THE AERIE

Stevie dropped his bike on the lawn and ambled over to the porch, plopping his skinny butt down next to me. “What’s up, Toph?”

“Exactly nothing! Two days into summer vacation and I’m so bored it hurts. What you been doin’?”

“Me? I’m dodging my mom. She’s been after me to clean up the garage. Have you seen that thing? The only way that place is ever gonna get clean is with some gasoline and a match.”

“Yeah? I dare you.”

“Har, Har! Get real! I’m too young to lose my cherry to a bunch of horny convicts with tattoos on their dicks.”

“Hey, who knows, you might like it.”

The strident, fingernails-on-the-blackboard voice of my sister came through the screen door, “Topher, Mom’s looking for you!”

“Come on, Stevie, let’s find someplace else to be.” We headed around the side of the house and sprinted toward the wood that began at the end of our yard. We settled on the far side of a huge old oak where we couldn’t be seen.

I’d always wondered how old that tree was; the trunk had to be at least five feet in diameter. I’d climbed it so often I think I could do it blindfolded.

I was leaning my head back looking up along the trunk and spotted the three branches extending strait out about twenty feet up and remembered that when I was eight or nine I asked my dad if I could build a tree house on them. He put the kibosh on that plan saying I was too young and the branches were too high up.

“Hey! That’s it!”

Stevie jumped up and looked around. “What?”

“Something to do. Come on!” We trotted along the edge of the wood toward town. Ten minutes later we walked into Dad’s hardware store. He was shuffling along the far wall with a clipboard inventorying tools.

“Toph, Stevie, what’s up guys?”

“Dad, remember a long time ago I asked if I could build a tree house in that big oak out back?”

“Yeah, I think I remember something about that. Why?”

“Well, you said I was too small then. I’m nearly sixteen now and I’d still like to build it.”

He looked at me with a kneejerk ‘No’ about to come out of his mouth but I guess he had a change of heart. “Do you have any idea how much work you’re talking about? And the lumber isn’t going to be cheap.”

“I think I can round up enough scrap lumber to do it. Come on, Dad. Look at it from a parent’s point of view. It’ll keep me off the streets and out of trouble.”

He chuckled, “I wonder. Tell you what, you draw up a design for me with proper measurements and a list of supplies and tools. If I think it’s a good plan, I’ll ask Jed Wilson over at the lumberyard to see if he can’t make you a deal on some odds and ends pieces.”

“Great! Thanks, Dad! I’ll work on a plan this afternoon.” Stevie and I turned and headed toward the door when Dad hollered, “Hey! I’m serious, Toph. If you build this thing, it has to be structurally sound. I’m not going to buy off on twenty or thirty boards nailed to a couple of branches.”

“Not to worry, Dad. I’ll come up with a good design.”

As soon as we were outside, I pointed down the street, “Lets go to the library. I need a computer.”

“Toph, there must be at least three computers in your house. Why do you need to go to the library?”

“If I go home, I’m going to be locked up with chores all day. Come on.”

We were amazed! When I googled ‘tree houses’, I quickly had literally dozens of designs right in front of me. Of course, most of them were professionally built, way beyond my carpentry skills, but I found three that I was pretty sure I could handle and, compared to what I originally had in mind, these were castles in the air. I printed off what info there was about them and we headed back to the tree to do some measuring. By the time Dad got home that evening, I’d cobbled together my own design using parts of all three downloaded plans. I included a list of materials and tools and even had an estimate of expenses. He was impressed.

“OK, Toph, it’s got my seal of approval. Do you want my help building it?’

“Maybe some advice if I get stuck on a problem but I’d really like to build it myself. Well, Stevie said he’d help.”

“That works for me but I hope you’re not counting too much on your friend. He’s not exactly the epitome of reliability. Go talk to Jed Wilson tomorrow and see what kind of a deal he can make you on some lumber. I’ll give him a call in the morning. Hell, he might even deliver.”

When I called Stevie the next morning to get started, he found a way to weasel out of it. It’s pretty much what I expected considering he’s absolutely phobic about anything that looks like work. I don’t think I’ve ever seen him actually carry out anything he said he was going to do. Well, one thing; he told me he was going to fail tenth grade and he did. A lot of his time was going to be taken up with summer school.

I headed down to the lumberyard to see Mr. Wilson and beg for what I needed. He looked at the list and shook his head, “Must be some tree house you’re building Toph. I don’t have near enough scrap around here to meet your needs but I might make a deal with you.”

I’m always leery of adults making ‘deals’ with me but I bit anyway. “What kind of a deal?”

“If you give me five good days of work cleaning out the shop out back I’ll provide all the lumber, nails and screws you need and bring it over.”

I couldn’t ask for more than that. “You’ve got a deal! Uh, when do you want me to start?”

“You pick the days but I’d appreciate it if you could squeeze them in over the next three weeks. I’m moving some new machinery in and I’ll need the space. I’ll have Larry load the stuff up today and bring it over. Now, I’m relying on you to keep your word. I don’t think your dad would appreciate getting a bill from me.”

“Thanks, Mr. Wilson. I’ll be here at eight sharp next Monday.”

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When the truck arrived later that morning, I helped Mr. Wilson’s hired man, Larry unload and carry the stuff across the back yard to the tree. I covered it with a plastic tarp to keep it dry. I’d also need about two hundred feet of extension cord for the power tools and a couple of saw horses. I figured I’d get started right after lunch. When I turned to head into the house, I almost ran right into Fran, a girl in my class who lives a couple of houses down.

“Hey Toph, what you gonna build with all that lumber?”

Fran was the class nerd. You know the type; straight A’s, scholarship awards, that kind of stuff. She was nice enough but she wasn’t the kind of person you wanted to be seen hanging out with. She was always dressed like a guy in jeans, T-shirt and sneakers. Sometimes I wondered if she even owned any other clothes. The only thing that had changed about the way she dressed since the first grade was the addition of a bra, although she wasn’t all that big and probably didn’t need one very bad. I’d heard rumors that she preferred girls to boys but then none of the guys I knew had ever asked her for a date. She definitely wasn’t the kind of girl I’d expect to see on the cheerleading squad.

“It’s going to be a tree house.” I pointed to the plans lying near the lumber.

She picked them up and looked them over. Shaking her head, she said, “Huston, we have a problem.”

“What problem?”

“It won’t work.”

“And just what would you know about building a tree house?” She could be so irritating when she rolled her eyes and got that ‘I’m talking to a dumbass’ look on her face.

“I’d know enough not to anchor the floor to three separate tree limbs. The first high wind and it’ll just rip apart.”

“No way! Look at the size of those limbs,” I said, pointing up into the tree.

“You’re anchors are six feet out from the trunk. Look, Einstein, you’re fixing something rigid onto three different things that move independently. Jeez, they’d only have to move an inch or so. You can rest the floor on the limbs but you can’t anchor to them. You have to anchor to the trunk.”

I saw that she had a point but damned if I was going to admit it. “Fran, why don’t you go build you own tree house and let me worry about mine, OK?”

“Sure thing, cowboy. Your funeral if you just happen to be in it on a windy day. Seeya!”

I went to the house and brought back some sandwiches and water. Sitting under the tree, I munched a PB&J and looked over the plans again. The more I thought about what Fran said the more I knew she was right. Then I began to wonder what other little screw-ups I’d committed. I really didn’t want this project to look like something slapped together by Spanky and Our Gang. Eating crow wasn’t my long suit but it was better than having to do everything twice. I walked over to Fran’s house and knocked on the door.

She answered, of course. Fran was the only child of a single mom who was a nurse at a doctor’s office so she was pretty much always home alone on weekdays. “Toph?”

“Uh, Fran, sorry I was such a butt. Would you be interested in helping me build it?”

She thought about it a bit before she answered. “I might, but only if I can be half owner.”

“How do you figure that? I’m the one who has to pay for all the materials and besides, it’s my idea!”

“First of all, your idea is flawed and secondly, I’d be doing half of the work as well as being your design consultant.”

“What do you mean flawed? What’s flawed besides the thing with the limbs?”

“Look, Toph, your design is basically good but it’s got a lot of bugs in it. I’d be happy to sit down with you and rework it. That is, IF I can be an equal partner.”

“No deal! Just forget I even asked!” No way I was giving up half ownership in my tree house that easily. I turned and headed back to study my plans again to see if I could find the ‘bugs’ she was talking about.

As I lay in the grass thinking about how I was going to bolt half a dozen heavy-duty braces to the tree trunk, I felt my resolve slipping. It was going to take at least two people to get the construction materials twenty feet off the ground and fixed into place. What I really needed was a cherry picker or some scaffolding.

“Shit!”

I knocked on Fran’s door again. When she answered, I just said, “Deal!” and turned around and walked back toward the tree. When she arrived like five minutes later, she had a legal pad on a clipboard and a hand-held calculator. Of course, she zeroed in on the first problem like she was reading my mind.

“We need a block and tackle. Can you borrow one from your dad?”

I suppose by now you can see how this was going to go. By the time she had worked over the plans making changes and coming up with a plan to get the floor to support the weight of three times more people than you could pack into the place, I knew I was hopelessly outclassed.

“Jeez, how do you know all of this stuff, Fran?”

“I don’t know. I just see it is all. Like a problem comes up and I get a picture in my mind of the solution. It’s always been like that.”

“I wish I could do that.”

“No you don’t. People would treat you like some sort of weird-o like they do me. You might have noticed I don’t exactly have flocks of friends hanging around me.”

“Yeah? Well maybe you’ll be making tons of money someday while they’re flipping burgers. Who knows? Maybe we’re all a little bit afraid of you.” She smiled at that and it was the first time I ever noticed that she was actually kind of cute. She had dimples.

It turns out Dad had a block and tackle setup stored in the garage. I climbed the tree to about ten feet above where the floor would be and roped it to a stout limb. Once that was in place, things started moving pretty fast. In three days, we had the floor laid down and started hauling up 2X4s to frame in the rest of the house. Fran could swing a hammer and drive screws with a power drill as well as I could. Hell, she could probably do everything as well as I could except maybe pee standing up and I didn’t think I’d want to challenge her on that.

The days were warm and humid, typical for our part of the country. For most of the day we were both drenched with sweat. I had the advantage of being able to take off my shirt. Poor Fran’s clothes just got sopping wet and stuck to her like glue; uncomfortable for her but a bonus for me because I could see her dark nipples showing through the sports bra and T-shirt. I had to force myself to not get fixated on them so I wouldn’t have a perpetual woody.

The more we worked together and the more time I spent with her the more I liked her. There was really nothing weird about her at all. As far as I was concerned, she was about the nicest girl in the whole class and she didn’t try to put on any pretenses; what you saw was what she was. What probably put off a lot of kids at school was that she didn’t sugarcoat her opinions and she didn’t go out of her way to stroke anyone’s ego. I think she kind of liked me because we kidded around with each other a lot.

Thanks in large part to Fran’s suggestions and corrections, it turned into an awesome design. It wrapped about two thirds of the way around the tree and had six exposures, five with screened and shuttered windows that latched on the inside and the sixth on one end with a door facing a six foot by six foot railed porch. While it was anchored to the massive tree trunk, a lot of the weight rested on the limbs with a metal skid plate that allowed them to move back and forth in the wind. A rope ladder was hung from the branch over the house so we could just step off onto the porch. Dad said we could leave the block and tackle in place to haul up heavy stuff like some scraps of furniture. We started out just having four beanbag chairs and a low coffee table, complements of Fran’s mom. By the fourth of July when it was almost done, Dad and Mr. Wilson came out to take a look at it. They liked what they saw. In fact, Mr. Wilson was so impressed that he donated enough shingles to make the roof waterproof. As an afterthought, we put a deadbolt lock on the door; you know, to keep out the riff-raff. Fran and I had the only keys.

I had worked off my debt to Mr. Wilson so Fran and I were finally the proud owners of a very unique and very well-built tree house. She found some house paint in her garage and did the exterior in a cammo design making it nearly invisible through the limbs and leaves. Of course, once Stevie saw that the place was a reality, he wanted in on it. I told him Fran and I would send him an invitation to our housewarming. I think it pissed him off which was no skin off my nose since Fran was my best friend now.

I can’t say when it was that my feelings for her began to change; when it began to sink into my thoughts that Fran felt like more than a friend to me. We had accomplished so much together as a team that she occupied a bigger place in my life than that. Sure, I was aware of her femaleness and didn’t miss many opportunities to ‘check her out’ but I do that with all girls. She was different. The attachment had grown to the point that I wanted to touch her and share things with her. What we were doing with the tree house was so domestic and comfortable I just wanted to be there with her as much as possible. The problem was that I didn’t know if she felt the same way about me.

Though it was originally meant to be a joke, my partner thought we really should have a house warming. We invited my family, her mom and a few kids from school including Stevie who didn’t show. We made some sandwiches and had some chips and dip and sodas. The tree house would hold every one if they didn’t mind being in each other’s personal space. Most everyone just climbed up, looked around, said it was really cool, ate a sandwich and some chips and left. There were the expected smart-ass references to Fran and I playing house but neither of us would rise to the bait. Mom refused to climb the rope ladder but she made us a gift of a couple of old framed rustic prints that we hung on the wall.

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Little by little, Fran and I kind of personalized the place. I built bookshelves on one of the interior walls and we quickly filled them up with our own brands of junk, including a few books. I raided our attic and found some old board games. There were two oil lanterns and even a kerosene heater for cooler days to come. The finishing touch was an official name for the place that Fran had burned into a piece of oak and hung over the door. We decided to call it ‘The Aerie’. I’m a little ashamed to admit that when she first suggested the name, my response was, “What the hell is an aerie?”

You know how it is when you have something new; you fuss with it all the time trying to make it just so. Well, Fran and I fussed for two or three weeks making little changes and additions here and there but as the novelty wore off, The Aerie became just what it was intended to be all along; a place where we could just hang out and feel some separation from the rest of the world. We both loved to read and it was so nice to flop onto a beanbag with a fresh breeze wafting through the screens and get into a good story.

One evening as it was getting dark, I was looking out the windows and saw that there were a few houses directly visible from the Aerie. I hadn’t paid much attention to them before but now they stood out because their lights were coming on and I could actually see into some of them. If you want to call it adolescent behavior, I guess that’s OK since I’m an adolescent, but I couldn’t resist the temptation to spy on people when the chance presented itself. I didn’t want to think too hard about whether I was a pervert or just curious. Personally, I think almost everybody is a little bit of a voyeur if they think they can get away with it.

I happened to be the owner of a better than average telescope that was a Christmas present from a couple of years ago. The next day, I managed to sneak it out of the house and up to The Aerie. I set it up and moved it around from window to window to locate the best viewing spots. I’d be telling a lie if I said I didn’t hope to see some naked female bodies but that wasn’t my only interest. A lot of what I saw around the neighborhood was just plain funny, like a view of Mrs. Andretti’s enormous derriere when she was on her hands and knees working in her flower garden and Joe Allen taking a big stick to his lawnmower because he couldn’t get it to start.

Looking toward my own house, I discovered a perfect view into my sister’s bedroom on the second floor. Of course the blinds were drawn in the daytime heat but I happened to know for a fact that she always had her window open at night. Even though I generally thought of her as the sibling from hell, I thought it might have possibilities since I hadn’t seen her naked body since long before she started growing boobs.

I started to scan around the area for more interesting possibilities when Fran called out from below, “Toph, drop the ladder!”

I moved the telescope away from the window and leaned it against the inside wall before stepping out the door and pushing the ladder off the porch. Even with a pack over her shoulder, she clambered up the ladder like a monkey. “I saw you were here so I thought I’d make us some lunch.”

“Great! Whatcha got?”

“Just some sandwiches and left-over potato salad.” She looked at me with a mischievous grin and added, “I also snuck one of Mom’s beers if you want to split it.”

I grabbed two paper cups off the bookshelf in response. “Won’t she know it’s gone?”

“I doubt it. She doesn’t pay much attention to that kind of thing. I sneak beer every once in a while and she’s never said anything yet. Hey, look at this!” she said, spotting the telescope. “Is it yours?”

I already had my story worked out. “Yeah, I thought we might spot some birds and animals from up here.”

She laughed and poked me on the chest with her finger, “Don’t try to BS me. You brought it up here to spy on people. I would’ve if I had one. What have you seen so far?”

“No, really!” I started to protest but it was obvious she could see through me like a plate glass window. “Well, nothing much so far.”

“C’mon, set it up and let’s look around!”

An hour of searching around didn’t turn up anything worthwhile so we abandoned our surveillance for a game of scrabble. I tried playing chess with her a couple of times thinking it was a game I was pretty good at. With her talent for picturing solutions to problems, she could see so far ahead of me that I didn’t stand a chance. At least she was kind enough that she didn’t rub salt into the wound after she kicked my butt.

In the back of my mind I was thinking there was something different about Fran when she climbed up the ladder but it didn’t hit me until we sat on the floor with the scrabble board between us. She was wearing shorts and a tank top! And no bra! The shape of her small breasts was clearly defined and her nipples made two prominent little bumps on the front of her top. If that weren’t enough to get my hormones churning, she sat with her legs splayed out offering me a clear view of the crotch of her white panties through the legs of her loose fitting shorts.

I forced myself to look away and quipped, “Did your jeans and T-shirt finally wear out?”

“What do you mean?” She apparently didn’t have a clue what I was talking about.

“It’s just that … never mind. Go ahead, you start.”

“OK, um, oh! I-O-N-I-C. How’s that?”

“Jeez, you are so lucky, Fran. I never draw letters like that.” I actually held my own on that game and edged her out in the end even though it was really hard to concentrate because my eyes kept drifting back to her panties and her boobs. If she had any idea I was ogling her body, she didn’t let on. I finally had to adjust my position to lying across the beanbag on my belly to hide the boner that was distorting the shape of my jeans. It also gave me a better view up the leg of her shorts.

We were about to start another game when my cell phone vibrated in my pocket. I had to promise my mom that I would keep it with me when I was in the tree house so she didn’t have to send out a search party every time she needed me for something. I checked the text: ‘*Come home and mow the lawn.’* I forgot that I’d promised Dad I’d have it done by the time he got home.

“Sorry, Fran. Gotta go finish some chores. Later!”

“Seeya. I’ll lock up.”

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After dinner that evening, I headed out the back door saying I’d be at The Aerie.

Mom protested, “I don’t like the idea of you spending so much time out there.”

My dad came to my defense. “Come on, Honey. There’s no harm, is there?”

“I’ve got my phone, Mom. You can reach me if you need me.”

I was out the door and headed across the lawn before she could come up with any more arguments. I pulled the ladder up behind me and opened the windows. I set the telescope up but it was still light out so I doubted there would be much going on in the secret world of people’s bedrooms. It was too dark to read without firing up an oil lantern and I didn’t want to draw attention to myself so laid back in a beanbag with my I-pod and listened to music for a while. Sometimes I just liked to sit in silence in the dark because it was so peaceful there.

In about an hour, people’s lights began to come on. It was time to assume my role as a peeping tom. I saw Mom busy cleaning up the kitchen; nothing interesting there. I looked through Mrs. Andretti’s living room window across the street and saw her squeezed into her recliner watching the tube with her little ankle-biter of a dog in her lap. Keeping my eye to the lenspiece as I moved the telescope looking for lighted windows, I couldn’t really tell which house I was panning across. I passed a window with a visible person in it and backed up adjusting the focus. When I looked up from the lens, I saw that I was looking through one of the upstairs windows in Fran’s house. I locked the scope into place and fine-focused on the inside of the room.

Fran was typing away on her laptop but she was facing the window so I couldn’t see what she was working on. I could see the bottom half of her bed behind her and a full-length mirror on a door on the opposite side of the room. After about fifteen minutes of watching nothing happening, I was feeling bored as well as a little guilty so I unlocked the scope and swung it around to look for other targets.

The light came on in my sister’s room so I locked onto her window. As I predicted, she raised her blind and opened the window wide. She must have had a thing for fresh air. She went to her bureau and pulled open a drawer taking something out and tossing it onto her bed. As I was trying to figure out what she was doing, she turned her back to the window and pulled her shirt over her head. Reaching behind her she unhooked her bra and leaned forward letting it fall off her shoulders. Still with her back to me, she pushed her shorts and panties down and stepped out of them, leaving her bare-assed naked. When she turned around to pick up what I now knew to be her nightgown, all was revealed. She had incredible breasts, probably as big as Mom’s, and a dark patch of hair between her legs. If I had managed to maintain non-sexual thoughts about my sister before this, those days were gone forever. Then she pulled the nightgown over her head and body killing the moment.

In spite of everything I knew to be brotherly and decent, I’d sprung a boner looking at my sister’s very sexy body. When you’re fifteen going on sixteen, there’s no other relief for my condition but to jerk off. So I did, shooting my stuff into a paper cup so I wouldn’t leave traces of my self-abuse on the floor. As I was stuffing my dick back into my underwear, my cell phone buzzed. It was from Mom, of course: ‘*Come in Toph – it’s time for bed.*’

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I was hopelessly hooked. Lying there in bed, I could only think about what else there might be out there for me to spy on. I crawled out of the sack and pulled on my jeans and sneakers. Creeping down the stairs, I remembered to step on the outside of the fourth stair down so it wouldn’t squeak.

When I opened the window shutters on the Aerie and looked around the neighborhood, I was surprised to see Fran’s light was still on. I knew it was after midnight so I guessed she was one of those people who are nightowls.

I focused the scope on her window and saw she was moving around the room. Following her, my eye caught the mirror across the room and stopped. There was something written on it in red letters. When I got focused on the printing, I read: Hi Toph. Text me if you’d like company. 4886.

Busted! How the hell did she know I was here? I put my eye back to the lens and looked again. She was busy doing something but she never once looked out the window. This was so weird! What was she up to? Maybe she didn’t even know I was here but then, why would she write that on her mirror? My first inclination was to lock up and go back to bed but the message was enticing: ‘Text me if you’d like company.’

In the end, I couldn’t let it go by. I texted: *How did you know I was here?*

I saw her stop what she was doing and pick up her phone off the desk. When she read the text, she smiled and waved at the window. She punched something into the phone and my phone buzzed soon after. *I didn’t – I’ll be over in a minute.*

I watched her trot across the lawn dressed in her normal jeans and T-shirt. She climbed up the ladder holding something in her hand. It turned out to be a thermos of hot chocolate. “Hey, Toph. Want a cup?”

“Uh, sure.”

She poured a cup for each of us.

“Come on, Fran. How’d you know I’d be here?”

“I didn’t know for sure but I knew you couldn’t resist checking me out with the telescope sooner or later.”

Even in the dim moonlight, I guess she could see that I was blushing. “Don’t get all upset now. I was counting on it as you could see by the message on the mirror. Did you think I didn’t see you looking at me when we were playing scrabble?”

Now I was **really** embarrassed “I’m sorry, Fran. I shouldn’t have done that.”

“And why not?”

“I guess it was kind of rude of me.”

“I disagree, Toph. I’d say it was kind of normal of you. Especially after I went to so much trouble to put myself on display. How often have you seen me wear shorts or go braless?”

“Are you saying you wanted me to look at you like that?”

“Bingo! The light comes on. I doubt you’ve taken any classes in proper etiquette for young ladies but surely you noticed I was sitting in a very unladylike posture.”

“Well, yeah, I guess.”

Fran heaved a big sigh. “I can see I’m going to have to be the aggressor here. Toph, would you like to see more than you saw earlier?”

I felt my heartbeat suddenly doubling and my breath get stuck in my chest. I could only manage a hoarse whisper, “Yeah, I guess so.”

She giggled. “Your cute.”

Setting her cup of hot chocolate down on the table, she lit one of the oil lamps and carried it as she closed all the shutters, then hung it in a far corner leaving only a dim, indirect light where I was standing. When she stood in front of me again, she leaned forward and kissed me softly on the lips.

“Here’s the only rule. This is a game of ‘I’ll show you mine if you show me yours”. I take off something then you take off something. Oh, wait, there’s another rule. We can’t actually fuck unless you have a condom, OK?”

Holy crap! Did the word ‘fuck’ actually come out of her mouth? “OK,” I rasped. “You first.”

She lifted up one foot and pulled off her sneaker. I did the same. Then we both dropped the other shoe. Next came her jeans. I took off my T-shirt. When she pulled her shirt over her head, her breasts were bare. They looked perfect in the dim light, small and round and perfectly formed with quarter sized, puffed-out aureoles and nipples that stuck out another quarter of an inch. It was my turn. When my jeans were around my ankles, the large protrusion in my boxers was the object of both our attention. That got a lascivious grin out of her.

She moved a step closer and hooked her thumbs in the waistband of my boxers, very slowly sliding them down my legs. My dick was as hard as it had ever been and pointed directly at her boobs.

“OK, now you have to take mine off.”

I kneeled on the floor in front of her and slid her panties over her flared hips and down to her ankles. Directly in front of my face was a patch of dark, curly hair that disappeared between her long legs.

“You can touch me if you want, Toph.”

I stood and reached out both hands, my shaking fingers brushing against her nipples, making them harden and protrude even more than they had been. As I continued to explore the shape and feel of her young breasts, I felt her warm fingers close around my dick and slowly slide up and down its length, making me feel light-headed and weak.

I looked around and spotted the beanbags and decided that they would do for a bed. “Let’s put them together.” We dragged them into place and lay on our sides facing each other.

I wanted her so bad my balls ached but I was still reluctant to just reach out and grab what she was offering.

“Close your eyes, Toph. I’m about to give you a proper kiss.” As my eyes closed, she pushed me onto my back and I felt her body moving over my chest. At first her lips just touched mine but then I felt her tongue slide across them and push gently inward searching around inside my mouth. I guess that was the final cue my brain needed to become fully functional because, from then on, I didn’t need any more coaxing. My arms slid around her and pulled her tightly against my chest. My hands rubbed her back and caressed her cute, silky smooth butt as she found my dick again and held it, her thumb smearing my pre-cum over the head.

She lifted her head and asked, “Do you look at a lot of porn on your computer?”

There was no lying to this girl, “Sure, do you.”

“Of course. I asked because, if you did, we should both know pretty much what to do, shouldn’t we?”

“Uh, yeah, but I wouldn’t mind a little hint here and there.”

“OK. Here’s a hint. I’d like you to suck on my boobs and lick my pussy.”

“I can do that!” Pushing her over onto her back, I attached my mouth to one of her breasts and slid my hand between her legs. The feeling of her nipple hardening in my mouth and the wetness of her sex stirred me to a level of passion I’d never felt before. I kept humping my hard dick against her leg as I moved from one breast to the other and found the entrance to her vagina, sliding two fingers in and out as she clamped down on them. I needed to taste her.

My mouth let go of her boob and I slid off the beanbag, moving between her legs and planting my nose in her bush, licking up an down her slit like a starved person getting the last scrap of the plate. That got her making soft little animal sounds, especially when my tongue made contact with the little hard button at the top of her slit. A few minutes of assaulting her pussy brought her to what I guessed was an orgasm. She pulled my face hard between her legs as her whole body jerked in a series of spasms.

When she finally relaxed, she said, “Get back up here; it’s your turn!”

The moment I was on my back on the beanbag, she was on the floor between my legs pumping my dick. When she leaned over and took it into her warm, wet mouth, I thought I’d died and gone to heaven. No jerk-off session ever came close to this. The feeling was enhanced by the sight of her lips sliding up and down, taking in at least half of it. She hadn’t made more than a dozen strokes with her mouth before I threw back my head and groaned, “I’m about to cum, Fran!” My balls squeezed up against my crotch as I unloaded gobs of stuff into her mouth. I looked down and watched, not believing my eyes as she swallowed it all and tried to suck out even more.

When she looked up at me and smiled, I reached under her arms and pulled her up onto my body, hugging her and kissing her like there was no tomorrow. I guess neither of us could find the words to express what we were feeling so we just grinned at each other like a couple of idiots. After a few minutes of holding each other, we got dressed and finished our cold hot chocolate.

We stood on the porch as I locked the door. “It’s really nice having our own place, isn’t it Fran?”

“I was just thinking that. We need to come up with something more comfortable than the beanbags, though. Got any ideas?”

“I’ll work on it.”

When we got to the ground, we held a long, sensual kiss and said ‘Good night.’

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Mr. Wilson was so pleased with the work I did for him that he called Dad and asked if it would be OK if I worked for him five half-days a week until school started again. Dad thought it was a good idea, in fact he took the opportunity to help me set up my own checking account figuring it was about time I learned to manage my own money; not that the two hundred a week I got paid was all that much to manage. I even got a debit card to withdraw cash from the ATM.

One of my first purchases with my first paycheck was a six-inch foam pad for The Aerie. I’m sure you can guess what I had in mind. I told Dad it was to put under my sleeping bag when I overnighted in the tree house. During the day it would be rolled up and covered with a blanket to use as a makeshift couch. I guess he bought it but he got kind of a little smirk on his face when I told him. The fact that it was twice as wide as was necessary for a sleeping bag and the growing closeness between Fran and me probably wasn’t lost on him.

It seemed if Fran or I didn’t have something specific like work or chores or projects going, we were at The Aerie. Other kids would come by sometimes just to hang out for a while but it was usually just one or both of the owners. As you might guess, we’d had several requests from our friends to borrow it or even rent it for an evening but we’d decided early on that that wasn’t going to happen. The last thing we wanted was for our little retreat to get a reputation as a ‘make-out’ spot; Fran and I excluded, of course.

Isn’t it weird that older people believe they have an exclusive right to be in love? If you ask them what being in love feels like, they describe exactly what Fran and I felt for each other but if we say we’re in love, they laugh and say it isn’t real love, just a teen-age crush. Go figure! Well, whatever it’s called, Fran and I couldn’t seem to find enough time to spend with each other. I felt like I lit up inside every time I saw her and missed her something awful when we were apart. It was hard keeping our hands off each other when other people were around but we decided between us to try not to raise any unnecessary suspicions about what we might be doing when we were together in The Aerie.

After that first incredible night, even a passing thought of actually doing it with Fran would cause me to pop an instant boner. The first time we actually went all the way was a few days later after she invented some lame excuse to drop in at the doctor’s office to ask her mom about something and took the opportunity to sneak a handful of condoms from the fishbowl when the receptionist wasn’t looking. That afternoon she sent me a text: *Meet me at The Aerie tonight. Got a surprise.*

I told Mom I was going to sleep overnight in the tree house since the weather was nice. She had her usual concerns about my spending too much time there of course, but she grudgingly let it pass because she didn’t have any good arguments against it. Fran had grown up so independent and was so intelligent and mature that her mom didn’t really worry much about her behavior or her motives.

All that evening, I was so antsy guessing what the surprise might be that I could hardly finish dinner and even passed on dessert prompting Mom to ask if I was feeling all right. I said I was just tired from work and not all that hungry. I headed out the door with my sleeping bag saying that I was going to read for a while and get to sleep early for a change.

When I got to the Aerie, the door was still locked so I knew Fran wasn’t there yet. When I unlocked and stepped inside, I saw that she had been. The foam pad had been unrolled and made up into a bed with sheets, a blanket and two pillows. Something had been placed on the pillows. I thought she’d done a hotel thing and left mints but a closer look showed them to be two condoms. This was going to be the night!

I opened the window and lit the oil lamps since I was expected to be reading. The sounds of crickets and birds contributed to the perfect atmosphere. I took a book off the shelf and tried to read while I waited for her but it was no good. I must have read the same paragraph ten times and still couldn’t have told you what it said. I was so anxious for her to arrive I was close to hyperventilating. Finally, I couldn’t stand it any longer and sent a text: *I’m waiting – I want you.*

A minute later, my phone buzzed with a return message: *Give me another hour – I want you too. XXX.*

An hour! It seemed like forever. I was pacing the room like an expectant father (perish the thought) when I spotted a paper bag on the bottom bookshelf. When I opened it, there was a bottle of wine, two wine glasses wrapped in paper towels and two sticks of incense. Oh, I loved this girl so much! I unwrapped the glasses and set them on the coffee table and lit one of the sticks of incense. I think it was sandalwood. I also killed one of the lanterns leaving only a dim, soft yellow light.

After what seemed like an eternity, I heard her coming up the ladder. I met her on the porch and took the bag she was carrying. We brought up the ladder and shared a big kiss and hug before we were even inside.

She sniffed the incense and spotted the glasses and wine setting on the table. “I see you found my surprises.”

Grinning, I said, “Yeah, I wish I’d thought of something special to bring.”

“You did, silly!” She nodded at the bed.

“Oh, yeah.”

“I’ve got another surprise but you have to turn around and not peek, OK?”

I turned around and shut my eyes. I heard the rustle of the paper bag and her moving around behind me and tried to imagine what she might be about to spring on me.

“OK, you can look now.”

I turned and looked at a dream. My girl stood there in the soft glow of the lantern in a very sheer, very short, baby blue nightie; so different from the way I was used to seeing her that I just stood there like a slack-jawed yokel gaping at the sight.

“You like?” Her big smile punctuated by her dimples. I’d remember this image for the rest of my life.

“Oh, Fran, that is so sexy! I can’t even imagine anyone more beautiful.” I reached out and let my fingertips touch her pretty face and drift down to caress the silky material over her cute little breasts. As much as I constantly lusted after her, this sight took me to a whole new level of want.

Her arms circled around my neck, pulling my face down to meet hers in the sweetest kiss ever. What I was feeling inside had to be the perfect definition of love. I didn’t just want to have sex with her, I wanted us to possess each other totally.

When she felt my erection poking into her tummy, she stepped back and looked at the considerable bulge in my jeans and giggled, “Lets go slow, Romeo. How about a glass of wine to start the evening?”

“I’d love some.” I picked up the bottle and looked at her feeling a little bit at a loss; it was a cork instead of a screw-top. She reached down and picked up her jeans, extracting a corkscrew from the pocket and handing it to me. The wine had a golden color to it. I filled each glass half way and handed her one as I raised mine in a toast.

“Here’s to us.”

“To us.”

Drinking wine was a rare event in my life and I’d never tasted anything like this before. It was a wonderfully mellow sweet taste. The label said it was a sauterne, whatever that was, but I liked it.

Fran slid her arm around my waist and guided me toward our bed. Taking our glasses and setting them on the floor, she turned her attention to making me naked. Can there be anything more sensuous than the girl you’re about to make love to slowly stripping you to the bare skin? By the time I stepped out of my underwear, my dick was screaming for attention but Fran had other plans.

“Lie down on your tummy and let me give you a nice back rub.”

As a masseuse, as well as almost everything else, she was an adept. She straddled my butt so that every time she slid forward or back I could feel her bush brushing against my skin. I could only sigh and moan in pleasure as her soft hands rubbed my neck and shoulders for a while, then kneaded the muscles of my back. Every once in a while her fingers would take a little detour and move down the crack of my butt and tickle my balls, giving my dick a new charge of blood, as if it needed it. Moving further down my body, she massaged the muscles in my butt and legs with firm pressure and squeezes, finishing up with a foot rub.

“Roll over, Rover. Lets see what the other side looks like.”

I plopped onto my back, my dick looking like a pole leaning in the wind. This time when she straddled my hips, I could feel her pussy rubbing against my balls and the base of my dick as she massaged my chest. “If you keep doing that, I going to shoot all over us both.”

“Fire when ready, soldier! Just give me a warning so I can catch it.”

“But I want to save it for when I’m in you.”

“I plan to be here for a while, don’t you? I know from personal experience that you’re good for more than one go around.”

“Well, you’d better move fast because here it comes!” I panted, thrusting my hips up against her. She slid down my legs and grabbed my dick, sliding her mouth over the head just as I let loose with several shots of cum and a loud groan to put an exclamation point to it.

When she finally had taken it all and let me slip from her mouth, she said, “You need to learn to control the volume unless you want the cops out here investigating strange sounds in the neighborhood.”

“I’ll just tell them I stubbed my toe. How about we trade places and I put my hands all over your body for a while?”

“Nope. That’s for another night. Tonight I do you, then you’ll owe me big time. Lie back and let’s see how long it takes you to come back to life.

She continued the massage starting at my right shoulder and moving slowly down my arm to my hands and finally to each individual fingertip. The left one was next. Can you believe it? By the time she was rubbing my belly, my dick was standing proud and ready for action again. I guess she was ready too because, as she slid her pussy up and down my leg, she left a wet trail. We both took the hem of her nightie and lifted it over her head. There was a wicked grin on her face as she tore the foil packet from the condom a millimeter at a time. I bet she’d practiced on a cucumber because she laid it on the tip of my dick and expertly rolled it down the shaft like she’d done it a thousand times.

“Is this a first for both of us, Toph?”

“It is for me.”

“I’ve been pleasuring myself too long to still have an intact hymen, but I want you to know you’re the first guy to ever make love to me.” She moved up my body, her knees on either side of my waist. Reaching between her legs, she found my dick and moved the head up and down her slit getting it well lubed. I kept my hands on her hips as she aimed me at the opening to her vagina and began doing short strokes, moving me into her a little bit at a time. The sensation of slowly sinking into her warmth was so much more than I could have imagined. When I had penetrated her totally and our pubic hair pressed together, she stopped moving. We said nothing because there was nothing to say. The looks on our faces said more than poems or books, the ecstasy of our union beyond verbal expression. When she began moving up and down my shaft again, she took two fingers of my right hand and rubbed the tips over her erect button showing me what she wanted. With my other hand I caressed her breasts and teased her nipples. She kept the pace slow and even, sinking down to take in every bit of my cock, then lifting her body until I nearly slipped out.

I wanted the feeling to last forever but a few minutes of moving our bodies against each other pushed us to the inevitable culmination. With her nostrils flaring and her breathing ragged, she sank down on me and circled her arms tightly around my neck, rolling over and pulling me on top of her. Our bodies clung together while our hips slammed together faster and faster in a frenzied rush to bring ourselves and each other the greatest of pleasures. She threw her legs around my waist and pulled me into her as my body stiffened and exploded in an eruption that left me weak and gasping for breath.

I gradually softened and slipped out of her, wetting the sheet beneath us with her juices. When I rolled off her onto my side, she turned her back to me and spooned against my body, pulling my hand over her side to cup her breast.

“I think I could get used to this, Toph. How about you?”

“Call me a addict.” I kissed her hair and her shoulders. “I wonder if you know how much I love you.”

“I have some idea but it’s very nice to hear you say it. I wonder if you know I feel the same way.”

“How long can you stay tonight?”

“I was hoping we could spend the whole night. Mom knows where I am so I don’t have to worry about sneaking in.”

I raised myself up on my elbow and looked at her in alarm. “Your mom knows about this?”

“She knows. We talked about it tonight. Don’t worry, Toph, she won’t rat you out to your parents. Mom knew it would happen sooner or later and she happens to like you a lot so she’s pleased with my choice. Her biggest concern is that I don’t get knocked up. In fact, she said she’d buy us a box of condoms so we’d have no excuse for doing anything stupid.”

I lay back down and kissed her neck. “That is so cool. My mom would go ballistic if she found out. Actually, I think Dad already suspects but he’s not near the moral tight-ass Mom is.

“Be nice, now. I think your mom is sweet. She just wants to protect her baby boy.”

“Yeah, I know but she probably thinks I should be a virgin until I get married.”

“Guess she’s lost that battle, hasn’t she?”

A very pleased smile spread across my face, “I guess she has.”

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By the time school started, word had already gotten around that Fran and I were an item. We didn’t take every available opportunity to publicly display our mutual affection like kids that age often did but usually, if you saw one of us, the other was either in class or nearby.

Something about both of us must have changed over the summer. Guys were looking at Fran differently than they did before. Part of it might have been the way she dressed, wearing designer jeans and more fashionable tops but I think it was probably the difference in the way she carried herself. She didn’t walk around looking at the floor to avoid making eye contact like she did before. It was probably a lot of things but the sum total was that she just looked really good.

As for me, somehow I just felt a lot more grown up. I continued working for Mr. Wilson after school so I’d have at least some independent income. Maybe that and my relationship with Fran marked the transition from boyhood to young adulthood. I can’t say for sure but I do know I looked at the world from a different perspective.

So how long did we last as a couple? So far it’s been over ten years. We were married a month after we graduated from University. We were split up for a while because she had to attend a different campus to get her degree in civil engineering. Now we have a baby girl of our own. The Aerie is still there. We never pass up an opportunity to spend some time in it when we visit our folks.

A lot of guys would say that I missed out on a lot by not playing the field for a few years but why would I do that when I already had the perfect girl?

END