**The Exhibitionist Next Door**

by BPClavel

**The Exhibitionist Next Door - 337: The Mat Room continued**

Dale was still struggling, but it was no longer about keeping her clothes on. They were all long gone. All she had on now was the pillowcase over her head and of course the gag in her mouth. She could neither see her assailants nor talk to them; her opportunity to scream for help was also long gone. Fortunately, she still had her ears, and she continued to listen to the whispers and the giggles to try and figure out how many girls were in the room and who they might be. Both Alexa and Jodie were clearly, but beyond the two of them, she only had a few guesses.

Below her neck, all she had on were three pieces of body jewelry, a fresh tramp stamp, and rope down at ankle level. She expected that she looked comical. In fact she knew that she must, for Alexa’s jokes about her sopping wet pussy and her rock hard nipples always seemed to elicit laughter.

She felt so very vulnerable, to be naked and held against her will. She tried to keep herself from thinking about that, in order to keep herself from panicking. She was pretty sure that they wouldn’t violate her; however, they had already done things that she had never expected to experience.

She wondered if Alexa would take photos to preserve the moment of her impending victory. She expected that she would not be able to resist doing so. Hadn’t she photographed her pussy that first time? Now that Dale knew that Alexa was into girls, that pussy shot seemed to take on a new and different meaning. Dale tried to listen for comments or other sounds to indicate whether or not photos were being taken.

By now it was obvious that she was destined to lose not only all her clothes, but the entire battle as well. Emotions pumped through her body as that continued to sink in . . . that her destiny was to be displayed nude to the entire school: students, staff and teachers. And it was hardly a distant destiny. It was surely mere moments away, unless of course Alexa was saving her for the finale. In any case, she would be seen. She trembled at the thought. It was the scariest thought that she could imagine, and yet it wasn’t only fear that had her trembling so. Part of what was making her tremble was more akin to excitement.

Her heart was racing at the prospect of being seen. She thought about her bare pussy, shaved just that morning. Everything would show . . . every little intimate detail, lips and all . . . depending of course on her body position. As the emotions surged through her, she realized that what really had the sparklers going off inside her pelvis, was that she had no choice in the matter. It wouldn’t be her stripping and displaying her own body. She had been taken out of the equation. Her body was still there, of course. But Alexa had not consulted her, nor would she.

Kelly and how captivated she had felt around Kelly popped into her head. Suddenly Alexa seemed like a mean and yet more powerful version of Kelly, for Kelly had always relied on her consent. Alexa on the other hand never sought any such thing. She just took what she wanted by force. As Dale was considering the similarities and differences between Kelly and Alexa, her nipple dream again came to mind. How Kelly would be in charge as the dream began, but then how Alexa would always step in and take over . . . and how at that moment the dream would always become more brutal . . . more violent.

“Okay, Michelle,” she heard Alexa say. “Help me tie her wrists.”

“Goddamn you, Alexa!” Dale heard Michelle say. “You did that on purpose!”

“Maybe,” said Alexa. “But you know you have nothing to fear from little Miss Goody Two Shoes. We both know that she won’t tell on you. You’re the last person she would tell on, and she didn’t tell on anyone after the time in the locker room, or the time at Jodie’s house.”

“And the rest of you don’t have to worry,” said Alexa. “I hold your fate in my hands, but you can trust me. They’ll grill me, but I won’t name names. I’m going down, but as long as you all keep to the pact, I won’t take anyone with me.”

Dale realized just how devious Alexa was. She’d apparently gotten quite a number of girls to help her, probably via persuasion or maybe coercion, but now she had just put them all on notice. In a roundabout way they were now all victims of Alexa’s scheme too.

As her wrists were being tied behind her back, she thought of Michelle’s involvement. A lone tear made its way down her cheek. She had tried so hard, but she had never been able to break through to her. How could Michelle still want to hurt her? They had been so very close. Deep inside she had to be the same girl and deep inside she had to know that Dale had never intended to harm her.

“Let’s tie her elbows together, too,” she heard Alexa say. “That will stretch her little titties out to the point that they just about disappear.”

She felt the rope sawing into her skin as her elbows were pulled uncomfortably together behind her back. A second tear followed the first down her cheek. She felt quite a number of hands on her arms during the process, and she realized that one of those sets of hands belonged to Michelle. That hurt. It hurt a lot. At one time, her Nutshell would have done anything for her, much like Carly, but now look what she was doing to her.

The more Dale thought about Michelle, the more she realized that she needed to finally capitulate. It was time to finally tell Nate that he was right about Michelle. It hurt a lot to realize what she needed to do. She needed to give up on Michelle. That thought alone brought more tears to her eyes. It was the most sad thought that she could ever remember experiencing, for she had never thought that she might abandon the reconciliation effort.

Dale had to try to force herself to think of anything but that. The pain was just too great. The ropes hurt, but nothing hurt like the idea of giving up on her Nutshell.

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Due to the time it took to appease Mr. Wheeler and get his phone back, Nate got to the gym just before things were about to start. He had not been willing to leave his phone behind. Even though it was password protected, it still had nude photos of Dale on it. He removed them regularly, but there were fresh ones that he had not yet transferred to his secret and secure storage device.

As he entered the gym, he looked around for Dale. He didn’t see her, but Susie was there with the other cheerleaders. He headed straight for her.

“Have you seen Dale?” he asked.

“Nope,” she said. “But they tell me she’s on the Maverick. Things are fine.”

“Are you sure?” he asked. “I’m certainly not mad about it, but your texts got me in trouble with Mr. Wheeler. I almost raced out of the room . . . right in the middle of class. I had to beg to get my phone back.”

“I’m sorry,” said Susie. “I guess I’m just so easily alarmed these days.”

“No problem. So am I. Text me any time you sense anything out of the ordinary. Anything at all,” said Nate, heading toward the bleachers to take his seat in among the football team.

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Back in the mat room, Dale was seated on the rock hard Maverick, the full size horse that was Prospect High’s mascot. Its head was raised as if in fury, its mane and tail flying wildly. It had three feet attached to a wheeled platform, raising it up a little above floor level. One of its front hooves was raised, pawing fiercely at the air. It looked strong, powerful and its eyes were filled with a look of savage determination.

Dale was in a state of near panic. Her feet were tied tightly together under the Maverick’s belly, pulling her knees out wide. She knew Alexa had done that on purpose. While some of the most intimate details of her pussy were hidden under her, everyone in front of her would get quite an eyeful. A lot of pussy detail was on display, including her mound, slit and the strip of skin in between, the upper section of her clitoral hood.

There was not a single hair down there to limit the view of her most intimate details. As she thought about that, she recalled why she had begun shaving years before; so that if she were seen, she would really be seen. Now she found herself contemplating if this might have been what she had in mind . . . back when she had made her original choice. She was held such that she had too little freedom of movement to manage even the slightest bit of additional coverage for her most intimate area.

And her arms were not only tied uncomfortably to one another, but also such that they were being pulled straight back. She couldn’t see it, but the rope from her wrists extended back to where it was tied around the Maverick’s tail. That forced her into a slightly leaning back, pelvis forward position. This meant that a little of her weight was on her hands just behind her butt. Using her hands to hold her up made it all slightly less uncomfortable; however, she knew that her own personal comfort had not been taken into account.

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To the best of her knowledge, she was now all alone in the mat room, and she had next to no ability to move. The gag was still in place. It was uncomfortable and tasted terrible, but at least she had no trouble breathing. Thankfully the pillowcase had been removed. It had been replaced by a giant banner that covered both her and the Maverick, nearly to the floor.

She heard all the hustle and bustle in the gym just beyond the large double doors. Among the louder sounds that reached her ears were the familiar sounds of the pep band warming up their brass horns.

Her impending unveiling was causing emotions to crash back and forth through her body, contradictory emotions. Emotions of extreme dread, mingled with intoxicating levels of excitement and arousal. She could tell that her nipples were at full tilt, and not very surprisingly she was still as wet as wet could be. She couldn’t see it in the dim light, but she knew that she had to be making a growing wet spot on the Maverick’s back.

As luck – or design – would have it, the girls had strapped her down such that the horse’s hard backbone pressed into her pussy. Had she wanted to, she probably could have used her thigh muscles to lift up just a little to decrease the pressure on her delicate little pussy parts, but she did not feel so inclined.

Adding to the intensity of the experience was the placement of the little magnetic decoration right on top of her clitoris. The sounds, the thoughts of what was to come, what now seemed entirely inevitable, as well as all the pressure on the most sensitive area of her pussy were adding up to an experience the likes of which she had never before known. Initially she tried to resist, but she had since given in. She was no longer able to keep herself from rocking her pelvis back and forth, gently rubbing herself against the Maverick’s backbone.

She was slipping into her own little world of pleasure when suddenly she felt a hand on her thigh…just a little gentle pressure. She had thought she was alone. Suddenly she knew she wasn’t.

“Pssst…” she heard. “DJ, can you hear me?”

The voice shocked her back to reality from the grinding that she had been indulging in. ‘Did Michelle really think that she might be able to answer with the gag in her mouth?’ She wondered, but she did her best to mumble so that Michelle would know that she had indeed heard. Next she held her breath, waiting intently to hear what Michelle would say.

“I’m so sorry, DJ,” she heard her say. “I’m really sorry.”

But then the voice and the hand on her thigh were gone.

Tears welled up in her eyes and began flowing down her cheeks in earnest, the call of her hot and horny pussy momentarily forgotten. She had already been so very emotional, but then to feel Michelle’s touch and hear her voice had been just too much for her. It had been short, but it had been so very sweet. That had been the first nice thing that Michelle had said to her in years.

Anyone peeking in under the banner and catching a glimpse of her predicament, tied naked to the horse, would have thought her tears were a sign of anguish. And they had been; however, now they were tears of joy. Somehow, in her state of discomfort, Dale suddenly found herself feeling elated.

Maybe Michelle was finally ready to let bygones be bygones! She now knew she wouldn’t be telling Nate that he had been right . . . at least not right away. Maybe the thaw that she had been hoping for . . . for year after year . . . was finally at hand. Emotions of joy added into the potpourri of the emotions that were coursing through her very being. The result meant that she had become a girl who was completely at the mercy of her emotions, hardly a truly rational thought anywhere in her head.

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Out in the stands, Nate watched the start of the last pep rally he would ever see as a football player. This would be the last time that Dale would cheer at an assembly for a team that he would be playing on . . . as his own personal cheerleader. After the next game he would become a civilian, and then basketball season would begin. Soon things were going to be different. Life would go on, but an important chapter was coming to an end.

As he considered all that, the pep band played the school fight song. As the song came to an end, Principal McRoberts walked to a microphone at center court.

His words echoed Nate’s thoughts, for he spoke of history in the making, the State Football Championship, and the gravity and importance of what lay just ahead. It was an inspiring speech, but fortunately he kept it short. The whole time that he was talking, three drill team girls wearing Bison heads were pretending to be grazing off to Nate’s right. The team would be playing the Benton Bisons that Saturday for the state title, and he expected that Dale on the Maverick was destined to get the best of those girls somehow during the assembly.

He had his phone, just relinquished by Mr. Wheeler, at the ready to catch all the comical action. The drill team girls wearing the large bison heads looked so cute in their short little sleeveless dresses. The drill team dresses were white with black trim. Their feminine legs looked so long and sleek, all the way from their ankle socks right up their spankies, at times visible as intended just under their short skirts.

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Dale was a bundle of rampant uncontrollable emotions as she first saw the light that indicated that the two large double doors had been opened. She felt the Maverick turn just a bit and then shake a little as it was moved toward the light. A moment later light flooded into her little air pocket under the giant white and black school banner as the Maverick was wheeled out of the mat room, entering the main gym itself.

She had been unwittingly grinding her soaking wet pussy against the hard backbone while waiting in the dark mat room. She had long known the thrilling arousal of streaking, of exhibitionism. And she had also known how the worry of being seen while nude added one more exciting layer to the overall experience. While she had made attempts, her own masturbation efforts had mostly been for naught. But that fall, with Nate’s loving touches, she had learned how much pleasure was to be had if her clitoris was manipulated in just the right way. Suddenly she was discovering for the first time that she herself might have success at making her sensitive but somewhat elusive little nubbin experience intense pleasure. Previously only Nate had been able to bring that about.

She had been trying to imagine what it would feel like if he were not only there, but also inside her at that moment . . . his dick up inside. The pressure on the outside of her pussy was so nice. Would it be even nicer once she had Nate’s stiff member inside her? She tried to imagine that, but had little to go on. For a long time, the thought of that had worried her a great deal. The idea of being penetrated by a real penis was indeed a little scary.

She had mentioned to Nate how ‘it stretches’ in response to his observation that her hole looked small. She expected that she was correct in that regard. She knew for a fact that pussies stretched to accommodate penises. However, she had seen and felt the size of his essentially permanently hard dick – not that it was abnormally large – and she had her concerns. They were not concerns based on logic, for she knew that most women enjoyed being penetrated. And yet her apprehension persisted.

She had been grinding on the backbone, and now that the horse had begun moving, it was grinding back. God, it felt good! It shuddered and shook as it moved across the floor. Tiny vibrations that began at the ancient worn out wheels were being transmitted . . . magnified by the solid Maverick . . . shooting straight upwards . . . until reaching . . . ultimately via the small jewel . . . her clitoris.

She had trouble focusing, but over the loud din in the gym, she heard the four pallbearers’ names being announced. The Maverick was rolling, trembling, vibrating . . . being pushed slowly toward her destiny by none other than Jason, Ward, Gage and Cody. That, at least, was exactly as it had been in the past. She had ridden the Maverick out of the mat room in this manner on quite a number of occasions. Never before had she been tied on. Never before had she been naked. Never before had she been gagged. Never before had she been grinding her engorged, sopping wet pussy into something so wonderfully smooth and hard. She rubbed against it. It felt as if it knew what she needed, participating fully in her heightening bliss.

Everything was happening all at once, and she was feeling overwhelmed, so adrenalized. There was no way to alert the pallbearers . . . not that she really wanted to . . . that they were in fact playing a role in Alexa’s depraved plot. They were unwittingly delivering her . . . Alexa’s nude prey . . . to her destiny. And what was even worse . . . it suddenly seemed . . . as if she herself would be playing a huge role . . . adding greatly to the degree of humiliation . . . that she was destined to be subjected to.

It was already destined to be more humiliating than anything she might ever have imagined. However . . . if she were to be thrashing about in orgasmic bliss as the banner was yanked off . . . Wow! Woooowwww! Just the thought of that made her try and will her pelvis stop . . . it was just no use. It had a mind of its own. Just the thought of being revealed while thrashing about in the throes of an orgasm . . . increased her excitement . . . increased the feverish intensity of her pelvic dance.

She was well past the point of being able to hold still. She ground her little pussy parts unrelentingly back and forth . . . over one little slippery bump in the mascot’s spinal column. It seemed ideally shaped and situated for that very purpose. It was destiny! The steady, frantic rhythm of her movement combined with the unpredictable, unsteady vibrato of the horse was setting her clitoris on fire. Literally on fire! It twitched and throbbed as the sensations routed pleasure directly into her sexual core.

Her breathless pace increased. She arched her back straining against her bonds. She had no hope of pulling free, but pulling on the ropes increased the pressure on her clitoris. Pleasurably so! Even the loud pep band music seemed to be resonating within the Maverick . . . being channeled as well . . . directly . . . straight into her swollen pussy.

“Are you alright, Dale?” she thought she heard one of the guys ask . . . over the roar of the crowd. She barely heard him. It was just all too much . . . the cheering . . . the band music . . . the utterly thrilling motion of the Maverick. The orgasmic pressure increased inside her pelvis. The panic inspired by knowing that in a moment the banner would be gone. All eyes would see her . . . in all her naked glory . . . all her orgasmic glory . . . right there . . . in the familiar Prospect High gymnasium. It was all so overwhelming! She was too far gone to worry about what the four guys might be thinking. Not that she could do anything about it. Not that she could reply.

She suddenly found herself wishing that the banner was already gone . . . that the entire school was watching . . . witnessing the earth shattering orgasm that was just starting to convulse through her body. The thought of everyone participating . . . watching her thrash about . . . sent her higher still. She stretched her neck. She turned her head side to side. Her eyes rolled back into her head. Her eyelids closed. She thrashed about . . . within the limits of her bonds. Waves of ecstasy washed through her.

She moaned uncontrollably, and then cried out as she climaxed . . . and then climaxed yet again . . . higher still. A little sound escaped past the gag. In that moment, she was thankful for the rubber ball in her mouth . . . as well as . . . the noise of the band and the large crowd. She paused briefly but . . . the unrelenting pulsating of the Maverick’s backbone . . .was not yet finished with her. It seemed to have plans of its own . . . for her. And tied spread-eagle . . . across its back . . . as she was . . . it definitely had the upper hand. The Maverick was in charge. In the next moment . . . the sensations resumed . . . at a higher level than where they had seemingly peaked mere seconds before.

She felt as if she were about to pass out . . . as the next climax spiked . . . it was so powerful . . . so much beyond anything . . . anything . . . she had previously . . . experienced. God, was it ever . . . wow! She tried to breathe . . . holding still . . . allowing herself to enjoying all the little wonderful tingly sensations . . . shooting back and forth . . . like roman candles . . . flaming balls . . . bouncing around within her pelvis. The earth shook . . . her brain turned to mush.

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As the Maverick came to a stop, the horse’s stimulating vibrations finally ceased. Dale took a deep breath . . . trying to come to grips with where she was. Quickly realizing that the curtain might lift at any moment, she closed her eyes . . . relaxing . . . trying to catch her breath. The pelvic rocking continued, but at a steadily decreasing tempo as her orgasm subsided. While there was essentially nothing about her position that she could change, she focused on looking as composed as possible. Her face burned. She would be naked, her butt, tits and pussy would be seen, but at the very least she didn’t want to look as if she had just experienced a full-blown orgasm. What had seemed desirable mere moments before no longer seemed like a good idea. Everything would be humiliating enough as it was. She knew her skin would be red, hopefully that would just be taken as due to embarrassment.

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Nate had been watching the entrance of the Maverick with great anticipation. He had already inventoried the cheerleaders, so he knew that only Dale was missing from the lineup. He had seen a considerable amount of movement within the school banner as the mascot had been wheeled out. Some of that, he knew, was the Maverick’s rickety old wheels, but there was more movement than usual. He had found that curious, but for one reason or another he had found no reason to become overly concerned. Susie’s text and the panic that it had inspired had been completely explained. His brain had relegated it to the category of things that could be forgotten entirely.

As the Maverick came to a halt at center court, he decided to photograph the arrangement of the various groups on the basketball court, for posterity’s sake. The cheerleaders were in one long row just in front of center court, all wearing their predominantly white ‘home game’ uniforms. The six sophomore cheerleaders were the exception. Their uniforms were predominantly black. Three of them were to the far right, the other three to the far left.

Next came the Maverick at center court, and just behind it in a grid layout, the drill team, wide rather than deep, Alexa front and center. Behind the drill team and wrapping around on its sides was the pep band.

Way off to the right, in the direction that the Maverick was pointed, Nate saw the three drill team members wearing the bison heads, still pretending to be grazing. As a matter of fact, since everyone else was still, the three bisons represented the only movement. The crowd was paying close attention, looking forward to a fun and comical bison hunt, now surely only moments away.

The only other person on the basketball court that Nate noticed was Kenny. As he often did, he was right down there, mingling between the groups, kneeling, taking action photos of the assembly in his official capacity as yearbook photographer.

The last thing that that pallbearers did before retiring to the stands was connect up small cords hanging down from the ceiling to hooks on similar cords that looked to be part of the large banner draped over the Maverick and its lone rider. The long cords extended up to two small winches on the ceiling of the gym. They were just two of a series of winches on the gym ceiling that were used for a variety of things such as suspending curtains, batting cages and other types of sporting equipment. They were also used to raise decorations for dances and other events.

Nate still had no reason for alarm as he watched Alexa turn and lift an arm, pointing it at the back wall. The crowd grew quiet as she aimed a remote control at the giant flat screen TV that had been recently installed on that wall.

The TV came on and the crowd let out a collective gasp as everyone began to grasp what they were looking at. Nate realized quickly that he was looking at an image from the fair the night of the Homecoming Dance. In the image Dale was seated nude, facing the camera. She was just sitting there, about to have her ankles bound and connected to the bungee cord. The image was so well lit that even the cleft of her shaved pussy was visible between her thighs. He saw himself seated next to her. He was wearing the floppy hat that he had worn that night in an attempt to conceal his identity.

Above the image of Dale someone had added in the title, “Dale Jordan, Homecoming Queen.” As far as he was concerned, it was not really needed. He knew that the girl was Dale and she looked like Dale. It was surely an image that he had seen before, but probably just on a phone, never anywhere near this large. Above his image the name, ‘Nate Miller’ had been similarly added. A red line extended down from the blond braid over one of Dale’s shoulders; the words, “Fake Braid” appearing at the end of the line.

Everyone in the gym seemed to be in shock. No one knew how to react. Most of them had seen similar images, maybe even this very image. Nate saw Alexa again aim the remote and the image changed to one of Dale hanging upside down by her ankles. She was being lowered toward the mattresses on the ground. Her back was to the camera.

Her athletic physique, her feminine muscularity made for a gorgeous image. She looked so tall and slender hanging there like that, but it was the twin globes of her magnificent bare bottom that really stole the show. Again a red line connected the long braid, hanging straight down, to the words, “Fake Braid”. A similar line went from the tramp stamp on her lower back to the words, “Temporary Tattoo.”

Nate, like most of the people in the gym was now on his feet, wondering what exactly Alexa was up to. The electricity surging through the crowd had been just too great for anyone to have remained relaxed enough to have stayed seated. As he watched, a third image appeared. It showed Dale in her boots outfit, sprinting straight at the camera. In addition to her boots, she wore the large gloves and the big, trapper style hat, its strap snapped under her chin. She had that unmistakable ‘Dale’ sparkle in her eyes, a slight smile on her lips, her mouth slightly open.

Even though her hair was mostly hidden, there could be no doubt that it was Dale. Adding to the certainty was his own image in the picture. Given that he was behind her, he was less than half her height on the screen. There was a caption which read, “Dale streaking Madison Park last Sunday.” Nate looked between her legs and saw the unmistakable sideways smile of her cute little shaved pussy, sharp as could be, frozen in time by the flash. The flash had also caused the diamonds on either side of her nipples to ‘pop’. It was blatantly obvious that her nipples were pierced.

The audience seemed dumbstruck. Even the teachers in the gym seemed at a loss as to how they should react. Surely they knew that they should intervene, yet no one took the lead. As Nate watched, he saw Alexa turn. All eyes were on her, and all waited with bated breath to see what she would do next. She had a second remote control in her other hand. She pointed it up at the centrally located winch control box on the ceiling.

In that instant, loud warning bells went off in Nate’s brain. Images from Dale’s nipple nightmare were suddenly front and center. And it all seemed too real! All of a sudden, it was no longer just a dream! There was Alexa, remote control in hand. There was Dale. There were the winches, cords extending down to where he knew Dale was hidden under the cloth banner.

He saw Alexa’s arm move in such a way to indicate that she had just pressed a button. In that instant, the cords went taught as they began to be reeled in. A split second later Nate saw the initial movement of the banner. In a state of shock, he saw one of Dale’s feet come into view. It was bare! In that moment he knew that things were wrong, terribly wrong. Dale would never have her shoes off for an assembly. As he began plowing his way down through the football team, knocking guys over as he went, he caught a glimpse of the rope around her ankle. He was quickly able to discern that her feet were tied together underneath the horse’s belly.

As Dale’s bare knee came into view, he prayed to God that Alexa had not attached the cords to her nipples; however, his mind was fixated on that possibility. That was just a dream, right? Alexa couldn’t even have known about the dream, right? And the dream wasn’t based on anything that had originated with Alexa, right? At least not as far as he knew. He had to get there as quickly as he could; although, he knew that he was probably destined to be too late if something was indeed attached to her nipples. And he had nothing with him to cut the cords. Pocket knives were not allowed in school; no one would have a knife.

Nate saw Alexa turn, and again point a remote toward the TV. The image changed. On the screen Nate saw the large black and white banner being lifted from the Maverick. Alexa had obviously rigged up a live feed. Somewhere off to his right was a camera. The image of the Maverick and its yet hidden rider would be shown larger than life to everyone in the gym.

Nate saw Dale’s nude hip come into view. Glancing back up at the TV, he saw a sharp image of her pussy slit being revealed to the large crowd, the tiny little jewel sparkling right where pussy met Maverick. Even those behind her would have a full frontal view thanks to the live feed on the big screen. Everyone in the gym, no matter where they were located, was now looking at pussy lips mashed against the mascot’s solid backbone.

In that moment, Nate learned a lesson the hard way. He had not been watching carefully enough where he was placing his feet. He had been charging down the bleachers, through the team, with the highest level of urgency, while at the same time watching what was happening at center court. As he stepped onto the next to lowest level bench, he stumbled, going down hard on the gym floor, taking a couple of guys with him.

Once he had struggled back onto his feet, he again focused on getting to Dale. Everyone else in the gym still seemed frozen in place. He accelerated toward her. He saw the banner rise to the point that her tits were revealed to the crowd, both live and on the large screen. Her arms looked as if they were being held back painfully far, her nipples jutting out, the diamond barbells flashing as the light hit them. The live feed was perfectly placed as far as Dale’s nipples and pussy were concerned, the camera forward of center court so that the Maverick’s head hid nothing of significance.

As Dale’s face came into view, Nate glanced to his left where he had seen movement. Only one other person seemed to have budged out of the state of shock that had gripped the crowd . . . Carly. She looked like a woman on a mission, a determined look on her face, fire shooting from her eyes. She reached Dale first, just as the rising banner revealed her fully . . . in all her naked glory. Carly had probably been seated lower down in the bleachers.

At that point, Nate realized that the cords had not been attached to any part of Dale. The banner continued to ascend lazily toward the ceiling above. He felt a slight sense of relief as that realization soaked in. Everything seemed to be in its proper place. Her chest had two tits, every tit had a nipple, every nipple had its one barbell, and every barbell sparkled. At the very least, his concerns for her nipples had proven to be unfounded.

Dale turned her head and looked right at him as he approached. The anguish in her swollen red eyes was gut-wrenching. He noticed how uncomfortable she looked on account of the red ball in her mouth, held in place by black straps extending back across her cheeks. Something else about her seemed unusual. Then it hit him; her hair was pulled back. She was wearing a long blond braid. A blond braid just as she had worn the night of the bungee jump!

He quickly examined her face, trying to learn more from the expression in her eyes; however, he was too distracted by all the tear lines on her cheeks – made all the more ghastly due to the mess her crying had made of her eye makeup. She had obviously done quite a lot of crying. Rage boiled within him as he neared the horse. In that instant he happened to glance over at Carly near the horse’s tail. He caught sight of her foot headed forcefully for his groin. In the nick of time, he turned his lower body just enough for the full impact of the blow to be taken by his upper thigh.

“Goddam it, Carly,” he yelled, almost tripping and falling, but he had been quick enough to grab her foot. Regaining his balance he gave her leg a shove. She almost fell onto the wooden gym floor. For Nate it had been an instinctive reaction. He said angrily, “I had absolutely nothing to do with this. Think, goddam it . . . Alexa . . . the remotes!”

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Carly, regaining her footing, shot him an angry look. “Shithead,” she snapped, immediately going to Dale’s assistance, attacking the rope that went directly from her wrists back to where it was secured to the Maverick’s tail.

Nate looked quickly for Alexa as he hopped up on the low platform that supported the Maverick. She was right where she had been, watching with a gleeful look on her face.

As Nate reached up and went about removing the gag, Dale looked into his eyes. The emotion, the pain that he saw there was almost too much for him to bear. It hurt to know that he had let her down; in her moment of need, he had not been there.

As the ball came out of her mouth, he asked, “Are you okay?”

Pursing her lips, she shook her head, ‘no.’ He saw her take in a deep breath. Stretching her jaw a little, she again looked into his eyes as if seeking safety.

She looked more distraught than he had ever seen her, so he hugged her before proceeding. She had very little freedom of movement, but she did lean toward him, attempting to get her face down to his head, sobbing uncontrollably. He felt a shudder ripple through her body.

She obviously needed to be held, but Nate pulled himself away to work on getting her free. He squatted down and began working at the rope around her ankle. It looked like whoever had tied it had not been in scouting. The old saying, ‘If you can’t tie a knot, tie a lot,’ came to mind.

He could tell that Carly was dealing with a similar situation with the knots at the tail.
Similarly they consisted of knot on top of knot, and it struck him that it might have been done that way intentionally. Alexa had probably wanted the process of untying to take as long as possible.

Looking up he saw Dale scanning the scene in the gym, as if finally realizing the full gravity of her situation. Hundreds upon hundreds of pairs of eyes were all looking at the nude girl tied to the school’s mascot. She looked completely overwhelmed, almost as if she might pass out. He saw her look up and notice for the first time the large image of herself on the giant screen above. Sheer agony was evident in her expression as she looked back down at him. Never before in his life had he seen so much trauma on a human face.

“Oh, My God, Nate,” she said, tears bursting forth.

“Alexa, right?” he said so that Carly could easily overhear.

“How could she? She’s ruined my life,” said Dale through her sobs.

“Somehow, we’ll come back from this,” he said, trying to reassure her. He himself was starting to realize the enormity of the situation. This was going to be very difficult to overcome. “Carly and I, you’ll always have us,” he said looking back at Carly, realizing how much Dale would need her in the days ahead.

“I’m here for you, Dale,” said Carly. “I love you.”

Nate realized that he had never heard Carly actually use the word ‘love’ before. He had always known how strong her feelings for Dale were, but she had mostly expressed them by talking about her willingness to kick ass, as needed.

Nate looked at Dale’s pussy pressed firmly against the Maverick, noticing the glistening wet area all around. He glanced up at Dale and saw her shrug and look away, an embarrassed half-smile on her tear stained face. He could tell that extreme emotions of many sorts had been part of her experience that morning.

Looking over, Nate noticed some movement in the crowd. A few individuals seemed to be jockeying for position, and yet everyone stayed back . . . watching the amazing scene as it continued to unfold. It was almost as if he, Carly and Dale were all alone, and yet they were surrounded by a sea of eyes. He had thought that more help might be offered, and yet it didn’t materialize. Everyone kept their distance from the nude girl.

Dale continued to sob, looking down at him at her ankle, almost as if she were trying to pretend that they were the only two people in the world. He looked up into her eyes, touching her calf tenderly so that she would know that he was there for her.

“Nate, you didn’t rescue me this time,” she said softly, her tear filled eyes looking deep into his.

“I’m sorry, Love. I didn’t know,” he said, his voice cracking. He knew that she had surely been through hell . . . was still going through hell. Nate looked deep into her eyes, wishing that he could bear at least part of her burden.

He finished with his knot as Carly finished with hers. He stood up to help Dale down. He hugged her to him and she fell toward him, sliding off her high positon on the horse. As her right foot came into contact with the ground, Nate steadied her. Her left leg was still up on the horses back putting her in nearly a full splits position.

Normally Dale getting off the horse’s back would have been gracefully accomplished; however, having her arms roped together made her entirely dependent on Nate. Had he not been there, she would have certainly fallen. As it was, she didn’t fall, yet there were some extreme pussy viewing moments for many in the crowd, depending upon their location. Nate looked up at the TV screen, realizing that he should have taken her off of the other side. The horse’s head might have partially blocked the camera’s view of her pussy on the other side. He heard a collective gasp go up from the crowd while her legs were pointing in opposite directions, but eventually she managed to get her left foot free of the horses back.

Even after both of her bare feet were on the ground, her pussy was still in view of the crowd, especially via the TV. Her pussy disappeared from the screen as she turned to Nate, seeking the comfort of his arms. As he again hugged her, he felt her trembling.

Carly came to them, placing a reassuring arm on Dale’s shoulders. “Oh, Dale,” she said with heartfelt compassion. Dale looked over into her eyes, and leaned such that their foreheads touched.

Nate looked around. What had seemed like quite a few minutes spent on the knots had probably been only slightly more than one…yet few people had moved. Everyone was still keeping their distance…as if in shock. It was as though they were watching some sort of a crime unfold; all wishing to stay back, not wanting to be a part of the scene, and yet drawn to the suffering . . . no one able to look away. A few people were obviously taking photographs or filming the scene.

He noticed Kenny off to the side, his big camera hanging forgotten on his chest. Nate took a second to study him as he comforted Dale. It seemed odd that he, of all people, was not photographing the spectacle. He had one hand on his head, his fingers in his hair, his mouth hanging open. He appeared to be in a state of shock. The sympathy on his face as he watched Dale was so extreme that he almost looked as if he might himself break down in tears.

Nate glanced back at the Maverick. Realizing the extent of the wet spot, he let Carly hold Dale, while he returned to the Maverick. Gripping the end of his sleeve in his hand he rubbed where Dale had been sitting until it looked dry. He looked up, seeing himself doing so on the large screen above.

“Thank you,” said Dale under her breath, as she realized he was cleaning up the evidence of her messy orgasm.

“No problem,” he said quietly, putting his arm back around her tenderly. “We wouldn’t want to leave that kind of evidence behind now would we?” He saw a grateful, loving expression in her eyes. After a pause, he asked, “Less exposure, or more exposure?”

Looking around at the crowd, Dale replied, “It has to be up to you, but I’m not ready for this to end . . . I mean . . . the damage is done, right?”

“But you’re crying?” said Nate.

“Still,” said Dale, casting her red eyes down, acting bashful.

“Hmmm!” said Nate trying not to chuckle while looking back at Carly. He realized that she had overheard the exchange. Her mouth was hanging open in disbelief.

"Are you sure, Dale? I could give you my jersey," he said.

Without looking up at him she shook her head, ‘no.’

Turning to Address Carly directly, Nate said, “Alexa’s all yours! Just don’t get yourself in too much trouble.”

He saw the fire return to Carly’s eyes as she looked up, turning her attention back to those in the gym, plotting a course for where Alexa had last been seen.

“Carly, please don’t!” pleaded Dale, yelling after her, but Nate could tell that Carly was not to be deterred. He would have liked to have followed her to watch the action, but instead, he took ahold of Dale’s arms and started guiding her quickly toward the end of the gym that had the entrances to the locker rooms. The crowd parted, everyone keeping their distance.

“Okay,” he whispered into her ear. “Like you say, the damage is done. I’ll try to make it look like it never occurred to me to give you my jersey.”

As they made their way, he was thinking hard about the pitfalls of various courses of action. Alexa’s photos had painted Dale as an exhibitionist and he himself as her accomplice. Because she had tried to kick him in the nuts, he knew that Carly had bought into the idea that he had been involved. He couldn’t allow people to think that both he and Dale had been in on Alexa’s plot. Even if Dale enjoyed nudity, she could still be a victim. Just because someone liked to streak, that didn’t mean that they could be stripped and put on display. Force was never appropriate.

Still trying to decide what to do, he stopped Dale and acted as if he were consulting with her. “Make sure you look crushed and embarrassed,” he whispered to her. She nodded, still sobbing, her eyes cast down, the corners of her mouth turned down in a look of complete humiliation.

He glanced at the knots holding her arms together . . . there were just so many. He tried to make it look as if he had dismissed the idea of trying to untie her arms right then. Her chest was thrust up and out by the awkward arm position. She didn’t have any way to cover up at all. Her tits and pussy were on full display in the brightly lit gym.

“Let’s just get the hell out of here,” he said loud enough to be overheard. He wanted everyone to know that he had changed his mind as he turned Dale, leading her back in the other direction.

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At that moment, his eyes met Felipe’s. Signaling to him, he shouted, “Find Carly. She might hurt Alexa . . . not that Alexa doesn’t deserve it. Just try and keep her out of trouble, if you can.” To his delight, Felipe popped his head up, looking around. A moment later he was gone. Nate felt better. He had been experiencing second thoughts about what he had said to Carly. Hopefully Felipe would be able to keep her from getting too carried away.

Nate renewed his efforts to hustle Dale along. He worried that someone might come up with a shirt or coat and offer it up in an attempt to ‘help’ Dale. He knew he would not be able to refuse such a gesture, but he thought that was less likely to happen if they were deliberately racing for the exit. He was also doing his best to look angry. He thought that that too would keep the help away. It didn’t require much acting, all he had to do was think of Alexa . . . that kept his blood boiling.

He took a moment to steal a glance and Dale’s naked butt, jiggling enticing along given their hurried pace. It was so pretty, her muscles rippling just beneath her smooth skin. He had to force himself to look away lest he smile.

“Out of our way,” he shouted, swinging his arm to indicate to the crowd ahead to open a path for them to the main gym exit.

He caught sight of Susie. She was standing to the side, a look of utter horror on her face. She looked as if she could hardly make herself look. Her palms were pressed against her cheeks. She seemed to be imagining how devastated she herself would be under the circumstances that been thrust upon Dale. Her face looked somewhat like Dale’s . . . as if she had been crying . . . just as she might if she herself had been stripped and put on nude display. He wondered if deep down she might remember that Dale might be enjoying the situation. If she did, there was no evidence of it.

After they had passed Susie, he leaned over and whispered in Dale’s ear, “Did you see Susie.”

“No,” he heard Dale respond.

He remembered that she was avoiding making eye contact, and he could tell that Dale’s anguish and embarrassed appearance wasn’t an act. Everything really was way too much for her. She was obviously experiencing extreme emotions; dread for her future, humiliation, as well as the excitement of being stark naked and on display in front of everyone.

“I guess you’ve set a new record for how many people have seen the pretty shaved pussy!” he commented quietly into her ear.

“Nate!” she said reprimanding him, but genuinely feeling all the anxiety that went along with knowing that it was indeed true.

“And as luck would have it, there is a little gem right on top. I’m sure it will be the talk of the school!” he teased.

Fortunately, he had a tight hold on her arm, for in that instant she did a nose dive. He was caught so off guard that he essentially fell along with her. Somehow he had managed to turn her and slow her fall enough that she hadn’t been hurt. That had been more a matter of how he been holding her arm than anything that he had consciously done during the fall itself.

Struggling to get back up off of her without smashing her, he saw the surprised look on her face, just inches from his own.

“Are you okay?” he asked.

“I think so,” she said quietly, nodding.

He looked back in the direction they had come. Someone had obviously stepped on the rope still secured to one of her ankles. Neither of them had paid any attention to how it had been dragging along behind.

She lay there, three quarters of the way on her back, her arms mostly under her, her tight, rock hard nipples pointing up at the crowd watching everything that was happening. As Nate got up he caught sight of Kenny, lifting up his camera to take a shot of Dale stretched out awkwardly on the hardwood floor. Kenny had apparently come to grips with his heartfelt compassion for Dale, realizing that she might appreciate a photographic record.

In order to give Kenny an even better shot, he lifted up her ankle to go about removing the rope. He held it up at waist level as he attacked the knot. In that position, just the one leg way up, every little pussy detail was very much on display . . . at least to those who were well positioned. Remembering the TV screen, he looked up. It was still on, but just displaying an image of the now riderless Maverick, quite a few people around it, all looking off in the same direction.

“I’m too exposed like this, Buster,” she said struggling, seemingly very distraught and embarrassed. He looked up from the knot. Her cheeks were lobster red. She tried in earnest to do something herself about the uncomfortable situation, attempting to raise her other leg to close the gap between her knees.

Realizing that she did have limits, he quickly lowered her leg back to the floor, saying, “I’m sorry, Dale. I was just focusing on the knot.”

Dale immediately clamped her legs together shooting him a poison arrow look.

He squatted down to finish untying the knot at floor level, realizing of course that there were people behind. It wasn’t just Kenny who had been granted the opportunity to get a good look or a good photo between Dale’s legs.

As he worked on the knot, he glanced up at her pussy. It was in fine form, happy and full of life. The outer lips were swollen. The inner lips glistened invitingly. The little jewel stood out between the twin slits that started at her mound. It was truly an exquisite pussy. Obviously not a juvenile prepubescent hairless pussy, but rather a mature pussy . . . a woman’s pussy . . . clearly shaved so that every little detail could be examined. Many people were doing just that. It was both an anatomy lesson as well as an opportunity for art appreciation . . . appreciation of the beauty of the human body.

Nate finished untying the knot and asked her if she was okay, allowing his question to be overheard. She had just taken a bad fall on a hard floor. With her hands tied behind, it could easily have resulted in a serious injury.

“Yes, I’m fine,” she assured him, but added, “My shoulder hurts a little.”

Leaning close and whispering, he asked, “I am sorry about the legs. Except for that, are you okay with how this is going, Slave Girl?”

“You’re such a kind Knight to torture me like this,” she said winking. Her facial expression returned to one of embarrassment and shame as Nate lifted her back onto her feet. Given that she had no use of her arms, he had to do all the work of standing her back up. Again taking her arm tightly in his hand, they resumed making their way for the main gymnasium exit.

Thinking that his rescue of Dale might be looking suspiciously slow, Nate decided to pick her up. Without consulting her, he grabbed her around the waist and threw her over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes. That allowed him to speed up, and he headed out the double doors at a trot, Dale’s nude body bouncing around on his shoulder.

However, only then did he realize the exposed position that he had put Dale in. Everything between her legs, her slippery pussy and even her anus, were now on display at a height that many in the crowd would have no trouble seeing. Still he pressed ahead.

“Put me down! Put me down!” yelled Dale angrily.

“Sorry, just trying to get you out of here quickly,” he said, placing her feet back on solid ground.

“Oh, My God, Nate. Just not with my butt in the air!” she said, angrily scolding him and turning to head down the hallway.

“Sorry, sorry,” he said, regretting how he had tried to speed things up. Secretly he was glad about their exchange. He suspected that it had made their stress evident as they both sought to get away from the tough situation that Alexa had imposed upon them. A little bit of relationship stress might be expected given the circumstances.

Together, Nate’s hand again on Dale’s arm, they turned left and headed down the main hallway through a sea of people. He had decided to lead her right past the main offices, Mr. McRoberts’ office among them, and straight out the front doors of the school. From there they would head to his car.

He was rescuing her in a manner that he hoped would be quite believable. Her clothes had been taken, so he was whisking her away as quickly as possible by heading straight for his car…via the shortest, most direct route. He was getting her as far from school as possible. He was taking her straight home, as-is.

As he marched Dale, naked with her arms tied behind her back, rapidly down the center of the school’s wide main hallway, he looked at all the students and teachers as they stepped aside to let them pass. He would recognize individuals and attempt to make eye contact, but that was typically unsuccessful.

It made him feel as if he himself were essentially invisible. Everyone seemed to only have eyes for Dale. They all scrutinized her carefully. Her nude body was being studied in great detail, especially by the guys. That was little surprise. He knew how he’d react if he were in their shoes, seeing her naked for the first time.

Her pretty titties bounced jubilantly along, as if enjoying the attention. They seemed oblivious to all the anguish on Dale’s face. Even though there was embarrassment in Dale’s eyes and tear streaks on her face, there was a spring in her step that indicated to Nate that she was happy inside . . . trying to make the best of the unusual circumstances. Her bare feet slapped against the hard floor sending tremors up through her body, causing her boobies to jump around enticingly on her small frame, her pointy nipples bobbing around right on top.

The opportunity to study a hot nude cheerleader with an impeccably shaved pussy was a rare occurrence indeed. Suffice it to say that this might be the one and only time that this might happen at Prospect High, so the occasion was not to be taken lightly. And of course, Dale was Dale. She was hardly an ordinary teen beauty. She was absolutely stunning nude, probably more beautiful than any model on any web site . . . pornographic or otherwise . . . at least to Nate . . . to many others as well, he was certain. Every inch of her skin was tight and in place, her muscles rippling just below revealing her athletic pursuits. In her cheer uniform alone, guys would turn to observe her lithe limbs, so it was hardly to be wondered at that they stared at her naked, mouths open indicating the extent to which they were awestruck.

**The Exhibitionist Next Door - 342: Getting Away continued**

In addition to staring at her tits, her pussy, and her lovely tush, her red, tear-streaked face was also being studied. He could see true empathy in the eyes of nearly every person. The girls in particular seemed to have the – ‘There but for the grace of God, go I!’ – look on their faces.

While many may have believed that she had willingly gone bungee jumping naked and streaking in the park, Nate thought that no one looked as if they thought that she had allowed herself to be stripped and tied nude to the Maverick. Everyone looked as if they were fully aware that Dale had been severely mistreated. Sympathy seemed to be evident on every face he studied.

Nate shot a glance at those behind them. Their eyes appeared focused on Dale’s butt, yet the expressions also looked to be full of compassion. Never had that hallway been packed with so many people and yet simultaneously so quiet. It wasn’t pin drop quiet, but possibly church service quiet. And to Nate that seemed like an appropriate metaphor given what was taking place. Those watching almost looked as if they were having a religious experience. They were observing a lovely creature, unsoiled by clothing…an amazing sight to behold. And yet the circumstances seemed to be those of ultimate suffering. As far as everyone knew, this was the hazing incident to end all hazing incidents.

Indeed Dale was suffering, but only he knew what she was really going through. Like Susie, they looked as if they were imagining how they themselves would feel in her position. And they seemed to have no doubt that she was embarrassed and in tremendous pain. Indeed her face was beet red and she was doing everything she could to avoid eye contact . . . every aspect fit.

Nate knew that some of it was an act, but only partly so. Dale was indeed experiencing all of the emotions of trauma. She was on a first name basis with nearly everyone there, and even though she was an exhibitionist through and through, she had never imagined that she would be seen by all of these people completely nude. Nate had hinted to her about how a few more people would see her nude over the course of the months ahead, but neither of them had imagined that it might end up being everyone all at once and right away.

Nate thought back to how difficult it had been for her to be seen by just two close friends, Carly and Felipe, just a couple of months earlier. That had of course been people whom she could trust. There had also been other large groups of people, such as during The Wheel of Death experience and its aftermath. However, in all of those instances they had been far from home, they had not known the majority of the people, and Dale had been protected by a pseudonym. None of those conditions applied at Prospect High. Dale knew everyone, and they all knew her . . . they knew her as Dale Jordan.

Presumably, she would continue to attend high school, but now it would be with students and teachers who had seen her completely naked. If she did continue to attend Prospect High, it was hard to know what that might be like for Dale, for Nate, or for any of those now witnessing Dale’s escape.

As they approached the schools main foyer, Nate and Dale were able to finally speed up. Fewer people had filtered out this far from the gym. Nate looked over at Dale. He examined the braid attached to her hair. While he couldn’t be absolutely certain, he felt that it was the very braid that she had worn early that fall while bungee jumping.

“Hold up there, Mr. Miller,” he heard an authoritative voice say. Looking for its source, he saw Mr. McRoberts standing there, holding up the palm of his hand to underscore what he had just said.

“No can do, Sir,” he said without slowing. “Dale’s not safe here.” He thought about adding to that comment, as he plowed ahead. It seemed to pretty much sum up why he needed to get her as far away from Prospect High as he could right then. Turning to again face Mr. McRoberts as they passed, he added, “You caused this, you know. Alexa did this because of you!”

Mr. McRoberts looked dumbfounded at those words and studied the look on Dale’s tear streaked face as they passed, her eyes burning holes in him. Fortunately, Mr. McRoberts made no attempt to physically detain them. Nate imagined that he looked too determined for Mr. McRoberts to have given that any serious thought . . . and he knew that Mr. McRoberts would be no match for him physically, had push come to shove.

As they exited the double doors and charged across the concrete where Dale had made the snow angel only a week earlier, they both blinked in the sunshine. All the snow had been gone for days, and it had warmed up nicely for a winter day. That of course meant that it was still quite chilly, especially on naked skin, probably fifty degrees Fahrenheit at best.

Nate leaned over and whispered in Dale’s ear, “As you pointed out this morning, it’s been just one week since the snow angel. And here you are again . . . nude. . . right in front of the school.”

“Something’s different this time,” she responded softly, and indeed it was. They were being accompanied by hundreds of students. There were people on all sides, and glancing back, Nate saw a steady stream of people continuing to flow out of the school’s many front doors.

“This changes everything, I’m afraid,” he said quietly.

“I know,” said Dale. “Alexa ruined my life.”

Nate expected that she was enjoying the nudity and the stress that went along with the extreme exposure, but her facial expression was consistent with what any girl would be going through who was suddenly displayed naked in front of all her peers.

“By the way, Lady G.,” he said to her so that no one else could hear. “…you are doing a great job of looking the part of the victim,”

“I’m not a victim?” she asked.

“I didn’t mean that you weren’t,” he said backtracking. “I just mean that you don’t look like an exhibitionist enjoying her nudity.”

He saw a brief hint of a smile on her lips as she asked, “Lady G?”

“Don’t you get it?” he asked. “Alexa turned you into Lady Godiva!”

Dale started to laugh, but then Nate shot her a glance and she went back to looking distraught.

Nate noticed people running ahead to get a good view of Dale or even to photograph her in the sunshine. Many people were respectful enough to not photograph Dale’s trauma, but not everyone. While there was no real way to prevent photos, every time he saw a phone in camera position, he had been pointing at the owner and shaking his head. That had seemed to work. On most occasions people had simply put their phone away.

He knew that there would be photos and video as well, in abundance, but he was hoping that his efforts might have limited the quantity somewhat. He had been taking his own photos, but that had ended at the point that Alexa had turned on the big screen TV. Also he knew that Kenny had taken a few photos once he had gotten over the shock of seeing someone he cared about being so severely mistreated.

“Where’s your phone?” he asked Dale as they started running toward Nate’s car. Dale’s bare feet limited how fast they could run.

“Where’s any of my stuff?” she replied, her titties bobbing around gleefully in her chest. “I’m traveling light. If it doesn’t fall into the attached intimate jewelry category, then I don’t have it with me.”

“What about the rope around your arms?” asked Nate.

“Not exactly mine,” said Dale. “Although I expect I’ll be keeping it.”

“Maybe it’s your souvenir,” said Nate.

As they pulled up at his car, Nate set to work on the various knots securing her wrists and elbows. The crowd had been behind, but they flowed around Nate’s car, wanting one last look at Dale before she disappeared.

“You’re not going to be able to ride in the car like this,” he said loud enough to be overheard, as he fought with the knots. They were indeed tight. Dale had probably been pulling them tighter ever since they had been tied.

Nate thought back to all the movement he had seen under the banner as the Maverick had been rolled out onto the court. “Wow, Dale, I know you were trying to get free, but all that struggling under the banner really pulled these knots tight,” he said aloud, hoping it might strengthen her case as a victim.

Nate was fighting with the knots, hurrying to get her untied. He thought about milking the moment for Dale, Super-Sizing her experience, so to speak, but he decided against it. They needed to get out of there. She was on still on display in front of hundreds of their classmates. The damage had been done. Nothing could be done about that.

It had been quite an experience for Dale, that he knew; one that they would never be able to recreate. As he continued untying knots, she was on full display, but fortunately still acting bashful. She stood stock still so as to not hinder his efforts. Looking over her shoulder, Nate observed how tight Dale’s nipples were in the cold breeze. He loved the look of her erect nipples in the sunshine, proudly bearing their burden, the little miniature dumbbells.

Once her elbows were loose, she did relax a little, breathing a sigh of relief. It was apparent just how far back her elbows had been pulled once her posture was allowed to return to something closer to normal.

“Wow, you’re going to have some real bruising,” he said examining her elbows as he fought with the knots at her wrist. He said it so he could be overheard . . . so that those listening would be fully aware of how mistreated she had been. It was, however, completely true, she was going to have extensive bruising. Whispering to her he continued, “Once your arms are free, I need you to do everything you can to cover yourself. Get ready to show everyone just how timid and shy you really are.”

“What about your braid, Lady Godiva?” he asked her while continuing to work on the knotted rope.

“I can get that later myself, Nate. These knots sure are taking forever,” she responded acting impatient to get out of view of everyone. “Can’t you hurry up a little?”

“Yeah, this is taking too long,” said Nate, giving up and digging out his keys. Once he had her door unlocked and open, he helped her get inside announcing to the crowd, “Show’s over.” Nate left her unbuckled, figuring that he would stop in a block or so and finish untying her.

Nate jogged around the rear of the car hopping into the driver’s seat. Moments later he had the car running and was pulling out of his parking spot.

**The Exhibitionist Next Door - 343: The Drive**

As they got underway, he shook his head saying, “Oh, My God, Dale! So much for that pep assembly, right?”

Now that they were alone, Dale started to relax a little, “Yep, one naked girl sure can bring an assembly to a quick halt.”

A few blocks from school Nate pulled over to finish untying her arms, and to take a moment to finally ascertain how Dale was really doing. The rapid yet lengthy escape out the front door had seen them so surrounded at all moments that they had both been forced to focus primarily on appearances.

As the rope came loose, Dale reached this way and that within the confines of the car to stretch out her arms and shoulders. Next she hugged herself to further loosen up her shoulders.

After allowing her a quick moment to enjoy her restored freedom of movement, Nate wrapped both arms around her, pulling her close. She was still trembling. She nuzzled her face into his neck.

Dale indulged in enjoying the comfort of Nate’s arms for a minute, but then went about removing the braid and all the ties that had been holding it in place. As the ponytail came out of her own hair, she ran her fingers through it, getting it into position and fluffing it up. Nate really had a thing for her unruly ‘Tomboy’ hair. He loved how beautiful she was while at the same time paying so little attention to her hair. Her ‘hardly a hair in place’ style fit her active, go-getter personality to a T, and yet it was seemingly one of those things about her that drove other girls crazy.

“Wow, what a shock to the system,” said Nate compassionately. He could only begin to imagine what she’d been through in the process of being stripped, gagged and tied to the horse. He had been so glad that her, ‘I’m not ready for this to end,’ comment had seemed in indicate that she was taking at least some of it in stride, and yet he knew full well that there must have been extreme emotional trauma in addition to anything that had been done to her physically to get her naked and on the horse. He suspected that the bruising where the ropes had been was not the extent of it.

Oh, Nate,” she said. “There I was, looking forward to a fun assembly, just trying to get along like I always do, when all of a sudden…” Her train of thought seemed to be interrupted as she finally choked up and gave in, allowing the tears to flow.

“I know, I know,” he said, holding her and rocking back and forth a little.

“Alexa’s mean, and she spanks a lot harder than you do,” said Dale.

“She spanked you?” asked Nate angrily as he pulled back a little to look into her face.

“And she punched me in the stomach, or someone did. Here, is my butt red?” she asked, turning in her seat and rising up on her knees to get her butt up in his face for inspection.

“I would say so,” said Nate. “It’s redder than your face.” Running a few fingers gently along one of her outer lips he added, “…but not anywhere near as red as this pussy.”

“Nate!” said Dale, sitting back down and trying to feign indignation.

“Just saying,” said Nate chuckling. “Someone got pretty aroused, didn’t she?”

“Well…” said Dale, bashfully turning away and looking out the passenger window to hide her face.

“You don’t have to be embarrassed. I mean, I’m always sporting this hardon,” he said taking her hand and placing it on his crotch. “Somethings are just very stimulating. There’s little either of us can do about that.”

“She made fun of me, Nate,” said Dale. “I got wet while they were stripping me. I couldn’t help it, but Alexa saw it and she made fun of me.”

Well, she IS mean, and I know you can’t help it,” he said.

“It was embarrassing, especially when the other girls would laugh,” said Dale.

“But punching you, spanking you,” he said angrily.

“Just a few spanks,” she said.

“Still! Even one is too many. Part of me hopes that Carly kills her.”

“Oh, Nate, don’t say that. That’s so not you,” she said.

“But part of me hopes that she leaves some there for me,” he added.

“What will happen to her, Nate?” asked Dale. “I mean, the police will be called, right?”

“Now you’re all concerned about Alexa?” he asked.

“I don’t know,” said Dale, taking a deep breath and sighing.

“Well, I’ll be tremendously disappointed in the American system if she can do such a thing and not be severely punished,” he said.

“She knows she’ll be punished. At least that is what her tone of voice indicated to me,” said Dale. “At one point, she even said, ‘I don’t care anymore.’ She wanted this that badly. Can you imagine?”

“That makes no sense,” said Nate. “Why would she do this knowing that she wouldn’t get away with it?”

“I know!” said Dale shaking her head. “It makes no sense, but all of a sudden I’m feeling quite hungry. I didn’t get much breakfast. Dairy Queen maybe? I do have victim status,” suggested Dale.

“So you think it’s safe to be naked for a bit, do you?” asked Nate, starting the car and pulling back out onto the street.

“I don’t know . . . sort of,” offered Dale wishfully.

“So who else was there helping Alexa?” he asked. “The drill team girls again?”

“I don’t think so,” said Dale, starting to cry.

“Why the fresh tears, Lover?” he asked, quite concerned.

Dale thought about mentioning Michelle, but she needed more time to process her thoughts about that. She continued to cry thinking about who else she had decided was in the mat room helping.

“Should I pull over again?” asked Nate.

“No, keep going,” said Dale through a torrent of tears. After a few moments of crying she got her tears under enough control to attempt an explanation. “It was cheerleaders, Nate,” she said, her voice cracking. “They turned on me.”

Suddenly Dale was crying harder than he had ever seen her cry. Nate did what he had to do, pulling into the first open parking spot. He unbuckled and slid over, attempting to comfort her. Her body convulsed with anguish. He didn’t know what to say. He knew there were some hard feelings there, but the idea that the girls who knew her best would side with enemy number one was too much for him as well. He tried to think of something comforting to say, but instead found himself crying almost as hard as she was. He couldn’t understand why they would do that to her. He knew that she didn’t deserve it.

She looked up into his eyes. “Nate, you’re crying,” she observed, trying to choke back her own tears.

“I’m sorry,” said Nate. “It’s just too unbelievable. I can’t even begin to imagine how much that has to hurt.”

“It hurts, Nate,” she said, the tears returning full force. She buried her face in his already tear soaked jersey.

There was nothing to say, so he just held her. He wanted his hug to convey that she had him. He was there for her. He’d always be there for her.

“I’m a mess, Nate,” she finally said once she could again form words. “My life is a mess. Even before Alexa ruined it, it was a mess.”

“Your life wasn’t a mess,” said Nate.

“And I don’t know where I went wrong,” she added, continuing to cry her heart out. “I guess I need a do over, but it wouldn’t do any good. It’s me they hate.”

“That’s not true,” he said. “When people get to know you, they like you. Susie, for example. She likes you. I’m sure she wasn’t in the mat room.”

“I don’t know,” said Dale, shaking her head. “Maybe she wasn’t, but Jodie was there. Vanessa and Erin…I’m pretty sure they were there. A few of the juniors, but I’m not really sure which ones.”

“I’m not surprised about Vanessa and Erin,” said Nate.

“I think they were there, but I’m not positive. Other than Alexa, Jodie and Michelle, no one spoke. I mostly had just laughter and whispering to go on,” she said.

“Michelle,” said Nate spitefully. “That, I could have guessed.”

“Don’t be mad at her, Nate,” said Dale, wishing she hadn’t accidentally mentioned her name.

“Oh, My God! Not this again,” said Nate in disbelief.

“I’m still hungry,” said Dale, purposefully trying to change the subject.

“Okay,” said Nate, drying his eyes and sliding back into the driver’s seat. “I guess I’m okay to drive.”

After they had gone a few blocks, Dale asked, “Where are we going? We’re not really going to DQ.”

“DQ,” said Nate.

**The Exhibitionist Next Door - 344: The Drive continued**

“But I was just kidding,” she said. “They know me there.”

“What happened to victim status?” asked Nate. “Besides, it was your idea, and you’ve always wanted to go there naked.”

Dale didn’t reply. She didn’t think he’d actually go there, but she knew she’d know in a couple of blocks. To her surprise, he did turn into the Dairy Queen parking lot, joining the lunch rush line for the drive-thru.

“What would you like?” he asked, turning and examining her tear streaked face.

“Why don’t you park and I’ll just wait in the car,” she suggested sliding lower in her seat.

“This will be fine,” said Nate. “You’re wearing your seatbelt. Across your hip it is wider than any bikini strap.”

“Nate, I’m butt naked,” she said, her concern growing.

“Hundreds upon hundreds of people have seen you naked today, Dale. The whole town will know everything within a few hours,” he said.

“So!” said Dale. “The victim thing . . . I don’t think it holds water.”

“Are you really this indecisive?” he asked laughing.

“I guess my adrenalin is just no longer pumping,” she said.

“Well, let’s try this,” said Nate. “Make a ball. Get your heels up onto the seat, right against your butt. Now hug your knees to your chest.”

Dale did as instructed saying, “I’m still naked.”

“Your legs are making your tits squish out,” he observed.

“What tits?” said Dale sarcastically.

“Here, slide your arms a little lower,” said Nate reaching over to help pose her. “There, now the pretty titty can’t be seen from the side at all.”

“What titty?” reiterated Dale.

“Let me guess,” said Nate. “Alexa was calling you ‘tit-poor’ and all that again, right?”

“Not as much as before,” said Dale. “A couple of those girls are a bit close to my end of the endowment scale. That’s why I think she was going easier on my tits. Instead she was going on and on about how aroused I was . . . the wet pussy . . . the stiff nipples.

“Makes sense, I guess,” said Nate, pulling forward a space and placing their order at the speaker.

At the last moment, just before pulling forward the final time, Nate tore off his jersey. Handing it to her he said, “Here, put this on, Slave Girl.”

Being designed to fit over shoulder pads, the jersey was giant on Dale. She had it on over her head in a flash. She breathed a sigh of relief, saying, “Thank you, Lover. I guess I’ve had my fill of nudity for today.”

“Don’t get too comfortable,” said Nate smiling tenderly at her. “I’ll be needing it back right after the drive through.”

At the window, Dale just sat there, staring straight ahead, avoiding looking over at the cashier. She knew how her face looked. The cashier looked curiously at the two of them, the boy in a white undershirt and the girl with messy hair in an oversize football jersey.

“Is she alright?” asked the middle aged woman as she handed Nate his order.

“As good as can be expected . . . considering how severely she’s been mistreated today,” replied Nate, looking over at Dale. Dale didn’t move.

“Miss, do I need to call the police?” the woman asked, addressing Dale directly.

“I’m sure they’ve already been called,” said Dale, turning her head to allow the woman to see how terrible her tear-streaked face looked.

“Oh, My,” remarked the woman as Nate put his car in gear and drove off.

“Do you think she’ll call the cops?” asked Dale half a block from Dairy Queen.

“Not sure,” said Nate. “But it won’t matter if she does. They’ll just learn what route we took . . . assuming they’ve been called.” Continuing after a pause, he said smiling, “My jersey, Slave Girl.”

Cheerfully Dale removed the jersey, tossing it back to him. She then rebuckled her seat belt, while Nate just held the shirt in his lap.

“You sure had me worrying at DQ,” she commented.

“You like to worry,” said Dale.

“I guess,” said Dale.

They drove the next block in silence.

“Nate, let’s go up the canyon to eat,” proposed Dale.

“Towards the clubhouse?” he asked.

“Yeah, it’s sunny. The clubhouse is closed. We can sit in that big parking lot and have lunch in peace,” she said. “It’ll help me. I’m starting to calm down.”

“I like the clubhouse idea,” said Nate, putting his left turn blinker on and altering course.

He looked over and observed Dale. She looked quite thoughtful. She was back in the fetal position she had been in earlier. That made sense as there were other cars on some of the busier streets.

When they were part way up the canyon, Dale remarked, “There’s the other end of the trail up to the overlook bench.” Nate looked over and saw her looking into the sage brush to the right of the road.

“Yep, this is where you surprised me on that first trip to Madison Park . . . by how fast you took off sprinting downhill, diagonally across the road.”

“Our park,” corrected Dale. “You know, I don’t think I’ve ever been on this section of the trail during the day.”

“I guess there are things that you’ve only done naked,” said Nate.

“Like climb onto the clubhouse roof,” remarked Dale as the building came into view.

As Nate parked in the middle of the empty parking lot, he asked, “Just what do you know about your tramp stamp?”

“What’s to know?” asked Dale. “It’s not a temporary tattoo like the one you had for me the night of the Homecoming Dance. Someone, probably Alexa, drew it on me with a big marker.”

“I wanted to tell you about it when I first saw it,” said Nate, putting his jersey back on.

“It’s just a tramp stamp, right?” said Dale.

“You’re right,” said Nate laughing. “But it’s a REAL tramp stamp. It actually says, ‘TRAMP’ in ornate capital letters.”

“You’re kidding,” said Dale, twisting her neck and arching her back in an attempt to see it.

“Here,” said Nate. “Turn a little and I’ll take a picture so you can see it.”

Dale turned and Nate photographed her lower back.

Looking at the photo on Nate’s phone she remarked, “It’s pretty well done, but it’s kind of mean . . . writing ‘Tramp’ on my back . . . for everyone to see.”

“It is,” agreed Nate. “You’re hardly a tramp. But in the overall scheme of things, writing ‘Tramp’ on you kind of gets lost in the shuffle today. I mean, the bigger trespasses were stripping you, tying you to the Maverick, and displaying you nude, arms back, knees apart to the entire student body.”

“I know,” said Dale taking the DQ bag and handing Nate his burger. “Double cheese burger for you. Grilled chicken sandwich for me.”

“Thanks,” said Nate, unwrapping one side and taking a bite. “Since I’m thinking about it. I should take pictures of your arms and ankles.”

“The bruising will look worse tomorrow,” she said.

“Probably, but I think we ought to document how they look right now. Hop out for a second,” he said.

They both climbed out of the car. Nate took full-body front and back shots, as well as close-ups of her wrists, elbows and ankles. They were definitely starting to look bruised. He also took a better shot of her ‘Tramp’ stamp now that she was in the sunshine. He made sure her red rump showed clearly in the photo.

“Maybe they can perform handwriting analysis on that to know who actually wrote it,” he said.

“If it wasn’t Alexa,” she said. “Then I don’t want to know.”

They got back in the car to resume having lunch. Nate ran his motor a little to keep the passenger compartment warm enough for the naked girl.

Nate decided to again talk about a difficult subject. “Dale,” he said. “My sense is that this was all Alexa. I know that it appears that these cheerleaders are against you, and I suppose that today they were, but without Alexa, I don’t think they would have done this. Alexa must be not only conniving but also persuasive. Remember what Mrs. Shepherd said about that? And just look at Miss Whitaker. Alexa just seems to be able to convince people to go along with her devious schemes.”

“I don’t know, Nate,” said Dale. “I’d like to believe that Alexa is the only one who hates me. I really would.”

“I’m not saying that these other girls don’t dislike you,” said Nate, not wanting to use the word ‘hate’. “I’m just saying that Alexa was able to make them think like her. Without her as a catalyst, nothing like this would have happened. If those girls had been left to independently form their own opinions without influence, then I think they’d see you for who you really are . . . a nice thoughtful girl.”

“Thanks, Nate,” she said. “It’s just all so crazy. I mean, the state championship hangs in the balance. The football team needs to stay focused on playing their best game ever. How can they manage to do that with all this craziness? Those guys needed a motivational pep assembly, and they deserved one. I care about those guys . . . about you guys . . . every one of you. The whole school needed that assembly, not for this to happen. Even if they hate me, why would those girls do that to the football team?”

“I expect that they don’t have nearly as much school spirit as you do,”’ said Nate.

Nate was truly impressed that Dale was thinking of the assembly in terms of how it might affect others: the football team, the student body.

“That’s hard to imagine,” said Dale. “Vanessa and Erin are the ones who thought up the victory dance idea. I think they want the team to win as much as anyone. I expect that even Alexa wants the team to win the game.”

“Maybe,” said Nate not thinking that he had any clue as to what Alexa might really want.

“It just makes no sense,” said Dale, shaking her head.

“And yet it happened,” said Nate. “It’s not logical. I doubt they can even explain it to themselves. But I have been thinking about school shootings.”

“Mass murder?” asked Dale. “Please tell me you’re not thinking of retaliating on that level. That might be outside the terms of our ‘No Breakups Ever’ agreement.”

“No, don’t worry, I’m not going to start killing cheerleaders,” said Nate. “I was just thinking about Alexa.”

“Nate . . . not even Alexa!” said Dale sternly but with a little bit of worry evident in her voice.

**The Exhibitionist Next Door - 345: The DQ Bag**

“Hear me out, okay?” said Nate.

“Okay . . . sorry,” said Dale.

“I’ve been trying to understand Alexa,” explained Nate. “But her actions are essentially impossible to explain. It would seem that she decided that ruining you was important to her. For whatever reason, I don’t know. And she tried to do so by working within the system; gathering evidence, taking it to the authorities. A few days ago, in Mr. McRoberts office, she thought she had you. But she didn’t . . . her plans crumbled. Mr. McRoberts didn’t come through for her. She got mad. She knocked over chairs and coat trees, slamming the door. And then . . . she decided to take matters into her own hands!”

“That’s what I think happened,” agreed Dale. “She was so furious.”

“But she’s not really crazy…” said Nate.

“She’s not?” interjected Dale.

“A little, just not completely crazy,” said Nate. “Back to the school shooting analogy. Under such circumstances, some students have entered their schools with multiple weapons, armed to the teeth. It happens several times a year, it seems. And in those cases, the shooters are willing to pay the ultimate price. They kill themselves, or they are killed by the police. I’m starting to think that Alexa is a not quite so crazy version of a school shooter. She doesn’t want to kill or be killed, but she is willing to accept the consequences.”

“That’s interesting,” said Dale. “I was mostly thinking that her actions were off the deep end.”

“And they are,” said Nate. “However, if you compare her to a school shooter, then the perspective changes a little.”

“So, she’s a school shooter without a gun and without a death wish?” asked Dale.

“Maybe,” said Nate. “It’s just a theory I’m working on. And in place of the guns, she has relationships and her power of persuasion to call upon. It might also explain why she is not worried about collateral damage . . . in other words, the football game.”

“Well, I’m going to beat her!” announced Dale.

“Dale, you don’t have to beat her,” said Nate.

“But I am . . . I’m going to beat her!” said Dale enthusiastically.

“Now it’s my turn to worry about what you might have in mind,” he said.

“I’m going to turn the tables on her,” said Dale energetically. “She’ll never know, but I’ll know.”

“She’ll never know?” said Nate, confusion evident in his expression.

“Do you have a pen, Nate?” she asked.

“Glove compartment,” replied Nate pointing.

Dale opened the glove compartment and started poking around.

“Condoms, Nate? Really?” asked Dale holding up what she had found. “You know what I do with condoms.”

“Give those to me,” said Nate, grabbing them from her. “Don’t you dare throw my condoms away again! I thought you were looking for a pen.”

“I am,” said Dale, returning her attention to the glove compartment.

A minute later Dale had torn off the top of the DQ bag and was busy writing on it.

“What are you writing?” he asked.

“None of your business,” she said. But after a moment’s thought she added, “I’m just feeling spontaneous.”

Nate left the naked beauty in peace to write whatever her heart desired. She had her hand curled around the piece of paper to block him from being able to see what she was writing. A minute or two later, she let out a big sigh and started tearing up what she had written.

“Didn’t come out like you’d hoped?” he asked.

Dale took all the paper scraps and tossed them into what was left of the DQ bag. She held up the bag. Giving it a little shake, she asked, “Are you going to draw the winning number, or am I?”

“Really?” asked Nate suddenly cluing in to what she might have in mind.

“Yep,” she said with a nervous smile. Softly and slowly, she whispered, “It’s lottery time!”

All of a sudden Nate’s outlook changed. He sat up.

“Lottery time? Really?” he asked in near disbelief.

“Wait, do you have your lottery ticket with you?” she asked.

“No, it’s too precious to carry around, but I remember the number,” he said.

“That will have to do,” she said. “What is it?”

“23-33-23,” said Nate.

“Bong!” said Dale frowning. “Try again.”

“33-23-33,” said Nate.

“Bing, bing, bing,” said Dale brightly. “Still my measurements; still not any bigger on top . . . nor anywhere else, so I suppose that is good.”

“Is this just the day of the drawing? Or will the prize be awarded today as well?” asked Nate.

“Shut up! Focus, Nate,” said Dale. “On second thought, I’ll give you a hint.”

She took his closest hand and pressed his fingers into the folds of her pussy, scooting forward on the seat a bit to improve access.

“Wet is good, right?” asked Nate.

“Wet is really good . . . for love making, I hear,” said Dale, looking into his eyes bashfully . . . appearing as if she needed to see some indication that he approved of the direction she was taking things.

“So I hear,” said Nate smiling, his smile communicating what she really wanted to know, that she wasn’t coming across as too slutty.

“Are you ready to try your luck and draw a ticket?” she asked.

“Okay. Can I use my other hand?” he asked wiggling his fingers in among her labia.

“Which is your lucky hand?” she asked.

“I know which hand my dry hand thinks is lucky at the moment,” said Nate.

“Well, better use that hand then,” she said smiling.

“I guess I’d better,” said Nate, reluctantly removing his right hand from her pussy.

He rubbed his thumb back and forth across his fingertips feeling the slipperiness.

“Are there winning AND losing lottery tickets?” he asked.

“Not saying,” she said. “But you only get to draw one ticket, so make it good.”

Nate looked Dale up and down. She was so very pretty and obviously so very excited. She sure had felt slippery and excited. But she probably wasn’t any more excited than he was. The air was filled with electricity, and he realized that they had probably done the right thing to wait. The intensity was so much greater than if they had rushed into things. The depth of their love would see them through this, as it had all the other ups and downs.

“Ready, Nate?” she asked.

“So draw the ticket, collect my prize, right?” he asked.

“First things first,” she said. “Don’t get your hopes up too high, Buster?” She saw a look of disappointment on his face. “On second thought,” she continued, “Let me rephrase that. If you draw the winning ticket, I’ll be ready with open legs. So it will all be up to you, as the lottery winner. It takes two. You have to be ready, too.”

Shaking what was left of the DQ bag and holding it up next to the car’s ceiling, she said, “Draw your number!”

“You’re sure fun. I just want you to know that,” he said, looking into her eyes and stroking her cheek with the backs of his fingers.

“Are you going to draw a number, or not,” she asked, playfully slapping his hand away.

“Okay, okay,” he said, rolling his eyes and acting as if the lottery thing was a chore.

Nate did think that all the tickets probably held the winning number, or at least he hoped they did. He reached up and in great earnest went about selecting a ticket. This was an important moment in the trajectory of their relationship, and he needed to do his best . . . both because he needed to pull the winning ticket, and because he wanted her memories to be happy.

With his hand inside the bag, he searched around for the piece of paper that wanted to cling to his still sticky fingers. He found it, or it found him. Slowly he drew it out, immediately hiding it between his two cupped hands.

“So, what is it?” she asked, excitedly up on her knees on the car seat. “Aren’t you going to look?”

“Let’s look together,” he said, holding his hands between them. “On three, okay? Count with me.”

They both looked into the other’s eyes and the began counting in unison, “One,” they paused. “Two,” Nate sighed knowing the moment was at hand. “Three!”

Nate removed the covering hand. They both stared at the ticket, but it was face down. In a fraction of a second, Dale’s hand shot up and flipped it over. It was indeed a winner!