**Summer at Cache Lake**

**Chapter 11: Back to the Log, continued**  
  
Little had changed in the hours she had been in the tent. The Airstream was completely dark and the moon was still high, its white light filtering down through the tall evergreens. A few minutes later she managed to crawl out of the tent. Listening intently, she remained crouched down right where she was, ready to dive back inside at the slightest hint of danger. She tried to relax and get her nervousness under control, but she gave up. Something about being outside in just her panties was simply too nerve-racking to make that possible. Her heart was racing.  
  
She always zipped her tent closed behind her, but this time she purposefully left it open. A zipped tent would be a problem if she needed to get back inside quickly. She thought about her flashlight but made the logical decision to leave it behind. Turning on a flashlight would only serve to draw attention to herself. She was better off without it.  
  
She stood up, allowing herself to briefly cover her breasts with her hands; however, once she was fully upright, she forced them down to her sides. After carefully making sure that the coast was clear, she took a tentative step away from the tent and then paused. Once she was convinced that nothing had changed, she took another.  
  
After the first few steps, the walking became a little easier, even though her excitement and anxiety grew as the distance to the safety of her tent increased.  
  
Jill was considering walking all the way back to the log at the water’s edge, but her initial goal was simply the other side of the clearing where the trail to the lake began. Walking very slowly so as to make as little noise as possible, she soon found herself there.  
  
She turned and looked back at the trailer with her tent beside it, lit only by the little bit of moonlight that made it all the way down to the ground.  
  
She knew she had to decide to go on or return, but as she thought about the decision, she realized that she had already made it. She was definitely going on – unless circumstances changed.  
  
Taking a deep breath to again summon her courage, she turned and took a few small steps along the trail that she and David had followed earlier in the evening.  
  
Sneaking along, all of her senses on full alert, she made her way slowly toward the lakeshore, pausing at various intervals to listen. She did her best to walk silently, but small twigs cracked now and then underneath the soles of her shoes. It had cooled off some, but it was still a comfortable temperature to be outside, even nearly naked. Shivers rippled through her as she tried to wrap her mind around what she was doing. ‘Could this really be me?’ she found herself wondering.  
  
She ran her hands up to her panties, plain little ordinary panties, all she had on with the exception of her shoes. Grasping the waistband on each side, she pulled them up, seating them firmly against her crotch, as if she were attempting to remind herself that she was not actually naked.  
  
It took quite some time, given her cautious pace, but eventually, she did emerge from the trees at the shore. She paused, surveying the late-night scene. The moon had moved quite a bit in the sky. Besides it and the brighter stars, the only lights to be seen were a few security lights in among the cabins on the distant shore. The tranquility of the lake at night made for a beautiful scene, but she was much too preoccupied with what she was doing to enjoy it fully.  
  
She considered turning around. She had already ventured quite far from the safety of her tent; however, she still wanted to make it to the log. She’d always been a goal driven individual.  
  
Standing there in the full moonlight, she felt so much more exposed than she had within the relative darkness of the trees. Glancing down, she saw just how well the moon was illuminating her. That realization caused a shiver to travel the length of her spine.  
  
It felt scary to stand there – much scarier to move, but she managed to turn and make her way slowly along the beach in the direction of the log. The going was easier given the openness of the shore. Her desire to reach the log was winning out over the mounting uneasiness she felt due to how far she was from her tent and her clothes within.  
  
Her heart pounded within her chest. She couldn’t believe what she was doing, walking along outside with nearly nothing on. It was so unlike her. She was so shy, so self-conscious of her skinny body, and yet here she was . . . her small breasts bare in the night air. Even though it was very unlikely, given how late it was, she was risking having them seen. And the worst part for her was the realization of how thrilling it all felt. It was like a rollercoaster ride, only scarier and yet more fun . . . in an electrifying, terrifying sort of way.  
  
Upon arriving at the log she sat down facing the lake. She was seated just where she had been earlier. Deciding that she felt too exposed in that position, she slid down onto the grassy portion of the sandy shore between the log and the lake.  
  
She thought about going on – towards the boys’ camp on the point, but she knew she wouldn’t. It was just fun to think about doing something so off-the-charts daring. She was sure they would be asleep, but even so, she didn’t dare go any closer.  
  
Thinking about going on made her aware of just how far she’d come. She tried to relax, but sitting there, she could feel her heart pounding. A minute later she found herself again scampering back to her tent, just much more carefully than the first time earlier that same evening. She didn’t have a shirt to cover herself with this time, so she crossed her arms over her chest, a breast in each hand. That helped her feel a little less exposed. She had already proven herself to be a very daring girl, so covering up now was okay, she reasoned.  
  
Once back inside the safety of her zipped tent, she kicked her shoes off and pulled her shirt on. It felt reassuring to again have her chest covered. She sighed happily as she crawled back inside her sleeping bag.  
  
Snuggling into the safety of her bag, she found herself feeling appalled and confused by her behavior. It was one thing to tan topless. Many girls did that, and it had a purpose; the elimination of tan lines. But running around topless at night? Who did that? What purpose might that serve?  
  
Eventually she did manage to fall asleep; however, the next morning she didn’t wake up at her usual time.  
  
“Bean, are you in there?” she heard David’s voice asking. Sitting up and looking at the time, she realized that her grandmother would already have breakfast on the table.  
  
“I’ll be there in a minute,” she replied, grabbing her hairbrush. She felt the need to hurry, especially considering that her bladder felt as if it were about to burst.  
  
A few minutes later, everyone looked up as she entered the Airstream and made a beeline for the bathroom.  
  
During breakfast Jill kept her eyes focused on her plate. She didn’t make eye contact with anyone, not even her grandmother when she was asked about her plans for the day. She wondered why her grandmother was still asking her that question. Even if she knew what she was planning to do, the last thing she was going to do was tell her grandmother such that the boys would overhear.  
  
As they were leaving the trailer, Jill whispered to David, “Pocket, can we talk . . . in private?”  
  
“Sure,” he replied. Turning to Ryan he continued, “I’ll catch up with you in a bit, Ryan . . . back at camp.”  
  
Ryan looked from David’s face to Jill’s face and then back again. He shrugged and then turned; however, before taking more than a step or two, he turned back around and pulled his shirt off over his head.  
  
“Your turn, Jill,” he said, pointing at her and looking deep into her eyes.  
  
Jill’s face flushed crimson. Ryan laughed boisterously as she turned and walked quickly away, her arms folded tightly against her stomach, each hand gripping an elbow.  
  
“Leave her alone, and wait for me in camp,” she heard David admonishing Ryan.  
  
She walked towards the Jeep. Once she was behind it, Jill glanced back and saw that Ryan was walking off in the direction of the point.  
  
“I’m sorry about him,” said David as he approached.  
  
“As if you’re any better,” she sneered. “Maybe the only difference is that last night I was actually dumb enough to take my shirt off.”  
  
“But then you ran off. You surprised me . . . running off like that.”  
  
“Sorry,” she replied. She thought about trying to explain but looked down at the ground instead, her bashfulness surging within her.  
  
“It’s okay,” said David. “You’re alright, aren’t you? You acted scared. But there was nothing to be afraid of.”  
  
“I’m just not very . . . comfortable . . . like that,” she said, biting her lower lip.  
  
“I know you’re not,” said David in a reassuring voice. “That’s why it’s so fun.” He started chuckling. It was more of a friendly chuckle than a mean one. Jill might not have minded it all that much had Ryan not just been laughing at her.  
  
“Stop that!” she scolded. “I want my old brother back . . . the brother that looks out for me. Not this new brother . . . this one terrorizes me.”  
  
“Terrorizes you? Please don’t think that. I just want to have a fun summer. I want us all to have a fun summer. I will always look out for you. We’ve got each other’s back, right?”  
  
“That’s what I used to think,” said Jill. “What have you told Ryan? Did you tell him what you saw that day in the lake?”  
  
“Why? Does it matter?”  
  
“I guess I’m curious what he knows. I suppose you tell him everything,” said Jill, her eyes downcast, a sad look on her face as she bit her lower lip.  
  
“I never told him about that.”  
  
“You didn’t . . . why not?” she asked. “I mean, I’m glad you didn’t. I’m just curious.”  
  
“I didn’t see the point. I guess I’ve been trying to dial down his expectations. At times it seems as if he thinks of nothing other than you and your pretty titties. We both miss your company tremendously.”  
  
“How about last night?” she asked. “Did you tell him that I took off my top, but then ran off?”  
  
“He knows we talked. That’s it. He so very much wants this to work for you. He’s even game to force it to happen, but I won’t allow that.”  
  
“Force it to happen?” asked Jill agape.  
  
“You know . . . trick you, or again strip you. Not on my watch. I just keep telling him, ‘If it happens, it happens. If it doesn’t, it doesn’t.’ I know you might simply decide to read novels and hike alone all summer.”  
  
“That’s exactly what I’m planning to do!” she said. “But thanks for not telling him. And thanks for talking to me. Sometimes it almost seems as if you are still my sweet twin brother, even though Ryan has turned you into a butt head.”  
  
She gave him a kiss on the cheek, and then shoved him forcefully. “Now git!” she said, turning and going to her tent for her novel.  
  
David watched her as she set up a lawn chair in the shade of the trailer and started reading. Jill, for her part, was only pretending to read. With her peripheral vision, she watched David carefully. After a minute he turned and started walking in the direction Ryan had gone.  
  
He paused, then turned and looked back. Jill glanced up from the page she had been staring at the entire time. “Join us, Jilly!” he said softly. Looking into her eyes, he peeled off his shirt.  
  
She scowled openly and then, shaking her head, she returned her eyes to her book. Once he was out of sight, Jill reached up and wiped a single tear with an index finger.  
  
After he was long gone, Jill did resume reading, but a little while later she found her mind wandering. She thought about her shyness. The more she focused on that, the more clear things became. There was absolutely no way that she would be able to be topless in front of Ryan and David. Certain aspects of that idea did sound a little bit appealing in a heart-racing, spine-chilling, blood-curdling, death-defying sort of way.  
  
She thought about her topless walk to the log the night before. But that had been alone. Topless alone and topless in front of others were polar opposites. Yep, she was just way too shy. Bashful, timid, modest, embarrassed . . . whatever you wanted to call it. Even if she decided to do it, she wouldn’t be able to go through with it, she realized – not that she would ever decide to do it.  
  
That thought pattern brought back memories of earlier summers at the lake – years before, as a child when she had frolicked through the forests around Cache Lake without her shirt. That made her smile. She had been maybe eleven or twelve the last time she had done that.  
  
At that time, she had really had no tits – nothing whatsoever – not even the puffy nipples that had signaled her first stage of development. Her chest had probably been indistinguishable from David’s. She hadn’t been self-conscious. No tits were the norm for girls of that age. She found it a bit strange that she had only started to feel self-conscious about being flat once her friends had started to develop. And it was also ironic that now, now that she was no longer as flat as a board, that she felt flatter than when she had truly been completely flat. Thinking back to her younger days, she did realize that it had been nice to run around without a shirt just like David. That had been fun. Alas, those days were gone . . . long gone.  
  
Jill ended up staying close to the trailer all day that day. Periods of reading would alternate with periods of thinking. She had a lot to think about. There were a lot of conflicting notions bouncing around in her head.  
  
One new idea that she found herself dwelling on was how effective the boys’ strategy had been at focusing much of her mental energy on her chest and the idea of going topless. Had the summer played out as she had expected it to, she would most likely not have experimented with topless tanning, and she wouldn’t have spent time thinking about her figure. She most certainly wouldn’t have wandered around the lakeshore at night in just her panties!  
  
She had decided to ignore their proposal and wait them out, but in reality, she was spending a good part of each day focusing on their proposal – thinking about her small breasts and her comfort level with them – even thinking about baring them – but always very cautiously.  
  
Thinking about her walk to the lakeshore with David the night before resulted in a plan that she couldn’t wait to implement. After all, turnabout is fair play! David had been trying to move things along by showing her what it could be like. She decided to try and move things along in the direction that she preferred . . . by showing them what that would be like.

**Chapter 12: Meeting Nick**  
  
The next morning after breakfast, just before they all went their separate ways, she decided to begin implementing her plan.  
  
“Are you guys missing pizza as much as I am?” she asked.  
  
“I know I’m getting quite tired of hot dogs and marshmallows,” said Ryan. Jill didn’t allow herself to be distracted by his comment. She was longing to roast hot dogs and marshmallows. That was among the things she was missing the most.  
  
“I’ve been craving pepperoni pizza,” said Jill. “How about you, David?”  
  
“You know I love pepperoni pizza!” he replied enthusiastically.  
  
Jill smiled openly; they seemed to be taking the bait. “I’m thinking Valentino’s Pizza . . . out on the highway. We go there every summer, and we haven’t been there yet this year. How about tonight, guys?”  
  
“They make the best pizza!” exclaimed Ryan.  
  
“Okay then,” said Jill. “Let’s rendezvous at the Jeep, say . . . six o’clock.”  
  
A bit later, they all went their separate ways for the day. Jill hadn’t gotten a firm commitment to a pizza outing, but she hadn’t pushed for one either. It had seemed best to just assume that she had buy-in. Everyone had talked longingly about pizza, so she was very optimistic.  
  
She pictured them all having a great time, with their shirts on, and then transitioning back into their standard threesome – the three amigos. Valentino’s even had an arcade. It would make for a great post-dinner activity.  
  
Jill congratulated herself on a masterful idea. She found herself feeling so very optimistic on a walk in the woods that she took that afternoon. During her walk, she found a very secluded meadow and tanned topless for an hour or so, hidden by the tall grass. For some reason, it was quite relaxing, much more so than tanning topless out in the open on the ridge. In the meadow, it was much easier to ignore the feeling that she was about to be caught in the act.  
  
On the same walk, she again worked on adding to her knowledge of the area’s wildflowers. Learning about them seemed as if it had the makings of a real hobby for her. Studying flowers was proving to be a peaceful distraction from all the stress that Ryan and David had injected into her summer.  
  
Later, after telling her grandmother that she was going to Agency for dinner, she started getting herself ready. She thought the boys might come early, so she made sure she would be fashionably late – but by just a few minutes. Those minutes she spent in the Airstream bathroom trying to ensure that her makeup was just right. She didn’t want to look like she was camping, but she didn’t want to look like a city girl either.  
  
The boys were not at the Jeep when she got there, so she climbed into the driver’s seat to wait. At 6:30 she was still waiting. The minutes dragged by. She felt so very alone. It was taking everything she had to keep from crying. She’d gotten her hopes up, which only severed to make her feelings of disappointment more extreme.  
  
They obviously weren’t coming and she had already told her grandma that she would not be there for dinner. She decided to go ahead and go alone. She did her best to put on a brave face as she started the motor and headed off to try and enjoy some pizza. She did her best to not cry, but the long lonely drive proved to be too much for her.  
  
Once she finally got to Valentino’s, Jill went straight to the bathroom. Her perfect makeup was now far from perfect. Dust from the road had attached itself to her face, highlighting her tear streaks.  
  
With her makeup somewhat fixed but her eyes still a little red, she went to the counter and ordered her pizza. That done, she chose a table and sat down, trying her best to think about things that wouldn’t make her sad. That proved to be difficult. All the time that she had spent alone had taken quite a toll on her psyche.  
  
Sometime later, Valentino himself delivered her pizza. She recognized him and his grey hair from prior visits. He sat down completely uninvited, taking the seat directly across from her. At first it was odd to have a man older than her father join her like that; however, they fell into conversation. He was quite friendly and the discussion helped keep her mind off the fact that her summer was a disaster. Her plans for a ‘best summer ever’ were quickly evaporating. ‘Worst summer ever’ seemed much more likely.  
  
Doing her best to pretend that she was happy did end up making her feel better – or maybe it was just that she was so desperate for social interaction that even an older married man seemed to be excellent company.  
  
As Jill started her second piece of pizza, Valentino excused himself and went back to the kitchen. Not too many minutes later a young man entered the pizza parlor. She observed him out of the corner of her eye as he headed past the counter and disappeared into the back. Probably another employee, she thought.  
  
A minute later he came back out of the kitchen accompanied by Valentino, the two of them heading directly to her table.  
  
“Jill, this is my son, Nick,” said Valentino. “You seemed lonely, so I gave him a call.”  
  
“Uhh . . . hi,” said Jill, attempting a smile. In reality, she wanted to find a rock to crawl under. The situation was beyond awkward.  
  
“May I?” asked Nick, indicating the seat opposite.  
  
“I guess,” said Jill looking down. She was suddenly feeling like a charity case.  
  
As Nick took a seat, someone else brought another small pizza out of the kitchen, handing it to Valentino who in turn placed it on the table for Nick. Valentino then smiled and headed back into the kitchen.  
  
Jill shuddered, suddenly realizing that she was on a blind date. “You didn’t have to come,” she said, not having any idea how to deal with her embarrassing predicament.  
  
Nick smiled a confident smile. “I know,” he said. “But I’m always up for free pizza.”  
  
“What did your dad say?” she asked, not really wanting to hear the answer.  
  
Nick picked up a piece of pizza and took a bite. He seemed in no hurry to answer. “Just that there was a cute girl here, about my age, and that she seemed sad and lonely.”  
  
“I’m fine. You don’t have to eat with me,” said Jill, wishing again that she might disappear.  
  
“Do you always order pepperoni? You should try this . . . the meat lover’s pizza. It’s my favorite. If you like pepperoni, you’ll love this,” he said, pushing his pizza toward her.  
  
Jill hesitated but then decided to try a piece.  
  
“Do you know where the name ‘pizza’ comes from?” he asked. “My father told me.”  
  
“Uhh . . . no,” she replied without looking up.  
  
“Well, pizza itself was invented by an Italian king’s head chef. When he offered it to the king, he realized that he still hadn’t decided what to call his concoction. He found himself saying, ‘here King, try a piece of . . . piece of . . . piece of . . . The King thought he was saying, ‘pizza!” And that’s where the name comes from.” Nick laughed heartily.  
  
Jill found herself chuckling at his lame humor. “But they don’t speak English in Italy. It wouldn’t have been ‘piece of.’”  
  
“I guess it’s more believable if you’re a kid,” he said apologetically.  
  
“It’s funny,” said Jill with a smile, feeling bad that she had ridiculed his joke.  
  
She was finally able to meet Nick’s gaze – briefly. Eventually, she relaxed a little as the two of them continued to converse. Nick was easy to talk to, just as his dad had been.  
  
“Is your dad’s name really Valentino? Or is that just marketing.”  
  
“Not marketing,” said Nick. “He was born here, but both of his parents were born in the old country. I’m not, but he’s full-blooded Italian. Other than in the pizzeria, he goes by, ‘Val.’ My name’s actually ‘Nicola’ . . . on my birth certificate. Is your full name Jillian or something like that?”  
  
“No, just Jill.”  
  
“Do you have a middle name?”  
  
“Just Jill.”  
  
“I like the name ‘Jill,’” he said with a pleasant smile.  
  
During their discussion, Jill learned that Nick was three years older and was home for the summer. He was studying Agriculture Science at a small public college and would be a senior in the fall. It was the closest college to Agency, but it was still sixty miles away in Elk Bend.  
  
She was enjoying talking to him, but as they continued eating, it became obvious that Nick had more in mind than just pizza.  
  
“The evening is young,” he said. “What’s your preference? Beer? Wine?”  
  
“Umm . . . I’m eighteen,” she said hesitatingly.  
  
“I’m old enough to buy, and you’re old enough to drink.”  
  
“Says who?”  
  
“I’m going to show you what boys and girls do for fun in small towns!” he said amicably.  
  
Jill blushed. For some reason, her mind went straight to sex.  
  
As Jill listened she learned that Nick was hoping that she’d go for a drive with him in his truck. They’d then find someplace to park – after visiting the grocery store, of course. He’d described a spot way up on a ridge, accessible only via logging roads. It supposedly had a panoramic view as it was above the tree line. In addition to a view of the thriving metropolis of Stanton, the spot Nick described was perfect for enjoying the sunset and then the stars once it had gotten dark. She suspected that in Nick’s mind their evening would involve much more than watching the sunset and looking at the stars. It would likely include kissing, and then some …  
  
It was nice to have someone to talk to, but she was not feeling at all like having a summer fling with an older guy from Agency. It might be the solution to her loneliness, to her Ryan-David problem, but she was pretty sure that it would just end up being a problem of its own.  
  
If she were to climb into his truck and head up into the mountains with him on a logging road, she was pretty sure that later that evening he’d be groping her . . . pawing her chest most likely . . . or at least trying to. She didn’t need to revisit that scenario, especially alone in a truck with someone she hardly knew. She didn’t need another boy, “feeling bottom.” Even if this boy was smart enough to not editorialize about her limited padding as Tyler had done, she knew exactly what he would be thinking. As she thought about that, she realized that it was likely to be a long time before she again risked letting a boy anywhere near her body. She just couldn’t imagine it being a pleasant experience.  
  
She was thinking about ways to say goodnight and graciously get herself free when suddenly she saw David and Ryan enter the pizza parlor. Her heart leapt and she almost stood up to wave. Fortunately, she caught herself. The pain of having been stood up returned in a flash as she realized that they were most likely there to rub that in her face. She imagined them ignoring her and eating at a separate table.  
  
Suddenly she was very glad to have Nick’s company. Purposefully ignoring David and Ryan, she doubled down on her conversation with Nick, doing everything she could to make it look like she was having a good time with someone they’d never met. She wanted it to look as if she didn’t need them at all. Nick seemed to notice the change in Jill’s attitude, and without realizing what was going on, he played his role perfectly.

**Chapter 13: A Letter from Tyler**  
  
Ryan and David had of course seen Jill immediately.  
  
“Hey, Bean,” said David, walking up and taking the seat next to her.  
  
“Hiya, Jill,” said Ryan, taking the seat next to Nick, right across from David.  
  
Jill frowned. While she didn’t want anything to do with them, it crossed her mind that this new development would probably make ditching Nick easier. But then she found herself thinking about accepting the invitation and actually going up to the ridge he had talked about. She thought of the signal that would send David. It would clearly make the point that she didn’t need them. But was making a point worth the risk?  
  
“Aren’t you going to introduce us, Sis?” asked David, eyeing Nick suspiciously.  
  
“This is your bother?” asked Nick, obviously trying to figure out what was going on.  
  
“You assholes stood me up! Introduce yourselves . . . better yet, find your own goddamn table.”  
  
“We were planning to be there at six. Really we were,” pleaded David.  
  
“Yeah,” added Ryan. “We’ve been looking forward to pizza all day.”  
  
“Sure you were,” said Jill, anger mixing with skepticism in her tone.  
  
“We were,” said David. “And we were headed back, but over on the road that goes to Cache Lake West, we came across an elderly couple with a flat tire. The man had the car jacked up and was trying to take care of it, but their spare was flat.”  
  
“Likely story,” interjected Jill.  
  
“It’s true,” said Ryan.  
  
“I suppose you saved the day, pumping it up for them,” said Jill.  
  
“No way to do that,” said David. “But we did get them the help they needed, but that involved going to the cabins . . . a long way in the wrong direction . . . why we were late. Grandpa loaned us his truck. We were hoping that you would be here.”  
  
As they seemed to be telling the truth, Jill did go ahead and introduce them to Nick, leaving out any mention of how they had met. She did her best to not show it, but she was glad to hear that they had been planning to have pizza with her. That made her feel better.  
  
A minute later Ryan and David got up to order a pizza. While they were at the counter, Jill let Nick know that she would be heading back to Cache Lake rather than going up to the ridge with him. She didn’t want to lead him on, and drinking and logging roads sounded like a bad combination. She was glad to see that he seemed to take her decision in stride.  
  
When the boys returned, she made a point of exchanging numbers with Nick. She wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to put David and Ryan on notice that she was developing a social life of her own.  
  
Even though she and Nick had long since finished their own pizzas, they stayed while David and Ryan ate. In the end, they all had a good time. They found a lot to talk about with Nick. He told them about some places that they might like to hike. He also had a wealth of knowledge about places to go climbing in the area. They were mostly places to which they’d need to drive to a trailhead, but they didn’t mind that. They had already exhausted all the destinations that they could reach on foot from their basecamp on the eastern shore of Cache Lake.  
  
Jill had thought originally that they might take advantage of the arcade; however, they all enjoyed talking so much that they didn’t end up doing that.  
  
Eventually, they decided to call it a night. As they exited the pizza parlor, Jill took Nick’s hand and pulled him aside. She didn’t want him to get the wrong impression, but she was much more interested in how things would appear to David and Ryan.  
  
While she talked quietly with him near the Jeep, the boys waited next to the truck. It took a while, but they eventually got the hint. After waving goodbye, they got into the truck and drove off.  
  
As soon as they had gone, Jill decided that it was time to say goodnight herself. “Thanks for the company this evening, Nick, but I’ve got to get back, too.”  
  
“I’ll call you.”  
  
“There’s no reception at the lake,” Jill reminded him. “But you can text. I’ll receive it next time I come to town.”  
  
“Sure,” he said. “But why don’t we just go ahead and set something up?”  
  
“Maybe,” said Jill hesitantly. “What did you have in mind?”  
  
She kicked herself for saying that. She knew she needed to learn to be more assertive when it came to boys. Unfortunately, she had a history of going out with guys she was not interested in – simply because she was not good at saying, ‘no.’  
  
“How about a movie? Maybe this coming Saturday.”  
  
“Well…” said Jill.  
  
“Why don’t we meet at Elmer Franks at 6:00 pm? We can have burgers, and then we can drive together up to Stanton. It’s only fifteen miles. There’s a multiplex, three screens!”  
  
“I don’t know, Nick,” she said. She was trying to say, ‘no,’ but she hadn’t seen a movie in weeks. It didn’t sound at all scary like the drive up the logging road in his truck had.  
  
“Well, think about it.”  
  
“Okay . . . a movie would probably be fun,” she relented. “Why don’t you text me what is playing sometime during the week. That way we can decide what to see in advance.”  
  
“Great . . . it’s a date then, next Saturday,” said Nick, trying to seal the deal.  
  
Jill cringed at his use of the word, ‘date.’  
  
“No promises, but I will think about it,” she said, doing her best to maintain an out.  
  
Shortly thereafter she was in the Jeep and headed back toward the lake. It had been slightly awkward, but she had managed to avoid giving Nick the opportunity for a goodnight kiss. He had been looking at her in a way that made her think that he might try for one.  
  
That night in her tent Jill was feeling somewhat gratified. While being stood up had stung, learning that it had been unintentional had gone a long way toward making her feel better. Her self-esteem had largely recovered. It had ended up being a nice evening, and Nick’s interest in her, even though it was not mutual, had helped her feel better about herself. In fact, it had helped a great deal. It had been a long time since she had felt very good about herself.  
  
It still hurt to think that she had come across as so pitiful that Valentino had called his son to come and keep her company. She shuddered at the thought. What could be more embarrassing? Fortunately, it had all worked out. She considered the irony of how it had been the arrival of David and Ryan that had been the turning point. They were being so mean to her, and yet she really did enjoy their company. She wished she didn’t, but she still did.  
  
Over an hour later, she found herself thinking about getting back up and wandering around again in just her panties. But in thinking about that, she realized that it wasn’t yet late enough. Ryan and David would still be awake. As a matter of fact, she could smell their campfire. Fortunately, her limited sleep the night before came to her rescue, helping her fall asleep rather quickly.  
  
The next morning Jill woke up in a very constructive frame of mind. ‘If the world gives you lemons, make lemonade,’ she thought. The old adage seemed to be a perfect fit for her situation.  
  
During breakfast, Jill did her best to be cheerful and build on the relaxed attitudes of the night before. The boys weren’t having any of it. To her disgust, Jill quickly realized that things were still ‘business as usual.’  
  
A little later she rode into town with her grandparents. While they did their shopping, she stopped by the library. She had decided that if it was her destiny to spend her summer reading, she might as well get a jump start on college. She knew that they required freshmen to take a core humanities course which had a large amount of required reading. She was successful at downloading a list of books from the college’s website.  
  
To her delight, two of them were available at the tiny Agency library: ‘Crime and Punishment,’ by Dostoevsky, as well as, ‘Oedipus Rex,’ by Sophocles. She checked those out and ordered two other titles online. Additionally, the librarian said she could get more titles via interlibrary loan. Jill smiled to herself, imagining how much better her fall semester might go if she arrived at college having already read much of what was on the list.  
  
Before leaving Agency, they stopped by the post office so that her grandparents could get their mail. The post office did not deliver to the east shore of Cache Lake, so her grandparents had a P.O. Box. Jill was very surprised when her grandfather handed her a letter.  
  
It was from Tyler, her ex-boyfriend. Not wanting any contact with him, she had blocked him everywhere on social media. He had obviously gone to the trouble of tracking down a mailing address for her. She scowled, imagining that her mother had probably given it to him. On the way out of the post office, she unceremoniously slid the letter into the garbage – unopened.  
  
The rest of her day was spent quietly hanging around the trailer and sitting on the beach reading. As it was the shorter of the two books, she had started with Oedipus Rex, and in the afternoon, she went in search of a spot where she could do a little topless tanning. It felt good to let the sun warm her bare chest, and it ended up brightening her mood quite a bit.  
  
That night in her tent she again found herself drawn to the idea of another excursion in just her panties. It was as if her mind was not going to allow her to get any sleep until she gave in. She did everything she could to dismiss the idea, but her mind kept circling back, patiently working at eroding her willpower. Eventually, she found herself sitting cross-legged on her sleeping bag wearing just her panties and her shoes. She knew she should wait a few hours, but it was hard to just sit there and wait. Finally capitulating, she unzipped her tent and poked her head out to have a look around.  
  
Outside her tent, the world was dark and quiet. She heard an owl hoot somewhere nearby. She could tell that the moon was again bright, but the amount of light that made it down into the clearing was limited. The shadowy areas were large and quite dark. She crept out, immediately going around her tent to get it between herself and the Airstream.  
  
She had decided to head in the opposite direction, straight away from the lake and the boys out on the point. From her position behind the tent, she darted to a spot just behind the Jeep. She contemplated starting it up and going for a topless drive, but not seriously. That would wake her grandparents. She smiled to herself to have even thought of that.  
  
Instead, she hurried straight away from the Jeep, down the dirt road that served as their driveway. That joined the main road about fifty yards out. The main road was gravel and quite a bit larger, wide enough for two cars to pass if they slowed way down.  
  
She paused there, listening and considering her options. She ran her hands up her bare torso, grasping each nipple between a thumb and forefinger. ‘My little pokies sure seem to be enjoying the fresh air,’ a voice inside her head said.  
  
She was conscious of her elevated heart rate; it seemed loud in her ears. She considered that the wise thing to do would be to return to her tent, but she knew that the direction that she was headed had to be extremely safe. As far as she knew, their Jeep and her grandparents’ truck were the only vehicles on that side of the lake. No one was going to be on the road that evening.  
  
Even though the logical side of her brain knew that, it still felt bewitchingly risky to be standing in the middle of the road in just a pair of panties. It was a seductively delicious feeling; it was, after all, a public road. She turned and started walking toward Agency. Town was so far that she could never walk there, but something about heading in that direction was invigorating.  
  
The going was relatively easy as the road was so much wider than a path. The moonlight helped as well, but it also added significantly to her anxiety. She knew that she would be visible to someone lurking in the shadows – not that there could be anyone there. She looked up and saw the star-filled sky through the arrow straight cut in the trees, extending as far as she could see into the distance.  
  
After a bit, she stopped to listen. All was indeed quiet. Standing there she made fists around the narrow waistband of her panties. She gave them a good tug, seating the crotch more firmly against her pussy. She smiled to herself, realizing that she had to be displaying a significant amount of what guys referred to as ‘camel toe,’ especially given that she had just shaved her lower lips bare for the first time.  
  
Looking down, she realized how poor of a choice her panties were for a late night excursion. This particular pair was bright white, even seeming to glow in the moonlight. She hadn’t chosen them; they were simply the panties that she had been wearing. She realized that in a car’s headlights they’d light up like a beacon. Because of that, if a car came, she’d have to act quickly and get herself into the forest.  
  
With her hands still gripping her waistband, she considered sliding them off. It had been exhilarating to be nude on Sunken Island; it would surely be fun to be naked on dry land. ‘Nope, not going there,’ she decided, wondering if that was where her nighttime excursions might be headed. A tingle rippled through her as she contemplated what it might be like to venture out stark naked.  
  
Letting go of her panties, she resumed walking. Her level of excitement continued to climb with each and every step. The farther she dared go from her tent, the more thrilling the outing became. That aspect alone made her want to go on and on.  
  
Eventually, she came to the bridge over the outlet. Due to the sound of the rushing water she heard it well before she was able to see it. Once on the bridge, she leaned against the low railing, peering down at the dark river below. She dropped a pebble to see if she could hear it hit the water above the sound of the flowing water.

**Chapter 14: Trip to the Bridge**  
  
She could see very little of the rushing river, but the air was much cooler on the bridge. Her nipples felt it, and for the first time that evening she shivered. She ran her hands up across her chest. Her nipples were as hard as could be, but she wasn’t at all surprised; they had been that way the entire time.  
  
Reluctantly, she decided to make the bridge her turn around point. It was about a mile from her grandparents’ property. As she considered heading back, she thought about how boring the long straight walk she had taken would have been with her clothes on. She contemplated how being topless had transformed an otherwise mundane excursion into a thrilling adventure.  
  
For the first time, she tried to imagine what it might be like to agree to the ‘one of the boys’ proposal. She wasn’t actually thinking of accepting; she wasn’t. But for the first time, she tried to picture herself peeling off her shirt midmorning in the campsite on the point.  
  
She imagined that she, David and Ryan would all head over and have breakfast as they always did. Since they would be on speaking terms, they would likely discuss and agree upon a destination while eating, and then afterwards they’d walk back to the campsite together. Presumably, it would be warm, so at some point, one after the other, the guys would shed their shirts.  
  
She imagined them turning and looking at her expectantly. She got butterflies in her stomach just thinking about that moment. She pictured herself grasping the hem of her shirt. She wondered how long she might linger in that position, working to overcome her inner demons before being able to lift the shirt up and off.  
  
Would taking off her shirt make her topless, or would she also need to remove a bra? Might she wear bras on such mornings? She was unsure. She decided that if she had committed to being ‘one of the guys,’ she would have packed them away for the summer. So there would be no bra.  
  
She cringed, imaging herself looking at the boys while standing in front of them bare except for a pair of shorts. She tried to picture where they would be looking, but she had no doubt about that. They’d be staring right at her itty bitty breasts. Again, she reached up and grasped her diamond hard nipples, stretching them up and away from her chest as she considered how it might feel to be gawked at under such conditions – in broad daylight.  
  
Most of all she found herself trying to picture the expressions on their faces, especially Ryan’s. That was the key, she realized. If she saw in their eyes that her A-cup boobies were being admired, then she might not have to run away and hide for the rest of her life. If, on the other hand, she saw a smirk of amusement, then she knew that she would regret that moment forever. She’d never live down the humiliation of baring her breasts only to be made fun of.  
  
Squeezing her breasts in her hands, she felt just how small they were – so familiar, yet so little. No, there was no way they might meet with approval. They were just so far from ideal – the large knockers always being played up in the media. Pressing her fingers into the area near a nipple, she thought about Tyler and how he had been telling the truth; she could indeed feel bottom.  
  
Confronting that reality interrupted her from the fun little mental exercise she had been engaging in. She chastised herself for even allowing herself to imagine what it might be like to bare her chest in front of anyone. Alone at night was fun, but during the day – in front of anyone – anyone at all – unthinkable. Given that she was female, it couldn’t happen. Given how lightly padded she was, it was completely out of the question.  
  
Suddenly, without warning, a car’s headlights appeared in the distance. The shock caused her to nearly jump out of her skin. The car was quite some distance away, but it was headed right for where she stood, its lights illuminating her body as well as her surroundings. Being in the center of the bridge meant railings on either side; she’d have to run along the bridge before she could get off the road.  
  
As she turned to run, she glanced down at her panties. Just as she had suspected, they were glowing bright white – almost as if internally lit. This will never do, she thought, panic gripping her. She yanked them down and off. She almost tripped while pulling them over her shoes; she had started trying to run, hopping awkwardly, just before she had them all the way off. A moment later, her panties were balled up inside one of her fists as she accelerated, sprinting straight away from the approaching car.  
  
She had no trouble running, given how the bridge was now illuminated. Only her infinitely long shadow, pointing straight ahead, was dark. As she came to the end of the bridge, she was suddenly conscious of the sound of the car as well. She turned and ran into the blackness just past where the bridge railing ended.  
  
She hoped that she wouldn’t get hurt because she could see nothing of the terrain below her feet. The areas not lit by the cars headlights were as black as black could be. It was a steep slope straight down, gravel, rocks and weeds. But she survived and a moment later she was crouching in the low bushes, listening intently. She thought that she should go farther, on into the trees, but there was no time. The car was right there. She hoped it would keep going. To her amazement and relief, it did, seeming to slow only slightly if at all.  
  
As the car disappeared in the direction of her grandparents’ property, she breathed a huge sigh of relief. They must not have seen her, not that that seemed possible.  
  
Squeezing her panties tightly in one hand, she laughed at herself. She couldn’t believe that she’d torn them off as part of a desperate act of self-preservation. And yet, she realized, that might have been what had made the difference. She’d lost a second or two doing it, but . . . her buns, as white as they were, were surely not as noticeable from a distance as her glow-in-the-dark panties would have been.  
  
As she started to get her heart rate under control, she began the climb back up to the road. It was far from easy. She was amazed that she hadn’t been hurt in the process of hurling herself down that slope at full-speed while essentially blind. Basketball and the agility that came with being in good shape had again paid solid dividends.  
  
Once back on the road, she became fully conscious of her nudity. She ran her fingers over the little bit of hair that remained just above her slit. Smiling, she again laughed at the irrational yet rational thoughts that had permeated her mind as panic had taken hold. How funny that she had apparently decided that she would be safer without her panties –reacting instantly. She knew she’d never tell anyone about that, even though it would make for a very funny story.  
  
She started to put the panties back on, but then hesitated. Another idea had occurred to her. Walking over to the sign that identified the outlet as, ‘Cache River,’ she unfurled them, tying them to the metal post just below the sign. She decided that it would be much more fun to walk back without them; and besides, it made complete sense to keep them off – the car might always return. She laughed at how crazy that thought was – that she was safer without her panties.  
  
There was another benefit. With them on the post like that, every time she drove to Agency, she’d see them and be reminded of stripping herself butt naked while in a state of sheer panic. Others too, she realized, might notice the small ball of white cloth on the post, but would they ever think that it might be panties? Probably not. She smiled at that thought. Finding humor in her situation turned out to be therapeutic, helping her put the shock of having been almost caught nude on the bridge into perspective.  
  
As she turned and headed for home, she had a potpourri of thoughts and emotions swirling around inside. But for the shoes, this was who she was. She was a girl, and the girl ended at the surface of her skin. Outside of her skin, well, those were possessions and the world around her. She had entered the world nude, and now she was again nude.  
  
How odd it was that society’s conventions involved the concealment of certain body parts but not others. She had never been embarrassed by the size or shape of her ears, her nose, her lips or her chin. And yet, like her breasts, they were clearly unique. She found herself thinking about tribes of native peoples in which female nudity, or at least toplessness, was the norm. She wondered if girls in those societies were more comfortable with their breasts because they were not emphasized via constant concealment.  
  
She remembered how comfortable she had been running around without a shirt as a child. Might she still have that comfort level if she had never worn a shirt? She thought not – at least not unless all other girls had been similarly attired. But what if they had been?  
  
Before she realized it, she found herself feeling more comfortable with who she was on many levels than she remembered having ever felt. She was a healthy young girl with her life ahead of her. She started skipping along happily. Everything about her was just fine she realized. There was nothing really wrong with who she was or how she looked. She was a happy person, and she was enjoying being who she was, nude under the stars in the night air.  
  
But as she approached the entrance of her grandparents’ driveway she realized how utterly flawed her decision-making process had been. Her panties were now a mile away. She slowed way down, listening carefully. Being far from her tent and clothes had been exciting, but this part of the excursion was suddenly terrifying. She thought about how David had come to her in her tent several nights earlier. If he, Ryan or her grandparents had discovered that she was gone, they might be looking for her . . . or waiting for her to return.  
  
Sneaking carefully along she grew anxious, imagining someone switching on a bright flashlight and catching her naked right where she stood. She stopped, listening, not knowing what to do. She needed to get back to her tent, but suddenly she wasn’t sure that she dared to go any closer.  
  
She thought about waiting for morning but quickly realized how poor of a plan that would be. She tiptoed carefully forward, one arm across her chest, the other in fig leaf position. She considered that if she were about to be caught in the beam of a flashlight, she should at least be covered as well as she could manage. Even though she couldn’t conceal her nudity, she could hide her most intimate areas – somewhat.  
  
Stopping for a moment, she kicked off her shoes. Hopefully, her bare soles would make less noise.  
  
When she was just fifteen or so feet from her tent, she decided to sprint the last few feet and dive inside. Even if she was heard, no one would be able to switch on a light that fast. She would be home free! As she came into contact with the fabric of her tent, she realized what a bad idea it had been. The fly of her tent was zipped closed. Her momentum ended up knocking the tent flat.  
  
In a state of full panic, she thrashed about naked on top of her collapsed tent, searching for the zipper. As she finally managed to get it open and crawl inside, she realized that all her alarm had probably been for naught. Given the ruckus she had just made, had someone been there, they surely would have said something or switched on a light.  
  
She found and pulled on a pair of shorts and a shirt as quickly as she could, but that was hardly quick, given that it was completely dark and that she was supporting the roof with her back. After resting for a minute to get her nerves under control, she headed back out, flashlight in hand. Now that she was dressed, there was little reason not to use it. After first retrieving her shoes, she went about fixing her tent. Fortunately, nothing was broken. She had just knocked over the poles and pulled a few stakes out of the ground. Doing her best to be quiet, she had it back up in about five minutes.  
  
Shortly thereafter, she was snuggling down into her sleeping bag. As she finally relaxed, she again laughed at herself. Running around naked was exhilarating, but it could also lead to comical circumstances. She imagined just how clumsy she must have looked, diving into a closed tent and then wallowing around on top trying to get inside. Thank God, the boys hadn’t been hiding there, a camera at the ready. ‘My God, could that have ever turned out to be the most embarrassing moment of her life!’ she realized.  
  
Thinking about her deliverance from two close brushes with disaster had her trembling with both fear and exhilaration. How thrilling it was to survive a close scrape – a nude close scrape! But she realized that if she was going to do that again, she would need to be much more careful – and a little bit less klutzy.  
  
She thought back, trying to reconstruct her exit from her tent. Even though she was in the habit of zipping it up, she thought that she had left it open. She was positive she had left it open the night she’d gone back to the beach topless; however, she wasn’t at all certain about that particular night. But if she had left it open, who might have zipped it closed? David? Ryan? Her grandfather? Might someone have come looking for her and then, upon not finding her, have inadvertently zipped it closed? She decided that she had to have zipped it up herself. Other possibilities seemed so unlikely.  
  
She found herself considering how she had invited the boys to join her for pizza. It hadn’t worked out like she had anticipated, and yet it had been moderately successful. They had all had a good time, and, probably due to Nick’s presence, the topless scheme had not come up. She had gotten to socialize with them as a grown-up woman, and for the most part, they had behaved.  
  
She decided that she felt like she was on a roll. With the conversations at the pizza parlor and her budding friendship with Nick (at least in terms of how it must appear to David and Ryan), she felt that the dialogue was changing. No longer were the boys directing the discourse. Deciding to capitalize on her momentum, she started thinking about something else that she had been wanting to do.  
  
She recalled what David had said about Ryan’s reaction to her emergence from the lake in her new bikini. She decided to target him for a little teasing – turn the tables on him, so to speak. She could rub it in his face that she wasn’t giving in to their scheme. And there would be a side benefit. She was still suspicious about this claim that he was enamored with her tiny breasts. In the process of teasing him, she might learn if that might indeed be true of not. With that thought foremost in her mind, she drifted off into a very restful, mountain-fresh air enhanced, sleep.

**Chapter 15: A New Approach**  
  
The next morning Jill dressed with her bikini top underneath an oversized T-shirt. She had considered going to breakfast in just her bikini top, but she had decided against that option. On the one hand she was too self-conscious to consider doing so, and on the other hand, she doubted that her grandparents would find it appropriate for her to be dressed like that for a meal. Additionally, she didn’t want to give her grandmother any insight into the battle that was raging between the two boys and the one girl.  
  
She was still working out the details, but she was planning to peel off her shirt at some point and tease Ryan by flaunting her bikini top. She knew she wanted to go ahead with the plan, but she knew it would be a little difficult for her to carry out. Swimming in a bikini was one thing, but purposefully parading around in one was an entirely different matter. Other girls might be able to wave their boobs in guys’ faces to get attention, but those were girls who had something to wave. Jill didn’t, but she was going to make every effort to boldly display what little she did have.  
  
Part of her expected that Ryan would laugh at her, in which case she’d feel humiliated, but the argument that he thought small tits were attractive would evaporate. If on the other hand, his eyes lit up, then she would be in a perfect position to tease the heck out of him. Drive him crazy by showing him the goods . . . blatantly reminding him that he was not going to get to see her tits in the flesh. Yes, she could fight back! Two could play at this game, she figured. She smiled thinking about the plan that she had come up with. Maybe she would be able to seize the initiative or, at the very least, reshape the dialogue.  
  
After they had finished breakfast and were walking away from the trailer, Jill called out to Ryan, “Looks like it will be a warm day today, Ryan. Not much need for shirts, right?”  
  
Ryan had been walking off in the direction of the point, but he turned and looked back at Jill, curiosity evident in his expression.  
  
“I don’t have to wait for you guys to take your shirts off, do I?” she asked coyly.  
  
She noticed Ryan shaking his head slowly while studying her. Jill felt as if she had him eating out of her hand.  
  
“Mind if I go first?”  
  
Ryan didn’t respond. He just stared at her, a hopeful look in his eyes. He was obviously suspicious, trying to figure out what she was up to.  
  
Jill paused to milk the moment; she had both Ryan and David’s full attention. She took a breath of courage, crossing her arms and grasping the hem of her shirt. She felt her face grow warm as she pulled it up and off in one deliberate motion, only hesitating slightly as she reached over to place it on a nearby folding chair. She stood there in just her shorts and her bikini top, letting Ryan gawk. It was, after all, a beautiful little bikini top. She was proud of it. Standing there, she hoped that they wouldn’t notice that she was trembling.  
  
Proceeding with her plan, she extended her arms overhead, interlacing her fingers, rotating her hands so that her palms faced skyward. In that position, she stretched for all she was worth, raising her shoulders, lifting up her ribcage, even rising up on the balls of her feet. She thought that it might seem casual enough . . . she was, after all, just stretching . . . but she hoped it might look sexy.  
  
And yet it wasn’t a pose that she had ever struck before in mixed company, absolutely not in a bikini top. Stretching her torso out like that would make her small breasts appear even smaller. If Ryan liked tiny titties, here they were, just about as tiny as they come.  
  
She scrutinized his expression for clues as to his true feelings. She didn’t even need to hide that she was doing so. He wouldn’t have noticed, for his eyes were glued to her chest. Happiness washed over Jill as she saw his jaw drop and his eyes light up. There could be little doubt, she thought; the look on Ryan’s face could hardly be an act. She glanced over at David, just as David was turning his attention to Ryan. For a moment, the two of them both studied Ryan.  
  
Realizing that she had him right where she wanted him, her arms still overhead, Jill extended her stretching maneuver by bending to the side. The bikini top stayed perfectly positioned, stretching with her lithe young body. She noted Ryan following her every move as if in a trance. From there she stretched to the other side, putting on the best little pectoral muscle stretching demonstration she could manage. Next, she arched her back, pointing her rock hard little nipples skyward. She didn’t have to look to know just how visible they would be, poking through the thin material of the small grey and black top.  
  
Ryan looked frozen in place and speechless as her little stretching demo came to a close, so Jill skipped past him. This part she hadn’t given much thought to, but she led the way out to the beach bouncing happily along the trail. She had decided to get a morning look at the lake, and she was suddenly in a wonderful mood.  
  
They followed her, just as she had known they would. She made sure to stay just ahead even though she could feel their eyes on her butt. She was wearing a small pair of low-rise shorts that flared out nicely at the leg openings. Her body insecurities were largely limited to her chest. She had always thought of herself as a lanky basketball player, which in her mind was hardly the ideal female figure; however, she knew she had the sort of legs that most girls were jealous of, long, lean and very fit . . . and now they were nicely tan.  
  
She recalled having overheard some guys talking about her in the high school hallway. One of them had said, “Jill Wahlund has an ass to die for.” She didn’t know exactly what that meant, but she knew enough to know that it was an extreme compliment. She had never thought much of the guy who had made that comment, but she thought that she would never forget those words. Whenever she would be dealing with body-image issues, she would say to herself, ‘At least I have an ass to die for!’ That usually went a long way towards helping her feel better about being a lanky, flat-chested basketball player.  
  
As she arrived at the lake, she strolled casually south. Once she was sure she was back in girls’ territory, she waded out into the lake up to her calves. Turning to face the approaching boys, she placed one hand on a hip, pulling her shoulders back just a bit to showcase her cute little bikini top in the morning sunshine.  
  
After the boys had come to a stop, Jill said, “So what are you guys planning to do today? Want to climb Steep Tooth. It seems like a good day to tackle that peak.”  
  
“We were up there last week,” said David.  
  
“Well, that trail or maybe Snow Lake. I haven’t been either place this year,” she replied.  
  
Studying her carefully, Ryan responded, “Ready to be one of the guys, Jill?”  
  
“Ryan . . . come on! Do I look like one of the guys?” she said with a wry smile, moving her chest subtly to and fro.  
  
“It has nothing to do with how you look,” replied Ryan. “It has everything to do with how you will look . . . hot!”  
  
“Not ready to admit defeat and behave like a grown up?”  
  
“Well, isn’t that a loaded question?” he replied. “But our terms stand. We are ready for you to join us. We can all make the climb to Snow Lake. It would be fun. What do you say?”  
  
On the spur of the moment, Jill decided to try negotiating. “Sure . . . it would be fun. I’ll even make the trip shirtless, but as a girl . . . in a bikini top. What do you say?”  
  
“Sorry, Jill, no dice,” said David. “Like Ryan said, our terms stand.”  
  
“Well, then, me and my perky little titties will be on our merry way,” she said, doing her best to smile. “If you guys don’t like female company, then too bad for you! Your loss!”  
  
With that comment, she walked back to shore, doing her best to keep her shoulders back and to hold her chest up proudly. After smiling at them contemptuously, she skipped off into the trees. She thought she had done a pretty good job with her teasing, but even though she was happy with her performance in that regard, she was sad about the outcome. She was very ready to move beyond this stage and have some fun. She did her best to shrug off the result as she made her way back to her tent for a few things. A short time later, carrying a chair, a towel, some sunscreen and her book, Oedipus Rex, she made her way back out to the lakeshore. Sitting in the shade of a large tree she started reading.  
  
That afternoon black storm clouds rolled in. In the evening she ate dinner with her grandparents. It had started raining, so Jill stayed in the trailer and the three of them played board games. She wondered it David and Ryan might show up, seeking refuge from the storm, but they didn’t. A game evening with the boys included would have been fun.  
  
Lying in her tent that night, Jill found herself wishing that she hadn’t offered to hike wearing just her bikini top. What had seemed at that time like it might lead to a win, now seemed liked a huge concession. She kicked herself for doing that, worrying that it might have sounded to the boys like she was ready to relinquish some control over how she dressed.  
  
Except for that one huge mistake, she was pleased with how her morning teasing session had gone. She’d had both boys, Ryan especially, eating out of her hand. His eyes had been glued to her chest the whole time. Even though she disliked the idea of basing any feelings of self-worth on what boys thought of her shape, Ryan especially, she couldn’t keep such thoughts out of her head.  
  
If anything positive had come out of it, it was that she had learned that Ryan did indeed seem as if he was genuinely quite taken with her lean figure. While she had not gotten her way, her breasts did now seem as if they might be her Super Power, but only as far as Ryan was concerned. Thinking that she might still somehow manage to turn that to her advantage, she decided to continue teasing him the next day.  
  
David, however, was a completely different matter. Jill had always suspected that he had a strong preference for large boobs, and he had admitted as much during one of their frank discussions. That was, in part, why Jill had been so surprised when he had broken up with Bailey that spring. She had amazing breasts – knockers really – about as big as they come – certainly when one took into account that she was otherwise a petite teen.  
  
But to Jill, it was largely irrelevant what size boobs David liked the most. He had always been supportive, always trying to convince her that there were a great many men who preferred women with small breasts. Given that he liked them large, she felt reassured that he wasn’t actually attracted to her. Somehow that served to make the ‘one of the guys’ scheme a little less distasteful.  
  
Lying there in her tent wide awake, she found herself wishing that it wasn’t raining. The idea of having another nocturnal adventure was enticing, but she didn’t want to do it in the rain. The rain had lowered the air temperature. She was convinced that wet and cold wouldn’t be any fun for a nude or nearly nude girl.  
  
The next morning found Jill sitting cross-legged on her sleeping bag trying to decide what to wear for her morning teasing session. She quickly ruled out the purple tankini top. The boys had seen it worn so much during prior summers, and it was more like a bare midriff tank top than an actual bikini top. It now seemed like something a kid would wear.  
  
The bikini top itself seemed like the obvious choice. The underwire feature seemed to make the most of what little she had; however, she had worn it the day before.  
  
In the end, she opted for the Mickey Mouse one-piece. It plunged down in the middle and way down on the sides. It would show both cleavage and side boob, except that she didn’t really have those things. It did smash what little she had, minimizing her curves; however, she wasn’t worried about that. Ryan and David already knew that she didn’t have much to work with.  
  
Over the one-piece, she put on a cover-up length T-shirt that came to mid-thigh. Around that she tied a belt, transforming it into a T-shirt dress, and headed in for breakfast.  
  
As soon as breakfast was over, Jill made her way out of the trailer and then ran on ahead, straight into enemy territory. She arrived at the familiar camp near the point well ahead of the boys and immediately removed the belt.  
  
The lake was glassy smooth. She relaxed, taking a moment to enjoy the scenery while she waited for the boys to catch up. She hoped they might embrace her presence, but she fully expected to be told to leave . . . and in no uncertain terms.  
  
“I think your twin sister is ready to be your twin brother!” announced Ryan happily as he approached.  
  
“Well, it would be about time,” said David coming up.  
  
Jill had been expecting some comment like that. She gave the boys a coy smile as she reached way down to grasp the hem of the long shirt. She then lifted it up part way, revealing much of her thighs. At that point she paused for the count of three, letting their expectations build.  
  
“You need to be topless when that comes off,” remarked Ryan.  
  
Acting as if she had not heard Ryan’s comment, Jill raised the shirt slowly, revealing first the bottom half of her suit. She felt warmth flow into her cheeks. She knew that she was blushing up a storm, but she saw Ryan’s eyes light up as the minimal coverage of her cut-high-on-the-hips suit came into view.  
  
Jill knew she had great looking legs, but they weren’t what she had come to flaunt. Ironically, she was there to flaunt what she considered her weakest feature, her chest.  
  
Once the shirt was off, she bopped around a bit, letting them have a good look at her body in her sleek new swimsuit. She made a point to swing her hips just enough to make it sexy, but not so much as to make it appear intentional.  
  
“Let’s go for a swim, guys!” she proposed. “Why don’t we race out to Sunken Island?” She knew they were both competitive, David especially, and hoped that might entice them.

**Chapter 16: A Race to the Trailer**  
  
“Okay,” said Ryan, taking off his shirt. “But it looks like you’ll be going naked. That suit looks as if it is all or nothing.”  
  
Jill glanced down at her suit. That had not been a conversation direction that she had anticipated.  
  
“The suit stays on, Ryan. All of it, top and bottom!” she snapped. “Now, let’s have some fun!”  
  
“Jill,” said David, taking off his shirt. “You know the camp rules. You are more than welcome to stay. We’ll even swim out to Sunken Island with you. And it WILL be fun. First, however, you need to heed the rules. We’ll wait for you if you want to run back and change.”  
  
Jill looked back and forth from David to Ryan, first at their bare chests and then at their expressions. She saw only resolve.  
  
“Fine!” she said angrily. Picking up her shirt and belt, she stomped off in the direction of the trailer.  
  
“You look really attractive in that suit, by the way,” remarked Ryan in his friendliest voice as she passed by him.  
  
Shaking her head, she scowled. “No girl deserves to be treated like this. You guys are assholes.”  
  
Ryan just smiled his mischievous, confident smile, so Jill turned, continuing on her way. She felt his eyes burning into her less than half covered butt cheeks as she made her way toward the trail.  
  
Once back at the Airstream, Jill sat down and started reading Oedipus Rex for a second time. The ending had surprised her, so she had decided she wanted to read it again before starting the longer book, Crime and Punishment. Her grandmother emerged from the trailer and the two of them read together in the shade, seated side by side.  
  
That afternoon it grew quite warm. She decided to change into her bikini and swim out to Sunken Island – unfortunately, again all by herself.  
  
As she walked down to the lake, she thought about making the swim topless; however, she knew that there was no safe way to do so. As soon as she took off, leaving her top behind on the beach, the guys were likely to show up. Somedays the breakfast conversations revealed the boys' plans for the day, but on that particular day, she had no idea what they might be doing. She might again get caught just as she had been the last time.  
  
Out on Sunken Island, she did again take her top off. Holding it firmly in her hand, she floated around for a bit. It was fun, but not quite as much fun as the first time. She was haunted by the fact that David had seen her suit partway down on her last swim.  
  
In the first place, she should have never told him that she regretted being successful at keeping them from seeing her breasts the prior summer. In the second place, she knew that seeing her with her top down had surely strengthened his resolve. It had been a major setback. She knew that he was thinking that what he was doing was for her – to help her deal with her body-anxiety issues.  
  
A little later she put her top back on and headed for shore. About halfway there, she noticed that David and Ryan were in their camp. Even though her towel was at the log, she altered course, swimming in the direction of the point. She had decided to continue teasing Ryan by again emerging nymph-like from the lake.  
  
As she neared shore, she saw that she had not gone unnoticed. They had moved two of their folding camp chairs and were sitting in them, observing her approach. ‘No doubt hoping that I’ll come ashore topless,’ she thought. ‘Too bad for them!’  
  
As she waded ashore, she made a point of having her hands up on her head, pushing her wet hair back out of her eyes and squeezing the water out of it. She did so with her elbows wide, making for a visual excuse to thrust out her chest, flaunting it blatantly, without making it look as if that was her intended purpose.  
  
“Time to become Joel!” said Ryan, once she was within earshot.  
  
“Joel?” she asked.  
  
“We’ve been sitting here trying to decide what to call you once the transformation is complete,” said Ryan. “What do you think of the name Joel? It sounds exactly like Jill, only different. We haven’t been able to think of a male form of the name, ‘Jill.’”  
  
“There isn’t going to be any transformation,” she replied gruffly.  
  
“Your resolve is weakening,” said Ryan.  
  
“Yeah,” said David, smiling broadly. “We both sense it. You seem to be in denial, but it’s just a matter of time now.”  
  
“You guys are just as deluded as you are immature,” she said, walking past them. She had meant to remain right at the shoreline and tease them a little, but she realized that there was no point.  
  
As she walked, dripping wet, in the direction of the trailer, she turned and looked back at them. “Do you really think that one day I’m going to just whip off my top for you two bozos?”  
  
“Yep,” said Ryan, giving her two thumbs up. “It’s going to be great!”  
  
Jill shook her head in disgust, but she reached up and took hold of the bottom of each cup with her hands.  
  
“You mean I might just grab it like this?” asked Jill teasingly, pausing for effect. “And then lift it up like this, baring my boobies?” As she said that, she did indeed lift the cups way up, but simultaneously, she pivoted on the balls of her feet, turning her back to them.  
  
The guys didn’t quite get to see her bare chest. It was exposed, fully in fact, but just to the forest in front of her. The guys, however, were treated to a view of her bare back as well as her empty bikini top, held up above her shoulders for their viewing pleasure.  
  
With that brash maneuver, Jill had caught even herself by surprise. She hadn’t given it any forethought. It had simply happened impulsively. However, once she was sure that they had registered that her breasts were indeed naked, she pulled the cups back down, repositioning them carefully. As soon as she was certain she was decent, she turned back around, again facing the boys, her hands defiantly on her hips. While holding eye contact with Ryan, she stuck out her tongue.  
  
“Do you really think that one day I’ll just do that and then do whatever with you guys . . . hike, swim, whatever . . . my tits hanging out?” she asked sarcastically. “I mean . . . seriously?”  
  
“Why not?” asked Ryan.  
  
“Seriously?!?!”  
  
“Let’s pants her!” he shouted, hopping up aggressively from his chair.  
  
Jill reacted with alarm, her hands going instantly to her waistband. He was kidding, right? However, she quickly remembered how impulsive Ryan tended to be. Her instinctive response was to hold her bottoms in place. Her eyes darted to David. He was still seated, but he was laughing as if he were enjoying the show.  
  
“She’s asking for it!” added Ryan.  
  
Jill took a step back. “Stay away from me!” she shouted, suddenly feeling quite vulnerable, dressed only in the little bikini. Pantsing might be a form of horseplay that teens engaged in; however, typically the victim had underwear on under their pants.  
  
Glancing back at David, she saw that he hadn’t moved. He was still laughing.  
  
Jill panicked. Letting out a frightened squeal, she turned tail and took off running. As she sprinted, she could hear feet pounding the trail behind her. Never before had she run so fast down a forest trail – certainly not barefoot. She had a head start, but she knew that they were both fast. She had to get to the safety of the trailer! It was going to be very close, she realized.  
  
All her focus had been on her chest. An adrenaline inspired thrill rippled through her body as she pictured herself in just the top half of her suit, her lower half exposed. Would Ryan actually try and pull her bikini bottoms down? If he did that, would David be helping him or would he intervene on her behalf? Hadn’t David made Ryan promise to not strip her?  
  
To her amazement, she reached the trailer before they caught up.  
  
She flung the door open and dove headlong onto the floor just inside. As quickly as she could, she reached for the door to slam it shut. However, before she was able to get it all the way closed, the boys were there. They yanked it wide open. She kicked at them, but a second later, they had her by both legs. She tried to hold onto anything and everything within reach, but they were stronger, pulling her right back out of the trailer.  
  
“What in the heck?” her grandfather shouted. He sounded quite surprised to have his peace and quiet so completely shattered.  
  
“Help me, grandpa!” she yelled.  
  
“It’s alright, grandpa,” said David reassuringly. “We’re just messing around, playing Tag. Jill just doesn’t want to be ‘it.’”  
  
“It?” said Jill in disbelief, but before she had a chance to say more, the trailer door had been slammed shut and the boys were carrying her back in the direction they had all just come. “Exactly . . . I don’t want to be it!” She tried to struggle, but she wasn’t willing to let go of her bikini bottoms for even a second, so it didn’t amount to much.  
  
In the pit of her stomach, Jill knew she had lost. She was about to be stripped. She was outnumbered and they were stronger. The trailer, her only hope, was no longer in sight. It had been a lot like the horseplay that they had always engaged in, only this time the stakes were much higher. Her only hope seemed to be the death grip she had on her bikini bottoms.  
  
“Jill, calm down,” said David in a steady voice.  
  
“Calm down?” she replied vehemently.  
  
“What has gotten into you? We’re not going to pants you.”  
  
Jill was confused. If they weren’t going to pants her, why had they chased her and why were they carrying her back to the lake?  
  
“Oh, yes we are!” countered Ryan.  
  
“You better not even try!” she said, pulling her waistband even higher up on her hips. It occurred to her that she was probably creating severe camel toe and exposing more of her butt in the process, and yet that seemed a reasonable price to pay if it meant keeping her bikini bottoms on.  
  
“Ryan, you know I promised Jill that nothing of the sort would happen. And you promised me that you wouldn’t strip her.”  
  
“Not exactly! You made me promise not to take off her top. As I see it, her bottoms are fair game!”  
  
“No, Ryan, not the top! Not the bottoms!” said David bluntly, setting Jill’s legs down in the middle of the trail.  
  
Once her feet were on the ground, Jill fought to free herself from Ryan’s grip, succeeding thanks to David’s help. A moment later, she was cowering behind David as he sought to shield her from Ryan. Jill knew that Ryan was no match for David; David could easily deck him, were he to decide to.  
  
“We’re not stripping my sister! That’s been the deal all along.”  
  
“But you saw what she did! She was asking for it.”  
  
“Maybe she was. But that doesn’t change a thing. We’re not stripping her! Got it?”  
  
Being careful that David wouldn’t be able to see, Jill stuck her tongue out at Ryan. She knew she shouldn’t, but she couldn’t resist.  
  
Seeing that she was mocking him caused Ryan to renew his efforts to get at her; however, David managed to keep himself in the middle.  
  
“She can keep the top . . . but I’m definitely taking the bottoms!” he said.  
  
David laughed. “Give it up, Ryan!”  
  
“Oh, come on,” he pleaded. “It’s time to find out if she’s hiding a Hitler mustache down there. I’ll bet she is!”  
  
Puzzling over his comment, Jill again made a face, sticking out her tongue at him.  
  
“Not happening!” said David resolutely.  
  
Jill was ready to again try and make a run for it, but the only safe place seemed to be right where she was, behind David. She was trembling, but she still had her bikini on.  
  
“Okay, okay,” said Ryan resignedly, dropping his arms to his sides and taking a step back. “I did promise. But my promise only related to her top.”  
  
“Well, we’ll have to fix that. But first, apologize,” insisted David.  
  
As Jill watched, peeking around from behind David, she saw Ryan let out a heavy sigh and shake his head in disappointment. After a long pause, he said, “I’m sorry, Jill.”  
  
“Being sorry is a good first step,” said David. Turning to Jill he asked, “Are you okay? You’re shaking.”  
  
“Leave me alone,” she said angrily, slapping his hand away. Sure he had come through for her when the chips were down, but he had also chased her and helped pull her back out of the trailer.  
  
David chuckled. Turning back to Ryan, he continued, “Ryan, this only works if Jill feels safe. You need to promise her . . . that she can walk around in whatever she chooses to wear, even a bikini, knowing she is safe . . . that it won’t be yanked off . . . neither the top nor the bottoms . . . okay?”  
  
“She was mocking me!” complained Ryan.  
  
David looked at Jill. So that he could see, she again stuck her tongue out at Ryan. They both needed to know that her will was intact. Jill glared resolutely into Ryan’s eyes.  
  
“See?” said Ryan, pointing at her.  
  
Again David laughed.  
  
A minute later Jill heard Ryan promise not to strip her. For good measure, David did as well.  
  
“Go on back to the trailer, Jill,” said David. “I’ll come talk to you in a bit. But let’s not involve grandma and grandpa, okay? They might be a bit worked up over what they just witnessed.  
  
Jill, who had remained behind David the entire time, did slip away to hurry back towards the trailer. Looking back over her shoulder, she saw David and Ryan talking. They appeared to be arguing.  
  
She thought again of getting in the Jeep and driving home. That would serve them right! They should know better than to treat her like this. She smiled, imagining their disappointment if she really did abandon them for the rest of the summer. However, she made the tent her first stop. She picked out some clothes and then went to the trailer to change.  
  
As she had expected, her grandparents were both quite concerned. It took a few minutes, but Jill did her best to reassure them that everything was fine. It really wasn’t, but David had been right. Neither one of them wanted to see their grandparents involved in what was going on. Jill found it easiest to simply add support to what David had said, that they had been playing Tag and that it had gotten a little out of hand. She suspected that Tag was a timeless game that her grandparents could relate to.  
  
Next, she went into the bathroom to change. She started by rinsing off in the shower. Quite a bit of dirt had stuck to her skin. That wasn’t surprising. She had never toweled off after her swim, and she had been running, kicking up a lot of dust.  
  
Before dressing, she took a look at herself in the mirror. She shook her head, realizing that what Ryan had said did indeed seem to be true. The little furry patch perched atop her pubic bone did happen to look a lot like a Hitler mustache. It was a disgusting analogy, maybe just a little bit funny, but disgusting nonetheless.  
  
As she pulled on a clean pair of panties, she resolved to do something about it. Even though no one was going to see it, she didn’t like that it looked like that. Nothing about the shape had bothered her until Ryan had said that, but now she knew that it would be all that she would think of whenever she looked at her naked self in the mirror.  
  
When she exited the restroom, David was there chatting with her grandparents.  
  
“Let’s take a walk, Bean,” he suggested.  
  
Jill didn’t want to go for a walk with him, but she also didn’t want her grandparents to observe any friction between the two of them after what they had just witnessed.

**Chapter 17: The Tree**  
  
Initially, they walked along in silence, neither one of them wanting to initiate the conversation. Jill did not want to run into Ryan, so she had purposefully headed down the driveway, going straight away from the lake.  
  
“The Walters or the Serranos must be here,” said Jill breaking the silence. “I saw a car last night.” As soon as she’d said that, she regretted it. She hoped that David wouldn’t ask for details.  
  
“Really? Let’s go investigate,” he said, turning right when they got to the road.  
  
For a time they again walked along in silence.  
  
“So . . . if you were going to keep your promise, why did you chase me? Why did I get yanked back out of the trailer?”  
  
David didn’t respond, even after Jill had given him more than enough time.  
  
“Well?” she asked. “That wasn’t very fun. You two scared me. Were you planning to help Ryan pants me . . . but then you chickened out?”  
  
“Chickened out?” chuckled David. “Did you want to get pantsed?”  
  
“Don’t be ridiculous! I just want to hear your explanation. Like I said . . . not fun . . . not fun at all.”  
  
“It’s no big deal . . . it happened. You spooked. You took off running. The next thing I knew, we were all running. Shortly thereafter, we were carrying you. No time to plan. Certainly no plans to pants you.”  
  
“It sure seemed like there were!”  
  
“Would you have liked it better if I had stayed behind and let Ryan chase you all by himself?”  
  
“No one needed to chase me!”  
  
“If you had stood your ground, then most likely none of it would have happened. Better yet, if you had not taunted Ryan with that little bikini top stunt, followed by sticking out your tongue. Surely you see that you were asking for it . . . just as Ryan said.”  
  
“Asking for it? Oh . . . so it’s my fault?” she asked indignantly.  
  
“Those were Ryan’s words, not mine.”  
  
“But you clearly agree.”  
  
“I didn’t say that. I don’t agree. It wasn’t your fault, but your behavior brought it about. You initiated a chain of events. One thing led to another. I’m sorry about what happened, but there was no advanced planning. I certainly couldn’t let Ryan chase you all by himself, now could I? I knew I had to be there. It happened, end of story.”  
  
Jill contemplated that, realizing that what he was saying, ‘one thing led to another,’ was probably a pretty accurate explanation. That was how it went with horseplay.  
  
“Well, thank you,” said Jill finally, looking into his eyes. “You did stick up for me. You protected me.”  
  
“I’m not perfect,” he said. “But I do keep my promises.”  
  
“You certainly aren’t, but you do,” she agreed, giving him a hug so that he would know how much it had meant to her. “I almost had a heart attack. I mean . . . seriously! I was sure you were going to break your promise . . . but in the end . . . you kept it.”  
  
Jill and David did manage to mostly clear the air between them. There was still stress, but Jill’s heart rate had come way back down. She had come to realize that she had taken the teasing one step too far. She’d been playing with fire. Earlier David had shared with her that Ryan had been advocating the use of force. Given that, teasing him had clearly been a bad idea. Indeed, she had always known that he had a very impulsive side to his personality.  
  
“You’ve got balls!” announced David out of the blue.  
  
“Actually . . . last time I checked, I didn’t,” she replied.  
  
“You know what I mean. Spunk! ...continuing to taunt Ryan even though he was threatening to pants you. I saw you sticking out your tongue.”  
  
“I said I was scared, not intimidated. He might one day succeed . . . pants me…”  
  
“Not if I can help it.”  
  
As they walked along talking, Jill decided that she was not going to take the Jeep and go home . . . at least not yet. She still loved the lake, but she also realized how much she needed David if she were to remain there. He had his flaws, but he had stood his ground between her and Ryan. All had seemed lost, and without his intervention, it would have been . . . everything . . . not just her top.  
  
That evening as Jill lay awake, she thought back over being chased, pulled back out of the trailer and then being carried off into the forest. It had been a harrowing experience. However, she found herself realizing that such antics, minus the threat of being pantsed, were high on the list of things that she had enjoyed other summers.  
  
At the top of the list of things she had been missing were the campfires and all the evening camaraderie that went hand in hand with them. How she missed those campfires, and laying there in her tent she could often smell the smoke, cruelly reminding her of just what she was longing for. Her grandparents turned in early, so it was the evenings that were her loneliest hours.  
  
Also very high on the list of what she had been missing was all the horseplay that she, David and Ryan had always engaged in. She was hardly the ‘sit in the shade and read all day’ type of girl – a few hours maybe, but certainly not all day. She loved getting her hands and knees dirty, even getting her knees scraped now and then. She loved to run, skip and jump. She even loved being chased, just not when it seemed as if she were about to be stripped naked. She had been somewhat active that summer, hiking by herself every other day or so, but it was not the same. Prior years she had been much more active, always running and messing around with David and Ryan.  
  
As she thought about it, she realized that she had not been to the rope swing, she had not floated the outlet, and she had not even climbed a tree. And she had also done very little running . . . not having David and Ryan to run after, with and from had meant that she had been walking everywhere . . . hardly the active lifestyle that she enjoyed. On top of all that, there had been no basketball.  
  
The next day while tanning topless in a meadow filled with wildflowers, Jill decided that it was high time for her to start being a little more active. She needed to start checking off a few of those boxes. It wouldn’t be nearly as much fun since she would be doing everything alone, but it was better than spending the summer just lying around.  
  
Sitting up, she started studying the trees around the perimeter of the clearing. Most of the trees around Cache Lake were evergreens, but here there happened to be some very large deciduous trees, perfect for climbing.  
  
She stood up with a measure of trepidation. She had overheard where the boys had been planning to go, so she knew that they were miles away; however, it was still unnerving to be standing up topless in an open area. Focusing on the largest tree of the group, she headed across the meadow. Her gut wanted her to go back and put her shirt on, but she knew it would be safe. It took a little effort for her mind to overrule her emotions, but she did manage to walk away from her towel, her backpack and her small pile of clothes.  
  
Barefoot, in just the bottoms of her bikini, she made her way towards the large tree. Even though she knew that there was next to zero risk, it still felt so scary to be walking away from her clothes in the sunshine. It was a scary feeling that she was starting to realize that she had an unusual attraction to. Something about those anxious feelings was oddly addictive. There was a certain thrill associated with it.  
  
The bottom limb was a little high, but she knew she’d be able to get on top of it. Feeling the bark, she realized that she had found just the excuse she had been looking for. It was quite rough. She knew that it would be fine on her skin; however, the material of her suit did not seem all that tough. The last thing she wanted was a snag or tear.  
  
Biting her lower lip, she held still, looking all around and listening carefully. Once she was reassured that the coast was clear, she hooked her thumbs into the waistband and slid her last remaining item of clothing down her legs. Stepping out of it, she felt the cool breeze on her most private area. A thrill surged through her. ‘Why was she doing this?’ she asked herself.  
  
Thinking that she might not like the answer, she forced herself to ignore the question. ‘Still need to do something about this,’ she thought, pulling at the hair on top of her mound with a thumb and forefinger.  
  
She shifted her gaze up into the tree, sizing up that first large branch. She took two steps back and then ran forward to get a good jump. A moment later, she had pulled herself up and was sitting astride the first branch, a leg dangling down on each side.  
  
The bark felt much less rough than she had thought when she had been thinking up an excuse to take off her bottoms. She laughed at herself. She was coming to realize that she was quite the funny girl, curiously attracted to what she was most afraid of. She placed a hand over her left breast, feeling for her own heartbeat. It was indeed elevated, and not from the exercise involved in climbing.  
  
She looked down at her shaved pussy lips, pressed against the bark. Imagining them being seen like that, she felt her cheeks flush. The warmth in her face was a remarkably pleasant sensation. ‘I’m such a strange girl,’ she thought, smiling and shaking her head. ‘God forbid anyone sees me like this. I’d die of embarrassment!’  
  
Pushing those fears out of her head, she braced her hands on the trunk and stood up on the branch she had been straddling. The next two branches were easy, almost like stair steps. But from there it got harder. Placing both hands on the next branch at about face level, she had to jump while simultaneously pressing down hard. That placed her such that her upper body was leaning over the branch. She was now in a pike position, her pelvis against the rough bark, her legs hanging down.  
  
Swinging first one leg and then the other, she got her butt up on top, both of her legs dangling off of the same side. As it was a pretty comfortable spot, she leaned back against the tree trunk.  
  
Due to the thick canopy of leaves, she couldn’t quite see out, but looking down she could see her bikini bottoms, right where she had dropped them. In her mind’s eye, she pictured Ryan and David showing up under the tree. Ryan reaching down and picking up her bottoms and then looking up at her. ‘My God,’ she realized, ‘I’d have nowhere to go. I’d be trapped.’ A thrill rippled through her as she contemplated what it would actually feel like to be caught where she was – nude with no escape. She’d have no choice but to climb down – eventually.  
  
She felt a cool sensation between her legs, and looking down she saw that her innermost folds had a damp look to them. ‘Girl’s bodies are so curious,’ she found herself thinking while she examined her bare lips. With one of her hands, she spread herself open to have a better look. She had, of course, studied herself in intimate detail on numerous occasions, but it was different this time. Things were shaved, and she was way up in a tree in the middle of the day. ‘Never thought I’d do this,’ she found herself thinking.  
  
It turned out to be fun to sit in the tree naked, so it was more than a half hour before she finally made her way back down. Once back at the base of the tree, she picked up her bikini bottoms. She had already decided not to put them right back on. With them balled up inside a fist, she made her way cautiously back across the meadow to where the rest of her stuff lay.  
  
That was the most exposed she had ever been she realized, keeping an alert eye on the bordering trees. Unlike her walk back from the bridge after she had tied her panties to the post, this was full daylight! Once back to her towel, it was with a sigh of relief that she lay back down. That brought her body below the level of the grass, giving her a relative yet minimal sense of security.  
  
She lay there tanning in the nude for as long as her nerves would allow, every once in a while sitting up to verify that she was still the only one in the meadow. It was quite exhilarating to be lying there face up, the sun shining down on not only her breasts but also the freshly shaven areas usually hidden within her bikini bottoms. Her nerves gave out before she got worried that the freshly exposed white skin might get sunburned. A short time later, she was headed back wearing a pair of shorts over her bikini bottoms but nothing up above save her bikini top.  
  
The next morning at breakfast, Jill had the feeling that there had been a thaw of some sort. She even found herself exchanging a small amount of conversation with both Ryan and David. She didn’t know exactly why, but maybe the chase and its aftermath would end up being a turning point of sorts. Maybe now things could start settling back down. She saw the hint of a smile on her grandmother’s face and knew that she too had sensed the development. Her grandmother also seemed to be doing her best to ignore the subtle change, lest she upset the apple cart.  
  
Jill learned that the boys were planning to go to Snow Lake and were then planning to climb the ridge behind it. That would be quite a long trek. First, they would have to climb up to Cornice Ridge and then follow it north for quite some distance. Up above that, they would come to a tarn they had dubbed Snow Lake. On several visits, they had eyed the ridge beyond the far end of the lake, but they had yet to attempt to climb it.  
  
As Jill learned that their plans would take them out of the area for most of the day, she started making mental plans to float the outlet.  
  
Midmorning found her rolling a large inner tube up the beach toward the outlet. There were two ways to float the outlet. One could either start at the lake as she was doing, or one could go along the road and start from the bridge. She had decided to have the full experience by starting from the lake.  
  
She waited well over an hour after the boys had departed to go anywhere near the inner tubes. Typically she wanted them to have no idea what she might be doing on any given day, but this time she had specific reasons for wanting her plans to be secret.  
  
She wore only her bikini as she made her way along the shore with the overinflated inner tube. She had no shorts or towel. Such things, if she brought them, would only get soaked.  
  
Once near the outlet, she walked out into the lake and sat down on the inner tube. She paddled a short distance along the shore, but then the current took over, drawing her out of the lake. As the river entered the forest, she thought of all the times she had floated the outlet. It had been something that they had done multiple times each and every year.  
  
This would be the first time that she would be doing it solo. Always in the past, they had done it in groups. That was especially fun, lots of splashing, lots of horseplay, even some singing. For some reason, her father loved to sing MacArthur Park, especially the ‘Someone left the cake out in the rain…’ chorus, at the top of his lungs while floating down the outlet. That was always hilarious, and it was her favorite memory that related to floating down the outlet.

**Chapter 18: Floating the Outlet**  
  
She and the boys would always be trying to upset each other’s inner tubes, except through the rapids. There, they’d often hold on to each other’s tubes to keep from tipping over. The worst section of the rapids had the appearance of being dangerous, but the channel was relatively narrow and deep, and the rocks were smooth. Even going through without a tube was probably safe. It might be impossible to keep one’s head above water; however, Jill knew that as long as she held her breath, she’d be fine.  
  
A solo trip down the outlet could end up being boring, Jill thought; however, she had a plan for how she would make the trip interesting. She reached behind her neck and untied her bikini. A moment later she peeled down the cups, baring her breasts to the forest as well as the sky above. She left the cups hanging down on her midsection. She was planning to put them back up as she went under the bridge. That seemed like the only place along the entire route where she might be seen. Other than the bridge, the outlet just meandered through virgin forest.  
  
Even though she knew it was quite safe, she felt the butterflies flapping around in her stomach. This was different from her other topless experiences. She was not staying in one place. Instead, she was being swept along, the river constantly carrying her through new sections of forest. That alone made it scary. She did her best to keep an eye on the shorelines ahead, but that was difficult. The round shape of the tube made it a challenge to keep her feet pointed downstream.  
  
Seeing the bridge just ahead, she pulled her top back up, repositioning the cups and retying the string. There didn’t seem to be anyone on the bridge, so she decided to take a quick break and go ashore just after passing underneath. With her tube on high ground, she walked up onto the bridge deck.  
  
As expected, her panties were still there. Inspecting them, she decided to put another knot in the loose ends, to make extra sure that they stayed put. Out of curiosity she walked over and had a look at the slope she had raced down in the dark. She was amazed at how steep it was, plus she noticed that she could tell exactly where she had been, due to the recently disrupted gravel.  
  
There was no one around, so she decided to be daring and remove her bikini top while up on the bridge deck. She knew she’d have plenty of time if a car were to appear in the distance. With the top completely off and in her hand, a tremor rippled through her body, from head to toe and then back up again. It was quite exhilarating to realize that she was topless in the middle of the road . . . in the light of day.  
  
Wanting to keep moving, she made her way back down to her inner tube. For a brief second, she thought about leaving her top hidden somewhere near the bridge. That would force her to walk back to that point topless. Walking back to the bridge was something that she would be doing anyway. There was a trail along the river bank; it was the only way back.  
  
In the end, she couldn’t bring herself to leave her top there. It just felt too risky. Instead, she looped it through the waistband of her bottoms, tying it so that it was on her hip. Again she shivered. It just felt so risky to have her nipples, her entire chest actually, exposed like that in broad daylight. Risky and yet so exhilarating! Thinking of David and Ryan, she was glad that they were way up on the ridge somewhere. Wouldn’t they get a kick out of seeing her topless!  
  
With her back against the inner tube, her bum in the hole, she allowed herself to fall backwards into the water. After drying off on her short walk on the bridge, the cool water caused her to inhale sharply; however, a moment later she was again comfortable and breathing normally.  
  
As she floated down the lazy section of the river, staring up at the blue sky through the gap in the trees, she found that she had to work at relaxing. Doing so was quite difficult while topless. It just seemed to be second nature to be on high alert, always scanning the banks ahead for people.  
  
Glancing down she studied her chest in the sunshine. Her breasts were a lighter color than the rest of her skin, but not by much, and there were no distinct tan lines. Her nipples were at full attention. She knew there were two factors in that, either one of them being enough to make them diamond hard: the temperature of the water and the excitement of being exposed.  
  
She paddled a little with her hands, turning first one way and then the other. At certain points, she had to paddle aggressively to avoid downed trees extending part way across the river. At one point she even had to flip over and swim a little to keep from running into just such a tree. That was when she realized just how smart it had been to tie her top to her bottoms. Once she was past the dangerous part, she checked her top. It was still there, just as secure as ever.  
  
As she floated on, she daydreamed about what she would have to do if her top went missing. She pictured herself taking the trail back to the bridge topless, and from there having to make her way back to her grandparents’ property by following the road. It would be much like it had been at night, but she imagined herself having to stay way off the road, keeping near the tree line. Alternately, she could wait for nightfall; however, that would be quite a long wait. Another option would be going back the way she had come, to the beach and then along it.  
  
In an attempt to relax by keeping herself from scanning the banks of the river, she forced herself to close her eyes for short periods of time. It was hard to do. She always felt the need to open them again, both to verify that there was no one there, but also to look for danger ahead in the river, big rocks or fallen trees to steer around.  
  
At that point, she entered the section of the river that they had named the Giant Bend. It stood out because it was where the river executed a long lazy circular turn, essentially doubling back on itself. It had always been a landmark for them and was notable because it marked the end of the calm section of the river, the rapids commencing just beyond. As kids, their parents had forced them to get out after the Giant Bend. For Jill and David, it had felt like a rite of passage to be allowed to float the outlet past that point once they had become teenagers.  
  
Leaning back, her head resting on the inner tube, she went around the Giant Bend, much of the time with her eyes closed. She did peek at the river ahead a time or two, just to make sure that she was staying in the center of the channel, and that no new hazards had shown up in the river after the spring runoff. Every summer, the tree snags seemed to be in different locations.  
  
As she exited the Giant Bend and entered the long straight section of gentle rapids just beyond, she was surprised to suddenly hear shouting. Shocked back to reality, she opened her eyes and scanned the banks of the river. David and Ryan were just above her, looking down upon her from the top of a steep bank. They were waving, cheering and jumping up and down. Gasping in horror, she even saw a high five.  
  
In a state of panic, Jill registered that she was bare-chested, her little nipples pointing straight up at the heavens above. Instinctively she reached for her bikini top but quickly realized how long it would take to get on, especially since it was tied at her hip.  
  
Oh, my God! What a disaster! Getting her brain in gear and flipping over, she pressed her chest into the inner tube, finally getting her boobs hidden. Face down, she glanced back up at the boys on the river bank. They were still doing a happy dance, but then she saw something that sent her alarm sky high. Ryan had his camera in hand, his DSLR. He had always had good cameras as he imagined himself to be quite the photographer. His new camera was the latest and the greatest.  
  
As she floated face down, feet first towards the rapids she came to the realization that her life was over. They were on raised ground in the center of the Giant Bend. They had been above her, Ryan surely taking photo after photo, the whole time she had been in the bend. The reason they had been cheering and waving was that they already had all the photos of her that they wanted. Her life, as she had known it, was indeed over. She thought of sticking her face in the river and inhaling water into her lungs. That might not work, but suddenly suicide seemed like her best option.  
  
She went limp, feeling the will to live drain out of her body. She saw David and Ryan disappearing into the distance as the current continued to carry her downstream.  
  
At that point, she realized that she was about to enter the dangerous section of the river. Even though drowning seemed like a good idea, she found herself kicking her feet to get to shore. Once she was in a shallow area, she stood up and made her way up the bank. Her emotions crashed down upon her and she crumpled into a loose pile of wet skin and bones. Wave after wave of uncontrollable sobbing shook her to the very core. Her life was indeed over!  
  
What might Ryan do with those photos? She couldn’t bear to think of the possibilities. Each and every one of them seemed worse than anything she had ever lived through. It was one thing to be a titless wonder, but it was quite another to have her titlessness splashed all over social media. And she had heard that such photos never EVER went away. They’d always be there. Forevermore, anyone searching on the name, ‘Jill Wahlund,’ would be treated to a series of photos of a flat-chested eighteen-year-old reclining in an inner tube, floating lazily down a river. Her eyes would probably be closed, but what difference did that make? Her bare chest and her pointy little nipples would be on full display . . . for everyone to see . . . forevermore.  
  
It was a nightmare, and yet she knew that it was one that she’d never wake from. Her body shook uncontrollably as she lay there crying. She was still topless, but what did that matter now?  
  
She cried for quite some time but eventually came to realize that crying served no purpose. Sitting up, she looked around. The world was still there, the river was still there, even the sun was still shining. It seemed so wrong, so unfair. Surely the world needed to acknowledge her pain and suffering. At the very least, black clouds should have rolled in to hide the sun.  
  
She stood up and immediately started walking. Somewhere in her head, the beginnings of a plan was forming, and it wasn’t going to be suicide! As of yet, it had no shape, no form . . . there was certainly no strategy. Just a desire . . . a desire to make them pay. So far she was just following the path towards the bridge. She had left the inner tube where it had fallen as she had gotten out of the river. Her top was still tied at her hip. She was topless, but that wasn’t something that she was conscious of.  
  
Her thoughts had been full of dread, but now anger and wrath were pushing all other emotions aside. ‘Make them pay. Make them pay,’ was all she could think. It was a long walk back, but her fury drove her on. She was barefoot, but she hardly noticed when she stepped on a sharp rock or twig.  
  
As the bridge loomed ahead, a wisp of sanity crept in. Without stopping she untied her top from her bottoms and then tied the wet clammy cups back in position on her chest. With only a token glance at the panties tied to the post, she started marching down the road. The hot asphalt seared her feet, but that only served to feed her dark thoughts. She marched on and on, her fists clenched in anger.  
  
She didn’t pause until she was passing the Jeep. Seeing it made her think of her emergency bundle wired securely up under the dash. ‘Emergency?’ she thought, ‘This is an emergency.’  
  
She reviewed in her mind what was there: a key, clothes, and money. What good were those things? She resumed her march. Passing her tent and the trailer, she considered getting dressed. But she was too mad, and she didn’t need to be any more dressed for this mission.  
  
She headed right on down the trail that led to the point. She didn’t know what she’d do if they weren’t there. It was time for confrontation! She knew full well she’d lose a physical fight, but that had become her plan. It was a bad plan, but she wanted at them! They had ruined her summer, and now they were about to ruin her life. They were going to pay! She’d probably be hurt in the effort, but what did that matter? Life as she knew it was over. Even if it was a suicide mission, it was what she had to do. About that, she had no doubt.  
  
As she emerged from the trees, she saw the two of them there, sitting in folding chairs around the fireless fire circle. They both looked quite jovial, smiling, even laughing. Ryan was holding the loathed camera in his hands, the back of it pointed toward David. He was obviously showing him an image.  
  
She barreled down on them, her fists clenched, ready for battle. At first, they didn’t see her coming, but then David noticed movement and looked up. He saw Jill in such a state. Her hair was straggly, her face was red and tear streaked, her eyes were bloodshot; she was wearing just the bikini, her body coated with dust. But what really stood out to him was the look in her eyes. Never before had he seen such a look of crazed fury . . . not in Jill’s eyes, not in anyone’s eyes.  
  
He started to stand up, but before he had gotten on his feet she plowed into him from the side, knocking him down into the dirt. In an instant, she was on top of him, pummeling him with her fists. David didn’t know what to do, but he was not about to hit back. He simply wrapped his arms around his head and let her do her worst.  
  
After landing fifty or a hundred blows in rapid succession, she suddenly got up, shifting her attention to Ryan. She didn’t succeed in knocking him down; he just kept backing away as she went about swinging her fists at him for all she was worth. He had one hand extended forward, fending her off, the other back, holding the camera. Jill was trying to get to the camera, but it was quickly obvious that she was only going to get to it by going through him.  
  
Jill knew she had lost control, but she didn’t care. She was going to beat the two of them to bloody pulps – or die trying. While she was beating on Ryan, she suddenly felt someone grab her around the waist, lifting her up. She kicked and screamed, but she couldn’t get away. David was carrying her toward the lake. Once he was knee deep, he threw her. She landed on her side, going fully under.  
  
A moment later, she was back up and charging through the water toward him. She plowed into him again, but this time he was ready for her. He again picked her up and threw her back out into the lake. After being thrown into the lake three times in that manner, Jill came up out of the water less eager to repeat the charge.  
  
Seething with rage, her hackles still way up, she stared at him through narrow slit eyes, panting, trying to catch her breath.

**Chapter 19: Floating the Outlet, continued**  
  
“Calm down, Jill,” said David. “I know you’re angry. I’ve never seen you like this, but…”  
  
“Goddamn you two!” she yelled interrupting him, her fists still tightly clenched.  
  
“Come here,” said David. “Let’s work this out.”  
  
“This time it can’t be worked out!” she yelled.  
  
“There’s been no damage. There are pictures, but only Ryan and I have seen them.”  
  
“So far!”  
  
“Ryan, hand me your camera,” said David, extending his hand toward Ryan.  
  
“Why would I do that?”  
  
“Just give me your camera,” he insisted.  
  
“I’m not stupid. It’s an expensive camera.”  
  
“You’ll get it back,” said David. “Just give it to me.”  
  
“I don’t think so. You’re thinking of deleting the pictures, aren’t you?”  
  
“No, Jill is going to delete them.”  
  
“I don’t think so. These are the ultimate blackmail photos.”  
  
“Don’t be an asshole, Ryan. You’re not going to blackmail my sister.”  
  
“Okay,” said Ryan. “Maybe not, but I’m definitely keeping the pictures. They’re awesome.” Turning to Jill, he continued, “They’re unbelievably hot. YOU’RE unbelievably hot!” Turning back to David he added firmly, “I’m keeping the pictures.”  
  
“I’m sure you want to,” said David. “But that is only going to happen with Jill’s permission, and look at her…” He paused as they both studied her. She had calmed down a little, listening intently, but she was clearly still livid, standing there thigh-deep in the lake, her hair wet and tangled, her bikini top slightly askew. “…she’s clearly not going to allow you to keep the photos.”  
  
Ryan didn’t respond, so David turned to Jill. “Do you want to allow Ryan to keep the photos, or would you like to delete them?”  
  
That was an option? Jill had not anticipated this turn of events. In her mind, the photos had already been uploaded for the world to see.  
  
“I’m sure the photos have already been saved onto some hidden memory stick, or somehow uploaded,” said Jill skeptically.  
  
“Come on, Jill,” said David. “You know there is no power and no cell phone reception out here. The photos are on the camera . . . nowhere else.”  
  
“Okay, give me the camera,” she demanded, holding her hand out toward Ryan even though the two of them were far apart.  
  
“She’ll throw it in the lake,” said Ryan. He was obviously not considering handing it over.  
  
“Damn right, I’ll throw it in the lake,” snapped Jill. “…after I smash it against a rock.”  
  
“Well, then we have an impasse,” said David. “You can delete the photos, but Ryan gets to keep his camera.”  
  
“Who says she gets to delete the photos?” demanded Ryan. “It’s my camera, they’re my photos.”  
  
“You’re not thinking straight, Ryan. You saw Jill today, floating peacefully down the river. That was obviously a girl who enjoys being topless. We both saw it. Keep your eye on the prize!”  
  
Upon hearing that, Jill felt a wave of embarrassment pass over her. She started blushing. She thought of trying to deny that she enjoyed being topless, but she knew that she had been caught. She kept quiet. She needed to play her role . . . she needed to say just the right things, helping David – at least until the photos were deleted. After they were gone, then she could go back to beating them up.  
  
“He’s right, Jill!” said Ryan. “You did look to be enjoying yourself out there today.”  
  
“Maybe I was,” she admitted, trying her best to think of what might bolster David’s case so that they could get access to the camera. “Even if I was, you sure ruined that!”  
  
“See, Ryan,” said David. “It’s like I’ve been saying. We protect Jill. We make it so that she feels safe. We bring her in under our wings, and then she’ll agree. I think she is ready to be topless, but she needs to feel confident that what happens at the lake, stays at the lake.”  
  
Jill wanted to deny everything David had just said; however, she could see the wisdom behind David’s logic. If Ryan became convinced that he might have a good chance at spending the rest of the summer with a topless girl, then he might allow the photos to be deleted. She imagined that might be a trade that he would agree to.  
  
The more Jill thought about it, the more she realized that she needed to lead them on. Ryan at least needed to believe that she was getting close to agreeing to their terms. But she knew that just coming out and saying that would not come across as believable.  
  
She knew that she wasn’t going to agree to their terms, but she also knew that she probably couldn’t pull off an act. She then thought of an angle that just might work. After all, getting the photos deleted was what mattered. The angle that she had thought of was the truth. The beauty of it was that it wouldn’t require much acting.  
  
“But I can’t agree to your terms. I just can’t,” she said, starting to cry. “Even if I have been caught and you guys now know my secret . . . that I have been enjoying toplessness . . . I can never agree.” She sobbed, her eyes downcast.  
  
“But you can,” said David. “If you like being topless, then there is no reason not to agree.”  
  
“Yes there is,” said Jill. She was still standing in the lake, almost exactly where she had last been tossed. She turned around and muttered something which they were not able to understand.  
  
“We didn’t hear that,” said David.  
  
“What I said,” said Jill, turning part way back but still talking quietly, “…is that I don’t look like other girls. Even if topless is fun, I don’t look good topless. I don’t look like a boy, but I don’t exactly look like a girl either.”  
  
“I’m sure Ryan would disagree,” interjected David.  
  
“I absolutely disagree! It’s not true,” said Ryan. “You are lovely, Jill, head to toe. I don’t think you know what you look like?”  
  
“Unfortunately, I do. That’s why this all makes no sense . . . no sense at all. I’m a lanky, flat-chested basketball girl, and that’s exactly what I look like.”  
  
“Well,” said Ryan. “That’s maybe what you see when you look in the mirror, but let me tell you what I see. I see a supermodel!”  
  
“A supermodel?” asked Jill, a puzzled expression on her face.  
  
“Absolutely!” said Ryan. “You were the only supermodel in our entire graduating class, and I’m a supermodel expert. Think about it. Supermodels are thin just like you. Some feminists describe them as being scrawny, but the prettiest ones are athletic . . . just like you. They have flat stomachs, protruding hip bones, and they are tall. Sound familiar? Supermodels are supposed to be between 5’8” and 5’11”.”  
  
“I’m over 5’9”,” said Jill sheepishly.  
  
“Exactly,” said Ryan. “I’m telling you!”  
  
“But supermodels are…” said Jill, not finishing her sentence.  
  
“Precisely! They’re f\*\*king gorgeous!” said Ryan. “And I’ll bet all kinds of supermodels wear your same bra size. They’re not a top-heavy bunch. And they are the undisputed standard of feminine beauty . . . in my well-educated opinion, anyway. ”  
  
“But guys prefer big boobs,” said Jill, talking quietly and looking down into the water. “Girls need large boobs . . . to look good.”  
  
“Says who?” said Ryan. “I’m a guy. I have my own tastes. And let me tell you this; I’m not in the minority. And like I said, I’m a supermodel expert. Show me some photos of current supermodels, and I’ll name them for you . . . and give you their measurements. Do you know why I can do that?”  
  
“Because you’re a pervert!” said Jill.  
  
David laughed.  
  
“Well, maybe,” he admitted. “But the real reason is that I simply think they are living works of art. Each one of them is beautiful in her own special way. And do you know what I am looking at?”  
  
Jill looked up and saw that he was looking right at her. As their eyes met, she blushed crimson red.  
  
“Exactly!” said Ryan. “I’m looking at a f\*\*king supermodel . . . a supermodel in a hot bikini.”  
  
“But guys like big boobs,” said Jill softly, repeating one of her core beliefs.  
  
“Correction, guys like attractive boobs,” said Ryan. “Sports Illustrated sells millions of copies of their swimsuit edition. It is chock full of women with modest busts, and they are there because they are beautiful. There are of course women with bigger boobs represented as well. I have this year’s issue with me. What it proves is that there is so much more to feminine beauty than bust size. You could be in that magazine . . . you should be in that magazine! Would you like to see it?”  
  
“No thanks,” she said. She couldn’t really refute his argument; supermodels were tall and skinny. But she’d certainly never thought of herself as having anything in common with them. But she was getting distracted. She tried to refocus on what she needed to say and do to get the photos deleted.  
  
“I’m really thirsty, guys,” she said. “What have you got to drink?”  
  
“How about a lemonade?” said David walking over to their cooler.  
  
“That sounds good.”  
  
“We’re not being very good hosts, are we?” said Ryan. He was suddenly being very cordial. “Come, have a seat.”  
  
As Jill waded ashore, David wrapped a big beach towel around her. It felt very good. She had been starting to feel cold standing in the lake.  
  
It was nice to sit down. She lifted her heels up onto the seat of the chair and hugged her knees against her chest, wrapping the towel around her legs as she did so. She started to relax as David popped the top on a can of lemonade and handed it to her.  
  
“Do you know what I think is your sexiest feature?” asked Ryan.  
  
“Frankly . . . I don’t want to know,” she replied, glaring up into his eyes.  
  
“Your shoulders,” he said. “You’ve got great shoulders . . . and you carry yourself so well. Your posture . . . it all starts with the shoulders. Your tits may be small, but you hold them up proudly . . . I love that . . . thanks to those wonderful shoulders!”  
  
“My shoulders?” said Jill dumbfounded.  
  
“Absolutely your shoulders, but not just your shoulders. Like I said, it’s the way you carry yourself. I love how you look when you turn, pivoting at the waist, and look back over a shoulder.”  
  
“You’re really strange,” said Jill with a smirk.  
  
“And YOU are too focused on your chest,” retorted Ryan. “I’m sorry, but it’s true. Boobs are such a small, no pun intended, part of the whole. You’re a gorgeous woman. You should be proud of how you look. You do yourself a disservice to always be hiding your beauty under so many layers.”  
  
Jill didn’t know what to say. She knew she’d been too focused on her chest, but in her mind, Ryan and his ‘one of the guys’ scheme was largely to blame – at least for what had gone on that summer. However, she liked that Ryan apparently paid attention to a lot more than just a girl’s boobs. She wished other guys were like that.  
  
“I’m sorry I went ballistic on you guys,” she said after a long pause. She really wasn’t. They had deserved it, but she was calming down and trying to again turn her thoughts to the need to lead Ryan on.  
  
“I have a present for you,” said Ryan out of the blue.  
  
“A present?” asked Jill, surprised but doing her best to sound agreeable. She still felt like smashing in his face, but she’d gotten some of that out of her system. Thinking about that, she flexed her fingers. Her hands were going to be quite sore, she realized.  
  
“Are your hands okay?” asked David.  
  
“I’d like to think that I did more damage to you guys than I did to myself,” she said taking a deep breath. “But I’m not seeing it.”  
  
“Oh, I’m sure we’ll have a few obvious bruises come morning,” said David. “You pack quite a punch.” As he said that, Jill saw that he was feeling his lip with an index finger, acting as if it was tender. He then held up his finger. “See . . . blood.”  
  
Jill studied his finger. “Not much,” she replied.  
  
“Here,” said Ryan, handing her a small bag.  
  
She looked inside. “Sunscreen?”  
  
“SPF 100,” said Ryan. “You’re going to need to take good care of the titties, especially the nipples. I mean, they are destined to get a lot of sun this summer . . . your shoulders as well.”  
  
Jill wanted to throw it back in his face and tell him to f\*\*k off, and yet it proved that not all of his thoughts were entirely selfish. “Thank you,” she managed.  
  
“Do I get to see the photos?” she asked. “I’m far from convinced that I look like a model, much less a supermodel.”  
  
“I’d love to show them to you,” said Ryan, retrieving his camera and moving a chair over next to hers. “Actually, let’s move into the shade. We’ll be able to see better.”  
  
A minute later they had relocated the chairs into the shade of the nearest trees. Jill and Ryan sat side by side, David kneeling just behind.  
  
Ryan opened the first image. Jill saw herself in the inner tube, but she was at quite a distance, little more than a speck in the photo.  
  
“Wait,” said Jill. “Whatever happened to Snow Lake and the ridge?”  
  
“Oh, that,” said David. “That was really just a ruse. We doubled back to spy on you. Boy did we get lucky! When we saw you take the inner tube, we headed straight for the Giant Bend. We knew you’d be there before too long. We didn’t think you’d be topless, not that we didn’t have our hopes.”  
  
“It would have been worth it to me even if I had only gotten bikini photos,” said Ryan. “Like I said, I love supermodels in bikinis.”  
  
Jill shook her head in disgust, but his flattering comments were starting to have an effect. She blushed again, realizing that she was about to look at topless photos of herself in the company of two boys.  
  
“Okay, here’s a great one,” announced Ryan, angling the camera so that she could see.  
  
Jill worked at keeping her expression frozen. The photo was surprising and yet it wasn’t. It looked about exactly like she knew it would. She had her head tipped back, resting on the tube, a very peaceful look on her face . . . and her chest was as bare as bare could be.  
  
“It looks like I am completely unaware that my world is about to come apart,” she remarked honestly.  
  
“You look gorgeous . . . and so content,” said Ryan. “Look at those shoulders. Look at your cheekbones.”  
  
“My cheekbones? All I see is how flat I am.”  
  
“You’re not flat. Not at all,” said Ryan, angling the camera so he could study the photo. He turned and displayed his own bare chest. “This is flat. You, well . . . you look sexy.”  
  
Jill felt the warmth again surging in her cheeks. “I can’t believe I’m looking at these pictures with you two bozos.”  
  
“Here, look at this one,” encouraged Ryan.  
  
As Jill sat and looked, Ryan showed her photo after photo. To her, they all looked basically the same, but Ryan seemed quite taken by the minor variations.  
  
“I look naked,” said Jill, realizing that her bikini bottoms were completely hidden due to how she was sitting, her butt down in the hole of the inner tube.  
  
“I love that about them, too!” said Ryan enthusiastically.  
  
“That’s not what I meant,” said Jill, shaking her head in disgust.  
  
“Okay, Ryan,” said David. “It’s time to say goodbye to the photos and delete them. Jill needs to know that we’ve got her back.  
  
‘More like my front!’ thought Jill, but she didn’t say it.  
  
“Awe, David,” said Ryan. “Maybe if she commits to our terms . . . and takes off her top . . . like here and now.”

**Chapter 20: A Dream**  
  
“Frankly, I don’t want her to do that,” said David. “Worded that way, that is not any different than blackmail. The photos need to be deleted unilaterally . . . not as part of any deal.”  
  
Jill looked at her brother appreciatively.  
  
“Okay,” said Ryan, with a heavy sigh. He studied the expression on Jill’s face. He appeared as if he believed that Jill might actually be considering changing her mind.  
  
“Here, Jill, delete what you like,” he said, reluctantly handing her the camera but retaining a firm grip on the strap lest she attempt to carry out her threat of smashing it and throwing it into the lake. “I’d like it very much if there were a few shots that you can live with.”  
  
Ryan graciously walked her through the process and one by one she deleted the photos. She almost started to feel sad for Ryan, hearing him sigh with every ‘click’ of the delete button, but in the end, all the ‘tit’ shots had to go. She tried to leave him with a couple of images, but there were very few that did not show too much.  
  
In the shot at the beginning, she was so distant that the photo did not bother her; when she zoomed in, the resolution was too low to show detail. A few shots later, there was one where her chest was mostly hidden behind her knees, and then right at the end, there were a couple that showed her from the back such that her nipples were not visible. All the while, she could not believe that she was working through topless images of herself while the boys watched, looking over her shoulder at the same photos.  
  
“Okay, you can keep those four,” she announced. She saw the look of disappointment in Ryan’s eyes. “Really, Ryan?” she asked, “I’m supposed to feel bad because you spied on me and took topless photos?”  
  
“I guess not,” said Ryan solemnly.  
  
“I still haven’t heard either one of you apologize,” she said. After a chorus of apologies, she continued, “It’s going to be real hard to forgive you. Now, Ryan, show me how to verify that all of the deleted images are unrecoverable.”  
  
She felt a small sense of victory as she saw the look of utter defeat in Ryan’s eyes. He showed her how to open a folder that held all the images marked for deletion. She chose the ‘empty trash’ option and then clicked ‘confirm.’ The expression on Ryan’s face said it all. The images were gone.  
  
Jill wanted to still be angry at them, and she was. However, much of her rage had dissipated. Everyone sat there in silence for a long moment, contemplating the events of the morning, but then something curious happened. The conversation switched seamlessly over to things that had nothing to do with the topless photos and nothing to do with their so-called ‘terms.’  
  
Indeed, it was almost as if they were back at the beginning of summer, three teen friends, talking about anything and everything. They talked about things as mundane as the weather as well as important topics such as career aspirations. Jill found that she was enjoying herself. This was how she had hoped to spend the summer, hanging out with her brother and their mutual friend. She did enjoy their company. They were not especially intellectual, nor humorous . . . they were just fun to be around. After all they had put her through, she still enjoyed their company.  
  
Jill purposefully steered clear of anything related to what they might all do together in the coming days. Seemingly the boys were also avoiding such topics. It was as if they all knew that discussing doing things together would break the spell. The guys would revert to talking about how Jill should move her tent out to the point and become ‘one of the guys.’ She’d then get upset at their lack of maturity and their warped attitudes when it came to women.  
  
But after a while, David asked, “Who’s hungry?”  
  
They were all ready for lunch. David proposed that they take the Jeep and all head in to Agency together. Even though Jill was hungry, she decided that she needed some time to herself. It had been a very traumatic morning.  
  
A short time later she was in the shower. She stayed under the warm water so long that she emptied out the trailer’s hot water tank, not that doing so was very difficult.  
  
Before dressing, she paused to study herself in the mirror. A supermodel? What a foreign concept! The girl looking back at her from the mirror was the same girl who had always been there. Her mother had always commented on her high cheekbones. Jill felt fortunate to have been blessed with an attractive face. She was also thankful that she had not had nearly the complexion difficulties that many of her friends had experienced.  
  
Had Ryan talked in lofty ‘model’ terms about her face, then she would not have been caught so off guard. She was used to ‘face’ compliments. The girl staring back from the mirror was attractive in a youthful way, her features not exactly delicate but proportional.  
  
Her hair, however . . . she had never really thought much of her straight chocolate brown hair. About the only thing that she liked about it was how the outer layers had lightened up due to what was essentially UV damage. As far as Jill was concerned, that little bit of color variety went a long way.  
  
For simplicity reasons, she kept it shorter than most of her friends. Long hair was in style, but she preferred it just long enough for a ponytail . . . for basketball. She wore her ponytail high on her head, at just the height that it could be easily pulled through the back of a baseball cap.  
  
Allowing her eyes to drift down, she examined her long arms and legs as well as her slender waist. She was quite well defined, in keeping with her athletic pursuits.  
  
Recalling Ryan’s comments, she studied her shoulders. To her eye, they were just shoulders. If anything, they were a bit too broad for a girl. But if they were attractive, then she could live with that, she decided.  
  
Inevitably her eyes moved on to her breasts, sitting high on her ribcage. At least now they did have a rounded shape to them. She liked that much more than the pointer stage she had developed through. Her small nipples capped them attractively, she felt, and yet she had a love-hate relationship with them.  
  
In her opinion, they were a pretty size and color; however, it was maddening how aggressively they worked at embarrassing her. She had resisted buying padded bras, but at times she had decided that it was something that she was going to have to do. Her nipples simply could not be tamed! They seemed to constantly be at full-attention, poking through whatever she was wearing . . . and always, always when it was the most inappropriate. That was another reason that she had resorted to layering.  
  
Next, her eyes zeroed in on her little ‘Hitler mustache.’ Taking her razor, she skinnied it up to the point that it could no longer be confused with a mustache, not Hitler’s, not anybody’s. When she was done it was just a thin vertical stripe. It looked funny to her, but she knew that it was a relatively common style.  
  
While she was at it, she also passed the razor carefully over the rest of her nether regions. ‘I guess this is what girls do,’ she thought to herself as she worked at getting her lower lips again completely smooth.  
  
When she emerged from the bathroom, she found that her grandmother had the table set. There were tuna fish sandwiches. Jill, however, felt like being alone. Her grandmother acted like she understood, so Jill took her lunch on a paper plate and walked back to the camp on the point. The boys had taken the Jeep in to town, so she sat in one of the chairs at the fire circle and ate her sandwich all alone.  
  
She liked the camp on the point. She had really been missing having her tent there. She examined the woodpile. ‘What is it about boys and firewood?’ she found herself thinking. There looked to be enough firewood for the rest of the summer. David had always enjoyed locating downed trees, sawing them up and splitting the wood. She had helped, but she and David saw it differently. To her, it was nothing but a chore.  
  
‘What a morning!’ she thought, still working to come to terms with all that had happened. She realized that her hands were shaking, almost imperceptibly, as she thought about the three of them together, looking at the topless photos. She had been so focused on the photos that it had almost seemed of little consequence that both boys had gotten such a good look at her chest. But she had been the one floating down the river topless. No one had forced her to take off her top. Indeed, anyone could have seen her; however, the wilderness around Cache Lake was nearly devoid of people. And yet it had only been the boys . . . no one else . . . fortunately.  
  
Even though it had been a big invasion of privacy . . . to have been seen and to have been photographed . . . she realized that she was going to have to live with it. Life would go on. After all, the photos had been deleted.  
  
She found herself wondering if Ryan might have managed to copy them onto something before they had been deleted. No, she decided. They were gone.  
  
Shortly thereafter, she was in her tent napping. Not only had the morning been nerve-wracking, but it had been exhausting as well . . . and her hands and feet were sore . . . her hands from slugging them, and her feet from walking barefoot.  
  
It ended up being a long nap, unfortunately, because that evening she again had trouble falling asleep. She had read ‘Crime and Punishment’ well into the late hours, but once she had finally turned off her little reading light, sleep seemed as if it was never going to come.  
  
She managed to resist the urge to head out on another excursion . . . in her panties . . . or less. She was too paranoid, especially now that she had experienced that things could go wrong. She chastised herself repeatedly for the mess she had gotten herself into.  
  
She found herself thinking again about how she had finally been seen topless by both David and Ryan. Given the combination of the pressure they had been subjecting her to and the risky behavior that she had been engaging in, it now seemed as if she should have known that it would happen, eventually. How had she not seen that it had been inevitable?  
  
As she continued to ponder things, she realized that being seen topless had not been nearly as traumatic as she had thought it would be. Of course her first thoughts had been all about needing to commit suicide, her life surely being over; however, those sentiments had represented an essentially irrational response to her belief that those photos would spread like wildfire on the internet, and then never go away.  
  
To her surprise, she realized that she was smiling as she replayed in her mind some of the things that Ryan had said. He was a pervert, and the way he was trying to coerce her into going topless was inexcusable; however, he did really seem to think that she was beautiful, sexy even.  
  
She struggled with that thought. It was so contrary to everything she had always believed. Indeed she had never thought of herself as ugly, but rather simply as one of the ordinary girls, the girls that never seemed to get a second look. And yet Ryan had said that she was the only supermodel in their graduating class. Maybe tall and thin wasn’t necessarily unattractive. Had he meant that he thought she had been the best looking senior girl? That was not to be believed. All the cheerleaders, the members of drill team, all the girls in the popular crowd? Indeed, their school had been full of pretty girls. Surely most of those girls were much more attractive.  
  
In the darkness of her tent, Jill ran her hands up and across her breasts. They were indeed small, but for some reason she found herself feeling just a bit more content with them than she had previously. It was especially nice to know that there might be guys in the world who looked at more than just boobs. Of course, she had always known that guys looked at more than boobs, and yet the day had been a learning experience.  
  
From her breasts, she ran her hands on up to her shoulders. Guys liked shoulders? Ryan was even more peculiar that she had thought! Who had ever heard of a guy who thought that shoulders could be a girl’s sexiest feature? He’d spoken specifically about how she carried herself. Indeed, her posture was something that her mother had often commented on favorably.  
  
The next thing Jill knew, it was light and she was traveling down a steep mountain road, the bumpiest one she had ever been on. She had her seatbelt on, but she was also hanging on as the truck bounced along violently. Holding herself in place was not optional, given their angle of descent and the forceful side-to-side rocking motion. Glancing over she was surprised to see Nick; he was driving. The sun was shining straight down through the windshield, warming her legs.  
  
Looking down at her thighs, she saw that they were bare. To her horror she realized that it was worse than that, much worse; she was bottomless, completely naked from the waist down. The only thing she had on was a small jacket. It was zipped all the way up, but it was short. It covered down to her belly button but didn’t go lower.  
  
Where were her pants? She looked all around inside the cab of the truck, but there was no additional clothing to be seen. She looked over at Nick. Their eyes met, and he smiled. Had he taken her pants? Her panties? She started to think of opening the door and climbing out, yet that would surely involve risking life and limb.  
  
In a state of full panic, she woke up. As she tried to get her heart rate under control, she thanked her lucky stars that it had been nothing more than a dream. But what an awful dream! Is that what would have happened had she agreed to his ‘let’s get some alcohol and drive up into the mountains’ plan? Thank God, she had been wise enough to avoid that!  
  
As she dressed in her tent, she found herself wondering what day of the week it was. At Cache Lake all days seemed alike; there were no Mondays, no weekends.  
  
When she went in for breakfast she was relieved to learn that it was Saturday. She had not missed her date with Nick. During breakfast, she found herself trying to remember more of her dream. Surely something had happened before the part that she remembered, and yet, try as she might, she was not able to recall any more than just the one scene, the bottomless truck ride scene.  
  
Did the dream mean that she shouldn’t go out with Nick? She decided otherwise. The dream was nothing more than an overactive subconscious imagination.