

# Protective Custody

I first met Lucy when she moved into the apartment building I lived in at the time, becoming my next door neighbor. Not long after that, I met her daughter Robyn - and a bit later, deflowered the then-13-year-old at *her* insistence. Along the way, I got the two of them to start actually talking to each other to the point that they were able to get along much better than either of them had thought possible. That led to Lucy and me becoming first friends, and then lovers.

It was while Lucy was on a business trip that I was asked to deflower Robyn's 15-year-old best friend Sandra, again at the youngster's request. During Lucy's business trip, she found some irregularities and experienced a few problems with the company that she and her staff were auditing for a client. She asked me to help find out what was going on because I was someone she trusted, and I knew enough about computers to be able to help.

I did the job under contract, and found that the company had been used for a number of illegal activities, along with being systematically looted by its upper management. The client wanted to prosecute as well as see if they could get their money back, and Lucy and I took the case to the local FBI office because much of the activity clearly involved a number of out-of-state banks and other operations. By the time it was all over, I'd earned myself a nice percentage of the 300+ million dollars that I'd been able to direct the FBI toward recovering - as well as almost literally handing them the evidence they'd needed to prosecute by turning over a laptop with the details of what had happened. As the case developed, Lucy, Robyn, Sandra, and I 'came clean' with each other about the various permutations of relationships and bed partners. We also got FBI protection because of involvement by what the FBI delicately called "an organized crime element". One of the members of that protective detail became friendly with us - friendly to the point of joining all four of us in bed.

When the case was over, Lucy and I married, and I adopted Robyn. With my new wealth, Lucy and I moved into a house closer to where Robyn's friend Sandra lived, and the two of them spent a considerable amount of time together - as well as with Lucy and me.

A couple of years later, I got a call from that agent - Amy - requesting my technical skills as a computer jock to help them break up a small drug cartel. Along the way, I had the distinct pleasure of meeting and becoming intimate with a couple of the people that were involved with the case - and then bringing them 'into the fold' with Lucy, Robyn, Sandra, and Amy. To my deep regret, the druggies we'd been after decided to try and scare me off by hiring a contract killer to eliminate Sandra's parents. In the aftermath of that tragedy, I wound up adopting Sandra, too - and took great pride when she asked to call me her Uncle Dan. The case ultimately ended with a number of massive raids by the FBI against a number of different dealers across the country.

The friendships we'd all developed continued throughout the following years; every so often, one or more of them would join our family for a period of loving time together.

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Lucy, Robyn, Sandra, and I were sitting in the living room one evening watching a movie on TV when the phone rang. Since I had Sandra on my lap as the two of us casually and affectionately molested each other, Robyn got up off of Lucy's lap - where the two of them had been doing much the same thing - to answer the phone.

I heard Robyn's delighted squeal after answering, followed by a brief conversation before she brought the phone to me. I looked at her questioningly, and she simply said "Amy" before handing over the phone.

"Hi, Amy" I greeted her, before asking "What's up? You get some time off, and want to visit for a while?"

I heard her gentle laughter before she answered "I wish! No, Dan, I'm calling about something else."

Something about the way she answered got my attention, and I stopped teasing Sandra's left nipple before asking "What is it?"

At the tone of my voice, Sandra, Robyn, and Lucy all turned to listen to me.

"I've got a favor to ask, Dan", Amy responded.

"You know I'll do what I can, Amy."

I heard her deep sigh over the phone before she said "I got a call from the SAC - Special Agent in Charge - in your town. He's got a little bit of a situation, and he wanted to know if there was anything I could do to help. *I* can't do anything to help him, but I think you **might** be able to, if you're willing."

Mildly exasperated, I asked "Amy, when have I **not** been willing to help the FBI?" - my words definitely got Lucy and the girls' attention, as well as giving them warning that Something Was Up.

Amy sighed again, and answered "You haven't - but this situation isn't like anything you've done for us before."

"So tell me."

"Okay, but I have to give you a little background, first."

"I'm listening..."

"He's been running a case in your area, trying to get a handle on a relatively small group of, well, thugs. They've been involved in a lot of different things in a small way - small enough to pretty much stay under the radar, so to speak, and careful enough that they haven't left any loose threads for us to latch on to." Amy had told us once that the FBI - and law enforcement in general - couldn't do much about any particular crime until and unless the person or people involved made a mistake, saying "There's no such thing as the *perfect* crime. Sooner or later, EVERY criminal makes a mistake, and it's that certainty that we're geared for and count on. All we need is a single loose thread - sometimes literally! - and we can unravel all their planning and scheming to build a case the puts them away."

I asked "What is it they're up to, and then?"

"Like I said, a lot of different things", she answered, and then seemed to run down a mental list: "A little gun smuggling. Snuff films. Blackmail. Turning kids - girls *and* boys - as young as middle school into prostitutes. Insurance scams. The list goes on."

"So how do I come into this?" I asked.

"Dale Kristofferson - he's Agent in Charge there - got his break when the wife of one of the upper-level scumbags walked into his office and offered to tell him anything and everything about the operation. She said that she could live with him abusing her, but when he started talking about 'breaking in' their fifteen year old daughter, it was too much."

"Okay, that's the 'why' of it - but you still haven't answered the 'how' part" I told her.

Another sigh, and she said "The 'how' is that she said she'd only give up the info if the Bureau would put her someplace he couldn't find them - she's literally scared spitless of him. Dale offered witness protection, but she didn't trust it. He offered a protective detail, and she just laughed, saying that the guy had enough people in law enforcement working for him that she might as well stand out on the street corner. Dale got her fixed up with one of those Winnebago jobs that they're moving every couple of nights, but he and she both know that can't last too long. So he's looking for *something* - anything! -that might bring her around. Like I said, I can't help him, but thought maybe you could - by taking her into something like protective custody."

"What do you mean?" I asked, somewhat baffled.

"I mean that if you're willing, she **might** agree to stay at your place where you can watch out for her. Between your background and that alarm system you've got, there's a chance that she might go for it - particularly with you not being in 'law enforcement', per se. I know it's a lot to ask, and I'll understand if you decide to say 'no'. And I haven't told Dale about this yet - I just said that I'd see if I couldn't come up with something. So if you do turn it down, you won't have to worry about any bad feelings or anything."

I sat there for a bit, thinking about what she'd told me - not just about what it would mean to me and my family, but to the woman and her daughter. And the kinds of things that Amy had told me the woman's husband was involved in.

I finally told Amy "Okay, Amy, I'll *think* about it - but you know it's not just my decision."

"I know that, Dan. That's why I'm telling you that if you have to turn it down, I'll *completely* understand. To tell you the truth, I'm not real happy about even asking you about this - but it's the only thing I could come up with."

"I figured as much, Amy. Can I call you back tomorrow, sometime?"

"Of course, Dan - take whatever time you need."

"Thanks, Amy. Tomorrow, then" I said, and heard her answer "Tomorrow" before both of us hung up the phone.

I could only sit there, trying to figure out how to even *begin* bringing this new 'adventure' up with the rest of them. ♦ My reverie was interrupted by Lucy's quiet "What is it, Dan? Does Amy need help with something again?" the worry clear in her voice. My last experience at helping the FBI hadn't gone as quietly and smoothly as ANY of us would have liked.

I looked up at her, and saw the concern on her face before looking at Robyn and Sandra, each of them mirroring her expression.

I released my own heavy sigh, and said "Not Amy, exactly. It's the local office that needs help, and it's a real gem."

Lucy and the girls waited (mostly) patiently while I got my thoughts together before I started telling them about Amy's request - and the who and why of it.

As I talked, filling in the blanks that I knew Amy had left out, first Lucy, and then the girls, grew paler and paler as I explained the situation - and particularly, what the woman's husband and his cohorts were up to.

By the time I was done, all three of them were clearly disgusted, worried, outraged, and fearful by turns.

I finished up by telling them "Okay, you know who, what, when, where, and why. I'm going to tell you right now that this isn't going to happen unless it's by **unanimous** agreement. I'm not going to tell you what *I* think should happen - quite honestly, *I* don't even know what I think about it yet. And I don't think any of you should say out loud what *YOU* think about it, either. IF this happens, it's going to affect **ALL** of us - this woman and her daughter are going to be in our *home*, living with us day in and day out

for some unknown period of time. It might be a few days; it might be a few MONTHS. I think we can safely assume that both of them would come in here with some emotional and mental baggage. If they're in our home, I don't think it would be... prudent to have them find out about us and our relationship with each other. We would basically have to put on our 'public' face *in our own home* AND deal with a couple of people that we might discover we don't like and are probably going to have their own 'issues' - and not only put up with them, but actually try to *protect* them however we can in whatever way they might need."

All three of them nodded solemnly, and I went on "I just told you, I'm not even sure what **I** think about this. What I want to do - and what I think all of you should do, too - is find a quiet spot *by myself* to really think this through. When I'm done, I'll come back here. When you've made your decision, you come back, too. Okay?"

They all nodded, and each got up and left to find their own place to figure out what they wanted to do. As I expected, Lucy made her way toward our bedroom; I left her to it, and went out to my office in the small building near our swimming pool. It was a good two hours before I made my way back to the living room - and I was the first one there.

Over the next hour, first Sandra then Robyn joined me. A bit later, Lucy made her way in, too - carrying the small dish that I dumped my pocket change into and a small vase. I looked at her in curiosity, but she just gave me a look that said 'wait and see'.

We sat trying not to look at each other for a couple of minutes before Lucy spoke up, saying "It looks like we've all made our decision - and I suspect that none of you wants to say anything because you either don't want to influence anyone else, or because you're afraid you'll be the 'odd' one. So I came up with a solution: I'm going to put the change disk and the vase over there on the table. Each of us will go over and take a coin out of the dish, and drop it in the vase - a penny if we say 'no' or a nickel if we say 'yes'. The table is far enough away, and I'll put the dish and vase close enough together, that none of us will be able to tell who got which coin. When we're done, we empty the vase here on the coffee table. If there's even one penny, we don't do it. Everybody understand?"

We all smiled and nodded - it was a fairly elegant solution of how to 'vote' without being singled out.

Lucy went on to say "I know you girls are old enough to do it anyway, but I want to make sure we ALL understand that if each of us isn't **absolutely sure** that we can do this, and then we should vote 'no' - this isn't something where 'I think I can' is good enough. Okay?"

Another round of nods and Lucy got up to put the dish and vase on the table - and stepping away from them so we could all see that the dish was in front of the vase, making it easy for each of us to use our body to block the view of the rest.

Lucy came back and sat down before saying "Dan, since Amy brought it up with you, I think you should go ahead and vote first, then Robyn, and then Sandra. I'll vote last, and bring the vase with me."

Without a word, I got up and went over to the table. With a sudden inspiration, I picked out a coin and dropped it in the vase - then stepped aside so they could watch as I 'stirred' the contents of the change dish, making it impossible for anyone to even guess which one I'd selected. Lucy smiled and nodded as I made my way back to my seat. Robyn stood, and went over to make her decision known before following my example of stirring the change. When Robyn was seated, Sandra stood and did as we had. Finally, it was Lucy's turn, and she stirred the change as well before returning with the vase.

Seated, she looked at each of us before quietly moving to turn the vase upside down on top of the coffee table, keeping its contents hidden - then slowly lifting it up to reveal four nickels face up on the glass. We all looked at each other for a few moments before breaking into subdued smiles.

"I'll call Amy in the morning and let her know we're willing to help", I told them quietly.

Lucy spoke up, saying "Now that that's out of the way, I think we'd all better get to bed - it's late, and tomorrow will be here all too soon."

Robyn and Sandra stood and came over to give Lucy and me each a kiss before heading upstairs, hand in hand.

When they were gone, Lucy came over to sit in my lap, playfully slapping my arm when I released a fake groan of complaint - she knew full well that I enjoyed having her on my lap, and that I was teasing her.

"Dan, I already knew this is right, and I figured you'd say 'yes', too. But I have to admit that I'm still a little surprised that both of them voted to do it, too. As much as they like being with you, and with me, I half-expected that one or the other would say 'no'. It makes me so proud of them that they'd be willing to put their wants aside to help someone with as many troubles as this woman, and her daughter."

I kissed her on the tip of her nose and answered "Yup. I think we can safely conclude that they've turned into the kind of people we wanted them to be, no matter what else happens."

Lucy gave me a small hug, and the two of us sat there for several minutes, each contemplating just how proud and pleased we were with the way Robyn and Sandra had matured - even more than they'd already demonstrated to both of us before then.

Ten o'clock the next morning, I called Amy's office - and was surprised when I was put right through to her.

"Thanks for getting back to me so soon, Dan. I'll call Dale and let him know that I wasn't able to come up with anything for him."

"Whoa, Amy! I'm calling to let you know that we decided that we COULD do it", I told her when I heard her pause to take a breath.

There was dead silence on the phone for several long seconds before I heard a soft "I'll be damned" before a relieved voice told me "Thanks, Dan. That's nowhere near enough - again! - but it's what I have. I'll call Dale, and give him your number so he can make arrangements to meet with you; and I'll send him a copy of our file, so he knows *exactly* who he's got on his side."

"That's fine, Amy", I answered.

A pregnant pause, and she asked "I've got to know - how did you decide?"

I gave her a quick synopsis, and another few seconds went by before she said "Every time I forget how grown up those two young *ladies* are, they go and do something like this to hammer it home again. I figured you'd be willing, and that Lucy *might* go for it - but I never really thought that Robyn and Sandra would. I **know** how much it means to them to be able to come to you and Lucy whenever they need or want; I honestly didn't expect them to put *that* aside for something like *this*."

I smiled to myself, and told her "Yeah, it kinda surprised Lucy and me, too."

I heard Amy's soft laugh before she said "I don't know if I should be pleased or amazed that those two could surprise you and Lucy!"

"Probably a little of both, just like we are", I answered.

"Well, you make sure and let them know how much this means to me, Dan."

I released my own laugh, and said "Don't you figure they already know, Amy?"

"Yeah, I guess they do" she answered with her own laugh, before saying "I'm sorry, Dan, but I've got to go. I'll get this to Dale right away, so you should hear from him pretty quick."

"I'll be here" I promised her before putting the phone back in its cradle.

I wasn't particularly that surprised when the phone rang barely an hour later; Amy had said that they were worried about the woman being 'outed'.

I answered it after the second ring, and after answering "Dan Andrews here", heard a pleasant baritone say "This is Dale Kristofferson, Mr. Andrews. Amy has told me that you would be willing to make your home available as a, um, sanctuary for someone that I would like to see protected. Is that correct?"

"Yes, it is" I answered.

"Amy has already filled me in a little on your previous experience with the Bureau, Mr. Andrews, and is sending me a copy of the Bureau's file on you that should be here tomorrow morning. Would it be possible for you to meet with me tomorrow afternoon, after I've had a chance to look it over? I'll be happy to meet with you either here in my office, at your home, or anyplace convenient for you. For reasons I think you understand, sooner would be better."

His words and tone told me that he really was worried about the woman. I answered him by saying "Since my home would be the sanctuary, you might find it reassuring to see for yourself what I have to offer, Agent Kristofferson. I work from my home, so feel free to stop in any time you wish tomorrow, morning or afternoon". I figured that once he'd read my file, he'd be visiting as soon as he could manage: Amy had let me read it myself one day; on paper at least, I even impressed *myself*.

"Any time, Mr. Andrews?" He sounded dubious.

"Yes, any time, Agent Kristofferson", I reassured him.

"Tomorrow, then" he said, by way of ending the call.

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I have to admit that I was still surprised when someone rang the doorbell shortly after nine thirty the next morning, and I saw what could only be an FBI agent on my doorstep - and thus, must have been Agent Kristofferson.

I opened the door and invited him in, pretending not to notice the odd look on his face as he got the chance to actually see the person he'd only known through a folder full of papers.

I stuck my hand out and said "Agent Kristofferson, I presume. Dan Andrews; I'm pleased to meet you." As we were sizing each other up, Sunshine, our family dog came up to greet him - and got the attention she craved, if only for a few seconds.

He shook with me, and I led him through the house and out to my office. Along the way, from the corner of my eye, I could see him looking over our house - and felt mildly



pleased. Lucy had seen to decorating and furnishing it with simple elegance; there wasn't anything 'fancy' like antiques, but all of it was of simple design and the highest quality. Once in my office, I showed him a chair, and then took my seat behind my desk. A few seconds went by and I quietly asked him "Would you be kind enough to give me a little more information about just who it is that I'm opening my home to?"

With a guilty start, he said "I'm sorry. Our file on you - the classified version, much to my surprise - was waiting for me when I got to the office this morning, and I read it immediately. I have to admit, Mr. Andrews, I've never heard about, never mind actually met, anyone quite like you before. I trust you won't be offended if I say that I took the time to make a couple of phone calls to verify some of the things I saw in your file. Reading about you and your background was really.... something."

I grinned and said "I assure you - it was really something from *my* perspective, too."

He managed a small smile, and I went on to tell him "Agent Kristofferson, it might be easier if we ratchet this down a little. I'm a guy that happened to be in the right place at the right time with the right training and experience - and a fair measure of luck. But I'm still just a guy - a wife, a couple kids, and an interest in doing what I can for people that need a little help. How about calling me Dan? If this goes through, it'll make things a bit easier for both of us."

He just looked at me for a few moments, and said "Okay, Dan. I don't know about the 'just a guy' part after reading your file and knowing what you're willing to do to help, though. I'm Dale, by the way."

I got up and went to the fridge I kept in the office and pulled out a couple bottles of beer, handed him one of them, and took my seat again. He looked at me strangely, and I just said "I'm sure the sun's over the yardarm *somewhere*, and I expect we've got a bit of talking to do. No sense getting thirsty in the process. If we're going to be working together, we might as well make it as easy and friendly as possible for **both** of us, don't you think?"

He gave me a wry smile in answer and lifted the bottle to his mouth as I did the same.

Over the next hour, he filled me in on the details of what he needed and why he needed it. When he was done, I was all the more certain that I wanted to help him as much as I could; even if the woman turned down the offer to stay with us, I was going to ask if there was anything else I could do to be of assistance - and absently toyed with the idea of contacting some of my old Army buddies before deciding not to. Last time I'd done so, Lucy had made it more than clear that such things were way down on her list of Good Things To Do.

"So now you know what's been going on, and who's been doing it" Dale told me, adding "If you're still willing to take the chance to help, I'll be more than happy to fill you in on the woman and her daughter before you meet them."

I drained the last few drops of beer from the bottle and tossed it into the wastebasket before telling him "I'm still willing. And even if she doesn't feel safe in my place, I want you to know that I'll do anything I can to help."

The relief was plain on his face when he said "Thank you, Dan" before draining his bottle and depositing it next to mine with a soft clink of glass.

I stood up and said "I think it'll help you convince her if you know what kind of security system I've got on this place. The last time I worked for the Bureau, some druggies went after the parents of my daughter's best friend, killing them. After that, I put a system on this place - a damn good system."

I saw his eyes flicker as I was talking, and he answered "When I got this office last year, the man I took over from told me about that event - but not who you were by name. I'm sorry you, and she, had to go through something like that. If it's any help, the Bureau and local cops have infiltrated and busted every gang that's even *thought* about doing anything like that since then. There're still drug gangs out there, but they're small and they spend a LOT of time looking over their shoulders." With that, he got up and followed me outside, where I gave him the dime tour of the place, pointing out and explaining the different security measures and devices. Then it was inside for another tour of what wasn't visible to the outside. By the time we finished up in the kitchen, he was visibly impressed.

I poured each of us some coffee, and after I handed him his cup, he asked "If you don't mind my asking, what did that system cost you?"

"I don't mind", I answered, "A touch over fifty grand" - he gave a silent whistle - "what with labor and materials. The guy that did it was a friend of a friend; when he heard why I wanted it, he did it 'for cost'; he's also doing the monitoring of it for free, too - he's got kids of his own, and wanted to show his appreciation for what I did helping bust up the drug gangs."

He nodded, and let me usher him to the little breakfast nook where each of us took a seat. I spoke first, saying "Dale, I've got no problems doing this to help you out. But there are a couple of things that I'd like to ask, in return."

He nodded and said "If I can".

"First, I'd like my wife to be issued a Federal carry permit."

He looked doubtful, and I explained "She's already got a local permit. The Federal would just make things a bit easier. If the woman or her daughter DO have to go out - something I think we can pretty much count on - then Lucy will be able to keep them company in places I couldn't."

He nodded at the logic, but still seemed hesitant.

I realized what the problem might be, and told him "Lucy does know how to shoot. I taught her." I could see that he was still uncertain, and added "If you want, I'll have her go up against any firearms qualification you want - yours or the local PD's. Lucy has been through a couple of Bureau combat ranges, and done better than more than a few agents - and she practices regularly."

He nodded, and said "Amy told me that Lucy and your daughters had gotten a little one-on-one training from the Bureau when you helped her last time. After seeing your file, I know that if YOU taught her, she can shoot; my only worry was whether or not she had any experience OTHER than on paper targets. But if she's been through Bureau combat ranges, and then I don't see why I shouldn't give her a Federal permit. You said that was first - what else is on your mind?"

"Second, the only contact between me and ANY law enforcement is through you - you told me that this woman is terrified of her husband, and has said that he has cops on the payroll. I'm not about to bet my family on a rigged game."

Again, he nodded before saying "I'd have wanted that, too - for the same reasons. What else?"

"Third, I think there should be some kind of documented agreement between me and the Bureau. Maybe a contract for services or something, so that each of us has a little CYA. If some bean counter insists that money has to change hands, make it a buck, payable on the Bureau's closure of the case."

"I can do that. Anything else?"

I looked him square in the eyes and said "Me, I can take care of myself. But if anybody comes after my family then all bets are off, and I take care of these pricks."

He visibly blanched, and then swallowed before he could reply "I understand. I know what you COULD do if you wanted to. And Amy has told me that she suspects that some of your Army friends may have made their own... contributions to the last case you were involved with. If there is any attempt to harm your family, I will NOT actively pursue any resulting activities - and I'll put that in writing. Anything more than that, I can't make any promises."

"Fair enough" I answered, adding "This is a very unique situation, Dale, and I just want to make sure we both understand where the other stands."

"I agree, Dan. I'd have wanted the documentation anyway, and the other things are consistent with the nature of the help we're asking you for."

He held my eyes as he was saying that, and I knew I could trust him. I nodded my understanding before asking "Now that we're both on the same page on this, who is it that I'm letting into my home?"

He reached into his suit and pulled out a photo that he passed across to me. Looking at it, I saw three people posing for the camera: a vaguely handsome dark-haired man, a strikingly beautiful woman, and a pretty young girl that bore a closer resemblance to the woman than the man.

When I looked up at him, Dale told me "What you have there is a copy of the ONLY picture we have of the man we're after: George 'Frenchy' de la Roche, a Cajun from way back in the Louisiana bayou country. With him are his wife Michelle, a Cherokee from Oklahoma, and their daughter Marie. From all the information we have on him, we know that he's slippery as an eel and meaner than two pissed-off rattlesnakes. That photo is about two years old, taken when Michelle was 33 and Marie was 14. Shortly after it was taken, Frenchy decided that Michelle wasn't keeping him happy enough and beat her badly enough that she had to go to the hospital for stitches - and to have her broken arm set. Marie had to go with her to get a dislocated shoulder treated - she'd gotten in the way of Frenchy while he was beating Michelle. While Michelle was out of commission, Frenchy took his pleasure with a number of different prostitutes - bringing them home to where Michelle and Marie were. Along the way, he picked up a dose of the clap, which he gave to Michelle, and then accused her of giving it to him before beating her again."

From the tone of his voice, I knew that Dale's opinion of this character was pretty close to my own.

He continued by saying "Michelle was pretty much resigned to life with Frenchy - until he started watching Marie a little too close and making noises about 'breaking her in'. That was the last straw, and Michelle bailed out on him when she got the chance. When she left, she had a notebook that she'd used to record a lot the different deals and people he was involved with: who was doing what for how much, and when they did it. As you might imagine, Frenchy was NOT amused, nor is he inclined to forgive and forget. Word on the street is that anyone that turns up Michelle or Marie gets a cool twenty-five grand 'Finder's fee' - and that anyone that helps them will be equally UNhappy."

Dale looked at me intently and said "That's where you come in. Michelle says the notebook is 'someplace safe', and won't turn it over until she thinks she's well out of Frenchy's range. I've had her in one of those motorhomes almost since she showed up in my office - she won't stay in a hotel or motel because she's afraid the staff will recognize her, she won't accept witness protection because she thinks it's a scam, and she won't take regular protective custody because she says Frenchy and his bunch have too many cops and such on their payroll."

He took a deep breath and told me "If - and it's a BIG if - she's willing to accept your protection in your home, I have no doubt that she'll turn over Frenchy's notebook to us, and we'll be able to bust his ass. But until she's sure she and Marie aren't going to fall into his hands or get killed, I've got nothing - and Frenchy and his pals get to keep playing their games. There are exactly TWO things that make me think this even MIGHT work: first, your background and experience. Second, who you are and where you live. Frenchy and Michelle have almost always lived their lives in the, shall we say, less-desirable

neighborhoods. This place, this neighborhood, is about as far removed from that as possible. When I talk to Michelle, I'm going to be hitting *heavily* on both of those points. Right now, it's the only shot I've got."

With a sigh, he sat back and took a deep breath before emptying his coffee cup. I refilled it from the carafe I'd brought with us before asking "Would it help any if Michelle got the chance to actually see me and my family and where we live and all that?"

He shrugged and said "Couldn't hurt."

"Then you're welcome to talk to her here - with or without me or any of my family present. I don't see any reason not to stack the deck in your favor as much as you can."

He sighed again, and asked "You wouldn't mind? My having her here?"

I just smiled and said "If she goes for it, she'll be staying here anyway. Might as well let all of us get a chance to see and meet each other first."

He gave me a wry grin, and said "True enough. When would it be okay for me to bring her here?"

"I know time is a factor - why not make it tonight, if you can? That'll give me time to let the family know, and you and Michelle can come after dark for a little more cover."

He voiced his agreement, and added "You know this isn't going to be easy, don't you?"

I gave him my own wry smile and answered "Yeah, I know - I'm pretty much used to getting the hard ones."

He gave me an appraising look and said "I guess you are, aren't you?"

With that, we both stood up and I escorted him to the door - where he was obliged to step over our cat, Wacko, who simply assumed that she owned everything in the house - including the people. As he was leaving, he told me that he'd call me later to let me know what time to expect them. I answered that I'd be waiting, and watched as he went to his car and drove off.

Back inside, I immediately called Lucy at her office and told her what had gone on - and that we might be having company that night. She listened carefully, and then assured me that she was fine with all of it - or at least as fine as she could be until it was resolved, one way or the other. I told her that I loved her and said that I'd let the girls know when they got home. Robyn was in her Junior year at high school; Sandra was in her Freshman year at a local college, and living at home with us.

I made my way back out to my office where I spent the next few hours going over the things that I figured I'd have to take care of if Michelle and Marie did come to stay with

us. Still, I was inside the house, waiting patiently until about 3:30 when Sandra and Robyn got home. Sandra's schedule was such that she could drop Robyn off at school before going to her first class of the day; her last class ended in time for her to bring Robyn home again.

When they came in, I gave them a little time to change clothes or do whatever they needed or wanted before heading upstairs to talk to them. I found them in Sandra's room, listening to music as they washed down a snack with cold sodas. They both looked at me as I came into the room, and I sat down on the floor across from Robyn so I could look at both of them as I told them about what Dale and I had talked about - including the invitation for Dale to talk to Michelle at our place, and why. Both of them understood, and I told them that I'd tell them more when Lucy got home, so I'd only have to tell it once. They grinned at me, knowing full well that either one or both of them, or Lucy, could have as much of my time and attention as needed or wanted - but that if I could manage to have to explain something only once, that was what I preferred to do, if only to be sure that I didn't end up saying it differently in any subsequent telling.

Satisfied that they were okay, I went back downstairs to wait for Lucy's arrival home. She'd been promoted several times since I first met her, and was all but guaranteed promotion to the next vice-president slot that opened up at her company - not just because of the results of what I'd done for her and the company she worked for, but because she was a highly organized and effective boss: she cared about, and took care of, her people and they responded by functioning like a finely-adjusted watch; only rarely did ANY of them have to work late, and even then it was usually because another department forced them to do so. So I wasn't surprised when I heard Lucy's car pull into our driveway shortly after 5:30; I met her at the door and gave her a big hug and kiss to welcome her home, just as I always did. I went upstairs with her to our bedroom and kept her company as she changed out of her 'work' clothes - teasingly cheering and applauding as she took things off, and booing and hissing as she redressed. When she was done, I pulled her into my arms for another hug and kiss before letting her sit down and tell me about her day. It was something I made a point of doing for her after every workday, knowing that it helped her 'bleed off' any stress or tension, and relax after being at work all day.

When she was done, she asked me about the girls, and I told her that I'd already spoken with them, and told them that we'd all get together after she got home. She gave me a Look and asked "And you waited until now to tell me this because...?"

"Because I love you and wanted you to have a chance to unwind from work first."

She smiled at me, and moved into my arms to kiss me before saying "Okay, I'm unwound. Now, let's hear about this Michelle!"

About that time, the phone rang, and Lucy moved out of my arms to answer it. She listened a moment, and then handed it to me, saying "Dale?"

I nodded that it was okay, took the phone, and said "Dan here. What's up, Dale?"

"Michelle agreed to meet me tonight, and come over to your place. I told her enough about the deal that she's at least willing to *listen*; I'm hoping that seeing and hearing about you and your family will do the trick. Would eight o'clock be too late?"

That time of year, the sun was setting a bit after 7:00; 8:00 would give them the cover of a little darkness while still getting them to our place relatively early.

"Sure, that's fine. That'll give me time to fill in Lucy and the girls while we have supper, we'll be all set when you get here."

I heard his sigh of relief before he said "Thanks, Dan. I'll see you at eight."

"No problem, Dale" I answered, before hanging up the phone.

I turned to Lucy and said "How about pizza for supper? Then we'll have time to go over all this and still have something to eat."

Lucy agreed, and the two of us left the bedroom - Lucy to go downstairs and order the pizza (she didn't have to ask what we wanted, she already knew what we liked) while I went into Sandra's bedroom - and discovered that she and Robyn had apparently moved into Robyn's room. I went through the connecting bathroom between their bedrooms, and found them in essentially the opposite positions they'd been in before: Robyn lying on her bed while Sandra sat on the floor as both of them worked on their homework. I let them know what was for supper, and said that it was time for us to all get together.

They quickly marked their places in their books, set their things aside, and followed me downstairs and into the kitchen, where Lucy was waiting in the breakfast nook for us.

We all sat down, and I spent the next half hour telling them a condensed version of everything Agent Kristofferson had told me - leaving out the parts that I knew would only disturb them unnecessarily. I was just finishing up when the doorbell rang; Sandra got up to answer it after I gave her money for the pizza delivery person. She came back in with our dinner, and the four of us talked about Michelle and Marie as we worked our way through a couple of large pizzas, washed down with sodas.

We'd pretty much covered everything and were just quietly chatting with each other when the doorbell rang again. That time, I was the one to get up to answer it - all of us expected that it was Dale Kristofferson with his two charges.

It was, and I let them in - only to be stunned when the two women pulled back the hoods of the sweatshirts they were wearing, giving me a good look at them.

Michelle was easily far more attractive than her photo had indicated. In person, I could see that there was a more-than-passing resemblance to the singer Cher. Next to her, Marie

proved to be a beauty in, and of, her own right: she'd inherited much of her mother's facial structure, and it was clear that she was going to be a lovely woman even into her old age. Then, when the two of them slipped out of the zip-up sweatshirts they were wearing, I was in for another shock at how nicely each one was built. Each had long, luxurious, straight black hair; Michelle's went down to the small of her back, Marie's 'only' a bit past her shoulders. Both had dark, coppery skin, with clear, smooth complexions, and beautiful dark eyes. Michelle was fairly slender, with a bust that made her look a bit buxom. Marie was a little more sturdily built than her mother, more of a medium-framed young girl: not a waif, but certainly not 'well-padded'; her bust was clearly defined, if smaller than her mother's.

Each looked at me with a different expression: Michelle with a mixture of mistrust and worry, Marie with her fear and loneliness clear upon her face.

Dale spoke up and made the introductions - primarily for the benefit of Michelle and Marie. I told each of them that I was happy to meet them; Michelle looked skeptical, Marie, hopeful.

I was surprised when Michelle spoke, asking me straight out "Why are you doing this? Why would you let us into your house when Frenchy is after us?"

Despite the directness of her questions, and how soon she asked them, I took a moment to look at her and realized just how afraid she was - even though she wasn't letting it show enough to affect Marie. I decided that if she was willing to be that open with her questions, and then she deserved for me to be equally as open with my answer.

Looking directly into her eyes, I said "Because Frenchy is a scumbag that NEEDS to be taken down. Not just for what he's involved in, but because of what he's done to you, and threatened to do to Marie."

Taken aback, Michelle then asked "What makes you think YOU can protect us? Frenchy's pretty tough - and smart."

I laughed - shocking her - and answered "Frenchy isn't tough. Tough guys don't have to beat up women and little girls to prove themselves; only scared little boys do crap like that. Maybe Frenchy is smart - like a fox?"

Michelle nodded, and I continued "Fine - smart like a fox. But I'm smart, too - like a *hunter*" - something that gave her pause again.

I went on to say "I know you're worried. That's why you're here tonight - so you can see for yourself that you don't have to be worried HERE. This man is going to show you around my home, so you can see for yourself that it's a safe place. When he's done, he's going to explain to you how *I* can protect you from Frenchy. If you want to, you can meet my wife and daughters; if you're nervous or don't want to, that's fine, too. If you want to



stay here with us, I'll see to it that you're safe and protected - but I'm not going to tell you what to do or force you into anything. Frenchy does that kind of bullshit. I don't."

My straight talk and level tone did more to convince her than anything else I could have said - I could see that she actually started to relax just a *little* bit when I was done.

Having said my piece, I told them "Go ahead. Look around, see if you think you'd feel okay here. When you're done, just tell Dale whether or not you want to meet my family, and if you want me there while he talks to you, or not. We'll be in the kitchen, out of your way."

I nodded to Dale, and made my way back to where Lucy and the girls were waiting for me expectantly.

I sat down next to Lucy, and let my breath out with a whoosh. All three of them looked at me, and I explained "Michelle is scared out of her wits, doesn't trust *anybody*, and is worried as hell about what's going to happen - not so much to her, but Marie. Marie is terrified of what's already happened, and it's pretty obvious that she's feeling pretty alone in the world. Both of them have had a pretty tough time up to now, and it shows. On top of that, they're a couple of knockouts."

Lucy raised her eyebrows, letting me know that the last sentence needed a bit of clarification - which I provided by describing both Michelle and Marie to her and the girls.

While we waited for Dale to finish showing Michelle and Marie around, we made some tentative plans in case Michelle decided to accept our offer of protection. There was a little back-and-forth, and a little negotiation, but we finally got things worked out. We'd been finished for just a couple of minutes when Dale came into the kitchen, spotted us, and came over to where we were seated.

He had a hopeful look on his face as he told us "Michelle's pretty impressed with your security system. She wants her and Marie to meet all of you and have all of you there while I tell her why Dan can protect her. I think she's willing to be convinced."

I stood up, and after a soft comment of "game time" to Lucy and the girls, they got up and moved with me as we followed Dale back into the living room where Michelle and Marie were bunched up at one end of one of the couches.

Dale moved to take a chair next to them, and I made the introductions. When I was done, Robyn and Sandra took one couch while Lucy and I sat in another. That left all of us pretty much facing each other as Dale started telling Michelle and Marie about my background - carefully leaving out the classified stuff, but quietly emphasizing the military part. Some of it was stuff that neither Robyn nor Sandra had heard before; from the corner of my eye, I could see them trying not to stare at me. Michelle and Marie made no pretense of NOT staring.

When Dale was done, he simply said "That's why I think Dan will be able to protect you and Marie, Michelle."

Michelle just continued to look at me for a few moments, and then said "Okay, he was pretty tough in the Army. But that sounds like it was a long time ago. What can he do NOW?"

Beside me, I could feel Lucy tense in anger at Michelle's question and tone; I discretely patted her to let her know that it was okay - and she started to relax again. For my part, I just looked at Michelle and said "Yeah, that was a long time ago. But don't forget that I spent a long time learning how to do those things. I did them very, VERY well, and I haven't forgotten how."

Dale spoke up then, saying "Michelle, he's telling you the truth. You heard about all the drug busts a couple of years ago?" She released a short laugh, and said "Yeah, I remember. Scared the crap out of Frenchy; he was terrified someone was going to come after HIM."

Dale just looked at her and said "Dan is the man that made the case for us. When one of the dealers tried to kill him and two FBI agents, Dan not only saved the lives of those two agents, but killed the guy that tried to ambush them with a shotgun - with a SINGLE shot from the .45 he carried."

That last bit was something even Lucy hadn't known, and I heard her draw in a quick breath in surprise. Michelle looked at me appraisingly.

Michelle's next question surprised all of us, I think: "So what does HE get out of this? How much are you paying him? This place isn't cheap."

Dale didn't know how to respond to that, so I did it for him, telling her "What I get out of this is watching the door slam behind Frenchy and buddies when they go to prison. What I get out of this is knowing that you and Marie don't have to put up with his abuse any more. What they're paying me is exactly ONE dollar - and I'm accepting that only because there are some kind of bullshit rules that say if I do something to help the FBI, they have to pay me. It's just to cover everyone's ass."

Michelle's skepticism was clear on her face; Dale knew how to handle that one by telling her "Michelle, after Dan helped us with busting all those dealers, he was offered a reward of seventeen and a half MILLION dollars by the Director of the FBI *himself*. Dan turned it down, saying they should use the money to train agents."

Michelle was stunned, and could only sit there for nearly a minute before asking "How rich is he that he can do something like that?"

Lucy spoke up at that point, telling her "Do you remember a few years ago when there was a big story about a bunch of executives stealing their companies' money, and smuggling guns and such?"

Michelle thought a moment, and then nodded her head - it had been something that had made the news all across the country.

Lucy told her "I was the accountant that discovered something wrong was happening there, and hired Dan to investigate their computer system. He figured out what was going on, and the company I was doing the audit for agreed to pay him a percentage of the money he got back for them. We took the whole thing to the FBI, and they wound up getting almost all of the three hundred million dollars that had been stolen. Dan ended up with a paycheck over TWENTY million dollars. When the FBI offered him that reward after the drug case, he just told them that he already had enough money to last the rest of his life, plus some to leave for the girls. He could have nearly doubled how much money he has, but he turned it down because he figured other people needed it MORE."

That last part clearly shocked Michelle; she gave me an appraising look and said "Why are you willing to help us, and then? Why do you care what happens to us?"

"For the same reason that I went into the Army: because there are *things* out there - not people, but **things** - like Frenchy that think it's okay to do anything they want to anybody they want, and I'm willing to do what I can to STOP them. I care what happens to you because I don't figure you deserve the kind of crap that you've had to tolerate with Frenchy. I don't care if it's you, the guy across the street, or some poor asshole living in a cardboard shack - when I see people being screwed over because they're poor or weak or can't fight it for some other reason, it pisses me off. I want to help make the world a better place, even if it's just by helping one person at a time. Because some people need and deserve the help, and I can do it", I answered.

With that, Michelle sat back on the couch. She pulled Marie close, and the two of them looked at each other, obviously in some private communication. After a bit, Michelle turned to face the rest of us, looking at each of us in turn - paying particular attention to me and Lucy. Finally, she leaned forward again, and said "Okay. I'm gonna give you a try, soldier boy. But you promise me this: push comes to shove, you take care of Marie before you worry about me. I've known what Frenchy was like for too long, and maybe some of his guilt rubbed off on me. But Marie, she doesn't deserve any part of it. Whatever happens to me, you watch out for her, right?"

I looked squarely into Michelle's eyes and told her "If it gets to that, I will - you've got my promise. But I'm going to do everything I can to make sure that doesn't happen."

My eyes and voice seemed to let her know that I meant every word I said - and when I saw her eyes widen slightly, I knew she understood that if Frenchy came after her or Marie while I was around, he was going to have one helluva fight on his hands.

Michelle leaned back again, and looked over to where Dale was sitting, watching us. She looked at him contemplatively for a bit, and then said "Okay, Mister FBI. I'm gonna trust you. Tomorrow, I get that notebook I told you about; I'll hand it over to you HERE, when I'm sure I'm safe. When this is done, you give me that witness thing you said so me and Marie can get a new start. Agreed?"

Dale Kristofferson didn't hesitate a moment, simply telling her "Agreed. You won't be sorry, Michelle, and that's MY promise."

She turned back to Lucy and me and asked "Okay, so how does all this happen? Where will me and Marie be staying?"

Lucy spoke up then, telling her "There's another bedroom upstairs with its own bathroom. Sandra and Robyn each have their own room and share a bathroom, but they're willing to double up to make one of the bedrooms available. So it's really up to you if you and Marie stay in one bedroom, or each have your own. The only real 'rule' we have in our home is that a closed door means 'Do Not Disturb' - period. If it isn't closed, and then how open it is tells you how willing the people in that room are to have company: a little bit open means a little bit willing, a lot open means a lot willing. Beyond that, we'll just have to figure it out as we go along. It shouldn't be too hard as long as we all understand that there's going to have to be a little give-and-take on BOTH sides. Fair enough?"

Michelle nodded, and gave us a small smile before saying "Fair enough. I reckon this is going to be as hard on you as it is on us - more, maybe, 'cause this is already YOUR house. But you'll see: we aren't too picky or demanding, not after living with Frenchy."

Lucy smiled back and said "Good. Do you know if you want to share a room, or each have your own? I'm asking only so we have a little time to get things ready."

Michelle and Marie had another silent conversation before Michelle said "We've both been cooped up together in that motor home for some time. If it isn't too much trouble, I think a room each would make *both* of us feel better."

Robyn spoke up then, saying "That's fine. Sandra and I will stay in one room, and we'll get the other one ready for Marie."

Lucy picked up the conversation again by saying "You're more than welcome to come before dark, and have supper with us if you want."

All of us could see Marie's wistful look at her mother, and Michelle said "I think we'd like that, having a sit-down meal with someone besides each other. Would seven o'clock be too late?"

"Not at all", Lucy assured her.

Michelle looked around at all of us, and said "Well, I think that's taken care of most everything. Mister Kristofferson, if you'll get us back, I think it's about time we called it a night."

We all stood, and when Michelle and Marie turned to make their way toward the front door, Dale gave me a big smile and a thumbs-up. I just nodded and smiled - it wasn't his home and family being asked to make room for a couple of complete strangers.

Lucy and the girls went with me to say good night to all of them; Michelle's last words to us were "We'll be seeing you tomorrow night", and after a moment, she added a quiet "Thank you".

When all of them were gone, the four of us made our way back into the living room. Sandra opted for my lap, Robyn for Lucy's. Lucy looked over at me and said "When you told us they were a couple of knockouts, I thought you were just exaggerating - but when I saw them, I knew you were right. Is it just me, or does Michelle look like Cher, only with bigger tits?"

All of us laughed, and I answered "No, I don't think it's just you. I think her face is a little fuller, but there IS a resemblance."

Sandra spoke up then, saying "Marie looks awful pretty, too. Could you *believe* that hair they have! It's so long, and straight, and *black*!"

To the surprise of the rest of us, Robyn noted "When Michelle first started talking, I thought she was being **really** rude. But then I remembered what Dad told us about what they ran away from, and I realized she was just scared and didn't know what else to do."

Lucy hugged her, and said "Yeah, I thought that at first, too, before I understood."

Robyn went on to say "And Marie looked SO lonely - like there wasn't anyone else in the **world** for her to talk to." She looked over at Sandra apologetically and said "I hope you don't mind, but I think I should spend some extra time with her, so she doesn't feel so bad."

Sandra just smiled and said "I don't mind - I saw it, and want to make her feel better, too."

In the silence that followed, we heard the living room clock chime - 9:30 - and Lucy said "It's getting late, and you two still have to go to school tomorrow. Since we're going to have guests starting tomorrow, I think it would be okay if we all stayed together tonight."

Robyn and Sandra both visibly brightened at that idea, and didn't make any protest about going to bed so early - knowing that it would be our last time to be together for a while.

We made our way up to Lucy and my bedroom where all four of us casually undressed and got into bed. When we bought the place, Lucy and I had both know that there would be times when one or both of the girls would be sharing the bed with us; it was an oversized custom job large enough to hold all of us comfortably. Lucy and I were the first to lie down; when the girls joined us a few moments later, they hesitated about where to go, and Lucy just smiled and said "Go ahead. I know you both want him."

Robyn and Sandra both grinned and moved to lie on either side of me. Without hesitation, Robyn and Sandra both reached down to start caressing my penis and scrotum while Sandra leaned over to kiss me, her tongue brushing across my lips. When our kiss ended, she pulled back to make room for Robyn to have a turn kissing me. I could feel myself responding to their tender ministrations, and saw that both of them could feel it too, and looked pleased with the results.

As I became more and more erect, Sandra and Robyn looked at each other for a moment before Sandra began kissing her way down my body while Robyn scooted up to make her firm breasts and hardening nipples available to my eager lips. I had just switched from one of Robyn's breasts to the other when I felt Sandra's warm mouth wrap around my erect penis, and then her lips slide down my length, taking as much of me as she could inside.

It wasn't long before I was completely hard, what with Sandra's agile tongue dancing along the underside of my manhood. While she was doing that, my mouth and tongue continued teasing Robyn's dark nipples, making them longer and harder as her small areolas puckered. My hands had found something to do, as well - the fingers of one were gently probing between Sandra's damp and parted labia as the other hand softly stroked Robyn's mons.

After just a minute or so, Sandra let me slip from her hungrily sucking mouth; I felt her move away from my hand, and then her weight shift on the bed - and a moment later, felt her straddling my hips. With both hands free, I gently pulled Robyn up and around, guiding her to kneel over my face, her back toward my feet - which she did with a broad smile on her face. I felt Sandra take my erection in her hand and position it against her opening before slowly lowering herself onto it with a soft moan of pleasure. Above my head, Robyn was starting to pant as my lips and tongue teased her clitoris and vaginal opening. I moved my hands up to cup Robyn's breasts, my fingers gently pinching and pulling on her nipples; she responded by leaning back to make it easier for me. Farther down, I felt Sandra lean forward, and knew that the two of them were kissing.

A few moments later, I felt the bed shift again, and then what could only have been Lucy moving to sit across my legs, behind Sandra. Even with Robyn's smooth thighs muffling the sound, I could hear Sandra's pleased groan and knew that Lucy must be doing her own part to pleasure Sandra - probably by doing to Sandra's breasts what I was to Robyn's.

As the seconds ticked by and the sounds of pleasure and arousal increased, I realized that Sandra was moving herself on me at a pace that was affecting her much more than it did me. With that realization, I understood that she was deliberately acting in such a way as to bring herself to orgasm while leaving me able to continue to make love - and on the heels of that, that she was doing so in order to leave me in such a state that Robyn could have her own orgasm while making love with me, too. In a matter of moments, I went on to recall that I'd *never* heard the two of them 'fight' - and only rarely disagree; even then, it was a quiet and polite difference of opinion, with mutual love and respect on each side. Not ONCE had I heard either one of them express any degree of jealousy, envy, or anything like that about each other - or anyone else, for that matter. Somehow, in some way that I couldn't discern, the two of them worked things out between them - particularly when it came to making love, when they always seemed to cooperate in such a way that virtually assured that both of them got the pleasure and release they sought. Even as my hands continued to squeeze and caress Robyn's breasts while my lips and tongue played between her thighs, I was thinking back to the many times that I'd been with them, and watched them with Lucy and others - and couldn't see any pattern to their actions. It was as though each of them knew and understood the *exact level* of the other's needs and desires, and compared those needs and desires against her own before they reached some unspoken agreement to adjust their actions so as to cooperate with each other.

I was brought back from my distraction by the feeling of Sandra's body moving a little more quickly as she continued to impale herself on me; my lips told me that Robyn was rapidly approaching her own orgasm: she lubricated herself copiously under normal conditions, but now she was even wetter than usual. The entire lower half of my face was liberally coated with her fragrant oils, despite my enthusiastic efforts to let none of them escape my mouth and tongue. Under my hands, I could feel that her breasts had tightened; her nipples were like small pebbles between my fingertips.

Another minute or so, and Robyn's smooth, firm thighs clamped around my head - but even with my hearing muffled, her cry of release was clear as her vagina spasmed around my tongue. Even as her wet opening clenched and relaxed, my lips and tongue were eagerly trying to keep up with the overflow of her delicate young nectar.

Finally, she was through, and only barely managed not to collapse on top of me; even so, I still had to help guide her to the side. Once my view was cleared, I could see that I'd been right about Lucy - she had both of Sandra's breasts cupped in her hands, softly pulling and pinching her nipples while she kissed and gently bit Sandra's neck and shoulders. Despite having seen the two of them together like that before, it still excited me, and made me marvel at my own good fortune that I had not only such a loving and sexy wife, but two beautiful young nymphs that were willing to share themselves with us.

Below Lucy's busy hands, I had a clear view of the area between Sandra's thighs - and more to the point, could watch our joining as she continued to move herself on me: with each lift of her hips, her vaginal lips would stretch out slightly as though trying to hold on to my glistening penis, only to disappear again when she lowered herself back onto me.

Her vagina was hot, wet, and tight around me; with Robyn's thighs no longer impeding my hearing, the liquid sounds of our union were clear in the air - as were her soft cries of pleasure and the heady scent of her arousal.

The sights, sounds, and scents of passion stimulated me tremendously. It was only by remembering my conclusion that Sandra wanted to leave me in a state capable of satisfying Robyn, too, that I was able to force myself to draw back from the pleasure they were all bringing me.

Lying there, I savored the sensations that Sandra's firm young body were creating as I watched her slide herself up and down my erect member.

As the next couple of minutes passed, I watched, delighted, as Sandra got closer and closer to her climax- and then found it. With a final thrust downward to take me as deeply as she could, her body frozen over mine as she released a loud cry of pleasure, reinforced. As her orgasm coursed through her body, I felt her hot sheath clenching around me as I watched spasm after spasm overtake her.

Even as I was getting a sudden whiff of aroused female, I heard a faint noise next to me. When I turned my head, I had a clear and close up look between Robyn's thighs as she masturbated herself in response to view she had. She suddenly looked down at me, and smiled - not embarrassed or ashamed in the slightest to have me see her pleasuring herself.

I heard another soft cry from Sandra, and turned back to look at her - and saw that she'd opened her eyes and seen what Robyn was doing, which apparently triggered her into another, smaller, orgasm.

Finally, covered with a fine sheen of perspiration, Sandra pulled herself off my erection and let Lucy guide her to lie down next to me as she slowly recovered from her climax. When she was settled, Lucy turned to give me a mischievous smile before leaning forward to take my erect and Sandra-slickened penis between her lips. To my immense relief, she bobbed her head up and down while licking it only a few times before letting it pop free so she could say "I think you want this, Robyn?"

"You bet!" I heard her declare before quickly moving to first straddle my waist, and then move to position herself over my jutting member. Lucy gave me an amused grin at Robyn's enthusiasm, and then moved to steady the girl as Robyn took hold of me and held me steady before lowering herself onto me. Once she was sure I was securely in place, Robyn leaned forward slightly - still steadied by Lucy - and began pressing herself downward, taking me farther and farther inside. As aroused and wet as she was, it took her only a couple of pushes before her dark pubic hair was enmeshed with mine.

At that point, Lucy moved her hands from Robyn's hips to her breasts, cupping them just as she had done with Sandra. This time, though, Lucy also tilted her body slightly, and I felt her begin to rub her mons and clitoris against my leg as she began squeezing Robyn's



breasts and gently pinching and pulling on her daughter's erect nipples. It took all of two seconds for Robyn to begin a soft moaning - the delay caused by her need to draw a breath first. A few seconds after that, Robyn began her own movement over me, slowly arching her hips and pelvis so that only the last couple of inches of my manhood slid in and out of her; the rest was firmly buried in her hot, wet vagina.

A couple of minutes went by with Robyn slowly impaling herself on my again-shiny erection as Lucy played with her breasts while rubbing herself against my leg. Robyn had just settled into a steady rhythm when I felt Sandra start to move again. Reaching out, I put my hand on her thigh; she turned to look at me, and I gestured with my head that I wanted her to move closer. She smiled, knowing what I wanted to do, and readily let me guide her to her knees over my head, facing Robyn and Lucy.

Looking up at her opening, I could see that her vaginal lips were still extended with arousal and dark with her desire; the gap between them still glistened with her oils. I extended my tongue, and ran it along the crevice between her labia, but couldn't quite reach her partially visible clitoris. Without a word, Sandra solved our mutual problem by leaning forward, which not only brought the nubbin of her erecting clitoris within range of my lips and tongue, but let her reach down to begin caressing Robyn's mons - and clitoris, too, if the sudden increase in the volume and intensity of Robyn's cries was any indication.

With the nubbin of Sandra's clitoral hood subject to my dubious mercies, I again ran my tongue from the bottom of her cleft to the top, where I slowly circled and teased her clitoris out from under its fleshy cover. As I was doing that, Sandra released her own moan of pleasure, her body shuddering slightly in response to my oral assault.

I reached up to begin playing with Sandra's breasts, but found them already covered by Robyn's hand; so I opted to start caressing any part of the rest of her body that I could reach, which turned out to be most of it. For the most part, my touch was light and gentle, with an occasional squeeze or soft pinch to stimulate various parts of her delectable anatomy. With Robyn's hands on her breasts, my head between her thighs, and my hands wandering the rest of her, it wasn't long before I could hear Sandra's distinct cries of pleasure and arousal accompanying Robyn's.

Below my waist, I could feel Robyn steadily increasing the tempo of her self-impalement on my penis - and behind her, Lucy rubbing herself harder and faster against my leg as her arousal continued to be ratcheted upward, too.

As the next few minutes passed, the sounds of Robyn's arousal and pleasure steadily increased, as did Sandra's as I continued to lave, suck, kiss, and otherwise stimulate the center of her womanhood. Finally, Robyn's movements on me reached the point where she pushed herself over the edge into orgasm. With a strangled cry, she froze over me, my penis deep inside her as wave after wave of release coursed through her body as her hot, tight vagina spasmed around me.

When it was done, Lucy helped Robyn un-spear herself from my erect member, and guided the youngster to lie on the side. Before she could turn back, Sandra had leaned forward to take my throbbing penis between her lips, using her mouth and tongue to clean Robyn's juices from it. I was a lot closer to my own climax than I wanted to be, and responded by giving Sandra's clitoris a furious tongue-lashing, all but throwing her into her own orgasmic abyss. Her firm thighs clamped down on my head as she let my penis pull from her lips so she could cry out her release, her wet vagina leaking her female nectar onto my waiting tongue.

With the passing of her climax, Sandra found the energy to pull herself off of me, leaving just Lucy and me as the only participants capable of continuing the action.

With a lusty smile, Lucy moved up to straddle my hips; without ceremony or delay, she lifted herself up, positioned me at the entrance to her vagina, and sat back down to take my entire length in a single motion - and releasing a deep groan of pleasure in the process. Our pubic hair merged, Lucy leaned forward to kiss me, getting a clear sampling of both girls' flavors. As our tongues danced and dueled in each other's mouths, my hands moved to Lucy's breasts, squeezing them. I again marveled at how firm and smooth they were before letting my fingers trace a path to her puckered areolas and erect nipples, where I began gently pulling and pinching at them as she softly moaned into my mouth.

After a bit, she sat up again - but not so far that I couldn't keep my hands on her breasts, feeling their weight shift as she began hunching herself to slide nearly half my erection between the fleshy gates bracketing her woman's cavern.

She continued to make love to me for several minutes, until I saw that her legs were getting tired. Taking her into my arms, I rolled us over so that she lay beneath me; a few seconds after that, we'd rearranged our legs to that hers were outside of mine - parted and pulled up to open herself to me as much as she could. I happily took advantage of the access she was giving me to press myself as far inside her as I could. With inward thrust of my penis, my pubic bone would press against hers, adding a little extra pressure to her clitoris to increase her pleasure and arousal even more.

Another couple of minutes, and I was all but pounding into her as she gasped words of encouragement and fulfilled desire to me; the liquid sounds of our union filled the room along with our gasps and moans of arousal.

As the next couple of minutes passed, I knew that Lucy was rapidly approaching orgasm - and I wasn't far behind. As I felt myself approaching the point of no return, Lucy suddenly froze beneath me; her hot, wet sheath began a fluttering and clenching around my pistoning penis, pushing me into my own climax. With a loud groan, I thrust into her once again, trying to fuse our bodies together as jet after jet of hot semen erupted from the end of my penis to wash even the deepest parts of her.

Finally, when I got my breath and senses back, I managed to pull my rapidly-deflating penis from her hot sheath; I was surprised when Robyn quickly moved in to put a small

towel between her mothers' thighs to catch the inevitable leakage. Lucy was still in something of a daze, and barely acknowledged Robyn's actions. I made up for Lucy's inability to express the gratitude I knew she'd feel, and pulled Robyn into my arms for a hug and kiss before telling her "Thanks, Short Stuff". She fairly beamed at me, and said "After watching that, I'm glad to be able to help!" with a smile and a small laugh.

I moved to lie next to Lucy and pulled her close, laying my arm across her body to 'hold' her. Looking across her body, I told Robyn and Sandra "Thank you - both of you - for this evening. You're both more than welcome to spend the night here, if you want."

The two of them looked at each other a moment before Sandra said "I think both of us would like that, Uncle Dan. It's probably going to be a while before we can do anything like this again, so both of us want to get as much time with you as we can before then."

As I was nodding my understanding, Lucy started moving next to me. Lifting my arm from her body, she rolled over to 'spoon' with me as she faced the girls, too. I heard her say "Of course you can. Let me rest up a little, and we'll all grab a quick shower - we smell like a used brothel - and then go to bed. I think you two should go ahead and be next to him tonight; while Michelle and Marie are here, you won't be able to. Is that okay?"

They both nodded enthusiastically before Lucy went on to say "And thank you, whichever one of you got the towel - I don't think any of us wanted to sleep in a wet spot tonight!" - making both girls laugh. It had happened a few times, and none of them liked it, even though they'd always insisted that *they* would be the ones to sleep on it despite my expressed willingness to do so.

With a quiet "Just a minute" to us, Sandra got up and left us - only to reappear a few minutes later with four glasses of orange juice. Three of them were small, the fourth half again larger. All of us laughed when we saw them: as copiously as Robyn lubricated, she was always left fairly thirsty after making love - more so than any of the rest of us. Robyn just smiled at Sandra before taking the large glass and taking a good, long drink from it - making us all laugh all over again.

By the time we finished our juice, we were all ready for a shower. Even with the extra-large shower Lucy and I had in our bathroom, it was a snug fit for all four of us to clean up together, but I don't think any of us minded in the slightest.

Cleaned and dried and back in the bedroom, Sandra picked up the tray with all the juice glasses on it and took it back to the kitchen where I knew she'd go ahead and load them into the dishwasher. In the meantime, Lucy and I pulled the bedcovers back while Robyn went to get another pillow each for herself and Sandra. By the time Sandra got back, I was in bed with Robyn on one side of me; Lucy was waiting for Sandra to join me, and then she'd take up station on the other side. Sandra quickly slid between the sheets and did as Robyn had: put one leg over mine and an arm across me so she could hold me as close as possible. Lucy got in then, turned out the light, and moved to 'spoon' with

Sandra, wrapping one arm around her. That left me laying there with each arm holding a delightfully cuddly young woman snuggling into my side. A short time later, all four of us were sound asleep.

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Before they left for school the next morning, Sandra and Robyn let me know that they'd be a little late getting home: they were going to pick up a few things to help decorate a room for Marie to help her feel more 'at home'. Lucy and I both thought it was a great idea, and thanked them. Both of them blushed slightly, and I went on to tell them "In a couple of days, when Michelle and Marie have pretty much settled in, we'll all go out so the two of them can pick up a few things. I think we'll be able to talk them into getting some things to 'personalize' their rooms."

Lucy and the girls all three nodded their agreement and understanding before Robyn and Sandra left to collect their things and head for school.

Lucy and I still had a little time before she needed to leave for work, and we spent it discussing some of the things that we thought we were likely to run into, and coming up with a general approach to getting used to, and dealing with, a couple of added "outside" people in our home. I also told Lucy about her Federal gun permit; it took her only a second to realize why I'd arranged it. The whole thing didn't take very long, which left us plenty of time for her to sit on my lap for a little kissing and mutual molestation before she left for work.

When she was gone, I made my way out to my office. Even with the money I'd gotten from the criminal case Lucy had told Michelle about, I continued working as a free-lance contract computer programmer. The only significant changes were that I was a lot more selective about whom I worked for, and I had a lot more freedom about just how much work I was willing to do: first on my list of priorities was my personal life - Lucy and the girls, and our life together. Working for someone else came in a FAR distant second.

Even as I was working on some code for one of my clients, my mind was busy with trying to anticipate - and thus be able to deal with - the things that might happen while Michelle and Marie were with us; particularly situations that might come up such as seeing to Marie's education, their need to 'get out of the house' periodically, shopping, recreation, and so on. As I did so, a number of things occurred to me, and I made plans and arrangements to deal with them ahead of time as much as I could.

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I'd finished my work for the day and was back in the house when I heard Sandra's car pull into the drive a bit before five o'clock. Looking outside, I saw that she and Robyn were loading themselves up with a number of packages; I went outside and asked if I could help, and Sandra smiled and said that I certainly could by carrying the last few bags they had. I collected the indicated shopping bags and followed the two of them up to Robyn's

room, where we put everything on the bed. Both of them thanked me, and then politely shooed me out of the room, grinning. I delayed only long enough to have a quiet conversation with Sandra.

I did as they wanted, heading back downstairs to have a cup of coffee while waiting for Lucy to get home. When she did, I met her at the door and walked with her up to our bedroom so she could change clothes. As she did, I told her about helping the girls with their purchases; Lucy asked me what they were doing, and I laughingly admitted that I didn't have a clue - that they'd chased me out without letting me know. She laughed in reply and said that she figured we'd find out soon enough. Then it was time for Lucy to let me know how her day had gone; she came over to sit on my lap and let me hold her - a sign that it hadn't been a particularly good day, since she needed a little extra comforting from me.

When she was done, the two of us made our way downstairs and into the living room to watch the evening news, and then I caught a 'filler' program afterwards while Lucy got started on supper. The clock had chimed the 7:00 hour a bit before when we heard a discrete knock at the front door. I answered it, and found Dale Kristofferson standing there with Michelle and Marie again dressed in baggy clothes to hide their shape, with hooded jackets to cover their heads and faces.

I quickly bid them all in, which they did; the sounds of our greetings apparently made it up to where Robyn and Sandra were - they made their own appearances a few moments later, followed by Lucy.

There were a few moments of awkward silence before Sandra quietly told Marie "If you want to come with us, we'll show you your room. We already started decorating it a little bit for you." Marie looked uncertain at that, but turned to Michelle who nodded her approval/encouragement. As the girls were heading off, Lucy said "Michelle, I'll show you to your room, too, if you like." Michelle agreed, and they were soon following the girls.

Dale and I were left alone, and took the opportunity to go over a few details about Michelle and Marie's presence. I also told him about the things that I'd thought about that afternoon, and what I'd done to prepare for them. He looked grateful about most of them, but was visibly concerned about a couple of others. I was able to assure him that his concerns were things that he didn't really need to worry about. I think the certainty of my attitude did as much to reassure him as my words did.

When we were done, we headed toward the bedrooms; we were halfway down the hall when first Marie, and then Michelle, appeared from their respective bedrooms. Marie was visibly happy, with Robyn and Sandra standing behind her, looking pleased with themselves. Michelle's face made it clear that she was not only relieved, but even a little awed by her own accommodations.

Marie told Michelle that Robyn and Sandra had already started helping her decorate by putting up some posters of the latest 'boy bands', providing her with a small number of music CDs by those same bands, and a few other things. Michelle looked at them in question, and Robyn simply answered "I know how *I'd* feel if I suddenly lost everything, so I just got a few things I thought she'd like." Following that, Sandra added "I don't know if we can do anything to make you feel like this is your home, too - but we can at least make it feel home *like*."

Michelle started to cloud over in anger? frustration? pride? - but Robyn's open friendliness and Sandra's quiet dignity made it impossible for her to take offense at what they'd said and done. Instead, she thought about it for a moment before smiling at them (much to Marie's relief) and saying "Thank you, both of you. You're right, and Marie and I appreciate what you've done." She then turned to Lucy and said "And I'm thanking you, too - it's a lovely room, and you did a really nice job of decorating it."

I finally spoke up, telling them "I don't know how much stuff you have to bring in - if you want, we can get it into your rooms now, or after supper; it's up to you."

Michelle hesitated a second, and said "We don't have much - we might as well do it now, so Mister Kristofferson here can get to his own life. I expect he's been neglecting it some while he's been dealing with us."

Dale started to object, and Michelle just gave him a Look that shut him up before telling him "Dale, I know you've more than had your hands full looking after us. Any time we've needed you, you've been there, any time of day or night. I know you want Frenchy real bad, but you've still given up a fair chunk of your own life to watch after us. I know it, and I'm not forgetting it. We'll get our stuff out of your car, and you can go about taking care of what matters to YOU for a change."

There was nothing for him to do but say "It isn't necessary - but thank you."

That settled, all of us made our way back downstairs; at the bottom of the stairs Dale excused himself so he could move his car around to the back. After asking Michelle and Marie to stay inside until he was there, I went out back to take care of the gate for him. In just a couple of minutes, he was parked close to the kitchen door, making the task of moving Michelle and Marie's things fast and easy. Lucy and the girls helped each of them gather and carry their meager possessions; when they were gone, Dale moved to get his car back on the street; when he cleared the gate, I closed it again.

A minute later, I was letting him back in the front door, and we waited in the living room for the women to join us, which they did a couple minutes later. When all of us were together, Lucy told him "Agent Kristofferson, you're more than welcome to stay and have dinner with us. But if you have other things that need your attention, I'll understand. If it makes any difference, supper is roast beef, gravy, potatoes, corn, green beans, and rolls, with chocolate mousse for dessert."

He licked his lips before answering "As much as I'd like to stay - it sounds delicious - I really do have to go."

Lucy just smiled and said "Of course. But you have a rain check for a future time, okay?"

"I'd love it, thank you", he answered.

About that time, Michelle cleared her throat and when he turned to look at her, she extended her hand, which held a thin wire-bound notebook of the type used by students all over the country. His hand trembled slightly as he reached out to accept it with a quiet "Thank you".

All of us knew that he was anxious to have a look at the notebook's contents, but was too polite to just rush off; Lucy solved the dilemma for him by saying "I know you have a lot to do, Agent Kristofferson, and we have a meal cooking. Would you mind if we excused ourselves?"

He pulled himself together, shot her a look of gratitude, and answered "Of course not. You're right; I do have to be on my way. I'll look forward to seeing all of you again before too long." With his excuse made for him, he gave us all a quiet "Good evening", and let me guide him to the front door.

When he was gone, I went back to join Lucy and the others, getting there just as Lucy said "Supper is ready, if you are..."

Michelle and Marie both gave her a small smile and nodded, and then let Lucy lead the six of us into the dining room. Along the way, Robyn and Sandra separated themselves from us - giving the rest of us time to sit before they started bringing in the supper Lucy had cooked.

When the dishes were all ready and the girls had taken their seats, Lucy turned to Michelle and said "We aren't religious people, but if you want to say a prayer before meals, we'll certainly respect your wishes."

Michelle gave her a wan smile and answered "Thank you. But Frenchy had a way of turning God-fearing people into non-believers. I reckon you know what I'm saying..."

Lucy just nodded her head and said "Of course. But if you change your mind, don't hesitate to let us know."

With that, they took turns handing their plates to me to put some of Lucy's roast beef on - I simply started stacking it on until the person indicated when it was enough. From there, the individual foods were passed around so that each of us could dish out our own portions. There was more than plenty, and nobody hesitated to take as much as they wanted.

The meal went by slowly and casually; Michelle and Marie each took turns telling us about themselves as we ate - Marie much more reserved than Michelle was. Every so often, either Robyn or Sandra would get up to refill our drinks before sitting down again. I noticed Michelle watching all this, but didn't say anything, figuring that if it mattered to her somehow, she'd let us know soon enough.

When we were all done eating, I got up and started clearing the table. Lucy and the girls started to say something, but I simply told them "Don't worry about it. I think all you ladies have plenty to talk about, so go ahead - this isn't something I haven't done before!"

Lucy and the girls laughed; Michelle and Marie only sat there looking surprised until Robyn asked Marie what subjects she liked in school. As Marie answered, Lucy took the chance to start her own conversation with Michelle. I continued clearing the table and putting the leftovers away - but I noticed Michelle's eyes watching me whenever she could. Even Marie threw me a few curious glances.

When I was done, I went back into the dining room and took a seat where I wouldn't be likely to intrude on the conversations. Sitting there, I watched and listened to Michelle and Marie, trying to see if I couldn't get some idea about the emotional and mental troubles they were bringing with them. It didn't take long to realize that there were a number of subjects that they were reluctant to discuss - and it wasn't hard to figure out why.

After a while, Lucy spoke up, saying "I think all of us would be a little more comfortable somewhere else, don't you think?"

Robyn and Sandra both spoke up, asking if it would be okay if they went with Marie to her room - something that made Marie blush slightly, even as she was looking delighted at the idea. Neither Lucy nor Michelle had any objections, and the three youngsters quickly left us to make their way upstairs while Michelle, Lucy, and I headed for the living room. There, I sat at one end of a couch before Lucy snuggled into my side; Michelle took a chair at a slight angle to us. She looked at us for a few moments before saying "I remember when Frenchy and I used to sit like that. But that was a long time ago, and it didn't last very long. How long have you two been married?"

Lucy answered her, and Michelle responded by telling us "I guess I shouldn't be surprised to hear that it's been that long. I can see that you two love each other - a lot. Me and Frenchy loved each other at first, too - but that didn't last too long before he started in on me. Then, when Marie was born, it started getting worse and worse. I see how you all treat your girls - 'specially you, Dan. How come Robyn doesn't look like you, Dan? And is Sandra really your kin?"

I gave her the edited version of how Lucy and I had met, which seemed to strike a chord within her. It was when I told her how Sandra had come to live with us that I saw her façade of strength and courage start to collapse. When I was done, she just sat there looking at us - particularly me - before saying "You did that for her? Even without her



being related?" I just nodded, and answered "She's a good kid. I love her. What happened to her folks was partly - if not mostly - my fault. What else could I have done?"

At that, Michelle finally lost it - with a sudden cry, she fell forward, her shoulders shaking as sobs wracked her body. Lucy didn't hesitate to get up and go over to take a seat on the arm of the chair and pull Michelle close to comfort her. Michelle latched onto her like a drowning person would grab at a life preserver, and cried even harder. Knowing that it was something that I couldn't really contribute to, I went to get Michelle a dish towel - something large and absorbent enough to do a fair job of soaking up her tears without being too big or thick. When I got back, Lucy smiled up at me, took it, and handed it off to Michelle, who promptly started dabbing at her eyes as tears continued to stream down her cheeks.

When the waterworks finally began to taper off, Lucy pulled back a little and asked Michelle "Do you want to talk about it?", and getting a small nod in reply.

Lucy patiently and gently got Michelle standing and moved over to sit on the couch next to the one I was still on. The two of them sat down again, and Lucy and I waited for Michelle to pull herself together again so she could tell us what 'it' was. I suspected that I already had a pretty good idea, and was sure that Lucy (as another woman) already knew, but wanted to hear it anyway.

After a few false starts, Michelle finally found her voice enough to tell us "I'm sorry. It's just that I've been holding it all in for so long, so I didn't worry or scare Marie. Then, when Dan said he wanted to take care of Sandra in such a damn matter-of-fact way, I just couldn't stand it any more." With a baleful look at me, Michelle said "Dan, I don't know if you really understand just how *different* you are from a lot of people - and especially Frenchy. There's been a few times that he's made widows and orphans, and it didn't bother him a bit - hell, he even laughed about it. So when you asked what else you could have done, well, I just remembered Frenchy - and finally realized just how damn lucky Marie and I are to have gotten away from him, and stayed away - and alive! - for so long."

Lucy took Michelle's hand and held it as Michelle took a deep, ragged breath before telling us "I met Frenchy just a couple months after I graduated high school - seventeenth in a class of a couple hundred, would you believe? Anyway, Frenchy was the kind of guy any girl would want: cute, sexy, loving, attentive, all the rest. Of course, I fell in love - hard. It wasn't six months before we were married - and I was still a virgin on our wedding night, would you believe?"

She sighed, and went on "At first, life with him was great. Oh, sure, we didn't have a lot of money and couldn't afford to do a whole lot of things, but we were *happy* together. We lived in this tiny little apartment - bedroom, living room, and kitchen. We had our own tiny bathroom with a sink, toilet, and shower - no tub. Most of our furniture was made up out of milk crates. If you ever need to furnish an apartment real cheap, milk crates are **real** versatile, let me tell you! Stack two, and you've got an end table. Six of them

arranged two by three, and you've got a start on a coffee table. Two high and two wide, you've got a TV stand AND shelving. You get the idea. Frenchy had a job, but it didn't pay real good because he never finished high school. Coming from way back in the bayou the way he did, schooling wasn't a real big deal to him. Oh, he was smart, all right; but he didn't have much in the way of schooling, and that was something the folks with the jobs wanted. Money was tight - real tight. It took a while, but I finally convinced him to let me get a job, too. Even with just my high school diploma, it didn't take me long to find work - and not much longer before my paychecks were as big as his. A year later, and I was making MORE than he was. That's when he started getting mean to me. We'd fight - usually about money - and every so often he'd get so mad he'd slap me. Never more than once, and he NEVER drew blood. But it was still hitting me, and he always felt sorry about it afterwards and apologized and swore he'd never do it again. That'd last an argument or two."

She tuned us out for a few seconds, came back with a slight start, and continued "I don't know what it was that turned him, but by our first anniversary, he had a whole new bunch of friends - people I never DID like. I tolerated them only because I loved Frenchy. I'd left my job, and was staying at home again. As time went by, he started finding newer friends, and as he did, he got meaner and meaner with me. He got together with some of the people he knew and got involved in something I *knew* was illegal, even if I didn't know exactly what it was; just the way he acted around me and talked with his 'friends' told me so. A couple weeks went by, and he came home with a big wad of cash. I asked him about it, because I knew he couldn't have made that much on his job. He got mad and hit me - not slapped, but **hit**. I fell to the floor, and he told me that if I ever asked him again where he got his money, he'd beat the shit out of me. Just from the way he said it, I knew he would. Right then, I thought about leaving him and getting a divorce, but I wasn't raised up to believe in divorce, so I stuck around, thinking I might be able to turn him back into the man I fell in love with."

She gave a cynical laugh before saying "Pretty stupid, huh? Well, I didn't think so at the time; I still loved him, and wanted the man I married back. So I hung in there, for all the good it did me. By our second anniversary, I knew that there wasn't a chance in hell he was going back. But by then, he'd beaten me enough that I was actually afraid of him. One time, I made the mistake of bringing up divorce - he'd finally worn me down to where I was willing to do it. He let me know what HE thought about the idea by leaving me with a black eye, split lip, and bruises all over my body before he told me that if I ever left him or tried to get a divorce, he'd hunt me down and kill me. I believed him, and never said or did anything about it again. A couple months later, I discovered I was pregnant. Frenchy was happy as could be; me, I didn't want to bring a kid into a house with Frenchy in it. We moved into a bigger place, and Frenchy took care of me - well, he didn't beat me too bad - until I had the baby. When he found out it was a girl, and not the son he wanted, he really went off on me. I think if I hadn't been in a bed in the hospital, he'd have killed me. By the time I was ready to go home, he'd calmed down, mostly. He still liked to hurt me, though - not just by hitting me, but by doing stuff that hurt me *inside*, too. I'd be nursing Marie, and he'd insist that I... use my mouth on him while I was doing it. He'd let some of his friends suck the milk from my tits right before it was time

to feed the baby, so I wouldn't be able to nurse her and have to give her a bottle; he knew how much it meant to me to breastfeed. When he got drunk or high, he'd make me take my clothes off and show all his friends how 'fat' I'd gotten during the pregnancy, and even spread my legs so they could see that my pussy was old and worn out."

After that last sentence, Michelle suddenly looked at both of us with an apologetic expression. Lucy quietly told her "We both know the words. Go ahead."

She continued by saying "About that time, we moved into an even bigger place, and he started bringing girls home - whores, from the look of them - and screwing them in OUR bed with me right there in the living room tending to Marie. He'd even leave the door open and turn off the TV or radio, so I couldn't help but hear the noises and all the rest. Then, when he was done, he'd bring the girl out naked, and compare her body to mine." She paused to take a breath before adding "Later, when Marie was old enough to be put in a playpen, he'd drag me into whatever room she was in and screw me, right there in front of her. I tried to talk him out of it, but he just laughed and said 'Don't you think she should see the only thing her momma's good for?'"

I could see Lucy starting to cry, and wasn't any too happy myself when Michelle sighed again before telling us "By the time Marie was able to walk, he'd pretty much given up on me. He was involved in more and more stuff and had a lot more money - which he used for drugs, whores, and guns, mostly; I almost had to beg him for money to buy food for Marie and me. We moved into another place, out in the country a way, and there were always people around - 'security' he called them, but I knew they were just hoods. And I knew that if I made any move to get off the place, they'd either stop me and tell Frenchy what I'd done, or beat the hell out of me themselves. We lived like that for a long time, and I kind of got used to it. Frenchy was busy with whatever got him his money, and pretty much ignored me - until he got mad or drunk or both. Then he'd hurt me, and tell me hateful things. I put up with it so that Marie would have *somebody* to love her and take proper care of her. Any time Marie or I left the house, Frenchy had somebody with us - when I took Marie in to the doctor, when she went to school, when either of us went *anywhere*, we had company. I had pretty much given up on ever getting away from him. Then, when Marie started to... develop, physically, I started hearing him talking about her. At first, it was just how pretty she was, and how she was going to have all the boys chasing after her. But as she got older, and started having periods, his talk changed from just talking about her, to saying what the boys would do to her - and then, later, what HE would like to do. That was when I got so scared for her that I was ready to die if I had to if it would keep her away from him."

Michelle was starting to cry again, and her body was shaking as she told us "I knew I couldn't just **go** - I had to figure out everything about it. I didn't know how long I had, and I was SO scared; but I started doing things in a routine: going to the same places at the same time on the same days. I knew that if I was going to have *any* chance of getting away, it was going to have to be when nobody around me was paying attention; and that I had to do things in a way that would make them bored so they'd stop paying attention. While I was doing that, I also started keeping back some of the money that I was able to

get from Frenchy, and I started writing down some of the things I heard him say; stuff like what he was doing and who he was doing it with, and so on. After all he did to me, and what he said he wanted to do to Marie, I was determined to make him sorry - make him pay for all he'd done to hurt me and her."

Michelle looked at Lucy, and then me, her face a mask of rage as she continued "I finally got my chance. A few weeks ago, I was at the mall. When I left with Marie, Frenchy told me to get something sexy for her to wear - and I knew I didn't have any time left. While we were shopping, I said I had to use the ladies room, and took Marie with me. The men that were with us waited at the end of the hall where the restrooms were; what they didn't know was that the hall went on past the restrooms to another door in the mall. Marie and I didn't even slow down as we passed the bathrooms - we just kept going right on down the hall. I peeked out the other door to make sure nobody that knew me was around, and we made it to another store. The manager there was nice enough to call us a cab, and let us out the back of her store to meet it. After we left, I had the cab take us to the federal building, and we went right up to the FBI offices."

Michelle was still crying, but she managed a wan smile before telling us "Agent Kristofferson was real happy when he found out who I was, and that I had information about what Frenchy had done, and was doing. It took him some time, but he finally came up with that motor home that we stayed in; you should have seen the planning he did to make sure nobody knew who we were when he moved us to it. He had like six different groups of people leave all at the same time, heading off in different directions. Marie and I were in one of the cars, all dressed up like we were when you saw us last night. We drove around for a long time, making lots of turns and such to make sure nobody was following us before we got to the motor home. Every couple of days, he'd come by with another FBI agent and move the motor home to a different place; always to a parking lot for a mall or big store, and out away from the buildings. I guess we must have looked like any other family traveling in one of those things; there were a couple of times that we got up in the morning to see that there was another one, or even two of them, parked not far away. He did all of our shopping for us - even the, uh, personal things we needed. Whenever the motor home needed gas or propane, he was the one that did it - Marie and I always hid in the back where no one could see us. It's been over a month since we first set foot in that thing, and God's honest truth, I don't want to be in another one, ever again. They're nice enough, mind you, but they're just too damn *small*, no matter how big they look. It seems like everything's always packed in around you, and you've got no place to *move*."

Her smile got a little wider as she told us "Those things are just too small for living in for any period of time. And with it being just me and Marie, both of us being female and not being able to go **anywhere** for being afraid that somebody Frenchy knew would see us, you can probably imagine what it was like. That's why I said what I did about each of us having our own room, last night. Marie's my daughter, and I love her to death - but I don't know that I could have spent another month cooped up in that motor home with her. One or the other of us likely would have either gone crazy or killed the other."

By the time she finished, I could see that the simple act of telling us a little bit about what life with Frenchy had been like had purged a lot of unpleasant emotions and feelings from Michelle. And from the look Lucy gave me, she knew it, too.

Michelle seemed to suddenly realize that she had the dish towel in her hand, and that she'd been crying; with an embarrassed glance at us, she started wiping her face and drying her tears. When she'd mostly composed herself again, Lucy squeezed her hand and said "Its okay, now, Michelle. You're safe here, and nobody is going to treat you that way ever again. And I *know* that Frenchy is going to pay for what he's done - not just to other people, but to you and Marie, too."

Michelle murmured something to Lucy before looking up at me. I just nodded my agreement with Lucy and told her "Nobody's going to bother you or Marie while you're in this house. Anybody that tries is going to go away *very* unhappy."

My tone of voice was calm and even, so there must have been something in my face or eyes that caused her to pale slightly before she said "Now I *really* believe you, Dan. I know that me and Marie are going to be safe here. Last night, I couldn't believe all that stuff Dale said about you. But since then, I've had some time to think on it, and I know it's true, now." She quickly held up a hand to silence Lucy before saying "Not that I'm saying anybody was lying - it's just too easy for things like that to get stretched a little. Like I said, I got to thinking about it, and what was said about Dan fits in with some of the things that I saw. The way he moves, for example - it's real quiet, and you don't hardly know he's there until he says or does something. The way he - I don't know, *holds* himself - it's real easy to see that there's a MAN inside there; one that knows who he is, and isn't afraid of much. That only comes from actually *doing*. I know he's smart, too - the way he pauses before he starts talking, as though he's actually thinking about what he wants to say, instead of just making noise. The way he talks, it's nice and polite and all that - until he needs to say something to get someone's attention like he had to do to me last night, and then he makes it *real* clear what he means to say. Then with that business about that company and those dealers - well, even I know you can't be doing that kind of thing unless you've got some brains between your ears. What with all of that, I can believe that he's willing to help us for the reasons he said - I see how he is with you, Lucy, and those girls. Tonight, after we ate, he cleaned off the table - something that NEVER would have entered Frenchy's mind - just so we could all keep talking. The only fuss that was made about it was by you, Lucy, and Robyn and Sandra. From what I saw, he knew it needed doing, and was ready to do it so that you wouldn't have to be bothered by it. You fixed supper, I expect, and those two girls served it up; it looked to me like he just figured he was doing his part. Then, when he was done, he just found himself a place to sit where he could listen and watch us - trying to figure me and Marie out, I expect. But he didn't get in the way of our talking - he just sat there real polite, not saying anything. Maybe being married to him as long as you have, you don't notice it as much. But if you'd spent any time around Frenchy, you'd see that Dan stands out like a turd in a punch bowl."

Lucy couldn't help smiling any more than I could at Michelle's comparison. She seemed to realize that it *might* not be all that complimentary, and started to apologize. Lucy just interrupted her to say "No, that's all right, Michelle. I know what you meant, just as Dan did. Neither one of us takes offense."

Michelle responded by saying "I'm sorry, anyway. See, that's something else about living with Frenchy: when I got out of high school, I spoke nice and proper, like you all do. Now, half of what I say sounds like I never went to school at all. I think being around all of you might do me and Marie some good - maybe both of us will start speaking like real people again."

That gave me the opening I needed to bring up some of the things that I'd thought about earlier in the day. I cleared my throat to get Michelle's attention and told her "I don't know what you've been doing about Marie's schooling, but there won't be any problem helping her learn and study here, if you want. We've got plenty of computers, and I'll be more than happy to help you figure out some kind of schedule and courses so she doesn't fall behind."

Michelle looked both hesitant and relieved before she told me "I don't know anything about computers and such; and Marie only got to use them a little bit in the school she went to. I wouldn't want for either one of us to break one and cost you more than you're already putting out for us. But if you can do anything to help her with her studies, I'd appreciate it."

I smiled and said "Don't worry about it, Michelle. There's nothing that either one of you can do to 'break' the computer from the outside. The worst thing you can do is erase something the computer needs to operate, and that only needs a little time to fix. If you want, I think any one of us would be more than happy to help you and Marie learn."

Relief won out over worry on Michelle's face, and she told me "Thank you. I think both of us would like that."

The next thing I told her was "You said something earlier about being stuck in the motor home." Michelle nodded, and I went on "That *might* be a problem here, too. Not as bad, maybe, but still...." She smiled her understanding as I continued "There are a couple of things we can do about that. If you want, I know somebody that can help 'disguise' you and Marie so the two of you can get out of the house sometimes without having to worry about being recognized."

Michelle's expression told me what she thought of THAT idea, and I hastened to assure her "No, I'm not just talking about wigs and big sunglasses. The guy I know, he's the makeup director for one of the movie studios; what he doesn't know about making people look like someone else probably isn't worth knowing. The other part of it is that even if you or Marie DO go out, one of us will be with you. If you just want to go out for ice cream or grocery shopping, I'll be more than happy to keep you company. If you want to

go a store to get some new clothing, and then Lucy will go - I think I'd stand out a little bit in the ladies changing room!"

That last bit got me a smile, and I went on "If Marie wants to go out without me or Lucy, and then Sandra or Robyn - or more likely, both - will keep her company."

Again, Michelle's expression didn't look too pleased at that idea, so I told her "Just so you know, Lucy has been given a Federal permit to carry a gun - and the only reason she got it is because she's already gone through a couple of different FBI 'combat' gun ranges, and shown that she can shoot. Sandra already has her own gun, and both her and Robyn are pretty darn good shots. Sandra's old enough to have a concealed carry permit - I checked this afternoon - and she's already said that she'd like to be able to have the gun with her all the time. So in the next day or so, I'm going to go down with her to the police station, and we're going to get her the license."

Michelle looked at me strangely and asked "You'd put your wife and daughter in the way between me and Frenchy?"

I shook my head and said "No, I wouldn't PUT them there. I'm telling you that they've already said that they are *willing* to do these things, and *want* to do them. When I asked Sandra this afternoon if she still wanted to carry her pistol with her all the time, she told me that she certainly did, and in no uncertain terms. Then she asked **me** if that meant that she'd be able to have it with her so she could watch out for Marie if they wanted to go out someplace."

Her curiosity got the better of her, and Michelle asked "You'd let them do that? Why?"

"Yes, I'd let them do that - because Sandra and Robyn are both old enough, and mature enough, to understand what it is they're offering to do. But I'm still worried about them enough that they won't be doing that until and unless Lucy or I are available to watch over them. If they want to go to the mall, that's fine - but Lucy or I will be nearby, even if we're not actually WITH them. You might not realize it, but those two girls are more than capable of handling themselves."

Michelle gave me an appraising glance, looked over at Lucy, who simply nodded, and then back to me before she said "I guess they'd have to be. If they've already been through all that other stuff, and being YOUR girls, I guess I can trust them as much as you do. Okay, if you think you know somebody that can make it so me and Marie can get outside now and then, I'm all for it."

Lucy took Michelle's hand again and assured her "I'm not going to just tell you 'trust us', Michelle. Before either one of you goes outside, you'll know that what Dan and I are telling you is right."

Michelle studied Lucy's face for a few moments before deciding she was satisfied with what she saw there. Turning back to me, she said "You said Sandra has her own gun?" I

nodded, and she went on "And I expect you and Lucy do, too." Lucy and I both nodded, and Michelle asked "Then what about all these guns in the house? Do I have to worry about Marie finding one of them? I know it sounds silly, after all the guns and such Frenchy had around, but...."

Lucy smiled, and said "No, you don't. We figured to just keep them out of the way. Sandra keeps hers - unloaded - in a locked case, anyway; she and Robyn each carry one of the keys on a chain around their necks. Dan and I have a small gun cabinet in our bedroom that we lock our guns in when we're not wearing them - like when we're in bed. It has a pushbutton combination lock on the door that **we** can open REAL quick if we have to, and it's VERY solid. On top of all that, we keep the extra ammunition - each of us carries several extra magazines - for the guns in a separate place: a very heavy, very solid locker out in Dan's office. All of us already know that guns can be dangerous, and we're all VERY careful."

That seemed to more than satisfy Michelle's worries; she was visibly relaxed by the time Lucy finished.

About that time, Michelle broke into a yawn that had her jaw audibly creaking. When she closed her mouth again, she blushed slightly and said "I'm sorry. It's just that it's been a long, hard time since I was able to relax even this much. I guess I'm a little more tired from it than I realized."

Lucy and I both grinned at her before I said "That's fine, Michelle - I expect that both of us understand. If you want to go ahead and go to bed, neither one of us will be offended."

"I think I'd like that - to sleep in a real bed, for a change. Uh, do I need to get up for anything tomorrow?"

Lucy answered "Not unless you want to. Robyn and Sandra head for school about seven thirty or so, I leave for work about eight. If you or Marie aren't up to moving around by then, don't worry about it - Dan's a pretty fair cook, and you're both more than welcome to fix anything you like for yourselves."

"Oh, I don't think we'll be sleeping that late - but thank you. I guess we'll see you in the morning."

Lucy and I each wished her a good night, and she got up and headed for the stairs.

When she was gone, Lucy made a beeline for my lap, pulling my arms around her as she buried her face in my chest as she started crying. I knew what the problem was, and just sat there holding her, and rubbing her back as she wept in pity and sympathy for Michelle and Marie's lives up to that point.

She'd finished her cry and had dried her tears when Robyn and Sandra came down to wish us a good night and let us know that Marie had already gone to bed - but that



Michelle had stepped into her room. They saw Lucy's reddened eyes, but she just shook her head to let them know that she was okay again. Each of them gave us a kiss - and not just on the cheek, either, since neither Michelle nor Marie was around.

Some time later, Lucy and I went up to bed ourselves - where Lucy made it more than clear that she wanted the reassurance of my arms around her as we drifted off to sleep.

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The next morning, Michelle and Marie came into the kitchen together as the rest of us were finishing breakfast. Lucy got up and went into the kitchen to show them where all the different dishes and things were, and offered to fix them some breakfast. Michelle politely declined, saying that coffee was fine for her. Marie had come on over to where the girls and I were sitting, and hesitantly taken a seat next to them - but away from me. I carefully didn't notice, or say anything, figuring that she was probably having an attack of nerves, and wasn't too sure I wasn't going to suddenly do something Frenchy-like (whatever that might have been). Even so, she licked her lips as she watched Sandra and Robyn finishing up their first plates-full of scrambled eggs, bacon, fried potatoes, and toast. There was more on serving plates, but Marie didn't seem inclined to either help herself, or ask for any.

Sandra and Robyn noticed, though. Robyn finished first, took a little more from the serving plates, and then said "I guess I cooked more than I should have - I've already had enough, and there's *still* some left." Sandra responded by saying "Yeah, I think so, too - I've already had too much!" With a smile, she turned to Marie and asked "Would you like some? You'd be doing Sandra and me a favor if you could finish off most of this; I really don't want to have to throw it away or anything."

Marie gave her a small nod of agreement, and Robyn answered "Great! Thanks *so* much! Here, I'll get a plate for you..." before getting up and going into the kitchen. Marie watched her, as Robyn had doubtless expected, to find out where the dishes were kept; from there, glasses and the rest would be nearby. As if to make it as easy for Marie as possible, Robyn casually opened up another cabinet and pulled out two different sizes of glasses, as she and Sandra had - a small one for juice, a larger one for milk. Off to the side, I could almost see Marie memorizing where the items had been, so she'd be able to find them herself later.

Back at the breakfast table, Michelle and Lucy had both seated themselves - Lucy next to me, Michelle on the other side of her. When Robyn was seated again, Marie hesitantly dished herself out some breakfast; when she was done, Sandra and Robyn began including her in their conversation as though she'd been having breakfast with them for years. For our part, Lucy and I did much the same for Michelle. As the meal went on, both of them visibly relaxed.

Finally, it was time for the girls to head off to school. Both of them got up and took their dishes to the kitchen and put them in the dishwasher - giving Marie, and even Michelle,

enough time to see where it was without making it obvious what they were doing. Sandra told Marie to take her time with breakfast; and that they'd be right back down.

True to their word, both of them were back as soon as they could brush their teeth and collect their school things. They came back to sit with the rest of us as they finished off their juice. When they were ready to go, they kissed me and Lucy goodbye before Robyn told Marie "You go ahead and decide what you want to do with your room, today, okay? When we get back, we can help you with anything you're not sure about. There's a stack of decorating magazines in our room, so don't be afraid to look in them for ideas and stuff."

Marie gave a hesitant shake of her head, and then Robyn and Sandra both hugged her before leaving for school.

Michelle watched all of this, but didn't say anything.

Some time later, Lucy left to finish getting ready for work, and stopped off to give me her own kiss before heading out the door.

When they were gone, it was just me, Michelle, and Marie at the table - and both of them suddenly had an attack of bashful. I pretended not to notice, asking Marie "Do you miss going to school, Marie?" She nodded, apparently not trusting herself to speak, and I told her "If you want, I'll be happy to put together a kind of study plan for you, so you don't get too far behind. I know it's kind of a drag not being able to go to school right now, but that doesn't mean you can't keep learning. Would you like that?"

She brightened considerably at the idea, and managed to tell me "Yeah, I would, Mr. Andrews, if it isn't too much trouble."

I just smiled at her and said "Just call me Dan - and no, it isn't too much trouble. We've got plenty of computers around here, and it won't be any bother at all to set one up for you to use. It won't be the same as having a teacher and class in the room with you, but you won't have to raise your hand to go to the bathroom, either!" - tossing in that last part just to see if I couldn't get a smile from her. I did even better than that, earning myself a soft laugh from her, and a smile from Michelle.

Standing up, I told them "I'm going to go ahead and get started for the day. Feel free to look around, fix yourselves anything you want to eat or drink, watch TV or a movie, or anything else. I'll be out in my office most of the time, so if you need anything, you can either come out there, or pick up one of the phones; all of them have a button with my name on it, so all you have to do is push it, and I'll answer. Okay?"

They both smiled and nodded their understanding, and I put my empty coffee cup in the dishwasher before going out to my office. There, I took a laptop and quickly got it configured for Robyn to use and transferred her files and configuration settings from the computer in her room (where Marie was staying) to it. Then I carefully deleted her

personal files from the desktop machine and set it up for Marie to use. That done, I made calls to a couple of my clients - companies that wrote educational software. In both cases, they were more than happy to make copies of programs suitable for Marie's age available for me to download - particularly after I gave them a brief, and censored, ♦ explanation of why I needed it. Getting the software itself took only a few minutes, since I had a high-bandwidth connection. From there, it was a simple matter to get the software installed and configured. While I was at it, I set up another laptop for Michelle to use, carefully installing some tutorials and other software geared toward the beginning and novice user, as well as some basic programs.

By the time I was done, it was getting close to 11:00; perfect, I thought - by the time I get things set up, and have them started on the computers, it'll be time for lunch.

Carrying Michelle's laptop with me, I went back inside the house - finding both of them in the living room watching TV. I got Michelle's attention, and said "If you don't mind, I'd like to go into your room so I can set this computer up for you."

She looked at me as if I'd lost my mind before saying "Why should I mind? It's *your* house!"

I smiled and answered "Yeah - but it's *YOUR* room."

Obviously surprised at my response, she answered "Uh, sure - if you really think I can get anything out of it, go ahead."

I laughed and told her "I think you can get something out of it. I'll get it set up, and when you're ready, I'll show you how to get started with it. From there, I don't think you'll have any trouble."

Her expression made it clear what she thought of THAT.

Excusing myself, I went upstairs and into her room - and saw that she hadn't done a thing to 'personalize' it. I went ahead and got the computer tied into our intranet - wiring the place for data had been one of the first changes I'd had made - and verified that everything worked.

I went back to the living room, and both of them turned to look at me. I told them "Okay, you've each got a computer to yourself. Marie, I can show you the programs you can use to keep learning now, if you don't mind. Then, after lunch, I can work with you, Michelle."

I could see on Marie's face that she was eager to get on the computer; Michelle wasn't so sure. Marie turned to look at her mother; after a moment, Michelle got up with her to keep us company.

When we got to the door to her bedroom, I stopped and simply waited - it took Marie a second to realize that I wasn't going to simply walk into 'her' room. Shyly, she opened it up and led her mother and me inside. I saw that Robyn and Sandra had indeed gotten a pretty good start on decorating it for Marie - and that there was still plenty left for Marie to do, if she wanted. Inside the room, I gestured for Marie to take the chair while I kneeled down next to her while Michelle stood behind us. It only took a few minutes to get Marie familiarized with the computer and software. A couple more minutes, and she was feeling fairly comfortable, and was happily running a science program. I stood up and backed away a little, leaving Marie to her own devices. After a bit, I told Michelle "She's got it, now. She won't have any trouble from here on."

Michelle looked at me strangely, and followed when I gestured with my head that we should leave Marie alone. Out in the hall, I carefully pulled the door to her room almost all the way closed before turning to Michelle and saying "She might not have gotten to do much with whatever computers she had access to before, but she definitely remembers how to use them. It just took her a few moments to remember a couple things, and she was fine."

Michelle asked me "What was that she was doing? When we left, I mean?"

"She was starting a middle-school level physics program. It will walk her through some basic physics, testing her along the way, and going back over the things she has trouble with."

"What about other classes? Like writing, and arithmetic, and such?"

"It's all part of the program. It'll let her do the physics - science - only for a little while, and then she'll have to go on to something else. The program was written for parents that home-school their kids, so it won't let them study just a few things; they have to go through ALL the subjects before they can start another class in any one of them. When she's done with the science, she'll have to do something else - then something else after that. Until she's gone through the whole list, she can't go back to anything she's already been through. There are two different programs she can use, and both of them do pretty much the same thing in the same way; the only real difference between them is how they go about the actual teaching. One of them is like having an actual teacher, the other is more like studying with a friend."

"You already had that... software?"

"Oh, no! I called a couple of the companies that I've done work for, and they were glad to let me have a free copy."

"You can do that? Get free computer stuff from folks you've worked for?" she asked.

"From these companies, yes. The work I did saved them a lot more than what one copy of the program cost."

"What do you do with computers, exactly?"

"I'm a programmer" I answered, and then seeing the confusion on her face, added "I tell the computer what to do, and how to do it, so other people can use it."

That seemed to clear things up enough for her, and the look she gave me pretty much let me know that she thought I was some kind of Smart Guy. She gave herself a little shake, and said "Well, whatever it is you do, it sure looks like you're pretty good at it. I know Marie was a little scared of being around you, and I think she was worried about doing something to your computer. But you were real patient and gentle with her, and that made her feel a lot better. After being around Frenchy all her life, she's a bit jumpy around men" - the last part apologetically.

"That's okay - I expect I'd be jumpy if it'd happened to me, too. Maybe here she'll learn that she doesn't have to be jumpy any more."

Michelle gave me an appraising look and answered "Maybe so."

Just then, we heard the clock strike the half-hour; Michelle looked at it and said "Eleven thirty. It's getting toward lunch time. Would you mind if I fixed it?"

"Not at all" I answered, adding "I usually just fix myself a sandwich."

She gave a small snort and said "Sandwiches are fine... for a picnic. For a meal, you should be having something with a little more to it."

I laughed and answered "I'll leave that up to you, and then. I'm going to go on back to my office for a bit; what time should I come in for a *proper* lunch?" - earning myself a smile from her before she answered "Oh, a little after Noon would be fine."

"And you and Marie will be eating with me, right?"

She looked a bit uncertain at that, but said "If that's what you want, I guess we will."

I looked into her eyes and said "Michelle, it's not about what I want - except for the fact that what I *want* is for you and Marie to realize that you're WELCOME here. If you don't want to have lunch with me, and that's YOUR decision, and then that's fine. What I need you to understand is that both of you are more than welcome to eat with me, or not. I'd like the company, but I'm not going to force you to do anything you don't want to do - I'm not Frenchy."

She gave me a faint smile and answered "No, you're not Frenchy. That's something I think Marie and me'll have to get used to. It's just that it's been so long, it might take us a while, is all."

"That's fine. Honestly, Michelle - you and Marie are both a part of our home, now. That's why I asked you if it was okay for me to go into YOUR room, and why I waited for Marie to open the door to HER room: so that both of you know that all of us here are going to respect you and your privacy. As long as you're with us, those are YOUR rooms, to do with whatever you like, short of tearing them up. If you or Marie want a different color on the walls, let me know and we - you and I - will take care of it. If you or Marie want to hang pictures or something, go ahead and have fun. Anything you want to do that doesn't need a hammer and nails to fix is fine with me. Understand?"

Michelle looked at me with such gratitude in her eyes that it got me pissed at Frenchy all over again - that he would treat Michelle and Marie so badly that they'd stopped seeing basic courtesy as their *right*.

"Another thing I want you to know is that you don't have to be afraid or embarrassed or ashamed to ask us for anything you need that we might forget. Both of us know that there are going to be things that you'll need or want that we won't think of, and that you'll want to go places so you can do things for yourselves sometimes. That's why I have somebody coming to help you learn how to keep people from recognizing you - so you CAN go out. You'll still have me or Lucy, or both, watching out for you, but you'll be OUT. The last thing is that you and Marie should understand that all of us would be delighted if the two of you wanted to become part of our family life. If everyone wants to watch a movie, don't be afraid to **tell** us what YOU like. If there's some particular food or drink that you really like or don't like, let us know, and we'll be happy to take that into account when we go grocery shopping. Don't feel like you have to keep the same hours as us - if you want to go to bed later, or get up earlier, go ahead; just don't be surprised or upset if the rest of us don't join you. If you want a cup of coffee, and there isn't any made or it's too old, don't be afraid to make some more. If Marie wants a snack or something to drink, she should help herself to whatever she wants. If we run out of anything, we'll just get more. You're in our home, and we're willing to treat you like family - if you'll let us. Okay?"

She started to tear up a little, but managed to answer "Okay, Dan. I'll... *we'll* try."

"That's all I **ask**, Michelle. I'll go out to my office, now - watching a woman cry turns me into a big marshmallow" - the last part meant to tease her out of her tears.

She gave me a half-smile, swatted her hand at me, and said "Oh, go on!"

I looked at her, and she nodded that she was going to be okay. I smiled, and did as I'd said - went back out to my office.

Shortly after Noon, I went back inside again - and found Michelle and Marie both sitting in the breakfast nook, apparently waiting for me. I sat down across from them - I figured both were nervous - and looked over what Michelle (I presumed) had made: she'd taken last night's leftovers and turned them into hot roast beef sandwiches, complete with mashed potatoes and gravy. It was a lot more that I usually made for myself, and I thanked both of them for joining me for such a fine lunch - making Michelle beam

slightly at the compliment, and Marie blush slightly at being the focus of my attention, if only briefly.

The next order of business was to get myself wrapped around the food - and enjoying every bite of it: Michelle had clearly done *something* to it to freshen up the flavor. When I asked her about it, she looked down at her plate and said "I, uh, went ahead and found your spices, and added a couple of them to make it a little different than last night."

"You did fine - thank you" I told/reassured her.

As we were eating, I made a point of including Marie in the conversation by asking her a few innocuous questions, and paying careful attention to the answers. One thing that caught my attention was her reply when I asked her age - that she'd be sixteen in just a couple of weeks. I didn't ask what day - for what I had in mind, it really didn't matter. I also asked her what kinds of things she was interested in - and listened to the answers.

By the time lunch was finished, both of them were visibly more relaxed - not just in our home, but around me, too.

When I was done, I got up and started to reach for the dishes; Marie jumped up and all but snatched them away from me, with a hurried "That's my job" - and blushing furiously when I quietly told her "Then thank you, Marie."

As she took the plates over to the dishwasher, I asked Michelle "Are you ready to start learning how to become a computer genius?"

She snorted and said "I'll be happy if I can just learn how to turn the darn things *on*!"

I laughed and answered "Oh, I think you'll do a little better than that."

Her eyes told me she wasn't entirely sure I wasn't lying to her, but she got up and led the way up to her room anyway. She didn't hesitate to open her door and lead the way to the computer I'd set up for her. I had her sit in the chair while I knelt next to her. I talked her through turning it on - applauding her when the screen lit up, making her laugh - and getting logged on to it. From there, we went on to opening up the first of the tutorials I'd installed, and getting her started on that. After the first few screens, she was starting to relax a bit, so I discretely shut up and moved back a little, letting her go at her own pace.

By the time she was done, she was easily moving around, clicking and double-clicking, dragging and dropping, and so on. When the program ended, she suddenly looked around and saw that I was sitting back from her and the computer. Blushing, she said "I guess it isn't so hard, after all, is it?"

I grinned and answered "No, not if you want to learn. You're doing great. There are some more lessons like that, to help you learn about the computer and how to use it. All of them work the same way - they'll let you practice something until you're comfortable you

know it; then they'll take you to the next part. Take as much time as you need or want; it's a computer, so it won't get impatient or yell at you. I've set up the lessons in an order that *should* make it easier for you, and make more sense. If you have any problems or questions, don't be afraid to ask: this stuff was all new to me, one time, too. When you're comfortable you know how to use the computer, let me know, and I can get you started on a few other things that I'll bet you'll think are pretty fun. Okay?"

She nodded happily, and turned back to the computer, starting up the next in the tutorials I'd installed. I stood up and made my way out to the hall - turning back, I could see that she was already engrossed in learning. I smiled to myself as I pulled her door about three-quarters closed. On my way back to my office, I met Marie, who was putting the dishes away from the dishwasher. I thanked her - embarrassing her slightly - and asked if she was doing okay with her studies. She gave me a happy nod, and I told her that if she had any problems with anything, she could ask any of us and we'd be glad to help. She nodded again, and with a slight blush, turned back to her self-appointed task.

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When it got close to time for the girls to be getting home from school, I got myself a beer out of the fridge in my office and went out to sit next to the pool, where I'd be able to see them when they parked.

A few minutes later, I saw the door open, and Michelle looking out at me. I told her "Come on out, if you want - nobody can see this part from the street." She looked a bit hesitant, but came out anyway - then smiling when she felt the warm sun on her back.

She came over to where I was, and took a seat nearby. She hesitated a few moments, and then asked "Do you think Lucy would mind if I cooked tonight?"

I laughed and said "Actually, it's my turn to cook - and no, I don't mind!"

Michelle looked surprised, and asked "You really cook?"

I grinned at her and said "Yeah, after a fashion. Not as well at most things as Lucy or the girls, but better at some. I don't have as much variety as they do, either. But I haven't poisoned any of us yet, and it gives Lucy and the girls a break, so I do my share. My specialty is Burnt Offering" - making her laugh.

Michelle was about to say something else when Sandra's car appeared in the drive. Both of us watched as she carefully pulled into 'her' parking space and shut the engine off. She and Robyn got out, and both came over to where I was to give me a kiss on the cheek.

I picked up my bottle of beer and had a swallow; Sandra took it from me, had a sip, and handed it to Robyn who had one, too, before handing it back. Michelle saw all of this, and I saw more than a trace of fear in her eyes. Robyn and Sandra must have seen it, too, and they both realized what the problem must be: that Michelle was afraid that I wasn't



going to stop with the one beer, and from there, become a problem for her the way Frenchy had.

Sandra spoke up first, talking to Michelle, and getting right to the point: "Michelle, you don't have to worry. I have **never** seen Uncle Dan get anywhere even *close* to drunk. Remember, he's not Frenchy - you don't have to be afraid of him, for ANY reason."

Michelle seemed to realize that she'd reacted in a way that wasn't entirely appropriate - but it was also clear that she wasn't entirely sure that it wasn't INappropriate, either.

Robyn had her turn next, saying "Michelle, look at him, and remember what just happened. Think about what was going on BEFORE we got here. You're out here with him, so you must have come outside after he was here - I don't think you would have come outside unless you were sure you wouldn't be seen. So, you were probably watching for him, so you could talk to him, right?"

Michelle nodded, not sure where Robyn was going.

"If you were watching for him, and then you know when he came out here - you probably saw him go from his office to the chair. Now, think about it: did he stagger? Did he do anything to make you think that he'd been drinking before he came outside?"

Michelle shook her head, and Robyn went on "So he looked okay then. You know how long you've been out here - probably not long, since the beer bottle is still pretty cold. So you can be pretty sure he's had just the one beer - and hasn't had much to drink from it. Do you think you have any reason to think that he's going to have more than that one beer? Or that even if he does, that he'll have enough to get drunk? Think about what you know about him, and decide if you think he's *really* the kind of man that would get drunk - never mind do anything like Frenchy would."

Michelle DID think about it. And after a few seconds, we could all see it as she visibly relaxed - and on the heels of that, blushed before she opened her mouth to say "I'm sorry, Dan. I saw the beer, and I just... went back to all the times that Frenchy got drunk, and then beat me. God's honest truth, I didn't even think about it being you - I just saw the beer, and lost it. I'm sorry."

I leaned forward and gently patted her hand before saying "Its okay, Michelle. I understand. I think ALL of us do. All of us knew that after being with Frenchy the way you were, there were going to be 'issues' that all of us would have to deal with. I'm sorry that one of them came up so fast - but then again, this is one less issue for later, right?"

She managed a brief smile before asking "You... you let them drink, too?"

I turned as Sandra answered "Yes, he lets us drink, too. Not often, and not much, as you saw - Robyn and I each had only a small sip. Uncle Dan figures that letting us learn how beer and such affect us here at home, there's a lot less chance that we'll do anything

stupid when we're out by ourselves. It works, too - I've been to a couple of parties where people brought beer, and even liquor. Other kids, that don't have parents that think like him, drink too much and get stupid. I know what it does to me, and I have only a little bit - just enough to be polite. There are a few girls at school that aren't virgins any more because of how much they drank at some of these parties. A couple of them have even gotten pregnant. That *hasn't* happened to me."

"Or me, either. Both of us HAVE been drunk - but only once, and at home. That's how we know how it affects us; and how much we can drink. Dad lets us make little mistakes at home, so we don't make big ones other places." Robyn offered.

What neither of them was telling her was that they'd already given their virginity to someone - namely, me. Robyn had been thirteen, Sandra fifteen, when it happened. But that wasn't exactly pertinent to the situation, just then, and would only distract her from the point they were trying to make.

And making successfully, if the expression on Michelle's face was any indication.

I don't think she was entirely convinced - but she'd heard enough that she had a different perspective, and something to think about.

I ended that particular conversation by telling her "Anyway, as I was saying, I'm not the best cook in the house - but I can get the job done. If you want to cook tonight, and then you'll be sparing the rest of them from one of my creations. I just ask that the next time you offer, it's on one of their nights, so I don't get accused of bribing you or anything."

Robyn and Sandra both grinned before Sandra told her "He's just pulling your leg. He's actually a pretty good cook. Not as good as Aunt Lucy, but better than us - at least, a little bit. But we're learning. If you're going to cook tonight, I think both of us would like to be there, so we can learn from you, too."

Michelle looked amused at their evaluation of my kitchen talents, and a trifle proud that they would want to learn something from her. She hesitated a moment, and then told them "Okay, if you want to learn, you're welcome. But only one, I think - otherwise, it might be too crowded. Next time, the other one, okay?"

Both girls nodded, and Robyn said "We'll figure it out. Is Marie busy? We'd like to see her, if she isn't."

Michelle assured them that Marie had been laying on the bed, reading, shortly before she'd come outside. Robyn and Sandra excused themselves, and went inside.

I took another sip from my beer, and Michelle waited until I set the bottle down before she said "I really am sorry, Dan. When Robyn reminded me about it, I realized that you weren't the kind of guy that I've gotten used to."

"No problem, Michelle. Like I said, I think all of us know there are going to be rough spots along the way. You and Marie shouldn't be afraid to let the rest of us know when you're uncomfortable about something - we'll be glad to listen, and do what we can to help."

"Thank you, Dan. We will - or won't, I guess I should say", she replied with a smile before going back inside.

I was still sitting outside, my beer long gone, when Lucy got home. I met her at her car and kissed her, and then carried her briefcase for her as we walked up to the bedroom. Along the way, I told her about Michelle's offer to cook supper - and that the next time, it would be for her or the girls.

Michelle called us all - except for Robyn, who had won the assistant cook lottery - in to supper about six thirty. Once we were seated, she and Robyn brought in the results of their efforts: Cajun food. It was definitely something new for us, and we were all looking forward to trying it out. Michelle told us "I learned to cook Cajun for Frenchy, when we were first married. He was from the bayou, and missed his home cooking - so I learned how, and he helped me get it just right. I haven't done it for a while, but this turned out pretty good. I hope you like it."

The meal started with stuffed artichokes, which were delicious. From there, it was on to jambalaya, followed by stuffed pork chops with caramelized onions, cornbread, and a sweet potato casserole. Dessert - which none of us was sure we had room for - turned out to be bread pudding with bourbon in it. When I commented on it, Michelle hesitantly told me that she'd had Robyn get it from the liquor cabinet. I assured her that was fine, saying that I was just surprised that bourbon could be used to such good effect in food - making her smile.

When it was clear that we'd all had our fill, Sandra got up to start clearing the dishes - followed, a moment later, by Marie. I started to get up to help, but Michelle just gestured me to sit down again, saying "As much as you helped me and Marie today, you just sit there."

Michelle saw Lucy looking at me questioningly, and told her "He got Marie and me both set up with computers this morning. Marie spent the better part of the afternoon on schoolwork while I was learning how to operate mine. He was real polite and patient with both of us, and helped us a lot."

That reminded me to tell Robyn that I'd moved her files over to a laptop, and that I'd get it for her after supper. She told me that was fine; she knew that I would make sure everything she might be interested in or want would have been moved over without my prying into what might be in her files. Both she and Sandra knew that I trusted them implicitly.

When Sandra and Marie came out the next time, they had cups of coffee for Lucy, me, and Michelle; all of us thanked them - causing a slight blush on Marie - and they continued clearing the table. When they were done, Robyn excused herself and the three of them left us alone.

I told Michelle that I'd spoken with the man that would be showing them - and me, I admitted - how to change their appearance so they wouldn't be recognized. She looked interested, and I went on to tell her that he'd be there the following Saturday - just a couple days away. She laughed when I said "If you can hold out until then, I *think* we can get you someplace where you can do some shopping." She answered by telling me that compared to the confines of the motor home, she felt our house was like being in a shopping mall - making Lucy and I both smile.

When we'd finished our coffee, we decided to adjourn to the living room - me after making a detour to get the laptop for Robyn and giving it to her.

Once all of us were seated, Lucy told Michelle "I've noticed that Marie seems to be, well, pretty shy. It seems like any time Dan or I compliment her, or say something nice to her, she blushes and gets embarrassed."

Michelle answered the implied question by saying "I know. You see, pretty much the whole time she was growing up, the only one she had around that showed her any kindness at all was me - everyone else either didn't pay her any attention, or paid her the wrong KIND of attention. She doesn't really know how to act when somebody besides me gives her a kind word."

The look on Lucy's face was a mixture of horror, disgust, and sympathy. Michelle saw it, and said "Yeah, that's pretty much how I feel about it, too - only more, since she's my daughter. Around you, Lucy, she's not so bad, what with you being another woman, and all - she's still shy and all that, just not as much. Around Dan, it's another story. All she knows from grown men is that they're loud, mean, hurtful, and not to be trusted about *anything*. I wish it was different, but it isn't. What you did today, Dan, helped some - but not much. There's still too much of the other in her for what you do to wash it away any time soon."

Lucy looked at Michelle in curiosity, and Michelle explained how I'd waited for Marie to open the door, and hadn't 'crowded' her when working with her on the computer. Lucy nodded, and told her "That's just the way he is - polite and all that, whenever people will let him. He seems to know when somebody needs some kind of special attention or handling, and he does what he has to, to help them out."

"That's what he did with me, too, getting me started learning about computers. He didn't crowd me any, and was as patient as anybody I ever knew. And once I started to get the hang of it, he just kind of eased back and let me have at it. I didn't even know he did it until afterwards."

Michelle went on "You said he's polite and everything when people will let him?" Lucy nodded, and Michelle went on "What do you mean by that?"

Lucy laughed, and told her "Have you ever been in a store, and gotten bad service?" Michelle assured her that she had, and Lucy continued "What Dan does is wait nice and patiently until he gets someone's attention. Then he asks for their manager. He's still real polite, and real calm, so they try to ask him what he needs a manager for. He says he needs to tell them something; he's still polite, but from the way he talks, they know they'd better do what he says. When the manager shows up, Dan calmly and politely chews them out for how bad the service was. He never raises his voice, and he never uses profanity - and that just seems to make it even worse for them. If the service was bad enough, he'll even tell them that they've lost whatever chance they had to sell something to him; he'll hand everything he's carrying to the manager, and tell them that their bad service cost them the sale, and walk out. Other times, if the people he's dealing with are rude or anything like that, he'll be just as rude - usually more! - as they are, until they settle down. He's got a stubborn streak in him that's truly amazing: once he sets his mind to something, that's it - unless you've got a truly exceptional reason he should, he's not going to change his mind. He'll just stand there and look at you, waiting for you to run out of steam, and then he'll go do what he was going to in the first place."

Michelle looked at me for a moment, and then said to Lucy "It sounds like he's not too easy to live with."

Lucy laughed again, and said "On the contrary - he's VERY easy to live with. He treats everyone with courtesy and respect, as long as they do the same toward him. He's so patient with people that don't know to deal with him that way, too - until he decides, as a last choice, that they aren't GOING to treat him the way he does them. Then it's over for them - they won't get another thing out of him, ever. He's willing to learn from anyone - and expects them to be willing to learn from him. When he comes across someone that can't or won't learn, he just ignores them."

"You two ever fight?" Michelle asked.

Lucy smiled before answering "No, never *fought*. We've had just a couple of disagreements about things, and we managed to work those out. I've gotten upset with him a few times, but it usually turned out that he was being perfectly reasonable, and that I'd made assumptions or some other mistake and didn't know or understand why he was doing what he was. He's never hurt me, or even raised a hand toward me - or the girls, for that matter. He won't even *spank* them. He just tells them why he thinks something they did was wrong, and why he's disappointed in them. They know how much he loves them, so when he talks to them like that, it just makes them feel that much worse."

Lucy looked at me, and I could see how much she loved me - and Michelle must have seen it, too, because she got a wistful look on her face before Lucy turned back and told her "Every day I'm alive, I thank God, the Universe, or whoever, that I met him. He's as tender and gentle with me and the girls as any of us could ever want. We all know that he

loves us with everything he's got, and all of us know how far he would go to protect us from being hurt - or to get anyone that DID hurt us."

"What do you mean?"

Lucy looked at me, and I nodded that she should go ahead. She did, telling Michelle about all that had happened during the two previous times that I'd helped the FBI - including how she knew, but couldn't prove, that I'd had a couple of my Army friends come into town and scare the man that had killed Sandra's parents into confessing to the police. She finished by telling Michelle "The only time that I've been genuinely angry with him was when he came home to help Sandra after her folks were killed. I knew from the smell that he'd been firing his gun; when I got a chance to look, I saw that he'd used up two of the three magazines of ammunition he carries - so I knew that it wasn't just a 'small' situation. What upset me wasn't that he'd been in some kind of gunfight, but that he hadn't said anything to me about it. I knew that he didn't want to worry me, but not knowing made me feel like he was leaving me out of part of his life - and I love him too much to want that to happen. I got a little mad, and told him what I was mad about. He understood, damn him, and apologized before I could even *say* anything to him!"

Michelle smiled in sympathy and understanding before Lucy turned to look at me again, her eyes telling me how much I meant to her - and reminding me (as if I needed it) how much I loved her, and why.

Michelle saw how we were looking at each other, and I saw a deep sadness cross her face before she got control of herself. By the time Lucy and I were looking at her again, she was the model of composure.

Michelle looked at me and said "If you're the kind of man that can make a woman like Lucy love you, and have those girls adore you the way they do, and then I expect that me and Marie'll be safe enough around you. I've got to admit that I was a little nervous, what with you being the only man here, and having this pretty woman and those girls around. But I've had a chance to watch you some, and seen how you treat all of them. I know I don't have to worry about you doin' anything that would make us uncomfortable, never mind comin' after us. I know if you were doin' *anything* bad to them, they wouldn't behave the way they do around you."

Lucy smiled at her, and said "I told you last night that I wouldn't just say 'trust us'; I said that before either one of you went outside, you'd know for yourselves that you could. It sounds like you know it, now."

Michelle gave her a grin, and said "When you told me that, I wasn't any too sure you were right to be that confident. But it sure looks to me like you had good reason. Yeah, I trust you - both of you. Marie, she'll be a little longer - if she ever trusts you, Dan."

"Whether she trusts me or not doesn't matter, really" I answered, to Michelle's surprise. "What matters is that before long, she'll know that she doesn't have to be afraid of me - and that's enough."

Michelle thought that over for a moment before nodding and saying "I reckon so - for now. If she can learn that not all men are like Frenchy from you, and then that's gonna be a good start on learning to trust them; at least, the decent ones."

I changed the subject to something else by telling her a little more about the upcoming 'disguise' school - who the man was, and what he did, as well as letting her know that he'd suggested a few things that we might want to have handy to help things along. She looked curious, and I said "I think it'll be pretty clear when you see them, and after you listen to what he has to say. He told me a little bit about what he's going to do, but not much. I've told Lucy about some of the things he suggested, and she'll be asking you for some information."

Michelle got a look of curiosity on her face and asked "What kind of information would Lucy ask me that you couldn't?"

"Some of your clothing sizes", I answered.

She still didn't understand, and Lucy offered "What he's not saying is that one of the things Mike told him was to get bra sizes - yours and Marie's."

Michelle looked mildly concerned, and I hastened to reassure her "No, there isn't going to be anything like that happening. I'm going to have to ask you to just wait until you hear what he has to say; THEN it will all make sense."

Michelle still wasn't too sure, and Lucy told her "That's why it's ME asking for that information - so *I* can take care of getting you some things."

Michelle looked back and forth between us before seeming to come to a decision. She looked at Lucy, but I knew she was talking to me, too when she said "I figured I could trust you two, and I'm going to. You said the stuff you're going to get will help, and I'll take you at your word. After what Frenchy's done with me, I'm not going to worry about whether or not Dan knows what **bra** size Marie and me wear. For her, it's a thirty-two 'B'; mine is thirty-four 'C'. Is there anything else you need to know?"

Lucy patted her hand and answered "No, that's fine, Marie. Any other clothing you need, you'll be able to buy for yourselves."

That reminded me about something else, and I told Michelle "I got a call from Dale Kristofferson today. He's going to be stopping by tomorrow or the next day with some money for you. He said he doesn't know how much you managed to get away with, or how much of it you have left; he wants to make sure that you can get anything you and Marie need in the way of clothes, soap and shampoo, and such."

Michelle managed a smile before telling us "While Marie and me were hiding out, he took care of buying anything we needed. When either of us was having our period, he was buying THAT stuff, too - and I think it embarrassed him some."

Lucy laughed, and said "The first time I went shopping with Dan, and asked him to get me a package of tampons while we were on that aisle in the store. He didn't hesitate at all - went right to the brand I told him, picked up a large package, and then *threw* it down the aisle and into the shopping basket. I knew right then that he wasn't bothered AT ALL about such things."

Michelle laughed, too, and turned to face me. I just shrugged and said "It's not like none of us knows the how and why of it, or it's any big secret. It's a woman's body preparing to let her get pregnant, is all - so why worry about it?"

Lucy laughed again, and said "See?"

That got Michelle curious, and she started asking questions about how Lucy and I met, and so on. The rest of the evening was spent with Lucy telling her about it, and from there, about her job. Lucy was just finishing up telling Michelle how business accounting *really* worked when all three of the youngsters came into the living room. Marie went over to sit next to Michelle while Robyn and Sandra stood next to me. Lucy and I looked up at them, and Robyn told us "We're getting tired, so we're going to go ahead and go to bed."

Lucy told them "Okay, we'll see you in the morning", and both girls leaned over to give Lucy and I each a kiss good night, and then left. When they were gone, Lucy asked Marie "You're not sleepy, yet?"

Nervously, Marie answered that she wasn't. Lucy smiled and told her "That's okay, Marie. I expect this is still kind of new to you, so maybe you're having a little trouble adjusting. I promise, you'll be just fine. Are you having fun with Robyn and Sandra?"

Marie graced us with a shy smile and nodded her head before answering "Yeah, a lot. I didn't get to spend much time with other girls before, and it's really fun to be around them."

I smiled in reply, and she fixed her eyes on me as she said "They also told me how nice you are, Mister Andrews. They said that you would **never** do anything to hurt me or make me afraid. I told them that I was still a little scared, but they said that it was okay - I'd see for myself that they were telling me the truth."

I leaned forward to slowly and gently take her hand before I told her "You can call me Dan, Marie, just like you can call her Lucy; both of us would like that very much. Sandra and Robyn should have told you that I'm also mean to them sometimes."



She got a nervous expression on her face, and I went on "I do things like make them clean their rooms, and turn down their music, and do their homework, and all *kinds* of terrible things."

It took her a second to realize I was teasing a little; then she smiled and managed to tell me "I don't think that's so mean. I think you're more like the way they said you are - like when you were talking to me about the computer this morning: real patient and gentle and everything. I was kind of afraid, but you didn't get mad or yell or anything, so I felt better after a while."

I patted her hand gently and told her "I'm glad you felt better, Marie. I want you to know that you don't have to be afraid here - and all of us would like to be your friend, if you'll let us. Okay?"

She gave me a shy smile and answered "I think I'd like that... Dan."

I released her hand, and she turned to look at Michelle to ask "I think I'd better go to bed, now, Mom. I want to get up early tomorrow so I can study on the computer some more. Is that okay?"

Michelle's eyes misted up, and she answered "Of course it is, honey. You go ahead; I'll be up in a little bit myself."

Marie got up and kissed her mother on the cheek, blushed a little when she saw us watching, then quickly made her way upstairs. ♦ When she was out of earshot, Michelle told me "Thank you, Dan, for talking to her like that. I know she's still a little afraid - but it's nowhere near what she was like around Frenchy, or while we were hiding from him. I think it was worse on her than it was on me. As bad as Frenchy was, she pretty much knew how to deal with him; on our own, she doesn't know WHAT to do anymore."

"I figured as much" I answered. "A few more days, a week maybe, and I'll bet she's fine again."

"I hope you're right. In the mean time, I think I'm due for some sleep, myself."

"Go ahead - we won't be far behind you" Lucy assured her.

When she was gone, Lucy told me "Every time I see Marie acting like she's afraid someone's going to jump on her for something, it just pisses me off all over again - that an asshole like Frenchy could DO something like that to an innocent little girl like that."

Lucy's vehemence - and choice of words - surprised me. I looked over at her, and she blushed slightly before saying "I'm sorry, Dan - but it really galls me!"

I sighed and pulled her close for a hug before answering "I know. It makes me mad, too - but now she's away from him, and she can learn how to be a normal fifteen-year-old."

Lucy sighed into my side, and said "I hope so. She's already had to deal with too much crap in her life."

Lucy and I sat there for a few more minutes before going upstairs ourselves. After we were in bed, she snuggled into my back, spooning with me, before saying "I'm always happy to be married to you, Dan. But when I hear Michelle talk, and watch Marie, it makes me realize just how damn *lucky* I am that we met each other."

I squeezed her arm - her hand was cupping my penis - and answered "I know. It's guys like Frenchy that make me ashamed to be the same sex as them - they do stuff like Michelle and Marie have had to put up with, and it leaves them thinking ALL men are like that."

Lucy gave my penis a little squeeze - felt it twitch in response - and said "That's okay. Being around you, they'll learn better."

Still holding each other, the two of us fell asleep.

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The next morning, after cleaning up and getting dressed, Lucy and I started for the kitchen - only to be greeted halfway there by the smell of fresh coffee. We looked at each other, since the girls were usually running a little later than we did. It took a moment before Lucy said "Michelle"; I knew then that Michelle had undoubtedly gotten up early enough to at least get a pot of coffee going.

When we got into the kitchen, it was clear that she'd done more than start the coffee: the aroma of food greeted us along with her cheery "Good morning!"

First on the priority list was to get ourselves some coffee; after a couple of sips, we drifted over to where the stove appeared to be entirely covered with various dishes. Once we got closer, though, we could see that it was actually just a few things: a number of various-sized omelets, hash browns, oatmeal, and stacks of toast.

Lucy and I looked over the food arrayed in front of us before looking up at Michelle - who suddenly seemed a trifle anxious. She hesitantly told us "I thought I'd get up and fix breakfast for everyone..."

That jarred Lucy, who quickly told her "That's fine, thank you. I think we were just surprised by it, is all."

"I didn't make too much, did I?"

"Oh, no" I told her, "this'll be just fine. *Might* be a little short, but I don't think anyone will complain about starving."

Michelle looked at me as though she thought I was joking. I just smiled and said "You'll see."

Lucy and I each got a plate and started putting food on it; each of us left the two largest omelets, taking smaller ones instead. After adding a ration of everything else, we went over to the breakfast nook and sat down, where there were glasses of orange juice at each place, and milk at three of them. We'd just taken our first mouthful of omelet when Robyn and Sandra appeared, closely followed by Marie. My two expressed their delight at finding food ready, and quickly got plates: Robyn loading hers with the largest omelet, Sandra with the next. Marie took what I suspected was the smallest. After that, all three loaded themselves with side dishes, and came over to join Lucy and me. Michelle then made her own plate with the remaining omelet, added the rest, and sat with us too.

A brief glance let me know that I'd been right - Marie had taken the smallest omelet; I saw Michelle give her a brief Look that made Marie look guilty. Meanwhile, all the rest of us were making happy noises about the choice of fillers Michelle had opted for: crisp bacon and American cheese, with a little sharp cheddar added for a little extra 'something'. I cleaned my plate first, and went to retrieve the plate of toast still in the kitchen, along with the rest of the hash browns and oatmeal. Lucy and I each took another slice of toast while Robyn and Sandra topped off their oatmeal.

It didn't take long before all the plates were clean and the food dishes empty. Sandra and Robyn finished off their milk, and then asked to be excused. When they stood up, Robyn said "Come on, Marie - we'll show you those magazines I told you about, so you can see if there's anything you want to do to your room."

Marie looked at her mother, got a small nod of approval, and quickly moved to join them - each of them carrying her dishes to the dishwasher and putting them in.

When they were gone, Michelle gave us a smile and said "I thought you were pulling my leg about having enough to feed everyone."

Lucy laughed and answered "Just looking at them, you wouldn't think they'd eat enough to feed a puppy; if you just watched them eat, you'd wonder how they stay so damn slender! Sometimes, it makes me jealous."

Michelle laughed too, and said "I know - I wish *I* could eat like that, and still look like they do!"

I told Michelle "Just so you know, the omelets could have been, oh, a quarter again the size they were, and that would have been about right." Michelle nodded sagely, knowing that I was just giving her a better idea of how much to make next time, not griping about that meal.

A bit later, all three girls came back downstairs - Robyn and Sandra clearly ready for school, Marie with a handful of magazines held close. My two put their knapsacks next to

the back door, and all three sat back down with us. Robyn and Sandra each had a cup of coffee while Marie went through another glass of orange juice, all three of them talking with each other. When the time came, Sandra and Robyn wished us all a good day, kissed me and Lucy on the cheek, and went out the door with a promise they'd see Marie later. Marie was visibly sad to see them go, but not overly so. A few minutes later, she excused herself, saying that she wanted to get her 'schoolwork' done.

We watched her leave, and when she was out of sight, Michelle told us "That's the happiest I've seen her in *months*, when she was with your two. With them being older and all, I don't know how long they can stand having her around, though. I remember when I was that age - it made a WORLD of difference if another girl was even *one* year older, never mind two or even four."

I answered by telling her "They can't 'stand' having her around, now."

Michelle looked both horrified and angry, until I added "They *like* being with her. Both of them have an idea of what she'd been through, remember? They already know how they'd feel, and what they'd think, if it had happened to them - so they're actually happy to be able to spend time with her: they *want* to help her get out of whatever kind of emotional and mental dungeon Frenchy might have put her in. Marie has what used to be Robyn's room; when I asked them about it, they told me that it was Robyn that *got* to give up her room, because she's closer in age to Marie than Sandra is. Do you understand? They BOTH wanted to give up their room to help Marie; Robyn **won** the prize of being able to do so. It was THEIR idea to start decorating the room for Marie, so it would be special for her when the two of you got here. And you just heard them - they WANT Marie to decorate it to suit herself."

Michelle didn't seem convinced, and Lucy told her "Before we told the FBI that we were willing to let you stay here, we had a little family meeting - then all of us went off by ourselves to think about what it would mean, having you here. When we got back together HOURS later, we voted - and it was **unanimous**. If it hadn't been, we would have tried to find some other way to help, but you wouldn't have been HERE. You and Marie are here because **all** of us *want* you here."

We watched as Michelle kind of went off into her own place in her mind. A bit later, she came out of it with a little shake, and then looked at each of us. Her face held gratitude and awe in equal measures as she told us "I didn't know that. I mean, I knew that you were letting us stay here because you were willing to help the FBI; I didn't know about the other. And I guess I'm just not used to giving credit where credit is due: I've seen how your two are with Marie; it simply didn't cross my mind that they might actually be grown enough to understand about her, and give up what they have so willingly to help her. I expect that I owe them, and you, an apology."

Lucy reached over to pat Michelle's arm and say "No apology necessary, Michelle. Remember, I told you last night how Dan is when he's dealing with somebody new? That's exactly how all of us are acting, now: there are a lot of things that you don't know

about us yet, so we're willing to SHOW you what we're like so you can treat us the same way. And you've been doing that - I don't think any of us has any cause to say that you haven't been friendly and polite with us. Now you know a little more about us, Michelle - and you can, if you want, reassure Marie if she comes to you with any worries or fears; either about Robyn and Sandra, or me, or Dan. I'm sure our two have already told her that if she wants to talk, she can come to them any time - and I'm going to tell you the same thing. Any time you or Marie want to talk to any of us about anything, we'll be glad to sit down with you and listen, no matter what it's about or how long it takes. Both of you have had a rough time, and if there's anything any of us can do to help smooth it out, we'll do it. Okay?"

Michelle's eyes started to mist over, and Lucy patted her arm again, saying "No, don't start crying. You'll get ME started, and then I'll be late for work because I had to do my makeup again!"

Michelle pulled herself together with a visible effort, and quietly told Lucy "Thank you".

Lucy just answered "Don't worry about it. When - not if, but WHEN - the time comes that you can do something to help someone else, pass it along. That's what Dan tells the people that he's helped along the way, so that's what I'll say to you."

"I'll do it, too!" Michelle declared.

Lucy just smiled and said "I know."

Lucy looked at the clock and told us "I'd better get going if I don't want to be late. I'm the boss, so I have to set a good example." She got up and went upstairs to brush her teeth and give her hair one last combing before leaving. When she came back down, she gave me a kiss, patted Michelle on the shoulder, and went out to her car.

After she was gone, Michelle looked at me and said "That's some kind of lady you've got there, Dan Andrews. I sure hope you appreciate her the way you should."

"I do" I replied, "every time I look at her."

Michelle gave me an appraising look, and said "Yeah, I expect you do, at that. You're some kind of guy, yourself."

To save either of us from any embarrassment, I got up and reached for my plate. Michelle gently slapped my hand away, telling me "No, you get on about your business - you've got things that need your attention, and I've got more than enough time to take care of something as simple as dirty dishes. Go on, scoot!"

I laughed, and did as she told me - getting a smile from her as I filled up my coffee cup before leaving for my office.

I had enough to keep me busy for the whole morning; I didn't even notice what time it was until the phone rang. I looked and saw that it was our inside line, and knew that it must be Michelle or Marie. I answered, and Michelle's voice told me "It's lunchtime, Dan. You'd best get in here, if you want any!"

"Yes, Mother!" I joked, hearing her answering laugh as I hung the phone up.

Back in the house, I saw that she'd apparently taken the last of the roast beef to make roast beef hash. That, with the rest of the corn and green beans on the side, made for a fine meal for all three of us. Marie even responded to some of my gentle teasing with smiles and a couple of small laughs.

After lunch, I got up and made a big show of reaching for a plate - in exaggerated fear of Michelle. Marie thought it was funny, even if I was clearly crazy; Michelle smiled and said "Go on, then, if it means that much to you!"

I'd put my things in the dishwasher and had just opened the door to go back to my office when Marie hesitantly got my attention: "Uh, Dan?"

I closed the door, and turned to her, asking "What is it, Marie?"

"Would... would it be okay if... if I wanted to put a different color in Robyn's, I mean my, room?"

I smiled and said "Of course it would. Didn't they tell you that?"

"Yeah, they did, but I just wanted to make sure."

"What did you have in mind?" I asked.

"Would light blue be okay?"

"No, I don't mean color - that's all up to you. What I meant was what did you have in mind for HOW to change the color. Painting? Wallpaper? A little of each? Do you want to look at some different colors and designs so you can pick something special out?"

Marie seemed a bit overwhelmed at the idea of actually having options; I told her "I've already told your mom that there's no problem if you want to change the room around a little bit, as long as I don't need a hammer and nails to change it afterwards. Okay?"

She nodded, unsure, until I smiled at her. With that, she seemed to realize that I really meant that there wasn't any problem with what she was asking. Still, I could detect a hint of trepidation in her voice when she asked "Uh, could it be paint? With maybe some wallpaper to trim along the top?"

"Sure it can. Do you have something in mind already?"

She nodded, and I said "Okay. Just let one of us know what the pattern or color is, and we'll take it from there. Anything else?"

She gave me a shy smile, and shook her head. I opened the door again, and went out to my office. A little while later, there was a small knock at the door; when I opened it, I saw Michelle standing there. I invited her in, and showed her to a seat. She made no effort not to look around and see where it was I worked. When she looked at me again, she blushed a little, but only said "Thank you, Dan."

"What for?"

"For letting Marie change that room around to suit herself."

"I said she could, so why are you thanking me for doing what I already said I was willing to do?"

Michelle gave me an exasperated sigh, and said "Exactly BECAUSE you're doing what you said you would. I know, it doesn't mean anything special to you, but it sure means a lot to me - and especially to Marie. While I was fixing lunch, she came in with one of the magazines the girls had given her, and showed me how this one room looked. I told her it looked nice, and she had tears in her eyes when she asked me if I thought you'd really let her do anything like that. I know you said you would, but I have to admit that I still wasn't sure you were willing to go that far. I didn't want to tell her you would if you had changed your mind, so I said that since it was her room, it was up to her to ask you. It still surprised me some when you agreed."

"But it's just a little paint and some wallpaper. When the two of you leave, it's easy enough to change back - if Robyn decides she doesn't like it. She may well decide to keep it - then you'll have done me a favor. Either way, it's no big deal."

"Maybe it's no big deal to you - but it is to Marie. The whole time she was growing up, she hardly ever got to pick anything out for herself ; at least, nothing like this. When I went shopping with her, we picked out her clothes together, but as for the decision being all hers, well, this is the first time she's gotten to choose about something this big. It's just a bucket of paint and a couple rolls of wallpaper to you. To her, it's a *whole room* - HER room! - and she gets to pick out the colors for it. If you'd said 'no', it wouldn't have broken her heart or anything; but by saying 'yes', you've made her a lot happier than I think I've *ever* seen her. Even now, she's up there measuring all the walls so she can tell you **exactly** how much surface there is, so you won't have to buy any more paint than you have to. And she's also adding up how much wallpaper trim it will take, so you don't have to buy any more of that than you have to, either."

"Measuring the walls? She has a tape measure?"

"No, she doesn't have a tape measure. She's doing it with an ordinary old foot-long *ruler*."

I started to get up, saying "Oh, hell, I've got a twenty-five foot tape measure; she's more than welcome to use it."

Michelle said "No, you sit down, Dan. If you go up there with a tape measure, and then you'll be taking a little bit of this away from her - and I don't think either one of us wants that."

I sat down again, the confusion clear on my face. Michelle told me "She's up there measuring with that ruler - and having the time of her life. Every time she lays it down, that room becomes a little more **hers**. Both her and me, we know that it isn't really 'hers' to keep forever; but if she's allowed to paint it and put up that trim, and then it becomes hers in a way that's way more important to her. If you go up there and give her a tape measure, and then you're taking some of that ownership away from her. Oh, she'll still be happy as a clam - and she'll never forget you. But if you leave her to do it her way, well, that makes it even more special. She'll not only remember you, but she'll remember how she was able to do something *herself* - and she hasn't had all that many chances like that. And like I said, none of them have been anything this important - small as it is to you."

When she explained it that way, I could easily understand what she was telling me - and knew that no, I *didn't* want to take that away from Marie.

I sat back in my chair and said "You're right. Okay, it's her room, and her project. I'll leave her to do it however she wants. And if I'm right about something I suspect, and then I'll even be able to add something to it to make it even MORE hers. Would that be okay?"

Michelle fairly beamed at me as she answered "I think it would be more than just 'okay', Dan. Thank you."

I grinned and told her "No, it's my turn to say that - if you hadn't come out here and said something, I might have ruined this for her."

Michelle told me "No, you wouldn't have 'ruined' it. She wouldn't be having as much fun, and she wouldn't have gotten as much out of it, but she'd still have been happy."

We sat there looking at each other for a few moments before Michelle said "Well, that was all I had to say. I'll go back to the house now, so you can get back to whatever it is that you do on that computer."

I asked her "How are you doing on YOUR computer?"

She gave me a big grin and said "I think I'm doing pretty good. I'm learning how to touch-type again. Making mistakes, but learning from them."

I grinned back and said "That's the secret: everybody makes mistakes. The trick is to learn from them."



She stood up, gave me another smile, and left.

The rest of the day and evening went by pretty much as they had the day before. The only real differences were that Lucy, Michelle, and I could hear the girls - all of them - laughing and giggling upstairs for most of the evening. I don't think any one of us gave any thought to asking them to quiet down - none of us wanted to do anything to disturb Marie's happy times.

Once bedtime rolled around, Robyn and Sandra came down to give Lucy and me our goodnight kiss; I was surprised when Marie managed to tell me "Goodnight, Dan". I wished her a good night in return, which gave her an attack of shyness, but she managed a smile before following the other girls upstairs. Michelle just watched it all with pleased surprise.

When Lucy and I were alone in our bedroom, I asked her when she'd be going to get the things for Michelle and Marie. She told me she planned on doing it after work the next day. I added something else to her list, and when I explained why, she smiled and gave me a fierce hug.

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The next day was a close match to the one before: Michelle made breakfast - more of it - and I spent most of the day working on some code for a client.

Dale stopped by with some money for Michelle and Marie. They came down to talk to him for a bit, and I left them alone. When he was ready to go, I let him out and re-set the security system.

The girls got home on time, and I got to spend a little time with them before they went up to Marie. Lucy got home late, as she'd said - and when I met her at her car, she gave me a conspiratorial wink and said "Mission accomplished, Dan. It'll be ready Tuesday." I hugged her, and then helped her carry the packages she'd brought home upstairs. There, Michelle and Marie each took possession of what was theirs - both of them clearly confused by what Lucy had bought, but willing to go along with it for a little while.

The evening passed with all of us watching a movie on cable television; it being a Friday, all the girls were allowed to stay up later.

When bedtime did come around, there wasn't any of the usual playful fussing or complaining - particularly after I reminded them that we'd be having a visitor the next day, and that Michelle and Marie would probably be able to go shopping, if they wanted.

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Eleven o'clock the next morning, there was a knock at the front door. Everyone but me had been waiting anxiously for our visitor, so when he finally showed up, there was

considerable excitement. I opened the door and let him in - and when I turned around from closing the door behind him, found myself wrapped in a bear hug. He finally released me, clapped me on the shoulder, and said "It's been too damn long, Boomer. I thought you'd forgotten about me."

"Not a chance, Mutt. Things just kind of happened, you know?"

He gave me a grin and said "Yeah, I know - they kind of happened to me, too."

He turned around to see the women and girls standing behind him, and quietly whistled - making all of them (except Marie) grin. I led him forward, and made all the introductions. When he met Lucy, he said "So you're the one that managed to catch him, huh?" She smiled and said "I'm not sure which one of us caught the other", making him laugh before he told her "Well, you take good care of him. There's a lot of folks that owe this guy, and I'm one of them."

She gave me a Look, but didn't say anything. When the introductions were done, all of us went into the living room, where Lucy had set out coffee and some pastries. Mutt accepted coffee, but passed on the food - something the girls were more than willing to compensate for.

When we'd all had a sip of our coffee, Lucy asked him "So, Mutt, how is it you know Dan? And why do they call you 'Mutt'?"

He laughed and said "My real name is Christopher Heinz." Lucy didn't get it, and he added "When you hear 'Heinz', what do you think of first?"

"Steak sauce", Lucy replied.

"And what is the full name of that sauce?"

"Heinz 57."

"And what else is called Heinz 57?"

She thought a moment, grinned, and he answered for her "A dog - specifically, a mutt", grinning back at her.

"As for how I met him, well, that's something else. If you're married to him, you probably know some of what he used to do in the Army, right?"

Lucy nodded, and he went on "There were a bunch of us intel - that's intelligence, as in spying - types that were assigned the job of getting some information about this fella and some friends of his. Boomer and his crew were assigned to watch out for us - we weren't anywhere near being able to do it ourselves, not in the conditions we were being sent into. It was supposed to be a two-week mission - pretty damn long, all things considered.

It went along okay the first week. The second week, things started getting 'interesting'. It was a couple days before we were supposed to be extracted that it hit the proverbial fan. One of the other intel guys got popped - caught, I mean, not killed. They hauled him down into their camp, and started trying to find out who he was and what he was doing there. On top of that, they sent out a bunch of patrols to see if there was anyone else they might have missed."

"All of us were laying around doggo - not moving, and hardly breathing, so nobody would find us. But damned if one of the patrols didn't come by where I was hanging with Boomer, here. One of the guys in the patrol steps on me - my leg actually, and broke my ankle. I let out a holler, and all hell breaks loose. Boomer pops up and takes out the patrol, and then helps me get back to where we were camped. Not all of us in one place, of course, but not spread out too far, either. He turns me over to a guy named Muddy - huge Black guy, carried a thirty cal machine gun like it was a water pistol - who starts taking care of me. Boomer, he gets a couple more guys, Speedy and some other fella, and the three of them head off. I didn't know it, but they were going down into the camp to rescue the guy that got caught. The rest of the guys, they're keeping an eye on things to make sure no more patrols get too close."

"A while later, we start hearing all kinds of racket from the camp: explosions out the wazoo, gunfire, screams, the whole thing. Some time after that, Boomer and the other guys, they come walking into camp, carrying the fella they rescued. He's some kinda screwed up; he'd been beat, tortured, all kinds of crap - but he was alive enough to let them know where he was. They had to blow the door off his cell and get a manacle off his leg before they could get him out. He told me later that Boomer had used a pinch of C-4 - that's plastic explosive - to blow the manacle off his leg; said all he felt was a little hot flash when it went off."

"They turn my buddy over to this Muddy guy, and a bunch of them take off again. They're back maybe an hour later, and Boomer says it's time to go home. One of the guys gets on this satellite radio they've got and makes the deal. Eight hours later, I'm laying in a hospital bed on some Navy aircraft carrier. Next to me is my buddy that got caught. Boomer and his guys, they're pretty much doing whatever they want - and the swabbies and Marines aren't giving them *any* crap, when you'd usually expect a few comments, anyway. Just looking at them, you can see you don't want to be pissing them off, you know? Even the Navy *officers* are giving them breathing room."

"Any way, a couple days later, they load us all onto this big-ass airplane, throw the damn thing off the boat, and we land Stateside a few hours later. There's regular Army to meet us, and the rest of it goes along like you might expect."

Lucy had a lot better idea of what I'd done in the Army than the rest of them, so she wasn't staring at me the way the rest were - particularly Michelle and Marie.

Lucy told him "We've had the chance to meet Muddy - several times, in fact. You're right, he is big - he liked to have scared the pee out of me the first time I saw him! How did you go from being in Intelligence to doing makeup work?"

Mutt laughed and said "The way that little adventure turned out, they weren't going to send any of us out into the bush again. We got the intel we were after, but it didn't happen as quiet as the folks upstairs wanted. After my ankle healed, I got transferred to a different base. There, I got involved in working with agents, and from that, into disguises. When I got out, it seemed pretty natural to just keep doing that kind of work. Hollywood figured I was gay, at first - you know, a guy doing makeup and such. But when word got out about my Army days, well, let's just say things changed."

"A few days ago, I got a call - my secretary tells me it's a guy calling himself Boomer. It takes me a second to remember - it's been a while, right? I answer, and it's him. He asks me if I know anybody that can do him a favor by coming out for a day or two. I tell him that of course I do - me. He says I don't have to do that, and I tell him to go to hell, I'm doing it. I ask him when and where. He tells me, and I ask what the job is. He tells me a little bit about it, and asks if there's anything he can do. I told him a few things, and as soon as we're off the phone, I'm making airplane reservations. Tonight night, they're having the 'wrap' party for the movie I was on; Boomer saved my life, so I'm here, not there. Simple as that."

"Wrap party?" Lucy asked.

He grinned and said "Yeah. Whenever they get done shooting a movie - like 'it's a wrap' - they have a big party for everybody that was involved. The stars, the crew, everybody. It's usually a pretty big deal, and everybody has a lot of fun."

"And you're here to help us, instead of going to a big party like that?" Michelle asked.

He looked at her and said "Like I told you: he saved my life. He was there when I needed help - big time! - and I'm damn well gonna do the same for him. I've been to a couple dozen wrap parties, always had a blast. But being able to help Boomer, well, that's something *special*."

Mutt looked around at all of them and finally settled in on Michelle and Marie. He looked at them carefully for a few moments, and then said "I'm guessing you and the girl are the ones he called me about?"

Michelle nodded, and when he saw the expression on her face he explained "Dan said he needed help for a woman and her daughter. The other girls, they look like they're part of his family - and I don't think he'd need help with anyone that messed with his *family*. That leaves you two. So what is it you need me to do, exactly?"

Michelle looked over at me, and I told him "Without going into too many details" - "That's cool" he offered - "we'd like to be able for Michelle and Marie to be able to go out

in public; it doesn't have to be often, or for very long. The problem is, there are a bunch of unhappy folks that don't want them walking around. So I'm hoping that you can help us."

He smiled at all of us and said "Sure, that's no problem."

He saw skepticism in Michelle's face and told her "No, really, it isn't. I've done this very thing a BUNCH of times - not just in Hollywood, but in the Army, too. Learned from some of the best, in fact."

He went on "Here's the thing: it's not about wigs and big sunglasses. All that does is actually DRAW attention to you. The thing you're after is to make anybody looking for you to think that you're not you. You don't do any ONE thing; you do a little bit of several things. The deal is that if you only change a couple of things, and then it's still you - just in a disguise. If you change several things even a *little* bit, you're not **you** any more. You'll still look kinda like you, but not enough - there'll be too many little differences. Understand?"

Michelle did, though it was still a bit much for Marie. Lucy got it, too, as did Robyn and Sandra.

"What can we do, then?" Michelle asked.

He smiled again and said "That's easy, too. What I'll do is show you a few things, and explain to you how they work. When you get the idea, you'll be able to do it yourself any time you want. Let's get started, okay?"

Michelle nodded, and he said "Stand up for me, if you would."

She did, and he looked her over - directing her to turn around a few times, and even walk a little distance away and back again. Then he had Marie do the same things; she was visibly afraid, but followed his gentle instructions. He sat looking at them for a few minutes - heightening the tension considerably - before saying "Okay, I'm ready to go."

He looked from Michelle to Marie and back before asking "What I've got to tell you, it might be kinda personal. Understand, I'm not going to be saying anything to you as a guy to a girl; it'll be makeup guy to client, okay? Do you want me to talk to you around these other people, or in private? Like I said, some of it is going to be... direct."

Michelle shared a look with Marie, and then told him "The others can be here, too - we don't mind. As for what you say to us... well, let's just say that you won't be saying anything to surprise us."

I saw an unhappy expression cross his face, but he covered it quickly and told her "Okay, that's fine. What I'm going to do first is tell you what you look like - again, it's like a makeup director, not me personally, okay?"

Michelle nodded and he said "Here goes. You're beautiful. You look like Cher, but you've probably heard that a million times already. You've got beautiful bone structure, you're trim without being skinny; I don't think your breasts are as big as they look on you, but they're still nice. Your skin is probably your most valuable feature - clear, smooth, and a very lovely color. That hair - I know a dozen women, easy, that would KILL to have hair like that: long, straight, black, rich and full. And even as long as it is, I can see that you don't have the split ends and other problems women usually have with hair that long. You've got nice curves, and you move well. All in all, you're a very lovely, very memorable woman. That's actually a GOOD thing for what we're going to do. Plain women, there isn't much that can be done, really. With the really good looking ones, and the really ugly ones, it's easier - just move them to that middle area."

He looked at Marie next, and said "You're a lot like your mom. Beautiful complexion and hair, nice body, great legs. You're cute as you could be, and I KNOW that you're going to be good-looking for a long, long time. You're not as trim as your mom; you're a little more 'compact', I'd say. But on you, it looks *great*. You move well, too. You're going to be only a little harder to work with than your mom."

He turned to talk to both of them as he said "Neither one of you is going to be particularly tough to change. Like I told you, once you get the idea about what I'm going to show and tell you, you'll be able to do this yourselves, any time you like."

He pulled a bag he'd brought in over and rummaged around inside for a moment before pulling out an instant camera. With a smile, he said "What I'd like to do is take a picture of each of you. Boomer told me that there's folks looking for you, so that's why I'm using the instant camera - so you'll be able to keep the pictures. This first picture is what we'll call 'before'. When we're done, we'll take another one we'll call 'after'. You'll be able to look at them side by side and see for yourselves just how effective what you're going to learn is. Okay?"

Michelle nodded, as did Marie - though Marie's was a bit more tentative.

Under Mutt's patient guidance, both Michelle and Marie had their photos taken: both full-length and portraits. In each case, he handed the picture to them without even looking at it first. When he was done, he turned to face Lucy and the girls and said "What I teach them, you can do it, too. Just change the stuff that's appropriate to YOU - and you'll know what that is by the time I'm done."

For the next couple of hours, he carefully and patiently went over the different things that Michelle and Marie could do to alter their appearance. In addition, he explained that it wasn't just looks; it was how they moved, their gestures and mannerisms, and so on.

When he was done, he asked "Okay, which one of you wants to try putting it into practice first? I'll be there to help, if you want it."

Michelle didn't hesitate to say she would - I think all of us could see that Marie was simply too worried to do it.

Michelle led him upstairs, and when they were gone, Lucy and the girls - including Marie - started talking about all they'd heard him say, and all he'd shown them. Marie wasn't as active a participant as the others, but she did join in.

It was maybe twenty minutes later when Mutt rejoined us - minus Michelle. He saw the expressions on our faces and smiled, saying "She'll be here in a moment; she just wanted to do one last thing."

He sat down, and a minute or so later, she came in. I say 'she' because the woman that came into the living room bore only the vaguest resemblance to Michelle - at least, at first glance. Even when we looked closely, it was hard to be sure that it really was her. As he'd said, it wasn't any one thing; there were simply a lot of subtle differences that were tough to put a finger on. Even Marie didn't seem entirely sure that it was her mother standing there.

When all of us had gotten the baffled looks off our faces, Mutt stood up with a smile and went about telling us the things that had been done: an under-sized bra that reduced the appearance of her bust. When asked, she admitted that it was uncomfortable, but not painful. Next was the removal of a little bit of one shoe heel - again, a small difference, but it subtly changed the way she walked and stood. Oversized stockings - the wrinkles served to hide the general shape of her legs, and made her look vaguely older. An adjustment in the straps of her bra that caused a slight change in her posture. A slight excess of makeup that made her not only look different, but older. The addition of a little padding that subtly - but effectively - changed the shape of her hips. There were a few other things, and when he pointed them out, it was clear that none of them made any significant change in her appearance - but the cumulative effect was MORE than sufficient.

When he was done, he went on to tell us about the other choices that could have been made - a larger (padded and stuffed) bra; putting a coin in one shoe to change the gait of a person's walk. Putting on extra clothing - preferably lightweight and seamless - to simulate added bulk or weight. Wearing different styles and colors of clothing than people would expect. He talked about a few more things, and I could tell that everyone else was listening as closely as I was - it was actually rather fascinating.

He finished up by saying "As a general rule, it's easier to look older than it is to look younger. Not that it can't be done; it's just a little harder, and takes a little more time and effort."

He looked over at Marie and said "If you want to go upstairs with your mother, I think she can show you how you can do this, too. I told her a couple things to help her get started." Marie nodded - a trace of eagerness on her face - and followed Michelle out of the room.

When they were out of earshot, he looked at me and asked "Okay, what's the deal, Boomer? It's been a while, but I can still smell a mission."

I looked at Lucy - who was a pretty fair judge of character in her own right - and she nodded that it was okay. I looked back at Mutt and began to explain it to him - minus any details that weren't pertinent. He knew I was leaving things out, but also knew that they were things that he didn't need to know. By the time I was finished, he was clearly outraged, telling us "Some schmuck actually *did* that kind of crap? To her, and that little girl?"

I nodded, and he said "Jee-zus Christ! You sure you don't want to take care of this yourself, Boomer? Even if it's too much for just you, I'll bet a couple of the other guys would be happy to come along - 'specially after you told them about these two. Shit!" - the last followed by a slightly guilty look at Robyn and Sandra. Neither one showed any indication that she'd heard it.

A few minutes later, Michelle reappeared with Marie next to her. Again, the change was startling: Marie looked to be about twelve - and a young twelve, at that. Even having some idea of what to look for, it was still tough figuring out the changes that had been made. A couple were obvious - but only from having seen Marie before the changeover: her bust had all but disappeared, and the curve of waist to hips had been reduced as well. Robyn asked if the too-small bra hurt; Marie gave me an embarrassed look, but answered that it didn't - that it was just uncomfortable.

Both of them were a lot more agreeable when Mutt asked to take the 'after' pictures - and both gasped when they had the chance to put the before and after images side-by-side.

They were still a little awed when I asked "Okay, do you two think you're ready to go out and do a little shopping?"

Michelle indicated that she was; Marie was still feeling a little bashful, but agreed. I looked over at Mutt and asked "Do you carry?"

He laughed and said "It wouldn't do much good laying home on the dresser!"

A brief discussion followed while we worked out how all of us could get to a nearby shopping mall. Michelle excused herself to make a quick trip upstairs; I figured it was to get some or all of the money Dale had brought her. It had been in an envelope, so I had no idea how much it was - and since it wasn't MY money, I wasn't going to ask.

The mall in question wasn't large, but still had a variety of stores that I figured would be more than sufficient for Michelle and Marie's first time out. It finally worked out that I would drive my car with Lucy, Michelle, and Marie; Mutt would drive his rental with Robyn and Sandra keeping him company. With everything settled, we got going. On the way, I told Michelle and Marie that the rest of us would stay in the general vicinity, but



not actually WITH them, so they could talk or do whatever they wanted. Both of them gave me a grateful smile via the rear-view mirror.

At the mall, I let Michelle and Marie out at one entrance, along with Lucy to keep a discrete watch over them until I got the car parked, and joined her - along with Mutt and the girls.

In short order, Michelle and Marie had found a store they wanted to go in. Mutt and the girls discretely followed - never getting very close, but always keeping them in sight. Lucy and I 'window shopped' nearby. Again, both of us kept a discrete and long-range eye on them.

Over the next couple of hours, Michelle and Marie must have been having themselves a grand time - they were in and out of almost every store, and seldom left one without at least one package added to their collection. Watching them as they moved around the mall, I was amazed yet again at the change in their appearance - and even how they moved. Neither one of them was readily recognizable as who they were without the disguises.

Finally, the two of them stopped; I saw Michelle gesture discretely that Lucy and I should go on by her. We did, and heard her softly tell us "I think we're done here - let's go home."

Mutt saw what happened, and casually led Robyn and Sandra in a direction that would intersect with Lucy and me. As we passed, I relayed Michelle's message and saw Mutt's eyes signal his understanding.

Lucy and I wandered back around to a door near where I'd parked the car, and split up - me to obviously pull it around for her. Behind us, Michelle and Marie casually made their way toward the same exit - and paralleling them were Mutt and the girls.

I got Lucy in the car, and then made a loop around one aisle of cars, coming back to the mall entrance just as Michelle and Marie were coming out. They saw the car, and veered off so that they were out of sight of anyone inside the mall; I pulled up next to them, they got in, and I was on my way again in just a few seconds. I'd seen where Mutt had parked, and slowly guided the car that direction - and passing him just as he and the girls were getting inside. They saw us, and Sandra nodded. After that, it was just a matter of getting home again.

Back inside the house, Michelle and Marie were both ecstatic at having been able to go out shopping. When Mutt and the girls joined us, both of them hugged him - though Marie's was a bit more restrained than her mother's. Mutt just laughed and told them how happy he was for them.

Lucy asked him if he wanted to stay for dinner, announcing that steak was on the menu in celebration of Michelle's and Marie's 'outing' - causing a small riot of laughter at the phrase.

Mutt accepted, and Michelle and Marie both excused themselves to change back into 'real' clothes. When they reappeared together, it just made their previous appearance all that much more amazing.

As supper was cooking - with Marie and Michelle helping Lucy - Mutt and I sat in chairs out by the pool, Robyn and Sandra keeping us company. Both of them listened quietly as Mutt and I caught up on some of the people that we'd both known.

They were so quiet, in fact, that Mutt seemed to completely forget about them when he told me "This is some kinda family you've got here, Boomer. That wife of yours is a babe, and those girls are a couple of beauties. You said both are adopted?"

I said they were, and he asked "Why do they look so different?"

I explained to him about Robyn being Lucy's natural child, and how I'd come to adopt Sandra after her parents were killed. Hearing about it, Mutt's face clouded over, and I heard him mutter "Sonzabitches!" before he said "So that was you on that drug bust, huh? Good deal. I heard about that other thing, that company that the crooks got into. Didn't think it was you, at first, until they had that press conference. Twenty mil paycheck, huh? Well, if there's anybody deserves it, it's you. There's a lot of people that owe you a hell of a lot - some of them without even knowing it. I gotta tell you, Boomer, I'm real happy to see you again. I never did thank you proper for what you did for me and my bunch."

I told him it wasn't necessary, and he answered "Maybe not to you, but it is for me. You and your guys pulled our chestnuts out of the fire on that one, and there wasn't a one of us that didn't know it. You've got a helluva family here, Boomer. Lucy's about the nicest *lady* I've ever met, and you've got every reason to be proud of those girls of yours. While we were in the mall, we had plenty of time to talk, and they've got their heads on straighter than most so-called grown-ups I know do. On top of that, they're smart, and a couple of damn nice people. I'm glad to see that things worked out for you, Boomer. You've got it coming, if anybody does."

Before he could say anything else, Lucy announced that supper was ready. Mutt seemed genuinely surprised when Robyn and Sandra stood up not far away. He looked at them and asked "You heard?" Sandra just nodded, and he said "That's okay. I don't figure you're the kind of girls to get big-headed about a compliment - and every word I said about you and your mom is true."

Sandra just smiled and said "Thank you."

After that, supper went pretty much as expected - with the possible exception of Mutt telling some fairly unbelievable stories about some of the figures in Hollywood, much to the amusement and surprise of Lucy and the others.

As the evening finally wore down, Mutt stood up and announced that he really did have to go - that his flight home was early the next morning. All of the women expressed their regret that he had to leave so soon - and thanked him for coming. Michelle and Marie were particularly emphatic about their thanks; he just collected a kiss on the cheek from each of them (making Marie blush) and said that was all the thanks he needed. As he was leaving, he told Lucy and the girls "If you ever get tired of this character, you give me a call - I'd be happy to have you anywhere around me."

All three of them laughed before Lucy told him "If that ever happens, I will - but do yourself a favor and don't plan on it!"

He put an exaggerated expression of heartbreak on his face, getting a laugh from them, and then wished us all a good night - after telling me not to forget him again. I assured him I wouldn't.

When the door closed behind him, Michelle came over and wrapped her arms around me, giving me a solid hug before pulling back and saying "Thank you, Dan. What he did for us, well, it's amazing. But he wouldn't have been here except for you. You've given us a little bit of our lives back, and BOTH of us appreciate it."

"You're more than welcome - both of you", I replied, before Lucy, Michelle, and I all sat down again.

Still standing, Robyn and Sandra said that they thought it was late enough that they wanted to go to bed; a moment later, Marie said she thought so, too. Robyn and Sandra came over to kiss Lucy and me good night while Marie did the same with Michelle. I think all of us were surprised when Marie came over and gave me a quick peck on the cheek before saying "Good night, Dan. Thank you for today."

"I was happy to do it, Marie", I assured her.

Satisfied - and a little embarrassed, I suspected - she turned to go with the others as they got ready and went to bed.

When they were gone, Michelle told us "I can only guess that you were as surprised by that as much as I was. I knew she was starting to settle down a little around you, Dan, but I didn't know she'd gotten to THAT point."

I smiled and told her "I don't think she has, really. I think tonight was a special occasion, just like today was. I doubt that it'll happen again any time soon." Next to me, Lucy nodded her agreement.

Michelle looked at both of us and said "Well, whether she does it again or not, I don't have any problem with it. I know you wouldn't do anything to hurt her, and I'm glad to see her able to give ANY guy a kiss on the cheek - never mind YOU. And Lucy, I hope you didn't mind that I hugged Dan earlier - but it was such a relief to be able to go *out* again."

Lucy laughed and said "No, I didn't mind - I understood as soon as you did it."

The three of us chatted for another hour or so before deciding it was time for bed, ourselves. Lucy and I cautioned Michelle that Sunday mornings around our house were decidedly more casual than the rest of the time - that she shouldn't be surprised if she saw all of us having breakfast in our robes, and wearing slippers. She gave a little laugh and said that it would be nice change to unwind like that.

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It was eight o'clock before Lucy and I made our way downstairs for some coffee. We'd actually awakened at six, but spent the intervening time having a little fun together. Both of us were suitably relaxed - and cleaned up - before we left our bedroom.

In the kitchen, we found Michelle and Marie reading the Sunday paper - neither of them any more dressed than Lucy or I. Marie looked a little shy, but when nobody said anything, she quickly went back to the comics she was reading.

Lucy and I had gotten through about half of our cup of coffee when Michelle told us that she'd started some home-made breakfast rolls - and that they'd be ready in another fifteen minutes, or so. She smiled at the anticipation on our faces, and said "You gave me and Marie a treat yesterday, so I thought I'd give you one in return this morning."

Neither Lucy nor I tried to make any protest; we just thanked her and let it go at that.

A bit later, Michelle got up to check the oven, and with a noise of approval, got a pot holder to take the pan of rolls out. As soon as she cleared the oven door, all of us could smell how delicious they'd be. Without a word, Marie got up and brought us the coffee carafe, and then went back and started another pot of coffee. When she sat down again, Lucy and I both thanked her; she gave us a shy smile, but didn't say anything.

Michelle let the rolls cool, and then broke them apart and stacked them on a tray. She was carrying them over to the table when Robyn and Sandra made their appearance - drawing a laugh from Marie when she saw the monster (Robyn) and bunny (Sandra) furry slippers they wore. Both of them smiled back at her before pouring themselves a cup of coffee - then following their noses to the source of the delightful aroma that pervaded the kitchen. In short order, each of us had a breakfast roll in some stage of consumption. Michelle had clearly made plenty, so there wasn't any need for any of us to 'hold back' - and we didn't. I accounted for three of them, myself, as did Robyn and Sandra. Lucy and Michelle each

went through two, with Marie having only one. There were still several of them left, even after all that.

Along the way, each of us had a turn at the different sections of the paper. It started when I got the comics from Marie, who went on to the magazine section. Robyn and Sandra took Lifestyles and Sports, respectively. Lucy went after the front page, and Michelle busied herself with Arts.

It was closing in on ten o'clock when we all decided that it was time to get dressed. The youngsters left first, so they could each take a shower; Michelle went next after Lucy told her we'd already had one. Lucy and I simply had to get dressed, so we were back downstairs well ahead of the others.

The rest of the day went by quietly. Robyn and Sandra snuggled next to me on the couch as we watched sports on TV. Michelle had found a book we had that she wanted to read, and was holding down a chair in the corner. Marie was on another couch, surrounded by more of the decorating magazines from Sandra's room.

Lucy claimed to have some errands to run; only Michelle and Marie were unaware of what those errands were.

It was mid-afternoon when Lucy got back. I casually asked her how everything went, and she just as casually let me know that they'd gone fine. Robyn and Sandra kept straight faces, but couldn't help nudging me in the side.

Lucy joined the rest of us with a couple of trade magazines that her company provided her.

Supper was a bit early, but not excessively so. I did the honors by preparing cheeseburgers, fries, and sodas. Lucy and the girls teased me about taxing my cooking skills while Michelle and Marie looked on with amusement. Dessert was another of Michelle's breakfast rolls, reheated - and still delicious.

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The next couple of days were pretty routine. Monday, Marie shyly gave me the list of things she wanted to do to her room - the paint color, the trim pattern, and even a scaled drawing showing the wall dimensions. I thanked her and said I'd have the things for her the next Saturday - visibly pleasing her.

Tuesday, Lucy was home a bit late, bringing in a couple of packages.

Wednesday, Robyn and Sandra did the same. Michelle and Marie didn't seem to notice.

So when we hit Marie with the surprise birthday party, it really was a surprise - not just for her, but Michelle, too. Michelle tried to protest that it was too much, but it was obvious that her heart just wasn't in it, and she soon gave in.

Marie was embarrassed terribly - and equally as delighted. Robyn gave her a portable radio and CD player, while Sandra had come up with a poster of another of the boy bands - signed, no less. Lucy had a book on astronomy for her - she'd told me that she was fascinated by the stars and constellations. Michelle didn't know it beforehand, but Lucy had gotten Marie a fairly decent beginner's telescope in her name. When she found out about it, Michelle tried to give Lucy and me a Look - but was simply too happy and grateful to manage it.

Marie was looking at me somewhat expectantly when I handed her the last gift. She opened it up to reveal that it was a pair of coveralls. She looked a bit confused, but held them out, revealing that her name was embroidered over the breast pocket, while the back held the logo "Andrews Construction - if it ain't broke, it will be!"

When they saw it, Robyn and Sandra both broke into laughter. Marie didn't understand, so I explained it to her.

"Those are your coveralls."

"What are they for?"

"To cover you of course, silly."

"But what do I need to be covered for?"

"You don't think *I'm* going to be doing the painting and such in your room, do you? It's your room, YOU do the work."

"But I don't know how!"

"Then I guess you'd better learn, don't you?"

The expression on her face was priceless - Robyn finally told her "It's okay, Marie. We'll help you. When Dad told us we could change things around when Sandra moved in, he did the same thing to us. After all the workmen were done, the only thing left was to paint and do the other decorating stuff. He told us that since they were our rooms, it was up to us to fix them up. He helped a little bit, showing us how to paint and such, but we're the ones that really did most of the work. So we know how to do it, and we'll teach you. We have coveralls just like those, so we'll all be dressed up like a real construction crew."

Marie finally understood then. With tears in her eyes, she put the coveralls down and came around to give me a hug, not hesitating in the slightest. When she turned loose of me, she stepped back and said "Thank you, Dan. It's the best thing I ever got!" - then,

with a small blush, she leaned over and kissed me on the cheek before going back to where she had been sitting. There, she promptly got into a huddle with Robyn and Sandra as they started explaining to her what they were going to be doing, and how and when.

Michelle eased her way over to where I was sitting with Lucy next to me, and leaned over to whisper to us "That's the damndest thing I've ever seen. You just made my daughter happier than I've ever seen her - without a doubt. It looks like *I* owe you one, too, Dan!"

Lucy and I turned to look up at her, and saw the tears of happiness in her eyes as she watched an animated Marie eagerly talking with Sandra and Robyn. Lucy and I looked at each other, and knew that we'd done a Good Thing.

As it turned out, the next day was actually Marie's birthday - but nobody minded in the least.

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Friday afternoon, after we'd had lunch, I went up to Marie's room and knocked on the door. She told me to come in, and I did - then pointedly looked at her and asked "Aren't you ready yet?"

Confused, she asked "Ready for what?"

I released a theatrical sigh, and answered "Ready to go get the stuff so you can do your room tomorrow. *I'm* not going to carry all that stuff - I mean"

"It's *my* room!" she finished for me, laughing.

"Exactly right. If you're not ready in fifteen minutes, I'm going to assume you've changed your mind."

With a smile, she ran out of the room to find Michelle - who was actually standing out in the hall, listening in. Michelle gave me a big grin when I walked by, and then went into Marie's room to help her get ready to go 'out', closing the door behind her.

**Ten** minutes later, Marie presented herself as ready to go. Again, she and her mother had implemented a number of the minor changes that Mutt had suggested; though dressed in jeans and a shirt, she bore only a vague resemblance to her 'previous' self. As we started toward my car, she even dared to take my hand, holding her 'plans' in the other.

I drove us to the home improvement store, and we got a shopping cart before starting down the different aisles. Along the way, I told her about the different things that she was going to need; she paid careful attention, asking plenty of questions. When we got to the paint department, she was ready - she handed the salesperson the sheet, and he easily got the paint mixed and wallpaper trim gathered. As we were waiting, I asked her "Okay, you've got the walls and decoration taken care of - but what about the trim?"

She looked confused, and I explained it to her. She admitted that she hadn't given it any thought - and I just asked "Better take care of it now, don't you think?" She nodded, and I stood off to the side, waiting patiently while she got together with another salesperson - a female - to go over choices for what color to paint the trim in her room. When she had one picked out, it was mixed up for her, and added to the cans and rolls in our basket. From there, it was down the painting supplies aisle. Again, I explained to her the good and bad points of the different items, and made a few suggestions - which she accepted without question. Once loaded up with everything she (and the girls) needed to do the job, we made our way to the checkout - where I had her stand far enough away that she couldn't see or hear how much it all added up to; I didn't want the price of it to frighten or worry her.

We got everything loaded into my car, and it was back to the house - where she insisted on unloading everything without my saying a word. From looking at her, I knew she was taking possession of the project: it was her room, and her responsibility to see it done - and that included unloading the materials into the garage until the next morning.

Only then did she go back up to her room and change clothes. By the time Sandra and Robyn got home, she was fairly vibrating in her seat in anticipation of showing them everything. Michelle saw it, and could only laugh quietly.

When they got home, and Marie showed them everything, Robyn and Sandra were suitably impressed - and quietly amused. While Marie was discussing how long the job would take with Robyn, Sandra came over and asked "Do you have any *idea* how happy you're making her with this?" I just smiled, and nodded.

The next morning, when I went downstairs for breakfast, I was a bit ahead of the others - but still found Marie sitting in the breakfast nook, waiting. The coffee had already been started, so I got a cup and went over to sit with her. She smiled at me, and I could see that she was both excited and nervous about what the day had in store for her. I asked her if she wanted to talk, and she first shook her head - and after a moment's thought, nodded it. I smiled and asked which it was; she managed to smile back before saying "I guess I do."

"So what's on your mind, Marie?"

She looked at me and asked "What if I make a mistake today? What if something goes wrong?"

I just smiled and answered "If you make a mistake, we correct it. If something goes wrong, we fix it."

"But you already paid for everything. What if it's so bad we have to do it over again? You made me move away so I wouldn't know how much all this cost, but I still know it was expensive, and I don't want to waste your money - you've already been so nice to us!"

"Marie, I want you to listen to me very carefully, okay?"



She nodded solemnly, and I went on "Whatever happens today, its okay. If you spill paint, we'll just get more. If you paint something wrong, we'll just paint it over. What I paid for this doesn't matter - what matters is that you get to make it into YOUR room. I told your mom that ALL of us would like to think of you as family, if you'll let us. And people in a family don't worry too much about things like this. You're careful and do the best you can. If you're happy with the way it turns out, and then there's nothing for the rest of us to say about it. Robyn and Sandra have both done this before, so they can help you - but they're working for YOU, not the other way around. It's up to you to decide what you want, and how to make it happen. All of us are perfectly willing to help you - but it's still YOUR room. Okay?"

She smiled and nodded, and I could see that she had settled down considerably. I asked if she had made the coffee, and when she said she had, I thanked her - which pleased her.

A little later, Lucy showed up, and then Michelle, and finally the girls. We all had a nice breakfast prepared by Robyn and Sandra; Michelle said she'd clean up so Marie and the girls could get started on painting. A little later, I went upstairs to see how things were going; I was looking through the doorway and listened as Robyn told Marie "Don't worry about getting paint on your coveralls. You might think that you're messing them up, but that's not what's really happening."

"It isn't?" I heard Marie ask.

Sandra spoke up, telling her "Not at all. When you get paint on them, you're making a memory. Each time you put them on, you can look at the different colors of paint, and remember the whole thing - and it's a nice feeling, I promise. See this green here? That's when I accidentally bumped into Robyn as she was painting the trim in my room, and her brush hit me. This yellow is from the ceiling in this room - I remember how it seemed like I was getting more paint on ME than on the ceiling. You see what I'm saying?"

I heard Marie's quiet "Yeah, I do."

I made a little noise, and then walked into the room - and saw that Robyn and Sandra hadn't forgotten anything from when they'd done it. The furniture was all pushed to the center of the room, and covered with drop cloths. The floor was covered, too, with the edges of the drop cloths securely taped to make sure any spills were kept off the hardwood floors. All three of them were dressed in their coveralls, and looked cute as could be. They had the paint cans open, and each held a painting weapon of one kind or another. It looked like Sandra, the tallest, was going to do the ceiling; Robyn had a trim brush, so I figured she was going to follow Marie and do the detail work. Marie had a roller with an extension handle; I could see that it was plenty long enough to let her reach the wall all the way up to the ceiling.

All three of them grinned at me, and I said "Looks like you're all set. Have fun!"

Robyn laughed and said "Oh, we will, Dad!" - followed by similar comments from Sandra, and then Marie.

I waved to them, and then left them to go to it. I figured they'd be done by late afternoon, at the latest. By bedtime, everything would be dry enough that Marie would be able to sleep in the room that night; the paint was all latex, and didn't have any odor or dangerous fumes.

During the rest of the day, I went up to see how they were progressing a few times. Each time, I was pleased at how well things were going. As expected, there were a couple of minor paint spills - but nothing serious. All three of them had an assortment of splatters, smudges, and paint spots on their coveralls - and were having a great time.

Around mid-afternoon, Michelle found me lying on the couch as I read a book. She sat in the chair next to it and told me "I was just up there, and all three of them were painting and laughing to beat the band. I haven't seen Marie that happy since she was a little girl. Thank you, Dan."

I just grinned and told her "You'll want to be there when they show me the place after they're done. I think you'll like it."

She got the idea that I was Up To Something, but let it go - Marie was happy, and Michelle knew that I wasn't going to do anything to mess that up.

It was almost 4:30 when a disheveled but happy Marie came in to tell me that they were done, and ask me to come up and have a look. I followed her, and we picked up Lucy and Michelle along the way.

When we got to the doorway, I saw that the three of them had done a fine job - and I told them so, as did Lucy and Michelle. Robyn and Sandra just smiled; Marie beamed at us.

I stood there for a few moments, obviously looking at everything. Marie started to get a little nervous, and I finally told her "There's only one problem, that I can see."

Worried, Marie looked around before asking "What is it?"

"It's ugly."

Looking crestfallen, Marie asked "What do we need to do?"

I pretended to think about it for a few moments before telling her "I guess there's only one thing TO do - take it out and do it over."

"Paint the room again?" Marie asked.

"No, silly. Get rid of that bedding and these rugs. Take them out and get something that matches the room - those things are *hideous*. You might be able to get Lucy to take you to the store in a couple days to get new stuff; so you'd better think about what you want to put in here."

Only then did Marie realize that I'd been pulling a prank on her - the mix of relief and happiness that crossed her face was priceless. Next to me, Michelle couldn't help but start laughing - which got me, Lucy, and the girls started, and finally Marie herself joined in.

When we'd all calmed down again, I told Marie "You did a fine job in here, Marie. You should be proud of yourself."

She gave me an embarrassed grin, but managed to nod, too.

I finished up by telling her and the girls "If you can get this mess - including yourselves! - cleaned up in time, I could **probably** be talked into pizza for supper."

That seemed to be all the motivation the three of them needed; they were gathering things up even before Lucy, Michelle, and I could turn away from the door. As we were making our way back downstairs, Michelle softly laughed again before telling me "That was a terrible thing to do, Dan - and I'm glad I was there to see it!"

As expected, all three girls had things cleaned up - including themselves - in short order. I let them cajole me into springing for pizza without too much trouble. We all ate in the living room while watching a videotaped movie. When we were done eating, Wacko, our cat, lay down in Marie's lap and started purring - loud and hard. Marie had been a little afraid of Wacko and our dog Sunshine at first, but both animals were so affectionate that she soon got over it.

By bedtime, the paint in Marie's room was almost completely dry; still she was careful not to do anything to disturb it.

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Monday morning, after everyone else had left after breakfast, I asked Michelle if she wanted to go to the store for anything. She gave me a grin and admitted that they'd forgotten a few things the last time. I told her I'd figured that was probably the case, and asked if that morning would be too soon. She said it wouldn't, and asked if Marie was going. I said that she could if she wanted, but that the more times the two of them were together, the more likely it was that someone would recognize them - pointing out that Frenchy and crew were looking for a mother and daughter, not just one of them. She immediately understood, and said that she figured Marie would understand. The youngster did - even to the point of telling Michelle that since she (Marie) had gotten to go out 'alone', it was only fair that Michelle got to do so, too.

After grave assurances from Marie that she would NOT be answering the door for *anybody*, and would **not** answer the phone, no matter how much it rang, a disguised Michelle and I went to a larger department store. I stayed with her, letting everyone assume that I was her husband/boyfriend; she added to the illusion by asking me how I thought she looked in a few of the things she looked at.

We were gone for over an hour; on the way back home, she had me stop in at a chain store, where she went in to get 'a few other things' as she called them. I accompanied her, of course, but gave her some 'breathing room' - she took the opportunity to pick up a few non-feminine-specific items, as well.

When we got back home, I left her and Marie to themselves for a while, and then asked if I could speak to both of them together. Both were curious, but not concerned when we all sat down in the living room. I started out by telling Marie why I'd just taken her mother out, which she understood readily enough. Then I gave the two of them a slightly longer and more detailed explanation than I'd given Michelle: that the disguises were good, and would hide who they were - but that they weren't *perfect*, like a surgery or anything. That the people that were looking for them were looking for a mother and daughter, so the more often they were together, the greater the chance that someone would recognize them - or at least, be suspicious enough to pay too much attention. That spreading the shopping trips around a number of stores - as opposed to just a few - reduced the chance that anyone would have multiple chances to recognize them. I said that either one of them, with any one of the rest of us, was pretty safe from being recognized, but that together, the chances went up - a lot.

I finished up by saying "That doesn't mean that you can't go shopping together - only that you can't do it all the time. Mutt told both of you that your single most memorable feature is your hair - its length and style. NOBODY is going to ask you to cut it if you don't want to, and I'll remind you that Mutt said you still had other options - changing its color or style. I'm just letting you know that as long as you choose to keep it the way it is, it's going to reduce the number of times that we can take you out. You understand?" Both nodded, and I went on "You both know that the rest of us are trying to watch out for you, but we're trying to let you keep as much of your freedom as we can. It's a tough balancing act. That's why I told you about all the things we have to consider when one or both of you want to go out shopping. Now you know what *our* perspective is on things, and you have enough information to make your own decision about how much of your appearance you want to keep, versus how often you want to go 'outside'. It's not an all-or-nothing proposition, either: the more your appearance changes, the more often we can risk taking you out in public. All the rest of us are going to accept whatever decision you make - we all figure that both of you are old enough to make your own choices and live with the consequences. You don't have to decide together, or all at once, any more than you have to verbally tell us what your choice is. You know what *our* limits are, so we'll just let you do what you feel is right for you within those limits. Fair enough?"

Both of them assured me they understood perfectly. I smiled, and said "Thank you. Now, did either one of you get anything you want to show off?"

Marie grinned, and said that Michelle had gotten her a new blouse, but that she wanted to wait until supper to show it off. I said that was fine, and excused myself to go out to my office.

I heard Robyn and Sandra get home, and after a while, finished up my work so that I could have a cup of coffee in the breakfast nook while I waited for Lucy.

I was there when she got home, and I went upstairs with her as usual. When she was changed and de-stressed, we went back downstairs to catch the news. It would have been Lucy's night to cook, but Michelle had said she'd do it. Sandra was to be her understudy.

During commercials, I told Lucy about taking Michelle shopping, and the talk I'd had with them when we got back. She nodded her understanding, and snuggled into my side, holding my arm as my hand rested on her warm leg, softly caressing it.

We were sitting just like that when Michelle came in to tell us supper was ready - and both of us could see the mixture of happiness and sorrow in her eyes when she saw how we'd been sitting.

The rest of the evening went as usual; Lucy and the girls all ooh-ed and ahh-ed over Marie's new blouse, making her blush even as she grinned happily.

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Agent Kristofferson stayed away as much as he could, simply so that he didn't draw any more attention to my place than absolutely necessary. Still he did call to let us know how things were progressing, and to give me warning when he wanted to drop off money or anything else for Michelle and Marie.

The first time he came by after Mutt's visit, we played a trick on him. Both Michelle and Marie got 'disguised', and were waiting with me for his arrival. When we heard his knock on the door, Marie got up and answered it, letting him in and telling him where I was. He got as far as the living room, saw Michelle, and was asking "Dan, who was that, and what are these people doing here?" when he stopped dead in his tracks. Everything going on in his mind was visible on his face as he just stood there: confusion, curiosity, worry, amazement, and finally, understanding.

With a soft "I'll be damned", he turned to have another look at Marie, and then back to look at Michelle, before saying "I wouldn't have believed it was possible. This is Marie and Michelle, right?"

All three of us laughed, and I assured him that they were, indeed, the people he'd left in my home. Staring from one to the other, he made his way to a chair and sat down. He finally managed to pull his eyes away from them and looked at me to say "I don't know who that guy is that you called, but I want his name and telephone number. The Bureau **needs** him!"

All three of us laughed again, and I told him Mutt's name, and phone number. Dale quickly wrote them down, looked from Michelle to Marie again, and carefully tucked the note away.

Shaking his head as he continued to look back and forth between the two of them, he reached into a pocket and pulled out an envelope, handing it to Michelle and saying "Here's some more pocket money. If you run short, don't be afraid to let me know - we want to take good care of you, okay?"

She smiled and nodded, and discretely tucked the envelope into a pocket as Dale turned to me. He looked at me and asked "They've been out?"

I said that they had, and went on to tell him about Mutt, how the transformation had gone, and the visit to the mall afterwards. Dale looked a little concerned, but I assured him that all of us had been there, watching out for them - and that they'd come home not only safe and sound, but considerably happier.

Marie wanted to show him her room - he didn't know why of course, but went along with it. Michelle and I kept them company as Marie led him upstairs and showed him the changes she'd made. He was impressed, and let Marie know it. She smiled and thanked him for his compliments before Michelle told her "Come on, Marie. I think these two need to talk, and I expect they'd both be happier doing it alone."

When they were out of earshot, Dale told me "Dan, what you've done here has gone **way** beyond anything I could - or would - have asked. I know that redecoration job in there cost you some money; the Bureau will cover it as part of their expenses."

I looked at him and said "If I get a check from the Bureau for anything other than the contract fee, I won't cash it. I'll sign it, and send it back - so don't bother."

He tried to protest, and I finally told him "Look, Dale, I saw what kind of condition those two were in when they got here. If I can make them - and particularly Marie - feel better and happier, and then I'm going to do it. All this cost me was a little money, and the way she's been so happy and cheerful since then is all the payment I need or want. So stop bitching at me."

The look he gave me let me know he wasn't happy about it - and that he understood that I wasn't going to accept any kind of payment from the Bureau, either.

We walked back toward the living room slowly as we got caught up on the status of his case against Frenchy, and Michelle and Marie's situation in the house. By the time we got to the living room, we'd each gotten the other fully up to date.

Michelle and Marie were standing there waiting for us, and Dale looked at them again before saying "I still can't believe it. I know it's you, but you don't *look* like you!" - making all three of us laugh, with Dale joining us a moment later. A bit later, he told us

he had to get going, and left - and he'd barely pulled away from the curb before Marie and Michelle were in near-hysterics at the way he'd reacted to seeing them. Their laughter was infectious, and I was soon laughing along with them. When they'd gotten themselves back together, Michelle came over and gave me a hug, saying "Thank you, Dan" - followed by Marie who hugged me, too, before the two of them went upstairs to change.

That night, over supper, they described the event to Lucy and the girls, and had all three of them laughing so hard they cried as they went into detail about the looks on Dale's face, and what he'd done and said.

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Over the next couple of weeks, Marie and Michelle finally came to treat us as though they were part of our family. Each of them got to go 'out' every so often, once together. Marie got to the point where compliments didn't make her blush, and she was able to talk to me as easily as anyone else did. After a timid start, she was soon comfortable giving me a kiss on the cheek, just as Robyn and Sandra did, before going to bed each night. The first time I swatted her on the butt she was surprised - until she realized that I was doing to her the same thing I did to Sandra and Robyn, and for the same reasons. She gave me a happy grin, and went on about her business. Michelle saw it, and just gave me an amused smile when I looked at her.

Another week, and things had changed again - and not for the better.

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It was Sunday morning, and Lucy and I turned out to be the first ones downstairs. I dug out the box of doughnuts Lucy had brought home from the store the evening before while she got the coffee started.

When it was ready, each of us took a couple of doughnuts, got our coffee, and went over to sit in the breakfast nook. We were reading the paper - Lucy the business section, me the comics - when Michelle came into the kitchen.

To our surprise, she didn't stop to get some coffee or anything to eat; she saw us and came straight over to where we were. Looking down at us, we could see that she was upset about something, and waited to hear what she had to say.

She made a couple of false starts, but finally managed to tell us "I think that me and Marie need to find someplace else to stay until they get Frenchy."

To say that Lucy and I were surprised would have been an understatement - neither one of us had any idea of how or why Michelle had come to saying anything like that to us.

I asked her "Would you like to talk to us about it?"

Her lips tightened and she shook her head, before she answered "I don't see any point to it. My mind's made up, and that's it."

Lucy asked her "Michelle, we really don't understand this. Yesterday, everything was fine. Now, this morning, all of a sudden you want to leave. Would you at least show us the courtesy of telling us *why*?"

Michelle's expression softened - marginally - and she said "I reckon I owe you at least that much."

Lucy quickly asked "And would you sit down to do it? It's kind of awkward to be looking up at you like this."

Michelle hesitated a moment, and then took a seat - well away from where Lucy and I were. Not a good sign.

She took a deep breath, and then said "It was late last night, and I was already asleep when Marie knocked on my door. I answered it and told her to come in. She was some kind of upset, and it took me a few minutes to get the story out of her."

"What happened?" I asked.

Michelle gave me a Look and said "She told me that she got up to use the bathroom, and while she was in there, she heard noises coming from the other bedroom. I asked her, and she said they weren't like anybody was getting hurt or anything, just different than she's ever heard before. She opened the bathroom door a little and peeked in - and saw that Robyn and Sandra were both naked and laying on top of the bed. Marie didn't know what they were doing, but when she described it to me, I reckon they were... using their mouths on each other. She watched them for a bit, until both of them kind of cried out, and Robyn - she was on top - kind of fell over and laid down on the bed. That's when Marie closed the door again and came over to me, scared out of her wits. She didn't know what they were doing, and didn't want to sleep in her room last night, so she stayed with me. I kept her company while she got some clothes this morning, and now she's all dressed and waiting in my room for me to get back, so we can pack up and leave."

On hearing that, Lucy and I both knew what had happened: Marie had heard them making love, and had watched as they brought each other an orgasm.

I thought about what Marie had said for a few moments, and had a few questions.

"Michelle, you said Marie heard noises from their bedroom?"

She nodded, and I asked "And she opened the bathroom door to see what was causing them?"

She nodded again, and I asked "Wasn't the door closed and latched, and then?"



I could see that she hadn't thought to find that one out.

"I don't know", she grudgingly admitted.

"Well, you know that's the one rule we have here - that a *closed* door is as good as locked. If Marie opened a closed door, and then she did something she knows she shouldn't have; I've seen her knock on one and wait for an answer often enough."

Michelle just looked at me, and I said "It might be worthwhile to find out if that's what happened."

She slowly nodded, and I went on to say "Marie said she saw Sandra and Robyn in bed and naked, and watched them. From the sound of it, that's where they stayed - on the bed. Marie said that when Robyn lay down, she closed the door and went to your room, right?"

"That's right."

"So neither one of them said anything to Marie, or did anything to let her know they knew she was watching? Neither one of them said or did anything to try to get her to come into the room, or do anything?"

"No, they didn't."

"Then what's the problem?"

Michelle flared up and said "The problem is what they were doing! It isn't right, those two girls... doing that! Specially not with Marie sleeping in the next bedroom!"

"But Marie *wasn't* in the next bedroom - she was watching them through a door that *she* opened."

"It ain't the same thing - you know what I mean!"

"You're right - it isn't the same thing. Between the time you moved in here, and now, you don't have any idea if Sandra and Robyn have done that before, or if they have, how many times. I know Sandra and Robyn, and I don't think that's the first time they've been together like that since you got here - have you noticed anything different about them BEFORE last night? Did you think there was anything wrong with them BEFORE you found out they like to give each other pleasure?"

I watched as Michelle thought that one over, and could tell that I'd put a hole in her balloon. But she wasn't going down without a fight, exclaiming "But it ain't **right** for two girls to... do that to each other!"

I just looked at her levelly and asked "Why?"

"It ain't I tell you!"

"Yes, I heard you - but I want to know WHY you say so. What are your *reasons*?"

She sputtered for a few moments, and then got thoughtful, hemmed and hawed a bit, and finally said "That's just what folks say. It means they're lesbians, and no man'd want 'em!"

"That's what folks say, is it?" I asked. Michelle nodded, and I asked "Are those same folks right about the things they say about you, being married to Frenchy and all?"

I'd nailed her square between the eyes with that one - she only sat there stunned as I went on "You think they're lesbians, and no good for a man? Aren't you forgetting that both of them have been out with guys from school - several times each? And that you've seen them kissing those same boys, and looking like they really meant it?"

She grudgingly admitted she remembered exactly that.

"Now, if they were lesbians, they wouldn't be kissing guys and meaning it, now, would they? So maybe what's going on is that they like boys AND girls. For all you know, they like boys better, but want to keep themselves safe until marriage, so they take care of their 'feelings' with each other. If that's the case, is that really a *bad* thing?"

She had to think that one over, too - and I watched as her balloon deflated even more.

"But what about Marie?" she demanded.

"What about her? Don't you think that if either one of them had done anything bad with her, she'd have come to you and said so? She hasn't, so you can pretty much figure that THEY haven't. Have you seen them treat her with anything BUT affection, and care, and friendship? No? They won't, either. Have you **ever** seen *any* of us do ANYTHING to trick or force someone else into doing something bad, or that they didn't want to do? Of course not - and you won't either. That's not how we are in this house. If Robyn and Sandra have found love and comfort and happiness with each other, who the hell are YOU to tell them it's wrong? They haven't said or done anything to rub it in your face, ask you to approve of it, or anything else. If anything, it sounds like they've been careful to *avoid* doing anything when or where you and Marie might be offended."

I went on to say "You know that the only rule in this house is that a closed door is as good as locked. The same way, the only code we live our lives by here is that each of us makes our own decisions, and accepts the consequences - good or bad. We don't force anyone else to do ANYTHING; and just the reverse is true, too: we don't let anyone else force US, either. Last night, Robyn and Sandra were behind *closed doors*, doing what *they* wanted to because *both* of them wanted to do it, in the privacy of their *own room*. You'd never have known anything happened between them if Marie hadn't opened that bathroom door and seen them. And Marie wouldn't have been frightened of what she saw

if YOU had taken care to teach her about sex - and not just for married people to have babies. YOU don't think its right for two people of the same sex to have pleasure with each other - but it's not YOUR decision to make for them. If YOU don't like the fact that Robyn and Sandra are willing to find love and happiness with each other, and then that's YOUR problem - not theirs, and I'm not going to let you try to make them feel bad, or say or do hateful things to them. And that's what it would be if you said or did anything: hateful; hateful because you *hated* the idea that two women could be happy with each other when you aren't happy at all, hateful because you *hated* the idea that they could find physical pleasure - and you know that's what they felt - without a man when you haven't had that kind of pleasure with *anyone* for a long time, hateful because you *hated* the idea that they could find love and comfort in each others arms when you don't have anyone's arms around you."

Michelle sat there, frozen, as I took a breath and finished by telling her "Marie broke the rules of our home by opening a closed door when she knew she shouldn't. Now you're angry that Marie saw something that she didn't understand, and scared her. Now you're upset because two people that aren't responsible to you found happiness and pleasure with each other. Now you're worried that maybe they're going to 'do' something to 'bother' Marie - when you obviously haven't said or done anything to let Marie know that there's anything TO be done. Tell me, Michelle - which one of us do you *really* think is doing wrong here?"

Michelle turned to look at Lucy - whose face made it clear what SHE thought. Michelle flinched slightly, and turned back to me. I sat there watching her for a moment, and then said "Not sure, Michelle? I'll tell you what - you go and think about it some. After you do, if you still want to leave, and then I'll call Dale, and he'll find you another place to stay."

She had enough of her wits about her to realize that I was - politely - telling her to get lost. She slowly stood, and made her way out of the kitchen without a backward glance. When she was gone, Lucy and I looked at each other before she told me "I'm sorry it came to this, Dan."

"I am, too. I didn't figure Robyn and Sandra were playing at being vestal virgins, so I expected it to come out sooner or later. I just didn't think it would happen the way it did - with Marie seeing them."

"What you said to Michelle was right, though. I'm going to be sorry if she decides they have to leave - I like her, and just love Marie. But I won't have her in this house hurting our kids, either."

I sighed, finished off my coffee, poured myself another cup and tried to go back to the comics - which weren't so funny, any more.

A while later, Sandra and Robyn turned up - surprised that Michelle and Marie weren't there. Both of them grabbed a cup of coffee and a couple doughnuts before coming over

to sit with Lucy and me. When they were seated, we told them about the whole thing with Michelle. The only expression either one showed was sadness - and regret when Sandra told us "I'm sorry, Uncle Dan. I don't think either one of had any idea she was there; that's why we always waited until way late, so that she'd be asleep and not hear us."

I patted her hand and said "No, you two didn't do anything wrong - at *all*. Marie shouldn't have opened the door, and both of them know it. After that happened, any problems are from what Michelle has or hasn't done."

I handed the comics off to Robyn, and got up. In the kitchen, I put together a plate of a few doughnuts, a carafe of coffee, and another of milk. Putting it all on a tray, I took it upstairs and set it in front of Michelle's door, told her "There's breakfast, coffee, and milk on a tray here, if you want them", and left.

After the rest of us had eaten, Lucy and I went back upstairs to get dressed - and saw that the tray wasn't in the hallway. Lucy gave me a half-smile, and we went on into our room.

It was a little after three that afternoon, and Lucy and I were cuddled up on a couch listening to music in the living room when Michelle appeared in the doorway. She came in, and we could see that her eyes were red and her face a little puffy - she'd clearly been crying. We started to sit up, and she just waved us back down, saying "No, there's no need for you to get up. What I've got to say won't take long, hard as it is to say."

We watched as she sat down, and were listening closely when she finally told us "What you said to me this morning, Dan, wasn't something I wanted to hear. But it was something I needed to hear - and hear good and plain, just like you said it. I asked Marie, and she said that the door was closed; she had to turn the handle to open it, so I'm apologizing to you for what she did."

She gave me a baleful look and went on to say "What you told me this morning about two people finding love and comfort and all that... Well, I thought on it. A lot. And I had to admit that you had a good point. I didn't like it much, and I thought on that some, too - and finally had to confess to myself that you were right about the other things; not exactly right, but sure close enough to count. I finally understood that I would have said and done things to those girls, and I knew that they *would* be hateful - and why I'd say them. It hurt me some, but I finally got honest with myself, and saw what I was like, and how what I was thinking wasn't good - not for me, and not for Marie."

"I also thought about what you said about not telling Marie things - and knew that I should have been talking to her a long time before we ever got here. And that I should have been talking to her about a lot more than what I would have before you said anything to me. So me and Marie, we had us a nice sit-down talk, and I explained things to her - a lot of things. I was scared, and ashamed, and embarrassed, and about anything else you could think of - but I done it. I was right surprised when she just sat there listening to me, nodding her head every now and then, like what I was saying was just as normal as could be - and then I realized that what I was saying *should* be right and

normal. A man and woman, they get together to make each other happy; there's no reason that talking about it should be anything to be ashamed about. When I was done, I told Marie the other stuff, too - like about Sandra and Robyn. And I told her that what they were doing was their decision, and it wasn't for us to judge the right or wrong of it, any more than it'd be right for them to judge *us*. She told me that when she saw them, she didn't think it was right or wrong; that it just scared her because she'd never seen or heard about anything like that before - and I knew right then that I'd done her wrong by not talking to her sooner, just like you said."

Michelle blushed mightily as she continued "When I was done, Marie started asking me questions, and for the life of me, I didn't know the answers to any of it. We didn't have much in the way of schooling on this stuff where I went to school - a few films the gym teacher showed, and that was about it. Even my own momma didn't talk to me about it, except to tell me about having periods and not to be layin' with boys until I was married."

Michelle lowered her head to stare at her lap as she told us "So what I have now is a fifteen year old daughter upstairs that's got questions and is a little scared, and her momma down here who doesn't know the answers and is a LOT scared."

She lifted her head again to look directly at Lucy, and then me, before she said "Lucy, Dan - I'm telling you that I'm sorry about coming at you like that. What I did was wrong. If you can forgive me, I'd like for me and Marie to keep stayin' here - you and your girls are good people, and I think we could still learn a lot from *all* of you."

Lucy knew what *I* would say, so I just waited for her to make up her mind about where she thought it should go, and tell Michelle.

A few moments went by, and Lucy finally spoke up, saying "We accept your apology, Michelle, and we forgive you. I know that all of us would like for you to stay here, too - after you left this morning, I told Dan that I liked you, and loved Marie; and that's still true. Sandra and Robyn came down to breakfast and asked where you were, so we told them that Marie had seen them last night, and that you were upstairs deciding if you wanted to stay or go. Both of them were sorry that Marie had to find out about them that way - not because they thought it was wrong, but because they understood how it could surprise and even frighten her, which is something that neither one of them would **ever** do willingly. If you and Marie want to stay here, both of you are still more than welcome. But you're going to have to understand that we aren't going to change our lives to make you happy - any more than we would expect you to do it for us. Remember the first time you sat down to dinner with us? And how we told you that we weren't religious people, but that if you wanted to pray, we'd respect it? That's what we want from you: to respect **OUR** ways, too. If you can do that, and then I think everything's going to be fine."

Michelle started to get misty around the eyes, and answered "We can do that - that's one of the things that I thought hard about, that you and Dan and those girls have done nothing but show us respect. Honestly, I don't know if what goes on between Robyn and Sandra is right, or not - but I **DO** know that it's not for **me** to decide for them. As long as

we're here, I won't say or do anything to either one of them about what they do amongst themselves." After a deep breath, she went on "And I know that after seeing them, Marie's gonna be some curious about it. I don't think she's gonna want to run in there and join them, but I don't doubt for a minute that she's going to have a passel of questions. I hope she comes to me with 'em, but I know that some of 'em are going to be things that only Robyn or Sandra can explain - and I'll be okay with that. Not happy about it, not because of Robyn or Sandra, but because of my own not knowing the answers. I thought about it hard, and I know what kind of girls those two are, and I'm not worried about them doin' anything with Marie. It's my own *not knowing* that gets on me."

Lucy looked at me, and I just nodded before she told Michelle "Michelle, you don't have to 'not know' if you don't want to. I know you're not ignorant; you just don't have much schooling - and that's something that's easy to change. You've heard about the internet?"

Michelle said she did, and Lucy continued "That's where we can go to help you learn. Yes, I said 'we' - I'll be more than happy to help you, if you want. Or I can just get you started, and let you alone from there; either way, it's up to you."

Michelle looked at her and asked "You'd do that? Even after how I talked to you this morning?"

Lucy smiled and said "Yes, I'd do that - *because* of how you talked to us this morning. I think you said a lot of what you did because you didn't know better. If it will help you learn, and then yes, I'd be glad to do it."

"How can you do this? Be so nice to me, and be so willing to help me and Marie after the way I talked to you this morning?"

I spoke up then by asking Michelle "Have you ever seen somebody on the street asking for money? Somebody that obviously wasn't a bum or a drunk, but just down on his luck?"

"I have."

"Ever give him money?"

"I did."

"Why?"

"Cause it wasn't much to me, and a lot to him - and he looked like he deserved it."

I just smiled at her. She looked perplexed for a moment, and then understood. She opened her mouth and said "But that's different. I'm just giving him a little money; you're opening your house to us, and even putting yourselves between us and Frenchy."

"Is it something entirely different, or just a difference of doing more or less of the same thing?" I asked.

She thought that one over, and finally answered "Just more or less, I think. But still..."

"But still, it's the same thing. You did what YOU could with those folks. Lucy and I and the girls are doing what WE can with you. You gave what you could afford and were willing; we're just doing the same thing - except that we *have* more, so we can *afford* more."

She tried again, saying "But it's not just the money - and I know you've spent a fair chunk of that. It's giving us so much of your **lives**, too. That's different, isn't it?"

That time, it was Lucy that smiled, and asked "Is it? Think about what you KNOW about us, and tell me how different it is, really."

Michelle just sat there blinking slowly for nearly a full minute. She finally came back with a small start and said "It isn't different - not really. I can see that all of you love each other so much, and how much each of you trusts and respects the others. So I guess any love and trust and like that that you give us is just a little bit of what you've already got - just like the money you spent on letting Marie decorate that room is a little bit of what you've got in the bank. As much as it seems to Marie and me, it's really just a little bit of what you already have - and you can afford to let us have it because you've got so much more where that came from that what you give us won't hardly be missed."

Lucy smiled and said "That's it, exactly."

Michelle just sat there, stunned, as she thought about all she'd just heard meant - not just to us, but to her, and Marie.

After a bit, her eyes got huge, and she stared at each of us in turn before saying "Dear lord! What kind of people you must be, that you can DO things like that!"

Lucy and I grinned at her, making her realize how she must look; she quickly got herself composed again, but was still somewhat awe-struck as she heard me say "I think maybe now you can really understand why we're willing to have you and Marie in our home, and do what we can to protect you from Frenchy."

She nodded, and managed to answer "I do. And with what you know, Dan, and what Lucy and those girls have learned, he doesn't have a chance, does he?"

"Not even a little one", Lucy told her, amused.

Michelle suddenly laughed before telling us "And the poor dumb bastard doesn't even know it! He is in *such* deep shit!" - then looking slightly guilty at her choice of words.

Lucy and I laughed with her, and Lucy said "Yeah, he is, isn't he?" - making Michelle laugh again.

With everything said and done, Michelle stood up and told us "Thank you, both of you - more than I could ever tell you. I'm going to go upstairs now, and finish my talk with Marie - at least, what I can of it." With a sudden inspiration, she asked Lucy "Do you think it would be okay if Marie learned this other stuff with me? So that it's the two of us learning together?"

"Of course its okay with me - whether or not to do it is up to YOU."

Michelle grinned, and said "My daughter, my decision. Yeah, I understand that" before turning to go back upstairs to where Marie was waiting.

When she was gone, there really wasn't anything that needed to be said between Lucy and me; she just snuggled a little closer, I hugged her a little tighter, and we went back to listening to the music.

Supper that night could have been a lot more awkward than it was. I think it was only Robyn's friendliness and Sandra's innate dignity that saved the evening. Michelle and Marie, of course, couldn't help looking at them, and watching them. Both girls noticed it, just as certainly - and promptly proceeded to ignore it. Robyn cheerfully drew Marie and Michelle into conversations about Marie's schoolwork, and what she'd been seeing through her telescope. Sandra did her part by asking them how they were doing on their computers, and if they'd found anything interesting on the Internet. By the time supper was over, Michelle and Marie had both gone back to treating Sandra and Robyn as they always had - almost. There was still a trace of hesitancy on Michelle's part, and Marie was again being a touch shy, but it was infinitely better than when the meal had started.

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Over the course of the following week, Lucy had her hands full showing Michelle and Marie around on the Internet, finding sites for them to learn more about not only matters sexual, but even their own bodies - as Lucy lamented to me "Both of them are absolutely ignorant of what goes on in their bodies; particularly their reproductive system. Neither one knows diddly about nutrition and pregnancy - even though Michelle's been pregnant, she really didn't understand it from a medical point of view - and it's tough getting them up to speed. The only good part is that Marie is too innocent to know how ignorant she is, and Michelle's bound and determined not to inflict her own ignorance on Marie."

I knew when they got to the part about the male anatomy because Marie suddenly started focusing her attention on the area immediately below my belt buckle. I carefully didn't notice while she got past that stage.

That was soon followed by what could only have been her education about the mechanics of sex; every time she saw me looking at her, she'd get wide-eyed and blush furiously.



That, too, went by apparently unnoticed - though it amused Robyn and Sandra to no end, neither said or did anything to let Marie know they'd seen anything different about her.

Finally, it got to the subject of human sexuality - and particularly FEMALE sexuality. Lucy grumped at me that neither one of them would admit to any kind of desires - never mind actually *doing* anything about them. She claimed she couldn't do anything to educate them until they 'got over it'. She finally got to the point that she must have read them the riot act; I wasn't privy to listening to what she said, but I knew she'd said *something* by the way the two of them walked around for a day looking as if they'd been pole-axed.

The day after that, Lucy was back at it again - and even without saying anything to me, I knew that she'd gotten through to them, and was making progress again.

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It was several days later that Michelle caught me, Lucy, and the girls together while Marie was off doing something else. She didn't pull any punches about what she wanted to talk to us about, either.

"I need some help from all of you about something Marie asked me about last night."

"What's that?" Lucy asked.

"She wants to know what it felt like when I lost my virginity, and what it feels like to make love. Considering who I've been married to, I don't think I'm such a good person to be answering that last question. Maybe if she hears about some good experiences, she won't be afraid as I was when it's her time."

Then, much to my surprised, Michelle turned to me and said "You might as well be there, too, Dan. Maybe you can add something from a man's view that none of the rest of us would think of."

Lucy and the girls all looked at each other - Michelle was asking something big of them. She knew it, too, and waited for them to let her know what they'd do. The three of them did their silent conversation thing, and after a bit Lucy turned back to Michelle and said "We'll do it."

Michelle breathed a sigh of relief and told them - and me - "Thank you. I know it's a lot to ask, but I think it's important; and I guess you do, too."

All three of them nodded, and Michelle thanked them again before leaving us.

When she was gone, all three were looking at me. I raised an eyebrow in question, and Sandra asked the question: "Do we tell her about you, Uncle Dan?"

"I don't see why you can't tell them about what you felt, without saying who you felt it *with*. I know they're LIKE family, but it's not like they ARE family." I replied.

Robyn opened her mouth to ask "And if she asked us what it's like to make love with another girl?"

"Tell her the truth. You don't have to go into details, of course, but you can let her know what *your* feelings are."

"And me?" Lucy asked.

I grinned at her and said "You're old enough to decide what to say for yourself. I'm not even going to BEGIN to try and tell you what you can and can't talk about!"

She grinned back and said "Good choice" - making Sandra and Robyn both laugh.

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At supper the next night, Michelle waited for a lull in the conversation to tell Marie "Marie, honey? You know that talk we were having the other night?"

Marie thought a moment and nodded; Michelle continued "We're going to finish it up tonight after supper. Lucy and Robyn and Sandra are going to talk to you, too. And Dan's going to be there if there are any questions that only a guy can answer. Okay?"


Marie looked around at all of us, thought it over, and said "Yeah, that's okay, mamma."

From there, the rest of the meal went as usual. When it was over, Michelle took Marie into the living room for a little pre-talk talk while the rest of us got the table cleared and everything put away. In the living room, Lucy and the girls all took seats generally around Michelle and Marie; I selected mine to put me off to the side a bit - out of Marie's direct sight, but still within 'conversation distance'.

When everyone was seated, Michelle told Lucy and the others "While you all were taking care of the dishes - thank you - I was telling Marie that I might not be the best person for her to ask those questions. I explained to her about me and Frenchy, and she understood - she saw enough of him that she knew what I was talking about, even if she was never actually *there*. I told her that I asked you three to help, and that you agreed. I'm only *asking* you to realize that she's still only fifteen, and that you don't have to go into detail about who did what, and how - you know what I mean. Otherwise, I'm not going to interrupt or get in the way; Marie's asking the questions, and you're all being kind enough to answer them the best you can - and both of us are grateful. If there's anything you don't want to answer just yet, we'll both understand."

That said, Michelle sat back and waited for Marie to start. After a moment's hesitation - and a brief glance my direction - she asked "What does it feel like when a guy is inside you for the first time?"

Lucy spoke first, saying "For my first time, it hurt a little. Both of us were young, and didn't really know what we were doing. We didn't have enough time to do it right, and it was in the wrong place - the back seat of his dad's car. Because of all that, it wasn't very nice for me: it was over before the pain stopped."

Robyn spoke up next - I saw Michelle's eyes widen in surprise, but she didn't say or do anything else - and told Marie "The first time I was with a guy, it was wonderful. He was real careful with me, and went real slow, so that I had plenty of time to get used to what he was doing. He was patient with me, and as gentle as anybody could want. There was a little bit of pain when he broke my hymen - my 'cherry' - but it wasn't much, and it didn't last long because he was so considerate with me. Before it was over, I'd  had a climax - you know, and orgasm - from making love with him. I couldn't have *asked* for a better first time."

Sandra spoke up next - no reaction from Michelle - and said "My first time was a lot like Robyn's. The guy was SO patient with me, and SO gentle - I knew that I didn't have to be afraid that he was going to do anything to hurt me. My hymen was already gone from an accident when I was younger, so *that* part of it wasn't any problem. Still, he was so kind to me - he went slow, making sure that I was ready for him - you know, wet enough inside. When he was all the way inside me, it felt *so* good - and before he finished, I'd had orgasms with him. Like Robyn said, I couldn't have dreamed for better."

Marie looked at all of them and asked "How old were you when that happened?"

Sandra spoke first, telling her "Fifteen."

Lucy was next, with "Sixteen."

Robyn closed it out with her quiet "Thirteen" - followed by a soft gasp from Michelle.

Lucy pretended not to hear it, but she knew Michelle was listening when she told Marie "There's no *one* 'right age' for every girl. It depends on when she's old enough to understand the choice she's making. It's when she knows in her heart and mind that she's ready. It's when she finds a guy that she loves and trusts enough not to hurt her, and do right by her. Honestly, I wish I had waited longer - but I didn't, and it took a long time before I got to where I could enjoy making love. Sandra was about your age, and from what she'd told me, she did exactly like what I just said a girl should do. Robyn was younger - but she's always been more grown up than her calendar age. I was sorry that it happened for her so young - until I learned how it had gone for her; then I was happy that she had had such a good first time. Honestly, I was even a little jealous of her, for having an orgasm her first time - it was *years* before that started happening for me."

Marie thought that one over for a bit before she asked "What's it like to make love? I mean, what does it feel like?"

Robyn spoke first, answering her by saying "I've only been with one guy, so I don't know how it is with another one - but I like it, a *lot*. When he's inside me, it's like there's been a part of me that was missing, and then I have it again."

Sandra went next, telling Marie "It's kind of like that for me, too. When my guy is inside me, it's like I know *exactly* why I'm a woman, and what I was put on earth for; making love just makes me feel so *complete*."

Lucy closed that round with "I haven't been with very many men. But with each one of them - except for one - it was pretty much the same: it felt nice, and sometimes I even had orgasms while they were in me, but it really wasn't anything **special**. I used to think that having sex and making love were the same thing, but now I know they aren't. It was that one exceptional guy that taught me that making *love* is something SO much better than just having sex. With him, every time we're together he makes me so happy, and feel so good, that I fall in love with him all over again. And in case you didn't figure it out, the guy I'm talking about is Dan."

I just sat off to the side, patently not noticing that Marie AND Michelle were giving me the once-over.

Marie's next question came as something of a surprise to all of us - including Michelle.

"What do you feel when you're with a guy? I mean *physically*", she asked.

Sandra spoke first, telling her "I feel my breasts start to get tight, and my nipples getting hard. I start to get wet between my legs, and it feels like there are butterflies inside me. As I get more excited, my nipples actually start to hurt a little - but it's a GOOD hurt; and my vagina opens up so that I feel like there's an empty place in me that needs to be filled up. My clitoris comes out, and it's real sensitive - almost any kind of contact with it makes me even wetter, and more excited."

Robyn told her "What Sandra said - except that I get SO wet between my legs; after I make love, I'm always thirsty because of it."

Lucy closed again with "It's pretty much the same for me, too."

A brief silence followed that before Marie asked "What's it like when you... orgasm?"

Lucy went first by saying "I don't know that any woman can really describe it to anyone else - and once you've had one, it doesn't NEED description. I guess the only thing I can say is that it's a really, really, REALLY intense pleasure that seems to take over your whole body. The French call it 'the little death', and that's about as close to putting it into words and I can get."

For their parts, Sandra and Robyn simply nodded their agreement with Lucy.

A longer pause, and Marie asked "Uh... what kinds of stuff do you think about when you're with a guy? I mean, what do you like him to do?"

Robyn smiled and answered "Kissing is always good. Having him touch me; not just on my breasts and between my legs, but all over. Feeling his warm body next to mine. Feeling his hard penis, and knowing that *I* did that to him - that he finds me exciting. Having him lick my breasts, and kiss and bite - softly! - my nipples. Sucking on my breasts and nipples. Using his mouth on me, between my legs. Feeling how strong he is when we're together, and knowing how gentle he is with me."

Lucy went next, saying "What Robyn said. And when he touches my butt - holding it and squeezing it. Having him slide his hands up and down my legs SO softly and gently it's like his fingers are feathers. When he softly bites my earlobes, and kisses my throat."

Sandra added her bit with "All of that, and when he kisses my shoulders. The way his hands touch my skin - softly, like he's afraid he's going to break me. His lips on my skin. My breasts pressing into his chest."

When they finished, all three of them were clearly aroused - as were Marie and Michelle, if their breathing was any indication.

Marie took a deep breath and pulled herself back together before asking "What, uh, do you like to do for him?"

Lucy grinned and said "Pretty much everything he does for me. With Dan, he actually likes to cuddle with me, holding me close, after we make love - and I'm *always* happy to!"

Sandra had her own smile as she told Marie "Like Aunt Lucy said, what he does to me, I like to do back. When he's done, I like to hold him inside me, trying to see how long I can keep him there before... it's too late." I saw Michelle's relief when Sandra didn't go into the gory details.

Robyn's happy expression only emphasized her words: "Anything and everything I can. I love him, and anything I can do to make him happy and feel good, I'm glad to do it."

Marie's next question was hardly unexpected, and obviously directed to Robyn and Sandra: "What's it like to be with another girl?"

They shared a look, and Sandra answered the question.

"It's different than being with a guy. Not better or worse, just *different*. Robyn's softer and smoother than... my guy. But she isn't as strong, either. Robyn knows what I feel like because she's another girl - but the same way, she can't DO things the way a guy does.

Her and my guy, they're two different ways of sharing love and happiness - neither one is better than the other; they're just *different*. It's like one of them is chocolate mousse, and the other is a chocolate bar - both are good, just in different ways."

The comparison seemed to be something Marie could relate to, and she nodded her head in understanding.

She finally turned to me, and with only a faint blush asked "Dan, what is it that guys think about all this?"

"I don't know - I'm not all guys. I'm not even the same guy I was ten years ago, never mind when I was your age. All I can tell you is that it depends on the guy - some are going to be mature and considerate, and do what they can to make their girl happy. Others are going to be like little kids, and only want to make themselves happy. Most are somewhere in between: not grown up enough to put the girls happiness first, but more grown up than to just want to get their own pleasure. You want to know what I think?"

She nodded, and I answered "I think you don't want a guy that's too worried about whether or not you're a virgin. Chances are, he's not, and his wanting you to be one only means that he's insecure enough to not want you to know whether or not he's a good lover. On the other hand, you probably don't want a guy that seems too interested in the details about any other men you've been with - he's probably going to use that as an excuse to leave when he gets tired of you. A guy that doesn't trust you can't be trusted himself - either he's feeling guilty about what he's up to, and projecting it on you, or he's got an emotional problem that you don't want any part of. A guy with a temper will probably wear you out with it; the same for a guy that keeps making 'suggestions' about how you'd be better if you did this thing or that one. A guy that's only interested in your body isn't going to be happy, either - everybody grows old, and our bodies change along the way; the firm tits you've got now may be sagging a little in ten years, and that won't be what he wants. You get the idea?"

She said she did, and I finished up by telling her "I heard a saying once that seems to pretty much sum it up: women marry so they can change the guy into what they want; guys marry what they want, and don't expect her to change. What you want is a guy that you love enough that you don't want to change him, and he loves you enough to accept that you ARE going to change. Both of you have to work at making it work. Then it'll last a long time, with each of you happy with the other one. A real marriage isn't 'him and her', it's 'them'."

Marie was sitting there watching me, and I asked "Is there anything else you wanted to ask me?" She shook her head 'no', and I asked "Anything else for Lucy or the girls?" Another head shake, and I said "Well, it looks like class is over. I'm going to get myself a beer" - and did just that. When I got back, I was surprised to see that not one of them had left - or even seemed to have moved, for that matter.

I sat down again, and Michelle asked me "You really believe that? About a guy accepting that his wife is going to change? And that a wife shouldn't try to change her husband?"

"Pretty much", I answered, adding "I mean, if she's changing in an unhealthy way - physically or mentally or emotionally - then he *shouldn't* accept it; but he shouldn't drop her, either, if that's the case. They should go **together** to a professional to get whatever help is needed. By the same token, if he's got things that make him a social or professional outcast, and then it's her duty to help him correct the problem. Otherwise, what I said applies."

She looked doubtful, and I asked Lucy "Since we've been married, has your weight changed? Don't answer with which way, or how much, just whether it has, or not."

Lucy levelly told me "It has."

My next question for her was "Do you think I love you any more or any less because of it?"

She just laughed - and said "And so you don't have to ask, no, there's nothing I'd change about you, either."

Michelle got the point.

The next question was from Marie - though I actually expected it from Michelle.

"You already knew that Robyn and Sandra aren't virgins?"

"Yes, I knew."

"And you don't mind?"

"It wasn't my decision to make. I know that both of them are very mature, and that they would know and understand the consequences of losing their virginity. The who and when and how had to be THEIR choice. I respect that choice, just as I respect the choice they've made to share their bodies with each other in love and happiness."

Michelle asked "Do you know who they're having sex with?"

"I know they're not just 'having sex' - what they're doing is making love. Yes, I know who with, but I won't say any more about it - if they want you to know, they'll tell you. It's..."

"Not your decision. I know." Michelle finished for me, smiling.

Marie again: "You said that they aren't 'just' having sex, that they're making love. Lucy and the other kept saying 'making love', too. Isn't it the same?"

Lucy jumped in at that point, telling her "No, Marie, it isn't - not by a LONG shot. Sex is what two people do with their bodies. When they include their hearts, it's making *love*. Sex can make your body feel good, but making love makes your heart and mind feel good, too."

Michelle stuck a nickel in the meter then by telling Marie "There **is** a difference, Marie. When Frenchy and I were first married, we made love. Later, it was just sex for him - and no love at all, for me."

Marie turned to Robyn and Sandra and asked "What you two do... is it sex or love?"

Both of them smiled before Robyn answered "Yes", and a moment later, Sandra explained "Both of us feel desires. We aren't always able to satisfy those desires the way we want to, so we help each other out. We share physical pleasure with each other, so it's part sexual. But we do it BECAUSE we love each other - so it's part love-making, too." They shared a look, and Sandra added "Actually, it's *mostly* love-making."

Michelle looked at Lucy and asked "And you're okay with this, too?"

Lucy simply told her "Of course. Dan already told you that they're both mature enough to know what they're doing - you know it, too, if you'll think about it. Beyond that, what they do and how they do it isn't really any of my business - I love them, and all that matters is that they're happy. They are. Don't you think I have better things to worry about?"

Michelle thought it over for a moment, and admitted "I see your point."

At that point, Robyn chipped in by saying "Michelle? Neither one of us is involved with drugs. Neither one of us is in a gang, or has ever gotten into trouble with the police or at school. Neither one of us has gotten pregnant, even though we go out with boys. WE had a vote on whether or not to let you come here or not, too - and you're here. Both of us get good grades at school. We don't have to dye our hair green, or get all kinds of body parts pierced. Sandra not only has her own gun, but a police permit to carry it wherever she wants. Doesn't all of that sound pretty mature to you? And considering all that, do you really think that either one of us would have given our virginity - and that's what both of us did, GIVE it to someone; it wasn't taken from us - without knowing the consequences? Do you *really* think it matters whether or not we find pleasure in each other's bodies when BOTH of us want to do so, and do it in private?"

Michelle paused again before answering "Looking at it that way, I guess you're right."

Sandra demanded "How else **should** we look at it?" Sandra was generally the most patient and tolerant of all of us; Michelle knew that she'd stepped in it in a BIG way.



With a tone of contrition, Michelle answered "I'm sorry - I shouldn't have said it that way. What I meant was that I just hadn't thought about it any way but my own; and when Robyn pointed out the facts of it, I saw she was right."

Mollified, Sandra didn't say anything else.

Michelle looked at Marie and said "I think you've all given both of us more than enough to think about. I expect we'd better be going on to bed, now."

Marie didn't offer any protest - but did come over to give me a kiss on the cheek before joining her mother at the doorway.

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A few days later, I got a call from Dale, letting me know the status on the case against Frenchy. He didn't sound happy when he called, and when he hung up, I knew why.

That night, at supper, I relayed the information to Michelle and Marie - and then NONE of us were particularly happy: Dale had said that they had most of the people in Frenchy's group staked out and ready to scoop up - but that there were still too many of them running around without cover for him to be able to risk arrests. He was afraid that anybody that got away would just end up causing even MORE trouble - not just in general, but against Michelle and Marie, particularly.

The following Saturday, Sandra and I were keeping Michelle company while she did some shopping at the mall. Lucy, Michelle, and the other girls had opted to stay home and watch cartoons while eating doughnuts and laughing themselves silly.

We'd taken care of everything we were after, and had decided that we were ready to go home. The previous couple of days had been rainy and cloudy, so we decided to leave the mall via a seldom-used entrance and go ahead walk around to where the car was parked - it was a nice day, and none of us felt like fighting the crowds to get to a closer exit. We were halfway to the door when we heard someone behind us call out "Excuse me! Excuse me! Can I talk to you for a minute?"

We stopped and turned around, and I saw a couple of people coming toward us. When they got close enough, I could see that they weren't what could be called society's 'upper crust'. But we'd already stopped and seen them, so it wouldn't have been polite to turn around and walk off.

When they got close, one of them stepped forward and said "I'm sorry to bother you folks, but I saw this lady with you, and she looks like someone I know, and I just wanted to see if it was her."

When I heard that, I knew I'd fucked up.

Behind me, I heard Sandra unsnap her purse - then the sound of her rummaging around in it. I knew she knew where everything was in it, and realized that she was covering the fact that she now had ready access to her pistol. To help her, I turned to the guy that had spoken and said "Who is it you're looking for, and then?"

He said "A lady by the name of Michelle del la Roche - know her?"

Michelle kept her cool, and didn't say a word - I just looked at the guy like I was trying to remember, and then answered "No, can't say that I do. What does she look like?"

"A little like this lady with you - smaller tits, but nice long hair like she has."

"Well, I suppose there's lots of women with long hair. And like you said, this one has a larger bust than this... Michelle?"

"C'mon, man, quit shitting around. I just wanna talk to her, and that'll be the end of it."

"Then talk - nobody's stopping you."

"I don't wanna talk to her here, dumbass. I want her to come with me."

"Oh, well, that's going to be a problem, and then. You see, she's with me, and I don't think she wants to go with you." I told him.

"Too bad, buddy. She's going anyway."

"I wouldn't try to force her, if I were you."

He laughed, reached into his jacket, and pulled out a hunting knife before asking me "And why not, asshole?"

Next to him, the other guy opened his jacket, showing me a revolver in a shoulder holster.

"Because it might prove painful, stupid" I replied.

With a snarl, he started to swing the knife at me.

He didn't make it.

I stepped between him and Michelle, continued the motion his arm was making, and when he relaxed after realizing he'd missed, changed the direction of his hand so that I firmly stuck the knife in his chest, between his ribs, and straight into his heart. The surprise on his face was almost comical. Almost.

His partner was pulling his revolver out; I slid over in front of him, and grabbed his hand and pushed up - the muzzle of the pistol resting under his chin. A finger into the trigger guard, a pull, and the top of his head exploded into a pink mist. I felt some of it settle on my face and arms as the sound of the shot reverberated down the empty hallway. Looking over my shoulder, I could see that Sandra had drawn her pistol and had it ready, but wisely decided not to shoot while I was 'mixed in' with the two stupids.

Without turning around I said "Sandra! Get Michelle out of here. Take her home *now*. Then tell Lucy to come back and find a place to watch me so she's not noticed. If the cops take me in, she should call Ira." - Ira Weintraub was my lawyer; he was the guy other lawyers went to when THEY needed help - "Otherwise, wait for me to make a call on my phone. When she sees that, wait ten minutes, and then come up like she just got here. Now, GO!"

All Sandra said was "Got it", and a moment later, "Come ON, Michelle - we've got to get *out* of here". I looked over my shoulder again and saw that she was all but dragging Michelle down the hall. They'd gotten outside and just disappeared around the corner when one of the mall's security people peeked around the corner. I stood there with my hands in plain sight and told him "I think you'd better call the cops. These guys just tried to rob me."

Five minutes later, the hall was approaching its occupancy limits, what with the cops, mall security, various Officials, and mall denizens that wanted to see what was going on. A couple minutes later, and one of the senior cops took charge and things quickly settled down. The crowd was pushed back far enough to keep them out of everyone's hair, I'd been assigned two cops to watch me while a more senior one asked me what the hell happened. A few more were guarding the bodies until a forensics unit showed up to do pictures and collect evidence.

The story I told the cops was that I'd been leaving the mall when the two characters called out to me; I'd done as they asked, and when they got close, the one had pulled the knife and threatened me with it if I didn't hand over my money and jewelry. I explained that I was ex-Army, and Special Forces, so I wasn't too worried about the knife - until the guy decided I was taking too long and tried to stab me. I claimed my Special Forces training kicked in, and I got the better of the guy with the knife; when he hit the floor, I saw the other one pulling a gun. I got to him, and we struggled over the gun until it went off - unfortunately under his chin and pointing toward the top of his head.

The cops asking the questions didn't look too certain, so I told him that he could verify who I was, easy enough. He asked how, and I told him that I'd done a couple of computer jobs for the FBI, and that the local office would be able to verify my identity and military background. The cop asked "You saying this was part of an FBI case?"

I hastened to tell him that it wasn't - that the only involvement the FBI would have would be to verify who I was for him.

He got on a cell phone and made a few calls. As he was doing that, I looked around - and saw Lucy watching everything from the very edge of one of the glass panels at the mall entrance. There were a couple of mall security types keeping a small crowd from coming in, so Lucy would seem to be just one of the rubber-neckers to anyone that didn't know who she was. I reached around to scratch my back, and discretely gave her a thumbs-up in the process.

A few minutes later, the cop came back over and told me "Okay, the local Feebie in charge said he knew who you were, and was able to describe you pretty good. I asked him how he knew you, and he told me that their office gave you some security a couple years ago. That's when I remembered that big drug bust, and how somebody here in town got some extra protection after the Bureau requested it. Would that have been you?"

"It was."

"Okay, Mister Andrews. You're sure these guys aren't part of that operation?"

"Quite sure. Like I said, these guys were trying to rob me."

The cop was standing there looking at me like he wasn't sure if he wanted to believe me or not when a uniformed cop came over and told him "Okay, Detective, we've got ID on these two. Both of 'em have sheets long as your arm - strong arm, robbery, assault, ADW, that kind of shit."

That seemed to settle it for the detective, and he told me "Okay, sounds like it's just what you said - a robbery gone bad; bad for the crooks, for a change. I won't be filing any charges, Mister Andrews - it looks like you did us a favor, here."

"Thank you, detective. Would it be okay if I called my wife to come and get me? I don't think I'd better drive myself just yet; I'll come back later for my car."

"Sure, go ahead."

I pulled out my cell phone and dialed Lucy's number; when she answered, I went through the dialog that I figured the detective was waiting to hear, and finished up by asking the detective which entrance she should use so that she could get through the police lines. He told me, I relayed the information, and that ended the call. As I was putting my phone away, he asked me what she looked like. I gave him a description, and he pulled a uniform over, told him who to watch for, and sent him off to the entrance he'd told me to use.

Fifteen minutes later, the uniformed officer came back with Lucy at his side. She rushed over to where I was, and did a fine job of pretending she'd just gotten there - asking what happened, was I okay, the whole thing. I did my part, telling her I'd explain in the car, that yes, I was fine, and so on. The detective watched us for a moment, and then had the uniform escort us back to where he'd let Lucy through the lines.

Once we were outside, in the car, and on the way home, Lucy asked me if there were any problems. I told her that I didn't think so, and asked how things were at home. She gave me a Look, and said that Michelle was in shock, Marie was terrified, and that Robyn and Sandra were both worried, but taking care of the other two.

When we got home, Lucy ran interference for me, so I could go upstairs and clean up - neither of us wanted the rest of them to see me with the guy's blood all over me and my clothes. Once presentable again, I went back downstairs to where I could hear the rest of them gathered in the living room. As I went in, I could see that Michelle had what looked like a pretty stiff drink - and that it had enough condensation on it that it must have been made before I got home. I figured she needed it from the look of her, and didn't worry about who'd made it for her. Sitting on the floor next to her, clearly scared out of her wits, was Marie - holding tightly to Michelle's leg. Robyn and Sandra had the ends of the couches on either side of Michelle; Lucy was at the end of the couch from Robyn.

When they realized that I was in the room with them, their reactions varied considerably. Robyn and Sandra both simply looked relieved. Marie looked like the sight of me lifted the weight of the world off her shoulders. It took Michelle a few seconds, but she finally jumped up (Sandra neatly caught the drink before it spilled onto the floor; she'd make somebody a FINE infielder) and ran over to wrap her arms around me and start crying into my chest. Lucy stayed seated, and looked on indulgently as I tried to soothe the crying Michelle.

It was a good ten minutes before Michelle would let go of me, and another ten before the waterworks slowed to a trickle. Five more were spent blowing her nose and trying to dry eyes that continued to leak tears. Finally, I was able to guide Michelle back to the seat she'd been in; Marie promptly wrapped her arms around Michelle's leg again. I took a seat between Lucy and Robyn - both of whom immediately moved to sit next to me and pull my arms around them.

That left the all-but-implacable Sandra to ask "So what happened, Uncle Dan?"

I started to tell Robyn and the others, but only got as far as the two guys coming up to us before Michelle declared "He jumped in between me and a guy with a knife, is what happened. He got into a fight with the other guy who had a GUN, and shot him. He saved my *life*, and then told Sandra to get me out of there so I wouldn't be in any trouble! THAT'S what happened!" - then proceeded to start crying and blubbering again. While she was going on, I told the rest of them what had happened - minus any inappropriate details.

Sandra looked concerned, but pleased - as did Robyn, when I looked down at her. Marie's expression could best be described as something just short of hero-worship. Every time Michelle looked at me, she just shuddered and started crying again.

A while later, the phone rang; since Sandra was the only one not grafted to anyone else, she got up to answer it - then brought it in to me, saying "Dale". I took it and heard him

ask "Okay, what the hell happened today, Dan? I got a call from some detective about you killing a couple of guys at the mall. He said all he needed was for me to tell him whether or not I knew who you were, and to describe you. I said that I did, and did, and that seemed to be all he needed. But I still want to know what *really* happened."

So I ended up having to go through it again for him - again leaving out inappropriate details for the benefit of Robyn, and particularly Marie. He seemed to know what I was leaving out, and why, and didn't say anything about it. When I was done, he was quiet for a long time before he said "I don't know what to say, to tell you the truth. You did a damn fine job of protecting Michelle, and on top of that, managed to keep both Michelle and the Bureau out of it. It wasn't *strictly* legal, but that's okay; and if there's any crap about it, I'll take the blame. The thing I can't get over, though, is that she was out there. Yeah, I know she had a damn good disguise, but now I'm wondering if she should have been there in the first place."

"Dale, you know that if she and Marie had to stay in the house all the time, they'd both go bugshit. Yeah, it's a nice house, and there's plenty of room, and all that. But they'd still be stuck in one place, not allowed to do much of anything - and I expect you've seen how that affects other people. It was a calculated risk that we rarely took; this time, Lady Luck just spit on us, instead of smiling. We could turn around and take either one of them out another thousand times, and nobody would give them a second look. You know it, and I know it: shit happens."

I heard him sigh, and he said "Yeah, I know it. But I want you to promise me that neither one of them goes out until there's a *serious* change in their appearance, so nobody else tries to make the connection!"

"I promise, Dale. I'll talk to you later, okay?"

"All right, later."

I turned off the phone and gave it back to Sandra; she went to put it back, returning with a cold beer for me - as well as one for Lucy, and another for her and Robyn to share. Robyn lifted my arm up and moved to the other couch to make it easier for her and Sandra to pass the bottle back and forth. Lucy scooted back over so she could sit up - and make it easier for her to drink her own beer. Sandra handed the drink to Michelle, who only then seemed to realize what it was - and quickly took a long pull from it.

She came up gasping; it must have been even stronger than I thought it was. Her eyes watered, and she coughed a little bit, but she finally got herself back under control - and looked a little more at ease by the time she was done.

All of us were about halfway through our drinks when Lucy announced "There isn't a chance in hell that I'm going to cook tonight. If somebody else wants to, that's fine. If not, and then somebody better get on the phone and order something - I'm getting hungry."

That simple, defiant statement was all that was needed to break the mood - first Robyn, and then Sandra, and then me, and finally Michelle and Marie started laughing; a moment later, Lucy joined us.

Robyn took another pull from 'her' beer, told Sandra "Share with Marie, if it's okay", and left. A minute later, we heard her talking to someone on the phone. Sandra took a swallow, and then looked at Michelle in question. Michelle didn't even hesitate - she just reached out for it, and passed it to Marie. Marie took a tentative sip, made a face, and then took a longer pull from it before turning it back over to her mom, who handed it back to Sandra. A moment later, Robyn reappeared, saying "Chinese. Half an hour, fifty-two and change."

I didn't even put up a token fight; I just pulled my wallet out, dug out three twenties, and handed them to her. The delivery person would get the change for their tip.

With Robyn back in the room Sandra gave the beer back to her; Robyn took a swallow, and then held it up toward Marie. Marie thought a moment, and then turned loose of Michelle's leg in favor of going over to join Robyn and Sandra on the couch. There, the three of them took small swallows of beer as they passed the bottle around. Michelle looked on benignly, taking an occasional, smaller, sip of her own drink.

The food arrived on schedule. Robyn, Sandra, and Marie went to take care of it; I heard Robyn talking with the delivery person as I saw Sandra and Marie carrying the cartons into the kitchen, where they were joined by Robyn. A few minutes later, all three came out, each carrying two plates with cartons on them. When they got in the living room, the cartons of food went on the coffee table and the plates were distributed. We all took a little bit of pretty much everything, and chowed down - AFTER Sandra showed Michelle, and Robyn showed Marie, how to eat with chopsticks. The conversation was quiet and insignificant throughout the meal.

When we were all done eating, the youngsters all went about cleaning things up, without prompting from anyone. When they came back, they had more cold beer for the rest of us; Michelle was still nursing her drink.

As we were sitting there, quietly just enjoying each other's company, Michelle spoke up, telling me "Dan, if I had any doubt about how serious you were about protecting me and Marie, it's long gone, now. And if I had any worry that you might not be able to do it, that's gone, too. You settled the first part by standing there and telling that guy that he wasn't going to get me - period. You took care of the second part by... doing what you did. I don't even remember seeing you move - it was like one second, you're standing there; the next, it was over. Whatever else happens, you've got my trust, and my confidence."

She looked at Sandra next, and said "And don't think I didn't notice what you did, either. When it was over, I saw you had your gun out, and were ready to use it if you had to. I saw your face, too - and you weren't going to let them have me any more than Dan was."

I... I'm sorry I froze up like that; before, any time there was anything physical like that going to happen, I learned to just hold still so I didn't draw attention to myself. That, and I've never seen anything like... that happen before, and it just scared me so bad."

Lucy told her "Don't worry about it. It's over, and done with. They're not going to bother you or anyone else any more. As for Dan" - Lucy looked up at me with pride in her eyes - "well, he's just who he is. He made you a promise, and he'll do everything in his power to keep it. And now you know why I love him and trust him so much - there isn't a thing in the world that would get him to hurt me or these girls for ANY reason.

Michelle laughed quietly to herself, causing Lucy to ask "What is it?"

Michelle just smiled and said "If Frenchy had any idea who was watching out for me, he'd just walk into some police station and turn himself in!"

Lucy smiled back, and we went back to just sitting there and relaxing.

It finally got late enough that the youngsters decided they were ready to go to bed. Lucy and I both got our usual kisses from Robyn and Sandra - but that night, Marie decided that I needed more than the quick peck she usually gave me; instead, the kiss she put on my cheek let me know how grateful she was that I'd protected her mother.

Some time later, the rest of us started yawning, too. By mutual consent we all got up and headed upstairs for some seriously needed sleep.

Lucy and I had undressed and gotten into bed when we heard a soft knock at the door. I turned the light on my side of the bed on, and told whoever it was to come in. The door opened, and Lucy and I were both surprised to see that it was Michelle.

She moved to stand at the foot of the bed, her robe wrapped tight around her body. She looked at Lucy, and then me, before she said "What you did today, Dan - I don't have words for it, and I don't know how else I can thank you or make it right with you except this:" - and with that, her hand pulled the belt of her robe free, letting it first open, and then with a shrug of her shoulders, fall to the floor.

In the dim light, I could see that she was as beautiful as I'd thought she would be: her breasts were full, standing out firmly with only enough sag to prove that they were hers, and hers alone. Each was tipped with a small, dark areola and nipple - visibly erect. Below, her belly was smooth and flat; between her thighs, there was a small, dense thicket of dark black hair. She made no move to cover herself, inviting examination.

Lucy and I could only lay there looking at her as she calmly said "I don't have anything else that I think you might want, so all I can offer you is me. If you want me, I'll lay down with you and do everything I can to make you glad you did. I expect that Lucy keeps you more than happy, but I want you to know that I'll do anything you want - *anything* - to make sure you know that I'm properly thankful for what you done today.



And I'm doing this in front of you, Lucy, so that you know I'm not sneakin' around behind you trying to steal your man; I don't think Dan COULD be stole, but I just want to make sure you know that all I'm tryin' to do is show him how grateful I am about him savin' my life - and keeping my little girl from being an orphan. If you're not agreeable, and then I reckon I can try to find some other way of showin' y'all how I feel."

From the way she stood there, the tone of her voice, and the words she used, I knew that even a simple "yes" would have her in my bed before I could even blink - and that she was absolutely serious about being willing to do anything I asked of her, without hesitation or complaint. Lucy and I looked at each other, and I could tell that Lucy knew it, too.

I looked back to Michelle, and saw that she was patiently waiting for either Lucy or me to give her an answer - and that she'd accept it without question.

"Michelle, you don't have to do this. What I did today - what Sandra did today - was done because we care about you, and Marie. We didn't do it so that you would come in here like this; we did it because it was the RIGHT thing to do. Nothing more, nothing less. You're a beautiful woman, and I'm truly flattered that you would offer yourself to me - but I can't accept. If you came in here and said that you wanted to share my bed because you liked the kind of man I am, I would be happy to have you join me. But to have you here because you think you owe me something because of what I did... well, that's just not reason enough for *me*. If I took you into my bed now, I wouldn't be the kind of man *I* want to be - I wouldn't be keeping the promises that I've made to myself about how I want to be with other people. I'm sorry if I've hurt your feelings, or done anything to upset you - but I have to be true to myself before I can be true to anyone else. Do you understand?"

She gave a small laugh, tinged with bitterness, before she said "I do understand. I guess if you weren't the kind of man you are, I wouldn't be here to offer myself to you this way. I thought you were so different from Frenchy that I could do this and make it right. But I forgot just *how* different you are from Frenchy - and you've just reminded me. I'm sorry if my coming in here has troubled you, or caused you any problems. I'll put my robe on, and be leaving you alone now."

She started to bend over to retrieve her robe, but was stopped by Lucy softly telling her "Don't be ashamed or embarrassed, Michelle. What you want to do is fine - it's *WHY* you want to do it that Dan doesn't agree with. Think about that, and when you're ready, I'll be glad to let you borrow him - because you'll be getting him for the *right* reasons."

With the end of Lucy's words, Michelle continued her motion to pick up her robe. Standing upright again, she casually put it around herself, and then closed it and drew the belt tight to hold it. Looking at us, she calmly said "I'll be thanking you for not saying anything about this where Marie might hear of it. She might not understand, and think the wrong things about it."

I told her "You have our promise on that."

Michelle looked at Lucy and said "I'll be thinking about what he said - and what you said, too. Good night."

Something clicked in my mind, and I threw the covers back and stood up - naked - to walk over to where Michelle was starting for the door. She saw me come toward her, and stopped, waiting to see what I was going to do. I cupped her face in my hands and tilted it up, so I could softly kiss her on the lips. When I pulled back, I could see the surprise and hurt on her face. Still holding her face in my hands, I looked into her eyes and told her "I do love you, Michelle. I love you enough to NOT let this happen now because the *reason* you want to do it isn't right."

With that, the tears started to silently flow down her face. I released my hold on her, and she turned and quietly made her way out the door. I closed it behind her, and slowly went back to lie next to Lucy. I turned the light out again, and pulled my wife close, holding her as both of us felt sorrow for the woman who'd just left. Sleep did not come easily for either of us.

The next morning, Michelle was up and going when Lucy and I got to the kitchen. She was a little 'distant' from us when she let us know that she'd make fresh cinnamon rolls, but we pretended not to notice. By the end of the day, she was back to normal, as far as we could tell.

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A bit over a week later, Sandra and Robyn came into my office when they got home from school. They did that every so often, so it wasn't anything particularly unusual. What they had to tell me, though, was.

"Dad, there's something we need to talk to you about" Robyn informed me.

I quickly finished up the little bit of code I was working on, saved it, and turned to look at the two of them. The words, and tone of voice she used, made it clear that whatever it was, it was Class A-1 Priority.

Sandra picked it up then, telling me "The last couple of weeks - pretty much since that uh, 'class' where she was asking us all about sex and stuff, she's been asking Robyn and me questions."

"Questions about what it's like to be with another girl. *Specific* questions" Robyn added.

"And they're coming more and more often. And she's started touching us" Sandra said.

I raised and eyebrow, and she quickly explained "Oh, not, not like that. It's just that before, she'd touch our hand or something, but it was just for a moment, and that was it."

Now, she's touching our arms and legs - nothing sexual, *yet* - and doing it longer. Then, last night, when we were going to bed, she kissed me. Not on the cheek, like usual, but on the lips. She did it to Robyn, too. No tongues or anything, but still..."

"We think... we think she wants to be with us - you know, physically. She's smart, and cute, and we both love her to death; but we're not sure what to do about it. If she really wants to, we'd both be happy to help make her happy, and help her feel good - but we're worried about what Michelle might say or do" Robyn said, her concern clear on her face.

With it out in the open like that, both girls waited to hear what I had to say, and whether there was any advice I could give them. Honestly, I really hadn't thought that any 'experimentation' Marie got involved in would happen anytime soon, so I was nearly as surprised by what Robyn and Sandra had told me as they probably were to have experienced it.

I sat there and thought about it for a while, and finally came to the conclusion that there was really only one thing that COULD be done - and that anything else would have to come out of that.

I looked from Robyn to Sandra, and both of them perked up a bit, clearly paying attention to what I was about to say.

"The only thing I can tell you now - until something happens, that is - is to keep going like you are. I know that neither one of you is doing anything to induce her into doing any of this; but I still want to remind you that she's still pretty vulnerable and kind of naïve. Please remember how I was with you, and try to be the same way with her: it's up to her to make it clear what she wants, and it's up to you two to make sure that SHE'S sure about it. If you have to, remind her that she how scared she was when she saw you that time, and that her mom might be worried about her - so if she *really* wants to do anything with you, she should make sure her mom knows whose idea it is, and why."

Both of them nodded their understanding, and I went on "It's good that you came in here to talk to me and tell me about it - now I, and Lucy, will have some time to think about it some more and decide how we want to deal with it if Michelle says anything to us about it. Honestly, I don't know how she's going to react. But *you two* are doing the right thing: trying to keep it low-profile, and handling the situation on as low a level as you can while you keep it private. Until you were pretty sure what Marie was doing, you played it cool and didn't say anything to anyone; now that you think there's more to it, you asked for advice - quietly and privately, and that's exactly what you should be doing. Now, it's up to Marie - and if what you're concerned about is correct, Michelle. Until or unless she makes an issue of it, just keep doing what you're doing, and leave it up to Marie to make her own decision. Okay?"

Both of them looked relieved and a bit more confident when they thanked me, and got out of their chairs. Both came around my desk to give me a kiss - not on the cheek, either,

since no one was around - and left. AFTER I'd given each a soft pat, and squeeze, on the butt which earned me a happy smile.

When Lucy got home, we went through the usual 'decompression' routine. After she'd told me how her day had gone, I told her about my conversation with Robyn and Sandra. Lucy looked concerned, but not worried - she knew as well as I did that the girls were easily as mature and thoughtful as anyone half again their ages.

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A few more days went by and I figured things had either evened out, or maybe even eased off, between Marie and the girls. I found out differently when Michelle knocked on my office door one morning.

I invited her in, and she thoughtfully handed me a large mug of coffee to match the one she was carrying. Then she sat down across from me, took a sip, and said "There's something I have to get straight with you."

From the tone of her voice, I figured I knew what it was about - and resigned myself to the fact that I'd been busted.

"Go ahead" I told her.

"After breakfast this morning, Marie came to me and told me that there was something she needed to do. I asked her what it was, and she said that she needed to find out for herself what it was like to make love. Well, you can image what went through my mind. She must have seen it, too, because real quick like, she told me that she wasn't looking to be with a guy. That threw me for a bit, until I realized that she was talking about Robyn and Sandra. I'll be honest with you, it upset me some, at first. But sitting there looking at Marie, I realized that she was probably gonna do what she wanted anyway, and that I might as well let her do it honest instead of trying to sneak around and do it behind my back."

Each of us took a sip of coffee before she continued "I also started to wonder whose idea it was, her wanting that. But before I said anything, I thought it through, and realized that your two wouldn't be doing anything to try and force her, or trick her: she saw them that time only because she didn't follow your house rule about doors; they'd taken some care not to be pushing it onto anybody. I asked her about it, and she said that it had been her idea - that she'd had to talk to Robyn and Sandra and explain herself to them before they'd even *think* about letting her be with them. That settled my mind some considerable."

"The last thing I thought about was whether or not they were going to hurt her, or that she might decide that she didn't like men. I thought about your girls again, and figured that since both of them have already said they've been with a man, and enjoyed being with him, that they weren't likely to be saying anything to Marie to make her shy away from boys, either. Then I thought that Marie might decide that way anyway, for herself, and it

worried me some - until I decided that if that was gonna happen, it was best it happen now, before she tried to do something against her nature, and get hurt by it. If it turns out that way, I'll be sorry for her - but only because there's folks out there that'll want to hurt her because of it. Me, she's my daughter, and I'll *always* love her, no matter what else happens."

I took another sip of coffee and Michelle told me "The reason I came out here is to get something straight with you, like I said. If it hadn't been for you and Lucy and those two young *ladies* of yours, I don't think I'd have been anywhere near able to handle this as calm as I am. Maybe it wouldn't have happened if we weren't here - but then again, maybe it would. Either way, you and the rest, you've gotten me to thinking about things different, and it's made me realize that there's a lot more about being with Frenchy that I need to get myself clean of. And you've also got me thinking that the world isn't like I thought it was, and I need to be looking at a lot of things in a different way, and thinking about them. What I'm telling you is that I came out here to thank you - again. On top of keeping us safe and protecting us and all the rest, you and your family have done me, and especially Marie, a good turn by showing us what it's like to be good, friendly, honest, open people. I know Marie has changed a lot since we've been here, and it's all been for the better. I hope I've changed some, too - and I know I'll be changing more."

With that, Michelle took a long drink from her coffee and waited to hear what I had to say.

I thought about it a moment, and answered "You and Marie were good people to start with - you just didn't have a chance to show it because of living with Frenchy. I knew it, Lucy knew it, and the girls knew it. That's why we were willing to have you here: because we figured you were good people that had been dealt a bad hand from a marked deck; and that staying with us and getting rid of Frenchy would be a new deal with honest cards for you. Anything good you say you got from us was already there; we just maybe helped you find it a little sooner. As for anything that happens between Marie and Robyn and Sandra, as far as I'm concerned that's up to them. I don't ask my two what they do when they're alone, and they don't volunteer anything. It's not that I don't have a pretty good idea, it's just that it's their *private* business. I'll only suggest that you do the same: don't ask what Marie is or isn't doing with them; that way, you don't back her into a corner where she either has to lie to you or tell you something you *might* not want to hear. If you *really* think you want to know what happens between two women, you might want to talk to Lucy."

The surprise was clear on Michelle's face when she asked "Lucy?"

I grinned, and said "Lucy. If I'm okay with Robyn and Sandra, do think I'd be any less so with Lucy?"

Michelle sat there a moment before asking "Since you've been married, even?"

"Plenty of times. I knew about all of them - at least, who it was and that they were together. Sometimes, Lucy and the other person want to be alone; other times, they want me with them. It's their choice."

The added shock was plain, too, as Michelle asked "You've been with other women, too? And Lucy knows?"

"Of course. Do you really think I'd do anything like that without her knowing about it?"

Curiosity got the better of her, and Michelle couldn't help asking "Why does she do it?"

"I don't think I know ALL the reasons; but she's told me that she loves me and trusts me enough to let other women 'borrow' me for a little bit; she knows that I love her more than anything else in the world - which I do - and that she knows I wouldn't want to be with anyone like that for the 'wrong' reasons."

"Wrong reasons?"

"Wrong reasons. Reasons like doing it just for sex. Doing it because the woman thinks she has to for some reason. Doing it without having at least a little bit of love for her."

"You... you love the women you're with? And Lucy, too?"

"Sure. I don't love them *as much* - which Lucy knows - but there's love there. Lucy knows that, too, and I think that's part of why she approves of it: because she knows that I wouldn't give my love to just *anybody*; they'd have to show that they were pretty good people first. The people it's happened with, they've been friends first, lovers second."

She looked at me curiously, and said "And you've let Lucy be with other men."

"Yes - for the same reasons. I don't know how or why, but it seems that I wind up with more women than she does men - but both of us are okay with how it works out. You have to understand that I love her - without question, without doubt, without fear or jealousy. And she loves me the same way. Remember when I told Marie about the reasons men and women marry, and how it **should** work?" She nodded, and I went on "That's how Lucy and I got married: she accepted me the way I *am*, and I accepted that she was going to change. By accepting each other on those terms, it's actually worked out the other way around: I've changed - for the better, I'll admit - and she's hardly changed at all. Curious, isn't it?" I finished, with a smile.

"How do you figure that happened?"

I laughed, and answered "I don't know HOW; I just know what we did. We *accepted* each other - I did my best, and Lucy accepted that. She did her best, and I accepted her. Both of us knew what the other was doing, and that made it easier for each of us to do things that would make the other happy. What we're doing, after a fashion, is trading in love."

I saw the disbelief on her face and explained "Really, we are. I offer Lucy the best I can give her, and she loves me for it. In return, she gives me the best she can - and I love *her* for *that*. Because both of us know that how and why the other one loves us, both of us know that as long as we keep doing what we're doing, the love will be there - each of us knows **exactly** why the other one loves us, so neither one of us is afraid that that love is going to go away for some reason we don't know. I love her, she accepts it, and gives her love back - which just makes me love her even more because she's accepting the love I'm offering. That makes her love ME even more, and it just keeps going back and forth and around and around, building on itself. Both of us know how and why our love is there; and knowing that, both of us know and trust each other **completely**. I KNOW that whatever Lucy does, it's because she loves me; and she knows the same thing about me. So when she lets me be with another woman, Lucy knows that I love that woman at least a *little* bit. And because she knows how and WHY I love, she knows that I wouldn't love that woman unless she was a good person - just as Lucy knows SHE'S a good person. So, if I love that woman, she's a good person. If she's a good person, and then Lucy is willing to let me be with her because she knows that sooner or later, she's going to meet the woman - and like her. And she knows she'll like the woman because she knows the woman is a good person - which she knows because I loved the woman enough to be willing to be with her. The same way, I know that if Lucy is willing to be with another man, HE'S a good person - the same way, and for the same reasons. Understand?"

Michelle just sat there, blinking at me for a full minute. I finally heard her draw in a breath before she softly said "Dear, sweet, Jesus! How much you must love and trust each other to do that!"

A moment later, she looked at me intently and asked "What if one or the other of you finds someone you can love like that, only more?"

I gently laughed, and answered "How can that be? The love and trust we have is already total and complete. Do you think she would be able to share me with other women - sight unseen - if her love and trust weren't absolute; a TOTAL love and trust? Yes, there are other women that I love *almost* as much as I love Lucy - she knows it, and accepts it because she knows that no matter how close it *might* be, she's still first with me - and always will be. She knows that because it was her that I married. She knows me, remember - and knows that I wouldn't make a promise or commitment to someone without standing ready to back it up - and that the more serious the promise, the more I'm committed to keeping it. And what promise is bigger than to swear to spend the rest of your LIFE with someone?"

Michelle was listening closely, and hanging on every word; when I was done, the full implications of what I'd just told her sank in - and on the heels of that, understanding. Her face went blank for a few seconds as her mind explored the potential of what I'd just told her; then she got positively radiant as she said "I'll be go-to-hell. That love and trust and all the rest of it - that's how you're able to give so much of yourselves for other people. You've got the whole universe to draw on, and no matter how much of yourselves you

give away, it's just a drop in the ocean! And these good people you and Lucy meet - they get some of this, too, don't they?"

"We try to show them it's there. If they start to see it a little bit, we explain it to them. Almost all of them have gotten it, so far. When that happens, they always turn out to be even better people than they were when we met them - and they were pretty good to start with."

Her eyes got big before she told me "Holy shit. If folks you told this to were good anyway, I can only imagine what they must be like now! How in the world do you find them?"

I smiled and said "Lucy and I just live our lives. People see what we're like - and some of them respond in a way that tells us they're good people. Because we're honest with each other - and ourselves - we can figure out how much those people want to get to being like us, and we get them started toward it. A couple of them, they've gotten as close as they wanted to, started to see the rest of it, and wanted more. The rest, they were happy with what they found, and didn't look any farther. Either way, they're happier with themselves and their lives than they were to start with."

Michelle sat there for a couple of minutes before giving a small shake and saying "I came out here to tell you that I wasn't going to make any fuss about Marie being with your two. Now, I've got something else to think about when I go back to the house!"

I smiled and said "Sorry."

She quickly looked at me and said "No, you don't have to be. What you said, it's something that I'd have wanted to hear, anyway. Still, I'll be going inside now - you've got work to do, and I don't want to be taking up too much of your time."

When Lucy got home, I relayed the whole conversation to her, and she just smiled.

After supper, all three girls cleared the table. When they were done, Marie came over to where Michelle was while Sandra and Robyn waited in the doorway.

Marie got her mother's attention, and said "I'll be upstairs in Sandra's room, momma."

Marie looked at her closely and said "You going to be all right?"

Marie smiled and said "I'm nervous - but I'm not afraid."

Michelle hugged Marie and said "Okay. You go along now, and I'll see you in the morning."



Marie hugged her mother back, and then went over to where Sandra and Robyn were waiting. The three of them turned to go upstairs, and the three of us watched as Marie reached out to hold hands with Robyn and Sandra.

When they were out of sight, Lucy and I looked at Michelle - who saw it, and simply said "It's all right. I know she'll be okay with them."

There didn't seem to be anything else to be said, so I just picked up the conversation we'd been having where we'd left off.

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The next morning, Michelle was sitting with Lucy and I having breakfast when all three girls came in to eat. There didn't seem to be any change visible in Marie - until she got close, and we could see the sheer joy on her face.

Michelle asked her "Are you okay, honey?"

Marie just answered "I'm fine, momma."

Looking at her, I figured she bore the same resemblance to 'fine' as a bakery did to a breadbox - but let it go without comment. Robyn and Sandra, on the other hand, didn't look any different than usual - something that Michelle clearly noticed, too.

When it was time for the girls to head off for school, Marie got up to go to the door with them, and didn't make any pretense of not kissing them - full on the lips - before they left. When they were gone, she saw us looking at her, blushed only slightly, and told us "I'm going upstairs to study, now" before putting her words into action.

When she was gone, Lucy and I were looking at Michelle again - and again, she noticed it. She smiled and said "I reckon she found out what real loving and happiness are, last night. That being the case, I'm not going to worry myself about it: she's happy, and knows there's other folks that love her, too. That ain't a bad thing, in anybody's life."

Lucy reached over to give Michelle's arm a squeeze, and we went back to our previous conversation.

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By the time a week had passed, Marie had settled down again - mostly. The expression of sheer joy was replaced by one of continual happiness. Her previous timidity was replaced with a reasonable level of self-assurance. Her bashfulness was traded out for confidence. Her gentle disposition was supplemented with a measure of courage. She was always careful to avoid any overtly sexual contact with Sandra or Robyn outside their room - but she wasn't afraid to hold hands with them, or kiss them, either. In fact, she wasn't afraid to kiss *anybody* in the house. It became routine for her to kiss me on the cheek before bed

AND on seeing me at breakfast in the morning. Even the occasional hug from her stopped being surprising.

Michelle watched all this with varying degrees and permutations of amazement, concern, pride, worry, respect, and fear. Throughout, though, she loved Marie - unhesitatingly, and without question.

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One morning, Robyn and Sandra joined us for breakfast before Marie made her appearance. Neither of them said anything, though I noticed them sharing Significant Looks. I knew something was up.

Then Marie came into the kitchen, and I knew what it was: she'd not only cut her hair shorter, but colored it blonde and styled it. I about fell off my chair.

Lucy and Michelle both gasped - then Lucy looked at me, and both of us turned to watch Michelle. As Marie came over with her breakfast to sit at the table with us, we saw Michelle start to cloud up, as though going to blast Marie for what she'd done. But as the girl got closer, Michelle's predicted intentions seemed to dissolve; by the time Marie sat down, Michelle looked much as she usually did. A glance around told me that Sandra and Robyn - the stylists, no doubt - were waiting for an explosion.

It didn't come.

Instead, Michelle waited a while, and then casually said "I see you did something different with your hair, honey."

You had to be looking close to see the brief flicker in Marie's eyes before she said "Yeah - do you like it?"

I inwardly cringed, but Michelle just said "Yes, it looks like whoever did it did a fine job on it for you." It did, in fact. And I didn't doubt for a minute that Michelle knew full well whose handiwork it was. "Any reason in particular for doing it?"

Marie screwed up her courage and looked at Michelle before answering "Well, it was a couple of things, actually. Part of it was I just wanted to see how I'd look blonde. The other part was thinking that it makes for a good disguise. Remember, Mutt said that our hair was pretty memorable, so I thought if I cut it shorter and colored it, I'd be able to start going out again - with Dan or Lucy, or course."

Ah.

Michelle considered that for a second, and said "Yeah, I can understand both of those. You look nice - is this something you think you'll want to keep?"

"Oh, no. It's nice - for something different - but I think I like my hair better the other way. When this is over, I'll probably let it change back."

With that, she turned to me and said "Dan, when Mutt was here, he said that if we cut our hair, he knew of a place that could use it to make wigs for kids with cancer. Do you know where he was talking about?"

"Not right this moment, but I can find out. Why?"

"Because I saved the hair that got cut, and I want the kids to have it. It's not fair that they don't have any, so they should get it."

To cover for Michelle's rapidly misting eyes, I answered "Okay, Marie - I'll find out right after breakfast, and let you know, okay?"

She smiled and said "Thanks, Dan" before returning to her breakfast.

When the youngsters were gone, Lucy and I looked over at Michelle, and saw the tears streaming down her face. I grabbed a dishtowel and handed it to her; she smiled her thanks and started drying the tears as she told us "When I first saw what she did, I was ready to get all over her. But then I thought about how she's changing, and figured I should find out WHY she did it, first. When she told me, it made perfect sense, and I couldn't be mad at her. It's nothing personal, but I'm starting to get a little stir-crazy, myself. Then when she said she wanted to give her hair to that place so they could make wigs for those kids... well, I damn near lost it."

I got up to get us some more coffee - Lucy wasn't going in until later, for a meeting - and heard the two of them whispering back and forth. Not A Good Sign, for you guys out there - when two women start whispering behind your back, it's a pretty safe bet that whatever it is they're doing, you're in for a Surprise. Probably a big one.

By the time I got back, they'd quieted down - but both had Who? Me? expressions on their faces. I knew that all I could do was hope to get a little warning before the 20-Ton Weight fell on me.

When it came time, Lucy got up and left for work - AFTER she and Michelle shared a Look. I just went out to my office, called Mutt, and got the name and address of the place he'd mentioned, telling him that I'd be sending them some hair soon. He said he was both sorry and glad to hear it - sorry because it looked so beautiful on whoever had been wearing it, and glad that it meant some kids would get it. I told him I felt the same way about it.

After the call was over, I went back inside and up to Marie's room - her door was mostly open, but I still knocked first. She told me to come in, and I saw that she was busy doing schoolwork on the computer. I gave her the slip of paper with the name and address of the place that did the wigs, along with the instructions for sending it that Mutt had given

me. She smiled at me prettily, and thanked me. I assured her that it wasn't any problem and went back to my office.

That evening, after supper, Marie asked if I could take her shopping the next afternoon. I said ♦ that I would. She asked Sandra and Robyn if they would go with her; Sandra claimed too much work for school, but Robyn agreed, saying that as soon as they got home from school would be best. I said that was fine with me - and noticed Lucy and Michelle share a smile.

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As planned, the next afternoon had me escorting Marie and Robyn around a shopping mall - a small one, and different than the one where I'd had problems before; no sense going someplace where *I* was likely to be remembered when the idea was to not be noticed.

Robyn and Marie had a great time - in and out of stores, going through clothes, window-shopping, the works. Along the way, they bought things - Marie more than Robyn - and I somehow got talked into carrying most of the bags. It was pushing six o'clock when I finally told them that we needed to get home for supper. Neither fussed - at least, no more than a token effort - and we were soon pulling into the driveway at home. I got the car parked, and the two girls went racing into the house to show Sandra what they'd bought. I lagged behind, and had just gotten through the door when Lucy handed me a paper bag, saying "Here's some more hair for the kids."

Okay, sometimes I'm kinda slow. I stood there a good five seconds, trying to figure out where this bag of hair had come from before looking at Lucy for the answer. She just laughed at the expression on my face, and said "Come on out!"

Behind, her I saw someone step into the kitchen. I didn't know who it was for a second, and then the bag of hair in my hand tripped my memory switch. It was Michelle - minus about three feet of luxurious black hair. In its place was a short - shoulder-length, at most - head of auburn hair with what looked like reddish highlights. It was simply styled, and actually looked quite attractive on her. I looked from her to Lucy and back again - then both of them broke into laughter, which brought the girls in to see what was so funny. In turn, *THEY* were amazed at the transformation in Michelle - and commented on how nice the style and color looked on her.

I turned to Lucy, who just grinned at me before saying "I'm sorry, Dan, but we just *HAD* to do it this way. Yesterday morning, Michelle said that she wanted to get out of the house, too - and that she was willing to cut her hair to do it. After I got to work, I made an appointment for her with my hairdresser for this afternoon. I was on my way home today even before you got the girls to the mall; we went straight from here to the hairdresser. They cut it - they were glad to save it after I told them about the wig thing - colored it, and styled it, all in a little over an hour. They rushed the job a little, but it still looks *fabulous*, don't you think? Anyway, we made a **quick** detour to a department store,

and came back in time to get back before you did - we only arrived about five minutes ahead of you, and Michelle barely had time to get out of sight before the girls came in. We had to hurry because I knew the girls would only keep you out of the house for a couple of hours. They weren't in on it; I just figured that they'd keep you at the mall until you decided you all had to get back for supper."

"Well, it worked - obviously - on both counts: changing her appearance, and surprising me with it."

Lucy laughed and answered "Yeah, I saw that."

I grinned back and said "That's okay. You've still got birthdays, and anniversaries, and...."

I had a tendency (okay, I did it whenever I could) to come up with 'creative' ways of giving her presents, or surprising her with an affectionate message. It invariably surprised her. Pleased her immensely, but surprised her. One anniversary, she had a constant stream of florists coming into her office throughout the day, each delivering a single rose. For her birthday, a large box was delivered with dire warnings and instructions that only SHE was allowed to open it. She did, and a bouquet of balloons floated out, lifting a small package that contained the diamond earrings I'd bought for her. The Christmas where my 'under the tree' gift to her was a new bathrobe - and in her jewelry case, unwrapped and unclaimed, a shiny new gold necklace. The Valentine's day that I gave her a gift that was canned - literally. I'd taken her gift to a place that could seal it inside a tin can - along with a small bell and a couple of pennies, so it would make 'interesting' noises when shaken. Only when she opened it did she discover the matching silk camisole and panties.

So when I commented on the special days ahead of her, she knew that she'd only challenged me to come up with even MORE creative ways to surprise her. She laughed, and said "I started a fight I'm not going to win, didn't I?"

"All things considered, is losing *really* so bad?"

She laughed again, hugged me, and said "Not even a little bit!"

The next evening, Lucy and I took Michelle shopping again - and had a blast.

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The following Saturday, we dared make a mass-visit to a mall - Lucy, me, Michelle, Marie, Robyn, and Sandra. For some reason, Lucy and Michelle took no small delight in hanging on each of my arms, and nuzzling my ears - drawing the attention of almost everybody above the age of puberty. We even went so far as to have lunch at the food court - the youngsters sat at another table, so they could pretend they weren't with the two women that took turns hand-feeding the one guy sitting between them, and just generally

pampering him to within millimeters of his life. Lucy, I could understand after a fashion - every so often she'd get into some kind of 'pamper Dan mercilessly' mood; she usually exorcised them at home, not a shopping mall. Michelle's participation, I just couldn't figure out - except that maybe she was just having her own fun, having gotten carried away by all of us being out together. Whatever it was, there wasn't anything to do but let them do whatever they wanted: with Lucy, I knew if I protested too much, she'd just go at it even *more*. So I gently took the bites of food they held out for me, took sips from the proffered drink, and tried to be as blasé about it as I could while ignoring the looks of envy (from guys) and hatred (from women) I got.

They finally had mercy on me and declared that they were done shopping - mostly because I didn't have any more arms to carry stuff, I think. We made our way back to the cars - me, Lucy, and Michelle in one, Sandra driving the other), filled them up with all the shopping bags, and headed home. There, I was able (willing) to make a stand without worrying about making a scene: I simply stated that since the stuff wasn't mine, I wasn't carrying it any farther. Teasing and cajolery were tried, but without effect. Michelle and Lucy were both still laughing, though, as they carried their purchase up to their respective rooms. The girls didn't even bother - they were too anxious to get their stuff upstairs and start trying it on.

Supper was something of an Event: all of them had bought *something* fluffy/foamy/revealing, and they all wore it to supper - which I was obliged to cook, it being my turn. As it turned out, the spaghetti and fixings I'd prepared seemed to somehow fit the atmosphere of the meal.

As we ate, I carefully looked around at all of them - and couldn't fault a one of them for their choice or taste. Lucy, Robyn, and Sandra were familiar to me; I appreciated how good they looked, but it was Michelle and Marie that I couldn't help looking at the most.

Marie was wearing a little number that wasn't particularly revealing - but it definitely made it clear that there was a real, live girl underneath, and that she most definitely had a *very* pleasant shape to her. The cut of it was such that she could have been wearing a bra underneath it - but the small irregularities on the front of it, about where her nipples would be, seemed to proclaim that she wasn't.

Michelle, on the other hand, was wearing some kind of sleeveless/strapless something or other that made her look sexy as hell - displaying a nice measure of cleavage, and molding so close to her skin that there was absolutely no doubt that she wasn't wearing a bra. If the way it followed the rest of her curves was any indication, she was without panties, as well - there wasn't a line to be seen on her *anywhere*.

I made sure to compliment all of them on their outfits - drawing happy smiles, and a couple of sultry looks, in the process.

When we'd finished eating, Robyn and Marie started to get up, with the obvious intention of clearing the dishes. I simply told them "Don't even think about it. You're not getting

anywhere near the kitchen or these dirty dishes in **those** outfits. Just sit down and enjoy yourselves; I'll take care of it." Each of them gave me a Look, but did as they were told.

I got the table cleared, the dishwasher loaded and started, and the leftovers put away before I went back into the dining room with a fresh bottle of wine. Everybody had their glass topped off, and the conversations continued.

After a while, it was decided to adjourn to the living room - I had a fine time watching all of them walking ahead of me. I'd heard a radio talk show host once say that he liked the women's movement best when it was walking ahead of him; right about then, I had to agree with him.

The rest of the evening the six of us sat in the living room enjoying quiet, pleasant conversation with each other as we finished off the bottle of wine. There were enough of us, and the evening lasted long enough, that none of felt any effects from it - other than to enjoy its pleasant taste.

Still, it finally got late enough that we all felt the need for some sleep. Again, the movement to upstairs and our respective bedrooms was a group operation. Once in the hallway outside our rooms, Sandra asked "Uncle Dan, would you unzip my dress, please?" I agreed, and she turned around and pulled her hair to the side to give me unencumbered access as I wondered why she didn't just have one of the others do it, since they'd doubtless helped each other do the zippers in the first place.

I'd no more than released the tab on Sandra's dress than Robyn made the same request with a "Me, too?", followed, unsurprisingly, by Marie asking for help, as well. When I'd finished with Marie's dress, it parted slightly, and I was given the chance to see that there was, in fact, no bra under it: from shoulders to hips, the smooth expanse of her back was unmarred by anything so mundane as cloth.

All three girls held their dresses to their bodies as they moved close to give me a good-night kiss, and then disappeared into their respective rooms.

That left me, Lucy, and Michelle standing in the hall. I wasn't surprised when Michelle said "Since you're here anyway, Dan, would you?" - and turned away from me in a gesture that she wanted me to unzip her dress, as well. I looked at Lucy - whose contribution consisted of shrugging at me - figured "what the hell..." and did as I was asked. Michelle, too, held her dress against her body and turned back around - where she promptly kissed me softly on the lips, said "Thank you, Dan. Good night", and went into her room.

Back in our own room, I happily helped Lucy with her dress - and didn't hesitate to slip my hands inside it, and around to cup her breasts in my hands. She leaned back against me and said "That was nice, tonight - just sitting there and talking."

I agreed, and began softly caressing her nipples, feeling them erect under my fingertips. She moaned softly then said "Keep that thought - I have to get out of this dress, first" before easing herself away (my hands were between her skin and the material, remember). We moved apart, and started slowly undressing, each of us watching the other. Lucy, with less on in the first place, was naked before I was - and casually went over and pulled the bedcovers down before slipping between the sheets. She lay there on her side with her head propped up as she watched me finish taking my clothes off. When I was naked, too, she gave me a come-hither look and said "Hmmmm. I think I know what I want to do next, tonight...."

I grinned, and made my way around to my side of the bed, and then slipped in to lie next to her. We were kissing as she was gently stroking my penis; I had my hand on her breast, softly stroking it when we heard a soft knock at the door. I looked at her, and she at me, and both of us wanted to ignore it - but it came again, and we decided to deal with whoever it was, first, so we wouldn't be disturbed again. Separating, I called out for whoever it was to come in - and when the door opened, saw that it was a very naked Michelle.

She stepped into the room, closed the door behind her, and moved to stand at the foot of our bed, facing us. *Déjà vu* all over again, I thought to myself, with a silent tip of a nonexistent hat to Yogi Berra. Without the intermediate step of taking off a robe, it was a pretty close match for how she'd appeared before us the last time.

Both bedside lights were on, and we had no trouble making out the details of her nude body as she calmly stood there looking at us for several seconds before speaking.

"The last time I came into this room, it was to offer myself to you for saving my life. You refused, Dan, telling me that you couldn't do it because I was doing it for reasons that you couldn't accept. I left here ashamed, angry, and deeply, deeply hurt. But before I went to sleep that night, I thought about what you'd said to me. And I realized that offering myself to you that way, I was doing *two* things wrong. First, I was offering myself to you as payment for something - in other words, exchanging sex for another kind of service; or prostituting myself, to put it bluntly. Viewed that way, I couldn't blame you for not wanting me."

"The other thing I realized was that you **did** care for me - enough that you were refusing something that you knew would actually hurt me in the end: you were keeping me from having sex with you for what I know - now - were the wrong reasons. What I wanted then was not just to repay you for what you did for me in the mall, I was also trying to find what I thought were the love and companionship of a man - the kind of gentle, caring man that I haven't been with for entirely too long."

She took a breath and said "I didn't understand, and then, how or why you would want to protect me from myself that way when it would have been so easy - so I thought - for you to use me and then throw me away when you were done. But then we had that talk, out in your office, the day I came out to tell you that I was okay with Marie and your girls. You



didn't talk to me all that much, really; but what you said meant a lot. I've been thinking about all you said to me that morning since then - and I've started to understand a lot of what you told me. But the most important thing that's happened is that I've realized something."

"I've realized that you, and Lucy, and Robyn, and Sandra have all been doing what you told me you do to people: find good ones, show them how they can make their lives better, and help them along. I'll admit, it took me a while; I *knew* you were helping us, and I *knew* you were showing us how we could make our lives better. The thing that it took a while for me to understand was that you thought you had found good ones - that is, that you thought Marie and I were good. Sure, you told us that plenty of times - but I always thought that you were saying it to make us feel better; I honestly didn't think that you *meant* it. You know what made me realize that you DID mean it?" I shook my head, and she said "A couple weeks ago, Robyn kissed you goodbye before she left for school. You swatted her on the butt and said 'You be good, today'. She answered 'I will', and went out the door. I thought 'Why is he telling her to be good? She is already!'. Then I thought about Marie, and wondered if I needed to tell her anything like that. Suddenly, I realized that I didn't - that she *was* good, just like Robyn. When that hit me, I started wondering if maybe, just *maybe* you meant it when YOU told her you thought she was good. Remembering that talk we had, I figured you did. That's when I knew - **knew** - that you meant it when you said the same thing to ME. All of a sudden, I understood that you and Lucy and Sandra and Robyn were telling us we were good people because we ARE good people, and that because we were good people, the help you were offering, and the showing us how to make our lives better was all of you doing for us what you do for each other - and that all of you loved us, just the way you said you told me you love each other, Dan. And the moment I understood that, I knew that I loved YOU - all of you - for the same reasons, and in the same way. And that Marie was doing it, too, even if she didn't have the words or understanding of it, she was doing it in her heart."

She looked at us in a kind of awe before she said "Since then, I've been paying close attention to how all of you act toward me and Marie - and all I can see is love and trust and respect in everything you do. You, Dan - when you talk to her about the stars she likes so much, you listen close, and actually talk TO her, and not AT her. It's like your whole focus is on her, and what you and her are talking about. Lucy, when you were talking to me about your job the other day, you were doing the same thing with me: you explained to me about what you do and how you do it, but you did it like you thought I would actually understand it, not like I was some little kid where you had to use small words. I had questions, a lot of 'em, and you answered every one so that I could understand what you were telling me. By the time you were done, I felt like I knew what it is you do - didn't figure I could do it, but knew what it was. The other night, I heard Marie ask Sandra and Robyn what love was. You can damn sure bet I hung around to listen to how they explained THAT one! And damned if they didn't - they pretty much told her the same things you told me that day, Dan. Different words, and they took a little longer to explain it, using a bunch of examples, but they did it. Marie asked them some questions, and they were able to answer her. When they were done, she says 'Oh, okay. I understand that.' I heard her asking some questions, kind of like she was trying to see

how what they said worked, and they didn't hesitate to answer her, telling her when they KNEW something, and when they only THOUGHT something - like they were making sure she understood between what was fact, and what was their opinion."

"I thought about a lot of other things, too - like how you all left it up to Marie and me to decide whether or not we wanted to cut our hair so we could go out again after... the mall. You reminded us that Mutt said changing our hair was the one thing that would change how we look, and that whether or not we did it was going to have to be up to us. You reminded us what needed to be done before something else could happen, and left the decision up to us - trusting us to decide for ourselves." She laughed, and said "Marie made her decision a little earlier than I did, and kinda forgot to let me know, but she did what was *right*. All along the way, all of you have told us what you thought the good and bad of something was, left us to decide for ourselves, and accepted whatever decision we made. The only time you didn't do that was when we were trying to decide something without knowing all the facts about it; even then, all you'd do was show us that there were things we weren't paying enough attention to, so we could decide better."

She took another deep breath and stood a little straighter before she told us "So I'm here tonight to tell you that I love you - all of you - and that if you'll let me, Lucy, I'd like to show your man how much. And seeing how happy Marie is with Robyn and Sandra, I reckon I'd like to find out if I can be happy like that with another woman, too."

Lucy and I turned to look at each other, communicating without saying a thing. Then, still without a sound, both of us got out of bed went to stand in front of Michelle, who had backed up a bit.

Each of us took one of her hands and Lucy told her "*Now* you want to be with us for the right reason; and both of us would be happy to have you join us." Then Lucy leaned forward, plainly intending to kiss Michelle. Michelle didn't hesitate, and moved to meet Lucy's lips with her own. Nor did Michelle flinch when Lucy raised a hand to cup her breast. Their lips parted, and Lucy's hand returned to her side. Michelle turned to face me, and I told her "Yes, we love you. Not because of this" - gesturing to her nude body - "but because of this" - a touch to her chest above her heart - "and this" - my fingertip to her forehead - as I finished "A body will eventually grow old, and wither. But a good heart and working mind - those are things that will last a lifetime."

Michelle nodded, and Lucy asked her "What would you like to do? There are two of us, and just the one of you - would you like to be with him, first, or me? Or would you like both of us to welcome you to our family together? Remember, there is no jealousy between us, so neither of us will be hurt or offended if you choose just one."

Michelle looked from Lucy to me, and back again, and realized that what Lucy was telling her was true: that whatever her decision, both of us would accept it without question or feeling slighted.

Finally Michelle said "Both of you, I think. I know what to do with a man, and I think that will help keep me... steady with you, Lucy."

Both of us smiled at her, and she smiled back as Lucy said "That's fine, Michelle. Since you're more comfortable with a man to start, and then why don't you go with Dan, and then."

I reached out, and Michelle confidently put her hand in mine. She hesitated a moment, and quietly asked "Can... can I look at you, first?" I nodded, and she let her eyes wander my body - pausing to examine the scars before letting her eyes drop to my manhood. Her eyes looked me over carefully before looking into my face again - starting to blush when she realized that I knew where she'd been looking, before realizing that it didn't matter to me.

Next, she turned to look at Lucy - and I heard her breath catch in her throat when she did. I knew how lovely Lucy was to me; my wife apparently had the same effect on our guest, and new friend.

When Michelle looked at me again, I smiled, and she let me lead her around the bed, and then guide her to lay down on it. Lucy and I slowly got in with her, on opposite sides so that she was between us. Each of us put a hand on one of her breasts, softly squeezing it and letting our fingertips caress its surface as we took turns kissing her. Soon, both nipples were hard and long, her dark areolas puckered and begging for a mouth to consume them as she softly panted her growing arousal.

I moved first, leaving a trail of kisses behind as my mouth blazed a trail across her smooth flesh on the way to the breast in my hand. My mouth finally crested the firm mound, and my lips captured the flag of her erect nipple. My hand, displaced, wandered across her body, teasing and caressing her soft, supple skin, gradually making its way lower and lower, finally coming upon the dark forest of her pubic thatch. There, it carefully explored the soft, dense mass as my lips and mouth continued to dance and play on the peak of her mammary.

When my fingers had mapped the range of the small dark wedge of her pelvic thicket, they went on to do a detailed survey of what lay beneath; drifting between her thighs, they discovered the hot, damp cavern of her womanhood, and the fleshy gates around it. Above my head, Michelle was softly moaning her passion - between kisses from Lucy.

My fingertips began to detail their discoveries, including the sensitive nubbin at the top of her cleft - and how it got hard, casting off its cloak to show itself in response to gentle touches and soft caresses. Between my lips and hand, her body undulated with her increasing desires; under my tender ministrations, the petals of her labia got longer and thicker, the area between becoming slick with the overflow of warm oils escaping her hot female channel.

My lips left her breast to lay claim to that which my hand had discovered. My head moved lower on her body, my lips softly biting at her warm skin as they traced a circuitous route along her belly - delaying briefly to let my tongue delve into the soft indentation that was her navel before continuing on their journey. Above, her noises were less vocal; my ears told me that her mouth and lips were busy with other things - such as introducing themselves to Lucy's.

My mouth finally came across the edge of her pubic fleece, and skirted the edge of it, tracing it's outline lower and lower. As I got closer and closer to the steamy entrance to her vagina, her legs parted to make room for me, and her pelvis lifted in welcome. With such a greeting, there was nothing to do but open my mouth and dip my tongue between the fleshy folds of her labia; as I did, she released a deep groan of pleasure as her thighs snapped open. My taste buds found her oils to be as delightful as the scent of her had been to my nose. I moved to place my open mouth over her opening, softly sucking her delectable fluids out as my tongue wormed its way inside her as far as it could reach; she responded with a cry of "Oh, *God!*" before being silenced by Lucy's lips again.

The flavor of her was heady and full, but there was more yet to do. I softly sucked each of her labia into my mouth, where I gently 'chewed' them with my lips. When both were full and thick with her desire, I returned to licking at her opening, drawing more of her juices out before lifting my head to tend to the erect nubbin of her clitoris.

Fastening my lips around it, I began to flutter my tongue across its surface - and felt Michelle lift her hips in response. When I had it standing as proud and tall as I could, I changed over to circling it with the tip of my tongue, applying varying amounts of pressure. Michelle softly squealed her pleasure, arching her back to make herself as available to me as she could.

With my mouth busy, my fingers elected to renew their explorations - by going spelunking in the damp cave between her firm thighs. First one finger made a tentative probe into the tight confines; when that was welcomed, it went further - then further still, until it was buried in her as far as it could go. Michelle's response was a deep groan of pleasure, so the first finger was joined by a second; together, they probed her depths time and again.

It wasn't long before Michelle's increasing arousal found a peak; with a loud cry of release, her thighs tried to clamp together as pleasure overwhelmed her body. Her vagina clenched around my fingers, holding them tightly in place; beneath my lips and tongue, her clitoris suddenly got shy, and disappeared under its hood. When her vagina relaxed a bit, I rotated my hand and curled my fingers - applying pressure to the sensitive area at the front of her vagina, just behind the entrance. She nearly screamed in response as she clamped down on me even harder. When she finally relaxed again, I straightened my fingers, and began slowly thrusting them in and out of her in time with the spasms I could feel going through her body. She reacted by lifting her hips and spreading her legs again, moaning her pleasure.

When she was reduced to mild aftershocks, I gently slid my fingers from her vagina; she shuddered slightly when they finally pulled free. From there, I began kissing my way back up her body. When I got as far as her bellybutton, Lucy started kissing her way toward me; we met at Michelle's breasts, where we shared a kiss - Lucy getting a good sample of what waited for her between Michelle's thighs - before both of us began licking and kissing the twin peaks of Michelle's bust. A bit later, each of us resumed our journey - me toward Michelle's head, Lucy's target laying the other direction.

When my lips found Michelle's she eagerly parted them so our tongues could introduce themselves to each other. I knew that she must be able to taste herself on my lips, but she didn't seem to have any reaction to it. As our tongues were dancing, Michelle released a long, deep groan of pleasure that told me Lucy had reached her goal.

Lucy and others had told me that the way one woman pleases another is much different than how a man does it. I resolved to let Michelle focus on what Lucy was doing by simply contributing to the stimulation she was receiving without getting in the way of the sensations Lucy was generating.

When Michelle started moaning again, almost continuously, I went about doing my part toward letting her enjoy her first experience of having another woman pleasure her. Lifting my head, I saw that Michelle's face and shoulders were flushed with her arousal - and that gave me the inspiration for what I wanted to do. Lowering my head again, I began kissing Michelle - but not on the lips. Rather, I started at one shoulder, softly kissing and biting her as I slowly worked my way toward her neck - detouring to her ears for a bit, and then back down to her throat. Across that - a longer side trip to her breasts - then on to the other ear, and finally across the other shoulder. The entire time, Michelle's cries of pleasure and arousal steadily increased - both in frequency and intensity.

When I lifted my head again, I saw that the flush had not only deepened, but expanded to include the upper slopes of her breasts - which I quickly fastened on as my next target. I let my head drop to her chest, where I began licking my way across her breasts, from one nipple to the other, and then back again. Taking as much of her nipple and breast into my mouth as I could, and gently sucking on it in time with the slow thrusts of her pelvis. Taking only her areola and nipple in my mouth, and sucking on them like a newborn child. Gently biting her areolas. Planting my mouth on random locations on her breasts, and gently 'chewing' with my lips.

The entire time I was doing that, my hand was wandering her body, again caressing and stroking any part of her that I could reach.

I'd just raised my head to figure out what to do to her next when she cried out her release, her eyes flying open to focus on a point approximately three light years over my left shoulder. She cried out again, and I turned to look down to where Lucy's face was buried between Michelle's thighs, her eyes closed as she focused on bringing Michelle as much pleasure as possible.

Finally, with a deep sigh, Michelle collapsed on the bed, her eyes closed and breathing rapid and shallow. I watched as Lucy's eyes opened. She saw me, and pulled her head from between Michelle's legs, the lower half of her face coated with what could only have been Michelle's juices. Lucy grinned at me mischievously, and moved up so the two of us could kiss - and giving me a fresh sample of Essence of Michelle in the process. I ostentatiously smacked my lips and said "Hmmm. I think I could learn to like that!"

Lucy laughed softly, and said "Me, too - in about a heartbeat!"

I got out of bed and went into our bathroom, returning a minute later with a damp washcloth and hand towel. I handed the washcloth to Lucy, who used it to wipe the rest of Michelle off her face before handing it back in exchange for the hand towel. While she was drying her face, I moved to begin cleaning the overflow of juices from Michelle; the few times that I had to go across her mons, she softly moaned and lifted her hips - amusing Lucy and I tremendously. Next, I dried her off; when I was done, Lucy took the cleaning supplies and put them in the laundry hamper in the bathroom. When she returned, we went back to lying next to Michelle, each of us with an arm across her, holding her. After a couple minutes, her eyes opened again, and she looked around in confusion for a bit before seeing Lucy and me. She looked at both of us, and then broke into a big smile before stretching hard enough that we heard joints creak. Relaxed again, she said "God! I thought that was all a dream - that I'd died on gone to a *really* sexy heaven!"

Lucy smiled and said "We're glad you liked it. Feeling better now?"

Michelle grinned in reply and answered "WAY better!"

She looked at each of us again, and hesitantly told us "When you first kissed me, and started touching me, I was kind of nervous. But both of you were so gentle that I realized that I didn't have to worry about anything. Then, when you started playing with my..."

"Tits", I offered, "They're called tits. Boobs. Knockers. Knobs. Your 'rack'. Your..."

I was interrupted by Lucy's hand over my mouth as she and Michelle both grinned at me.

Michelle laughed, and said "Okay, my **tits**; it felt good. And when Dan started kissing one, and sucking on it... it was great. I felt his hand, you know, between my legs, and I started to worry a little bit - but again, he was so gentle and patient and careful, and it started feeling so *good*."

She turned her head to look at me and said "When you started kissing my belly, I liked it - until I realized where you were going. Frenchy never did anything like that to me, and I didn't know what you were going to do. But when you touched me with your tongue the first time, it was so *sexy*, how soft you were about it. Then, when you did it again... well, I knew I was in heaven."

She turned back to Lucy and said "I was kind of nervous with you, too - about kissing, I mean."

Lucy smiled and said "I know."

Michelle smiled back and said "I thought so. But you kept doing it, and I realized that I *liked* how you kiss. The way you kiss is different than how Dan kisses. Not better or worse, just *different*. I like how you kiss!"

Michelle suddenly turned back to me and exclaimed "That doesn't mean I don't like how you kiss - I do!", concern on her face. I grinned and said "I'm glad to hear that - because I want to kiss you again." She grinned back, and I did that very thing. When we were done, she smiled at me and said "I like that, too!" - making Lucy laugh.

She looked at both of us before saying "After I had my..."

"Orgasm. Climax. Big 'O'..." I got out before Lucy put a finger across my lips with a smile.

"orgasm", Michelle finished with a grin "you started kissing my belly again. Then you both started kissing my body, and met at my tits. I knew you kissed, and wondered if you could taste me on him, Lucy. But then both of you started sucking on my tits, and I forgot about it - until Dan kissed me again. I could taste something, and it took me a second to realize that it was ME. But it didn't taste bad or anything - actually, it was kind of... nice. I think I can understand why some guys like to do that - I tasted kind of spicy and sweet at the same time. Anyway, I just kept kissing him until you started using your mouth on me, Lucy. When you did that, he started kissing my *shoulders* and nibbling on my *ears*, and nipping at my *throat*, and sucking and biting my tits and *nipples* and it just kept getting better and better - until I had another orgasm. Then I guess I kind of lost it, because I don't remember anything until I woke up just now."

Lucy grinned and told her "You did kind of lose it. While you were gone, Dan got some things and cleaned you up" - Michelle's hand flew between her thighs, and she blushed - "and we decided to hold you until you were ready to come back to us."

Michelle looked at each of us and said "I had two orgasms with you; before, all I ever had was just one, sometimes, with Frenchy. And I had them just from you using your mouths on me." She tilted her head to focus on me and asked "Is... is it going to feel that good when we actually start to make love?"

Lucy reached over to tilt Michelle's head back toward her and said "Michelle, dear, we *were* making love. Making love isn't just about body parts; it's about your heart, too. But to answer the question I **think** you were asking: yes, I think you'll feel just as good when Dan's inside you. You said that sometimes you had an orgasm when Frenchy was inside?"

Michelle nodded, and said "Back before he started getting mean to me, yeah, sometimes. Not every time, though." She looked at me a little shyly and said "He wasn't as big as Dan, I think; I... I don't know if that makes any difference."

Lucy spoke up again, telling her "It doesn't *really* make that much difference how big or small the man's penis is, Michelle. What makes the difference is how interested he is in making you happy with it." With an impish grin, Lucy added "It isn't the size of the tool, it's the skill of the craftsman. And Dan is a *very* good craftsman! Would you like to find out for yourself?"

Michelle blushed faintly, and said "I... I think I'd like that."

"I think you'll like it, too!" Lucy teased, and then added "He isn't ready yet, though. Do you want to get him started, or should I?"

Michelle looked a bit uncertain, and Lucy smoothed it over by saying "Why don't I go ahead and start, and then you can take over when you're ready."

Michelle nodded, and watched as Lucy gently nudged me onto my back, and then leaned across Michelle's legs to take my flaccid penis into her mouth as she cupped my balls in her hand. In just a couple of minutes, I was nearly fully erect, my penis shiny with Lucy's saliva. She pulled her head back so that only the crown was past her lips, gave me a little lick, and with a soft pop, let me pull free of her mouth.

Michelle had watched all this, and looked surprised that Lucy had done what she had. Lucy turned to look at her, and saw the expression on Michelle's face. Concern in her voice, Lucy asked "What is it, Michelle? Is something wrong?"

Michelle hesitantly told us "I... I never done anything like that to Frenchy - except after he started getting mean to me, that is. Even then, the only thing I had to do was open my mouth, and he'd use it like it was my... between my legs."

Hearing that, I couldn't help but start to soften again - that Frenchy had a talent for screwing things up even when he wasn't around!

I could see the hurt in Lucy's eyes as she told Michelle "I understand, dear - I wouldn't be too happy if something like that happened to me, either. But you just saw that Dan didn't do anything like that; it was *me* doing things to *him*. If you don't want to, or don't think you can, and then that's fine - with *both* of us. But I'll bet you that it would be a lot different for you if it *YOU* were the one in control, like I was. It's actually kind of sexy for me, knowing that I can make him excited like that, just using my mouth, and nothing else."

"Is... is he going to... squirt his stuff in my mouth? Frenchy never did that, but he'd pull out and squirt it on my face when he was finished."



"He won't do either one of those things if you don't want him too, Michelle. And I'll be here to help you learn how you can tell when he's going to squirt, so you can take your mouth off, first. Would that be okay?"

Michelle nodded, still hesitant, and Lucy told her "Michelle, don't do this if you don't want to. Dan and I neither one wants you to do anything you aren't happy or comfortable with. That's Frenchy's way, not ours."

Michelle looked at her and managed a smile before saying "I know. I think that's why I want to try."

And that's how it came about that I became the practice dummy (no comments, please!) while Lucy gave Michelle blowjob lessons. It was rough going at first (at least, from my perspective - teeth can *hurt!*), but Lucy's patient tutelage and my lack of response except to the most extreme provocations (see previous comment) had her gradually shift from hesitant to willing - and then on to eager. By the time I was ready to blow my load, she was enthusiastically using lips, mouth, and tongue all at the same time, her eyes smiling. Lucy was watching me, and saw that I was getting close; she took Michelle's hand and cupped it under my scrotum, telling her "After you've been doing that for a bit, you'll want to hold him like this. When you feel his balls pull up close to his body, he's getting ready to squirt. It's up to you if you want to take your mouth off and finish him with your hand, or let him cum in your mouth. If you keep your mouth on him, it feels better for him, and you can still choose whether you want to spit it out after, or swallow it."

Michelle's eyes told Lucy and me what she thought of that last idea, but she managed to nod to let Lucy know she'd heard.

A minute later, I knew it was going to happen. Michelle felt my balls pull up, and quickly pulled her mouth off, but continued sliding her hand up and down my saliva-slick erection. She hadn't stroked me but a few times when the first shot of cum burst out the end of my penis, landing near my chest; the following spurts were successively milder, leaving a trail of puddles of cum that got closer and closer to where Michelle was softly pumping my slowly-softening member.

When all that was left was a small trickle of semen, she released her hold on me and turned to Lucy with a big smile on her face, saying "I did it!", her joy clear in her voice.

Lucy laughed, and answered "Yes, you sure did!"

Only then did Michelle seem to realize that there had been an actual man associated with all of it; blushing, she turned to look at me and gave me a shy smile as she asked "Did I do okay, Dan?"

I grinned and said "You did fine, Michelle - didn't you get the results you wanted?"

She blushed even darker, gave me a happy smile, and answered "Yeah, I guess I did, didn't I?"

Then, amazed, Michelle watched as Lucy reached out to collect a small puddle of my semen on her fingers and put it in her mouth, smiling. Fingers clean, Lucy took them out and told her "Me, I *like* the way Dan tastes. When I can, I like to keep him in my mouth so I can have all of his juice - it makes me feel SO sexy to know that I can make him climax like that, and that his juice is just for *me*."

Michelle's expression made it clear that she wasn't convinced. Lucy just told her "Didn't you ever get any of Frenchy's juice in your mouth? You said that he squirted on your face."

Michelle hesitantly nodded, and said "I did, sometimes - but I didn't like it."

Lucy asked "You didn't think you'd like using your mouth on Dan because of how Frenchy used you; do you think maybe it would be the same way about his cum?"

Michelle considered that for a few seconds, and then tentatively reached out to dip a finger in a larger puddle of my semen. She lifted it to her lips, sniffed, and then delicately touched her tongue to it. Another second went by, and she stuck her finger in her mouth, drawing it out a moment later, cleaned of my juices. She collected another, larger, sample, and did it again - but when she pulled her finger out the second time, she gave us a half-smile and said "I guess getting to choose DOES make a difference. Dan's stuff is kinda like custard, only a little thinner, and a little salty. I... I guess it would be okay if he was to squirt in my mouth, next time" - then after realizing what she'd just said, Michelle got a worried look on her face and asked "Is... is there gonna be a next time?"

Lucy laughed and answered "Yes, there's going to be a next time - if you want" - and laughing again when Michelle nodded her head.

Lucy got up and went into the bathroom, reappearing a few moments later with a damp washcloth. She started to clean me off when Michelle said "Here, let me do it..."

Lucy smiled at me and turned the job over to Michelle - who methodically and thoroughly cleaned me from where the first spatter of cum was pooled, all the way down to making sure she got all traces of semen out of my pubic hair. When she was done, she quickly disposed of the washcloth and got back into bed with us, taking her place between us with a broad smile on her face.

Lucy and I were both surprised when the smile left Michelle's face, only to be replaced with a look of worry. Lucy asked "What is it, Michelle?"

She answered with a question: "Is... is Dan done? I mean, for the night? Or can he... you know..."

Lucy smiled in reassurance and answered "No, Dan isn't done for the night, and yes, he'll be able to have another climax - or even two, if we help."

Michelle looked relieved - making Lucy and I grin at each other - and said "When me and Frenchy was first married, we'd do it two or three or even sometimes four times in one night. But after a while, it was just once, every couple of days. Then it was a week, maybe, and then a couple of weeks. Finally, he didn't want me hardly at all. I didn't know if it was me, or Frenchy, or something else."

Lucy told her "I don't know what it was, either. I think maybe it was just Frenchy; I know that Dan has surprised me a LOT of times with how... enthusiastic he can be. I remember one time he gave me and two other girls *several* orgasms **each** before he finished."

Michelle looked at her doubtfully, and Lucy just smiled and nodded, saying "Really, he did. We were on top of him so he didn't have to do too much of the work, and it was a special occasion - a *really* special occasion! - but he did it."

Michelle turned to look at me with a mixture of awe and anticipation on her face.

I smiled and raised an eyebrow; Michelle got the deepest blush I'd seen in a LONG time, making Lucy laugh.

The three of us lay there in the bed as the two of them waited for enough time to pass that I'd be able to 'respond' to them again. As we did, Lucy and I took turns telling Michelle about some of the more intimate friends we'd made, using just first names. Michelle was somewhat amazed that so many people were willing to not only make love with us, but each other, as well. As we were talking, the three of us were also casually stroking and caressing each other; Michelle had finally reached down to take my flaccid penis in her hand and had been gently squeezing it; Lucy started talking about Abby, and Michelle felt me twitch in her hand. Her head snapped around to look at me, and then she looked back at Lucy, who asked "What?"

Michelle answered "While you were talking about Abby, I felt him. In my hand. He..."

"He moved?" Lucy asked.

Michelle nodded, uncertain whether she was getting me in trouble or not. Lucy smiled and said "It's okay - I know he thinks she's special. She's one of the ones that Dan did something special for, and that always makes men a little more possessive. She's smart and friendly and really cute and sexy; I like her, too."

Michelle had continued her gentle, rhythmic squeezing, and felt me slowly getting larger in her hand. She looked down as Lucy asked "He's getting harder?"

Without even thinking about it, Michelle nodded her head, her attention still on where her hand was wrapped around me.

Lucy quietly said "When he's hard, he'll be able to last a lot longer this time. Go ahead and help him, if you want to."

Her focus still on my steadily growing penis, Michelle slowly shifted around to bring her head closer to where I was filling her hand. Without hesitation, she slowly lowered her head and wrapped her lips around the head of my penis, softly sucking on me as her hand began to slowly stroke my increasing length.

When I was almost completely erect, Michelle looked up at me, her eyes twinkling in satisfaction at what she'd done for me. I smiled back, and nodded my head to let her know that she was doing just FINE.

Next to us, Lucy started moving as well; in a few moments, she'd turned around so that she was lying next to Michelle, her head even with Michelle's ass. From there, Lucy moved closer, reaching out to nudge Michelle's legs apart to make room for her head. Seconds later, Lucy had her face neatly tucked between Michelle's thighs, her mouth starting to go to work on Michelle's womanhood.

When Lucy started, Michelle softly moaned her pleasure - something that sent a decidedly pleasant vibration through my penis, and into my balls.

A couple more minutes went by, and I was fully erect between Michelle's lips; the sounds of Lucy's mouth between her thighs and the aroma of her arousal were clear in the air.

I knew that Michelle was ready - indeed, MORE than ready - by the soft moans she was making around my penis. I reached out and gently guided her head up until her lips pulled free of me. She looked at me in question, and I simply told her "That's enough. Now it's time for more."

In a split second, her expression changed from one of concern and curiosity to eager desire. Lucy must have heard me, because she carefully extracted her head from between Michelle's slowly clenching thighs. Michelle let us guide her back around and up the bed, so that she was laying parallel to where I was. I leaned over and took a nipple between my lips and softly sucked at it for a few moments as my hand dipped between her thighs. She readily spread her legs for me, and my fingers found her labia parted, and the area between them all but dripping.

I lifted my head from her breast, and looked into her face as I slowly moved myself between her legs, holding my body over hers. A little adjustment, and then I gently lifted her legs and draped them over my own, which left my erect penis resting against her mons.

Her desire was clear on her face, but there was also a trace of fear, too - and that fear came through in her voice as she asked me "You're going to make love to me now?"

I smiled and shook my head, answering her by saying "No, Michelle. I'm not going to make love TO you now. Now, we're going to make love *together*."

She visibly relaxed at my words, and smiled as she nodded her head in understanding. I eased my hips back and the head of my penis slid down the crease of her womanhood; when it brushed across the hood of her clitoris, her eyes closed and she sucked in a quick breath of arousal before opening her eyes to look at me again.

The head of my penis was resting between her labia, the end of it softly pressing against her hot, wet opening. Our eyes locked, and I slowly began to press myself into her. Beneath me, I felt her start to tense up, and I immediately stopped, easing back again so that I wasn't applying any significant pressure against her.

She was looking up at me, and I could see that there was still a trace of fear in her eyes. I smiled down at her and said "I'm not going to hurt you, Michelle. I want to make *love* with you. If I force myself inside, that isn't love; and love is what I want to give you. Will you trust me, and accept it?"

Hesitantly, she nodded. I leaned over far enough to be able to kiss her on the forehead before saying "Thank you."

She managed a smile, and I raised myself up again. With another gentle push of my hips, I pressed myself against her opening again. I felt her tense up slightly, and stopped, waiting. A couple seconds went by, and she realized that I wasn't going to just bull my way into her - probably as Frenchy had done all too many times. She relaxed, and I pressed myself forward still again. She stayed relaxed until the head of my penis popped through the tight ring of her opening; I felt her clamp down again, and stopped to wait for her to calm down again - which she did a little faster. I began to press myself into her, and as I slowly got deeper, I felt her body begin to tighten up again. I quickly slowed, and then stopped, what I was doing, and felt her immediately relax. I gave it a couple of seconds, and then began to withdraw from her. She got a look of surprise on her face when I did; but it quickly changed into pleasure when I stopped with just the head of my penis inside and slid forward again. That time, I was able to get nearly half my length in her before having to stop for her. Another slow withdrawal, and then back in again - ending when three quarters of my manhood was inside. Back out, and I was able to gradually bury myself in her on the last push.

I held myself steady over her, giving her time to adjust to my presence; from the things she'd said, I had the impression that it had been a long time since she'd had anyone inside her like that.

Looking down at her, I could see that she was somewhat distracted, so I waited patiently for her to let me know when she was ready for me to continue.

After a bit, she did - looking up, at me she said "It's been a long time... too long, I think. And you're bigger than... him. But I'm ready, now. Please, Dan - make *love* with me."

So I did.

As I slowly eased myself out of her, Michelle's eyes closed and she moaned softly. Then, when I started to push back in again, her eyes opened and she lifted her hips in welcome, groaning her pleasure.

Over the next couple of minutes, I slowly increased the tempo at which I was moving in and out of her; she responded by grabbing my forearms and squeezing them with each penetration.

Around me, she got wetter and wetter, and her vagina gradually relaxed around me - but she was still deliciously tight inside, and amazingly hot. Lucy made her own contribution to things by coming over to begin licking and sucking on Michelle's breasts, and pulling and pinching her erect nipples - between bouts of the two of them kissing deep and long.

Sitting as I was, on my heels, I didn't have to put forth much effort to make love with Michelle. But the position did mean that I was eventually subjected to a little muscle tension in the backs of my thighs, and in my calves. As nice as it felt to making love with Michelle, there was still some discomfort, and I was starting to think about changing positions when she suddenly tightened around me, crying out as she was overtaken by an orgasm. It had come as something of a surprise to me, but I was still able to enjoy the sight, sound, and feeling of her body experiencing what must have been a considerable sexual release: looking at her, saw that her head was thrown back, the tendons of her neck drawn tight, her eyes rolled back into her head. She was releasing a long, deep, drawn-out groan; her fingers pressed into my forearms as her vagina repeatedly clenched around my stilled penis. A couple of seconds went by, and she all but collapsed, drawing a deep, shuddering breath before stiffening underneath me again. The second period was a trifle shorter, and didn't appear to be as strong, but it was soon followed by a third - then fourth. She was laying there gasping when a fifth struck, and again when the sixth overtook her. She was looking up at me, covered with a fine sheen of sweat, panting when another shudder ran through her - I wasn't sure if it was the final wave of her orgasm, or 'merely' an aftershock. Either way, she was clearly too wrung out for me to continue right then. So I leaned forward and lowered my head to kiss her, her tongue brushed my lips and when I opened my mouth, came in to re-introduce itself to mine.

I was both happy and disappointed that it didn't take her long to get herself back together - disappointed because kissing her and feeling the hard pebbles of her nipples pressing into my chest was quite pleasant; happy because it meant that I could shift my position to relieve the first mild cramps in my legs.

I shifted my weight, and Michelle suddenly realized that I was still inside her - and still hard. The look of amazement on her face was priceless; next to us, I could see the amusement on Lucy's face.

"You're... you didn't... you can..." Michelle began to say a number of things, but wasn't able to finish any of them. Lucy, though, understood, telling her "Yes, he's still hard - as you can tell. No, he didn't climax. Yes, he can still make love with you."

Michelle looked toward Lucy, who smiled and nodded her head in affirmation. Michelle turned back to me, and I smiled before saying "I'll be happy to keep making love with you - if we can move to a different position. I'm about to start getting cramps in my legs."

Michelle silently nodded - then closed her eyes and moaned softly when I slowly eased my penis out of her. When I slipped free, she released a disappointed groan, but quickly opened her eyes to look at me - first my penis, and then on to my face - before asking "What... what do I have to do?"

I grinned, and told her "You don't **have** to do anything. But if you want to move to a different position, we can make love some more."

She'd recovered enough that she was able to stick her tongue out at me - I mimed kissing it, making her smile - before saying "No, I mean - what should I do so we can... All I know about is like this", the last apologetically.

I didn't notice the tone of her last statement, and replied "That's up to you. We can stay like this, and I'll stretch my legs out; that's called the missionary position. You can be on top, if you want, facing either direction. If you want to turn over, you can either lay down, or be on your hands and knees, and I'll be behind you. Whatever you want to do that makes your part A line up with my part B" - the last making her smile.

She thought for a moment and shyly said "I think I want to be on my hands and knees. That's how dogs do it, and I always thought it looked kind of... sexy."

"Doggy style, it is!" I declared.

She quickly moved to get her legs from around me, and rolled over onto her stomach. There, she moved forward a bit, slid a leg to my other side, and then backed up so that she was reasonably close to me again. Looking over her shoulder at me, she grinned in anticipation - and I could see the smoky lust in her eyes, as well. Getting up on my knees - a relief, I admit - I paused a few moments to look at the view she was giving me: at the vee of her thighs, the dark cloud of her pubic thatch was split down the middle; in the center, the pink flesh of her vagina winked at me, around it, her soft, thick labia were well-parted, the inside surface of each glistening with her oils.

She looked back at me in concern, and I smiled as I told her "I was just looking at you" - and when she looked concerned, added "You're beautiful, there." She looked doubtful, and I explained "It's like an exotic flower, blooming just for me" - and she smiled before wiggling her hips a little to remind me what I was there for - as if I'd forget!

Moving close to her, my penis came to rest in the cleft of her ass, making her gasp. I arched my hips back slightly, and pushed myself down so that the head was wedged against her opening. Putting a hand on one of her hips, I held myself steady as I pushed my hips forward again - slowly pressing myself into her hot, tight channel. With a single slow stroke, I found myself buried in her; I could feel the deepest part of her faintly nudging the very tip of my penis. I know that I'm only slightly above average, so to be that far inside her, I knew that either she was unusually small inside, or Frenchy - God curse him - was hung like a field mouse.

Either way, it was a delightful experience to be so totally encased by hot, wet female flesh. So I held myself inside her for a bit, savoring the sensations being inside her were creating - until she decided that enough savoring was enough, and began pressing herself back against me.

Taking the hint, I put my other hand on her other hip and held her steady as I began slowly pistoning in and out of her wonderfully wet, tantalizingly tight vagina.

It wasn't long before I was sawing into her even more quickly than I'd been able to before; she expressed her appreciation by pushing back at me with every thrust, grunting in pleasure when I bottomed out in her.

After a couple of minutes, I felt Lucy moving next to us again - then watched as she moved to in front of Michelle, got onto her back, and wormed her way underneath until she was able to lift her head and start sucking on Michelle's wobbling breasts.

Michelle threw her head back and groaned, enjoying the added stimulus for several seconds before letting her head drop to reciprocate on Lucy's breasts. Around me, Michelle got even wetter, telling me that she was enjoying Lucy's attentions - and probably what she, herself, was doing, as well.

A few more minutes went by, and I felt Lucy start moving again - and after a few seconds, knew that she was sliding herself even farther under us. I knew when she stopped because I suddenly felt a tongue sliding along the underside of my scrotum as it swung back and forth in response to my thrusts into Michelle. A few moments later, that same tongue (a reasonable assumption, I think) began gently probing at where Michelle and I were joined. At the touch of it, Michelle again threw her head back, crying out in pleasure - before dropping her head again. Looking around her body, I could see that she'd buried her face between Lucy's thighs, and was enthusiastically tonguing Lucy's visibly wet cleft.

It was that sight that shifted me from 'this is nice' to 'gonna get off'. I continued to watch Michelle's inexperienced but frantic licking of Lucy's labia while I felt Lucy's tongue sliding along the underside of my penis as she (apparently) licked Michelle's clitoris. All the while, I was sliding myself into Michelle's tight pussy, feeling myself hit the very end of her vagina with each inward thrust.



As I was watching and experiencing all of this, I continued steadily pumping in and out of Michelle - and that pumping was happening faster and faster, and I was pressing into her even harder and harder. That seemed to suit Michelle just *fine*: she started pushing back at me even harder and making even more noises between slurps at Lucy's pussy.

Finally, there was nothing left but to take a couple of slow strokes, and bury myself as deep as I can into Michelle's hot twat as my nuts tried to blow out the end of my dick.

With the first shot of my jism, Michelle's head flew back again, and she almost screamed as I felt her clamp down around me - the entire length of her vagina was clenched around my penis, feeling like I was on the inside of one of those Chinese finger-traps. Only it was a hot, wet, oh-so-tight female.

At long last, there was nothing left for me to squirt into Michelle's full-to-overflowing pussy - the mixture of our juices had turned into a white froth that had soaked all the pubic hair on both of us, and continued on to the insides of her thighs - where Lucy eagerly licked them up.

Michelle started to collapse; I managed to get my arms around her enough to support her until Lucy can get clear; then with Lucy's help, I let her down onto the bed slowly - but I kept a hold on her hips, lifting them to try and keep any more juices from draining onto the bed. Along the way, my penis pulled out of her vagina; she shuddered and made a noise of disappointment when it happened.

I continued to hold Michelle while Lucy made a quick dash into the bathroom, returning with a towel that she quickly tucks under the two of us. I'm finally able to let the rest of Michelle's weight down on the bed, and carefully move to lie next to her. Lucy makes another trip into the bathroom, coming back with not one but TWO damp washcloths, and a hand towel.

I reach for one of the washcloths; Lucy just shook her head 'no', and proceeded to clean my entire pelvis and groin of my and Michelle's juices. When she was done, she quickly dried me off, and then started on Michelle. As before, contact with Michelle's pubic area resulted in some involuntary responses - something that Lucy and I *still* found amusing. Lucy got as much as she could with Michelle lying on her stomach; I carefully turned her over, and Lucy went about finishing the job, and then carefully patting the affected area (about half her body, it seemed) dry.

By the time she was done, Michelle's eyelids were starting to flutter; Lucy quickly tossed the cloths in the hamper and came back to slide in next to Michelle.

A minute later, Michelle's eyes opened, and just as she had the first time, she had a little trouble making out where she was. When she did, though, the smile and look that hit her face were beatific - she fairly *glowed* in happiness and pleasure.

"Feel better?" Lucy asked, teasing.

"I... I didn't *know* it could be so..." Michele tried, unable to find the words.

"Yeah", Lucy said, smiling.

"All the time I was with Frenchy, I never had anything like that happen to me. I mean, I had orgasms, sometimes, but *never* anything like THOSE. Is that what making love is supposed to feel like?"

Lucy held Michelle's face in her hands and answered "Yes, dear - that's what making love is *supposed* to feel like. Every time."

"That's nothing like what me and Frenchy used to have together. Does actually loving someone really make that much difference?"

I tilted her head my direction, and looked into her eyes as I asked "Don't you think so? You and me, we love each other - and you know what happened. If you didn't have anything like that with Frenchy, what do you think was missing?"

She looked at me and said "But I DID love him!"

I just raised an eyebrow in question; she looked at me for a few seconds before her eyes got wide and she said "But he didn't love me, did he? Not even in the beginning; not really."

I saw her start to get misty-eyed, and quickly told her "I think he did love you, Michelle - as much as he could, anyway. But I don't think that he could love you *completely*. Remember our talk in my office? And what I said about how Lucy and I love and trust each other?"

She thought a moment, and nodded. I saw her eyes start to clear up a little, and told her "Maybe that's why Frenchy got mean with you: he realized that he couldn't love you as much as you loved him, and it made him bitter and scared inside. He didn't know what else to do, so he started hurting you to try and make himself bigger. Except that it didn't work - he still knew that you had more on the inside than he did. He kept hurting you more and more trying to make himself big, and it never worked - because he always knew that you were a better person inside than he was; he knew that YOU knew how to love, with all your heart, and he didn't."

Michelle looked at me for a moment, and then at Lucy, who nodded agreement with what I'd just said. Michelle looked contemplative for a bit, and then told us "I never thought about it that way before. At first, I thought it was something wrong about me, and I tried so **hard** to figure out what it was so I could fix it. Then, later, I just figured that it was the people he was hanging out with that changed him - they were mean, and figured he just kinda 'caught it' from them, that it wasn't really his fault. I finally just gave up on it - until he started talking about Marie. Then I knew I had to do something. And what you're saying is that it was him, and just him, all along? Why didn't I see it, and then?"

Lucy got her attention and said "You loved him. You loved what you saw in him. There were probably little signs, but you didn't pay any attention to them. I'll bet if you think back, you'll see them for what they are, now."

Both of us watched as Michelle sifted through her memories of her life with Frenchy. After a bit, we saw her frown before she looked at us again. Sadly, she told us "You're right. There were signs, and I didn't pay attention. Things like he never told me he loved me; he'd only say 'me too' when I told him that I loved him. Whenever we wanted to do different things, it was always me givin' in to him. Him always wantin' to lay with me, even after I told him I wanted to wait until I was married. How he didn't hardly want to spend any time at our house, where my folks were, but wanted us to be alone all the time."

I lifted my head to look down into Michelle's eyes, and told her "Don't feel bad, Michelle. You were only 18, and you didn't know. You loved him, and that was all that mattered to you; you didn't want to let your mind get in the way of what your heart had. There's something that almost nobody understands - or even suspects, really."

"What's that?"

"That if your heart and your mind are both going to be happy, and then you've got to get them working together. You can't turn your heart loose and your mind off - you'll end up living with Frenchy. And if you turn you mind loose, and close off your heart, you don't have anybody. The trick, the hard part, is to use both your heart AND your mind."

"How?"

"You know that Lucy and I love each other, and how much, right?"

She got a wistful look and answered "Of course."

"Do you know WHY we love each other that much?"

"You just DO, I guess."

"Nope. Think back to the talk we had in my office. Remember what I said about me and Lucy trading love?"

A moment later she nodded, and I went on "That's how you use your heart and mind at the same time. You figure out what things about someone that you like - and what things about YOURSELF that you like. You like them because they're honest or caring or smart or whatever, and you like yourself because you're sincere, affectionate, caring, or whatever. You've got to be honest with yourself, otherwise it won't work. So once you know about yourself, and about the other person, you can start seeing what it is that you have that they like, and what they have that you like - and you start giving it to each other. What you're doing is trading with each other: you're caring, and they like that;

they're honest, and you like *that*. You're happy and they're happy. Now, figure out what would happen if there was even more to it - the better person they were, the more there was for you to like; and the better person you were, the more there was for THEM to like. Now, there's a whole lot of liking going on here - and depending on what it is that each of you likes about the other, and how much, maybe it turns into love. Oh, boy!"

She grinned at me, and I continued "Hot damn, you're in love - and you know exactly why: remember, you kind of took inventory of yourself and that other person. You're getting so much of this, and so much of that, and a little bit of the other thing from them; they're getting about this much of this, that, and the other from you. Both of you know whether or not you're getting enough from the other person *in exchange for* what you're giving to them. Now, what do you suppose happens if one or the other of you figures that it isn't exactly an even trade. All of a sudden, one of you is maybe *losing* a little bit in the deal - so what do you do? You try to talk it out, and see if you can't get things evened up again. If that doesn't work, what else can you do? Maybe you try holding back a little on some of what you've got, to try and balance it out. That doesn't do any good, either. Now what? The only thing left to do is not to trade with them - because if it isn't an **EVEN** trade, and then somebody's going to be happy, and someone isn't. Sounds like a lot of trouble, doesn't it?"

She nodded, and I went on to say "Now, suppose that instead of going through all that *after* the fact, you decided to be more careful in the beginning of the process. You meet somebody, and the two of you start swapping values back and forth - remember, you're getting something of *value* to YOU from them, and they're getting something of value to them from you. Okay, you're going along then, and you notice that there's things they don't want to give you - but things of yours that they want. What do you do? Trade anyway? Hell, no! You don't want to get into all that other mess, so what you do is let them know, nice and polite, that it wouldn't be an even swap; and you don't want to see anybody's feelings hurt, so you don't want to trade with them like that. Sure, they're likely to get upset and call you names - but that's still a whole lot better than the other, right?"

Michelle grinned, and agreed.

"Okay, there're only a couple of tricky things about this. One of them's kinda tough; the other one's actually pretty easy. The easy one is the trading will only last as long as the value of what it is. By that, I mean that if all you're after is how handsome a guy is, you're only going to love him for as long as he **IS** handsome; if he gets into a car wreck or gets old and ugly, the love goes, too. On the other hand, if you love someone for something about their character, like how honest they are, or how brave they are, and then the love lasts as long as they're honest or brave."

"The tough one is this: you've got to be **absolutely honest** about what it is you're trading, and you have to be *absolutely consistent* about how you trade. You can't lie to yourself or someone else and you can't just do it part time. It's everything, all the time, or you're better off not doing it. If you're honest and consistent about it, and then the person you're trading with will always know where they stand with you - so if you love them for their

honesty and courage, and then they know that as long as they're honest and courageous, you'll love them. Once you've got that with each other, and then giving a hundred percent of yourself gets pretty easy: you know that as long as you've got what it is that they love about you, you've got their love. And you know that if you start to change in a way that they *wouldn't* love, and then you'll lose it, too - and that makes a powerful reason to stay a good person; particularly if you really like what it is they have."

Michelle lay there, blinking at me, for several long seconds. Then she turned to look at Lucy, who just smiled at her. A bit later, she opened her mouth to speak, closed it, waited a bit, and then opened it again to tell us "It's not that hard of an idea, is it?"

"As an idea, no, it's not." Lucy told her.

"But actually doing it, that's something else, isn't it?"

Lucy answered "At first, yes. But once you get started, and get a little practice at it, it actually gets easier the more you do it."

"And it works."

Lucy laughed, and simply gestured between herself and me before saying "And for Robyn and Sandra, too, of course."

"Them? How? They understood what you were talking about?"

My turn to laugh before I told her "It wasn't necessary to explain it to them. They're already *living* it. Lucy and I got together when Robyn was still young enough that something like this was a perfectly reasonable way to live - better, in fact, because it made her life more consistent: she knew that we loved her, and why. She didn't have to worry that we were suddenly going to stop loving her for some reason she couldn't understand, and she knew what kinds of behavior on her part were going to get what results and reactions on OUR part. Her 'universe' was neat and orderly and predictable. Sandra picked it up from being with Robyn so much; but she already had a pretty good idea of it to begin with."

"How in the world do they handle trying to work and live with people that *aren't* like you?"

"The same way we do: on our own terms. For the most part, we don't have to spend that much time with people that don't understand what we do. But we still watch out for those that are close, and we try to 'bring them along' when we can - kind of leading them into being better people by setting an example for them. For a lot of the people that we know, it works - better for some than others, but it works. There are a couple of families that we know that we think will understand before too long; they were having problems and asked us how we managed to not do what they were doing. We told them, in general terms, and let them SEE how we do it. They saw it worked, and started doing it. They had

a little trouble at first, getting their hearts and minds tied together, but they got the hang of it. Now they're just learning how to do it ALL the time; and like I said, I don't think it's going to be much longer before they do" was Lucy's reply.

"On top of that, each of them has a few friends that are learning from them, too. Remember, there ARE people out there that are good, and just don't know it yet - kind of like you and Marie, when you first got here" I added.

Michelle grinned and said "And when these other people 'get it', are you going to take THEM to bed, too?"

Lucy and I both smiled before Lucy said "If they want. Remember, it's about loving - not just the sex. The physical part of it is a concrete example of an otherwise abstract idea."

Michelle said "You sound like you're some kind of philosopher, or something."

"No, that's him, remember? Degree from Princeton."

Michelle said "All of this makes for an interesting conversation - but we ARE in bed, and I DID ask you two to make love with me. Dan and I have had a turn, so I guess it's you and me, Lucy", grinning.

Lucy grinned back and said "That's fine with me. I've got to admit, I was kind of surprised when you started licking me while Dan was inside you."

Michelle blushed slightly and said "What you were doing felt good - *real* good. I didn't even think about it; I just wanted to make you feel good, too. It kinda surprised me, too. I didn't exactly know what else to do, so I just licked you, kind of like you were licking me."

Lucy laughed and said "You did just fine - I had a small orgasm while you were doing it."

"A small one?"

"Yes, why?"

"After you and Dan have given me so many tonight, and they've all been so good... I feel like you're being left out, or something."

Lucy smiled and said "No, I'm not being left out. You're still here, aren't you?"

Michelle smiled in response, and moved to begin kissing my wife. After two fairly powerful climaxes, I wasn't in any shape to start responding to the sight of them, erotic and stimulating as it was.

They started out by kissing each other - lip to lip. But it was only seconds before each had their lips apart, and I knew that their tongues were dueling in each other's mouths. It wasn't a minute later that each had a hand on the other's breast, testing its firmness, hefting its weight, caressing it, and rubbing a thumb or finger across its peak.

A couple minutes more, and both sets of nipples were hard and erect as each of them began a soft moaning, and they became more active with each other.

It was Michelle that pulled back first, her eyes smoky with desire as she looked at the softly panting Lucy. Softly, Michelle said "I... I didn't know that being with another woman could be so sexy..."

Lucy answered "We haven't even *started*, yet!" - and Michelle responded by lowering her head and leaning forward to suck one of Lucy's nipples into her mouth. Lucy put her hands on Michelle's head while tilting her own head back in pleasure. A bit later, Michelle switched over to the other breast, leaving the first with an erect nipple glistening with saliva. As she tended to Lucy's other breast, I saw Michelle's hand begin a slow journey down Lucy's body; Lucy felt it, too, because I saw her spread her legs in invitation to Michelle's touch - which came soon enough.

Michelle continued to switch back and forth between Lucy's breasts as her hand repeatedly delved between Lucy's parted thighs - and each time her fingers made an appearance, they glistened with Lucy's juices.

Lucy's moans and exclamations steadily increased; eventually, Michelle had mercy on her and began kissing her way down Lucy's body. Lucy responded by spreading her legs even more, to make room for her new lover.

Eventually, Michelle was lying between Lucy's legs, the core of Lucy's womanhood open and exposed to her. I watched as Michelle slowly caressed Lucy's labia, examining Lucy's vaginal entrance closely. Finally, she lifted her head and looked at Lucy, and then me, before saying "It *does* look like a flower! I never realized!"

Having announced her discovery, Michelle quickly returned to tending that flower, and a bit later, lowering her head and extending her tongue to sample its nectar. I saw Lucy stiffen, and then heard her soft groan of pleasure at what Michelle was doing. I watched Michelle's head start moving slightly as she tried to bring Lucy the kind of pleasure that she'd been the recipient of; and I was privileged to listen as one woman softly and patiently taught another the art of oral pleasure.

"Yes, like that... Oh, God... It's good when you use your lips on my clitoris - yes, that... Ooooooh... tease my lips... that's it... it's okay, you can suck a little harder... Oh, yes... oh, that's good, do that some more... yes, that's a good place, too... use your tongue there - yes, like that..."

Lucy was a good and patient teacher; Michelle an enthusiastic pupil. It wasn't long before Lucy didn't need to give directions to Michelle - and not much longer before she couldn't have, even if she'd wanted to.

I knew Lucy, and knew that she was getting closer and closer to her orgasm - and watched as Michelle reached around Lucy's waist to take hold of Lucy's breasts, and start squeezing them and pinching her nipples.

It didn't take much of that to push Lucy over the edge; with a deep, shuddering groan, she came - hard. I saw Michelle's eyes widen as she was suddenly presented with a goodly amount of Lucy's vaginal fluids - and watched as she happily licked them up as fast as Lucy presented them.

As Lucy's climax began to taper off, Michelle responded by slowing her actions between Lucy's thighs - but not stopping them. After a bit, Lucy was once again a willing subject of Michelle's wanton attentions. This time, though, Lucy wanted to be a participant, too. She looked down at Michelle and said "Get up on your knees, and turn around so your feet are up here."

Michelle did as she was asked - careful not to leave Lucy's mons unattended for too long - and quickly realized what Lucy wanted; Lucy gently guided Michelle's leg over her head, leaving Michelle's mons and opening as exposed as her own. Michelle again dipped her head between Lucy's thighs, even as Lucy was lifting her head between Michelle's.

My position left me with a view of where Lucy was engaged in a furious tongue-lashing of Michelle's clitoris and labia; that was followed by extending her tongue and trying to see how hard she could fuck Michelle with it. From the sound of it, though, Michelle was matching her, lick for lick - so to speak. It was only a couple of minutes before I heard each of them cry out as they found their release - Michelle only slightly ahead of Lucy. As I watched, one of them would experience a wave of pleasure, and then catch her breath as the other was peaking. Back and forth they went, leaving me to watch tandem orgasms. It was a truly spectacular sight.

Lucy was first to recover enough to begin a new oral assault on her partner's womanhood; the stimulation seemed to bring Michelle out of her post-orgasmic fog, because she quickly began to return the favor.

The sight of the two of them eagerly lapping at each other's pussies - and the dense fog of pheromones and eau de femme - were having an effect on me; I found that I was nearly fully erect, even as a simple observer. I got to my knees and looked at them, trying to decide which one I wanted more: my wife, or our new-found lover. The problem - if it could be called such - was solved for me by Michelle. She must have seen me from the corner of her eye, because she lifted her head long enough to say "Do Lucy... I've never seen it before, and I want to watch!"



That was all I needed, and carefully knee-walked my way between Lucy's legs, facing Michelle. She lifted her head, and with a happy twinkle in her eye, opened her mouth and quickly sucked over half my length inside. Using a tongue that seemed to have learned a LOT of tricks since the last time she'd used it on me, coupled with a gentle suction and twisting, bobbing head movement that almost brought tears to my eyes, she soon had me hard as a rock.

Satisfied that I was ready (!!), she let me pop free of her lips - then reached out to take me in her hand and guide my penis to Lucy's open and glistening pussy as I got myself steadied. Positioning the end of my penis between Lucy's glistening labia, Michelle quietly told me "Do it - I want to see it!"

She continued to hold and guide me as I pressed my hips forward, slowly loading Lucy's wet channel with my manhood. When about half of me was inside, Michelle licked her lips and muttered "That is *so* sexy! I never thought it would LOOK like that!" - her eyes locked on where Lucy and I were joined.

In just a few moments, I was sawing in and out of Lucy's pussy as Michelle offered a softly spoken color commentary on the action - occasionally interrupted by her need to release some sound of arousal or pleasure in response to Lucy's continued efforts.

Lifting my hands, I cupped Michelle's breasts, feeling their spongy mass shift slightly as she moved in response to the stimulus of Lucy's talented tongue. Carefully, I took her nipples between my fingers, and began to pull at them - gently at first, and then harder and harder as she eagerly responded to my touch.

I was surprised as hell when she suddenly lowered her head slightly, and fastened her lips around one of MY nipples. When she began sucking on it, it was like there was a fiery electrical connection between my nipple and my penis; the harder and longer she sucked, the harder and longer I became. Then, when she began biting at it, too - well, that was entirely too much. I felt myself rapidly approaching the point where I was going to spray Lucy's hot pussy with my jism; even as I felt my balls begin to tighten, Michelle released my nipple from her lips to again cry out her release. The sensations she'd created in my nipple continued long enough that I felt my penis swelling before the first thick wad of my semen erupted from the end.

Even as I was washing Lucy's womb with my hot seed, I heard her shout as she, too, fell into the abyss of climax. There we were: the three of us all climaxing in, on, and around each other.

Michelle was the first of us to fall from the summit; only because my hands were still filled with her delightful mammaries was I able to support her long enough to guide her to the side so she wouldn't cause any problems for Lucy. I wasn't far behind her, though. Three climaxes in - I checked the clock: two hours - was a bit much for me. Still, I managed to slide my rapidly shrinking penis from between Lucy's labia, and scoot

backward far enough that I could get out of bed without having to worry about collapsing on one of them.

Pulling myself together, I managed to half-stagger into the bathroom, where I supported myself on the sink as I collected a small stack of hand towels and several washcloths - then wetting the latter in the sink before carefully wringing the excess water out of them. Prepared for the aftermath, I managed to carry my burden back to the bed and set them on the nightstand. From that point, it was a barely-controlled collapse next to Michelle.

Some time later, I watched as Lucy was able to sit up. She looked around and saw that I'd brought back cleaning supplies; she crawled over us - somehow managing not to kneel anyone - and grabbed a still-damp washcloth. With it, she first wiped her face - as much to help her get her wits back as to remove any of Michelle's fluids, I figured - then her pelvis, where a goodly amount of my semen was running down the inside of one thigh. With that taken care of, she grabbed a towel and dried herself before setting it aside in favor of another washcloth - which she proceeded to use on me, again starting by wiping my face with it before moving on to clean my penis. The cool water did serve to refresh me more than I'd have expected, and I found enough energy to sit up, using the headboard as a backrest. Lucy smiled at me, and collected another washcloth, which she handed to me with the question "Do you think you can clean her up a little while I get us something to eat and drink?"

I nodded, and turned to begin wiping Michelle off as Lucy crawled to the edge of the bed, stood up, and went out the door - leaving it almost entirely closed behind her. As I was cleaning Michelle, I heard Sandra's voice asking "Is everything okay in there, Uncle Dan?"

I assured her that it was, and I heard the smile in her voice as she said "I just thought I'd better check." I heard her softly padding across the hall, and then the door to her room close.

I had finished cleaning Michelle, and had started drying her off when Lucy reappeared, carrying a tray with several bottles of club soda, one of those lemon-shaped plastic bottles full of lemon juice, and a small stack of the granola bars the girls favored.

She set the tray on the nightstand on her side of the bed and got back into bed on the other side of Michelle from me. By then, I'd finished what I was doing and had set the towel aside. Together, Lucy and I got Michelle turned over and around - she'd been 'facing' the foot of the bed - and propped up against the headboard.

As Lucy tried to get some fluids into Michelle, I picked up another damp washcloth and finished the job of cleaning her off, and then dried her. By the time I was done, she'd started to come around.

Lucy had squirted a healthy dollop of the lemon juice into the bottle of club soda she was trying to get Michelle to drink; we knew Michelle was on her way back when she made a face at the taste of the lemon.

Gradually, with Lucy and me helping each other, and both of us helping Michelle, we got to the point where we were all generally alive and alert. I say 'generally' because Michelle seemed to have decided that her function in life was to sit there owl-eyed, watching Lucy and me, her head turning achingly slowly when it moved at all. Lucy said later that Michelle most closely resembled an infant who's just learned to sit up: everything's a surprise, and there isn't a lot of fine motor control over the muscles.

Whatever the problem, Lucy and I both began trying to bring life, if not mobility, back to Michelle. Through patient instruction and gentle cajolery, we managed to get a granola bar and bottle of water into her, and then each of us had something to eat and drink while we waited for Michelle to catch up with us - at least, part of the way, anyway.

Eventually, she did. With a soft noise, she tried to reach for another bottle of water. Lucy opened it and handed it to me; I carefully helped Michelle drink from it while Lucy unwrapped another granola bar. Between the two of us, we got more nutrition and fluids into her, which seemed to help tremendously.

As we waited for the food and drink to kick in, Lucy asked me "Do you think she's *always* going to be like this after making love?"

I considered the question, and finally answered "No, I don't think so. I mean, it HAS been a long time for her, and it's not like she's getting a lot of exercise or anything. I think it's just a question of building her stamina up again."

Lucy thought that over, and said "You're probably right. I mean, she's starting to come around okay, now that she's got some food and water in her." She laughed then, and said "I wonder if anybody has ever thought about making an after-sex nutritional drink, like they have for athletes?"

I grinned and said "I don't know - but whoever gets it on the market first is gonna make a *bundle*!"

Both of us laughed softly, until Michelle managed to speak up, telling us "You two are *entirely* too alive."

I looked at Lucy and mimicked Peter Lorre by saying "The monster *lives*!"

Lucy slapped at me, and leaned over to look at Michelle and ask "Are you okay now?"

Michelle made a face and answered "'Okay' is a relative term. Relative to being run over by a particularly large bus, yes, I'm okay. Any more than that, no, I don't think so. What the hell did you two DO to me?"

I looked at Lucy and observed "Her speech is better. Not so bayou-ish."

Michelle turned to look at me and said "What we just did was good for cleaning the cobwebs out. I expect it cleaned a LOT of things out. But you haven't answered the question yet."

Lucy laughed and said "We just made love, is all. Why?"

"You do this to people you LOVE? What do you do to folks you DON'T like?"

Lucy grinned and answered "Ignore them, mostly. What, don't you feel better after that?"

Michelle managed a grin and said "Oh, I feel a WHOLE lot different. I'm not sure 'better' is the word, but definitely different. Wore out is more what comes to mind."

I laughed and told her "We were talking about that. I figure it's just that you haven't made love for while, and that you haven't been getting enough exercise; you just don't have the stamina, yet. It'll come, though."

Michelle looked at me and said "Before tonight, I NEVER made love, EVER. Had sex, but never made love. You're probably right about the exercise, too. Question is - will I live long enough to *get* the stamina?"

Lucy and I both laughed before I answered "Oh, I think you'll live. Look at it this way: until you do, you'll sleep like a baby all night after making love!"

Michelle gave me a Look, which amused Lucy, who told her "You'll be fine, I promise. Tonight was just kind of a special occasion - your first time with us and everything. Next time, it won't be so much - you'll see."

"You want me with you again?"

"Of course - if you want it, too" I answered.

Michelle's eyes got wet and she told us "I... I thought it was just the one time. I didn't think that you'd want to be with me more than the once, what with all the friends and such you have."

Lucy told her "Oh, pooh. Don't be silly. Of *course* we'd want to make love with you more than once. After all, we love you, don't we? And if you want to, I think the rest of our friends would like to be with you, too. They all like each other, so I'd bet they'd like you, too."

Michelle was openly crying as she told us "I... I think I'd like that. Being with you two again, I mean. I'm not sure yet about the rest - this is still kinda new to me."

"Of course. Whenever you're ready, and want to" Lucy assured her.

Michelle suddenly started and said "What about the girls? I know I yelled kinda loud. Do you think they heard?"

Lucy and I shared a look before I told Michelle "I don't know. Does it matter, really? You know what they've been doing, so why should you be worried whether or not they know you've found some happiness and pleasure too? Don't you think they'd understand?"

Michelle looked at me for a second, and then smiled and said "No, I guess it doesn't matter - I guess they *would* understand about it."

Following that, she yawned so hard we heard her jaw creak. When she was done, she shyly grinned at us and said "I guess I'm kinda wore out from tonight."

Lucy and I just smiled and said "That's okay. It's getting late, and we really should be getting to sleep anyway."

Michelle started to move and said "Okay. I'll go on back to my room now."

I put a hand on her leg to stop her and asked "Why? Don't you want to stay here with us?"

She looked at me in amazement and answered "Yes, I do - I just didn't figure I could, was all."

I gave her a mock-stern look and said "Anybody we make love with is MORE than welcome to sleep in our bed. That's House Rule number Two."

She smiled at me and said "I don't want to violate any house rules, so I guess I'm staying here tonight." She looked around, and asked "Where in the world did you get this bed, anyway? It's got to be big enough to sleep six people!"

Lucy laughed and told her "It's custom-made. With all the friends we have, we figured a big bed was a good idea. And it held eight, once. Well, several times, but it was one occasion. Now, would you like to take a shower with us before we go to sleep?"

Michelle suddenly realized that there wasn't any of the sticky residue usually associated with intimate contact, and looked at us accusingly. I just told her "Yes, we cleaned you up a little. We love you. Now, do you want to shower with us, or not?"

She broke into a smile and told me "Yes, I'd like to shower with you. And I love you, too."

"Good. You wash my back, and I'll wash yours."

Michelle played at giving me the Fish Eye, but couldn't keep it up - she dissolved into laughter after telling me "I'd think you were up to something, if you hadn't already done it!"

Lucy and I both helped her get out of bed, and kept her company - still chuckling - into the bathroom where we shared a friendly shower, without too much groping and fondling. Not that there wasn't *any*, mind you, just that there wasn't TOO much of it. Afterward, we all got into bed, Lucy and I bracketing Michelle. It wasn't long before all three of us were sound asleep.

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The next morning, Lucy and I both tried to get Michelle moving, but left her alone after our efforts resulted in repeated unintelligible complaint noises.

We were in the kitchen having breakfast with all three of the youngsters when a disheveled and robe-clad Michelle wobbled into the kitchen. She managed to pour herself a cup of coffee and carry it all the way to the breakfast nook - all without spilling any. On sitting down with us, she gave Lucy and me an Evil Look, asking "Why didn't you wake me this morning?"

"We tried, really. But you kept making noises that sound like complaints - and not very polite complaints, at that" Lucy answered with a grin.

Michelle relented from glaring at us long enough to take a sip of her coffee - quickly followed by another.

Only then did Marie ask "Are you okay, momma?"

Michelle answered "I'm fine, honey. I was just up too late last night, and I need some more rest."

"Were you with Dan and Lucy?"

Michelle perked up a bit at that, and answered "Yes, I was, dear. How did you know?"

"I heard you yell, and when I went to your room, you weren't there - so I figured you might be with them, instead, so I didn't worry about it."

"You weren't worried about me being with Lucy and Dan? Why not?"

"Because I figured if you were with them, and then they were making you feel good, like Robyn and Sandra do with me - except different because of Dan, of course."

"And you don't mind?"

"Of course not, mamma. I know you weren't very happy when we were with Daddy, so if being with Lucy and Dan makes you feel good, and you want to be with them, why would it bother me? You deserve to be happy, too!"

"Thank you, dear. Yes, I was with Dan and Lucy, and they made me feel *very* good, and I was *very* happy."

On hearing that, Robyn and Sandra shared a smile and a Look that Michelle didn't see - though Lucy and I did.

Marie replied "I'm glad, mamma. I hope you're with them some more, so you're happy, too."

"I'm glad you're glad, dear. And I think I will be with them again."

"Okay."

That seemed to settle things for Marie, and Michelle just turned to look at Lucy and me, clearly surprised at how easily her daughter had accepted her time in our bed.

Lucy just smiled and quietly told her "See? When you *live* it, you don't HAVE to explain things to them."

Michelle just nodded, and went back to her coffee - which she seemed to need **very** badly.

After a while, Robyn and Sandra got up and went upstairs so they could finish getting ready for school. When they came back downstairs, kisses were passed around and they left for school, with Marie going upstairs to start her own 'school day'. That left us three adults sitting in the breakfast nook. Michelle was looking like she might have a pulse by that time, and with a mischievous gleam in her eye, Lucy got up and moved to stand next to her. Without a word, Lucy eased Michelle upright, guided her over to where I was - and then went about getting her seated on my lap, straddling my legs and facing me.

"Good morning" I told her, smiling.

She looked a bit uncertain, but answered "Good morning to you, too."

"Did you sleep well last night?"

She gave me a Look and answered "You know damn well I did!"

"Any regrets?"

Without hesitation, she smiled and said "Not a one."

"Good" I told her, before leaning forward to give her a good-morning kiss. She accepted it, and then began to return it. In just a couple of seconds, we were touching tongues again; and she didn't flinch when I slipped my hands inside her robe and up to cup her breasts, my thumbs brushing across her nipples, feeling them erect in response.

When our lips finally parted, Michelle pulled back slightly and looked at me for a moment before saying "Now *that's* the way to wake up in the morning - but I think we better stop in case Marie has to come down for anything. She's okay with my being in your bed in another room; I don't know how she'd react to see you playing with my tits at the breakfast table!"

I grinned, and slid my hands down to her hips; she started to stand up again, but I held her for a moment so I could lean forward and softly suck on each of her nipples for a few seconds - making her gasp in pleasure. When both stood out, I released my hold on her, and she got to her feet.

With a feigned Angry Look, she made a show of pulling her robe closed and re-tying the belt to hold it in place. I responded by pretending to be heartbroken, and on the verge of tears. She couldn't help but start laughing, and gently slapped my arm before saying "You!"

I enthusiastically nodded my head, and agreed "Me!", as if verifying who I was in response to her declaration. She laughed again, shook her head, and went back to where she was sitting - after pausing to give Lucy a kiss, and getting another quick fondle in return.

When she was seated again, she suddenly seemed to realize that there was still food on the table - and promptly went about correcting that small oversight. Lucy and I watched in amusement as she demolished the rest of the toast, all but inhaled several strips of bacon, tore through a small pile of hash browns, and washed the whole thing down with another couple cups of coffee. Only when she was done did she seem to realize that all she'd done for the last few minutes was eat - and with an embarrassed note to her voice told us "I was hungry..."

Lucy responded by saying "I kinda noticed" before the two of us started laughing - and after a moment, Michelle joined in with us. In short order, all three of us had tears streaming down our faces.

We'd barely managed to get ourselves under control when Lucy glanced at the clock and regretfully told us "I have *got* to get going - by the time I get my makeup fixed, I'm going to be late anyway!"

She got up, kissed both of us, and hurried upstairs; she returned a few minutes later, issued another round of kisses, and rushed out the door.



Michelle and I sat there for a few minutes drinking our coffee before she looked at me and said "Now that I know how to look, I can see just how much you two love each other - and those girls of yours. And I know how lucky Marie and I were that we took you up on your offer to let us stay here: she's SO much happier and all that than I *ever* saw her while we were with Frenchy; and I can look back and see how much I'VE changed, too. I guess God or whoever put us here so as to try and make up for all the time Frenchy had us. I can only hope that Marie and me, we find ourselves a guy that's willing to love us the way you love Lucy, and let us love him back the same way."

"I think you will, both of you. You, Michelle - you know what you want, and as long as you don't settle for anything less, you'll get it. It might take a while, but the good things never happen quick. As for Marie, by the time she gets to marrying age, I think she'll have been living like this long enough that she won't even have to think about it - she'll just *know* what the guys are like, and only accept one that'll treat her right."

"You think so?" Michelle's voice held no small measure of hope.

"Yeah, I do. In fact, I'd be willing to bet on it happening just that way."

Michelle looked visibly relieved, and a couple minutes later said "Well, it's getting to be late, and I think I'd better get dressed and get moving."

"You don't have to do that on *my* account", I told her, adding "In fact, if you wanted to just lay around naked, that would suit me just fine!"

She laughed and asked "And what would Lucy say if I did that?"

"Tell me to save her some, probably" I responded, making Michelle laugh even harder.

Michelle finished her coffee, deposited the cup in the dishwasher, and went upstairs. I cleaned the table off and got the dishwasher started before going out to my office.

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Over the next couple of weeks, Michelle found herself sharing a bed with Lucy and/or me several times - usually every two or three days. As we figured, she did develop more stamina, and was able to recover from some fairly powerful orgasms much sooner than she had that first night with us. She also relaxed enough that she was willing to 'play' with us - pressing her butt back at me when I patted it, giving one of Lucy's tits a gentle squeeze in passing, and so on. The change in her, from the day she arrived until then, was simply amazing. Even Dale commented on it during one of his brief visits. I simply attributed it to her finally feeling safe and secure. He didn't seem entirely sure, but accepted my explanation.

He also let us know that he and the rest of the people on the Frenchy 'squad' had almost gotten everything into place - almost all the players were covered, and they were close to

having something like a schedule and pattern to everyone's movements. He tried to apologize to Michelle for how long it was taking; she just looked at him and said "You take the time you need. Frenchy's a mean and slippery one; if you don't get him the first time, you won't get a second try."

From the updates we (I) got from Dale over the phone, we knew he was just a short time from making his move against Frenchy when Sandra and Robyn came into my office after getting home from school one afternoon.

I quickly gave them my full attention, and Robyn started things off by telling me "Dad, I think Marie wants to ask you and Mom and Michelle something."

"What's that?"

Sandra answered "We don't *know*, but we think it's something about her virginity."

I raised an eyebrow, and Robyn said "The last couple of weeks, it seems like she's asked us about what it was like for us a lot, and saying things like she wished it could be like that for her, too."

Sandra added "She hasn't come right out and *said* anything, but..."

I nodded and asked "So why are you telling me this now?"

"Because we think she wants to talk to you and Mom and Michelle" Robyn answered, adding "Soon, we think, and we wanted you to know first, so you could all talk to each other before."

"Thank you for telling me. I'll get together with her mom and Lucy, and we'll see what we can figure out."

Both girls got up then, and gave me a kiss - and not the kind we usually reserved for when company was around, either. I knew that both of them missed being able to spend time with me and Lucy - and truth be told, Lucy and I missed them, too.

When they were gone, I started thinking about how to bring this up with Michelle; Lucy would be able to understand both sides of it, and would probably be able to help me - a LOT, I figured.

When Lucy got home, I went up with her for our usual 'decompression' time; when it was over, I let her know about my talk with Robyn and Sandra. Lucy seemed to understand, as I'd thought she would, and said that we should probably talk to Michelle that night, after everyone went to bed - assuming that Marie didn't make her move first.

Fortunately, she didn't, and Lucy and I were able to let Michelle know that we expected her to join us that night. When bedtime came around, she casually came into our bedroom with us, just as Marie did with Robyn and Sandra.

With all of us naked, and Lucy and I bracketing Michelle, I finally got up the nerve to let Michelle know that we needed to talk - and that it was about Marie. That got her attention, and we spent the next half hour telling her about what we thought Marie might have on her mind, and why. To say that Michelle was surprised would have been an understatement; stunned would have been closer, but still insufficient.

Michelle finally got her mind around the idea that Michelle was consciously thinking about changing her virginal status, and started talking to Lucy and me - mostly Lucy, for obvious reasons - about what she could do, and what the possible options were. It finally got down to the point where we figured that there really wasn't much that could BE done; all we could do was wait to see if that was really what she had in mind, and if so, who she was looking at - and try to make sure that she'd really thought it through, and was really ready for it.

After *that* conversation, none of us really felt like making love; by mutual consensus, we all just spooned together and turned out the lights - and pretended we were going to fall asleep any time soon.

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The next few days, all three of us discretely watched Marie like group of hawks eyeballing a particularly tasty mouse. If she noticed, she didn't say or do anything to indicate it.

Finally, at supper one night, she calmly asked if she could talk to the three of us after supper - alone, she said apologetically to Robyn and Sandra. They both nodded and smiled to let her know that they weren't offended.

When we'd finished eating, Robyn and Sandra got the table cleared and made a quick but controlled exit to their room.

As the four of us sat there in the dining room, the tension was thick enough you could have sliced it, wrapped it, and sold it off.

Finally, Michelle took the bull by the horns and asked "What was it you wanted to talk to us about, honey?"

After a bit of hesitation, Marie told us "There's something that I've been thinking about for a couple of weeks, now - almost a month, actually."

"What's that, dear?"

"I've been thinking about how nice it is to be with Sandra and Robyn, and I've asked them if being with a guy is as nice as being with them. They both said that they were two different things - that being with a girl was like having cake, and that being with a guy was like having ice cream: they're both nice and fun, just *different*. I thought about that for a long time, and I really like being with them. But I think maybe I want to try being with a guy, too."

Lucy asked "You think maybe?"

Marie blushed slightly and said "I mean I *know* I do. Like I said, I thought about it a long time. I know that I'm a virgin, and that if I'm with a guy I won't be afterwards. And I know that if I do... that, and then I can't go back to being a virgin when it's over, either. I know that you might think I'm still too young, but I found out on the Internet that I'm about the same age that most girls are when they do that the first time."

"So why are you telling me this, Marie?" Michelle asked.

"Because I want you to know that I don't want to do this without knowing about it first, and there's something I need your help with."

"Okay, I'll accept that you really thought this through, and you're sure you want it to happen. But what could you need MY help with?" Michelle asked.

"Because I want it to happen with someone that I know will be nice to me, and not hurt me. I know I'll be nervous, and even a little scared, and I want him to be somebody that I can trust not to hurt me or make it happen too fast. I know who I want to do it, but I don't know if he would or not, so I need you to help me convince him that this is really what I want, and that I'm ready for it."

Michelle asked "Who is you want, honey?"

"Dan."

Hearing her say my name, my heart dropped. Even though I'd been the one to deflower both Robyn and Sandra, I'd still made sure that both of them were ready and understood the consequences. The thing was, with them, it had still been done privately and quietly; Marie had just announced to the whole world what she wanted to do, and who she wanted to do it WITH. All three of us adults sat there looking at her for several long seconds.

It was Lucy that got things rolling again by telling Marie "This is something pretty important, you know. Would you let us talk about it first, before we give you an answer?"

"I know it is, Lucy - that's why I wanted all of you together when I asked. And I know that you'll want to figure out whether or not you'll agree to it, so I don't mind waiting."

The three of us excused ourselves and made our way up to Lucy's and my bedroom. Once inside, and with the door closed, I emphatically told them "I'll tell you right now - I'm not going to express ANY opinion about this; it's for Michelle to work out, not me."

Michelle stared at me and asked "Why won't you say anything?"

"Because if I say I'm willing, you might think I'm just trying to jump her bones. If I say I'm not, you might think that I don't love her and care for her. So I'm just going to shut up and listen and let YOU decide; she's your daughter, so you've got the biggest say in this."

Lucy gave a wry laugh and said "You're dead wrong, Dan. If she's anything like I was at that age, SHE'S got the biggest say in it. All anybody else gets to decide is HOW she says it."

Michelle looked at Lucy in question, and Lucy explained "If she's told 'yes', and then you've got some influence over who and when. If you say 'no', and then she may well do it anyway, without your guidance. Either way, I think it's a safe bet that it's going to happen, sooner or later."

Michelle nodded her understanding, and sat on the edge of the bed, obviously considering what to do. Lucy sat next to her and took Michelle's hand, saying "It's your decision, Michelle - but I'll be happy to answer any questions or let you know what I think, if that's what you want."

Michelle nodded, and continued to think about what to do. I took a seat on a chair, and waited. Over the next half hour, Michelle did ask Lucy a few questions, and solicited Lucy's opinion on some things. Finally, better than 45 minutes after we sat down, Michelle looked at Lucy and me and said "I've thought it through, and decided what to tell her."

Lucy and I both looked at her expectantly, and she said "This is probably the hardest decision I've ever made - except for leaving Frenchy. Like Lucy said, if I tell her no, she might up and do it anyway with somebody I wouldn't like. But if I tell her yes, and then she might understand it as something I wouldn't say."

She sighed and told us "There's a few things that I'm sure about. I'm *sure* that she really did think about this, long and hard, before coming to us with it. I'm *sure* that she really understands what it is she's asking, and knows what's going to happen after. I'm *sure* that I want it to go right for her, so she doesn't have the kinds of fear and not knowing I had at her age - and after. I'm *sure* that I'm going to be worried about her, whatever happens with her." With a look at me, Michelle added "I'm *sure* that if she was with Dan, that he'd be as gentle and patient and understanding with her as she'd ever need or want."

To both of us she said "God's honest truth, I wish she'd waited - like till after I was dead. But that ain't gonna happen; she's ready and wanting it to happen NOW. I know that if Dan said yes, it wouldn't be because he just wanted to lay with her; he's nowhere near

being like Frenchy. And I know that if Dan said no, it wouldn't be because he didn't love her and care for her; I just have to watch him with her to know he does. I know she's had a fair chunk of lovin' from those girls of yours, and I know how happy it's made her; and I think that if she was to be with someone like Dan for the first time, she'd be able to find that kind of happiness with men, too - a lot more and a lot sooner than I ever did."

Taking a deep breath, she said "What I'm saying is that I've thought on it hard, and know what I want to tell her. I *want* to tell her it's fine by me, and that I'm proud of her and love her. But I can't do that until something else is settled, first."

Michelle looked right at me and asked "Dan, would you kindly be the one to show my daughter what it's like to make *love* with a man for the first time? She wants it, and I'm telling you that I'd be right happy about it if you'd do that for her."

I looked to Lucy, sitting next to her, and saw that Lucy was looking at me with love and trust and compassion in her eyes. With only the most minute nod of her head, she let me know that she thought it would be the right thing to do for Marie.

Even with the approval - even encouragement - from both of them, I still had to make the final decision; a decision that I'd have been just as happy had been made by someone else. When I'd deflowered Robyn, and then Sandra, I'd been in love with them in a way that was still more physical than emotional and intellectual. I wasn't particularly happy about it, but that was the way it had been. I'd changed since then, though - living with Lucy and the two of them as I did, I'd come to realize that what I'd done with them had been not entirely proper. Sure, I'd made both of them think it over, and given each of them multiple chances to change their minds; but in the end, it had been an older man taking some small advantage of a couple of much younger, very inexperienced girls.

What Marie - and Michelle - were asking was something entirely different: they were asking me to consciously, deliberately go about the task of separating a fifteen-year-old girl from her virginity. And not only that, but do so in a way that would leave her at least satisfied - if not pleased - enough with the event so as to leave her capable of enjoying further sexual encounters with men.

As much as I loved Marie, and wanted to see to it that she was taken care of and had a happy and joyous life, what I was being asked to do was still a major request. What if I screwed up? What if I did or said something that frightened or hurt her? Thinking about it, I realized that the penalties for failure - and the rewards of success - were equally great.

Looking into Michelle's eyes, I told her "I just don't know. I'm afraid that I'll do something to hurt or scare her."

Michelle gave me a confident smile and answered "Nobody's asking you to make it *perfect* Dan. And I think - no, I **know** - that me and Marie both know you'll make it as easy and good for her as it can be. Me and her, we both know you love her, and how

much. Neither one of us doubts for a minute, a *second*, that if anybody can make it right for her, it's you. Both of us TRUST you, Dan. And if not you, and then who?"

And that last question was what decided it for me. Indeed - if not me, who? I knew that if I was 'it', that I'd be as patient and gentle as she needed. Did I dare trust that anyone else would be, too?

Finally, I gave Michelle my answer: "I'll do it."

She and Lucy both looked relieved - and pleased.

Michelle told me "Thank you, Dan - for BOTH of us. I think we'd better go down and tell her; she's probably getting pretty nervous by now."

All three of us stood up and went back to the dining room - where it didn't look as though Marie had moved so much as a muscle. Still, looking close, it was possible to see that she was, as Michelle had predicted, getting pretty nervous.

We all sat down and Marie turned to her mother, who told her "We talked about it some, but Lucy and Dan both told me that since you're my daughter, it was really up to me. I thought about it hard, honey. I love you - you're my little girl, and you always will be."

I could see in Marie's face that she was expecting an unhappy answer.

Michelle must have seen it, too, because she quickly said "But I also know that you're growing up. Faster than I like sometimes, but that's what being a mother is all about. I talked to Lucy and Dan, and he agreed that he was willing to do that for you."

Marie's face went from despair to delight in about zero seconds flat. She quickly turned to face me, and I smiled and nodded to her, making her light up even more.

Michelle got her attention back by asking "Marie, honey. Have you thought about how? I mean, do you need or want anybody else there to kind of help you out?"

Marie smiled and said "I thought about that, momma. At first, I thought that I might be too afraid and would need somebody to kind of hold my hand. But then I thought about Dan, and I realized that I didn't have to be afraid - I know that he wouldn't do anything to hurt me on purpose, and that if it did hurt, and then it would be a lot less with him than anyone else. So I decided that I wanted it to be extra special - just me and him."

Michelle smiled and told her "That's fine, honey. Me and Lucy, we know he'd be like that, too. Did you have anything else in mind? A time or a place?"

Marie blushed slightly and said "I was kinda hoping... that it could be just me and him, like for a whole day, so we didn't have to hurry or anything. And I was thinking that my room would be good - that way, nobody else has to move out or anything."

Michelle just patted Marie's hand and said "Then that's how you'll do it, honey. What time were you thinking?"

"I was thinking that maybe Friday night" - two days hence - "would be a good. Then when our time was up, we would still have Saturday night and all of Sunday to kind of celebrate."

I could see that Michelle was a little surprised at the idea of *celebrating* the defloration of her daughter, but she quickly realized that that was exactly how Marie thought of it: as a good thing worth celebrating, not a bad one to be lamented.

Michelle told her "That sounds just perfect - and that's how we'll do it."

Marie looked inordinately pleased, and Lucy told her "Now that that's all settled, how about if you go on upstairs so we can get this all worked out?"

Marie nodded happily, and all but floated out of the room.

When she was gone, Michelle looked at us and said "Did I just hear my daughter ask to spend an *entire day* making love with Dan?"

I grinned and said "Sounds like she takes after her mother!" - making Michelle blush. Since the first time with us, she'd demonstrated a healthy appetite for making love.

We spent a little time working out the logistics of the situation; it didn't take long, since all of us were dedicated to making things as special for Marie as we could.

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The next two days, Marie had to be pried off the ceiling. Robyn and Sandra had learned what was up, of course, and proceeded to get Marie as primed and prepared as they could: hair done, manicure, pedicure, primping and preening - Marie was the willing target of all manner of help and assistance from them.

Lucy watched all of this with clear delight; even Michelle seemed to find it amusing - even if it WAS her daughter that was the target of all the madness.

Finally, it was time.

Friday, Lucy and Michelle teamed up to make supper - beef stroganoff and the rest. It was filling, but not heavy - something I think they planned, so as to keep Marie and I from feeling logy later.

After supper, Robyn and Sandra quickly got the table cleared and brought in a bottle of wine, which they gave to me to open. I knew that all of them were trying to make it as special as they could for Marie, and I willingly went along with it. The wine was poured,



and I was surprised slightly when Michelle made the toast "To Marie!" - both pleasing and embarrassing her.

We all lifted our glasses and had a sip. Lucy got Marie's attention, and told her "Marie, tonight's a special night for you, and there's something special I want you to know."

Marie looked at her expectantly, and Lucy told her "Remember that night you asked all of us questions? And I told you what it was like for me the first time?" Marie nodded, and Lucy continued "What I didn't tell you then was that ever since Dan and I have been making love, I've wished that HE could have been my first. He's so gentle, so patient, so *caring* that you don't have to worry about anything, okay?"

Marie nodded, and then Michelle spoke up.

"Marie, honey, I want to tell you something, too. You know that me and Lucy and Dan have been making love together. What I want to tell you is something that you already know, but I want to remind you of: Dan isn't Frenchy. Dan is kind and loving and understanding. You shouldn't be afraid that he's going to hurt you - because he won't. You shouldn't be afraid that anything you do will bother him - he loves you, and it won't. You shouldn't be afraid to talk to him and tell him what you're feeling - because he'll understand. Marie, I want you to know that if I could do it over again, *I'd* want my first time to be with Dan. So when you're with him, you tell him what you feel, and what you need - and he'll make it as special as you could ever want."

Marie solemnly nodded her understanding, and Michelle just smiled back at her.

Sandra broke the serious mood by announcing "Well, if Marie is going to get to start making love with Uncle Dan, I guess that means that Robyn and I are going to have to start making other plans." Then she turned to Robyn and asked "You want to go out on a date tomorrow night?"

Marie blushed slightly as Lucy and Michelle and I all laughed.

We'd all gone through about half the wine in our glasses when Marie quietly got up and came around to where I was sitting. I turned to look at her and asked "You want to go now, dumpling?"

She smiled and nodded, and after I stood up, she took my hand. The rest of them saw, of course, but didn't pay any special attention; they seemed to know that to do so would only embarrass her unnecessarily.

Together, the two of us went upstairs. Outside her bedroom, we stopped and waited. After a moment, she realized that I was waiting for *her* to open the door to her room. She gave me a shy smile, and did - then the two of us walked into her room. I looked around and saw that she'd continued the decorating that Sandra and Robyn had started - there were a few more posters of guys, and some of various space photos. I also noticed that

there was a small stack of hand towels on her dresser, ready for whatever use someone may have had for them. Her bed was made, but the bedcovers were turned down.

The rest of her room was immaculate - knowing how Robyn's and Sandra's rooms usually looked, I suspected that its current condition was as special as the occasion.

I sat down in the chair in her room and gently guided her onto my lap. Putting my arms around her loosely, I looked into her eyes and told her "Marie, I'm here because you asked for me. It's up to YOU to decide what we do, and when we do it. If you want, I'll be happy to stay up here with you until tomorrow night, and not have us do anything - you can tell them anything you want, and I won't talk against it. Anything that happens between us is private - it's just for you and me; I will NEVER tell anyone about what happens here."

She nodded, and I went on "We're here because you want to learn how to make love with a man. You're a virgin, and you don't want to be one any more. That's your choice, and I respect it. But because you've never been with a man, that means that there are things you don't know, or aren't sure about. I want you to know that you don't have to be ashamed or embarrassed or anything like that; I know that you don't know, and I'm not going to think anything bad about you if you have a question, or want to say something to me. The only 'silly' question is the one you *don't* ask, okay?"

She smiled, and I told her "I'm here for YOU. Don't worry about me - the whole reason I'm here is because I want YOU to be happy, and feel good. There are a lot of things that a man and woman can do while making love; and if YOU want to, I can help you learn some of them. Maybe there are things that you've heard of, and you want to find out about them. That's fine, I'll be happy to do that with you. But the same way, if I start to do something you DON'T like, you have to tell me that, too. We can take as much time as we need, so don't feel like you have to hurry about *anything*. The door is closed, so nobody will bother us until YOU open it again. You understand?"

She nodded her head and told me "Yes, Dan, I understand."

I smiled back and asked "Good. Now, what do you want to do?"

She grinned, and said "I want us to be naked."

Though surprised, I simply asked her "Okay. How do you want to do that?"

She didn't hesitate before telling me "I want to take your clothes off, and let you take mine off."

Apparently, she'd thought this a LOT farther through than any of us had guessed. Either that, or she'd gotten a lot more input from Sandra and Robyn than I'd have expected.

I smiled and nodded in response to her remark, and she slid off my lap and took a step back, waiting for me to stand up.

I did, and after I slipped the holster with my pistol and spare magazines off my pants at the small of my back and set them on the top of the computer desk. Marie watched carefully, since she'd gotten instructions from everyone in the house that she wasn't to even *touch* any pistol she might see. When my hands were at my side again, she carefully stepped forward and began unfastening the buttons on my shirt. When she got to the bottom, she carefully pulled it out of my pants and got the rest of them undone, too. That accomplished, she slowly opened it, revealing my chest and stomach - and when she had a full, unimpeded view, I heard her moan softly. Apparently without realizing it, she released her hold on my shirt and moved her hands to my chest - slowly running her hands across it, feeling the muscle and bone beneath; then it was on to my belly. I worked out regularly, so I was in fairly decent shape. I didn't have the 'six-pack abs' some of the younger guys at the gym did; but then, I was in my late 40's and carried some scars that they'd never earn, so I figured it worked out okay.

When she'd had her fill of checking me out, she gave a little shudder, and reached up to pull my shirt off my shoulders. When it was free, she carefully laid it across the back of the chair I'd been sitting on. Next, she reached for the buckle on my pants, her hands trembling slightly. She fumbled with the clasp for a moment, paused to take a deep breath, and got it on her second try. Then it was time for the button at the waist of my pants; I pulled my belly in a little bit - she looked up at me and smiled - and she had that undone in short order. She hesitated slightly when she reached for the tab of my zipper, but got hold of it and pulled it down in a single, sure motion.

With another deep breath, she put her hands at my waist and slid her fingers under the waistband of my pants. A moment's hesitation and she began to kneel down, sliding my pants down my legs as she did. When they cleared my shorts, I heard a soft gasp as she got her first look at the bulge in my shorts.

She kept enough presence of mind, though, to continue sliding my pants down my legs - only then realizing that I still had my shoes on: something that would make it difficult to get my pants off. She covered it well, releasing my pants long enough to untie my shoes and slip them off, and then my pants legs, as I lifted each foot in turn.

My pants soon found themselves keeping my shirt company on the chair - leaving me standing there in just my under shorts as she knelt before me.

She reached up to slide her hands underneath the waistband of my shorts and slowly lowered them - lowering her head, as well. When they were pooled around my ankles, she carefully slipped them free, as she'd done with my pants. Then, almost reverently, she lifted her head to look at what it was that she'd claimed to want: my manhood - and softly sucked in a breath at seeing it.

She started to reach up to touch me, hesitated, started to move again, and stopped. I saw her look up at me, uncertainty on her face. I smiled and gently asked "You want to touch?"

She nodded, slowly, and I told her "Go ahead, and then, if you want."

Her eyes lowered again as her hands rose up, not stopping until she had laid them on my thighs, alongside my penis and scrotum. Then she slowly turned her hands, sliding them underneath me until she held my balls and penis in her cupped hands.

She tilted her head forward slightly, to give herself a little closer look at what it was that she had asked for. She tilted her head a few times to either side, and gently moved her hands as though hefting me.

Finally, she gently let my slip between her hands and come to rest at my normal position.

She looked up into my eyes and saw only acceptance of her. Smiling, she slowly stood up as our eyes remained locked.

When she was again standing tall in front of me, she quietly told me "Now it's your turn, Dan."

I stepped toward her and cupped her face in my hands before leaning forward to place a small, soft kiss on her forehead. When I straightened again, I could see in her eyes how happy that small gesture had made her, and how deeply it had moved her.

I slowly slid my hands from her face to her shoulders, where I paused a moment before letting them slide down and together so that they met at the collar of the blouse she was wearing. Gently, I began to unfasten buttons, slowly working my way down the front of her blouse. As she'd done, I carefully pulled it loose from the skirt she was wearing to finish the job.

I put my hands on the sides of her neck and softly stroked her jaw line with my thumbs before moving my hands down to take the edges of her blouse in them. I carefully peeled her blouse from her shoulders, and then down her arms and off her body - revealing that she was wearing a very sheer, very sexy black bra. Her blouse was left to keep company with my shirt and pants.

I stepped behind her and rested my hands on her shoulders before leaning over to give her a soft kiss on her ear, and getting a soft sigh in response. I slid my hands down her bare arms, and then around to where the clasp on her bra was. Many years of practice paid off then, because I was able to unfasten it quickly and easily. To my mild surprise and great delight, her bra didn't immediately fall forward; her breasts were large and firm enough that they easily held it in place. I slid my hands up her back so my thumbs could gently push the straps off her shoulders, and then back down again so that my hands ran the span of her back and around to her sides. I let the tension build for a moment, and then

carefully slid my hands under the material of her bra and moved them around her body so that I was cupping her breasts from behind while the lacy cups of the bra covered my hands. At the first touch of my hands on her firm young breasts, Marie gasped and tilted her head back to rest against my chest. Then, when I ran my thumbs across her small, hard nipples, she moaned softly and tried to press her chest forward to increase the contact.

My fingers mapped the surface of her smooth mammaries, tracing their curves, memorizing their heft and texture, softly testing their soft surface. Only when I was sure that I would never forget the feel of her did I let my hands release the warm mounds of her bust to slide her bra down, and then off, her arms - leaving her torso bare, delighting my eyes; the lacy material of the bra was left piled on the seat of the chair where her blouse and my clothes lay.

Next, I slid my hands to her waist, holding her softly as I kissed a path from the point of one shoulder to the other, delaying at the back of her neck to allow my nose the chance to take in the pleasant scent of her hair. With a final kiss to the top of her head, I let my hands glide to where the snap of her skirt awaited. It resisted only momentarily; then my fingers took hold of the tab that would release her skirt from the graceful curve of her hips. I lowered the zipper of her skirt slowly, letting the rasping of it add to the delicious tension I was creating between us. Too soon, it was at the lower limit of its range; shortly after that, there was a puddle of material at her feet.

Looking down, I saw that she had on a pair of panties that were a clear match for the absent bra - and wore nothing else from the hips down. I carefully knelt behind her, kissing the vertebra of her back along the way, causing her to tremble slightly under my touch.

Once on my knees, I gently cupped the lovely orbs of her ass cheeks through the thin material of her panties, and marveled at how soft they were to the touch, and how firm they were underneath.

My hands traced the soft curve of her hips around to the front of her body; she gasped slightly when my fingers dipped below the top of her panties. I slid my hands back around to her sides, and then carefully eased the thin material of her panties down her legs - kissing the top of the cleft between her ass cheeks when it was revealed to me. When her panties were bunched around her ankles, I put one hand on her waist to steady her as she gracefully stepped out of her clothes, and her shoes when I held them for her. Her skirt was tossed over to join her blouse, the panties went with her bra.

Standing with her back to me, she was a sight to behold: smooth, tawny flesh without a blemish or mark flawing it anywhere. From the tips of her toes to the bottom of her ass, her legs were gracefully curved, smooth, and muscular. Above them, her heart-shaped ass was a treasure to behold; above that, the curve of her hips flowed smoothly into her waist, and then back out again to frame a smooth, graceful back that turned into delicate

shoulder. Set on those was a graceful, slender neck that simply begged to be kissed - and if the truth be told, gently bitten.

My hands slid back up the outsides of her legs until they were again resting on her hips. A gentle pressure and she easily turned to face me, the dark wedge of her pubic hair falling under my gaze. Again, I leaned forward - and placed my lips at the very edge of that dark mass of hair. At the touch of my lips on her belly, Marie again drew in a sharp breath, releasing it slowly as I began to kiss my way back up her body.

When I got to her belly-button - an unconscionably cute 'innie' - I paused long enough to dip my tongue into it, and felt her shudder slightly in response before continuing my journey up her body.

On reaching the level of her breasts, I was faced with a difficult choice: Left? Or Right?

I found my own solution: Both.

With an erratic - and erotic! - figure-8 pattern, I managed to kiss almost every square inch of her marvelous breasts; what I didn't get then was simply left for later. Under my lips, her dark nipples grew even longer and harder; the areolas, only slightly larger than the nipples themselves, puckered in sympathy. With the peaks of both breasts faintly glistening with my saliva, it was time to finish the journey.

Up her chest to her throat. Along that to her ear, whose lobe was subjected to a brief but gentle nibbling. Then it was back around to her face, where I softly put my lips to hers.

When I stepped back from her, I saw that her eyes were closed, and listened to her soft panting.

After a few moments, she opened her eyes to look at me - and in them I could see a trace of nervousness. But more than that, I saw love, and trust, and most of all - desire.

Stepping forward, Marie took me by the hand and led me over to the bed, where she indicated that I should sit down. I did, and she unashamedly moved to sit on my lap, straddling my legs as she faced me. She scooted close and pulled my arms around her waist. With her warm firm ass on my legs and the softness of her pubic hair gently brushing against my lower belly, I felt myself begin to get hard - hard enough that I could feel myself slightly pressing against her lower mons.

I knew she could feel it, too - she wiggled her cute little butt in my lap and smiled at me before telling me "There are a lot of things that I want to know about guys, and making love. I learned a lot when momma was looking things up on the internet with me, but seeing drawings and pictures and such isn't like real life. And when I talked to Robyn and Sandra, each of them told me how much she liked being with her guy, and now nice it felt for her to be with him, and make love... and I knew that I wanted that feeling, too. So when I started thinking about it, I decided that I wanted it to happen with somebody that I

knew I could trust, and that would be nice to me - and the best person I could think of for that was you. I didn't think that we were going to be here very much longer, so that was when I decided that I had to say something about what I wanted. And I wanted it to be tonight - or tomorrow - because I don't start my period again until Tuesday, and I didn't want you to have to worry about getting me pregnant, or using a condom. You understand, don't you?"

Put to me that way, and under those conditions, there wasn't anything for me to do but tell her "Of course I do, Marie."

She gave me a beatific smile and said "I'm glad. As long as momma and I have been here, I've gotten to watch you and Lucy and Robyn and Sandra, and I can see that all of you love each other *very* much." She paused to give me a shy grin before saying "At first, I was really kind of afraid of you - you're bigger than daddy, and you always have your gun with you. But when I saw you were always so nice to us... I decided that you were a lot nicer than I thought. I think momma got mad at you a couple of times, but you never got mad back at her. You just stayed so calm and patient with us, and it made me feel SO much better. Momma doesn't know, but sometimes, I used to hear daddy yelling at her, and calling her names and things. And I saw him hurt her a lot of times; he even hurt me once when I tried to help her. She never said anything, but I know momma was really afraid of him, and I think maybe she was even afraid of all men. So when she wasn't afraid to be with you - and Lucy - I knew that you must be a nice man. And that's why *I* want to be with you, too, so I can learn about making love with a man - a *gentle* man.

I pulled her close and gave her a hug, which she happily returned - hearing about life with Frenchy from *her* perspective just made me despise him all the more.

We slowly released each other, and Marie looked up at me and asked "Are we going to start, now?"

I smiled and said "If that's what you want."

She nodded, and I asked "What do you want to do first, then?"

She grinned and said "All I ever got to see on the internet was drawings of what men have. So I want to find out what you're *really* like."

I grinned back and said "That's fine with me. What do you want me to do?"

She hesitated a moment before asking "Can you... can you just lay down, on your back, so I can look?"

"Of course I can."

"And can I... touch you?"

"It's up to you, Marie. You look and touch as much as you want; if you do anything to hurt me" - I saw the expression on her face at that idea - "by accident, then I'll let you know, okay? As long as you're even a LITTLE bit careful, chances are that that's not going to happen; I'm just letting you know so you don't have to worry."

She nodded solemnly; then grinned at me again when my penis twitched against her mons at the idea of having her playing with it. She scooted back - the muscles of her ass felt great - and finally stood up so that I could move. I pivoted and lay down on her bed, then scooted myself to the side a bit so that I was more in the center. When she saw that I was ready, she casually climbed up onto the bed, and made straight for my pelvis.

The first few minutes, she just looked at me - from the top, the bottom, the sides, even end-on. Eventually, she carefully reached her hand out and delicately grasped my penis just behind the glans. She looked up at me hesitantly, and I smiled to let her know that she wasn't hurting me. She smiled back, and started gently exploring my manhood - how firm it was (not very, just then), how flexible (quite), how big around, how long, and so on. For some reason, that I was circumcised seemed to fascinate and trouble her at the same time - something that didn't prevent her from taking some small delight in my foreskin, however.

The feeling of her soft, warm hand was starting to have a little bit of an impact on me: I could feel myself starting to get a little firmer in her hand when she abandoned my penis in favor of my scrotum and testicles. Again, she was very careful, and I spoke only to tell her that they were particularly sensitive to pressure; she nodded her understanding, and continued her exam.

Finally, her exploration of the male anatomy was done, and she moved toward my head a bit before laying down next to me on her side, so she could hold her head up with one arm and look down at me.

The first words out of her mouth did wonders for my ego: "Are all men as big as you?"

I smiled and said "Pretty much - I'm only a *little* bit above averages size; there are some that are smaller, and some that are bigger." The idea that there was a penis larger than mine seemed to amaze her.

"Is... is it like that when you make love?"

"No, dear. Before a man can put it inside a woman, it has to be harder than that. When it gets hard, it also gets bigger." THAT idea left her speechless for a few moments.

"It... it really fits? Inside a woman, I mean? I checked, and I'm small inside; if I try to put two fingers inside, it hurts a little." On the heels of that statement, she realized what she'd just told me and blushed slightly. I smiled and told her "Its okay, Marie. Everybody touches themselves like that when they're young - and even when they're older. It's called



masturbation, or playing with yourself, and it's nothing to be ashamed of; like I said, everyone does it. I'd be surprised if you *didn't* try to find out how big you are inside."

Reassured that she wasn't any different than anyone else, she asked "So it fits?"

"Yes, dear. A woman can stretch inside so that any man can fit inside her. After all, a baby comes out that way, and it's a LOT larger than a penis. Besides, if they go nice and easy - like we're going to do! - then she has plenty of time to adjust to it, so it doesn't hurt her."

She considered that for a few moments, and nodded her acceptance.

"So how does the man's sperm get inside? All the stuff I read says that he puts it there, but they didn't say HOW - just that he had to be inside her. Is it like you pee or something?"

"Or something", I replied, and continued "I told you that a man has to be hard to be inside the woman. Well, when he's inside, he has to move in her to kind of tickle his penis. When he's tickled it enough, he squirts his sperm in her. It comes out the same hole, but it's not *pee*."

"Does a man HAVE to be inside a woman for that to happen?"

"No, he doesn't. If he's hard and his penis is tickled anyway, then he'll squirt his sperm anyway."

She thought that over for a moment, then looked at me and asked "Can... can I make you do that? I... I want to make your penis hard, and see what it looks like when you squirt like that."

Hmmm. Should I let a naked, cute, nubile young sixteen-year-old give me a hand-job..... decisions, decisions....

"Yes, Marie, you can do that, if you want to. That's why I'm here, so you can learn about making love."

Delighted, she quickly got into a sitting position and reached out to take my flaccid penis in her hand. Holding it, she looked at me and asked "How... how do I do it?"

Surprised at the question, I had one of my own: "Didn't Robyn and Sandra talk to you about this?"

She gave me a shy smile and said "They said they would, but I told them I wanted to hear it from you, instead."

Ah. This is already too easy, why not add a little more pressure and raise the expectations to make it a little more 'challenging'?

"How do you do it when you're with Robyn or Sandra?"

She started to get upset before she realized that I wasn't asking for any gory technical details; after a moment, she said "I use my hands, and my mouth. That works on guys, too?"

I smiled and answered "Yes, it works on guys, too - maybe even better than it does on girls, since we usually get sexually excited faster and easier than you do." She thought that over for a few moments before turning to look at my penis as she gave it a small, experimental stroke.

It wasn't much, but it was a start. In a few sentences, I gave her a brief tutorial on how to use her hand to get a guy hard; she easily caught on, and was soon sliding her hand up and down my penis as it got harder and harder - something that seemed to both delight and amuse her.

I was at full hardness and enjoying my role as tutor when she asked "If I used my mouth, would it happen sooner? Like it does with Sandra and Robyn?" She didn't seem to have even realized what she'd just told me - either that, or she simply didn't care.

"Yes, it would, dear."

"How do I... You're not the same as them."

Obviously.

"You can just lick it, or if you want to, you can put it in your mouth." She made a face at that idea, and I told her "Before you decide that's gross, remember that when you and the others are together, your mouths go where you have your periods, too."

From her expression, I could see that she was thinking that one over. Finally, she asked "What if it's in my mouth when you squirt?"

"I'll tell you before that happens. Then you can decide if you want to let that happen or not. Some women like the taste of it, and some don't. You'll have to decide for yourself."

She considered it, and apparently decided she could trust me: lowering her head, she opened her mouth and wrapped her lips around my penis, just behind the glans. She looked at me, and I said "That's fine, Marie", encouraging her, then added "Now there are different things you can do: you can suck on it - gently! - or you can take more of it into your mouth. You can use your tongue to kind of lick and tickle the underside of it, and you can kind of twist your head while you use your mouth like you were using your hand. If you want to, you can even use your hand like you were before AND your mouth, or use

your hand to play with my testicles. If you want, you can do a little bit of all those things at different times and in different ways. It's all up to you, and how much pleasure you want to give the man. The only other thing I can tell you is that it helps make it easier for both of you if you use a little bit of your saliva to kind of lubricate things."

She nodded and tried to smile around my penis; I smiled back and watched as she started trying to learn how to do the different things I'd just told her about. Only once did I have to caution her about teeth; after that, I was more than happy to be the learning tool (pun intended!) for her education on fellatio. It didn't take her long to get the hang of the different things she could do, so most of her time was spent learning how to mix them together in different ways - and repeating them when she got a positive response from me. She didn't have much in the way of technique, of course, but she MORE than made up for it in enthusiasm and willingness to experiment.

Between the sensations of her eager mouth as it was wrapped around my penis, and the sight of her head slowly bobbing up and down on it, I found myself moving closer and closer to my release. At great personal sacrifice, I tried to put it off so that she could have more time to practice her new lessons, but there was only so much I could do. Finally, there came the point where I knew the inevitable was going to happen, and I told her "Marie! I'm going to do it!"

She bobbed her head again, and then let me slip from her lips. She gave me a couple more strokes with her hand, and it was time: the first wad of cum erupted from the end of my penis to fly nearly straight up into the air, only to come down just above my navel. Marie tilted my penis slightly, and the second shot arced to land a little higher on my body than the first. The third hit below my belly-button, the rest traveled progressively shorter distances, until the last bit of it simply erupted from the end to begin coating Marie's hand where it was still wrapped around me.

With the first shot, her eyes had widened in amazement, and she continued to watch, fascinated, as the rest of my climax occurred. Only when she realized it was over did she give my penis a couple of slow strokes - as much to get a feel for how slippery my cum was as to finish me off, I suspect. When she felt me beginning to shrink in her hand, she released me and lifted her hand to her face to examine the deposit I'd made on it. She looked closely, slid her thumb and forefinger together to test its texture, and then lifted her hand up so she could test to see if there was any aroma.

Looking at me, she hesitantly stuck her tongue out to find out what the taste of it might be like. When she pulled her tongue back in, she crinkled her nose, thought a moment, and went about cleaning my juices off her hand.

Only then did she seem to remember that there were puddles of semen on my belly, too. She quickly moved to grab a small towel off the dresser - her breasts moving *quite* fetchingly - and came back to wipe it up. When she was done, she carefully set the towel aside and moved to lie on her side and snuggle up to me again, asking "I did it okay?"

I gave her a small hug and answered "You did just fine, Marie. That was very nice - thank you."

She smiled shyly and snuggled a little closer before extending a hand to start playing with the hairs on my chest. After a couple minutes, she hesitantly asked "When... when can we do some more?"

I gently laughed and said "*I* can't do any more with *that* for a little while - maybe a half hour. But that doesn't mean that **I** can't do something for **you**, though!"

I could FEEL her smiling into my side, and said "You've heard Sandra and Robyn say that it's different, the way a man and a woman do things. Would you like to find out how it's different when I use my mouth on you?"

She tilted her head to look up at me and asked "You... you'd do that?"

I smiled and told her "Yes, I would. I *like* to do it!"

She grinned, and nodded her head to let me know that she was agreeable to my offer.

"Here, lets change over - you lay on your back, and I'll rest on my arm next to you, and we can talk a little bit, too, okay?"

Without hesitation, she did just as I suggested; a moment later, I was propped up on one elbow, my hand resting on her belly as I looked down at her. She saw me looking at her, and gave me a shy smile that went straight to my heart.

I asked her "We've got a whole day together; do you want to just talk about sex and making love, or is there anything else you want to discuss?"

She smiled again, and said "I've wanted to talk to you about a lot of things while we've been here, but I never really felt like it was the right time or something. Until now, I guess."

I grinned and agreed "Sure, now is good!"

Her first question was what I thought would happen to her and Michelle once Frenchy was taken care of. I told her that I couldn't be certain because I wasn't in the FBI, but then told her what I *thought* would happen. Over the next little while, we chatted with each other about a number of different subjects - and as we did, I slowly began moving my hand on her body: softly caressing her skin with my fingertips, sliding my hand along her side, gently cupping her breast with my hand, tracing the outline of her throat and jaw, and a number of other subtle actions. She didn't even seem to realize what I was doing, but I was watching her, and saw her breathing quicken slightly - and watched as the first faint blush of arousal started to tinge her ears and face.

At my request, she'd just finished telling me what she wanted to do with her life - namely, be an astronomer; the stars and galaxies and all that fascinated her. She was good in math and science, and didn't care so much for Social Studies. She was looking up at me when I leaned over slightly and softly kissed her on the forehead. She smiled, and I moved in to kiss her again - on the lips.

She met my kiss hesitantly, at first - but soon responded by kissing back. Then I felt her lips part slightly, and her tongue faintly touch my lips. I let my lips separate, and a moment later, her tongue was back, and began to introduce itself to mine. A few seconds later, our tongues were dancing and playing in each other's mouths; I moved my hand to her breast again, and heard/felt her soft moan as her nipple re-erected in my palm.

Our mouths separated after a bit, and I looked down at her to see that the faint blush I'd seen on her before had noticeably darkened, and that there was desire and arousal in her eyes. I leaned back in for another kiss, which she eagerly welcomed, and even more eagerly participated in. A minute or two later, I pulled back from her a little and began kissing her face: lips, nose, eyelids, and so on. When I got to her jaw, I followed her jaw back to the vicinity of her ear - and nuzzled it for a few seconds before softly nibbling on her earlobe, something that had her arching her back in a matter of seconds.

From her ear, I began leaving a trail of butterfly-soft 'lip-bites' down her neck and across to the point of her shoulder. Then it was down a little and back across, following her collar bone to her neck, which I happily showered with kisses as I traced a path across to the other side of her neck. Back along her collar bone to her shoulder, and across her shoulder to the other ear, which got the same treatment as the first as she started an almost continuous soft moaning.

I followed her jaw line back to her chin, and then it was back to her lips - which she used to shower my face with kisses before I could even pucker up. She finally relented and let me kiss her again: mine were soft and loving, hers were eager and passionate.

I finally pulled my head back again and smiled down at her, clearly seeing the desire and passion on her face as she looked back up at me with hooded eyes. I kissed her softly on the chin, then on down her throat - and still farther down, ending in the valley between her delightful breasts. I did a slow figure-8 around her breasts, leaving a trail of damp kisses where they flowed into the rest of her body. I continued to repeat that slow, tantalizing pattern on her beautiful breasts, gradually shrinking it so that each circle around a breast brought me a trifle closer to the nipple that eagerly awaited my hungry lips.

Then it was time: with the closing of the circle, I wrapped my lips around the peak of her breast, feeling her dark areola tightening between my lips and her nipple hardening in response to my gentle sucking. Marie groaned softly, lifting her chest to try and get more of her breast in my mouth as she put her hands in my hair to hold my head in place.

When I had her nipple as long and hard as I could get it, I released it from my mouth, and started to move my head. Marie held me in place briefly, before realizing that I wanted to do the same to the other; only then did her hold on me loosen enough for me to kiss my way across her body to the other, which got the same treatment - and brought the same results.

Back and forth I went, breast to breast, until I had both of her nipples standing proud and tall, faintly glistening with my saliva. I made one last trip down the breast I'd just finished with before curving away to start kissing my way down her body; in a series of curly-Q's and flourishes, I moved lower and lower, steadily working my way toward the source of the heady aroma I could clearly detect. When she finally realized what my target was, the scent of her became even stronger, and she began a small writhing underneath me as she parted her legs to make room for my legs, then body.

When I got to her navel, I toyed with it for a little bit: kissing around it, softly sucking on it, and delicately washing it with the tip of my tongue; Marie responded by clenching her fingers in my hair and panting her increasing desire.

But there were still better things ahead, and I eventually turned away from the cute dimple of her bellybutton to continue my expedition of discovery.

It wasn't much longer before my mouth reached the narrow wedge of her pubic hair; my lips found it to be delightfully dense and surprisingly soft. I kissed a zig-zag pattern down and through it: a kiss to the left edge of it, another to the middle, and a last to the right edge, then back again; each path across the luxurious carpet of her pelvic carpet taking me a little lower - and bringing me a little closer to my goal.

My lips came in contact with her hooded clitoris; she gasped, and her legs opened even farther as she tilted her pelvis up - revealing the damp cleft that was clearly visible among the short straight hair surrounding it.

Finally, my lips brushed hers.

Lifting my head a bit, I welcomed the chance to finally look at what I'd been working my way toward from the time we'd first lay down on the bed, and the source of the delicate aroma I'd detected some time earlier.

Her labia were short and thin, but easily seen; between them, the entrance to her vagina was faintly visible - and not just damp, but clearly *wet*. Above, the fleshy bump that I knew hid her clitoris was also within sight; and unless my eyes deceived me, starting to pull back from that small pellet of pleasure.

She saw me looking at her, and I caught a trace of nervousness in her eyes; I smiled at her before saying "I just wanted to look at you for a moment. I was right: you're as pretty here as the rest of you is."

Those words not only allayed any nervousness she felt, they also reassured her; she smiled at me in a way that told me I'd said something to her she would happily remember for a long, long time.

Looking at her again, I knew what I wanted to do first - and did it. Extending my tongue, I dipped it into the bottom of her opening and drew it upwards, flooding my taste buds with her nectar. The flavor of her was the liquid concentrate of her scent: light and delicate, and slightly musky with a hint of sweetness. Once I had sampled the taste of her, I wanted more; and began gently lapping at her labia and the area between them, relishing the delectable flavor of her as she began a soft moaning in response to my actions.

When I'd consumed the readily available supply of her feminine oil, I expanded my efforts to include softly licking the folds of her labia and gently sucking on them, placing my mouth over her opening and pressing the stiffened rod of my tongue into her hot sheath, and using the tip of my tongue to tickle and caress her erect clitoris.

In just a few minutes, she was writhing under my tender ministrations, moaning and gasping in pleasure and arousal, her smooth thighs clenching against my head. I reached up to take her breasts in my hands, and began squeezing and caressing them, and softly pulling and pinching her nipples. I continued my labor of love, moving to eagerly lap up her virginal juices whenever they were available to me, and stimulating her into producing more of them when they weren't.

A few more minutes, and I could tell that she was getting close to an orgasm. I brought her to the edge a couple of times and let her slowly slide back; then I brought her to the peak and held her there for a few agonizing seconds before adding the last bit of stimulation that would put her over the edge - loudly crying out as her orgasm hit her full force.

Her clitoris disappeared under its hood, and I moved my mouth down to begin laving the entrance to her womanhood, preventing the overflow of her fluids from getting any farther from her labia than my lips and tongue.

When she was again able to express herself, I heard her shakily tell me "Don't.... don't do that again, please - I don't think I could stand it if you did..."

I lifted my head to look at her - saw how flushed she was with continued arousal - and answered "Okay, Marie, I won't - I promise", and saw the relief in her eyes before her head fell back. Reapplying myself to the happy task of getting her highly aroused again, I began kissing the insides of her thighs, from knee to *just short* of her vaginal opening; the next time I did it, I started marginally higher on her thighs, the time after that a little higher still. It ended when all I had to do was move from the crease of one thigh to the other; at that point, I again began using my tongue to probe at her wet opening.

When I did, she started arching her hips up, as though trying to get my tongue farther inside - and that was the point that I'd been trying to get her to. Carefully wetting my

finger, I touched it to the tight ring of her entrance. Then, carefully and gently, I began to worm it inside her - and listened to her groans of pleasure as my digit moved farther and farther inside her. It was when I felt the tissue of her hymen against the end of my finger that I stopped - I had no desire to cause her any pain; my primary purpose of getting my finger into her was so that I could first try to see if I could determine what condition her maidenhead was in: thick or thin, tough or delicate? I had a secondary purpose, as well, and that was to see if I couldn't 'loosen' her up a bit, so that it would be easier for her later when it came time to slip something more substantial than just a finger between her delicate vaginal lips.

As I used my tongue to tease and tantalize her clitoris, I was using my finger to carefully test the nature of her virginity. She responded well to my presence inside her as I used my mouth on her clitoris; she didn't seem to notice the small movements I was making with it as I made my examination. I finally decided that her hymen wasn't particularly thick or tough, and gently eased my finger out of her - accompanied by her mild complaint at its absence. Encouraged, I got the finger next to it wetted, and slide that one inside her, to her distinct pleasure. When it was thoroughly coated with her oils, I slid it back out, gently put the first back in to get it covered as well. With both fingers well-lubricated by her natural oils, I slowly and gently began trying to ease them into her. She made a small initial complaint, but when I eased off slightly, she didn't repeat it. Moving even more carefully, I finally managed to slip both fingers through the tight ring of her opening; from that point, it was relatively easy to slowly slide them farther inside and begin gently stretching her vagina before it reached her maidenhead.

While I was doing that, I continued to use my lips and tongue to manipulate her clitoris; even putting my mouth over it and applying a soft, rhythmic suction that soon had her crying out as she climaxed again. Her vagina clamped down around my fingers, all but cutting off any blood flow to them - but their presence didn't seem to impede the power of her release; if anything, it seemed that her second was even stronger than the first.

When her vagina stopped clenching at my fingers, I carefully eased them out of her - pausing to lick them clean - and moved to lie next to her again. I could see that she was still in something of a post-orgasmic thrall, and reached out to hold her close to me, felling minor shudders course through her body ever so often.

After a minute or so, she looked up into my face and gave me a smile that would have captured my heart, if it hadn't already been claimed by Lucy.

It took her a couple of tries, but Marie finally managed to tell me "Robyn and Sandra were right - it *is* different when a man does it that when a girl does. It's not better or worse, just *different*. I **like** how it's not the same!"

I grinned at her and said "I'm glad that I was able to make you feel good, honey."

She looked at me mischievously and said "Oh, it was a LOT better than just 'good'!" - which got both of us laughing.



When we'd both calmed down again, she moved to lay on her side so that she could put one leg over mine and snuggle into my side; her hand rested on my chest and she let her fingertips map out random designs in my chest hair. I had an arm around her, and I began to caress the graceful curve of her hip and waist.

A couple minutes later, she casually let her hand move down my body and wrap itself around my penis and start gently squeezing me. I felt her nipples harden slightly in my side, and my penis began to swell in her hand in response. She looked up into my face in surprise and asked "You can get hard again, now?" - her voice eager.

I smiled and answered "It sure seems that way, doesn't it?" - and got a happy nod in reply.

She quickly sat up again - her firm breasts wobbling EVER so slightly, and in such a delightful way - and looked down at me to ask "Does that mean you can... that we..."

"That I can be inside you now?" I asked for her.

She blushed slightly and answered "Um, yeah", before looking at me expectantly.

"We can if that's what you want to do", I assured her.

"That's what I want to do" she calmly informed me, her voice steady and certain.

I asked her "How would you like it to happen?"

She didn't flinch or hesitate, telling me "I looked it up on the internet, and almost everyplace said that it would be easier for me if I was on top of you - so that's what I want to do."

I smiled and told her "Then that's how we do it." - then both of us realized the double entendre of what I'd just said, and laughed.

When we'd both settled down again, I told her "It would probably be easier if I sat up and rested against the headboard. Then you can kind of sit in my lap and I can help hold you steady."

She said she understood, and asked "But aren't you going to have to be harder than this, first?"

I smiled and said that I would; she responded by moving to position herself between my legs, leaning over, and taking me into her mouth without any hesitation *at all*. Looking up at me with my penis between her lips, her eyes were sparkling in delight and anticipation as she smiled around my stiffening member.

She quickly equaled the successes of her earlier experience, and went on to surpass them. In just a few minutes, she had me fully erect as she slowly bobbed her head up and down

while running her tongue along the underside of my penis. When she was satisfied that I wasn't going to get any harder (I don't think I could have, anyway), she slowly pulled her mouth off of me, leaving me coated with a fine sheen of her saliva. She got to her knees and let me sit up and scoot back so that I was resting against the headboard of the bed. When I was ready, she knee-walked her way up my legs until she was bridging my waist. At that point, she cautiously lowered herself so that her mons was resting along the underside of my penis. I reached out and cupped her breasts in my hands and began caressing them, and playing with her nipples as she began a slow rocking motion that rubbed her cleft - and her clitoris at the end of one direction - against me. In just a few moments, I could feel a slight decrease in the friction she was generating against me, and knew that the oils she was again producing were being smeared along my shaft by her movements.

She seemed to know it, too, and her breathing began to increase as she became more and more aroused. After a bit, I leaned forward slightly and took one of her nipples into my mouth and began sucking on it - which served to fan the flames of her desire.

I was starting to wonder if she wasn't going to keep moving on me like that until she orgasmed when she slowed, and then stopped her movements on me. She looked into my face, and I could see the desire and arousal in her eyes; her face and shoulders were blushing darkly.

She managed to gasp out "I... I want you... inside me."

I put my hands on her hips, and helped steady her as she got to her knees. There, she reached down to take my penis in her hand and hold it upright before lowering herself again. She discovered that we weren't quite lined up the way she wanted and moved herself back slightly, then looked down to watch as she tried again - and found that the alignment was perfect. She slid the head of my penis back and forth between her labia a couple of times, softly moaning at the contact, before positioning me at her opening and lowering herself a trifle to help hold me in place.

She lifted her head again, and I looked into her eyes as I told her "Marie, there's no hurry on this - *any* of it. Don't rush things - take your time and *don't hurt yourself*. That's the **only** important thing to me: that you aren't hurt by this. Only go as fast as you're comfortable with - if it starts to hurt, then stop or slow down. Okay?"

The sincerity of what I was saying got through to her, and she smiled and nodded to me before saying "I will, Dan, I promise. But I want to do this, too."

"That's fine, Marie - just remember that if you hurt yourself, you'll be hurting me, too."

She nodded again, and I felt her begin to let some of her weight down so that my penis was pressing more firmly against the entrance to her vagina. I could only hope that the little bit that I'd been able to stretch her before was still working and that it would be enough.

Marie slowly let more and more of her weight come to rest at the point where the head of my manhood was splitting her labia. At first, I thought that it simply wasn't going to happen, but as the pressure steadily increased, I could feel her tight opening begin to spread. It wasn't much, and it was slow, but it was progress for her.

My hands were on her hips, and all I was doing was helping to steady here - I was being *most* careful not to apply **any** downward pressure: I expected that unless she knew *she* was in full control, the effort to get me inside her would only make her nervous and fearful. The only thing I thought of that might help her was to lean forward again and use my mouth and lips and tongue to tease her breasts, in the hope that the added stimulation would increase her arousal enough to make it possible for her to get me inside.

After a minute or so, she eased up in her efforts to fit herself onto my penis; then, after taking a few deep breaths, she tried again. Whether it was the added lubrication of her earlier effort, that she relaxed a little more, or my efforts at her breasts, I don't know - but she did make more progress: to me, it felt like I was on the cusp of slipping inside her when she backed off again. A few more deep breaths, and she was back at it once more.

That time, I could feel that she quickly got as far as her most recent attempt. A few seconds more, a little more weight lowered, and I suddenly slipped through the tight ring of her opening. She gave a small squeak and immediately froze over me. When heard her, I immediately took hold of her small waist and tried to support her as best I could; she managed to look up at me, and gave me a small smile of appreciation.

I asked her "Are you all right? Are you hurt?"

The look on her face in response to that was one of pride and satisfaction as she told me "I'm fine, Dan. No, it doesn't hurt - it just kind of surprised me when it just kind of *popped in* like that, is all."

"You're sure you don't want to stop, of get off?"

Her initial response was an emphatic "No way!"; then seeing the concern on my face, she hastened to assure me "Really, Dan. It's okay. Now that I've got you inside me, I'm not going to stop until it's over!"

After a few moments, she carefully lifted herself up a trifle, then settled back down - and gained another tiny fraction of an inch more progress. A second later, she did it again, with the same results.

Over the next couple of minutes, she slowly impaled herself on my further and further that way: lifting up a bit, then lowering herself again to get a little more of my erect penis inside her. As nice as it felt to have her incredibly tight and wet sheath slowly enveloping my penis, I was worried about her enough that the sensations she was creating around me were nowhere near moving me toward my release. If anything, they were only sufficient to keep me hard enough for her to continue her efforts.

Finally she was sliding up and down the end of my penis fairly freely when we both felt the head of my penis come up against the obstruction of her hymen. When that happened, I heard her release another small noise - but understood it to be one of surprise, not pain or discomfort.

She settled herself down so that her maidenhead was resting firmly against my glans before looking into my face and asking "Is this the part that's going to hurt?"

I tried to give her a reassuring smile (how reassuring could I be when *I* wasn't the one being deflowered?), and answered "That's up to you, dear. I think if you take your time and go slow, you can find out how easy we can get past this point. I can only offer just this one bit of advice."

She looked at me expectantly, and I told her "If something hurts, don't do that."

She gave me a look of exasperation, then smiled and said "Okay, Dan, I'll do that. I mean, I won't. Whatever."

With a look of deep concentration, she started sliding herself up and down as much of my penis as she had inside her; I continued to steady her so she could focus on what SHE was doing.

After a couple of 'warm-up' moves, she began pressing herself against me with each downward movement; I could feel myself bumping against her hymen, but it didn't seem to hurt her any, so I could only trust her to act intelligently on her own behalf.

It was perhaps a minute later when I felt myself bump against her maidenhead, a brief resistance, then on past it a bit before she stopped. I was watching her face closely and saw her wince briefly, but nothing more - no noise, no tears.

She looked up at me again, the delight clear on her face as she told me "I did it! You're inside me! I'm not a virgin any more!"

She saw the worry on my face, and sobered (slightly) before I asked "It looked like it hurt you a little. Are you all right?"

Her smile added weight to her words when she told me "No, it didn't hurt. It kind of felt like something pulled on me inside, and it was uncomfortable for a second, but no, no pain."

I looked at her closely, and she nodded as she said "Really, Dan. It feels *good*!" - the last part with a lusty grin.

What else could I do or say? Nothing but smile, reach down to give her a gentle pat on the butt, and say "I'm glad for you, Marie" - and get a big smile in return.

With The Deed taken care of, the rest was *relatively* easy for her - it was just a matter of gradually working herself farther and farther onto my erection, being careful to stretch her insides no more or faster than she was comfortable with. With one last downward push, her cute butt settled into my lap as the tight ring of her entrance closed around the base of my member; the head of it was firmly resting against the furthest wall of her hot, wet, oh-so-tight vagina.

Firmly impaled on me, she took a little time to kind of 'go inside' herself, familiarizing herself with how it felt to have someone inside her in way she'd never experienced before as she tried a few small tentative motions to see what effect they had on her.

After a while, she 'came back' and looked into my face with a happy smile as she said "Being with Robyn and Sandra was nice - really nice - but this feels *way* better! I think I'll like being with girls, but guys are going to be a LOT more fun!"

I smiled back, and she began moving herself on me - small movements at first, but as her comfort and confidence grew, so did the range and enthusiasm of her activity. When she was taking nearly my entire length easily, I had a look at where I was sliding into her; I saw a few faint traces of blood, but nothing more. Apparently, it had been a lot easier and less painful for her than either one of us could have reasonably hoped for.

Even so, I was still amazed when, several minutes later, I felt her action on my penis noticeably speed up for a minute or so before she suddenly settled onto my lap again and gasped out in what could only have been an orgasm. A small one, granted - but an orgasm none the less. I had no doubt about what it was because I could feel her already-tight vagina begin clenching around me so tightly that it was almost painful, and as I watched her, I could see her body going through a series of spasms that matched the tightness she was creating around my member.

It was a small orgasm, though, and didn't last very long - but when it was over, she looked at me in clear delight as she said "That felt *so* good! It wasn't as hard as what I have when you or Robyn or Sandra use your mouth on me, but it felt so much *deeper* than the other ones I've had."

With that, she started raising and lowering her body again: lifting up until the ring of her opening was just behind the crown of my penis, then dropping back down again until we both felt the end of my dick bumping against the deepest part of her.

I could only envy the energy and enthusiasm of her youth - and be grateful that I was being included in it.

Still, her youth did have its limitations - a little longer, and I could tell that she was starting to get tired. I managed to capture her hips again, and held her down until she opened her eyes to look at me.

"You're getting tired" - it was a statement, not a question, I directed to her.

"A little bit - but I don't want to stop; it feels too good!"

I gave a little laugh - I knew she was sure to keep her husband happy, whoever that lucky guy might be - and said "We don't have to *stop*; you can just let ME do some of the work, instead."

She considered that for a moment, then smiled and said "Yeah, that would be good, too."

"You know that there are different ways that we can make love?"

"You mean positions? Sure."

"Which one would you like to try next?" I asked with a grin.

She grinned back and said "Anything that's easy for you - I just want to keep going!"

"Me behind you?" I offered.

She nodded her head in agreement, and I released my hold on her hips so that she could slide herself off of me. She lifted up, and when the head of my penis pulled out of her, she released a small moan of disappointment. Still, she quickly moved to get on her hands and knees, watching me in anticipation, a "What are you *waiting* for?" look on her face.

As I moved to get behind her, I had to reflect on the changes she and Michelle had gone through since they'd come to stay with us. For Marie, the transition from the fearful, shy, quiet little girl I'd first seen to the confident, bawdy, extrovert I was sharing a bed with was amazing.

As I moved in behind her, the sight of her nearly took my breath away: the firm globes of her ass pointed right at me, below them the dark smudge of her pubic hair was neatly divided by her glistening extended labia, the dark pink entrance to her vagina visible between them.

I positioned myself close, then eased my hips back and pressed my erection down so that it was wedged against her opening. Holding myself steady with one hand, I barely had time to put the other on her waist before she was pressing herself back against me - and watched as her efforts caused her wet sheath to wrap itself around the head of my erection.

I quickly put the other hand on her waist and held her steady as I pushed my hips forward, slowly burying myself in her hot, tight channel - accompanied by her low groan of pleasure at being filled again.

In less than a minute, I was pistoning in and out of her in a slow, steady motion that seemed to please her tremendously. After a bit, I leaned forward and took her breasts in

my hands, feeling their firm spongy mass shift slightly in response to my thrusts. I began rolling her erect nipples between my fingers and gently pulling and pinching them; she responded with an increase in the intensity and frequency of her aroused moans.

The pace I set for my thrusts into her was such that it was more than enough to keep me fully erect in her, but not so stimulating that I was at any risk of climaxing too soon. She'd said that she wanted to make love more, and that was what I was going to do for her. This was her first time to be with a man, and I was determined to make it as pleasant and memorable for her as I could manage.

Over the course of the next twenty minutes or so, she had three more orgasms - each a little more powerful than the one before. Any man she blessed by taking to bed was going to be left feeling like a king from the way she responded to making love.

By the time she recovered from the third, I could see that she was getting tired again - small wonder - and held myself still in her until she managed to look back at me over her shoulder. When she did, I told her "You look kind of tired again - how about we change around so you can rest, too?"

She didn't argue; she just nodded her head with a lusty grin.

I pulled back until my penis slid out of her - another moan of disappointment from her - and she asked "What now?"

"How about the old standby: you on the bottom, me on top?"

She smiled her agreement, and moved to lie on her back, spreading her thighs in open invitation (as if I had any doubt!). As I moved between her thighs, she looked up at me and said "I... I want to see. You know, while we..."

I grinned and said "We can do that."

I reached down and slid each arm under her legs, so that they were 'draped' across my elbows - she was still small enough that she didn't weigh enough for it to be uncomfortable, and it put enough of an arch in her back that by lifting her head, she could clearly see where her vaginal lips were parting her pubic hair. I heard her softly say "I didn't know I looked like that..." before I eased myself forward enough to get the head of my glistening erection wedged against her mons.

Helpfully, she reached down between us and guided me so that I slid down between her labia and held me there while I adjusted my position a bit. She felt me begin to press into her and guided me until she was sure I wasn't going to veer off in a different direction than she wanted. When her hand was out of the way, both of us watched as my penis slowly disappeared between the folds of her vaginal lips - she with a long, low groan of pleasure and arousal as it happened. Only after I was fully inside her did she tell me "I... I didn't think it would look so *sexy*..."

I just grinned and told her "Keep watching. It gets better."

She looked at me as though such a thing weren't possible, but did as I said; and gasped when I began to pull back out of her, and she saw her labia pulling out, too, as though they were trying to hold my penis inside her. She uttered a throaty "Oh, **God!**" at the sight, and watched, mesmerized, as I reversed direction and eased myself back into her.

When I was embedded in her again, she let her head fall back and quietly announced "I can watch it happen while I'm feeling it, and it's **so** sexy..."

With those words, I began pumping in and out of her again. With the position we were in, and the angle I was entering her, I couldn't enter her far enough to touch the deepest part of her vagina; instead I was impacting it more toward the 'front'. Being a guy, I obviously don't know if there is such a thing as a 'G' spot - but I will vouch for the fact that Marie got an inordinate degree of pleasure each time I thrust myself into her. In just a few minutes, she had another orgasm - by far her strongest. Several minutes later, another, stronger still.

As I continued my steady pistoning in and out of her she continued having orgasms, ever growing in intensity, several minutes apart. Between the sight of my penis disappearing into her tight sheath, the liquid sounds of our union and her cries of pleasure, and the feeling of her hot, tight vagina spasming around me with each of her climaxes, it wasn't too long before I felt myself getting closer and closer to my own release.

As the pace of my thrusts increased, the time between Marie's orgasms decreased; when I reached the point that I was all but jack hammering into her, she was having what seemed like a single, continuous climax. Finally, it was too much for me, and with a deep groan, I pressed myself into her as far as I could, feeling the first hot jet of my cum racing toward the head of my penis. Even as I was washing her cervix with that first spray of semen, Marie's eyes flew open and she all but screamed as her body froze beneath me. Though her body was still, her vagina wasn't: it clamped down on me again before it started a rhythmic spasming that ran from the base of my penis toward the head before starting over again. The feeling of it was incredible, and I felt myself squirting my cum into her even more powerfully under the added stimulation she was giving me.

It was with a mixture of relief and regret that I finally stopped unloading my hot jism in her - relief that the amazing intensity of it was over, and regret for that same reason. Beneath me, Marie was going through the final throes of her release, her body shuddering as spasms continued to wash through her.

I carefully eased my arms from behind her legs and eased them down onto the bed, scooting myself back a bit so that she could straighten out a bit, too. But I was careful to keep my still-erect penis from pulling out of her; after how enthusiastic as she'd been about having me make love to her, I thought she'd want me inside as long as possible.



I was supporting my weight on my elbows and knees as she gradually got her breath and senses back. I was watching her when she opened her eyes and looked up at me, a big smile creasing her face. She started to move, and realized that I'd let her legs down - and that I was still inside her. Her eyes got big as saucers as she asked me "You're still hard? Inside me?"

I grinned and said "No, not hard all the way, but mostly. And you can tell that I'm still inside you."

She grinned back and said "We can make love some more?"

It was at that point that I wished I'd had a little warning or something about how enthusiastic and/or insatiable she'd be - I could have started on a special high-energy diet or something.

I sighed and smiled before telling her "No, dear, I'm sorry - we can't make love any more for a while. You see, I'm old and worn out, so I just don't have enough youth and energy to keep up with you."

She made a face at me and answered "Oh, pooh. You're not old and worn out; you're mature and experienced - plenty experienced enough to take care of me!" - the last with a lusty grin. I couldn't help but grin back at her.

She looked into my face and asked "Why are you still in me? I mean, I felt you squirt in me. It was so hot, and I could feel it every time you squirted, and it just *hit* me so **hard**."

"I'm still in you because I thought you might like to have me there. But if you don't, I'll just pull out now."

"Don't you dare!" she exclaimed, before realizing that I'd been teasing her.

I grinned at her, and she gave me a surprisingly shy grin back before telling me "I like having you inside me, and I want you to stay there as long as you can. It feels really, really nice."

So I stayed there, as long as I could, while she happily told me how it had felt for her when I was making love to her - something that delayed the shrinking process considerably. But there was no stopping it completely, and it got to the point where I knew that there wasn't anything else to do but uncork from her. She seemed to realize it to, and calmly accepted the inevitable. I had her draw her knees up and tilt her pelvis up before I did, though, explaining to her that it would give me a little time to grab a towel for her. She understood what the towel was for, and surprised me by blushing slightly. On the count of three, I pulled back from her and quickly moved to grab one of the conveniently located towels, and positioning it under her. She let her hips lower then, and made a face as the combination of our fluids began to flow out of her.

I told her "Hold on a minute", and quickly went into the bathroom she shared with Robyn and Sandra, got a couple of washcloths, dampened them with some warm water, and went back to her. I used one of them to begin cleaning her up, and she started to protest. I just told her "Hush up. I did it, and I'm going to clean it up." She stuck her tongue out at me, but did as she was told - gasping slightly when she saw the faint tinge of pink on the washcloth. By the time I was done, pretty she'd pretty much emptied out, and she sat up, insisting that since I got to clean her off, it was her duty to do the same for me. I conceded the point, and as she was doing so, we heard a discrete knock at the door, followed by Lucy's voice telling us "There's water and something to eat on a tray out here. When you're done with it, just set it back outside and we'll take care of it."

We heard a little more noise, then silence.

When Marie had me cleaned off to her satisfaction - I was clean sooner than she stopped wiping at me; I think she just wanted to play with my penis - she took the washcloth I still had hold of. Putting both of them in her hand, she reached down to tuck the towel close and got to her knees, telling me "You can get the tray while I'm in the bathroom."

I laughed and gave her a salute - making her smile - and did as she said.

When she came out, she looked as fresh and clean as she had when I first undressed her; she quickly came over to where I was propped up against the headboard and collected a bottle of club soda and a sandwich. We quietly chatted with each other as we replenished our energy and fluid reserves.

By the time we were done, the food was all gone, and there were still a couple bottles of water unopened. Marie waited in bed as I collected the empty bottles and set them on the tray with the empty plates, then set the whole thing out in the hall. When I was back in bed with her, she guided me to lie on my back, and then lay down so she could cuddle up to my side, one leg over mine and an arm across my chest.

I glanced at the clock, and saw that only a little over two hours had gone by since we'd entered her bedroom; I could only hope that I'd survive the rest of the time. As we lay there, both of us drifted off for a short nap...

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I did survive - though barely. The rest of the time Marie and I were together, we made love several more times, and in a variety of places and positions. When we took a shower together after our nap, she happily dropped to her knees and proceeded to use her mouth to get me hard again - then had me make love to her from behind as both of us stood under the shower spray. Only after her third orgasm did she have mercy on me and let us stop so that we could actually clean up.

Later, we got into a session of '69' that left both of us exhausted, and her temporarily satiated; she'd taken no small delight in teasing me while I brought her to some number

of orgasms - she was barely able to hold herself over me as she finally brought me to release, eagerly swallowing my cum as I fired jet after jet of it into her greedy mouth.

I woke up from one nap to discover that she was sleeping on top of me, my erect penis buried inside her. When she woke up a minute later, she gave me a lecherous grin and said that she'd rolled me onto my back, used her mouth to get me hard, and climbed aboard.

We made love on the bed. We made love in the shower. We made love on the chair. We made love on the floor. She was on top. I was on top. I was behind her. We were laying down, standing up, and kneeling. Anything and everything she could think of that would get our parts lined up was in the play book.

The only thing that I think saved me was the frequent discrete knock on the door that let us know refreshment was available. No small number of snacks showed up that way, as did breakfast, and even lunch.

By the time Marie was willing to call an end to it, she'd brought me to climax no less than seven times in a twenty-four hour period. I lost track of her orgasms somewhere around sixteen or seventeen.

Both of us were on the bed recovering from our last go-around (Marie sitting on my erect penis while playing with her clitoris through several orgasms; I couldn't have climaxed again if my life had depended on it) when I asked her "Okay, dumpling, you think you've had enough for your first time with a man?"

She gave me a lusty grin, and answered "I guess so."

"You *guess* so?"

"Well, it's been a LOT of fun, and you made me feel really, **really** good, but I'm starting to get a little tired."

*A little* tired. Dear God in heaven, take me now!

We rested for a little while longer, and then had another shower together. Much to my surprise, she didn't try to get me 'fired up' again; if anything, she was quite solicitous of me. After we were dried and dressed again, I put my pistol back on and she opened the door so we could go downstairs. When she did, the draft of fresh air from the hall made it obvious that her room would probably have to be fumigated to get the smell of aroused female out of the walls.

Hand in hand, we made our way downstairs to where Lucy and Michelle were having coffee in the breakfast nook. I sat down next to Lucy, who looked at me in sympathy while Michelle's expression clearly stated that she didn't expect me to survive the night.

Marie stood there a few moments before Michelle asked her "Did everything go okay, honey?"

Marie gave her a radiant smile and answered "Oh, yes, momma - it didn't hurt *at all*."

"And you think you like making love?"

"Oh, yes - it was *wonderful*" Marie answered, her face lighting up like one of those big spotlights they use for special events.

"I'm glad, honey", Michelle told her.

"Is it okay if I go to Sandra and Robyn?"

"Of course, dear."

We all knew what she was going to talk to them about, of course. When she was gone, Lucy announced to nobody in particular "I don't think 'Marvelous' even comes *close* to what she felt."

Lucy turned to me then and sympathetically asked "How are you? Are YOU going to survive?"

"I'm not sure. With luck, no."

Lucy laughed and said "We heard the two of you a couple of times, early on. Michelle was worried that Marie was hurt the first time, but I stopped her and asked if that really sounded like anybody was in pain."

Michelle blushed and said "Well, I really didn't expect her to holler out like that. But when Lucy asked me, I realized that if anything, she was having a better time than *I* ever did!"

Lucy looked at me mischievously and asked "So what was the final score?"

I gave her a baleful look and answered "Seven for me, lot's more than that for her. I lost track around seventeen or so - but that was real early this morning."

I could see the shock and surprise on both their faces as Michelle asked "You're sure it was that many? She's only fifteen, and I figured she'd be sore and such! I sure was!"

I mentally tallied up to where I lost count, and verified "Yup, seventeen. That was about four this morning; there were a bunch more since then. I don't know about sore or anything - she barely bled at all, and claimed that it didn't even hurt; just a kind of pulling or tug inside. Judging from the way she acted, I'm going to have to believe her. She's *real* enthusiastic, she is."

Lucy gave a small laugh and said "I guess so!"

Michelle stood up and went to get a cup and brought it over to me before filling it with coffee. Looking at me in sympathy, she said "I reckon you need this, if that's how it was. And Dan, I'm thanking you for making it so good for her - it's pretty obvious she isn't going to be having any troubles about men."

"The only trouble she's going to have with men is the ones that are afraid of her after she wears them out!" I answered, making both of them laugh.

Lucy told me "We waited on supper, since we figured you'd be out about this time. What do you want to eat?"

"Pretty much anything. Killing and cooking it are optional."

Lucy gave me a sympathetic smile and said "How about pizza? Your favorite: pepperoni and sausage, extra cheese?"

"Deal. But the next time somebody wants me to deflower a sixteen year old, I want at LEAST a couple months warning, so I can work up to it."

Michelle and Lucy both laughed until tears streaked their faces. I just drank my coffee, hoping that it would jump-start my heart.

Lucy got up and ordered the pizza; when it arrived, all of us gathered in the living room to eat it. Lucy sat next to me, indulgently, while Marie sat on my lap. Marie carefully fed me slices of MY pizza as she ate some of the other two we got, holding my bottle of beer to my lips when I indicated I needed a drink. I think I surprised everyone by eating even more than Robyn did - there wasn't a bit left of my medium, while there were still a couple slices of the other two.

When we were done eating, Lucy surprised me by bringing out a bottle of champagne and glasses. After getting it opened and distributed among us, she announced "This to help Marie celebrate her change from virginal maid to experienced woman - Cheers!"

Marie surprised me by blushing furiously, but all of us lifted our glasses in toast.

Later that night, when Lucy and I were alone in bed, she asked me "Really, Dan - how many orgasms did she have?"

"I'm serious - it was seventeen when I lost count."

She looked at me doubtfully, and I raised a hand as though taking an oath and said "Really. Surprised the hell out of me, too. I mean, they weren't your pass-out-afterward kind, but there wasn't any doubt that they were orgasms. She liked to have killed me."

Lucy grinned and said "Oh, I don't think it was all *that* bad, was it?"

"There were parts of it that were right nice, I'll admit. But she was like the Energizer Bunny with his batteries in backwards: instead of going and going, she just kept coming and coming and coming and..."

That got Lucy laughing, and after a bit, I couldn't help but join in with her. When both of us had settled down, she looked at me in sympathy again and said "If it was really that bad, I think Michelle and I can give you a couple days to recuperate before one of us comes looking for some loving."

I gave her my best moon-eyed look and solemnly answered "Thank you, thank you, thank you!" - getting her laughing all over again.

When she was done, she turned onto her side and wriggled back at me, spooning with my front before pulling my arm around to cup her breast. With a deep sigh, I dropped right off to sleep...

At breakfast the next morning, Robyn and Sandra were looking at me with something akin to awe. Michelle and Lucy both noticed it, and shared an amused smile. I was still too damn tired to care.

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During the following week, I found myself making love not only with my wife, but *both* of our guests as well.

It was one night when Michelle was with us that our 'family secret' came out.

The three of us had finished making love and were resting against the headboard when there was a knock at the bedroom door. Without even thinking about it, Lucy called out "Come in!" - and when the door opened, it was a very sleepy, very naked Sandra that came into our room. She was rubbing her eyes and didn't see Michelle as she announced "I had a *really* bad dream - can I go ahead and sleep with you tonight?"

Michelle could only sit there stunned as Lucy and I gave each other an "Oh, *crap*, now what do we do?" look.

Sandra turned as was facing us from the foot of the bed - leaving all of us with a **very** clear view of her - before she quit rubbing her eyes and saw who all was present. The look on her face made it clear that she knew she'd just opened up a BIG can of worms.

Michelle just sat there, looking at her for several long seconds before turning to look at Lucy, then me. Both of us just looked back at her, saying nothing.

A few more seconds went by before Michelle quietly asked us "I'm guessing this isn't the first time?"

Lucy answered "No, not the first time."

A couple seconds, then "Robyn, too?"

"Yes" from Lucy.

Several seconds more, and Michelle asked "Both of them... with both of you?"

"Yes" Lucy confirmed.

"How? Why?" Michelle asked, scooting around to face Lucy, leaving a gap behind.

Lucy took a deep breath, and began to explain how she and I had met in more detail than she'd offered before. As she was talking, I mouthed "Robyn" to Sandra, and gestured with my head; Sandra nodded and left us, reappearing a minute later with a very nervous Robyn. I gestured to both of them, and they quietly climbed up onto the bed with us, electing to sit next to me and pull my arms around them.

Michelle was listening intently to Lucy, and didn't seem to notice the addition - until Lucy had explained how it had all come out that I had been involved with Robyn and Sandra *with her knowledge*, and how she and the girls had come to share their love with each other.

Only then did Michelle look over toward me, and see that the girls were on either side of me - my arms around them as they held my hands, their faces making it clear that they were afraid of what she would do or say. Looking intensely at each of them, she asked "That night you were talking about the man that you gave your virginity to, and the man that you love so much. Him?"

Both of them nodded slowly, and I saw Michelle give me an unfathomable look before turning back to Lucy and saying "This is some kind of surprise, learnin' about all this, this way. I'm gonna have to think on it some. I'll be goin' to my own bed, now - seems you've got enough company for tonight already."

With that, she calmly scooted to the edge of the bed, got up, and quietly walked out of our bedroom.

There wasn't anything for the rest of us to say, except for Sandra who hesitantly told us "I'm sorry, Uncle Dan and Aunt Lucy."

I gave her a hug and reassured her "Its okay, Sandra. We know you didn't do it on purpose."

Robyn looked up at me and asked "What's she going to do, Dad?"

I sighed and said "I don't know, Short Stuff. I guess we'll find out when she's ready."

Lucy gestured for the two of them to come to her, and they did - and all three of them started to quietly cry as they hugged each other for reassurance. I went over and put my arms around all of them, to give and seek solace with them.

When the tears were gone, and they'd dried their faces, we shared a round of kisses and went to bed - Robyn and Sandra in the middle, Lucy and I bracketing them.

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The next couple of days were tense for all of us. Though nobody said anything to her, Marie seemed to know that something had changed, but didn't outright ask about it - even after seeing Robyn and Sandra each on my lap at different times.

In the meantime, Lucy, the girls, and I didn't treat Michelle or Marie any differently than we had before - Marie was still comfortable with spending a night with Sandra and Robyn. Michelle just watched all of us, even as she was putting up a front that everything was fine for Marie.

It was the third morning after Michelle learned about us that she stayed downstairs with Lucy and I after the girls had all gone off to their studies - Robyn and Sandra to their schools, Marie to her computer.

She looked from one to the other of us for a few moments before saying "That was some kind of surprise, learning that you two have been layin' with those two girls of yours. What surprised me most was learnin' about it after you two - hell, all of you - have done so much for me and Marie. I've got to tell you that it bothered me - bothered me something fierce. I've been thinking on it, these last couple of days - what you told me, Lucy, and what I've seen about all of you since me and Marie have been here. God's honest truth, there was a couple times thought I should be callin' somebody to take them away from you - like maybe the police or some such."

Lucy took my hand at that, and I could feel how cold her fingers were - and knew that she was absolutely terrified at the thought of losing Robyn and Sandra; never mind the possibility of going to jail.

I gave her hand a reassuring squeeze just as Michelle started talking to us again.

"But I don't reckon I can do that. Whatever else is going on, I know that you two aren't doing anything to hurt those girls. What I finally figured out was that what you're doing isn't for everybody, not by a long shot - but its right for *you*."



Michelle looked at me and said "I remembered what you told me out in your office that day, Dan - and what it meant. I couldn't see how somebody that could love another person the way you love Lucy and those youngsters could do *anything* to hurt them, in **any** way. And I thought about how you were about helping Marie out when she said she didn't want to be a virgin any more - and I figured that anybody that had that much of a time with her wouldn't have done any less with Robyn and Sandra. From what I've seen of those two, if they weren't willing to be layin' with you, they'd be more than able to tell someone - if they didn't take care of it themselves."

Looking at each of us again, Michelle went on to tell us "More than anything else, though, was what I knew, **knew** mind you, about all of you: that you all love each other, a whole lot more than I ever even thought people *could* love someone else. I know that if I was to bring the law in here, I wouldn't be RIGHTING a wrong, I'd be DOING one to someone else: all of you good people."

Next to me, I felt the tension drain out of Lucy, and she turned to give me a relieved smile before Michelle said "What you all have, well, it's something special. Way too special for the likes of me to be messing it up - not after where I've been and who I've been with. Like I just told you, I ain't saying that what you all do is right for everyone. But it's right for YOU - all of you. What you've give me and Marie, it ain't but a fart in a hurricane compared to what you have with each other. And after all you've done for us - not just lettin' us stay here, but what you've taught both of us about what it means to be good people, and showin' us how we could be like that, too - I know that what I started out thinking about you and those girls *couldn't* have been right. For that, I'm apologizing to you - even if I didn't come out as say anything, or do anything to cause offense, I know it wasn't right. You know what finally made me realize that I was thinking wrong about you?"

Lucy and I both shook our heads, and Michelle smiled before saying "Watching all of you these last couple of days. I **knew** that all of you were worried about what I might say or do - but I could see that all of you loved each other too much to let ME get in the way of it. You just kept loving each other, without fussin' or fightin' - and you were the same way with Marie; and as much as I'd let you, me. I knew that any group of people with that much love and caring for each other deserved better than to be broke up for *any* reason."

With a deep breath, Michelle went on to tell us "The thing of it is, is that Marie loves all of you - the way that you love each other and her, I think - and I know that *I* love you, too. I couldn't love either one of those girls of yours any more if they were mine; and you've treated Marie as good as if she was YOUR own. I don't know if I *can* do it, but I want to **try** to show you two, and those two young un's, that I love you and them, too."

With that, Lucy started to quietly cry as she reached out to take Michelle's hand - and I saw Michelle start crying herself. After a few moments, the two of them got up and moved close, hugging each other. I got up, too, and joined them; Michelle readily opened an arm to make room for me.

After a bit, Michelle asked "You're not vexed at me?", her concern clear in her voice. Lucy managed to stop sniffing long enough to say "No, not vexed. I think Dan and I both understand that you had to think about it - because WE did, too, before any of this happened."

Michelle looked at each of us again before saying "Yeah, I reckon you did, at that" before hugging us again.

A few minutes later, we broke up, taking our seats again at the table in the breakfast nook. Lucy's makeup was a wreck, and she started dabbing at it before realizing that she'd basically just have to clean it all off and start over. Finally, she announced "Oh, hell with it. I'm just going to go upstairs and take another shower; after all this, I need it!"

Hesitantly, Michelle offered "If you don't mind, I'd be willing to come along and scrub your back. Seeing as how it was me that caused all this, anyway."

Lucy smiled and answered "I think I'd like that" before reaching over to pat Michelle's hand.

Together, the two of them stood up and made their way out of the kitchen. I watched them go, and sat there a while longer, drinking my coffee.

When I went upstairs some time later, I saw that they had apparently gotten each other's motors going: both were lying on the bed, shining faintly with perspiration as they held hands. I looked down at them and smiled; after a couple seconds, they seemed to realize they weren't alone any longer and looked at me in return before Lucy smiled and said "We decided that we still love each other."

"So I see. Is there any reason that I can't show Michelle that I still love her, too?"

Lucy grinned - as did Michelle - before she answered "Not a one - except that I'm already late for work, so it'll be just you two."

I grinned back and told her "No, you're not late for work. You're home, sick - I called in for you."

Surprised, Lucy looked at me as I told her "I kinda figured that today would be a good day to love."

She smiled widely and nodded before saying "Yes, I think it would. Thanks for calling in for me."

With that, she and Michelle shared a Look, and then started moving toward me. When they were close enough to touch me, Michelle said "It looks like you're overdressed for this shindig, Dan."

I looked down and smiled; somehow, I didn't think that it was going to be a problem much longer.

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When the girls got home from school that afternoon, they would have seen that Lucy's car was still in its parking spot; they came right up to see if she was okay - and discovered that she was a bit more than just 'okay': she was being supported by me and Michelle, who had brought her to a thundering orgasm just a few minutes before.

They could only stand there, somewhat stunned to see that Michelle had apparently not only decided against causing any trouble for us, but opted to return to sharing our love.

When Michelle saw them, she smiled and said "I expect that this is pretty much of a surprise to you. But I finally decided that you all loved each other, and Marie and I loved you, too much to get in the way of that love. Dan and Lucy both understood that it was something I had to work out for myself. Now that I have, would you let ME love you, too?"

Robyn and Sandra shared a look with each other that clearly said "Damned if I know what happened..." before both moved to where Michelle gestured. When they were close enough, she leaned over and kissed them - not just on the cheek, but on the mouth. And from the way their eyes opened, I expect that it was a more enthusiastic kiss than either of them expected - but both responded in kind.

When they were done, Michelle tilted her head and asked "Now, why don't you two shuck those clothes and join us? I reckon the bed's plenty big enough for us..."

Both girls looked at me, and I smiled to let them know it was okay - and after only the briefest hesitation, both did just as Michelle asked. When they were naked and in bed with us, Michelle first kissed Robyn, then Sandra - and in both cases, the kiss went on for no small time, ending only after the two kissing had reached up to cup the other's breast.

By that time, Lucy had recovered enough that she was able to look on, an expression of bemusement on her face.

Perhaps a half hour later, Sandra was sitting on my lap as Robyn was in a three-way molestation with Lucy and Michelle when we heard Marie's voice asking "Has anyone seen Robyn or Sandra? They should be home from school by now and...." - her voice trailing off as she came into the bedroom to see all of us naked on the bed.

She just stood there a few seconds watching all of us, when Michelle caught sight of her. Michelle released Robyn's left breast, and Lucy's right one, and turned to Marie to say "Honey, I found out a couple days ago that Dan has been making love with Robyn and Sandra, too, before we got here. It surprised me, and it took me a couple of days to remember how much they love each other, and that I love them, too."

Without even blinking, Marie asked "What took you so long, mamma?"

Michelle answered "Well, sometimes it just takes me a little while, is all. Does it bother you that Dan makes love with Robyn and Sandra?"

"Of course not, mamma. I know he loves them, even more than he loves you and me. And I know they love him, too - so why shouldn't they make love with each other?"

With that response, Michelle just sat there, just blinking for a few seconds before turning to me and asking "Does everyone but me understand this love thing you have going on?"

I smiled and said "No, you understand it, too - you just let something distract you from it for a little while, is all."

Michelle nodded in understanding, and then turned back to Marie to say "You might as well join us, too, honey - God knows, the bed's big enough!"

Without hesitation or concern, Marie did just that: took her clothes off as if it was perfectly normal to disrobe in front of five other people, and climbed in to join us. When she did, Robyn unobtrusively eased over to be with Lucy, leaving Michelle and Marie to themselves. Without appearing to do so, I think all of us watched the two of them.

Marie moved into her mother's arms, saying "I love you, mamma. I'm glad we got to come here and stay."

Michelle hugged her, and answered "I love you, too, honey. And I'm glad we did, too."

With that, Marie tilted her head back and, without a qualm, moved to kiss Michelle - square on the lips. Michelle was surprised, but quickly got over it, and kissed her daughter back; in less than a minute, each of them was cupping the other's breast.

When their lips finally parted, Marie looked up at Michelle and asked "Mamma, if it's okay for Dan and Lucy to make love with Robyn and Sandra, does that mean its okay for us to make love, too?"

Startled, Michelle hesitated only moment before answering "I guess it does, honey."

"Good. Because I know how lonely you got sometimes when we still lived with Daddy, and how afraid I was there. Now we can make love with each other, so both of us can be happy again."

Michelle's eyes misted a bit at that, and there was a definite catch in her throat when she said "Yes, honey, it does" before tilting her head down to kiss Marie again.

When their lips parted again, Michelle asked "Marie, would it be okay if I made you happy now?"

Marie just smiled and said "Of course, mamma", and moved to lie down, looking at her mother lovingly. Michelle sat up, and then turned around so that she was kneeling next to Marie, facing her. Looking down, Michelle softly said "You're so beautiful, Marie. I never realized just *how* beautiful you are until just now."

Marie beamed and responded by telling her mother "And you're beautiful, too, mamma. I love you so much, and I'm glad you want to make love with me."

Michelle smiled again, and leaned over to kiss Marie - a kiss that ended only after both of them had put both hands on the other's breasts, and teased the nipples to erection. When they came up for air, the love was clear in both sets of eyes - along with no small measure of desire.

Michelle leaned forward again, but her new target was Marie's breast; taking it's nipple into her mouth, Michelle soon had her daughter panting softly in desire before moving to give the youngster's other breast the same treatment. Even as she was doing so, her hand came to rest on Marie's belly - and began traveling south, soon coming in contact with the soft, dark mass that covered her own daughter's pubic mound. A few seconds more, and her hand dipped between Marie's thighs - causing Marie to groan at her mother's intimate contact with the core of her femininity.

In return, Marie reached out to softly place her hand on the inside of Michelle's thigh - then slowly caress her way upwards, until her hand was cupping her mother's sex. At the touch of her daughter's hand on her mons, Michelle shuddered slightly - from the way her nipples erected, we knew that it was arousal, and not aversion.

Over the next several minutes, Michelle continued to nurse at Marie's breasts and let her fingers toy with the youngster's most intimate places; in return, Marie kept her hand between her mother's thighs, returning the favor.

It wasn't long before Michelle's hand was displaced in favor of her mouth: turning around, Michelle leaned forward again to slowly place her head between Marie's well-spread smooth, firm thighs - and a moment later, we heard Marie's groan softly in response to her mother's actions. With the two of them obviously focused on each other, the rest of us began to openly watch them.

Marie just lay back on the bed, writhing slightly in response to her mother's tender ministrations, for several minutes before pulling herself together enough to reach out for one of Michelle's legs - guiding it back, and over her head so that she could return the oral favors Michelle was bestowing on her.

Next to me, I heard Robyn say "That looks so hot. I wonder if we look anything like that when WE make love, mom."

Before Lucy could respond, I told her "Yes, it does - and so do you two. Better, even."

Lucy and Robyn both turned to look at me, pleased smiles on their faces, before going back to watching Michelle and Marie.

As we continued to watch them, we also detected the unique scents that were Michelle and Marie, as well - along with the sounds of eager tongues lapping at wet openings, and soft moans and groans of pleasure and arousal. A few more minutes, and we saw as Marie went through a small orgasm, followed a couple minutes later by Michelle having her own release - but both of them continued to tend to the other's desires. It wasn't long before Marie had another orgasm, then a third in sync with Michelle's second. A bit later, as Marie cried out her fourth release, Lucy turned to me and said "After seeing this, *now* I really believe she had that many orgasms while she was with you! It's like it's non-stop with her!"

Robyn and Sandra looked at her, and Lucy explained "Dan told us that when she was with him, she had seventeen orgasms before he lost track at four o'clock in the morning. Michelle and I didn't want to believe him - but now I do!"

Both girls turned to look at Michelle and Marie again, somewhat stunned to learn just how much passion and pleasure was inside their young friend. They'd known she was 'enthusiastic', but didn't know that she could keep going *that* long.

Michelle and Marie continued to give each other orgasms for the better part of an hour - with Marie having roughly three smaller climaxes for each of her mother's larger ones. Finally, Michelle lifted her head - the lower half of her face shiny with Marie's oils - and all but fell over onto her back with a BIG smile on her face. When we could see Marie's face, it was as shiny as Michelle's - and bore an equally happy expression.

When it became clear that neither one of them was in any condition to move, Sandra and Robyn got up to get warm washcloths and begin cleaning them up - and both were amused to discover that the process of cleaning Michelle's mons resulted in an involuntary lifting of her hips.

While they were doing that, Lucy and I went downstairs to load a couple of trays with assorted munchies and drinks - we'd agreed that it looked to be a long afternoon and evening. By the time we got back upstairs, Marie and Michelle were both semi-alert; with the addition of some food and liquid refreshment, both began recovering nicely - though they tended to make cow-eyes at each other for a little while.

It was well after midnight before we all decided to call it quits - mostly because Robyn and Sandra ganged up on Michelle, leaving her as little more than a single quivering mass of flesh that probably would have orgasmed at the slightest touch. For our part, Lucy and I tag-teamed on Marie, finally exhausting her - but leaving us in only marginally better shape.

The next morning, I woke up to discover that it was just Lucy, Michelle, and me in the bed. I sat up to see if perhaps they were in the bathroom; when I moved, Lucy woke up.

When she saw me, she gave me a big smile from where she was spooning with Michelle. After a moment, she asked "What are you looking for?"

"The girls."

"Where are they?"

"I don't know - that's why I'm looking for them."

Lucy stuck her tongue out at me, and I leaned over to give her a kiss on the tip of her nose - and getting a whiff of Marie in the process - and waking Michelle. As she blinked at me, I gave her a kiss, too - getting Eau de Sandra - before edging to the side of the bed and standing up. I was about to walk to the bathroom when all three girls came into the bedroom, bearing trays - Robyn with cups and lots of coffee, Sandra with a small pile of cinnamon rolls, and Marie with orange juice. I quickly took care of my bathroom needs and made my way back to the bed. There, the youngsters were patiently doling out breakfast, clearly amused at the condition of the rest of us.

Michelle, Lucy, and I had all gotten a couple cups of coffee and a roll into ourselves when Michelle asked "Where in the **world** do they get the energy?" nodding at the girls. Lucy just laughed and said "I don't know - but if we could figure out how to tap into it, we'd never have to import another barrel of oil!"

For their part, the girls just grinned at us before Robyn told us "We woke up a little while ago, and saw what time it was; we figured you'd be getting up soon anyway, so we went ahead and made breakfast. When you're ready, it's downstairs, keeping warm in the oven."

Lucy raised an eyebrow and asked "This isn't breakfast?"

Marie laughed and answered "Oh, no! This was just something to help get you going; all of you looked like you'd need something just so you'd be able to get out of bed!"

Michelle and Lucy both laughed when I muttered "Damn kids." - Robyn, Sandra, and Marie all just grinned, knowing that I wasn't really upset.

When we three elderly folks were able to move again, each of the girls took one of us into the bathroom and helped us get cleaned up. Robyn teamed up with Michelle, Sandra with Lucy, and I got Marie. I don't know about the other two, but I finally decided that there were worse ways of getting going in the morning than being pampered by a naked, slippery, conciliatory young girl.

Downstairs in the breakfast nook, all three girls continued their self-appointed mission of taking care of us by bringing us our breakfast after they'd gotten us seated. Bacon and cheese omelets, hash browns, loaves of toast, gallons of coffee, and orange juice by the

quart were made available to us - and all three of us gladly dug in, having nearly exhausted ourselves the previous evening.

By the time we were done, I think all three of us were feeling approximately human again - but it was still depressing to watch the girls scampering around, laughing and smiling, and generally cheering us up.

I have to admit to being somewhat relieved when Robyn and Sandra finally left for school; Michelle, Lucy, and I all shared a look of "Thank God it's over!" - but smiling, none the less.

For the life of me, I don't know how Lucy made it through work that day - Michelle and I cuddled up for a brief nap right after lunch.

That night, the evening was a LOT more subdued; when bedtime came around (early), we casually broke into two groups: me, Robyn, and Marie in one; Lucy, Michelle, and Sandra in the other. Since Lucy actually had to go someplace the next day, she got our bedroom; I joined Robyn in Marie's room.

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That pretty much set the tone for the next few weeks - weeknights, various permutations of people would gather for a *little* mutual fun and frolicking after an evening of casual fondling and friendly kissing. At various times, Lucy, Michelle, and I all had one or more of the girls either on our lap or cuddling with us.

Weekends were something else, entirely - all of us tended to gather in Lucy's and my bed for mass-molestation exercises and general debauchery.

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It was a Thursday night and all of us were sitting in the living room watching a movie on cable when the phone rang. Since Marie was parked on Lucy's lap and Robyn and Sandra were cuddling with Michelle, I got up to answer it.

"Andrews residence" I said.

"Dan? It's Dale Kristofferson. We've made our move against Frenchy, and we got damn near everybody."

"That's good to hear!"

"There's just one problem - Frenchy and some of his boys got away from us; damned if I know how. The thing is, he knows who you are, and where you live - and I'm afraid he's on his way there now. Some cop figured out who you were, and told him where you live."



At those words, my blood ran cold. I pulled the phone away and told Lucy "Lucy! Dale made his move, but Frenchy got by him, and he may be on his way here."

All of them paled, but Lucy managed to ask "What do you want us to do?"

"Get everybody upstairs. Lucy, find a spot where you can watch the top of the stairs; if you see anybody but me, shoot them. Sandra, get your weapon and you and Robyn get into one of the closets in our bedroom; if anybody but me or Lucy opens it, shoot them in the lips." Our closets were large, walk-in jobs that would hold all four of them easily.

Sandra paled even more, but nodded; all of them got up and started to move as Lucy asked me "What about you, Dan?"

She went white when she heard me say "I'll be down here, waiting for them" - the tone of my voice telling her that it wouldn't be with a bouquet and box of chocolates.

As they started toward the stairs, I put the phone back to my ear and Dale told me "I heard that, Dan, and I've got cops on the way already; they'll be there in just a few minutes."

"Fine - but you tell them they'd better stay outside. Anybody that comes inside is *mine*."

I could hear the mix of regret and trepidation in his voice as he said "I'll tell them. We'll be there as soon as we can, Dan."

"I just hope it's in time." I replied before hanging up the phone.

I quickly went upstairs and saw that Lucy had found herself a spot in the doorway to Robyn's bedroom, where she was almost entirely concealed by a potted plant when she kneeled down - but that she had a clear view of the top of the stairs. Next was the bedroom, where the rest were waiting in the closet, the door open. I had all of them but Sandra lay down; she remained sitting upright - I figured if bullets started flying, they'd be at or above waist level. I gave Sandra a kiss, assured her that everything would be okay, and closed the closet door.

Back out in the hallway, I turned out some of the upstairs lights, so that anyone coming up the stairs would be looking into the light, but Lucy would have a nice, well-lit target against a darker background.

Downstairs, I disabled the alarm system so it wouldn't make any noise: I didn't want any distractions; I knew all the doors and windows were locked, so having it off meant that I'd be able to hear anyone trying to break in. That done, the next step was to turn off all the lights so that I'd have the advantage of dark-adapted vision in my own home - I *knew* where all the furniture and things were, so I'd be able to move as freely and noiselessly as possible while anyone coming in would still be a little light-blinded and on unfamiliar ground.

As I waited where the living room, dining room, and stairs pretty much came together, I closed my eyes to help speed the adjustment to night vision. I heard a couple of cars go by, but neither one stopped.

I was still standing there when I heard something outside the dining room. I quietly made my way inside, and was standing next to the window when the glass broke in; a moment later, a head appeared - then went back outside with an additional half-inch hole in its forehead.

Even as the echoes of my shot died out, I heard more glass break - in the living room, and in the kitchen. Figuring the living room had more stuff for whoever it was to trip over, I headed for the kitchen, slipping diagonally through the doorway so that I had my back to the wall. Looking around carefully, I saw a shadow rise up in the breakfast nook. Whoever it was must have seen me, and started to raise a gun a moment later - but it was a moment too late, because I put a double-tap right into his chest. He fell backwards with only a grunt at the impact of the bullets - hollowpoints tended to make people do that.

I was about to head for the living room when I heard Lucy scream; I quickly went to the stairs, where I could see someone just reaching the top of them. I recognized him, and yelled "Frenchy!"

As he turned toward me, I heard two shots ring out, and watched as Frenchy started to fall back down the stairs, dropping the small automatic pistol he had in his hand. When he hit the floor at the bottom of the stairs, I was right on top of him - and saw that he'd ended up on his back, and that he was still alive. Across the side of his shirt, there were two grooves that were already starting to leak blood; a half-dollar would have spanned both of them easily - Lucy's shots had both been in the X-ring, and either would have killed him if he hadn't turned just as she fired.

When Frenchy got his senses back, the first thing he saw was the muzzle of my .45 resting on the bridge of his nose. After uncrossing his eyes, he next looked up at me - and promptly wet himself.

In a very calm, very sincere voice, I told him "If you so much as *breathe* funny, I'll cap you. You understand me?"

He very carefully nodded, and I said "Now, raise up your waist and tuck your hands under your back - *very* carefully and *very* slowly if you don't want your brains splattered all over my floor."

After he'd done exactly as I'd told him, I moved to kneel on his belly - not a pleasant thing for him, but it made sure he didn't try anything stupid.

When she saw that I had control over things, Lucy came down the stairs, her pistol in her hands, looking around. When she got close, I told her "It's okay - only three tried to get in, and I got the other two. Just keep everybody out of the kitchen, okay?"

Lucy knew what I was saying to her, and answered "I will. What now?"

That question was answered for me by the arrival of what seemed like every cop car in town. A minute later, there was a frantic knocking at the door along with shouts of "Police!"

Lucy went over to the door and checked that it was, in fact, the cops outside - a lot of them, in fact; satisfied, she carefully safed her weapon and opened the door for them.

The first couple of cops inside didn't seem to know how to handle the sight of her standing there with a pistol in her hand, never mind me kneeling *on* someone else with my gun in his face. Their quandary was solved by the appearance of Agent Kristofferson, who told them "She's okay - so is he. The bad guy is the one on the floor; cuff him and read him his Miranda."

With things coming under control again, I saw Lucy almost collapse in on herself in relief. ♦ The cops soon had Frenchy cuffed and standing; only when he was secured was I able to go to her and take her in my arms. I'd barely hugged her when she said "Upstairs!" - and both of us hurried to our bedroom, where I called out to Sandra that it was us - and watched the closet door open to reveal Sandra sitting there with her pistol cocked, apparently ready to do just as I'd told her. Seeing us, she started to cry, but kept enough control to *carefully* let the hammer down on her pistol before standing up.

A few moments later, all four of them were huddled around Lucy and me, crying in relief.

That was how Dale found us a minute or two later. He delicately cleared his throat, and when all of us were looking at him said "We got one more, in a car down the alley; he didn't give us any trouble. With the ones Dan took care of, that accounts for everybody we were after."

He hesitated a moment, then apologetically told me "I'm sorry, Dan."

I looked at him and asked "How did they know?"

He got a mildly outraged look on his face before telling me "There was a police detective that told them - the guy that took your statement at the mall, of all people. He recognized Frenchy's boys, but didn't put it together until a couple days ago."

"You've got him?"

"Oh, yeah - and he already knows he's in deep shit."

I just nodded, and turned back to Lucy and the others. A moment later, Dale turned and left us alone again.

When everyone had mostly gotten over the shock, we made our way back downstairs: Robyn and Sandra holding hands with Lucy and me while Michelle had an arm around Marie. When we got to the bottom of the stairs, we saw that they still hadn't hauled Frenchy off yet. The cops watched closely as Michelle took her arm from around Marie and walked over to him. She looked at him for several long seconds, and then simply spat in his face before turning around and walking away again.

She was again holding Marie when Frenchy angrily told her "I never should have married you, bitch!"

I think all of us were surprised when Michelle just laughed - then told him "Where you're going, **you're** going to be the bitch, tough guy!"

With that, the cops apparently decided it was time for Frenchy to go - he tried to resist a little, but it didn't accomplish anything.

I saw Sandra start for the kitchen, and quickly told her "Don't go in there!"

She stopped and looked at me in curiosity for a moment - then understood that there was undoubtedly a good reason I didn't want her in there. Shortly on the heels of that, she seemed to understand what that reason probably was, and paled - but kept herself together and came back to where Lucy and I each had an arm around Robyn. She moved close to us, and Robyn and Lucy made room for her between them.

Dale looked at me, and said "If you'll keep everybody here or in the living room for a little while, we'll take care of the, uh, mess. Both of them."

I nodded, and gently herded the rest of them into the living room. There, I went about making stiff drinks for Michelle, Lucy, and me - and milder ones for the girls. There wasn't any ice for them, but all things considered, I didn't feel like stepping over the dead guy in the kitchen was worth getting any.

As we sat there, Lucy suddenly had an attack of the shakes - it was only by holding onto it tightly with both hands that she was able to set her drink on the table before all but collapsing in my arms.

I knew what was happening, of course - the same thing that had happened to me after *I'd* had to shoot at someone the first time. I just held her close and did what I could to comfort her; the rest seemed to have a little appreciation for what she was going through, and left both of us alone while they tried to reassure each other.

When she'd calmed down again, Lucy looked up into my face and said "I tried to kill someone tonight", her voice shaking, clearly anguished.

"Only because HE came into **our home**, trying to kill *us*" I reminded her, adding "Maybe you didn't see it, but he had a machine pistol. If you hadn't shot, there was a pretty damn good chance that he would have used it - or tried to."

About that time, Dale stuck his head in to see how we were doing; I made sure Lucy could hear me as I asked him "What was Frenchy carrying?"

Dale raised an eyebrow and answered "MAC-10, with an extended clip. The one outside had an Uzi, and the guy in the kitchen had a Thompson, of all things." I knew he was referring to the old WW-II era Thompson .45 caliber submachine gun.

Lucy listened to that, and I could see her thinking about what might have happened if she hadn't been there, and ready to shoot.

Dale seemed to realize what was happening, and came over, saying "Lucy? If you hadn't been there, and shot when you did, he would have been able to kill all of you several times over; that extended magazine he had holds over FORTY-FIVE rounds. You only did what you *had* to do, and only because **he** forced you into it. Shooting somebody is a long way from anything to be happy about - but the *reason* you had to shoot was RIGHT, if that helps you any."

Lucy looked up at him and nodded; reassured that she'd heard him, Dale looked at me in sympathy and left us again.

After while, Lucy moved off my lap and saw that Robyn - and particularly Sandra - were pretty shaken up. She quickly gestured for them to come over to us; Robyn headed right for Lucy, and Sandra for me. Each of us did what we could to settle them down again - me by quietly telling Sandra how much I loved her, and how proud I was of her. I could feel that she had calmed down considerably when she looked into my face and said "Uncle Dan? Now I understand *why* having Michelle and Marie here was right. I mean, I knew it was right before, hiding them from him; but I didn't really understand WHY. But now I do, and I'm glad that we were able to keep them safe. I was really scared, because I was afraid that you or Aunt Lucy would get hurt - but I knew that I had to help protect Michelle - and especially Marie. I... I didn't want to, but I knew that if he got past you and Aunt Lucy to where we were, I was going to do just like you told me: put my gun in his face and pull the trigger."

I hugged her and said "I'm glad it didn't come to that, dear."

Sandra was ready to get off my lap before Lucy was done with Robyn; when she got up to move, I went over to where Michelle and Marie were, taking them into my arms and doing what I could to let them know that it was finally over, and that everything was going to be okay.

I was still holding them when Dale showed up again. I looked at him and he quietly told me "We, uh, got everything taken care of, so you can move around again if you want to."

There was only a little bit of, um, mess in the kitchen, but we got it cleaned up. There's still a little outside the dining room, so you might want to take care of it, Dan, before anyone goes out there."

I thanked him, and assured him that I'd do just that. Relieved, he looked at us again before clearing his throat and telling all of us "If it helps any, we got all the rest of them; from a quick look at their records, there are a couple dozen kids - some even younger than you three - that are going to be able to get some therapy for what they've been through, and go back to their homes and families. And we've got the evidence we need to put several people away for murder - they're the ones that produced the snuff movies. All told, we - the Bureau, the local cops, and YOU - are going to put a BIG hole in the crime element around here."

I nodded in acknowledgement of what he'd just told us; he didn't get much of a response from anyone else - but didn't seem to expect one, just then. He excused himself after a moment, and left us alone.

At my side, I felt Michelle move, and pulled my arm back so she could get up if she wanted. She didn't, and quickly pulled it back around her waist before telling me "I'm sorry that you and yours got mixed up in all this, Dan - especially with it going this far. I don't reckon I have to say it, but I will: me and Marie, we'll never forget all you've done for us. Not just tonight, but before, too. I'm just sorry you had to learn what Frenchy's like for yourselves; I wish there was some way I could take the hurtin' of that away from you."

Lucy heard what she said, and answered for me by saying "Don't, Michelle. What you did was right - getting yourself and Marie away from him, and doing what you could to see him pay for what he's done to others. I wish it hadn't come to this, too - but it did, and that was Frenchy's choosing, not ours. Now he's going to pay for what he's done. I think maybe you're right about what he can expect when he gets to prison; he's going to be as afraid and abused in there as you were with him - maybe even more. We - all of us - have learned what kind of people you and Marie are, and if we were able to help you, then I'm glad of it."

Michelle looked at her, then Robyn and Sandra, who both silently nodded their agreement with what Lucy had just said. Then she looked at me, and I simply told her "There's a quote from a guy by the name of Edmund Burke: 'The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing'. We couldn't just 'do nothing' for you, any more than you could for Marie - and for the same reasons: because Frenchy is an evil man, and it simply wouldn't be *right* to let him hurt you that way."

Comforted, Michelle leaned against me again, letting me hold her close.

Some time later, Dale came in and told us that everything was done, and that everybody was leaving. He asked if I needed or wanted anybody to stay behind; I just told him that if a patrol car could swing by a little more often, that would be fine. He assured me that

he'd see to it. I eased myself from between Michelle and Marie, and escorted him to the door. There, he told me again how sorry he was that Frenchy had gotten to us. I told him that we'd talk about it later, that the rest of us needed to pull ourselves together, and see if we couldn't get some rest. He said he understood, and left. As he was leaving, I saw a cop car go by, the officer driving it paying close attention to our house.

I went and reset the alarm system, and when it complained about the broken windows, told it to ignore those particular sensors - but to continue to watch everything else. Then I went out to the garage and got a piece of the foam backing board that Robyn had needed for a school project; it was large enough that I could cut and trim it down a little and use it to block off the missing windows, keeping the bugs and such out. I fastened it in place with duct tape (the handyman's secret weapon), and detoured through the kitchen to make sure it was presentable for the others. It was, relieving me considerably. I got all of us something cold to drink, and went back to the living room. Everyone was glad to see what I'd brought with me; Lucy, Michelle, and I went over to fortify ours with a little alcohol while the youngsters used theirs to chill down the weak drinks they still held.

When we were all seated again, Lucy happened to look at the clock and exclaimed "It's only eleven o'clock!" - clearly amazed that it was still that early. Subjectively, I think all of us figured it to be much, much later.

After we'd all pretty much finished our drinks, Lucy stood up and said "I don't know about anyone else, but I think I'm ready for bed. This has been one *hell* of a night!"

The understatement brought smiles to everyone's faces, and we all agreed that it had, indeed. We slowly got up, and holding each other close, the whole troop of us moved upstairs to Lucy's and my bedroom where we gently undressed each other and got into bed.

None of us felt like doing anything more than simply holding each other - and it was a long time before any of us fell asleep.

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The next day, I had workmen come out and start dealing with the aftermath of the night before - replacing the missing windows, patching the holes where Lucy's bullets had hit after grazing Frenchy, and so on. I personally went out and dealt with the mess resulting from the guy I'd shot in the forehead; as I turned the soil in the flowerbed to conceal the bits of brain and bone the others had missed, and carefully hosed the blood off the plants and grass, I could only wonder if something I'd heard was true: that plants seemed to grow better where blood had been spilled - and decided that I'd find out soon enough.

That night, Lucy and I were sleeping alone - Robyn and Sandra were keeping Michelle and Marie company in Marie's room - when I woke up to the sound of Lucy having a nightmare. It take much to figure out what it was about, and I gently woke her up, then held her close as she cried into my chest. Off and on, her nightmares continued for the

better part of a month - and it was the hardest thing in my life to have to wait for them, knowing that there wasn't a damn thing I could do to help but be there for her *after* the fact.

Sandra had a little bit of a haunted look about her for a few days, but gradually found her equilibrium again, becoming the friendly, dignified young lady that all of us loved. Robyn - to no one's surprise, I think - bounced back the fastest; she was simply too friendly and happy to let it get her down for too long.

Michelle and Marie were probably the worst hit by it - and when I talked to Michelle about it, she admitted that it wasn't just Frenchy that bothered her, but guilt over the fact that he'd come into our home to try and get at her and Marie. It was all I could do to convince her that there wasn't anything for her to feel guilty about. Marie was a little bit easier; she was more frightened than guilty - but as things settled back into something resembling a routine, she began to recover, as well.

Dale offered to move Michelle and Marie to someplace else; after Lucy and I assured them that they were welcome to stay, neither one of them wanted anything to do with it, thank you very much: they both told him that they felt safer and more secure in my house than they figured they could anywhere else.

It didn't take long to deal with Frenchy and his buddies; the evidence against them was so overwhelming that every last one of them copped a plea rather than risk a jury trial. Even so, they were all sentenced to lots and lots of time in various prisons. After they were all taken to their various new homes, we were able to relax the security around Michelle - but she still felt better when Lucy or I would accompany her or Marie when they went out.

Dale had made the arrangements for Michelle and Marie to go into Witness Protection; they were a few days from making that move when I got a call from him telling me that he'd just gotten word that Frenchy had been gang-raped in prison. I thanked him for letting me know, and got Michelle off by herself to tell her what had happened. Her only reaction was to tell me "I reckon' he's finally reaping some of what he sowed."

The time that Michelle and Marie left us was a sad one for everybody - Lucy, me, and the girls all loved them, and knew that they loved us. But we also knew that it was for the best; that Michelle and Marie would have new identities and be able to get a fresh start in life *without* the dark cloud of Frenchy hanging over them.

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It was nearly a year later when we got a letter in the mail; the return address was for a Melissa Rockford someplace in Wyoming. Not recognizing the name or place, I opened it up and began to read - and soon realized that it was from Michelle, even though it was written so that it appeared to be meant for someone else.



It seemed that she had been able to go back to school, and gotten some kind of certification or something that let her be a legal aide - and that she was working in a small office that helped people that couldn't afford a regular lawyer. She wasn't making a lot of money at it, but felt so good about what she was doing that it didn't matter: she had more than enough to take care of her and 'Martha', and it made her feel like she was giving back some of what she'd gotten from 'some very close, very special friends'.

She went on to say that Martha was in school, and doing better than anyone had hoped or expected - she was a full grade ahead of where she should have been, something that Melissa credited her 'most special man friend' with making possible. Martha was making lots of new friends - good ones - and that she was generally behaving the way she should - she had a few *very* close friends, was **very** selective about making new ones of either gender, and discrete about any other activities.

She also wrote that she'd met a few guys, and thought she'd found a nice one. He loved her, and doted on Martha; he didn't pressure her to do anything she wasn't comfortable with, and had made it clear that he cared for her for what was in her heart and mind, not her looks. She thought he might be going to ask her to marry him, and she said that she figured she'd say 'yes' - though the one she *really* wanted was already taken, this one was gentle and loving and patient.

Finally, she said she wanted to express her love and gratitude to the friends she'd made, and who had helped her so much and so willingly, even when it had made things extra-difficult for them. She wrote that she'd never forget all of them, and would love them always - just as she knew they loved her.

When Robyn and Sandra got home, I let them read the letter, which made them sad (a little) and happy (mostly) - as it did for Lucy, later.