**Summer at Cache Lake**

**Chapter 171: On the Ball**Jill hadn’t forgotten where she was. She opened her eyes and looked up and down the street. She needed to be careful, but she was having fun. Being in the front yard increased the risk, but her excitement with it. The two seemed to go hand in hand. Focusing on the sounds of the night, she allowed her thoughts to again travel to the basketball game that she’d been cheated out of.Still breathing deeply and pressing her moist folds into the ball, she chuckled to herself. It was funny to think in those terms. She’d spent the summer doing everything she could to avoid playing basketball naked. Had she been out of her mind? It was surprising, but suddenly she was quite unhappy with herself for having denied herself that experience. It might have ended up being the experience of a lifetime!It could, of course, have been just the guys who had already seen her naked: David and Ryan, a few of the Cache Lake West guys – not Hector – definitely not Hector. They could have played three on three: she, David, and Ryan against Kyle, Patrick, and Eric. Other combinations would have worked as well; she and Kyle could have been on the same team. He would have liked that.She couldn’t believe that she now felt as if she had missed out. Should she drive back across the state? But even that wouldn’t work. David and Ryan wouldn’t be there – they were injured. Without them, it couldn’t happen. She wasn’t bold enough to approach the other guys herself. Getting talked into such a thing was one thing, but proposing it herself was quite another.And without David, it might not be safe. Just because those guys had seen her naked did not mean that she could trust them. She could trust Kyle. And she could trust Nick. He probably wouldn’t play, but he could come and watch. The more she thought about it, the more she realized that she was fooling herself. The opportunity had come and gone. It was gone forever unless she ended up back at Cache Lake the following summer.As she couldn’t experience that game in real life, she decided to test drive it via her imagination. Again closing her eyes, she placed a hand on the center of her chest. To remind herself just how naked she was, she allowed it to slide slowly down her body. It passed over her belly button, eventually, reaching her lower abdomen.As her hand arrived at her pubic bone, she let her middle finger venture on down to her slit. There it made contact with her little nubbin, her clitoris. After prodding it gently a few times, she removed her finger and arched her back. This caused the ball to roll back ever so slightly on the walkway as her pelvis tilted down. That had the intended effect; it brought the ball into contact with her clit. It felt nice. Her clitoris was coming to life. She relaxed her legs to let the ball support a bit more of her weight.From there, she started twirling and rocking her hips, pleasurably pulsing her hard little nub against the ball. Its hard, rough surface felt divine on all of her most tender girl bits. Many, many times she’d sat atop a basketball, but never like this!With her eyes still closed, she observed the stark naked Jill in her self-directed fantasy. She stood tall, facing the other five players. She pictured herself standing there boldly, one hand on her hip, the other relaxed comfortably at her side. Her feet were not together, and one knee was angled out to the side. She had nothing to hide. And yet, having her nude body on display was not what she was there for. She’d already experienced that. She was there to play basketball! So what if she was naked – at least that was what she was telling herself. She wondered who would be the most distracted by her nudity, the boys or she herself.She imagined an interested but curious look on Kyle’s face. Meeting his gaze, she lifted one foot from the ground, bending her leg tightly at the knee. Holding her court shoe behind her butt cheek, she pulled, stretching out her quad. It was one of the many stretches that she performed before and after every game. The fact that she was nude was not going to change how she warmed up.Her libido increasing, she pictured herself working through her usual stretching routine. A number of the stretches were rather modest, others much less so. In her mind’s eye, she watched the players jockey for position. Nick, too, he was there. David hung respectfully back, but not the others. They were clearly there to be entertained. As she considered that, she decided that it was fine. She liked the idea of putting on a show.She shifted into a standing hamstring stretch, placing her feet rather far apart, one ahead of the other. She imagined herself blushing as her outer labia shifted relative to one another. Her vagina was pointed straight down, but she could feel it being pulled open. Additionally, the cooling effect of the air on her delicate folds made her aware of just how wet she was.Her excitement building, she glanced down at Kyle’s shorts. She’d never been one to spend a lot of time studying guys’ bulges, but now and then she couldn’t help but sneak a peek. Kyle had quite a tent going on down there! Knowing that she was the cause of that, the Jill in her fantasy tried to think of something witty to say. She quickly discovered that she was nearly as shy and socially inept in her fantasy as she was in real life. She averted her eyes bashfully, hoping that Kyle had not noticed that she had been checking out his package.She went back to focusing on her routine, trying her best to not think too much about the wanton display she was putting on. A few of the stretches were such that she was actually able to perform a variation atop her basketball – obliques, for example. In real life, she was on the ball performing a seated oblique stretch while in her imaginary pregame program, she was doing essentially the same thing only standing.She had one arm straight overhead, lifting one side of her ribcage way up. To stretch her obliques, she pulled it even further, allowing it to press her head over and fall toward the opposite shoulder. She could really feel it. It had been quite a while since she’d last stretched.She imagined all the guys’ eyes on her chest. She’d moved beyond believing that her breasts were unattractive. What remained was a tingly feeling of excitement when people could see just how small her boobies really were – in the flesh.Down inside, she still wished they were a bit larger – so that it might be a nonissue. However, as it was, it was thrilling to show off just how tiny her little boobies were. For some reason, her embarrassment at their lack of size seemed to be a big component of how exhilarating it was – to be seen topless.In her fantasy, she found herself enjoying the oblique stretch because of how it would stretch out her breasts, one at a time, making them appear even tinier than they were. It seemed so counterintuitive that she might be reveling in the embarrassment of being so light on top, and yet that was exactly what she found herself doing as she prepared to play basketball naked.There, in her front yard, she opened her eyes and glanced quickly around. Her pelvis was in constant motion, pressing her moist folds against the surface of the ball. Her hips went round and round almost as if she were working a hula hoop, the point of greatest pressure circling her clitoris – sometimes crossing over it.The fusion of what was happening on the basketball court in her head and what was going on in real life in her suburban front yard was proving to be a powerful combination. Her eyes again relaxed closed. She felt as if she could reach orgasm quickly if she wanted to. However, she felt like holding off a bit, letting things build. The longer she could delay, the more earth-shaking the experience was destined to be. **“**Jill, you need help stretching your hamstrings,” David announced. She didn’t, but she knew exactly what he had in mind. Of course, she did. She was the puppet master behind the curtain. She didn’t know if she should allow him to do what he was suggesting, but she was going to. **“**Okay,” she nodded, blushing at the thought of the exposure just ahead.David repeated his line, but this time substituting the word ‘hoo-ha’ for ‘hamstrings.’ “Jill, you need help stretching your hoo-ha.”Even in her fantasy, Jill found it hard to believe that she was going to go through with this. David and Ryan moved to positions at her sides, lifting her arms up and putting them around their shoulders. Reaching down, they each placed a hand between her legs just above her knees. Jill felt her feet being lifted from the ground. Trying to pretend that it was an honest-to-god stretch intended to advance her readiness to play, Jill straightened her knees and kept her toes pointed.Her legs went up and up, tilting her pelvis such that her vagina angled toward her audience. She witnessed the rapt attention on their faces as her knees were pulled further and further apart. Glancing down, she saw her glistening wet pussy bloom. Never before had she felt so exposed. She found herself struggling, doing her best to get her legs back together; however, the boys proved to be stronger. Her legs were pulled wider apart until she was as close to being in the full splits as her flexibility allowed.She watched as the Cache Lake West players leaned forward in her mind’s eye, studying the petals of her blossoming pussy, now pornographically wide open. There on the basketball court, she twisted, first one way and then the other, trying to free herself.And as she squirmed in her imagination, she allowed her knees to slide a little further out in real life. That pulled her vagina even wider apart and had the stimulating effect of again increasing her weight on the ball. It all proved to be too much. She couldn’t delay any longer. A tidal wave of pleasure crashed down upon her, sending spasms of ecstasy splashing back and forth inside her lower abdomen. The internal spasms translated into external motion, causing her pelvis to shake and quiver as it continued grinding on her ball.Her euphoria building through the orgasm, Jill arched her spine, tilting her head back. Her eyelids were still closed, but her mouth had relaxed open. She gasped for air, half aware that she had been moaning. As she started to calm down, her eyes drifted open. The stars were still there. They seemed to be watching her peacefully. Even though the street lights cut down the number of stars that were visible, it was still a magical view. She loved the night sky, and the feelings seemed to be mutual – she and the stars: kindred spirits.Prying her eyes from the heavens, Jill took in her surroundings. Nothing seemed as if it had changed. It was late on a Sunday night; Holden appeared to be sleeping. She wondered if a car might have passed while she had been off in her fantasy world. She imagined not. Surely she would have heard it.Her hips had slowed, but they had not stopped. They were now swinging gently this way and that; she was now massaging rather than grinding.Realizing that she’d experienced her orgasm before the basketball game had even started, she made the conscious decision to go back for more.Closing her eyes, she picked up an imaginary ball and tossed it inbounds to Kyle. As she moved forward onto the court, David was on her like stink. This was exactly what she had known would happen when Kyle had first proposed splitting the two of them up. She and David would be the best players on their respective teams; they’d, of course, be guarding each other. And David was taller, and what was more, he knew her every move. As Jill fought to get free, Kyle drove in and scored with a layup.A moment later, David had the ball. The roles were reversed. He came hard at her, seemingly ignoring the fact that she was naked. Jill almost went down as he drove for the basket. He went in for a layup but dunked the ball instead. **“**Hey, charging!” she yelled at him angrily, not wanting to fall and scrape up her bottom. **“**You weren’t set,” he argued. **“**I most certainly was,” she snapped.Jill opened her eyes. She was going about this all wrong. If she imagined David in the game, it was destined to be serious basketball. Nothing about it would be erotic. If she was to experience another orgasm, she needed to park him on the bench. Considering that, she decided to take it up a few notches. It was going to be more fun if there were new people there – people who had never seen her naked – lots of them.

**Chapter 172: High School Gym**Again closing her eyes, she suddenly found herself in her high school gymnasium. Glancing quickly around, she saw that it was the evening of the conference final. The bleachers were packed. The pep band was even there, the cheerleading squad, too! They never attended the girls’ games – except during post-season play.Jill wasn’t quite the tallest person on the team, but her legs were like tightly wound springs. She could jump! For that reason, she made her way to center court for the tipoff. **“**Miss, you’re naked,” remarked the referee as Jill lined up opposite a tall blonde girl in a red uniform. **“**I’m naked?” she replied in surprise. Looking down, she saw that the referee’s observation was indeed correct. She was wearing socks and shoes, nothing more.Suddenly in shock, she glanced around. Everyone was staring at her. She froze.Jill opened her eyes. ‘This is more like it,’ she thought as she checked for cars. She was again grinding atop the ball. She closed her eyes, transporting herself instantly back to the brightly-lit gym. **“**What should I do?” she asked the referee in desperation. **“**Line up,” he said, supporting the ball in one hand and pointing at a certain location on the hardwood floor. Jill thought she saw a smirk on his lips.Glancing at their opponents, Jill saw that she was being laughed at. Before she knew it, the ref blew his whistle and tossed the ball into the air. She jumped, but she’d been flustered and hadn’t been down in position. The blonde in red beat her handily. **“**Come on, Jill,” she heard one of her teammates complain as she followed the other team’s center down the court. She needed to quickly shift into a defense frame of mind. That was much easier said than done.Everywhere she looked, hundreds of people were staring at her. She looked at the cheerleaders. All of them seemed to be either laughing or pointing – at her.Before she’d even managed to get into the game, the red team scored. One of her teammates had the ball. It was Dani. She looked at her. Was she naked too? No, she wasn’t. She was wearing her white, home-game uniform. She glanced around at the rest of her teammates. They all had their uniforms on. She was the only one naked.Glancing down, hoping that it had been just a figment of her imagination, she quickly verified that she was in fact nude. Her nipples were just as bare and pointy as could be. Even her pussy was on full display. And not only that, but it was impeccably shaved – just as bald as it had been when she’d been in grade school. Why was she naked? **“**Jill, get open!” she heard David yell from the stands as Dani tossed the ball inbounds to Aubrey.Jill saw that Aubrey was too closely guarded to take a shot. Feeling everyone’s eyes on her, Jill made an attempt to shake her defender. Aubrey threw the ball in her direction, but Jill was still too rattled to catch it. The girl guarding her got to it first, colliding with Jill in the process. Jill stumbled and fell.Feeling as if she’d been fouled, Jill sat there, her bare butt on the shiny wood floor. But there was no whistle. Instead, laughter arose from the crowd. She sat there, blushing, confused. Why was she naked? Why was everyone laughing? Were they all in on the joke?She realized that she was panting, but not due to exertion – due to how arousing it was to be naked in front of the entire school. She was having trouble getting her eyes to focus, but every time they did, she recognized someone. **“**Get up, Jill,” she heard David yell. She could always pick out his voice.As she struggled to her feet, she realized that she had abandoned her team. They were at the far end of the court playing four against five. **“**Bean, get in the goddamn game!” she heard David yell as she tried to concentrate.She felt her nipples bobbing around completely unrestrained on her chest as she started jogging toward the action. Everyone – students, teachers, coaches, parents – was now seeing just how tiny her little breasts really were. In that instant, one of her teammates managed to steal the ball. In the next moment, she lobbed it high and hard. “Jill!” she yelled at the top of her lungs.That was all it took. The instincts that she’d developed over her years of training took over. As the ball arced lazily overhead, she took off at a sprint for the unguarded basket. She intercepted the ball near the top of the key. Slowing slightly to make sure she didn’t miss, she dribbled it once and then launched herself into the air, sinking an easy layup. **“**I can do this!” she said to herself as the crowd cheered and her teammates arrived to congratulate her.However, just as she was starting to think that she might be able to play basketball naked, Dani swatted her bare butt. Not only did that serve to remind her that she was nude, but it also sent her one step closer to the edge.Realizing that she was about to orgasm with the entire school watching, Jill clamped her hands tightly over her pussy. What had been intended as modesty proved to be something else entirely. Her fingers had a mind of their own, probing rather than just covering. She let out a moan as lightning bolts shot along her spine. Firecrackers started exploding where her fingers were pressing into her sopping wet folds. Her legs buckled and she collapsed backwards, her fingers rubbing furiously inside the cleft of her pussy.Her body shaking and quivering uncontrollably, she glanced over at the courtside cheerleaders. They all seemed to have their hands over their mouths, staring wide-eyed at the naked girl rubbing herself to orgasm on the basketball court under the bright lights. They obviously could not believe what they were seeing.Jill couldn’t believe it either, but she also couldn’t bring herself to take her hands away. On her back in a puddle of sweat, her legs splayed wide, she swirled her fingers around in her slippery folds, pressing hard. Never before had she needed something so badly and had so little control over what she was doing.The crowd went wild as her orgasm built toward a crescendo. Her brain said run and hide. She knew that was what she should be doing, and yet her head seemed to have no say. Something much less cerebral was in command. Her body arched. With the soles of her feet pressing down, her butt rose up from the hardwood floor.There, in the Holden High Gym, in front of hundreds if not thousands, Jill’s eyes rolled back into her head as the gravity of what was happening overwhelmed her. Panting and moaning simultaneously, she lifted her hips still higher, straight towards the rafters. She knew she’d never live this down. She’d never be able to go back to school. She’d never again be able to look any of her friends in the eye. She shook as her body quaked.The gym grew quiet as everyone stared in disbelief. No one could believe their eyes – or ears – for Jill was moaning in ecstasy, vocalizing louder than ever before, and she had an expression on her face that seemed to convey a mixture of pain and rapture. The moment went on and on.Quivering and shaking, Jill fell to the side onto the grass next to the walkway, the basketball that she had been taking advantage of seemingly bucking her off. She rolled, collapsing onto her back, assuming a position in real life approximating the one she had been in on the imaginary basketball court. Her ball started to roll away, but she reached over and caught it. It had earned its keep. It was indeed slippery, but she wasn’t one bit surprised. It had been a most messy orgasm. In fact, she was certain that she’d never cum that hard in her life.She lay there panting. She felt her heart beating against the inside of her chest as she forced her eyes open. She could see the stars, but she couldn’t yet focus. Each star was a fuzzy blur bouncing around in her field of view in time with her rapid respiration.Suddenly, remembering where she was, she sat up with a start. Had she had an audience in real life – not just the imaginary one in the gym? But fortunately, all was quiet. She looked up and down the street – no cars.She breathed a sigh of relief, but in that moment, she glanced across the street. Something had caught her eye. There had been movement. She saw a dog, a small black dog with a shaggy coat. Given how dark it was, she probably wouldn’t have noticed it had it been still.But as she started to again expel a sigh of relief, she saw the leash. She froze. Doing her best to focus, she saw a pair of legs. There was someone there, a man, standing in the shadows.Panicking, she got up and raced for the side yard. A second later she was through the gate, slamming it behind her. **“**Shit! Shit! Shit!” she mumbled to herself as she collapsed into an insensible pile of anxiety in her backyard. What have I done? What have I done? Her mind refused to focus. Had she really just been seen naked – in Holden no less? And then, just as she started getting her mind wrapped around that nugget, she realized what the man had witnessed. He’d watched – and surely heard – her bring herself to a nearly continuous series of spectacular orgasms atop her basketball.But then another thought crossed her mind. Might he follow her? Might he come into her backyard? She didn’t think that he would, but in her disoriented state of mind, anything seemed possible. Had she really been that stupid? Not only shouldn’t she have done that in her front yard, but once caught, she should never have run into her own backyard.It was too much to expect of her under such conditions of duress, but she should have run down the street. In that way, she could have led the man to believe that she didn’t live there. She could have easily circled back later, once he was gone. How stupid she’d been – and how careless! But it was too late. She couldn’t undo her orgasms and she couldn’t run back out, pretending that she lived elsewhere. Still worrying that he might come into their yard, she crawled to the backdoor. Once inside, she reached up and flipped the lock.A minute later, she was curled up in a ball on the cold tile floor in front of the dishwasher. She was sobbing, but, more than anything, she was mad, mad at herself. She’d once been a sensible girl, a careful girl. What had happened? Where had that girl gone?Sure, streaking and orgasms were good fun, but the good times weren’t worth all the downside that she’d been experiencing.After spending at least ten minutes chastising herself for being an idiot, she suddenly wondered where her ball was. She had no memory of bringing it with her into the backyard. She crawled through the dark living room to the front of the house. After very slowly pushing the bottom of a curtain aside, she peered out.The front yard was just as if had been, dimly lit by a couple of distant street lamps. She couldn’t see the ball. She studied the shadows across the street. The man and his dog appeared to be gone. At the very least, they were not where they had been. She spent some time there, watching for movement and looking around for her ball. Eventually, she pulled back from the window.A few minutes later, she was in the bathroom brushing her teeth in preparation for going back to bed. She considered going to her room and sleeping there; however, she still wasn’t ready for summer to be over. She was ready to be a little smarter, a little more careful, but she wanted to remain nude and continue sleeping under the stars.After checking carefully to make sure that no one was in the yard, she unlocked the back door and cautiously returned to her sleeping bag. She’d decided that this man, whoever he was, almost certainly wouldn’t enter their backyard. It was extremely unlikely that he was a serial rapist. He was just a neighbor taking a dog for a late night potty walk. He’d gotten lucky, and it had turned into a very entertaining outing for him, at least that was how she imagined it from his perspective.Attempting to look on the bright side, she realized that it had been much too dark for photography. She was sure that she would have seen a flash had there been one – relatively sure, anyway.But even though he might not have taken a photo, he’d certainly gotten an eyeful. She tried to picture exactly what the man had seen; for some reason, she was certain that it had been a man. She’d seen pants, the rest of him had been in shadow; however, women wore pants, too.Jill tried to imagine what she had looked like. In her mind’s eye, she saw her lanky, flat-chested self astride her ball, her knees out to the side but braced on the ground. She tried to picture all the pelvic motion – the gyrating – the grinding and thrusting. It all seemed so obscene! She’d been humping her ball! She’d surely looked like she was in heat.The expression ‘bitch in heat’ crossed her mind, but she dismissed it instantly. She was simply unwilling to think of herself in such derogatory terms. Even though ‘bitch’ purportedly meant female dog, the term was just too nasty to apply to herself no matter how badly she had been behaving. A young woman in heat; she could stomach that, and it was bad enough.She imagined that forevermore, whenever she saw a man in the neighborhood, she’d wonder if he had been the one who’d watched her humping her basketball in their front yard. She’d most likely never know who it had been. Indeed, she didn’t want to know; however, he’d surely find out who she was. He’d have no trouble learning who lived in their house – possibly he already knew.She wondered how far people typically walked their dog. At such a late hour, she decided that someone would probably only go a short distance. The person who had seen her probably lived within a block or two. Hardly a comforting thought.The only solace she could find lay in the fact that, shortly, she’d be leaving for college. Soon, she’d be something like a thousand miles away from this mystery stranger, number ninety-six. She’d vowed to make Maria the last person to see her naked. That commitment had not been kept.Considering that, she realized just how close she was to an even one hundred. She needed to now do everything she could to freeze her tally at ninety-six; however, she also found herself wishing that she’d somehow managed to get to a hundred. It was such an appealing round number ¬– three digits!She laughed at herself. What did she really want? Her thoughts were often so contradictory. If a hundred sounded cool, then why not a thousand? Was there any limit? Was there any way that she’d be able to stop?From there, her thoughts drifted to just how wild her orgasm had been. Indeed, she’d almost passed out. Was that why she’d fallen off of her basketball? She knew she hadn’t actually blacked out, but she’d certainly gotten lightheaded. It had been amazing!

**Chapter 173: Timeout**When she awoke the next morning, Jill’s mind quickly went right back to the things she’d been thinking about as she had been falling asleep. She still couldn’t believe that she’d allowed herself to be seen humping her basketball in their front yard. What was wrong with her? Was she actually in heat? She was pretty sure that ‘heat’ didn’t exist for humans, but how else might she explain her raunchy behavior?Considering that, she decided that it was strange that she seemed to get off on exposure. Shouldn’t her fantasies be about having sex with a man? Indeed, humping a ball might be viewed as going through the motions of having sex. Even though she was a virgin, she knew that in at least one common sexual position the woman straddled the man in much the same way as she’d been astride her ball.But sex hadn’t been the driving force, not mentally. That had all been about the excitement and embarrassment of being seen naked. That hardly seemed as if it would be a heterosexual girl’s typical fantasy. Was she an exhibitionist? Did she really want something like that to happen in real life? She knew she didn’t, but was she positive? She had no doubt that just the idea that it could happen was intoxicating.Suddenly, she sat up with a start. Her basketball? Where was it? What if that man had it? It had her name on it. But not only that, it would also carry her scent. Jill cringed at the thought. It had been one slippery ball! It wouldn’t be slippery anymore; it would have dried, but still. Might Ninety-Six have taken it? It would certainly make for one hell of a souvenir.She wanted to race out to the front yard and find it, retrieve it – if it was there. However, she was nude. What a dilemma! She wanted the ball, but it was now daylight. It was still quite early, but the sun was up.She got up and hurried inside, trying to decide what to do. A minute later, after taking a quick pee, she was again down at floor level peering out into the front yard from behind the curtain. It made no difference that it was light out. The ball was nowhere to be seen.She hopped up and raced upstairs. Her parents’ bathroom window was just above, also facing the street. If the ball was there, she’d surely be able to see it from that window.She breathed a sigh of relief. The ball was there! It was not at all where she had thought it would be; it was much closer to the street. But that seemed plausible – that it might have rolled. She’d departed the front yard in such haste. She could have knocked it in any direction. Fortunately, it hadn’t ended up in the street.She hurried back down the stairs. She couldn’t leave her ball there. Indeed, the man might come back. Or someone else might take it. It had her name and her scent on it. She had to get it!She hesitated at the front door. What a conundrum! She still didn’t want to dress, but it would be foolhardy to go out naked, even if she might be able to accomplish her mission in twenty or thirty seconds. No matter how brief, she couldn’t allow herself to be seen like that. Ninety-Six might be out there, again walking his dog. Or someone else might see her.She grabbed the afghan off the back of the couch and pulled it around herself. Maybe it wouldn’t count as having gotten dressed if it was just the colorful blanket – and she kept it brief. A second later, she was out the door and hustling along the very same walk that all the action had taken place on the night before.She glanced quickly right and left as she approached the street. Even though she wasn’t naked, she still didn’t want to be seen. She didn’t want anyone to know that there was someone home in the Wahlund house.However, someone did. Ninety-Six knew. Would he tell anyone? If he told someone, what might he tell them? Would he say which house? Might he describe what he’d seen?As Jill reached down for her ball, she hesitated. Her name, written with a black marker, was on top. Not only that, but it was turned such that it was parallel with the street. It didn’t seem random. What were the odds that the ball might roll all the way out next to the sidewalk and come to rest in exactly that orientation?As she snatched it up and headed back toward the front door, she imagined Ninety-Six picking it up and studying it. Had he retrieved it from deeper in the yard or possibly saved it from going into the street? Had he held it as he’d thought about taking it? All of those possibilities seemed as if they might explain the ball’s location and positioning better than a random roll. Had he handled the ball? There was no way to know, but it would have been wet, at least on one side.However, she was very glad to have it. The idea of it becoming someone’s souvenir had been very distasteful. She didn’t even want the man to have his memories of the event much less physical evidence. Might her DNA be on the ball? All of those thoughts made Jill cringe.As soon as she was inside, she pulled off the afghan and tossed it back onto the couch. Carrying the ball, she headed into the kitchen to make coffee.While the coffee was brewing, she studied her name on the ball. She wondered if Ninety-Six had been able to read it given the available light. She decided that he probably would have.Even though she was to blame, she carried her ball into the dining room and placed it in a certain corner. It was the family’s ‘timeout’ corner. Many times she had stood there, David too, facing the wall, waiting for the timer to signal the end of her punishment. She faced her name into the corner. She knew the ball hadn’t done anything wrong. She’d been the naughty one; however, she’d decided that it could serve a symbolic timeout on her behalf. Even though she knew that she ought to make herself serve the timeout, she didn’t want to stand in the corner.After eating a bowl of her mother’s granola, again dry, she tried her phone. It had to be fully charged, but she still couldn’t get it to turn on. Deciding that the last thing that she needed to have happen was for her parents to walk in only to find her naked, she picked up the landline and called her mom.Even though her mom wasn’t saying that David had experienced a setback, it seemed as if that might be the case. Or possibly his vitals were simply taking a bit longer to return to normal than the doctors had anticipated. Whatever the reason, her parents were expecting to be in Elk Bend at least another two days waiting for David to be discharged.As she hung up, Jill made a mental note to call them regularly to avoid a most awkward surprise. She didn’t want her parents to become Mr. Ninety-Seven and Mrs. Ninety-Eight. She couldn’t let that happen.However, she was glad that she could stay naked. She knew that she should feel bad about feeling that way. She’d much rather have David fully-recovered and home. That would mean the end of her naked time, but it would be well worth it.Learning that Jill’s phone had also been a casualty of the rockslide, her mother had encouraged her to get a new one. Supposedly she was eligible for a free upgrade. Jill liked the idea of starting college with a shiny new phone, but she really didn’t have a choice.Thinking about a new phone, however, proved stressful. The last time she’d gotten a new phone, a man at the cell phone store had transferred all her files and data over for her. Even though she expected that everything on her phone was recoverable and knew that she’d want it all on her new phone, she couldn’t imagine giving her old phone to someone else for that purpose, not with all the photos and videos that were on it.Considering that and the fact that she wasn’t ready to get dressed, she decided to put that errand off. She could live without a phone for the time being. She was the least dependent on social media of anyone she knew. Many of her friends seemed to do little other than stare at their screens. She’d get a little active on a few sites during the school year, but then spending the summer at Cache Lake without cell reception always seemed to wean her back off any addiction.Even though that was true, she was wishing that her phone was working. She’d enjoyed exchanging texts with Austin and felt bad for leaving him hanging. And since she was lonely, there were others that she’d like to get in touch with, Nick and Kyle among them. As she wasn’t ruling out a return to Cache Lake the following summer, she was planning to keep her pledge to them and stay in touch.With nothing else to do, Jill picked up her book and went into the backyard to read. She’d located the reading list for her class and had studied some notations that she hadn’t previously paid attention to. There were page ranges listed for a number of the books! Her current book, The Mismeasure of Man, as well as Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee, both fell into that category. As they were both long and especially because what had befallen the Indians in North America was so sad, she was glad to learn that she only needed to read selections from them.After recording the page ranges inside the back covers, Jill made an important decision. Later that afternoon, certainly before dinner, she was going to get dressed and go grocery shopping. She couldn’t put it off any longer. The worst thing about being a naked recluse was surviving on just what was already in the house. There was no fresh food: no fruit, no milk, no eggs, no bread. Without milk, she couldn’t even make macaroni and cheese! Loneliness was also a factor, but that wasn’t nearly as bad as subsisting on dry cereal for breakfast and canned food for the other meals.She did long for a little human interaction, but she was content to use her time reading. She really liked the idea of being well prepared for the one class. That would mean that she’d have more time for her other classes.Midmorning, she went in for something to drink. Seeing her poor forlorn ball still in the corner, she picked it up. She apologized to it, not only for having left it in timeout for so long, but also for having used it for her own self-gratification. She felt bad for having bathed it in her vaginal secretions. She apologized for that specifically for good measure. One she’d made her peace with the ball, she took it into the kitchen and rinsed it off in the sink. It seemed as if it would make a full recovery. She set it in the dishrack to dry.Early in the afternoon, after a lunch consisting of a can of beef ravioli and a can of green beans, she pulled out her diary to study the list she’d made that summer, the list of the character traits that her ideal mate would possess.She didn’t end up adding to the list or otherwise updating it. Instead, she found herself lost in thought considering how both Nick and Kyle measured up. When she’d begun the list, she’d primarily had David, Ryan, and Tyler in mind as she’d gone about constructing her criteria. Even though Kyle and Nick were very different, they now both seemed to have a lot of merit. As she’d gotten to know them, she learned that a few of her initial assumptions and impressions had been wrong.Later that afternoon, it was time to consider getting dressed to go shopping. She was a little sad about that, but she’d been naked for a full forty-eight hours. She wasn’t going to set a new nudity record, but that didn’t matter. She considered that setting a record within the confines of her home probably wouldn’t count anyway. She’d been seen, but only by one person. The real yardstick to measure a period of nudity was probably not hours anyway. It was probably by the number of people who saw the nude person.Up in her room, Jill spent some time trying to decide what to wear. She hoped to go to the store as incognito as possible. She didn’t want to be recognized. But concealing her identity was quite problematic. It was summer. She’d stand out if she wore long pants and long sleeves; however, if she wore summer clothes, she’d quickly be recognized.Pawing through her things in her room, she realized that she’d look very much like herself if she wore any of it. Most of what she owned had been purchased to hide her flat-chested self from view. Loose clothing was her shtick. Anyone who knew her would recognize her instantly.She went into David’s room to investigate what he might contribute to the effort. As he was also tall and slender, she had always been able to get away with wearing some of his things. She gave some thought to trying to make herself look like a boy. Indeed, she could wrap a large ace bandage around her chest to flatten her breasts, not that she really needed to.She decided that she might be able to make herself look like a boy below the neck with a pair of baggy jeans, especially given how tall she was; however, she decided that it would be hopeless above the neck. She didn’t want to cut her hair and she had delicate skin as well as feminine facial features. Giving up on that idea, she ended up picking out a light-weight, black hoodie from David’s room.Back in her room, she selected a pair of grey sweat pants that she’d cut off to make into shorts. They were rather drab and quite different from what she typically wore. She slipped them on without bothering with panties. Getting dressed turned out to be a very somber activity. She didn’t want to do it, and yet, she felt the need to go shopping.

**Chapter 174: Amber**A short time later, she left the house wearing the shorts and David’s hoodie. She’d put on a dusty rose colored baseball cap and had the hood up over it. She’d considered a black baseball cap but had decided that she might actually attract more attention if she overdid the gangsta look.As it was warm, she hadn’t worn anything under the hoodie, but she had it zipped all the way up. Standing in front of a mirror, she’d decided that she looked rather cute dressed as she was. Most people would find it strange that she was wearing long sleeves, but given that her legs were bare, it seemed okay. She pushed the sleeves up to her elbows for comfort.Hoping that it might make her look a bit older, possibly like a young housewife, she carried a few of her mother’s reusable grocery bags with her. She’d decided to leave the Jeep hidden in the garage and walk. The grocery store wasn’t particularly far and she needed the exercise. To minimize the number of people who saw her, she planned to stick to side streets.After going a couple of blocks, she saw a person with a dog on a leash approaching. She stopped in her tracks. Might this be Ninety-Six? She quickly decided that the dog was too large and possibly too brown to be THE dog. Even though it wasn’t them, she crossed the street and proceeded along the opposite sidewalk to avoid the encounter.At the grocery store, she tilted her head down as she entered. She tried to tell herself that she wasn’t doing it to hide her face from the security camera, but she knew otherwise. Indeed, she had no reason to avoid security cameras, as a matter of fact, she hadn’t even seen one. She’d just become so paranoid. Doing her best to stop acting as if she were a common criminal, Jill grabbed a shopping cart and headed on in.Fortunately, it was well before the ‘on the way home from work’ rush, so the store was not particularly busy. In one aisle, she caught sight of a girl she recognized from high school, so she reversed course and went to a different aisle. Via a series of cat and mouse maneuvers, she managed to get her shopping done without an actual encounter with that individual.She recognized her cashier as well, but only as a cashier. The woman eyed her a bit suspiciously, but Jill did her best to ignore it. She knew it was probably just because she had her hood up over the baseball cap. Fortunately, the woman refrained from bringing that up in conversation.Shortly thereafter, Jill was headed home with her purchases, a heavy shopping bag suspended from each hand. She had decided to take a slightly longer route home. Even though she was pretending otherwise, she knew exactly what she was doing. By going a short distance out of her way, she’d be able to go by a certain park, a park with a skateboard installation in one corner. It was Tyler’s hangout. She’d spent many a happy hour there with him the prior fall as they’d been getting to know one another. She remembered fondly her time there, the majority of it spent sitting on a rail fence watching Tyler and his friends skateboard. For some reason, she’d been wondering if he might be there.As it turned out, he was there. Catching sight of him, she paused on the sidewalk nearly half a block away. She felt a strong urge to go and say ‘hi,’ but she knew she wouldn’t. They hadn’t spoken since the incident in his bedroom about six months earlier. Even though she now wanted to normalize relations with him, she was having trouble deciding how she might initiate that. She did have a few ideas. It wouldn’t be that hard. He’d always been reaching out to her. She’d been the one avoiding his every attempt.Looping back, she entered the park from the opposite side, making her way to a picnic table that was several hundred feet from the skatepark. She was positive that she wouldn’t be noticed there. As she had refrigerated food with her, she wouldn’t be able to stay long. She sat down and pulled a few snack items out of a bag: a banana, a bag of chips, and a can of pop.She was sideways to where he was. It seemed as if she’d be able to observe him without it being obvious, or at least that was her plan. As she watched him out of the corner of her eye, she smiled to herself. She’d certainly had her share of mishaps while spying on people that summer. The boys had caught her topless near their campfire and then later, Britt and Jenna had caught her fingering herself in the forest – she even had a couple of Britt’s pictures to prove it! She kept a careful eye on Tyler, telling herself she’d make a hasty retreat if she saw him heading in her direction.He looked good! He was shirtless. She loved his broad shoulders and his dark wavy hair which was blowing in the breeze. How she adored his hair! She’d enjoyed running her fingers through it when they’d kissed. His sexiest feature, however, wasn’t visible from such a distance – his eyes. He had the sweetest, most expressive eyes!She’d been there almost half an hour and was contemplating leaving when suddenly she heard, “Jill! Damn! I thought that might be you!”Shocked back to reality, she spun around to see who it was. “Oh, Amber . . . hi.” Fortunately, it was Amber, one of her two best friends. “You cut your hair!” Jill added in surprise.Amber had always been a pixie, but now she was a pixie with a pixie haircut. She was blonde, and Jill knew for a fact that her parents had named her Amber with her hair in mind. As far as Amber’s mother was concerned, it needed to be illegal to name someone Amber who did not have blonde hair. The topic had come up frequently as there had been another girl named Amber at Holden High, a girl who just so happened to be African American.Amber would get so mad at her mother whenever that specific topic came up. In her world view, it was racist. Jill had never seen it that way. It was just Amber’s mother wanting others to acknowledge what her daughter’s name signified as far as she was concerned.She took a seat opposite Jill. “I wanted to dye it blue, but the restaurant where I work doesn’t allow colorful hair . . . and my mom would have killed me. So I cut it instead.” **“**It looks good!” Jill probably would have said that even if she hadn’t thought it was true; however, she did like it. “Very different, that’s for sure, but it suits you,” she added offering Amber a can pop as well as some of her chips. **“**Thanks. When did you get back? Why didn’t you call me?” **“**Just today,” Jill lied. “And my phone’s broken. We have a landline, but without my phone, I don’t even know anyone’s phone number.”To her surprise, Jill started telling Amber exactly how her phone had gotten broken. But as she thought about it, there seemed to be no better way to find out what Amber knew about the rockslide as well as Jill’s naked marathon to get help. **“**You’re kidding, right?” Amber said, her mouth falling open.Jill was almost overcome with emotion upon seeing Amber’s surprise. She’d decided that everyone in Holden had to already know all that had happened. Indeed, she’d been hiding out in a dark house because of how sure she’d been that everyone had seen the video of her running naked through Stanton. However, to her surprise, Amber seemed to know nothing. **“**Nope . . . unfortunately, all true. David’s still in the hospital. Ryan’s parents brought him home, but he has a cast on his leg.” **“**Wow!”Jill proceeded to tell her the G-rated version of the story, leaving out absolutely everything that hinted at nudity or the ensuing news coverage. As she’d started the story, she’d pushed the hood back and removed her cap, setting it aside on the picnic table. She could be Jill! She was overwhelmed with relief. Maybe she wasn’t going to need to enter the witness protection program after all! Without realizing that she was doing it, she pulled her shoulders back and held her head up confidently.Jill turned her head, glancing quickly in Tyler’s direction. It might even be okay if he saw her and came over. That would be one way to break the ice. Looking back at Amber, she realized that she hadn’t seemed to notice that she had been spying on her ex.After Jill had finished her story, Amber told her how glad she was that she was back in town. That too made Jill feel good. She liked her friends, and it was nice to think that her absence had been noticed. Indeed, Amber and Dani had always made her feel good about herself. “Yes, I work evenings and Brendan keeps Dani busy, so I’ve had a rather lonely summer,” Amber explained.Jill didn’t know how to characterize her summer. It hadn’t exactly been lonely. She thought about telling Amber about Kyle and Nick – about all the attention that she’d received that summer from two members of the opposite sex; however, she decided not to. That would only invite questions that might trip her up.Instead, Jill mentioned all the reading she’d done. It was, of course, true that she’d spent a lot of time reading, and it would be completely in keeping with how Amber might expect her to spend her summer. **“**I’m going over to Dani’s tomorrow morning. Brendan’s out of town, so she invited me over for lunch. You should come!” **“**Well…” said Jill, giving it a little thought. **“**But, I better warn you. We’ll most likely end up tanning topless. I know that’s not your thing . . . that it’s kept you away in the past.” **“**I’ll come,” said Jill, jumping at the opportunity to get together with the two of them. She knew that what Amber had just said was true, but it no longer made any sense. **“**Great!” said Amber, hopping up. She had to leave to get ready for her shift. “And just because we’re tanning topless, don’t think for a second that you have to. It doesn’t matter one bit to us what you do . . . as long as you’re comfortable.” **“**Thanks.” Amber had no idea how much she’d changed. “I’ve got a new bikini,” she mentioned. **“**Cool! Bring it.”Jill was thinking of unzipping the hoodie and letting Amber see that she had nothing on under it. She expected that she’d be shocked. Instead, Jill decided not to. She’d save any such surprises for the morrow.Realizing that she wouldn’t be able to get in touch with Dani to find out a time, she got that detail from Amber as they were parting. She was planning to be there at 11:00am.Amber offered to swing by and pick her up. Jill accepted gladly. Dani lived outside of town meaning that she’d need to drive if she didn’t ride with Amber.As Amber hurried off, Jill gathered her things together to head home. Glancing in the direction of the skatepark, she saw that Tyler was no longer there. She’d been so absorbed in conversation that she hadn’t noticed. Worrying that he might have noticed her, she spun around, searching the park in all directions. Tyler was nowhere to be seen.For the walk home, Jill put the cap back on her head but left the hood back. She also lowered the zipper to a position between her breasts, bringing a minor amount of skin into view. As she walked, she held her head up high. For some reason, she was on top of the world. Even though it was still possible, likely even, that Holden would discover and watch the news segments, the period of greatest risk seemed to have passed.Stepping in her front door, Jill made stripping her first order of business. She needed to get the milk and the eggs into the refrigerator, but that could wait until she was naked.Once all the groceries were stowed, she carried her clothes upstairs and hid them from herself. She wanted to pretend that they didn’t exist and that she hadn’t gotten dressed.Shortly thereafter, she was again in the backyard. She was thinking about how much fun she’d have at Dani’s house sunbathing topless. Of course, she was going to sunbathe topless! Dani and Amber were going to be so surprised. She had confided enough in them that they were both well aware of her body-image issues.But at Dani’s the next day – when she took off her top – they’d instantly see that she’d spent a lot of time topless that summer. The cat would be out of the bag! They’d assume that she’d done a lot of topless tanning, most likely alone, and she’d let them. They’d never guess about all the camping, hiking, and swimming that she’d done bare to the waist – as well as nude, for that matter. They were going to be so surprised and it was going to be so fun!They’d finally get to see the confident young woman that she’d become.

**Chapter 175: Dani’s House**For dinner, Jill made herself a giant tomato salad. The tomatoes had looked so flavorful that she’d bought a good number. She also made a pitcher of fresh squeezed lemonade. She’d bought a whole bag of lemons. Something about the tart flavor of lemons had always appealed to her. In fact, lemons were a big part of why she liked Dutch Babies so much. Her grandmother had picked up on that when Jill had still been quite young.As she was no longer thinking that everyone in Holden had seen the video of her naked run, Jill no longer felt quite as compelled to keep herself hidden within their home; however, she did want to remain nude. That, in and of itself, was all the excuse she needed to keep the lights off and the curtains closed.Thinking that she might be spending a fair amount of time with friends during her last week in town, Jill decided to buckle down and spend the evening reading. There were still a number of books on the list that she had not yet gotten to.It occurred to her that the man she’d put on the basketball-humping show for the night before was likely to come by again. In fact, she decided that he might now walk his dog past her house every night in hopes of a repeat performance. She gave some thought to hiding somewhere and watching for him. She decided against that course of action. No doubt she’d spend hours waiting for him to come by, and what would be the point? Especially, given that she didn’t really want to know who he was.Her plan, to the extent she had one, was to avoid letting him catch sight of her again and then to disappear off to college. Of course, she’d be coming home for breaks – but what was done, was done. Having been caught experiencing an orgasm while bucking atop her basketball was just something else that she’d have to learn to live with.Later the evening, the night sky again found Jill stretched out in the buff on her sleeping bag. Just two more nights remained for her to sleep naked in the backyard – if they ended up releasing David as her mother anticipated. Jill planned to take full advantage.She was feeling amazingly happy. She hadn’t realized just how dark the cloud of worry hovering above her head had been until she had spoken with Amber, causing the cloud to evaporate.Suddenly, she was a new woman with a new lease on life! She was ready to conquer the world. Her self-esteem was at an all-time high! A lot of that had to do with her feelings about how she looked. It wasn’t that she now believed that she was beautiful. It wasn’t that at all. She was still the lanky beanpole she’d always been. What had changed was that she was now content with her body. It was hardly perfect, but so what? It wasn’t limiting what she might accomplish in life.In the past, she’d wasted both time and energy being embarrassed about how she looked. Now, she felt as if her looks didn’t really matter. Her body didn’t match the ideal that the media seemed to always be portraying in ads and on TV. She’d never have that body. But she didn’t need to have curves to be happy.Contrary to what she’d once believed, guys seemed to be attracted to women of various shapes and sizes. Maybe they’d been lying, but both Kyle and Nick had spoken about liking her for various reasons that had more to do with personality than physical appearance.Even though she’d been suspicious – still was – that it was the nudity more than anything else – what they had said had gone a long way towards restoring her faith in humanity, men specifically.But, however she sliced it, she was happy as well as very optimistic about her future. She’d head off to California with her head held high. If anyone didn’t like her for who she was, then that was their problem. There were surely men who’d only be attracted to women with large boobs. That was fine. What did it matter? There were also many men who thought that smaller breasts were pretty.In short, over the course of her summer, she’d learned that the size of a woman’s breasts was not nearly as important as she’d once thought. And her little boobies were cute! She’d become convinced of that. Somehow, her pointy nipples and the perky shape of what little she did have almost made up for what she lacked in bra-cup-filling volume.Jill again woke with the dawn. If there was any downside to sleeping outside under the stars, that was it: the inability to sleep in. While attempting to go back to sleep, she found herself thinking about Tyler and how she might go about reaching out to him.She smiled, considering how surprised he’d be to get a text from her out of the blue. Even though she’d blocked him across social media, she suspected that he hadn’t done the same. He’d always been trying to get in touch with her. However, given that her phone would not turn on, sending him a text wasn’t really an option.Even if texting him had been a possibility, she doubted that she’d do it. For some reason, she felt as if she wanted to go about patching things up with him in person. In that way, she’d be able to watch his expression for insight as to what he might be thinking. Texting did not provide such feedback.Texting had been ideal for getting to know Austin, but that was completely different. The situation with Tyler seemed to require face to face contact.A little bit later, while she was cooking herself an omelet, Jill’s thoughts returned to how she might go about coming out of her shell at Dani’s. It was a fun topic to think about. She could whip off her top first thing and startle her two friends, or she could bide her time and be the last one topless. Even that would likely surprise Dani and Amber.It was fun to think about taking off her top in a showy manner; however, she decided against doing so. She wanted to come across as a well-adjusted girl who was at peace with her flat-chested fate. She wanted to seem completely normal, avoiding the possibility of giving them the impression that she was unusual in any way. Specifically, she didn’t want them to think that she had become a nudist or an exhibitionist. Maybe she had, but they didn’t need to know that.She’d simply follow their lead. She hadn’t sunbathed topless with other girls, so she didn’t know quite what to expect. However, she was comfortable around Dani and Amber, so it would be fine. She needed to simply relax and not overthink any of the details. She smiled to herself – that was exactly what she was doing – overthinking the details.After breakfast, she spent a little time catching up her diary, describing in detail her encounter with Amber in the park. Once that was up-to-date, she read until it was time to get ready.Jill was still upstairs when the doorbell rang. Upon opening the door, she was glad to note that she and Amber were dressed about the same. Amber was wearing shorts and a sleeveless top, a pink bikini top in evidence underneath. Jill too was wearing her bikini but had just the grey shirt Britt had given her over the top, no shorts. **“**Ready?” Amber asked. **“**Yep,” Jill replied. As she stepped into a pair of flip-flops, she picked up the day bag that contained her towel and a change of clothes for later. She also had lemons with her. She’d decided that fresh squeezed lemonade would be her contribution to lunch.Dani greeted them at her door in a bikini. She was delighted to see Jill and welcomed her into their home with a smile and a warm hug. **“**Amber told me last night that you’re back from the lake earlier than expected due to a landslide. So sorry to hear about David,” she said, her voice full of compassion.Shortly thereafter, Jill was repeating everything she had told Amber the day before. The three girls had moved their conversation to the kitchen. As the girls had decided that lemonade sounded great, they were listening to Jill’s tale as she went about cutting and squeezing lemons.Jill’s confidence was growing. It was very reassuring to learn that Dani, too, had not heard of the rockslide much less seen the Channel Five videos.A short time later, the three friends were on the back deck next to the pool. They were seated around a patio table under a large shade umbrella, each with a tall glass of lemonade complete with ice cubes.As Dani had been dressed in just her bikini, Jill had removed her cover-up as they’d exited the house. Amber was slow to get with the program; she was still wearing both her shorts as well as her tank top.Jill had received compliments on her bikini. It was the black and grey patterned one with several small accent colors mixed in, the one with the underwire top that she had gotten just before heading off to Cache Lake. She knew that Amber and Dani would have said nice things about it even if it hadn’t been such a cute suit, but they had sounded quite sincere; their words had made her feel good about her selection.Jill studied Dani’s suit as they continued catching up. It was a solid black number with a nice sheen to the fabric. Like her suit, it was cut such that it covered about half of her butt. The top looked rather substantial, but that wasn’t surprising. Dani was quite well-endowed. In fact, she had huge boobs, which was especially surprising considering that she too was a basketball player.Jill was wondering why Amber had not yet stripped down to her suit. After all, they were all there to do a little topless tanning. So far, they weren’t even tanning. It was nice to hear about what the girls had been doing, but that wasn’t where Jill’s mind was.Jill got to hear about the trials and tribulations of Amber’s new job as a hostess at the upscale steak house that had just opened in town. In addition, she learned more than she wanted to know about all that Dani had done that summer with Brendan. They’d all known Brendan forever. Indeed, he was one of Ryan’s good friends. Jill was mostly surprised that Dani could have fallen for him. As far as Jill was concerned, he was quite ordinary. She kept her opinions, in that regard, to herself.As the minutes ticked by, Jill started to sense that topless tanning might not be on the agenda. She knew that Amber and Dani had talked. Had they decided to try and make her feel more comfortable by keeping their tops on? That would be a disappointing development. She had decided to follow their lead; however, how was she supposed to demonstrate just how comfortable she’d become in her skin if they were planning on protecting her by keeping their tops on?Hoping to move things along, Jill took her last sip of lemonade and stood up. She strolled out to a lounger in the sunshine. **“**Mind if I get a little sun?” she asked as she stretched out. **“**Be my guest,” said Dani with a smile; however, she and Amber remained in the shade, continuing to talk.Dani’s backyard was not exactly fenced, but she lived in the country. The plots of land were so large, that she didn’t have any close neighbors. In addition to that, the fact that they were up on a raised section of ground, giving them a territorial view, added to how safe the yard felt. It was certainly a yard in which a girl might be able to sunbathe topless, provided, of course, that no one was home. The backyard could be seen from the house as well as the barn. Dani’s family owned horses.As she laid there, Jill’s mind again wandered to Tyler. She found herself wondering what he’d been up to that summer. Both Amber and Dani had spent the summer in town. She suspected that they might be able to fill her in; however, she knew that they’d never mention him. They knew better than to do that. Just after their breakup, she had informed them, in no uncertain terms, that she never wanted to hear his name ever again. They’d both respected her wishes. And now that she was actually thinking about him, she couldn’t bring herself to ask. They’d be curious about her motives, and she did not want to invite that conversation. She’d reach out to him herself when the time came.The sun felt quite nice on her skin, but Jill was more than aware of how much nicer it would feel if she were topless. What was the holdup? Indeed, she spent most of the last seventy-two hours naked. It was a small bikini, yet it covered so much; add in the fact that the wires in the top weren’t particularly comfortable to a girl who was used to being naked. She wanted to fit in, and yet, she didn’t want to be wearing her bikini top – such a dilemma. It had been her understanding that fitting in was going to involve tanning topless. **“**Whatever happened to topless tanning?” she asked at long last.Dani and Amber looked over at her. After a few seconds, they started laughing. **“**What?” Jill asked. **“**We decided there was no reason to put you through that,” said Amber. However, she did stand up and strip down to her bikini. It was largely pink but involved a printed pattern that included small white curly designs. The top consisted of two triangles, and the matching bottoms were tied on her hips. Amber had a very small frame. She was probably just a B-cup, but given how petite she was, she looked rather top-heavy to Jill – more like a C-cup.Once she was down to just her bikini, she wandered out into the sunshine and stretched out on the lounger next to Jill. **“**Put me through what?” Jill asked. She knew very well what Amber had meant, but she wasn’t willing to let things slide. **“**You know,” said Dani with a shrug. “It’s no big deal. No need for any of us to be uncomfortable.”

**Chapter 176: Tanning**A minute later, the three of them were all reclining on the loungers in the sunshine. Jill didn’t know what to do. She was there to tan topless. **“**So, if I wasn’t here, you’d be topless?” she asked. **“**Most likely, but what does it matter?” Amber replied. **“**It matters to me,” said Jill. With that, she sat up and untied her top, quickly pulling it off over her head. One way or the other they were going to find out just how much better she felt about herself.She saw Dani sit part way up. Supporting herself on one elbow, she studied Jill, one of her hands above her brow shielding her eyes from the bright sun. “Well, look at you!” she said enthusiastically. “Amber, look who has been tanning without us.” **“**She most certainly has,” Amber replied. “…topless even.” **“**I most certainly have,” echoed Jill with a happy smile. **“**Model for us,” suggested Dani. **“**Model for you?” **“**Absolutely! If you’re not feeling so shy!” **“**Yeah, show off that titty tan!” Amber chimed in.Jill stood up. For some reason, she wanted her friends to know that she’d spent a lot of time topless. She stood with her hands proudly on her hips. Her nipples were, of course, at full attention. Standing near the end of the lounger, she turned her torso first one way then the other, eventually spinning all the way around to prove that there wasn’t a line extending across her back – as if there might have been any doubt. **“**You look great!” Dani declared. “I never understood why you were so shy . . . why you ever thought that your breasts were less than beautiful. Doesn’t she look good, Amber?”Jill glanced over and saw Amber nodding. “She looks great!” Amber replied with an approving smile. **“**Hot even! But . . . something happened, didn’t it? There’s more going on here than just a little tanning. You’re not the same Jill,” said Dani suspiciously. **“**Yeah, spill it!” said Amber. **“**But I am the same Jill.” **“**Only different . . . very different. You’re so tan. And you’re not acting at all like Jill would. I’d know! You’ve got a boyfriend! That must be it. I know . . . you met a guy at the lake, right?” Dani asked. **“**I think she lost her virginity!” Amber added gleefully. **“**Nope . . . still a virgin,” Jill replied. “But, actually, you’re right. I have changed! I’m not the Jill that I used to be.”With that comment, her hands grasped her bikini bottoms at her hips, initially pulling the straps up. “Tan everywhere,” she announced as she surprised even herself by sliding them down her legs. She definitely had not been planning on doing that, but suddenly she’d felt the urge to come clean. Letting go, her bottoms fluttered down to her ankles. As she stepped out of them, she saw looks of shock and dismay on both of her friends’ faces. **“**What are you doing?!” asked Amber, her mouth hanging open. **“**I’ve been doing a lot more than merely tanning topless.” **“**I can see that,” said Dani. She still had a hand up shielding her eyes, only now she was staring straight at Jill’s bare crotch which was right at eye level.Jill wondered if one of them would comment on how well-shaved she was or on how completely seamless her tan was. Indeed, there was no longer even the slightest hint that there had once been a Fuzzy Wuzzy. However, both girls were speechless. They simply sat and stared. **“**Now, I’m the one worrying,” said Jill. “Worrying about what I’m putting you through.” **“**You should be,” said Dani. “We tan topless . . . not naked.” **“**You should try it,” said Jill. “It’s nice.” She was surprised to note just how completely she’d apparently abandoned her goal of fitting in. **“**How about not,” replied Amber.Jill looked at her. She had a rather unsettled look on her face. **“**Nope. Not going there,” said Dani, obviously in full agreement with Amber. **“**Don’t worry. I’m not a lesbian. You both know that.” **“**I’m not sure what I know anymore,” said Amber, still looking at Jill with a puzzled but disquieted look on her face. **“**At least, take your tops off,” suggested Jill. “We’ve already established that you would have, were it not for my presence.” She was suddenly feeling quite self-conscious to be standing naked in front of the two of them. She hadn’t been thinking that she might take off her bottoms, but then it had happened. **“**Maybe,” said Dani.Jill realized that her cheeks were warm. Looking at Dani, she saw that she was blushing as well. Why had she taken off her bottoms? What might they be thinking of her? She picked them up and started searching for the correct alignment in order to put them back on. **“**Don’t put them on for us,” said Dani. “It’s obvious you’ve done a lot of naked tanning. Don’t let us stop you.”Jill was vacillating. She looked over at Amber. **“**Right, you do you,” Amber agreed, but she still looked uncomfortable.Jill didn’t know what to do. She had simply been intending to tan topless in order to fit in. However, now that she was nude, she had no idea how to fit in. That no longer seemed like a possibility. It seemed her destiny to always be odd man out. With a shrug, she dropped her bikini bottoms and returned to a reclining position on the lounger.The three of them lay there without saying a word for more than a minute. It was an awkward silence. Jill felt the need to explain, and yet she had no idea what she might say that might justify how she had just stripped herself naked in front of her two friends. She knew how shocked she would have been, had one of them done that in her backyard, at least, prior to that summer. **“**I know you are Jill, but you’re definitely not the same Jill,” said Dani all of a sudden. “We know you too well . . . don’t we, Amber?” **“**I was surprised enough by your bikini,” Amber replied. “Last I knew, you were still wearing a tankini.”Jill chuckled. “I still have it. But I didn’t wear it all summer.” **“**By the look of things, I’d say you didn’t wear much of anything all summer.”Jill knew that was true. Her tan was betraying her. Suddenly she felt the need to tell all. She wanted to be accepted by her two friends, and not just for who she had been – for who she had become. She was proud of all the progress she had made that summer, and she was ready to come out of the closet. She felt the need to know if their friendship could survive such a revelation. **“**Do you guys want to hear about my summer?” she asked. **“**Most certainly,” said Dani, sitting up. **“**Okay then,” said Jill. She looked over at Amber and saw that she was nodding. “I wasn’t going to tell you. I wasn’t going to tell anyone, but maybe I will. That is, if you promise…” Her voice trailed off. **“**Promise what?” asked Dani when Jill didn’t continue.Jill paused to consider what she was doing. She hadn’t wanted anyone in Holden to find out, and here she was on the verge of telling two people herself. **“**Promise me that you won’t tell a soul. Not your parents, not anyone. And especially not Brendon,” she added, staring directly at Dani. **“**I promise. Cross my heart,” Dani replied, tracing an ‘X’ on her chest. **“**I promise, too,” said Amber, tracing her ‘X’ atop the pink triangle of fabric which covered her left breast. **“**Okay, then,” said Jill. She’d never imagined doing this, but there was no turning back. She stood up and headed into Dani’s house. Glancing back, she saw Dani and Amber rise to their feet. She could see that they were talking. She wondered what was being said, but she doubted that it would be anything that would surprise her.Once inside, she blinked as her eyes adjusted to the dim light. She couldn’t believe how confident she felt, especially considering how she had just walked into a friend’s house naked. **“**Your parents are at work, right?” she asked, suddenly realizing where she was. **“**Yep,” replied Dani. “It’s just my little brother that you need to be worried about.” **“**Your little brother?” Jill clamped her hands over her breasts and looked around apprehensively.Dani laughed. “Don’t worry. He’s not here . . . went camping with the family of a friend. Just us girls,” she added as Jill breathed a sigh of relief, her arms relaxing back down to her sides. **“**You used to have a laptop in the kitchen,” Jill remarked, looking around. **“**Right here,” said Dani, walking over to the counter at the back of the kitchen. **“**May I?” Jill asked. **“**Be my guest,” said Dani, switching it on.A minute later, Jill was searching for the Channel Five website. She still couldn’t believe what she was doing, and yet it was something that she wanted to do. She felt an overwhelming desire to find out if those that she considered to be her friends might be able to accept her given who she had become. For some reason, she had to know, and the Channel Five broadcast seemed like the perfect introduction to a rather complex topic. **“**Okay, but remember your promises,” she said. “This might end up being the most difficult thing you’ve ever had to keep secret.”With both Dani and Amber looking over her shoulder, she clicked on the first link and then adjusted the sound as the reporter started talking. It was the broadcast that she had watched in David’s room the night of the rockslide. **“**Oh, my God,” Dani muttered, placing her hand over her mouth, as the video of Jill sprinting down the street nude filled the screen.Jill stepped back so that Amber and Dani could lean in for a better look.As the news report continued, Jill looked back and forth from Amber to Dani. Both of them had wide-eyed looks of disbelief on their faces. They’d already heard the story of David and Ryan’s injury and rescue, but now they were learning that she’d left out a very significant detail.She’d never imagined showing the video to anyone, certainly not Dani or Amber; however, she felt a lot of anguish melt away as they watched. They had promised, and if they were unable to continue as her friends given all the changes that she’d experienced that summer, then she needed to know that. It would be very helpful information. It would probably end up governing how open she’d be with other people going forward. **“**Now, remember, you promised,” she reminded them as the video came to a close. **“**Oh, my God, Jill,” said Amber. She staggered two steps back and slouched down into a chair, a dazed look on her face. **“**Your boyfriend’s sure cute!” offered Dani. **“**My boyfriend?” **“**The guy you were clinging to. The one you searched the rocks with . . . for your dress.” **“**Oh, Nick,” she said nodding. “Not my boyfriend. But yes, he’s kind of cute.” **“**Not your boyfriend?” asked Amber. “Can I have him?”Her comment surprised Jill, but she didn’t answer. Even though Nick was free to date whoever he liked, she wasn’t about to help Amber get in touch with him. **“**I love the way he stood up for you,” she continued. **“**Definitely a keeper,” agreed Dani. **“**Seriously, guys? I show you a news broadcast of me running naked into Stanton and all you can talk about is Nick?” **“**Well, I really don’t know what to say. The rest of it just makes me squeamish,” Amber admitted. “I’d curl up and die.” **“**I’m a survivor, I guess,” said Jill, “…but yes, I certainly did have my curl-up-and-die moments.”She thought about bringing up just how many people had seen her naked but decided that might not be the best direction to take the conversation. However, considering that caused her to realize that Dani and Amber meant that her tally had just climbed to ninety-eight. **“**There was never a dress, right?” asked Dani. **“**What do you mean?” asked Amber.Dani seemed to be cluing in faster than Jill might have expected. “Exactly! You guys know me. I almost never wear dresses. Certainly not for hiking.”Jill saw Amber’s mouth fall open. “You lied to Nick? You had him searching for a dress that never was?”Jill laughed. “Don’t look at me. Nick’s the one who lied. He made up the dress.” **“**Wow! Just wow!” said Dani. “For some reason, I’m sensing that this is just the tip of the iceberg. Why don’t we have lunch while you fill us in?” **“**Let’s watch the next episode,” Amber suggested.Jill looked at the screen. As expected, there was a link to the following night’s broadcast. **“**How about after lunch,” said Dani. “What do you say, Jill?” **“**Yes, first lunch.” She was still quite apprehensive about what might be in that segment. She’d known all along that she’d see it eventually. Now it was unavoidable. She’d be watching it for the first time with Dani and Amber.

**Chapter 177: Lunch at Dani’s**  
  
As Dani started getting things out of the fridge, Amber asked, “So . . . are you just going to stay naked?”  
  
Jill glanced at her two bikini-clad friends and then down at her own naked body. She had not been expecting to be put on the spot like that; however, it made complete sense. She was much more used to being naked than Amber was with being around a naked girl.  
  
“Yeah, Jill,” said Dani, glancing up from what she was doing. “Staying naked?”  
  
Jill’s first inclination was to take the hint and get dressed; however, she was in the process of coming out to her friends. She wanted to see it through.  
  
“Unless it bothers you, I’ll stay naked,” she announced.  
  
Amber laughed, raising her eyebrows in amusement. “You do you!”  
  
Jill looked over at Dani. She had the warm, understanding smile on her face that Jill had grown to appreciate. Things were going to be alright between the two of them. Amber, on the other hand, was still an unknown. From the start, she’d seemed much more shocked by the revelations. Possibly she was destined to be the less open-minded of the two when it came to having a friend who had a predilection for nudity.  
  
While Dani went about putting together some bacon-lettuce-tomato-avocado-camembert wraps, Jill launched into a bit of an explanation. Both girls listened attentively. She ended up leaving Ryan out of the tale almost entirely. Indeed, he was there, but mostly just as an observer.  
  
After all, Jill had grown to realize that she was naked because she wanted to be naked. That was especially true now that she was in Holden. She’d left all those that had been encouraging her to take off her clothes behind. None of them could be blamed for all the time she’d spent nude since returning home.  
  
Sure, Ryan had set the wheels in motion, but over the course of the summer, she’d gained a more profound understanding of who she really was. And who she was, deep inside, had nothing to do with Ryan. He hadn’t made her who she was. Ryan had only facilitated her process of discovery. She still didn’t know if she was a nudist, a naturist, or an exhibitionist; however, she was more than aware that she was something.  
  
The reason that she didn’t know which one of those terms best described her was that she had yet to study up on what each of them meant. As a matter of fact, she didn’t really want to. She was simply Jill, and she preferred the idea of being herself rather than conforming to any pre-established pattern of thought or behavior.  
  
However, she was ready to admit that she had a deep affinity for nudity. It was time to do that. If she hoped that her friends would accept her for who she was, then it was high time that she do the same. How could she expect them to do something that she herself was not willing to do? She’d spent the summer learning about herself, while at the same time doing her best to avoid an obvious truth. She’d been in denial.  
  
“So . . . I was right!” said Dani, breaking the silence. “You are a completely different person.”  
  
“But I’m not.”  
  
“I’m afraid you are. The Jill I knew was very reserved. She always went to a lot of trouble to change into and out of her basketball uniform where she couldn’t be seen . . . even going into a bathroom stall, if necessary.”  
  
“I did do that,” admitted Jill, casting her eyes down bashfully.  
  
“And now look at you,” continued Dani. “Not only are you different, you’re essentially the exact opposite.”  
  
Jill glanced down at her nude body. “That’s a fair observation . . . I guess. But I am the same Jill.”  
  
“Prove it!” Dani challenged.  
  
“I know that you let the air out of one of Coach Turner’s tires sophomore year because she didn’t pick you to be a starter…”  
  
“Shush!”  
  
“You did what?” asked Amber in surprise.  
  
Dani shrugged. “I was pissed.”  
  
“And I never told anyone . . . not until now,” said Jill.  
  
“And you didn’t get caught?” asked Amber.  
  
“No. No one knew . . . only Jill.”  
  
“See. I’m the same Jill.”  
  
“I know who you are,” Dani snapped. “I’m just having trouble wrapping my girl brain around just how much you’ve changed. I didn’t think you’d ever tan topless. And, now look at you – bare ass naked!”  
  
“Well, I don’t really know how to explain,” Jill replied, and she didn’t. How could she have gone from being her prior self to being the person that she now was? “What I can tell you is this,” continued Jill after giving the topic a little thought. “In many ways, I’m just as shy as I was.”  
  
“I hardly think so,” countered Dani with a chuckle.  
  
“But I am! I still blush. I still get embarrassed. Being naked is scary. It’s just that I’ve learned how thrilling it can be. Scary, but also addictive. I’m headed off to college. I won’t be able to indulge once in California. I’m hoping the two of you will understand and accept me for me, but down there . . . no one will know me. I’m sure no one would understand.”  
  
Amber had been listening but saying little. Jill was wondering what she was thinking. Finally, she spoke. “But where does this all lead, Jill? Will we one day read in the paper that you’ve been arrested? That you were caught wearing a trench coat and flashing kids at the playground?”  
  
“That will never happen,” said Jill. “Think of it this way. I’ve just learned that I’m not ugly because my boobs are nearly nonexistent.”  
  
“You’re not,” Amber agreed.  
  
“Well, I used to think I was.”  
  
“I know you did,” said Dani. “And you were SO wrong.”  
  
“And now I know that I was. I’m much happier now. It’s like I’ve been set free! My breasts are small, but now I actually like them.”  
  
“That’s so cool,” said Dani. “You don’t know how good that makes me feel to hear you say that.”  
  
“Frankly, I’m in a good place. It wasn’t at all fun to be so unhappy with my looks that I was going to that much effort in the locker room to make sure no one ever saw my chest. Over the course of the summer, I’ve become content with who I am. I used to live in hopes that I was still in adolescence . . . because if I was still an adolescent, then there remained a chance that my breasts might yet develop. I’ve finally given up hope. They’re not getting any bigger and I’d never consider implants. I’m a woman . . . a woman with very small breasts . . . that won’t change . . . but I’m content. This body is me, and it’s okay. I’m happy. These breasts are enough. I now expect to find and marry a man who will not feel cheated, and I know that they will feed my babies.”  
  
“Good for you!” interjected Dani.  
  
“But I’m certainly not planning on becoming a flasher. I’ve just come to enjoy being naked when circumstances allow.”  
  
“Like at Dani’s house?” asked Amber.  
  
“Is it a problem?” Jill asked.  
  
“Not as far as I’m concerned,” replied Dani.  
  
Amber looked quite a bit more skeptical.  
  
“For some reason, my comfort with nudity seems linked with how I am now at peace with how the boob fairy passed me by. Possibly that’s a coincidence of timing. Maybe I’ll grow out of this, but maybe I won’t.”  
  
“I can tell you’re a happier person,” said Dani. “I like seeing you like this.”  
  
Amber didn’t respond, but by then they had finished eating.  
  
“Shall we watch that next video?” Jill asked. “Mind you, I haven’t seen it. I was out at the lake the night it aired. I’m actually quite anxious about it. But maybe you guys can help me get through it.”  
  
“Anxious about it?” Dani asked.  
  
“As you know, a lot of people saw me naked that day. After the first broadcast, any of those people might have gotten in touch with that station . . . in search of their five minutes of fame. I expect a few of them did. As a matter of fact, I happen to know that a girl named Jane did. They’ll be interviewing her.”  
  
“How do you know that if you haven’t seen it?” Dani asked curiously.  
  
“David told me they were running teaser ads during the day with her in them . . . to get people to tune in for the evening news.”  
  
“But what might she possibly say that could make this any worse than it already is?” asked Amber.  
  
“Plenty,” said Jill. “I happen to know she’ll be referring to me as Tarzan.”  
  
“Tarzan?” asked Dani.  
  
“Let’s just watch . . . and then I’ll try to explain. Not that there’s really an explanation for what happened . . . at least no logical explanation. It’s just what happened.”  
  
With that, Jill stood up and led her two bikini-clad friends back over to the computer. She clicked the link, and they all leaned in to watch. Jill knew she was trembling. She took ahold of Dani’s hand to steady herself. Dani seemed to sense her need, giving her hand a reassuring squeeze.  
  
The broadcast began with the same two women, Amanda, the reporter, and Cynthia, the anchor, discussing the rescue from the side of Bearhead Summit the day before. They started off by bringing any viewers who had missed the prior day’s broadcast up to speed.  
  
Jill was surprised that they again showed the video of her naked run and bike ride down the street in Stanton, but then she realized that she shouldn’t be. It seemed to be the station’s favorite clip.  
  
“And to think, that was just five days ago,” Jill remarked quietly.  
  
From there, the station cut to the hospital where a different reporter provided an update on David and Ryan’s medical progress. Jill noticed that Dani and Amber were paying close attention, but from her point of view, what he was talking about was old news.  
  
“Up next, we’ve got a most interesting interview with a young woman named Jane Porter and a hiking companion,” said Cynthia.  
  
“Exactly right!” said Amanda. “Jane says she’s dreamed of one day meeting her very own ‘Tarzan.’ And yesterday, high above Stanton, her dream came true.”  
  
“Tarzan?!” laughed Cynthia as they cut to the interview.  
  
Jill recognized Jane right away. She was seated, making it much less obvious just how short she was. Additionally, she was wearing a shirt rather than the peach-colored bikini top. That served to conceal just how busty she was. Seated next to her was the tall redhead that Jill also remembered from her group. She didn’t recall ever having heard his name, but Amanda introduced him as Miles Becker.  
  
“Thank you for coming to the studio,” said Amanda. “It seems that you both encountered Jill and David Wahlund in the mountains above Stanton yesterday. You’ve been referring to Jill as Tarzan. Please explain, bringing our viewers up to speed.”  
  
“Well,” said Jane. “We first saw the three of them together as we reached the top of what I now understand to be Bearhead Summit. They were busy making a Tarzan video.”  
  
“A Tarzan video? Please explain,” interjected Amanda. “What made you think that it might be a Tarzan video?”  
  
“Well,” said Jane. “Tarzan was dressed like, umm, Tarzan.”  
  
“Except for the loincloth,” remarked Miles.  
  
“What was different about the loincloth?” asked the reporter.  
  
“No loincloth,” he replied.  
  
“So . . . naked?” asked the reporter.  
  
The camera zoomed in on Jane. She didn’t reply, but she was nodding.  
  
“No nothing,” Miles was heard to remark from just off-screen.  
  
“And, to be clear, this was before the rockslide, right?”  
  
“Well before,” said Miles. “The boys were, at that point, completely uninjured.”  
  
“So, if the girl was merely nude . . . no loincloth, why are you referring to her as, ‘Tarzan?’”  
  
“Banging on her chest,” said Miles, pantomiming the motion, “…and doing the ape man’s distinctive call . . . at the top of her lungs.”  
  
Dani reached in and paused the video. “Jill, did that really happen?” She had an incredulous look on her face.

**Chapter 178: The Second Broadcast**  
  
Jill shrugged. “Hey . . . haven’t you ever done anything that would have caused you extreme embarrassment if it made the TV news?”  
  
“Not anything at all like this,” stated Dani.  
  
“Me neither,” said Amber, “…but let’s watch the rest.”  
  
“…and then you can disown me,” said Jill. “But remember, you can’t tell anyone. You promised.”  
  
Jill extended her arm toward the keyboard and pushed play. The news program was turning out to be every bit as bad as she had feared, yet she needed to see needed to get through it.  
  
“Jane, please describe for the audience what you witnessed there on the summit?”  
  
As Jane was not quick to answer, Miles took up the baton, “Tarzan was up on a boulder . . . standing tall . . . her head held high.” He extended his hand three or more feet above the floor to indicate about how big the boulder had been. “On cue, she started yelling at the top of her lungs . . . powerful lungs . . . and banging on her chest . . . pounding fiercely. Quite impressive, really. The boys were both circling. One appeared to be filming . . . like with a phone. The other looked to be just following him around.”  
  
“Interesting that this all happened before the rockslide,” commented Amanda. “We had a report that her dress was torn off by one of the boys as the rockslide took them down the slope. Did you see a dress? Blue and white?”  
  
“We never saw a dress, right, Jane?”  
  
“No,” said Jane, shaking her head. “Tarzan was naked.”  
  
“I told you Nick lied,” said Jill, during a short pause that must have been for a commercial break during the original broadcast.  
  
The interview continued, Jane and Miles mentioning how David had come over and talked with them. They mentioned learning that the two of them were twins and that Tarzan’s real name was supposedly ‘Lola.’ The reporter had a bit of fun with Jill’s alias.  
  
“Lola?” asked Dani.  
  
Jill just shrugged, turning her attention back to the news broadcast. She imagined that David had surely asked Jane and her friends to refrain from mentioning what they had witnessed to anyone. Somehow neither Jane nor Miles brought that up. The only thing at all like that that came up was that David had asked them to not follow them.  
  
From there, the interview jumped forward to their encounter on the trail. How Tarzan, aka Lola, had come up behind them and spoken of her desperate need for help – before continuing on toward Stanton at a breakneck pace. Jane spoke in very complimentary terms about how impressed she had been with Jill, how focused and driven she was. “Tarzan was a woman on a mission!” she said, her respect for Jill very evident in her tone. “Very capable . . . like Tarzan himself!”  
  
“No sooner was she there than she was gone . . . sprinting down the mountain,” said Miles. “We tried to keep up, but there was no way. She must run track.”  
  
“I don’t know about track,” said Amanda, “…but she was captain of her high school basketball team.”  
  
“Makes complete sense,” said Miles nodding. “That girl, she’s lightning fast!”  
  
“And about the photos you have of Tarzan…” said Amanda, but Jane cut her off.  
  
“Hey, you promised!” she said angrily.  
  
“For the record, Ms. Porter, nothing was promised.”  
  
Jill’s jaw dropped in disgust. She remembered someone surreptitiously taking photos when she’d been standing next to Jane. Had they also taken photos on the summit?  
  
Amanda continued, “We’ve seen photos of Jane and Jill together. Jill, I mean, Tarzan, was nude and drinking from a water bottle. In keeping with a promise she made to Jill that related to preventing the photos from finding their way onto the internet, Jane has not shared them with us. She showed them to us. We’ve seen them. However, we don’t have them . . . to show.”  
  
Jill shook her head. Jane had told her story, but she was apparently planning to keep her promise, narrowly defined.  
  
“Give me a call, Tarzan,” Jane blurted out. My number is ¬\_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_”  
  
Jill could see Jane’s lips moving, but there was no sound.  
  
“I’m sorry, Ms. Porter. We’ll have to bleep that out. Trust me, you don’t want to give your number out on live TV.”  
  
“But I want Tarzan to call me,” Jane replied.  
  
“Well, if she calls me at the station, I’ll give her your number.”  
  
“Thanks,” said Jane, looking a bit dejected. Staring into the TV camera, she pleaded, “Call me, Tarzan!”  
  
“Wow!” said Dani, reaching over and again pausing the video. “That woman has the hots for you.”  
  
“I don’t think so,” said Jill. “She wanted to meet Tarzan.”  
  
“And she did!” interjected Dani.  
  
“A male Tarzan,” Jill added.  
  
“Maybe . . . but not anymore. Now she wants you! You should call her. She wants to hook up!”  
  
“Not happening,” said Jill, but she was curious about what Jane might say if she did call her.  
  
The next interview was Mrs. Brooks.  
  
“That woman was rather rude,” said Jill upon seeing her image on the screen, “…but she did loan me a jacket . . . which was nice.”  
  
As it turned out, the station seemed to have edited Mrs. Brooks’ interview severely as it was exceedingly short. All they used Mrs. Brooks for was to establish that Jill had run into the ranger station nude and had then eagerly accepted a jacket when one was offered.  
  
“See! I didn’t want to be naked. I wore that jacket . . . but it only came down to here,” she said, tracing a line on her stomach with her hand at belly button level.  
  
Jill noticed that both Dani and Amber were studying her carefully. It looked as if they were trying to figure her out while at the same time trying to imagine what it would be like to be bottomless under such circumstances.  
  
With that interview concluded, the station cut to a parking lot scene in front of a thrift store. Jill’s heart sank. She had hoped that they wouldn’t find out about her shopping trip. The Jane and Miles interview had been bad enough. Seeing that they would be covering her visit to the thrift store was the last straw.  
  
“Oh, my God,” she said, again reaching for Dani’s hand. “I don’t think I can watch this.” Dani squeezed her hand reassuringly.  
  
“What happened there?” Amber asked.  
  
“Oh, let’s just watch,” said Jill. She didn’t want to pause it to explain. That would only serve to draw out the pain. She wanted to get it over with.  
  
As they watched, the camera panned across the front of the store to where Mr. Mendoza was standing next to Amanda. His hair was slicked back just as it had been when he’d confronted her.  
  
“First off,” said Mr. Mendoza after he had been introduced. “I’d like to apologize to Miss Wahlund. I had no idea. Had I known what she was dealing with, I would have bought her the clothes she needed myself. I would have.” He paused, staring straight into the camera while nodding. “I am so sorry that I unwittingly added to this young woman’s woes. Your broadcast, Amanda, brought me to tears when I saw it last night.”  
  
“You weren’t alone,” replied Amanda. “I’ve heard the same from others. But regarding Jill . . . you had no way of knowing.”  
  
“But I still have regrets. I do,” he replied, again nodding.  
  
“Let’s show our TV audience Mr. Mendoza’s first glimpse of Jill,” said Amanda. “This security camera clip shows Jill entering the store with Nick Bianchetti, the man who told us yesterday that Jill’s dress was torn off by her brother.”  
  
“This woman is obviously hoping for a Pulitzer Prize. She’s determined to get to the bottom of this!” interjected Amber as a black and white CCTV image filled the screen.  
  
There was no sound. Jill and her two friends watched as first Nick came into view, quickly followed by Jill wearing just the jacket. The shot was from the front of the store looking down from a high angle. Jill’s buns were on full display even though a black censorship bar had been added to hide her crack. As they advanced into the store, Jill picked up a shopping basket, initially placing it behind her butt. However, she swung it in front of herself as she hurried past Nick.  
  
The entire clip lasted only a matter of seconds. They played it a second time at a markedly reduced speed. Not only that, but they froze the image a couple of times for a few seconds, seemingly with the intention of giving viewers more time to see what was going on. It was clear to Jill that they were trying to milk it without it seeming too obvious.  
  
“So, Mr. Mendoza,” said Amanda. “You saw this . . . and then what did you do?”  
  
“Yes. I happened to be watching. I went out of the back to confront them. It’s not every day that a bottomless girl enters the store . . . suspicious behavior, to be sure. But again, Jill, if you’re watching, I’m extremely sorry. I am.” He again stared into the camera and nodded – as if he were trying his best to convey compassion.  
  
“Seems like a very nice man,” remarked Dani.  
  
“Hardly,” said Jill. “It’s nice to hear him apologize, but he should apologize. Maybe it’s his job, but he wasn’t at all nice to me.”  
  
“What did he do?”  
  
“Just watch,” said Jill, expecting that it would come out how she had been treated like a shoplifter. It did, but fortunately, no more video clips were shown. Jill found that curious. Why hadn’t they shown video of her buying the clothes she’d tried on? Had Mr. Mendoza withheld that video? Possibly because it had made him look bad?  
  
At that point, they seemed to be wrapping up, Amanda and Cynthia discussing how Jill had saved her brother as well as their friend, Ryan. However, they couldn’t end the segment without spending time talking about Jill’s willingness to be naked.  
  
“Apparently Jill was having a little naked fun when the rockslide intruded upon their antics,” said Amanda.  
  
“Seemingly so,” said Cynthia.  
  
“It’s my guess that she never imagined that she might find herself in such a difficult situation . . . being forced to go for help naked,” replied Amanda.  
  
“But it’s interesting . . . all that she had to go through in her effort to get dressed,” said Cynthia. “I’ll repeat what I said yesterday. My brother would die under those circumstances. There’s no way that I would go for help naked. At the very least, I’d wait for nightfall.”  
  
“And then again,” said Amanda, “…you probably wouldn’t have been making nude Tarzan videos in the mountains.”  
  
“Most certainly not,” chuckled Cynthia. “But considering that, I’m wondering if they were making a movie . . . something with an actual plot.”  
  
“That would be quite a movie!” said Amanda.  
  
“And as we don’t have the actual Jill Wahlund Tarzan video to share, a few of those in our technical department put together a montage of various Tarzan clips downloaded from the internet . . . to help all of us imagine what Jill’s version might look and sound like. I’ve been told that this starts with the definitive Tarzan, Johnny Weissmuller, includes the well-known Disney version and ends with the incomparable Carol Burnett.”  
  
“Cool!” said Amanda.  
  
The screen filled with Tarzan after Tarzan, each of the belting out a yell while pounding on their chest.  
  
From there, they concluded the segment with a promise to continue the story the following evening if they were able to uncover more details of significance . . . or get the Jill Wahlund Tarzan clip to share. Jill was relieved to note that there were no more links to click. Apparently, that was the end of the Channel Five broadcasts – at least, to date.  
  
“Oh, my God, Jill!” said Dani. “I just can’t wait to show those videos to everyone.” As Jill watched, Dani bookmarked the page before closing the laptop.  
  
“I know you’re kidding,” Jill shot back. “You better be kidding!”  
  
“I am,” Dani admitted. “Mum’s the word.”  
  
“Thanks,” said Jill, heading down the hall to the restroom.  
  
In considering the broadcast they’d just watched, Jill realized that it hadn’t been as bad as it might have been. David had gotten her worrying that they’d find out that she’d bitten Ryan’s ear and talk about that. Fortunately, that hadn’t come up. That was a relief! Additionally, nothing related to her visit to the minimarket in Elk Bend had been mentioned. Yes, it was terrible, but it could have been worse.  
  
From there, Jill’s thoughts turned to the number of people who had seen her naked. Amber and Dani had lifted her tally to ninety-eight. It was a huge number; however, it only included those who had seen her nude in person. That meant that it was essentially just the tip of the iceberg. A much larger number had seen her body, well most of it, on TV. And what was more, that number would likely continue to grow, at least as long as the news segments were on the site. For years?  
  
A time or two, Jill had given some thought to this second group of people. It was surely a large group – much, much larger than her official tally. But it was surely a finite number of people; however, the actual number could not be known. Someone, somewhere, might be able to come up with an estimate for her by studying viewership ratings. She’d always seen little point in that. If her actual count was just shy of a hundred, then the TV viewer count had to be in the thousands, probably in the tens of thousands – if not more.  
  
And yet, it didn’t matter. Their look at her body had been limited by the two-dimensional nature of the medium as well as by the censorship bars. So a great number of people had seen somewhat less than those who had seen her in the flesh; however, they could watch her naked run over and over, if they chose. It bothered her, and yet it wasn’t exactly a big deal. It was just one more component of her new reality. Her naked image was circulating. In a way, it was almost exciting that it was going on – that at any given moment, someone somewhere might be looking at her nude form – and that she could do nothing about it.  
  
When she emerged a minute later, she saw that Dani and Amber were again out on the loungers in the backyard. Neither of them had taken off their tops. Jill decided that she wasn’t going to bring that up. They could do as they pleased. She went out the backdoor to join them. She stretched out on her lounger next to them, her bikini all but forgotten where she had dropped it earlier.

**Chapter 179: Heading Home**  
  
“So, Jill, is there a movie?” asked Dani. “Did you spend your summer filming jungle pornos?”  
  
“No!” said Jill, followed by a sharp exhalation of air, an expression of disgust. “Of course not!”  
  
“Just the Tarzan video?”  
  
“Of course that’s the only…” Jill stopped midsentence. The hitchhiking video had suddenly popped into her head. She was also recalling her vow to not allow such circumstances to turn her into a liar.  
  
Changing course, she took a different tack, “Please! I need friends . . . now more than ever. I lied to Amber. I’ve actually been home for three days now . . . all alone. I’ve spent the entire time hiding in my house. I only went out once. I needed food . . . met Amber on the way back.”  
  
“You need friends, and we need to see your Tarzan imitation,” said Dani. “Now’s perfect . . . you’re wearing your Tarzan costume.”  
  
“Yeah, let’s see it!” said Amber.  
  
Jill stood up and without saying anything went back inside, returning a minute later with a glass of the lemonade she’d made earlier.  
  
“You don’t have to do Tarzan for us,” said Dani. “I can tell you’re not in the mood.”  
  
“I’m not,” Jill admitted, lying back down. She was still hoping to find a way to fit in – not stand out.  
  
For quite a while, little was said. All three girls seemed to be digesting what they had learned that afternoon.  
  
At one point, Dani invited Jill to go horseback riding with her, even suggesting that she might go naked if she preferred. Jill had ridden with Dani on a number of occasions, but horseback riding wasn’t an activity that she enjoyed nearly as much as Dani. And she knew that she couldn’t ride naked. The trails around Dani’s house were not heavily traveled, but they were still likely to encounter others on horseback.  
  
Jill knew that she needed to be very careful around Holden – and at college for that matter. Being seen naked in Stanton had been bad enough, but she’d had no choice and she didn’t live there.  
  
“I don’t feel the need to go horseback riding in the nude, but I have been wanting to play basketball naked,” Jill admitted. No sooner had the words left her mouth than she started regretting what she had said.  
  
“You do?” said Dani in surprise. “You know we can make that happen.”  
  
“Maybe,” said Jill. “But we’re not going to. I can only be naked under controlled conditions.”  
  
“Like hiking in the mountains above Stanton?” Dani asked.  
  
“Okay, maybe that wasn’t such a good idea. But in and around Holden, I have to be much more careful.”  
  
“How about at night?” Dani asked. “Midnight basketball. I could round up the team.”  
  
“Or the guys team, for that matter,” suggested Amber.  
  
“No one needs to be rounded up.”  
  
“Then . . . just Amber and I?” asked Dani. Jill could tell by the sound of her voice that she seemed to like the idea.  
  
“I’m not playing basketball,” said Amber. “That’s your thing, not mine.”  
  
Jill thought that the idea of playing basketball with Dani sounded fun, but it wasn’t at all the game she’d missed out on with the guys from Cache Lake West.  
  
“I want to, but I can’t,” said Jill. “I’ve been a bit naughty this summer. I can’t do that anymore. I need to start behaving.”  
  
“When?”  
  
“Now, I guess.”  
  
Amber laughed. “Jill . . . you never used to do anything that was at all naughty.”  
  
“I know. I know. Maybe I am a different Jill now.”  
  
A bit later, Amber needed to be going. She had to be at the restaurant well before the dinner hour. Dani volunteered to give Jill a ride back into town so that she could stay a bit longer, but Jill decided to ride with Amber. She stuffed her bikini into her bag and pulled out a pair of shorts and a sleeveless top for the ride home.  
  
Along the way, she remembered her need for some new clothes for college. Amber would be the perfect one to accompany her on such a mission. She’d always had a very up-to-the-moment fashion sense.  
  
“I need to go shopping . . . clothes shopping,” said Jill, introducing the topic. “I don’t want to take any of what I already own to California.”  
  
“I don’t blame you,” said Amber with a smile.  
  
“Ouch! My stuff isn’t that bad,” said Jill defensively.  
  
“Yes, it is.”  
  
“Okay, maybe it is,” she admitted. “That’s why I need you. Go shopping with me?”  
  
“That’d be fun, but it would have to be early. I work nearly every evening.”  
  
“Tomorrow morning?” asked Jill hopefully.  
  
“Sure!”  
“Okay . . . my turn to drive. I’ll pick you up. Say . . . 9:30.”  
  
Amber agreed, and they talked about what Jill needed for college and which stores they might visit. They’d only just completed their discussion when Amber pulled over in front of Jill’s house. Walking in the front door, Jill lost no time in stripping back down to her birthday suit.  
  
After stowing her things in an attempt to imagine that he hadn’t been dressed, she again made her way to the backyard. Their tall fences were a godsend; there was only one back corner that she didn’t dare visit due to how some windows on the Tanaka’s upper story overlooked that portion of the yard. As she’d had enough sun, she sat at the table in the shade to read; however, once the shadows had grown long, she moved out into the yard, stretching out on her sleeping bag.  
  
A short time later, she was lying on her stomach propped up on her elbows reading. Suddenly, there was a noise. Had it come from the house? Jill froze, feelings of panic surging within her.  
  
“Jill, we’re home!” she heard her mother’s voice call out. Jill’s body went completely stiff from fright. Her words had been loud and clear. The back door was wide open, so she was probably just inside.  
  
Not knowing if she’d already been seen or not, Jill leapt into action. She popped up and covered the twenty or so feet to the closest fence in the blink of an eye, running crouched over, an arm across her chest, the other hand down below. With no regard for her skin, she dove through a low bush, collapsing between it and the board fence. Her heart was hammering inside her chest.  
  
A moment later, her mother stepped out onto the patio. “Are you out here, honey?”  
  
Jill couldn’t move. There was not a single piece of clothing in the entire yard. That was good and bad – nothing to put on, but also nothing to betray that she might have undressed outside.  
  
Her father came out the door and joined her mother. “She’s got to be here somewhere. The doors weren’t locked and the Jeep’s in the garage.”  
  
Jill had no idea what to do. She was trapped.  
  
“Look . . . her sleeping bag,” said her mother pointing.  
  
Why were they home? Just the day before, her mother had told her that they were keeping David there for another two days. That had obviously changed.  
  
Jill remembered her plan to keep in touch with her mother in case that happened. She kicked herself. She should have called her that morning. Why hadn’t she? Her mind had been occupied with thoughts of tanning at Dani’s, but that was no excuse. It certainly wasn’t a good excuse.  
  
Scarcely daring to breathe, she peered out through the leaves, observing her parents near the patio door. She couldn’t quite hear what was being said, but they were obviously conversing.  
  
All of a sudden, they both turned to go back inside. Jill saw her chance and took it. As quietly as she could, while their backs were turned, she made a desperate dash for the side yard. Once they were inside, it would be too late. She wouldn’t be able to see them to know if one or the other of them might be looking out one of the many windows into the backyard. She’d closed all the curtains that faced the street, but none of them on the side that looked out at the backyard.  
  
She made it to the side yard, the narrow area between the house and the fence, wondering if she had been seen. Without pausing, she went to the gate. She opened it so very slowly, doing her best to keep it from squeaking. After she was through, she closed it gently behind herself. She collapsed down into a ball. She had to think. She was still trapped, but at least she was in a much better location than down behind the bush.  
  
She thought back to when she had been similarly trapped out on Sunken Island, David and Ryan swimming toward her. She’d made all the wrong choices that day. She couldn’t allow that to happen again. It would be much better to go back into the backyard, wrap her sleeping bag around herself, and admit that she had been nude ¬– even if that might result in her parents seeing her – than for her to go sprinting around Holden hoping to somehow evade detection.  
  
Fortunately, as she started to calm down, her I.Q. seemed to be returning. Maybe, if she took her time and stopped rushing around like a crazy woman, she’d be able to figure a way out of the mess she’d again gotten herself into. “Think, Jill. Think,” she muttered to herself.  
  
She looked at the house. There was only one window on the entire end wall. It was a bathroom window. It might actually be open, she realized looking up; however, it was a second story window. There was no way to climb the siding to get up to it. She might be able to climb the fence, but she still wouldn’t be able to reach it. She could try, but she might end up falling.  
  
Keeping her parents from finding out that she had developed a relationship with nudity was not worth risking a broken bone. Even if she had a ladder, attempting to climb in that window would place her in a position in which she might be visible to neighbors. They might not be home, and even if they were, they’d be unlikely to see her there above the side yard. She knew she’d chance it, if she had a ladder. She didn’t.  
  
She thought of climbing the fence into the Tanaka’s yard. She could do that. She wouldn’t be risking a fall, just splinters. She dismissed that idea as foolhardy. She didn’t need to be caught naked by the Tanaka family.  
  
She thought of David. He was surely home. He’d probably bring her some clothes . . . if he was able to. However, there was no way to contact him. Like her parents, he was probably wondering where she was.  
  
Jill thought about waiting for nightfall. It wasn’t a terrible idea; it was probably just six hours away. She’d survive; however, her parents would be worrying and they might put out an APB and get the police looking for her. That sounded awful, but she realized that it was a risk she might have to take.  
  
However, she didn’t want to wait. She felt the need to be doing something. Deciding to investigate her options, Jill got on her hands and knees and started crawling slowly toward the street.  
  
At the corner of the house, she slowed and then stopped, looking out into their front yard. Things were quiet and there was no movement. No one was visible. She looked toward where Ninety-Six had been standing with his dog. No one was there either. Maybe she could make a run for it, but she’d have to think of someplace to run to. She looked up and down the street. Seeing a car coming, she lowered herself down, resting her chest on the grass.  
  
After the car had passed, she lifted herself back up and resumed crawling slowly forward. She peeked around the corner of the house, again pausing. And then she saw her opportunity! The garage was open! Her dad had pulled in next to the Jeep. The sound of the garage door opening had probably been what she’d first heard from the backyard. And, for whatever reason, her parents had not bothered to close the garage door!  
  
Doing her best to keep low and be quick about it, she crawled around the corner. For a few brief seconds, a naked woman would have been visible to anyone in the street, on the sidewalk, or peering out of the houses across the street. However, the coast had seemed clear.  
  
The concrete was cool on her hands and knees, but she stayed down on the floor in the shadows next to her parents’ car. She held her breath. Her butt was pointed at the street, but hopefully, the shadows were deep enough to keep it from being very noticeable.  
  
She didn’t know if she was alone in the garage. She looked under the car to see if she might be able to see feet. She didn’t see any, but unfortunately, there was too much stuff in the garage to be able to be certain.  
  
Listening carefully, she rose slowly to her feet. She was still in view of the street, and yet she knew that it would be hard for anyone outside to see into the relative darkness.  
  
Once on her feet, she made her way in a stooped position around to the Jeep, hiding her chest and pussy as best she could with her arms. The Jeep! Thank God for the Jeep! Opening the passenger door as silently as she could manage, she climbed in and reached up under the dash. Her bundle! Thank God, it was there! Fortunately, she’d not yet taken it out to put her things away.

**Chapter 180: Shopping**  
  
Hugging it tightly to her chest, she slid back out of the Jeep, tears of joy welling up in her eyes. Sitting with her bare buns on the cool cement floor, her back against a tire, she tore into the small bag. Everything was there! She had clothes! With tears running down her cheeks, she unfolded the shorts and placed her feet into them. Turning and laying all the way back in order to get her hips up, she pulled them up to her waist. A few seconds later, she was again sitting up and threading her arms into the T-shirt, simultaneously pulling it down over her head.  
  
Standing up to get the shorts zipped and snapped, she realized that she’d done it! She was dressed! She’d saved herself! She picked up what was left of the bag. She even had money!  
  
Feeling more relieved than she’d ever felt before, she slipped back out of the garage. A few seconds later, she was skipping up the sidewalk. She was barefoot, but she had clothes – and money. Life was good! All the effort she’d gone to that summer to be prepared for every eventuality hadn’t been for naught!  
  
How ironic, she thought. The bundle had been intended to save her from Ryan and David. In the end, it had saved her from herself.  
  
She headed straight for the grocery store. The grocery store would be her alibi. She’d buy a few things, and then, when she got home, she’d be surprised that they’d come home early. Her parents would never know just how close they’d come to discovering their daughter naked in the backyard. That wouldn’t have been the end of the world, she realized, but this was infinitely better!  
  
For some reason, all Jill could think of to buy was ice cream, so that was all she bought – several kinds, enough for a party. As she was paying, the cashier scolded her for coming in barefoot. She mentioned a ‘no shoes, no shirt, no service’ policy, but she accepted her money. Jill apologized, but she didn’t really care. Being barefoot was nothing compared to how she had been dressed only minutes earlier. She wanted to say, “At least I’m not naked!” but she held her tongue.  
  
On the way home, she passed a man walking a dog. It was a small black dog with curly fur. It looked to be about the right size. She glanced up at the man and their eyes met. She felt her nipples tighten. Was this the man? She looked away as they passed one another on the sidewalk. She felt her face flush, but by then he was behind her. He wouldn’t be able to see. She sped up – just in case.  
  
At home, seeing that the garage door was still open, she entered the house that way, making as much noise as she could.  
  
“You guys are home!” she cried out happily once she was in the laundry room. It was hardly an act. She was happy!  
  
“Oh, there you are, Jill,” said her mother. “We were starting to worry.”  
  
“I just went to the store. I wasn’t gone long.” She walked over to the fridge to put the ice cream into the freezer. She saw her mom observing her closely. “What?” she asked, hoping that her mom hadn’t noticed that she’d been crying.  
  
“Next time, remember to take one of my reusable bags. You know . . . save the planet.”  
  
“Oh. I will, Mom. Sorry.”  
  
“And Jill . . . everything was open.”  
  
Jill didn’t know what to say. She never left the house without locking up. Fortunately, her dad came into the kitchen just then, interrupting them so she didn’t need to think up an excuse. He gave her a hug. “Yes, please remember to lock.”  
  
“I know. Sorry,” she said, bowing her head. “But David? They let him come home . . . early?”  
  
“They did. He was doing so well this morning that there was no reason to keep him in the hospital,” explained her mother. “He’s upstairs taking it easy. I’m sure he’d like to see you.”  
  
“You guys could have called,” she said, realizing that they might have tried while she was at Dani’s.  
  
“We thought about that,” said her mom. “But we decided that it would be more fun to surprise you.”  
  
Jill coughed out a laugh. “Yeah, it’s much more fun this way!”  
  
As she turned to go upstairs, her mom said, “You can serve your timeout after you’ve said hello to your brother.”  
  
“My timeout?” she asked apprehensively. She looked from her mother’s face to her father’s, searching for clues. “For not locking the doors?”  
  
“No, for dribbling in the kitchen.”  
  
“But, but…” Jill protested. “I wasn’t dribbling in the kitchen.”  
  
Her mom pointed at the basketball in the drying rack. Imagining herself explaining why it was really there, Jill gave in. “Okay, sorry. You caught me.”  
  
Jill spoke with David for a few minutes. She thought about telling him what she’d been doing the past few days. She wouldn’t tell him about her orgasms, especially not the series of orgasms she’d had on the ball in the front yard, but the rest of what she’d done seemed okay. She decided that it could wait.  
  
As David felt like taking a nap, Jill went back downstairs. She picked up her ball from where she’d placed it to dry and carried it into the dining room.  
  
“Okay, set the timer,” she told her mom as she sat down atop her ball in the timeout corner. Facing the wall, she realized that she probably did deserve a timeout, just not for what her mother assumed she’d done.  
  
“How much time, Mom?”  
  
“The usual . . . ten minutes,” came the reply.  
  
“I thought I’d outgrown time outs,” she remarked.  
  
“So did I, dear,” replied her mother solemnly.  
  
Jill chuckled to herself. It was much better to be in the doghouse for something that she hadn’t done than for any of the naughty things she had done. Of course, nineteen was a bit old to be sitting in timeout, but she expected that her mom was probably doing it for fun. She had an unusual sense of humor. And she really did hate it when she or David would dribble a basketball inside the house. It made the dishes in the cupboards rattle. That had always seemed harmless, but her mother had never seen it that way.  
  
She suspected that if she complained and denied bouncing her ball, her mother would back down. She decided not to do that. She wanted to serve this timeout for several reasons, nostalgia among them. She also figured she owed it to her ball. She’d left it in timeout a long time, and it hadn’t really done anything wrong.  
  
Eventually, the timer rang and she got up. She’d never enjoyed a timeout more.  
  
“Why don’t we go out to dinner,” she suggested, walking back into the kitchen. “Amber . . . you know, Amber . . . she’s a hostess at a new steak restaurant in town. We could give it a try.”  
  
“Maybe another day,” her mom replied. “You father and I have done nothing but eat out for so many days.”  
  
“Sure, another day,” Jill agreed.  
  
“But steaks do sound good,” said her father walking in from the laundry room at that very moment.  
  
“Why don’t you grill, dear,” suggested her mother.  
  
“I think I’ll do that,” he replied. “But it will mean a trip to the store.”  
  
“I’ll come with you, Dad. I just need to put on some shoes . . . in case they have a ‘no shoes, no shirt, no service’ policy.”  
  
“I expect they do,” he replied with a nod.  
  
Later, the Wahlund family was together on their back patio. The steaks had turned out great. Jill had made an Indian bead salad following her grandmother’s recipe to accompany them while her father had been working with the BBQ.  
  
Later that evening, they were enjoying bowls of ice cream. David seemed to be doing quite well, especially considering that it had been under a week since the rockslide. It was his broken ribs more than anything that was slowing him down. The cast on his hand was not bothering him nearly as much. It had been quite itchy initially, but he seemed to be getting past that phase, at least that was what he said.  
  
“Have you been sleeping out here?” her mom asked, looking at the sleeping bag in the middle of the yard.  
  
“I have,” Jill admitted. “I wasn’t ready for summer to be over.”  
  
“But I thought you were excited to start college.”  
  
“Oh, I am. It’s just that summer’s the best!”  
  
After finishing her ice cream, Jill went to her sleeping bag and started working it into its stuff sack. She’d sleep in her bed that night – for the first time in almost two months. Things were quickly returning to normal in the Wahlund household.  
  
Amber wasn’t quite ready when Jill arrived the next morning to pick her up. The two girls talked together in the bathroom while Amber put the finishing touches on her makeup. Amber was still pleased with her decision to work for a year or two before going to college. Jill was glad about that. She couldn’t imagine staying behind in Holden while many of her friends went off to college, but if it was right for Amber, then that was what mattered.  
  
Shortly thereafter, the two girls were walking from the Jeep to a store in an outdoor strip mall. Jill was in high spirits. It was time for her to own her decision to be flat and proud!  
  
In that first store, Jill tried on tube tops. It wasn’t a style of top that she’d ever considered owning; it left nothing to the imagination.  
  
She selected a yellow one that fit like a second skin, and after paying, put it back on to wear out of the shop. In a symbolic gesture, she asked the saleswoman to discard or donate the shirt she’d had on. It was a loose, baggy shirt that had the shy, embarrassed girl who she had been written all over it. She’d gone into the store without a bra, not that an observer might have noticed; however, exiting the store, the fact that she was braless was more than apparent.  
  
Amber acted impressed that Jill seemed to be planning on following up her bold talk with a course of action that would make ‘flat and proud’ a permanent part of her persona.  
  
Outside, in front of the store, Amber faced her to size her up. Jill looked down, noticing just how visible her pointy nipples were in the form-fitting top. “You have such a lovely midriff,” she remarked. “I’m not sure you’ll want to dress like this for class, but there will certainly be plenty of occasions where you might.”  
  
From there, they walked across the street to the Holden Galleria, the recently renovated and rechristened Holden Mall. Amber helped Jill find more tops that fit her new self-image.  
  
One top that they found that Jill thought she might actually wear to class was also essentially a tube top. It was white and similarly tight, but it differed in that it was long enough to extend all the way down to the shorts she had on. It had small tight sleeves that were only barely attached. It was an off-the-shoulder style shirt that left her shoulders completely bare. Like the yellow top, it looked painted on. Amber commented on how she liked it because it drew the eye to her “sexy-looking” collar bones. That observation got Jill laughing as she tried to imagine herself as others would see her in the store’s mirror.  
  
Jill was enjoying Amber’s fashion sense and her upbeat attitude. She, too, liked to wear daring clothes. In the past, Jill had never understood why Amber dressed as she had. Now she found herself in complete agreement when it came to wanting to show off the goods.  
  
It turned out to be a perfect day to shop for what Jill had in mind. The stores had all set up large back-to-school sections, meaning that the lightweight summer tops had all been marked down and moved to sale racks. She was going to be able to get more than she had hoped and still stay within the budget number she’d gotten her mother to agree to.  
  
In addition to tight tops, Jill also picked out a few shirts with plunging necklines. Amber liked one of them so much that she tried it on as well. Given that the plunged dipped nearly to one’s navel, it was definitely a top that could not be worn with a bra. It looked awesome on Jill; however, Amber decided that it was a look she could not pull off. It just didn’t seem to work with a larger bust. To Jill’s amusement, she seemed jealous of how nice it looked on Jill.  
  
From there, Jill found and bought some skinny jeans. She’d never been too taken by the ripped look, but Amber talked her into buying one such pair. As it was more fashionable than the shorts she had on, she took the tags off and worn it, putting the shorts in one of her bags.  
  
Jill bought a pair of yoga pants as well. Her new tight tops seemed to require that she go skin-tight below the waist as well. But, as Amber kept reminding her, she certainly had the figure for it. Jill had long regarded her legs and butt as her most attractive features. She found it quite ironic that she was now regarding her skinny upper torso in a similar light.  
  
While having lunch in the food court, Jill finally got up the nerve to bring up a topic she’d been spending a lot of time wondering about. She asked Amber what she knew about Tyler and what he’d been doing that summer. Had she seen him around?