**City Girl in the Desert**

by[YDB95](https://www.literotica.com/stories/memberpage.php?uid=1345851&page=submissions)©

"Uptown Sophisticate" was my self-designated title at our wonderfully bland suburban high school, forever emblazoned on my senior page beside a picture of me in a slinky dress and black tights and all the cheap jewelry I could afford on my allowance.  
  
"Pretentious bitch" was my detractors' behind-the-back name for me.  
  
I was aware of it and I didn't care. I couldn't wait to leave behind the teenage wonderland of cookie-cutter houses and lame house parties and football games for the big city. If I couldn't get out until at least college, I could at least dress the part and act it as best I could.  
  
I used to keep a running tally of how many days I could go without wearing jeans, and senior year I managed to never wear them. Naturally the first one to notice was my best friend, Katie, a couple of months into the year. "Do you even own any jeans anymore, Christie?" she'd asked in that innocent drawl of hers.  
  
"Of course," I'd said. "I might need to break down and wear them in winter. But we'll see if I can avoid it!"  
  
"God, don't let my mother hear you say that next time you come over!" Katie had said. "She's always after me to wear skirts more often. I can just hear her asking me already, why I can't be more like you!"  
  
A decade later, having long since lost touch with all my high school friends except Katie, that comment still stung. If only Katie knew how many times my parents had said the same thing to me about her! My best friend since about the fourth grade, the quiet and innocent one who didn't even seem to notice she had breasts for the first few years she did, who mostly seemed happy in plain sweaters and jeans and who showed no interest in dating until Jimmy Newton asked her to prom and even then didn't even notice what a knockout she was in her royal blue gown. Shorter than I and a little heavy, but she wore it well, usually a better student than I was until I decided in ninth grade that I wanted to go away to college after all, the brainiac to my fashion hound, the nerd to my princess, she and I made an odd couple but an inseparable one all through those boring years back home.  
  
Our fifth grade teacher called us Mutt and Jeff because I was three heads taller, and she never quite caught up and so the name stuck. We hated it, but I've got to admit it fit.  
  
That comment about wearing more skirts was hanging heavy in my mind that early spring morning at the coffeehouse as I waited for her. In the ten years since high school, we'd seen each other on holidays in college and occasionally afterward -- just enough to know we'd both grown up a lot, but not everything had changed -- and now that life had finally blown her back my way for a semester in New York, but her studies and my job had kept us both too busy to get together yet. It had probably been at least two years, I mused over my latte, and I wondered if the butterfly had finally come out of her cocoon.  
  
"Christie!"  
  
I looked up and saw it still hadn't happened, even as I jumped up to hug my old friend. No surprise that she was wearing jeans while I was in a skirt and tights, or that she still had the plain long hair she'd worn all through high school while I had a stylish short 'do, and we both laughed at just how much hadn't changed in all that time.  
  
"Nice hair," she said, plopping down across the tiny table from me. She'd lost most of her baby fat over the years, and now looked curvy and robust rather than fat. I was a little envious, to my great surprise. I've been a loyal gym-goer and my figure is slim and beautiful, but sometimes I do think it'd be fun to actually need a bra and to have hips.  
  
"Thank you," I said, patting it with my left hand. "Jean-Charles came very highly recommended by a girlfriend of mine at the gym. He had a six-month waiting list and it set me back two hundred dollars, but you can see it was worth it!"  
  
Katie laughed and quickly turned away to wave down the waiter and order a hot chocolate. "Wow, you sure haven't changed!" she said as soon as we were alone together.  
  
"Neither have you," I said. "Hot chocolate? Don't you know how full of calories that is?"  
  
"Hey, I go swimming at the university gym every day," she said. "I refuse to starve myself."  
  
"Well, you do want to look good in a swimsuit, don't you, if you're going to wear one every day?"  
  
"I'm there to swim, Christine, not to show off. Besides, I get my share of looks from the guys."  
  
"I hope that's all you're getting from them," I said. There was no way Katie knew how to fight off a jerk like I could.  
  
"Most of them are fine," Katie said. "Pleasant looks and conversation, and it's not like I'm not checking them out, too." She giggled, just like back in high school. "Speaking of which, I can bring a guest if you want to join me one of these days."  
  
"No thanks." The poor thing didn't need these guys she was flirting with to see me in my bikini, after all; they'd never give her another look.  
  
"Oh, right, you never did learn to swim, did you?"  
  
"That too." It slipped out.  
  
"That too?" Katie asked. "That and what else?"  
  
"Oh, well, I mean, too busy at work," I said. "Lately it's a pleasant surprise if I get home before seven o'clock. In fact, I'm seriously considering a leave of absence for the summer. It'd be good to get out of New York anyway. Lately I'm feeling like one of those natives who never sets foot off Manhattan, you know?"  
  
"You look like one, too, Miss Uptown Sophisticate." Katie was lucky the waiter arrived with her cocoa at that moment, and she looked up and thanked him.  
  
"You're the only one I'd let get away with that one, kiddo!" And then only because I'd nearly let my concerns about outshining her at the pool come to light. But fair's fair.  
  
"I'm blunt because I love you, of course," Katie said, sipping her drink. "But listen, I was thinking of asking anyway, I've got a fellowship to study in Abu Dhabi this summer and I'll be staying at that commune out in the desert."  
  
"What commune?"  
  
"The one I stayed at last time, remember? Two years ago?"  
  
"Oh, okay." I didn't remember it at all, but then Katie's studies had flung her all over the place.  
  
"Right," she said. "Anyway, if you want to come spend a few weeks there..."  
  
"Are you kidding, Katie?! They hate women over there, or at least women like me! I'd probably be stoned to death the minute I got off the plane!"  
  
"It's not like that!" Katie said. "Especially not at the commune. It's mostly Westerners anyway, and they're all really openminded. Maybe too much so for you, actually."  
  
"What's that supposed to mean?"  
  
"Only one way for you to find out, isn't there?" Katie grinned. "To tell you the truth, it's nothing like your style. But I think you could use a little taste of it, to be frank."  
  
"Do you, now?" This was most unexpected of my wonderfully plain old friend. "Then maybe I ought to come over. Fine."  
  
"Wonderful," Katie said, and she looked like she meant it. "But I think you ought to practice your swimming between now and then. We spend a lot of time in the pool there, and you don't want to miss out on that."  
  
"I don't suppose I do," I admitted. But now her giddy confidence had me a little worried. "Tell me, if you don't mind my asking, you've slimmed down a lot. Are you wearing a bikini these days?"  
  
"Thank you, but you'll just have to wait and see what I wear to the pool."  
  
She had that same twinkle in her eye as she said it that she'd always had when some boy I liked had given her the eye. I wondered why, but I didn't dwell on it.  
  
What I did do was tell her all about my latest beau, Ronald. "He's a day trader, and the hours are ridiculous," I said. "But it does pay. You should see his car. First time he asked me out, I thought he looked a little nerdy, to tell you the truth. Lucky him, I'd overheard him telling another guy he drove a Jaguar, so I gave him a shot. He bought me this, too." I held my hand out and let her admire my new pinkie ring. "Great in the sack, too, when I'm willing to go to bed early anyway."  
  
"I don't need to know, Christine," Katie said.  
  
"Oh, we're girlfriends, Katie, it's okay!" I said. "He's great, but I wish he was up for more than once a night sometimes. That old joke about how the man always rolls over and falls asleep? I never had that happen before, but with Ronald it does. I even try tickling his balls sometimes to wake him up, and --"  
  
"Christine, please!" Katie whined.  
  
"Oh, all right, Katie, you always were a bit of a prude." I stood up. "I'm running late for my waxing anyway. I suppose you don't want to hear about that either."  
  
"I don't even want to think about that," Katie said. "Doesn't it hurt like hell?"  
  
"You mean you've never done it?" I'd seen my dear friend in the locker room enough times to know she needed it a lot more than I did. "Katie, I insist on making you an appointment before we go to your commune."  
  
"No way, Christine. I'm happy with the way I look, finally."  
  
"Don't you want the men at the commune to notice you at the pool?"  
  
"That's not something I've got any concerns about, Christine." She sounded chilly for some reason. She never did have an ear for when I was only trying to help.  
  
I checked my watch; Charlene did not like to be kept waiting. "All right for now, darling," I said. "But let's at least think about it before summer, okay?" I leaned over and kissed her cheek, and she did the same but didn't answer me.  
  
"I really ought to drag her to Charlene's before this trip of ours," I called to Ronald that night as I was getting changed in his bathroom.  
  
"Soundproof door, babe," he reminded me. So I finished changing into my nightie in silence, safely tucking away my clothes in my overnight bag. We'd only been together a month or so; I look beautiful in my underwear but I wasn't ready for him to see that just yet.  
  
Besides, I reminded myself as I admired my freshly bald womanhood in the mirror, great beauty should be revealed all at once, not gradually. The better to knock his socks off with.  
  
As I stepped out into his bedroom with my head held high and my body bare, I saw I couldn't knock his socks off, because he already wasn't wearing any. Or anything else. "Well, hello there!" he said in a silly effort at a sexy purr as I took my turn around the bed for him. "Somebody's happy to see you," he added, waving his dick at me the way he always did, which had the unfortunate effect of reminding me once again that he wasn't as well-endowed as I'd have liked. Jaguar, I reminded myself as I smiled through my disappointment. The rest of his body wasn't too bad, at least. A bit on the skinny side and no tan at all, but he did work out -- about a six. A six but a day trader with a Jaguar.  
  
"Now what were you saying?" he asked, rubbing himself like a teenager. I decided to let him.  
  
"I was saying I ought to drag Katie to Charlene's with me before that trip," I said. "For a waxing." I ran my fingers over my pussy. "She'll be sorry if she doesn't, you know, spending a summer at the pool with me there."  
  
"The way you talk about her, would that be enough anyway?" Ronald asked. "Isn't she kind of a girl-next-door?"  
  
"She's not a pretty woman," I admitted. "But that's no excuse not to try, you know? Sometimes I feel like asking her, don't you know how hard I work to be this beautiful? This summer I guess she'll have to take notice. But enough about Katie, Ronald." I climbed onto the bed. "You gonna bring that over here or what?"  
  
"But of course!" He finally let go of himself and reached over for me as I lay back beside him.  
  
Ronald was better than a six in bed -- maybe an eight or so. He did know how to fondle my breasts just right, and my sighs of pleasure were genuine as he kissed and caressed them. His timing before his hands and his mouth headed south were pretty good, too -- long enough to get me wet but not to get me frustrated before he reached down and rubbed my pussy. "Ooohhhh, feels great!" I cooed, and it did. His fingers were a little clumsy down there, but Charlene had done a great job as usual and even his uncertain touch was lovely on my nice smooth skin.  
  
He remembered I liked two fingers, and his agility was better inside than out. "Ohhf!" My gasp was real, as were the following moans. If only he could bend his dick like he could his fingers! I closed my eyes to enjoy the sensation, so I didn't realize he was going down on me until I felt his kisses on my belly. That gave me the usual good-news-bad-news flutters, but at least the good news came first.  
  
Ronald was a ten with his tongue. He was enough to make me wish I could settle for that alone. I never could, but at least my pleasure was real as he licked and kissed me all over my pussy. My sexual responsiveness is excellent, but I try not to overdo it with a guy like Ronald. It's all too easy for him to notice I'm not nearly as boisterous when he's inside me. It's not like he can help being at least an inch too small, and I hate having to remember to fake it. So I did my best to hold back on just how wonderful that tongue of his felt on my clit.  
  
Wonderful, though, it was, and he got me off all too soon. "Thank you!" I sighed. I tried to reach over and grab some tissues from the bedside table before he raised his head, but naturally being a man he always had to pop up right away.  
  
I smiled through my impending revulsion as he lay down on me, and tried to focus on the pleasure -- such as it was -- of his dick inside me at last. It was better than nothing. "Mmm, lovely, Ronald," I whispered.  
  
He leaned in for a kiss, and I tried to act like there was nothing wrong. But his face was absolutely glistening with my wetness, and I just couldn't. "Stop!"  
  
"What?" He stopped his tentative humping and hovered just over me.  
  
"This is what." I wiped his face with both of my hands, getting as much of the wretched stuff off as I could. "Okay, now you can kiss me," I said.  
  
"May I, now?" And he did. The taste of myself on his tongue was utterly disgusting, but I reminded myself it could have been worse as I let him nibble my lips and lick my teeth.  
  
I do prefer being on top, but I find I put on quite a show when I'm that much in control, and Ronald wasn't ready to see that much of me. Besides, his timing wasn't bad, and he did have me worked up pretty well with his humping. I let go and enjoyed his modest penetration for what it was, and he did bring me off twice before he came.  
  
"Wonderful, dear," I said, waving off another kiss from him as he pulled out.  
  
"You're beautiful, Christine," he said.  
  
"Thank you."  
  
"Going to shower again?"  
  
"Of course." I got up as soon as he was off me.  
  
"Don't you just want to fall asleep together for once?" he asked as I headed for the bathroom.  
  
"I can never fall asleep that fast anyway," I said.  
  
I saw Katie a few more times before summer came, but never got a chance to introduce her to Ronald as he called it off a few weeks after that night. "Probably just as well," I told Katie when we got together for cocktails in May. "Playboys never know a treasure even when it's in their arms!"  
  
"I'm sure you told him what a treasure you were, though," Katie said.  
  
"What's that supposed to mean? Ronald wasn't blind, he didn't need me to tell him!"  
  
Katie laughed. "God, Christine, you're never going to change, are you?"  
  
"Why would I want to? So I knew what I wanted for my life when we were kids. What's wrong with that?" I sipped my drink. "Besides, it's just as well. Ronald was only a six. I can do better. Eight in bed, though."  
  
"Here we go again," Katie said.  
  
"Katie, girlfriends talk! No holding back! Or are you jealous? How long has it been?"  
  
"About eight months," Katie admitted. "And he was more than an eight in bed, I'll tell you that much."  
  
"How do you know?" I didn't bother saying there was no way shy, demure little Katie could have the frame of reference I did; she didn't need me kicking her when she was down.  
  
"What do you mean how do I know?" Katie was smiling but I heard an edge on her voice for some reason. "The same way you do, either a guy's dynamite in bed or he isn't. And Andy was."  
  
"Andy with the mommy issues?" I remembered her emails about him now that I heard the name.  
  
"That's the one. Poor guy needed counselling, bad. But the sex was..." She paused and took a sip of her drink. "Wow! I think my record was ten orgasms."  
  
"In one night?" I was aghast. "Katie, you should never let a man know he can give you that much pleasure! What if men knew we like it as much as they did? Where would that leave us?"  
  
Katie laughed. "Oh, grow up."  
  
"I'm serious! You think Ronald would have bought me this ring if he knew I'd let him do me ten times in one night?"  
  
"No doubt he wouldn't, Christine. I'm sure you're right about that."  
  
"Exactly. I usually am when it comes to men. But the damage is done with this Andy guy, I guess."  
  
"Oh, he deserves a woman who appreciates him," Katie said. "If he does ever get his issues worked out, he's going to make someone awfully lucky."  
  
"Ten times lucky," I grumbled.  
  
"It's not just that," Katie said. "Every time was so gentle, so magical. He had a way of tickling my vulva that made me climb walls..."  
  
"Vulva!" I laughed. "God, listen to you, Katie, are you a grade school sex-ed teacher now?"  
  
"That's the real word for it, and I think it's got a wonderful dignity," Katie said. "You've got your opinion, I've got mine."  
  
"I guess," I said. "Anyway, I'm sorry you've had this dry spell. You must be horny as hell."  
  
"You've got that right," Katie said. "I don't even try to get to sleep anymore without masturbating first."  
  
"You masturbate?!"  
  
"Don't expect me to believe you don't, Christine!"  
  
"Believe it or don't believe it. I don't. That's what guys are for!"  
  
"That and jewelry, huh?" Katie laughed.  
  
"Well, yeah," I said. "I had that figured out a long time ago!"  
  
The look Katie gave me made it clear that she didn't get my point at all. But I was used to that. As long as I could remember, things tended to go miles over her head as far as men were concerned. But she was my dear old friend, and I was worried about her. I didn't want to see her getting too dependent on her own hands like men are, after all.  
  
There was nothing I could do about it, of course, and I really didn't want to have to think about it in the first place. But it did unavoidably come to mind on my next workout. The gym is the one and only place where I'm sometimes tempted to do what Katie had so ungraciously revealed to me that she did. It isn't just that a good workout is nearly as good as sex, much as that is true. It's also that I'm usually the most gorgeous woman in the room, and that plus the workout puts ideas in my head that are awfully hard to ignore when I finally retire to the locker room and peel my leotard off.  
  
These days at the gym I'm almost always the only one in a leotard. That also helps put me in that randy frame of mind, and probably would even if it didn't add to my attractiveness compared to the other women. I've gotten my share of dirty looks from them in their plain t-shirts and sweats, and even apparently had one official complaint against me (according to Mike, the PT I slept with twice last fall), but it went nowhere because I'm not breaking any rules by looking beautiful.  
  
But all that was no more on my mind than it usually is when I finished my workout the evening after that uncomfortably revealing discussion with Katie. What was on my mind was that usual temptation I felt, which thanks to Katie I was feeling harder than ever, damn her!  
  
Most of the other women changed out of their workout clothes at the lockers and then wore a towel off to the shower. I never did. My breasts are spectacular, and I don't take them out for just anyone. So I was safely locked in a nice private shower stall before I undressed, which was a mistake in retrospect. It meant I was free to touch myself and confirm just what I had feared.

Between my usual post-workout high and Katie's tales of self-indulgence and her ex's magic fingers, I was wet as a leaky faucet.  
  
Of course, I was well-versed in ignoring that and getting on with my shower. But I was not used to the temptation being nearly as great as it was just now. Ten times in one night, and she'd still been able to walk away from the guy! And she was shameless enough to do it herself every night now! And this was mousy little Katie -- just imagine what this Andy guy could have done with me if he were lucky enough to get the chance!  
  
I tried. I really tried not to let my hands go anywhere near my pussy again. I turned on the hot water and stepped in, and tried to focus on washing up.  
  
I tried, but for once I failed. I just had to scratch that itch!  
  
I made one last ditch effort to just be contented with a quick rub. That only made me long for another, and so I rinsed the soap off my hands and gave my clit another, slower feel this time so I could enjoy this one last touch longer. But then it felt like my hand was out of my control, and I circled around and rubbed it again.  
  
It was no use, and at least no one else was there to see my rare loss of self-control. I didn't know what Adam looked like, but in my imagination he was just as gorgeous and well-groomed as I am. Rather than try to picture myself with him, I imagined I was Katie -- after all, with her the damage was done. He already knew how much she liked it. Or how much I liked it, if for the moment I was her.  
  
I was too enamored with my newly big breasts to feel dumpy like I normally would if I had her body, and too amused at Andy's own loss of control as he kissed and pawed them. I always did envy Katie's ability to make men lose their minds with those melons of hers, even if she never took advantage of it! In any event, Adam's fingers and lips felt wonderful, and down below he was fully packed and felt divine inside me.  
  
"Make me come again and again!" I ordered.  
  
"Already have!" he said, and somehow I knew it was true.  
  
"More, then!"  
  
"Sure!"  
  
Oh, to really cut loose just once in real life like I did in my mind just then! Someday I will, of course, but not until I'm sure it's a guy I want to stay with long term. I'd never risk letting anyone know just how wild I can get in bed until I'm certain he's a keeper. But in my imagination with Katie's troubled ex, all that was perfectly safe. In the safety of my mind I came with a roar again and again.  
  
In the shower back in reality, I came once, and had to bite my tongue to keep quiet about it. But that one was a beaut, and I felt wonderful in spite of my shame.  
  
Damn you! I texted Katie ten minutes later on the subway. Now you've got me doing it!  
  
Doing what?  
  
You know. What you told me you've been doing every night.  
  
Good for you, Christine. Doesn't it feel better to just accept it?  
  
No, it doesn't, dammit! I hate feeling out of control like this!  
  
Cry me a river, Uptown Sophisticate!  
  
I didn't bother reasoning with her after that last one. What did Katie know?  
  
I also didn't dare tell her now that Pandora's box was open, I was finding myself unable to resist more and more often.  
  
I did make up my mind that first night that I wouldn't be slipping up again. For the next two days, I stuck to it, too. But on the third day I saw a clutch of college boys in matching sweaters on the subway -- a glee-club, maybe? -- and by the time I got home my panties felt like I'd worn them in a swimming pool. When I got them off in my bedroom, the memory of that forbidden pleasure in the gym shower was just irresistible. At least, I reminded myself as I lay back and rubbed myself to a big one, no one else needed to know.  
  
No one but Katie, anyway, and she thought it was a good thing for some reason.  
  
By summer I'd given up on even trying to kick the habit. Another guy came and went in early May, and with the exception of those two weeks I don't think I ever went more than three days without giving in. I never would have forgiven anyone but Katie for getting me into such a bad habit, but I still pitied her too much to really be angry at her. Imagine having no choice but to settle for your hands! And after all, she was my dearest old friend.  
  
I guess it was that pity that inspired me to spring for a business-class ticket for her as well as for myself when we were off to her commune in July. Because she was Katie, of course, she tried to refuse it. "Christine, I couldn't!" she said when I unveiled my gift as the taxi was pulling away from the curb. "The university already paid for my coach ticket, you know."  
  
"Tell them you got a free upgrade," I said, passing over in silence the fact that she would never get one while dressed in a sweatshirt and jeans -- at least not while I was also there in my designer minidress.  
  
"I could do that," she admitted. "But this really isn't appropriate, Christine. I know how much more expensive these tickets are, and..."  
  
"And you know I would never fly coach under any circumstances," I reminded her. "Do you really want to be alone in that sardine can when you could be sipping champagne with me? And I don't mind the cost. For one thing, there'll probably be some drunk businessmen in the next row. Strength in numbers fighting them off."  
  
"Why would you want to fight them off in the first place?" Katie asked. "Because they only drive a BMW instead of a Mercedes?"  
  
"I'd settle for a Beemer if the guy was cute," I reasoned.  
  
Katie laughed for some reason. I didn't bother asking why, because at least she stopped trying to refuse the ticket.  
  
She did lighten up once we were on the plane, and we were both pleasantly tipsy as we roared off across the Atlantic. I still had my doubts about our destination, but a vacation is a vacation. "You're lucky I was so desperate to get out of New York for a little bit," I said towards bedtime, when some of the other passengers had already turned their lights out.  
  
"Shhh!" Katie whispered, "We don't want to keep anyone else awake."  
  
"You're still thinking like you're back in coach," I replied, but I did resort to whispering when I remembered how much I'd paid for these seats -- I didn't want to make anyone else angry when they'd paid the same.  
  
"Hope I never stop being that considerate, then," she said, standing up. "I'm going to the bathroom and then I'll turn in."  
  
"Guess I'll do the same."  
  
I hate sleeping in my bra, but appearances must be kept. I reclined my seat and pulled the thin blanket over me, and did my best to get comfortable. I was still working on that last one when Katie returned.  
  
I saw she also hated sleeping in her bra, as she'd taken it off and now had it clutched in her left hand.  
  
"Katie!" I propped myself up on my elbows. "You're in public!" Now I didn't need to be reminded to whisper, as I was terrified I might alert someone else to her appearance.  
  
"So what?" She stuffed the bra away in her carryon bag.  
  
"Aren't you afraid someone will notice you're not wearing that?"  
  
"It's none of their business if I'm not, is it?" Then she turned to look at me. "Wait a minute, you're keeping yours on all night?"  
  
"Of course I am! We're in public!"  
  
Katie shook her head and lay back in her seat. "That must be so uncomfortable. And you don't even really need a bra in the first place, do you?"  
  
"Geez, Katie, why don't you just announce that on the intercom? Maybe they didn't hear you in the cockpit!"  
  
Someone else did hear us, as there was a "SHHHHH" sound from a few rows ahead of us. So I held my tongue and tried not to think of Katie's sloppy appearance across the aisle. But of course I couldn't forget that, and it kept me awake for ages while she was soon snoring away. It was enough to make me consider not telling her I had also bought business class tickets for the flight back. But what kind of friend would I be then, even if she was being inconsiderate for the moment?  
  
I must admit I was pleasantly surprised at Abu Dhabi. Not all the women were covered up from head to toe and not all the men looked at me like I was Satan herself because I refused to cover my legs (which are too shapely for me not to show off, honestly -- spinning class really pays off). Some of the women's headscarves were really quite stylish, although you'd never get me to keep my naturally blonde locks under wraps.  
  
"Admit it, you don't hate it here," Katie said over lunch at the hotel restaurant on the second day.  
  
"I don't, you're right," I said. "But I'm still awfully curious about this convent of yours."  
  
"Commune, not convent," Katie laughed. "You think I'd drag you across the ocean to stay at a convent?"  
  
"I might've thought so before what you told me about your, erm, personal habits," I said. "God, they probably cut off people's hands for that here, don't they?"  
  
"Wow, just when I thought you were learning something," Katie said.  
  
"Well, am I wrong?"  
  
"No idea," Katie said. "But you'll be free to do that at the commune if you want."  
  
"Depends on what the guys there are like," I said.  
  
"I think you'll be impressed." And there was that coy smirk of hers again.  
  
We spent three days at the hotel before heading off to the commune. Katie had explained on the plane how she would have a lot of meetings for those first few days and then wouldn't need to be so close to the university afterward. "I'll probably take the bus in for a day here and there," she said on the morning of the fourth day, in the taxi to the bus station. "But mostly I'll just be studying stuff I've already got, and I can do that from anywhere. And of course you'll be free to stay and hang out at the commune."  
  
"You seem awfully sure I'll like it well enough to do that," I said.  
  
"I am awfully sure you'll like it, if you'll let yourself like it."  
  
"What's that supposed to mean?"  
  
"It's a surprise."  
  
"Katie, you've been awfully vague about this whole thing!"  
  
"I know. If you don't like it, we can always get you someplace else to stay. But I think you will."  
  
"But you won't tell me why."  
  
"Nope."  
  
"Great."  
  
I was almost glad she was being so cagey, since the surprise gave me something to look forward to as the bus rolled through the desert. I had some cousins from Arizona and the scenery reminded me of their boring stories of how gorgeous the place was. Hey, I wanted out of New York, I reminded myself time and again. This was about as "out of New York" as a gal could get.  
  
Our stop was a desolate crossroads with a gas station and a ramshackle café. Probably a modern-day oasis, but I rather suspected that word was politically incorrect over here. As we stepped down from the bus, I saw a couple people waiting by parked cars outside the café, including a tall, gangly white guy in cutoffs and a t-shirt too small for him. As ugly as he was, I prayed he was our ride and we wouldn't have to wait here too long.  
  
He was, I realized when Katie made a beeline for him. "Danny!" she shrieked like a schoolgirl, in spite of the fact that she'd never reacted to a boy like that when she really had been a schoolgirl. "So good to see you!"  
  
"Right on time, Katie!" He stood up from the fender of his car and she leapt into his arms. "Welcome back!"  
  
"Glad to be back!" Katie said. Then she turned and waved to me as I took my sweet time walking across the sandy lot. I did not want my new shoes getting scuffed!  
  
"And you must be Christine," Danny said. Once Katie had finally let him go, he held out his hand and I willingly shook it, glad to know he wasn't the type who'd expect a hug from someone he'd just met.  
  
"Yes, I am Christine," I said. "Danny, is it?"  
  
"It is, and Katie's told me all about you!" He had the decency to look impressed with me, I had to give him that. "We're so glad you decided to come join us."  
  
"Nice to meet you, Danny," I said. "I think I'm glad too, but I sure wish I knew what Katie hasn't been telling me about the place."  
  
Danny turned back to Katie. "You didn't --"  
  
"Don't say anything yet, please!" Katie said. "I just want Christine to relax a bit and broaden her horizons, and I've already said if she doesn't like it, we can get her a hotel somewhere."  
  
"Every time you say that, I wonder should I just get a room already?" I told her. "I've been thinking, what's that famous hotel in Dubai?"  
  
"Burj Al Arab?" Danny laughed. "Yeah, that's just about the exact opposite of us. But come on, give us a try first. We don't bite."  
  
"Just get in the car, Christine," Katie said as she and Danny put our suitcases in the trunk. To her credit, she then got in the backseat without my asking her to. My legs are gorgeous, but they're also long and she knew I needed the space more than she did.  
  
I was expecting Danny to drool over my legs now that he had such a close view of them from the driver's seat, but I was pleasantly surprised as he kept his eyes on the road. It was a dusty, narrow road and I was just glad those two weren't nearly granola enough to open the windows -- we'd have gotten dust everywhere. Instead, we ran the air-conditioner nice and high, though it couldn't drown out the boring folk music Danny had playing on the stereo.  
  
It was a good twenty minutes down that dusty road before I saw a big wall emerging on the horizon. "Is that it?" I asked.  
  
"That's it!" Danny said.  
  
"Katie, you weren't kidding about this place being out in the middle of nowhere!" I hadn't seen any other sign of civilization since the bus stop.  
  
"It's better that way," Katie said. "The locals really don't like the lifestyle here."  
  
"They hate it, but they don't complain about the rent we pay on a patch of sand they otherwise couldn't do anything with!" Danny said. "That's our secret, you know, our money is green."  
  
"Just where do we get the money from?" I asked.  
  
"We all pay our share of the rent, of course," Danny said.  
  
"We do?" There'd been no word about rent.  
  
"I paid for both of us out of my stipend," Katie said. "It's a lot cheaper than a hotel in Abu Dhabi would be."  
  
"Oh...thanks." I wasn't really sure I should say it after I sprang for the business class plane tickets, but her heart was probably in the right place.  
  
As we got closer, I saw two things. One, the commune was big, bigger than a city block from what I could see. Two, it was completely walled in. Just what were they hiding in there? I knew Katie wouldn't tell me, and she knew I'd make good on my threat to leave if I didn't like it. But I couldn't deny I was curious.  
  
By the time we'd parked the car and made our way to the front door, I was expecting to step into 1969. I wasn't far off, as the cavernous room we stepped into was decked out in beads and colourful ancient rugs and furniture, and the couple snuggling on the couch looked fresh from Woodstock.  
  
When they looked up to see Katie in the doorway, they both jumped up. "Katie!" said the woman. She and the man both took turns hugging her like a long lost sister.  
  
"Hi, Mags," Katie said. "Eddie, Maggie, this is my oldest friend, Christine."  
  
Oldest friend? Not best friend? But there was no time to worry about that as it looked like they might try to throw themselves at me like they had at Katie. To my mild relief, Maggie settled for a two-fisted handshake, and with Eddie I got away with just one hand. "We heard she'd be bringing a friend this year," Eddie said.  
  
"Your reputation precedes you!" Maggie said.  
  
"It usually does," I acknowledged.  
  
"Any of the other old-timers still around?" Katie asked. I hid my annoyance at her stopping the others from replying to my comment.  
  
"We're the old guard now, I'm afraid," Danny said. "Barbara and Karen were hoping to make it back, but Barbara got a fellowship in Australia."  
  
"I sure was looking forward to seeing them again," Eddie said.  
  
"Just remember it was look but don't touch!" Maggie said.  
  
Once again I wondered just what my dear old friend had gotten me into.  
  
"But we've got some great new folks, and we're just in time for lunch," Danny said. "Katie, I put you guys in the room you requested. Why don't you go get settled and then meet us out on the patio? Ten minutes?"  
  
"Sounds great!" Katie said. I had to agree, though as always I kept to myself how hungry I was. It's the price of being beautiful. Katie probably understood, since she'd lost most of her baby fat. But not enough to avoid adding, "I'm ravenous after that trip!"  
  
"Did you really need to announce that?" I asked as Katie led me up the stairs.  
  
"Announce what, that I'm hungry?" Katie asked. "What's wrong with that, especially at lunchtime?"  
  
"It's like I said about sex, Katie, we don't want men knowing we're just like them with this sort of thing!"  
  
Katie only laughed. "Whatever, Christine. I get where you're coming from about sex, as much as I think you're being horribly manipulative, but with food?"  
  
"Restraint is power," I told her. "You'd be a lot more like me if you'd learned that as young as I did."  
  
"No comment," Katie grumbled as we reached the top of the stairs. I guess I couldn't blame her. I'd be too ashamed to say anything too if I were in her shoes.  
  
The stairs led out to an outdoor hallway that ran along the inside of the wall, with a band of sunshine visible between the roof and the top of the wall. It reminded me far too much of a roadside motel like we might have seen back in our hometown, but when Katie opened the door (no lock, I noticed to my silent dismay) I was greeted with a beautiful, opulent room with two double beds and a giant bathtub visible in the bathroom. "Oh, this is lovely!" I said. "A lot nicer than I'd dared hope for, I have to admit, Katie."  
  
"Well, not all the rooms are like this," Katie said. "But I told Danny and the others you have your standards, and my respect is a good thing to have in this place."  
  
"Oh, is it, then?" I knew I ought to mind my tongue about how self-important she was sounding, but I just couldn't help it.  
  
"You're welcome, Christine." She set down her suitcase at the bed farther from the door. "Go ahead and wash up, and then let's go get lunch."  
  
The truth was that I was quite hungry, and also more than a little bit morbidly curious about what else she had in store for me in this place, and I had to pee anyway after that long trip. It was only while I was taking care of that need that it occurred to me -- if we were sharing a room, it meant I couldn't play with myself. That brightened my outlook quite a bit -- maybe now I could kick the habit!  
  
While I was in the bathroom, Katie changed into a short skirt and a fresh top. "Cute outfit," I said when I got out of the bathroom.  
  
"Thanks. It's way too hot for jeans, huh?"  
  
"To me, it always is, Katie."  
  
"I know!" Katie laughed as she stepped back outside. "Come on downstairs, I won't even tell anyone you're hungry."  
  
"I'm not sure I am," I said. "They're not going to serve camel steaks or anything, are they? I should've told them I'm a vegetarian."  
  
"No!" Katie laughed again. "And there are veggie options available if you want."  
  
I needn't have worried. Lunch was a nice couscous salad with shredded chicken, a bit carb-heavy but nothing like what I'd feared they might feed us. The décor on the patio was a bit dated, but that too was far better than I'd dared hope. "We save the nice china for the grand hall and we only eat there when it's cold," Danny explained.  
  
"That makes sense," I said. "I wouldn't bring my good china outside either."  
  
"He's joking, Christine," Katie said. "There's no great hall."  
  
"Why bother in a place where no one ever dresses for dinner?" Danny asked.  
  
At this, a few of the other people in attendance laughed. Danny and Katie both gave them a look I couldn't read at all, but the laughing stopped.  
  
Others trickled in, mostly in couples but a few singles as well, while we were eating. I noticed early on that they all seemed to know Katie, for they all seemed to welcome her with a hug and an enthusiastic hello, both of which the silly dear always returned. She did at least have the decency to introduce me to them all.

"I thought you said there wasn't anyone else besides Danny and the hippie couple that you knew from before," I said after the third such round of introductions.  
  
"There aren't," Katie said. "It's just the way we greet each other here."  
  
"No one's greeted me that way yet," I said.  
  
"I know how you are about that kind of thing," Katie said. "So I had Danny warn everyone not to try to hug you unless you said it was okay."  
  
"Excuse me?!"  
  
"Well, Christine, you hate it when people you don't know get too close."  
  
"Yes, but I'm perfectly capable of telling them not to touch me!"  
  
"I just wanted to make it less awkward for everyone. How do you think it feels when you try to give someone a hug and they push you away?"  
  
"I don't care about that. I can handle my own boundaries, Katie. Okay?"  
  
"All right, all right. Sorry. Enjoy your lunch."  
  
I did enjoy it, although I had to deal with my fair share of dumb questions about New York. Not to mention a chubby gal named Sarah who proudly proclaimed she was from Brooklyn. "I've been there a time or two," I said, leaving out that I'd hated every pretentious, boring moment of the place.  
  
"My boyfriend was always after me to move to the Village, but I didn't want to live in a shoebox!" she squealed. "Call me crazy, huh?"  
  
"I wouldn't ever live below Twenty-Third Street myself," I said. "Even back in high school, they called me 'Uptown Sophisticate', you know."  
  
"You live in Harlem, do you?" Sarah asked, apparently not joking.  
  
"Not that far uptown!" And I turned back to my couscous.  
  
Katie gave her girlish, over-the-top greeting to each and every new arrival. One of these was a rather awkward looking fellow who I could tell did not want a hug from someone he didn't even know. He got it anyway, though, and at least managed to look pleased at it. "Well, that's a nice introduction!" he stammered. "I'm Tim, and I just got here last week."  
  
"I'm Katie and I just got back today, but I was here a few summers ago," she said. "You're going to love it!"  
  
"Thanks," Tim said. "Yeah, I think I will. I mean, I do, so far, just that it hasn't been long, you know? And the fourteenth..."  
  
"That's all voluntary, you know!" Katie said. "Don't worry about it. But if you do join in, you'll be amazed at how quickly you get comfortable with it!"  
  
"Thanks," Tim said. "I hope you're right!" He sounded Midwestern, so the "I" sounded more like "Ah". Just what I needed, an awkward bumpkin horning in on Katie's attention. Fortunately he was off to get a plate and fill it, and since we were nearly done, he didn't join us.  
  
"The fourteenth?" I asked as soon as he was gone. "What does that mean?"  
  
"I'll tell you everything when we get to the pool," Katie said. "You up for a swim?"  
  
I grinned. "You never did tell me what you're wearing to the pool these days. I can't wait to see it!"  
  
"Hold that thought!" Katie said, standing up. "Shall we go get changed now?"  
  
She looked happy but awfully nervous as we went back upstairs. I knew by now there was no point in asking why. For all that I had asked about before, I couldn't help hoping she wasn't going to wear a bikini to the pool. She'd lost a lot of weight but she still didn't have the right shape to pull it off, especially not with me next to her in my lemon-yellow one that flattered my hips and bust just about perfectly. In fact, I feared she'd look utterly frumpy next to me no matter what she wore. But she'd brought that on herself inviting me here!  
  
As soon as we were back in our room with the door shut, I was half-relieved and half-repulsed when Katie unceremoniously took her top off. "Oof!" I averted my eyes just a touch too late, and got an eyeful of Katie's belly and her heavy breasts, still cupped in a dowdy-looking bra. "Katie, we're close, but I'm going to change in the bathroom!"  
  
"As you wish," she said. And I heard what sounded like her unfastening her bra and pulling it off, but I saw nothing as I carefully averted my eyes while digging my bikini out of my suitcase and carrying it into the bathroom.  
  
Like I said, sometimes I really do envy Katie's breasts. Sometimes. Seeing what they look like even partially uncovered like that has always been enough to disabuse me of all that. I made a point of taking my time changing into my swimsuit, not wanting to catch another look at my poor saggy friend.  
  
Of course, since I was naked and in no hurry to get dressed, I was sorely tempted to fall off the wagon. But I settled for an admiring look at my slim, toned body and reminded myself not to show Katie up any more than I really couldn't help doing.  
  
When I finally had everything in place and no excuse to dawdle any longer, I turned the bathroom doorknob but didn't open it right away. I figured that would give Katie enough time to warn me not to come out. Even if she didn't mind me seeing her boobs, now she knew I did mind.  
  
Hearing no complaint, I opened the door and blossomed forth in my bikini -- and just as promptly leapt back into the bathroom. "Katie!" I gasped. I closed my eyes, but the image I'd glimpsed was seared into my mind's eye -- Katie sitting on her bed, rubbing sunblock all over her body, which was stark naked.  
  
"Haven't you ever heard of sunblock, Christine?" The fool sounded utterly calm and collected as she said it.  
  
"Haven't you ever heard of putting your swimsuit on first?"  
  
"Christine, come out. Please."  
  
"I will, as soon as you get your swimsuit on."  
  
"No, Christine. Come out. Now."  
  
I couldn't very well just hide out in the bathroom until she came to her senses. I stepped out into the room and forced myself not to flinch at Katie, who was standing hands-on-hips with a conciliatory look on her face. I did my best to look only at her face, but there was no ignoring her boobs -- they didn't sag nearly as much as I'd suspected, but my back hurt just imagining mine were that big -- and her wide hips, and the utterly ungroomed triangle between them.  
  
"It's okay, Christine," she said. "I don't mind!"  
  
"I do, Katie! Boundaries!"  
  
"No boundaries here, Christine. It's clothing optional."  
  
"What?!"  
  
"The pool. It's clothing optional. No one will fault you for wearing a swimsuit, but you don't have to, okay?"  
  
"Okay?! Katie, for heaven's sake, how could you do this to me?"  
  
"Do what to you?" the poor fool asked. "I told you, you can wear your swimsuit."  
  
Of course, that wasn't what I meant at all. It would be one thing for someone like me to go bare at the pool, but Katie? With that shape and that bush? I felt humiliated for the poor thing before we'd even left our room. But I just couldn't tell her that. If my dearest old friend just had to make an ass of herself, what could I do about it. "Oh, all right," I said, seeing no other option.  
  
"Thank you for understanding," Katie said. Then she handed me the sunblock bottle. "Do my back and my butt, please?"  
  
"I'll do your back. You can reach your own ass, I'm sure."  
  
"Deal."  
  
As I was rubbing the lotion on her back, I remembered what that Tim guy had said at lunch. "Now, does this have anything to do with the fourteenth?"  
  
"Yes," Katie said. "July fourteenth is Nude Day back home. It's a tradition here, too."  
  
"You mean to tell me the last time you were here..." I just couldn't finish that sentence, and finished rubbing Katie's back in silence.  
  
She turned around and nodded with a smile. "It is so liberating! I hope you'll try it, too. Here, I'll do your back."  
  
I turned around and held my hair out of the way. "I'll take your word for it, Katie," I said. "But I hope you'll understand if I find some excuse not to be anywhere near the pool on the fourteenth."  
  
"You don't know what you'll be missing, Christine. You really don't."  
  
She did at least put on a robe for the walk down to the pool. On the way down we crossed paths with two good looking guys who were also wearing robes. They exchanged knowing chuckles with Katie and continued on their way without a word. Gay, obviously, since they took no notice of me. At least I'd have something to look at for free.  
  
Now, Katie is my oldest and dearest friend. So as we stepped into the pool area, I vowed to take her side if there were any nasty comments about her appearance. To my surprise, though, there weren't. I did see a few familiar faces including Sarah, the silly fool who thought I lived in Harlem. Fortunately, she was busy splashing around in the pool and didn't take notice of me, nor did I have to look at her body. The two guys we'd seen on the way down were just as gorgeous underneath as I'd hoped, and I drank in the lovely sight from the deck chair I claimed. One of them noticed me after a moment and waved, and then they both quickly jumped in the pool.  
  
"Maybe I'll have a dip," I said, doing my best to sound casual as Katie took her robe off and bared her body to the afternoon sun.  
  
"Go on ahead," Katie said, and I turned to see she was settled in her chair, looking a lot more comfortable than a woman like her had any business feeling in public without anything on. "I'll be in later."  
  
I was set to argue the point a little bit, at least, but then Maggie and Eddie turned up, also naked and also just as unfit for it as Katie was. "Haven't you missed this, Katie?" Maggie asked.  
  
"More than you can imagine!" Katie said. "I was just telling Christine here about Nude Day and how beautiful it was."  
  
"It really is," said Eddie, who at least had the decency to be hard for me. "No pressure, of course, but we hope you will join us!"  
  
"I certainly see you hope that," I said.  
  
"Christine!" Katie snapped. "That's rude, all right?"  
  
"Oh, it's all right," Eddie said, looking down. "Sorry. We really are supposed to cover up when that happens."  
  
"Don't feel the need to do that on my account," I said.  
  
"Didn't you want to go in the pool anyway?" Katie asked.  
  
"Indeed." I stood up and nodded at Maggie and Eddie without another word, and jumped into the warm water.  
  
Chlorine is murder on my hair, of course, but for once it was completely worth it, as I found myself near the two gentlemen I'd been admiring. "Hi, boys!" I said. "I'm Christine. I'm sorry my friend didn't introduce us upstairs."  
  
"Is that Katie up there?" asked one of them. "I've heard so much about her."  
  
"I've known her since the fourth grade," I said. "Ever so glad she brought me here!" A lie, but clearly what they wanted to hear.  
  
"I've been here about a year," said the other man. "Danny and some of the others, they talk about her all the time, such a ray of sunshine. Any chance you can get her in the pool?"  
  
"She said she'd be coming in later," I said. "So you're an old-timer, huh?"  
  
"Yes," he said. "Name's Doug, and I work in oil and gas. Used to live in Abu Dhabi, but they're not a big fan of guys like us, you know."  
  
"And I'm a teacher at the American school," said the other man. "Pete." He shook my hand underwater, which at least gave me an excuse to look down. Pete and Doug were both nicely clipped and groomed. Katie could learn a thing or two from them, I couldn't help thinking. "When Doug and I started dating, we both knew, we'd best find someplace where the locals didn't have eyes."  
  
"God, I can only imagine."  
  
"I take it it's your first time at the pool?" Doug asked.  
  
"Does it show?"  
  
"It's what you're not showing," Doug said, and Pete laughed. I forced myself to join in. "No pressure, of course, but once you've given it a try you'll never want to wear a swimsuit again."  
  
"That's what Katie was just telling me," I said. "But I just don't know..."  
  
"Took me a while, too," Pete said.  
  
"Dear, it took you a lot longer than a while!" Doug said.  
  
Pete laughed. "Eh, you're right. Christine, don't make the same mistake I made, okay?"  
  
"If you say so," I said, though I still had no intention of going naked for anyone, especially not a couple of fruits. I still couldn't complain about the view, though.  
  
"Hey!" came another male voice behind me. "Christine, isn't it?"  
  
"This is she all right," said Doug. He took Pete's hand. "See you later, okay?"  
  
"Sure, guys." I turned to see who'd called my name. It was Tim. "Hi, Tim," I said as cordially as I could muster, while looking down in hope that he was wearing trunks. To my great relief, he was.  
  
"Can you believe this?" he asked. "I've been hearing about this every day, but I never came until today."  
  
How adorable. The shy little thing just had to get a glimpse of me. "I hope you're not disappointed," I said, and wondered if I ought to tell him upfront that he would never be seeing me in any less than what I was wearing right then.  
  
"Disappointed?! This is beautiful! I mean, I wasn't quite brave enough to go nude yet, and I see you're not either -- believe me, I understand -- but it's all so welcoming and safe, you know?"  
  
Welcoming and safe? The poor guy sounded even younger than he looked. But I couldn't help finding his sincerity endearing, and he did have a nice toned chest, and unlike Katie he had the decency not to let everything slop out. Maybe someone this plain and uncomplicated was just what I needed to get through this crazy experience. No one back in New York had to know I'd messed around with someone so far beneath me. I put on my flirtatious grin and answered soft and low, "Welcoming and safe. Yes, Tim, that's a beautiful way to put it. And you're right, I'm just not quite brave enough yet, but we'll get there, won't we?"  
  
"Maybe tomorrow," he said. "I just had to have a look around first, and see if it really was okay, you know? But I guess it is."  
  
"Well, don't do anything until you're comfortable," I said, thinking maybe I'd better put the brakes on; I did not want him thinking he was going to see me without my bikini anytime soon. Now, though, I was thinking maybe I would give him that honor at some point -- just not in the pool and among all these other people!  
  
"Right now I'm wondering just what the secret to that is," Tim said. "I guess you haven't figured it out either, huh?"  
  
Just as I was about to offer to take his trunks off for him if that would help, there was a splash behind me and I turned to see Katie bursting out of the water. "Tim!" she said. "You made it!"  
  
"Well, I came to the pool anyway," he said. "I was just telling Christine here, I'm still not sure about going nude. But...wow, I admire you!" Then he burst out laughing like the boy I suspected he probably was underneath. "I mean, not like that, although I do admire you like that too, but I mean..."  
  
Katie laughed. "Tim, it's okay! I was new to this once, too, and I know just what you mean."  
  
"Thanks." Tim let out a nervous laugh. "Sorry if it looks like I'm gawking at you or anything..."  
  
"It's okay if you are, Tim!" Katie hugged him, and I had to watch the poor kid deal with the shock of that before he remembered his manners and hugged her back. "You don't think anyone here isn't checking everyone else out, do you?"  
  
"Good point," he said. "I do feel kind of overdressed, though."  
  
"Not if it's what you're comfortable with, okay?"  
  
"Katie, thanks. You really know how to set a guy at ease."  
  
At that, I had to excuse myself. I may have been falling for Tim, but I couldn't stand anyone sounding that smarmy! Especially not with Katie, who I knew would respond with more of the same. For some reason neither of them noticed as I waded away, anyhow.  
  
My corner of the pool was otherwise empty for some reason, so I leaned against the edge to relax, enjoying the sensation and the look of the water lapping at my breasts. I had some concerns that my interest in Tim might make them hard, but at least it would be easy to avoid too much attention with so many naked people out and about.  
  
It was also easy to overhear Katie's silly gushing at Tim, much as I didn't want to. Regrettably, I was right about her response to Tim's goofy comment. "That's what this is all about, isn't it? A little corner of the world where no one is judging anyone else about their body or anything?"  
  
Then just when I thought it couldn't get any worse than that, Tim had to open his mouth again. "That's beautiful. But I must confess I am judging your body, Katie, and my judgment is a good one!"  
  
Katie at least had the decency to laugh at that. "Thank you! That's just the sort of thing that made me fall in love with this place last time, how open we all can be here. People say they like each other's clothes, their hair, why not everything else?"  
  
"Somehow it just isn't the same, is it?" Tim said. "I like your shoes, I like your eyes, I like your vulva!" He said that last word with a ridiculous flair that reminded me of my altercation with Katie over it a few months before.  
  
Katie remembered too, for she gave me a triumphant glance out of the corner of her eye. "So nice to meet a man who isn't afraid of that word! And thank you, I'm glad you like mine. But can you really see it?"  
  
To my utter disgust, they both looked down at Katie's big bush, which of course they couldn't see through. Tim laughed. "Now that you mention it, no. But I do like what I do see. I'm so glad there are still women out there who don't shave everything off. Always loved natural beauty."  
  
Sure you did, you smarmy little toad, I thought as I turned around and pushed up out of the water. I'd heard all I could stand to. But I couldn't make my escape quite fast enough to avoid hearing Katie gush about how much she loved being natural. "So erotic to look down and see a triangle, I always thought!" That was news to me, but maybe that was only because Katie had always been smart enough not to tell me she was turned on by such vulgarity.  
  
I danced off the rest of the afternoon reading on my deck chair, casting an occasional glance at Tim to let him know I was interested but not giving off too much, of course. It's never wise to let a man know you're falling for him right away, if ever. He smiled back a time or two, even as Katie kept him busy frolicking in the water for ages. I almost felt sorry for him, but he could have simply gotten out of the pool anytime just like I did, if the poor dear had any backbone.  
  
At long last I spotted him hugging Katie goodbye, and put on my flirtatious grin for when he came by my chair. Perhaps I had done too good of a job of keeping him at arm's length, because he got out of the pool on the other side. I know all there is to know about leading a man around by the penis, I conceded, but not an immature brat like Tim. The poor thing was lucky he was so cute. As for Katie, she lingered in the water for a few minutes with some of the other shameless naked people, and then finally climbed out to greet me. "Have you fallen in love with the place yet?" she asked.  
  
"Oh, sure," I said, doing my best to look only at her face. It wasn't easy. "But don't think for a moment you'll get me down here without my swimsuit anytime soon."  
  
"Christine, that's fine!" She flopped down in the chair next to mine, still making no effort at all to cover up. "It's all about what you're comfortable with. Just, if you're still not up to it on Nude Day, you might not want to come to the pool then. You'll be welcome in your suit, but you'll stick out more than ever."  
  
"I usually do anyway," I reminded her.  
  
Dinner was a lively affair, and thankfully everyone got their clothes back on for it. I had resisted the temptation to chat Katie up about Tim while we were dressing (which of course I did in the bathroom as Katie was too shameless to draw any boundaries) because right then I didn't trust her to keep her mouth shut about my planned conquest. But I was pleased they'd hit it off when we arrived in the dining room and Tim waved at us from a mostly empty table in the corner.  
  
I gave Tim a cordial nod and led the way to his table, keeping my delight to myself. Katie kept nothing to herself. "Good job staking out this corner!" she told him as he stood to greet us, gripping at both his hands like a groupie meeting a rock star. "Always was my favorite seat in the house."

"Another way great minds think alike, huh?" Tim said. To me he added, "Hey, Christine."  
  
"Hello, Tim," I said. "Nice to see you again."  
  
"Poor choice of words with Ms. Free Spirit here," Tim said, pointing at Katie, who laughed.  
  
"Oh, it's fine," Katie said. "And you can see me that way at the pool anytime you like!"  
  
I kept my disgust to myself as those two laughed. I would just have to have a stern word with her later on.  
  
I will give credit where it's due: Tim gave back as good as he got when it came to my subtle flirtations. If most of his actual chatter was with Katie, I couldn't very well pretend I didn't understand why -- naturally he felt closer to someone he'd seen naked, after all. As for Katie herself, she was full of fond tales of her last summer on the commune and what an eye-opener it had been for her, how much more confident she felt after her stay, and at least neither one of them resorted to flattering her pussy again.  
  
My own thoughts were very much with my own pussy rather than with hers, for Tim looked adorable in his short-sleeve print shirt, the sort of fashion don't that cute guys can nevertheless somehow pull off. The view of him in those tight swimming trunks was still fresh on my mind, and as I put up with Katie's inane prattle and admired his humoring of it, I was getting hornier by the minute.  
  
Of course it wouldn't do to get him in bed on our first day there, though I had no doubt I could. I would just have to break my winning streak and take matters into my own hands. But when would I get enough private time while sharing a room with Katie?  
  
The answer came halfway through some dull adventure movie someone put on in the front room after dinner. I, of course, dropped the hint to Tim that I would be in attendance, and then sauntered off before he could ask to join me. Always leave them wanting! I've had guys eating out of my hand since I first grew boobs, so I had no doubt he would turn up hoping to catch me. With that in mind, I squeezed into the last available bit of a couch alongside a British couple and an older woman they were chatting with, and had my sassy grin at the ready when he appeared a few minutes later. Naturally Katie was tagging along, and they both gave me a smile before settling for a spot on the floor.  
  
Well, I'd won the battle, of course, but I did feel an odd combination of pity for Katie and frustration with her. Didn't she know better than to sit on the floor in a skirt? Even Tim thought of that and asked if she'd like him to go find a chair for her instead. But did Katie take a hint? "Everyone here was at the pool this afternoon, Tim, remember?" And those two silly fools dissolved into laugher as Katie at least remembered to pull her hem down in the middle as she settled herself.  
  
Once again I reminded myself, I love Katie but I can't always save her from herself.  
  
As I said, the movie was dull, a typical guy flick. While I was more and more certain that Tim, cute and hot though he may be, was the very definition of not a man but a guy, even he wasn't much into the movie from what I could tell. I kept an eye on him and Katie while I watched, just in case she needed my help fending off an ill-advised arm around her or something. He never made such a move, perhaps having guessed correctly that the way to stay on my good side is to treat my naïve but dear friend with respect, but he did give plenty of hints that he wasn't really following the plot. Neither was Katie, as it turned out, for less than an hour in, they both stood up and ducked out of the room.  
  
For a moment I was horrified that he might try to talk his way into our room, but instead I saw them hug goodnight outside the front room door and go their separate ways.  
  
It was awfully early to be turning in, but we were in the middle of the desert and there was no other option but going for a drink by the pool, which was likely as not overrun with naked people again. No thanks! Besides, I still had that delicious intimate itch to scratch, and at least maybe Katie had found somewhere else to finish off the evening. Ten minutes or so after Katie and Tim had left, I followed their lead and slunk out of the room.  
  
When I got upstairs, our room was empty but Katie's bedside lamp was turned on. I was momentarily disappointed as I realized she was in the bathroom, then just as quickly relieved as I heard water sloshing a bit in there and realized she was taking a bath. So I would indeed have my precious few minutes to myself! I shut the door and looked for a lock, only to find there wasn't one, which of course made me reconsider. Once that seed of doubt was in my mind, I reminded myself of how well I'd been doing, keeping my hands clean since before we'd left New York -- was Tim really worth breaking that winning streak, cute as he was?  
  
As I stood there debating the matter -- and trying to ignore how wet I was with anticipation -- I noticed something I hadn't noticed at first about the sound of Katie's bathwater. It wasn't just sloshing, it was sloshing in rhythm. The silly girl was playing with herself in there! Probably thinking of Tim, too, the poor thing, without a clue of how hopeless her chances would be against me once I let Tim in, if I let him in.  
  
Of course, I couldn't be so cruel as to not let her have her fun, I decided, but damned if I'll let her be the only one to indulge herself! I pulled my panties down and kicked my sandals off with them, and lay back on my bed with my legs spread and admitted defeat.  
  
Wouldn't you just know Katie would have to interrupt at the last moment! "Christine?" she called from the bath. "Is that you?"  
  
"Yes!" I did my best to sound agreeable. "I was bored with the movie."  
  
"Do you need the bathroom?"  
  
"No, take your time!" Hadn't she ever noticed how careful I was with my pee breaks, so guys wouldn't notice? Maybe I was so good at it that girls didn't notice either.  
  
"Thanks! I love this bathtub, you should try it later!"  
  
"We'll see!" And I resolved to say nothing more, as my fingers were already good and busy.  
  
Now, there's one good thing about playing with myself instead of getting a guy in bed for it. No need to hold back on the pleasure -- it's not like I need to fool myself into thinking I can do better, after all. And I am one very responsive gal when I want to be. I once really let myself go in a hotel room in London for a guy with a Bentley, and the silly old lady in the next room had to go and call us on the phone to tell us she was trying to sleep. (I felt like offering to call an escort service for the old bat, but that was her concern.) After admiring Tim all afternoon and the satisfaction of knowing I'd frustrated him so much he'd had to settle for flattering Katie's overgrown bush, I was in a mood to reach just those heights, and I was sorely tempted to let myself go and really express all my pent-up pleasure.  
  
But I couldn't do it with Katie right there in the bath. I just couldn't.  
  
Don't get me wrong, it's not that I had any qualms about letting her know just what a tigress I could be in bed. In fact, I figured it would do her some good to be aware of that if she had any thoughts of competing with me for Tim's affections. Really, it would only be fair that she knew what an unfair fight it would really be. Rather, it was that she already knew how she'd gotten me into this embarrassing habit. I wasn't about to let her know just how deep I'd fallen into it! So as I flicked about at my clit with my fingers, imagining they were Tim's tongue and that my hands were free to squeeze his hard cock to my heart's content, I kept my husky breathing to a minimum and made do with whispering the occasional "fuck!" here and there. When I came, I had to grit my teeth and swallow hard to keep from letting out a roar.  
  
It all left me nearly as frustrated as I'd been feeling before, but at least I knew I was putting Katie through the same thing, for I couldn't hear any moaning or yelping from the bathroom. Of course, there was no way Katie was capable of the sort of operatics I was, but surely there was something she was struggling to keep to herself. And it served her right.  
  
I had my skirt back down in plenty of time, and was curled up demurely on my bed when she finally emerged, naked of course. "I needed that after such a long day," she said. "I'm going to read a while before I sleep. Let me know if the light bothers you."  
  
"Good idea," I said, sitting up. "Maybe I'll read something too." I got up to collect my current paperback from my suitcase, and turned around just in time to see her climbing into bed. "Oh, for heaven's sake, Katie, you sleep naked too?"  
  
"For years now, except on my period. What's the big deal?"  
  
I sighed. "If you don't get it, I can't explain it."  
  
At least we both had good excuses not to talk after that. So there were no awkward questions about what we'd both been up to while she was in the bath.  
  
My inner sense of time is excellent, and there was no need to get up early the next day anyway. So I didn't bother with an alarm, and it was a pleasant late hour of the morning when I arose and stretched and saw Katie was already out and about. I could only hope she wasn't making a fool of herself at the pool again, but at least I didn't have to watch it close up this time.  
  
Once I was showered and coiffed, it was nearly lunchtime. So I chanced on finding the dining room already open, and it was. With no sign of Katie or Tim, I let myself get roped in to joining Sarah and a few rather homely guys she'd been chatting with. "Christine here is from Manhattan," she explained as I reluctantly joined them.  
  
"Yeah, I saw you at the pool yesterday," said one of the guys. "And I thought, she's got to be a New York gal."  
  
"Well, I'm not originally from there," I said. "But I was always destined for the place, that's for sure. "In high school they called me 'Uptown Sophisticate,' you know."  
  
"That's...foresightful," said the other guy.  
  
"Not for me it wasn't," I said. "I just knew what I wanted from a young age, and I had the drive to get it. So why not be known for it?"  
  
"Oh, you mean you gave yourself that nickname," Sarah said.  
  
"Well, yeah," I said. "Who else was going to think of it for me?"  
  
"Anyway," Sarah said. "Going to the pool this afternoon?"  
  
"I might," I said. "But don't get any ideas, I'll be keeping my suit on!"  
  
"Me too," said the guy who'd seen me the day before, whom I didn't recognize at all. "I wouldn't subject everyone to this body! Not such a pretty sight, you know?"  
  
"You're right," I told him.  
  
For some reason the conversation stalled there, but I was saved from having to restart it when Katie appeared. "Hi all," she said. "Christine, sorry I didn't let you know where I was. I just didn't want to wake you up."  
  
"Not at all," I said. "Just tell me you weren't at the pool again already?"  
  
"Of course not," she said. "I do have my studies to attend to, remember? I spent the morning in the library, and I'm going back there after lunch." Then she turned to greet Sarah's friends. "Hi, I'm Katie," she said.  
  
"Jim," said the first homely guy.  
  
"Stan," said the second one. "Pleased to meet you."  
  
"Are you the Katie who used to live here, a few summers ago?" asked Jim.  
  
"That would be me, yes," Katie said. "I can't get over how my reputation precedes me!"  
  
"It's a good reputation," Stan said. "Danny never shut up about how he couldn't wait to see you again. Welcome back!"  
  
"It's great to be back," she said. "You know, I saw you guys at the pool yesterday. Sorry I didn't get a chance to say hello."  
  
"No problem," Jim said. "To tell you the truth, I was a little bashful to introduce myself, while you were naked and I wasn't."  
  
"I understand!" Katie said. "I went through the same thing when I first got here last time. But next time, don't be shy, okay? It's fine!"  
  
"Excellent attitude, Katie," Stan said. "Thanks."  
  
"Christine," she added, "Don't let me stop you from going out there again this afternoon, okay?"  
  
"Uh, okay." I opted to pass over in silence that her being there would be more likely to stop me from going back.  
  
"We're all going," Sarah said. "I went bare yesterday for the first time, and it's so addictive! Guys, I wish you'd try it."  
  
"We'll see." Stan gave me what could only be called a dirty look as he said it, as if I could care less what he chose to do.  
  
After a stop in the front room after lunch to see if there was anyone new who looked worth getting to know, I quickly decided the pool it was. This time I donned my leopard print bikini, and put on a bathrobe over it to avoid giving any guys the wrong idea. Then as soon as I stepped outside, I remembered all the nudists wore a bathrobe to the pool. I'd sooner risk giving some guy a heart attack than making him think I'd go naked at the pool, so I tossed the bathrobe back on my bed and tried to imagine I was fully clothed as I headed for the pool.  
  
Fortunately, no one saw me on the way. Even more fortunately, I stepped out onto the deck to see although Sarah had once again put her big body on display for one and all, her two friends hadn't. The three of them were chatting away just as casually as could be on the ledge by the shallow end, and I evaded their unwanted attention as I found a vacant deck chair near the deep end.  
  
I did have plans to take a dip later on, but for the moment I was content to get some sun. I pulled my current trashy novel (which I had had the presence of mind to cloak in the dustcover from one of Katie's textbooks -- I hadn't even looked at the title) and was soon lost in a rose-colored world where people were smart enough to know when they weren't beautiful enough to put their bodies on display.  
  
I'd been utterly absorbed for some time when a familiar voice snapped me out of my daydreaming. "Women in international trade," he said.  
  
I looked up and was overjoyed to see Tim standing there, decent and unaccompanied by Katie or anyone else. "Hi, Tim," I said. "What about international trade?"  
  
"Your book," he said. "Is that how you and Katie met, are you studying international affairs too?"  
  
"Oh!" At last I looked at the dust cover, which did indeed say what Tim had just recited. "No, I just got curious about her studies and she didn't need this book today. No, we grew up together and me, I'm done with school, thank you very much!" I set the book aside where I could make sure he wouldn't see what was really inside, and grinned up at him. "Good to see you haven't lost your modesty like her," I said.  
  
"Truth is, I'm just not as brave as she is," Tim said. "Is she coming here today?"  
  
"No, she's studying, the poor thing."  
  
"Oh, I admire that about her," he said. "Maybe I ought to try going nude while the coast is clear, huh?"  
  
"What do you mean clear?" I asked. "There are a dozen or more of us here!"  
  
"I mean while Katie's not here. Maybe then I can surprise her once I'm used to it."  
  
Now, the temptation to see him in the altogether before Katie did was strong. But I didn't want him feeling quite that comfortable with me yet. "Let's hold off on all that," I said. "I'm not feeling quite up to that yet."  
  
"You're thinking of it too, are you?"  
  
I gave him my best grin and nod; no need to tell him the answer was absolutely not. I gestured to the empty chair beside me. "Keep me company for a while. Let's get to know each other a little better, and we'll see how we both feel about it later."  
  
Tim was all too free of his gender's tendency to few words. He could even outtalk some of my girlfriends! There were stories of growing up in some California suburb I'd never heard of, and of college and teaching English somewhere else in the Middle East -- I guess that's how he found out about the commune, but I wasn't really listening. I was just enjoying the lilt of his voice and the view of his sleek body, and hoping for a show from his trunks.  
  
Surprisingly, there wasn't one. Perhaps he was nervous. With that in mind, I more than welcomed his gaze upon me and reminded myself to be patient.  
  
"Christine?"  
  
I snapped back to attention. "Sorry," I said. "I got distracted." I could only wish that really were true!  
  
"I asked, how did Katie convince you to come over here? I mean, I can see it's more her kind of thing than yours."  
  
"Oh, you've got that wrong!" I said. "Ever since we were girls, Katie was the quiet, demure one and I was the adventurous one. Honestly, I think she's just putting on a show here to overcome her past. I've tried telling her, look, it's fine to be who you really are! Maybe after yesterday she'll have it out of her system."  
  
"I sure hope not." Tim laughed as he said it, and I chanced a glance down to see now he was getting hard. "Sorry about that!" he said, and he spread his towel over his middle.  
  
"Oh, that's perfectly all right," I said. "Just don't get the wrong idea about Katie from what you saw yesterday, all right?"  
  
"It was kind of hard for her to hide anything, wasn't it?"  
  
Enough was enough. I sat up. "Ready for a swim?"  
  
"With our suits on?"  
  
"Yes, Tim. You're not getting a better look at me just yet!"  
  
What I did see of his body looked even better glistening in the water. I was ever so relieved that there was no risk of his spotting my own arousal when the rest of my body was already wet. He did not need to know what I was feeling just yet.  
  
At least now I knew I had my hooks in him. As we were toweling off, he said, "Will I see you and Katie at dinner?"  
  
"We haven't exactly got a lot of other options for eating out here, have we?" I pointed out.  
  
The three of us did end up having dinner together, and I had to run interference several times when he expected me to know anything about Katie's studies. Finally she was at least smart enough to say, "Tim, I think you've got the wrong idea. Christine works in banking, and she doesn't know anything about women in international politics. Or about international politics, for that matter."  
  
"Hey!" I punched her on the arm.  
  
"Well, it's true, Christine," she said. Turning back to Tim, she tried to continue. "Ever since middle school --"  
  
"Tim doesn't want to hear about your awkward years, Katie!" I interrupted.  
  
"I do if she wants to talk about them," Tim said. "I survived that living hell too, after all. I'm more than happy to compare notes with both of you about that."  
  
"Both of us!" I exclaimed, trying to sound as diplomatic as I could.  
  
"Oh, Christine never had an awkward phase, don't you know?" Katie told him. "Miss Uptown Sophisticate had it together from the day she hit puberty!"  
  
It was nice of Katie to acknowledge that, and at least the conversation was steered into safer waters now. So I let them both go on about their memories of puppy love and embarrassing milestones, and didn't even object to Katie telling him all about the first time she wore a bra to school. If she wanted to make a fool of herself, after all, so much the better for driving Tim into my arms when the time was right. Which, of course, it wasn't yet, not after the intimate afternoon we'd had at the pool. Now was the time for a few days of frustrating him to heat up his desire.  
  
For the next three days, I did just that. A cordial smile when I walked into the dining room, then I'd sit with someone else. (He usually ended up with Katie anyway, and after the talk about middle school I didn't even want to know what they were up to!) A playful grin at the pool, and I'd dive in and swim and leave him eating his heart out on the deck.  
  
On the fourth day, Katie went into the city for some meetings at the university. So I figured the time was right for another taste of honey, especially since the next day was the fourteenth. As I strode up to his deck chair at the pool, I was undecided about just how far I should lead him on to think I might participate in Nude Day. I figured the answer would come to me as we chatted.

The silly fool pretended not to notice me until I was standing over him, grinning down at him and giving him a delightful view of my cleavage. "Oh, hi, Christine," he said, and at least he had the decency to set his book down. "How've you been?"  
  
And sure enough, the answer came to me. "Lost in anticipation for tomorrow, and you?"  
  
"You don't know the half of it!" Tim said. "It's been so weird, getting to know Katie and getting along so well with her, and literally seeing every inch of her while I've kept my trunks on. It feels really unfair, actually, but Katie always says..."  
  
"Yes, yes, just do what's comfortable for you, I know." I sat down on the edge of his chair and helped myself to a feel of his thigh. It was rock hard. "Tim, you don't know much about women, do you?"  
  
"Like most men, no." He seemed to think that was funny.  
  
I didn't laugh. "Tim, we're socialized to defer to men on just about everything, okay? When Katie tells you she doesn't mind you covering up while she isn't, she doesn't really mean that! She's just trying to make you feel better, even as she humiliates herself again and again to attract you! Can't you see that's what's going on here?"  
  
"No kidding?" Tim looked thoughtful. Maybe for once he really was. "Well, humiliated or not, she has attracted me."  
  
"Manipulated you is more like it," I said drily.  
  
"Manipulated? What do you mean?"  
  
"I mean every woman knows if you give a man a good look at your body, you can get him to do anything you want. Katie's a little naïve, but even she knows that!"  
  
"But she hasn't asked me to do anything expect spend time with her, which I'd do anyway!"  
  
"Not yet. But look, if she came back right now and told you before you get to see her tits again, she wants you to steal a car, you'd do it, wouldn't you?"  
  
"No!"  
  
"Sure, Tim. I know men. The good news is, I also know how to treat them. And if I like what I see tomorrow, maybe I'll show you, okay? Maybe."  
  
"Don't assume I'll like what I'll see," Christine.  
  
"Oh, you will." I stood up, and helped myself to a discreet brush over his crotch with my palm. Sure enough, he was hard again. "And all you've got to do is show Katie you won't be led around by the dick, got it?"  
  
"Goodbye, Christine."  
  
I only smiled in response before I turned to go. Men can be so cute when they try to play hard to get.  
  
Of course, now the gauntlet had been thrown down. I would just have to participate in Nude Day after all. I didn't relish giving everyone a look at the goods, but if that's what it took to snap Tim out of the spell Katie had him under, it would have to be done. I almost felt sorry for Katie, too, when I thought of just how terribly I would upstage her tomorrow. But really, she'd asked for it.  
  
The impending thrill of victory, and the tickle of embarrassment I was already feeling, together had me wound up tighter than a corkscrew. Fortunately, Katie wasn't back yet I recalled her saying to expect her around dinnertime. So I had all the time in the world to take care of things in the bath.  
  
Now, no one's perfect. I should have undressed in the bedroom and left my clothes on the bed, but force of habit led me to keep even my shoes on until I got to the bathroom. There I quickly undressed and, recalling that I had decided to go ahead with Nude Day, I gave myself the once-over in the full-length mirror. Days of sunshine had left my boobs a pasty white, and there were the first few warning signs of hair in my bikini area, but I was still every inch a knockout compared to any of the women I'd already seen naked at the pool. I had no intention of giving Tim too close of a look anyway. Not perfect, but I'd do fine.  
  
I drew a nice hot bath and, once again cursing Katie for getting me into this gross habit, I gave in to the urge I couldn't possibly hold off on until tomorrow. It was nothing compared to the way I'd ravage Tim then, of course, but my fingers did feel divine in the steamy water. It only took a few strokes to remember there was no need to hold back now. No men to control, no Katie to keep up appearances with -- for once, I was utterly free to let myself go.  
  
And let myself go I did. No more the demure lady, I enjoyed grunt after moan at my own every touch, titillated all the more by the echo in the little room that had my joy ringing out back at me. I thrashed around hard enough to splash some of the water on the floor, but that only added to the forbidden pleasure I had ever so utterly given into.  
  
"Yes, gimme that cock! Yes! Do it to me! Ram it into me!"  
  
Once the ice was broken, it wasn't just broken, it was boiled. I was shouting up a storm of dirty commands, flipping the bird at the repressed, sexist country I had so foolishly let Katie drag me to, and welcoming imaginary Tim to ravage me to his heart's delight and mine, to enjoy a real woman for a change.  
  
The one line I couldn't cross -- thank heavens -- was saying his name out loud. That, for some reason, I wanted to keep for tomorrow. And so any nosy ears out in the bedroom heard me talking up a storm about all sorts of filthy invitations of just what to do with my beautiful body, but they wouldn't hear just who I was imagining doing it all to me.  
  
I came with a shriek to end all shrieks, and let out with a cathartic "Whoooh!" as I finally gave my long-suffering clit a rest and pulled my hands away. A quick dunk in the water to wash away the sweat I was sure I'd worked up, and I pulled the plug and toweled off and got dressed, feeling more alive and eager than ever.  
  
When I opened the bathroom door, my elation was shattered as I saw Katie sitting on her bed, grinning at me. "That's quite a bathtub, isn't it?" the little bitch chirped.  
  
"Unh!" I couldn't disguise my horror. "What are you doing here?"  
  
"It's almost six," she said. "I said I'd be back by dinnertime."  
  
"I thought you said 'at dinnertime'," I managed to say through my humiliation. "Katie, don't you know when you ought to leave a room?!"  
  
"Christine, it's nothing to be ashamed of! I did that the other night, you know, while you were in bed. In fact, I'm really kind of envious. You really let yourself go in there."  
  
"Well, I wouldn't have if I'd known anyone could hear me!"  
  
"Why not? It's beautiful! Really, why can't you just be proud to be a woman with a healthy sexual appetite? It hasn't been that long that that's been okay, you know."  
  
"Don't give me your radical feminist baloney, Katie. You violated my privacy here!"  
  
"It's my room, too," she said. "And we are best friends, aren't we? Girlfriends talk about stuff like this!"  
  
"What about that day at the coffee shop, when you told me to cool it with the sex talk?"  
  
"That was in public, Christine. This isn't. And you do remember what tomorrow is, don't you?"  
  
"How can I forget, with you going butt naked at the pool all the time? Did you even bring a swimsuit?"  
  
Katie laughed but didn't answer my question. "I'm really hoping Tim will finally go nude tomorrow. Listen, if he does, I don't want you saying anything bad about his body, okay? The poor guy's a little shy, and I think he feels guilty because he's already seen me nude all these times and I haven't seen him. I want him to be comfortable with it."  
  
"I would never insult a man's body to his face, Katie!"  
  
"Right, Christine. Don't you know yourself at all?"  
  
"What's that supposed to mean?"  
  
"Never mind. Just go easy on Tim, that's all I ask."  
  
"I'll go easy on him, but I've also got to warn you, I've decided to participate too. So his attention will be diverted elsewhere from you for a change. Understood?"  
  
"Sure, Christine. I understand just fine." She stood up. "Dinner?"  
  
"Sure." At least she was aware of what she was in for tomorrow.  
  
In the morning, I was out of the shower before Katie was out of bed. Beauty takes time, after all. As the steam faded in the bathroom mirror, I brushed my hair and took a final assessment of my body and whether I really was willing to put it on display. One great thing about small breasts -- they don't sag. Mine stood out proudly, as pert and beautiful as ever. My flat tummy and slim hips reflected all the hard work I'd put into staying trim, not an ounce of fat to answer for. As for my...well, Katie was right and the word is vulva, but I refuse...it was just about perfect. The way my subtle yet graceful curves came to an end in a perfectly symmetrical cleft had me utterly bursting with pride. If it was showing the first signs of unsightly hair growing back, I was cautiously optimistic that people would notice its magnificent feminine dignity rather than its imperfections.  
  
Hands on hips like a pinup girl, I made up my mind. Yes, I was willing to make this sacrifice for the good of saving Tim from the dumb choice he was so perilously close to making. Katie would be hurt, but it was for her own good, really. Don Henley was right, women are the only works of art. It's just too bad women like Katie don't take greater care to appreciate their unique gift. Or maybe it was the other way around and thanks to genetics, she never had the potential to be this beautiful anyway. Either way, all I was going to do was beat her at her own game. She would thank me in the end for teaching her a lesson.  
  
I had to remind myself of that when I opened the bathroom door to find her standing there waiting. She burst into silly girlish giggles. "Well, we were always best friends, but who ever knew we'd be this comfortable together?" she snickered.  
  
I smiled and nodded, and passed over in silence that I, for one, did not feel comfortable once again being forced to look at her plump, ungroomed body. She would get her comeuppance for that soon enough, after all. While I waited for her to shower, I pulled my bathrobe on and sat cross-legged on my bed, going over scenarios in my head as to how Tim might react to my body and how I should handle each one.  
  
When Katie came out of the bathroom (I must admit she was quick), she had her hair wrapped in her towel and was of course otherwise naked. "Let's get some sunblock on one another, huh?" she said.  
  
"I'm still not touching anything but your back, and I want the same from you," I declared, reluctantly taking my robe off -- she'd already seen what she was up against, after all.  
  
"As you wish, my dear," she said, and she opened the bottle and set about rubbing it on. She giggled a bit as she lathered up her boobs. "I certainly don't want these getting burned," she said.  
  
"They could do with a little tanning, you know," I said, although I didn't see how she'd ever get any sun on the undersides.  
  
"A little is right. There's no way they'll get just a little today, you know that."  
  
I couldn't deny that, and I was just as happy not to have to talk about her breasts any further anyway.  
  
She did take care of her own rear end, and to get the indignity out of the way I did the same, which once again made Katie laugh. "For heaven's sake, Kathleen, we're not schoolgirls anymore!" I admonished.  
  
"Oh, I know!" she said. "But some things never get beyond that mentality when everything about sex is brand new to you and it all seems so hilarious, you know?"  
  
I didn't. But I could certainly understand why it was that way for her. As she clutched both her butt cheeks with her hands and wiggled around like she was desperate for the bathroom or something, I humored her and smiled through my annoyance.  
  
Once we were lathered up and ready to make our entrance, I picked up my robe from the bed to put back on. But Katie wasn't having it. "Come on, Christine, no need to cover up today of all days!"  
  
"I suppose you're going to prance down there without a stitch on?" I asked. "So even people who aren't participating will see everything?"  
  
"I figure nearly everyone here has seen all of me by now," she said. "Anyone who doesn't want to, will probably be hiding out in their room for the day or even going into the city."  
  
That, I had to admit, was probably true. And the sooner I started humbling her with my own appearance, the better. I set the robe back on the bed. "Fine," I said. "Let's go."  
  
Every step down the walkway and then downstairs and then outside had me feeling like my heart was going to explode. Even my toes felt on fire with embarrassment, even though we didn't actually see anyone for most of the way. I guess it showed, for Katie hooked her arm through mine and said, "It's okay to be nervous. I was too, the first time. You'll be amazed at how welcoming everyone is, really!"  
  
Of course, I could only imagine how nervous I would be if I had a body like Katie's! But if she could take it, I could take it.  
  
She wasn't wrong, as it turned out. When we opened the door to the pool area and stepped in side by side, the world didn't grind to a halt just because of my statuesque presence. I did get some appropriately appreciative looks, even from Stan and Jim who had for some reason been avoiding me, and that put me at ease as well.  
  
"Christine, you did it!" Danny emerged from the crowd, naked of course and looking like a misassembled jigsaw puzzle like most naked guys do, but he looked happy to see me and I did my best to return the favor. "How are you finding the feeling so far?"  
  
"I'm getting used to it," I said. "Honestly, I still don't quite see the appeal Katie is always talking about, but I'm working on it."  
  
"There's no need to work on it, Christine," Katie said. "Just let the freedom wash over you."  
  
"Excellent advice," Danny said. "And look, if you don't like it, no one's going to judge you for leaving or putting a swimsuit on, okay?"  
  
"If you say so," I said, though I couldn't see anyone wearing anything and I didn't want to be the only one.  
  
"I do." He touched my shoulder and squeezed it a bit. "And congratulations. We know it's a big step. Enjoy the party!"  
  
"Is he gay, Katie?" I asked as soon as he was gone.  
  
"I don't know," Katie said. "Why?"  
  
"He barely even glanced at my body. I kept waiting for him to drop his eyes, and he never did."  
  
Katie laughed. "Oh, Christine, you're never going to change, are you?"  
  
"What does that mean?!"  
  
"Nothing. Let's get some breakfast."  
  
There was a nice continental spread near the deep end of the pool, nothing hot for obvious reasons, which I couldn't very well argue with, though I'd have loved a hot cup of coffee right then. I settled for iced tea and a bagel with fat-free cream cheese, and remembered my manners when I did catch others admiring me. Who could blame them?  
  
Wouldn't you know it was good old Sarah, from Brooklyn, who was the first to comment on my body? "Christine, can you get me an appointment with your waxer when we go back t New York? She did a beautiful job!"  
  
"Thank you," I said. "But I don't think she does house calls in Brooklyn."  
  
"I meant for me to go to her salon!" Poor Sarah really couldn't take a hint.  
  
"She's got a pretty full schedule," I said. "But I'll talk to her on my next appointment, okay?" I would do no such thing, of course. Sarah was right, Darla did a fantastic job every time, which was exactly why I couldn't see inflicting Sarah upon her.  
  
"Thanks! I've been thinking of giving it a try for ages, but I always chicken out. But seeing how you look...wow!"  
  
"Thank you, Sarah. I guess I ought to warn you, though, not every woman looks this good underneath. No offense."  
  
"No offense? Christine, that was uncalled for!" She spun on her heel and went off to whine to Stan and Jim. I could tell she was whining about me, because they both gave me a dirty look that I caught out of the corner of my eye. Luckily they stayed in her corner and didn't force me to get too good a look at their pasty white bodies.  
  
I was just polishing off my bagel when he appeared grinning at my side. Tim. He'd finally done it. "Well hello," I said, allowing myself a quick look down. His dick was nice enough, but it was soft. Of course, he'd only just caught sight of me.  
  
"You did it too, huh?" he said. "What do you think?"  
  
"I think I prefer saving this view for special occasions," I said. "But it's fun, sort of."  
  
"I'm with you," he said. "We have clothes for a reason. But it's a kick, isn't it?"  
  
"It does make me feel beautiful," I allowed. "I do work hard to look like this. Why not show it off now and then, huh?"  
  
"Hmm, yeah." I already knew Tim wasn't the most talkative guy, to be fair.  
  
It was right then that I knew Katie had spotted Tim, for I heard that inimitable girlish squeal of hers behind me. "Tim! You did it! I knew you could!"  
  
She threw herself at him like a groupie with a rock star, and when she'd finally let him go, of course now he was hard. "Tim, you're beautiful," she gushed. "You had nothing to be shy about." She gazed shamelessly at his dick as she said it, but I confess I was watching too. He was quite well endowed, and I was just about ready to make him an offer I was sure he couldn't refuse.  
  
"Thanks," he said. "I guess you can see how beautiful I find you, huh? Sorry."  
  
"Don't be sorry! That makes me feel great!" Did Katie even know how immature she sounded?! I could only stand there in frustrated silence and wonder. Evidently she didn't know, because it only got worse. "Whooh, I just feel so excited for you, Tim, remembering what it was like my first time!"  
  
That did it. I just couldn't stand there and listen to my best friend prattle like someone half her age. I took a quick look around for someone I'd feel comfortable putting myself on display for, didn't find anyone who looked worth of the honor, and I jumped in the pool.  
  
Katie had told me more than once how wonderful skinnydipping felt, and as soon as I was in the water I realized she was right about that, at least. As I swam up and down the pool, I thought about Tim -- had I made my exit at the right time? Probably as close to it as I could have with Katie there. He'd had a good look at me, now he could eat his heart out for a while. I was quite sure he'd seek me out later on when I was done swimming.  
  
Of course, I took my sweet time on that. When I was finally ready to get out of the pool, I wore my most flirtatious grin as my body rose glistening from the water. It caught the attention of a guy I hadn't seen before, who was shaved clean down below. I'm not crazy about that look on men, but it fit this guy pretty well. "Happy Nude Day," he said, offering me a hand as I climbed out, which I gladly accepted.  
  
"Same to you," I said. I longed to look around and confirm that Tim could see me chatting up other guys, but that wouldn't do -- I could see I hadn't quite hooked this guy yet. In any event, he wasn't bad in his own right. Square shoulders, nice cleft in his chin, neat haircut, probably an ex-college football player who'd managed to stay in shape. "Are you new to this?" I asked, looking for a little vulnerability in that masculine aura.  
  
"It shows, does it?" he asked. "Yeah. I've been wanting to try it for years, and when I found out I was going to have to come over here for business this summer, I figured what the heck? It's fun, isn't it?"  
  
"It's got its moments," I said. "A friend of mine tr...talked me into trying it." No one needed to know Katie had tricked me.  
  
"Right, you're Katie's friend, aren't you?" he said, and my esteem for him dropped like a rock. "Yeah, she just seems born to this whole thing. I wish I could feel that comfortable with it."  
  
He wasn't comfortable...there was my in. "Oh, well, when you're in great shape like you and I are in, why shouldn't we be comfortable?"  
  
He chuckled. "Why, thank you! Yes, I saw you here with Katie the other day and I was thinking, man, I hope she comes to Nude Day. Hope you don't mind my saying, it was worth the wait!"  
  
That was more like it! I allowed a sincere smile, but not for long. "I'm glad to hear that," I took a deep breath and welcomed his obvious appreciation as my breasts rose and fell. "You going to be around after lunch?"

"Sure! I'd love to chat some more..."  
  
"I've got to go check on someone now, but maybe I'll see you then?"  
  
"I'd love that. Sorry, what's your name?"  
  
"You'll find out this afternoon, won't you?" I winked and pranced off without another look. At least now I had a Plan B.  
  
But there was no sign of Plan A now that I had time to look around. Katie didn't appear to be anywhere either. Those fools wouldn't! Would they? I had no choice but to rush up to our room and see.  
  
This time I did see a few other people on the way, starting with an older couple who were just arriving at the party. "Hope we're not late!" said the man to me as I brushed past them.  
  
"No, there's a great crowd there," I said. Then halfway up the stairs I passed a woman who had even less business loving Nude Day than Katie did, but I smiled at her and she returned the favor.  
  
I did think perhaps I ought to peek in the window discreetly rather than barging into our room, but there was no time to be considerate. I threw the door open. To my great relief, there was no one there. I didn't know where she might have gotten him off to, but at least it wasn't here.  
  
With that crisis averted, I relaxed long enough to notice I really needed to pee. I'd probably swallowed some water in the pool. I shut the room door and went into the bathroom, and had already sat down to relieve myself when I realized I hadn't quite shut the bathroom door all the way. No harm done, I reasoned, with no one else in the room.  
  
As I wiped my pussy, I realized I was still wet. Tim had been awfully cute, even if he'd had to act like a kid to appease Katie, and then there was the other guy whom I'd definitely gotten my hooks into. I stood up and flushed and washed my hands, and figured I might as well enjoy a round with my hands while I had the room to myself.  
  
Except that just as I was about to throw the bathroom door wide open, I no longer had it to myself. I heard the outside door open and Katie laughing.  
  
I didn't know what she was laughing at, but whatever it was, Tim felt guilty about it. "I'm sorry!" he said, though he was also laughing.  
  
"No, it's fine!" Katie replied. "She's always been that way. I really don't think she can help it!"  
  
"I admire you for putting up with her," he said.  
  
"Can't choose our friends, can we?"  
  
I didn't know who they were talking about, but right about then I was thinking I ought to start choosing my own friends more carefully. But there was nothing for me but to stand stock still and hope they didn't stay long.  
  
Evidently, though, they did plan to stay, as I heard one or the other of them flop down on what I could only hope was Katie's bed. "You sure you want to?" Tim asked. "I don't want to push you."  
  
Oh, dear God, no!  
  
"You're not pushing me!" Katie said. "Honestly, I've been hoping this would happen, but with Nude Day coming up, it was best to see what happened then first. And what happened is...I'm dying to make love to you, Tim."  
  
Jesus, wasn't she ever going to grow up? But if I was stuck here, I just had to see this. Luckily I remembered my compact on the sink, and I carefully picked it up and opened it. Holding the mirror up just right afforded me a look at the two lovebirds. I figured if Katie was willing to give it up that easily, they deserved each other!  
  
It was Katie who'd flopped down on her bed, and now she was sitting up, her legs spread wide as a chestnut tree for Tim, who was standing over her and grinning and hard as a rock. Even I could probably have seen her pussy from my hiding place if she hadn't been so bushy. "So, Tim?" she cooed.  
  
"Yes, well, I did tell you I liked your vulva, didn't I?"  
  
I could've thrown up, I really could have.  
  
"Thank you, Tim, but are you only going to look at it?" She gave him a come-hither motion with her finger, and he climbed onto the bed between her legs.  
  
"I don't really know my way around a woman's body all that well," he said. I had no problem believing that!  
  
"Your honesty about that is refreshing," Katie said. "Most men don't. But we're happy to show you what we like if you just admit it!"  
  
Speak for yourself, Katie!  
  
She did, in any case, show him. I was equal parts outraged and amused as she took his right hand and placed it in her bush. "Now, just rub my lips nice and light...ohoooo! That's great! More of that! Ohoohoohooo...yes!"  
  
I couldn't see just what Tim was doing with his fingers, but I recalled what Katie had said about her ex - He had a way of tickling my vulva that made me climb walls - and I guessed I ought to be happy for her. Evidently Tim had unlocked that particular secret too. In no time Katie was on her back, wiggling around and howling. I had to admit I was getting pretty worked up, too, listening to her obvious pleasure whether I approved of it or not. At some point I'm pretty sure he gave up tickling her and started fingering her. I couldn't see the moment when it happened, but Katie's moans definitely grew more intense and longer. By the time she said, "Ohhhh, feels so good!", I knew it had progressed.  
  
Around that time, Tim leaned down and started kissing her breasts, and playing with them with his free hand. I guessed I couldn't very well begrudge Katie getting some pleasure out of them when she had to lug them around all day, but I didn't need to know just how much pleasure they gave her. Here she was screeching with joy when she didn't even have him inside her yet -- clearly my dear friend knew nothing about keeping men in the dark about these things!  
  
When I saw her grab his dick and rub it around her pussy without actually taking him inside yet, I had to give her credit for knowing a little something about teasing anyway. I could also no longer resist going to town on myself with my free hand. Despite my outrage at the whole thing, my arousal had only grown, and I dipped two fingers inside to find myself utterly sopping. The warm wetness did feel lovely on my clit, although I did hate myself nearly as much as I hated Katie and Tim right then.  
  
I had to struggle to keep quiet. But at least I tried. There was no mistaking the moment Tim was inside Katie. They could probably hear her screech of joy in Dubai. She only got more boisterous from then, as Tim went at it slow and gentle just like I imagined all sex Katie had ever had was. He'd just have to wait to see what a real woman could do, I thought, as I rubbed myself faster and imagined what I'd be doing him right then.  
  
"Mmmfh, Tim, harder! Faster!" Katie shattered my image of her yet again when she slapped Tim on the hip three or four times. She knew how to show a man who was boss after all, and sure enough he did pick up the pace.  
  
Watching him flail away at her while she wiggled her legs and slapped his hip may have been the lamest amateur porn I'd ever seen, but it did get me too worked up to give my own needs short shrift any longer. I'd seen far more than I needed to, and silently I set the compact back on the sink and got down to business with my right hand. I could, of course, still hear Katie howling up a storm out there, and at least that gave me cover to let out a grunt or two of my own. Of course I hadn't forgotten Katie overhearing me the other day and I wasn't about to let that happen again now of all times. But I just couldn't remain completely silent, and once again I cursed Katie for plunging me into this dirty habit as I rubbed around my clit, loving each stroke as much as I hated it, and accepted that I couldn't remain completely quiet. It was just too frustrating.  
  
Of course, at least I wasn't as frustrated as Katie was going to be now that she'd let her guard down so completely for Tim. I almost felt sorry for her as she came with a yelp and then egged Tim on to the same. "Come for me, baby! You can do it!" Slap, slap. I knew men well enough to know he wouldn't scream like she had...so I was surprised and aroused afresh when he did.  
  
Dead silence reigned for a moment after his orgasm, and I had to stop with my finger right on my hungry clit to avoid letting them know of my presence. I took advantage of the unwelcome break to reassure myself that when I got my hands on Tim, I'd make him screech a lot louder than that, and of course he would not get the same out of me. Then we'd see which one of us he came slinking back to! As I stood there praying neither of them would need the bathroom, I could also only hope there wasn't going to be any goody-goody pillow talk about what a beautiful experience it had been.  
  
But this was Katie we're talking about, so of course there was. "You do too know your way around a woman's body, Tim. That was lovely!"  
  
"Thanks. I had a good tutor, didn't I?"  
  
"Oh, stop!" And there was that girly laugh of hers. "I do sometimes have a big mouth in bed. I hope that didn't scare you or anything."  
  
"No! I admit it wasn't what I was expecting, but it was beautiful."  
  
"Thanks. I get that a lot. People think I'm going to be timid in bed just because I'm soft-spoken in public, you know? Especially when they also meet Christine and know we're old friends."  
  
"Yeah, I hate to bring her up, but I was kind of thinking, between the two of you..."  
  
He hated to bring me up? Served him right having to do it, then!  
  
"Well, I've never heard what she's like in bed, of course," Katie said then, "but she's always telling me I ought to hold back and not let the guy know how much I'm loving it. So I'm guessing she's a lot quieter than I am."  
  
"God, that's so manipulative!"  
  
"I know! And I'm always telling her, there's already that ugly stereotype about women not liking sex as much as men do, why perpetuate that?"  
  
She had never said that to me, and there were plenty of reasons to perpetuate it anyway.  
  
"Why indeed? Why does she want men thinking that way?"  
  
"Probably because she thinks she can get more expensive gifts out of them if they think it'll improve her response in bed."  
  
"Good God! Katie, why are you best friends forever with someone like that?!"  
  
"We were only kids when we met. It was...different. Except she was big on wrapping boys around her finger back then too, now that I think of it. No accounting for taste, I guess."  
  
My free hand was clenched in rage. Just what did Katie think she'd have been back in high school without my skirt-tails to hang on to? She certainly wouldn't be overconfident enough to go naked at the pool!  
  
"Yeah, I had friends like that when I was a kid too," Tim said. "I think I understand. I'm not sure how I'd react if they showed up now, though."  
  
"Well, if you're as much like me as I think you are, Tim, you might have wanted to show them how much you've changed from when you were the shy and quiet one of the pair."  
  
"Good point. There was this one kid, Jeff...ah, but you don't want to hear about that, do you?"  
  
"Sure I do!" I panicked as I heard sheets rustling, then relaxed just as quickly as Katie said, "Let's go back down to the pool and you can tell me all about him. They ought to have some beer ready by now, too."  
  
"Just let me hit the bathroom first," Tim said, and I froze in horror. "Maybe you know how guys have to pee after we come."  
  
"Yes, and women are supposed to pee after sex, too, to clean the pipes," Katie said. How the hell did she know that?! "But we can use the bathrooms downstairs, that way we won't have to wait for each other. And I'm ready for some more sunshine."  
  
"Works for me," Tim said, and they were gone. I remained frozen in the bathroom for a few minutes, fearful that they'd come back for something they'd forgotten, until I remembered they couldn't have forgotten anything because they literally hadn't brought anything in the room with them.  
  
I was hurt and I was frustrated, but I was still more wound up than ever. The prevailing just-had-sex smell didn't help with that, nor did the fact that Katie's sheets were still damp when I lay down on her bed -- I wasn't going to get mine dirty as well, after all. It didn't take me long at all to bring myself off to the most intense orgasm I'd had in ages. Alone at last, I grunted and moaned and yelled as loudly as I liked, as I imagined chaining Tim up and squeezing his cock until it hurt and making him beg forgiveness for bothering with Katie when he could have had me.  
  
Though I felt much better once I came, I was still furious with Katie. But I couldn't think of anything I might be able to do about it for the moment, with both of us stranded out here in the desert. So I washed my hands and went back down to the pool.  
  
I had no trouble avoiding Tim and Katie, who were chatting harmlessly in the shallow end of the pool and didn't show any sign of noticing when I returned. My Plan B man did notice, as I caught his eye over by the buffet table just as I rounded the corner of the pool. He tipped his beer bottle at me and nodded, and I smiled. But something must have caught his attention, because as soon as I neared the table, he was on his way off around the other side of the pool.  
  
No problem, I reasoned as I opened a beer for myself. I'd corner him at dinner if the mood struck me. For now, after the way Katie had just hurt me, it was probably best that I just mingle with the crowd, and until dinnertime that's just what I did.  
  
Dinner proved to be more of the same, as I ended up chatting with a South African couple I hadn't met before. They at least were nice enough, though I found the woman to be awfully loose in her praise of her husband for finding this wonderful place, which I was increasingly finding anything but wonderful. I was too relieved to have finally gotten my clothes back on (no nudity allowed in the dining room for hygienic reasons) to care much.  
  
I found it so easy to avoid Katie for the rest of the evening that I had to wonder if she was trying to avoid me, too, though I couldn't think why. She finally blessed me with her appearance late that evening when I had just turned out the light. Perfect timing as always, but I forced a smile as I watched her come in.  
  
"So how was your Nude Day?" I asked.  
  
"Blissfully free and wonderful, thanks. And you?"  
  
"Educational," I said.  
  
"Educational?"  
  
"I knew there was a reason why I didn't put my body on display for just anyone, but I didn't quite know just what it was, other than not everyone being worthy. Now I see there really is no other reason, and that's enough."  
  
Katie laughed, but didn't look at me as she made her way to the bathroom. "Oh, Christine, please don't ever change!" she said.  
  
The rest of our stay went like that, I'm afraid. I haven't got a lot I care to share about that last week, except to say Tim never came to his senses. We had a cordial conversation or two by the pool, but he could never take my hints and was always straight back into Katie's arms. Neither one of them had the good taste to put on a swimsuit after the big day, either, so I was just as happy to keep naked Tim at arm's length. I was careful to stay away from our room, lest I get another unwelcome show, and could only hope Katie would show some restraint already.  
  
Of course they sobbed like a couple of babies on the day we left. I can't stand to see a man cry, so I shook hands with Danny and waited out in the minivan for them to get through their long goodbye. When Katie finally arrived, her eyes were puffy but dry. "He'll be visiting me in New York for Christmas," she said. "God, I've always wanted to spend the holidays in the big apple while I'm in love. How much more romantic can you get?"  
  
"Good God, Katie, you sound like an out-of-towner!"  
  
"I am an out-of-towner," she reminded me. "And more than happy to be one if it means having a dream come true!"  
  
I looked out the window at the desert rushing by. It had been a nicer time than I'd have guessed, but I could hardly wait to get on that plane. Even if it meant Katie going braless for the night again. "Just keep your feet on the ground about Tim, okay?" I said. "You did just meet, and who knows what he'll get up to between now and Christmas."  
  
"Christine, that's a terrible thing to say! We're in love!"  
  
"You're in love. Tim's a guy. Big difference."  
  
"Oh, you know that's not true, Christine," Katie said. "You heard how sincere he was."  
  
"I heard how sincere he was?" I repeated, turning back to face her. "When?"  
  
Katie's lips curled into the nastiest smile I'd ever seen on her, and she whispered her answer so the driver couldn't hear. "That day in the bathroom."