



Reluctant Press presents:

A Unique Ecstasy

Philippa Peters



A 'NEW WOMAN' E-BOOK

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A UNIQUE ECSTASY

by **Philippa Peters**

I. WAR HERO

I've tried writing this part of my life several times. I've tried writing it in the third person, "Lee Otis did this, etc, etc," or "Lee Otis said that," and so on and so on. But it's probably a lot easier if I just set it down the way I think it happened to me.

I know it's going to shock a lot of people out there, all the fan clubs that still keep on going even though I am retired from the business now. You'd think with all the biographies written about me, it's funny that not one has been written about her, that there wouldn't be room for another.

But this won't be one of those pap biographies, written by a studio flack, that you're used to. This is a warts and all story about me. It's part of my autobiography. Only a part, though. This is the part no-one has ever written about. After all, who could tell it but me – and her. And, if you keep going to the end, you'll read why that's just me who's left to remember it all and to tell about it.

I could go on a lot about the war and so on, and what a hero I was – and Timmy Lindemann - but it would be untrue. I did fly a few combat missions in bombers over Germany, as the bios say about me, but they were milk runs by the time I got over there. And who cares if Timmy Lindemann was a gunner in one of the Fortresses I flew? No-one's heard of him anyway.

I didn't know him well even though he hung around the crew of 'California Honey'. He was spare crew but flew with us almost every time we went out, I think. We were operating out of England and it was always raining. Someone was always sick with colds or flue.

I knew Timmy well enough to buy him a beer or two, which I recall doing after the Dresden run, our deepest and furthest over Germany. It was after that one that I was rotated back to the States, finishing up where I started, ferrying planes for Transport Command.

I don't know what got me into acting. I mean, I know the steps I took but I don't know why I let myself get co-opted into doing what I did. It was like, after the big one, I was just waiting around for it all to start up again, waiting for what was going to happen next. I was just passing away the time, spending money as fast as I got it, and making out with every girl that I could.

My last job left me off at Vandenberg and that was it. I was used to strutting out the old uniform with the few ribbons I'd genuinely earned. It pleased the girls to be going out with a 'war hero'. "You ought to be in pictures," more than one of them squealed at me before I moved on them really seriously and then it was more than squealing.

The studio's invented a few myths about how I broke into bigtime acting. I really like the one about my stunt flying and being so photogenic in the stills. It was nothing like that at all. I was dating a 'starlet', she called herself that, an 'extra' I'd call her now, who had a call for crowd scenes at Western. I think the movie was Man from Washington, but it could have been any of those moody spy stories that were all the rage after the war.

We had quite a night and I drove with her down to Western's big lot, out on Miller, as they called the 147 then. We said tender goodbyes in the cab but then I realized that I wouldn't have the fare back to town.

I didn't want to look like a cheapskate in front of Doris, I think that was her name, so I conned her into thinking I wanted to see her work. When we got near to the checking off point – it was six in the morning – this assistant director guy was really narked because the light was right and there weren't enough extras to make a decent crowd.

Of course, I was glad to walk through, change hat and coat and stroll back with Doris making up for the lack of fresh people on the 'street'. Some other stuff with Chris Channing and old Walter Mountford was going on at the time but I never paid any attention to it. We had to walk through about six times before they got it right, I remember that. I also remember that we were paid off right there and, as I recall, I blew it all on another night with Doris. An indefatigable one, as I think I remember it.

Which doesn't move the story forward about Timmy, does it? I found the 'extra' scenes easy to do after Doris – no, it was Dora – Dora Purcell. She did finally make it as an actress in a few B movies in supporting roles. Well, it was Dora who got me onto a few lots and making a little money, even picking up some of the vernacular of the trade. But it was Timmy who pulled me up the next step. At the time, I never knew what a big step it was, from 'extra' to 'speaking part'. I was really green in every aspect of the business.

It was on the set of London Calls that I saw this slim, blonde girl. She had a speaking part, a girl friend to one of the main actors, I think. We came off the set together, me after a casual walk through as usual. She looked me right in the eye, how bright and blue they looked, her mouth really red, and then she did this very funny double-take as she looked at me. Then she blushed and looked down and away from me.

She obviously knew me from somewhere and was very embarrassed at seeing me again. She turned away, her lovely pearl earrings bobbing, I don't know why but I saw that she had pierced ears and her silk dress swirled about her legs, nice legs even if they were thinner than I usually liked them. I liked stockings with straight seams up their calves on my girls and that was what she wore above black, shiny-leather high heels.

She was supposed to go back into the scene but she flubbed it. The director, it was Mike Kane, as I recall, got real mad at her and chewed her out right there. She was trembling and biting her lip, looking like she was little girl who might cry at any moment, but she glanced at me and I knew.

I mean I knew it wasn't the director's chewing her out that was affecting her so badly. No, it was me, that's what it was! She was shocked, scared, upset, by the sight of me. Then some big, old guy, to me that's what he was, came out of the crowd. He was mostly bald with some white hair and wore glasses. Later, I found out that he was the producer, Joseph Mann.

Mann said something real cold to the director – I didn't catch it, like his name – but it stopped the ranting right there. Some guy next to me said, "Don't fool with the producer's girl, right?" and then he laughed.

"Right," I agreed, staring at the girl, trying to figure out where I had seen her before. I couldn't remember having a girl like her. Maybe without the makeup, I mused, but I'd have to have been hard up. I mean, she wasn't stunning or anything. That's the way I remember her then, pretty ordinary, for starlets that is, fitting in with the other girls around her.

We did the scene again and she gave me a wide berth. Next time, the star actress blew it and, boy, was the director ever different. He was so understanding but he did glare at the slim, blonde girl as if it was still her fault. When we finally got through that scene, a break was called while makeup was freshened and the leads got ready for the next group of scenes.

The slim girl would have walked away from me but I grabbed her arm. There was real fear on her face when she turned to look up at me. Then she looked down fearfully, her eyelids all blue eye shadow, her eyebrows really thin and finely shaped.

"Look, you," I said, more roughly than I intended.

"Please," she whispered in that funny sort of voice she'd used in the film. "Please don't say anything. Please let me go."

I was mystified. I held onto her arms, while she just shivered in front of me, looking at the ground, her white-gloved hands holding on to her purse.

"I'm not going to say anything," I said

Her mouth formed a pretty, red 'O' in relief and she gave me a quick look. "Thanks," she said huskily.

"For now," I added as she tried to pull herself free of my hands and get away.

She had turned partly away. Now she turned back and gasped. I saw her in profile and, I don't know how or why, but suddenly it hit me. I remembered that so polite gunner who always said "Thanks" just that way, you could almost never hear him, Timmy Lindemann.

II. JENNIFER STERLING

As the thoughts reached from my mind and were projected onto my face, as I realized just who the 'girl' who I had my hands on must be, so 'she' must have seen the recognition bursting out of me. She wrenched free of my hands and darted away, through the crowd of extras and technicians.

I was absolutely floored. Tim Lindemann? Here? In a dress! Dressed up like a girl! A hot flush went through me, and I know I shuddered. One of the light men noticed and said something about it being real cold for the time of the year. I nodded, still dumbfounded. I didn't know what to say or who to tell. As I thought about it, I didn't even know if I had to tell anyone. Then, as I thought more about it, I knew I had to tell someone. I mean people can't do that, can they? Not in movies!

I didn't get a chance to tell anyone anyway. As I was heading with the crowd to B stage where the paymaster hung out, I saw 'her' standing on the steps of the trailer talking to the old, bald guy, the one someone had said was the producer. I remembered the remark then about 'her' being the producer's girl. The old guy had his hands spread out and was shrugging. She looked about ready to cry. She pulled a little hankie out of her purse, turned and almost walked right into me as I bore down on 'her'.

The bald guy had gone into the trailer and I thought more about what that guy had said on the lot. The producer's girl? Ugh, I thought of her with him. Perverts, that's what they were. I imagined Timmy simpering after him the way 'she' was supposed to simper after her boy friend in this little pic we were making. Awful!

"Well, Tim," I sneered at 'her'. "You got a lot of explaining to do, don't you?"

'She' closed her pretty, feminized eyes as if she was in pain, or, possibly, as if she was conjuring up a spell to make me vanish. She opened her eyes and I was standing there looking 'her' up and down. I couldn't believe the fancy, female stuff she was wearing.

He must have shaved his legs, Timmy boy, just like a woman, to have legs that looked that smooth in nylons like those. He must be wearing a garter belt, too, to keep them up, and that curvy waist? Must be he was wearing some kind of corset under the silk dress. He had on open-toed high heels I could see now as he faced me and his toenails were painted red.

He'd taken off a glove to go into his purse and I could see that his fingernails were like his toenails in color, a deep scarlet red, but his fingernails were also long and pointed, shaped like a girl's. They hadn't been like that when I had passed him pints of beer to share with the crew in England.

Timmy had such a nice, slim figure, too, not buxom, but definitely there beneath the clingy, yellowish silk that also set off his golden-streaked hair. I had noted how slender he was in the shoulders when he was firing a gun in the belly of the aircraft I flew. I wouldn't have mentioned it to him. It would have been insulting to him as a man. As a woman, he looked to be shaped pretty well, slimmer than I liked most of my girls. 'She' was fashionably slim, I suppose, though I'd call it thin, really.

"There's noth-nothing to explain," Timmy said hoarsely, as the crowd went away from me, in search of their paychecks. He was trying so hard to keep his voice at a high pitch while I grinned, evilly I'm sure, at him in his pretty yellow dress, trying so hard to be womanly to his old crewmate.

"You were a boy when you served in the One-Six," I sneered at 'her'.

She was remarkably composed. "Yes, Lee," she said, and her eyes met mine, sadly, defiantly, for the first time, really. A strand of long hair drifted across her cheek and in a feminine manner, she pushed it back into place. "I was a boy then but now I am a girl." Her voice was incredible. I had expected it to be all squeaky like the girl she was playing in the movie but it wasn't. It was actually pleasant, like an educated woman's, a controlled, womanly soprano.

I was stunned. I mean, it was if someone had clobbered me with a two-by-four! I mean, that couldn't be! It was downright unnatural! It couldn't happen. Then I realized what this 'nancy' was saying, this queer, this pervert. I drew back my shoulders to deck him and I think I would have punched 'her' in her lipstick when suddenly she dropped her eyes and seemed to slump, too.

"Go on," she said quietly. "Go ahead, Lee, the macho man. I deserve it, don't I, for being so different. Hit me and tell everyone what a hero you are! Saving the world from queers like me."

"What?!" I sneered again. My fist stayed down.

"Beating up queers is what we servicemen did for kicks, wasn't it? I suppose the present day soldiers and airmen do it, too, since we taught them, didn't we?" 'she' asked bitterly, her voice steady and becoming once more that 'normal', female voice. "I saw it happen in London more than once. We always bought drinks for the heroes after they rid the bars of the 'puffs', didn't we?"

A little breeze was wafting her blonde hair about her neck and face. I seemed to gain then the aroma of a very feminine scent, delicate, like roses. I realized, in dismay, that it was 'her' scent. She smelled like a woman! I swallowed very hard, repelled but fascinated, I can recognize that in me now, by this feminine figure in front of me, a feminine figure whom I had drunk with and pounded on in all the stupid games airmen, so relieved that they aren't dead yet, play on each other. This 'girl' was a serviceman, for goodness sake, who had slept in the same barracks as me in the Services.

"Timmy Lindemann," I said slowly, watching the darkly madeup, vivid eyes wince slightly as she watched me fearfully and my still balled-up fists.

"Jennifer Sterling," 'she' said, her voice pitched lower but not unfeminine at all. "That's what I call myself today."

I gulped again. I mean, what do you say to a female impersonator who really wants to be taken to be a pretty female. Small talk about our war experiences was definitely out.

'She' was the one to glance around. "Everybody's gone," she said. "Didn't you have money to pick up, too?"

I nodded. I hadn't noticed. Now I would have a hard time getting my pay for the day. How could I prove to the paymaster that I had been there, one of the crowd? I had no contract and they didn't look at the rushes.

We were in the middle of B Street, having edged away from the trailers. The cavernous B Stage was deserted, I could see that and a glance back at the trailers where 'she' had come from showed no lights. I remembered the old, bald guy.

"So you're the producer's girl friend?" I asked with a leer, starting off to where the paymaster usually was. Who knows? He might remember me.

"W-What?" Jennifer Sterling gasped and I could hear her high heels clicking on the tarmac as she scurried after me. She grabbed my arm to hold me back as I headed into B Stage. "What, what, did you say?"

"You're the producer's girl friend, honey," I sneered yet again as I easily stepped away from Jennifer's frail grip and went on to B Stage. "Everyone calls you that," I shouted over my shoulder as I jogged across the setting for some desert B movie 'epic'. Even though I

ran, there was no-one there, nor on E Avenue. The guards said I was the last coming through and sort of pushed me out of the wire gates so that they could lock up.

Timmy, Jennifer, whoever, was waiting for me at the end of the long walk, past the parking lots, that led down to Miller Street proper. She sat behind the driver's wheel of a chrome-finned Chevy. I'd lost Dora in talking to 'her' and was resigned to a long wait for a bus back to town.

She rolled down the window as I stopped and glared at her. She'd cost me a day's pay and a ride. "I-I'll give you a r-ride b-b-back to t-town," the guy who called himself Jennifer Sterling stammered to me.

I didn't want to ride with the little queer. It would have been bad enough if he hadn't been dressed in such expensive women's clothing, his hair womanly and his face made up like a woman's. But what they say, I thought grimly. At least, I could save the fare, more drinking money, and be back in town at least an hour earlier, too.

"D-did you say anything, t-to anyone?" Jennifer/Timmy asked, nervously checking her mirrors, as we sedately went at five below the limit along Miller. I could guess that the little 'femme' didn't want to be stopped by any big, burly policemen.

I admired her silk stockings and shapely legs again, neat and trim ankles and smooth, rounded calves, slim and not muscled like a guy's, like most airmen and GIs I knew. I let her suffer for a little while.

"Say anything about what?" I finally said, playing really dumb.

Jennifer gave me a fierce glance, her first real look at me since I had gotten into her car. Despite the makeup and long hair, I could see Timmy Lindemann in 'drag' in that look.

"You know," she said, turning back to concentrate on the Studebaker in front of us that was just ambling along, ten below the limit. As I expected, she was too timid to pass. "A-About me being a man," she said at last as I still took my own sweet time about answering.

"Oh, that!" I exclaimed. I was going to lie and then, I thought, heck, Timmy might start doing something stupid and speed up the car. I let the little fruitcake down easily. "Who'd believe me?" I asked. "And who could I have told in such short a time anyway?"

'Jennifer' thought about it for a while. She dropped back even more behind the Stude as traffic began to pick up slightly going out of town. "I would like to mention something to you," she said suddenly, jerkily, as if she had been thinking something over for a while and didn't quite know how to say it.

"You do want to get into pictures, don't you?" she went on in a rush before I had a chance to cut her off. "I-I can get you a bit of a break since, well since, since I know Mr, Mr Mann. He, he can get you a, a bit part in Sierra Wind."

For a moment, Jennifer Sterling took my breath away. I was impressed. Joseph Mann usually had one or two movies shooting on different lots at all times. Sierra Wind had started shooting on Western's back lot. There was a permanent Western town there as one oater after another followed in production there. The extras there were almost permanently employed. Dora had told me that it didn't matter if I could ride. I shouldn't bother to apply there. There were too many cowboys around the movie lot as it was. I'd never be able to get a job there, Dora predicted, not that I cared.

"If, if that works out," the girlish Jennifer Sterling babbled on, her voice rising in pitch, almost squeaking in her nervousness, I think, "I-I know it's only three or four lines but I could t-talk again t-to Mr Mann."

"Your sugar daddy," I interrupted her and she was startled.

"Oh, he's not," she said and I could see her blush as she clenched the wheel. She wore one white glove that concealed the pretty, painted nails I had seen earlier. The car wobbled as she sped up and we finally passed the Studebaker and swerved back into the driving lane. "He's, he's just, just someone who knows m-me."

"Well," I said, amused by what 'Jennifer' said but not believing a word. I idly wondered what they got up to in bed at night and then figured that I really did not want to know. "Thanks, Miss Sterling," the car wobbled again as I emphasized the words. "But no thanks."

Jennifer Sterling was really surprised and upset. It was amazing how easy it was to think of her by that name and not as Timmy. She seemed paler to me and she gripped the wheel even more firmly.

"You don't have to worry," I said. No, I didn't want to be beholden to someone like the little fruitcake Timmy Lindemann had become. "I won't fink on you, Miss Jennifer Sterling, nor on your sugar daddy."

I had let the disgust reach my voice. I was pleased to see that I reached 'her' and that she was hurt, too. The hand without the glove showed white knuckles in vivid contrast to her shaped, so red, lacquered nails.

"And when I need a break," I finished. "I'll get it myself, not from some fairy and some fairy-loving morphredite freak."

I stopped, not caring for the way I sounded. We drove the rest of the way in silence. I think Miss Jennifer Sterling was shaking when she let me off on Hollywood. She wouldn't look at me as I saluted her like we did in the Services in thanks and headed off to Morton's where they had television. You could watch the afternoon ball games from the east and bet on them if you felt like it. I was still pretty flush after all, following the days I'd worked.

III. PAYOFF

That night, a messenger from Western left a package for me at the rooming house on La Jolla. In it was a contract for four weeks work on Sierra Wind. There was a script for me to read as well. 'Jennifer Sterling' had lied. The speaking part actually had seven lines. I was also in several scenes, part of the crowd, and I knew how to do that.

I did hesitate before I signed it, knowing that I was being bought off, but that was the way it was in California in those days. And, what the hay, two hundred a week regular for four weeks was top dollar since I also got my meals for free. If she wanted to buy me off, or her sugar daddy did, why shouldn't I let them? I had no intention of ratting on 'her'. Who did I know who would care, anyway? It wasn't like she was Hepburn or anything like that. And, also, I didn't think that I would ever see 'her' again.

Jennifer Sterling, geesh I had a hard time thinking of 'her' that way, hadn't told me that she was also in Sierra Wind. She was one of the dance hall queens. How appropriate, I thought sardonically, when I first heard her described that way. I caught her looking at me and she seemed to read my mind for she looked quite ill for a moment.

It was quite a sight to see 'her' and these other girls doing a can-can on the stage of the 'Last Chance' saloon. 'Jennifer' fitted right in. It was supposed to be the girls singing and I wondered how she would fake that but they all did, fake it, I mean. The singing was really done by a little group of fat, old ladies (really!), who did the squeaky, 'cutesy', little girl voices the girls mimed to.

It was kind of neat to watch, particularly when they swished their skirts up over their heads, petticoats too, and revealed their stockings, black garters and frilly panties, all the time wiggling their pretty fannies. I got a charge out of it, I can assure you and I think a lot of the guys around the stage did, too. The girls were hit on by the guys after the shooting ended and I could see that they enjoyed it, too, breathing heavily, their bosoms rising and falling after the fifth run-through for whatever reason.

I watched Jennifer being propositioned by a cowboy bit actor, a guy like me, and she turned him down prettily before she froze seeing me watching her, a knowing smile on my face. Being the producer's girl would make that easy for her to turn down persistent guys. I thought of going over and making her life miserable but then I did have the job because of her and so I left her alone as another guy approached her and put his arm about her thin shoulders.

Jennifer Sterling wore a wig with masses of blonde hair and it suited her which is why the guys were trying to hit on her, I expect. She had pink flowers also in her hair to match the pink and black, can-can dress she wore. She was very heavily madeup which enhanced her average looks and made her sort of beautiful. Even I thought so. The beauty spot by

her mouth was also intriguing. I had to shake myself for a moment and stop contemplating the things she showed about her as if she was a girl, really. I did, after all, know better.

I was surprised at how well she danced with the other girls, showing off her stockings and garters as she smiled as if she was really enjoying it like the other girls. I watched when it came to the part where they turned their backs and threw their dresses over their heads and wiggled their derrieres in their pretty, white, frilly panties. I lost track for a moment and couldn't tell which one was Timmy and which the real girls. I saw the movie when it came out and they really cut the scene in editing. I guess it was a little too sexy for the censors then.

"They all look pretty good," I heard the director say after the fifth take to an assistant. "We'll have them do one more and see if we can pick one out as the best." It was stupid, I thought, but I didn't mind. The brunette girl on the end of the line, Dolores, had smiled at me as several guys tried to get her to sit at their tables in the makeshift bar we'd setup way off the set.

Jennifer finally talked to me after the second week when I was sitting in the bar having a coffee, bored out of my mind with waiting for the lighting to be right for some outdoor, background shots. I'd already taken out Dolores and Anita from the dance hall queens, and laid them both, and was angling for Connie, the most buxom of the group, though she was everybody's favorite.

Jennifer also had a coffee and was leaving the mobile cafeteria line, cup in hand, a dark raincoat over her pretty pink dance hall dress, pink flowers in her hair, when she saw me. She froze a little but there was hardly anyone sitting at the tables and so she couldn't pretend she hadn't seen me. I think she had done that a few times before.

She hesitated and I waved to 'her' to come over. Jennifer came warily and sat down gracefully, smoothing her dress beneath her, the rustle of her petticoats such a feminine sound. It produced goose bumps on me. I wondered idly what it was like for her. And then thought of her underwear, the black stockings and frilly white panties. Ooh, that must be something else for a 'girl' like 'her'.

"H-How are you, Lee," Jennifer asked very nervously. It was that female voice again. It was similar to the Timmy I had known but it was also very different. Although it was lower pitched at times than many of the girls' voices, it was definitely female-sounding.

"Fine," I said with a grin, looking her over. She blushed. "Things couldn't be better." I thought of the girls, dressed like her, whom I had dated. I leered at Jennifer and she winced.

"I thought you wouldn't be here," Jennifer began softly, gripping the cup in both hands and sipping from it like a woman. I admired her nails and hands, so feminine as well. "Not anywhere near me."

"I got over my stupid, male pride," I said cheerfully, only slightly emphasizing the word 'male' but I saw that she caught it by her slight grimace. "Not wanting to accept help from a woman," I added. "You know how it is."

I couldn't help the extra stress I also gave to the word 'woman'. Jennifer Sterling blushed again and the coffee cup trembled noticeably despite the feminine way she held it in both hands.

"Hey," I said, feeling a little sorry for my remarks. She had left me alone, hadn't she? "Don't take everything I say so personally. That's no way to be a big star. You might be a famous actress yet."

I was kidding her. There was no way she could be a leading actress. Some guy would only have to feel her up once in a clinch and she was a goner. And as for sleeping your way to the top, well, if this was all Joseph Mann was going to get for her, she'd never make it further.

"Some go in by the door marked 'Push'," Jennifer Sterling said, a shiver in her narrow, feminine shoulders and long, blonde hair. She nodded and glanced down, looking anywhere but at me, "and some go in by the door marked 'Pull'."

"Huh?" I said. Yeah, I'm a real smooth talker sometimes.

"It's a quote from Winston Churchill," Jennifer said, giving me a quick glance with those heavily outlined, black-painted eyes, the blue seeming brighter by the enhancements of feminine eye makeup, like eye shadow and mascara. I noticed how thin and shaped were her eyebrows. If she had had those in the One-Six, I thought, she'd never have made it out of basic training.

"Mr Mann has seen the rushes," Jennifer went on, the tiniest of shakes revealing what must be her inner tension at talking to me. "He thinks you have quite a presence. He, he suggests you take drama lessons, Lee. You, you aren't already signed up with anyone, are you?"

Me? Drama lessons? I was staggered. I know I laughed at Dora and Dolores as they talked about their teachers and hurried off to classes in the evenings and at weekends, cutting into my time with them. Which is why Anita, if you were wondering, when Dolores just had to go to her class. It struck me hard. Joseph Mann thought I had some talent, no, not that, 'presence'. That was what Jennifer had said. What the heck was that?

A slight smile crossed her scarlet lips as she now looked at me, trying to find out how I would react, I guess. Jennifer should easily have been able to read the astonishment in my face. I didn't conceal it. She carefully set down her cup. She had been carrying a tiny purse dangling from a bracelet, enough for a lipstick and compact, I thought. She opened it and took out a card. She passed it gracefully, like a woman, to me, her hand soft and smooth as she touched me. That made her hand jump back to her lap as if she had been electrocuted.

Some actress, I thought. Miss Jennifer Sterling was definitely going to have to learn to touch a man if she had any dreams of being any kind of movie star. She was going to have to learn more than just touching a man, I thought sardonically. I looked at her beautifully painted lips and wondered how she, Timmy as she used to be, would get along in the love scenes that all actresses had to go through.

The card read, 'Edwin Bird, teacher of dramatic arts.' I'd heard others talking about Bird. He was supposed to be very, very good. Only took on the best, it was said. Could make anyone a star, others agreed. But he wasn't taking on anybody new these days, said another.

I turned the card over and it had a signature on the back. It took me a while to work out that it said 'Joseph Mann', so fancy were the letters. I thought it might be what they called Gothic script or it might be German. I had seen similar lettering on many war souvenirs.

"Edwin teaches me, too," Miss Jennifer Sterling, budding actress, said carefully. Why was I not surprised? "But, but don't worry, Lee. You won't be seeing me for a while now and certainly not at Edwin's. I, I have some, some work to do b-before you see me again."

Jennifer sounded so anxious that I wanted to reach out and take her hand and find out what was troubling her so much. She stood up and swished away from me, taking off her coat and disappearing into a crowd of girls dressed just like her, in frilly pink skirts and black garter belts and stockings. Luckily, I remembered who she really was and so I saved both of us from a great embarrassment. Or so I thought.

IV. JENNIFER'S PROPOSAL

I started with Edwin Bird the following week, on my day off from filming. I tried to ask him about 'Jennifer Sterling', but he just stared at me as if I had committed a huge mistake, like missing lines in his sketches. Then, a second time and he got very angry and made me work harder and harder.

I'm always described as Bird's last protégé, which is true, by and large. But then, most people aren't aware, as I am, that it was Bird who transformed Timmy Lindemann, son of a producer he owed favors to, into 'Jennifer Sterling', actress. Bird finished with me long before he finished with 'her'.

Bird never spoke to me of Jennifer's past though he knew I knew who 'she' really was. That's why, I think, he worked us together so intensively, more for 'her' benefit, I thought with some conceit at the time. Now, I'm not so sure. I learned how to play to 'her', a woman I knew was a man. From that, I guess, I learned how to act to anyone in any part they cast for me.

Should I list now the dykes and lizzies I played to as if I really was in love as the script said I was? Or the other old bats I had to make up to in order to make it big in this business? Still, that's what film acting is all about, isn't it? Detesting someone and making everyone else believe that you really love them. I fooled many of the old bats, too, thanks to those sessions Bird put me through with Jennifer. It was worse for her, I know.

After Sierra Wind, however, I didn't see Jennifer Sterling again for a year. My movie 'career', though I didn't think of it that way, began to inch forward. I got bit parts in other films at Western, not always produced by Joseph Mann. The first few were, though, and I was well on my way to being the first henchman, sidekick to the real actor who played the principal villain, in B movies.

Edwin Bird ignored that, however, and worked me by myself and in groups, on stuff I could barely read. He made me go outdoors and rant for hours, working on speeches from Shakespeare, O'Neill, Goethe (in translation), or poetry, and then I'd turn and there he was watching me. He talked to me more about the poets and their intent than how to say the lines and then he would have me do it again, tell him about the author and what he wanted, and do it again, and again.

I asked him why once and he said I was learning to 'get the English right'. Then it was dialects, and Williams, or maybe it was Mark Twain, Fitzgerald and *Gone with the Wind*. It was a heady period of my life. It was my education, I realized later, and it was then that I also began to think about the future. For goodness sake, I did have a shot at being a real actor if I could only produce and control the 'big' voice Bird was trying to get out of me.

At first, I didn't recognize Jennifer Sterling when she came back to Edwin Bird's. She was sitting demurely on Bird's studio sofa when we entered his workshop after spending time outdoors again.

"Today, we work with the big voice," said Bird in his Mid-European accent. "But we see how you control it when you play to another, to a pretty woman," he indicated the blonde on the sofa. "What happens to that big voice with her to distract you?"

The blonde smiled and didn't lift her eyes to acknowledge me. Despite her bulky blouse, her tight skirt and wide waist belt, I could see that she had a most curvaceous figure. She wore her hair in the pageboy style so popular then and was wearing very little makeup.

She looked up and smiled at me, her lips soft and pink and very, very kissable, I thought. Oh, those would distract me, I thought. Then, I'm sure, my eyes must have seemed to bug out of my head, just like in a cartoon. She was Jennifer Sterling. But this was a Jennifer whom I would never have known was Timmy if I hadn't seen her as Jennifer before, or him as Jennifer before.

It's too complicated, this 'he' and 'she' stuff. From now on, I'm going to refer to Timmy as Jennifer, call him 'she', and use 'her' to describe him. After all, I never saw her as

Timmy again and I never saw Tim in any of the gestures she made or the looks she gave me. From that time at Edwin Bird's, she was Jennifer Sterling and I didn't think of her as anyone else. Well, almost all of the time, anyway.

Jennifer had had subtle work done to her face. Her nose was thinner and bobbed a little, a very feminine nose and it so altered her looks. She'd had something done to jawline, to her chin and even her brows. They were definitely flatter, not jutting out, like mine.

When she stood, I realized, too, that she had also done something to her body. She was still slim but her hips were wider, I was certain and her chest? Could it be, could it really be real? Did the movement and swaying of two definite breasts and the cleavage I saw at the v-neck really be real? Could he really have been changed into a she?

Jennifer didn't help me at all. We were straight into Bird's improvisations and she was a delicate maiden. "My lord and master," she said in a clearer, higher, more confident voice, a lovely female voice, in fact.

I flubbed what I had to say which exasperated Bird. We had to do it again as Jennifer went through a series of different types of female responses in male 'heroic riffs' that Bird used all the time in class to break down our preconceptions of male and female roles. Jennifer's humble, graceful, sly femininity deflated my pomposity several times which pleased Bird.

He had us do the first scene from Romeo and Juliet which I fumbled so badly, my voice all over the place as I sounded like a teenager seeing a girl for the first time just as his voice was breaking. Bird had a twinkle in his eye as he laughed at me.

"He was not prepared, this one, for such a ravishing Juliet," Bird said gallantly, helping a blushing Jennifer to her feet as I remained gibbering, trying to recall the next line.

"Nay, tis not so, my lord," said Jennifer, improvising easily. She curtsied in her tight skirt to the older man, who seemed delighted, then kicked off her high heels and put her arms about him and gave him a big hug. For a moment, I was jealous. Then I was astounded that, even for a moment, I could be jealous in regard to Jennifer Sterling.

I began my Romeo lines again but Bird waved me off. "Enough for today, Mr Otis. Enough," he intoned to me like a Gregorian chant. We had worked on those the week before. To increase my range, Edwin said. He was patting Jennifer's back, holding her against him and looking at her most fondly.

"And for you too, my darling Jenny," he said, hugging her back as Jennifer smiled at him. "Bring me the scripts of your father's big project and we'll run through it with the young gunslinger here."

I felt like an idiot. Lindemann. The spelling alone should have given it away. Joseph Mann. Jennifer's father, of course. He had just dropped the first part of a surname that sounded too German. I wondered what Bird's name had been before he changed it?

Jennifer's father had to be Joseph Mann. No wonder he would do anything to keep his daughter from being exposed as his son. I don't know why but I felt a lot better looking at her and thinking that she didn't have a sugar daddy after all, just a daddy.

Jennifer and I left together and I noticed her nervousness return for the first time. Her Chevy was parked next to my Ford on the street in front of the low, three-storey building that had Bird's studio on the first floor.

"I can't give you a lift then," Jennifer said and her smile was bright. She waved to me gently, just lifting her hand as women do.

"Hey, Jennifer," I called after her as she looked like a perfect woman in silhouette as she unlocked her car. "I just have to ask," I said as I went up to her. I blurted it out. "What's happening to you?"

"Well," she smiled and a dimple appeared in the smooth, creamy skin of her cheek, "I have the second female lead in Bachelor Suite."

"No, not that," I snapped at her pretty face. Yes, Jennifer was now pretty. She'd be a standout among all the girls that I saw trying to get parts at the studio. "That's not what I meant. You know what I'm talking about."

I wanted to know how she had become so female, so rounded, so much of a woman that I was having a hard time not making a pass at her. Was it possible that she had really changed? No, that couldn't be. I'd known Tim in the war anyway. But I didn't have any doubt that the girl in front of me had once been Timmy Lindemann, a machine-gunner in the US Air Force.

"Do you think I would tell you here?" Jennifer asked lightly, arching a thin, shaped eyebrow. There were people on the street and a car hovering, waiting for the parking spot.

I took her by the arm and waved the car off. "Over a drink then," I said brusquely. Jennifer was startled as I took her keys and took her to the passenger side of the car. "We'll take your car," I said as she got in nervously, swinging her shapely legs in gracefully. "I'll get a cab back for mine."

Only when we were driving, me behind the wheel of her car, putting it through its paces as she never did, did I realize how much I was treating her like a woman, and yet I knew!

Dunbar's Rest has private booths, surrounded by wood-framed Tiffany-like mosaics, lots of plants and as it promises, a quiet, restful atmosphere. Though Jennifer hadn't noticed, I'd seen the admiring looks the waiter gave her as we were escorted to a table in the restaurant. I'd requested a quiet booth far from the piano, and that's what we got.

She took off her gloves and laid them on her purse while I ordered martinis, very dry. Jennifer smiled at my order. We'd regarded martini-drinkers as British 'poofsters' during our stint in England.

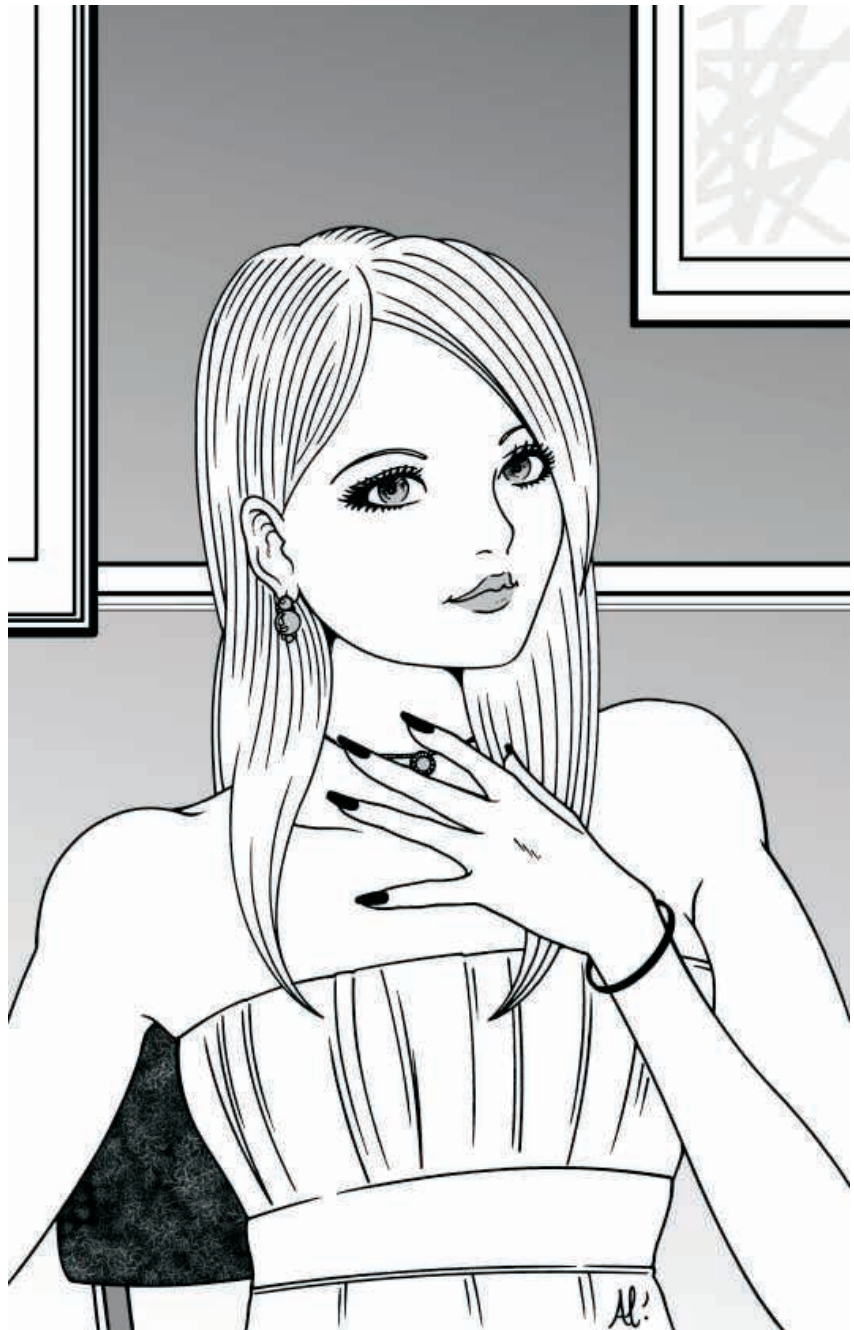
"So I've changed my drinking habits," I said. "You've changed a lot more than I have. You were going to tell me about it."

The blonde-haired Jennifer Sterling flicked her long hair back about her neck and gave me a look of surprise. "I was?" she said quietly. She was expertly made up. The mascara was not overdone, nor her eye makeup, as she had for the movies we had been in together. Her eye makeup was light but it was her skin that was so changed. She seemed healthier. There was a soft glow to her face that couldn't all be makeup, surely. Her lipstick was a subdued shade of red but I couldn't have named it. Her fingernails matched. Her jewellery was smaller, too, little golden bells at her ears and a thin necklace with a small, golden charm.

"Well," Jennifer said, toying with the olive on its toothpick. "Well," she said again, looking up at me. She licked her lipstick nervously and then plunged in. "You can see by my face that I had to be away quite a while." Her gorgeous blue eyes regarded me steadily.

"You've had surgery," I said, pressing.

She nodded, her earrings moving gently on her ears. "On my nose, of course," Jennifer said slowly. Lots of girls were having their noses done, I knew. Plastic surgery had come a long way after



the war. She touched her lovely, smooth neck. "The adam's apple, of course, my vocal cords, and here and here, shaving the bones back."

I grimaced as she said that. No wonder she had been away so long. She must have had her face laid open but I could see no scars.

"Electrolysis on my skin, removing all my hair. I don't have to shave any more," she went on. "Dr Gerhard is such a wonderful surgeon, years ahead of his time. Of course, his clinic is in Mexico, so I had to go there. My father has helped to set him up there since the war is over."

"I finally figured that out," I said as if it hadn't been just hours earlier. She gave me a nice smile then.

"Only child," Jennifer said softly. "Daddy spoils me."

I ordered more drinks. Our waiter hovered, making sure that everything was all right for her. He seemed completely bemused by Jennifer's fragrance, that delicate hint of rose blossoms about her. The waiter wasn't alone. So was I. He left very regretfully while she looked a little flustered.

"And the rest of you?" I asked, indicating her figure.

"Oh, come on, Lee," Jennifer murmured, blushing. "You must have come across a girl with false," she indicated her chest with a hurried gesture, "implants, that's the word."

Most of the girls I met with falsies put them in a drawer, I thought. If she had falsies, they were mighty good. Those I'd like to see, I thought, and again had to kick myself for thinking such about another man.

"I've known girls with falsies before," I agreed. "But you've done more." I was thinking of her rounded hips. That surely couldn't just be padding.

Jennifer shook her lovely blonde hair and sighed. "It's all padding, really," she said with a nervous blush. "Dr Gerhard wasn't sure it would be so good for me but he's pleased with the results, too. He thinks lots of other girls can benefit from the same surgeries now."

I didn't understand that. I never thought to ask her whom she meant by 'other girls'. I don't think we were talking the same language for a while.

"It does make me feel good, though, and I've been practising all the time," she went on earnestly, wanting me to understand her, I guess.

You hear what you want. I was somewhat relieved. Padding, I knew what that was, something you put in and took out. I heard Jennifer saying that she was a regular guy, really, who'd had plastic surgery, but underneath all that feminine shapeliness was Timmy

Lindemann, unchanged. Which was true. I just didn't understand what she meant by padding. I didn't know what they could put under the skin.

"I-I did come to Edwin's on purpose to see you today," Jennifer stammered, twisting the barely touched glass in front of her with both hands. I waited. "I-I was asked to put, to put, a proposal to you."

"I have an agent now," I said, which was true. I'd been in what, ten films in the last year, each part a little better, a few more lines, than the last. It was steady work and my agent said he was angling for parts in some really big cowboy movies that were going to be made in the upcoming year.

"You, you shouldn't be typecast as a cowboy," Jennifer said, still staring at her drink. "There's a part for you in Bachelor Suite, if you want to take it. I think they'll change the title because it is a film about a murder."

"Oh," I asked stiffly. "I don't need more parts from you. I'm not blackmailing you at all, am I?"

Jennifer shook her lovely, blonde hair. "No," she whispered. "You've been wonderful to me."

I gaped at that and the girl I now knew as Jennifer Sterling blushed as she used to when she had first seen me on the movie lot.

"You would play a doctor," Jennifer went on hurriedly. "He, he's actually the murderer so you get a range of emotions to play. Doctor Bird, Edwin, says that you are ready to branch out."

"Getting regular reports on your old Air Force buddy, are you?" I snapped. The hurt look on her feminized face was priceless. She could have been a woman, the way her bright blue eyes teared up.

It suddenly struck me. "What part do you play?" I asked.

Jennifer bit at her lower lip. "The doctor's wife," she whispered and I think she was blushing again.

"And we get to ...?" I asked suggestively.

Jennifer actually shuddered. She couldn't look at me but she nodded.

"How many times does the doctor kiss his wife?" I asked harshly.

"A, a lot," Jennifer whispered. She reached for her purse and gloves. "You, you're right. I c-can't do this." She stood up in a rustle of nylon and silk to go. I sensed her wonderful, feminine fragrance as well.

I stood and steered her back to her seat. I waved off the waiter who had appeared again and looked all ready to be a knight in shining armor and rescue the fair lady. Would he be so anxious if he knew that Jennifer was a guy, too, I thought angrily.

"Tell me the rest of it," I said, partly realizing what it was but wanting to hear it any way. "Why me? Why do you want me in this part as your loving, I presume, husband?"

"Well, well you know, you see," Jennifer flicked her eyes up to me and they went down again. "It, it would be easier."

"So," I said smartly. "Rest easy. Your secret is safe with me. I'm not telling anyone about you. I promise you that. You don't need to pay me off with a part in a good film. Any actor can be your husband."

Jennifer nodded nervously, her hands clutching her gloves. "I know but," she began most tentatively. I heard a pretty big 'but' in those words. "I need you because," she went on so softly and anxiously that I could barely hear her. "I, I've never, I've never." Her bobbed blonde hair shook, her earrings were shaking and she seemed on the point of bursting into tears.

"You've never kissed a man before," I finished. "At least, not seriously." That would be a drawback if Jennifer got some of the he-man actors I had met as a first-time lover, even in films. And if she got a reputation as a poor kisser, she'd be finished as well. I think she knew that.

Jennifer nodded again, her reddened lips shaking. "I, I don't think I can, anyway," she murmured.

"But you wanted to be an actress," I persisted. "You must have known that, as a woman, you'd have to kiss a man." Then I taunted her. I shouldn't have. It was mean. "It's no big deal, really."

"But if I make a mess of it," Jennifer shivered as she spoke. "They, they, won't understand. What, what if they know I'm different? I couldn't bare that. I mean, he, he would know and, and the crew would know."

"It would be the same with me," I countered.

Jennifer nodded and sighed, her breathing seeming very constricted. Her eyes were very bright as she looked at me fearfully. "But, but you wouldn't tell if I was so bad, would you? You wouldn't tell, I know. And besides ..."

I had to prompt her to go on. "Yes, besides what?" I asked.

Jennifer, my former buddy, Tim, sort of hunched her shoulders like a child expecting a strong rebuke or a slap. "You, you could teach me," she whispered, unable to look me di-

rectly in the eye again. "I mean, how I should do it, you know as a girl, what I ought to do."

I couldn't help it. I burst out laughing. That was the weirdest proposal I've ever had. At first, I thought it was just Jennifer's fruitcake way of getting a man, any man, to do things to her, with her, he'd never do otherwise. She was flushing bright-red as I laughed out loud, thinking it was the damndest, sorry excuse I'd ever heard to get in my pants.

Even the martini Jennifer dumped on my head was worth it to see the look on her face as I got even with the little fairy for all the disgust I felt seeing a man primped up like a beautiful girl. I supposed that I would have to make up with her for laughing at her like I had. I probably deserved it.

It would be so disappointing, however, to make up to Jennifer and then not be able to follow through, or worse, if she wanted a follow through. There was a look of pure humiliation on her face as she got up and scurried out of Dunbar's, leaving me to face the wrath of one very upset waiter.

V. LESSONS WITH JENNIFER

Edwin Bird was polite. He'd heard how badly I had treated Jennifer Sterling, I guessed. Did I wish to go on with him or would I find a new teacher, he wanted to know.

If he, Edwin Bird, recommended me for film parts to his friends, he told me icily, or to other producers and directors, I was expected to take such parts or else give up his coaching.

"You do not need what I am teaching you to sit on a horse and fire a gun," Bird said firmly. "You do need it if you want ever to be a professional actor."

"Jennifer Sterling," I said angrily as Bird stared stonily at me. "It's that part in a movie with her, isn't it? But you should have heard what came with it. She wanted me to teach her how to kiss men!"

Bird nodded and I could sense that he was angry with me. "Yes," he agreed. "A very wise proposal. You do both need to practice that. You haven't, I think, ever kissed a woman in a play, have you?"

I stared at him until Bird raised his eyebrows, waiting for my answer. "No, I have not done a screen kiss yet," I sneered, "but I was sure that I could rise to the occasion." Heh, heh, heh, followed my words through my mind.

"And what if it is a woman you despise?" asked Bird. "Could you kiss her and convince an audience you loved her? What if she is the wife of a dear friend? What if she is

old, or ugly, or has terrible bad breath or she insists on a perfume that makes you nauseous?"

"Okay, okay," I said, wondering why he was getting so serious with me. "I get the point." But he wasn't finished with me.

"Kissing on film is very demanding," he said. "The operator is right here." Edwin Bird moved in very close to me, using a book to imitate a camera. It was just inches from my nose. "There are rules that any director expects you to know. None of that slobbery stuff you are famous for. No open mouths and absolutely no French kissing. Yet you must still convey passion for the girl.

"There are so many techniques to learn. It is very demanding to do it naturally, to feign love where none exists. Then there is the other side. How can you keep your arousal under control when that is what you must show according to the script? The girl is there and willing and she is so very beautiful and you are half in love with her any way. Ach, it is so very difficult."

I gaped. I was astounded.

"So," said Bird sharply. "This will be our next assignment. I shall arrange for Jennifer to be here with the script for Bachelor Suite and you will both practise under my supervision." He frowned as I pulled a face. "What is the matter, Mr Otis? Did not Jennifer explain all of this to you last week? I think it will be difficult for you to play the part of a married man, never having been one, and of course, Jennifer has not been married to a man, either. I told her you must practise. But she seems to think that you do not want to kiss her. Is this a sticking point for you? You do not wish to be an actor after all?"

Would you call that blackmail? I did, later, much later, when Bird wasn't in the room. He was right and he wasn't. I'm certain he knew Jennifer Sterling was a man but he was prepared to treat her exactly like a woman. I was flummoxed by his attitude. I couldn't afford to quarrel with about it, either.

Abe Moss, my agent, was spooked, too, by the contract he got in the mail for Bachelor Suite. He couldn't understand why I kept getting parts and he wasn't doing anything for me. Friendship, I explained to him, gloomily. Sometimes, it didn't pay to have friends in high places. That made him stare at me but I didn't bring up Jennifer Sterling or her daddy who, I guess, was behind it all. What daddies won't do for their little girls!

We, Jennifer Sterling and I, were very stiff the next time we met at Edwin Bird's studio. We read through the rough draft of the script that she had. I did have a terrific part. I was so loving and sincere, such a nice guy, until the doubts crept in, and the denouement when I unmasked was meant to show me at my most terrifying, henchman best.

Jennifer's wasn't much of a part. She had to play the clingy, adoring 'wifey' as she was referred to scathingly by the main detective. She had to be empty-headed but decorative. Clearly the bedroom scenes were there to show off a little skin. She was in her underclothes a lot. I swallowed as I thought about it, how I had to put my hands on her when she was dressed so scantily and show affection as she did to me. Bird was right. I did have to learn how to show my affections for someone whom I normally wouldn't want to be affectionate with at all.

Maybe it was too big a step for me, I thought, having doubts I could hold up. I wasn't sure Jennifer was up to it, either, the way she had talked to me before. But after thinking about it for a few minutes, I realized that I did want to do Bachelor Suite. It would at least give me something to be noticed for besides sitting on a horse.

We had read several scenes through a couple of times with Bird making faces at the dialogue in several parts. It was pretty stilted in patches and Bird made suggestions to us on how to handle it, the pause here, a gesture of the head, of the hand, a move of the body, pacing, all the tricks we needed not to make fools of ourselves.

It came to me that we were prepping for actual parts in an actual film in which I would have a larger part than I normally did. I began to think of people watching me and what they would see. It had never bothered me before. I got quite a rush as I listened to the Prof, as I'd heard others call Bird. I mean, he was making sense but, more than that, I could sense that what Bird thought I was doing was important. He expected me to learn from him.

It was about this time, it might have started right then, with Jennifer Sterling, shy and restrained, but sensational in her white, summery dress, that I began to see myself as an 'actor' and started to take the whole thing seriously. I found I was thinking of acting as a career not just something to fill up my time before I settled down to real work or, as I often said, to something serious.

I had become very attentive when Bird suddenly had us stand. Jennifer's white dress swirled and swished noisily as she rose up on her high heels, her female attributes well displayed. She saw me glance at her breasts and flushed, her hands behind her back as she waited for Bird to instruct us on what we had to do.

"Now, how do you begin to kiss Miss Sterling?" the Prof asked me sternly, as if I had never kissed a girl before. All right, perhaps I had never kissed a girl like Jennifer before.

I looked at her. Jennifer was blushing and had trouble looking at me again. That irritated me. She was supposed to be my wife. No woman I married would treat me so shyly or with such fear. She was wearing large, hooped earrings that bounced on her neck. My wife wouldn't wear those, either, but she would be as well made up as Jennifer was, her lips so red and inviting.

"It is most natural that you put your hands on her hips," said Edwin Bird, picking up the camera he had borrowed, a large, portable thing. He aimed it at us. "Go ahead, Mr Otis," he said, waving his hands at me to start. "She is not fragile. She will not break under one, little kiss."

I pulled Jennifer a little towards me with my hands on her hips. Her hands were on my arms, keeping me at bay but she couldn't refuse her instructor's command. She was just a little smaller than I was in her high heels. I caught my first scent of her perfume. It was very feminine. I slid my hands about her thin waist to pull her closer to me. So, she was wearing a corset, I thought and grinned.

"Now, Jennifer," said Bird gently. "Your arms go about Mr Otis's neck."

She was so close, her hair brushed my face. It was soft and scented, too. Her arms moved hesitantly and Jennifer was no longer holding me at bay as I felt her womanliness as she leaned against me. Her soft breasts yielded against my hard chest but they were high and full, and very nice to feel against me. Whatever padding she was using had to be first-class.

As our bodies touched, more like bumped together clumsily, Jennifer opened her beautifully madeup eyes to look up at me uncertainly. I lowered my head and kissed this woman who was really a man just as Bird was saying a trifle crossly, "Now put your lips on hers, Mr Otis."

I don't know what I expected. I did, I suppose, expect that there would be a real difference to kissing a real girl. There wasn't. Her, that is Tim Lindemann's, lips were soft and sticky with lipstick like the lips of many girls I had kissed. I kissed her and it was no different from kissing a woman. Actually, it was even better because Jennifer shivered as I kissed her and I felt her arms tighten about me and her body go rigid. There's a lot of pleasure for a guy when a girl goes like that when he kisses her.

Holding my ex-gunner friend was like holding any woman and having her body press into mine. Her perfume filled me. Her breasts, or her padding, pressed into my chest. My hands were about a very slim waist and long hair was caressing my cheek as well as hers. It all felt right. I was kissing a female and I pressed my lips harder on hers, feeling an instantaneous response.

"Awful!" snapped Bird and Jennifer pulled away from me as if she had been stung. "That is no way to kiss a woman, Mr Otis."

I looked at him in surprise. I thought that it wasn't bad. In fact, I really thought that it was pretty good. Surely he could tell that by the effect that my kisses had had on the girl I had kissed. Jennifer was quivering and her gorgeous eyes were downcast. She had closed them as I kissed her. I held onto her as she put her hands on mine as if to release me.

"You are supposed to love this woman," said Bird forcefully. "She is your wife. You have made love to her many times. Hold her gently. Support her. Do not grope her backside. If she moves away a little, move after her. Let your arm go, so. Now your arm on her back."

He had moved closer to us. He took my hand and guided it so that I could feel her bra through the flimsy material. He gently directed Jennifer to move her head to 'let the camera see' and instructed me to kiss her again "with real passion, Mr Otis, with real commitment."

I did my masculine best. I wanted to kiss her with real passion and real commitment but her lips quivered so when I pressed hard and Jennifer shifted away from me, clearly agitated.

"No, Jennifer," Bird was much gentler in correcting her. "You must kiss him back. You accept his kiss with love. Remember that he is your husband. You love this man. Purse your lips and lean into him. You know that you are going to love being kissed by your husband, your man. Now, let's try this again."

We kissed again, and again and again. Our lips seemed to be permanently locked together so many times. I can't tell you how it felt as Bird turned it into such a clinical exercise while I wanted to keep on several times with the sweetness I seemed to feel as we kissed. I hoped that she felt it to in all the shivering and shaking she was doing each time that I touched her or held her close.

"This is the way it will be with many directors," Bird warned us. "They will want the shot so many times, in slightly different ways and, all around you, there will be faces staring at you. It must appear fresh and natural each time. Now again, the passionate kiss."

It was really very pleasant for me to be kissing Jennifer Sterling, I thought, particularly after she must have concluded eventually, like me, that she wasn't going to die of kissing me. I think I am a good kisser and I think she was as well. I think that she liked me kissing her after a while though I couldn't stop and ask her. Once she relaxed a little bit, however, she began to kiss me back as Bird told her to it became very pleasant indeed.

I almost wished for Bird and his camera to disappear. I hated being stopped so often just when it seemed that Jennifer and I were getting somewhere. Her lips were soft and clingy, her perfume was heady and I loved touching her body. She reacted to every little touch just like a little schoolgirl, which I supposed in many ways, she was. I was the teacher, I thought smugly.

Bird had us move to the sofa and practise all kinds of kisses. I didn't know there were so many. I loved trying them all but Jennifer was nervous and flushing many times, particularly when I caught her unawares. She tried to keep her lips closed all the time but I tasted her mouth several times with my tongue and sent her into shivers but she was an

actress, I discovered. She didn't stop me when I went in harder while Bird moved his position with his camera.

Jennifer was not going to have any troubled kissing other male actors. I told her so and she blushed and hung onto me, arms about my neck, beginning the next kiss with me, without any direction from the Prof.

She didn't tell on me when I gave Jennifer a short French kiss and I didn't tell on her when it was she who clutched me tightly to her in a passionate embrace, to which I responded as any red-blooded male would, hanging onto such a lovely girl.

It was funny, though, as it was praise that made her tense up and shiver the most. When I said nothing and Bird was looking back at the script, I got in several lovely kisses and caresses of her bra that made her gasp and hold onto me while she kissed me back very ardently, not realizing at first what I was up to, improvising, I saw.

Bird finally relented and we staggered off the couch together. I felt as if I had spent the afternoon necking with a girl. I suppose I had and it was as frustrating as teenage necking can often be. You get so aroused but there can't be any finish as there is with adults.

I found Jennifer's coat and helped her into it. She looked up at me, her lipstick quite gone. "That was a lot of fun today, wasn't it?" I said lightly as she flicked her long hair over her collar.

She looked at me very sharply. Then she blushed and looked away. "You don't have to mock me," she said, the agitation marked in her voice.

"I'm not," I said in surprise. "I was surprised, though. It was very nice. It was like kissing a real girl. I couldn't have told the difference."

A quiver went through her. She turned on her high heel and almost ran away out of the building, her heels clicking furiously. She had really nice legs, I saw. She held her head high, I saw when she turned in profile. She wouldn't have reminded me of Tim now that she had had that plastic surgery she mentioned. I could see that I had said something wrong again but I didn't know what.

I thought I had been paying her a compliment. But even in that Tim Lindemann was just like a woman. She was slighted by whatever I said and would never be able to figure out, just like a real woman. Well, Timmy ought to be pleased when I told him so when I kissed him again.

VI. JENNIFER'S BEAU

Well, we made Bachelor Suite. It was in the theatres, though, as *The In-House Murder*. I wasn't the star of it, nor was Jennifer. But we did have important parts and I thought she

was stunning in the black, lacy teddies she wore. She was so sexy the way she poured herself onto me. It's the only way I can think of to express how she enticed her 'dear, old daddy' back to bed. I'm surprised we didn't get an X rating for that picture. Maybe her daddy bought off the censors.

It was very easy for me to be passionate with her on the film set. Many men told me how much they envied me and tried to hit on Jennifer for real. I encouraged her to take some of them up on their offers but she looked so upset and so wounded that I stopped saying it.

Jennifer picked me up in her car each day, always nervous when I got in her car, leaning over to give her a little kiss on the cheek to start the ride off well. I had moved then to a dump just off Miller. Others saw it and soon it got around that Jennifer Sterling was my girl. I couldn't get a date to save my life. The other girls on the set told every new starlet that I was Jennifer's beau.

I had treated her right out of force of habit. I held her chair for her. I kept a seat for her beside mine in the cafeteria. I walked her between sets and gave her light kisses, on the cheek when we parted. I even put my arm about her off the set. After Jennifer stopped shivering at so much male attention that she wasn't used to at all, she finally didn't whisper to me to stop and let me casually put my arm about her, reinforcing what everyone thought about us. We never kissed off the set though.

On the set, it was a different matter. Jennifer was my wife, my loving, doting wife and so I treated her like that. I held her and hugged her and squeezed her as if she was my girl. She knew I was acting and tried to be just as affectionate and casual about touching me as well.

I think our kissing scenes were natural but, boy, did they ever take up a lot of time. I really liked it as well. When I kissed Jennifer, it was like kissing my wife. She responded to me after the first few takes as if we were husband and wife and so we pulled it off. Watch the film. Forget that I'm the murderer masquerading as a doctor. Just look at the two of us. Have you ever seen a more affectionate couple enjoying themselves? We could really have been married.

I really missed her when the film was over but Jennifer was whisked away by Joseph Mann to work on Sands of Time for Oriental. She didn't even have time to attend the windup party. I couldn't begrudge her, however. If you don't know, it was her big break. She played opposite Gary Knight and the love scenes she had with him were just fantastic, more so than the ones she had had with me. I was insanely jealous of him when I saw the pic at the old Adelphi on Brooklyn Avenue. I wanted to have made it with her, held her as Gary did, squeeze her like he did while she looked at me in that welcoming fashion.

How I laughed at myself after I had a few snorts at Dunbar's after I saw the flick. I had forgotten entirely by then that Jennifer Sterling was not a woman. How could I have been so stupid, I said to myself a thousand times. I knew the answer. She had become one of the

most enticing women I had ever known by the end of Bachelor In-House Whatever. I regretted that I hadn't told her so and I knew that I should have told her that I wanted to keep on seeing her.

I got stalled then for a little while. I guess it was because Jennifer and her father were no longer taking an interest in my career. Perhaps she'd got what she wanted from me. Abe Moss had to go to work and start to earn his agent fees. Jennifer Sterling had a run of success then, three big films, well, biggish, though no-one remembers them today, while I labored on as the mad scientist, the mad artist, etcetera. I won't bore you with details. Enough hacks have already.

Then Abe asked me to read this World War Two spy story script. Ho hum, I thought. Now I would be a mad spy or a foaming at the mouth Nazi. I stuck it away and, if Carla hadn't ditched me at the last moment, when I was out at Abe's beach house chasing some starlet whose name I can't remember now, I probably wouldn't have read for the movie that changed my life.

It was a great script. It was a romance, really, heightened by the war, the danger, the ugliness we'd all lived through in the revelations since the war. The male lead part was going to have to be a little bit of a chameleon as he presented himself as one thing to the Nazis, another to the girl he used as his courier and mistress, marrying her just before the Gestapo took her, and having to choose between her and his duty as a spy when he finally finds her in a concentration camp.

I got excited reading it and called Abe to check and see if I had a shot at getting the part. I had no idea what the studio was that was going to make the movie, nor did I hear anything about the director. But I recognized a great script when I read it. That has turned out to be one of my strengths as an actor.

Abe was glad I liked the script. The way he talked you'd have thought that he had written it himself. "I think we got an in, kid," he said. He always talked to me as if he was acting in a movie himself. "Joseph Mann is producing and you've worked a lot for him. I know they're after a bankable actor but they got Jennifer Sterling for the girl, so I hear. You and her were pretty good in that murder film, weren't you?"

Jennifer Sterling. Why, oh why, did our paths have to cross again? Just when I thought I was out of all that, that subterfuge I had engaged in, I was drawn back in. Oh, but I did want that part. Even more when I heard that Peter Greaves was going to direct it. He was moving up. I loved all his films. Even his first B movies were taut and superbly cut. I'd already marked him in my own mind as going to be one director I really wanted to work for.

"Sorry, Lee," said Abe when he called me the next day. "They want a bankable actor in the lead. I said what about a part as the Gestapo investigator. They already got some German ready for that part. But, hey, I can get you a name before the title in Born in the Sad-

dle. Western's remaking it and they'll probably change the title." He rattled on but, frankly, I wasn't interested.

I wanted the lead in *Evening of the Third Reich*. Again, that was the original title. It was *Evening in Berlin* when it hit the screen and it made me leading man material. But before that, I had to get the part in that movie. I decided to track down Jennifer Sterling. Yeah, I had sworn that I would never blackmail her about what she was. But she was my old wartime buddy, wasn't she, I reasoned. I knew that I had helped her out with all the kissing she had practised on me. Well, one good turn deserved another, didn't it? I still had a few good kisses in me that we hadn't tried yet. I think she would like them if I could get close enough to her to try her out again.

It wasn't easy. She didn't go out. She had no known close friends. Then I thought of her daddy, Joseph Mann. It took a little work to get his home number. I checked his public schedule and waited until I saw him leave for an evening meeting. Then I called his home number and asked if I could speak to Jennifer.

"Who is this calling?" snapped the woman who answered. I could imagine a housekeeper, older, rigid, protective of the family.

"I have a message for her from her father," I said as pleasantly as I could. "Could you bring her to the phone?"

There was a short silence. "What do you want, Lee?" Jennifer asked warily in her own voice and I realized she had fooled me with a put-on voice. "Haven't I done enough for you and your career already?"

I was taken aback. "You have," I replied. I was about to lie and say to her all the things I would say to any woman about missing them and wanting to see them again. I thought about suggesting that we get together and practise on the couch again. No, not that, I decided. I told her I had missed her. Women usually fell for it and I had a date. "Look," I finally said into the silence that told me that that technique wasn't going to work that time. "Abe Moss somehow got a script for the *Third Reich* movie you are making. He thought that your father would cast me as he has used me before. I loved the script and the whole idea of the movie. I want the Ross part in it."

There was more silence for a while. "I can't do that, Lee," Jennifer said, and I could imagine her biting her lower lip. I could hear the tremble in her voice as well. "This isn't one of the pulp movies that Daddy's churned out in the last few years to keep our head above water. This is a proper film, the big one, for him to put himself back on top where he belongs."

Funny but I had never questioned what a big name producer like Joseph Mann was doing making cowboy B movies before. But I wanted this movie for what I knew it would mean for me. "I want this movie," I said slowly to her. "Can we meet and talk about it? I can pick you up in an hour."

"You don't know where I live," she said.

"With Daddy," I answered, treating it like a question. "I can pick you up in twenty minutes."

Again there was a pause. "I won't change my mind," Jennifer said slowly and distinctly.

"I don't care," I said, trying to mean it but not succeeding, I'm sure. "I actually do want to see you again and the movie makes a convenient excuse." Did I really mean that, the way it came out? "Besides," I said. "I owe you a drink. The last one I bought you got spilled somehow over some very rude and insensitive idiot."

Jennifer didn't say anything for a moment. "Is he likely to be there again?" she asked lightly, a lilt in her voice. I knew then that I had hooked her.

"I killed off the stupid slob," I said. "It will just be me and a hundred acquaintances at the Mirabel."

"Oh, you have to dress to go there," Jennifer said with a gasp. "I, I don't think that I have a thing to wear."

"Just the little black dress," I said to her with a smile that she couldn't see. "All you women have them, don't you?"

Jennifer did another swift intake of breath. I had said something that pleased her, at last, I think. "It will take me an hour to do my makeup," she breathed unsteadily into the phone.

"You girls always wear too much makeup as it is," I said. "Start a new trend. Come out dancing with me without makeup."

Jennifer laughed, a gay, infectious, very feminine laugh. No, I wouldn't tell her again that she sounded real. I knew better than to tell her, but she did. "I would need at least an hour," she said.

"All right," I said quickly. "I'll pick you up in an hour." I hung up fast before she found an excuse not to go out with me.

Then, I rang the Mirabel. They hummed and hahhed about a reservation and then asked me who it was for. "For Lee Otis and Jennifer Sterling," I said.

"Jennifer Sterling, the actress?" asked the guy I was talking to.

"Yes," I said and suddenly he found a table at nine o'clock for us.

I half expected it but Jennifer was there to open the door herself. She looked gorgeous in her fur coat and dark little hat over her shiny blonde hair. I'm sure the cabby's eyes were bulging out of his head as he ogled her from the front window of his vehicle.

"Wow," I said, reaching out and taking her black-gloved hand. I leaned forward to give her a kiss of greeting and Jennifer let me kiss her soft cheek. She smelled as wonderfully feminine as I remembered, like a rose.

"Are you ever a sight for sore eyes?" I murmured and she smiled. But she was very nervous all the same. I could see it in the way she looked at me, having to look away quickly if I looked at her. Jennifer got into the cab gracefully and in a most natural female manner. I tucked her arm under mine and felt her tense but she didn't object.

She had beautiful legs, her stockings sheer and silky. It was a pleasure to hear her cross her legs. Whoa, boy, I thought. Don't start thinking that way or the next thing you know, you'll be in her panties. Hmm, that doesn't sound right, does it? I'd be tearing her panties off her. Does that sound better? Well, I couldn't think that I'd be in his panties, now could I?

Jennifer was quiet for the cab ride and I was also thinking a lot. I hardly talk when I'm thinking. And I was thinking that I had forgotten how beautiful she was. I had forgotten how feminine, how female really, that she was. I didn't know how I was going to tell her that but I really wanted to.

"The Mirabel," Jennifer said with a demure smile when we pulled up under its canopy. "I've heard of this place but I've never been here."

I wasn't surprised to hear her say that. "What was the last time you were out on a date?" I asked her lightly.

Jennifer's face froze as she looked at me. I put my arm under hers. "That's what I thought," I said, trying to give her an easy smile. I wanted her to smile at me. I wanted her to like me. The movie part was riding on how charming I could be to my former air force buddy. "A girl who looks as gorgeous as you has to learn to go out and have fun. As a girl."

Jennifer chose to smile timidly. "I, I do go out," she said nervously.

"Shopping?" I asked, guiding her into the dark interior. "Suppers with Daddy?"

"He doesn't like to go out," Jennifer said defensively as she surrendered her fur coat to the delight of the hat check girl.

She wore a little black dress that was a knock out. Jennifer had always had slender shoulders and the spaghetti thin straps that held up the deep plunge of her neckline

showed her off to advantage. She removed her hat and gloves as the maitre d' fawned over her and we got a very nice table in front, near the cabaret and dance floor.

The maitre d' asked if we minded if he took our pictures, all the time looking at Jennifer, wanting her picture, I'm sure, to display on his celebrity wall. She blushed very prettily as a photographer with one of those big, boxy, concertina like things came over and used his flash and took her picture twice.

With a figure like hers and such a gorgeous face, I'd have taken her picture a hundred times. She blushed even after the camera jockey went away.

"I feel like everyone is staring at me," Jennifer said then, crossing her legs and leaning towards me to speak quietly and only to me.

"They probably are," I said with a little smile. "They haven't seen such a beautiful woman as you before. I can tell you that every guy in this place is jealous of me."

"Please, Lee," Jennifer said, blushing more and biting at her red, painted mouth. "You, you know. You don't have to say such things."

"Not unless I mean them," I said. And surprisingly, I did mean them. I loved it as well as she blushed at compliments. Most girls I took out now expected them and paid them no mind. "You'll have to get used to them. Any man who takes you out is going to want to whisper sweet words into your lovely ears."

Her hand flew up to her earrings, long and dangling, as if she could stop such words of praise for her as a woman.

I asked Jennifer what she would like to drink this time and wasn't surprised when she chose dry, white wine. I had a whiskey sour at which she smiled but didn't say that she couldn't have one of her favorites from England, not now she was a woman. There was a little jazz combo playing at the end of the floor, just a trio but it looked like they would be augmented later. A few couples were dancing.

"Would you like to dance?" I asked her.

Jennifer glanced fearfully at the floor. "Not enough people," she said, just as two tables of couples stood up and moved out.

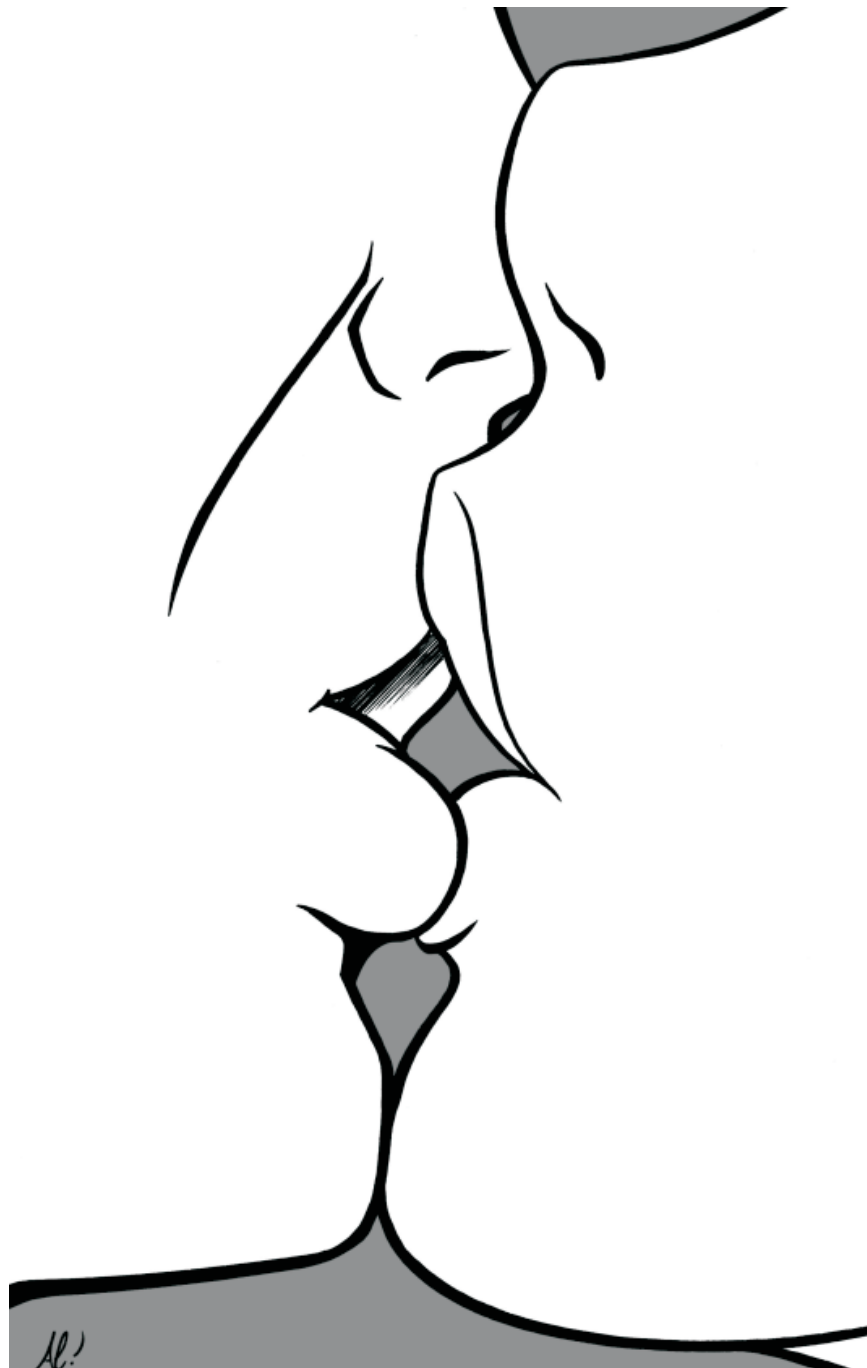
"Now there's no room," I said, standing and taking her hand.

Jennifer couldn't do anything else but come with me onto the floor. She held me rigidly first until she realized that we fitted together easily, my little twirls finding her anticipating me in her high heels. I could never have danced backwards in high heels and with a dress flaring out when my partner twirled me. I told her so.

"How do you do it so well?" I asked.

Jennifer gave me her first genuine smile of the night. "Years of practise," she said lightly and I almost felt her relax then in my arms.

I quickly forgot that Jennifer was what she was. I held her as I would have any girl and it became a real date. We danced, we drank, we went hand in hand to our table, we applauded the singers and laughed at the comics, danced some more and Jennifer relaxed so much that she was even putting her head on my shoulder as we did a slow, dreamy waltz to the octet that had grown from the earlier jazz trio.



Around one o'clock, she yawned and asked me if I could take her home. In the cab, I put my arm about her and let Jennifer cuddle up to me. I just held her against me as I would any sleepy woman. She didn't object at all as her eyes began to close. I paid off the driver and helped my sleepy date out of the car.

"That was your ride just going," Jennifer said in alarm as I escorted her gently to her front door. "You should have got him to wait. They don't come out here usually this late on a weekday night unless they get a huge tip up front."

"Well, maybe I didn't want him around," I said. "I didn't want him watching me."

"Watching you?" Jennifer asked, her slender eyebrows showing the question. "What didn't you want him to see?"

"This," I said. I hadn't planned it. I had just

thought I would take her out, entertain her, tweak her conscience a bit, and maybe even try a little bit of blackmail. I am so glad I didn't, particularly the last part.

I kissed her. I kissed those beautifully painted lips that had been tantalizing me since the first moment I had seen her in her doorway. I slipped my hands inside her coat and hugged her to me and kissed her hard.

"Oh my," Jennifer gasped after a little while, turning away to breathe, I think. She turned into me then, leaning a little unsteadily against me, her eyes still closed as she pursed her lips and we kissed again. I say 'we' because this time she opened her mouth to me and kissed me back, her head moving restlessly as I pressed myself into her. We kissed again and again until she broke free a little, gasping heavily, her whole body heaving as if in distress. I kissed her scented neck and she moaned and held onto my arms with hers.

"I, I don't know what to do now," Jennifer said unsteadily as I held onto her and kissed her cheek gently, then her hair and her jewelled ear.

"You invite me in for coffee," I murmured in her ear. "You could offer me dessert but I think I have had enough of that here outside."

She actually smiled at such a corny line. "Would you like coffee?" Jennifer asked me nervously. We had turned it down at Mirabel.

"I thought you would never ask," I said, taking the key she had held in her hand all of that time and opening her door for her.

It was a richly furnished, old-fashioned house. It had a feeling of enormity to it, doors and passages and stairs going off every which way from the foyer and main living room.

"Daddy?" I asked quietly.

"Goes to bed with a sleeping pill," Jennifer said uncertainly as she put her coat away carefully in a closet. "Otherwise, he says he stays awake dreaming of Germany in the Twenties and early Thirties."

"You were born there?" I asked.

Jennifer nodded. "My mother didn't get out. Daddy said she would come some day but she never did." She turned away hurriedly. Her heels clicked on the wooden, parquet floor. "I'll make the coffee."

I followed her under an archway into a huge kitchen and watched her set up the coffee. I could see that Jennifer still didn't know what to do with a man in her kitchen and so I went over to her and put my arms about her waist. She stiffened as I kissed her, her arms keeping me a little way from her.

"Do you want me to tell you what to do now?" I asked softly as I kissed her soft cheek, her mouth very stiff and closed to me.

"Oh yes," Jennifer said and blushed again.

"You push me away," I said. "You say something like, 'Down, Romeo. Go and sit on the sofa and see what is on TV and I'll bring you your coffee'."

I tried to kiss her again and Jennifer repeated what I said, word for word. It made her smile when I let her go and went off to sit in the living room.

She brought me coffee on a tray, serving me in her two-handed, feminine style. She took her own cup and looked about the room.

"Uh uh," I said. "Don't even think about going to sit somewhere else." I patted the sofa beside me. "All dates end here."

Jennifer just stared at me and so I put up my hand, took hers and guided her to sit beside me.

"We spoon a little after the coffee," I said to the beautiful girl sitting so warily beside me. "And you decide how far you are going to let me go."

"Not far," Jennifer whispered quickly, taking a sip of her coffee, her dress spread out and partly over me. I smiled at her and she blushed again.

"You look so pretty sitting beside me," I murmured to her. She nervously re-crossed her legs. "I love hearing the sound of a woman's dress moving and her stockings sliding one over the other, don't you?" I asked her in a very quiet voice. I waited and she gave me a quick, little nod, looking as uncomfortable as she always did at receiving compliments that weren't in the script.

"Then when you have had enough pleasure, you tell me it's time I went and you get up, pull me to my feet, and push me over to the phone, calling the cab company for me if I try to pretend I'm too sleepy to go."

Jennifer smiled tentatively at me. "You've done this before," she said. "You've done it many times, I think."

"But never with a girl like you," I whispered to her, not trying to move in on her as I would have had to be doing with Carla if I was still going out with her. "Never with one so beautiful and never with such a quick learner."

Her dimple showed as Jennifer smiled at me, holding on to her coffee cup tightly. "The phone is there," she said softly, pointing past me. I loved how red and gleaming her feminine nails were.

I reached over and took her cup from her and put it with mine on the tray. "First," I said. "You are entitled to your pleasures." I put my arm about her as she flinched. She was uncertain what to do. I think she might have wanted to push me away as I kissed her. "You can tell me when any time after five minutes," I said softly as I gently released her sticky, trembling lips from mine.

"What, what's so magic about five minutes?" she asked jerkily as I moved closer to her and stroked the soft arms she was using to hold me off, my lips working along her cheek to her neck.

"It's a guaranteed minimum," I murmured into her lovely, jewelled ear. "If he can't pleasure your lips for five minutes, dump him."

Then there was no time for talk as I got my arm around her and, as we kissed, Jennifer slowly put her arms about me, about my waist and then about my neck. When she had to breathe, I kissed her rounded chest where I could reach, her bare skin so fragrant and soft to my lips. She reacted by holding to me even tighter. I kissed her neck, her lips, her face and she clung to me, pleasuring me as much as her girliness was pleased by me.

I hadn't meant to go so far but Jennifer didn't say 'when' as I gently stroked her leg and then slid my hand up her dress. She clamped my hand with her thighs as I gently stroked them and she twisted and wriggled as her mouth was on fire. She was kissing me strongly, her breathing intense.

With my hand behind her back, I undid the zipper on her dress. I thought she would stop me for sure but she sort of whimpered and pulled my head down onto her, our kisses intensifying. I thought Jennifer's padding would come loose then and it would be over as we sort of laughed about how far we had gone.

She was not padded. I slipped down the straps of her dress and easily opened her bra. She had real breasts. My old armed forces buddy had real breasts and when I caressed them, my old armed forces buddy became frantic, clinging to my hands and directing me to caress her hard, engorged nipples which seemed to bring her immense amounts of pleasure.

I began to slip off Rosemary's dress and her bra. "N-No," she whispered as I pushed her dress from her and looked down on her lovely figure. She had perfect women's breasts, not heavy, but not small. When I kissed them, she went through spasms of emotion and I thought she would throw me right off the sofa.

I ran my hands down her body over her hips and Jennifer shuddered but I was able to recognize the signs. Those were shudders of pleasure. I had seen them on so many women I had loved since I had come out to California. I must say that I was enjoying myself, too. I was getting a real thrill out of caressing her shapely breasts and her wide hips and then her soft, feminine legs. What wide, soft, hips she had. No padding anywhere. I was so wrong about her. She was probably a girl and I had been conned into thinking she wasn't.

I touched her panties and she went wild, wriggling and wriggling to get away from me. We fell on the floor and since I had hold of her panties and they came down. I was wrong again in thinking she might be a girl. She wasn't. She was as much a man as I was.

Now I suppose I should have stopped there, having exposed and embarrassed the lovely girl enough. I didn't. Not me. I suppose I could use the excuse that I was aroused and I just couldn't stop. I could have. Perhaps I should have. But I didn't want to. No, I didn't want to stop at all.

Jennifer Sterling was a gorgeous babe and I've had so many before in a lot of different ways, "I'm sorry, baby, I have the rag on", or "I don't want to get pregnant. So, I'll do anything, suck anything of yours, but I don't want to be penetrated." Those excuses were common. I'd heard them all and learned to overcome or get my pleasures in other ways. I looked down at the shivering Jennifer, clinging to me so femininely, not knowing at all what to do with me, and knew I could get off with her. I didn't think at all about whether she could get off with me.

Jennifer buried her head in my shoulder and was crying as I touched her between her legs. It took her a few moments to realize that I was still caressing her. I kissed her again and let my tongue do its work. I slipped out of my shirt and pants and it was incredible how skin to skin with a soft, mobile woman can feel. She seemed to love it, too, though she shivered all the time, her hands urging me to stop and then not to stop as I caressed her garter belt and stockings. Within a minute, she was under me again like any woman.

Jennifer didn't know what to do, and so I showed her. I lifted her legs up about my waist and lubricated her with my emissions as she squirmed. She didn't object as I stroked her. She only held me tighter. She looked up at me with frightened eyes as I began to enter her. Then she gasped and her painted eyes got larger and larger as I made her shapely tush wiggle under me.

She must have thought about it. She went very still and held my arms tightly but she didn't try to push me off her. Jennifer didn't try to lower her legs or get me to stop caressing her thighs. I leaned over and kissed her breasts and she jerked, her hair flying from side to side on the cushion I pushed under her head. She took hold of my head frantically, holding my body against hers, quivering and shaking as I gently penetrated her derriere.

I pushed very lightly but insisted. When I began to ride her, moving like a piston, she squealed and hung onto me, kissing and kissing me as I penetrated her more and more and finally spent my first throes of passion inside her.

Jennifer was crying and kissing me at the same time as I came, filling her, making a mess of her, stroking her firmly wherever I wanted, kissing her wherever I wanted and she encouraged me with her hands to do whatever I liked to her.

Then she said something no other woman has ever said to me. "Thank you, thank you, thank you, Lee," she said, her arms about me, caressing me as well, her breasts still so tense against my chest. "Oh, thank you so much, Lee."

Later, she told me that when I came inside her, Jennifer felt like she was a woman taking her man inside her. She felt she was my woman and she knew then that she loved me and there would never be any other man in the world for her but me. I made her feel that she was a woman. Everything I did delighted her as she guessed I had done it all with real women some time before I did it to her. And Jennifer loved me for it, for doing her that way, for giving her such intense pleasure.

She clung to me and I clung to her, spent, but not completely finished. Her little manhood was tight too and against me. I picked up her silk panties and slowly began to stroke her there. Jennifer whimpered then and her hands closed on mine, wanting me to stop and not to stop, I guessed. I kissed her breasts and she gingerly took her hands away and put them about my neck, her eyes closed in ecstasy. I got harder myself again. She writhed but I had her pinned. My free hand caressed her breasts and she took that hand in hers and kissed me.

Jennifer came with a shriek as I exhausted myself again inside her as she reacted to my caressing her first gently and then strongly. She came and ruined her pretty panties and then we just lay together trembling. Only then, both of us spent did we have time to think about what we had done, the implications beginning to penetrate each of our blown-out minds.

VII. MY GIRL FRIEND

I couldn't leave Jennifer in the state she was in. She was naked save for her garter belt and stockings and crying in a mess of our clothes. I tried to comfort her but guilt and shame seemed to overwhelm her.

"What did we do?" I heard her murmur.

She started to say things to herself, the nicest being, 'stupid idiot'. It was so far from the thank-yous of our earlier lovemaking that I couldn't believe it. Then I realized the difference. I had touched her maleness. I had aroused her in a way she did not want, did not expect, or perhaps denied she could be aroused.

Jennifer still looked really good to me, despite her mussed up makeup. Her body was gorgeously female except for what was between her legs which she pressed on anxiously, looking at me with frantic eyes as she tried to cover her maleness with her dress.

"Where is your bedroom?" I asked her gently. Her hair cascaded wildly about her face as she wiggled and looked up at me, her anxiety clear on her face. "We need to get you

cleaned up," I added as gently as I could. "We need to get you some makeup remover and we need to get you to bed."

Jennifer shuddered and nodded. I stood, naked as jaybird and she looked at me up and down, her mouth open and quivering as the shakes took over. She must have been a virgin, I thought. Certainly, she was a virgin with a man. It was my maleness she was looking at, I knew that. Then there was the contrast between our bodies, hers so female, so curvy, so soft, and mine so blocky and muscular.

I picked up a bundle of clothes, hers and mine. "Lead the way," I said.

Jennifer got up and tentatively started to go to the stairs. It was intriguing, no, it was stimulating to see her feminized, naked body move, how her breasts moved naturally, how her stockings and garter belt claimed my attention, demanding to be caressed. She danced up the stairs like a ballerina, scurrying along a dark hallway and into a dimly lit room.

Jennifer was still trying to hide her maleness but then she saw how I was carrying her dress and she had to rescue it. I tossed my clothes onto a soft, padded chair and eased the door shut as she went into her bathroom. It was all in pink. As I half expected, there was a nightdress under her pillow which I got for her. Somewhere she had found clean panties and put them on. She looked womanly and strikingly attractive as she creamed her face and then began to wipe away her makeup with tissues.

Her hair had come loose of all barrettes and pins and was a ruffled mess. She looked gorgeous as she then undid her garter belt and began to take the stockings off her so smooth legs. It was so sensual, so female, a gesture that I found myself getting aroused again. Jennifer glanced over at me, trembling again with nervousness, and her beautiful, makeup-free face creased in alarm as she saw that I was still naked and that I was bigger in one certain space.

"You should get dressed," Jennifer whispered hoarsely and so I guessed that Daddy was nearby.

I held out her nightdress, frills about the neckline and arms. It was light and silky and probably transparent. Jennifer put it on quickly and it was largely transparent. I could see her breasts, how firm and high they were, her nipples still very large and hard by the look of it.

Jennifer came cautiously out of her bathroom in her lovely nightie and panties. She couldn't avoid me or the huge erection I was getting just looking at her and her rampant breasts. I put my arm up to hold her. "Please," she said, close to tears. "Please leave me alone, Lee. I don't know what came over me. I'm never going to do that again, ever. I am not, not, not."

"Then you've learned entirely the wrong lesson from tonight," I murmured, sitting on her bed. Jennifer didn't know what to do with a naked man in her room. She went over to

her vanity and picked up her hairbrush and began to brush out her hair. She twisted it then into little bunches behind her ears and used rubber bands to secure them. It made her, without makeup, look like a teenaged girl.

"I'll never do that again," Jennifer repeated slowly. "I won't." She hunched over almost rocking on the commode, on the softly padded seat she sat on, away from me. She looked at me most fearfully then but the one thing that she didn't say to me gave me every indication that she didn't mean everything she was saying. The one thing she wasn't saying to me was that I should leave.

I pulled back the covers on her bed and rolled in.

"What are you doing?" Jennifer gasped as I reached up to the light switch next to her dolls and tried to flick off the already dim lights.

"I'm not going," I said firmly. "Not with you in the state you're in. So get into bed with me and let's talk. You are not going to turn one of the best nights in your life into one of the worst." The shocked look on her face really deserved to be preserved in a photo. Jennifer didn't want to get into bed and yet she looked as if she didn't not want to, either.

I got the light out and lay back. Her bed was soft and warm. It took her a few minutes. She asked me to leave then several times but I ignored her as I had been the one to put that idea in her head. I don't know why I was being so contrary, and with a queen of some sort too, not even a woman. But I had enjoyed exploring her body and I think she had enjoyed exploring mine. I told her so and there was deafening silence from her part of the room.

"So there was something you enjoyed," I said calmly into the darkness. "And there was something I did that you hadn't expected. It made you feel all this guilt and stuff. I wouldn't leave any girl in distress after that. So you can get into bed. You are in your nightie and it's not coming off. But if you don't see that you've found out so much about yourself as a woman, you must be blind."

I think the cold drove her to get into bed. She tried to stay well away from me.

"I'm the first man ever in your room," I said and Jennifer murmured, "Yes."

"I'm the first man in your bed," I said softly. "I like that."

I reached over and touched her gently. She was shaking. I lifted her hand to my mouth and kissed her feminized fingers. "Now after a man and a woman have made love," I whispered to her, loving the fragrance of her and the softness of the silk and the skin that I touched as I ran my arm about her. "Let's pretend we did it here, slowly and properly, a man and a woman. So now we begin the cooling down process. We kiss the parts we can reach, like hands. We move together because we are exhausted and big movements are too much trouble."

Yes, I said a lot of rubbish. I don't know why but I did want to console her. I wanted her in my arms again as if she was a woman. I don't know why but, like our kissing, making love to her wasn't the terrible experience that I had once thought that it would have to be.

"Was this your first sexual experience?" I asked Jennifer softly, stroking her arm.

It took her a while to answer from the darkness. "Yes," she whimpered, finally, trembling at wherever I touched her.

"I thought so," I said. "I have slept with girls before who were virgins and they reacted just like you. One moment, they were euphoric and the next they were swearing off sex forever. Usually, it was because of the pain they felt. It was just like that for you, wasn't it, pain, guilt, shame, wondering what others would think of you if they knew."

"My father," Jennifer whispered, her voice shaking with emotion. "You have to go."

"He never comes in here, I would guess," I whispered back. "I'll go before he gets up but I could stay here till he goes out, couldn't I? He doesn't need to know anything his daughter does."

I moved over beside her and Jennifer stiffened as my body touched her in so many places all at once. She tried to pull back. I found her mouth, though, with mine, and kissed her gently. She was stiff as a board. I withdrew and slid across the bed to my side, so to speak.

"There," I said as gently as I could. "The world didn't come to an end, did it? We kissed and the world went on. We made love and no-one cared but us. Do you want to talk about how wonderful it was or do you want to sleep?"

I could almost hear her thinking about it in the darkness. There was a third option and she took it. No, she didn't kick me out of the bed, so I guess there were four options. She moved a little into the middle of the bed and I felt her beside me, touching my arm with her hands.

"Thank you," Jennifer whispered hoarsely then. "Thank you, Lee, again and again. I thought you'd be running for the door long ago when you found out for certain, you know, that I am really what you knew I was."

"I know you make a gorgeous girl, lovely Jenny," I said. "You really turned me on to-night. Well, if you must know, you did when we kissed for Edwin Bird. Remember that? And then on the movie we were in, seeing you, holding you every day. It was wonderful. I've missed you since."

Strangely, it was true. "I've really missed you, too," Jennifer whispered, just her hand reaching out and brushing my arm before hastily retreating.

There was a little silence after that confession. What else could I do then? I turned to her and she was shivering as I reached my arm across her. I kissed her nose first and then her mouth. I hugged her where I could and kissed her face and her lovely neck. I went very slowly and, when I came back to her mouth, I sensed her eagerness to be kissed. She opened her lips to me and I took it very slowly and gently and enjoyed it greatly. I know she did too.

How do I know she enjoyed the slow kisses and light petting? Well, she cuddled up to after a time and let her bare legs rest against mine. Then her arms came about me and she let me put my arms about her. I kissed her gently and she tentatively tried a kiss to my lips. I lay back and let her explore. My quietness turned her on.

She warmed to the slight touch on the outside of her breast and caressed my hand slowly as I caressed her. We were both waking up. "Would you like to be a woman again?" I whispered, my lips brushing hers delicately. I felt her nodding to me. It was much slower than before. I tried to be as gentle as possible and finally she could not contain her arousal.

She showed me that she liked the way we had done it the first time. I used the pillows on her bed to lift her to me and so we kissed and kissed, her breasts rising and pressing so fantastically into me as she wrapped her beautiful sensitive legs about me and I penetrated her one more time. We stayed wrapped up together after I came and then she was shivering, too, and I had to hold her as well. I was holding onto her in concern that her depression might return.

"It, it's all right," Jennifer said through chattering teeth as she hugged me so hard that I thought she was trying to make herself a part of me. "It's just the way it makes me feel. Is this what they call an orgasm? I hope it is because I love it. I love the way you are making me feel. I want it to go on forever."

Well, it was one of the longest lovemaking sessions I've ever had and I enjoyed every second of it as well. I didn't care if Jennifer wasn't one hundred per cent female. She was enough female for me. I slipped off drowsily to sleep unaware how or when we separated. I know she was as naked as I was when I awoke, light pouring into her bedroom windows and her asleep but holding onto me as if she would never let me go again.

VIII. KING OF THE ONE NIGHT STANDS

The thumping was her father on the door. Jennifer shot up and looked down groggily at me. Terror, horror, crossed her face as she realized who I was and where I was.

"Yes, Daddy," she called fervently to the thumping. "Don't come in. I don't have any clothes on."

It was the picture in the paper that had driven Joseph Mann to Jennifer's room to demand her explanation. It was a picture of her and I in the Mirabel, she smiling at the camera and showing off her fantastic cleavage which I could now testify was as real as it looked.

I stayed in her bathroom as she put on nightie and a negligee and went down to explain to her angry father just what she had been doing with a blackmailer like me. I stayed in her bathroom and, yes, I did get dressed. I even made her bed and tidied up the room. I'm sure it was usually spotless. Under the cold light of day, it was a perfectly beautiful, young girl's room, with dolls on most shelves, everything in pink and makeup or feminine lotions everywhere.

I spied on her through the door crack of the bathroom as Jennifer came in hurriedly. She stopped when she saw the bed. Her unadorned face looked somewhat regretful as if she expected me to be still laying there. After she closed the outer door, I opened the bathroom door and she gasped.

"I thought you'd gone," she said, a little smile of relief on her face.

I went up to her and put my arms about her slim waist. The silky negligee raised a lot of unwelcome thoughts as I stared down into her lovely face.

"I couldn't just walk out, could I?" I asked. "Don't you have other people who work here, a housekeeper, a chauffeur or something?"

She nodded. "Yes," she said, flushing as I held her and looked down at her lovely, unbound hair and breasts. "Oh, thank you for thinking of that. Anna goes out shopping soon with Hilton, her husband. He's the chauffeur. I have to give them my list. Daddy has a meeting with Peter Greaves and his bankers this morning and Hilton is going to drop them both off. Then we'll be alone."

A thought seemed to cross her mind as she stopped. Her eyes glanced at the bed and she began to blush. I leaned forward and gave her a kiss. Yes, it was still there, the strange attraction between us. I could feel it stoking up. But I had some work to do, too, and so I had to break it off.

"I have to meet with Abe today," I whispered in her ear as I felt her trembling against me.

"Yes," Jennifer said with a shaky giggle. "The King of the One Night Stands."

"What?" I gasped, holding her a little away from me.

"Oh," she said, biting her lip again. "I shouldn't have said that, should I?"

"King of the One Night Stands?" I asked.

"It's what the girls call you when we get together," Jennifer said, a pink flush to her face, her thick eyelashes downcast. "You have been out with a lot of them, for one night."

"And you think that's what I am doing with you?" I said. Well I had intended that, even as I waited in the bathroom. "You know we are going to see each other again, don't you?"

"We are?" Jennifer asked, her beautiful blue eyes fringed with black, curly lashes opening wide as she looked up at me so femininely.

"My reputation is much exaggerated," I said haughtily. "I don't sleep with just anyone, you know. And when I enjoy the main course, I always go back for seconds," I kissed her lightly on her pink, fresh lips, "and thirds." I kissed her again. On the fourth, she put her arms about my neck and held on and we kissed very ardently. I felt her breasts against me as I hugged her, too.

I showed unbelievable restraint in not taking her there in her room. It was even harder to watch her dress and get ready as a woman for her day. There wasn't a hint of manliness about her as she prepared her bath, bathed, giggling when I held on to her towel and so saw that her body was as naturally female as I had seen it under the dim lights the night before, save for the obvious 'mistake'.

Watching her make up and put on her nylons and garter belt and then her bra was real torture. I would have broken down as she was hunting for a skirt and blouse. I kissed her shoulder, near her white bra strap, loving her fragrance. "Not now I've done my makeup," she pouted, stroking my hands about my waist, caressing my face with her hair. "You should have started before I began to put my face on."

"And you would have let me make love to you again. In your own bed, with your father up and moving about?" I asked, squeezing her.

"Yes," Jennifer whispered and turned to me, eagerly messing up her lipstick so much that, later she had to do it all again.

"Let's go down to the beach tonight," I said. "There are motels in Malibu."

"Don't they know your face?" Jennifer asked, cuddling up to me. "They recognized us both in the Mirabel last night." I didn't enlighten her that it was she who had been recognized. I was an afterthought. "We could come back here," she said nervously as if she couldn't believe what she was saying, "if you promise to be gone by eight when the Hiltons get here."

"All right," I said and Jennifer sighed. She was blushing again as she raised her head for another kiss. "You have a date," I said lightly.

Jennifer stiffened at that and then began to smile. "I do, don't I?" she said in wonder as if it was something that she had never expected to happen to her. I liked that. I liked being her first boy friend.

"Now you do anything a woman does," I whispered to her between kisses. "I expect a bikini tonight."

Her kissing ended in a fit of giggles. I could sense Jennifer's pleasure as she hugged me. It was hard to leave her but to tell the truth I was starving. She made sure everyone had left and then gave me a ride in her car to Abe Moss's office. I promised to be at her house by five.

"Don't forget the bikini," were my last words called to her. Jennifer was smiling in delight but pointed to something over my shoulder and I turned to meet Abe, who had come out of his office.

"That was Jennifer Sterling, wasn't it?" Abe said as I greeted him.

I nodded. "Yes, it was Jennifer," I agreed.

"You were at the Mirabel with her last night," Abe said slowly, speculatively. "You have an interesting way of securing film roles for yourself."

I wanted to sock him but he was an old man. "We did not discuss it at the Mirabel, nor on the ride she gave me today into town," I said icily. That was true. I didn't mention the first phone call.

"You're going to see her again," said Abe slowly as we walked into his office. "You two are an item now."

"Jennifer's an old girl friend," I said tightly. "We've worked on a few films together."

"Hmm," said Abe, looking at me speculatively. "You know Jennifer Sterling is Joseph Mann's daughter, don't you? And Joseph Mann is producing this Third Reich movie? The interest you have suddenly developed in this girl has nothing to do with that, of course."

I was flabbergasted that he had seen through me so easily. It was what I had intended, I suppose. I had intended to get to her one way or another. I just hadn't realized how out of control both of us would get.

"Joseph Mann is an interesting person," said Abe Moss slowly. "Lots of people think he must have lost it all to start producing all those little pictures he did for Western. But he never lost it. He took those on to groom his daughter for stardom. He dotes on her. He'd kill anyone who hurt her. Mark my words, young cowboy. Hurt Jennifer Sterling and you make Joseph Mann your implacable enemy and he has friends, friends you would not want to know about."

"Joseph Mann produces B movies," I said stupidly. "This is a chance for him to get back in the big time, Jennifer told me."

"Ah, so you have discussed it," said Abe with a smile of satisfaction. "That is a fiction that he has sold to her. Joseph Mann has access to sources no one else has. He can make any movie in this town or out of it that he wants. He can have any director he wants. What he wants is to give his daughter what she wants. But he does it cleverly. He lets her earn her way up in roles she can handle. Now she is ready to be a leading lady, he finds her the right scripts, the right director, the right star to play opposite her. I can tell you that he doesn't want you in this movie he's producing for her. Peter Greaves told me so."

I sighed. "Well," I said, guessing that I was beaten. "I guess it's back to Western's offer."

Abe nodded. "I'm trying to get them to sweeten the deal," he said. "I told them there's interest in you across the street and your picture in the paper will help. Where are you taking Jennifer tonight? A picture of her in a bikini with you as background could make them a little nervous that we're going to move on."

"Just the beach," I said vaguely. "I didn't plan that Mirabel picture. Henny just said he wanted it for his celebrity wall."

Abe grinned. "If I have heard that once," he quoted. "That's what he says. What he wants is a picture that mentions his club and that the papers will love to print. And you have to admit, Jennifer Sterling has become quite a looker."

He should have seen her with her clothes off.

A picture of Jennifer in her black bikini would have scorched the newsprint that carried it. I told her what Abe had said and how he was trying to improve my deal with Western.

"You didn't tell him where to find us?" Jennifer asked anxiously as we lay on her huge bath towel and watched the orange sun sink to the horizon. The dunes partly hid us from view up the beach where we had walked hand-in-hand.

"Not at all," I said. "But I wouldn't put it past him to have us stalked. A picture of you in a bikini. Hmm, hmm."

Jennifer smiled coyly. "You like?" she asked prettily and came into my arms without any urging or subterfuge on my part.

"We could make it out here," I said, my shorts bulging as I pressed my male, hairy body against hers.

Jennifer giggled. "I'd like that," she said and I couldn't tell in the light if she was blushing but I expected that she was. "But I liked it in my bed."

Her hands betrayed her nervousness when she made remarks like that. It was as if she didn't trust her femininity. She wouldn't have had lessons in flirting with a man, I supposed. But her naiveté and awakening womanliness was fascinating to watch and listen to.

"Okay," I whispered, feeling her wriggle as I put my arms about her again and stroked her smooth skin. "I'll come back to your bed and let you seduce me again."

Jennifer rolled over on top of me and that was so nice. She began to kiss me, practising seduction, I suppose. Suddenly some kids and a dog ran by. We had been too engrossed to see them.

"What is it?" I heard a woman call as the kids turned and ran off.

"It's a man and a beautiful lady!" yelled back one of the kids, a boy, I think.

"They were kissing, yuck."

We waited a few anxious minutes for Jennifer and then got up to leave. We passed a family a little further down the beach and one kid said, "See, daddy. Isn't she a beautiful lady?"

I felt Jennifer's hand tighten in mine and I looked at her. I'm sure she was blushing but her long, shapely legs, her skimpy bikini top, so amply filled, and her slimness, never mind her face, partially obscured by huge sunglasses, deserved the comment.

"Oh, yes," I heard the father sigh. "That is indeed a beautiful lady. Good eye, son."

Jennifer was nervous and eager in bed. She wanted to be treated only as a woman which I thought a little unfair, as I told her. She must have been able to receive pleasure through her manhood and why shouldn't she? I was willing to stroke her but she didn't want me to. Not then, anyway. She was still getting used to having her female body ravaged by a man, she said anxiously, but she would do anything for me that I wanted. She hardly knew what to do, she said shyly, and she hoped I would teach her.

"What a way to stroke the male ego, Jenny," I laughed at her, cuddling her closer to me and kissing her laughing mouth. Jennifer didn't mind my hands anywhere on her in bed and so it was terrific to be in bed with her. I think I got all the pleasure though, time and again as I taught her positions and tricks on how to be taken sexually by a perverse male, me.

My phone was ringing when I got home sleepily at eight the next morning. It was Abe Moss.

"Get yourself to the Angel Studio this aft at two," he said. "Peter Greaves called me. He wants you to test for Evening of the Third Reich. I told him you'd be there." He sounded miffed as he hung up abruptly.

IX. CO-STARS

So you think Jennifer got the part for me? Well, actually you'd be wrong. I was on a standby list Greaves had of up-and-comers, he said. He wanted a big, bankable star, but Haney hurt his back on that Roman epic and said he had to take a few months off. Jim Greenwood was offered the part, took it, and then backed off to follow Gina Rizzi to Europe and we all know how that turned out.

I was second or third on his B list, Greaves said to me frankly, and they were testing six other actors for the part. I had three scenes in the test, one with his blonde assistant, Heidi, who looked a little like Jennifer but without her great body. It was easy to pretend she was Jennifer. I would never have left her in the camp the way Ross, the so-called hero did. It wasn't hard to show how torn up I would be at such a decision.

There was a quietness after the scene which was broken only when I looked up and Heidi said, "Wow," to her open-mouthed boss.

"Yes," said Peter Greaves, beginning to nod. "You nailed that. I wonder if we can get that intensity on film when we go on location."

Of course, they had to see others and they would call me and let me know.

Abe Moss gave me the bad news the following day. "Greaves wants you but Joseph Mann says no. Peter would like you to call him but they're going to cast Vincent Gardner, I hear."

"I'm very sorry," said Peter Greaves. "Even Mann said that your tests were by far the best. He keeps saying he wants a bankable star. Then Heidi told me you have been seeing Jennifer Sterling. Did you know she is in this movie, too? Did you know she is Mann's daughter?"

"I'm trying not to work on that connection," I said angrily. "I would like to get the part on my own merits rather than on connections."

There was silence for a while. "Very noble of you," said Peter sardonically. "But you could still rescue this thing. I don't want to work with an ass like Gardner. So will you please date Mann's daughter again. Take her to the Goldies, that new award show they're having in Beverly Hills. It will be on television. Show her a good time and I'll get her to put in a good word for you with her father. I really want you in this movie as Ross."

Abe got us invites to the awards. The promoters really wanted the beautiful, up and coming Jennifer Sterling and were delighted that Abe could 'deliver' her. Of course, they took me as well.

Jennifer was in a real dither when I called her and asked her to come with me. "What could I wear to such a show?" she asked and I could sense her reluctance.

"It's a chance to really dress up," I said. "You haven't seen me in a tuxedo and cummerbund and I haven't seen you with your hair up and in a long, elegant evening dress. There's a party afterwards too at Joe Patton's home that we are invited to. You know Patton?"

"Oh yes," Jennifer said. "Daddy knows him well. I, I think that this time, this time, I must ask Daddy if I can go out with you."

Yes, that was the funny part of my loving Jennifer. I was sleeping with her whenever I could and yet Daddy didn't know and I didn't want him to. I actually was thinking how great it would be to work with Jennifer all day and every day but I didn't want to get such a job by the method I had set out to get it. I didn't want Jenny, my lovely Jenny, to realize what I had done to get the part with her. She would feel betrayed, I'm sure.

"Please tell him that you want to go," I said to her. "If you ask him in the same tone as you are talking to me now, he'll think you don't really want to go. If you must, tell him how actresses have to be out in the limelight with handsome men or they start to fade."

Jennifer laughed. When she called back, she was still laughing. "It took all of your arguments," she said. "But Daddy says that I can go with you. He was surprised you asked me."

"Well," I said. I had tried to stop telling lies with her, stop all the manipulations I usually tried. "It's the sponsors really. They want you and figured, I guess, after that picture in the paper, I was the one to ask you."

"Flatterer," Jennifer said down the phone, and I could sense the smile on her face as she spoke to me, "but I do like it. You can tell me more if you like but I won't believe you. They asked you to bring a date, didn't they? It's lovely that you thought of me. Shall I charge the Christian Dior dress I'm going to wear to your account? It's going to be a knockout."

Wow, had she changed in the two weeks we had been secretly going out. She was excited and talkative, as unlike the quiet person she had been before or even longer ago when she was Tim Lindemann. I enjoyed talking with her on the phone. I ran up a huge bill for Abe to pay. She said she was lying on her bed as she phoned me and she described exactly all the clothes she was wearing.

"Don't you wish you were here now?" she said with a giggle.

I groaned. "It would change our phone call," I said. "You wouldn't be wearing anything then, not even those black panties you are talking about."

"Oooh," she said and laughed. "Promises, promises."

I wanted to see her sooner than Friday and the awards show but she had promised her father to view some films with him. "You made me neglect him," she teased and I had visions again of her in her bikini.

"Until Friday then," I said with a sigh. "I'm looking forward to showing off my woman in public."

Jennifer laughed again. "I'm looking forward to you bringing me home," she said with a lilt in her voice. Then there was a little silence on her end of the phone. "Oops," she said and I could imagine her blushing.

"Don't blush," I said to her.

"I'm not," Jennifer protested. I was trying to help her to accept her natural femininity. I wanted her to say what she wanted just as she wanted to say it and not guard her words at all, not with me. "Well, just a little."

"I want to be with you tonight," I said and I meant it. "Can't you slip out for a while?"

"Save your strength for Friday," Jennifer giggled. "You're going to need it my man."

Then the little minx hung up on me. Phew, what kind of woman had I released when I had kissed her with intent? She was blossoming. Dating a man, making love to a man, was encouraging her to explore being a woman. She might turn out to be more woman than I could handle.

I might have expected that I would meet Daddy at the door to his home. I'd only seen him the once and not to talk to. Joseph Mann concentrated all his attention on me and, even though I was taller and stronger than him, he intimidated me. He got straight to the point.

"Why did you invite my daughter to go with you to this event?" he asked me belligerently.

Just his look, never mind his words, made me nervous. "Well, I like Jennifer," I said.

"Mr Otis," Joseph Mann cut me off. "You and I know that is not true."

I protested but he held up a hand as the bigger man guided me into the familiar living room.

"You served with Timothy in England," he said, his eyes never leaving my face. "You were a bomber pilot. Is it him you like or is it her? Or is it to blackmail me into giving you a part in our movie?"

Talk about coming to the point! I was flustered. I have to admit that. "I don't do that any more," I said and then realized how it must sound to him. "What I mean is that I wasn't doing that in the first place when you started giving me bit parts. It won't be from me, I can promise you, that anyone ever learns the connection between Tim and Jennifer Sterling."

Joseph Mann grunted and looked at me hard.

"Besides," I said. "I know Vincent Gardner. I understand that you've offered him the part I was interested in. So Abe Moss has got me into Fort Cheyenne, I think it is. I couldn't do yours now even if you offered it to me."

Okay, so I was stretching it but Jennifer's father challenged me and when I'm challenged I give it back.

Her father grunted again and waved me to the same sofa where I had first undressed Jennifer. "I do have to thank you though, Mr Otis," he said, still watching me carefully.

I tried to keep a straight face. I could never have played poker against Joseph Mann and won. "Oh," I said lightly. "For what?"

"We live a quiet life here as you might suppose under the circumstances," he said, still focussed on me and my reactions. "But since you came here two weeks ago and took my daughter out dancing in a night club, she has been happier than I have ever known her. She is a very good actress around this house and knows how to manipulate me. But I have received very few genuine displays of affection from her.

"Your phone call and her asking my permission caused one of her most impulsive hugs for me. She even kissed me. When she came out of her room after being on the phone with you for nearly an hour, she began to smile and laugh and she hasn't stopped in three days."

I could scarcely bear his intense gaze. "My daughter is happy," Joseph Mann went on. "I, I, her father, have sacrificed very much to make her happy and Jennifer has tried so hard to show me that she is happy. But this is different. So, Mr Otis, I have to know if you plan soon to make her very unhappy since she will be working on one film and you another."

"I don't plan to make her unhappy," I said, bristling. "With your permission, I will take Jenny out again after tonight."

Joseph Mann cut me off with a wave of his hand. "She does what she likes," he said. "She never asked my permission before. She didn't tell me what she was having Gustav Gerhard do for her in his clinic. I only get the bills, such as the one for the dress she has had to buy for tonight."

Jennifer chose that moment to come down the stairs in her Christian Dior dress. She said it was by that designer and I had to believe her. I didn't know one designer from another. I did know class though and she had it, in spades.

The long ball gown hugged her figure and showed it all off in its female proportions. The dark green silk was gathered below her knees and then it flared out again, revealing her trim ankles and high-heeled open-toed shoes.

She had dyed her hair. It wasn't so blonde any more but was layers of dark and light blonde if you can imagine such a thing and she had it piled up on top of her head, huge, glittering earrings swinging at her neck and a huge, many diamonded necklace gleaming at her cleavage, so prominently displayed by the square neck of her strapless dress.

I jumped to my feet and almost ran to greet her. Jennifer saw the admiration in my eyes and promptly went into demure, shy mode. I got her wrap and



her purse for her after giving her the lightest of kisses on her cheek so as not to spoil her makeup.

“We’ll be late, Daddy,” Jennifer said, going to him, standing beside the door, and giving him a hug. I wonder what her father thought of her new perfume. I recognized it as something new, something French as delicate and rare as she was. “You don’t have to wait up for me.”

“For a son, I wouldn’t,” Joseph Mann said, almost glaring at her. “For a daughter, I must.”

That took a little gloss off the early evening as Jennifer held onto me tightly as I led her to the limousine I’d ordered for the evening.

She gave me a wry smile as I told her again how wonderful she was and how spectacular her dress and hair.

“He has to be like that,” Jennifer said in a whisper, glancing to the driver who still had the partition slightly open. “Daddy knows how to make people feel very guilty and selfish.”

She had that right, I thought. Joseph Mann had rattled me enough that I had forgotten for a moment why I was taking Jennifer out. To an awards show so that I could charm her and blackmail daddy, wasn’t it? So the Third Reich film was gone, partly, I suppose because of my own bravado. There were some wonderful compensations, though. The way Jennifer looked as a woman and the way she clung to my arm and hand let me know that I was going to be compensated fully later. Funnily enough, I was looking forward to it.

The cameras loved her. I hadn’t realized that television was there, too, filming us for their evening news programs. They were local to California but, if Joseph did stay up, he would surely see his daughter on my arm as we waved to a decent-sized crowd of people there, many calling for Jennifer Sterling to come and sign their autograph books. She obliged with a smile and even signed one guy’s shirt with her lipstick. A couple of girls thrust their books at me and got the first Lee Otis autographs ever, right there on the same page as hers.

I did hear one girl say as I took Jennifer’s arm and we strolled in under the hotel canopy, “Who’s Lee Otis?” and the other said, “I dunno.”

Jennifer looked up and gave me a huge smile then and I gave her a wry smile back. (That was the picture printed all over the world and I’ve seen it every year since whenever anyone writes about Evening in Berlin.)

“That girl is going to be thrilled in a couple of years’ time,” Jennifer whispered, squeezing my hand delightfully. “You are going to be a big star, you know. Much bigger than me.”

"Thank goodness your father didn't hear you say that," I murmured back and Jennifer was startled. "He's so protective of his daughter."

She smiled. "Oh," she said archly. "So that's what you meant."

Jennifer looked up at me and began to blush furiously in her lovely, strapless dress as I stared at her in shock. She, noticing and commenting on double entendres? Whatever was the world coming to?

Jennifer Sterling was a dream date. I don't remember the awards show at all but she seemed to love every minute of it. She complimented all the winners and runners-up whom we saw as we left and again at the party at Joe Patton's. There, she introduced me to many directors and producers who frowned, trying to remember my name, until she said that Daddy thought I was one of the best up-and-coming young actors in town.

I got a lot of speculative looks after that. We danced because Jennifer loved to. She loved me to hold her as if she was truly a woman. She clung to me all through the evening and, if anyone looked at her at all, and many did, they had to know she had a very attentive boy friend.

We kissed all the way back in the limo, not a care in the world about her makeup then. I paid off the driver as I helped my beautiful date from the car. We had a bet and she won. Joseph Mann had gone to bed.

"Would you like coffee?" Jennifer asked sweetly. "Or would you prefer your dessert?" She must have planned that speech but she spoiled her attempt at super-sophistication by blushing and then starting to tremble.

I took her in my arms then and pressed her closely to me. It would be crude of me to say she got the point but she broke off and led me with trembling hands to her bedroom where I had the most intense pleasure of my life in undressing her totally, slowly and killing myself with longing as I eased everything off. Then I frantically pulled off my own clothes and dived into the bed where she met me half way and we made love in our own preferred and special ways.

Jennifer was insatiable and I thought I would die if she urged me on again until she finally asked me very guiltily if I could do it again the way she had forbidden me the first night. She gasped her way through it as I did, sighing as she finally was released, clinging to me and holding me tight on top of her, kissing me so strongly she even aroused me again for a last half hearted pleasuring between her lovely, soft thighs.

"I love you," Jennifer whispered to me.

I'd said it easily to lots of girls. "I love you," I said to her, meaning at that time and place, and knowing that I meant it at the time I said it. I also knew how much it really meant but it seemed to mean so much more to Jennifer than the casual words did to me. It

unleashed a final round of lovemaking, though, that was a fitting judgement on my last statement. Dawn was breaking when she relented and let me sleep, her head nestled into me, her legs wrapped around me.

Jenny woke me the next morning by tickling me with a feather. The sun was so bright it must have been afternoon. It was and she was in a happy, giggling mood. "Are you going to sleep all day?" she asked. "You can if you want to but Daddy says when you're awake you should come and talk to him."

That woke me up like a bucket of cold water. "He knows I'm here?" I gasped. "How?" I looked at the impish grin on her clean, washed, makeup free face. "You told him?"

Jennifer nodded. "Well, he already knew," she said with a smile. "I always think I am so clever. But he knew I had slept with you before, after the Mirabel."

"He told you he knew and you confirmed it," I said huffily, pulling on my pants while Jenny smiled sunnily at me. Oldest interrogator's trick in the book. It was even in the script of the movie she would be in, but not me. "Why does your father really want to see me?"

Jennifer opened her eyes wide. "He wants you to make an honest woman out of me," she said in a stage whisper and then began to laugh and tickle me.

She said she would help me dress but, with her robe and nightdress open and with her kissing me every second, and putting my hands on her breasts, and round her waist, it took me an hour to get dressed enough to go and apologize to Joseph Mann. How do you apologize to a father for sleeping with his daughter under his own roof even if the daughter has invited him to and especially if that beautiful daughter is not his lovely daughter but his beautiful son?

I was just working that out and slowing at the top of the stairs when Joseph Mann appeared at the bottom. "Ah, Mr Otis," he said. "I was just coming up to see if Jennifer would let you go. Come on, come on."

I went down in fear and trepidation. I needn't have worried. Making an honest woman of Jennifer was not on Joseph Mann's mind. Getting me to sign a contract to play Ross, the lead role in Evening for the Third Reich was. Mann had talked to Peter Greaves who was delighted to agree to the change in actors and to Abe Moss who said he had a verbal agreement only with Western. Mann had even called Vincent Gardner's agent who had not actually been signed for the Ross part and had offered him my role in Fort Cheyenne which he had taken.

I stayed all day at the Mann house, being entertained by one of the prettiest, liveliest girls I have ever gone out wit. And, that night, after Daddy went to bed, I took Jennifer back to her bedroom, our bedroom, and we celebrated my being in the picture with her by making passionate love again until she told me with a giggle that she had to stop as her nipples were getting so lovely sore, her words.

X. AN AFFAIR I REMEMBER

You wonder why I write so much about that film which only movie buffs see these days even though *Evening in Berlin* holds up really well. It's because that film changed my status in the business. Overnight, I became a leading man, or, since most movies had more than one male lead, a co-star.

In those days, Jennifer and I had to be discreet about our 'affair'. It was one of those things that no-one was supposed to know, that we were living together and not married, which meant, of course, that everyone did in fact know about us. Jennifer Sterling and I were an item. Being in the same movie helped.

We had to go to interviews together and to premieres where she was even more gorgeous in her long gowns than I could ever have believed. But on the set before that, we were inseparable. She sat in my lap when there were only a few seats available in the cafeteria and she held on to my hand and hugged me as if a huge bar on her conduct had been lifted from her.

At least, I seemed to see her like that for the first time. I loved the changes that I saw in her though some others I spoke to were surprised. They had always seen her as a giddy, happy girl. I guess I had inhibited her in her behaviour from the moment I had first seen her as Jennifer and she had seen me, her old Services buddy.

In town, I kept my place, but I slept, when she allowed me sleep, every night I could in Jennifer's bed, with Jennifer. Her father accepted me entirely as did his staff. They were very respectful and, since they clearly liked Jennifer, they were nice to me, never letting me see a hint of disapproval. She was so happy and so loving with me, in front of everyone, that everyone seemed to cheer up whenever she was about, even her normally sour-puss father.

Being on location was the worst. We abided by the fiction that no-one should know we were an 'item' but sometimes I couldn't go along with it. Jennifer was in this slitted, black evening dress in one scene, and she vamped me. We did it a number of times and when her eyes sparkled, and we kissed, all the cameras so close to our faces, I could feel myself wanting her.

Jennifer was trembling too, laying on me as we finished the last take. She relaxed and grinned at me as Peter announced to all that we could move on.

"You kids take a break," he said, smirking at all of the principal actors. "You can have the rest of the afternoon and evening off. We bring in the acting crew for the concentration camp tomorrow. So, it's going to be heavy. Take some time to compose yourselves."

We weren't in trailers then. We were in a motel. In Ralph Young's room, there was a permanent poker game, which only stopped occasionally for craps which the lighting crew favored and was all they would play.

"Beg off," I whispered into Jennifer's ear as I heard the four or five actresses setting up a shopping expedition to the nearest big town. "Come to my room." It was something that we had guarded against doing, afraid of being caught by some eagle-eyed member of the crew.

Jennifer was snuggled into my shoulder. She lifted her head and grinned at me. "Yes," she whispered and rolled off me, all long, tanned, smooth legs in black garters and stockings. My hands itched with the desire to grab her and take her there in front of everyone.

The other actors cursed me, I had won too much, for not joining the game. I claimed that I had to read the script for the next day. I hadn't memorized the lines. I said I was going to be in the reading room (it was really the laundry room but nothing in it worked) if anyone wanted me.

It was easy from there. Peter Williams, a conscientious Brit playing one, had joined me. I yawned a lot and went back to my room for a nap. I left the front door open and Jennifer joined me, still in her slitted, black dress.

It had been a week since we left town. Needless to say, Jennifer had missed me as much as I had missed her. She wanted me as eagerly as I wanted her. She wanted me to love her in every way that I could. As I kissed my way down to her panties to take them off, I inadvertently kissed her awakened member and it awakened some more.

"Oh," Jenny gasped, but she wiggled and didn't pull away. If I had thought she was a man, I could never have done it. I don't know, but I had awakened enough women to how pleasurable their clitoris can be in the past and this foreplay just seemed to be the same. I aroused her thoroughly and she came, writhing and clutching at me as she discovered a pleasure she hadn't known before. Then she did it to me. I knew it well but having Jennifer do that to me was excruciatingly pleasurable.

I then entered her in the way Jennifer most preferred and she became even more ardent and passionate in making me discover every part of her femininity.

"I wish we didn't have to do it so grossly," Jennifer murmured as we lay together, sated with sex, her leg across mine, her knee caressing my ribs.

"Grossly?" I asked, stroking her legs and rounded hips, her breasts within reach of my mouth.

"Yes, you know," Jennifer said. "When we take each other in our mouths. It was good for you, wasn't it?"

"Yes," I said. "Men like it. You know that. Some girls think that it's all men like. Didn't you like it as well? I thought you did."

"It, it was different," she agreed. "But real girls wouldn't let you do that, would they?"

I snorted. "Some real girls won't let you do anything but that," I said. "They don't want to get pregnant."

Jenny gasped and so I had to explain what I meant and tell her about parts of the female body she could never have and how girls derived so much pleasure from foreplay and how important the clitoris was in a girl's pleasure.

Jennifer caught on and she began to awaken and caress my chest with her soft, feminine hands "You were thinking of me b-being a wo-woman with a clit-clitoris?" she said, her nails digging into me as she held onto my arms.

I nodded, kissing her. "Of course," I said, knowing that she would love to be thought of that way. The thrilling kiss and hug I got from her told me that she was enthralled with that new idea. "Women react differently to being touched there," I said, trying to be helpful. "Some love it and can't fully come until they are aroused by it. Others prefer to do it for themselves while a man is coming in them. Some are like you. They just like other things more."

Jennifer was silent for a moment. "I think I understand Dr Gerhard better now," she said.

"Gerhard?" I asked. "Why would you be talking to him?"

She was very quiet then, hardly stroking me at all. "Lee," Jennifer whispered then very demurely. "How would you like it if you could take me from the front, put your thing into me here," she touched her clit, "as if I was truly a woman?"

"As if," I began. "I don't understand."

"Dr Gerhard says that he can make me a woman," Jennifer whispered, stroking me, her words coming out in a feverish rush. "He says it was done before, in Germany in the Thirties, and in one of the concentration camps run by Mengele."

That name made my blood run cold. "Make a woman out of a man?" I asked, the stupidity of that thought stunning me. "No-one can do that."

"There was a girl, Lili Elbe, she was called, who was changed from a man before the war," Jennifer went on nervously. "Dr Gerhard asked me to read the files. He said I would be a woman, with a clitoris and a vagina, but I didn't understand why he kept going on about it and about the pleasure I would have as a woman. He said I would have orgasms."

"He wants to castrate you?" I asked, my head pounding as I thought of it and that was all I could think of. "That would end all the pleasure that we have together, my darling. I like you, every bit of you. No, I love you, every bit of you. Don't change anything for me, Jennifer."

She laughed. "Well, it's not going to happen right away if it ever does," Jenny said, her arms about my neck, hugging and hugging me. "But wouldn't it be great if I could be a real woman? Then I wouldn't feel weird about you arousing my clitoris every time we make love. I'd welcome it."

Then Jennifer, my woman, proceeded to make love to me, giving herself to me completely, until I was so sated that I actually did have the nap that I had told Peter the Brit I was going for.

Joseph Mann was waiting for me when I came in after a visit to Abe Moss to plan which movie offers to take up in the year ahead.

"What has Jennifer told you about Dr Gerhard?" Joseph asked me bluntly, stepping outside and gesturing for me to walk with him to the side garden where there were paths, a bench or two and several fruit trees. Hence the name to Mann and his servants, the orchard, though it was more a patch of trees and grass.

"Jennifer has talked to me twice about him," I said cautiously.

"She is setting up an appointment with him," Joseph Mann said brusquely. "She thinks he will make her into a woman."

I gasped. I felt ill. "He can't," I gasped. I had to sit down in the orchard as terrible chills seem to course through me.

"Jennifer tried to explain it to me," her father said abruptly. "But I was much too impatient. I did not believe it possible. She says it is basically turning the male genitals inside out and using plastic surgery as she had done on her face and breasts to make her sexual areas be exact replicas of the female. I said it was a disfigurement and absurd. She would lose all feeling. She said Gerhard was positive she wouldn't, rather the opposite, in fact. She thinks she will feel inside herself like a woman."

Joseph Mann stopped talking and I could think of nothing to say. "I'll, I'll talk to her," I said.

"I asked her about you two," Joseph Mann said as I stood up. He stared at me. "Forgive me," he went on. "I know it is your own private affair what you do together in bed but I wanted to know why she was pursuing this, this mutilation."

What could I say? I had thought that what we had between us was satisfying her. I know it satisfied me. I was satisfied by the way Jenny moved beneath me when I touched her and how feminine and lovely she was to touch and hold. She seemed to love me doing what I did to her.

"Jennifer said that she loves you and that you love her," Mann went on, putting out a hand to keep me in the orchard with him. "She says you make love to her in many ways which she would not describe but she did say you made her feel like a woman when you were inside her. You do tell her you love her, yes?"

"I do love her," I said, feeling nervous as I talked to this man, Jennifer's, Timothy's father. "She is all the woman I need. If she's not one hundred percent female, I don't care. I totally enjoy the ninety-five per cent I am getting. I thought we were getting close enough to talk about such important things that you've mentioned to me."

Joseph Mann nodded. "Go talk to her," he said. "She says she wants to be completely a woman so that she can marry you. Did you know that?"

I was shocked. Marry Jennifer? Marry someone I knew was a man like me? But the moment I thought about that I knew that it was wrong. Jennifer was not a man like me. She wasn't a woman like Dolores or Anita, either. She was, well, she was Jennifer. And she had never talked to me about getting married.

I thought about that all the way on my walk around the house and up the stairs to our bedroom. I could call it that. We slept there together and I had never been assigned another room even though there were at least six other bedrooms in the place.

Jenny took one look at my somber face and said. "You have been talking to Daddy."

I nodded. "You want to be married to me," I said.

She stiffened, looking so lovely in a soft, silky, grey blouse, her figure perfectly accentuated by her narrow waist and wide hips. She nodded without speaking.

"Very well then, Miss Sterling," I said, going down on one knee in front of her, and taking her hand in mine. "Jennifer," I said, looking up at her. "Will you marry me? Will you be my wife forever?"

Jenny's stiff fingers and her stiff pose dissolved as I arose and she flung herself into my arms. "Oh yes, oh yes," she cried and her mouth crushed mine so that she didn't realize that I was holding the box I had bought for her on my trip into town before I had even spoken to Joseph.

I had bought her earrings before, which had made her ecstatic. Jenny had said that she felt so wonderful to know that a man was buying her lovely, feminine gifts. I got loved very amorously for that in my car on the side of the road.

Now, with the ring for her finger, Jennifer just pulled me on to the bed and kissed and kissed me until I couldn't stand it and had to touch her and caress her. So we spent the afternoon and early evening in bed, she bursting with excitement over putting her ring on and admiring herself in the mirror with it, the only thing she was wearing after a while.

"This thing with Dr Gerhard," I said slowly to her when I could. "You don't have to do such a thing for me. We can get married as we are."

Jenny shook her head. "Not unless we lie," she said quietly. "And what kind of marriage would that be? It would just be doing what we are doing now, wouldn't it?"

She sat up and looked down on me, her long hair unfastened and sweeping down about her neck. "I thought you understood. I thought that was why you were asking me to marry you."

"I had the ring to ask you before your father spoke to me," I told her. "I don't want you to go through with this. I'm afraid for you. I'm afraid you will lose all feeling for pleasure, my darling. I'm afraid you will never have one of your orgasms again. I will still be in ecstasy when we make love but you won't be aroused as you are now. I love you the way you are."

I kissed her and Jennifer gave me a beautiful smile. "It will be so much better," she whispered. "And if it isn't, you can still penetrate me, you know where, and I will pleasure you in any way that I can, my darling Lee. And I'll make your clitoris answer to me." She giggled and blushed. "But I want you inside me properly. I want you to rouse me like you do all your women. Dr. Gerhard says that the sensitive nerve endings will all be there and so I will be roused and I will rouse you as woman should."

"He says he will use plastic surgery to turn some of my thing into a clitoris after I told him about our talk and how important it was. He said it is no problem. He's as eager as I am to get started. He's already sent me some different special drugs, female hormones, which will do most of the work of changing me. Then it will just be snip-snip, some plastic surgery and I will be a woman."

I tried to argue but it was going to be a long time away and Jennifer wanted to go and show Daddy her ring and to catch the Hiltons and see if they noticed before they left. She was like a giddy, little school girl as she raced around the house to show off the ring and announce herself as a woman now engaged to be married.

XI. WEDDING PLANS

It was the best of times. We even had encouraging friends. Peter Greaves threw us the most lavish engagement party and everyone there wanted an invitation to the wedding, which I promised, like an idiot, while Jennifer blushed and blushed to be the centre of such attention and so many ribald comments.

I completed *Out of Time* for Peter and then got the call from Olympic to be in Rome. Every actor in Hollywood wanted a part in that one and they cast me without even a screen test. I got ribbed from all sides, including my fiancée, about having to shave my legs and having to wear a 'dress' for the role.

They don't show that gory epic much any more. It was an enormous hit at the time but so many other epics surpassed it and, frankly, I thought the story line was very confused. But it was my first costume epic and led to a series of historical films in which I really made my name.

But all that was later. I was leading a life of domestic bliss with Jennifer, the like of which I had never known before. It was as if we were a married couple, Jennifer and me, living with her father. Jenny didn't work in any films. She said, with a grin, that she didn't want to be overexposed, and then wore an evening dress to the Rank's premiere that knocked everyone else off the front pages and announced us to the world at large as 'about to be married.'

Jennifer was sick a lot in the mornings. It was if she was pregnant at times, but she only smiled and laughed at my concerns. "It's only the hormones," she said, putting my hands on her breasts. "Don't you notice the difference? I'm growing and I'll have to have the implants pulled soon. It's going to be all me here and here." She patted her upper thighs.

I noted that Jennifer was more feminine and neither of us made any effort to hold back her growing femininity. She was more and more provocative the way she dressed, particularly in the bedroom, where her lingerie became frillier and skimpier by the day. The bustiers and corsets she wore that molded her into such fantastic female shapes that we never stopped making love. I had a daily fashion parade from the most erotic of female fashion magazines and I loved every minute of it. I'm sure she did as well. I know she loved the way that I treated her in her exotic clothing.

Jennifer was considerate when I did late takes, however, and had early morning calls on the set. She knew the rhythms of filmmaking and easily adjusted to them. It was me then who pushed it, having to have one more kiss and one more cuddle, one more possession of my lovely wife in which she would always accommodate me.

I had once gone to bed in the evenings by myself. I had once gone days without sex. Being engaged to Jennifer meant that I was always in bed early and had sex whenever I wanted it or when she was aroused, which seemed like every time she saw me. I mean, she tried to let me sleep for my early morning calls but I couldn't until I had taken her at least once and had her exhaust all my overloaded nerve ends.

Jenny changed her hair, darkening it, lightening it, wearing it in braids, waves and curls. She loved me to touch her. If I put a hand on her legs, she would draw me on and soon she was holding on to me and kissing me while my hands explored her thighs and panties and she pressed into me closer and closer.

Needless to say, I could take Jennifer anywhere. I could slide her panties down and she would arch her back against mine and I could fondle her body against mine while her mobile fanny aroused me until I had to go and go until she came, her hair in my face, her head turned as I kissed and kissed her. She loved 'impromptu' as she called it and she wore shorter and shorter skirts, I noticed, to entice me with her lovely legs into taking her anywhere in the house.

We were nearly caught many times by the Hiltons or her father but that just seemed to add spice to the game.

"I know this is too much," Jenny once whispered to me as she lay against me on the couch, having satisfied my raging lust for her, "but some day, we'll be old and only have our memories. I'll always remember this time as the very best."

"We have lots of time yet," I murmured. "We have to set a wedding date. I can't wait to see you as a bride."

"Oh yes," Jennifer turned and snuggled up to me. "You look so handsome in your tux. So does Daddy though he's dreading giving me away. He never thought he would be the father of the bride. Not with me anyway." Then she began to cry.

It took a while to console her. But then Jennifer took me to the east side of the house which I had not explored. There were several rooms there that seemed prepared for occupancy, one clearly a child's playroom. She opened the closet door for me and there were



clothes. It took me a moment to realize that they were all little girls' clothes and the toys, the kitchen, the dollhouse, the makeup kits, it was all for girls.

"Daddy had this readied for my sisters," Jennifer said unsteadily, picking up a little doll with yellow hair and hugging it. "They never made it out of Germany. Nor did my mother. I used to come here and play all the time. I'd pretend I was Eleanor or Patricia, my sisters, and have tea parties with Celeste." She hugged the little doll.

"My aunt, who lived with us then, didn't mind," Jenny went on huskily. "She said she was glad someone was getting some use out of all this waste. But Daddy never gave up hoping, hoping to get his daughters back. I'd dress up and go and sit with him in his study and hug him and he'd call me Ellie."

Jennifer wiped the tears from her eyes. "He still calls me that when he's drunk a lot." She whispered. "I know he'll drink a lot on the day I am a bride. It will be so hard for him, the memories, the hopes."

I took her in my arms and hugged her. What could I do? I had often wondered how Jennifer could have come to be what she was. An old man's longing for a past torn away from him? Romantic notion, but I didn't think so. But I was not going to argue with Jenny then. Let her keep her romantic notions of being a woman, I thought. I loved her and would 'marry' her. It was time I spoke to Joseph Mann and we arranged what paper work we had to so that I could marry his surviving daughter.

I procrastinated about marrying her. I was thinking that I should before Jennifer had the operation that she said she wanted. I should have married her sooner. Maybe it would have changed what finally happened to us. I know that I've always regretted that I didn't do that, persuade Joseph to let me marry his daughter just as she was.

Then I had to go on location for Rome. It wasn't far but just enough out into the desert to make it hard to get home every night. Lopat, the director, promised it wouldn't be beyond a month. I made Jennifer promise to come out to the film crew's compound we'd created. I wanted her to come in two weeks time at the latest. I set up my trailer to accommodate her when she arrived.

It was dry, exhausting work. Trekking in water became a problem, the animals didn't co-operate. When Jenny called, I was on the set, and Lopat grumpily told her we'd be there a month and to stay away from me. He didn't tell me, a thing which I've never forgiven him for.

Jenny was two days late in coming to see me when I got the call from Joseph Mann. It took me another day to connect with him. The Hiltons' words that he was indisposed and what Jennifer had said about his drinking tied together. Something had happened with Jennifer. I told Lopat I was leaving and he had a fit. I told him he would have to shoot

around me and took off back to town with Lopat screaming like a prima donna, that I would never work again in that town.

Joseph Mann was as blunt as ever. "Jennifer's gone to Gerhard's clinic," he said. "Lopat told her you are going to be out there a month and so she went. She says it's just for cosmetics. She wants some implant removed. But I don't think that's true. I can't see any difference in her. Could you? Besides, she took fifty thousand out of her bank account and that's more than three times what she took last time. I think she's gone for something else."

"She would have told me," I said, dry-mouthed in fear.

"Jennifer never tells me when she makes a move," said Joseph heavily. "I didn't know when she enrolled in a girl's dance academy when she was twelve, I didn't know when she permed her hair, did her nails, or that she had become my daughter full time. I didn't know when she was called by the draft board and cut off all her lovely hair and went to war, acting like a man. I didn't know the other kids called her Linda Mann or Belinda at school and that she answered to those names. She never said when she was going to Gerhard any of the times she's gone. I wish I had never told him about her."

"I'll go after her," I said. "Where do I find this Gerhard character?"

"In Mexico," said Joseph Mann, handing me a map of the west coast of Mexico. "I've marked the route. I intended to go myself but it would be better if you went. I'm likely to kill Gustav with my own bare hands if I see him. I did not want my daughter to be his first sex change operation. I wanted him to perfect his techniques first."

I looked at the old man in horror and he stared back at me, stone-faced.

"You think I should do nothing for Jennifer?" Jennifer's father asked me. "Deny her what I know can be done, that was done in the concentration camps. My wife was a doctor, you know, which is why they would not let her out, and she had to keep my girls with her. Mengele had them all shot, all the doctors and nurses, and their families, because they might have talked to about the horrors they had to perform.

"They killed off all their victims as well. Gustav got out two years before the end but they won't let him into this country even though he's told everything he knows. He offered me the favor of his services, knowing about Timothy from my sister."

"You should have refused," I said unsteadily, standing up and heading for the stairs to pack a bag for my trip.

Joseph Mann was waiting for me at the bottom of the stairs when I came bouncing down, glaring at him.

"I have arranged a charter flight for you," he said. "The plane will stay in Acapulco while you are there. She travelled by car so you should not be too far behind her. I will talk

to Jack Hunt," he was the producer of Rome, "and to Bill Lopat. I will smooth it out for you as best I can." He gave a wry smile. "If charm doesn't work, I'll throw money at them."

I nodded. I thought cynically of my career, which he was promising to save. I actually didn't care that much about it then. All I could think of was Jennifer laying on some butcher's slab with some dirty butcher going after her with a huge butcher's knife.

The Calanos Clinic was nothing like a butcher's shop. In fact, it was a hospital that would have matched the best in the world. It was clean, sterile and very confidential. It had a clientele that wanted privacy and I could imagine easily as a place where drying out, illegal abortions and illegal surgeries were done for the very rich.

It was impossible to get in. If Jennifer was there, she was likely under an assumed name. They had no Sterling, Mann, Lindemann, or Otis patients, the suave administrator told me. Dr Gustav Gerhard? They had no doctor by that name.

I had to go. It took a thousand to an orderly, whom I had waited eight hours to see leave, to get the name, Moreno, a doctor 'in town'. It took another thousand after I followed the orderly home to get the name of the place where Dr Moreno worked in town. Moreno came to his downtown office late. More bills got me into see him as an 'emergency'. He spoke Spanish so fluently I thought I had been misled in my search for the 'German' doctor. Joseph should have had his picture taken.

"I've come from Joseph Mann," I said, knowing that would be the best approach. "He wants me to contact his daughter right away. He forbids you to do any surgery on her at all."

We played the game for a while. He denying everything while my anger rose. "Forget Joseph Mann," I said my face livid with anger. "If you have done any harm to Jennifer, I intend to have you killed. I can afford a thousand men. One of them will get you."

"Joseph says this?" Moreno asked in surprise, his Spanish accent turning to a German one as he stared at me with sudden interest.

"No, I do," I said. "Jennifer is my fiancée, and I like her just the way she is."

'Dr Moreno' considered. "Then you will like her now even more," he said, smiling as if all the cares in the world had been lifted from his shoulders. "It is a miracle, thanks to me. She is a woman. The operation was a complete success."

I felt the hairs on my head standing up. I tried to be expressionless but I was seething with all kinds of emotions.

"Jennifer is, of course, heavily sedated for the pain at present, but she told me that you know all this if you are the man she spoke so lovingly about," Moreno went on, babbling about what a great doctor he was and only he could have done such an incredible thing.

"I want to see her," I managed to say through gritted teeth.

"Of course, of course," he said, even smiling to me. "She is registered as Senora Ortega. She has had complications after giving birth and I have done corrective surgery, you understand. You know, I have seen your face before, haven't I? Are you in the movie business like Joseph and his daughter?"

I ignored that. I only wanted to see Jennifer. He promised to take me up to the clinic after his surgery hours. At Calanos, he would register me as 'Senor Ortega' and then I could see her any time I wished.

Jennifer had dyed her hair brunette and she was heavily sedated. Her face showed the signs of being in pain but she was beautiful nonetheless. I held her hand, her long nails as lovely as ever, and stroked her smooth arm, smoothing the pink, frilly nightdress about her prominent breasts. There were tubes and catheters running into her all over the place.

The Mexican nurses who attended her glowered at me and wouldn't let me stay while they 'changed the dressings' and did some other thing to Jennifer, but when her eyes fluttered and she was awake, they let me back in.

Her face was contorted with pain. "Lee," Jennifer, my fiancée gasped but she did manage to give me a smile as beads of sweat gathered on her forehead. "What are you doing here?"

"It's where I should be," I said, leaning over and kissing her forehead. Jennifer slightly raised her head and I kissed her lips, dry and chapped, but the desire was there. I felt it. She withdrew as the pain got to her and a nurse pushed me rudely out of the way as she adjusted Jennifer's pain medicine and intravenous drip.

It took a week for the worst to be over, for her to comprehend that I was there with her for good. In time, Jenny was able to sit up, a fresh nightgown gathered about her, her makeup and lipstick always lightly done by her nurses when I went in to see her then. She smiled at me so happily and always wanted me to kiss and hug her which I did, even with 'Dr Moreno', all cheerfulness and enthusiasm, in attendance.

I kissed her lightly and she would raise her head and I could feel that she, like me, hungered for more. "Isn't it wonderful?" Jenny often said grimacing at the pain she must be in, holding onto my hands. "I am a woman now."

"You always were," I told her huffily.

Jenny laughed at me, and squeezed my hand. "It will be so different," she whispered and pulled on me, the smile on her face never going away. So, I had to kiss her again, many times.

"I missed you so," Jennifer said, another week later, putting her free arm, the one without an IV about me, holding me to her. "I thought the shooting on Rome was going to go on for over a month."

"It probably is," I said and Jennifer was horrified that I had left the set to be with her.

"You have to go back right now," she said, agitated. "They'll replace you."

"I don't care," I said. "I just want to be with you." That got me an extended kissing session that was only broken up by a smiling, younger nurse who came to give Jennifer more sedative.

"What did she say?" I asked as Jennifer slipped away again, grimacing slightly in her continual pain 'as everything readjusts' as Dr Moreno said.

I leaned over to give her a goodnight kiss. "She says she wished she had a man as ardent a lover to be her husband," Jennifer whispered to me, and let me kiss her face and lips, as I let her cling to me until she relaxed and went to sleep.

I called Joseph Mann soon after I got there and called him again to find out what was happening on the set of Rome. "You have a daughter now," I told him, the first time we talked.

"I've known that since she was a little boy," Joseph Mann said and we were both silent for a moment after that as we digested what he had said.

"Does Jennifer know you are missing from the set?" asked Joseph.

"Yes," I answered shortly.

"And she told you to go back?" asked Joseph.

"Yes," I said.

"I got an extension of your leave for another week," said Joseph. "Trust Billy-boy to do something silly. Damaged his rushes by exposure in transit. Had to do half the scenes again. Funnily enough, not the ones you were in."

I got the feeling Joseph Mann was hinting at something he had arranged to be done. I didn't believe what I was hearing. He couldn't have had a film sabotaged for me. I don't think he had that much power. No-one would do that for any amount of money, would they?

XII. THE BEST OF TIMES

With Jennifer pushing and Joseph pulling, I went back to work. Everyone knew about Jennifer's 'car accident' and were very sympathetic. I felt like a complete fraud particularly when William Lopat re-worked the shooting schedule all on his own to give me two days off to go home when he thought Jennifer came back from Mexico so that I could be with her.

Jennifer was so extraordinarily beautiful as she lay in our bed, framed by a white, frilly pillow. I went running up to our room as a smiling Joseph Mann urged me on. "She's waiting for you!" he called genially to me as I hurtled up the last steps. I almost flung myself on the bed as went to hold her, hug her and kiss her.

Jennifer was still very fragile. I had to be very careful holding her and kissing her but she wouldn't complain that I was too rough. "I came home for this," she said blissfully as I lay beside her in our bed and snuggled to her, trying to be as gentle as I could.

She couldn't walk well and she had a thing that she had to keep inside her where her male genitals had been. "It's to make sure I don't close up," Jenny said lightly. "Then we would have a problem, wouldn't we?"

She was thinner, as you would expect, and anxious to get to her hairstylist's and beautician's to make herself into the Jennifer of old. She wanted me in bed with her, however, as much of the time as I could be with her and I wanted to be with her and hold her as well.

"It won't be long," Jenny promised as she kissed me and cuddled up to me, the touch of her breasts to my chest a torture for us both. "And then I'll be your woman entirely."

Swelling, stitches, pain, we had to wait for them to go away. Then there was a period of recuperation. She was private about 'douching' as she called it, and wouldn't let me see any scars or such.

"I don't want you to remember me like that," Jennifer whispered as she cuddled me and I ached that I could not possess her, not have her as I had become so accustomed to having her in any nook or cranny of the house. "I want you to see me first, properly healed and looking as a woman should."

I sweated and took cold showers. Right. She was all woman now and woman enough to know how to release her husband's desires in bed without having to have penetration. My only worry was that she got no release but she said she loved me so much. She said that I was so wonderful to her, stroking her shapely legs and rounded breasts anyway. She knew it was going to be so fantastic later on. She smiled and teased me by saying that if she had to wait, then so did I.

Jennifer changed her hair back to blonde while I was out working on Enigma, another one for Peter Greaves. I remember walking in on a gaggle of women one day. It was there, in Joseph Mann's house. They were packing away dresses and veils and giggling at me and shooing me away from one room where there was a dress I mustn't see at all. That's how I found out Jennifer was planning our wedding.

"It would be heavenly if the first time you had me was on our wedding night," Jennifer said dreamily in bed that night. It must have been four months all told since she had had the surgery. Then she giggled and rolled in her pink, frilly nightie on top of me. "But I can't wait that long."

Jennifer took my hand and guided it between her legs. It was amazing. Her vagina and clitoris were shaped exactly like those of a woman. She felt exactly like a woman. When I eased off her panties and her nightie, it was an unbelievably gorgeous, naked woman that was in bed with me, trembling all over with love for me.

I touched her clitoris, gently exploring and she reacted with passion. She was uncontrollable. The months of waiting seemed to have built up an incredible desire inside her and she held nothing back. Her desire for me was matched entirely by my own insatiable desire for her. When I entered her for the first time, she gasped and cried and wiggled with excitement. She devoured my mouth and thrust her naked breasts against me.

I've never had a more willing woman in bed with me. And Jennifer was a woman, demanding from me everything a man gives his woman. It felt right to me and I began to fill her, thrusting as any man would, and then she began to convulse beneath me, her orgasm as a woman there, delightful and satisfying for us both. It was so fantastically ecstatic that we had to do it again and again, our hands exploring each other's bodies in every blissful way that we could.

"Lee," she screeched my name and her whole body arched as Jenny had never done before. I was frightened for a moment the first time until she started rocking under me and her hands began to direct me not to stop, never to stop penetrating her and filling her up as women demand of men.

Jennifer lay beneath me each time shuddering and shaking as she clung to me, kissing any and every part of me frantically as she climaxed, releasing all the sexual fervor and longing she must have stored up through her convalescence.

She wasn't satisfied with just one orgasm any night after that, either. She had to have more. Jennifer had so much wanted to be a woman and it was everything she had hoped it would be. Or that is what she said. I played my part in bed and touched only her female parts. She wanted no variations, nothing that we had done before. She loved me as a woman and I loved her as if she was a new woman. And it really was great to be so up tight, so close together, so face-to-face as I kissed her and penetrated her, she pressing her breasts and her whole body tightly to me as if we two could become one.

"I love you, my woman," I whispered to her.

Jennifer put her arms about my neck, her legs about my waist, and directed my manhood where to go. "I love you, my man," she whispered back and she met every move of mine with a move of her own. It sometimes took us so long, an hour or longer, to come enough, she spasming finally as her nipples grew so huge and her lips so possessive.

"It was worth it," Jennifer often said dreamily as we cuddled, man and woman, naked together, before sleeping, and I had to agree that she was right.

XIII. THE WORST OF TIMES

"Hey, Lee. You gotta see this," said Bob Ames, one of the actors in *Way of the Assassin*, a 'small' movie I did for Peter Greaves' friend, Joe Leopold, even as I was still doing callbacks for Rome's editors. "I can't believe that some doctor really thinks he can turn a man into a woman, do you?"

"Yeah. I saw that," said Ted, the chief gaffer. "But I got more class than you, Ames. I wouldn't be showing that paper to Lee."

My blood ran cold. I could see the paper Ames was holding. The words 'Sex Changed' and the picture of a pretty, blonde woman in a long, black dress caught my eyes. It was as if I had been stabbed. Blood draining from me, I reached for the paper. But someone else whisked it away from Robert J. Ames, whom I'd thought was a friend and began showing the article around, most people reacting in amazement, everyone there arguing with someone else.

"It ain't possible," one person said and others agreed while I got up furiously to see what they were talking about.

Garry Wilson, a grip, came in with another paper and held it up. 'Ex-GI becomes a woman' said the headline and again there was a picture of a blonde woman in a long evening dress.

Gerhard, I thought bitterly. We were fools to trust him, I thought with a shiver. He's ratted us out to the press.

"Sorry, Lee," said Ted, the chief gaffer, returning with the first picture in his grasp. "That Smith woman is a pain in the ass."

"She is," I agreed, mystified at his comment. I held out my hand for the offensive paper. I sweated bullets in the seconds Ted decided to pass it to me reluctantly. Well, I would have to face up to it some time, I thought savagely. I hated what it would do to Jennifer, though. I hated how it would make other people look at her. I said to myself that I didn't care about myself and strangely that was true.

It wasn't about Jennifer at all. The picture was of someone else. It was of someone named George Jorgensen, only now he was to be called Christine Jorgensen and he was the first man in history to legally have had his sex changed from man to woman. It had happened in Copenhagen, in Denmark. It was not about my wife-to-be at all.

I almost felt the relief like a palpable presence, something I could have reached out and touched. Then I read the Deirdre Smith gossip column and there it was under the heading 'Trouble in Paradise?' It was all about Jennifer and me and how she was supposed to be tiring of me and getting ready to go back to work with a new boy friend, a former flame, Michael Brennan, in some musical that would take her to Europe. It ended with 'Wedding bells are definitely on hold for the photogenic pair.'

Knowing how I had left Jennifer that morning and how she had said that I wasn't to come in early, as she was being fitted for her dress that very afternoon, I had to laugh at the column which cheered Ted up in no time.

"I can't go home this afternoon," I told Ted, "while she and her girl friends are trying on their dresses for the wedding. Does that sound as if this is true?"

"Oh," said Ted with a big, conspiratorial smile. "When are you getting married?"

It was such an innocent question but I had already learned that most of the gossip news in the papers came right from movie crews.

"Soon," I said carefully and winked to him. "Soon."

Jennifer and Joseph had the papers at home and were poring over the story of Christine Jorgensen. "She's so pretty," said Jennifer as she studied the different photographs in all the papers Joseph had brought her.

"I was so shocked," I told them. "I thought the story referred to Jennifer." They both looked at me in surprise. "I thought Gerhard had talked to the press about you. I couldn't imagine that another doctor in another place would be thinking in the same direction as you two."

"You have paid him enough," said Joseph Mann to his daughter. "Gustav will never go to the press about you, anyway. He knows me too well."

"I might not have given him sufficient money," Jennifer said doubtfully. "He wanted to be first in the medical journals. He told me so. He wanted to write it all up but not tell anyone who he had operated on. He so much wanted to be known as a great surgeon-doctor."

"Infamous if he couldn't be famous," growled Joseph Mann and the look on his face scared me.

"It was only a thought," I said. "The story of another sex change just took me by surprise. I couldn't imagine ... that is, I thought Jennifer would be unique."

Jenny gave me her wonderful smile. "I am," she said.

We couldn't turn on the radio in the weeks ahead without hearing about Christine Jorgensen. Then, when she came back to America, it was like a zoo at the airport where she landed.

If Gerhard had gone to the press, that is the way it would have been for Jennifer, only ten times worse, given her status already as a woman, an actress and very soon, a wife. I would have been roasted in the papers, I knew. I would have been the butt of jokes, for certain. I would never have worked again if the story of her surgery ever got out.

But, still, a fascinated Jennifer and I couldn't look away from Christine Jorgensen, such a pretty blonde and a former GI. She was an entertainer as well and Jennifer said that she hoped that we could meet her some time. I agreed but fervently hoped that we never would. I doubted that my wife would ever have been able to keep her precious secret once she met another woman who was just like her.

We set the date for the wedding and Jennifer was never more excited and loving with me. Our night times were exhausting but delightful as we had to retire early as I had to be on the sets of the movies I was in early in the morning.

Jennifer had great fun preparing the guest list with so many of her father's and my friends on the list. She also made a list of girls to invite. It looked like a list of my former girl friends and she assured me that it was.

She was not going to show them, Jennifer said, giggling as she said it. I tried to tear up the list and she put it behind her back. I caressed her leg and managed to kiss her and she folded into my arms while she still held onto the list. Even my hand up her skirt caressing her thighs and her panties did not faze her any more.

"I'm a woman now and you can't tease me sexually for favors any more," Jenny laughed at me. "That's because I am just going to surrender to you. Always!"

We quite forgot her father was there, watching us, as we normally tried to keep our foreplay for the bedroom, out of his sight. When we sat up correctly, he grunted at us.

"You think I don't hear the bedsprings working every night?" Joseph Mann asked sarcastically.

"Daddy!" a blushing Jennifer protested.

"The whole house shakes sometimes," Joseph said, in his heavy-handed attempt at humor. "You don't have to hide your affection from me, you know, Jenny. I am your father, young lady, and I approve."

"Oh, Daddy," she said remorsefully and went and gave him a big hug.

Jennifer was, however, totally aroused again that night. She had another of her fantastic orgasms in bed as I made love to her and she could not stop caressing me and hugging me.

I had an early call the next day and I was up and in the bathroom before she woke up. When I went to give her a good morning kiss in bed, I saw a terrified look on her face.

"What's the matter?" I asked, scared by the look on her face.

She hesitated and threw back the bedclothes. There was a red clot on her white, silk nightdress. "I'm bleeding," she said.

At first, it didn't register. I mean, women do bleed, don't they? Then it hit me that Jennifer wouldn't. "Have you cut yourself?" I asked foolishly and she shook her head, looking at me wide-eyed in fear.

"No, I'm bleeding from inside me," she said.

She had some women's pads and tampons. Jennifer had had to use them when she came after she douched. She used one of them and it came out with a lot of blood on it.

"I have to see Dr Gerhard," she said shakily and I agreed.

For the first time ever, I went to Joseph's room and woke him. When I got back to our bedroom, Jennifer was dressed in a dark, pinstriped suit, fixing her nylons to her garters. She had never looked so womanly and alluring.

"I'm sure it's nothing," Jennifer said, smiling at me as she saw the signs of arousal in my eyes as I studied her. "Dr Gerhard said that I might experience weird pains and stuff as everything inside me shifts to being used as female. This is just a glitch, I'm sure."

"I'm going to cancel the shoot," I began.

"Oh no," Jennifer said, shaking her lovely, loose blonde hair at me. "Look. It's not so bad now. I'll have Daddy stop and get me some women's sanitary pads when the drug-store opens. I'll talk to Dr Gerhard as well. Daddy can take care of me. He used to hate it so whenever I dressed once upon a time. Now, since you came into my life, he's begun to treat me as his daughter. It will all be all right."

I shouldn't have listened to her. I let myself be persuaded to go to work on *The Way of the Assassin*. Jennifer came to the door with me and kissed me lovingly on the doorstep,

her arms about my neck, her body pressed against mine, her scent so wonderful in my nostrils as I hugged her so lovingly back. I remember thinking how desirable and womanly sexy that she was. I waved to her from the back seat of the car the studio had sent for me and that was the last time I ever saw her alive.

XIV. EPITAPH

TRAGEDY TAKES THE LIFE OF HOLLYWOOD ACTRESS. Today, in Acapulco, Mexico, the actress, Jennifer Sterling, aged twenty-five, was declared dead by medical authorities. The actress, best known for her role in *Evening in Berlin*, died of complications from a motor accident earlier this year. She had appeared to be recuperating over the last few months and had planned to marry the actor, Lee Otis, aged thirty-one, her co-star in *Evening in Berlin*, and currently starring in *Out of Time* and *Rome*. Jennifer Sterling was the actress's stage name. Born Belinda Mann, she is survived by her father, the producer, Joseph Mann.

I've carried that note in my wallet for years. Such a bald few lines to wrap up a life. I got Joseph's panicked phone call from Mexico on the set. He sent the chartered plane back for me and I got there late that evening.

Gustav Gerhard met me in the lobby of the Calanos Clinic. "There was nothing I could do," he said, his face stricken and I had the hardest time not smashing his face in. "She had lost so much blood. If she had been here at the start when she started bleeding, I could have done something. You should not have taken her away from here so soon. You should not have made such violent love to her."

Then I did hit him. Because that was exactly what I thought. I knew it was all my fault. I knew that I should have been more restrained. Even Joseph Mann had been remonstrating with me the night before about how I was treating his lovely daughter so roughly.

I left the doctor sprawled out in the hallway, a nurse rushing to his aid and went to the room he'd named. Joseph was there beside her. Jennifer looked like she was sleeping. I felt sure that at any moment she would wake up, smile at me and reach out to squeeze my hand.

She did none of that. Jennifer just lay in the bed, the sheet up to her neck, her lips so cold and rigid when I kissed them. I gently kissed her eyes and promised to be so much more gentle with her in the future. I could barely see her through my tears and that's when I felt her father's arm on mine.

"She has gone from us," Joseph said and I heard the quiver in her voice. "It was nothing to do with you and the way you loved her. She tried to live until you got here to say that to you. I brought in another doctor. It was a rupture that should never have happened, a fault in the surgery she underwent, a time bomb left inside her, waiting to erupt

finally as it has. It was there, unnoticed, for all this time. A nick made by a clumsy surgeon, Rodriguez says, a simple thing that should never have happened, would never have happened in his clinic.

“If Jennifer had stayed here longer, they might have caught it. If she had bled then, they would have known where the blood must be coming from and repaired her. But they couldn’t have caught it before she left. Then, when we got her, they didn’t have enough time, enough blood, to keep our Jenny going until they could operate. It had nothing to do with sexual activity. It was higher in her than you would have reached. You couldn’t ever have torn her or damaged her. I knew you would want to know that.”

What terrible cold comfort that was. Oh, my wonderful Jennifer! I should have been with you. I should have noticed. I should have done something more than just take my pleasure from you. I couldn’t help myself. I began to cry uncontrollably and my only comfort was Joseph Mann’s arm on my shoulder.

We brought her body back to Los Angeles. Joseph insisted on cremation and I understood why. He had her ashes scattered about the garden. He deeded me the house on his deathbed but I’ve only recently been in it. It took only fifteen years for me to do that since my Jennifer died.

I still own Joseph Mann’s house but I couldn’t go near it for the longest time, for years in fact. I avoided that part of town. The memories of her are still too vivid, too real. But I did go eventually and I felt Jennifer’s presence all through the garden as I wandered through it. I could almost see her around every corner, on every path, waiting to jump out on me, excited and thrilled to be so girlish with me, knowing how pleased that I was with her when she was like that.

I went up to the room where we had made love and slept together so often and I couldn’t help it. I cried for hours, rolling and weeping on the bed. I talked to her and told her how I missed her, how I loved her truly and how I considered her, Jennifer Sterling, to be my wife. I would have loved to see her as a bride as she so much wanted to be. I promised her spirit that I would always love and honor her and I hope, in a small way, in this chapter of my bio, that I have. Wherever you are, Jennifer Sterling, you will always be my wife and I will always love you.

No, you never saw me in *The Way of the Assassin*. I couldn’t finish it. I couldn’t go back. I was numb for so long. Then, I got a letter. Well, it wasn’t a letter, really, it was a press clipping. It was in English but was for Americans. I didn’t know such a paper was produced and sold in places like Acapulco. The article was declaiming the lack of public safety in the place. It pointed to the senseless murder of the noted physician, Juan Moreno, beaten to death in his office, a death that the authorities were neither investigating nor accounting for.

I knew Joseph had sent me the clipping and I was glad. I was glad for what he had done. I remembered him coming to me in the crematorium hall and, for the first and only

time, hugging me. It didn't take away the hurt nor did it bring Jenny back. It was a father's and a husband's revenge. That was all.

"She loved you," Joseph Mann said simply to me, his eyes very bright as well. "You made her so happy. I want to thank you for that. For me, you are my son, my daughter's husband. You were married to my daughter, Jennifer Sterling. You will be my heir."

Oh, but I missed Jennifer Sterling. I missed her for years after. I thought I saw her in so many women. The way she moved or giggled or the way she would blush when sex was mentioned. I would see that in a woman and try them out. I tried them all but they were illusions. No one was ever like her.

I still see her smiling at me and raising a femininely arched eyebrow to say, "I am." She was absolutely right. Nothing and no one was ever like Jennifer Sterling. She was unique.

*****end*****