The Tradition

Chapter 1

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Emily surveyed the parking lot to make sure that no one was watching her as

she exited her cousin’s car. Not bothering to wait for Beth to get out of the

driver’s seat, she took off practically at a run after she determined that the

coast was clear. As she reached the concrete steps leading to the brick façade

of Riverside High School, she noticed a freshman boy, whose name she couldn’t

recall, struggling with what looked to be some kind of science project.

In addition to his backpack, he carried a large piece of plywood piled high

with glass beakers and electronic gadgets. She looked wistfully at the

entrance and briefly considered ignoring him.

Sighing, she turned to him, “Need help?”

Was the boy gawking at her, his eyes devouring the exposed flesh under her

too-short skirt?

“That would be great,” he said. “I can’t exactly put this down easily, and I

had no idea how I was going to get in the door. Would you mind opening it for

me?”

She followed behind him as he limped up the stairs at an excruciatingly slow

pace and, when he finally reached the top, let him in. After he assured her

that he could manage the rest of the way, she grabbed her first period books

from her locker and hurried to the bathroom to hide.

It didn’t take long for Beth to find her.

“Emily, honey, I’m wearing the exact same outfit that you are, as will all six

of the other cheerleaders. It’s okay, really.”

“That’s easy for you to say. I’ve seen those tiny bikinis that you wear to the

beach. You have no shame.”

Beth didn’t bother to reply. Instead, she grabbed Emily’s hand and pulled her

over to the mirrors.

“Look at yourself. You’re completely covered. There’s nothing obscene or even

abnormally revealing about what you’re wearing. It’s a cheerleading outfit,

for God’s sake. Girls your age all over the country right this moment are

dressed the same way.”

Emily made herself look.

“See,” Beth said. “It’s not that bad. I’ve seen you wear sleeveless shirts

before, and I know that you’ve worn shorts that covered less than that skirt.”

“Not to school, I haven’t! Besides, this whole outfit is designed to draw

attention. Look at the royal blue of the skirt and the bright red top. The

colors are practically blinding. Look at how far down the neck plunges and

that pleated skirt shows off my panties with every step that I take. When I

sit down, it rises up all the way over my butt.”

“Stop exaggerating. The neckline doesn’t plunge; it barely makes a tiny little

‘v,’ and you can’t see any of your cleavage. The skirt doesn’t show your

panties; it shows your bloomers. You’re supposed to see the bloomers.”

Emily could see clearly both the affection and the annoyance in Beth’s look as

she continued.

“Stop being so dramatic. You wanted to be a cheerleader, didn’t you?”

“I wanted to be a part of something,” Emily said, “instead of just being my

older cousin’s tagalong, and I knew that it would please you. I think that the

only thing that made you prouder than being selected as squad captain for your

senior year was seeing me be selected as the only freshman to make the team.”

Beth hugged the younger girl.

“I was so proud, and I’m still proud. You’re going to do great! Now, buck up

and get out into that hall.”

Emily knew that she didn’t have much of a choice; she couldn’t hide out in the

girls bathroom all day long. Still, she hated the thought of all the attention

and the boys staring at her. She made it through the day, though, without

dying of embarrassment. Then she fought the butterflies in her stomach and

performed at the pep rally in front of the whole school. She cheered on the

sidelines during the game and danced at halftime. Emily never really grew

comfortable in her outfit, but, eventually, she got used to wearing it.

The season wore on, and the football team did great. For the first time in

many years, there was talk about the playoffs and maybe even a state

championship. As the prospects for the team increased, Emily more and more

caught mysterious snippets of conversations about “the tradition,” but no one,

not even Beth, would elaborate, regardless of how much she pleaded. As the

regular season ended, their team sat atop the standings. Beth called a closed

door meeting with the other two seniors on the squad to discuss preparations

“just in case.”

By this point, Emily was dying of curiosity. She knew that eavesdropping was

wrong, but she just had to find out what they were saying. She also knew that

she couldn’t just stand by the door and listen. If one of the other

cheerleaders saw her, they’d tell Beth, and she’d be in big trouble.

Instead, she circled the area looking for a concealed location and discovered

an unlocked supply closet right next to the room. As quietly as she could, she

stacked boxes and buckets to make a platform that would allow her five foot

two inch frame to reach the ceiling. After carefully removing one of the

acoustical tiles, she found that, if she listened closely, she could just make

out what they were talking about.

“It’s tradition,” Beth said. “Obviously, we have to do it. Do either of you

really have a problem with it?”

“No,” answered Meg.

“I think that it could actually be kind of fun,” Julie said.

Emily heard Beth’s voice next.

“You are such a slut!”

“And you’re an exhibitionist,” came Julie’s retort.

Though the voices were faint, she could tell that humor filled the exchange.

She heard Beth’s voice again.

“What about the other girls?”

“I’ve been talking about it with a few of them,” Meg said. “They’re a bit

nervous, especially Kate, but are okay with it since it’s, you know, tradition

and all. The only one that I’m really worried about is Emily.”

“Yeah,” said Julie. “Not only is she the youngest, but she’s so shy. She’s

such a sweet kid; do you really think that she can handle it?”

Emily tensed.

‘Sweet kid. I’m not a kid! I’m a high school sophomore, practically an adult.

And I’m not that shy; I run around all the time in that skimpy cheerleader

outfit, don’t I?’

She wanted to yell out but that would have just exposed her eavesdropping.

Instead she listened intently as Beth continued.

“No one has said anything to her, have they?”

“As per your orders,” Meg answered, “no one has said a thing.”

Emily let out a little yelp and then quickly covered her mouth with her hand.

‘Beth is the reason that no one will talk to me about it? Does she think that

I’m a child that needs to be protected?’

In the next room, she heard Beth.

“That’s good. I think I’ve got an idea to mitigate it somewhat for her, but I

have to talk to Greg first.”

“Don’t hold out on us,” Julie said. “I’ve been really concerned about her

having to do this. If you’ve got a possible solution, please let me know what

it is.”

Emily strained to hear Beth’s faint voice.

“Well…”

Two students in the corridor outside the supply closet started talking so

loudly that she couldn’t hear much of the rest of the conversation and caught

only little pieces. Meg seemed concerned about Beth’s idea at first but then

got enthusiastic about it. Emily also heard the name “Ben” mentioned. Ben

Miller, the offensive tackle, maybe? She was so frustrated that she wanted to

get down and ask the people in the hallway to leave.

‘It’s not their fault,’ she thought. ‘They don’t know that I’m desperately

trying to snoop on my cousin’s private conversation.’

The thought rattled her. Since when did she eavesdrop? How would she feel if

someone invaded her privacy? Her guilt overrode her irritation at being

referred to as a shy kid who needed to be protected. She closed the ceiling

back up and waited for the students in the corridor to leave.

Chapter 2

Greg Barnes watched Beth as she entered the room. He loved her outfit, the

short skirt, the tight top that accentuated her breasts, and those long black

boots. There was just something about the bare skin that showed between the

boots and the skirt that so turned him on.

Not for the first time, he thought ‘I know it’s a cliché for the captain of

the football team to date the head cheerleader, but tell me again why we

decided to just be friends?’

“Hey girl, what’s on your mind?” he asked after she sat next to him on the

couch.

“I’m concerned about what is going to happen if y’all win the championship.”

There it is, then. So far, they hadn’t discussed it. He teased her a bit.

“Nervous about following through with the tradition? I would have thought that

you’d be into it.”

She smiled.

“You do know me well.”

She crossed her legs.

‘Did she deliberately flash her panties at me?’

“What I’m concerned about is Emily,” Beth said.

Greg had been focused on his team and preparations for the playoffs.

“You’re right. I hadn’t thought of that. I can’t picture her going through

with it.”

Though Emily easily made it to the top five on anyone’s list of cutest girls

in the school, none of the players talked about her in the locker room. Some

girls were just too angelic for vulgar comments and thoughts, public ones

anyway.

“All eight of us, including her, WILL go through with it,” Beth said.

“There isn’t anything that we can do? Between the two of us, we lead the

football team and the cheerleaders. Can’t we just exempt her from having to

take part? I’m sure that the guys will understand.” Greg said.

“Don’t take this the wrong way, and, believe me, I’m glad that you understand

and are willing to help with the problem. Emily will be taking part. It

wouldn’t set a good precedent to let one girl out of it. It would go against

tradition, and it would hurt both her honor and the honor of the cheerleaders

as a whole.”

Greg wasn’t willing to give up that easily, but he could tell that Beth was

leading up to something.

“Okay, then what do we do?”

“I have an idea, but it’s going to take a some doing on your part,” Beth said.

“Go on, share.”

“I was doing some research on the matter, reading the past Cheer Captain’s

Chronicles, and I found a caveat to the tradition. Apparently, it’s customary

for the most valuable player to be able to choose any one of the cheerleaders

for a private performance, and the two of them usually do their thing

completely separate from everyone else. It seems that the MVP is allowed far

more perks than any of the other players.”

Greg nearly dropped his Coke.

“How does that help us? We don’t want to subject Emily to more than what is

expected from the others.”

Beth explained quickly.

“Well, if the right person were chosen MVP, he could make it a lot easier on

her.”

Greg got the picture.

“I understand. It sort of sucks for me, because I’ll probably get the MVP

award as the quarterback. I’ll miss out on all the action, but it’s worth it

to protect Emily.”

Beth smiled and reached over to grab his knee.

“That’s not exactly what I had in mind. I wouldn’t want you to miss my show.”

Greg grinned at her.

“What if Ben Miller were voted MVP?” Beth asked. “He’s an all state tackle,

and you know better than me that linemen just don’t get all the recognition

that they deserve. As captain, you could swing the vote his way, right?”

“Hey now,” Greg replied, “that is a great idea. You’re smart AND beautiful.

Gentle Ben is a great choice; he’s even shyer than she is. I doubt he was even

planning on going to the party.”

“Do you think he’d do it if we told him it was to protect Emily?” Beth asked.

“I’m absolutely positive that he will.”

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The team cruised to victory in the final playoff game. After the following

Monday’s cheer practice, Beth called all the squad members together for a

meeting. Emily listened intently as Beth began to speak.

“Our sports and cheerleading programs here at Riverside High are steeped in

tradition. We have traditions for initiation, traditions to ensure continuity

of leadership, even traditions for which cheers to use. We take these

traditions seriously, and teach them to each new initiate. There’s one

tradition, however, that is only discussed once a particular situation

arises.”

She paused before continuing.

“In the event that the football team wins the state championship, the

cheerleading squad throws a party for the seniors on the team. Since the team

is playing in the championship game this Friday night …”

The seven girls interrupted Beth with loud clapping and cheering.

“Since the championship is Friday night, we need to discuss your

responsibilities for that party if our team does happen to emerge victorious.”

Emily’s heart rate sped up. She was finally about to hear what everyone else

apparently already knew.

“There’s no way to sugarcoat it; the cheerleaders will be expected to strip

for the senior players and to stay naked for the entire party.”

Emily’s eyes got big.

‘What? She can’t really mean what she just said, can she?’

On the other hand, it made sense. Them wanting to protect her, the joking slut

and exhibitionist exchange between Julie and Beth, the nervousness she sensed

in some of the other girls. Beth was serious.

“There will be a strict look but no touch policy. I trust that Greg will keep

his guys in line. If any of them get fresh, he will make sure that they are

removed from the premises. It’s up to me to watch over you girls.”

Julie yelled out, “Who’s going to watch over you?”

Most of the girls laughed, and Beth gave Julie an annoyed look.

“Once the party is over, what you do is your business, but, while it is

officially in session, you will not have more than the most innocent physical

contact with the players. Dancing is okay, even slow dancing with body parts

touching. Intimate contact is not, and there will be absolutely no drinking.

Do you understand me?”

The girls each nodded their assent.

“There is, however, one notable exception to the rules. One of the seniors

will be voted most valuable player for the game by his teammates. That player

will be allowed to choose one of us cheerleaders for a private party. The

policy for the private party is, basically, anything but. That means anything

that he wants goes. Touching is allowed. Only actual intercourse if forbidden.

Are there any questions?”

Beth didn’t give them much of a chance to respond before continuing.

“Great. Now for some details. There’s not all that much planning to do for the

actual event. Meg and Julie have volunteered to make all the necessary

arrangements. All you need to do is leave Saturday night open in case of a

victory, and practice the routine that we’re about demonstrate for you. If

we’re going to strip for the guys, we’re going to do it as a team, and we’re

going to do it right.”

She gestured for Meg and Julie to join her in front of the others.

“The routine that we’ve worked up is relatively simple. Once you watch us

perform it this once, you’ll be expected to practice on your own and know it

for this weekend.”

The three team leaders removed their shoes and socks.

“Julie, Meg, and I will also be modifying a set of older uniforms, so you

won’t be wearing our normal game attire. We’ll also be making three other

changes. First, obviously, is the lack of shoes and socks. Tennis shoes just

aren’t sexy, and we couldn’t think of a way to make taking them off fun or

exciting.”

“I wanted high heels and stockings, but Beth nixed the idea,” Julie said.

There were some nervous laughs in the room. Emily sat paralyzed.

‘Are they really about to demonstrate a strip routine that I have to learn?’

Beth lifted up her skirt. Instead of her normal red bloomers, she was wearing

a pair of white panties.

“Next, leave the bloomers at home, ladies, and the sexier the panties you

wear, the better. Finally, we couldn’t figure out a good way to take off

normal bras and not break the rhythm. It’s sports bras for the evening.”

Meg started the music, and the three girls began to dance. Emily watched in

amazement as her cousin and the two other seniors stripped naked in front of

the rest of the squad. She felt nothing but dread at the thought of having to

do it herself.

‘I can’t do this,’ she thought. ‘I can’t strip naked in front of a bunch of

boys. I’m not even comfortable when I have to shower with the girls at camp.

Should I resign from the team? Beth would be so disappointed.’

Consumed by her thoughts, Emily didn’t speak a word as Beth drove her home.

Should she agree to do something that she found mortifying, or should she let

down the one person who had been there for her for the past five years, who

had practically raised her?

Just before she exited the car, Emily finally turned to Beth.

“I just wanted to let you know that I won’t let you down.”

Beth leaned over and gave her a kiss on the cheek.

“That’s my girl.”

Chapter 3

On Thursday morning, the football team loaded up in two buses and headed to

the state capitol. In the afternoon, they did a walk through in shells –

helmets, shoulder pads, and shorts – at the university stadium and then went

to their hotel rooms to settle in for the night.

Taking the adage that a quarterback’s best friend is his left tackle to heart,

Greg made sure that he roomed with Ben. With about an hour to go before lights

out, he clicked off the television and turned to his teammate.

“You decided what you’re going to do next year?”

“I think that I’m going to accept the scholarship to Tech. They have the

better engineering program and are willing to red shirt me. I just don’t think

that I can finish an ME degree in four years and play football. You?”

“I think that I’m going to choose State,” Greg said. “That’s where Beth is

going.”

Ben didn’t look surprised at the announcement.

“You two are finally an item? That’s great.”

“What do you mean?”

Ben looked at Greg like he was a complete idiot.

“Let’s see. You’re the quarterback and captain of the football team. How many

girls have you asked out in the past year?”

Greg thought about it for a second and was shocked that he had a hard time

remembering the last girl that he asked out.

“I can’t think of any, but there has to have been some.”

“Man,” Ben said, “you two hang out together every chance you get. Every dance,

y’all go as ‘friends.’ You’re already dating, just without any of the

benefits.”

“We’re just friends. Her parents are going to be moving out of state, and I

don’t want her to feel deserted. That’s all.”

Greg hadn’t intended for this conversation to revolve around his love life. He

changed topics.

“Are you nervous about tomorrow?”

“Not really. Oakridge has a strong team, but I think that we match up well.

I’m not overconfident or anything, but I think that we’ll win.”

“A lot is riding on you,” Greg said. “You’re one of the best linemen in the

state, and I need you to bring your A game.”

“Hey, I’ve got your back. Literally. You know that. You’re sounding nervous.

Are you okay?”

Greg tried to figure out the best way to broach the subject with his friend.

“I’m concerned about what’s going to happen after we win. You know about the

party, right?”

“I’ve heard rumors. The cheerleaders are throwing a bash for the senior

players. There’s wild speculation among some of the players about what’s going

to happen. Regardless, I wasn’t planning on attending.”

This news did not surprise Greg.

“I’m not sure what rumors you’ve heard, but they may be truer than you think.

The cheerleaders will be partying butt naked with us. No touching is allowed,

but they really are going to strip.”

“You don’t mean ALL the cheerleaders. Surely not Emily too?”

“ALL of them. Including Emily.”

Greg knew that Gentle Ben didn’t get mad often, but, when he did, he was an

erupting volcano. The last time was when a couple of freshmen had been playing

around throwing rocks in the parking lot and one of them had hit Ben’s 1970

Dodge Charger, putting a chip in the windshield. Ben had saved money since he

was ten to buy that car, and Greg knew that Ben and his dad had spent

countless hours working on it. Ben had been livid. He had chased down the one

that threw the rock. If Greg and a few of his buddies hadn’t restrained him,

he might have seriously hurt the kid.

Greg could tell that Ben was starting to get mad now.

“You can’t make her strip naked in front of all those guys. It’s not right!”

Greg expected Ben to sympathize but didn’t anticipate such vehemence.

“Calm down. It’s okay. I agree with you. Beth came up with a plan.”

“A plan? Beth should tell Emily to stay at home!”

‘What’s the deal? Why does he care so much about this?’ Greg thought.

“I know man. Calm down. That’s what I suggested, too. Beth said that it was

some kind of cheerleader honor thing. We can’t mess with their traditions

anymore than they can mess with ours.”

“It’s still stupid. She should stay home.”

Greg had never known Ben not to listen to reason.

“How would you feel if they told us how to handle a situation with one of our

players? Would you at least listen to her plan?”

“Go ahead.”

“A part of the tradition is that the game MVP gets to choose one of the squad

for a private party. I guess that the idea is that he gets a special bonus in

that the no touching rule doesn’t apply. The important thing is, though, that

he and the cheerleader disappear for the duration of the party.”

Ben cocked his head to the side, looking like he was trying to work out the

ramifications.

“How does that help? Unless you truly screw up, you’ll be the MVP. You’ll

surely choose Beth, right?”

Ben suddenly snarled at him.

“Don’t tell me that you’re going to choose Emily? Exactly how far can you go

with the touching?”

If he didn’t watch it, he was about to be receiving more punishment from his

own lineman than from the opposing defense. Did Ben have a thing for Emily?

“Wait a second. Hear me out. I’m not going to choose Emily because I’m not

going to be the MVP.”

That comment stopped Ben in his tracks.

“Huh?”

“I’ve been talking to some of the guys, and, assuming you have your usual

great game, we’re going to choose you as the MVP.”

“You’re the QB, the team captain. The honor should go to you,” Ben said.

“You’re just as much of the reason that we’re here as I am, and I’ve already

received a lot of honors. Besides, I need to stay with the other guys to make

sure that they behave themselves.”

Ben objected again.

“What about Beth? You’re going to let her strip in front of everybody?”

“She’s an exhibitionist; it’s not going to bother her. To tell you the truth,

I think it’s hot.”

Ben tried another tack.

“You want me to stay with Emily while this party happens? You know that I

don’t really talk to girls, and she’s as shy as I am. Are we just supposed to

sit in uncomfortable silence for hours?”

“Look, this is the only thing that we could think of that works. Is there

someone else that you would trust to stay with her?”

Ben shook his head.

“Would you rather her stay with you for a while and be mildly uncomfortable or

have her walking around naked in front of a bunch of guys? This way, you’re

the only one that will see her tight little bod.”

Ben started to erupt once more.

“I’m not going to see…”

Greg cut him off.

“Sorry, just teasing you there. Look, as MVP, you can do anything short of sex

with her, or you can do nothing. Your call. Will you do it?”

Ben didn’t look happy, but he agreed.

In the championship game, the lead changed hands eight times. Down by four

points with time about to expire in the fourth quarter, Riverside’s team lined

up at their own 40 yard line. Greg took a seven step drop. Oakridge rushed

their four linemen and blitzed the middle linebacker. The full back picked up

the blitz. The four other offensive linemen teamed up to block three defending

players, leaving Ben isolated on Oakridge’s prep all-American right end.

Ben exploded from his stance and pancaked his guy. With the end out of the

action, he looked into the backfield and saw Greg rolling to his left because

the fullback had missed his block. Ben ran back to help and laid the

linebacker out. Greg, now with plenty of time to set his feet, heaved the ball

as hard as he could. The football came down 55 yards later in the hands of

senior wideout, Mike Conner. Oakridge’s free safety, who had played deep in

the center of the field, sprinted at Mike.

The two met at the one yard line. Mike tried to leap over the defender just as

the safety lunged at him. The blow hit his legs and flipped him completely

upside down. Mike landed on his shoulder in the end zone still clutching the

ball as time expired. Touchdown! With the extra point, Riverside won by three

points, and their fans rushed the field.

With Greg’s encouragement, the team voted Ben MVP. After a night of revelry

and travel back to their hometown, preparations began in earnest for the

Saturday night party. Mike arranged the use of his uncle’s cabin, located just

outside of town, for the event. Though somewhat isolated in the woods, there

were still neighbors close enough that might call the cops if they suspected

that an underage party were taking place. The planners assigned parking at

various spots near the cabin so that the celebration would be less

conspicuous.

Chapter 4

About an hour before Beth was scheduled to pick her up, Emily finished her

shower and wrapped herself in a towel. Walking to her bed, she looked at the

outfit laid out for her with dismay. The senior cheerleaders had taken one of

the older uniforms and made major alterations. The skirt was now a good three

inches shorter than the one on her normal uniform, and the top was cut off so

that not much of the section between the bottom of her breasts and her waist

would be covered.

Then, she looked at the underwear. The black sports bra was okay, better than

wearing something sexy and lacy. The panties were a problem. She had two pairs

laid out, both black as well, and couldn’t make up her mind which one to wear.

The first was a really dainty pair with lots of lace. Though not a thong by

any stretch, it would show most of the sides of her legs and a great deal of

her butt. The other wouldn’t show much less than her bloomers would have.

Sighing, she finished getting ready and got dressed, putting on the more

conservative panties. She then waited by window in her room, forcing herself

not to fidget or pace around the room. As soon as she saw Beth’s car arrive,

guilt got the best of her, and she hurriedly changed into the sexier panties.

Grabbing her overnight bag and throwing on a jacket, she kissed her dad

telling him that she’d be spending the night with Beth. He barely looked up

from the book he was reading as he told her goodbye. After slipping some flats

on her otherwise bare feet, she was out the door.

“So, girl, are you ready?” Beth asked when Emily got into the car.

Emily blushed.

“As ready as I’ll ever be.”

“I’m so proud of you. I know that this isn’t easy for you, but you haven’t

complained once.”

Emily was eager to change the subject.

“So, did Ben Miller pick which cheerleader he wanted for the private party?

I’m guessing Julie. It surely would have been you if Greg had gotten MVP.”

“Actually, Ben has chosen, and it wasn’t Julie. He chose you.”

The revelation shocked her.

“Me? I thought surely that one of the senior girls would be chosen. Oh Beth, I

don’t think that I’m ready to go that far. I’ve never even kissed a boy.”

Beth pulled the car over to comfort the upset girl. Putting her arm around her

and giving her a squeeze, she spoke to Emily softly.

“It’s going to be okay, Em. You know Ben; he’s a really great guy. He won’t

try to get fresh with you at all.”

“I don’t know him that well. We’ve been in the same group a bunch when I’ve

tagged along with you to hang out with Greg and his friends, but I don’t think

that Ben has said more than twenty words to me total.”

“Come on, you’ve been around him for years. Surely, you know that he’s a nice

guy.”

Emily forced herself to calm down and think for a minute.

“I know that he got really angry at those guys who damaged his car. The rumors

were that he would have put one of them in the hospital if it hadn’t’ve been

for Greg.”

“That was one time. I’ve never heard him utter a single mean word about anyone

except for that once.”

Despite not wanting to like the guy who was going to force her to strip

tonight, she couldn’t help but recall some of his better qualities.

“Okay. There are some positives. I remember when Julie had her leg in a cast

last year. He carried her around and was at her beck and call the whole time.

You know how Julie is, she wanted to ‘repay’ his kindness, but he wouldn’t

take advantage of it.”

“See…”

“And you’re right. I’ve never heard him say anything bad about anyone, and

there’s not a person in the school who doesn’t like him. He’s a good football

player, and he’s smart. I’ve heard that he’s probably going to be the

valedictorian for your class. But…”

“Go ahead. What is it?”

“He’s huge. He’s like, what, 6 – 5? The program guide says that he’s 275

pounds.”

“All muscle, too. What’s wrong with that?”

“He dwarfs me. I feel like a tiny kid next to him, like he could crush me like

a flea if he wanted.”

Beth looked like she had finally had enough of the coddling.

“Will you just trust me? It’s going to be fine. When we get to the house, go

upstairs. He’ll be waiting in the first bedroom on the right. There’s an iPod

in the glove box that you can plug into the radio in the room. Just walk in

the room, turn on the music, and do your routine. After that, do whatever he

says.”

“You said that he wouldn’t make me…”

Beth cut her off.

“I am one hundred percent positive that he will not make you do anything

besides strip. Greg has assured me of it. Do you really think that I would let

you walk into a situation like that if I didn’t feel that it were safe? Still,

though, the tradition is that he’s in charge. I expect you to do whatever he

says.”

Emily knew that Beth always looked out for her. Ever since Emily’s mom died,

Beth had been part older sister and part mother to her. Beth wouldn’t let

anything bad happen to her. If Beth trusted Ben, then so would she.

“You’re right. You wouldn’t have me do it if you didn’t think it was safe. I’m

sorry if I’m acting like a brat.”

“You’re not acting like a brat; you’re just scared. Think about it this way,

though. Yes, it will be terribly embarrassing for you to strip for Ben, but

he’ll be the only guy that sees you. No dancing naked with the other fourteen

seniors. Some of those guys are real horn dogs, not gentlemen like Ben.”

Beth started the car, and they rode in silence the rest of the way. They were

parked near the cabin before she knew it.

Emily grabbed the iPod and got out of the car. Before she shut the car door,

Beth instructed her, “leave the coat in the car.”

Emily shot her a pleading look. Beth ignored her, removing her own jacket and

putting it in the car. Emily reluctantly followed suit.

Though the temperature had dropped quickly with the setting sun, Emily’s

primary motivation for wanting to keep the coat was not warmth, but modesty.

The garment reached almost to her knees and fully covered her scanty attire.

Without their coats, she wouldn’t have been surprised if someone seeing them

walk down the street called the police to report a couple of prostitutes. At

least, the street was dimly lit, so the darkness of the evening concealed them

somewhat.

The outfit was even worse than she anticipated when she had stared at it on

her bed. No matter how hard she tugged it down, the top didn’t fully cover the

black material of her sports bra. And, the skirt! The skirt was impossible.

She wore it as low on her waist as she possibly could, but it would only come

down far enough to barely cover the bottom of her butt cheeks. Being pleated,

it came up when she made any movement. In effect, she flashed her panties,

back and front, with every step. If there would have been anyone out on the

street to see her, she would have died of shame.

Though dressed almost exactly the same, Beth didn’t appear to be bothered.

When they reached the door of the cabin, she removed her shoes and walked in.

Emily knew that there were boys inside, but the thought of having Beth

disappointed in her was even worse than having them see her in this

humiliating outfit. She followed her cousin in the door.

She and Beth were the first two cheerleaders to arrive, but all the football

players were already there. Every eye in the place was on either her or Beth.

She froze. Was she expected to stay down here and mingle with these guys? She

looked at Beth, who motioned for her to go upstairs.

She was relieved that she didn’t have to socialize with all the boys while

dressed so provocatively until she realized what she would now have to do. Not

only did she have to cross the room with everyone watching her bouncing skirt,

but she had to climb the stairs, too. There would be no way to preserve her

modesty as her panties would be on full display after the first step.

She tried hard to forget her outfit and her audience as she went up the

stairs. She focused on putting one foot in front of the other and fixed her

gaze straight ahead.

‘Maybe they’re not even looking. Maybe they’re all staring at Beth.’

She couldn’t fool herself, however, and was greatly comforted to walk into the

bedroom away from all the prying eyes.

‘Only two eyes in this room,’ she thought, ‘but they’re going to see a lot

more than just my panties.’

Ben was sitting on the bed on the opposite side of the room. Even seated, he

was still head and shoulders taller than her.

‘He’s so massive,’ she thought.

She saw him jump as she walked in the door. He looked in her direction for a

moment and then quickly averted his gaze. He continued to look at the floor as

she closed the door, walked over, and plugged in the iPod.

‘I think that he’s more scared of me than I am of him!’

“Are you ready for my dance routine?” she asked.

Chapter 5

Ben flinched as the door opened. It was Emily. He couldn’t help but see how

she was dressed as she walked into the room. She looked really good, with the

cutest little bare feet.

‘Does she have to buy child-sized shoes?’ he wondered before berating himself

for having such an idiotic thought.

The bare skin didn’t end at her feet either. It traveled all the way up her

legs, ending at the white and blue lining of her red skirt that started, in

his opinion, way too close to her waist for him to be comfortable.

‘I can see her bloomers without her even moving that skirt is so short. Does

she normally wear black ones?’

Her uniform also left her midriff completely uncovered. He couldn’t help but

gape at her exposed navel.

‘What’s that black fabric showing at the bottom of her top? Is that her bra?’

Taking into account the rest of her apparel, he was surprised that she was

even wearing a bra or that the shirt didn’t show off more of her breasts.

‘No one told me that she was going to be dressed like that!’ he thought. ‘At

least, it’s safe for me to look at her face.’

He found that it wasn’t safe, however. He was too intimidated to look her in

the eyes, and all he could think about was how beautiful she was and how much

he would love to run his fingers through her long blonde hair.

As soon as he could, he tore his eyes away from her. He figured that the

safest thing would be to pick a spot on the floor and stare at it.

He could hear her walk across the room and do something with the radio. He

resisted the temptation to look at her while her back was turned. He heard her

feet scuffle more, probably her turning around to face him. Then came her

voice, which trembled slightly, “are you ready for my dance routine?”

‘Dance routine? Maybe she meant the stripping?’

He continued to stare at the floor, but he finally found his voice.

“That’s okay. You don’t have to dance for me.”

He expected her to be relieved, maybe even grateful. Instead, anger sparked in

her voice.

“What do you mean, I don’t have to dance for you?”

“Just that. I don’t want you to dance for me.”

“Let me get this straight, a cheerleader walks into a bedroom with the

intension of giving you a private striptease, and you don’t want her to do it.

Are you gay?”

He winced at her harsh tone.

“No.”

“I see. Then, obviously, you don’t find me attractive. It was my understanding

that you had chosen me as your reward. Would you prefer that I go get someone

else? Julie perhaps.”

“No. God, no. Of course, I find you attractive. You’re the most beautiful girl

on the squad, in the entire school even. Probably the most beautiful girl that

I have ever seen.”

He hadn’t meant to say that. She had him flustered. How can he be expected to

carry on a conversation with someone that pretty dressed like she was?

Some of the edge disappeared from her tone.

“Can you please explain to me how a normal, red-blooded teenage guy can

possibly have an attractive teenage girl, dressed like this, offer to strip

naked for him and turn her down?”

Ben didn’t know how to answer. He prayed that she didn’t say the word “naked”

again, or, for that matter, “strip.”

She walked over and sat down right next to him on the bed, just inches away

from touching. He could now see her bare thighs in his peripheral vision. He

couldn’t help but notice that the skirt had ridden up and that her bloomers

seemed quite brief and lacy.

‘Those aren’t bloomers; those are her panties!’

He couldn’t keep his eyes on the floor under these circumstances, and it would

be rude to turn away. He forced himself to meet her eyes. He couldn’t help it.

He just started talking.

“Look, Greg told me about this party and about what the cheerleaders were

going to do. He and Beth were worried about you being in front of all those

guys. Then, Greg told me that the MVP could choose to have one of you meet

with him in private. The plan was to have me win the MVP so that I could

protect you from having to do that in front of the guys.”

“And this plan was completely altruistic on your part,” Emily said. “You had

no intention of seeing me naked. They told you that I would just sit up here

with you fully, well almost fully, dressed while the rest of the squad has to

do who knows what downstairs?”

The anger was back. What had he done wrong?

“Sort of. Greg actually told me that you would, uh, remove your clothes. He

said that he and Beth were fine with that because they thought you would be

okay if it were only for one guy instead of everyone. I asked him why you even

had to do that. If it’s my choice, why don’t I have you stay dressed?”

He honestly had no idea whether his answer would make her more mad or sooth

her.

“So, the idea that I wouldn’t have to go through with this was solely your

idea? Beth had nothing to do with it.”

Good. She seemed less angry.

“Yes, completely my idea.”

“And, why did you come up with this idea? Why don’t you want to take advantage

of this situation to at least see me naked?”

She said it again. He knew that this question was dangerous, but, having no

clue by what merits she was judging his answers, he had no idea how to spin

his answer. He couldn’t tell her the truth, but he should get as close to it

as possible.

“I know that we’re not exactly best buddies or anything, but we have hung out

in the same crowd for a long time, at least occasionally. I tend to care about

people who are in my circle of friends. I don’t like to see them hurt or even

uncomfortable if I can help it.”

A part of her felt incredibly guilty for getting angry at him. He was

obviously a nice guy who was trying to do a good deed for her. Her temper,

however, was a coping mechanism that she had learned after her mom’s funeral.

Then, it had been a lot easier to be mad at her mom than to grieve. Now, it

was a lot easier to be mad than embarrassed.

Given what she had overheard while eavesdropping and her conversation with

Beth in the car about keeping her safe, she had begun to think that Beth had

arranged it so that she wouldn’t have to strip. It had been tempting, for a

split second, for her to accept this protection. Her sense of fairness

overcame her momentary relief, however. How could Beth expect the rest of the

squad to do something and not her? Wasn’t she just as much a cheerleader as

the rest of them?

She was gratified when he revealed that Beth had nothing to do with that

aspect of the plan. It made sense that her cousin would look out for her and

arrange for her to have a slightly easier route than the rest of the squad,

but she couldn’t tolerate the idea that Beth thought she was too weak to do it

at all.

She turned her attention back to Ben. What was his motivation? She listened to

him explain how that’s just how he treated his friends, and it made her temper

rise.

“Don’t you think that your friends are capable of making their own choices?”

she practically shouted. “I made the choice of being a cheerleader, and I made

the choice to come here tonight with the rest of the squad. I will not let

them down.”

He looked at her blankly. She felt sympathy for the poor guy, but she had to

embrace her anger. Otherwise, she’d chicken out.

“You do have one thing right, though,” she said. “It is your choice whether or

not you want me to get up there in front of you and do my striptease routine.

So, choose. I either do the routine right here, right now, or I go downstairs

and join my teammates and do it there. And, if you do choose to have me

perform it for you, you had better not take your eyes off me.”

She couldn’t believe what she had just said, and, by the expression on his

face, neither could Ben. He sat there for what seemed to be a long time. She

began to think that she had pushed him too far and that he was going to send

her out to perform with the other cheerleaders. Instead, looking like he had

been slapped and then kicked while he was down, he said simply, “Dance.”

She managed to keep her anger burning long enough to turn on the iPod and

stand with her back to him. Once the music started, she tried to block him out

of her mind and concentrate solely on her performance.

When the intro music started, she shook her hips. From watching the three

seniors perform the dance in longer skirts than the one that she currently

wore, she knew that she would be exposing her full panty-clad backside with

every other beat. At least she didn’t have on a thong like Julie had had.

Though, what would it matter considering what he’s going to see?

She continued to shake her booty until the lyrics started. In time with the

music, she smoothly brought the backside of the skirt up and tucked it into

her waistband. Then, keeping her knees locked, she bent her limber body at the

waist and lowered her hands until they were flat on the floor. Moving with the

beat, she moved her hands to the back of her ankles and ran them up her legs

until they covered her butt. Still bent completely over, she grabbed her

panties, pulled them down, and stepped out of them.

She kept her legs clamped together like Meg’s had been, not obscenely parted

like Beth’s and Julie’s. He would see those parts of her soon enough anyway.

She tried not to think about the teenage boy not five feet from her who was,

probably, staring intently at her bare ass.

As the chorus started, she executed three and a half full pirouettes. Each of

the turns caused the skirt to flare up to her waist showing off the trimmed

triangular patch of her pubic hair to Ben. Knowing that her light colored hair

didn’t do much to conceal her nether lips, she got a little bit flustered as

she came to a stop facing him.

‘Get a hold of yourself. He’s about to see a lot more than that in a second.’

In one smooth motion, she took hold of the bottom of her blouse and, extending

her arms above her head, whipped it completely off. Dropping the shirt to the

ground, she used her back and legs to bend over backward until her hands were

once again flat on the floor. She knew that the move had the effect of shoving

her clit directly in front of Ben’s eyes.

Unable to stop from blushing, she carried on. She slowly lifted first one leg

and then the other until she was doing a handstand. When the team leaders had

done the same move, the entire squad had seen every detail of their vaginas

and butt holes. Having not yet had occasion to visit a gynecologist, no one

had previously had such an intimate view of her. Ben now had.

With her micro-mini skirt hanging down around her stomach, she rotated one

hundred and eighty degrees so that she could now see him, upside down from her

point of view, staring once again at her exposed pussy. As the chorus began

for the second time, she bent her legs, one at a time, away from Ben once

again and resumed a standing position for two beats before turning, extending

her right leg toward him, and sinking into the splits.

She then gracefully removed the sports bra and sat there, hands over her head,

letting him drink in the view of her perky breasts until the beat told her to

rise. She once again turned away from him. This time, there was no need to

shake her hips to expose herself. Rather, she unzipped the skirt and let is

slide down her legs. She stepped out of the garment and waited. Just as the

song ended, she turned, thrust her chest out, and dropped her hands to her

side.

Chapter 6

Ben stood there staring at the beautiful naked girl. Over the course of the

last two and a half minutes, he had literally seen every part of her. While

she seemed embarrassed and flustered, he was completely mortified. He had no

idea what to do now.

As his silent staring began to get awkward, someone pounded on the door.

“Cops!” the person shouted.

Instantly, Ben grabbed his letter jacket and threw it over Emily’s shoulders.

He rushed to the window, opened it, and stepped out onto the roof overhang.

“Come on!” he yelled, gesturing for Emily to join him.

The command in his voice broke her from her stupor, and she climbed out the

window.

“I’ll go first.”

With that, he was on the ground before she knew what he was doing.

“Jump,” he called.

When she hesitated, he yelled, “don’t worry, I’ll catch you.”

She launched herself off the roof, positioning her body to fall butt first. He

caught her like she weighed nothing and helped her into a standing position.

“Follow me. My car’s this way through the woods.”

She stayed right behind him until he suddenly stopped and pushed her down

behind a bush.

“There’s a cop with a flashlight,” he whispered, pointing toward the house.

Suddenly, a light shone directly on the bush and a voice called out.

“You there. I can see the red on the jacket. Step out here right now!”

He practically ripped the jacket off of her, leaving her naked once more.

“Stay right here until I draw him away,” he whispered in her ear. “Here are my

car keys. If you walk straight that way, you’ll reach a dirt road in about a

quarter mile. The Charger is parked there. If I don’t show up by the time you

get there, take off and get somewhere safe.”

With that, he took off running to the right.

She waited until she could no longer see either Ben or the beam of the

officer’s flashlight. Trying to find the right balance between prudence and

haste, she struck out in the direction that Ben had pointed out to her.

The adrenaline from almost being caught by the cops quickly wore off, and she

began to feel the cold night air. She shivered as the it bit at her

unprotected body. Emily felt so vulnerable. Without any clothing or footwear

for protection, each rock, tree with rough bark, and sharp thorn became a

danger that tore at her sensitive skin.

She found that walking on fallen leaves offered the fastest course because of

the cushioning the dead foliage afforded her feet. She cringed, however, at

the noise that she was making. Alone and naked in the dark forest, she had

literally no defense against anyone or anything that she might encounter.

At frequent random intervals, she would suddenly stop and stand completely

still, even to the point of making sure that her breathing was as light as

possible, while listening intently for any signs of life around her. During

one such stop, she heard movement near her. Her heart started pounding.

‘Is there someone there? Should I call out? What if it’s the police or one of

the boys from the party fleeing the police? No telling what some of those

players would do if they caught me out here alone, completely undressed. What

if it’s not even a human? Are there bears here?’

The limbs and remaining leaves of the thick growth of trees diffused the

already dim light from the quarter moon. She could make out shapes of big

things, like a tree trunk when she was close enough, but she could see no

details. She wished desperately for a flashlight, or, even better, for Ben.

‘Get a hold of yourself, girl! What are you? Some sort of weakling character

from a romance novel?’

She stepped in the direction of the noise, stepping hard on leaves and sticks

to make a loud ruckus. Then, she suddenly stopped again and listened. She

heard a scurrying noise rapidly retreating from her.

‘Stupid!’ she berated herself. ‘It was just a rabbit or something.’

With her newfound bravery bolstering her, she made better time. Still, she

frequently found herself wishing for company. Any friendly face would have

been great, but she found herself mostly wishing that Ben were there. His huge

muscles would have made her feel so much safer.

She walked until she abruptly realized that she could now see the moon and

stars. The tree line had ended. Proceeding forward a short distance more, she

felt packed dirt under her feet, and, with the forest no longer blocking the

moon’s rays, she could make out more of her surroundings. She saw a dark blob

by the side of the road and hoped that it was Ben’s car.

Being in the middle of the dark woods had been bad because she hadn’t been

able to see what was around her. Being on the road was almost worse because,

since she could see her surroundings, anyone looking could see her. Feeling

vulnerable, she used her arms and hands to cover her private parts as she

cautiously approached the vehicle.

She saw no signs of movement, though, and, when she drew close enough to read

the lettering on the back, determined that it was definitely his Charger. She

unlocked and opened the driver’s side door. The inside light surprised her for

a second. It seemed to shine with the light of a thousand suns, illuminating

her supple form to any onlookers. She jumped in and pulled the door shut,

shutting off the light. She placed the key in the ignition and thought about

what to do next.

Ben had told her to take off if he wasn’t waiting at the car for her, but

should she just leave? She tried to think logically. Ben probably knew the

woods better than she did, and he was fully dressed. The shoes, especially,

would have allowed him to move much faster than her. Surely, he would have

made it here before her if he were able to. The cop must have caught him.

‘I can’t believe that he sacrificed himself for me like that. He didn’t even

hesitate. I hope that he doesn’t get in too much trouble.’

She decided that her best bet would be to try to head home. She didn’t relish

driving through town naked; she didn’t even have a driver’s license, just a

learner’s permit. She didn’t have much of a choice, though. She couldn’t stay

here all night, and, after she sneaked in through her bedroom window, home

would provide clothing.

She also felt weird about driving Ben’s car. He didn’t let anyone, not even

Greg, drive it. It felt even stranger being naked, the hard metal of the brake

on her bare foot, the coarse fabric of the seat on her behind, the seat belt

brushing her exposed breast. Shaking off the effects of the abnormal

sensations, she turned the key. Nothing happened.

‘What’s wrong now? Don’t tell me that, on top of everything else, the car’s

broken!’

She looked around the interior in frustration and noticed that the shifter was

a lot different than the one in Beth’s Honda Civic. She felt around with her

left foot. There was another pedal beside the brake. The Charger, apparently,

had a manual transmission.

Beth had been the one to teach her how to drive. Her dad had only gotten

involved in the process twice. Once to take her to the DMV to get her actual

permit and once when he decided that all young drivers needed to learn how to

drive a manual transmission. He had borrowed a friend’s car and took her out

for practice.

The experience had not gone well. Her dad didn’t have the patience or the

skill to teach her properly. The only way she had been able to get the car out

of first was to press really hard on the gas while releasing the clutch.

Even as she now tried it, she thought, ‘This is a really, really bad idea.’

She didn’t floor it, but she revved the engine much higher than she should

have. When she let out the clutch, the back tires dug in and spewed dirt

everywhere. Not prepared for the rapid acceleration, she lost control of the

car and ended up heading straight at the ditch on the opposite side of the

road. Seeing that she was about to crash, she jerked the steering wheel hard

to the left, managing to alter the path enough not to drive directly through

the ditch and crash head on into the trees on the other side. She finally

remembered to brake, and the car skidded to a halt as the front passenger-side

quarter panel scraped against the trench’s dirt wall. Since she neglected to

push in the clutch, the engine came to a sputtering halt.

Giving no thought to her modesty, she leapt out of the car, leaving the door

open, and rushed around the Charger to inspect the damage. Even in the

inadequate light provided by the headlights and interior lamp, she could tell

that there was a huge dent, and the paint was all messed up.

‘Ben’s going to kill me!’

Just as she had that thought, she saw an enormous figure burst from the woods

on the opposite side of the road a short distance away and sprint towards her.

She could tell instantly that it was Ben.

For a split second, she remembered her nakedness and was glad that it was Ben

who was seeing her. Then, she realized that she had damaged his prize

possession a lot more than just putting a chip in the glass. Should she run?

Even if she did, how would she ever outrun him? Would he hurt her or yell at

her? Which would be worse?

As he neared, she braced herself for his wrath. She expected him to lambaste

her for being a careless idiot or to threaten her with physical violence.

Instead, his first words were “Are you okay?”

She didn’t know how to respond.

He gently grabbed her by the shoulders and looked her in the eyes.

“Are you hurt? Are you in shock?”

The cumulative effects of the evening caught up to her. The humiliation of

parading her panties in front of half the football team, stripping naked for

Ben, the fear of being caught by the cop, her arduous journey through the

pitch-black woods, and crashing the car overwhelmed her. For the first time

since her mom’s funeral, Emily started to cry, and, when she did, the

floodgates opened.

Tears poured down her cheeks as she sobbed uncontrollably. Ben wrapped his

arms around her and pulled her to him. She buried her face in his chest and

bawled. He continued to hold her until she finally regained control of

herself.

Chapter 7

The loss of composure embarrassed her. She tried to apologize, both for

damaging his car and for being such a baby.

“I’m so sorry.”

“No, don’t apologize. It’s my fault. The Charger isn’t the kind of car that

you just hand the keys to a stranger and tell them to drive it. It’s very

powerful and very temperamental. I could have got you killed. Are you sure

that you’re okay?”

Emily nodded.

“Could you stand here for a second without me? I’m going to see if I can get

it out of the ditch.”

After carefully rocking the car back and forth a couple of times, he was able

to back it out. He pulled up next to her and got back out. He briefly checked

out the damage before guiding her to the passenger side door and opening it

for her.

A vivid recollection flashed through her mind. Just after she had gotten her

permit, her dad gave her permission to drive his car with Beth riding as a

passenger. While backing out of the driveway, she had misjudged the distance

between the car and their brick encased mailbox. Her dad rushed out of the

house at the sound of the crash.

His only reaction had been to exclaim about the dent and to harshly scold her

for her carelessness. In contrast, Ben’s only concern seemed to be whether or

not she was okay.

She reclined the seat back and closed her eyes; she needed to think.

It was obvious that Ben had a major crush on her. That was the only way to

explain his actions. He was a nice guy, but, even as inexperienced as she was,

she knew that no guy would pass up what was offered tonight just because he

was nice. His manner with her, his actions in distracting the cop, and his

easy forgiveness of her wrecking his car all spoke to his infatuation. It was

going to be hard to let him down without breaking his heart.

Then the thought occurred to her, ‘Why?’

Why break his heart at all? At first, she had been intimidated by his

gargantuan size. She had quickly found out, though, that he was much more

cowed by little old her than she would have thought possible. She didn’t even

have to open her eyes to know that right now he was studiously looking

anywhere but at her uncovered body.

Ben was intelligent, strong, competent, and confident, and he was not bad

looking at all. The only area where he seemed to lack confidence was in

regards to her. She could fix that.

If she was going to be completely honest with herself, part of her refusal to

date anyone had been her fear that, at some point, he was going to want to see

her without her clothes. She didn’t have to worry about that anymore; being

naked for Ben wasn’t nearly as bad as she had anticipated.

If she had no excuses not to date, why not date Ben? If he wasn’t good enough

for her, then she was setting her standards a mite too high. She made up her

mind; he was the guy for her.

She opened her eyes and returned the seat to its upright position.

Ben surely heard her move because, without looking in her direction, he began

to speak.

“I had to use the jacket to get the cop off my trail, and I don’t have any

blankets or anything.”

‘What the heck is he talking about? Oh, he’s worried about me being naked.’

“I can pull the car over and give you my shirt.”

He applied the brakes.

She made a quick decision.

‘It’s okay for my boyfriend to see me naked, and it will probably be easier to

get him to realize that he’s my boyfriend if I stay this way. Besides,’ she

felt a little slutty for even thinking it, ‘I’m starting to have fun.’

“No,” she said.

“No?”

“No.”

“I don’t understand,” he said. “Why not?”

“Ben, you’re a great guy, but you need to learn a lesson about friendship. I

understand that your first reaction is to try to protect your friends from

their own actions. You have got to learn, though, that sometimes it’s a sign

of disrespect to do so. To me, it’s like you’re saying that I’m not mature

enough to take care of myself, that you have to do it for me.”

He looked at her and, then, realizing that he had just seen her naked again,

jerked his eyes back onto the road.

‘He has no idea what I’m saying.’

“First, you tried to relieve me of my responsibility to my squad. You refused

to understand that I needed to stand up for myself and accept the consequences

of my choices head on.”

He interrupted her.

“What does that have to do with you not getting dressed now?”

He was practically pleading with her to get dressed. She almost laughed. She

never realized just how much power being naked provided.

“I’m the idiot who stood there like a deer caught in the headlights when the

guy warned us about the cops. I’m the idiot who didn’t think to grab her own

clothes off the floor before fleeing into the woods. It’s my fault that I’m

not dressed. I won’t have you giving up your clothes because of my stupidity.”

He was silent for a minute, obviously thinking through his words.

“I understand your point. You don’t want others to suffer because of your

actions, and you want to be treated as someone mature enough to make her own

decisions. I respect that. Would you, instead, take the shirt as a favor to

me?”

‘Reflexive listening. Good, he does know how to debate, and he’s showing off

some of that brainpower that I’ve heard so much about. I’m going to have fun

sparring with him, but this is going to be so unfair.’

“Thank you for listening. That’s a good start, but how would you taking the

shirt off be a favor for you? What benefit would you derive? Do you like

driving shirtless and need me to take the shirt to justify doing so now?”

He could only answer no.

“Is it an imposition for an attractive girl to be riding with you while naked?

You are a healthy, normal boy, right?”

He didn’t answer her that time.

“I can only conclude,” she continued, “that this ‘favor’ of yours is just a

ploy to once again take responsibility for my actions. I swear, if you offer

me your shirt one more time, I will refuse to cover myself AT ALL until you

get me my own clothes back!”

They drove in silence for a few more minutes. She took his lack of a response

as a capitulation.

“Speaking of getting my clothes back, though, where exactly are we headed?”

she asked.

“Actually, I was about to ask you that. This road tees in about five more

miles. When we get there, we need to make a decision. If I turn right, I can

take you via backroads to your house. Uh, dressed as you are, would you be

able to get past your dad to get some clothes? Or, could we call Beth or

someone to get you something to wear?”

Emily thought quickly. Now that she had decided to date Ben, she didn’t want

the night to end. She wouldn’t even let herself think the word “seduce,” but

she needed time to make him see things her way. If she told him that she could

easily sneak into her room, he would immediately take her home. Neither her

nudity nor her arguments would be able to dissuade him. A little white lie

wouldn’t hurt, would it?

“My dad would freak if I pulled up to the house with a guy even if I were

fully dressed. It’s not worth the risk. We should call Beth, though, to let

her know that I’m okay. My cell phone is in her car. Do you have yours?”

“It’s in the glove box. Greg forbade anyone from bringing a phone because too

many of them have cameras. He wanted to make sure that no pictures were taken

of the girls.”

Emily had always thought highly of Greg, but her estimation of him went up

even more with Ben’s simple declaration. She was really going to have to

adjust her estimation of the male population. Some of them, anyway.

Emily dialed Beth’s number. After four rings, the call went directly to voice

mail. She left a message telling Beth to call her on Ben’s phone.

“No answer. Any other ideas?”

Ben seemed reluctant to speak.

“Come on. You’ve obviously thought of something.”

“Well, he said, “if we turn left at the tee, we can go to a little fishing

camp that my parents own not far from here. It’s not much, just a one room

shack with a small kitchenette and a bathroom, but it would be a place that we

could hang for a while until Beth calls you.”

“That’s a great idea. Why didn’t you want to tell me?”

Ben didn’t answer. She decided that she had been cruel enough already to the

poor boy. She let the matter drop.

A little while later, Ben looked like he was going to start talking again, but

then stopped. He did this several more times. Finally, she prodded him.

“Go ahead. What is it?”

“Well, I’m just about out of gas. I love this thing, but it’s not exactly

fuel-efficient. There’s a convenience store on up the highway. We need to stop

and fuel up. I could also get some snacks if you’re interested.”

“Sounds fine. But, again, why didn’t you want to tell me?”

“The station is very well lit. Anyone there could be able to see into the car.

Are you sure that you won’t take my shirt?”

Before she thought the matter fully through, she took advantage of his lapse.

“That’s it, mister. I warned you. No more covering for me until I get my

clothes back. You’re just going to have to get used to me being naked.”

She decided to push her advantage.

“You keep your shirt. I don’t need it. In fact, give me your wallet. I’ll go

in and pay for the gas and get snacks.”

He took his time responding.

“I wish you wouldn’t.”

“Why not? I bet whoever’s in that store won’t be nearly as offended by my body

as you apparently are.”

She knew that he wouldn’t allow her to go through with her threat. In fact,

she counted on him not calling her bluff. She figured that he only had two

choices left to him, try to order her not to do it or pleading. She thought

that she had him figured out.

‘Wait for it…’ she thought.

“Please don’t do that. I’ll do any thing that you want.”

‘Bingo!’

“Pull the car over,” she said.

He found a little side road, turned onto it, and coasted to a stop.

“Look at me.”

He turned and stared directly at her eyes.

“No, look at all of me. I’m getting a little insulted that a fine upstanding,

patriotic, healthy normal American boy like yourself cannot seem to bear the

sight of my naked body.”

She was acting a lot more comfortable about her nudity than she felt. She

tried not to gulp as he followed her command, his eyes taking in her legs and

stomach, her exposed breasts and bush. Her nipples hardened.

‘Now, that’s an unexpected reaction. I’m turning into Julie, or, at least,

Beth. I’m not going to start shaving down there anytime soon, though,’ she

thought, remembering the view that the two other girls had presented at the

practice performance.

“That’s good,” she said. “From now on, I want you to stop avoiding looking at

me. You don’t have to be rude and stare, but you can at least look in my

direction. In return, since you’re so concerned about my modesty. I’ll stay in

the car at the gas station and even lean back so no one can see me unless

they’re right by me. Deal.”

He looked embarrassed but relieved.

“Deal,” he said.

Chapter 8

He started the car and drove them to the store. True to her word, she laid the

seat flat and hid while he went to pay for gas and get snacks. After he left,

she risked a quick peak.

The place was hopping! There were at least ten separate cars there, not

including the Charger. Ben had parked at the pump farthest from the building,

but there were still a lot of people milling about. She quickly ducked her

head back down, hoping that no one had seen her. Though she was having fun

with Ben, she was far from being an exhibitionist.

She couldn’t imagine getting out naked with all these people around. She

couldn’t imagine even just sitting up where they might be able to see her

breasts. Noticing the level of illumination inside the car from the lights all

around, she began to feel exposed and vulnerable. She brought her arms up to

cover herself.

‘Any truck driving by could see me clear as day. Or, what if some guy decided

that he likes Ben’s car and comes over for a closer look. I’d die of

embarrassment.’

Then she had another thought.

‘What if Ben came back and saw me covering up like this? He’d know that I was

lying to him about going inside.’

She forced herself drop her hands back down.

‘Hurry. Please hurry, Ben.’

She tensed when, a few minutes later, a shadow fell over the car. Someone was

approaching.

‘Please, please be Ben.’

The driver’s door opened, and Ben reached in to drop some bags in the back

seat.

“Just gotta pump the gas, and we’ll be on our way,” he said.

She heard him fill the tank and put the hose back up. She then saw shadows

moving around the car.

‘He’s checking out the damage.’

When he got back in, she noticed that he looked directly at her. The glance

seemed forced, but it was a start. She would have smiled, but she remembered

that she was the one that caused the damage he had just inspected.

She asked, “Did I hurt it badly?”

“Just a few scratches,” he replied, as he started the car and drove off. “The

fender’s not rubbing the tire, so driving it isn’t a problem. I’ll be able to

fix it.”

“I really am so sorry. Can I pay you to get it fixed?”

He looked to be considering his next words carefully. Given how much she had

abused him this evening, she didn’t blame him.

“Look. I really do understand what you said about personal responsibility, but

this really wasn’t your fault.”

She started to object.

“Wait. Don’t say anything. Raise your seat back up and let me show you

something.”

When she had done so, he completely stopped the vehicle. Traffic on the road

was light, and there was no one around at the moment.

“You drive Beth’s car, sometimes, right?” he asked.

She nodded.

“Her Civic probably has a stock four cylinder engine. That’s what you’re used

to. The Charger has a V8 that has been modified for racing. My dad and I got

this engine and transmission out of a wrecked racecar and rebuilt it. Those

two components alone are worth more money than your cousin’s entire car.

There’s a lot of difference in horsepower and performance between this and

what you’re used to. Watch this.”

He revved the engine and let out the clutch. The back tires squealed, and the

front end lifted off the ground. He let up on the gas enough for the front

tires to return to the road.

“Zero to sixty in under four seconds. I’ve done the quarter in just a hair

over ten. I just need to make a few more modifications…”

He stopped himself and returned the car to a more normal speed.

“Anyway, the point is that this car is a lot different from what you’re used

to. I don’t let anyone drive it for a reason. If you don’t have experience

with high performance driving, it’s too dangerous. I could have got you

killed.”

He seemed really dejected at the thought of putting her in danger.

She leaned over and kissed his cheek.

“You did the only thing that you could. Would you rather that I have been

arrested? Would you have had me stay outside all night, naked and alone, at

the mercy of rapists or who knows what? Thanks for making me feel better about

wrecking the car. I’ll agree to let you take the blame for this one.”

They made small talk the rest of the way. He seemed to relax a bit regarding

her state of undress, even if he didn’t appear to be completely at ease.

The fishing camp was located right on a small lake and, though somewhat

isolated, had a few other buildings within sight. None of them had any lights

on or seemed to be occupied. Emily made her way inside as quickly as she could

without seeming to hurry.

The inside of Ben’s cabin was pretty Spartan. Two old chairs, a small table,

and a queen-sized bed with a nightstand were the only furnishings.

‘I wonder if the bed was the reason for him being so reluctant to bring me

here? Let’s find out.’

As Ben put away the groceries, she climbed on top of the covers.

“It’s been a really long day. I could really use a nice nap,” she said.

“You go ahead. I’ll turn off the light and rest at the table.”

“You’re going to sit at the table with all the lights off? What will you be

doing?”

She was going straight to hell when she died for torturing him like this. She

just knew it.

“Uh, nothing.”

“It doesn’t seem to make sense for me to get some rest and you not to, since

the lights will be out and all.”

“True. I’ll just lay down over here,” he said.

“On what? There’s nothing to lay down on.”

“The floor’s fine with me.”

“I see,” she said. “Do you usually sleep on the floor?”

She was surprised that he didn’t just lie to her.

“No.”

“Then, stop being silly. Come over here. We’re two mature individuals. We can

share the bed,” she said.

“Okay. You can get under the covers, and I’ll sleep on top of them.”

Was he ever going to learn to stop arguing with her?

“No, I said that I wasn’t going to cover myself up in any way until you get me

my clothes.”

“But, you’re na… I mean, you’ll get cold. Sleeping with covers on isn’t the

same as covering up. It’s cold in here, and the heater doesn’t work.”

She had him now.

“That is a good point. But, I can’t have you getting cold, either. You don’t

even have your jacket. You’re going to have to sleep under the covers with me.

Now, what do you normally wear to bed?”

“Boxers.”

The boy really needed to learn how to lie.

“Okay, go ahead and get undressed.”

She slipped herself under the covers and stared at him. He looked like he had

no idea what to do.

“I can’t get undressed in front of you.”

‘Wrong argument,’ she thought.

“You’re telling me that it’s okay for me to strip naked and parade around in

front of you all night, but it’s not okay for me to see you in your boxers?”

He started to respond.

‘Surely, he’ll remind me how it was completely my decision to strip and to

remain naked.’

Instead, he began taking off his shoes.

‘I do believe that I’ve finally broken the boy.’

On one hand, she felt so wrong for manipulating him. On the other hand, she

really enjoyed it as Ben unbuttoned and removed his shirt.

‘Oh my God! He’s absolutely ripped.’

He turned away from her to take off his pants, revealing yellow Sponge Bob

boxers. He finally spoke as he turned around.

“Don’t you dare say a word. Not one word.”

She could tell that he was trying to distract her from seeing the front of his

boxers as he quickly climbed into the bed, but she caught a good glimpse of

the tent that had formed there. The size of what she saw, more than his

admonition, left her speechless.

He lay down one his side with his back to her while he flicked off the lights.

“Goodnight, Emily.”

She snuggled up next to him, knowing that he could feel her hard nipples and

firm breasts on his back.

“I hope you don’t mind if I use your body heat. I’m a little cold. Goodnight.”

She woke to the sound of his cell phone buzzing on vibrate mode. They had

apparently switched position as they slept because she now had her back to him

and his arm engulfed her body. She could hear Ben lightly snoring. She gently

extricated herself from his arms and grabbed the phone. She quickly and

quietly ran to the bathroom and shut the door before answering.

“Hello,” she said.

“Emily?”

“Hey Beth. You won’t believe what happened to me tonight.”

Chapter 9

Every single eye in the room, including Beth’s, watched Emily ascend the

staircase. She, and maybe Greg, were the only ones, however, that didn’t have

lust in their hearts as they stared at the diminutive beauty’s sexy black

underwear. Beth felt intense pride in her cousin, who had even worn the skimpy

panties instead of the grandma style ones.

Beth had been working to try to break the younger girl of her shyness, and,

this year, Emily had grown in confidence so much. It was just months ago that

Emily had hid in the bathroom rather than face the school in a totally

conservative uniform. Now, she was showing off her lingerie to a room full of

guys on her way to strip naked for one of the football players. She had come

so far. If she would just finally agree to go out with a nice guy, Beth’s work

would be about finished.

After Emily disappeared into Ben’s bedroom, Beth entertained the boys by

herself for a while. She made sure that most of them got good looks at her

thong-covered rear end under the ridiculously short skirt. By the time the

next cheerleaders arrived, the four juniors – Ashley, Cara, Laura, and Kate,

the football players were pretty worked up.

Assigning the perpetually early Meg to drive the always tardy Julie didn’t

work as well as she had planned. The two seniors showed up almost fifteen

minutes late, by which time the audience was starting to get a bit rowdy. As

soon the two arrived, Beth hustled all seven girls to the front of the room to

a cleared area between the fireplace and the coffee table. The other six took

their positions with their backs facing the crowd. As Beth walked over to

start the music, a knock sounded at the door.

‘Who could that be? Greg said the Ben was already upstairs and all fourteen of

the other seniors are present,’ Beth thought.

Mike opened the door and discovered the unanticipated and unwanted presence of

a police officer.

While Beth had forbid the girls from consuming any alcohol, Greg had made no

such admonition. He allowed the guys to have beers, nothing stronger, and

promised that he personally would kick anyone out who got drunk or disorderly.

The cop, as he entered the room, couldn’t help but notice that there were

several underage drinkers present.

A limited amount of chaos ensued. While more than half of the players made an

effort to calmly hide their drinks, four or five of them bolted, mostly to the

back of the cabin but one upstairs.

“Halt. Stop right there,” the officer yelled.

Two of the runners stopped.

“If I don’t see everyone of you back in this room in five seconds, I’m going

to start arresting people!”

It took longer that the prescribed five seconds, but, with Greg’s help, the

cop got all the whole crew reassembled.

The officer nodded at Mike.

“I’m Lou Mitchell. Your uncle let slip that you boys were going to be holding

your celebration in his cabin, and the two of us and my partner thought that

it would funny to come up here and give you boys a little scare. I was a

senior on the ’88 championship team. Congratulations, boys. Fine job in the

game.”

Greg spoke up.

“You just about gave me a heart attack.”

Officer Mitchell laughed.

“Well, we’re off. Y’all be safe, and make sure that I don’t get called back

out here for an official visit.”

He eyed the cheerleaders and shook his head.

“Have fun. Good night.”

They could hear him talking in his walkie-talkie as he exited.

“Ron, this is Lou. Where are you?”

“Out back chasing…” came the voice over the speaker.

“Whatever you’re chasing, stop it and get back to the car. You missed me

scaring the kids. It was hilarious. Now, let’s go.”

Greg didn’t know that anyone had warned Ben and Emily about the cops even

being there, and, since they hadn’t come down the stairs, presumably the only

way to exit the second floor, he had no way to know that they had left. With

no thoughts about his two friends upstairs, he settled in to watch as Beth got

the girls organized once again for the performance.

The start of the show was fantastic. Seven of the most desirable girls in

school shook their rears in time with the music with each bounce exposing

their thongs. Though Greg had the hots for Beth, he couldn’t help but watch

the other girls as well. He assuaged his conscience by staring at Beth the

most.

When the lyrics started, the girls, in smooth, coordinated movements, tucked

the back of their skirts into their waistbands. The guys looked at girls and

at each other and exchanged high fives. They then watched in awe as the

cheerleaders all bent at the waist and touched their hands to the ground.

Knowing intellectually that the hottest young ladies in school were going to

perform a strip tease for you doesn’t prepare you for the actuality. Greg

couldn’t believe it when the seven girls pulled off their panties in unison.

Beth, Julie, and Cara all parted their legs so that he could see, literally,

everything. His erection strained against his pants even more.

‘I should have worn a cup. This could get embarrassing sporting wood all

night,’ he thought.

They then rose and started doing spins. The tiny pleated skirts flared

completely out, and the boys saw everything from the waist down. Greg knew

that Beth shaved, but he was surprised to see that only Meg, Ashley, and Kate

didn’t. He really liked the bare look but also appreciated the nice blonde

landing strip that Meg sported. He didn’t care quite as much for Ashley’s

full, though trimmed, triangle that matched the flaming red hair on her head

or Kate’s hirsute patch.

Next, he was treated to seven pairs of teenage breasts encased only in sports

bras. He took a second to marvel at how coordinated and graceful the routine

was before the display that came next overwhelmed his cognitive abilities.

In one accord, the seven barely clad females bent backwards, displaying their

nether lips to the audience as the short skirts inexorably rose. Then, one leg

at a time, the girls moved into a handstand.

‘Oh shit. They completely showed off their pussies.’

They exhibited both the back and front of their bare groins before righting

themselves and going into the splits. They then whipped off their bras leaving

their tops completely uncovered for the boys’ viewing pleasure. Finally, they

stood back up and let their skirts slide down to the floor. They ended with

their naked bodies, breasts thrust out, facing the football players.

It’s hard for guys not to rate girls based on their physical characteristics,

and Greg couldn’t help but compare the girls. While most guys in the school

would not have ranked Beth as number one, he was so taken with her that he had

eyes mainly for her. He looked her over completely, entranced by her athletic

figure. He loved the way her straight jet-black hair framed her face and dark

eyes and fell to just above her breasts. Though most guys liked more endowed

girls like Kate, Greg thought that Beth’s perky 32B breasts fit her perfectly.

He was most enthralled, however, by her trim stomach and shaved pussy and

could tell that she was just as aroused by this experience as he was.

Next, he looked at Ashley. Depending on which guy you asked, you would be told

that either Emily or Ashley was the hottest girl in the school, followed

closely by the other. Her bright red hair matched her face at the moment, but

he could tell that she too was enjoying all the attention. He especially liked

her pretty green eyes and thought that her C cup breasts were extraordinary.

Kate, though cute in her own way, wasn’t the prettiest girl on the squad, but

her other assets demanded attention. Her bra size was rumored to be a 40D,

and, now viewing her mammaries unencumbered for the first time, he could

certainly believe it. Though not fat by any stretch, she was easily the most

rubenesque of the seven girls, and he appreciated the contrast that the extra

meat provided. He could tell that Kate was the most uncomfortable with showing

off her body and made a note to make sure to pay special attention to her

during the rest of the party to make sure that she was okay.

Julie commanded attention from any guy within a hundred yard radius. She

complimented her nice looks and great body with overt sexuality. Some of the

girls at school whispered insults about her being a slut, but Greg didn’t

agree with the condemnation. He knew that Julie had been raised in Germany as

the daughter of a single military man. She grew up in a culture that had a

completely different attitude about nudity and sex than America. She had no

qualms about displaying her body and enjoying whatever pleasures of the flesh

she wanted.

Meg was the only blonde on the squad besides Emily. He thought that her hair

color might be why she kept the landing strip, to prove that it was natural.

Though not in the same league as Ashley or Emily, she possessed an above

average level of attractiveness and nice C size breasts. Besides, she had such

an engaging personality.

Cara was the most average looking of the cheerleaders, but also the most

athletic. Besides being on the squad, she was also the point guard for the

basketball team and anchored several of the track relay teams. Her gymnastic

and tumbling skills far exceeded even Beth’s. Though not nearly Greg’s

favorite, just about any naked girl is worth a good look, and he appreciated

her lithe body and B size breasts.

The only one of the girls that he didn’t appreciate looking at was Laura. She

looked emaciated when she was dressed. When he saw her naked, he had to resist

the urge to go get her something to eat. In contrast to the trimmed bodies and

toned muscles of most of the other girls, Laura was all skin and bones. He

didn’t spend much of his time eying her.

After a short period of stunned silence while they appreciated their

tremendous good fortune, the team erupted in applause, hooting, and hollering.

Wolf whistles and shouts of “great bod” abounded. There was no standing

ovation, however. Greg figured that most of the guys were like him and wanted

to avoid showing off tents in their pants. The looks on girls’ faces ranged

from serious embarrassment, Kate, to sexual arousal, Julie.

Beth broke from holding her pose and went to switch off the music. She then

stepped in front of the rest of the squad to make and announcement.

“The girls and I had a long discussion last night about what we could do to

make this celebration extra special for all of you.”

She looked at the expectant faces and continued.

“Not that! Get your minds out of the gutter,” Beth said.

Most of the boys burst out laughing, though some did look quite disappointed.

“What we decided is that you should have a chance to view each of us

individually as we pose for y’all.”

The boys weren’t exactly sure what she meant, but they went along with her as

she motioned for the other nude ladies to go behind the boys.

As Meg turned out all the lights except the ones directed at the area where

Beth was standing, Beth explained.

“For ten minutes, I’m going to model for you, any pose that you would like. Do

I have any suggestions?”

None of the other guys spoke up, so Greg filled the void.

“Turn around. Good, now spread your legs out. Further. Just a little more?

Great. Bend over.”

He couldn’t believe that the head cheerleader was displaying her gaping pussy

and butthole to half the football team. He left her in the pose for a minute.

“Anyone else have a suggestion?” he said.

“Stand up with your side toward us,” Mike said. “Now bend over.”

Greg saw what Mike was going for, but thought that this particular pose would

work a lot better with someone like Kate.

“Can I get someone to bring her a chair?” Greg said.

Julie brought one of the dining room table chairs and placed it in front of

the fireplace.

“Sit down,” he told Beth “Put your feet on the coffee table. That’s fantastic.

Spread ‘em really wide. Lean back. Is it okay if we have the guys get a closer

look?”

Beth, even as much as an exhibitionist as she is, blushed at the request but

did nod her assent.

The guys lined up and, one by one, walked right up to her and closely examined

her exposed pussy. They couldn’t help but notice the signs of arousal and

musky smell. Greg was surprised that Beth didn’t cum on the spot.

Her time finally up, Beth called Meg up to the front. With the ice broken, the

other guys got into the act, asking for poses though they mostly repeated the

same ones that Beth had done. Greg didn’t even consider that his teammates

might have been reluctant to tell Beth how to model because of his presence.

Next was Julie. The guys knew that she was completely uninhibited and tried

their hardest to find a pose that would embarrass her. They failed.

Probably the highlight of the night for most of the boys was Ashley’s turn as

model. Most of them just wanted to stare at her and seemed reluctant to make

her spread her legs. She had to prompt them by asking if they would like her

to sit in the chair like the other’s had done. She blushed as she suggested it

and the whole time that the guys were examining her.

Cara and Laura posed for their respective time periods as well. Greg noticed

that a few of the guys actually seemed quite taken with Laura’s cocaine chic

look.

‘Some guys must like those super thin waif types,’ he thought. ‘To each his

own.’

Kate went last and, once again, seemed the most reluctant of the group. He

noted gladly that his teammates also sensed her nervousness and took it easy

on her. Mike took the lead in directing her poses and complimented her body as

sincerely as he could whenever possible. By the end of her ten minutes, Kate

seemed much more relaxed even though a room full of guys were closely

inspecting her open pussy.

Chapter 10

When Kate’s time finished, Beth announced that there was now only about an

hour until midnight, the time the party was scheduled to end.

“We have no more scheduled activities, so feel free to mingle and dance. Just

remember, look but don’t touch,” Beth said before she set her iPod to the

dance mix playlist and turned on the music.

Greg approached her and asked her to dance with him.

“At the risk of sounding like Paris Hilton, that was so hot!” he said as they

danced to the first song. “I can’t believe that y’all went through with it.

And, with such enthusiasm…”

She smiled at him.

“Did you honestly expect anything less?”

He stepped back and scanned her body as she danced, her heaving breasts and

engorged clit.

“It’s been too long since I’ve seen you naked. You’re more beautiful than

ever.”

After the song ended, they parted company for a while so that they each could

patrol the party and make sure it didn’t get out of hand. For the next thirty

minutes, they separately circulated the room and broke up any couples that

seemed to be getting too close. Greg had intending to look out for Kate, but

she stayed by Mike’s side the entire time, seeming happy and content.

With the party winding down, they danced a slow dance. He had to force himself

not to break any of the rules that he had been enforcing. They did dance

close, though, and he knew that she could feel his erection against her

stomach.

The song ended, and Julie approached them.

“I’ve got an idea, but it goes against the rules,” she said. “It would end the

party with a bang, though.”

They listened to her explain her plan. At the conclusion, Beth nearly burst

out laughing while Greg could only nod in stunned silence.

“I guess it wouldn’t do any harm. Just make sure your little show lasts until

midnight. I’ll not be responsible after the clock strikes twelve,” Beth said.

Still chuckling, she turned off the music and called for everyone’s attention.

“For the evening’s finale, Julie would like to put one final performance.”

Julie took over for Beth, nodding to four of the guys standing by the coffee

table. At her gesture, the four cleared off the table and knelt beside it, two

on each side. Julie strutted over and lay down on her back on the wood

surface, her hands above her head. As soon as she got into position, the guys

went to work. The two nearest her head immediately started caressing her

breasts while the one located on the lower right side began lightly stroking

her clit.

Julie closed her eyes and appeared to enjoy their ministrations. Her helpers

gradually increased the intensity of their actions, squeezing rather than

caressing her breasts and rubbing her clit more vigorously. Julie brought her

knees up and spread her legs. The guys working on her breasts removed their

hands and instead put their mouths to her nipples. While the boy servicing her

clit kept up his frenetic massage, the lone one remaining stuck his finger

into her hole.

Between the sexual tension of the evening and the amount of stimulation that

she had already received, Greg anticipated her cumming almost immediately.

Instead, she held out for nearly five minutes before erupting in a huge

orgasm. Her whole body shook, and she ferociously grabbed the two players

nearest to her arms. Her audience burst out in applause.

‘I can’t believe that she did that,’ Beth thought, stunned by the performance.

“Okay, everyone, that’s it. This party is officially over!” she said.

Beth began looking around for her uniform and found that most of the

cheerleader’s clothes had disappeared. She was able to find her skirt but that

was it. Ashley had had the presence of mind to hide all her clothes, so she

was able to get fully redressed. None of the rest of the girls were able to

locate any of their underwear or found both a top and a skirt.

Julie didn’t even bother to look around for her outfit. Instead, she led her

four helpers upstairs, presumably to one of the unoccupied bedrooms. What most

surprised Beth, though, was that she saw Kate, still naked and carrying her

top, leading Mike upstairs. As Beth watched curiously to see if any other

couples would form, Meg walked up to her and Greg.

“The rest of the girls and I spent a few minutes talking. We don’t think it’s

fair to leave all these fellows so worked up with no chance of relief. Two to

one isn’t a horrible ratio. Though Ashley claims never to have given head

before, I think that the four of us can handle those eight players over there.

I’ll just have to play referee to make sure that they don’t start fighting

over Ash.”

Beth chuckled as Meg walked off.

“Well, kiddo, that just leaves you and me. I’m planning on staying the night

here and have a bedroom upstairs. Care to join me?” Greg said.

“You want to add benefits to our friendship?” Beth teased.

Greg looked her in the eyes.

“That’s not exactly what I had in mind.”

Beth’s heart rate accelerated.

“Then what?”

Greg leaned in and kissed her. It wasn’t a friendly kiss. It was a pussy

moistening, toe curling, soul baring kind of kiss. She found herself

responding with equal intensity.

Greg took her hand and started leading her up the stairs. When the they

reached the top, Beth realized that she had completely forgotten about her

cousin. She stopped.

“Wait a sec. We better check on Emily and Ben and let them know that the

party’s over,” she said.

She knocked on the door to the bedroom that Ben was using but got no response.

“You don’t suppose that they fell asleep?” Beth asked.

Greg, close behind her, replied.

“I wouldn’t put it past them. I don’t know if Ben would know what to do with a

naked girl, and I can’t see them talking this entire time.”

Beth knocked a little harder before opening the door. She first noticed that

the room was freezing cold. She then noticed that all Emily’s clothes were

laying on the floor, but neither she nor Ben were in the room.

She turned to Greg in shock.

“Do you think something happened to them?”

“Like what, an alien abduction?”

Beth was getting worried. All kinds of nightmare scenarios flashed through her

mind. She saw Ben kidnapping and raping her defenseless, naked friend.

“That’s not funny! I thought that we could trust Ben. What did he do with

her?” Beth shouted.

Greg put his hand on her bare shoulder.

“Calm down. I’m sure that there’s a reasonable explanation. I’ll run to the

bedroom and get my cell phone. We’ll call them.”

She appreciated the attempt to settle her, but horrible images kept coming

unbidden to her mind. If anything had happened to Emily, Beth would have only

herself to blame.

‘I shouldn’t have made her do this. I should have forced her to stay home.

What was I thinking?’

Greg came back and handed her the phone. Not thinking, she immediately called

Emily’s number. After ringing, it went to voicemail.

‘Idiot. Emily’s cell phone is in your car!’

She thumbed through Greg’s address book to get to Ben and hit “send.” The

phone rang a long time before anyone picked up.

“Hello,” the voice said.

“Emily?”

“Hey Beth. You won’t believe what happened to me tonight.”

Beth had never been so relieved in her life. She sank down onto the bed.

“Emily! You scared me to death. I walk into the bedroom to find you missing,

your clothes on the floor, the window wide open. Where are you? What

happened?”

“Ben and I escaped out the window when the police came,” Emily said.

“The police? That was just a joke. A friend of Mike’s uncle, an old football

player, stopped by as a prank. How did y’all even know about it?”

Emily told her about the warning and their escape and then about the cop in

back of the house. She told her about being separated from Ben and walking

naked through the woods.

“There’s no way that my shy little cousin was prancing around outside nude,”

Beth said.

“Not only that, but I’m still naked. I haven’t had on a stitch of clothing

since Ben took the coat back.”

“Wouldn’t Ben offer you his shirt?” Beth asked.

“He did, many times. I refused.”

“Why ever did you do that?”

“I can’t explain right now. Ben’s asleep, and I don’t want to wake him.”

“At least tell me where you are,” Beth ordered.

“At Ben’s family’s fishing camp.”

“Okay, Greg probably knows where that is. I’ll come get you first thing in the

morning and bring you some clothes!” Beth told her.

“No, don’t. I want some more time with Ben. I’m going to tell him that you’re

unavailable until tomorrow evening. You can meet me outside of town to bring

me my clothes. I’ll call you later to coordinate.”

“Wait a second. You want to spend the day naked with Ben? What’s going on with

you two?” Beth asked.

“Later, I’ll tell you everything. I promise. Love you! Bye.”

Curious but relieved, she handed the phone back to Greg.

“You heard?”

“I did, good for them,” Greg said.

“But, how far do you think they went? Are they just hooking up or…”

Greg interrupted her.

“I doubt that Emily and Ben would just hook up, but, right now…

He spun her around grabbed her around the waist, kissing the back of her neck.

“…the only couple that I care about…”

He squeezed her bare breast with his right hand while reaching under her skirt

with his left.

“…is you and me.”

Chapter 11

Ben woke as Emily left the bed. He watched her nude form as she grabbed the

phone and hurried across the cold floor into the bathroom.

‘She must be freezing,’ he thought. ‘At least the bathroom heater works.’

Between the acoustical dampening effect of the door and the noise made by the

blower, he couldn’t hear any of her conversation. He waited for her to come

out.

“Who called?” he asked.

She jumped a little when he spoke.

“Oh. It was Beth,” Emily said.

She shivered and clutched her arms around her midsection as she walked toward

him. Instead of walking to the opposite side of the bed to get in, she pulled

back the covers on his side and climbed over him, making plenty of bare skin

to bare skin contact as she did so. Ben’s manhood stood at attention once

again.

“I’m freezing. Warm me up,” she told him.

Still dazed by the her actions, Ben couldn’t figure out what she meant.

“Come on, share that body heat. Hold me.”

Ben turned over and laid his right arm flat on the bed above her head. She

cuddled up next to him, her body touching his for its entire length, and

rested her head on his shoulder.

She sighed.

“Ah, warmth. You feel good.”

Ben didn’t know what to do. He had dreamed for so long about her. His greatest

fantasy was to put his arm around her and have her rest on his shoulder much

like this. Now that it was actually happening, the situation was so

complicated. He was embarrassed because she couldn’t help but feel his

erection against her stomach. Surely she wasn’t too naïve to know what it was?

And, he didn’t know how she felt about him. Was this just a fun night for her

or was it something more? Even if it was more, was it worth the risk?

In the end, he simply could not resist the opportunity. He wrapped both his

arms around her and enveloped her in his embrace. He wanted nothing more than

to give her an affectionate kiss on the top of her head, but he refused to

give in to his desire.

Still feeling somewhat awkward about the situation, he found his voice.

“What did Beth want?”

Emily told him about the prank by the police and about Beth being concerned.

“Is she going to come bring you some clothes?” he asked.

“Not tonight. She’s pretty beat. She also had something she needed to do

tomorrow. I told her that you probably wouldn’t mind hanging out with me until

we can all meet up tomorrow night. You don’t mind, do you?”

Ben quickly realized what the delay meant.

“You intend to stay naked the entire time, don’t you?”

“Is that a problem? I did tell you that I wouldn’t cover myself until you got

me my own clothes.”

He decided that it was time to end the game. He released his grip on her.

“We need to talk.”

For the first time since they had left the cabin, she seemed nervous. She

rolled onto her back and met his eyes.

“Yes. We do.”

Ben started.

“I’ve known you for a long time, and you’ve always seemed so shy and innocent.

I could tell that doing that routine for me embarrassed you. Back at the

cabin, you looked like you had to force yourself to stand there like that.

Then, at some point when we were in the car, something changed. You somehow

decided that you wanted me to see you. What gives?”

“I made a decision,” she said.

“Care to share what that decision was?”

She bit her lip before answering.

“Let’s just lay all the cards on the table. It’s obvious that you have a thing

for me. When I got in the car, I thought about how I could let you down

without hurting you too badly. Then I thought ‘why.’ Why let you down at all.

Why was I so afraid to start dating?”

She paused.

“This is going to sound silly.”

“No. Please continue. I need to hear it,” he said.

“You’re a great guy, so I decided that I would like to go out with you. In

fact, I started thinking about you as my boyfriend. The big thing, though, was

that I decided it was okay if my boyfriend sees me naked. You do like me,

right?”

He knew that it couldn’t have been easy for her to open up like that. It was

difficult, but he realized that, to be fair, he had to respond in kind.

“I don’t like you; I love you. I have since you were in 8th grade. I’d sit

home at nights thinking of myself as some kind of pedophile because of it.”

“How come you never talked to me? I know that you’re not much for socializing,

but we were together in groups a lot. You practically ignored me.”

“There were a lot of reasons,” he said. “I saw you turn guys down left and

right. Besides, I had a plan.”

She smiled.

“A plan? This, I have to hear. Do tell.”

“First, you have to understand how I see myself. I’m basically a nice guy. I

think that I have a lot of good qualities, but I see them as qualities that

women tend to look for in a potential mate once they’re ready for marriage,

not the kind of stuff that high school girls are looking for in a boyfriend.”

He paused to gather his thoughts.

“Also, and this is hard for me, I seem to be more sensitive than most of the

other guys that I know. The thought of going out with you and then losing you

is horrifying. I’d rather have never had your love than to love you and lose

you. I mean, as long as I can be your friend, I can handle the fact that you

don’t love me. If we started dating, I’d fall so hard for you in an instant

that I wouldn’t be able to recover.”

Her face hardened.

“And so your plan…” she said.

“Well, I figured that, since my qualities better suit someone older, I’d wait

until you were almost finished with college before approaching you. That way,

I’d optimize my chances that you’d marry me.”

He knew that it sounded ridiculous as soon as it was out of his mouth.

“I see,” she said. “So, I guess that out best bet right is to go ahead and

elope right now. I’ll call my dad for permission, and we can rouse a justice

of the peace out of bed.”

What was she doing? He poured his heart out to her, and she was making fun of

him.

“Don’t play with me like that. We can’t do that.”

“Why? Do you think that it’s silly to get married before we even have a chance

to find out if we’re compatible, if we like being around each other? That’s

what dating is for. It’s even more silly to choose not to date because dating

might not lead to marriage. Even if you waited until I was presumably ready,

we still might find that we’re not right for each other. And, what if I find

someone else while you’re waiting on the sidelines?”

She made good points.

“I know that it probably wasn’t the best plan, but it did eliminate having to

take a huge emotional risk,” he said.

He stopped again and thought.

“I guess, with what I’ve already admitted, it’s too late to avoid taking that

risk. What do we do now?”

Her smile lit up her entire face and reduced him to quivering jelly.

“You should kiss me.”

His mouth engulfed hers, but he was gentle. Years of pent up frustration and

desire poured out in his one simple act. When he finally broke the kiss off,

she spoke.

“Do you have, um, protection?”

He backed away from her.

“Don’t get me wrong. You are really beautiful, and I’m really attracted to

you.”

“But…” she said.

“But, this is moving really fast. I didn’t know that you had any, uh,

experience at this kind of thing. Do you want to go that far before we even

have an official first date?”

She looked embarrassed.

“I don’t know. It’s just that, well, with all the running around naked and the

feel of you next to me, I need, you know, release.”

Her entire body blushed at the admission.

“I’m not all that experienced, but I think that we can achieve that without

going all the way,” he said.

She threw back the covers, which had been pulled up to her neck, baring her

breasts.

“I am at your mercy, sir!”

One part of him recoiled at what he just did and what he was about to do.

There was no way for him to remain even slightly dispassionate about her now.

He was well and truly in her grasp. He felt like he was literally opening up

his chest and having her clutch his heart. She could crush it at any time.

Her need overwhelmed his reservations. He stared at her hard nipples and

smelled the musky odor indicating her arousal. He tentatively reached out for

her.

She closed her eyes and let out a little gasp as his fingertips brushed her

breast. The reaction encouraged him. He spent several minutes caressing her

entire body, running his hands up and down from her toes to her shoulders and

back missing nothing in between. Then, once again starting with her toes, he

started kissing her all over. It took him almost fifty slow smooches to work

his way up her leg.

She kept her thighs clinched as he kissed all around her golden triangle and

made his way up her torso. He delighted in covering every square inch of her

flat stomach, nicely rounded breasts, and shoulders. He saw goosebumps form on

her arms and legs as he tongued her neck, ears, and face.

His eyes feasted on her flushed, exposed body. He gently kneaded her breasts.

She moaned as his tongue found her erect nipples, and he worked her into a

lather before moving down her body.

Ben placed his hands on the inside of her thighs, and she parted her legs

wide. He caressed the smooth skin of her legs and ran his fingers through her

downy hair before finding her engorged clit. Her hands clenched the bed sheet

as he massaged the soaking wet folds of sensitive skin. Her breathing sped up,

and she started bucking her hips up and down.

Ben let her catch her breath before inserting his finger in her

well-lubricated pussy. With his opposite hand still rubbing her clit, he moved

the finger in and out. After a moment, she started bucking her hips once

again. She tried to clench her thighs, but his hand was too strong. He sped up

the piston-like motion. Finally, she let out a scream.

“No more! Please, no more!”

He wiped his hands on the side of the bed and laid down next to her. Taking

her into his arms, he whispered in her ear.

“I love you. I love you so much.”

She fell asleep with echoes of his proclamation ringing through her mind while

cradled tight in his embrace.

Chapter 12

She awoke still wrapped in arm with her back to him. As she opened her eyes

and turned onto her back, he said, “morning, sunshine. How’d you sleep?”

“Well, very well. What time is it?”

“Almost nine,” he replied.

“How long have you been awake?”

“About an hour,” he said. “I thought about going to get some stuff for

breakfast, but I didn’t want you to wake up and find me not here.”

“You could have woken me.”

“You looked so beautiful, sleeping. Besides, I like holding you.”

She snuggled into him. They lay there for quite a while just enjoying the feel

of each others’ body.

“Did I hear you say something about breakfast? My stomach is starting to

grumble, and, if I’m hungry, a big, strong man like you must be starved.”

“I only have the snacks that I got last night, here, but there’s a little

country store up the road not too far. I can run and get us some supplies

right quick. How about bacon and eggs?” he said.

“That sounds wonderful. While you’re gone, I’d like to freshen up a bit. I

don’t have any soap, shampoo, or even toothpaste or a brush with me though.”

“Check the top right drawer in the bathroom. Mom keeps all kinds of stuff in

there, including spare toothbrushes for guests.”

Emily watched as Ben got out of bed and dressed. Not wanting to face the cold

of the room, she stayed huddled under the blankets until he finished in the

bathroom.

Grabbing his keys, he bent down to kiss her. She quickly covered her mouth.

“There’s no way you’re kissing me and my morning breath while you’ve got

freshly brushed teeth. You’ll have to wait until after I shower.”

Grinning, he settled for kissing her forehead before leaving. She waited until

he had left to get out of bed. She quickly noticed that he had left the

bathroom heater on for her and that the small room was now quite toasty.

‘He’s so considerate,’ she thought.

By the time that she had attended to her needs and showered, she could hear

him clanking pots in the kitchen. She paused before opening the door, feeling

oddly nervous.

‘Quit being silly,’ she told herself. ‘Not only has he already been pretty

intimate with you and ogled your naked body for hours, he’s also your

boyfriend.’

Still, she couldn’t help but feel awkward walking around in front of him

undressed. She wanted to go get a blanket to wrap up in, but remembered her

silly blustering about staying naked. She knew that he’d readily let her out

of it, but she couldn’t bear the thought of him thinking of her as a foolish

child.

Bracing herself, she stepped out into the room.

“I could have done that,” she said, indicating the cooking chores.

He turned and looked at her, apparently over HIS shyness anyway.

“Nonsense, I wanted to do breakfast in bed for you.”

She tried not to shrink under his all-seeing gaze.

“I can at least help…”

He interrupted her.

“You look like you’re freezing. Get under the covers and get warm.”

She smiled at him. Did he know that she was embarrassed? She thought about

pushing the point just to be obstinate but dismissed the idea as being too

childish.

He finished up and brought quite a spread to her. The plate, containing

biscuits smothered in white gravy, fried eggs, and bacon, sat on a lap tray

with a glass of orange juice and a small bud vase with a single red rose. She

clapped in delight.

“You know that I can’t eat all this, right?”

“Oh. I tend to think about how much I would eat and then add a little,” he

said.

“You’re so cute,” she said.

Then, a thought occurred to her.

“How did you know that I liked my eggs over easy?” she asked.

“Same way that I knew what snacks and drink you would want last night without

asking. I paid a lot attention over the last few years whenever you were

around.”

He was right. He had bought her granola bars and a Diet Coke last night, her

favorite snack. She hadn’t even noticed that he didn’t ask her in advance. How

had she been so blind to his attentiveness for so long?

“Before I eat, I believe that you owe me a kiss,” she said.

After eating, Ben cleaned up the dishes while she stayed in bed. Between the

bathroom heater, Ben cooking breakfast, and the sun rising, the small house

was starting to heat up to a more comfortable temperature. She knew that she

wouldn’t be able to hide under the covers all day.

As Ben finished up and walked over to her, she threw the covers off, exposing

her body to him once again. He smiled, took off his shoes, and sat down next

to her.

“Whatever shall we do with ourselves today?” he asked.

Her nervousness must have shown through to her face because, instead of

touching her as she expected, he asked another question.

“Are you okay with this?”

She stumbled over her words a bit.

“I am. I really am. Last night was great. It’s just that this is all so new to

me. You seem to know what you’re doing and be so relaxed about it all. Are you

very experienced?”

“Are you fishing for my sexual history, here?” he asked.

“Kind of, I guess.”

“That’s fair,” he said. “I’m flattered that you think that I know what I’m

doing, but I’m not all that experienced. I played all the usual kissing games

in junior high, but I never had an actual girlfriend.”

“What about the stuff that you did right before we went to bed?”

His face reddened.

“There was this one girl…”

“Julie,” Emily guessed. “Did you have a thing for her?”

“No! I mean… I like Julie and all. She’s a great girl, but…”

He took a moment to compose his thoughts before continuing.

“Do you remember last year when Julie broke her leg?”

Emily nodded.

“I had had my leg in a cast my freshman year,” he said, “and I felt sorry for

her. I offered my services helping her in any way that she needed. I carried

her around so she wouldn’t have to walk on crutches and lifted her in and out

of her car, that sort of thing. Then, one night she calls me and asks me to

come over, not telling me what she wants.”

He face reddened even more.

“You know Julie; she’s not very inhibited. It turns out that she wanted me to

bathe her. I tried to talk her out of it, but she said that I was the only one

strong enough to lift her in and out of the tub without getting the cast wet.

She said that she was tired of sponge baths, so she placed a plastic chair in

the tub to prop her leg on and called me.”

“You don’t have to tell me the rest,” Emily said.

“No, it’s okay. Anyway, Julie’s like a force of nature and was not to be

assuaged. Before I knew it, I was carrying her naked body to the bathroom. I

thought that I’d be able to escape and wait in her bedroom while she finished,

but she decided that I should bathe her. She wouldn’t even let me use a

washcloth. Instead she had me put the soap directly from my hand to her body.

She made sure that every part of her not in the cast got washed, too.”

Emily thought that Julie’s bath sounded awfully good. She filed the idea away

for future reference, blushing a little bit herself.

“Anyway, after I washed and dried her, I took her back to her bedroom still

completely naked. She told me that it wasn’t fair for me to tease her like

that and leave. I tried to protest that everything that I had done had been at

her direction, but she would have none of it. She started out by demanding

that I have sex with her.”

Emily felt jealous at the thought of another girl having the attention of her

boyfriend, but couldn’t help but be amused at the thought of Julie abusing

poor, innocent Ben.

“On that issue, I did stand my ground, telling her that there’s no way that I

would sleep with her. She finally relented, but not before I promised that I

would at least help her get release. She pretty much orchestrated what she

wanted me to do, telling me what to do and guiding my actions. That’s pretty

much it. My only experience before last night.”

He looked at her.

“What about you?”

In a very serious tone, she answered him.

“There was this one guy. He made me take off my clothes and stared at my naked

body before he kissed me. I was so turned on, that I practically begged him to

take me. Instead, he caressed my body and used his hands to bring me to

multiple fabulous orgasms.”

The look on Ben’s face was priceless.

“It was you, silly. Only you.”

After listening to Ben describe his experience with Julie and recalling the

night before, Emily was getting pretty worked up again.

“I still don’t know how far I want to go,” she admitted to him.

“There’s no hurry,” he said. “We can even take a step back from what we did

before.”

“No. I definitely want more of that.”

She blushed.

“I’ve also heard from the girls in the locker room that it feels really nice

when the guy uses his tongue, uh, down there,” she said.

She couldn’t believe she was having this conversation. Where had her normal,

shy self gone?

“I just don’t know if I’m ready for more than that yet,” she concluded.

Ben looked like he wanted to say something but that he was reluctant to.

“What is it?” she asked.

“It’s not easy talking frankly about this kind of stuff, is it?” he asked.

“No, but it does help build trust, right?”

“Well, last night, when I, uh, stuck my finger inside you, even though you

were well lubricated, it was hard to get it in. I think that, if for no other

reason than your comfort, we should work up to putting in anything larger.”

Emily didn’t understand for a second. Then she remembered getting a glance at

the large tent in his boxers last night.

“Oh!” she said, and then she blushed.

“Speaking of that,” Emily said, “I feel a little guilty. You took care of me,

and I fell asleep before I returned the favor.”

“All in good time, my dear. All in good time.”

She could tell that he was thinking about something.

“You did tease me mercilessly last night, though.”

“I was worn out after you finished with me. I’m sorry I fell asleep,” she

said.

“I didn’t mean that. I meant before, in the car and getting into bed. I was

thinking ‘who is this little vixen and what did she do with my sweet Emily?’”

She blushed but did not respond.

“Just know that payback’s a bitch,” he said. “But, right now, I just want to

do this…”

He kissed her. Hard. Then he used his hands, mouth, and tongue all over her

body this time. He tortured her in ways that felt so good and made her beg for

him to put his finger inside her. He pleasured her until, out of breath, she

pleaded with him to relent.

They lay there for quite a while, with him holding her tenderly, as she

recovered. Once her energy returned, she looked down at the sweat-soaked body.

“I think that I need a bath. I hate the feel of that rough washcloth in the

bathroom, though. Do you think that I can find a nice, strong hand somewhere

to soap me up?” she teased.

“I think that that can be arranged,” he said while getting up.

He looked surprised when she remained on the bed.

“First, though, it’s my turn,” she said.

“Your turn for what?”

“My turn to try to make you feel like you’ve made me feel. Get those clothes

off, mister,” she commanded.

He didn’t resist. He took off the shirt and pants once again as she admired

his chiseled body. He seemed to hesitate slightly before slipping off the

boxers, but he went through with it. She had never seen a naked guy before.

She had, of course, changed diapers on baby boys and seen some websites that

Beth showed her, but she had never seen one in person.

She stared in wonder at his erection.

‘Oh my God! It’s huge,’ she thought.

Ben turned and walked to the bathroom.

‘His butt is so cute!’

He returned holding a washcloth and laid down on his back next to her.

“What do I do?” she asked.

He didn’t answer. Instead, he took her hand and placed it on his erect member.

He moved her hand up and down.

Emily got the picture. She marveled at the feel of it as she stroked and

caressed it. She kept stroking until Ben suddenly grabbed the washcloth and

used it to cover the head of his penis.

“Keep going,” he croaked.

She started stroking again. Seconds later, it started convulsing and a wet

spot appeared on the cloth.

“Okay. Okay, that’s good,” he said.

Ben used the rag to clean himself off. Emily watched, amazed, as his erection

slowly shrunk.

“That’s really neat. I want to see that again,” she said.

“Later. Maybe, later.”

The two spent the rest of the afternoon naked. Ben bathed her, which led them

back to the bed and her needing another shower. Ben told her that he would

call Beth and arrange the meeting while she cleaned up. Sad to be leaving

their love shack, she finally got back in the Charger around 7pm. It still

felt odd to be outside naked, but, silly or not, she refused to cover herself

when Ben tried, once again, to try to get her to drape a blanket over herself

for the ride home.

Chapter 13

Beth and Greg had spent the day in much the same way that Ben and Emily had,

though without any of the inhibitions of the less experienced couple. Beth,

too, was saddened to have such a great day end, but was looking forward to

relating the events to Emily, and, more importantly, hearing exactly what she

had been up to at Ben’s fishing camp.

When Ben suggested to her that they meet at eight at a rest area just outside

of town, she readily agreed. She also didn’t have a problem when he requested

that she bring Greg. That just gave her more time with her new boyfriend.

“Any idea why Ben wants you to ride with him home?” Beth asked Greg just

before they reached their destination.

“Not really, but, since he spent a whole day with Emily, he probably wants to

talk about the relationship. He can be worse than a girl.”

Beth stuck out her tongue at him, knowing that he was kidding. They had spent

a lot of time talking about and defining their relationship during the day,

and she didn’t exactly have to rope him into the conversation.

As she pulled into the nearly deserted rest area parking lot, she saw Ben’s

Charger parked in the back corner, the one farthest from the road. She drove

over and parked near his car. As she did so, she saw Ben get out and walk over

to the passenger side. Though the parking lot was lit, both hers and Ben’s

cars were in the shadows, and the darkness didn’t allow her to see inside his

vehicle.

“Isn’t that sweet,” she told Greg. “He’s being a gentleman and opening Emily’s

door for her.”

She took her eyes off Ben for a while as Greg said goodbye with a long,

sensual kiss.

“I love you. See you later,” he said while getting out of the car.

“I love you, too, stud. See you soon,” she replied.

Greg turned away from her just as a very naked Emily stepped out from behind

Ben. Beth couldn’t tell who was more shocked, Greg or Emily. He gawked at the

naked blonde as she froze in her tracks. Emily then seemed to realize the

display she was putting on. She let out a short scream, threw her arms across

her breasts and bush, and sprinted to Beth’s car.

“What are you doing, bringing him here? You knew that I didn’t have any

clothes!” Emily shouted at her.

“Calm down. I figured that you would have sense to wrap up in a towel or

something. I’m not used to my shy cousin running around naked. Why aren’t you

covered, anyway, and didn’t Ben tell you that he was picking up Greg?” Beth

said.

“Ben knew that Greg was coming?”

“Ben is the one that requested it,” Beth answered.

“Ohhh. I am so going to kill him. He’s in for it now.”

“Care to explain what’s going on?” Beth asked.

The boys hadn’t gotten in the car yet, and she could see them laughing

hysterically.

“I’ll catch you up later,” Emily replied.

“Okay, want to get dressed before we get on the highway? Your bag of clothes

is in the backseat.”

“In a second,” Emily said.

Instead of getting dressed immediately or going into a catatonic state due to

humiliation, Emily got out of the car. With her hands by her side, she slowly

walked up to Greg and gave him a friendly hug.

“I’m sorry that I was rude to you a minute ago. Good to see you, Greg.”

Greg couldn’t find any words to reply.

Emily then strode to Ben and pulled his mouth to her. After a pressing her

nude body fully against him and practically sucking his lips off his face, she

broke off the kiss.

“Goodnight, lover,” she said and strutted back to the car exaggerating the

movement of her hips as the boys’ eyes were glued to her departing butt. Beth

would have laughed at the stunned expressions on their faces if her own face

hadn’t mirrored theirs so well.

“What has gotten in to you?” Beth asked.

As Beth pulled away from their dumfounded boyfriends, Emily reached into the

back seat and grabbed her clothes.

“Do you realize that I’ve been completely naked for almost twenty four hours?”

Emily said as she slipped on her panties.

“Ah, those feel good.”

Emily finished getting dressed and told Beth all the details about her time

with Ben. When she completed her tale, she asked, “anything new with you? How

was the party?”

Beth told her about all that had happened at the cabin from the start of their

performance through Julie’s one woman, four man, show. She told Emily about

Kate going upstairs with Mike and about the other four cheerleaders promising

to entertain the remaining players, then she said, “and sometime between the

end of the party and me frantically calling Ben’s phone to find out your

whereabouts, Greg and I officially started dating.”

Emily leaned over and hugged her cousin.

“What? That’s great. It’s about time!”

Then, she stopped and began to look concerned.

“Oh my God! I’m so sorry,” Emily said.

“For what?”

“For giving your boyfriend a naked hug. I wanted to make Ben a little jealous

for playing that trick on me. I didn’t think about you and Greg’s

relationship. I’m really sorry.”

Beth laughed.

“Honey, I’m not worried about you trying to steal my boyfriend. It’s okay. The

look on his face was priceless.”

She laughed again.

“I wonder how Greg is feeling right now; he’s always thought of you like a

little sister,” Beth said.

“He probably doesn’t think of me that way anymore. There was a distinct bulge

in his pants when I hugged him.”

The girls laughed together.

As soon as Beth dropped her off and she got to her own room, Emily picked up

the phone to call Ben. She was confused both by her own reaction and by Ben’s

reason for pulling the prank in the first place.

“Ben, I can’t believe you did that!”

Ben burst out laughing.

“You completely deserved it, refusing to get dressed, pretending that being

seen nude didn’t bother you. You have to admit that I gave you every

opportunity to wrap a towel or blanket around yourself before we left. Heck, I

practically begged you to.”

“But you let Greg see me naked. I thought that you’d be too jealous to let

another boy see me,” Emily said.

“Why’d you think that? I’m not really the possessive type.”

“The whole thing with the party. You agreed to let me dance for you so that

all the other guys wouldn’t see me naked. Right?” she asked.

“No. I agreed to it because I didn’t think that you could handle undressing in

front of all of them. I wanted to protect you, not save your body for myself.”

“What about at the gas station, then? You wouldn’t let me go inside. You

pleaded with me not to,” she said.

“Em, honey, you’re a smart girl and a good debater. You need to work on your

poker skills, though. It was obvious that you were bluffing. I had to decide

whether to call you on it or just give in to whatever it was that you were

wanting.”

He laughed.

“I did imagine for a second what would happen if I would have handed you my

wallet instead. I hadn’t realized before last night how stubborn you could be.

I wondered for a moment if you might just actually go through with it. Whether

you did it or whether you had to tell me that you couldn’t do it, I figured

that it would be embarrassing to you either way. In the end, I guess that I

decided that I would rather be humiliated than put you through it.”

With an explanation like that, it was hard to stay mad at him.

“So, what did you think of my reaction?” she asked.

“Truthfully?”

“Yes, please.”

“I wanted you so bad that it was hard to resist throwing you on the hood of my

car and taking you right there.”

She laughed.

“Ben Miller! I can’t believe you said that.”

He laughed too.

“I can’t help it if I have a totally hot girlfriend.”

“I like the sound of that. Your girlfriend,” she said. “So, you gonna ask me

out for next weekend or what?”

“We could do a traditional dinner and movie on Friday night?” he said.

“Sorry. No can do. Beth wants to do a cheerleading squad bonding night on

Friday. I think that she wants to make sure that no one is seriously

regretting their actions from last night.”

“Well, it looks like my Saturday is going to be completely booked, but I’ll

probably be free by early evening. You up for something, then? We’d have to

keep the time fairly flexible, though.”

“What are you going to be doing?” she asked.

“I have to fix the car. I don’t mind driving it for a week with the damage,

but I need to get it dealt with as soon as I can. If the panel slips at all,

it could start rubbing the tire. Anyway, it looks like it’s going to be an all

day job, especially with the priming, painting, and all the waiting around for

it to dry,” he said.

“Oh, Ben, I’m so sorry. Will it cost a lot? Is there anything that I can do to

help?”

“Hey, I told you, it’s not your fault, and, no, it won’t cost hardly anything.

I have plenty of paint, primer, and compound from when my dad and I painted it

originally; the only thing that I have to buy is a couple of brackets that are

too damaged to repair. I’ll get those from an auto salvage yard, though, so it

won’t run me more than twenty dollars or so.”

“Can I help?” she asked again.

“It would be a long, boring day for you watching me pound out dents, but,

sure, you can keep me company if you want.”

“Cool. What time do you want me to come over? I’ll have Beth drop me off.”

“Around ten or so? That will give me time to get a quick workout in before you

get here,” he said.

“Sounds good.”

“Hmmm.”

“What?” she asked.

“Oh,” he said, “I was just thinking. If we’re going to be painting, we

wouldn’t want to get your clothes stained. You might just have to take them

off.”

“Ben!”

Chapter 14

On Monday morning, Roberta Wilson sent Carla Pederson a text message when she

saw Emily exiting Ben’s Charger instead of her usual ride, Beth’s Civic. She

sent another one when the two walked away from the parking lot holding hands

with Ben carrying Emily’s book sack. Carla texted five of her closest friends,

and, by the time the couple reached their lockers, the news was all over the

school.

Bill Simon, who had been carrying a torch for Emily since the first day he had

seen her at the start of their freshman year, clenched his fists when word of

the new relationship reached him, but thought better of any action, though,

when he visualized the size of the offensive tackle. Sam Turner took a more

pragmatic view. The odds are that most teenage relationships don’t work out,

and this turn of events meant the that delectable Emily was now officially a

part of the school’s dating pool. Vince Thibodeaux, however, like most of the

boys in the school, both liked and respected Ben and was happy that the shy

senior was able to land such a major catch.

The reaction from the girls was vastly different from that of the boys. Beth

nearly had to eviscerate one of the freshmen when she overheard the girl in

the restroom talking about Emily. Beth understood that, though Emily was

always as sweet as can be, a certain amount of jealousy permeated over her

selection to the cheerleading squad at the end of just her freshman year, but

those remarks were simply not called for!

Emily’s cheerleading friends tried their best to shield her from the remarks,

but they couldn’t keep it a secret forever. She finally borrowed Beth’s phone

from her purse and gasped as she looked through the text messages.

‘So, Marci is planning on stealing Ben out from under me, huh? And, Tracy

thinks that Ben and I are too shy to do anything more than hold hands? We’ll

see about that!’ she thought.

Even seated, Ben towered above most of the people in the cafeteria seating

area, so she spotted him easily. He started to wave at her when he saw her

approaching but cut the motion short, apparently puzzled by the expression on

her face. She marched right up to him and, in front of practically the whole

school, pulled his mouth down to hers and gave him a slow, smoldering kiss

before walking away without saying a word.

The students burst out in applause.

‘The only thing that would have made that better,’ she thought, ‘was if I had

been wearing my cheerleader outfit.’

It was the first time that she had ever actually wanted to seen wearing it.

By the end of the week, the newness of their relationship had worn out for the

rumormongers, and Emily and Ben were left pretty much alone.

As promised, Emily had Beth drop her off at Ben’s house at around 10am

Saturday morning. She found him out in the garage already under the car. She

was glad that she had worn sweats, as it was a bit chilly in the unconditioned

space. They weren’t much to look at, but they were warm. Plus, she had brought

along a bag with a cute outfit that she could wear if they went out later. It

was the best of both worlds.

“Hey, Loverboy, what are you doing?”

Ben grunted.

“Hey Em. Just taking off some bolts. I soaked it with PB Blaster, but they’re

still a bit tight.”

He pushed himself out from under the Charger and stood up to embrace and kiss

her.

“Good morning.”

“Ummm. Good morning to you too. What’s PB Blaster?”

“Have you ever heard of WD-40?”

“I think I’m seen my dad use that. It comes in a blue can, right?”

“That’s the one,” Ben said. “One of the uses of WD-40 is to help loosen bolts.

PB Blaster does the same thing, only better. Have to be careful with it,

though; it has a lot harsher fumes.”

“Okay. What can I do to help?” she asked.

“Not much really. Just keep me company.”

He climbed back under the car. It didn’t take too long for Ben to finish

disconnecting the brackets holding the quarter panel on. He wore a white tank,

and she liked the way that his muscles bulged as he worked. She marveled at

how easily he picked up the big piece of metal and carried it to a work table.

‘I wonder how much that thing weighs?’

She pictured those huge hands manhandling her and sighed.

Ben set the panel down and picked up a small sledge hammer. He looked like he

was just about to strike the metal when he abruptly stopped.

“This is going to be really loud. Did you want to go inside for a while?”

“No,” Emily replied, “I’d rather watch you.”

It was amazing how quickly she could go from barely noticing him being around

to looking at him like he was a piece of meat.

She stuck her fingers in her ears. He smiled and began pounding out the dent.

‘Look at his attention to detail. Every little part has to be perfect,’ she

thought.

Breaking only to eat sandwiches for lunch. Ben worked relentlessly. After the

metalwork was completed to his satisfaction, he stripped off the old paint and

applied primer. As he waited for it to be ready, he waxed the rest of the car

and then buffed it off while the paint dried.

‘Look at the way that he caressed the car’s body. Should I be jealous?’ Emily

thought.

By sundown, the panel was back on the car and looked as good as new. He and

Emily cleaned up and got dressed in time to eat dinner and catch a movie.

The next weekend, Beth got a job house-sitting for neighbors who were going

out of town. She invited Greg, Ben, and Emily over on Friday night.

When Ben and Emily pulled up to the house after dinner, Greg and Beth had just

started watching “Step It Up 2” on DVD. Greg looked like he was being tortured

and tried to take the opportunity provided by the other couple’s arrival as an

excuse to stop the movie. Emily hadn’t seen it yet, however, and wanted to

watch it. Ben, of course, supported her fully. With Greg outvoted three to

one, the foursome got comfortable in the living room.

“Well, that was fun,” Greg said when the closing credits started to roll.

“Oh, come on. It wasn’t that bad,” Beth said. “Besides, it gave me some ideas

for some new dance moves. Maybe I’ll show them to you later. In the bedroom.”

“Maybe it wasn’t as bad as I thought.”

Emily smiled at their banter. The movie hadn’t exactly been a cinematic

masterpiece, but it did have a lot of dancing. She loved dance movies.

“So, what should we do now?” she asked.

Beth smiled slyly.

“There’s a pool out back.”

“A pool? It’s freezing outside,” Emily said.

“It’s heated. I put my foot in earlier. It feels heavenly.”

“Too bad I didn’t bring my swimsuit then,” Emily replied.

Emily expected Beth to offer one of her bikinis. She was already thinking that

maybe it would be okay to parade around in a skimpy two piece. She wasn’t

prepared for Beth’s suggestion.

“Who’s up for skinny dipping?”

The two guys agreed immediately and, along with Beth, were halfway to the back

door before Emily was able to process the information.

“Last one in has to do a dare!” Greg shouted.

Emily hurried after them. She walked out to see her friends rapidly shucking

their clothes. By the time first Greg’s, then Beth’s, and finally Ben’s bare

butts had dived into the pool, she had removed her shoes and socks and

unzipped her jeans. All three sets of eyes were glued to her as she pushed

them down her legs.

‘I can do this. They’ve all seen me naked, anyway.’

She and Ben had slowed down since their first night together, deciding that

they needed to get to know each other better as girlfriend and boyfriend

rather than let their raging teenage hormones drive their relationship. Even

Ben hadn’t seen her in her birthday suit for the last two weeks.

It seemed different, too, taking off her clothes in front of them. When Greg

had seen her last time, she had been irritated at Ben for tricking her and was

still awash in a glow of the day’s sexual activity. Those emotions weren’t

present now. With no preparation, she was going from sitting in the living

room watching a movie to stripping outside for the entertainment of her

friends.

She stepped out of the pants revealing cute, pale pink panties and then pulled

her shirt over her head. Her lacy bra matched the panties.

‘Am I really going to do it, strip with them watching me?’

She kept her gaze on Ben as she unhooked her bra and let it fall to the

ground. It was easier that way, concentrating on her boyfriend. She pushed

down the panties and stood there naked. She was about to jump in the pool when

Greg stopped her.

“Not so fast,” he said. “You still owe us a dare.”

“He did clearly say that the last one in owed a dare,” Beth said.

Emily, feeling really stupid just standing there with everything exposed,

turned to Ben.

“Hey,” he said, “if you really don’t want to…”

“No, it’s okay.”

She turned back to Greg.

“What did you have in mind?”

“Nothing major. How about you go down the slide?”

Emily could feel their gaze on her naked butt as she walked over to the

ladder. The pool area was well lit, and she knew that the thin metal struts

weren’t doing much to cover her as she started climbing.

Ben had seen much more of her than this and a lot closer up, and Beth was

girl. She didn’t really worry too much about them. Greg was a different story.

‘He’s seeing more of me than he ever wanted,’ she thought. ‘Wait, he’s a guy.

He’s probably not seeing as much as he wants!’

She blushed..

It wasn’t too bad until the height took her above the privacy fence.

‘Anyone at all can see me now!’

In her haste to get out of the potential view of the public, she didn’t even

bother to try to preserve her modesty as she separated her legs to bring them

from the ladder to the slide. She quickly launched her bare backside down the

slippery surface.

Instead of submerging like she expected when she hit the water, she landed

right in Ben’s waiting arms. With his height, he had no problem standing even

in the six-foot water of the deep end.

He gave her a long kiss, and their tongues intertwined.

“Lay your head back and relax,” he told her.

Demonstrating her complete trust in him, she immediately did so.

He used his hands to caress her entire body. He teased her all over as she

floated on the calm water. With one hand submerged and one hand over her, he

traced his fingers lightly over her feet and legs. He stroked the inside of

her thighs and massaged her behind.

She felt her body react to his touches. Her nipples grew erect, and she knew

she was wet from more than just the water. Still he teased her.

He gently squeezed her breasts and rubbed her clitoris from the outside. He

gave her ethereal kisses on her neck and, underwater, behind her ears. His

hands were everywhere, never staying where she wanted, needed, them for long.

Her growing arousal made relaxing and, therefore, floating impossible, and she

began to sink. She felt only the briefest sense of alarm before his arms

caught her. He drew her body to him, and she wrapped her legs around his

waist. They kissed, long and deep.

Somewhere she felt the movement but could concentrate only on her desire, her

craving. Her lips were torn from his as she was lifted out of the water, and

her butt made contact with the rough concrete. She gasped as his tongue

entered her. She spread her legs and let him have his way. Finally, her back

arched with release, and she uncontrollably raked her long fingernails across

his shoulders. She couldn’t help but moan.

Dimly, she was aware of Greg and Beth looking at them, at her, but, at the

moment, she was so lost in the afterglow that she didn’t care. Ben climbed out

of the water, his enormous love muscle extended and dripping water. He picked

her up and carried her inside.

She knew that he wanted to take her, to have his penis inside her. After he

dried both of their soaking bodies, he laid her in bed and climbed in next to

her. She was ready. She lay on her back and spread her legs, waiting. Instead,

he pulled her close to him and embraced her. Holding and caressing her,

whispering his love for her in her ear, until they both fell asleep.

Emily woke the next morning still in his arms. Once again, he had woken before

her and was watching her as she slept.

“Ummm, good morning,” she said as he kissed her.

“Morning.”

“So, why didn’t you take me up on my offer last night?” she asked.

“That’s not the kind of decision that you should make on the spur of the

moment. If, or when, it happens for us, I want it to be because we’ve both

decided in advance that the time is right.”

Chapter 15

Christmas and New Year’s Day came and went, and the green buds of spring

replaced the barrenness of winter. It was late March, after cheerleading

practice, when Julie struck up a conversation with Emily.

“I’ve been meaning to ask you,” Julie said, “how’s the sex with Ben? I had the

opportunity to feel him up once while he was hard. He’s huge. I bet with just

a little bit of experience, he’d be awesome in bed.”

Emily stared at her in horror.

“What? Is the sex awesome?” Julie asked again.

Coming from anyone else, Emily would have been surprised or angry. With Julie,

she couldn’t help but be amused. Instead of running away like she should have,

she answered.

“We haven’t actually gotten that far.”

“What?!? Em, is there something wrong with him?”

“No, there definitely nothing wrong. We’ve played around; we just haven’t gone

all the way.”

“Why ever not? He’s a stud. How can you play around with him and not want him

in you?” Julie asked.

Emily blushed.

“I do, sometimes. When we play around, I’ve begged him to put it inside me,

but he won’t. He says that we can’t make that decision in the heat of the

moment. I have to tell him in advance.”

“That’s easy enough,” Julie said. “Go up to him now and tell him that you want

him tonight. Sex is great! You’ll love it.”

“I’m not sure that I’m ready.”

Julie looked at her like Emily should be wearing a straightjacket.

“Would it help you if you had company? We could do a three-way.”

Emily blushed and shook her head emphatically.

“NO!”

“Hon, does he go down on you?” Julie asked.

Emily hesitated, but answered yes.

“Does he finger you?”

“Yes.”

“Then what’s the big deal. Well, in Ben’s case, I guess it is a BIG deal.

Don’t worry. It won’t hurt much,” Julie said.

“I’m not really worried about it hurting,” Emily said. “It’s just… I don’t

know…”

“Girl, if you want to keep him, you’ve got to do it.”

Emily’s shoulders tensed and her eyes narrowed.

“What do you mean?”

“I know that Ben is a nice guy,” Julie said, “but he is a guy. Guys want sex.

If he doesn’t get it from you, he’ll get it somewhere.”

“Ben isn’t like that!”

“Em, honey, all guys are like that.”

Emily tried another approach.

“Ben wasn’t exactly getting a lot of experience before he started dating me,

was he? He turned you down.”

“That’s because he had eyes only for you. Now that you’re dating, the newness

will wear off. And, think about this: next year, he’ll be away at college

around all those mature coeds. Do you really think that you can hold onto him

without sex?”

Emily was mad at Julie but had to concede that she made a good point. She

hadn’t wanted to think about Ben, and Beth for that matter, leaving her. How

did she feel about Ben going off to school? Would he still want to date a

virgin high school girl, practically a child, while surrounded by all those

women so much more experienced than her? She thought hard about it for a few

days before broaching the subject with Ben.

“So, prom?” she asked him.

“Yes? What is it?”

“It’s a big dance where people get all dressed up, but that’s not important

right now,” she said.

He laughed so hard that she thought he was going to suffocate. Before being

around Ben, she hadn’t known that people really do slap their knees in

response to a joke, and it amazed her that, no matter how many times she made

a similar “Airplane” reference, it always cracked him up. She couldn’t help

but smile; he was such a lovable geek.

“Seriously, you haven’t asked me yet,” she said after he had regained his

breath.

“We’ve still got a month, and I didn’t know if you’d want to go.”

“It’s only the biggest event of the year, and I’ll probably be the only

sophomore invited. Why wouldn’t I want to go?”

He looked chagrined.

“Remember when we started dating, and I told you that I don’t have a lot of

qualities that a teenage girl looks for in a boyfriend? Truth is, I don’t

dance.”

“You have a lot of qualities that this teenage girl is looking for.”

She smiled at him, and his face lit up.

“I can teach you all that you need to know to get by. Besides,” she said, ”I

was reading this romance novel…”

This was the hard part. Should she do it? Was she ready?

“And?” he prompted.

“Well, I’ve decided. I want you to ravish me.”

“Ravish, huh?”

“Yes. Ravish. I know that it’s a cliché, having sex after the prom, but it

sounds nice.”

“I guess I’ll be renting a tux.”

It was a Friday night, just shy of two weeks before prom, when her dad called

out to her.

“Emily?”

“Yes, Dad,” she said, walking into the living room.

“You know what tomorrow is, right?” he asked.

She looked at the date on the calendar.

“Oh! I had forgotten. I’m so sorry.”

“Don’t feel bad. It’s good that you’re moving on. Still, though, are you going

with me?” he asked.

She gave him a hug and a quick kiss on the cheek. This was one of the few

things that they still shared, and he had been so nice about giving her what

money he could to buy a prom dress.

“Of course. Let me call Ben and tell him that I won’t be available until the

evening. We had been planning a picnic.”

Emily and her dad drove in silence, and she wondered what was going through

his mind as they passed through the gates of the cemetery. Five years ago

today, they had laid her mom to rest. Emily found it hard, sometimes, to even

remember her face, her voice. What would things have been like if she had

lived?

Her dad parked near the grave and grabbed flowers and a small book sack from

the back seat. As had become their ritual, she walked with him until they

reached a bench near the grave. She sat, allowing her dad some private time.

As he approached on the way back, she could tell how emotionally draining this

was for him. She looked away so that she wouldn’t see the tears still fresh on

his face. Without a word, he sat next to her. She got up and trudged to the

tombstone.

Emily hated crying, the loss of emotional control, and fought hard against it.

She summoned up the anger she felt at her mom for leaving her. Why did she

have to work so late on a Friday night? If she had come home earlier, the

drunk wouldn’t have been on the road yet. Because her mom had to complete some

stupid, meaningless assignment for a deadline, Emily had to grow up not

knowing her mom and with a dad so devastated that he couldn’t make himself

deal with the world.

She stared at the epitaph, “Beloved Wife and Mother.”

‘Did you love me, Mom? Did you? If so, why did you leave me?’

She struggled to keep the anger. She needed it. She wanted to hate. Hate would

fuel the anger.

All Emily could think about was the summer before the accident when her

parents had taken her to the beach. They had laughed so much. Though the

images were fuzzy, she couldn’t help but see the love that her mom had had for

both her and her dad. Despite her best efforts, Emily couldn’t hate. Before

the sadness could completely overcome her, she went back to her dad.

“I haven’t done right by you, kid,” he said.

“What do you mean, Dad?”

She could see tears forming in his eyes again.

“After your mom died, I knew that I needed to pull myself together for your

sake, but I couldn’t. I tried my best, but I couldn’t.”

He reached out to hug her, and she embraced him. She had seen her dad upset

but never like this, never so demonstrative.

“I love you, girl, and I’m sorry that I haven’t been a better dad for you.

You’re turning into a fine young woman. You’re smart, beautiful, and, most of

all, you have a good heart. Your mom would be so proud of you.”

It was all Emily could do to choke back the tears.

“I’ve been debating something for a long time, and I’ve finally come to a

decision,” he said. “Your mom kept diaries from the time that she was in

junior high until shortly before she graduated college. I’ve always thought

that it would be an invasion of her privacy to read them, so I never have.”

He paused.

“I think that, under these circumstances, she would have wanted you to read

them so that you could get know her better. You’re so grown up, taking care of

me and with a boyfriend of your own, that I think you’re old enough now. I

want to give these to you.”

He handed her the book sack.

She started with the first one, and read all the way home. She dimly

registered her father’s goodbye as he dropped her off at the house and left

again saying something about a bar. She retired to her bedroom and pored

through the journals, not even bothering to eat lunch and barely remembering

to call Ben to cancel their date.

It was close to midnight when she finished. After stretching, the first thing

that she realized was that she was starved. The second thing was that her dad

was not home.

Her dad never stayed out late, and he absolutely had not once in the last five

years left her alone and not knowing where he was. He knew how her mom’s

accident had affected her, how much she worried if he was even a little late.

She cursed the fact that he was too stubborn to buy a cell phone for himself.

She did the only thing that she could think of. She called Beth.

Chapter 16

Beth could tell that something was wrong as soon as she heard the tremble in

Emily’s voice. She got in the Civic and rushed over.

“Do you think he’s been in an accident? What should we do?” Emily asked as she

intercepted Beth on the doorstep.

“I’m sure he’s fine. If he had been in an accident, the police would have

called you. Your best bet is to go to bed, and, hopefully, we’ll know

something in the morning.”

“I couldn’t possibly sleep with the day that I’ve had and Dad missing…”

Emily told her about the trip to the graveyard and the journals.

“I’m marked some passages that you just have to read,” Emily concluded.

“They’ll be time for that later. First, you get cleaned up and ready for bed.”

Beth knew that she was treating her cousin like she was a child but felt that

Emily needed Beth the surrogate mother now, not Beth the friend. When Emily

returned from the bathroom wearing her nightgown, Beth escorted her to bed.

“We’ll just lay down for a few minutes,” Beth told her.

Beth turned out the lights and crawled under the covers with the younger girl.

She held her tight and lightly rubbed her forehead. In less than five minutes,

Emily was sleeping soundly.

‘That has worked like a charm ever since she was a baby,’ Beth thought.

With Emily resting peacefully, it was time for Beth to get to work. She had a

suspicion that she knew exactly where her Uncle Joe was spending the night,

especially this being the 5th anniversary of his beloved wife’s death. She

also felt sure that, like she had told Emily earlier, the police would have

called if he were in the hospital but not if he had been arrested. It didn’t

hurt to check, though. She dug out the phone book and called each of the

town’s three hospitals. However positive she was that he was fine, it was

still a relief when her search turned up no one matching her uncle’s

description.

‘Nothing for it but to wait,’ she thought and picked up the diaries. Turning

to the first page that Emily had marked with a Post It note, she began to

read.

March 23, 1988

Dear Diary,

Dan Morton asked me to go to prom with him today! He’s only the dreamiest

senior on the entire football team, and he picked me. I’m the only sophomore

that’s been invited. This is so exciting! Dad pretended that he was going to

say no, but, instead, he gave me $300 for a dress! This is the best day EVER!

Beth had a hard time picturing Aunt Carol as a boy-crazy teenager. Though her

aunt had always been fun loving and had a great sense of humor, she seemed so

shy and reserved. Beth had assumed that she would have been more like her

daughter in high school and be more reticent around boys. She turned to the

next marked passage.

April 9, 1988

Dear Diary,

I thought that last night would have been the best night of my life. My dress

was beautiful, and Dan looked so handsome in his tux. I thought that I was the

luckiest girl alive. Now, I don’t know.

Dinner and the prom were great. He took me to Chez Mouton! I don’t know how he

could afford that, and he twirled me around the dance floor all night. I’m

surprised that I don’t have holes in my head from all the jealous stares from

the other girls.

After we left, though, he took me to a hotel room. At first, it was really

romantic. He made me stay in the car while he lit candles and turned on really

nice music. Then he picked me up and carried me in the room! Talk about

sweeping me off my feet. Though it was only our first date, I felt a

connection with him, and he was so gorgeous. I mean, DAN MORTON!

As we sat on the bed, he leaned in and kissed me. It was divine! My first real

kiss!

Then he moved down to my neck, gently caressing me with his lips. I started to

feel all tingly, especially down there! It was only our first date, though,

and I began to think that I should make him stop. He had spent so much money

on me, and the prom was so nice! Didn’t I owe him something?

I didn’t stop him as he unzipped the back of my dress, not even when the top

part fell down to my waist and my boobies were exposed. He went for them

immediately, but he wasn’t rough. He stroked them really gently, and it felt

really good! I was really embarrassed when my nipples hardened. He just

smiled, though, and started licking them! Oh, it was heavenly. It felt so

good!

I knew that I should stop him; sloppy second was well far enough for a first

date. When I tried to speak, though, he kissed me on the mouth again. It’s

hard to object with his tongue in my mouth!

He stood and pulled me up after him. With nothing holding it any longer, my

dress fell to my ankles. I’m sure that my face turned red with me standing in

front of him wearing only my panties, a garter belt, stockings, and high

heels. I didn’t have long to dwell on it, as he drew me to him and kissed me

again. I could feel that he was aroused too!

Before I knew it, his hands were on the waistband of panties. I tried to grab

them to hold them up, but I was too late! He had them down around my ankles in

a flash. I was naked!

As I tried to cover myself, he pushed me onto the bed. I tried to object as he

took off his pants and underwear, but no words would come out of my mouth.

Then he was on top of me! And then inside of me!

I laid there as he finished. Afterwards, he got me a washrag and handed me my

clothes. I got cleaned and dressed silently, and he escorted me to the car. He

dropped me off at my house with barely a word and no goodnight kiss.

I still don’t know what to think. He hasn’t called. Does he still like me?

Does he think I’m a slut? I need to talk to him about last night.

Beth couldn’t believe it. Aunt Carol had been a victim of date rape. Did

anyone know about this? She turned to the next section that Emily had selected

for her.

April 25, 1988

Dear Diary,

It’s been over two weeks since prom, and Dan still hasn’t called me. He seems

to be avoiding me in the halls. Fran says that she heard that he was talking

about what happened to the other football players. I don’t know if I’ll ever

be able to show my face again.

I’m also starting to get a little worried. I should have started my period

last Friday. It’s probably stupid; it’s not like it’s never a few days late.

‘Oh no!’ Beth thought. ‘Surely that hadn’t happened to Aunt Carol…’

She skipped to the last passage with a Post It note.

May 28, 1988

Dear Diary,

I went to the clinic to have it taken care of today. It wasn’t an easy

decision, but I had no other real choice. My parents would have killed me.

It’s lucky that I was able to hide it from them. I’m so glad that Samantha

understood and helped me with the money. I can’t believe that Dan wouldn’t

even help with that! I hope that God will forgive me for what I did.

‘Aunt Carol had an abortion and my mom paid for it?’ Beth thought. ‘Between it

being the anniversary of the accident, her dad being missing, and finding out

that her mom was raped and had an abortion, Emily must be a wreck.’

She ended up sleeping on the couch with the phone close by.

It was nearly ten when Emily woke. Her first thought was to rush to her

father’s room to see if he made it home during the night. Her heart sank when

she found the empty bed. She tried to shut out all the possible tragedies that

might have befallen him as she made her way to the living room. Hearing Beth

snoring lightly on the couch, she tiptoed through to begin breakfast

preparations. She hadn’t even finished getting out all the ingredients when

the phone rang.

“Hello?” she answered, picking up the extension in the kitchen.

“This is a collect call from the Springfield Jail from – Joe Taylor. Will you

accept the charges?” the automated voice at the other end of the line said.

She recognized the recorded snippet of her father’s voice. The sense of relief

so overwhelmed her that she didn’t even register the “jail” part of the

message.

“Yes. Please, yes,” she said.

“Emily, I’m so sorry to worry you. I did a very stupid thing last night,” Joe

said.

Emily glanced up to see Beth enter the room.

“What happened, Daddy? Where are you?”

“I’m in jail, honey. I went to a bar last night and tried to drive home after

having a few too many.”

“Daddy! How could you? After what happened to Mom…”

“I know. Believe me, I know. It was incredibly stupid. Can you forgive me?”

Emily was so relieved that he was okay that she couldn’t maintain her anger,

even for him being idiotic enough to drive drunk.

“Of course. I love you. What happens now?”

“I’ve arranged to post bail tomorrow and to get a ride home. Can you stay with

Beth until then? I’m sure that Samantha won’t mind,” he said.

Beth could hear the conversation and nodded without hesitation.

“Beth’s here now; she stayed over last night. She says her parents won’t

mind.”

Something that her dad said registered.

“Why do you need a ride home?” she asked.

“I’m sorry to tell you this, but I was in a bit of an accident.”

Emily’s hand that was holding the phone started shaking.

“An accident? Are you okay? Was anyone hurt?”

“I’m fine. Just a few cuts and bruises, and I didn’t hit anyone else. The car

is totaled, though, and there was some property damage. I was damn lucky; I

can’t believe that I was so stupid,” he said.

She wanted to yell at him for risking his life like that, for taking a chance

of leaving her orphaned. She could tell that he was beating himself up,

though, so she held her tongue. He needed her support, not her anger.

“It’s okay, Daddy. The important thing is that you’re okay. I love you.”

“Thank you, Em. You’re a special girl.”

There was a pause on the line.

“Honey? The officer is telling me that my time is up. I’ll see you tomorrow.

Bye.”

“Bye, Daddy.”

As she hung up, Beth walked over and gave her a hug.

“See, girl. It’s going to be okay.”

“I can’t believe that he was so stupid, though,” Emily said. “My faith in men

isn’t all that high right now. Did you read about what happened to Mom when

she was my age?”

“I did. But not all guys are like that. Ben and Greg certainly aren’t.”

“Greg, maybe. I’m not so sure about Ben,” Emily said.

“Emily! What are you talking about? Did Ben do something?”

“No, not really, but I was talking to Julie the other day…”

“About boys?” Beth interrupted.

Emily nodded.

“That’s a really bad idea. If you need advice on how to improve performance in

bed; talk to her. Any other advice concerning men, stay far away,” Beth said.

“But she made some good points. She told me that guys all really like sex.

That’s true, right? Is Ben going to stay with me next year when he’s away at

college if I refuse to do it with him?”

“Em, I chose Ben to witness your dance because he was literally the only guy

that I trusted with you and that was before I saw how he treats you since you

started dating. I’ve never seen a guy so head over heals, except maybe the way

your dad was for your mom.”

“Well, he wasn’t planning on taking me to the prom until I promised to have

sex with him afterwards.”

Beth looked shocked.

“He made you promise to have sex with him before he would agree to take you to

prom?”

“It wasn’t exactly like that, but sort of…”

“Emily! How was it exactly?”

“We were talking about the dance and whether he was going to take me, and I

told him that I wanted him to ravish me after the dance. It wasn’t until I

told him about the sex that he said he’d take me.”

“I see,” Beth said. “And this was very serious conversation?”

“No,” Emily admitted, “it was kind of joking.”

“Do you really think that he’s only taking you because you agreed to have sex?

Do you think that, if you called him right now and said that you changed your

mind, he’d refuse to take you?”

Emily knew in her heart that Ben wasn’t like the guy who had slept with her

mom, but, between learning about the abortion and her dad’s incredibly moronic

actions, she was feeling mad at all men.

“No,” she said softly.

“Emily, only you can decide when you’re ready. If you love Ben and want to

share this with him, go ahead. If you’re not ready, just tell him; he’ll

understand. And, don’t project your anger at others onto him. He deserves

better from you.”

“You’re right.”

It didn’t ease her anger much, however, and she was fairly short with Ben when

she called to tell him that she’d be staying with Beth and riding to school

with her on Monday.

Chapter 17

Ben moped around his room for several hours on Sunday afternoon after talking

with Emily. Finally, he could stand it no longer and called Greg to talk.

“Emily is breaking up with me,” Ben said.

“What happened?”

“I don’t know.”

“She’s breaking up with you, and you don’t know why?” Greg said. “I don’t

understand.”

“First, she canceled our plans for a picnic on Saturday afternoon, then she

called off our date for that night, and she called me this morning to tell me

she’d be riding to school with Beth on Monday.”

“Let me get this straight, Ben. Because something apparently came up and she

couldn’t see you this weekend, you think she’s dumping you? Get a grip, man.”

“It wasn’t just that. It was the way she talked to me, like I wasn’t

important. She even sounded mad at me for the last phone call.”

“Emily wouldn’t be mad at you for no reason. Did you do something?” Greg

asked.

“No, I didn’t do anything. She’s a teenage girl, for God’s sake. She probably

just changed her mind about wanting to go out with me,” Ben replied.

“Come on. Emily’s not like that. Besides, it’s two weeks before prom; there’s

no way that she’d break up with you right before the social event of the year

without a darn good reason.”

Greg paused.

“Look, it’s one of two things. She’s either upset about something that has

nothing to do with you, or you did something stupid that you don’t even know

about. I could tell you some stories about stuff Beth found offensive when I

was, like, you’ve got to be kidding me. Feel her out Monday at school. If it’s

the former, just be there for her. If it’s the latter, apologize, even if you

didn’t do anything wrong.”

Greg was making a lot of sense.

“I guess it’s like the Wizard’s First Rule,” Ben said.

“What?”

“It’s a book by Terry Goodkind. The rule, paraphrased, says something like

people will believe any lie if they’re afraid that it might be true,” Ben

replied.

“Exactly, you’re afraid she might break up with you so you think that she is

going to,” Greg said. “You’re a wise and intelligent man when you’re not being

an idiot.”

Emily knew that it was wrong of her, but she avoided Ben at school on Monday.

Beth was right; he had done nothing wrong. She hated being irrational and felt

stupid for the way that she was feeling, which, of course, made her even

madder. Her best bet was to not deal with him for a while.

She practically ran into the house when Beth dropped her off. Seeing her dad

seated on the couch, she rushed over to him and gave him a huge hug. She only

let go when she noticed that he tensed up, and she realized that she was

hurting him.

“Dad, you’re hurt!”

“It’s nothing. Like I said, a few bumps and bruises. The seat belt left a bit

of a mark, and you were squeezed up against it. No big deal.”

She looked him over. There were a couple of scratches on his face and a knot

on his forehead. Beyond the physical damage, she could see guilt and sadness

in his countenance.

“Tell me what happened,” she said, sitting down beside him.

“Not much to tell. I went to a bar downtown intending to have a couple of

beers to take my mind off things, had too many drinks, and, like an idiot,

thought that I could drive myself home. The details are fuzzy, but, for some

reason, I swerved and ended up crashing into a shop. The car went through the

building façade, damaging a bunch of merchandise. The accident triggered an

alarm in the store, and the police arrested me for DUI. I’m lucky that I

didn’t kill myself or someone else.”

She took his hand and held it.

“It’s okay. We all do stupid things.”

“I’m glad you’re being so good about this. You’re more understanding than I

have any right to expect. There is more, though. I contacted a lawyer who

talked to the DA for me.”

Emily’s pulse jumped. She had been so glad that her dad was all right that she

hadn’t thought about possible consequences.

“There was a lot of damage done to the shop, over $10,000 worth. If I pay

restitution, I can take a plea deal and get probation with community service

to go with the loss of my driver’s license for a year. If not, the store owner

will press charges for damaging her property, and I’ll be incarcerated for up

to two years.”

“Do you have enough money? Can I do anything? I can get a job,” she said.

“I’m sorry, Em. You getting a job won’t help. I have to come up with the cash

in the next month, and I don’t have it. I’ve already talked to Samantha. She

doesn’t have it either. I don’t see any way to avoid jail.”

Emily couldn’t help but think, ‘What will happen to me?’ She realized, though,

that, no matter what hardships she would have to endure, it would be nothing

compared to her dad having to spend years in prison. Being careful not to hurt

him, she buried her head in his shoulder and embraced him.

“I know that this is hard for you,” he said, “but it will be okay. Samantha

has agreed to take you in. She and Bill are staying here in town until Beth

graduates, so you’ll be able to finish out the school year before they move.”

Emily tried to block thoughts of herself out of her mind but couldn’t. Even

though Ben, Beth, and Greg were leaving, she still had a lot of friends at

school. She was popular and a cheerleader here. At a new school, she’d have to

start over. Cheerleaders were normally chosen at the end of one year; there’s

no way she’d be able to get on a squad for her junior year. This was horrible.

Her poor dad, though. She had seen The Shawshank Redemption; she knew what

kind of things happened in the big house. How would he be able to deal with

it?

They stayed on the couch, holding each other, for a long time.

It was a long and emotional evening and night. Between the worry about her dad

going away and about her moving across the country, she barely slept at all.

If anything good at all could have been said to arise from the situation, it

was that the anxiety and sadness she felt about her dad’s plight overwhelmed

her unreasonable anger at Ben. She resolved that she would end his banishment

on Tuesday.

She had it all planned out in her head what she would say to him. Obviously,

she would start by apologizing profusely and follow up with an explanation of

exactly what was bothering her. He would explain in great detail how much of a

silly goose she was being, and all would be well.

When she saw him standing in the hallway, all her plans evaporated. Is he mad

at her? She basically hadn’t spoken to him the entire weekend and had

deliberately avoided him on Monday, and, for all he knew, she had no reason.

‘I would be mad at me,’ she thought.

The expression on his face when he saw her coming toward him wasn’t anger,

though.

‘Why does he look so scared?’

She couldn’t help but remember how it felt to be in his embrace, how safe and

secure it was. The emotion from the past few days caught up with her. She

tried to open her mouth to speak, but she couldn’t. All she wanted was for him

to hug her, to let her know that everything would be okay. Without a word, she

threw her arms around him.

He hesitated for a moment before reciprocating the hug.

“Whatever it was that I did, I’m sorry,” he said.

She looked up at his face. She treated him like crap for days, and he was

apologizing to her? She snuggled her head deeper into his chest and resisted

the temptation to let him take the blame.

“It wasn’t you; it was me. I had some pretty intense family stuff going on and

needed some space. That’s all.”

He gripped her tighter and kissed the top of her head.

“Anything that you want to talk about?”

“No. Not right now.”

“I’m here if you need me,” he said.

“I know. This is what I need.”

He stood there holding her until she finally relaxed her grip.

“Thanks,” she said. “I’m so sorry about canceling our date and the picnic.

Rain check?”

“I’m free next Saturday…”

“Sounds great… Oh, wait, I promised Liz that I would help her with some

techniques. Cheerleader tryouts are just around the corner. Late afternoon

would be fine, though.”

“Liz?” Ben asked.

“Do you know Liz Appleton? Cute little freshman girl?”

Emily smiled as she saw the light of recognition go on in Ben’s eyes.

“Ahh. That Liz. It’s hard not to know of her. She’s quite a topic of

conversation in the locker room.”

Ben stopped talking and a strange look came over his face. Emily wondered if

she should be jealous. Surely, Ben didn’t have a thing for Liz. She was just

about to ask what was up when he continued.

“Liz’s friend, Jeff, he’s not going to be there, is he?”

“I think that Jeff is her stepbrother. As far as I know, he’s not.”

“Good. Em, I want you to promise me something. Do not hang around with that

guy. He’s trouble, and I don’t think it’s safe. Promise me that you’ll call me

immediately if he shows up with her.”

“Okay. No problem.”

Ben looked her in the eye.

“I mean it, Em. Promise me that you’ll call.”

He was usually so docile. She liked it when he took charge.

“Okay. I promise.”

“So, can I give you a ride to school tomorrow?” he said.

“I’d like that.”

Ben smiled at her.

“I love you.”

Chapter 18

Ben had scarcely finished shaking hands with Mr. Taylor when Emily walked into

the living room. Any time that he saw Emily, he couldn’t help but be in awe of

her beauty, but, tonight, she was absolutely amazing. He had expected her hair

to be fixed up and curled, the way the girls seemed to prefer it for dressy

occasions. Instead, her blonde locks were left straight and fell to the middle

of her back, just the way he liked it.

There seemed to be a twinkle in her eye as she watched him admire her in

stunned silence, but it could have just been the reflection of her shiny,

pale-blue dress that matched the color of her eyes so perfectly. He was having

a hard time believing that it was his shy girlfriend standing before him

wearing this off the shoulder gown that exposed so much of her cleavage and

came down to only mid-thigh on her bare legs. He had also never seen her wear

such high heels, blue of course, and wondered how she was going to dance in

those things.

“So?” she finally had to prompt him.

“You look incredible. I can’t find words to even begin to describe how

beautiful you are.”

His comment seemed to please her as her face beamed, making her look even more lovely.

As he held out his elbow for her to take, he noticed Emily’s Dad’s expression.

For a second, Ben thought that Mr. Taylor was going to say something, possibly

about his daughter’s clothing, or lack thereof. Instead, he shook his head and

opened the door for them.

Emily gave her dad a quick peck on the cheek, and Ben led her to his car,

holding the door open for as she got in.

Once they were safely in the Charger, Ben turned to her.

“Em, that dress…”

“You like it? Beth helped me pick it out.”

“I love it, but, well, there’s not much of it. Aren’t you, uh, cold?” Ben finished lamely.

He had wanted to ask her if she was embarrassed but decided not to put that

thought into her head. She looked so sexy.

She smiled at him.

“No. I think it’s warm enough tonight. In fact, you seem to be sweating.”

He knew that she was teasing him. Her voice shook a little bit with her next

statement, though.

“I decided that I we’re going to play a little game tonight. Each time you do

a certain thing, I owe you an article of clothing. I’m only starting with

three pieces if we count the shoes as one, so you’d better figure out the

action pretty darn quick.”

She arched her backside off the seat and hiked her skirt up to her waist. As

he tried to keep as much attention as possible on the road, she slowly pulled

down her royal blue thong. Once she had slipped it over her shoes, she handed

it to him. He absently stuck it in his jacket pocket.

“That’s for the first time,” she said.

Over the past six months, he had seen her naked many times. Literally every

curve, every fold of skin, was burned into his memory. It amazed him how he

still couldn’t get enough of seeing her.

“You’re going to the prom without underwear? Are you sure?” he asked.

She smiled at him.

“Well, unless you do the action two more times first, then I’ll be going naked.”

He laughed. He loved it when she was in a teasing mood. Still, he wanted to

make sure that she was really okay with it. He had never seen her wear so

little in public.

“Seriously?”

“It’s okay. Really. I know that the skirt is short, but it’s also stiff. It

won’t accidentally flare up. As long as I’m careful about sitting down, I’ll

be fine,” she said.

“Even with underwear, that dress wouldn’t leave much to the imagination.”

She blushed at his comment.

“You like it, though. Right? I haven’t exactly been the best girlfriend

lately, and I wanted tonight to be really special for you.”

“Em, the night is really special because I’m with you. You don’t have to do

anything that makes you uncomfortable.”

Her face lit up at his response.

“It’s not that bad. I know what some of the other girls are wearing, and this

won’t be the most revealing outfit there, believe me. It’s something that I

want to do for you. You do like that I’m wearing this?”

“Very much so. You are so hot. I can’t believe it,” he said.

She positively beamed.

“So, what’s the plan? You haven’t told me much about what we’re going to do

tonight.”

“To start with, we’ll be dining at Chez Mouton.”

He expected her to be very excited. Though the prom was being held in

Springfield, about a forty-five minute drive from their small town, he didn’t

expect that many of his classmates would be able to score reservations for one

of the finest restaurants in the area. Luckily, the Tech football coach had

connections and was willing to hook him up.

He glanced at her hoping to see a pleased expression on her face. Instead, she

had a really weird countenance that he couldn’t interpret. Had he done

something wrong?

“Should I have picked a different place to eat? I can cancel, and we can go

somewhere else.”

Slowly, a smile returned to her face.

“No, it’s fine. It’s great, really. I’ve heard good things about it; the name

just triggered a not nice memory That’s all.”

“It’s really no big deal. I know of this nice trattoria that could fit us in

on short notice,” he said.

“No. Please. I’ve always wanted to eat there. Let’s go.”

She hesitated a second before continuing.

“How can you afford it? I’ve heard it’s really expensive.”

“I’ve been saving up. I want tonight to be special, too.”

As they pulled into town, he tried to sound casual as he said, “You know, this

isn’t such a bad drive. It’s certainly easy to make the trek on weekends, and

it’s not even too far for the occasional weeknight.”

They hadn’t really discussed yet him going off to college next year. He hoped

that she intended to keep going out with him but had his doubts that she would

be willing to put up with a long distance relationship.

She seemed to instantly know what he was getting at.

“If it’s okay, I’d rather not discuss that tonight. Let’s enjoy the moment, okay?”

He pretended to be occupied with paying attention to the car in front of him

for a moment so that she couldn’t see his face.

“No problem, I understand,” he said.

As he pulled into the parking lot at the restaurant, she said, “Look, the sign

says valet parking only. What are you going to do?”

“I’ll pull up to the guy and tell him that I prefer to park it myself. I’ll

tip him anyway, so I’m sure that it won’t be a problem.”

“Why don’t you drop me off at the stand? That way, I don’t have as far to

walk.”

He thought her response was a bit odd but didn’t give it too much

consideration. She got out of the car when the valet opened the door for her,

and he explained the situation to the attendant. As he expected, the guy

didn’t put up much of a fight, and Ben was able to park it himself.

As the hostess greeted him, he couldn’t help but stare at Emily as she stood

waiting for him.

‘How could such a gorgeous creature be my girlfriend?’ he thought.

He was worried that she was going to break up with him soon and had to fight

not to let it make him depressed.

‘This very well could be my last night with her; I have to make the best of it

while I can.’

He bent and kissed her, and placed his hand on the small of her back as the

maitre de escorted them to their table. Ben tried not to wince as he looked at

the menu and hoped that this was the kind of place who gave the women ones

without prices. Otherwise, he would never be able to convince Emily to order.

She seemed discomfited by the poshness of her surroundings. She did, however,

rave about her fancy grilled chicken salad, and Ben could tell that she was

impressed when the waiter used some kind of metal device to sweep all the

crumbs off the table.

“Dessert?” he asked.

She winked at him and blushed slightly.

“I’ll give you your dessert later.”

It was Ben’s turn to blush.

He made it a point to not let her see the bill and paid their waiter with

folded currency. He knew that she would feel bad if she found out how much of

his hard-earned money was going towards this meal.

When they reached the valet stand, Emily told him, “I’ll stay here, and you

can pick me up.”

‘That’s really odd. It’s almost like she’s…’

He turned and winked at her before proceeding to the car.

Chapter 19

Emily realized that Ben had figured it out when he winked at her. Waiting at

the valet stand had been risky, but walking to the Charger with him would have

been worse. Once they got there, how would she have been able to prevent him

from opening the door for her? Then she would have had to give him her shoes.

At least, this way he could decide if he was going to make her give up more

clothing.

She hoped that he would let the attendant open the door for her, and not

insist on doing it himself when they got to the prom. She knew that he

wouldn’t do both, but, if he did either, she’d have to dance all night with

bare feet. She would do whatever he decided, though.

He pulled the car up and made no move to get out. The valet opened her door,

and she noticed that Ben stared at her crotch as she got in. She couldn’t help

but be slightly embarrassed, but it was just Ben. It’s not like he hadn’t had

the same view many, many times and in much better lighting conditions.

She wasn’t used to going commando, though. She felt like everyone was looking

at her and knew that she wasn’t wearing panties. And the top was indecently

low. The waiter had stared at her cleavage every time he came to their table.

She had thought about moving the napkin from her lap to her neck but saw how

Ben reacted. Instead, she had made it a point to lean forward whenever the guy

was near.

She liked the hunger that she saw in Ben’s eyes. He was normally so reserved.

Whenever they had private time away from prying parents, he always drove her

crazy before satisfying her needs. Though he occasionally let her give him a

hand job, it wasn’t the same. He never lost control like she did. When she

slipped off her thong earlier, he had looked capable of losing control.

In a way, she liked the thought that she could make him want her so much. On

the other hand, she couldn’t help but think about what happened to her mother,

and imaging this giant of a man full of unrestrained lust scared her. She

remembered reading the novel 1984 for class earlier in the year.

‘This must be what Orwell meant by doublethink,’ she thought.

She did her best to suppress the negative feelings and focused on having a

good time with her date. She knew that Ben was safer for her than any guy she

could ever meet. Who else would be so gentle and patient with her? She simply

had to treat him better. She knew she had already hurt his feelings once this

evening by blowing off his attempt to talk about the future; she hadn’t wanted

to tell him yet about her moving out of state.

Ben pulled into the convention center parking lot and asked her, “Do you want

me to drop you off at the front?”

“That’s okay; I don’t mind walking.”

After he parked, he grinned at her.

“I can open your door for you if you like?”

She almost laughed.

“I think that I can manage.”

Relieved that he had let her keep her shoes, she strolled hand in hand with

him into the dance. She noticed that a lot of guys turned toward her when they

saw her dress. Ted Johnson’s date even had to slap him to get his attention

back.

Emily’s heart rate quickened.

“Ben,” she whispered, “is this dress too revealing?”

Instead of answering right away, he stopped, cupped her face in his massive

hand, and gave her a long, deep kiss.

“The dress is absolutely perfect. Every guy in this room wants to be with you,

and I can’t believe that you’re here with me.”

She didn’t know if she liked the concept of a lot of guys wanting her; it made

her even more conscious of how much of her breasts were showing and of the air

passing over her dampening, unclad nether regions.

‘Can any of them tell that I’m not wearing anything under this?’ she thought.

She felt her nipples harden.

‘Maybe I have more in common with Beth than I knew.’

With her increased arousal, she became more enthusiastic about the effect her

exposure was having on Ben. His eyes were slightly dilated, and she could see

a bump forming in his pants.

“I saw this old movie once where people were dancing and the guy drug his

partner through his legs and tossed her up into the air,” he said. “Can we try

that?”

She smiled sweetly at him.

“Try it, and you’re dead.”

He laughed and held out his hand to her.

“May I have this dance?”

The DJ was playing “Truly, Madly, Deeply” by Savage Garden as he led her onto

the dance floor.

‘This is our first real dance. This will now always be our song.’

Though she had tried hard to teach Ben modern steps, he had no sense of

rhythm. The best that she had been able to achieve was to have him hold her

while doing simple three or four step movements. Good thing a slow song was

playing.

She willingly left the floor with him when the DJ put on “The Chicken Dance.”

‘What is this, a wedding reception?’ she thought.

She laughed at the couples still on the floor as Ben went for punch. For the

rest of the evening, he would occasionally ask for her hand when a slow song

would come on. Otherwise, they enjoyed each other’s company and talked with

Beth and Greg and Julie and her dates.

Emily liked watching her cousin during the more upbeat numbers. She and Greg

moved well together. She laughed as Beth flashed her panties on more than one

occasion. Funny that Beth was wearing underwear while she wasn’t!

All too soon, the party was over, and Ben escorted her back to the Charger. As

she reached for the door handle, he stepped past her and grabbed it first.

“Not this time,” he said.

She smiled as she got in.

“Well?” he said once he had gotten settled.

She slipped off her shoes and handed it to him. Only one more item to go.

Anticipation heightened her arousal.

“Where to now?” she asked.

He mumbled something.

“What’s that? I couldn’t hear you.”

He kept his eyes straight ahead on the road.

“I have a reservation at the Marriot.”

He was so, so cute when he was embarrassed.

“That seems a little presumptuous,” she said.

“But you said that…”

“I know, silly. I was just teasing.”

She could see the tenseness in his shoulders ease.

After he parked at the hotel, he leaned over and kissed her.

“I love you so much,” he said. “I’m going to register and get everything

ready. You hang tight for a few minutes and don’t even think about touching

that door handle.”

She heard him open and close the trunk and watched him enter the building.

Goosebumps formed on her arms and legs.

‘Did he mean what I thought he meant?’

At least ten minutes passed before he exited the building. She had to fight

the urge to get out before he returned.

He surprised her by getting in the car and driving around back. She waited for

him to circle around and open her door.

‘This is it,’ she thought.

He kissed her deeply again.

“I believe that you owe me something.” he said.

Did he really mean for her to strip here? If she objected, she would know that

he wouldn’t demand it. She resisted the temptation to chicken out.

‘Trust him.’

She turned her back to him.

“Could you help? It’s hard to reach.”

She felt his massive fingers fumbling with the small tab. Then she heard the

unmistakable sound of the slider descending the zipper teeth. The pressure

around her chest loosened, and she could feel the cool air on her back. As the

zipper completed its drop, the top of the her dress fell to her waist, and her

breasts were exposed. Not stopping to think about what she was doing, she gave

the garment a final push, and the fabric slid down her legs to land in a

puddle at her feet. She stepped out of it as Ben picked it up and locked it in

the car.

She turned back to face Ben and the hotel. She couldn’t help but notice all

the room lights that were still on. Anyone could be at one of those windows,

devouring her nude body with their eyes, seeing her bare breasts with her hard

nipples and looking at her trimmed pubic hair.

She moaned as Ben gently laid his hand on her butt, caressing it and slightly

pushing her in the direction of the building at the same time. She ached for

his touch on her and grabbed his free hand, trying to force it onto her

engorged clitoris. It wouldn’t budge. The pressure on her backside increased.

She didn’t care; she wanted him now!

“Inside,” he whispered.

Reluctantly, she lurched forward. The movement helped break her from her

stupor. She realized how exposed she was.

‘I have to get to cover.’

Her pace quickened, and she was glad that Ben parked so close to the door. He

quickly inserted a card key and opened it for her. She stepped into an

enclosed stairwell.

“Which way?” she asked.

“One floor up. Follow me.”

He stopped when he reached the second floor landing.

“Wait here for a second,” he said.

Ben walked through to the corridor, momentarily leaving her alone. She didn’t

have time to panic, however, as he quickly returned.

“The coast is clear. Let’s go.”

He led her a short way down the hall before opening up one of the rooms with

his card. Relieved to be out of potential public view, she rushed inside.

Ben had already prepared the room. All the lights were out, and dozens of

small candles provided the only illumination to the space. A clock radio

played mood music. Emily was instantly struck by the further similarities

between her prom night and her mom’s. She shook her head to try to dislodge

the thoughts that sought to ruin the rest of her evening.

Ben grabbed her from behind and began rubbing his hands up and down her body.

She gasped as his finger brushed against her breast and moaned as her massaged

her clit, but fought to urge to give in to his touches. She wanted him to

desire her as much as she did him.

He seemed perplexed when she led him to a chair across from the bed and

indicated for him to sit down. She backed away from him and began moving her

body to the rhythm of the music. His eyes widened when she caressed her own

breasts and teased her nipples. Encouraged, she moved her hands lower and

touched herself. She was soaking wet!

‘What am I doing?’ she thought. ‘I’m full on masturbating in front of him.’

Surprised by her own action, she took a step back. Since she had forgotten

that she was so close to the bed, she tripped and fell back on it. With her

lying on her back, her legs spread wide, Ben must have taken as an invitation.

She saw him grab a package containing an XXL Trojan and begin to unbuckle his

pants.

An image of her mom in the same position popped into her mind, and, for an

instant, the vision melded with her. She could feel her mom’s fear and doubt.

As Ben/Dan moved toward her, she screamed.

“NO!”

She rolled off the bed and ran to the bathroom, slamming the door in her wake.

Moments later, she heard a knock.

“Go away! Just stay away from me,” she yelled.

Trying to shake off her sexual haze and the aftereffects of her hallucination,

she turned on the shower and stepped in. It was at least a half hour later

before she shut off the water and wrapped a towel around herself.

Emily didn’t fully know what to expect when she stepped out of the bathroom.

Should she apologize for her behavior? How could she explain what happened?

Would Ben be mad at her? What she really didn’t expect was for him to be gone.

Her dress, shoes, thong, and the overnight bag she had stowed in the Charger

earlier in the week were all sitting on the bed, and Ben was nowhere to be

seen.

‘He didn’t get what he wanted, so he left me,’ she thought.

Chapter 20 - Conclusion

Ben felt guilty for leaving Emily without a ride, but he knew that she had her

cell phone in her purse. She could easily call Beth. Besides, the room was

paid for through the night; someone should get use out of it.

While driving the dark, deserted back roads to his house, he couldn’t help but

dwell on the events of the evening. He had been shocked by her actions. One

minute, she was deliberately teasing him, getting him all worked up, and, the

next, she was running away from him.

It had confused him greatly at first, but he figured it out quickly.

Obviously, she had been planning on breaking up with him soon but had decided

that she would sleep with him first. A pity ..., he believed they called it.

She must have gotten scared at the last minute and decided to back out. He

wished she would have explained how she was feeling; he hated leaving on bad

terms with her.

What he still didn’t understand, however, was the scream and the look that she

had given him before rolling off the bed. Both had been filled with such fear,

anger, and even hate. He realized that she often got angry for no apparent

reason, which was annoying but not a huge problem. What could he have done to

make her afraid of him, though? He loved her; how could she hate him?

When she had told him to go away, he did. He knew that she wouldn’t want to

deliberately hurt him and was probably groping for a way to break up with him

without leaving hard feelings. He decided that the best bet would be to leave,

that way she didn’t have to deal with it. He made sure to return all her

clothes and get the overnight bag out of the car before departing.

The night played over and over in his mind, especially her screaming and

glaring at him. He couldn’t stand the thought of her hating him, even if he

had given her no reason.

He was barely aware of how heavily his foot was leaning on the accelerator

until he glanced at the speedometer and saw that he was pushing eighty miles

per hour on a curvy road with a forty-five mile per hour limit.

He knew the highway well. He visualized the next curve, rated at thirty-five.

It was right before a bridge, and the land beside the pavement dipped into a

steep ravine with a low fence and an old oak tree on the other side. He often

wondered if his Charger would be able to clear that fence if he were going

fast enough.

He punched the gas petal and watched as the red needle hit one hundred twenty.

“Just two good ole boys…” he sang quietly to himself.

He could see the Charger, black instead of the orange General Lee, launching

into the air. Only this time, there would be no cut away to a new vehicle

after it landed. This time, the car would be a mangled heap of twisted metal

wrapped around a tree.

Would he survive, he wondered, if he left his seat belt on? Better to unfasten

it after leaving the ground.

He raced toward the curve. At what point would be too late to pull back even

if he wanted to?

He didn’t think of his family or his friends or the bright future that he

would be throwing away. He did think of Emily, though.

How would she feel about this? Would she blame herself? She would. She would

feel responsible for the rest of her life.

Years of experience with high speed driving had taught him that slamming on

the brakes would result in a loss of control. Instead, he downshifted. He

winced as he heard the strain on the transmission, but it couldn’t be helped.

He was close to the curve, too close.

He drifted as far to the outside of his lane as he could. His only option

would be to cut hard to the inside lane. He prayed that no one would be

traveling in the opposite direction around the curve at that exact moment

because it would mean disaster for both of them.

Still traveling way too fast, he wrenched the steering wheel to the left. He

felt the rear tires slip a little. If they lost too much traction, he would

fishtail and could end up crashing into the ditch doing three-sixties. He

heard the squealing and smelled the burnt rubber, but his investment in

high-performance radials paid off.

Once he was safely around the curve, he was able to slow down, and, with his

heart beating rapidly, make his way home.

A little over two weeks passed with Ben and Emily studiously avoiding each

other. Even Beth and Greg couldn’t get any details out of either of them,

though not for lack of trying.

On Tuesday, Joe Taylor called the school and told them that Emily wasn’t going

to be attending that day. Instead, both dressed in their Sunday best and went

to the courthouse.

Emily couldn’t help but be anxious when she entered the building. Would this

be the last time that she saw her dad outside of a prison for a long time? Her

dad’s attorney had called late last week and set up this meeting with the

prosecutor. He had been a vague on the details, and neither Emily or her dad

knew if this was the day that he would begin serving his sentence.

She took a handkerchief out of her purse and dabbed at her eyes. She had went

nearly five years without shedding a tear after her mom was laid to rest. For

the past two weeks, she hadn’t made it through a single day without crying.

Joe shook his lawyer’s hand as soon as he walked in the room and somberly took

his seat. Emily quietly sat in an out of the way chair in the back.

“Mr. Taylor,” the assistant district attorney said, “I have the paperwork for

your plea agreement prepared. Your representative has already read through it

and okayed it. By signing here, you are admitting to criminal charges of

driving under the influence. You will lose your license for a period of one

year, perform one hundred hours of community service, and be placed on

probation for three years.”

“I don’t understand,” Joe said. “What about the restitution?”

“According the my records, the restitution has been paid,” the DA said while

pulling out a sheet of paper from the file on his desk.

“May I see that?” Joe asked.

Emily saw her dad scan the document. He turned to her.

“Emily, this says that Benjamin F. Miller paid the money last week. Ben Miller. That’s your boyfriend, right?”

Emily didn’t know what to say. How could Ben have paid it? Where would he have

gotten the money? How did he even know about it? Why would he have done it?

Without much further conversation, Joe signed the necessary paperwork. After

some discussion of the requirements of his community service and probation,

Emily’s dad was allowed to leave the courthouse a free man.

The confusion that Emily felt at first was replaced by joy for her dad by the

time they got outside. She hugged him, and they both laughed and cried. She

had never been so relieved in her life. Her dad wasn’t going away! She would

be able to stay here and continue to be a cheerleader.

During the ride home, thoughts about Ben interrupted her celebration. Surely

he didn’t think that she was going to sleep with him because he had prevented

her dad from going to jail. Did he think she was some kind of prostitute? Her

anger at him had almost subsided to the point where she missed his company;

most of the tears that she had shed had not been for her father. Now, she felt

the anger returning.

Her dad had borrowed Beth’s car for the trip into Springfield. The plan was

for Greg to drop her off after school to pick it up. Emily would make Beth

give her a ride to Ben’s house; she wanted to confront him.

As expected, Beth had been fine with the idea of giving her a ride. Once they

were in the car, she said, “Good, you two need to talk, anyway. Any particular

reason that it has to be now, though?”

Emily spit out her words.

“He paid my dad’s fine.”

“Oh, Em, that’s great news, but why do you sound so mad?”

Emily didn’t respond, and Beth pulled the car over to the side of the road.

“Emily Taylor, I don’t know what happened between the two of you, and I don’t

really care. I do care, however, that you’re acting like a spoiled child. Ben

Miller is one of the nicest, kindest people that I have ever met. He certainly

doesn’t deserve to have you treating him like this. If you’re not planning on

being nice to him, I’ll turn this car around right now, and you can find

another ride.”

“You weren’t there. You don’t know what he did.”

“You’re right,” Beth said. “I wasn’t there. I don’t know anything about it;

neither you or Ben will tell me anything about it. I do know both of you,

however. You are quick to anger so that you can avoid feeling anything that

might make you vulnerable, and he is so smitten with you that a single mean

word from you would crush him.”

Emily bristled at both Beth’s description of her and of Ben.

“You weren’t in that room; you don’t know.”

For the first time, she could see a concerned look on Beth’s face.

“Honey, did he hurt you? Did he rape you?”

“No, but he wanted to,” Emily said.

“He wanted to? What do you mean?”

“I could see the lust in his eyes.”

“I see. And what were you doing at the time?” Beth asked.

Emily couldn’t tell her that she was laying on her back on the bed, naked,

with her legs spread wide. Instead, she stayed silent.

“Tell me, Emily, how did you get away from him?”

“I ran to the bathroom.”

“Did he try to stop you? What did he do?”

“No. He knocked on the door, and I told him to go away. The room, the night,

everything, it was so much like what mom described.”

Beth grabbed her hand.

“Reading that about your mom, especially with what happened with you dad right

after, must have been horrible for you. Not all guys are like that creep your

mom wrote about. Will you trust me that Ben isn’t like that?”

Emily started to disagree with her, but Beth cut her off.

“Emily, at least give him a chance to explain. Will you do that? Will you do

it for me?”

As much as she didn’t want to give him a chance, it was hard to refuse her

cousin. Beth had always been there for her. How could she say no?

Grimacing, she nodded.

When they pulled into Ben’s driveway, Emily almost told Beth to drive away

because Ben’s Charger wasn’t there. She was just about to speak when spotted

him pushing a lawn mower at the side of the house. She told Beth to stay put

and got out of the car.

He clearly saw her approaching because he shut off the engine.

Her promise to Beth to give him a chance clearly in the forefront of her mind,

she strove to keep her voice level.

“You paid my dad’s restitution.”

He didn’t meet her eyes.

“Yes.”

“Why?” she asked.

He continued to stare at the ground and didn’t answer.

“If I were a cynical person, I’d think that you had a ulterior motive for

paying a large sum of money on behalf of your ex-girlfriend.”

“If I could have kept the source anonymous, I would have. They made me give my

name,” he said, still looking anywhere but at her.

“Where did you even get that much…”

She stopped herself as her brain made an odd connection.

“Ben, where’s the Charger? You never let anyone else drive it. Now, you’re

here, and it’s not. Didn’t you tell me one time that it was worth a lot of

money?”

Ben didn’t answer her.

“Why would you sell the thing that you love most in the world to help me when

we’re not even dating?”

Ben mumbled something.

“What was that?” she asked.

“I said that it’s not the thing that I love most in the world. Not even

close.”

Was he crying?

“I don’t get it. If you care so much for me, why did you run out on me just

because I wouldn’t have sex with you?”

He finally looked at her, and, from his expression, he probably wouldn’t have

thought that she was any more stupid at that moment if she had said that

Britney Spears was the best singer on the planet and Miley Cyrus should win an

Oscar for her acting.

“What the hell are you talking about?” he asked. “At every single point in our

relationship that involved anything sexual, you always took the lead when we

went to the next level. I never pushed you. Not once. Ever.”

It finally occurred to her that it was possible that she had misjudged the

entire situation.

“You were the one that wanted to have sex that night,” he continued, shaking

his head. “I knew that I should have stood my ground and told you no.”

“You didn’t want to?” she asked.

“No.”

“But guys…”

“Guy’s always want to,” he finished for her. “Yeah, guys aren’t supposed to

worry if they’re going to do it right or worry how it will effect the

relationship. I do, though. And, I always thought that my first time would be

with the person that will become my wife, not necessarily on my wedding night,

but... Look, I knew that I should have told you how I felt, but it’s so hard

for me to say no to you.”

She couldn’t help it; she seized upon the one part of his statement that she

could twist around on him.

“You didn’t want me as your wife?” she said.

“Emily, I told you that first day that I wanted to marry you, just as you told

me that you didn’t know how you felt about me. I still don’t know how you feel

about me. It seemed like you sure had fun hanging out with me and exploring

the sexual stuff, but how would I know how you really feel? How many times

have you told me that you love me?”

“All the time. Right? Surely I…”

“Never, Em. Never.”

She stood there thinking. She couldn’t remember a single time when she had

told him how she felt. Did she even know how she felt?

She had learned with her mom’s death that it was dangerous to love. Love led

to loss. She couldn’t help loving her dad and, of course, Beth. Was it worth

it to let someone else in?

She thought about how he had been with her, so kind, so loving. Did she ever

truly believe that all he wanted from her was sex? Was her anger really just a

way to keep from having to admit how she felt? If there was ever a man in this

world who deserved her love, it was him.

“Ben, I…”

“Don’t you dare say it now!” he shouted.

He had never raised his voice to her in anger. She didn’t know what to do, how

to react.

He turned and started walking away from her toward the front door of his

house.

Now that she had discovered how she felt, she didn’t want to lose him. If she

let him get away now, things would never be the same. She only had one weapon

left at her disposal, but she detested it’s use. Did the ends justify the

means? Could she ever respect herself again if she went through with it?

She had no choice. It was her only shot.

She focused on what life would be like without him, on how much she had hurt

him. She let down her defenses, let herself be lost in the emotions. Tears

streamed down her face, and her body was racked with sobs. Ben couldn’t help

but hear her.

He turned back to look at her, his face hard and eyes cold. She could tell

that he was trying to fight it, but he was losing the battle. His face

softened. He took a tentative step toward her. Then another. He ran to her and

swept her up in his arms.

“I’m sorry. I love you. Please, just don’t cry,” he said.

When she was finally able to get her tears under control, she told him in a

still shaky voice, “Ben, I do love you. I’ve been so stupid; can you ever

forgive me?”

“I could never not forgive you,” he said.

Emily sent Beth home and stayed to talk with Ben for hours.

“So, Benjamin F. Miller. What’s the ‘F’ stand for?” she asked him.

He grimaced.

“Franklin.”

“No way, Benjamin Franklin. Too funny,” she laughed.

“What can I say, I have patriotic parents.”

“What about your brother, TJ, then?”

“Thomas Jefferson Miller. Sad, huh?” he said.

“That’s horrible. Can I tease him?”

“Be my guest.”

She paused.

“Ben, can we go to your parent’s fishing camp tomorrow?”

“If you want. Why?”

“I’m ready. I mean, I’m really ready this time. I want to complete what we

started on prom night,” she said.

“Em, I love you, but didn’t you hear what I said about wanting my first time

to be with my future wife?”

She smiled at him.

“I heard you perfectly.”

THE END