

Exile

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Note: This is my story. The names and details have been changed to protect the privacy of those involved. Some of this account has been reconstructed from memory, but most of it has been based on a journal I kept during these years.

Chapter One

Memory Protect

November 1981

It was just beginning to snow again when the sedan pulled up to the curb. The window rolled down with an electric moan, and even across the sidewalk I could feel the heater. The driver looked over and beckoned me with a tilt of the head, but I had already started crossing the sidewalk. I knew why he'd pulled over.

"Got the time?" I asked him as I leaned through the window. I'd been standing in the cold for nearly an hour; I would have done him for just ten minutes in his overheated car.

"Yeah," he said, taking a closer look at me. The electric door latch unlocked with a thump and I climbed into the passenger seat. I got a brief glimpse of him when I opened the door: fiftyish, balding, overweight, but with a neatly trimmed beard and wearing a nice suit. The car smelled of cologne and cigarettes, not at all unpleasant compared to some of the cars I'd been in over the past few months.

"How old are you?" he asked.

"How old do you think I am?"

"Sixteen?"

"Yup," I said. I was really fourteen, but I'd learned the customer was always right.

He grunted, sort of a cross between a “huh” and a clearing of the throat, and then shifted in his seat. I knew the next thing out of his mouth would be “I’ve got a daughter your age”.

“I’ve got a daughter your age,” he said. The look in his eyes said that this was worth at least an extra \$25, even for a hand job.

“Drive,” I said. “Cops’re gonna be along any second.”

He put the car in gear and pulled away from the curb.

“Where?” he said.

“What do you want?” I knew plenty of quiet alleys and parking lots, good enough for a BJ or a quick jack, but if he wanted anything more we’d have to go to the rooming house on Chandler Street. I had a deal with the owner there.

“Just um...just a...,” he stammered.

“Head?”

“Yeah.”

“Sixty. Up front.”

“Okay,” he said.

“Take the next right, then a left on Thayer Street. There’s a parking lot on the left, about halfway down the block.”

Five minutes later we pulled into the unpaved lot, shielded from the brooding row of lofts by a van. Over the purr of the car’s engine I could hear a band rehearsing somewhere.

“Here,” he said, pulling three \$20 bills from his wallet.

“Push the seat back,” I said. He reached down between the seat and the door and toggled an unseen switch. The front seat eased away from the dashboard with an electric whine.

“What’s your name?” he asked as he undid his belt and trousers.

“Lita,” I said, lying. My friend Cami told me never to use my own name. I’d chosen the name of a guitar player I liked, Lita Ford from the Runaways.

“Rita?”

“No, Lita.”

“Lolita?”

“Close enough,” I said, reaching between his legs to fish his penis out of his boxer shorts. As I kneaded his half-erection he cupped my breasts through my sweater, gently squeezing them. It was a gesture purely for his own benefit; I felt his cock growing in my fingers as he fondled my tits. When he was hard I leaned over into his lap and took him in my mouth. He smelled a bit funky —sweaty, musky, a middle-aged man’s smell—but I’d smelled worse. His cock tasted faintly of urine but, again, I’d tasted worse. As I began to suck him I felt his hand roaming under my skirt, coming to rest on my bottom.

“Suck me,” he muttered under his breath, “Suck it. Suck that cock, baby. Yeah, suck me...” He was a Talker. Some Talkers gave me the creeps, especially when they’d start to pretend I was someone they knew, a friend or co-worker for instance. I’d wonder what movie was playing inside their heads. A snuff film, perhaps?

But most Talkers were benign, content to spin their little narrative while I serviced them, muttering a play-by-play they could recall later while they furtively jerked off in

the office or at home. Nearly half the men I'd pleased had been Talkers to some degree, from those who'd repeat "Aw, yeah" incessantly to men who referred to "that cock" and "those balls" with such detachment that it seemed as if their genitals were entities separate from their bodies.

This guy was somewhere in the middle of the spectrum, grunting and sighing when I bathed his cock with my tongue, and repeating "suck me" while my head bobbed in his lap. His penis was circumcised, stubby and thick, with a hard shaft and spongy head that barely reached the back of my throat.

The squeaking of the seat springs began to get louder; I knew he was getting close. His hand was now inside my panties, cupping my ass, and his monologue had tapered off into heavy breathing punctuated by the occasional "suck". As I briskly sucked him I could feel his thighs tensing and relaxing through his trousers, his belly heaving, his penis twitching in my mouth. Suddenly he groaned and tightened his grip on my ass as the first spurt of semen shot from his cock. It was cloyingly sweet, something I hadn't expected, but there was no way I could spit it out. I choked back his second and third spurt, swallowing hard. He relaxed, sinking back into the car seat and releasing his grip on my ass as he let out a deep breath.

I released his softening penis from my mouth and sat up, brushing a strand of blonde hair from my face. Flipping down the visor, I checked my makeup in the vanity mirror.

"Cigarette?" He flipped open the pack and offered me one.

“Thanks.” I finished reapplying my lipstick and took a cigarette, letting him light it for me.

“Can I give you a lift back downtown?”

“No thanks. Just drop me at the corner.”

* * *

The hiss of steam heat and the smell of boiled cabbage greeted me as I walked into the foyer. I trudged down the flight of stairs that led to the basement and let myself into the apartment. The smell of gumbo simmering on the stove overpowered the neighbor’s cabbage. I shrugged off my coat and hung it up in the closet.

Cami was stretched out on the living room couch, gazing at the television from under hooded eyes, half of an unlit joint in her hand. When she saw me come in she folded her legs, making room for me on the couch.

“Delia’s sleeping,” she said, bringing the joint to her lips and fumbling with a pack of matches.

“She working tonight?” I asked, fishing in my bag for my lighter. I handed it to her, tugging at her legs and pulling them on to my lap. She was wearing a short yellow silk kimono that set off her milk chocolate complexion.

“Two shows,” Cami replied, passing the joint. “You have dinner yet?”

“Nothing but coffee and cum since breakfast.”

“Dee made gumbo.”

“I know. Smells good.” I passed the joint back to her and kicked off my boots, exhaling a cloud of pot smoke that glowed blue in the light of the television. I settled

back into the plush cushions of the old couch, absentmindedly caressing Cami's smooth legs. She must have just shaved and moisturized; her skin felt as smooth as her silk kimono.

"Mmmm...that feels good, Annie," she whispered. I leaned over and laid my head on her hip as my caresses progressed up her thigh. As Cami began to gently stroke my hair, I parted her kimono and exposed her beautiful cock, half-hard and freshly shaved. I pursed my lips and lightly blew on it, making it stir and twitch between her shapely thighs. Cami had only been on hormones for a few months; her cock and balls hadn't atrophied like Delia's. And unlike Delia, who looked to be between thirty and fifty depending on her makeup, Cami was sixteen. Despite her delicate facial features and budding breasts, she still had a teenaged boy's libido. Erect early, erect often.

And erect she was. She softly sighed as I parted my lips and let her cock enter my mouth. Cami tasted clean, a trace of soap and skin cream on her shaft. Unlike the previous nine blowjobs I'd given that day, six in cars, two in the hallways of buildings, and one in an alley, this one was done slowly, carefully, lovingly.

Cami parted her legs slightly, letting me roll over on my belly between them. Propping myself up on my elbows, I held her shaft with one hand and her balls with the other, guiding her spear back between my lips. Cami began to slowly rock her hips in time with the motion of my head between her legs. Her hardness tensed and her balls twitched every time I swirled my tongue over her shaft. I looked up and watched her hooded eyes begin to close and her expression begin to slacken as whatever pills she took

before I got home began to take effect. I sucked her faster, hoping to make her come before she passed out.

Cami's eyes opened again and she smiled at me as she tugged at my shoulder, pulling me up from between her legs. I released her glistening cock, letting it flop against her thigh. Cami reached for the zipper in back of my skirt, pulling it down. I wriggled my hips, letting the skirt fall around my knees before stepping out of it. Skinning off my panties, I knelt over Cami's reclining form, reaching for her hardness and guiding it inside me.

As I drew Cami's cock inside me I could hear Delia waking from her nap, padding from her bedroom to the bathroom. The door closed as I pulled my sweater over my head, water running while Cami fumbled with the clasp of my ratty old bra, toilet flushing as Cami's hands found my breasts, fingers pinching my nipples as our hips ground together and apart. As our pace grew faster I could hear the bathroom door open again, Delia's footsteps getting closer, each step out of time with our thrusts.

"Don't be staining my couch, girly" Delia said, throwing a towel between me and Cami. She stood next to us, her long red silk robe tied loosely at the waist with a thin sash.

"No, ma'am," Cami said. She stopped thrusting inside me and lifted her hips from the couch, sliding the towel under her ass before falling back into the cushions. She resumed her rhythm, our hips rocking against each other. I leaned over and kissed her, first on her forehead, then on her nose, then on her full lips, teasing her tongue out with my own. I could hear Delia pawing through my purse.

“It’s in my coat, Delia,” I said, breaking off my kiss. “The money’s in my coat.”

“Uh huh,” she muttered, padding off to the closet to get my coat. She returned with it a moment later and set herself down in one of the overstuffed chairs next to the couch, watching us fuck while she rummaged through my pockets. She pulled out the wad of cash and counted it as I turned my attention back to Cami, who was suckling my breasts, lightly biting my nipples while I rode her hardness.

“You need a new bra,” Delia said, peeling a few bills off of the cash I’d brought home and placing them on the coffee table. Her robe opened slightly when she stuffed the rest of the money in the pocket, revealing her half-hard penis and small, hairless balls. As I leaned over and kissed her smooth ebony belly, Delia opened her robe a bit more, her cock stirring slightly as I gently kissed it. I took her in my mouth as I rode Cami’s hardness, feeling her expand slightly but never really get as stiff as the cock I had mounted. Delia sighed and stroked my hair as I sucked her.

This wasn’t going to be one of those rare occasions when I could make Delia come, filling my mouth with her thin semen despite her years of hormone treatments. That didn’t mean that she couldn’t enjoy my blowjobs, though. I had the feeling that this was the reason she let me stay with her and Cami, besides the money I brought home and the meals I sometimes cooked. Every so often I’d manage to suck her just right, to make her body shake, to make her come. Afterwards she’d hold me in her arms and rock me like a baby until we fell asleep.

This wasn’t going to be one of those times. Cami was close to coming; I could feel her stiffen inside me, her hips rising off the couch and lifting me up as she buried herself

inside me. A particularly deep stroke began to set me off, making me release Delia's penis with a sharp gasp. She stepped back and began to stroke her glistening spear as she watched us fuck on her couch.

"Coming," Cami gasped, her cock throbbing inside me, pulsing as a warm feeling spread through my pussy. She grabbed my cheeks and pulled me against her hips, our rhythm slowing and finally stopping. I was close to coming and I rocked my hips a few times in an effort to feel the friction of Cami's softening shaft against my clit.

"Finish me," I whispered in her ear. I didn't need to say it; Cami loved to lick her own cream from my sloppy sex. Delia watched as we changed positions, making sure we didn't stain the precious upholstery on her thirty-year-old couch. Cami was careful to keep the towel under my dripping pussy as she laid me back on the couch and ducked her head between my thighs. I wondered if I'd come before the pills kicked in; more than once Cami had passed out while we'd made love. This time she managed to stay awake, licking me clean and lashing my clit until I came. I tugged on her shoulder to let her know I'd had enough. Cami looked up at me and smiled, her eyelids heavy and half-closed.

As Delia padded back to her bedroom to get dressed and Cami lay back on the couch to doze off, I headed to the bathroom and filled the tub with hot water and bath oil. A few minutes later I was stretched out in the old cast iron tub, letting the warm water chase the lingering chill from my bones, a chill from another day spent on the street sucking and fucking strangers for money.

It seemed as if every moment I spent alone I'd begin to yearn for the life I had lost: the house in Maine, Ramon and the boys, and Julia, dear Julia. It had been not quite a year but it seemed like a decade ago. As always, my eyes began to well up with tears. I reached for a washcloth and daubed them away.

* * *

December 1980

Despite all my fears and worries about Ramon, Del, and Paco heading out on to the stormy Gulf of Maine in the fishing boat, it was actually a highway accident that took them away from me, a collision with a tractor-trailer carrying a load of timber. Ramon and Del were killed instantly. Paco, who was riding in the back of the van, bled to death before the ambulance could arrive. Less than an hour after the funeral, I was in the custody of the Maine Bureau of Child and Family Services.

I was placed in a foster home in Portland, sharing a room with Denise, a sixteen-year-old chain smoking heroin addict who stole whatever she could from me, even clothes that had no chance of ever fitting her. Our foster parents were a crusty old couple in their sixties; he was retired from the paper mill and drank all the time. His wife cleaned houses part of the time and looked after us the rest. Mr. and Mrs. Hubbard lived off of the money they received from the state for looking after six foster kids crammed into three tiny bedrooms.

I thought I'd only spend a couple of weeks here, as Julia was petitioning the state to have me released into her custody. Numb from the sudden loss of my papi and stepbrothers, living with Julia was all that I had to look forward to. But that couple of

weeks stretched into a month and more, and on a blustery day the week before Christmas, I received news from a social worker that Julia had suffered a sudden stroke.

Julia's family came up to arrange for her care. Whether they were aware of our relationship or not, I do not know. Either way, I was shunned, and not allowed to visit Julia in the hospital. She passed away three weeks later. I never had a chance to see her or tell her how much I loved her.

* * *

Just when I thought things couldn't get worse, they did. Mr. Hubbard began to take a special interest in me. It started with the occasional grope in the close confines of the kitchen, escalating to a forced kiss in the upstairs bathroom. His breath was foul from Lucky Strikes and cheap whiskey, and the grey stubble on his face was painfully scratchy. I could feel him press his half-hard cock against my thigh as he groped me and slobbered on my lips. The sound of footsteps in the hall forced him to break off his clumsy embrace. Mr. Hubbard left the bathroom in a hurry.

The next night he did it again, cornering me in the bathroom and groping me. When he tried to part my lips with his foul tongue, I pushed him away as hard as I could. Mr. Hubbard was much stronger than me, and he kept me in his grip, forcing his knee between my thighs. I tried to squirm away but he wrestled me to the tile floor, pinning me against a threadbare bathmat with his body.

"Wassa matter? You a virgin?" he hissed. I just nodded, wishing he would go away. His grip relaxed and he slowly eased off of me. He drew up to his knees and

unzipped his trousers, fishing his cock from his torn boxer shorts. His half -limp penis dangled from a nest of grey pubes.

“I’ll get that cherry later. Right now you gonna suck it, Amy,” he said.

“Annie.” He didn’t even know my name.

“What?”

“My name is Annie,” I said.

“Who cares.” He put his hands on his hips. His gnarly pink worm stirred. I sat up and leaned into his crotch, taking his cock in my hands and drawing back the foreskin. There was a rank, musty smell coming from his boxers, but I just held my breath as I took him into my mouth. He hardened quickly.

I began to suck him, mechanically, efficiently, trying to perform the act as quickly as possible. Mr. Hubbard unbelted his pants and let them fall around his knees. His hips began to move to my rhythm, forcing his cock deeper into my mouth. It was neither long nor thick, but it had a fat, bulbous head that dribbled thin drops of precum.

“Take your hand off it,” he whispered. I’d been stroking his shaft, sliding his foreskin back and forth. I did that to make him come faster, but it also kept him from going too deep. Reluctantly, I loosened my grip on his cock and he brushed my hand away. Mr. Hubbard grabbed the back of my head and began to force his penis down my throat. His fat cockhead battered the back of my mouth, cutting off my breathing and triggering my gag reflex. I nearly bit him as I began to retch, forcing him to withdraw momentarily.

As I was catching my breath, I felt something in Mr. Hubbard's loosened trousers, something square, something familiar. As I leaned back into his crotch and let him fuck my face again, my fingers slowly probed for the pocket. Looking up, I saw his eyes were closed, his breathing heavy, his thoughts were elsewhere. My fingers suddenly found the object in his pants: a wad of cash. Keeping my eyes on his slackened face, and trying desperately not to gag, I slowly eased the money from his pocket and slipped it under the edge of the bathmat.

Mr. Hubbard opened his eyes and looked down, a crooked smile forming on his thin lips. His creaking hips began to speed up and I felt his cock begin to twitch in my mouth. Even so, the first spurts of his semen caught me by surprise, a bitter, thin liquid hitting the back of my throat. I suppressed the urge to retch and spit it out, fearing his reaction. I honestly thought that I wasn't going to leave that bathroom alive, that he'd strangle me or drown me in the tub. Choking down his thin seed, I went limp on the floor.

Mr. Hubbard stuffed his flaccid cock back into his shorts and pulled up his trousers. Without a word, he stood up and left. I leaned over the sink, rinsing out my mouth for a few minutes before reaching under the bathmat for the money. I looked at the roll of bills; mostly tens and twenties, maybe a couple of hundred bucks. I wondered when he'd realize it was missing.

I left the bathroom, hiding the wad in my towel, and returned to my room. Fortunately, Denise wasn't there. I counted the money, \$352, and hid it in the only secret place I had, behind the dusty old radiator next to my bed. Setting my face into an expressionless mask, I went down to the kitchen for something to drink. Rinsing with

water hadn't helped, and I needed to get the taste of Mr. Hubbard's bitter spunk out of my mouth. He was down there, sitting at the table, watching Mrs. Hubbard wash dishes while he drank his whiskey. He didn't even look up at me; he just sat there, hunched over his ashtray and his glass.

I had already made my mind up to run away, somewhere, anywhere. There was a problem, though. Mr. Hubbard's perch in the kitchen gave him a good view of the front door, and the only other way out of the house was through the basement. But the stairs to the basement ran from that very kitchen. My only hope was to wait until they went to sleep, but Mr. Hubbard regularly stayed up late, watching television from under a haze of cigarette smoke. By the time he went to bed, I'd be virtually locked in my bedroom with Denise. Back in my room, I stuffed some clothes into a grocery bag and hid the bundle under my bed.

By the time "lights out" rolled around, Denise was already asleep. I lay in bed fully clothed, with the covers pulled up to my neck, listening for Mr. Hubbard's footsteps on the creaky stairs. After hearing his bedroom door close, I waited fifteen minutes before easing out of bed. I retrieved the cash from its hiding place and pulled my bag of clothes from under the bed. Denise was quietly snoring as I sneaked out of the room, across the hall, and down the stairs. The house was eerily quiet and dark as I left it for the last time.

I walked for nearly an hour in a light snow, heading for the bus station. Portland was deserted. Even the bars were closed. The bus station was empty except for a janitor mopping the floor. He looked up at me for a moment and went back to his task. There

was no one at the ticket counter, just a sign that read “Open at 6AM”. That was three hours away.

I grabbed a bus schedule and ducked into the ladies room. In the privacy of a stall, I read the schedule. The first bus wasn’t until 6:15, and that one went to Bangor. I’d never been there and I didn’t know anyone in Bangor. There was a 6:30 bus to Boston, though. I’d been there a few times with Julia. I tried to remember where Margaret’s mother’s shop was located. It wasn’t too far from that hotel Julia liked, but I didn’t know exactly where that was, either. It seemed so long ago. I closed my eyes and leaned against the side of the stall, trying to get a little sleep.

The sound of the bathroom door opening woke me up. I grabbed my bag and hustled out of the stall, surprising the janitor as he wiped the sink. It was just after six, and the ticket counter was already open. A middle -aged woman sat behind it, sipping coffee. I bought a ticket to Boston and went to wait for the bus among the rows of plastic seats.

* * *

Boston was like I’d never seen it before, shrouded in snow, shadowy in the light of a weak grey dawn. The bus crept through the slick streets, stuck in the morning traffic. By the time we reached the Greyhound station, I’d remembered the name of the hotel and found it on a map in the bus station. Ritz -Carlton. It wasn’t too far, just a couple of blocks away. I walked there, partly to get my bearings, partly because I wanted to see it once more. Julia and I had made love there; it seemed like a sacred place to me.

Standing in front of the Ritz, I looked across the park towards Beacon Hill. Julia and I once went to dine at the home of some friends of hers who lived there, the Cabots. I started walking in the other direction, crossing the sunken highway and into a neighborhood of brownstones and storefronts. Just past the police station I entered a familiar block, a row of brick buildings with stores just below street level. My heart leaped when I saw the sign for Shelly's store, in the middle of the block.

The windows were covered in taped -up newspaper. A "closed" sign hung in the door. I looked through the window where a corner of paper had curled back. The store was empty except for the counters, also empty but for a single paper cup of coffee, half - full. My heart sank.

I sat in a donut shop for the next hour, picking at a muffin and trying to resist the urge to cry. Running away seemed like a bad idea now, and I mulled over whether I should go back to the foster home. I could just take a bus back that day and Mr. Hubbard would probably never notice I'd been gone. Then I remembered the bitter taste of his cum. I took a gulp of coffee to wash down the memory.

I walked back to the hotel and then down the long street next to it, where Julia and I had lunched and gone shopping. I stopped at every store on Newbury Street, looking in each window and lingering over the ones where Julia and I had been. Walking down one side and back up the other, I arrived back at the Ritz just as people began to leave work for the day.

I followed a throng of well -dressed men and women and over to Beacon Hill and spent the next hour looking for the Cabots' home. A servant answered the door and told

me that the Cabots were out of town for the winter. She closed the door in my face and I began to walk back to the bus station. There was a fast food place next to the station, so I bought a burger and tried to figure out what to do.

I couldn't remember where Brad's house was; all I knew was that it had been about a half hour away by car. Nor could I remember the name of that law firm Julia had used, the one that was handling the petition for guardianship. After eating, I checked the bus schedule. The last one back to Maine was at 11:30 PM. I put my clothes in a locker and headed back out to the street, wandering through Back Bay. I found the big old library and went inside, finding a quiet, warm corner where I could cry.

I must have dozed off for a couple of hours, waking up to the sound of someone clearing his throat. A bearded young man in a tweed suit leaned over and shook my shoulder.

"You can't sleep here," he said.

"Okay. I'll go."

"You can stay if you like, you just can't sleep," the man said. He had a concerned expression.

"Oh. okay."

"Is there anything I can do for you? You look lost."

"No, I'm all right. I'm supposed to meet someone," I said.

"We close in an hour. You're welcome to stay until then," he said. He straightened up and left, pushing a cart of books down one of the rows of shelves.

I left a few minutes later. It was almost ten at night and I started walking back to the bus station. I made up my mind to take the last bus back.

As I rounded a corner near the station, I noticed that the streets were empty except for a few women standing here and there, smoking cigarettes and beckoning to passing cars. As I approached the station, one of the cars slowed down and pulled over to the curb near me. An electric window rolled down and a man called out to me from inside the car. I stopped and turned, not quite hearing what he was saying.

“Excuse me?”

“I said ‘What’s up?’,” the driver barked. He was heavy-set, middle aged, and balding.

“Nothing,” I replied.

“Wanna take a ride?” I shook my head and continued walking as he drove off, slowly cruising the remainder of the block.

“Fuck you, bitch.” A bleach-blonde woman with a sharp nose was suddenly in my face. She wore a white leather jacket, short red skirt, fishnets, and boots.

“What?”

“Fuck you. This is my street. You don’t fucking work my street, you fucking cunt.” She punctuated this with a pop of her chewing gum.

“I’m not working,” I said, still unclear about what was happening here.

“Don’t fucking lie to me, cunt,” she hissed, shoving me with both hands. I fell back to the sidewalk. “I’ll fucking cut you.”

As she reached into her pocket I hurried to my feet and ran, tears streaming down my cheeks. I kept going, block after block, all the way back to where Shelly's store had been. I ran down the steps and hid, hoping that I hadn't been chased, wishing that the store was still here, that any minute now Shelly and Margaret would open that door and invite me inside with a hug and a nice hot cup of tea.

I'd scraped my knee getting off the sidewalk back at the bus station. It began to sting, and I noticed that my tights were torn and my knee was a little bloody. I was pretty sure that I hadn't been followed all the way here. The problem was getting back to the station for the last bus to Portland. That prostitute—I realized what had happened there and how she thought I was working her turf—would probably still be there. I didn't want another confrontation.

I spent some time in another donut shop; they seemed to be everywhere in Boston. The manager kicked me out after an hour, so I wandered the streets again. Even in this neighborhood there were women and young men on certain corners, soliciting passing motorists and sometimes driving off with them. I steered clear of these streets.

There was a row of old mill buildings by an elevated highway. A few had lights on upstairs, not the fluorescence of a factory floor but the warm incandescent glow of someone's home. A door opened and I could hear footsteps and conversation, laughter mingling with the muffled sound of a band playing inside the building. A couple of people milled around on the sidewalk for a minute and then drove off in a cargo van.

They'd left the door ajar, so I went inside. There was a large tin-clad door with a heavy padlock and a sign that read "Wu Fong Specialties". I walked up a long flight of

stairs, following the sound of the band. It came from behind another heavy door, this one painted plain black. The music stopped and I heard a lock turning. As the door opened, I ran to the end of the hall and ducked into a small bathroom and locked myself in. It was a tiny space with a toilet and a sink, lit by a small bulb hanging from the tall ceiling.

Someone rattled the doorknob and I cleared my throat. “Sorry,” came a voice from the other side of the door. After I caught my breath, I took off my torn tights and daubed at my scraped knee with a wet paper towel. It wasn’t a bad bruise, but I was more upset over my ruined tights. They were keeping me warm.

I wanted to spend the night here. It was warm and safe, but the toilet seat was broken and I wouldn’t be able to sleep like I had in the Portland bus station. The floor was disgusting, but a double layer of paper towels made it nearly habitable. I bunched up my coat for a pillow and fell asleep.

* * *

Chapter Two

Artists Only

“Hey. Get up,” he said.

I had been dreaming about Julia. We were making love in her garden, sipping white wine as we kissed and caressed, a gentle summer breeze our only garment. Her roses were in bloom, and the fragrance was like a drug, the petals so soft, the buds so pliant.

“C’mon. Get up,” he repeated. He stood over me, sneakers, torn and paint-splattered jeans and t-shirt, and a mop of hair, a young man with a cigarette in his mouth and a couple of days of stubble on his cheeks.

I sat up and realized that I wasn’t in the garden with Julia. Julia was dead and I was sleeping on the floor of a bathroom, hiding from a whore with a knife. I began to cry.

“Hey, what’s wrong? Are you okay?” The boy squatted next to me, offering me a wad of toilet paper. I dried my tears.

“Thanks.”

“Where are you from?” he asked.

“Maine.”

“Your parents...?”

“Gone,” I said, hesitating. I had a father somewhere.

“Shouldn’t you be in...?”

“Foster home,” I said. “I...I...can’t go back there.” My tears began to flow again.

“When’s the last meal you had?”

“Yesterday.”

“Hungry?” I nodded. “Come, I’ll make you something to eat,” he said. He stood up and extended his hand, helping me off the floor of the bathroom. I picked up my coat and followed him into his place, a cavernous space behind one of the metal doors down the hall. There were huge paintings everywhere, big streaks and splatters of color. A smell of turpentine hung in the air. He ushered me over to a makeshift table in the corner of the studio, built of cinder blocks and wood and surrounded by four mismatched -matched chairs. Against the tall brick wall was a wooden table with a hot plate, a toaster oven, and a mini refrigerator.

“My name’s Michael,” he said, filling a pot with water and setting it on the hotplate.

“Annie,” I said, sitting down at the table.

“Pleased to meet you, Annie,” he said as he stooped to get something from the refrigerator.

“Did you paint these?” I asked.

“Yes. Do you like them?”

“Yes. May I...?” I got up to take a closer look at a large canvas, unfinished.

“By all means. Just don’t get too close. It’s still wet.”

“Okay,” I said. I wandered around his studio, looking at his art. Apparently he lived here as well, as there was a bed in the far corner, a thin futon supported by the same materials that made up his table. A few minutes later Michael called me back to the kitchen. There was a plate of rice and beans and a small cup of hot soup with tiny white cubes floating in broth.

“It’s miso soup,” Michael said. “I can make you some tea if you’d prefer that.”

“No, this is fine. Thank you,” I said, lifting the cup to my lips and inhaling the warm vapor before taking a tentative sip. It was delicious and chased the chill from my body. As I gulped down the rice and beans, Michael sat across from me, spreading a gooey brown paste on a thick white wafer.

“Rice cake,” he said. “Would you like one?”

“No thanks,” I said. “Do you have any bacon?”

“Sorry, no,” Michael laughed. “I’m a vegetarian.”

“Oh, sorry.”

“No need to be.”

“I can pay you for this,” I said. I began to reach into my coat for money.

“No, don’t,” he insisted. “Don’t worry about it.”

“Thanks.”

“Where in Maine are you from?” Michael asked, pouring two cups of pale green tea.

“Coopersport. On the coast.”

“Nice. We used to spend summers not far from there when I was a kid.”

“Yes, it’s nice.” Actually, it was freezing there right now and there was a foot of snow on the ground, but I began to miss it.

“Is there someone you can call? Family or friends?” he asked. There was that same concerned expression I’d seen in the librarian’s eyes.

“I don’t know...I...” The tears began again.

As the tea cooled I told Michael everything, starting when my mother was killed and ending with the events of the last 24 hours. He just sat there, listening quietly, taking it all in. Finally, he spoke.

“I guess you can stay here for a few days, at least until you figure out what you want to do. There’s a couch that’s big enough to sleep on. One problem, though.”

“What’s that?” I asked.

“My girlfriend is coming back in a week.”

“She lives here with you?”

“Yeah. Things haven’t been going well between us. She’s been with her parents for the last couple of weeks. Having a guest around would...”

“Complicate things?”

“Yeah,” he said with a sigh. “You understand, right?”

“Yeah.” It was my turn to sigh. He was cute.

“Anyway, I’ve got to get to work. You can sack out in my bed if you want. There’s a bathtub behind that screen if you want to use that.”

“Thanks.” I finished my tea as Michael got up and disappeared behind the maze of wood-framed canvas screens that divided the kitchen and living areas of the loft from his

studio. As I got up I heard the sound of a cassette being slotted into a portable player, the click of the “play” button, and the drone of loud guitars played softly over the clink of a paint brush dipping into a glass of turpentine.

The bathtub was an old cast iron claw -footed tub, installed as an afterthought on a platform of cinder blocks and plywood. The water had a greenish tint but was agreeably warm. I shed my clothes and slid inside the bath, hesitating only when the soapy water made my skinned knee sting. I closed my eyes and listened to Michael moving around his painting, his sneakers squeaking on the worn wooden floor, his brush rhythmically slapping against the canvas.

I could have fallen asleep right there, but I knew I’d regret waking up in a tub full of tepid, dirty water. Instead, I stepped out and dried myself off, opened the tub drain, and slipped under the covers of Michael’s bed. After two nights of sleeping in strange bathrooms, the thin, lumpy futon felt like heaven. I closed my eyes, letting the drone of guitars lull me to sleep.

* * *

The sun streaming through the tall windows woke me up. Michael was still painting. I sat up in his bed and looked around. Instead of a dresser, his clothes were folded and stowed in stacks of milkcrates placed on their sides. There was an antique vanity table, his girlfriend’s, with makeup, a lighted mirror, and a small wrought -iron chair. I made the bed and got dressed, walking to where Michael was painting. He was standing in front of his canvas, quietly looking at it, brush in hand. I quietly sat down and watched him survey his work. He turned his gaze to a small charcoal sketch, a study for

the work-in-progress. Then he picked up another brush and a small can of paint, steadily outlining a streak of red with a thin black line.

“What do you think?” Michael asked. He kept looking at the canvas, not turning around.

“It’s nice.” It was abstract, and I didn’t pretend to understand what it meant, but I liked the colors. The red streak jumped out from the field of brown and black, and the thin line Michael had added gave it depth, like it was some sort of vein or artery.

“What does it say to you?” he asked.

“What?”

“Does it speak to you?”

I didn’t know much about art, and what I did know was limited to what Julia had shown me, taking me to museums in Boston and letting me borrow her books. I really liked the Impressionists. They painted things I recognized, like landscapes and flowers and trees, but added something: style, I suppose, making it more than just a photograph. I tried to imagine what Michael had painted and kept going back to arteries and veins, thinking again of Julia and her stroke. I felt a tear begin to trail down my cheek.

“Hey, what’s wrong?” Michael asked, rushing over to where I was sitting.

“Nothing. I...nothing...,” I blurted, and ran back to Michael’s bed, burying my face in the pillows, ashamed to be seen sobbing my eyes out.

“Hey,” he cooed, sitting on the edge of the bed and gently rubbing my shoulders.

“Annie...”

“I’m sorry. I...”

“Don’t worry. Just let it out. Let it out,” he whispered.

I sobbed into his pillow for nearly a half-hour, while he caressed my back, letting out most if not all of the grief that had built up over the past couple of months. When I was done, Michael dried my eyes with a towel and made tea.

“Okay, I’ll admit it isn’t my best work, but it’s not that bad,” he said, handing me hot tea in a cracked porcelain mug. For the first time in what seemed like years, I laughed.

After we finished our tea, Michael walked me to the bus station and I retrieved my bundle of clothes from the lockers. The woman who had threatened me the night before was nowhere to be found; the streets were filled with people in suits heading for home at the end of the day. On the way back, Michael took me to a cafeteria-style restaurant near the loft, wrinkling his nose when I chose a big bowl of beef stew.

“Listen, I have people over every so often, and I think we should just say that you’re my cousin or something,” Michael said, finishing his vegetarian chili.

“Okay, whatever you say.”

“Just for propriety’s sake. I’m not even supposed to be living in that space, so far as the city is concerned. I just don’t want to end up on the street for harboring a runaway.”

“I understand.”

“Good. Thanks,” Michael said, extending his hand. I took it and he gave me a gentle squeeze.

We returned to Michael's loft and sipped green tea while we watched the sun set over the city. That evening, a few of his friends came over to hang out, drink wine, and smoke pot. Michael didn't think twice about pouring me a glass or passing the joint, though he gave me a sharp look when I started getting a little giggly.

Michael's friends were also artists, and most of their conversation was pretty much gossip about who was sleeping with whom. Roger, a sculptor who lived a few doors down, was particularly keen on keeping track of this sort of thing, especially when it came to his ex-boyfriend, another artist who lived in the neighborhood.

Fay, a red-headed painter who was there with her boyfriend Whitney, came over and sat next to me on the couch. She had the loveliest emerald green eyes, carefully limned with kohl.

"All this talk must seem pretty boring to you," she said.

"Not really." I thought it was cool, like a small town of artists inside a big cold city, living in their own little world.

"Have you met Sandi?"

"Who?"

"Michael's girlfriend," she said.

"No, I haven't."

"Lucky you. She's a bitch," Fay said, chasing the epithet with a sip of wine.

Everyone left a few hours later, and I began to clean up, washing the wineglasses in the sink and emptying the ashtrays.

"You don't have to do that," Michael said.

“I don’t mind,” I replied. He smiled and stretched out on the couch. When I had finished cleaning up I joined him. He lit a joint and passed it over to me.

“What’s Sandi like?” I asked him. He took a deep drag on the joint and exhaled slowly.

“She’s very talented. More so than her parents give her credit for. When we met in school, she was doing the most amazing work. She’s only gotten better since then.”

“Is she nice?” I asked.

“Nice?”

“You know, sweet?”

“I don’t...yeah, she can be sweet at times,” he said, frowning.

“She’s hurt you?”

“Yeah.”

That was something I had a hard time understanding. I’d been hurt, but never intentionally. Friends move away, lovers die, but having someone you loved inflict pain was something new to me.

“You still love her?”

“Yeah,” he said, wistfully.

My heart skipped a beat then, seeing him look so vulnerable. He’d been so caring and gentle and protective of me that day, and now I felt like holding him in my arms. He must have noticed the way I was looking at him, and he frowned again. Then his features softened and he smiled.

“I should let you crash,” he said, getting up from the couch. “I’ll go rustle up a blanket and some pillows.”

The couch was old and lumpy, but it was better than sleeping in a bathroom. I was listening to the radiators click and thump when I heard another sound in the dark. Michael was crying, soft sobbing muffled by a pillow. I felt my heart sink. I felt like crying, too.

Quietly, slowly, I got up from the couch and tiptoed through the maze of canvas screens and over to Michael’s bed. He was laying face down, his head buried in the pillow, his back heaving slightly with each sob. I turned the cover down and crawled into bed next to him, softly kissing the back of his neck. He turned his head towards me.

“Annie...”

“Shhh...”

“We can’t...”

“I know,” I whispered, leaning in to kiss him on the lips. I put my arms around him and held him, feeling his tears rolling down my bare breast. Caressing his smooth back, I felt him relax and fall asleep. After staring for a while at the photograph of Sandi next to the bed, bathed in cold moonlight, I followed him.

* * *

It was cold in the loft the next morning. Michael was hogging the blankets, so I snuggled closer to his sleeping form. He stirred momentarily but didn’t wake up. I could feel him growing harder through his boxers, his morning erection pressing against my thigh. Out of sheer curiosity, I reached down and fished out his hard cock. He was

circumcised, with a nice fat head and thick shaft. For the first time in months, I felt horny. Naughty. Hungry.

Slowly, I ducked under the covers and slithered down his body until I faced his penis. Inside the warmth and darkness of the blankets, I parted my lips and began to slowly suck him. He grunted once or twice when my tongue swirled over his shaft, but he didn't wake up. I began to suck him harder, reaching into his boxers to cup his balls. His cock twitched and throbbed as my tongue danced over it, but he still didn't wake up. When his cock was nice and wet, I began to stroke the shaft with my hand, jerking him off as I sucked him. I heard a low moan coming from outside the blanket.

Suddenly, he pulled the blankets to the side. The chilly air hit me, but I didn't stop sucking him. I could see him watching me, an expression of astonishment and surprise on his face, but he didn't stop me. Then he gasped, his cock twitching in my mouth as it began to spurt. His body shuddered the way Del's did sometimes, and he gasped again as the flow of semen began to wane. I kept his cock in my mouth as it softened, releasing it with a little "slurp".

"I gotta..." he said, after I had released his cock.

"I know. Go pee," I said. He put on a robe and trotted to the bathroom, while I gathered the blankets around me and snuggled against the part of the futon that was still warm from his body heat. I hadn't packed any pajamas, and all I had to sleep in were cotton panties. I heard the toilet flush and a moment later Michael was back.

"Where did you learn...?" he asked.

"I'm not a virgin," I replied. "Come back to bed and snuggle with me."

Michael shrugged off his robe and got back into bed, wrapping his arms around me. They were strong and lean from all the work he'd done, building out the loft and constructing frameworks for his large canvases. I felt safe with him, safe for the first time in months. As we lay together, I felt his cock begin to stir again.

"Do you want to make love?" I whispered.

"Yes. I do." Michael rolled me on my back and began to kiss me, first on the lips, then on the neck, then on my collarbone. He lingered around my breasts, teasing my nipples, licking them when they stiffened and crinkled. I'd gotten to that age when my areolae were slightly puffy, soft protuberances that Michael began to lick and suck, drawing them between his lips before continuing his explorations.

Michael knelt over me and tugged at my panties. I lifted my bottom off the bed to allow him to draw them down my thighs and off my legs. He gazed at my body, as if committing it to memory. His cock rose as he took inventory of curves, lines, and shadows. As he pulled off his boxers, I spread my legs for him, exposing my nearly hairless sex to him.

"Do you have a condom?" I asked. I lost my diaphragm while I was in foster care, possibly to my klepto roommate Denise's sticky fingers. As if it would ever fit her basketball-sized cervix. Michael reached into one of the stacked milk crates and produced a packet, ripping it open and rolling the latex sheath over his hardness. He returned to the bed, kneeling between my legs, and I reached out for his member, guiding it between my labia. It had been the first time in months that I had felt someone inside me, and it felt

strange, tight, as if my sex was going to close up some day. I could feel every latex wrinkle as he pushed his cock inside me.

“Annie? Are you...?” he asked, seeing me wince as his hardness filled me.

“No, I’m fine. Keep going. It’s been a few months,” I replied. I desperately missed this feeling, and I felt like I’d cry if he stopped and pulled out. As Michael began to thrust I felt my sex loosen up, accommodating his lovely cock. My hips began to grind against his, pressing my clit against his pubic bone, making my tummy tingle with anticipation. Nevermind a good fuck, I hadn’t even been able to masturbate in the foster home, even though Denise wouldn’t think twice about rubbing her clit in my presence.

Michael was wonderful in bed. He’d corkscrew his hips like Del used to do, stirring my honeypot with his tool. He liked to kiss, too, despite our funky morning breath. And he couldn’t seem to get enough of my nipples, sucking them while he rocked his hips, lightly grazing them with his teeth. It was like fucking and foreplay at the same time. Between this and my forced abstinence, I was coming early and often. Michael began to pound away at my pussy, making me shriek and shudder with every stroke. I tried to bear down on his cock, hoping to make him come, but I had no control. I was just along for the ride.

Finally, I felt him twitch inside me, and his thrusts began to stutter, a hitch in the motion of his hips as he came. But for the condom, he would have filled me to the brim with his hot spunk. Even so, I could feel a spreading wet spot under my cheeks. I would have loved to lie in bed for hours with Michael on top of me while I stroked his smooth back and listened to his steady breathing, but I really had to go to the bathroom.

“Michael?”

“Hmm?”

“I really need to use the bathroom.”

“Hrmph.” Reluctantly, he rolled off of me. I scooped his bathrobe from the floor and wrapped it around me, heading for the bathroom, making it just in time. As I emptied my bladder, I heard him call my name.

“Annie?”

“What?”

“I thought you said you weren’t a virgin.”

“I’m not.”

“Well, there’s blood on the rubber.”

“Oh, shit. My period must have started.” Spots of blood on the toilet paper confirmed this.

“Michael?”

“What?”

“Do you have any tampons?”

“No.”

“Doesn’t Sandi use...?”

“She uses those sponges from the health food place.”

“Eww.”

“It’s all-natural, but she has to wash them out in the sink afterwards.”

“Ewwwww.” That was too weird. Fortunately, my flow was still light, and I could get by for the time being with a makeshift plug of toilet paper. It felt funny, but it worked. I waddled back to Michael’s bed. There was a small blood stain on the sheets. Michael didn’t seem to care. He looked up and smiled.

“Is there a place where I can buy some tampons?”

“Yeah, there’s a convenience store a couple of blocks away. Want me to get you some?”

“No, I’ll go,” I said, trying to find my panties in the mound of blankets on the bed.

“I’ll go with,” Michael said, putting on a fresh pair of boxers. “We can get coffee or something, too.”

It was warm for a midwinter’s day, and everywhere the snow was melting into huge grey puddles of soupy slush. Michael and I walked the few blocks down to Tremont Street together. I wanted to hold his hand, but thought better of it. Someone he knew might see us; more grist for the gossip mill.

After I bought the box of tampons at the 24-hour store, we ducked into a coffee shop where I could use the ladies room. It wasn’t a minute too soon, as the toilet paper tampon was nearly soaked through. I washed my hands and left the bathroom, but the smell of bacon frying stopped me in my tracks.

“Michael? Could we get breakfast here?”

“Yeah, sure. I think I can get a muffin or something.”

I ordered bacon and eggs, and if Michael was disgusted over my non-vegetarian choice of breakfast, he did a good job of hiding it. After breakfast, we got more coffee to

go and headed back to the loft. As we headed upstairs, I noticed that the heavy steel door with the “Wu Fong Specialties” sign was partially open. I peeked inside: dozens of Chinese women were seated at sewing machines, hard at work. A metallic voice on a PA system called out “Number 19! Phone call! Number 19 you have a phone call!”. I looked at Michael. He just shrugged his shoulders.

We sat on the couch and sipped our coffee before Michael disappeared into his workspace. The sound of music and brushstrokes soon filled the loft. I finished my coffee and stripped the sheets off of his futon, trying to scrub out the blood stain over the slop sink in the kitchen. When it was pretty much invisible, I draped the sheet over one of the screens to dry.

Once that was done, I sat down with a small notebook I’d picked up when I bought the tampons and began writing about the last few days. The words were slow to come at first, but after a couple of false starts they began to flow. So did my tears. The pain was still fresh. I blinked away my tears and kept writing; it felt good to get it all down on paper. It felt like I was in control of things, even though these events had passed.

When my writer’s cramp got to be too much, I put my journal aside and looked around for a book. There wasn’t all that much to read in the loft, just a couple of milkcrates full of books next to the bed, mostly college textbooks. I pulled out a slim volume of poetry and sat down on the bed to read.

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked...

Wow.

I read it again.

Wow. Julia and I had often read poetry together, Sappho, Shakespeare, Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman. This was nothing like that. Actually, it sort of reminded me of Whitman, the tone of voice, mainly, but Whitman had never written a line like “alcohol and cock and endless balls”. I read it a third time, lingering over every line, trying to understand what must have been intensely personal references to people and places and events. I thumbed to the back of the book, looking for biographical information about this man named Allen Ginsberg, but there was none.

I spent the next couple of hours curled up with the book, reading each poem and then digesting the words. None of them, though, had the flavor of “Howl”, that first one. I went back and read it a fourth time and then lay back on the bed, savoring this epiphany.

The music in Michael’s studio had stopped. I put the book down and got up from the bed. Michael was in the kitchen, seated at the table, spreading thick brown miso paste on a rice cake.

“Want some lunch?” he asked, looking up.

“Sure,” I said, sitting down at the table. He offered me a rice cake. It was light, as if it was made of styrofoam or something. I took a tentative bite from the edge; it sort of tasted like Rice Krispies cereal, only less so. Michael laughed when he saw me wrinkle my nose.

“Try some peanut butter on it,” he said, “or, if you’re feeling adventurous, some miso.”

I sniffed the jar of miso paste. It was pretty intense, so I passed on it, opting for the peanut butter instead. The rice cake wasn't so bad with a smear.

"There's something I'd like to do this afternoon," Michael said, pouring two cups of tea.

"What's that?"

"I'd like to sketch you."

"Really?"

"Is that all right?"

"Yes, I'd love that," I said.

Michael draped a white sheet over the couch and set up a chair about ten feet away. While he went to fetch his sketchbook and pencils, I kicked off my sneakers and sat down on the couch. I remembered a painting I'd seen once at one of the museums Julia and I had gone to, of some famous woman reclining on a backless couch, dressed in fine clothes and jewelry. I lay down on the couch, trying to mimic her pose, her regal bearing. Just then, Michael returned with his pad. He stopped, took a look at me, and started laughing.

"What? What's wrong?" I asked, suddenly feeling foolish.

"I wanted to sketch you in the nude," he said, still laughing.

"Oh. I see," I said. I felt my cheeks burn with embarrassment.

"If you're not comfortable with that..."

"No, I'm fine. Just a sec." I shrugged off my shirt and undid my jeans, doffing my bra and panties. While Michael took a seat in the chair, I stood before him, naked. I really

felt naked. Really naked. Really, really naked. He'd seen me in bed, but that was different. This was different.

"Should I sit?" I asked. I felt awkward.

"The way you were laying was fine. You looked like you were waiting for Courbet to paint you."

"Who?"

"Nevermind. Just lay like you just did. It was perfect."

"Okay. What about...?" I spread my legs slightly; the tampon's little white string dangled from my sex.

"Don't worry about that. You sure you're okay with this?"

"Yes, I'm fine. Like this?" I reclined along the couch as I had done before he returned, supporting my head with my arm, with my other arm resting on my side.

"Perfect. Now just hold that pose." Michael propped the sketchpad up on his lap and began drawing, looking at me, then back at the pad. I watched him draw, trying to stay perfectly motionless. It was hard work, especially when my nose itched. I resisted the urge to scratch it as long as I could.

"Michael?"

"Yes?"

"My nose itches."

"So scratch it."

"Oh," I said. I was relieved not to have to be the perfect mannequin.

"You're doing fine, Annie," Michael said.

“Thank you.”

“Are you cold?”

“No, not really,” I said. The loft had warmed up, and the sun was starting to stream through the tall windows.

“Michael?”

“Hmm?”

“Can I ask you a question?”

“Sure”

“Did you ever draw Sandi?”

Michael put down his pencil and looked up.

“Yeah, when we were in school. We’d draw each other all the time,” he said. He had a wistful look, as if I’d made him dredge up a long lost memory. I made a mental note to stop bringing her up so often.

“We stopped doing it a long time ago,” he said, going back to sketching. His expression changed to one of intense concentration. I didn’t want to say anything after that, for fear of breaking the spell. After a while, Michael stopped and put down his pencil.

“Break time,” he said, getting up from the chair.

“Can I see it so far?”

“Sure. Here,” he said, handing me the pad.

It was amazing. He’d concentrated on my face, just roughing in the rest of my body, though he’d taken particular care with my breasts and the curve of my hips and

belly. I felt pretty, something I felt whenever I was with Julia, something I hadn't felt in ages.

Michael returned with his robe, which he draped over my shoulders.

"Relax. I'm going to make some more tea."

"Michael. It's lovely. It's beautiful," I gushed.

"You're beautiful," he said, gently kissing me on the forehead. I sat on the couch and laid the sketchbook on the coffee table, staring at it until Michael returned with the tea. Michael sat next to me on the couch while we sipped tea and smoked some pot.

"Let's finish up before we lose the light," Michael said.

"Okay." I took off the robe and resumed my pose as Michael took his seat across from the couch. The way he crossed and re-crossed his legs, trying to get comfortable, suggested that he was hard inside his jeans. I gave him a sly smile.

"What?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing," I replied, still grinning.

"Tell me," he insisted.

"Um...well...I don't know how to put this..."

"What?"

"Well...don't you think you might be more comfortable like this?"

"Like what?"

"Like me. Without clothes."

"Oh, I see now," he said. "You just want something to look at while you're posing."

“Well, yes,” I said. It was true: he had a nice body and I liked looking at it.

“As you wish,” he said, standing up and putting aside the sketchpad. He pulled his t-shirt off slowly, giving me a nice long look at the thin line of hair that ran up towards his flat stomach. Sneakers and jeans were next, and the lump in his boxers confirmed my suspicions. He took his shorts off last, playfully flexing his biceps like a bodybuilder, which was funny considering his lean, almost skinny physique.

Michael’s hard cock bobbed as he sat down and resumed his sketching. Even though his erection began to wane as he concentrated on his drawing, it never went completely soft. I kept my eye on it as he drew, thinking of all the ways I could show my appreciation for his kindness.

“Finished,” Michael said, just as the sun disappeared behind an office tower. He came over with the sketchpad and handed it to me as he sat down next to me on the couch.

“It’s wonderful,” I said, never taking my eyes off of it even as I hugged him.

“I’m glad you liked it,” he said. “You were a great model.”

“I’d love to pose for you again.” To underscore my words, I placed my hand on his thigh and began caressing it.

“Deal. It was fun.” Michael began to lean closer and our lips met. As I closed my eyes and let his tongue find mine, I let my hand roam up his thigh, finding his hardness, gently stroking it.

“Let me give you something,” I whispered, breaking off our kiss. Michael smiled as I slid off the couch and knelt between his legs. His hard cock bobbed in time with his

heartbeat. I took it in my hand and held it, slowly gliding my fingers over the shaft. Leaning forward, I gently, lovingly kissed the tip before opening my mouth and slowly devouring it. Michael sighed as my lips traveled the length of his shaft.

I knelt before him as if in prayer, my head slowly moving up and down as I devotedly sucked him. Michael let out a soft moan every time I swirled my tongue over his cockhead or gently squeezed his balls. I knew he was close to coming —the way his cock throbbed and his thighs trembled—but I did my best to drag it out as long as I could, squeezing the base of his cock when he came too close. Looking up and seeing the smile on his face told me that he was enjoying this delicious torture.

Finally, I decided to let him have his release. I began to suck him faster, harder, stroking his shaft with my fingers as I pleased him with my lips and tongue. When his cock began to twitch I sucked even faster, gobbling his hardness as he began to spurt his seed in my mouth. When he finally softened, I released his glistening tool from my mouth and scooted up into his lap for a kiss. Michael held me in his arms until the setting of the sun began to cool off the loft. We got up from the couch and Michael got dressed while I grabbed his robe and went to take a bath.

I sat in the warm water, looking out the window at the city. The sun was hidden by some buildings but it still cast an orange glow on some of the taller structures and in the clouds above. I could hear Michael starting dinner, chopping something on a wooden block. Somewhere on the street down below, a car alarm went off.

“Want me to scrub your back?” Michael asked, appearing from behind the screen that separated the bath area from the rest of the loft.

“Could you?”

“Sure,” he said. I leaned forward in the tub and held my hair up as Michael wet a washcloth and ran it over my back. I had a fleeting memory of my childhood, something about my father, but it dissipated like a wisp of smoke.

“Dinner’s going to be ready in a few minutes,” Michael said, squeezing out the washcloth.

“What are we having?”

“Stir-fry. I’m just waiting for the oil to heat up.”

“Mmmm...give me a kiss first.” Michael leaned over and our lips met. He tasted like fresh scallions.

We had a delicious dinner lit by candle light, moonlight, and the lights of the city outside. Afterwards, we sat on the couch and listened to music while we snuggled under a woolen blanket. The wine began to go to my head, and I felt like I had not a care in the world.

“Michael?”

“Yes?”

“Will you make love to me?”

In lieu of a reply, he leaned over and kissed me. We made out on the couch for a while and then Michael got up, offering his hand, pulling me to my feet. We walked to his bed, hand in hand.

“What about your...?” he asked.

“My period? Don’t worry about that.”

“Okay,” he said. I shrugged off his robe and lay in bed while he undressed, and then he joined me. Michael went straight for my breasts, kissing and suckling my nipples as his hard cock pressed against my leg. His kisses began to journey lower, down my belly and thighs. I felt him tugging at the tampon’s string with his teeth.

“No, no,” I whispered.

“I thought...”

“No, take me this way,” I said, rolling over.

“In your...?”

“Yes. Do you have any lubricant?”

“I think so. Let me look.” He got out of bed and rummaged through one of the milk crates, coming up with a jar of petroleum jelly.

“This okay?”

“It will have to do,” I said. I preferred something water-based, like KY. Vaseline was sort of gross, but I desperately wanted to please him. Behind me, I could hear the top of the jar come off and the squishy sound of Michael’s cock being greased up. Then he gently kissed my bottom.

“Ready?” he asked.

“Go slow,” I replied. I felt the tip of his cock, slightly cold from the jelly, pressing against my bottom. Twice he slipped off before finally entering me, and I began to realize that he’d never done it this way before. I hadn’t taken anyone in my bottom in months, and though I had easily accommodated Ramon’s fat cock, that seemed like ancient history. Michael felt even bigger inside me.

“Are you okay?” Michael asked. I nodded, and took a deep breath, trying to relax my bottom for him. His pubes began to tickle my cheeks, and he pressed his body against mine and kissed the back of my neck. Slowly, he began to thrust, and I pushed my bottom against his hips in response. With each stroke, my bottom began to loosen up for him.

“I’m not going to last very long,” he whispered.

“That’s okay. Come for me.”

“I’m gonna...ungh...” I felt his cock twitching inside me, filling my bottom with his hot sperm. He lay on top of me and then started to withdraw his softening cock.

“No! Stay inside me,” I begged. Michael kissed my cheek and pushed his half-hard member back inside me, gently nibbling my earlobe as he lay on my back.

“You didn’t come,” he whispered.

“That’s okay,” I said. I just wanted to feel his body against mine.

We did it once more before the end of the night, and I did manage to come, rubbing jelly on my clit while Michael pumped my bottom. When he went to the bathroom and clean himself off, I grabbed a pair of Sandi’s panties, so I wouldn’t leak and stain the bed. We fell asleep in each other’s arms, our hunger sated.

* * *

I woke up to the sound of a fight.

Angry voices were coming from the kitchen. I sat up. Michael wasn’t in bed. Instead, there were a pair of suitcases on the floor next to it. My heart pounded as I threw on the bathrobe and got out of bed, tiptoeing towards the kitchen. Sneaking a peek from

behind a screen, I saw Michael and Sandi screaming at each other. Actually, Sandi was doing most of the screaming.

“You screwed her in our bed!” she shouted.

“Sandi, we didn’t do...”

“And who the fuck is she? Some fucking whore you picked up?!?”

“Sandi...”

“In our fucking bed!”

“But...” Before Michael could say another word, Sandi slapped him. Hard.

Then she noticed me watching.

“You! Who the fuck are you?” I backed away as she stormed over to me, tripping over her suitcases and falling on the floor. In a flash, she was on top of me, grabbing two fistfuls of bathrobe and shaking me. She reared back to hit me but Michael grabbed her arm and held it, pulling her off of me. My robe had opened up and Sandi noticed that I was wearing a pair of her panties. That added even more fuel to her ire.

“Are those my panties? I’ll kill you!” She tore loose from Michael’s grip and was on top of me again, choking me with one hand and slapping me with the other. I could taste blood on my lips. Michael managed to get Sandi in an arm lock and pulled her off of me again.

“Better get your stuff and get out,” he said, trying to maintain his grip on a squirming, red faced Sandi. I ran over to the couch, where my clothes were neatly folded on the floor and began to stuff them into the shopping bag, which promptly ripped. Still wearing her panties, I threw on jeans and a sweater, grabbed my clothes, shoes, and coat,

and ran out of the loft. The last glimpse I had of Michael was of him on the floor, trying to keep Sandi from killing me.

I ran down to the floor below and into the dimly-lit bathroom, where I put on my shoes and checked my face in a mirror. My lower lip was bleeding where one of her fingernails had caught it, and there were red finger marks all over my neck. I daubed at my lip with a piece of wet toilet paper until it stopped bleeding, and then I began to shake like a leaf and start to cry.

I stayed locked in that bathroom for almost an hour before carefully venturing out, peeking around corners and down stairs, making sure the coast was clear. On the street again, I ran about a dozen slushy blocks before coming to a stop in front of a laundromat. It was empty and seemed as good a place as any to get my bearings and figure out what to do. There was a discarded plastic bag on top of one of the washers, so I grabbed that for my clothes. There was a row of chairs in the back, hidden from the street by a tall row of dryers, and I stayed there for a couple of hours, shivering and crying, until hunger drove me back outside.

I found a coffee shop a couple of blocks away, and ordered just toast and tea. While waiting for breakfast, I went back into the ladies room and tried to clean myself up with water and paper towels. I was a mess from the night before, and I wanted a hot bath more than anything, but this would have to do. I lingered over my tea as long as I could, until the waitress started glaring at me, sending me back to the street.

I spent the day walking around the city, trying to figure out what to do next. I was out of ideas. As night fell, I considered taking the bus back to Maine, but the thought of

Mr. Hubbard forcing his wormy cock inside me made me nauseous. I walked back to Michael's neighborhood, hoping to spend another night in one of the loft's bathrooms, but none of the outside doors were unlocked. I waited for a few hours, hoping someone would come out and leave a door open, but that didn't happen. Discouraged, and on the verge of tears, I began walking back towards the bus station.

On a corner near the lofts there was an old gas station that was being used as a parking lot for taxi cabs. As I walked past it, a cab rolled up and stopped. The driver got out, carrying a small gym bag, and locked the front door of the cab. I waited until he was down the block and around the corner before doubling back. The rear door to the cab was open and it was still warm inside, though it smelled pretty rank, stale cigarette smoke and old food. Using my bag of clothes as a pillow, I curled up on the back seat and cried myself to sleep.

* *

Chapter Three

Gimme Shelter

We were moving. I sat up and looked around. It was light out. Suddenly, the cab stopped short and I hit my head against the partition.

“Who are you? Get out my cab! Get out!” The driver, a man with a bushy black mustache, pulled over to the curb and got out. He banged on the window and opened the back door, all the while yelling in a language I couldn’t understand. I grabbed my bag and went out the opposite door, running as fast as I could. The driver got back in his cab and drove off.

I found myself standing under an elevated train track, next to a big cathedral. People were going inside, even though it was early and the sun was barely up. I crossed the street and followed them into the church, quietly taking a seat in a back pew. I felt like I’d only had a couple of hours of sleep, so I closed my eyes and dozed off to the sound of Mass.

“Sweetheart? Sweetheart?”

I opened my eyes. The church was empty except for the grey-haired priest sitting next to me.

“I’m awake, sir,” I said.

“Are you in some trouble, dear? Is there anything I can do to help?”

“No, I’m okay, thanks.”

“Is there someone I can call for you?”

“No.”

“Come with me, dear. Come.” He gave me a look of pity and held out his hand, taking me back behind the ornate altar and into an office. While I sat down and looked around at the rich paneling and portraits of men in cassocks and robes, he made a phone call.

“...yes...no...this morning’s mass...a split lip and a bit of a shiner, I’m afraid...perhaps...about thirteen or fourteen...yes...yes...wonderful...very good...thank you.”

“Was that the police?” I asked. I began to resign myself to being shipped back to Maine.

“No, dear. That was Father Ken. He runs a youth ministry and shelter.”

“I’m not Catholic,” I said.

“That doesn’t matter,” he replied, walking over to where I was seated. “He’ll help you.”

“Thank you,” I said. While we waited for Father Ken, the priest let me use the office’s small bathroom. My cheek was bruised from hitting the glass in the back of the cab and my lip was swollen where Sandi had cut me. I washed up and brushed my hair. When I emerged, there was another priest in the office, somewhat younger, with longish hair and Elvis-like sideburns.

“I’m Father Ken,” he said, holding out his hand. “What’s your name?”

“Anne,” I said.

“Are you hungry, Anne?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well, come with me. I’ll see that you get some breakfast, and then we can talk. Is that all right?”

“Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.”

Father Ken had a brief conversation with the other priest and then we left. The shelter was just a few blocks away, in an old brownstone on a block that had seen better days. The halls smelled like disinfectant but it was warm, with steam heat hissing from the radiators. He led me into a small dining room, with a couple of rows of tables and benches, the kind school cafeterias have. While I waited, Father Ken went to the adjoining kitchen and spoke to someone I couldn’t see. A few minutes later, a nun appeared with a tray. She placed it in front of me, smiled, and left.

The eggs were runny, the toast was burnt, and there was no coffee, but I didn’t care. I devoured the meal in under a minute, and when the nun returned to fetch the tray, I asked for another helping. She was happy to oblige.

Father Ken returned with a notebook and pencil and asked me a few questions. I told him about my family, Julia, the foster home, carefully sanitizing the events of the past few days. I told him about Mr. Hubbard, though, and Father Ken’s eyebrows arched when I told him about the encounter in the bathroom. When I had finished my tale, he just sat there, silently mouthing a prayer.

“What’s going to happen to me?”

“I’m not going to send you back to Maine, if that’s what you’re afraid of.”

“Thank you,” I said, feeling relieved.

“Come, let me show you to your room. You can wash up and have a nap, and then we can figure out what to do,” he said. I followed him upstairs, to the top floor. He showed me into a small room with a cot and a dresser. There was a bathroom across the hall, with a claw-footed bathtub and an old porcelain sink. Father Ken left for a moment and returned with a couple of towels.

“Here. I’ve started a nice warm bath for you,” he said, handing me the towels.

“Thanks.” I followed him down the hall to the bathroom.

“Why don’t you give me your clothes, and I can have Sister Bernice put them in the laundry,” he said.

“Um, okay,” I said. I felt a bit funny getting undressed in front of him, but he was a priest, so it had to be okay, like going to the doctor or something. I pulled off my sweater and jeans and handed them over, standing before him in Sandi’s leopard print panties.

“Where did you get those?” he asked. There was an edge to his voice.

“Um...I borrowed them,” I said, which was technically true.

“Hand them over,” Father Ken demanded. “I’ll look for something more ‘age-appropriate’ among the donations.”

I slowly stepped out of Sandi’s panties and handed them over, standing before him cross-legged, hoping he wouldn’t notice the tampon string between my legs. Even though

my flow had stopped right after Sandi kicked me out of the loft, I was still riding the white pony, just in case.

After Father Ken left with my clothes, I tested the bath water and got into the tub. There was a threadbare washcloth and a half of a bar of mild soap. Nothing like the expensive bath oil that Julia used to buy for me, but it would have to do. I cleaned myself up and was about to relax in the tub when the door opened unexpectedly. Father Ken didn't believe in knocking.

"This is the largest size I could find," he said, placing an unopened package of girls' cotton panties next to the tub. He'd also brought a pair of boys' trousers and a grey sweatshirt.

"I have clothes with me," I said.

"I know, and most of them were not what I would consider 'age appropriate'. And I found a substantial amount of money in your coat."

"Hey! That's my..." I was pissed that he'd gone through my clothes, but this was even worse.

"Don't worry. You'll get it back. I'm just holding on to it for safe - keeping," he said.

"Oh..."

"But I can't help to be curious about how you came into that much money," Father Ken said. I hadn't told him about picking my foster parent's pocket while I blew him.

"Have you been working the streets?" he asked in a softer tone.

"No."

“Then how...?”

“I found it.”

“You found it?”

“Yes.”

“Where?”

“I found it in Mr. Hubbard’s pocket while he was fucking my face!” I shouted, startling the priest to the point that he took a step back.

“I see,” he finally said. “I see.”

By this point in the conversation, I had drawn my knees up and had my arms crossed over my chest. Father Ken had been looking at me, not as a priest but as a man, and I had instinctively covered myself.

“I’ll leave you then, until dinner,” he said, exiting the bathroom.

The panties he’d brought were a size too small, but they were new. The sweatshirt and pants were obviously hand-me-downs, but they fit well enough. Returning to my room, I noticed that my clothes were gone, but my coat, hair brush, toothbrush, notebook, and shoes were still here, as was the box of tampons. I wanted to write in my notebook, but I didn’t have a pen. A quick search of the room turned up nothing to write with and only a Bible to read. Bored, I opened it up, but one of the room’s previous occupants had covered almost every page with crude drawings of male genitalia and copulating stick figures.

I felt like a prisoner.

The metal grate on the window did nothing to dispel this illusion. The view through the grimy window was of an alley lined with trash barrels and the occasional dumpster. As if on cue, a grey rat poked its nose from under one of the bins and darted across the slush.

With nothing else to do, I lay down on the lumpy mattress and tried to rest, but I was too anxious, too nervous to sleep. There was too much uncertainty in this situation. Where was I going to go? Was Father Ken going to place me with another foster family? Orphanage? Convent? I felt like I was about to get swallowed into this gigantic institution. I felt powerless.

* * *

The door opened a few hours later. Father Ken stepped in and sat down on the edge of the bed. He looked at me without speaking for a while.

“Dinner is about to be served downstairs,” he finally said.

“Thank you,” I said. I followed him out of the room. “Father Ken?”

“Yes, Anne?”

“What if I want to leave?” We stopped at the top of the stairs and he turned to me.

“Anne, it’s in your best interests to stay. You’re safe here. You have a nice warm bed and a bath. Sister Bernice cooks a pretty good meal,” he said, an earnest expression on his face.

“The front door is always unlocked,” he continued. “You can walk out any time you want. But I’d like you to stay, if not for you, then for me.” Father Ken gave me a long, searching look.

“Okay. I guess.” His sincerity dispelled any apprehensions I had in the bathroom earlier. I was sold.

His expression brightened, and he gave my hand a squeeze. I followed him downstairs, back to the dining room where Sister Bernice had served me breakfast. There were about a dozen boys seated at the cafeteria - style tables, along with five or six priests. Everyone looked up when Father Ken and I entered the room. I took a seat at an empty table, and a minute later Father Ken returned with a tray of food. He sat with me and watched me devour a bowl of chili and two slices of white bread.

No one spoke the whole time I was there. Occasionally, one of the priests or a few of the boys would glance in my direction. The boys would steal a look and then whisper something to the person next to them. None of them were older than fourteen or younger than ten, and I couldn't help but think about my late stepbrothers. This only compounded the awkwardness I felt.

When I had finished my meal, Father Ken took the tray back to the kitchen. He returned a moment later and leaned over to whisper in my ear.

“Come down to my office in an hour or two, and we'll talk some more,” he said, straightening up and giving my shoulder a gentle squeeze before leaving the table to talk to some of the other kids.

After dinner I headed back to my room, stopping off at the front desk to snatch a pencil. As I headed up the stairs, I noticed one of the boys and one of the priests heading down the hall and into one of the rooms. As he closed the door, the priest, an older

gentleman like the one at the cathedral, gave me a strange look. As I sat in bed, writing in my notebook, this look stuck with me.

After writing for a couple of hours, jotting down the events of the last couple of days, I went downstairs to Father Ken's office. He had two rooms, one with a desk and shelves of books, and another smaller room, sparsely furnished, with just a bed and a small table, and a bathroom not much bigger than a closet. The only decoration was a crucifix and a framed print of some saint with a glowing yellow halo. Father Ken was seated at his desk, and he motioned for me to sit down in a chair across from him.

"Dinner okay?" he asked, looking up from a sheaf of papers.

"Yes, it was fine, thank you."

"You're a very polite young lady," he said.

"Thank you, sir."

"Call me Ken." He took a sip of amber liquid from a glass on his desk.

"Okay, sir...er, Ken."

"I don't know about Maine, but in this state things move pretty slowly. It might be a while before we can place you in a good home."

"Oh. I see."

"You're welcome to stay here as long as you need," he said, taking another sip.

"Thank you."

"We don't often have girls here, but I'm sure things will work out. You'll be one of the boys in no time. We might have to cut your hair, though."

"Cut my hair?"

“Just a bit. Some of the boys come in with head lice. It’s just a precaution.”

“You’re going to shave my head?” I began to panic. I loved my long hair.

“No, no, no. Just to shoulder length or so. Is that all right?”

“I guess,” I said, even though it wasn’t.

“Fine. We can have one of the sisters do it tomorrow. There’s no rush.”

We spoke a bit longer, mostly about my family, my mother’s death, and the churches my Catholic stepfather attended, in Florida and Maine. After about an hour, Father Ken wished me a good night and I returned to my room. As I passed the room where the boy and the priest had gone earlier, I could hear the squeaking of a bed. The kid must have been jerking off. As I closed my door, I began to imagine this, picturing the boy laying in bed, his jockey shorts around his knees, stroking his smooth boycock and squeezing his hairless balls. I was momentarily tempted to knock on his door and offer to take care of his erection for him, but thought better of it.

This mental image began to make me horny, but I didn’t want to make my bed squeak. I thought about taking another bath, but there was no lock on the door and someone might barge in. I looked around and decided to lie on the floor and pleasure myself. There was a small, ratty rug covering part of the wooden floor. I took off my pants and lay down, rubbing my labia through the tight cotton panties.

Just then I remembered I was wearing a tampon. I put the pants back on and went across the hall to the common bathroom. My flow had completely stopped, so I took it out and threw it in the wastebasket. As I was returning to my room, I noticed the priest

leaving the boy's room, the one where the bed had been squeaking. This was odd, but I was so intent on getting off that I thought little of it.

I was laying on the rug, my panties down around my ankles, furiously frigging my clit when there was a knock on the door. Quickly, I pulled up my panties and jumped into my pants, wiping my fingers off on the leg before opening the door. It was an older priest I'd never seen before.

"Who are you? Where's Tommy?" he asked. His breath smelled of liquor.

"Who's Tommy?" I asked.

"This is his room," the priest said.

"I thought it was my room," I replied.

"How long have you been here?" he asked.

"Just today."

"I see. Sorry to bother you." With that he turned on his heel and left.

This all but killed my urge to get off. I sat down on my bed for a while before reaching for the copy of the Bible, the one that had been defaced. I turned to a random page of obscene drawings. A crudely drawn dick was penetrating what looked like buttocks, and the drawing was captioned in a child's handwriting: "Fathur Miek" and "Me". I suddenly realized what had been going on in the boy's room, and what the drunken priest wanted with Tommy, in whose room I was staying. I wondered if Tommy had drawn this.

I thought about moving the dresser over to block the door before going to bed, but decided against it. Still, it took me a while to drift off to sleep.

* * *

A sharp rap on my door woke me up the next morning. I got out of bed to see who it was, but they were gone. The bathroom was unoccupied, so I wrapped a towel around me and went to take a shower. I was in the middle of rinsing off when someone opened the door, muttered a quick “Sorry!” and left. I finished quickly and went back to my room to dry off.

After breakfast, Sister Bernice took me into one of the bathrooms and cut my hair. It wasn’t a complete disaster. The bangs were a little uneven, but at least my hair was still longish, nearly coming down to my shoulders in sort of a pageboy cut. All in all, it was better than getting head lice.

After she cut my hair, Sister Bernice brought me downstairs to the basement, where four small classrooms had been set up. She escorted me into one in which four boys my age were seated across from an older nun behind an ancient wooden desk.

“Sister Josephine, boys, this is Anne,” Sister Bernice said, by way of introductions.

“Good morning, Anne. Please take a seat,” Sister Josephine said. With that, Sister Bernice left to begin making lunch. I sat down in an empty seat between two boys. Sister Josephine resumed her English lesson.

I kept my eyes and attention on the lesson, but I could feel the boys’ gaze on me, checking me out. The boy to my right had fair complexion and blondish hair, but the one to my left had olive skin and bore a faint resemblance to Del. I felt a familiar pang in my chest, the feeling of loss. I’d never get to see my stepbrothers grow up to be men. I missed them so much.

I was virtually alone with my thoughts that day. None of the boys would talk to me, even at lunch, and Sister Josephine didn't call on me in class. When we were dismissed that afternoon, I went back to my room to do my homework.

When I came down for dinner later on, I was greeted with the same sight as the day before, the boys eating quietly with a few priests seated among them. Except for one familiar face, it was a different group of priests from the night before. While I was eating, Father Ken came by to talk to some of them, joking around and laughing with his colleagues.

"Anne, come see me in my office after dinner," he said before leaving.

"Is anything wrong?" I asked.

"No, no, not at all. I found some more clothing you might be able to wear," he replied.

"Oh, thank you," I said, wishing I could have my own clothes back. I wasn't able to pack much when I left Maine, but I did bring along my favorite skirt and a sweater I really liked, as well as some nice underwear that Julia had bought me.

I finished my homework after dinner, and after writing in my journal for a while, I went downstairs to Father Ken's office. He invited me inside. There was a small pile of clothes on a chair. Father Ken was stretched out behind his desk, a drink in his hand. While I stood across from his desk, he refilled it from a bottle he kept in a lower drawer.

"Why don't you try these on and see if they fit," he said, taking a sip.

"Here?"

"Yes," he said.

Slowly, I unzipped my pants and let them fall, stepping out of them and pulling off my sweatshirt. Feeling awkward standing in front of him in my panties, I quickly reached for the pile of clothes, picking an item at random. It was a little pink sundress, made for a girl no older than ten or eleven. Tight around the chest, the hem barely covered my bottom.

“Turn around,” he said.

I complied, looking around for a mirror and seeing none. I supposed Father Ken would be my mirror. I struggled out of the dress and reached into the pile again. There was a pleated plaid uniform skirt that was a little tight around the waist but otherwise fit well. I felt embarrassed wearing the skirt; growing up in Florida we’d constantly make fun of the parochial school kids for having to wear uniforms while we went to school in shorts and pretty skirts and dresses. I took it off and put it aside, selecting another item from the pile of clothes.

In the end, there were only four items that fit: the plaid skirt, a white button-down blouse, another sweatshirt, and my favorite skirt. Somehow, my clothes had been thrown into the donation pile. I grabbed the skirt, hoping Father Ken wouldn’t notice. He’d been watching me closely while I tried on clothes, but had turned to refill his drink.

“Find anything that fit?” he asked.

“Yes, sir.” I held up the items that I could wear.

“What about that pink dress?”

“It was a little small,” I said.

“Nonsense. It looked fine on you.”

“Okay, I guess,” I said, taking the little dress out of the pile and putting it with my new clothes. I hoped that he never asked me to wear it.

“Good, good,” he said, getting up from his desk. “Now there’s something else we need to do. Come.”

Father Ken motioned for me to follow him into the small bedroom off of his office, sitting on the edge of the bed and patting the mattress. Slowly, I followed him and sat down next to him, dressed only in my panties.

“I just need to examine you,” he said, quietly. “This won’t hurt.”

“Okay.”

Father Ken looked in my ears, eyes, and mouth, just like a pediatrician, though I was pretty sure he didn’t have any medical education. At least there were no medical certificates hanging on his office walls. I flinched when he touched my shoulder, expecting his hands to be cold, but they were warm and sweaty.

“Stand up,” he said. He examined my arms, looking for needle tracks, I guess, and had me turn around. He traced my spine and his hand grazed my bottom, ever so lightly, as if by accident.

“Face me.”

His fingers lightly grazed my breasts, making my nipples stand up. I could feel a blush spreading across my cheeks, and tried not to look him in the eye, but I couldn’t help but notice his expression, a combination of hunger and fascination, as if he’d never seen a girl before.

“Okay, lie down, Anne.” I lay on my back on his bed and felt him tugging at the waistband of my panties.

“These fit okay?” he asked.

“They’re a little tight, sir.”

“I’ll try to find something bigger. Let’s take these off for now.”

Father Ken pulled my panties down, slowly, gradually, drawing them down my thighs and off my legs. I kept my thighs together, apprehensive, uncertain of what was going to happen. Was Father Ken going to make love to me? Or was this part of his “examination”? He glanced at my discarded panties, as if to make note of the size, and then placed his hand on my thigh.

“Relax, Anne. Would you like something to relax?”

“Um, yes, please.” I thought he was going to pour me a drink like Papi used to do sometimes, a little bit of rum in a glass on a weekend night before we had a little fun, but Father Ken returned with a glass of water and a little yellow pill.

“Take this,” he said. He watched me swallow it and wash it down with some water, taking a sip of his drink at the same time.

“Now lie back and relax. Let me look at you.” He sat down on the bed.

I took a deep breath and let him touch me, cupping my little breasts, feeling the skin on my belly, prying my thighs apart and looking at my pussy. I sighed as the pill began to take effect, feeling a growing sense of detachment from my body. I looked up at the crucifix hanging on the wall over the bed and thought of the time Julia tied me to her bed, spread-eagle, and made me come so hard that I passed out cold. I wondered if Father

Ken would like to tie me up and lick me down there. His hands were cupping my mons and I felt his fingers brush my labia. I wondered if he could tell I was getting wet thinking about Julia and Jesus and the leather restraints.

I felt the bed shaking slightly and looked down. Father Ken had his cock out and was jerking it with short, fast strokes. I reached for his lap. I wanted to do that for him. In my drug-induced haze, I thought that if I jerked him off I could get my clothes back, maybe even my money, but he gently brushed my hand away without missing a beat.

I felt completely uninhibited, though, and began to play with myself. I hadn't come in a couple of days, and the pill Father Ken had given me only made me hornier. Shamelessly, I began to tease my clit, gently kneading my breasts with my other hand. Father Ken watched closely, never taking his eyes off me as he jerked off.

My clit felt electric, with the slightest contact sending chills down my spine and a tingling through my belly. I circled it with a fingertip while I watched Father Ken. He was handsome, youthful despite a few grey hairs, with clear blue eyes and sharp features, though his face was a bit slack from drinking. I thought about kissing him, feeling his lips against my own, smelling his cologne, having his hands roam over my body. Even more than the sight of him stroking his hardness, the mental image of us making love in his bed was enough to set me off. I gasped and arched my back as I climaxed, a nice, intense orgasm that curled my toes, making me bite my lips to keep from moaning too loud.

Father Ken's hand moved over his dick furiously, making the bed bump against the wall. Suddenly, he stiffened and let out a deep breath as he came, his cock spurting its load in three wide arcs of semen, the first spraying across the bed and hitting me on the

chest. He kept pumping for a while and then stopped, getting up from the bed and rearranging his clothes.

“Let’s get you cleaned up,” he said, handing me a towel. I wanted to just lay back in his bed and go to sleep, but Father Ken was already handing me my panties and wiping me off with a corner of the towel. I got up on rubbery legs and got dressed, gathered my clothes, and left. The last look I had was of Father Ken pouring himself another drink. Since he’d come, he hadn’t looked me in the eye once.

I managed to haul myself upstairs to my room, but though I could have easily gone to sleep right then and there, I was still a bit sticky from Father Ken’s semen. I put away my new/old clothes and went across the hall to the bathroom to take a shower. By this time I had figured that a broken pencil jammed between the door and frame would keep it from opening, so I took a nice hot bath instead of a quick shower.

Back in my room afterwards, I still felt the effects of the pill he’d given me, sleepiness, euphoria, inhibition. I got into bed naked and played with myself for a while, though I fell asleep before I could come again.

The sound of the door opening and a bright shaft of light woke me up. I looked over at my window and saw that it was still dark out. A silhouette blocked the light from the hall, a slow-moving figure who was whispering something.

“Tommy? Tommy? Are you there?” It was the drunken priest who had knocked on the door the night before.

“Tommy’s not here,” I replied, but the priest closed the door and shuffled over to the bed.

“Tommy? I’m here, Tommy. Where are you?”

“He’s not here,” I repeated, to no avail.

“Tommy? Where are your hands, Tommy? Show me your hands.”

I pulled my hands from under the blanket and showed them to him. He grabbed them and pressed them against his crotch, against his half-hard penis. Before I could pull my hands away he had his pants unzipped and had pulled out his hardening cock. He wrapped my hands around his member and urged me to relieve him, moving his hips slightly so his cock glided between my fingers. I started to stroke him quickly, the way Father Ken had touched himself, hoping he’d come quickly and leave me alone.

“Slow, boy. You know the way I like it,” the drunken cleric whispered. I began to stroke him slowly, using both hands to caress his hardness. His heavy breathing and the occasional squeaking bedspring were the only sounds in the room as I pleased this confused old man.

“Good, that’s so good, Tommy,” he murmured. I began to use more friction, rubbing him harder while still maintaining a slow, steady pace. The priest’s breathing got even heavier, and his hips kept moving against my hands while my fingers glided around his shaft and over his spongy cockhead.

“Here it comes, boy. You know what to do,” he rasped. But I didn’t know what to do. What would Tommy do? Who was this Tommy, anyway? Before any of the answers could come, I felt his cock begin to twitch. I improvised, leaning forward into his crotch and taking the head of his cock into my mouth just as a thin flow of semen began to

dribble from his penis. He gasped as I swirled my tongue over his cockhead, licking it clean. He quickly grew flaccid, and I released him from my mouth.

The drunken priest stuffed his soft cock back in his pants. I thought that this was it, that he was going to leave, but he began to probe the bed, pushing his hands under the covers, feeling around for my thighs.

“So soft...your skin is so soft, Tommy,” he slurred. He looked about to topple over, but instead he sat down hard on the edge of the bed, his hands groping towards my crotch.

“Let me rub your pee pee for you, Tommy, like I used to do,” he whispered. I felt my blood turn to ice, uncertain of what would happen when he found a pussy where he expected a boy’s cock. His fingers fumbled between my legs, gently, though, and not rough. The stiff column of flesh he was seeking wasn’t there, and even in the darkness his disappointment was visible.

“You’re not Tommy,” he said, sadly, straightening up and snatching his hands away. “You’re a girl.”

I pulled the blankets up to my neck as he stood up, fearing an angry outburst, maybe a slap. But he just straightened his clothing and left the room without a word, quietly closing the door in his way out.

I lay in bed, staring at the ceiling, trying to take in the weirdness of the last few hours. My experience in Father Ken’s office had the quality of a dream, disconnected events strung together with dream logic. The embarrassment I felt while trying on clothes in front of him, the way he touched me, the pill, the crucifix, touching myself in front of

him, his semen spilling on me. Then there was the old priest, the alcohol on his breath, his hardness in my hand, the taste of his offering, the way his body stiffened when he found my cleft. It was over so quickly, before I was fully awake.

And now I was alone with my thoughts, trying to understand what this all meant. It was when I remembered the other night, when the priest took that boy into that room, the room where the bedsprings squeaked, and all the other priests that would show up for dinner every night. This wasn't a shelter; it was a brothel.

* * *

After dinner the next day, I went down to Father Ken's office and knocked on his door. He was seated behind his desk as usual, a drink in his hand, classical music playing on the radio.

"Anne, I was about to send for you. I found some more clothes that might fit you," he said.

"Thanks," I said, taking a seat across from his desk. "Could we talk about something?"

"Sure," he replied.

"It's about last night." Father Ken paused in mid-sip and put down his glass.

"About the...examination?"

"No, no. This happened after that," I said. Father Ken visibly relaxed when I said this. I began to tell him about the elderly priest who had barged into my room. I told him everything about the encounter, even how I took his cock into my mouth and swallowed his cum. Father Ken began to look flushed, and he shifted in his seat a few times.

“Was it wrong what I did?” I asked.

“No, dear. It wasn’t wrong. It was an act of Christian kindness.”

“Who was he?”

“His name is Father LaRose, Father John LaRose. He was my parish priest when I was growing up,” Father Ken said.

“Who was Tommy?” Father Ken’s face saddened at the mention of the boy’s name.

“Thomas was one of our more troubled children. We placed him with a loving family, but he kept running away. The last time, about six months ago, he was found dead of an overdose not far from here. Father John was devastated. Tommy was one of his favorites.”

“Oh, I see,” I said. I began to feel sorry for Father John. “Could I ask a favor?”

“What can I do for you, Anne?”

“Is there some way I can get a lock for my door?” I asked. Jamming a pencil in the door frame worked in the bathroom, but not in my room, where countless layers of paint had made the gap too small.

“I understand if you don’t want Father John barging in at all hours, but I’m afraid a lock is out of the question. A matter of policy, you see.”

“I see.”

“I will have a talk with him, perhaps make your floor off-limits to him, especially when he’s been drink...er, when it’s late.”

“Okay, thanks. I just got scared when he woke me up.”

“I understand completely. Is there anything else?”

“Well...”

“Tell me,” he urged.

“Could you give me another...examination?”

Father Ken nearly choked on his drink. I guess he wasn't expecting that. We hadn't talked about that at all, and I could tell that he wasn't sure about how I felt about his touching me and jerking off in my presence. For my part, I was horny as hell, and Father Ken seemed like he'd gladly lend a hand or more. I'd thought about getting to know one of the boys better, but none of them would talk to me yet. Besides, Father Ken was a handsome man, a nice man. I wanted to pleasure him, please him.

“Yes, we can do that. Certainly.” Father Ken had barely recovered his composure.

“Tell you what: why don't you try some of these clothes on first, okay?”

“Okay,” I said.

I began to remove my blouse, skirt, and shoes, stripping down to my panties. Unlike the night before, I didn't hesitate or show reluctance. I was unsure of what was happening then, uncomfortable to show myself to Father Ken. But after our little “examination”, I knew where I stood, where this was going. I even felt like I had a bit of control over the situation.

On top of the pile of clothes was another package of girls' panties, this time closer to my size. I skinned off the tight pair I was wearing, giving Father Ken a good look at my bare bottom as I bent over to pull up a new pair. Like the others he'd given me, they

were virginal white cotton with a little rosebud pattern, but these were bikini -cut instead of briefs. The others made me feel like a ten -year- old girl.

In the pile of clothes was a plaid uniform jumper that fit pretty well, a couple of long skirts that were too big but could be easily altered, and another skimpy sundress. Like the one Father Ken gave me last night, it barely covered my bottom. I could tell he liked it when I modeled it for him, the way his eyes were locked on me. I turned around to pick up a discarded item, giving him a quick flash of my panties, and was rewarded with the sound of Father Ken drawing a quick breath.

After trying everything on, including my favorite sweater, which had somehow found its way into the donation pile, I stripped down to my panties again and sat on the corner of Father Ken's desk.

"Could I have another pill, please? To relax, I mean." Father Ken smiled and opened his desk, producing an orange prescription bottle. He opened it and shook out a pair of pills, giving one to me and taking the other, washing it down with a sip of his drink. I reached for his glass to take the pill, expecting something sweet and smooth like rum. Instead, I took a gulp of something harsher, harder, stronger, making my eyes water.

"Bourbon," Father Ken said. I'd had that before, but always with ice or a mixer. I coughed a few times, and Father Ken fetched me a glass of water. I drained the glass and then we went into his small bedroom. He sat down on his bed and I stood before him, tingling with anticipation.

"Father Ken?"

"Yes, Anne?"

“My breasts feel funny. Will you kiss them?”

Without replying, he leaned closer to my heaving chest. I could feel his breath caress my nipples before his lips made contact, followed by the delicious feeling of his tongue circling each nipple as he sucked them into his mouth. I sighed and ran my hands over his back, through his hair. Then I began unbuttoning his black shirt, starting at the starched white Roman collar that encircled his neck.

Father Ken stood up and pulled out his shirttails while I unbuckled his belt and undid his trousers. In a moment he was down to his undershirt, boxers, black socks, and a small gold crucifix that hung from a fine chain around his neck. He took off his shirt and shorts, and sat down again to take off his socks. Finally, he was naked, save for the cross. He wasn't as hairy as I expected, just a sparse thatch on his chest and arms, not nearly as much as Ramon had on his body. Below a slightly paunchy belly, his cock pointed skyward, hard and twitching. He leaned in and continued sucking my nipples, his hands roaming over the backs of my thighs and my bottom. I closed my eyes and savored the feeling of his caresses.

“All better?” he asked, looking up at me.

“Yes, thank you.”

“Lay down so I can examine you,” he said, keeping up the medical pretense even though we both knew it was a sham. I stretched out on his bed, my legs slightly apart, the pill he'd given me making me feel lightheaded. Father Ken began to gently stroke my thighs, grazing the crotch of my panties with a couple of fingers, making me shiver with delight and anticipation.

“Let’s get these off,” Father Ken said, tugging at my panties. I lifted my bottom off the bed to help, and he slid them down my thighs and off my legs, letting them fall to the floor next to the bed. He began to stroke my belly, moving his hand lower and lower until he was cupping my mons, one of his fingers lightly resting on my lips. I reached down and pushed his finger inside me, gasping as his digit penetrated my pussy. I was very wet, and my clit was tingling from the contact with his finger. Slowly, I began to hump his hand, making the bed softly squeak with my rhythm.

Father Ken began to stroke himself, and like the night before, I reached out for his hardness. This time he let me touch him, let me stroke him, long slow strokes like I’d done with Father John’s penis. I wanted him to last so I could at least suck him or maybe get laid properly.

Father Ken’s finger began to saw in and out of my snatch while I played with my clit, circling it with a wet fingertip. The bed began to make more noises of protest, but we ignored it, lost in our pleasure. I felt my climax begin to build slowly, steadily, pushing through the effects of the pill I’d taken. I tried to keep stroking Father Ken’s cock, but it was distracting me from my mounting pleasure. He slipped another finger inside me and began to diddle me faster, making me catch my breath a few times as the tingling down there began to spread throughout my body.

Suddenly it hit me, an intense orgasm that reduced me to a quivering mass of jelly, making my limbs tense and relax as endless waves of pleasure washed over me. I felt my pussy tighten around his fingers and he stopped banging my little box, withdrawing his digits and wiping them on the sheet. I gave my clit one last swirl, gasping as the last

waves of my climax receded like the tide. I let out a deep breath and relaxed, hoping that I hadn't made too much noise.

"Feel better?" he asked. I sat up on Father Ken's bed and put my arms around his neck, hugging him. He held me in his arms, his hands hesitating as if he didn't know how to hold me, finally resting them on my hips. I began to wonder if this was awkward for him, whether he'd really had any experience with a girl at all. I gently kissed his neck and looked up at him.

"Your turn," I said. "Lay back on the bed."

"You're going to examine me?" he asked with a laugh.

"You'll love this. It's an oral exam." Father Ken smiled and stretched out next to me. I guided his thighs apart and curled up between them, getting my first close-up look at his cock and balls. His penis wasn't very long, but it was thick, with his foreskin making it look even thicker. I pulled the skin back and planted a gentle kiss on the fat purple head, making Father Ken gasp with surprise.

My pussy was still throbbing from his fingerfucking, and I had half a mind to straddle him and guide his cock inside me, but I didn't want to rush things. Instead, I began to slowly suck him, gently cupping his balls with my hands. As I began to establish a rhythm, Father Ken's hips began to move. I looked up over his heaving chest and saw his eyes were closed, his mouth was open, a slack expression on his face. It was as much a product of pills and alcohol as it was from my lips and tongue, and I wondered if he'd gone to sleep on me.

A stifled gasp as I swirled my tongue over his slick shaft told me otherwise. I began to suck him harder, speeding up my rhythm and matching each bob of my head with my hand, sliding his foreskin up and down over his hard cock. His member twitched when I probed between his cheeks with a finger, and his hips began to move faster, matching my speed. I released him from my mouth and licked his tool up one side and down another, giving my jaw a brief respite before parting my lips again. I knew he was getting close; I could taste a drop of sticky, salty precum.

It was time for his release. I worked my tongue over his cockhead while quickly jerking his cock the way he'd done the night before. He moaned and I felt his glans begin to flare in my mouth, his balls twitching in my hand, and suddenly he began to spurt his seed, filling my mouth with his hot offering. I swallowed his semen greedily, hungrily, letting only the merest drop escape my lips and drip down his glistening rod. He let out a deep breath as the flow of cum began to wane, his penis softening between my lips. After cleaning him off with my tongue, I gave his cock another tender kiss, gently laying it down atop his now - empty balls. I scooted up on the bed and lay next to him, resting my head on his shoulder. Father Ken turned his head and softly kissed my forehead.

We lay together for a while, like lovers do, his legs intertwined with mine, his hand caressing my back. I ran my fingers over his chest, idly toying with the gold crucifix and listening to his steady, slow breathing. His caresses slowed and stopped, but it wasn't until he started snoring that I realized he was asleep. I carefully extricated myself from his embrace and climbed out of his bed.

After getting dressed and folding the clothes I was going to take, I sat behind Father Ken's desk for a while, taking small sips of his drink to wash down the taste of his semen. One of the desk drawers was slightly ajar, and I could see the bottle of pills. Reassured by the sound of Father Ken's snoring in the next room, I carefully opened the drawer, trying not to make a sound, and pulled out the orange plastic container. There were plenty of pills—the label read "Valium"—and I spilled out about a half-dozen, sure that he wouldn't notice them missing.

Back in my room, I split one of the pills in half and took it, laying in bed and enjoying the feeling of relaxation that spread through my body. I thought about writing in my journal, but my limbs were like lead. I could have drifted off to sleep right then, but I had to go to the bathroom first.

There was someone in the bathroom across the hall, so I walked down to the second floor. It was more of a trot, actually, as I really had to go. The door to the second floor bathroom was closed, but there was no answer when I knocked. I opened the door, hiked up my skirt, pulled down my panties, sat down on the toilet, and began to pee.

I didn't notice the boy in the bathtub until I was about to get up and wipe myself. He was young, maybe eleven or twelve, with fair skin, short reddish-blond hair, and a freckled face. Cute as a button, his mouth was open in astonishment and his hazel eyes were as wide as dinner plates.

"Um, hi. I'm Annie," I said, not really knowing what else to say.

"Hi," he croaked.

"What's your name?" I asked.

“Billy.”

“Well, Billy. I’m sorry I barged in on you, but I really had to go, you know? Now I’ve got to wipe myself. I’d ask you not to watch, but I know you’re curious. You are curious about how I’m put together down there, right?”

“Uh-huh.”

“Well you can watch if you’d like, but I’d prefer that you didn’t.”

“Um, okay,” he said. He turned his head towards the wall, but I could see his eyes were still glued on me. I daubed myself with some toilet paper, flushed, and pulled my panties back up, letting my skirt fall back around my thighs. I had my towel and toothbrush with me and was about to wash my face and brush, but instead I jammed the end of the toothbrush between the door and frame, and went over to the tub, dipping my fingers in the soapy water.

“It’s nice and warm, Billy. Would you mind if I joined you?”

“Um, okay,” he muttered again.

The water was warm, though I hoped it wasn’t because Billy was peeing in the bath water. Even so, I had a head full of Valium and a nice hot bath sounded like a good idea. Having some company was even better. This time I let Billy watch as I got undressed. As I slowly slid naked into the bath, his eyes were fixed on a spot between my legs, tracking my pussy until it disappeared beneath the water, at which point his gaze moved up to my breasts and stopped there.

“Billy? Billy?” I had a bit of trouble getting his attention.

“Yes?”

“Would you please pass me the soap?”

“Here.”

“Thank you.” I began to lather my breasts, slowly caressing them with the slippery bar of soap. I could sort of make out Billy’s hand moving between his legs beneath the foamy water. His other hand was draped along the edge of the tub. I took it and guided it to my soapy breasts, letting him feel them. He began to squeeze my little tit.

“Gently, Billy. Girls like it when you’re gentle,” I said. Billy’s squeeze became a gentle caress, and he traced the line below my budding breast with his fingertip. Then he began to trace a circle around my nipple.

“Yes, like that. Just like that,” I whispered. As his finger circled my slick nipple, I began to trace a circle around my clit with my own soapy finger. My other hand was below the water, slowly moving up Billy’s smooth thigh. I could feel his hand moving, jerking his young boycock. Beneath that hung a small, slack pair of hairless balls. Billy let out a small gasp when I began to fondle them.

“Let me do that for you,” I said. “Why don’t you soap up my tits some more, okay?” Billy nodded eagerly, taking his hand off of his stiff pecker so he could lather my breasts with both hands. As he fondled my soapy tits, I took his smooth shaft in my hand and began to stroke him. His boycock was just a few inches long, circumcised, and as hard as a bar of iron. Billy’s young cock twitched as my fingers danced over his shaft.

“Do you like that?” I asked. Billy nodded and smiled. I took the soap from him and lathered up my hands, slicking up my fingers for the benefit of his cock and my clit. His slim hips rose off the bottom of the tub to meet my fingers. I thought about trying to

straddle him and stuff his hard little cock inside me, but I'd lost my diaphragm while I was living at the foster home, and I didn't have any condoms. Billy might not be ejaculating yet, but I couldn't take a chance here. Even a little drop would be enough.

"Get up on your knees. Let me finish you off," I said. Billy got up, a curious expression on his face. I gathered my hair in a loose ponytail with my hand, keeping it out of the soapy water.

"Hold my hair for me, will you?" Billy rinsed the soap off of his hands and held my hair back as I leaned into his crotch. I heard him let out another little gasp as my lips made contact with his hard boycock. It still tasted a bit soapy, but I didn't mind. The cool bathroom air had made his balls contract into a pruny little package. I gently squeezed them as my mouth sunk lower on his smooth penis.

Lathering my hands with the soap on my breasts, I began to caress Billy's firm young bottom as I sucked him, feeling his cheeks tighten as I swirled my tongue over his hard shaft. His heavy breathing and the way his cock twitched in my mouth told me that he was close to his release. I squeezed his little buns and heard him gasp once again as he came, a small hot drop of semen oozing from the head of his dick. He shuddered as I gave him one last suck before releasing his still-hard penis from my mouth. Billy sighed and sat back down in the tub.

"Did you like that?" I asked him as I rinsed off my breasts. Billy grinned. The taste of his cum lingered on my lips; I was glad I didn't try to fuck him without a condom or something. I thought about showing Billy how to fingerbang me, but that would take a little too much time. Even with the toothbrush jamming the door closed, I feared getting

caught by someone. Besides, the water was beginning to get cold. I could finish myself off in bed.

I gave Billy a kiss on his freckled forehead and rinsed myself off. We got out of the tub together, and I dried him off with his towel. I remember doing this for Paco after we had made love in the shower, and I felt that familiar pang of loss, albeit dulled by the effects of the tranquilizers. I helped Billy into his tattered red bathrobe and had him go before I did so no one would see us exit the bathroom together. Giving him a gentle pat on the bottom, I closed the door and spent a few more minutes in the bathroom, brushing my teeth and washing my face.

Back in my room, I lay in bed thinking of Billy and Father Ken, taking me at the same time, the priest slowly fucking me from behind while the young boy knelt before me and offered his smooth boycock for me to suck. I longed for one of my toys, a vibrator or a dildo, but had to content myself with my fingers as I brought myself off. After I came, I thought I heard footsteps in the hall outside my room, but I was too tired and spent too long looking out there. I was asleep before I even closed my eyes.

* *

Chapter Four

Sister, Brother

That Saturday, there were no classes. Instead, the shelter's residence would be put on cleaning detail, mopping floors, cleaning bathrooms, doing laundry, even helping Sister Katherine in the kitchen. I had spent the morning in the laundry room, loading the boys' smelly socks and crusty shorts into the washing machine and was finishing lunch when I spotted Sister Katherine coming out of the kitchen. I needed a needle and thread so I could take in the waistband of those skirts Father Ken had found for me.

Sister Katherine filled in for Sister Bernice on weekends, and was physically her polar opposite, slender where Sister Bernice was broad and angular where the other was curvy. She had an opposite temperament as well, being somewhat more distant and reserved than her more affectionate counterpart. I busied my lunch tray and went over to where she was dipping a tea bag into a cup of hot water.

"Sister? May I ask a favor?"

"Certainly, Anne," she said, not looking up. I told her about the clothes I'd received and my need to alter them so they'd fit. She thoughtfully blew the steam from her cup, listening to my request.

"Would a sewing machine do?" she asked. "Do you know how to use one?"

“Yes, that would be great,” I said. I waited while she finished her tea , after which she led me down to the basement and into a locked storage room next to the classrooms. There was a huge pile of clothes, the donation pile I guessed, along with a collection of old furniture, mattresses, and rolled-up carpets. Sitting in a corner of this collection of junk was an antique sewing machine, treadle powered like the one we had in the house in Maine.

I sat down behind it, checking that it was threaded and that the treadle actually worked. I picked a random piece of clothing off of t he pile, a stained and torn t-shirt, and began doing a running stitch along the edge. There was that old familiar feeling as my thighs pressed together when I worked the treadle, and I had to stop lest I begin to get too aroused in front of Sister Katherin e.

“Ah, I see you’ve used one of these before,” she said.

“We used to have one at our house. I liked making dresses and stuff with it,” I said.

“This is Sister Bernice’s, so be careful with it,” Sister Katherine said.

“I will. I promise.” She gave me a rar e smile and left the storage room. I started another load of laundry and went to fetch the clothes I needed to alter. Taking in the waists took just a few minutes. I was trying on one of the skirts, a long peasant -style number that went down to my ankles, when I noticed a familiar looking bra strap sticking out of the pile of donated clothes. I dug around through it, coming up with just about all of the things I’d packed when I left Maine, all except a t -shirt and a pair of panties. I wrapped my old clothes in the two skirts I’d altered and was just about to leave when the

storage room door opened. It was Sister Katherine, and she was holding her own little bundle of clothes.

“Excuse me, Anne? I was wondering...” she said. I thought I was about to be busted for snatching my clothes back from the pile, but then I realized that she wanted me to mend some of her things. I took the bundle from her and examined what she’d brought: a bra with a busted strap, a couple of old pairs of panties with broken elastic, a blouse with a torn pocket. I smiled at her and sat down at the sewing machine, starting with the bra, reattaching the strap in no time at all.

“Sister Katherine?”

“Yes, Anne?” She’d been watching me like a hawk as I handled her underwear.

“I’m not sure I can mend these panties,” I said. “The elastic is too worn. They’re too old.” They were white cotton briefs, thin and frayed.

“Oh, okay. Just do the best you can.”

“You really should get new ones,” I said. I did the best I could, mending a few of the larger holes and trying to fix the legband. The last item was a starched white blouse whose breast pocket had detached from the bodice. I sewed it back on, carefully trying to keep my stitches straight and unobtrusive.

“You do that so well,” Sister Katherine said, leaning over and watching me work the old sewing machine.

“Thank you,” I said, removing the blouse from the machine and checking the stitch. I handed the blouse to Sister Katherine.

“Is there anything else you need done?” I asked.

“Well...no, nothing.”

“Please, tell me. I’d be happy to do more.”

“Well, it’s this dress,” she said, turning and lifting her arm. The seam was split, just a couple of inches. “I tore it reaching for something on top of the fridge.”

“I can fix that easily. Turn around so I can unzip you.”

“Well...” She hesitated before turning around, and after I undid the zipper she was slow to shrug her simple grey dress off of her shoulders. Sister Katherine stepped out of her dress and handed the garment to me. She wore a white full slip with just the barest hint of lace trim around the neckline. As I separated the seam from the lining, she stood next to me and watched intently.

I had just finished threading the machine with some grey thread when I felt Sister Katherine start to gently stroke my hair.

“That feels good,” I said. She’d frozen for a moment when I started to speak, but then she resumed, leaning just a bit closer to where I was seated. I began mending the seam, trying hard to concentrate on the task. Sister Katherine had such a gentle caress. I missed the touch of a woman, even such a motherly gesture. When I had finished sewing, instead of handing back the dress, I leaned my head on her hip, pressing my cheek against the fabric of her slip, closing my eyes and savoring the feeling of her fingers running through my hair.

I looked up at her, wondering if she was going to kiss me. Her eyes were closed tight and her mouth was slightly open, a look that was much more arousing than any sensation I’d had working the sewing machine’s treadle. I stood up and held her around

her waist, standing on my toes to bring my lips to hers. She opened her eyes and looked startled for a moment, and then her expression softened, as did her lips, parting to invite my tongue. We stood there kissing for what seemed like an hour, our hands roaming over each other.

“Come,” I said, leading her over to the big pile of clothes that dominated the room, lying down on it and pulling her with me. We embraced on top of the heap and resumed our kissing. For a nun, she was an awfully good kisser, and I wondered what she was like when she was my age, maybe twenty or so years earlier.

“No, no, let’s just kiss,” she said when I began to pull the hem of her slip up her pale thigh. I stopped and pulled her hem back down, smoothing it against her skin.

“Kissing’s good,” I whispered. Sister Katherine smiled and we locked lips again. My hands roamed over her slim body, but not below the waist.

“What’s that?” she asked, breaking off our kiss and bolting upright. There was someone in the hallway outside, dragging something heavy down the stairs. Sister Katherine dashed for her dress, which was still draped over the sewing machine. She dressed quickly and was just about to leave when I grabbed her hand.

“Will you come to my room tonight?” I asked her. “I mean, just to kiss and stuff.” Sister Katherine hesitated before nodding. She gave me a quick peck on the lips and quickly left.

I rummaged through the pile for a few minutes, but I didn’t find anything even remotely wearable. It didn’t help that it consisted almost entirely of boys’ clothes. I tucked my bundle of clothes under my arm, happy that I’d found most of my old stuff,

and left the storage room to finish doing laundry. In the hall, one of the boys had an old metal bucket full of soapy water and was mopping the floor. He looked up as I passed by, and then went back to his mop.

* * *

Saturday night at the shelter was pretty bizarre. There was a large common room that wasn't used during the week, furnished with old couches and a second-hand television set. Just about all of the boys went in there after dinner, to watch a hockey game and just hang out. A few priests were seated among the boys, and I recognized a few of them from prior dinners. Billy was there, and he gave me a smile, as was the olive-skinned boy from my class, who merely looked up when I took a seat on one of the couches.

I watched the hockey game for a while and began to get bored, so I got up and left the common room, hoping to head back to my bedroom to read my history textbook or maybe get a bit of writing done. However, in the hall outside the common area, I ran into Father Ken.

"I've been looking for you," he said. "Let's talk in my office."

We entered Father Ken's office and he went behind his desk, pulling a package wrapped in brown paper from a drawer, followed by his bottle of bourbon and two glasses.

"This is for you," he said, handing over the parcel. "Open it."

I sat down across from his desk and opened the package. Inside was a box containing something lacy and black. Digging into the box, I pulled out a frilly black bra

with lacy cutouts for the nipples, a matching pair of crotchless panties, a garter belt, and fishnet stockings. I looked at Father Ken with a baffled expression; he'd taken my old clothes from me because they weren't "age appropriate" in his opinion, yet he'd bought me undies worthy of a hooker.

"Thank you," I said. "They're lovely."

"You're welcome. I'm glad you like them," he replied, pouring two drinks.

"Let me put them on," I said, disappearing into Father Ken's bed chamber and closing the door. I took off my clothes and began to put on the things Father Ken had given me. The bra was a bit big; he must have guessed at my size. The straps were adjustable, though, and the panties and garter belt fit fine. The garter tabs were made from cheap plastic and were hard to attach to the stockings, but held fast after a bit of fiddling. I took a look at myself in the mirror that hung on the back of the bathroom door. The crotchless panties and peek-a-boo bra left nothing to the imagination. The outfit wasn't quite complete, either; it needed black pumps and a feather boa.

When I returned to Father Ken's office, he was still seated behind his desk in his high-backed leather office chair, sipping his drink. His trousers were undone and he was idly stroking his cock as he waited for me to return. I climbed up into his lap and threw my arms around him, rubbing my exposed pussy against his hard penis as I kissed him.

"Thank you. I love it. Do you like it?" I said.

"You look lovely," he said, squeezing my bottom through the lacy panties. I ground my cleft against his stiff rod, feeling some of my wetness rub off on him.

"I have a favor to ask you, Father," I whispered.

“What it is, Anne?”

“I need to see a gynecologist. I need some protection.”

“I’m afraid I can’t...I mean...church doctrine...”

“What if it wasn’t for protection? Just a check -up?”

“Well, I’ll have to think about...” His voice was thick with lust, his expression betraying his conflicted feelings. I knew he wanted me, wanted to feel himself inside me, but the idea of using contraception was an obstacle in his mind. I had no idea that the pursuit of pleasure could be so complex and decided to drop the subject.

Father Ken had no intention of continuing the discussion either. He handed me the other drink and watched as I took a first sip of bourbon, then a second, then a gulp, nearly draining the glass. We shared an alcohol -flavored kiss, and then Father Ken stood up, holding me by the bottom. I wrapped my arms around his neck as he carried me into his bedroom and playfully tossed me on his bed. I pinched my nipples and teased my clit as I watched him undress. When he was naked, save for the small gold cross around his neck, he climbed into bed and stretched out on top of me, pressing his body against mine as we kissed. His erection pressed against my mons, so I adjusted my hips and ground my clit against his hard, veiny shaft, and wrapped my legs around his waist.

“I wish you were in me,” I whispered. Father Ken just grunted and pressed his cock harder against my pussy, grinding his hardness along the length of my slit until it began to chafe.

“Ow,” I complained. “Do you have any lube?” Father Ken looked down at his dick before getting up from the bed and going into the bathroom. He returned with a bottle of

hand lotion, which he handed to me. I squeezed some on to my fingers and began to rub it into my burning cunny lips, adding another big dollop to my reddened clit. Then I motioned for him to come closer and rubbed another blob of lotion on to his angry red cock until it glistened.

I tugged at Father Ken's slick penis, urging him to lay on top of me again. This time our genitals slid smoothly against each other, like well-oiled parts of a machine. Father Ken lay partially on top of me, supporting himself with his arms while I reached down to press his cock against my cleft and rocked my hips. Every time he thrust his pelvis, his glistening shaft would saw across my clit. It wasn't as good as fucking, but it felt pretty nice.

I looked up at Father Ken's face. He was alternating between looking down at his cock, looking at me, and closing his eyes. I wondered what he was thinking about when his eyes closed, who he was thinking about. He'd look so distant for a moment and then he'd snap back, looking down at our goodies grinding together and moving his hips a little faster.

As good as this felt, I still wished we were fucking. Unlike the previous two nights, Father Ken was taking a while to come. If he'd been inside me, I'd be in the middle of a mind-blowing orgasm by now. I really missed having Ramon on top of me, in me, feeling the muscles move beneath his back, knowing that all of that power was focused on the fat cock pumping in and out of my little pussy.

Just as I was thinking how long Father Ken was taking to come, I felt his hips start to stutter and his cock begin to throb against my clit. I looked down at his slick penis and

saw a rosy jet of semen shoot from the tip and land on my belly. The second spurt arced a bit lower, trailing on to the lacy waistband of my garter belt. A third and fourth spurt shot forth and Father Ken gave one last thrust before rolling off of me and on to the bed.

“I’ll get you a towel,” Father Ken said, seeing the sperm mess on my belly. These were the first words he’d spoke since carrying me in from the office. He went to the bathroom and returned with two towels, handing one to me and using the other to wipe the hand lotion from his cock and balls. I daubed his cooling semen from my skin and the lotion from my cunny, handing the towel back to Father Ken.

“Okay, we can do that,” he said, laying down next to me on the narrow bed.

“Do what?”

“The doctor. An exam. I know someone. I’ll set it up.”

“Thank you.”

“Just don’t tell me what it is,” he said.

“Tell you what?”

“Don’t tell me whether it’s a pill or a diaphragm or an IUD. I don’t want to know. Just take care of it.”

“Okay. I will. Thanks.” I gave him a hug and kissed him and we held each other until he drifted off to sleep. I watched him for a while before slipping out of bed and putting my clothes on over the lingerie he’d bought me. I was wearing the long peasant skirt that day; you could hardly see the fishnets. Before leaving, I poured myself another drink, washing down one of his Valiums with a sip of bourbon.

I returned to my room and decided to take a shower, still feeling sticky trails of sperm on my skin. I thought about finishing myself off while I was showering, as all that greasy humping hadn't made me come. But my legs felt rubbery from the booze and the pills and I thought I'd be better off doing it in bed. I dried myself off and headed back to my room.

I was back in my room, naked and spread-eagled on my bed, two fingers in my pussy and one on my clit, on the verge of a blinding climax, when there was a soft knock on my door. I stopped what I was doing, knowing that what I was doing was being accompanied by a bedspring symphony. Whoever was at the door knocked again. I threw on a long t-shirt and went to answer it.

"Who is it?" I asked through the door.

"Katie," came the reply. I had to think for a second before I connected the name to Sister Katherine. I opened the door.

"Anne," she said, slipping into the room and closing the door behind her. "I didn't wake you up, did I?"

"No, no," I said. She was wearing an old bathrobe and had taken off her wimple, revealing her short auburn hair. I felt her drawing close, her hands finding my waist, her lips brushing mine. We stood in the middle of my darkened room and kissed for a while. After kissing Father Ken, her lips felt particularly soft and inviting.

I undid her robe and moved my hands inside, on to her warm skin. Beneath the robe she wore a plain pair of panties and a bra, every bit as austere as the undies I'd mended for her earlier. I felt her hands begin to roam under my t-shirt, over my back and

down to my bottom. We kissed and groped each other until I broke off the embrace and led her to my bed.

I shrugged off my t-shirt as Sister Katherine reached behind her back to unclasp her bra. I hadn't gotten a good look at her when we were in the storage room, as she'd been wearing a full slip, but now, wearing only her white cotton briefs, I could finally view her near-naked form. She was skinnier than I thought, with slim, almost bony hips. She wasn't much bigger than me on top, either, but she had big brown nipples that crinkled into an oval when I sucked and kissed them. Every time I suckled her crinkly areolae, she'd moan softly and gently kiss the top of my head.

We lay side by side on the bed, our thighs intertwined, our breasts pressed together, exploring each other's body with our hands, and each other's lips with our tongues. It seemed as if Katie would have been content to just kiss and fondle each other all night, and that it was up to me to make the first move towards something more. I began to kiss her neck, her breasts again, the slight swell of her tummy, stopping at the high waistband of her underwear.

"No, no," she softly protested as I began to pull her panties down.

"I want to make you feel good," I whispered.

"It's wrong...it's so dirty."

"But it's so beautiful....you're so beautiful," I countered. Her protests ended but for a quivering tension in her thighs as I pulled the panties over them, revealing her untrimmed bush. I let her panties dangle from one of her ankles as I curled up between her legs, leaving a trail of kisses up her thighs.

“Oh, Annie,” she sighed, as I parted her labia with my fingers and began to tease her clit with my tongue. Her pearly nubbin swelled, and I was amazed at its size, nearly as big as the tip of my pinkie finger. As it engorged with blood like a tiny penis, I began to circle it with my tongue, trying not to touch it directly, at least not yet. I’d guide my tongue down the length of her slit and back up, bringing some of her own nectar up to her clit.

As I began to softly lash her clit with my tongue, Katie began to rock her hips and run her fingers through my hair, quietly moaning and mewling as I licked her secret pearl. My hands reached beneath her bottom, cupping her cheeks as I drank from her sex, watching her breasts heave like boats on a stormy sea.

“Anne...no...Annie,” she whispered, though she made no effort to stop me. Quite the contrary: every time I’d suck her swollen clit she’d press her hips forward to meet my lips. I began to alternate between swirling my tongue over her clitoris and sucking it with my lips, and soon I was rewarded with the feeling of her quivering thighs pressing against my shoulders. She barely made a sound as she came, just a few quick breaths and a soft moan. As her thighs began to relax, she gently pushed my head away from her sex. She’d had enough.

“Anne,” she whispered after I scooted back up on the bed and into her arms. “That was wonderful.” As we kissed, I could taste a trace of blood on her lips. She must have bitten them to keep from crying out as she came.

“I’m so happy you liked it,” I said, kissing her again. Our thighs were once again intertwined, and I felt her wet sex against my skin as I pressed against hers with my own

moist cleft. There was a knot in my stomach, a tension that had been building all day, since our furtive embrace in the storage room on top of the pile of clothes. That I hadn't come when Father Ken was humping my pussy didn't help. Sister Katherine had interrupted my attempt to take care of this myself, and now, after making her come, I sorely needed my own release.

I thought about something Del had said once, after a long week on the boat with his brother and father, something about his balls turning blue from not having sex. I thought that was funny, but now I saw the truth in what he said, and I imagined the inside of my cunny turning blue, like how my lips were after swimming in the cold Atlantic in the fall, waiting for something warm to pink it up. Something, anything, a tongue, a finger, a cock, even a purring vibrator.

"Would you...?" I asked Sister Katherine, gently guiding her hand from my waist down between my legs.

"I...I've never..." she whispered.

"Just use your fingers," I said. It wouldn't take very long unless she was particularly clumsy, which I didn't think was the case.

"No, let me try..." she said, kissing my neck and breasts just as I had done for her. She lingered over my belly, her soft lips pressing against my skin, and then she was between my thighs. I felt her warm breath on my sex, my clit rising in anticipation. Her wet tongue parted my nether lips, tasting my wetness, slowly edging towards my clitoris. I arched my back in anticipation and I wasn't disappointed when her tongue swirled over my pearl, sending an almost electric jolt through my body and out my limbs.

I grabbed two fistfuls of sheets, trying to resist the urge to press her head against my sex and make the friction more intense. I could feel every taste bud on her tongue as it glided over my swollen nubbin, glad that she took the direct approach and didn't try to tease me. It wasn't very long before I was shuddering on the bed, pinning her between my shaking thighs as my orgasm left me helpless, a trembling bag of bones on a lumpy mattress. Katie seemed like she'd never stop, and I had to pull my sex from her mouth and tug on her shoulder before my clit became painfully sensitive. I gently pulled her up to lie next to me, and we held each other and kissed, the taste of my nectar lingering on her lips.

"That was beautiful," I cooed in her ear. "Thank you."

"I've never done...I mean...I've wanted to..." she whispered.

"Never?"

"Never. I've kissed, and, well, that's it," she said.

As we lay together in the narrow bed, I told Sister Katherine about how my best friend, Luci, and I started fooling around together, and how crushed I was when she moved away. I told her about Tina, another girl with whom I shared my body, my pleasure, my secrets. And I told her about Julia, who was closest to my heart, even in death. My voice was choked up and a tear was running down my cheek as I talked about her. Losing her was like losing my mother all over again.

"You poor dear," Sister Katherine murmured, holding me to her breast as I softly sobbed. I felt bad for burdening her with my grief, but it felt so good to let it out, like an

emotional orgasm. I wondered if my heart had turned blue as well. Katie gently stroked my hair as I began to fall asleep in her arms.

* * *

I woke up with a start. The door was opening and someone was slowly shuffling into the room. I looked back at Sister Katherine, who was holding me from behind, partially shielded from the light streaming in from the hallway by my body. Her eyes were wide open, like a deer caught in a car's headlights.

"Tommy? Tommy? Where are you?" It was Father John again, looking for his long lost boy.

"I'm here, Father. Right over here. Follow my voice, Father," I said. Sister Katherine held me tighter and I could feel her heart racing.

"Tommy? Show me your hands, boy. Where are your hands?"

"Right here, Father. Take my hand," I said, reaching out for him. He placed my hands on his cock, and I tugged on his hardening member, drawing him closer, gently kneading his pale tool until it was fully erect.

"That's it, Tommy. Nice and slow, like I showed you," he slurred. I could smell the liquor on his breath.

Sister Katherine didn't dare utter a sound as I began to stroke the elderly priest's penis. While I pleased old Father LaRose, Father Ken's words about how this was an "act of kindness" came back to me. I thought about Tommy, how he must have been around the age of my stepbrothers when he died. Had he even kissed a girl? Was there any pleasure in his all-too-short life or just pain?

“Get ready, Tommy. You know what to do,” Father John said. Just like the other night, I leaned forward and took his cock in my mouth, swirling my tongue over the broad, spongy head, and was rewarded with a small spurt of semen. A couple of hot, thin dribbles followed, and I scooped them up with my tongue, licking clean his softening penis.

“Good boy,” the priest said in a low voice. “Bless you, Tommy.” I heard the priest stuff his soft cock back in his trousers and turn to leave. As the door closed behind him, I was glad that he didn’t try to reach under the covers again, searching for a penis that wasn’t there.

“That was Father LaRose,” Sister Katherine whispered.

“Yes, he came in here a couple of times before, looking for ‘Tommy,’” I said, rolling over in her arms so I was facing her.

“You...you...took him...in your...,” she stammered. I leaned closer and kissed her, knowing that the taste of Father John’s seed was still on my lips.

“Bitter,” she said.

“I know. You get used to it.”

“I’ve never...”

“Never?”

“I dated boys when I was younger, but it never went that far,” she said.

“What about girls?” I asked.

“What about girls. That was a subject that was never mentioned when I was growing up, let alone acted on. It wasn’t until I entered novitiate that I acted upon the thoughts I had. It felt so shameful at first...”

“But...?”

“But I gave in to my lust,” she said, snuggling closer. Sister Katherine kissed me and laid her head back down on the pillow.

* * *

She was gone when I woke up the next morning. I washed up and put on my best skirt and sweater and went downstairs for breakfast. After eating, Father Ken took us all to the cathedral for morning mass. There was a catechism class afterwards, but I was excused from this, by virtue of not being a Catholic. I walked around the neighborhood for a while, but it was cold and there wasn’t much open. On the way back to the shelter, I ran into Billy. He was hanging on the corner and smoking a cigarette, out of sight of the shelter’s front door. He looked too young to be puffing away at a Marlboro.

“Hey, Annie,” he said. “Wanna smoke?”

“No, thanks.”

“Smoke a joint?” Billy’s demeanor was totally different from when I first met him, a bashful naked boy in a bathtub. He was on a street corner, his natural element, the throne room of his tough boy kingdom.

“Sure,” I said. We walked around the block behind the shelter, to a boarded -up brownstone that had seen better days. There was a small nook below street level, underneath the front steps. Billy ducked inside the passage and I followed. Light filtered

in from a row of glass bricks set into the front stairway, illuminating a small space filled with construction debris, fast food wrappers, and empty coffee cups.

Billy reached into his pocket and pulled out a thin joint, lighting it with the cigarette. He took a big hit and passed it to me, peeking through the low doorway when he heard a siren pass by and recede into the distance. I took a drag on the joint and passed it back to him.

“That was fun, the other day,” he said.

“In the bath?”

“Yeah.”

“Yeah, it was.”

“Could we do that again?” he asked, trying hard to suppress an eager expression.

“I dunno. What’s in it for me?” I was bored, and an afternoon of playing with this boy sounded like fun, but I didn’t want to make it too easy for him to get in my panties. He thought about my question for a while.

“Well, I can get you some pot,” he said. “Or coke or dope. Whatever you want.”

The idea of having some coke sort of appealed to me, but I wondered what kind of shit this eleven-year-old kid could come up with. I wasn’t about to suck him off for a bag of talcum powder. Then again, this joint was pretty good.

“Get me some pot,” I said. “An ounce or something.”

“A whole ounce? No way!” Billy protested. “I can get you a quarter, maybe.”

“Make it a half, then.”

Billy thought it over for a moment and then he nodded. We finished up the joint and left our hiding place. As we hit the sidewalk, Billy turned to head in the opposite direction.

“I’ll get it to you after Sunday supper,” he said. “Is that okay?”

“Sure,” I replied, leaning down to give him a quick kiss on the cheek. Billy smiled and ran off to find his dealer, who was somewhere in the neighborhood. I headed back to the shelter and went up to my room, killing time by writing in my journal until the mid-afternoon meal was served.

Billy entered the dining room just as grace was being said. Red faced and runny-nosed, he looked as if he’d just run a mile. He took off his coat and sat down to dinner, giving me a wink and a smile to let me know that he had my bag of weed. Sister Katherine was also there, holding a tureen and a ladling out soup for everyone. All of the boys were present, as was Father Ken and a pair of priests that I recognized from previous dinners. I wished Sister Katie would sit down and eat with me —except for Billy, none of the boys would talk to me —but she was busy serving dinner.

I finished quickly and cleaned off my tray, catching Billy’s eye before heading upstairs. I glanced up towards the ceiling, hoping he’d catch my drift and meet me upstairs when he finished his meal. He gave me the slightest of nods to show me he understood.

I was in my room reading when I heard a soft knock on the door. It was Billy. I let him in and closed the door behind him.

“Here,” he said, handing me a rolled -up plastic bag. It felt lumpy. I unrolled it and examined the contents, holding the open end to my nose and taking a sniff. I’d never bought pot before, and I didn’t really know what to look for, but it smelled nice and pungent. I rolled it up again and stuffed it in the waistband of my skirt, under my sweater.

“You got a pipe or papers?” he asked.

“No. Do you?”

“Nope. I got an idea, though. You got something sharp? Like a pin or some thing?”

“I’ve got a pencil,” I said.

“Good. C’mon.” Billy led me out of my room and across the hall to the bathroom. I closed the door behind us and was about to jam the pencil in the door frame when Billy stopped me.

“Wait, I’ll need that to make the pipe ,” he said. I leaned back against the door to keep someone from barging in on us and handed him the pencil, which he stuck behind his ear.

Billy took the toilet paper off of its holder and began to ease the cardboard core from the center of the roll. The paper began to telescope around it, but he managed to free it without damaging the roll too much. He placed the roll back in the holder. With his thumbnail, he scored the cardboard tube, about a half inch from the end, making a small hole and tearing off the excess. Then he reached into his pocket for a tiny silver nugget of aluminum foil, which he carefully peeled open. Inside was a small brown lump.

“What’s that?” I asked him.

“Sheesh.”

“Sheesh?”

“Hash. Hashish. I got it from Donnie.”

“Donnie?”

“Yeah, the guy I got the pot from,” he said. He tore off a piece of the tin foil and pressed it into the hole in the toilet paper tube, making a crude bowl. Then he took the pencil from behind his ear and carefully punched some holes in the foil, handing the pencil back to me when he was done. While I jammed the door closed with the pencil, Billy tested the makeshift pipe, holding one end to his mouth and covering the other with his hand.

Billy handed me the pipe, and I filled it with a pinch of pot from my bag while he soaked a towel and jammed it against the gap along the bottom of the door. Then he opened the window next to the tub. Cold air began to drift into the small room.

“We gotta sit next to the window and blow the smoke outside, or else they’ll smell it in the hall,” he said. I sat next to him on the edge of the bathtub, both of us leaning on the window sill, and I handed him the pipe to light. He handed it back to me, unlit.

“Hang on a sec,” he said, pulling out the tinfoil nugget again. He unwrapped it and sliced off a loamy chunk with his thumbnail, adding it to the pot in the improvised pipe. “Okay, hold it up to your mouth and cover the end with your hand.” I did as he asked, and he lit the pot/hash mixture with a match. I slowly inhaled the dense smoke.

“Pull your hand away from the end,” Billy said. I did so, swallowing the rest of the smoke, which began to expand in my lungs. I suppressed the urge to cough, but my eyes began to water anyway from the smoke’s harshness. Billy took the pipe from me and to ok

a hit, nearly coughing as well. We passed the pipe back and forth until there was nothing but ash in the bowl, and then we smoked another.

By the time that one was done, I was wasted. It didn't make me giggly like the pot I smoked with Michael. Instead, I felt like I was floating, lightheaded, dizzy. I imagined that I could hear voices coming from the room next to the bathroom, and I wasn't sure if they were real or not, but Billy heard them, too. He got up from the edge of the bathtub where we were seated and went over to the opposite wall, where the voices were coming from. He knelt by the wall, next to an electrical outlet. I tiptoed over to him.

"Who is...?"

"Shhh!" Billy hissed, cutting me off. He reached into his pocket and fished out a dime, using the coin to remove the screw that held the outlet's cover in place. It took a minute to pry it loose; it seemed as if dozens of separate coats of paint had glued it to the wall. When the cover was finally off, Billy peered into the wall.

"Take a look," he whispered. I knelt next to him and peered through the hole in the wall, into the room next door. I remembered how Del, Ramon, and I used to spy on my mother and stepfather through the hole in our bedroom closet. I didn't dwell on this memory, however. What I saw was too bizarre.

"That's Father Mike and Chris," Billy said. The priest and the blond-haired kid, who was roughly the same age as Billy, were seated on the edge of the bed that was perpendicular to the wall we were spying through. Chris had been sent tripped down to his jockey shorts. Father Mike had his trousers off, his arm around the boy, and was running

his hand over Chris's smooth chest and down into his shorts. I could see the priest's other hand, busy between his own legs as he began to rub the boy's young cock.

"Shove over," Billy whispered. I moved to the right a bit, still peeking through the outlet, giving Billy a view through the wall. We knelt at the wall together, just about cheek-to-cheek. On the other side, Father Mike was making Chris stand up so he could pull down his underpants. Chris's pecker was standing at attention. Father Mike began to rub him.

"Wow," I said, sotto voce.

"Yeah," Billy said. I guess I knew what was going on in the shelter between the clergy and the residents, but seeing it happen was different. Very different.

"Anyone here ever do that to you?" I asked Billy. He was silent.

"Father Ken gave me an 'examination' the first night I got here," I said, putting my arm around his waist. I could feel him trembling. In the room next door, Chris was on his knees, his lips wrapped around Father Mike's penis. In a low voice, I told Billy about all the things I did with Father Ken and Father John. He listened quietly as he watched Father Mike lay Chris on his belly on the bed and apply some lubricant to a spot between the blond boy's cheeks.

As we watched Father Mike spread Chris's legs and mount him, I ran my hand over Billy's back, trying to soothe him. I could tell that he was both upset at what we were watching and captivated by this scene. I was, too. Chris was laying on the bed, facing us, clutching a pillow. He didn't cry out when the priest entered him, but I could

see tears start to form in his eyes. Father Mike lay on top of the boy and began pumping his tender bottom. Billy turned away from the hole.

“I’m not a fag,” he said, his voice devoid of emotion.

“I know you’re not,” I said, kissing him on the forehead.

“Father Ken examined me, too,” he said. “And Father James. And Father Joseph.” Billy’s eyes were misting up.

“It’s okay. It’s okay,” I cooed, getting up from my knees and pulling Billy to his feet. I steered him over to the sink, where I wiped his tears with a paper towel.

“I’m not a fag,” he repeated.

“No one is saying you are,” I said. “Do you like girls? Do you like me?” Billy nodded his head.

“Then you’re not gay,” I assured him. I was about to say “And so what if you are”, but decided not to. How fragile men’s egos are, even at this age. I leaned in and kissed him on the lips. He was cold to me at first, but he soon warmed up, putting his hands on my hips. I guided one of them up to my breasts.

“Wanna take another bath together?” I asked him.

“Yeah,” Billy said, a smile growing on his face. I gave his little butt a playful squeeze and went to fill the tub. While the water ran, I stripped off my sweater and stepped out of my skirt.

“I gotta pee,” Billy said. The sound of running water must have been getting to him.

“Go ahead.”

“I can’t while you’re watching.”

“You watched me pee the other night,” I said. “Fair’s f air.” Billy couldn’t argue with that. He unzipped his fly and fished out his penis. It was hard. He stood over the toilet for a moment.

“I can’t. It won’t come out now.”

“Would you like me to leave?”

“No, well...no,” he said.

“Okay, then. Just close your eyes and think of something else. Try to forget the fact that you’re in a tiny bathroom with a girl who’s wearing nothing but panties.”

“Um, okay.” He shut his eyes and began mumbling something under his breath. Whatever he was thinking about did the trick: his penis began to soften and soon a straw-colored stream was flowing into the toilet. He shook out the last few drops and gave me a satisfied smile.

“My turn,” I said, putting down the seat. I pulled my panties down and sat on the toilet, taking a leak in front of Billy. This time I didn’t ask him to turn away. He watched, fascinated, trying to figure out where the pee was coming from. After I emptied my bladder, I took a wad of toilet paper and dried myself off. Steadying myself by holding Billy’s shoulder, I stepped out of my panties and stood before him, nude.

“Let’s get you out of those good Sunday clothes,” I said, loosening his tie. Soon we were both naked, and the tub was only half full. Billy stood with his hands on his hips, his hard little cock standing at attention. I sat on the edge of the tub, my legs apart, and motioned for him to come closer.

“You’re curious about how I’m put together?” I asked him. He nodded, never once taking his eyes off of my sex. “Okay, take a good look,” I said, partin g my labia with my fingers. “This is my clit.” Billy moved closer, peering intently as I teased my clitoris from its hood.

“It’s sensitive, like the tip of your dick. Below that is my urethra, my pee hole. And below that...”

“...is your fuck hole,” Billy laughed.

“Yeah, right. My fuck hole,” I said. “Most guys are a little more polite about it, regardless of what they’re thinking. You want to get in there, you’d better be polite. And gentle. Remember what I told you the other day?”

“Girls like boys who are gentle?”

“Exactly,” I said, kissing him on his freckled forehead. The bathtub was almost full. I checked the temperature and climbed in, easing into the warm water. Billy climbed in after me, and I positioned him so he was sitting between my legs with his back to me, his firm little butt pressing against my cleft. I reached for the soap and began to lather up his smooth chest. As my soapy hands worked lower and lower on his torso, Billy sighed and settled back against my breasts.

I expected to find a nice hard little pecker between his legs, and I wasn’t at all disappointed. Billy’s little bubble butt pressed against my pussy as I jerked his soapy cock and cradled his slack ball sack.

“Turn over so I can do your back,” I said. Billy rolled over in my arms so that he was facing me, his head resting on my shoulder. I lathered his back, starting at his neck

and working my way down to his bottom. He flinched when my fingers probed his crack, so I backed off from there, lathering his bum cheeks instead. Billy's soapy cock slid back and forth over my thigh as I gently fondled his bottom.

"Stand up so I can get you nice and clean," I said. Billy stood up in the tub and I knelt in front of him, stroking his penis as I rinsed off the lather. I leaned in and took it in my mouth, sinking my lips down the length of his hardness. He sighed with pleasure as I sucked him and cupped his hairless balls, his hips rocking slightly to my rhythm.

I desperately wanted to fuck him right then, to swallow him with my hungry cunny, to feel his stiff pecker stir my juices, but I couldn't risk getting knocked up, least of all by an eleven-year-old boy. There was, however, something else we could do. I released him from my mouth and began to soap up his cock again, and then I turned around and presented my bottom to him, sliding the bar of soap along my asscrack until I was nice and slick.

"Kneel behind me, Billy," I instructed him. He got on his knees and inched closer, the tip of his cock sliding along my crack, his eager hips thrusting in anticipation of what was about to happen. I reached back and took hold of his cock, guiding it into my tight bottom. It took a couple of tries for him to enter me, but once his tip had penetrated my nether hole, the rest of his shaft slid in effortlessly.

"Feel good?" I asked him.

"Yeah."

"Go slowly."

“Okay.” It must have taken all of his restraint not to start humping me furiously like a horny little poodle, but somehow he managed pretty well. I could feel his warm breath on my back, and the cool air from the open window caressed my wet breasts, making my nipples crinkle up like pruny bath water fingertips. I guided his hands to my breasts, giving him something to hold on to while he slowly pumped my bottom. Meanwhile, I began to frig my clit with my soapy fingertips, occasionally dipping one into my snatch.

“Annie, I’m gonna...” Billy gasped. I could tell by the way his hips stuttered between thrusts that he was struggling to stay in control as he teetered on the edge of coming.

“Come for me, baby. Come in my ass,” I urged him. These words had a galvanic effect on Billy, and he began to thrust hard and fast, making a loud slapping sound as his hips hit my bottom again and again. Then I felt him stiffen and twitch inside me and the thrusts stopped. Billy lay his head between my shoulder blades as his cock began to soften and slip out of my bottom.

Billy got up off of me and sat back down in the tub, a contented smile on his face as he watched me roll over and sit down across from him. The smile wouldn’t leave his face, even when I leaned over to kiss him.

“You liked that, didn’t you?”

“That was awesome,” he said.

“Do you want to do it again?” I asked.

“Sure!”

“Okay, let’s dry off and go to my room,” I said. “One thing, though...”

“What?”

“You’ve got to lick my pussy first.”

“Eww! No way!” Billy’s smile disappeared and he wrinkled his button nose.

“Okay. Suit yourself,” I said, slowly lathering my breasts and arms.

“But...but...” His eyes were locked on my soapy tits.

“But what?” I asked him. “Does some thing about my pussy disgust you?”

“No, but...”

“But what? Lots of guys do it. Lots of guys like it. Girls love having their pussies licked.” Billy thought about this, weighing his desire to fuck me again with the natural reluctance boys his age had toward cunnilingus. It took a long time for my stepbrothers to reconcile themselves with the idea of eating pussy, but once they’d done that they began to enjoy eating me out, Del especially. He loved to watch me squirm with delight as his tongue danced over my clit; it made him feel like a real man in bed.

“Look, Billy, I don’t want you to do anything you feel uncomfortable about”, I said, not wanting to make having sex an unpleasant experience for him. The priests around here were good at doing just that.

“No, no. I’ll try it. I want to,” he said.

“You sure about this? You don’t have to.”

“No, I want to, Annie. You’ve been really nice to me.”

“You’re so sweet,” I said, leaning forward and kissing him on the forehead.

“You’re going to grow up to be a handsome man and a wonderful lover.”

Billy blushed at this, his big smile returning to his freckled face. We rinsed off and dried ourselves, smoking another bowl of pot laced with hash as the bathtub drained, hiding the pipe behind the tub's drain pipe. Billy screwed the cover back on the electrical outlet after taking one last look at Chris and Father Mike. They were lying together on the bed, nestled like spoons.

Even though we were just going across the hall to my room, we had to get dressed anyway. I left first, telling Billy to count to 100 before following. Back in my room, I took my skirt and sweater off again and lay down on my bed in my panties. Billy joined me a couple of minutes later, and he took off his clothes and joined me in bed. I pulled him on top of me and we began to kiss, though his tongue was all over my mouth.

"Whoa, slow down," I said. "Less tongue. Watch the teeth." We kissed again, and Billy did much better this time, showing a bit more restraint.

"Now, start kissing lower. Nibble my earlobe a bit, kiss my neck." I stroked his soft, smooth skin as he began to gently suck on my earlobe and explore my neck and shoulder with his lips.

"Do my breasts, now. Cup them gently and bring the nipple to your lips," I instructed him. Billy suckled me like a baby, carefully fondling my small tits. His teeth lightly grazed my nipples, making me shiver with delight, and I let him play with my little boobs for a while, enjoying his gentle touch. Billy must have enjoyed playing with them; his pecker was hard again and pressing against my leg.

"Okay, now start kissing lower, down my belly." Billy looked up and smiled as he began to leave a trail of kisses that stopped at the waistband of my panties.

“Before you pull them off, just give me a kiss right here,” I said, pointing to my panty-clad mons. His lips pressed against the soft cotton covering my pussy, and then he began to tug at the waistband of my underwear.

“Slowly, slowly,” I said, lifting my bottom off of the bed. Billy paused for a moment and then began to slowly pull my panties down my thighs, like a boy trying to unwrap a gift on Christmas morning. When he’d finished removing my undies, he looked up at me, awaiting the next part of his lesson.

“Kiss your way up the inside of my thighs,” I said. “Take your time. Tease me a little.” Billy gave a little chuckle as he began to kiss and caress my inner thighs, working his way up to my cleft. When I felt his hot breath on my sex, I reached down and parted my labia.

“Here’s the tricky part. You’ve got to concentrate on the little bump at the top, but not right away. Work your way up to it, kiss and lick around it first,” I said. Billy hesitated for a second before planting a kiss on my snatch and licking around my hungry hole. His tongue began to inch higher until he found my clit, making me gasp and shudder.

“Like that?” Billy asked.

“Just like that. You’re doing fine,” I said. “Taste okay?”

“Yeah, a little salty, like tears, but okay.” Billy went back to circling my clit with his tongue as I began to cup my breasts and lightly pinch my nipples.

“Okay, start licking my clit directly, up and down and side to side, not too hard.”

Billy did as he was told, and I felt my thighs begin to quiver, a kernel of pleasure building in my lower belly.

“A little harder...cup my bottom in your hands...that’s right...perfect...”

Billy had a look of intense concentration on his face as he ate me, glancing up at me every so often to watch the effect his mouth was having on me. I had been halfway to coming back in the bathtub, so I knew it wouldn’t take very long. Julia had the patience and stamina to eat me for an hour, something I knew was beyond this eager young boy. Some day, though...

“Yes, Billy...yes...put your finger in me...yes...ungh...” He slipped a slick digit in my cunny, pushing it in and out like a little cock, his knuckle grazing that sensitive spot on the top of my vagina. I squeezed my breasts and arched my back in anticipation of what was to come, the kernel of pleasure inside me expanding like a supernova.

“Urgh...yes! Harder, now, harder...oh God oh God oh God...” My thighs began to spasm as I came, pinning Billy between them as he lashed my clit with his tongue and fucked my hole with his finger. My ass levitated off the bed and I felt like I’d fly off into space if I let go of the sheets. There was a second peak to my climax as Billy switched from an up-and-down motion to a vigorous side-by-side shaking of his head, his tongue and lips rubbing across my clit like a multitude of mouths.

“Okay, okay, that’s enough,” I gasped, tugging at his arm and pulling him on top of me. He smiled, his face glistening with my juices, and we kissed.

“Was that okay?” Billy asked.

“Perfect,” I said. “You were perfect. Thank you.” Billy smiled again and nestled his head in the crook of my neck as I held him and caressed his back.

“I liked doing that,” he whispered. “I liked seeing you come.”

“You can do that whenever you want,” I said, kissing his cheek. We lay together for a while, and then he rolled off of me, his hard little boycock twitching with anticipation. I reached over to the bedside table for the bottle of moisturizer. A local hotel had donated cartons of toiletries to the shelter, the little bottles of shampoo, conditioner, and lotion that they stocked for guests, pre-moistened towelettes, and tiny tubes of toothpaste. I squeezed out a dollop of lotion and began to rub it all over Billy’s stiff prick, making it glisten in the dim light of my room. Then I handed the bottle to him and rolled over on my belly.

“Put some lotion in my bottom,” I said, spreading my cheeks apart. The lotion was cold at first, but the friction of Billy’s finger warmed it up. I reached under my belly and began to finger my still-sensitive clit with a greasy finger as Billy mounted me. I didn’t need to guide him inside me this time, as he knew exactly what to do. His slick cock slowly pierced my bottom, and I clenched my muscles to make it extra tight for him.

“So good,” he murmured as he slowly began to thrust.

“Mmmm...” I agreed, pushing my bottom up to meet his hips. He held my shoulders as he fucked my ass, gently kissing my back and neck. We coupled gently, quietly, his little balls rubbing against my pussy with each stroke. Billy was the perfect size for my ass, just like Paco, and he seemed to enjoy it just as much as my little

stepbrother. And just like Paco, Billy had a hard time maintaining a slow pace. I didn't mind, though, because every hard thrust pressed my swollen clit against my fingers.

Unlike the assfucking I'd had in the bath earlier, Billy was taking his sweet time coming, and by the time I felt that telltale twitching of his cock, I was beginning to climax again. I rubbed my clit harder, trying to catch up with him, and I succeeded. My orgasm wasn't as intense as the ones I had when he was eating me, but it was enough to make me clench my sphincter around his spasming cock. Billy gasped in surprise as my tight hole got even tighter, and he gave my bottom one last deep thrust as he came.

"Stay in me," I whispered as Billy started to roll off of me. We held hands, our fingers intertwined, as he lay on top of my back. I turned my head so he could see my smile, and he gave me a tender kiss on the cheek. When his cock finally softened and slipped out of me, we snuggled together under the covers, trading gentle kisses and soft caresses.

"Are you my girlfriend now?" Billy asked.

"Oh, Billy," I sighed. "You're three years younger than I am."

"But..." He began to sound upset.

"Let's be like brother and sister instead, okay?"

"Okay, I guess," he said, crestfallen.

"Hey, hey, don't frown, baby. I loved my brothers. And we used to do fun things like this all the time," I said. "Besides, boyfriends and girlfriends break up all the time. I want you to be my little brother forever. Okay?"

“Okay. I like that. I never had a big sister,” he said, smiling again. I kissed him and we hugged each other, like siblings rather than lovers, until Billy’s stomach began to groan from hunger. Intent on raiding the kitchen for a snack, he started to get out of bed, but I made him wait until I cleaned off his little pecker with a towelette and dried it with my panties. We got dressed and went downstairs to get something to eat. There was a basketball game on in the common room, and Billy left to catch some of it, giving me a quick kiss before he left.

I had just finished eating a sandwich and was walking back to my room when I heard a soft sobbing coming from the room next door to the bathroom, Chris’s room. I stopped for a moment outside his door and listened, and then I knocked once, twice, and then a third time. The sobbing stopped and a small voice said “Come in”.

Chris was lying on his bed, clutching a pillow. His eyes were red and his face was lined with the tracks of tears. He looked up at me with the saddest expression I’d ever seen, anywhere. I sat down on the edge of the bed and took one of his hands.

“What’s wrong?” I asked, expecting him to either reply “Nothing” or say something about his encounter with Father Mike. His reply surprised me.

“I miss my mom,” he said, choking on the last word.

“I’m so sorry,” I whispered, taking the pillow from his hands and setting it aside so I could take this sad boy in my arms and hold him. “I miss my mom, too.”

I held Chris’s trembling body as he cried on my shoulder, letting his grief flow as he held on to me for dear life. My eyes began to tear up as I listened to him sob. I missed my mother and, even more so, I missed Julia, who had been more than my lover, she’d

been my surrogate mother for the past year. I'd had almost five years to absorb the loss of my mom, but the pain of Julia's passing was still fresh, like an open wound.

I sat holding Chris for a long time, gently rocking him and stroking his back and his unruly mop of dirty blond hair. The flow of tears began to recede and his tight chest relaxed. When he finally fell asleep, I laid him down on his bed and tucked him in, giving him a soft kiss on the forehead before leaving. Back in my own room, lying in my own warm bed, I let my own grief out of its hiding place in the back of my mind and cried myself to sleep.

* * *

Chapter Five

Bodies

I woke up the next morning to find that someone had slipped an envelope under my door. Opening it up, I found a note from Father Ken, two \$100 bills, a consent form signed by “Fr. Kenton Foley” acting as legal guardian, and directions to a gynecologist’s office downtown. In the handwritten note, Father Ken said that I was excused from classes for the day in order to see the doctor and “take care of any other business”. I wondered what kind of pull Father Ken had to get an appointment on such short notice.

I put the envelope away, took a nice long shower, and got dressed. After a quick breakfast, I took the subway downtown. The appointment wasn’t until 11AM, but I wanted to be early, just in case. As it happened, I had to sit in the waiting room until well after noon before the doctor could see me.

He was an older man with a kindly face and snow white hair, narrow bifocals balanced on a bulbous cherry-red nose. My gynecologist in Maine had been a younger woman, and I felt sort of funny when this gentleman began poking and prodding down there, but eventually I relaxed while he examined me. At least his fingers weren’t cold, though the speculum felt like it had been sitting in the snow for a week.

Dr. Murphy asked me a few questions about my periods, sexual activity, contraception, and my health in general. He measured my cervix for a diaphragm, wrote something on a prescription pad, and told me to get dressed and see the receptionist on the way out. The whole exam had taken about fifteen minutes at most.

I thought I'd have to pay for the examination, but the receptionist said that there was some sort of arrangement between Dr. Murphy and the archdiocese. All I had to do was sign an index card marked with today's date and I was all set. I took the prescription to a drugstore a few blocks away and had coffee in a donut shop next door while the pharmacist filled the order. A half hour later, I had a new diaphragm and a couple of tubes of spermicidal jelly. It was still early in the afternoon, and I had \$65 in change from one of the hundred dollar bills, so I decided to go shopping.

The department stores were like nothing we had in Maine. I spent an hour just looking at skirts and sweaters. They were expensive, too, and I decided against buying something too pricey, remembering how my clothes ended up in the donation pile in the basement. One thing I did need was a nightgown, something modest enough that I could wear it when I went from my bedroom to the bathroom across the hall, but one that also would feel nice against my skin. The short babydoll nighties my mother used to wear were out of style, replaced by long flannel gowns that went from neck to knees, but I managed to find a silky satin chemise, chocolate brown with ivory lace trim. That it was on sale, marked down to \$29 from \$89 sealed the deal. I bought it, pleased with myself for finding such a sweet deal.

I walked around downtown Boston for a while, window shopping and enjoying this free time. I'd walked around the city before, but I'd been too concerned with finding a place to sleep to see the sights. Now that I had a place to stay, the city looked different, friendlier. People smiled here, not as many as in Florida, but much more than I'd seen in Maine, especially during the winter.

I was heading back to the subway station when I passed a store in a sort of run down set of blocks near Chinatown. It had a sign that said "Liberty Books" on the marquee, and "Adults Only" on the door. I peered inside, curious about what was sold here. There were rows of racks with magazines and books, and way in the back of the store I could see a display of sex toys, like the ones Shelly sold in her place. I screwed up my courage and walked inside, thinking that the worst that could happen was that I'd get kicked out.

A girl with a shocking pink mohawk haircut stood behind the cash register, filing her nails with an emery board and chewing a piece of gum. She gave me a perfunctory glance and went back to her grooming and chewing. The shop was almost empty except for a middle-aged man in a suit who was looking through a rack of shrink-wrapped magazines. I browsed through the book section, hundreds of short pulp novels with lurid covers, line drawings of women with men, women with women, and men with men. I worked my way to the back of the store, to the display of sex toys of all sizes and shapes, each one individually sealed in cardboard and plastic packages.

I missed the toys I'd left behind before going into foster care. They were nicer than anything in this store, but more importantly, they were reminders of what I'd shared with

Julia. I didn't want to leave empty-handed, though, so I selected a small pink vibrator, more or less penis-shaped, something that I could easily hide if I had to. I brought it up to the cashier, and she put down her emery board and rang up my purchase.

"You need batteries for this?" she asked.

"Yes, please." She reached under the counter and pulled out a pack of AA batteries, ringing them up and placing them in the bag.

"How old are you, hon?" I already had my money out, not expecting this question.

"Eighteen," I said, straightening up and trying to look older.

"Okay, hadda ask," the cashier said. She took my money and made change, stapling the plain brown bag shut and handing it over to me.

"Have fun, sweetie," she said, giving me a sly smile.

"Thank you." I left the store and headed back to the shelter.

* * *

Classes were still in session, so it was quiet in the building, especially upstairs. I sat on my bed for a while, reading and writing in my journal until I started to get bored. There was still some time before dinner was served, so I got undressed and put on my new chemise, enjoying the feel of the supple fabric as it caressed my skin.

I reached for the brown paper bag with my other new purchase, the vibrator. I unscrewed the bottom and slipped the batteries in, replacing the end cap and twisting it, making the vibe purr softly. It looked like a real penis, not much bigger than Billy's boycock, with veins and bumps along the shaft and a small mushroom-shaped head. With my new chemise hiked up around my hips, I teased my clit with one hand while I brought

the vibrator to my lips with the other, sucking on the rubbery phallus and making it glisten.

When it was wet enough, I turned it on and used the humming head to circle my clit, sending an electric jolt through my belly. Slipping the tip between my wet labia, I slid it into my sex while I fingered my clit. It wasn't as intense as the toys that Julia had bought for me, but the buzz was pleasant enough. I slid it in and out of my pussy, and then up and over my clit, sending another wave of pleasure through my belly.

My thoughts wandered as I played with myself, first imagining Dr. Murphy, the gynecologist, as he loosened his trousers and pulled out his cock, pushing it into my pussy while my legs were up in the stirrups. Then I thought about the bookstore, first a cover of one of the books, a drawing of a little girl in a short dress sitting on the lap of an older man, her pretty dress bunched up around her waist as the man fondled her cunny through her little white panties. My thoughts turned to the punky girl behind the cash register, thinking about her stiff pink mohawk and how it would look between my legs as she ate me out, wondering if she had shocking pink pubic hair as well. I was imagining her with a big pink strap-on, guiding it between my legs, when I started to come. I arched my back, frigging myself furiously and plunging the vibrator in and out of my hungry hole until my body stiffened, quivered, and then went limp.

I turned the vibe off and pulled it out, first licking my juices from the veiny pink rubber cock and then drying it off with a towel. After catching my breath, I found a hiding place for the vibrator inside the bed's boxspring, next to where I'd stashed the bag of pot Billy got for me. There was still nearly an hour left until dinner, so I decided to

take a bath, bringing a pinch of weed with me to smoke in the tub. While I was in the bath, I shaved the sparse growth of hair on my pussy. When I was done, it didn't look too much different than it did when I was ten years old.

Father Ken came over to me as I was finishing dinner. He sat down next to me and gave my shoulder an affectionate squeeze.

"Everything go well today?" he asked.

"Yes, it went fine. Thanks."

"So, you're all set now?"

"Yes," I said.

"Good. That's all I need to know. Come see me in an hour or so, okay?"

"Yes, Father." He left me to talk to one of the boys. Across the room, Billy caught my eye and he gave me a brief smile and a wink. I returned my tray to the kitchen and headed back to my room, where Billy was waiting for me.

"Smoke a joint, Sis?" he asked.

"Sure." We ducked into the bath room, stuffed a wet towel under the door, and sat next to the open window, passing the joint back and forth. After we finished the joint, Billy lit a cigarette, holding it outside of the open window between drags.

"I've got a surprise for you," I said.

"What is it?"

"I can't tell you. It wouldn't be a surprise then."

"C'mon, tell me. Please?"

"I'll show you later. I've got to see Father Ken in his office."

“Another examination?” he asked.

“Something like that. I’ll come to your room afterwards, okay?”

“Cool,” he said, flicking the cigarette out of the window. The glowing orange tip disappeared into the alley below. I gave Billy a quick kiss and went back to my room to get ready for Father Ken. I took off my clothes and slipped my diaphragm in, applying a liberal amount of spermicidal jelly to the inner surface. I used to skip the jelly sometimes, when I knew I’d be sleeping with Del or Paco as they hated the way that stuff tasted, though I never skipped it with Ramon; he’d always fill my pussy with his cum. Then I put on a pair of panties from the first package Father Ken had given me, the ones that were a bit too small and a bit too tight. Over these, I wore the little pink sundress that Father Ken had given me. Like the panties, these were made for a younger girl, and the hem barely covered my bottom. Finally, I tied my hair up in two pigtails and went downstairs to Father Ken’s office suite.

Father Ken was seated behind his desk, wearing a plush terrycloth bathrobe and sipping a drink. He smiled when he saw me wearing the dress that he’d given me.

“You look wonderful, Annie,” he said. “Turn around for me.” I swirled around, making the hem of the dress float up and expose my tight cotton panties, and then I came over to him and climbed into his lap, giving him a kiss on the cheek. He hadn’t shaved that day, and his face was rough and stubbly. Father Ken smiled and put his hand on my thigh, gently caressing me, his fingers lightly grazing my panty crotch.

“Thank you, Father. For today, I mean.”

“Don’t thank me yet, Annie. I have a favor to ask you.”

“Anything,” I said. “Tell me.”

“I’ll tell you later,” he said. “First things first.” He put down his drink and cradled me in his arms, kissing me on the lips. I could taste the liquor as our tongues met.

“Have a drink, first,” Father Ken said, reaching into his desk for the bottle. He poured about an inch into a glass and added some Coca Cola until the glass was half full. I gulped it down, and a warm feeling began to spread through my body. As I laid my head on Father Ken’s shoulder, he put his hands inside my dress and began to caress my back and belly. I could feel his hardness through his bathrobe, pressing up against the back of my thighs.

“Let’s go into the other room,” he said. I slid off of his lap and he took my hand, leading me into his small bedroom. His robe had slipped open and I could see his hard cock and heavy balls. Compared to Billy’s young tool, he looked huge. Father Ken sat down on the edge of his bed; I stood facing him.

“Let’s get this off, now,” he said, tugging at my dress. I pulled it up over my head and draped it over a chair, untied my shoes, and stepped out of them, standing before him in just my panties and socks. Father Ken put his hands on my hips and drew me closer, leaning in to kiss my nipples. I ran my hands through his hair, tilting my head back and closing my eyes as he suckled my breasts. His hands roamed over my body, down my back and over my bottom and thighs, a gentle touch despite his strong hands. I felt him tugging at my pantie s, slowly pulling them down my thighs.

“Very nice,” he said, when he saw that I had shaved.

“I did it for you, Father,” I said. Actually, I did it for myself, but he didn’t need to know that. We kissed again, and then I knelt between his knees and he shrugged the bathrobe off of his shoulders, letting it fall to the bed. I gave his stiff member a gently kiss on the tip. There was a tiny drop of precum that made a slender thread connecting my lips with his glans. It didn’t last long, disappearing as I lowered my head into Father Ken’s crotch and took his cock in my mouth.

Father Ken sighed and leaned back on the bed as I slowly began to suck him, swirling my tongue over the underside of his shaft as my lips engulfed his hardness. I didn’t want to make him come too fast, knowing that something better was in the offing. I just wanted to wet his cock to make it easier to take him inside of me.

“Lay back, Father,” I whispered. His penis glistened with moisture as he shifted lengthwise on the bed and laid down on his back. The tight cotton panties were still around my thighs, locking my legs together, so I stepped out of them and climbed into bed, straddling Father Ken’s hips. He looked up at me and smiled, slipping his hands along my thighs as I reached down to guide him inside me.

I hadn’t been properly fucked since that night with Michael a week earlier, so Father Ken’s fat cock was a nice tight fit. As I eased myself on to the priest’s staff, I wondered about Michael and Sandi, whether she’d left him or not, whether I’d ever see him again. His loft wasn’t far from the shelter; perhaps I’d run into him someday.

All thoughts of Michael’s lovely prick dissipated like a puff of smoke as Father Ken’s cock began to fill me. An involuntary smile crossed my face as his column of pleasure stuffed my sex. I glanced down between my legs and watched Father Ken’s

thick meat disappear into my hungry hole, inch by inch until his coarse pubes tickled my freshly shorn labia. Looking up at his face, I could see he was fascinated at the sight of his cock slowly sliding inside me. I leaned over his chest and kissed him.

“How does that feel, Father?”

“It’s wonderful, Annie. I’ve never...”

“Never?”

“Never. Well, just...”

“Boys?”

“And other men,” he said. I was astonished that he’d never made love to a girl before, that I was his first. We really hadn’t even begun to fuck; I made up my mind to make this special for him, something he’d never forget. I began to ease off his cock, slowly, carefully, until just the tip lingered inside me, and then I slid back down on his stiff pole, engulfing him once more.

Father Ken held me by the hips until I took his hands and guided them to my breasts. He gently pinched my stiff nipples, flicking them with his fingers. I began to do the same to him, running my hands over his chest and squeezing his pectorals. Other than a bit of flab, he was pretty well built, with strong arms and broad shoulders, not as nice as Ramon’s had been, but Father Ken didn’t spend all of his time on a fishing boat hauling nets and reeling in drag lines.

I began to slide up and down a bit faster, wiggling my hips a bit on the down stroke, making his hardness stir my snatch with a circular motion. Father Ken’s hips began to rise off of the bed to meet mine, pressing his flesh even deeper within my cleft,

making me gasp with pleasure. He moved his hands from my breasts down to my ass, guiding me as I rose and fell on his rigid tool, urging me to pump his manhood faster. I leaned forward and rested my head on his heaving chest, giving me a little more leverage with which to move my hips.

With my ear against his sternum, I could hear his heavy breathing, his heartbeat, and the little grunts and gasps he'd make with each thrust of his hips. I could feel his hands spreading my cheeks apart, dipping his fingers between them, teasing my nether hole as we fucked. I thought about how nice it would be to have someone take me there, too, someone young and energetic like Billy, someone who could give my bottom a brisk workout while I slowly slid up and down Father Ken's fat tool. Maybe some other time...

The pace of our thrusts increased as Father Ken wrapped his arms around my body and began to pound me from below. I grabbed his shoulders as he held me in a bear hug; all I could do was move my hips against his, up and down and side to side, corkscrewing them the way Del's hips used to when we made love. I clenched myself around Father Ken's hard cock, feeling him respond with a twitch and a spasm. I heard him gasp loudly and he released me from his arms. He was getting close, very close.

I sat upright again and began to bounce on his hard cock, using his fleshy thighs to rebound with every stroke, fucking him faster and faster. He held my thighs, keeping me from bouncing too high and releasing him from the warm embrace of my sex. The narrow bed went from a rhythmic squeaking to an ominous groaning as we approached its breaking point. Father Ken didn't seem to care one bit; his eyes were fixed on my jiggling breasts, bouncing with each stroke.

“Annie...I...I’m gonna...”

“Come. Come for me,” I urged him. He needed no further encouragement as he grabbed my bottom and pulled me down on his cock for one last thrust. I felt him swell and throb inside me, his cockhead flaring as he began to spurt his sacred seed in my needy greedy hole. I missed the feeling of an erupting cock filling me with cum, the warm feeling that I’d get when Ramon came inside me.

As Father Ken’s cock began to soften inside me and begin to slip out, I collapsed on his chest, wiggling my bottom to keep him in me. He held me in his arms, caressing my back and kissing the top of my head.

“Annie? You didn’t come, did you?” he whispered.

“No. That’s okay. It felt wonderful anyway,” I said.

“But...I want to...”

“Shhh. Relax. It’s okay,” I cooed. His soft cock slipped out of my messy snatch, and I felt his cum start to drip from between my lips. Suddenly, he rolled me over on my back, pinning me to the bed as he kissed me. As I was wondering what he was going to do next, he began to slide down towards the foot of the bed, hoisting my legs over his shoulders and ducking his head between them, going straight for my sex.

I’d had head from men and women, boys and girls, but getting eaten by Father Ken was like nothing I’d ever experienced. He was like a hungry animal, greedily licking up his own semen from my dripping hole, his rough tongue running over my clit, strong hands cupping my ass and bringing my honeypot up to his mouth. He was relentless, tireless, drinking my nectar and his cream like a starving man. The tingling in my belly

that had waned after he came was back with a vengeance. I closed my eyes and imagined that I was being ravished by a wolf, a satyr, a bear, slobbering over my pussy to get it ready for its feral penis.

As Father Ken's stiff tongue ravished my tender sex I began to come, thighs quivering, hips shaking, an involuntary stiffening of my limbs rendering me helpless in his bed. I think I might have kicked his back a couple of times with my heels, like a rider spurring on a horse, but he didn't even seem to notice. He just kept lashing me with his tongue, sucking me with his lips, squeezing my bottom with his hands until I couldn't take anymore.

"Father...Father...stop...Papi...enough..." I gasped. He stopped and looked up, seeing me red-faced and helpless in his bed, a crimson flush spreading across my chest. Letting my legs down from his shoulders, he crawled back on top of me, his face moist with my juices and his seed. We kissed, sharing the taste of our lovemaking, and then we lay together quietly, holding each other close.

"Wow," I said, once I had caught my breath. What he lacked in finesse, he more than made up for with raw energy.

"Was that okay?" Father Ken asked.

"Yeah, it was great," I replied. This wasn't the time to critique his technique. I was happy that he'd finished me off. Not too many men would lick a cum-filled pussy, not even if it was their own semen.

I half expected Father Ken to fall asleep, like he had on previous evenings, but his hardening cock surprised me, pressing against my thigh as his hands roamed over my

body. This time he was on top, pinning me to the bed as he fucked me with a slow, steady pace. He lasted much longer this time, making me moan and thrash beneath his pumping cock when I came. After he filled my spasming cunny with his sperm, he kissed me tenderly and rolled off of me, his heavy eyelids closing as he drifted off to sleep. He still hadn't told me what the favor he mentioned earlier was all about, and I hadn't had a chance to tell him that I had money left over from the \$200 he'd given me for the gynecological exam and the diaphragm, but I made a mental note to talk to him about it the next day.

I blotted my dripping pussy with a towel and got dressed, checking myself with the bathroom mirror before leaving. I looked like I'd been fucked by a football team. My hair was a tangled mess, my thighs were sticky with semen, and I could feel a wet spot forming in the crotch of my cotton panties. I straightened myself up as best as I could, giving the slumbering priest a kiss on his cheek and leaving the tiny bedroom.

My drink was still on his desk, where I'd left it. I downed it while I sat in his big leather chair, and then I opened his desk drawer, taking out his bottle of pills, listening for the sound of Father Ken's snoring before going any further. I spilled a few out, wrapping them in a tissue and stuffing the wad in the waistband of my undies. Right before I left, I poured some of his bourbon into the half-empty can of Coke and took it with me.

* * *

It was late and the shelter was quiet. I tiptoed down the hall and knocked on the door to Billy's room. He was sitting in bed, reading a comic book.

"Hey, Annie," he said, putting aside "Spiderman".

“Hi, sweetie. Ready for your surp rise?”

“Yeah!” he said, smiling.

“Okay, meet me in my room in about ten minutes. I’ve got to shower first.”

“Shower?”

“Father Ken left me a gooey mess,” I said. “I really need one badly.”

“Okay. Ten minutes,” he said. I kissed his freckled forehead and sq ueezed his thigh.

“Want one of these?” I asked, reaching under my dress to pull the wad of tissue holding the pills from the waistband of my panties.

“What are they?”

“Valium. Tranquilizers. I swiped them from Father Ken.”

“You’re bad,” he laughed, holding out his hand. I gave him one and took another.

We washed them down with the can of bourbon and coke.

“Ten minutes, okay?”

“You bet.” I kissed him again and went upstairs to shower. Afterwards, I dried off, put on my new chemise, and pulled my lumpy mattre ss off of the boxspring and on to the floor next to the bed. There would be no squeaky bedsprings tonight. I sat on the mattress and brushed my hair while I waited for Billy.

A few minutes later he knocked softly and I let him in. He was holding a wet towel, which he stuffed under the door, after which we pried my window open and leaned on the sill while we smoked a joint laced with hash.

“Let’s save the rest for later,” I said after we’d smoked half of the joint. “I don’t want you falling asleep on me before I can give you your surprise.”

“C’mon. Tell me what it is,” he pleaded.

“It’s a surprise,” I whispered. “You’ll love it.” I sat down on the boxspring and pulled him closer to me. Billy leaned down and kissed me on the lips, his tongue lightly brushing against mine, his hands caressing my bare shoulders.

“You’re turning into quite a kisser,” I said, unbuttoning his shirt and pulling the shirttails from his pants. Then I unbuckled his belt and unzipped his trousers, holding him steady as he stepped out of them. His hard cock strained against the front of his briefs, popping out as I slowly pulled down his shorts. When he was naked, we lay down together on the mattress and began to kiss again, our hands roaming over each other as we nibbled each other’s lips. As I stroked his hard young boycock he fondled my breasts through the slippery chocolate satin chemise.

“Ready, Billy?” I asked him, hiking the hem of my chemise up around my waist. I was already wet and he was as hard as he’d ever get; foreplay wasn’t really necessary.

“Yeah. Ready for what?” he said, a puzzled expression on his face.

“Get between my legs,” I whispered, lying back and gently pulling him on top of me. As I stroked his stiff dick and began to guide it towards my sex, Billy suddenly realized what we were about to do.

“Wait, won’t you get knocked up?” he asked.

“I’ve got protection,” I said, rubbing the tip of his cock up and down my labia.

“Surprise.”

“Wow,” was all Billy could say, as he finally realized that we were about to fuck.

“Start off slow,” I whispered as I parted my nether lips with the tip of Billy’s penis. Despite the shower, my cunny was still slick with Father Ken’s sperm. Billy’s hard boycock slid in easily.

“Slow, Billy. Slow,” I urged him. I could tell he wanted to speed up immediately from the tension in his hips and butt. It was only my firm grip on his bottom that kept him from jackhammering me with his eager young tool.

“Feel good, baby?” I asked him.

“Yeah.”

“Better than my mouth?”

“Yeah.”

“Better than my ass?”

“Shit, yeah,” he said. “You’re so wet and warm.”

I didn’t want to tell him that his stick was stirring up someone else’s cum, so I just kissed him on the lips. Billy stretched out on top of me, his chest against my satin -clad breasts, the top of his shaft sawing against my clit. I let go of his buns and began to run my hands all over his smooth back. Without my hands regulating his pace, he began to thrust faster.

“Yeah...fuck...yeah...,” I began to murmur. I didn’t think I’d come again that night; Father Ken had already brought me off twice, once with his tongue and once with his fat cock. But my numb little clit began to tingle from the friction of Billy’s hard pecker brushing against it every second or third stroke. The tingling began to spread as he

pounded me faster. I rocked my hips to meet his, returning my hands to his firm little boy buns, feeling them tense and relax as he pounded my pussy.

Suddenly Billy's body tensed up, and I could feel his boycock begin to twitch inside me, releasing his seed to mingle with Father Ken's. I tightened myself around Billy's spasming shaft, trying to milk more than a drop of his hot semen. Billy let out a little gasp and then relaxed on top of me, laying his head on my shoulder as I caressed his smooth skin. As we lay together on the mattress, I kept clenching my muscle around his still-hard penis.

"Annie...", Billy said as he started to roll off of me.

"Shhh...stay inside me," I whispered. We kissed, lightly nibbling each other's lips, playing hide-and-seek with our tongues. I pulled my chemise off over my head, longing for some skin-to-skin contact, feeling his hairless chest against my budding breasts. Billy was still hard, so I began to rock my hips slowly, bearing down on his cock with each stroke.

We did it slower this time, and he lasted much longer, surprising me when he made a palpable effort to keep from coming until I had, closing his eyes and frowning every time he neared his climax. I wondered what he was thinking about. Baseball? Multiplication tables? Regardless, he managed to control himself wonderfully for a boy his age. Father Ken didn't have this degree of control.

Billy eventually came soon after I did, spurred on by the feeling of my cunny spasming around his shaft as I convulsively climaxed. This time he softened inside me, slipping out as we lay together afterwards. He rolled off of me and we held each other,

laying side-by-side on the bare mattress. As we began to cool off from our lovemaking, I reached over to the bed and pulled the blankets down on both of us.

“Sleepy?” I asked him. Billy nodded. “We can’t spend the whole night together. We might get caught.”

“Yeah, you’re right,” he said. He started to get up.

“Wait, stay just a few minutes longer,” I said. Billy smiled and held me tighter, nestling his head against my little breasts. I began to wish that we could spend all night in this makeshift bed and make love in the morning, but this just wasn’t possible in the shelter. After a few more minutes of snuggling, we reluctantly got up from our nest. Billy helped me drag the mattress back on top of the boxspring and got dressed. We shared a long goodnight kiss and then he left. I pulled my chemise back on and got into bed, running the events of the evening through my head before falling asleep.

* * *

I had classes as usual the next day. The boys in my class still weren’t talking to me, but the olive-skinned boy, the one who sort of resembled Del, kept sneaking sidelong glances at me whenever Sister Josephine wasn’t looking. I smiled back at him and he blushed and looked away.

I ran into Father Ken in the front hall after lunch. He was just coming back from somewhere, dressed in a heavy black coat, his nose and cheeks pink from the frigid weather.

“Father Ken? Could I speak with you for a second?” I asked him. He told me to follow him down to his office. I took a seat across from his desk while he hung up his coat and scarf.

“So, what’s on your mind, Anne?” he said, settling down behind his desk and pouring a mid-afternoon drink.

“Well, a couple of things. I still have some money left over from yesterday, from what you gave me.”

“How much?”

“A hundred,” I replied. He thought it over for a second.

“Tell you what, Anne. Why don’t you buy yourself something nice, like a dress or a new winter coat, okay?”

“Thank you, Father.” I tried not to show my surprise. Father Ken was still holding the cash I’d taken from my foster father the night I ran away. I figured that he was keeping it so I wouldn’t be able to run away and buy a bus ticket to somewhere. It was 1981 and \$100 could practically buy a bus ticket to Los Angeles.

“You’re welcome, Anne. Anything else on your mind?”

“Well, last night you mentioned a favor, and I was wondering...”

“...what the favor is?”

“Yes, sir,” I said, folding my hands in my lap. Father Ken looked at me for a moment and took a sip of his drink.

“Well, there’s a colleague of mine, a Father Murphy. We attended seminary together years ago.” Father Ken took another sip before continuing.

“He’d very much like to meet you, Anne”.

“And...examine me?”

“Yes, Anne. If you feel uncomfortable about this...”

“Can I think about it?” I asked him.

“Sure. Take all the time you want,” Father Ken said, smiling at me. He had that look of sincerity, the look that persuaded me to stay with him at the shelter that first night. “Come down here after dinner and we can talk some more.”

“Thank you, Father,” I said. We shared a quick kiss before I left for my afternoon class.

* * *

Later that night I was in Father Ken’s bed, straddling his hips with my thighs, sliding up and down on his hard cock, my head spinning from Valium and bourbon. He was underneath me, pushing his hips against mine, his hands on my bottom, probing my crack with his fingers. I felt his thighs begin to tense and his cock start to twitch, so I leaned forward, releasing all except the tip of his penis from my hungry pussy, hoping to prolong our coupling.

“Father?” I whispered. My face was but inches from his, my blond hair spilling around his head.

“Yes, Anne?” His hips moved upward slightly as he tried to push his shaft inside me again. I remained motionless.

“I’ll do it,” I said. “Father Murphy, I mean.” I slowly began to slide down his pole, feeling a growing tingling down there as he filled me up.

“That’s wonderful, Anne. Thank you.” He lifted his head off of the pillow and kissed me as our hips ground together again. My climax began to bloom, and I lost my control, frantically humping his hardness with my quivering hips. Father Ken had my bottom in his hands and was encouraging me to slam myself down against his cock. I was so lost in my own pleasure that I didn’t even feel him come. He must have, however, because he roughly grabbed my bottom and kept me from humping him any further. Soon he was soft and slipping out of me, and I could feel his warm semen begin to flow from my messy slit.

As I lay on top of Father Ken, listening to him breathe, a strange mix of feelings flowed through me. I felt vulnerable, yet safe. Needy, yet satisfied at the same time. The man beneath me was facilitating the most horrid of crimes, the sexual abuse of children in his charge, yet I felt like I’d do anything he asked me to do.

When I had been in school back in Maine, there was a local scandal involving one of the high school’s guidance counselors, who was seen entering a motel room with one of the students, a seventeen-year-old girl. Until then, I had only the vaguest notion of the illegality of what my stepfather and I had been doing, not to mention my relationship with Julia. I knew that these things were frowned upon, and probably against the law, but when the counselor was found guilty and sentenced to ten years in the state penitentiary, I realized how serious the consequences would be should someone find out about us.

Father Ken’s cum had dripped out of me, spilling over his cock and balls. I crawled down the length of his body and licked him clean, hoping to make him hard again. But he

was asleep, lightly snoring as he lay on the bed. I kissed his cheek and got dressed, quietly closing the door to his bedroom behind me.

It was quiet in the shelter. As I walked upstairs, I thought about knocking on Billy's door. His light was off, however, and I decided not to wake him up. My sad little Chris was asleep as well, so I just went back to my room, grabbed my pot and a towel, and took a hot bath, smoking some weed while the bathtub filled.

* * *

The shelter's furnace broke the next day. I woke up to a room as cold as an icebox. There was no hot water, either, and no gas for cooking breakfast. Father Ken walked us over to the cathedral, where we all waited in the pews until a bus came to pick us up. We were driven over to a parochial school and served breakfast, and then ushered into an auditorium, where we watched an old black & white film about the Bible. It was mind-numbing boredom.

By the time we were bused back to the shelter that evening, everything had been fixed. After I finished dinner, I headed upstairs wanting nothing more than to smoke some pot and take a bath, but I ran into Father Ken on the stairs.

"Tonight?" he said.

"Tonight?"

"Father Murphy wants to meet you tonight."

"Oh. When?" I'd nearly forgotten about the "favor".

"In an hour. My office." He glanced around to see if anyone was in earshot.

"Okay. In an hour," I said.

“Wear your school clothes,” Father Ken said, giving my hand a discreet squeeze before heading down the stairs.

I still had time for a bath and a smoke. Afterwards, I put on my plaid skirt and white blouse and headed downstairs to Father Ken’s office. There was another priest with him, a man about his age, with thick black hair streaked with silver and a florid face, crimson cheeks and nose as if he’d just come in from the cold night.

“Anne, this is Father Murphy,” Father Ken said, half -standing behind his desk.

“Father Steve,” the other priest said, extending his hand for a shake.

“Anne,” I said, taking a seat next to him. I crossed my legs and smoothed my skirt over my thigh.

“You’re a very lovely girl,” Father Steve said. “Stand up and let me take a look at you.”

I stood up and moved closer to his chair. He crossed and re-crossed his legs, a visible bulge growing in his trousers. I rested my hand lightly on his knee, and he reached a trembling hand out to caress my cheek.

“Lovely,” he murmured, taking a rather big sip of his drink. He put his glass down on the desk.

“Show Father Steve how you’re growing, Anne,” Father Ken said as he refilled his colleague’s drink. I smiled at him and began to unbutton my blouse, slowly, lingering over the last button before revealing my breasts.

“Yes...perfect...,” Father Steve whispered, his shaking hand hesitating before cupping my little buds. “Perfect...”

“If you’d like some privacy....,” Father Ken said, motioning towards the bedroom.

“Yes, please. Come, Anne,” Father Steve said, standing up and taking me by the hand, holding his drink in the other. He closed the door to Father Ken’s tiny bedroom behind us, and took off his jacket, draping it over the back of a chair. Then he sat down on the bed and motioned for me to come closer.

“Are you nervous, Anne?” He held my hips, guiding me between his knees, his gaze fixed on my bare breasts.

“No, Father,” I said. I was a little apprehensive, but I tried hard not to show it. I put my hands on his knees and felt him tug at my skirt’s zipper, slowly pulling it down. He undid the button on the side and the skirt fell around my ankles. I stepped out of it and kicked it aside, shrugging my blouse off of my shoulders. Father Steve reached out and ran his hands over my cotton panties, brushing against my crotch with his fingers. Then he tugged at them, and I pulled them down so he could see me. I had shaved what little hair had grown back down there. Father Steve just stared at my cunny, like he was hypnotized. I stood there for what seemed like hours while he sat there with his eyes locked on my sex.

“Will you rub my tummy?” I asked him, realizing that I had to take the initiative, or else we’d be here all night.

“Does your tummy hurt, Anne?” he asked, snapping out of his trance.

“A little. Will you rub it for me?”

“Of course. Lay down,” he said, shifting his perch to the foot of the bed. I laid down on my back, my legs slightly spread. Father Steve began to gently caress my belly, his soft hands slowly moving in a circular motion.

“That better?” he asked.

“Mmmm...it feels good,” I cooed. Father Steve’s hand began to roam higher, edging towards my breasts. I took his hand in mine and placed it on my tit, moving it around so his palm brushed over my stiff nipple. He placed his other hand between my legs, cupping my sex as he fondled my tits. I spread my legs a bit wider.

“Will you lay with me?” I asked Father Steve. He had that fixated expression on his face, and I felt like I had to keep making the next move. He looked at me and slowly withdrew his hands. They shook as he began to unbutton his shirt.

Slowly, methodically, he began to take off his clothes, carefully folding each item and placing them on the chair which held his jacket. He even folded his boxer shorts and black socks. I got a quick look at his body as he crawled into bed and shut the light; he had a bit of a paunch, pale, spindly legs, and a hard but stubby cock, as red as his nose. I snuggled up against him and listened to his breathing.

“Father?” There was no answer. “Father?”

“Yes?” he said, his voice hoarse.

“Would you like me to make you feel good?” I reached between us and brushed my fingers against his cock.

“Yes,” he whispered. I gave his tool a gentle squeeze and kissed him on the lips, coaxing his tongue out to play with mine. His hand found my breast again, squeezing it

just a little too hard. I took his shaking hand and guided it down to my bottom, where I didn't mind a little roughness. Father Steve's heart was racing as I began to lick and kiss his nipples, working my way down his chest and round belly in the darkness.

Now I was face-to-face with his cock. I gave the tip a gentle kiss as I explored him with my fingers. He was short, really not that much longer than Billy's, but his penis was thick, with a fat mushroom head capping the stubby shaft. I thought about Mr. Hubbard for a moment; his cock was just like this one. As I took the glans into my warm mouth, Father Steve rolled on to his back and parted his legs. I curled up between them, feeling his warmth linger on the sheets, and began to slowly suck him.

Father Steve's hips began to move, and he began to moan softly, his hard cock sliding over my lips with each shaky thrust. I cupped his big balls and swirled my tongue over his fat cockhead, sucking him as skillfully as I could. I heard him gasp a few times, and his cock twitched sporadically in my mouth, but he didn't come. I redoubled my effort, sucking him harder, faster, my head bobbing between his thighs, but he still didn't come. My jaw was starting to ache. I thought he'd have a hair trigger from the way he was shaking.

Finally, my neck began to cramp from the somewhat awkward position I was in. I released his cock from my mouth, making a wet slurping sound, and sat up on the bed. Father Steve looked down at me expectantly, like he wanted something but he couldn't ask for it. I straddled his hips and he rocked his pelvis, pressing his glistening cock against my sex. I reached down and parted my lips with the tip of his prick, wetting

myself with the precum that oozed from his penis. As his glans entered me, I settled my hips down against his, sliding my sex down his stubby shaft.

I began to ride him, slowly moving up and down on his pole. Father Steve gazed up at me, breathing through his mouth, an ecstatic expression on his face. I guided his hands up to my breasts, and he flicked my pebbly nipples with his fingers, but again he began to squeeze my tits too hard, so I moved his clumsy hands down to my bottom.

I had been riding Father Steve's cock slowly, steadily, thinking that he'd take his time before coming, but once his hands were on my ass he pulled me against him and began frantically rocking his hips, pumping my cunny with his stubby prick. Suddenly, he tensed up, his fingers digging into my flesh, and I felt him twitch inside me, the heat of his semen spreading through my sex. He clutched my bottom until his cock stopped spasming and began to soften, then he relaxed and let out a long sigh, releasing me from his grip.

I rolled off of him and began to snuggle against him, but he rolled over on to his side and got out of bed, flicking the light on. I shielded my eyes with the pillow, blinded for a moment as Father Steve picked my panties up off the floor and used them to clean off his flaccid cock. He dropped them on the bed when he was done and proceeded to get dressed. He didn't say a word. He didn't even look at me. After he got dressed, he left the bedroom, leaving the door half-open. I heard the creak of Father Ken's leather chair.

I could hear Father Ken saying something, but I couldn't make out the words.

"Yes, fine," Father Steve replied. "Fifty?" Father Ken said something else, and I heard the rustling of paper.

“Next week?” Father Ken said.

“Yes, please,” the other priest replied.

“Time for another drink?” Father Ken asked his colleague. Father Steve declined, and left soon after. As the office door closed, Father Ken walked into the bedroom and sat on the edge of the bed.

“Are you all right, Annie?” he asked, gently touching my shoulder.

“Yes.”

“Was he too rough?”

“A little.” I could still feel Father Steve’s fingers on my bottom.

“Let me see,” Father Ken said. I rolled on my back and let him examine me, let him part my legs to see the other priest’s semen oozing from my sex. Father Ken touched me gently, softly, not like Father Steve, his hands caressing my breasts, my hips, my thighs. Then I felt his warm breath on my sticky sex, and he kissed my sloppy snatch, softly at first, then a little harder, scooping up Father Ken’s cum with his tongue. He licked me carefully, cleaning my little twat, and I ached to feel his tongue on my clit. I moved my hips slightly, wanting him to lick higher, to touch my swollen button.

I got my wish. Father Ken’s tongue began to work its way up to my clit, bathing it, swirling over it, making me squeal with delight. I closed my eyes and tried to picture myself in bed with the two priests, with Father Ken pounding my pussy from behind while I sucked Father Steve’s fat mushroom-headed prick, their two glistening cocks assaulting me from both ends, filling me with spurts of hot semen as they came simultaneously. That’s when I began to come for real, my quivering thighs pressing

against Father Ken's shoulders while he lashed my clit with his tongue. I had one last mental image of the two priests filling my hungry holes before my pleasure peaked. I closed my eyes tight as I came, and I could almost see the stars again.

The feeling receded like an outgoing tide when Father Ken lifted his mouth away from my cunny. My eyes were still half-closed but I could hear a rustling of clothes, the scrape of a belt buckle against the floor. Suddenly, Father Ken was on top of me, parting my legs, lifting them over his shoulders, and stuffing his hard meat inside my soaking pussy. He filled me with his cock and began to thrust.

"Father...yes...do me...fuck me..." My orgasm continued where it left off, building to a higher peak as Father Ken pounded my pussy. His cock burrowed into me, reaching places that Father Steve's prick couldn't touch, the fleshy ridge of his glans sweeping over that sensitive spot inside me. My toes curled as my pussy convulsed around his veiny shaft, squeezing him, urging him to fill me with his spunk. "Come in me, Father. Come for me. Come..."

But Father Ken didn't come inside me. He stayed in my pussy until the last possible moment and then pulled out, jerking his cock with short, quick strokes until he spurted his hot seed on my cleft and belly, warm ropy jets of semen that pooled around my navel. Then he let my legs drop from my shoulders, got up from the bed, and walked back into his office, leaving me alone in his bedroom.

I lay quietly in his bed, wondering what had just happened. This wasn't like him; he usually fell asleep after we did it. I plucked my panties off of the bed and used them to blot Father Ken's semen from my belly and cunny. I debated whether I should actually

put them on or not. They were still wet from when Father Steve wiped his cock off with them. In the end I decided to put them on, as it would have been awkward to run in to someone in the hall while carrying a pair of semen -soaked panties. I dressed quickly and walked into Father Ken's office.

"Father Ken?" He was seated behind his desk, pouring himself a fresh drink, his bathrobe open.

"Yes, Anne?" He answered without looking up.

"Would you hold me for a while?"

"Um...sure. Come sit on my lap, Anne." He took a sip of his drink and patted his thighs. I sat down on his lap and hooked my arm around his neck, resting my head on his chest. Father Ken put down his drink and held me, gently rocking me back and forth in his chair.

I was just about to close my eyes when I saw \$50 in cash on his desk. When I realized that this was the "fifty" that Father Ken and Father Steve had discussed, I felt an icy ball forming in the pit of my stomach.

Father Ken had just pimped me out to another priest.

"Father Steve was very much taken with you, Anne," he said, still rocking me in his arms. "He'd like to see you again next week. Would you like that, Anne?"

"I guess," I said. I felt a weird mix of conflicting emotions. Seeing the money laying there on the desk made me feel like I'd been used. I thought that sleeping with Father Steve was an act of kindness, like the hand job I'd given old Father John, not a commercial transaction.

At the same time, my affection for Father Ken never wavered. I'd do anything for him, anything he wanted, even sleep with his clumsy colleague again. I felt safe in his arms as he rocked me back and forth like a baby, safe from the streets, safe from abusive foster parents, angry whores, and mad girlfriends.

And there was a twist to all this: it felt exciting to know that someone had paid to sleep with me. Was there really any difference between this and the time I sucked Billy's cock for a bag of pot? Or what about the things I did with Michael? Wasn't that my way of showing my gratitude for taking me in off of the streets and feeding me? If there was a difference, it was negligible.

I'd already crossed that line. I was a whore.

"Get some sleep, Anne," Father Ken said .

"Okay. Goodnight, Father." I kissed him on the cheek, and the warmth returned to his eyes. He kissed me on the lips, just a little peck, and then patted my bottom as I got up from his lap. I headed back upstairs to take a shower and go to sleep.

On my way back to my bedroom, I passed Chris's room and heard him sobbing again. I stood outside his door, debating whether I should go in or not. I really needed to wash up; my belly felt sticky from Father Ken's semen and my spermy panties were adhering to my bottom and hips. But hearing Chris's sobbing tugged at my heartstrings. I knocked softly on his door and entered his room.

Chris was lying on his bed, clutching his pillow, his face red and tear - streaked, his moist eyes closed tightly. I sat down on the edge of his bed and gently stroked his hair.

"Mom?"

“It’s Annie, Chris. From across the hall.”

“Mommmmm...,” he wailed, casting aside the pillow. “Hold me.”

I took him in my arms and held him, gently rocking him back and forth just as Father Ken had done for me only a few minutes earlier. I felt his chest heave with each sob, and his tears began to soak through my blouse. After a few minutes of holding him and whispering soft reassurances, I tried to get up to leave, but he held fast, reluctant to let go of me.

“Chris, I’ve got to wash up and go to sleep.”

“Please stay, Annie. Please?”

“I can’t. I’ve got to...”

“Please?”

“Chris...”

“Please?” I couldn’t say no.

“Would you like to sleep in my bed tonight?”

“Could I?”

“Yes. Come...” I got up from the bed and took his hand, leading him across the hall to my room, where I dried his eyes with a towel.

“I’ve got to wash up first. I’ll be back in a few minutes,” I said, tucking him into my bed and kissing him on the forehead. I took a very quick shower, just rinsing off the residue of the evening’s encounter, and returned to my room. Chris was still awake, laying in my bed with the covers pulled up to his chin, watching intently as I finished

drying myself off and slipped on my satin chemise. I climbed into bed and he snuggled up against me, holding me with his skinny arms.

“Thank you, Annie,” he whispered.

“Sleep well, baby,” I said, turning out the light next to the bed.

“Annie?”

“Yes?”

“Will you be my mommy?”

What do you say to something like that? A tear began to form in the corner of my eye as I searched my heart for the right words.

“Chris, honey, I can’t be your mommy. I’m only fourteen and you’re, what, eleven?”

“Ten.”

“All the same, I’m too young to be your mom, honey.”

“Couldn’t you be my pretend mommy? I’ll be a good boy for you. I promise. I will.” Chris looked to be on the verge of tears again. I held him, held him tightly, wrapping my arms around his skinny little body and hugging him.

“Okay, baby. I’ll be your ‘pretend’ mommy. Shhhhh...” I began rocking him in my arms again, kissing the salty tears from his cheek. Chris sighed contentedly and I could feel the tension in his chest begin to melt away.

“Thank you, Mommy.”

“Good night, baby,” I whispered. Chris nestled his head on my shoulder and closed his eyes. For the first time I could recall, he smiled.

* * *

That night I dreamed that I was in the cathedral, lying naked on the red -carpeted altar. Father Ken stood over me in a purple and white cassock, sprinkling some sort of liquid on me from a silver chalice, a sticky white fluid that pooled on my belly. The boys from the shelter were all there, dressed as altar boys in white robes trimmed with gold fringe. Father Steve was there as well, holding a silver plate with a pile of little round wafers on it. He knelt next to me and placed a wafer between my labia, all the while murmuring something in Latin.

Then the boys, lined up in order of height, walked over to where I was laying. Chris was the first in line, his rosy cheeks free of tears, his unruly mop of blond hair neatly combed away from his cute face. He knelt between my legs and bent down, pulling the wafer from my lips with his teeth before standing up and taking a seat in the front row of pews. Father Steve, still kneeling next to me, replaced the wafer with a fresh one. The edges were rough and felt scratchy against my clit as he slipped it into my pussy, leaving just enough exposed so that the next boy could grab it with his teeth, just like Chris had done.

When all of the boys had partaken of their wafers, Father Ken loosened his cassock. He was naked underneath, and his cock looked bigger than ever. He knelt between my legs and entered me. Then Father Steve slipped a cushion behind my neck, tilting my head back. I could see that his cassock was open as well, revealing his stubby cock and pendulous balls. I knew my part in this ritual, as if it had been rehearsed many times, and I opened my mouth to accept his penis.

As the two priests began to fill me with their hard meat, the boys, now naked, filled up from their pew and surrounded us, reaching for my body with their hands, guiding my own hands to their eager young cocks. A couple of the younger boys squirmed to the center of the circle and began rubbing their stiff peckers on my thighs, humping me while Father Ken and Father Steve took their pleasure in my mouth and pussy. The two priests looked upon their young charges with smiles of approval.

Suddenly I was awake. It was still dark outside. Images from my dream began to fray like an old sweater, but something lingered, something real, the feeling of something rubbing me through the slippery satin of the chemise. Chris, who was still asleep, had his legs wrapped around my thigh. His jockey shorts had slipped down around his knees and he was unconsciously humping my thigh with his little stiffy. I wondered if he was having the same dream as mine. I gently rolled him on his back.

“Wha...where...Mom?” he murmured, still half-asleep.

“Shhhh...go to sleep, baby,” I whispered, kissing his button nose.

“Mom?”

“Shhhh...” I lightly kissed his lips, his chin, his chest. The dream had left me pretty horny, and I briefly thought about sucking Chris’s hard little boycock, but decided not to. I didn’t want to wake him up. He looked like a sleepy little angel in my bed. I gently laid my arm across his chest and went back to sleep with my head resting on his shoulder.

* *

Chapter Six

Brothers in Arms

The next morning I hustled Chris out of my room and back to his own before anyone could notice that we had spent the night together, giving him a quick hug and a kiss before getting dressed. He looked happy, well-rested, at peace for once, and when I came down for breakfast, he had saved a seat for me. The other boys in the dining room noticed us sitting together. I thought I caught Billy looking sort of annoyed, but he quickly turned his head.

In class that morning, the olive-skinned boy passed me a small, tightly folded slip of paper. I palmed the note, slipping it into my notebook, not unfolding it until Sister Josephine left the room to take a phone call.

“Meet me outside after lunch,” the note read. It was signed “Manny”. I looked over at him and nodded, getting a sly smile in return.

I ate my lunch quickly and went up to my room to get my coat. On my way down, I ran into Billy on the stairs.

“Where are you going?” he asked.

“Just out for a walk before class,” I said.

“Oh. Okay.” It was freezing outside, and I could tell he wanted to ask if he could come along, but the frigid weather was making him think twice about it.

“Hey, let’s get together before dinner and get stoned, okay?” I said, giving him a quick peck on the cheek. He nodded eagerly and headed off to wherever he was going.

Manny was waiting a few doors down from the shelter, sitting on the steps of a brownstone, smoking a cigarette. When he saw me coming, he flicked his smoke into the gutter, where it rolled under a car, leaving a plume of orange sparks.

“So what’s up?” I asked him.

“Wanna get high?” he said.

“Yeah, sure.”

“Cool. I know a place...”

“...around the corner?”

“Yeah. Howdja know?”

“I’ve been there before. With Billy.”

“Billy? That little peckerhead?” he sneered.

“Hey, he’s a good kid.”

“Yah, whatever you say,” Manny said. We walked around the block to the abandoned building and into the nook under the stairs, where he pulled a fat joint from his pocket and lit it up, taking a big hit and passing it to me. The weed tasted dirty, moldy, but after a few drags I was pretty wasted. Manny lit a cigarette afterwards, offering one to me, which I declined.

“I can get you pot if you want,” he said.

“No thanks,” I replied. I still had most of the bag that Billy had gotten for me.

“How about pills? Coke? Smack?”

“Coke?”

“Yeah, good stuff. Ain’t been stepped on,” Manny said.

“That sounds good,” I said. I remembered the parties that Brad’s parents had at their house, where I had my first taste of cocaine. That couple, Rob and Laura, snorting lines from between my breasts, Kathy and Candy, Candy’s deep blue eyes. It seemed like ages ago.

“Let’s head back. I’ll hook up with you after dinner, ‘kay?”

“Cool.”

The full effect of the pot didn’t hit me until I was out of the cold winter air and back in class. I struggled to pay attention to Sister Josephine as she went over the results of a math quiz we had taken the day before. Afterwards, I was famished, and I persuaded Sister Bernice to make me a peanut butter sandwich.

Billy was waiting for me outside my room, looking sort of glum as he sat on the floor with his back against the wall. I helped him to his feet and he fetched a wet towel from the bathroom, wedging it into the gap under my door. He had a little metal pipe with him, so we didn’t need to smoke from the makeshift cardboard and foil contraption.

We were lying in bed after smoking a couple of bowls. Billy was unusually quiet, just staring at my ceiling.

“What’s the matter?” I asked him.

“You went with Manny after lunch?” he said.

“Yeah. He’s sort of cute.” He did sort of remind me of Del, the same big brown eyes and thick black hair, the same skin tone, the same lanky build. He could have been one of Del’s cousins.

“Oh,” Billy said, his eyes still on the peeling plaster ceiling.

“You’re jealous?”

“No.”

“Tell me.”

“No.”

“Billy! Don’t be like this,” I pleaded, gently cupping his cheek and turning his head so I could kiss him.

“I don’t want to share you, Annie,” he said softly. A tear formed in the corner of his eye and rolled down his freckled cheek.

“Oh, Billy,” I said, kissing the tear from his face.

“I love you,” he said, his eyes glistening.

“I love you, too. But you’re already sharing me, Billy.” I told him about Father Ken, and Father Steve, and even about Sister Katherine and how old Father John walked in on us while we were lying in this very bed. Billy listened quietly, taking it all in.

“You’ll always be my special little brother, Billy. Always.”

“Don’t leave me, Annie,” he said, rolling over and hugging me. I held him, kissing away his tears, rocking him in my arms just as I had comforted little Chris the night before. We held each other until it was time to go downstairs for dinner.

I was sitting in bed, writing in my journal that evening, when there was a knock at my door. It was Manny, still wearing his coat, still shivering from the icy winter weather.

“I had to go all the way to Dorchester for this,” he said, taking off his coat and sitting on the edge of the bed. “Good stuff.” He pulled a little glassine envelope from his pocket, half-filled with a lumpy white powder. Spilling some out on the cover of one of my textbooks, he sorted it into four lines with a matchbook cover and then reached into his pocket for a dollar bill, which he rolled into a tight tube.

“Go ahead,” he said, handing me the rolled bill. I held my hair back with one hand and snorted one of the lines. Unlike the coke I’d had at the party, this stung my sinuses. My eyes watered, and I felt a numbness in the back of my throat, but that feeling of euphoria made it all worthwhile.

I snorted another line and then it was Manny’s turn. After he inhaled his pair, he pulled a joint from his pack of cigarettes.

“Wait, let me get a towel for the door,” I said. I picked up the case containing my diaphragm and jelly from my dresser and headed across the hall to the bathroom. Manny was lighting the joint just as I returned. I stuffed the wet towel under the door and opened the window a few inches.

We sat side-by-side on the bed, passing the joint back and forth until half of it was gone. Manny put the half-joint on the table next to the bed and was about to pull out a smoke when he changed his mind. He turned, leaned over, and kissed me on the lips, squeezing my breast with his hand.

“Hey, not so hard,” I protested.

“Sorry,” he said, his touch getting lighter. We kissed again, softly this time, our lips slowly parting until our tongues gently touched. I ran my hand over his chest and began slowly unbuttoning his shirt, slipping my hand inside to feel his lean, muscular build.

“Lay back,” I whispered. Manny kicked off his shoes and swung his legs on to the bed. I reclined next to him, opening his shirt and kissing his chest while he fumbled with his trousers. By the time my lips were on his taut stomach, he had his pants open and was pushing them down around his thighs.

Manny’s cock was big, almost man-sized, more like Ramon’s thick tool than Del’s in length and girth, even though he hardly had any pubic hair, just a fine black fuzz. He twitched when I touched it, and again when my lips made contact. He sighed and said something in Spanish as I swirled my tongue over the tip and cupped his balls with my hand.

“Oh, yeah...suck it...suck it, baby...” he moaned. I bathed his shaft with my tongue, sinking my lips lower and lower on his hardness before moving back up his cock and licking the tip. Then I did it again, a bit faster this time, looking up while I sucked him to see the ecstatic expression on his face. I could taste the precum oozing from his penis. I knew he wouldn’t last long.

“Ungh...yes...here it comes...,” he gasped, his thighs tensing up as his cock twitched in my mouth. He began to spasm, thick jets of semen pouring from his tool and filling my mouth. I tightened my lips around his shaft, trying not to let any of his cum escape before I could swallow. It seemed like he’d never stop coming. I had to loosen my

lips in order to gulp down the mouthful of cum he'd given me, and a little bit of semen dripped down his softening cock. I licked it clean after I swallowed his hot load, and gave the tip of his dick a gentle kiss.

"Where'd you learn that?" he asked, opening his eyes.

"I used to suck my papi," I said, scooting up on the bed to lie next to him.

"Your papi? You a latina? No way. No fuckin' way," he laughed. There weren't many Hispanic girls with blonde hair and fair skin like mine.

"He was my stepfather, from Cuba. He married my mother when I was like nine." I told him about my stepbrothers, how we moved to Maine from Florida after my mother died. Manny listened quietly, his arm around me as I lay my head on his chest.

"Wow, I'm sorry," he said. "You must miss them."

"Yeah, I do. Del would be just about your age now." As the effects of the cocaine wore off, I began to feel depressed.

"Hey, hey, don't start crying on me, baby," Manny whispered. "Let's do another line or two, okay?"

"Okay." While Manny cut some more lines, I took off my clothes and got under the covers, watching as he carefully formed the powder into lines and re-rolled the dollar bill. That temporary feeling of exhilaration was back, along with my horniness. We finished off the joint we smoked earlier, and then Manny took off the rest of his clothes and joined me under the blanket. I reached between his legs, feeling his penis harden in my hand.

"I gotta get a rubber," he said.

“Don’t worry. I’m wearing a diaphragm.”

“A dia-what?”

“Nevermind. I’m protected,” I said, pulling him on top of me and guiding his now-hard cock inside me. As his shaft slowly filled me, our lips met, and we kissed. I thought I was kissing Del for a second until I blinked my eyes and saw Manny again.

He fucked me nice and slow, the muscles in his back tensing and relaxing as his hips drove his penis in and out of my hungry sex. I wrapped my arms and legs around his pumping body, pushing my hips against his with each thrust, hoping that each successive stroke would make his cock push deeper and deeper inside me.

“Damn, you gotta sweet pussy, girl,” Manny whispered. “Nice, tight little pussy.” There was something exciting about the way he talked dirty.

“Fuck me, Manny. Fuck me nice and hard,” I moaned. It felt good to talk dirty back to him. He must have liked it too, because his hips began to move with more force, making his hard shaft grind against my swollen clit. Between the coke, the pot, the dirty talk, and Manny’s stiff prick in my pussy, I felt the first waves of an orgasmic tsunami building up in my lower abdomen, spreading up my belly and down my thighs.

Manny buried his face in my neck as he rocked his hips faster, his arms wrapped around the small of my back, his thick cock pistoning in and out of my sex. He’d been here before, unlike Billy and Father Ken, and it showed. He knew how to please a girl. He knew what I wanted, he knew how to make me come.

And come I did, a blinding orgasm that stiffened my limbs, making my toes curl, making me dig my fingers into the muscles on Manny’s back. I moaned, screamed, cried

like a murder victim, thrashing around on the bed beneath him, shaking my head back and forth, arching my back and grinding my hips against his. The bed protested our vigorous coupling, sending forth a symphony of squeaks and groans, but I was way past the point of caring about it.

It was a cathartic climax, bringing tears to my eyes as pent -up emotions from the past few days poured out of me, leaving me spent, exhausted. I looked up at Manny and he smiled back at me, his hips slowing down but for one, two, three last hard thrusts. And then he came.

The flow of semen from his throbbing cock was so long, hot, intense, that at first I thought he was emptying his bladder inside me. I tightened myself around his shaft, trying to milk the last few drops from his beautiful prick. This surprised him, making him smile and kiss me as his thrusting slowed and stopped. Then he saw my tears, and his smile faded.

“Are you okay?” he asked. “Annie?”

“I’m okay,” I whispered, my voice hoarse from my climax. “Manueli to...” I reached up and caressed his face. Beads of sweat had formed on his forehead and I wiped them away with my hand.

“Did I hurt you?”

“No, no, no. That was wonderful. It was just what I needed.”

“You sure?”

“I’m sure,” I said, hooking my arm around Manny’s neck and bringing his lips to mine. His hips were still moving, just a bit, and even though his cock was beginning to

soften it was still triggering little orgasmic aftershocks, making me gasp and draw my breath. Finally, he slipped out of me and rolled over on to his side. I snuggled against his chest as he kissed my neck and shoulder.

“My mother called me that,” he said.

“What?”

“Manuelito.”

“Oh. Where is she now?”

“She died last year,” he said with a flat tone of voice.

“I’m sorry,” I said, caressing his face and softly kissing his lips.

“I miss her,” he said.

“I know.”

“I gotta go,” Manny said, sitting up in my bed and turning his back to me.

“Stay. Just a few minutes more. Please?” I reached for his shoulder, gently tugging him, hoping that he would lay here with me, hold me, kiss me.

“No. I gotta go,” he repeated. As he climbed out of bed I spotted the trail of a tear on his cheek.

“Manny?”

“What?”

“Kiss me.” Reluctantly, he turned and leaned over to press his lips against mine. It was a quick kiss. I don’t think he wanted me to see his tears. I gave his hand a gentle squeeze as he broke off our kiss.

“Thank you,” I whispered. A smile began to form on his face. He wiped his tears with the back of his hand and got dressed quickly. And then he was gone.

I was still feeling wired from the coke, thoughts and images running through my mind a mile a minute. For a brief moment I thought I could smell Del’s scent, sweet sweat with a hint of cumin and that gooeey stuff he sometimes put in his hair, but it passed as quickly as it had come. I wondered if it was a hallucination; I wondered if it was possible to hallucinate a smell.

It was late and I needed to go to sleep if I was going to be able to function in class the next day. I still had a couple of Valium left, so I took one, swallowing it dry. While I was waiting for the pill to take effect, I stuffed the damp towel back under the door and smoked what was left of the joint Manny had brought. Despite all of this, I was still wide awake and feeling especially lonely in my bed.

I decided to throw caution to the wind. Slipping on my chemise, I went out into the hall and down a flight of stairs to Billy’s room. The light was off and there was no answer when I knocked. I slowly opened the door, trying not to make too much noise. Billy was in bed, fast asleep, his blankets bunched up around his waist. The bed creaked as I climbed in, and Billy stirred, murmuring something unintelligible, but he didn’t wake up. I snuggled up against his slumbering form and fell asleep.

* * *

Billy was still asleep when I woke up. The blankets had been pushed to the foot of the bed. He was lying on his back, a morning erection pitching a tent in his briefs. I reached into his shorts, gently fondling his hard boycock and fishing it out. Leaning over

his sleeping form, I lowered my head between his thighs and parted my lips, taking his firm little penis in my mouth and softly sucking him.

“Mmmm...Annie...good...,” he moaned. I looked up at him; his eyes were still closed and his breathing was slow and steady. He was still asleep, dreaming, dreaming about me. I continued sucking and licking his erection, pausing each time he stirred, careful not to disturb his dream.

I fished his hairless balls out from his briefs and licked them as well, running my tongue along the seam of flesh that separated his little olive -sized nuts. As I ran my tongue up his shaft and took his penis back in my mouth, he stirred again, coughed, and opened his eyes.

“Annie...what...?” The look on his face was priceless, like a boy whose dream came true, seeing the bicycle he always wanted under the Christmas tree.

“Shhh...lie back, Billy,” I whispered. Now that he was awake, I could put a little more energy into my sucking. I pulled his briefs down around his thighs and gobbled his little cock, gently squeezing his balls as I greedily sucked and licked his tool. He leaned back on the bed, breathing heavily through his mouth, his hands gripping the worn sheets that covered his mattress. My head bobbed above his thighs, engulfing and releasing his glistening boycock with my mouth. Billy’s hips began to jerk spasmodically and then he came, a few drops of semen spurting from the tip of his stiff pecker. I swallowed my morning meal and licked the remnants from his softening cock, giving the tip a gentle kiss when I was done.

“Annie...that was...” Billy seemed to be at a loss for words. I pulled his shorts back up and patted the little bulge between his legs, sliding up the bed to give him a gentle hug.

“I used to love waking up my brothers like this,” I said, kissing his forehead.

“They must have liked that a lot,” Billy said, leaning his head against my shoulder.

“Annie, I gotta...”

“Yeah, I know. Go pee. I’ll see you downstairs as breakfast in a few.”

“Thanks, Annie,” he said. He seemed reluctant to kiss me on the lips, afraid that he’d taste his own cum, but he did anyway. I gave his bottom a playful slap as he climbed out of bed and headed for the bathroom.

At breakfast I sat between Manny and Billy, who kept giving each other dirty looks between bites of scrambled egg and toast. That morning in class, while Sister Josephine was out of the room, Manny leaned over and whispered in my ear.

“What’s up with Billy?”

“He’s a bit jealous,” I said.

“Why? You fuckin’ him, too?”

“Yeah. You got a problem with that?” I said.

Manny looked stunned. He was about to say something when Sister Josephine returned to the classroom. For the remainder of the morning, he kept shooting me sidelong glances. I couldn’t read his expression. When class broke for lunch, our conversation continued.

“You’re surprised?” I asked Manny. We were alone in an upstairs hallway.

“Well...I...I don’t know,” he said.

“You think I’m a slut?”

“No, well...I...”

“Manny, you don’t know the half of it,” I said. I tugged at his belt, pulling him closer as I backed against the wall. He grabbed me by the waist and kissed me, pressing his body against mine. I could feel him harden inside his trousers, like a bar of iron pressing against my thigh. I would have loved to drag him up to my room and put that erection to good use, but the sound of someone walking up the stairs put an end to our brief encounter.

“We’ll talk some more later,” I said, giving him a quick kiss. He smiled briefly and headed down the hall.

I was about to head downstairs to class when Father Ken stopped me in the front hall.

“Got a minute, Anne?” he said. I followed him to his office.

“Yes, Father?” I said, taking a seat across from his desk.

“Has Father John been coming into your room at night?”

“No, Father. Not since last week,” I said.

“Good, good,” he said. “I have another favor to ask you.”

“Yes, Father?”

“Well, Father John is going to enter a convalescent home later this week, a facility in New Mexico that’s dedicated to caring for elderly members of the clergy.” When

Father Ken said the word “members”, I had a brief mental image of a nurse in a starched white uniform efficiently stroking the old priest’s veiny cock.

“I’d like to send him off in a special way, and I was hoping that you could help me in this regard,” he continued.

“How?”

“I’d like you to be ‘Tommy’ one last time for him. I’ve got some clothes that you can wear, and if you tied your hair back...”

“Why me? I mean, why a girl? Couldn’t one of the boys...?”

“None of them know him very well, and I’m afraid that his condition, his mental condition might be a bit frightening to them,” Father Ken said. “Would you do this for me?”

I thought about it for a moment and nodded.

“Wonderful,” Father Ken said, beaming. “I’ve already taken the liberty of excusing you from afternoon class. Father John should be here within the hour. Here are the clothes I’d like you to wear.” He handed me a neatly folded stack of clothes; dark blue slacks, a clean white shirt, a clip -on tie, a pair of oxford shoes, a new t -shirt, and a fresh pair of jockey shorts. I was just getting up to leave when Father Ken cleared his throat.

“One last thing, Anne,” he said, reaching into his desk drawer and pulling out a white plastic tube. I thought it was toothpaste at first until he handed it to me. It was lubricating jelly. I took it from him without a word and headed to my room to get dressed.

It was a good thing that the tie was a clip -on; I had no idea how to tie a real one. After I’d gotten dressed in the boys’ clothes Father Ken gave me and tied my hair back

with a rubber band, I went across the hall to the bathroom, checking myself in the mirror. Except for my short ponytail, I could have passed for a boy. A pretty boy with delicate features, but a boy nonetheless. I was about to head back down to Father Ken's office when I remembered the lubricant he gave me. Back in my room, I bent over the edge of the bed, trousers and jockeys around my knees, and applied a dollop of cold lube to my bottom. I wondered if it would be enough.

Reaching under my bed into my hiding place in the corner of the boxspring, I pulled out the little vibrator I'd bought at the adult bookstore. I applied a liberal amount of lube and pressed the tip against my nether hole, twisting it a few times until it entered me back there, spreading the warming lube deep inside my ass. I pushed it in and pulled it back out, trying to relax and prepare myself for the old priest's cock. When I was nice and slippery, I wiped the vibrator off with a tissue and returned it to its hiding place under the bed. I got up, pulled my shorts and trousers up, straightened my clothes, and headed downstairs.

Father Ken was seated behind his desk, sipping a drink.

"He's in my bedroom," he said.

"What if he wants to touch...touch my penis?" I asked him, remembering that night when Father John reached under my blanket for something that wasn't there.

"Hmmm..." Father Ken said, scratching his chin while he thought it over. "Here, stuff some of this in your shorts." He passed me a box of tissues. I wadded up a bunch of them into an oblong shape and stuffed it down into my shorts, adjusting the little bulge

into something resembling the real thing. I sometimes wondered what it was like to have a cock and balls hanging between my legs. It felt weird.

Father John was lying in Father Ken's bed. The lights were off, but a dull winter grayness lit the room. The old priest was lying on his back, stripped down to his boxers and t-shirt, black socks held up with garters on his legs.

"Tommy?" he rasped, his breathing somewhat labored.

"I'm here, Father." I stood at the foot of the bed, and he squinted, trying to make out my face with his fading eyesight.

"Lay with me, Tommy. Take off your Sunday clothes and lay with me," he said, patting the bed. I unclipped the tie, unbuttoned the shirt, unbuckled my trousers, kicking off my shoes and stepping out of the pants. Wearing just a t-shirt and the artificially bulging jockey shorts, I climbed into bed and lay down next to Father John. He put his arm around me, guiding my hand to a spot between his legs. I slipped my fingers inside his boxers and began to stroke his hardening cock.

"That's good, Tommy. Good boy," he whispered. He gently rubbed my back, working lower and lower until he was cupping my bottom, squeezing my ass. I fondled his penis, pulling it out of his shorts, sliding the foreskin over his shaft. When he was fully erect, I doubled over and laid my head on his lower belly, parting my lips to take him in my mouth. A thin drop of precum formed on the tip of his cock as I sucked him.

"Good, Tommy...very good..." He sounded distant, lost in the dark forest of memory and longing. His hips moved ever so slightly, responding to the touch of my lips, the caress of my tongue on his veiny shaft.

“Roll over, Tommy,” he said, sitting up. “Let me see your bottom.” I pulled him from my mouth and did as I was told, laying on my belly next to him. I heard a rustle of clothing and the snap of elastic as Father John slipped off his boxers. Then I felt his hands tugging at my jockey shorts, pulling them down over my ass just to the top of my thighs. He straddled my legs and pressed the moist tip of his cock against my crack.

“I won’t hurt you, Tommy. I won’t hurt you,” he said as he spread my cheeks apart and pushed his cock into my ass. It did hurt, though, but I just clutched the pillow and bit my lip to keep from crying out. He entered me slowly and started thrusting even before he was fully inside. The bed began to creak and I wondered if Father Ken was listening. No doubt he was sipping his drink and stroking himself while the old priest buggered me.

“Such a good boy...such a nice boy...,” Father John kept repeating as he slowly pumped my sore bottom. “Good boy...nice boy...” A moment later, he grunted and buried his cock to the hilt, his wiry pubic hair tickling my bottom. I felt his veiny tool spasm inside me as he came. Almost immediately, he rolled off of me and on to his back, his breathing heavy and labored. And then he was asleep.

I watched him for a few minutes and then crept out of bed, pulling up my shorts and gathering my clothes from the floor. I took one last look at him and left the bedroom.

“Anne? How did it go?” Father Ken asked. His cock wasn’t out like I thought it would be, but there was a prominent bulge in his trousers. Of course, he was sipping from a glass of bourbon.

“Okay, I guess. It sort of hurt,” I said.

“Come here. I want to make sure you’re all right,” he said. I put the clothes on his desk and walked over to where he was sitting. Father Ken turned me around so that I was facing his desk and pulled down the jockey shorts. The tissue paper penis fell out on to the floor.

“Bend over,” he commanded. I leaned over his desk as he gently spread my cheeks. I felt his breath on my bottom and then something warm and wet, his tongue. He began to lick the mixture of thin semen and lubricant that was leaking from my ass.

“Father...ungh...,” I moaned as he began to finger my pussy and probe my nether hole with his tongue. Despite my soreness, I was wet and horny. I wanted Father Ken to fuck me. Pussy, ass, mouth, I didn’t care. I wanted him to use me, use me for his pleasure, fill me with his seed.

He chose my ass. As I stood bent over his desk, I heard his belt buckle clink, the vrrrrp of a zipper, the sound of clothes rustling. Father Ken teased my asshole with the tip of his cock and slowly began to slide it in me, an inch at a time. I flinched and tensed up when the base of his cock opened my ass a bit wider. He must have noticed this because he withdrew slightly and then began to fuck my bottom with slow, shallow, steady strokes. I grabbed the far edge of his desk and let him take his pleasure in my sore little ass.

Father Ken must have been stroking himself while I was in bed with Father John because he didn’t last very long, about a dozen thrusts at most. Like the old priest, he grunted when he came, his cock spasming as he filled my bottom with his cum. After he pulled out of me, he blotted the messy mixture of sperm and lube that leaked from my ass

with a tissue and pulled my briefs back up. I straightened up and he pulled me on to his lap, wrapping me in his arms and kissing me on the cheek.

“That was a fine, fine thing you did for Father John,” he said.

“Yes, Father.”

“Does it still hurt?”

“A little, Father.”

“Here, take a few of these,” he said, reaching into a desk drawer for a bottle of pills. He uncapped the vial and poured a few into my hand.

“What are they?” I asked. They didn’t look like Valium.

“Dilaudid. A painkiller. Just take one for now. It’ll make you feel better,” he said. I put one in my mouth and washed it down with some of his bourbon, wrapping the rest in a wad of Kleenex.

“Thank you, Father.”

“Now, go back to your room before class lets out, okay?”

“Yes, Father.” I stood up from his lap and got dressed. As I was leaving, I saw Father Ken heading into his bedroom to check on the elderly priest. I left his office and headed upstairs to my room.

* * *

I was sitting on the edge of the bathtub, smoking pot from the makeshift pipe while waiting for the tub to fill when the Dilaudid began to kick in. It was almost as if I was already in the bath, as a warm feeling began to spread through my body. The soreness in my ass was gone, and my legs felt rubbery. I put the pipe away under the tub and got

undressed, slipping into the warm water and closing my eyes. I had trouble forming a coherent train of thought, but I didn't care. I felt like I'd found the perfect drug. A whole seminary of priests could fuck me in the ass but I didn't care. As long as I could feel like this afterwards.

I stayed in the bath until the water turned tepid. There were footsteps in the hallway outside; classes must have just let out. Someone knocked on the door, and just as I was about to say something the door opened; I hadn't bothered to jam the door closed. It was one of the boys, a dark-haired twelve-year-old holding a towel and a bar of soap.

"Oh, sorry," the boy said, his voice sounding distant, even though he was only a few feet away. I wanted to invite him into the bath with me, but he was gone as quickly as he had appeared. As soon as the door closed, I decided that it was time to get out of the bath. I unstopped the drain and exited the tub, my legs still feeling like rubber. I thought about the Gumby doll I had when I was younger, and I began to giggle, half-expecting to look in the mirror and see green rubbery skin and an angled head.

Back in my room, I put on a pair of panties and stretched out in bed, enjoying the effects of the painkiller. I dipped my hand in my undies and began to toy with my pussy, but my clit felt like it belonged to someone else. Besides, I didn't have the energy to bring myself off. Wrapping my blanket around me, I closed my eyes and fell asleep.

A persistent knocking on my door woke me up. It took me a minute to get my bearings. The Dilaudid had all but worn off, and the soreness in my bottom was back. The blanket had fallen off of me while I slept, and I wrapped it around me again.

“Come in,” I called out. The door opened. It was Manny and Billy. The younger boy was holding a plastic -wrapped ham sandwich and a can of soda. Manny closed the door behind him.

“You weren’t in class this afternoon and we didn’t see you at dinner,” he said.
“Are you okay?”

“I’m fine. Just a little tired is all,” I said, sitting up in bed.

“I brought you something to eat,” Billy said, offering the sandwich and the soda.

“Thanks, Billy. That’s sweet of you,” I said. I was ravenously hungry and unwrapped the sandwich, devouring half of it immediately.

“I wanted to wake you for dinner, but Father Ken told me not to,” he said.

“Let’s go, Billy,” Manny said. “Let Annie rest.”

“No, I’m fine. Stay. I could use some company,” I said. Billy sat on the bed with me while Manny sat cross -legged on the floor, quietly watching me eat the rest of the sandwich. As I popped open the can of soda and took a swig, Manny pulled a glassine envelope from within his pack of cigarettes.

“Wanna do some lines?” he asked.

“Sure,” I said. Manny poured some of the contents of the envelope on the cover of one of my textbooks and began to form four lines with a matchbook cover.

“What about Billy?” I asked him. Four wasn’t divisible by three. There were three of us here.

“What about Billy?” Manny said.

“Billy? Would you like some coke?” I asked the younger boy. Billy opened his mouth as if he was about to say something, but no words came out.

“Manny, I think Billy might like some coke, too,” I said. “If there’s not enough, he can have mine.”

The boys looked at each other and then back at me. Whatever had transpired between them while I was passed out, whatever entente they had reached, I was determined to see them get along as well as Del and Paco. Like brothers.

“Would you like to do a couple of lines, Billy?” Manny said.

“If there’s enough,” Billy replied.

“Yeah, there’s enough,” Manny said, grudgingly. He poured the some more of the coke on to the cover of the textbook and formed it into six lines, rolling up a five dollar bill. He handed the bill to me. Ladies first, I suppose.

“I’ve got a joint,” Billy said, after we’d snorted up the coke, reaching into his shirt pocket.

“Manny? Would you get a towel from the bathroom?” I said. “Get it nice and wet first.” He left the room and went across the hall.

“Did you and Manny reach some sort of understanding?” I asked Billy.

“Sort of,” he said. “I’m supposed to stay away from you, when I’m not with him, that is.”

“Fuck that,” I said. “You’re my brother.” I scooted over next to him and put my arm around his shoulder, pressing my lips against his. We kissed until Manny returned with the wet towel. Billy broke off the kiss abruptly, afraid of the older boy’s reaction.

“Hey, what the fuck...” Manny said, seeing us together on the bed.

“Stuff the towel under the door and sit the fuck down,” I said. He did as he was told.

“Listen up, both of you. I had two stepbrothers, Paco and Del. One older, one younger. They never fought over me. They knew I loved them both, and I did. I shared my bed with them, I shared my body with them...”

Both Manny and Billy were silent, letting my words sink in.

“I’m going to be with who I want, when I want. If you’ve got a problem with that, then fuck you. Manny? Billy? You got that?”

Both boys nodded and murmured assent.

“Now shake hands and light that fucking joint.” Manny grudgingly extended his hand, and Billy shook it. Then Billy pulled a lighter from his pocket and sparked up the doobie that was hanging from his lip. While we passed the joint around, I thought about my stepbrothers. They’d bicker sometimes, and Del couldn’t resist teasing his little brother every so often, but as a rule they got along fine. I missed playing catch with them, cooking for them, laying in bed between them.

The room was unusually warm that night. Maybe it was the cocaine, maybe it was the steam heat hissing from the radiator. I let the blanket fall from my breasts and pushed it aside. The boys were surprised to see that I was wearing just panties and nothing else.

Billy was the first to start getting undressed, unbuttoning his shirt as soon as we finished the joint. Manny soon followed, stripping down to his underwear and sitting next to me on the bed. He reached out and cupped my breast, kissing my neck as I put my arms

around the boys' shoulders, drawing them closer. Billy leaned over and began kissing my other breast and soon each boy had a nipple between their lips, suckling my puffy areolae. I closed my eyes, savoring the delicious feeling of their kisses and nibbles while I ran my fingers through their hair.

"That's more like it," I cooed. "Just like brothers..." Their hands were all over me, my breasts, my belly, my thighs. I parted my legs and felt two sets of fingers rubbing the crotch of my panties while I caressed their smooth young backs. I felt a tugging at the waistband of my undies; it was Manny, on my left, trying to pull them down. I lifted my bottom off the bed to make it easier and he slid my panties down around my thighs.

Laying back on the bed, I let them explore my body. Just as I opened my eyes again, I saw Billy get up from the bed and kneel between my legs, pulling my underwear down and off. Then he leaned into my sex, tenderly kissing my labia. Manny watched with interest as Billy began to eat me, his tongue parting my labia and traveling up my slit.

"Yo, man. That's crazy shit, bro," Manny said. "Howzit taste?"

"You should try it some time, Manny," he replied. "Annie loves it."

Manny looked at me and I smiled and nodded, confirming what Billy said. He shook his head and went back to my breasts, kissing and licking my nipples as Billy's tongue began to swirl around my swollen clit. I began to softly moan and squirm on the bed as two sets of lips ravished my tender spots. Billy ate me out like a pro, and soon I was pressing my sex against his tongue, teetering on the edge of my climax. Billy's busy tongue and Manny's suckling sent me over the precipice, making me quiver and shake on

the noisy bed as I came. I had to push Billy away from my pussy; it felt like he could eat me all night if I let him. He looked up from between my shaking thighs and smiled, his face moist with my juices.

“Wow, she does like it,” Manny said. Billy got up from the floor and climbed into bed next to me, giving me a kiss as Manny gently caressed my belly. I could taste my nectar on the younger boy’s lips. We lay together quietly while I recovered from my climax.

“Help me drag the mattress on to the floor,” I said a few minutes later. “It’s my turn.” We pulled the mattress off of the boxspring, and then I tugged at the boys’ shorts, urging them to strip them off, revealing two bobbing erections.

“Okay, Manny? Sit down on this side with your legs spread,” I directed. “Billy? Sit here and cross your legs over his.” The boys did as they were told, positioning themselves on the mattress butt to butt and propping themselves up on their elbows. I made Billy move a bit closer, until their balls were touching. Manny looked warily at me, wondering what I had in mind, somewhat uncomfortable with the idea of his genitals touching another boy’s goodies.

“Don’t worry. You’ll love this,” I said, kneeling next to them and taking their cocks in my hands, stroking them a bit before pressing them together. Manny’s man-sized cock dwarfed Billy’s stiff boycock, but by angling them just right, I got the tips to roughly line up. Then I leaned over and opened my mouth as wide as I could to accommodate the twin spears, taking them between my lips.

“Holy shit,” Manny muttered as my tongue swirled over his shaft. Their two cocks together were too big for me to take more than a couple of inches between my lips, so I concentrated on the tips, sucking one and then the other and licking the length of their tools. I could have sucked them both until they came, but I had another idea of what to do with these two beautiful cocks.

“Billy, get the hand lotion from my dresser, will you?” I said. He disengaged his legs from Manny’s and got up from the mattress. I made Manny scoot down a bit so he was in the middle of the bed and then I straddled his hips, guiding his hard, glistening tool to my wet slit. Pressing the tip of his penis against my labia, I parted my lips and slowly settled down on his hardness. Billy stood next to us with the bottle of lotion in his hand, watching as I took Manny’s cock inside me. When Manny’s member was buried to the hilt, I took the lotion from Billy and squeezed some on his stiff boycock, spreading it around until he was nice and slippery.

“Okay, Billy? Get behind me,” I said. That was all I had to tell him, as he knew what I had in mind. I leaned forward over Manny’s chest and felt the greasy tip of Billy’s cock pressing against my bottom.

“Go easy,” I told him. “I’m still a little sore back there.”

“Sore from what?” Billy asked.

“I’ll tell you later,” I replied. “Just go slow, okay?”

“Damn, I can feel him inside you,” Manny said as Billy’s young penis entered my ass, slowly penetrating me until I could feel his groin against my cheeks. I began to rock my hips, squirming on the two cocks that filled my tender holes. Manny held my thighs,

moving his hips against mine while Billy held my waist, trying not to slip out of my bottom.

I was in heaven, sandwiched between two handsome young men, sliding up and down their flesh, one in my cunny and one in my ass. Manny brought his hands up to my breasts, gently squeezing them and flicking my nipples with his fingers. I closed my eyes and for a moment I was back in Maine, with Del's and Paco's young cocks inside me, filling me, pleasuring me. When I opened my eyes again, Manny was smiling up at me. He propped himself up on his elbows again and brought his lips to my breast, suckling my nipple and lightly grazing it with his teeth.

My hips sped up, almost involuntarily, until Billy's pecker slipped out of my ass. I paused for a second to give him a chance to stuff his cock back in my hungry bottom and then resumed slowly rocking my hips. Billy leaned over my back, hanging on to my shoulders, trying to match my rhythm.

I felt another climax beginning to mount, a seed of pleasure growing deep inside me, nurtured by the boyflesh that sawed in and out of my ass and pussy. I closed my eyes again, wiggling my hips a bit faster, trying to catch that elusive feeling, trying to make it mine. Manny pressed his hips upward, spearing me with his tool, making me gasp and catch my breath. It was like throwing a match in dry leaves as the feeling within me smoldered and finally caught fire. A low moan began to escape my lips as I rocked a bit faster, sinking down all the way on Manny's cock until my clit ground against his pubic bone.

That was the trigger, the start of my orgasm, the arrival of my release. I fell upon Manny's chest, madly humping his cock as I came. Billy slipped out again, but just as quickly he was back in my bottom, and I clenched my muscle around his hard shaft, trying to keep him inside me. I heard him gasp and felt him tighten his grip on my shoulders, his boycock twitching in my bottom as he came. When he finally slipped out of my ass, I felt empty back there, but now I was free to hump Manny's tool as fast as I wanted. The older boy held my bottom as I slid up and down on his pole, my pussy still spasming even as my climax began to fade. I heard him grunt softly and push up against me with his hips, burying his throbbing cock to the hilt. I felt his glans flare like a cobra's hood, a warm feeling spreading through my sex as he filled me with his hot cum.

My hips slowed and stopped as Manny's cock softened inside me. I laid against his chest, listening to his breathing while Billy's head rested between my shoulder blades. When Manny's penis slipped out of my messy slit, I climbed off of his hips and laid next to him. He thoughtfully moved over to make room for Billy, who snuggled up against my back, his slippery cock nestling between my cheeks. The three of us laid together for a while, enjoying the afterglow. I kissed Manny and then turned to kiss Billy before reaching for my discarded panties, using them to blot up the semen that leaked from my ass and cunny.

"I ain't never done that before," Manny said.

"That was cool," Billy added.

“Mmmm...it was wonderful,” I said. Billy reached into the pile of clothes on the floor and produced another joint, which he sparked up and passed to me. We relaxed on the lumpy mattress and smoked it.

“Annie? Why were you so sore?” Billy asked me.

I was about to reply when there was a soft rapping on my door. The three of us froze, knowing that we were about to be busted for sure. There was another knock and then the doorknob began to turn. The door opened a few inches, blocked by the wet towel that had been stuffed into the gap above the threshold. A tousled blond head peeked around the door. It was Chris, my sad little boy, his face lined with tears.

“Annie? Annie? Can I sleep...?” Chris fell silent when he saw me sandwiched between two naked boys. “What are you doing?”

“Come in and close the door behind you,” I said. He squeezed through the gap between the door and the frame. “Stuff that towel back under the door.” He did as he was told and then crawled on top of me.

“Mommy,” he sobbed, laying his head on my breasts. I held him in my arms and rocked him, kissing the top of his head as he cried.

“Mommy?” Billy wondered.

“Shhhh...it’s okay Chris. Mommy’s here. Shhhh...” I found a spot on my panties that wasn’t sticky with sperm and used them to dry his tears.

“Mommy?” Manny asked. “What th...”

“I’m just his ‘pretend mommy’,” I replied, rocking Chris in my arms again. “He misses his real mom a lot.”

“Yeah, I know the feeling,” Manny said. He and Billy watched quietly as I held Chris, comforting my sad little boy.

“So, Annie. You were saying...?” Billy said, breaking the silence. “About the soreness.”

“Oh, right. You know Father John?” I said.

“That old guy?” Billy asked. “The creepy one?”

“Yeah,” I replied.

“We call him ‘Father Zombie’,” he said. I had to laugh at that.

“Anyway, he came into my room a few times, middle of the night. He thought I was ‘Tommy’, this kid who used to stay here, in this room.”

“I remember Tommy. Good kid, ‘til he took a dirt nap,” Manny said, reaching into his clothes for the packet of coke he’d brought. “Fuckin’ shame.”

“Father John would come in, wake me up, and get me to jerk him off,” I said.

“Did you?” Billy asked. He snuggled closer to me, resting his head on my shoulder.

“Yeah, I did.”

“Ewww,” Billy said.

“Hey, it wasn’t that bad,” I said. “Anyway, he’s leaving for a place in New Mexico, sort of a nursing home for old priests, so Father Ken asked me to sleep with him before he left.” Manny stopped chopping lines of coke, Billy looked up in surprise, even Chris lifted his head from my breasts and looked at me like I had antlers or something.

“You didn’t,” Billy said.

“I did. Here’s the weird part: Father Ken had me dress like a boy, shirt and tie, even a pair of jockey shorts. I stuffed them with Kleenex so Father John would think I was ‘Tommy’.”

“No way,” Manny said.

“Yes way,” I replied.

“And that’s why your ass was sore?” Billy asked.

“Yeah. Well, from Father Ken, too.”

“You mean I fucked the same ass Father Ken and the Zombie fucked?” Billy asked. He clearly wasn’t comfortable with the idea.

“Hey, I took a long bath afterwards,” I said.

“Oh, okay,” he said. “I guess.”

“Let’s do these,” Manny said, holding a textbook with six neatly drawn lines of coke and a rolled-up \$5 bill.

“Chris? You want one?” I asked him. He shook his head. “Okay, get up a sec so I can roll over.” He crawled off me and I rolled on to my belly, holding my hair back with one hand and putting the rolled up bill to my nose with the other, snorting two lines, one in each nostril. It was a better grade of cocaine than the other night, and it didn’t sting so much. Chris crawled on to my back and clung to me like a baby primate, his head nestled between my shoulder blades. His little penis was half-hard and pressed between my cheeks. I passed the book back to Manny, who snorted a pair of lines before passing it to Billy, who did the remaining two, picking up some stray white crumbs with his finger and rubbing them on his front teeth.

“Got another joint?” I asked Billy.

“Not rolled. Wanna smoke another?” Both Manny and I nodded, and Billy reached into his discarded trousers, producing a bag and a pack of rolling papers. He began to assemble a joint, using the textbook to clean the seeds and stems from the weed.

“Manny, there’s a wad of tissue paper on my dresser with some pills in it. Could you get them for me? And get the can of soda, too.” I would have gotten up myself, but Chris was clinging to my back like I was a life preserver from the Titanic. Manny fetched the pills and the soda and rejoined us on the mattress. I opened the wad of tissue paper and took one of the pills, washing it down with some flat soda.

“What is that?” Manny asked.

“Dilaudid. Want one?”

“Shit, yeah,” he said, taking one. “That’s the good stuff.”

“Billy?”

“What’s Dilaudid?” he asked.

“It’s a painkiller, narcotic, like smack in a pill,” Manny said.

“If you take one, Billy, you’re spending the night here, because in twenty minutes you won’t be able to walk,” I said.

“Sounds good to me,” he said, taking one and swallowing it, chasing it with some soda. He finished rolling the joint, carefully licking the adhesive on the paper and flicking it back and forth with his hand, like a nurse with a thermometer, drying the wet stripe that ran down the length of the paper. When it was almost dry, he lit it and took a drag, passing it to me.

“Can I have some?” Chris asked as I passed the joint to Manny.

“You’re too young,” Billy said, even though he was just a year older than Chris.

“I smoked with my uncle all the time,” Chris said. “Please?” Manny looked over at me and I nodded, so he passed the joint to Chris. The young boy took a deep drag and began coughing, his body spasming against my back. Manny and Billy laughed. I handed the can of soda to Chris and he took a big gulp, soothing his throat.

“Gimme that thing before you drop it on Annie,” Billy said, taking the joint from Chris. He took a hit and passed it back to me.

“Get up for a sec, Chris. I want to lay on my back,” I said. He got up while I rolled over, and then climbed back on top of me, once again laying his head on my breasts.

“You okay, baby?” I asked him. He nodded and laid his head back down. I held him in my arms and caressed his smooth skin, passing up the rest of the joint. While Manny and Billy finished it off, I felt the Dilaudid begin to kick in. My head swooned, just a bit of dizziness even though I was lying down. Billy stubbed out the remainder of the joint and snuggled closer to me, while Manny reached over to the bed and grabbed the blanket, pulling it down on top of us. He leaned his head on my shoulder, his hand resting on my breast next to Chris’s head.

I lay in a narcotic haze, with Billy and Manny on either side of me, Chris on top of me, their warm bodies feeling more comfortable than any blanket could be. It was like swimming in an ocean of boyflesh. My hands roamed over Chris’s silken back, lower and lower, cupping his little bottom. He shifted slightly and I felt his little pecker harden,

slipping between my thighs. I tightened them around his stiffy, squeezing the m together. Chris sighed and looked up at me.

“That feels good, Mommy,” he whispered. I could feel both Manny and Billy moving their heads, trying to figure out what was going on under the blanket. They must have been as wasted as I was; holding their head s up was too much effort. They both snuggled even closer to me.

I didn’t intend to fuck Chris. He was too vulnerable, too emotional. I just wanted to comfort him and dry his tears, to hold him and rock him in my arms. But the pill gave me a strange detach ment, from my body, from my actions, from the world. I cupped my sad little boy’s bottom in my hands and parted my legs slightly, gently pulling him up until the tip of his hardness was nestled against my labia.

“Put your thing in mommy’s pussy, baby,” I whispered. “Let me make you feel good.” The words came from my mouth, but it felt like someone else had said them. I squeezed his firm little boy buns and he began to poke my sex with his hard little stick. It took him a couple of tries but then he was in me, his flesh gliding along a carpet of Manny’s semen.

“Mommy...” Chris murmured. I held his bottom, feeling his cheeks tense and relax as he began to thrust. I was too wasted to move, so I just lay there, letting him hump me, his hard little boycock slid ing in and out of my messy snatch. I felt Manny’s cock harden against my thigh; Billy must have already fallen asleep.

“That’s right, baby. Nice and slow,” I cooed. Chris looked up at me, his eyes heavily lidded, and he laughed for the first time I could r emember. I tried to lift my head

to kiss him, but my neck felt rubbery, unable to support my head. I sighed and closed my eyes while a thousand miles away Chris's penis slid in and out of my sex.

He clung to me, holding me tightly around my waist, his chest heaving, his hips rocking back and forth. I tried to squeeze his little boy buns but the strength had drained from my fingers. Suddenly, I felt him tense up, a tremor spreading through his little body, and then relax as his thrusting slowed and stopped. He must have come in me; if it wasn't a dry come I'd never know it, as I wasn't feeling anything at that point. Chris laid his head on my breast and let out a deep, contented sigh.

"Good boy...such a good little boy," I murmured. And then I was asleep.

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Chapter Seven

Discipline

When I woke up, Manny and Billy were both gone. Chris was lying next to me, snuggled against my back. The sun was just coming up, filling the room with an orange glow. I rolled over and kissed Chris on his forehead, gently waking him up by caressing his angelic face. He opened his eyes and smiled up at me.

After he helped me drag the mattress back onto the bed, I sent him back to his room and went back to sleep until the sound of footsteps in the hall and doors opening and closing—the usual sounds of the shelter waking up in the morning —roused me from my slumber.

Breakfast was different that morning. Something had changed. As I sat down to eat with Billy, Manny, and Chris, other boys would greet me with a cheerful “Hi, Annie,” or “Good morning Annie. I barely knew any of their names, and wondered why the ice had suddenly been broken.

Since it was Saturday, there were no classes, just chores to be done. After breakfast, I went downstairs to the laundry room in the basement where a pile of dirty clothes awaited me. Sister Katherine was there, doing some of her own clothes. I quietly

closed the door behind me and came up behind her, slipping my hands around her waist and gently pulled aside the back of her wimple, kissing the nape of her neck.

“Annie,” she gasped. “Someone might see us.”

“It’s okay, the door’s closed,” I said. She turned around in my arms and kissed me on the lips, her hands on my hips, pulling me closer to her.

“I missed you,” she whispered. “I thought about you a ll week.”

“I missed you, too,” I said. “Can I see you later?”

“I have to start lunch. Maybe this afternoon.”

“Okay,” I said, kissing her soft lips again. “Until then?”

“Annie, I...” She wanted to say something but stopped.

“Shhhh...I know,” I said. “I know .” We kissed again and then she started to leave.

“Sister?” I asked her, just as she put her hand on the doorknob.

“Yes, Annie?”

“Could you unlock the storage room for me? I need to mend a few things.” One of the straps on my chemise was coming off, probab ly from that night when I’d slept with Billy, and the little pink dress Father Ken had given me, the one that was way too small, had begun to split at the seams.

“Of course, Annie,” she said. “I’ll do that right now. Just lock it up when you’re through.

“Thank you,” I said. She smiled and left the laundry room. I put a load into the washer and went back upstairs to my room to get the clothes I needed to mend.

I was about to head back downstairs when I had a naughty thought. I was looking forward to using the old sewing machine again and feel the delicious tension that would form between my legs from using the foot treadle. I reached under my bed, inside the boxspring where I hid things, and pulled out the little vibrator I'd bought earlier that week. Wrapping my clothes around it, I headed back down to the basement. Sister Katherine had already unlocked the storage room, and I went inside after I checked on the load of laundry.

There was a new batch of clothes on the donation pile, and I dug through it for a while, looking for girls' and women's items. Except for a lace -edged nylon half slip, it was all boys' clothes. I hiked up my long peasant skirt and tried on the slip. It was a little loose around the waist, but I could easily take that in. I draped it over the chair behind the sewing machine and unwrapped the little vibrator from within the chemise and the pink sundress.

Lying down on the donated clothes pile, I hiked my skirt up again and pulled my panties down around my thighs. Parting my labia with one hand, I brought the tip of the vibrator up to my lips with the other, licking the pink rubber glans until it glistened. Then I slowly inserted it into my cunny, which was moist with anticipation, slowly sliding it in until only the knurled knob at the end was exposed. I pulled my panties back up, sat down behind the sewing machine, and began to work on the loose strap on my chemise.

As I began to work the treadle, the rubber phallus inside me accentuated the delicious friction I felt each time my thighs pressed together. Repairing the strap went too quickly, so I decided to reinforce the other strap, just in case. I had to pause when I was

done, in order to replace the spool of brown thread with a spool of pink, but as I mended the side seams of the little pink sundress the wonderful feeling returned.

All that was left was the slip, and after finding some cream colored thread that matched the ivory nylon, I reached into my panties and twisted the knob at the end of the vibrator, its gentle purring sending waves of pleasure through my belly. By the time I'd finished altering the waistband of the slip, I was tantalizingly close to coming. I wanted to finish myself off right then and there, but I had another load of laundry to take care of before lunch. Getting up from the sewing machine, I hoisted my skirt and lowered my panties, turning the vibrator off and removing it. The top edge of the rubber glans dragged over that sensitive spot on the roof of my vaginal walls, making me shudder as I pulled the phallus out of my pussy. It glistened with my juices in the dim light of the storage room. I gave it a little lick, just a taste, and wiped it off with the crotch of my panties before I pulled them back up my thighs.

Wrapping the vibrator in my camisole, I left the storage space to go attend to the next load of dirty clothes. It took just a few minutes to transfer the last load to the dryer and put a new load into the washing machine. This batch was all boys' underwear, t-shirts, and socks, a pungent pile that seemed more like compost than laundry. For a moment I thought about tying a scented dryer sheet to my face like a surgical mask, but I just held my breath and loaded the washer, adding as much detergent as I could.

I still had to try on the slip I altered, so I headed back to the storage room. I wanted to dig through the donation pile, too, hoping to find the rest of the clothes that I'd brought with me from Maine, a Miami Dolphins t-shirt that used to be Del's and a pair of panties

from a set that Julia had bought me during one of her trips to Boston. I opened the steel-clad door.

Sister Katherine was standing next to the sewing machine, my vibrator in her hand, her expression frozen in a combination of surprise and lust. The tip of the rubber penis was barely an inch from her nose, as if she'd been sniffing it when I walked into the room.

"Anne!"

"Sister?"

"Where ever did you get this thing?" she said, trying to sound authoritative but too flustered to keep her voice from cracking.

"I bought it, Sister. At a bookstore downtown. I'm sorry," I said, feeling my shame burning on my face. It wasn't that I was ashamed of myself for owning a sex toy. I was ashamed that Sister Katherine saw it, that she'd think less of me, that I needed something she couldn't give me. It was a tangible representation of my sexuality, of my needs. Her needs were still buried within her, a secret life with no physical record, just a series of stolen kisses and quick embraces, not even a wet spot on a bed sheet until a week ago.

"Annie," she said, her composure back again, her face wearing the same neutral mask I'd seen before we slept together. Just a little over an hour ago, she seemed to be on the verge of confessing her love for me. Now she seemed a million miles away.

"Sister, I'm sorry," I repeated, looking down at my feet.

Sister Katherine took three brisk steps over to me and held the vibrator in my face, glaring at me. I never knew brown eyes could look so cold.

“Show me how you abuse yourself with this...this thing,” she said.

“Sister, I...”

“Show me.”

We looked at each other for a moment and then I took the vibrator from her, stepping out of my skirt and lying down on the pile. Sister Katherine came closer and stood over me, watching as I twisted the base of the vibe, making it purr in my hand, and began to rub it over my the crotch of my panties, pressing it against my cotton -clad cleft.

“I wanted to look at your pretty nightgown, and I found...that...wrapped in it,” Sister Katherine said, watching as I rubbed the vibrator over my mound.

“But Sister...” Normally, the vibrations would have me squirming, but the icy feeling in my stomach seemed to block anything pleasurable. Besides, I was on the verge of tears.

“Take those off,” she said, pointing to my panties. “Show me how you gratify yourself.”

The edge of lust was back in her voice when she said that, and I suddenly remembered the time that I asked Julia to tie me to the bed, to dominate me. It was the night we read “The Story of O” together, the night we lugged that old trunk filled with corsets and restraints up from her basement, the night she held me on the edge of my climax for so long that when I did come I passed out cold. Julia had to revive me with old fashioned smelling salts, and she’d admitted that she was about to call an ambulance for me.

That's when it clicked. Even though Julia hadn't said a word from the time she cuffed the restraints around my wrists and ankles and blindfolded me until after she revived me, she'd probably sound just like Sister Katherine did right now; her face would have had the same stern visage.

The icy ball in my stomach began to melt as I realized that I wasn't being punished, not for real, at least. Sister Katherine wanted me to submit to her. Underneath that spare grey dress she was wearing, somewhere between her legs, a fire was burning, the same heat I now felt between my legs. I put the vibrator aside and began to pull my panties down my thighs, feeling her eyes on my cleft. I pulled my panties off of my legs, letting them dangle from my ankle, parted my thighs, and picked up the purring vibrator again.

"Show me your sex," Sister Katherine ordered. I reached down and parted my lips, letting her see the moisture that was beginning to flow. I licked the tip of the vibe and brought it down to my flower, running it up over my clit and down to the entrance of my hole. As the tip penetrated me, I arched my back and gasped, the feelings I'd had while using the sewing machine returning tenfold. As the purring shaft disappeared inside me, I began to circle my clit with a wet fingertip, teasing my little button, never touching it directly.

Sister Katherine stood at my feet, her hands on her hips as she watched me plunge the vibrator into my hungry hole and pull it out, only to push the glistening shaft back inside. I pulled up my sweater, taking my finger off my clit and bringing it up to my

nipple, circling it as I had with my pearl and then pinching it, letting a brief bit of pain mix with the pleasure.

“You will wear a bra at all times while you are living here,” Sister Katherine said. “Is that understood?”

“Yes, Sister...I’m sorry...,” I moaned. I pinched my nipple again as my climax began to approach, partially to punish myself for letting my breasts go unharnessed, partially to delay my release for a minute or two. I pinched my other nipple for good measure and then returned to my clit, tracing a circle around it with my fingertip.

I began to fuck myself faster, pumping the vibrator in and out of my hole, and touching my clit directly for the first time since I pulled my panties down for Sister Katherine. The fire began to build in my belly, the heat radiating through my body and down my limbs. I let out a series of little gasps and my legs began to quiver as my climax approached. Sister Katherine stood like a statue between my feet, staring at me as I began to shudder. I thought about the night we spent together, her small breasts and bony hips, her hairy bush, her ruby lips, her swollen clit, how she bit her lip when she came, the taste of blood when we kissed. Her arms around me, the smell of her shampoo. And then I came.

I closed my eyes, not to pretend that she wasn’t there, but because I wanted to see the stars again, the bright sparkles on a deep blue field. I was not disappointed. My fingers danced over my clit as I thrust the vibrator deep inside me, the purring of the toy almost visible behind my eyelids, a great explosion of concentric circles of gold and silver on a blood red background. I felt a spasm of pleasure between my legs that

expanded, a wave that traveled through my pelvis, my belly, my thighs, curling my toes and nearly paralyzing my hands. When I stopped fingering my clit and plunging myself with the vibrator, the colors faded to a greyish brown and then black. My thighs relaxed, my bottom unclenched. I let out a deep breath and slowly pulled the vibrator from my pussy, twisting the base and stopping its gentle purring. I lay on the pile of clothes, spent, exhausted.

I opened my eyes again. Sister Katherine was still standing there, still looking at me with her face set in a mask. At that moment I wanted nothing more than to see her face soften, to have her lie with me, to hold me, hug me, kiss me, to tell me that I was a good girl. To tell me that she loved me.

“Sister Katherine...,” I whispered, unable to put my desires into words. She looked at me for a second and turned on her heel, walking out of the storage room and slamming the door behind her. That cold feeling in the pit of my stomach returned.

“Sister!” I called out after her. Only the stone walls of the room heard me.

“Sister,” I whispered again. And then the tears started. I lay there on the pile of clothes, sobbing into an old, smelly t-shirt someone had donated. I hadn’t realized the depth of my feelings for her. I wanted her to love me; maybe I wanted to love her, too.

I let the tears flow, letting it all out, weeping for my sad little Chris, for Julia, for Ramon, for Paco and Del, even for old Father John and his lost Tommy, weeping for all the pain and sorrow in the world. I wept until no more tears would flow.

Somehow, I summoned the energy to pull my panties up and put my skirt back on. I folded my clothes, the chemise, the dress, the slip I still hadn’t tried on, and slipped the

vibrator into the bundle, leaving the storage room and locking it behind me. The last load of laundry wasn't done yet, so I headed upstairs to put my things away and lie down on my bed for a while.

A while turned out to be a couple of hours, as I fell asleep while I was just resting my eyes. I hurried back downstairs and managed to finish doing the laundry just before dinner was served. Sitting next to Billy and Manny, I ate my dinner without saying a word. Manny looked at me strangely, as if he thought I was mad at him about something. I tried to smile.

After dinner, I was heading back upstairs when I heard someone running up the stairs after me. I stopped and turned to look. It was Manny.

"Annie," he said, sounding somewhat out of breath. "Annie, what's wrong?"

"I...I really can't tell you," I said. I didn't want to tell him about Sister Katherine and I.

"C'mon, Annie," he said, moving closer, wrapping his hands around my waist.

"It's not you, Manny," I said, leaning my head on his shoulder. Sharing an embrace in the hallway was sort of dangerous, but I needed the closeness.

"Father Ken? Did he...?"

"No, no, it's nothing like that," I said, kissing him on the chin. "I'm okay, really."

"You sure?"

"I'm okay," I repeated. "Maybe I'll see you later." I kissed him again, this time on the lips, and pulled away from his arms, heading up to my room. Normally, I'd be eager

to crawl into bed with Manny, but I needed to be alone for a while, to write in my journal and sort out my feelings.

I did just that, filling two pages in my notebook. It felt good to write it all down, almost cathartic. Afterwards, I smoked some of my pot and took my last Valium. I'd have to get some more from Father Ken. In a pleasant haze, I lay on my bed and thought about Sister Katherine, imagining her in a full -length black nuns' habit instead of the utilitarian grey dress and wimple she always wore, making the sign of the cross and then embracing me, drawing me into the deep folds of her long garment, enveloping me, pulling me inside. I imagined her naked underneath, our breasts pressing together, her soft lips on mine.

I snapped out of my reverie, put my shoes back on, and went downstairs. The boys were all watching sports in the common room. I walked past them and stood in front of Sister Katherine's door, hesitating just as I was about to knock. A muffled cry came from behind the door, something between pain and pleasure. The bed squeaked once and then there was silence. I was about to leave when I heard another sound, a painful moan. I knocked on the door, once, then twice.

"Hold on," I heard a voice call out. "Who is it?"

"Sister? It's Annie," I said. "I can come back later if..."

The door opened. Sister Katherine stood there, her hair a mess, one hand inside her bathrobe and the other crossed over her breasts, holding the robe closed. She had a pained expression on her face and her cheeks were drained of color.

“Sister! What happened? What’s wrong?” I asked, closing the door behind me. I took her by the arm and led her back to her bed. She sat down slowly, her robe opening as she settled on to the edge of the bed. Sister Katherine was holding a bloody wad of tissues between her legs.

“Your period?” I asked, putting my hand on her forehead to see if she had a fever. That whole toxic shock syndrome thing had been in the news a year or so earlier, and that was the first thing that came to my mind. Her skin was cool, almost clammy.

“No, no...I...I tried to...,” she stammered, looking over at something in the middle of her bed. It was a container of deodorant, the kind that came in a long, round pump dispenser that sort of looked like a vibrator or something. The brand had a cutesy name like “Tingle”, and it sort of made you wonder exactly what they were selling. The pearlescent plastic container had a streak of fresh blood on the bulbous cap.

“I tried to do...what you did this afternoon...with that...thing,” Sister Katherine said, her tears flowing now. I held her in my arms, rocking her like I rocked Chris when he cried, kissing the salty trails that crossed her cheeks. Reaching for more tissues, I gently dried her eyes and kissed her.

“It hurts?”

“Yes,” she whispered. She reached for the box of tissues, pulling out about a dozen and wadding them up, replacing the blood -soaked tissues between her legs.

“I’ll be right back,” I said, giving her another kiss before heading upstairs to my room. I grabbed my last Dilaudid and stopped off in the bathroom to get a towel and a wet washcloth before returning to Sister Katherine’s room. She was lying on her back,

still holding the wad of tissues to her bleeding sex. I put down the towel and washcloth and broke the pill in half with my thumbnail, giving her one of the pieces.

“Take this,” I said. “You’ll feel better.”

“What is it?” she asked.

“Just a painkiller. Just half. Take it,” I urged. She accepted the piece from me and washed it down with a sip of water. As she lay back on the bed and closed her eyes, I took the other half, washing it down with just my own saliva. Then I sat next to her on the bed and gently pulled her hand from between her legs.

“Let me see,” I whispered. “How bad is it?” The bleeding from her torn hymen had stopped, but her labia and pubic hair were matted with blood. I gently cleaned her with the wet washcloth and dried her with the towel. The pill must have just started to kick in, and by the time I was finished cleaning her bloody pussy her pained expression had vanished, replaced by a faint smile. I scooted up in bed and lay next to her, kissing her cheek and watching the color return to her face.

“Still hurt?” I asked her.

“No, it’s nice now,” she said. “Good pill.” Sister Katherine sounded almost drunk. She looked to me like the type of person who never drank or took a drug in her life. That half of a Dilaudid must have hit her hard.

“That look on your face,” she said. “I wanted to feel that. Would you use it on me? That thing?” She still couldn’t say the word “vibrator”.

“Not now, not tonight,” I said. “Let it heal. A few days.”

“I was compulsive when I was younger,” Sister Katherine confessed. “I masturbated all the time, everywhere, even in public. It embarrassed my family so. Sometimes I wonder if that’s why my button is so big.”

I lay down next to her, gently rubbing her tummy, listening to her talk about her childhood, her adolescence, her years in the seminary. Sister Katherine’s speech began to get slower, her sentences began to trail off into just phrases, fragments, words.

“Make love...Annie...kiss,” she whispered, looking up at me, her eyes welling up with tears again. I kissed her soft lips, her lazy tongue meeting mine as my hand roamed up from her belly, cupping her small breasts. She began to softly moan as I brought one of her nipples to my lips, gently circling it with my tongue, making it stiffen and crinkle.

“Annie...love...I love...,” she moaned, as my lips traveled lower, over her belly and stopping at the top of her unruly bush. I looked up at her for a moment. She looked back at me and nodded, her fingers trailing through my hair, a look of hunger in her heavily-lidded eyes. I pulled the towel away from her sex and parted her thighs, kissing one and then the other as I curled between them.

“Annie...this afternoon...I’m sorry...so sorry,” Sister Katherine whispered.

“Shhh...,” I replied, kissing her sex, dipping my tongue between her labia. The iron taste of blood lingered within her cleft, a reminder of a hurt that pills and wet washcloths couldn’t banish. With my soft, wet, warm tongue, I began to wash away her pain.

“Annie...I...ungh!” Sister Katherine winced just as my tongue made contact with her swollen clit, her body tensing and her pelvis twisting as I touched her sensitive button.

“Did that hurt?” I asked.

“No, no, keep going,” she said, emerging from her haze for a moment only to retreat again, her body and limbs relaxing once more, a deep sigh passing her lips. I licked a circle around her clit, brushing against the underside with my tongue, making her shudder anew. As I ravished her tender bud, Sister Katherine began to breathe heavily, her hands slowly moving to her breasts, touching them as if for the first time, kneading, squeezing. I sucked my lips around her clit as if it was the tip of a little cock, lashing it with my tongue, making her gasp, tense, relax, tense, gasp again, and finally cry out, a low, keening moan as her bottom rose off of the bed. Her thighs quivered as she pressed against my lips, urging me to help her climb her summit of pleasure. I cupped her bottom in my hands and assaulted her sex with lips and tongue until she could take no more.

“Annie...” she gasped as she settled back on the bed. “Annie...”

“Shhh...” I whispered, giving her pussy a last tender kiss and withdrawing from between her thighs. “Close your eyes...” I laid down next to her, pulling her blanket up and over her, tucking her in as I kissed her cool forehead.

“Annie...” she said, closing her eyes. I snuggled up against her and listened to her breathing get slower and slower until she was asleep.

Before I left her, I cleaned the blood off of the bullet-shaped deodorant container. It was about the length and girth of Ramon’s cock, smooth and cold where his had been veiny and warm. I thought about taking it upstairs with me, wondering whether I’d feel him inside me again. Then I changed my mind, put it down, and had one last look at Sister Katherine before I left.

I didn't want to feel a cold plastic phallus inside me. I knew where I could get the real thing. Quietly closing the door behind me, I headed upstairs, back to my room, where I put in my diaphragm before heading back downstairs to the common room.

Manny was sitting with a couple of other boys his age, sipping soda pop and watching the Celtics play ball on television. I sat down next to him and took a sip from his can.

"You okay?" he whispered. A priest I'd never seen before, seated across the room, looked over at us and scowled.

"Yeah. I'm fine," I whispered back. "Could we get out of here?"

"Where?"

"Anywhere. Your room?"

"I dunno," he said. "Father Kevin's been looking at me all night." He made a subtle gesture across the room towards the priest, who glanced over again. Manny and I sat together, side by side but barely touching, and watched the game. I wanted to feel his arm around me, but there was no way we could do that right here.

During a time out, when the station cut from the game to a commercial, Father Kevin got up and headed in the direction of the bathroom. I looked over at Manny.

"Let's go," he said. We hustled out of the common room and went upstairs, heading for his room. Once inside, we immediately shed all of our clothes and jumped into bed, holding each other while our lips met. I reached for Manny's hardness, stroking it, aching to feel him inside me. Dispensing with foreplay, I rolled over on my back and

pulled Manny on top of me, parting my thighs and guiding his beautiful cock towards my lips.

There was a sharp knocking at the door. We froze.

“Manny? Manny? Are you in there?” came a voice from outside.

“Oh, shit. It’s Father Kevin,” Manny hissed.

“What are we going to do?” I whispered. My heart was pounding, a thumping that seemed to block out all other sounds.

“Hide!” Manny said. “Hide under the bed. Quick.” He rolled off of me.

“Manny? Are you okay?” Father Kevin called out. As the doorknob began to turn, I scooted off of the bed, gathering my clothes from the floor and sliding underneath the bed frame, pressing against the far wall and trying to look like a dustbunny. I could see the door opening, black shoes and black trousers coming closer to the bed.

“Manny? Are you all right?” Father Kevin asked again.

“I’m okay,” he replied. “Just a bit of a stomach ache. I thought I’d lie down for a while.” The bedsprings creaked above me as Father Kevin sat down on the edge of the bed, making it sag ominously. It was then that I noticed my panties, still where I’d left them, in the middle of the floor next to Manny’s shirt and trousers.

“Let me feel your forehead,” Father Kevin said. The bed sagged in a new direction, nearly crushing me. “You feel cool. Your stomach, you say?”

“Yes, Father.”

“Let me rub it for you,” the priest said. I could hear the rustle of blankets and the bed began to creak in a regular pattern as Father Kevin caressed Manny’s belly. “That feel better?”

“Yes, Father,” Manny replied in a flat voice. Then the creaking stopped.

“Manny? What’s that on the floor?”

“What’s what?”

“These,” Father Kevin said. From under the bed, I could see him lean forward and scoop my cotton panties up from the floor with his finger. “Are these yours?”

“Um...yeah...,” Manny said. “Mine.” I could hear the blanket being pulled away.

“Put them on,” Father Kevin commanded. The bed moved above me and I heard the snap of elastic as Manny pulled them up over his hips, probably stretching them out for good. Father Kevin sat down on the bed again.

“Do you like wearing these?” he asked.

“Yeah,” Manny said, sheepishly. The bed began to rock slightly.

“Does that feel good?” the priest asked.

“Mmm.”

The rocking went on for a while and then Father Kevin stood up. I heard the clink of a belt buckle and the buzz of a zipper, and then his trousers pooled around his feet as he stood facing the bed. No words were exchanged. It seemed that Manny knew what he was supposed to do. I heard lips smacking, slurping over something. Father Kevin began to rock on his feet.

I closed my eyes and wished I could have blocked my ears. I didn't have to see to know what was taking place. Every so often, Father Kevin would grunt and the bed would begin to rock harder as his legs hit the mattress with each thrust into Manny's mouth. And as quickly as it started, it stopped, with a grunt and a slurp, Manny's wet coughing making the bed squeak again.

There were no more words. Father Kevin reached down and pulled his trousers back up, fastened them, and left. As his steps receded down the hall, I slid out from under the bed.

Manny was lying with his face to the wall, half-curved, still wearing my panties, silent. I climbed back into bed and snuggled up to him, putting my arms around him and kissing the nape of his neck.

"Manny, I'm sorry," I whispered. "The panties..." He didn't reply ; he just shrugged his shoulders.

"Manny...Manny..." I tried to get him to roll over, but he resisted.

"Manny. Talk to me," I pleaded. He rolled over, his eyes moist with tears. I hugged him again, kissed him on his forehead, his chin, his nose. When I tried to kiss him on the lips, he turned his head away.

"You'll taste him," he whispered. "On my mouth..."

"I don't care. Kiss me." He was right. I could taste Father Kevin's spunk on his lips, but that didn't stop me. I wanted him to taste me instead. I licked his lips and sucked his tongue like a cock. His hard cock pressed against my thigh, and I reached down to stroke it through the panties.

“They do feel good, don’t they?” I cooed, squeezing his cotton -covered balls. Manny finally smiled and chuckled, rolling on his back and quickly pulling the panties off.

“Fuck these,” he laughed, playfully throwing them at me.

“Quick thinking back there,” I said. “It could have been worse. He could have looked under the bed.”

“Yeah, that would have sucked. You owe me one, though.”

“You’ll get what you want,” I said, tugging at his shoulder and pulling him on top of me. I reached for his hardness, gently stroking it and guiding it between my legs.

“Where were we?” I said. “Oh, right.” I pressed the tip of his cock between my lips, feeling it sink into me. Manny hovered over me, supporting his weight on his elbows and knees, finally settling on top of me as his shaft disappeared between my legs.

“Sweet pussy,” he whispered as he started to thrust.

“Nice and slow,” I cooed. “Make it last.” Manny pulled the covers over us and we began to couple, slowly, quietly, stopping each time the bed made too much noise. The danger of the situation compounded the delicious friction I felt as his shaft slid in and out of my sex. I ran my hands over his back, his bottom, feeling his muscles tense and relax beneath his smooth skin. When I came it was like torture to keep from crying out. Manny locked his lips against mine when I began to moan, holding me tightly in his arms as his hips rocked and rotated, slowly pumping my hungry pussy with his manhood. As the waves of pleasure receded, it was his turn to come, his lovely cock spasming inside me as

I clenched around it, twitching with every spurt of semen. I wrapped my limbs around him, wanting him to stay inside me forever.

Eventually, he slipped out and rolled off of me. Manny reached across me to turn out the light.

“Thank you,” I whispered, snuggling up against him.

“Annie...” he started to say. Then he kissed me.

“Thank you,” he whispered.

* * *

He was having a nightmare. That’s what woke me up.

It took a moment for me to remember where I was. Manny’s bed, moonlight, clothes on the floor, Manny grunting something in his sleep, a tension in his shoulders. I wondered what he was dreaming about, what imaginary peril he was in. Perhaps it was Father Kevin, whose earlier visit had interrupted our lovemaking.

Manny had an alarm clock, a rare luxury in a place where none of the doors had locks, not even the bathroom. It was only 2AM. I thought about just going back to sleep in Manny’s bed, but his room was more centrally located than mine, and someone could easily notice me leaving in the morning. I gathered my clothes from the floor and got dressed, giving Manny a gentle kiss before slipping out of the room and back to my own.

Sunday was a frigid day, an icy wind whipping through our clothes as we were marched to the cathedral for Mass. It was cold inside, too, and I sat in a pew, huddled in my coat, as I watched the congregants take communion. Sister Katherine was with us,

and I tried to catch her eye but couldn't. It wasn't until afterwards, when we were walking back to the shelter that I could even get near her.

"Are you okay?" I asked.

"Yes," she whispered. And that was it. When we reached the shelter, she disappeared into the kitchen to prepare Sunday supper. I went up to my room to hang up my coat and ran into Billy in the hallway.

"Hey, I got some more hash. Wanna smoke after supper?" he asked.

"Yeah, that would be great," I said. We agreed to meet in my room after we ate supper.

I was sitting between Billy and Manny, having just finished my meal, when Father Ken approached and leaned over to whisper something to me.

"Annie, could I see you in my office when you're done," he said.

"Yes, Father," I said. I looked over at Billy; he seemed disappointed.

"I'll come by later," I whispered to him before getting up from the table. I bussed my tray and headed upstairs. Something in Father Ken's voice made me think that I should put in my diaphragm.

I knocked on the door to Father Ken's office, hearing him beckon me inside. He was seated behind his desk, sipping a drink. Seated in one of the chairs across from him was an older man in a blue suit, maybe in his fifties, greyish hair that used to be red at some distant time in history. He turned in his chair, making the ice in his drink rattle as he watched me enter the room and sit down in the chair next to him.

“Anne, this is Mr. O’Hare. Fred, Anne,” Father Ken said, introducing us. Fred extended his hand and I took it. “Mr. O’Hare is one of the shelter’s most generous donors, Anne.”

“Pleased to meet you,” I said.

“The pleasure is mine,” he replied, settling back into his seat and taking a sip of his drink.

“Would you like something, Anne?” Father Ken asked. I wanted a Valium more than anything at that moment, but I couldn’t ask for it in front of this stranger.

“Something to drink, please,” I said. Father Ken smiled and reached into the mini-fridge next to his desk for a soda. He opened it and poured some into the glass he’d been drinking from, the glass that had about an inch of bourbon in it. He passed it to me and pulled another glass from his desk, into which he poured some more bourbon for himself. I took a sip of the potent drink he’d mixed for me and began to relax.

“Mr. O’Hare has a proposition for you, Anne. He’s offering to sponsor your First Communion. You can become a member of the Church,” Father Ken said. I looked over at Mr. O’Hare and he smiled at me.

“I...I don’t know what to say,” I said. “Thank you, I guess.” I had only a vague idea of what First Communion was. The first step to becoming a nun?

“You do want to join the Church,” Mr. O’Hare said.

“I guess so,” I said. I’d never met this person before, and I began to wonder what he wanted in return.

“Would you like to take some time and think it over, Anne?” Father Ken asked.

“Yes, I would, thank you,” I said.

“Would you like to see your dress?” Mr. O’Hare said, pointing to a small round table that graced the corner of Father Ken’s office, a table like a sidewalk cafe would have, with two wooden chairs on either side, something Father Ken used when he counseled his charges, a more intimate setting than across a wooden desk. There were two boxes, large and small, and a shopping bag bearing the brand of a small dress shop in Dorchester.

“Dress?” I asked.

“Communion dress,” Mr. O’Hare said. “A lovely one. Take a peek.” I took another sip of my drink and placed it on Father Ken’s desk before getting up to look at the clothing this strange man had brought. I poked through the shopping bag first: a lace-trimmed full slip, a bra, a package of tights, lace-edged white socks, and a pair of white satin panties with ruffles on the front and back, something that a six-year-old might wear to a party or some other special occasion. Then I opened the small box. Inside, wrapped in tissue, was a pair of black patent leather maryjanes. I put the shoes aside and opened the big box, folding back the petals of wrapping paper.

The dress was a lacy white number, satin and crinoline, puffy sleeves, decorated with faux pearls. I held it up against my body; it looked to be close to my size, just a bit small.

“I had it handmade for you,” Mr. O’Hare said. “Father Ken gave me your size.”

Father Ken hardly knew my size, having guessed at it when he bought me that trashy lingerie. Still holding the dress against me, I turned to model it for Mr. O’Hare.

“You look lovely,” he said. It looked ridiculous, like something a doll would wear. If I had been on the fence about taking communion, the thought of being seen in public in this awful dress decided the matter for good.

“Thank you,” I said, turning to put away the dress.

“Try it on, Anne,” Father Ken said. “Let’s see how you look.”

“Try it on?” I asked. In front of Mr. O’Hare?

“Yes, try it on,” Father Ken said, sitting back in his chair and taking another sip of his drink. The look in his eyes all but said “...and put on a little show for us.”

“Yes, Father,” I said, putting the dress down so I could take off my clothes. Unbuttoning my blouse and stepping out of my skirt, I picked up the dress and unzipped the back.

“Anne, try on all the things Mr. O’Hare has brought,” Father Ken said, just as I was about to step into the dress.

“All of it?” I asked.

“Yes, all of it,” he replied. I put the dress down again and opened up the shopping bag, first pulling out the lacy little bra. It was a size too small, but I struggled it on, feeling it constrict my chest as I closed the front clasp. As Father Ken and Mr. O’Hare watched, I pulled off my cotton panties and put on the ruffled pair, pulling them up my thighs and straightening up. I could see Mr. O’Hare squeezing his crotch as he watched me, his pale blue eyes fixed on an area between my neck and my knees.

He broke off his stare when I pulled the slip over my head, adjusting the straps as the hem settled around my thighs. I examined the package of opaque white tights. They

were much too small; I would have torn them to shreds just trying to put them on. I put them aside and sat down to don the lacy ankle socks. These were nearly as frilly as the white dress.

After I stepped into the dress and put on the maryjanes, I walked over to Mr. O'Hare and turned around.

"Could you zip me up, please?" I asked him. I felt a trembling hand tug at the zipper and then another hand in the small of my back to keep the dress from riding up. The dress was tight around my waist and chest, and the lacy hem of my slip peeked out from under the crinoline froth.

"How's that fit?" Mr. O'Hare asked. I turned around and saw that his hands were back in his lap, discreetly squeezing his bulge.

"It's a little small, sir," I said.

"You can have that altered, right Fred?" Father Ken said.

"Of course," he replied. "It's handmade. Friend of my wife's."

"Anne, you should thank Fred for his generous gift," Father Ken said.

"Thank you, sir," I said.

"You're welcome, missy," Mr. O'Hare replied. "Ken?" he asked the priest, who was taking a sip of his drink.

"Right. Anne?" Father Ken said, tilting his head in the direction of his guest.

"Yes, Father?"

“Thank him,” he said, tilting his head again, a subtle gesture that took a moment to sink in. I looked at Mr. O’Hare. He uncrossed his legs and unzipped his trousers. Thank him.

“Yes, Father,” I said, hiking up the dress and knee ling between Mr. O’Hare’s legs. He was a big man, stocky but tall, even sitting down. He pulled his tie out of the way, giving me access to his belt buckle and zipper. I undid his pants, reaching into his boxers to fish out his hardness. He was a big man d own there, too, bigger than just about anyone I’d ever seen, and he wasn’t even fully hard yet. As I began to slide his foreskin up and down over his shaft, he stiffened, his bulbous purple glans swelling to the size of a small plum.

Mr. O’Hare looked down at me with an expression of anticipation, as if this was the first time he’d ever had his cock sucked. His grin widened when my lips made contact with his organ, my tongue swirling over his fat cockhead, my hands sliding down his shaft, pulling his foreskin taut. I had to open my mouth as wide as I could to accommodate him, and there was so much of his flesh in my mouth that I could hardly use my tongue. My lips sunk lower and lower on his fat penis until I could take no more; fully two thirds remained.

As I began to suck his swollen tool, Mr. O’Hare’s hands tightened around the armrests of the chair, his big thighs tensing up every time my head bobbed in his lap. My fingers danced around his shaft, pleasuring the parts of him my mouth could not reach. I closed my eyes and listened to the sound of his heavy breathing, a tie being loosened, a collar button undone, the clink of ice in a glass.

Mr. O'Hare leaned over and unzipped the back of my dress as I sucked him. The tightness in my chest subsided a bit and I could breathe deeply again.

"Let's get this off so we don't make a mess," he said, tugging at one of the puffy cap sleeves. I released his cock from my mouth with a loud "slurp" and stood up, shrugging the dress from my shoulders and stepping out of it. I carefully folded it and replaced it in the box.

"The slip, too," Father Ken said. I could tell by the motion of his hand under the desk that he was stroking himself as he watched me suck his guest's penis. I pulled the nylon slip over my head and folded it as well, and then removed the lacy bra, returning to my spot between Mr. O'Hare's legs dressed only in the ruffled panties, shoes and socks.

As I took his cock in my mouth again, Mr. O'Hare reached down to feel my breasts, cupping them with his huge hands, fat thumbs flicking my nipples. I wondered if he was going to want to fuck me as well, and whether I'd be able to take this big organ inside me. It was just then that Mr. O'Hare began to come, without warning, no grunt, no words, not even a twitch until after he began filling my mouth with his hot semen. It seemed to go on forever, thick ropy jets of sperm shooting from his fat cockhead. I swallowed, suppressed a cough, swallowed some more, and had to pull his cock from my mouth to keep from choking on his load. A thick stream of cum began to drip down his pole, but I managed to lick it up before it could stain the front of his trousers.

"Very good, very good," Mr. O'Hare said, letting out a deep, contented sigh and taking a sip of his drink. "My wife never does this."

“Anne is a good girl,” Father Ken said, pouring another inch of bourbon into his glass.

“Yes, a good girl,” Mr. O’Hare agreed.

“Would you like some privacy now?” Father Ken asked.

“No, no, that won’t be necessary,” Mr. O’Hare said. He pulled me up from between his legs and on to his lap, spreading my legs with his so I ended up straddling him, the crotch of my ruffled panties rubbing against his now -flaccid penis. I felt it stir against my cleft, and I knew that he wasn’t going to settle for just a blowjob. Mr. O’Hare held my ruffled bottom in his big hands, squeezing my cheeks and pressing my crotch against his organ. He held me like that for a while, my head resting on his broad shoulder, my arms wrapped around his neck, while he sipped his drink and made small talk with Father Ken. As they discussed the previous year’s donations and certain items in the upcoming budget, I felt Mr. O’Hare’s cock begin to harden again, slowly, steadily, twitching slightly every time he squeezed my buns.

“Are you sure you wouldn’t prefer to be alone?” Father Ken asked again, seeing Mr. O’Hare rhythmically squeezing my bottom and pressing my crotch against his.

“Thanks but no,” Mr. O’Hare said. “I’d like it if you watched. Join in, even. I’m not going to be using all of her holes at once.” I lifted my head from his shoulder and looked at him when I heard that last part. He gave my bottom another squeeze and smiled at me. “Ready, missy?” he asked.

“Clear off your desk, willya Ken?” he said even before I could answer him. As Father Ken moved papers and folders to the side, Mr. O’Hare stood up, still holding me by the bottom, and sat me down on the edge of the desk.

“Lie back, missy,” Mr. O’Hare said. As I lay back on the desk, my legs dangling over the edge, he removed his suit jacket and laid it on his chair, undid his tie, unbuttoned his shirt, and let his trousers fall around his ankles. After taking a sip of his drink, he reached for the waistband of my ruffled panties, tugging at them. I lifted my bottom slightly and he pulled them down my thighs, all the way down to my ankles. His cock was fully hard now, still moist from my lips.

“Take her arms, Ken,” Mr. O’Hare said as he pulled my thighs apart. Father Ken stood up, his semi-hard cock dangling from his fly, and pulled my arms back, holding my wrists. His penis was only inches away from my face. I turned my attention back to Mr. O’Hare, who grabbed my thighs and pulled my sex closer to his hardness, rubbing his shaft over my hairless cleft. I wanted to spread my legs wider to accommodate him, but the panties kept my ankles together, pressing my inner thighs against Mr. O’Hare’s legs.

Mr. O’Hare guided the bulbous tip of his cock between my lips, pressing inward until his glans penetrated my slit. I winced and tried to move away; I just wasn’t wet enough and it really hurt, but I bit my lips and tried not to cry or scream.

“Does that hurt?” Father Ken asked. I nodded. But rather than stop his guest from going any further, Father Ken reached into his desk and pulled out a tube of lubricant, handing it to Mr. O’Hare, who squirted some on his shaft and over my labia. He spread it over his cock and used his glans to spread the lube that was dripping down my cleft, and

then he tried to enter me again, forcing the tip of his penis inside my slit. He gripped my thighs with his strong hands as he pushed his thick shaft into my sex. It still hurt, but not as much as before.

As Mr. O'Hare began to thrust, slowly pulling his huge member out and pushing it back in, I felt Father Ken relax his hold on one of my wrists. I heard him stroke himself a couple of times, and then he moved closer and laid his hard cock on my face with the bottom of his glans resting on my lips. He took my wrist in his hand again and looked down at me with an expectant expression. I knew what he wanted, and I parted my lips and began to lick the underside of his cock as he watched his guest try to split me in half with his penis.

With my arms and legs restrained, I could barely move, not even my hips. My poor little pussy stretched to accommodate Mr. O'Hare's big tool, and once I got past the initial pain I had to admit that it wasn't all that unpleasant, though I'd have enjoyed it more if I was a little wetter; Mr. O'Hare didn't seem to appreciate the value of foreplay. Then again, he probably saw me as a whore, communion dress or no communion dress. Whores are supposed to be ready, always.

Mr. O'Hare began to fuck me harder, faster, moving my body back and forth over Father Ken's desk as he plugged me with his thick cock. Father Ken's desk blotter slid under me as the tall man pumped my pussy, making the priest's cock slide up and down across my lips. I merely had to stick out my tongue to lick his shaft. Then Father Ken moved slightly to the side and a bit closer, angling his cock into my mouth. I took him

between my lips and tried to lift my head from the desk to suck him, but all I could do was swirl my tongue over his glans, tasting a drip of precum that had formed on the tip.

Father Ken began to move his hips, rhythmically pushing his cock in and out of my mouth. I tightened my lips around his shaft and sucked him as Mr. O'Hare pounded my pussy. Two hard cocks, assaulting me from both ends, two sets of hands restraining me, holding me down on top of the desk. I kept telling myself that Father Ken would never let this man hurt me, that he liked his sex a little rough. I didn't mind it a little rough. I liked it when Brad fucked me like an animal during that weekend he stayed with me and Julia last summer. I loved it when he held my arms behind my back and plowed my pussy from behind. But this was a more than a little rough sex, especially when Mr. O'Hare went deep, almost hitting my diaphragm and stretching my cunny even wider with his root. I almost bit Father Ken's hard cock, and I had to tighten my lips around it even more to keep from scratching him with my teeth.

"Ease up, Fred. She's still a little girl," Father Ken said. He let go of one of my wrists and began to caress my cheek, still rocking his hips back and forth and fucking my face. Mr. O'Hare pulled back, just using the tip of his cock to pump my little pussy.

"She's a tight one, Ken," he said. "What a fine little whore you have here."

I felt my cheeks redden when he called me a whore. Even though the bulbous head of Mr. O'Hare's cock was beginning to feel pretty good as it rubbed across that sensitive spot in my cunny, all of the enjoyment drained out of me like an unstopped bathtub. I just lay there, passively, letting the two men use my body for their pleasure.

This time I felt Mr. O'Hare's cock twitch before he came, right after he let out a satisfied groan. He spurted once inside me and then immediately pulled out of my pussy, yanking his big tool as he spread the rest of his seed over my belly and thighs.

"Shit, I came inside her a little," he said, giving his prick a last long stroke before reaching for his drink.

"Don't worry about it," Father Ken said. "It's taken care of."

"It is? Good, because I can't afford another problem like that last girl," Mr. O'Hare said. "Cost me a pretty penny." He stuffed his softening cock back inside me, just letting it rest in my aching pussy. "You like that, missy?" he asked me. I couldn't answer: my mouth was still full of Father Ken's cock.

As Mr. O'Hare's sticky semen dried on my skin, Father Ken gave his penis one last thrust and pulled it from my mouth. He began to jerk off, short, quick strokes like that first night he "examined" me on his bed. He gasped softly and began to spurt all over my breasts and down my belly. I could feel a rope of his hot sperm crossing a trail of Mr. O'Hare's cooling cum.

"Another drink, Fred?" Father Ken asked, reaching down to pull his trousers back up.

"Sure," Mr. O'Hare said, stepping back and pulling his soft cock from my pussy. I felt a bit of his first squirt begin to drip out of my tender slit. I wanted to reach down and feel it, maybe see if I was bleeding, but I just lay there on the desk while Father Ken poured another round for himself and his guest. They continued talking as if I wasn't there.

“Wish I had more time,” Mr. O’Hare said. “I sure would love to have that tight ass. The wife’s waiting for me, though.” I heard the sound of clothes rustling, a zipper, a belt, a coat.

“Maybe you could take her for a weekend,” Father Ken said. “Up to your house on the lake.”

“You’re really digging for another contribution, eh Ken?” Mr. O’Hare said with a hearty laugh.

“I do what I can, Fred,” Father Ken said. “For the kids,” he added.

“Let me think about it, how I can keep it hush hush,” Mr. O’Hare said. “I’d love to have her for a whole long weekend.”

“Well, let me know,” Father Ken said. “She’s not going anywhere.”

“Thanks, Ken. I’ll give you a call.” I heard the clink of glass as Mr. O’Hare drained his drink, and then the slap of palms as he shook Father Ken’s hand. And then he was out the door, the box with the dress under his arm, heavy footsteps receding down the hallway. I laid my head back on the desk, staring at the water stains on the ceiling tiles. I heard Father Ken walking into his bedroom and then he returned with a towel, which he tossed on to my belly.

“Clean up,” he said. I wiped the cooling sperm from my breasts, belly, and thighs, and then gently blotted my pussy. Father Ken could see me wince at the slight pain.

“Still hurt?” he asked. I nodded my head and began to sit up.

“Stay there. Let me look at it,” Father Ken said, pulling up a chair and sitting down by my feet. He leaned forward, between my thighs, pulling apart my lips with two

fingers. I could feel his warm breath on my sex. I thought he was about to lick me, like he'd done after Father Steve fucked me, scooping up the semen with his tongue and spreading it over my clit. But he just pulled his fingers away and stood up, walking behind his desk and opening a drawer. I sat up on his desk, sliding off the edge and stepping out of the ruffled panties. As I hunted through my own clothes for my plain cotton panties I could hear Father Ken opening prescription pill bottles, tapping a few pills from each into an empty vial. I pulled my panties up and went back over to the desk.

"Here, take one if it still hurts," he said, handing me a small orange vial. The prescription label had been partially torn off. I looked inside; there was an assortment of pills, Valium, Dilaudid, and a something I didn't recognize.

"What are the little pink ones?" I asked.

"Something to help you sleep," Father Ken replied, sitting back in his chair. I tapped out a Dilaudid and washed it down with the drink he'd poured me earlier, bourbon and coke, now flat.

"Father?"

"Yes, Anne?"

"I have a favor to ask," I said, putting my blouse and skirt back on and folding up the underthings that Mr. O'Hare had bought for me. The dress had left with him, to be let out by the seamstress who made it.

"What would that be, Anne?" he said.

“Sister Katherine told me that I have to start wearing a bra all the time,” I said. After what happened the night before I couldn’t be sure that she was serious, but I couldn’t be sure she wasn’t.

“That sounds like a good idea,” Father Ken said.

“Well, I only have one. I can’t wear it every day, so I need a few more,” I said. I’d only brought one with me when I left the foster home in Maine. “There were none in the donation pile.”

“So you need some money?”

“Yes, and some time to shop.”

“Okay, that’s no problem,” he said, reaching into his desk drawer and pulling out a bulging envelope. He pulled out a huge wad of money and peeled off two hundred dollar bills. “This enough?”

“Yes, Father. Thank you, Father.” I took the money and stuffed it into the pocket of my blouse.

“Keep whatever’s left over,” he said, smiling, taking another sip of his drink. “Oh, and Anne?”

“Yes, Father?”

“Get a few nice things,” he said. “You know what I mean.”

“Yes, Father. Thank you, Father,” I repeated. I started to leave.

“Anne?”

“Yes?”

“Those things fit you, right?” he said, pointing to the shoebox and shopping bag on the table in the far corner, the maryjanes and underthings that Mr. O’Hare had brought.

“Yes, Father.”

“Take them with you, then.”

“Yes, Father. Thank you.” I grabbed them and half bowed as I left his office. When I was back in my room, I tossed them under the bed, not wanting to look at them, much less wear them, especially those ruffled panties and the lacy ankle socks. Wearing them made me feel like a six-year-old at a birthday party who soiled her pretty dress with ice cream and had to spend the rest of the time in just her frilly undies. But I could tell that Mr. O’Hare liked them, liked to see them on me, liked how they made me look like a little girl. He liked pulling them down my thighs; I thought he’d drool when he did that.

I stuffed the money Father Ken had given me in the place under the boxspring where I hid my pot and my vibrator. I still had over a hundred left over from my trip to the gynecologist earlier that week. Pulling out my bag of pot, I grabbed my towel and my toothbrush and left the room to take a bath and wait for the Dilaudid to kick in. As I was brushing my teeth and waiting for the tub to fill, I remembered that I was supposed to hook up with Billy before Father Ken had summoned me to his office. I rinsed out my mouth, spitting out the traces of Mr. O’Hare’s semen that remained, and left the bathroom, heading for Billy’s room.

He was in his usual place, on the bed, doing the usual thing, reading a comic book. He looked up, surprised to see me.

“Hey, I’m sorry about earlier,” I said.

“No sweat,” he replied. “Father Ken?”

“Yeah, him and another guy. Take a bath with me, okay?”

“Sure,” he said, putting the comic book aside and swinging his legs off of the bed.

“Got some papers?” I asked.

“Yep.”

“Good. Bring them.” We headed upstairs to the bathroom; the tub was just half full. I jammed the end of my toothbrush between the door and frame, giving us a bit of privacy. While Billy stuffed a wet towel under the door and rolled a couple of joints from my bag of pot, I got undressed and checked the water temperature. Nice and warm. I stepped into the tub, slowly lowering myself into the water. Billy saw me wince as I sat down. I was still tender down there.

“Annie? Are you okay?” he asked as he licked the rolling paper’s adhesive edge and folded it over the fat joint he’d rolled.

“Yeah, just a little sore,” I said. He lit the end of the joint and handed it to me .
“Thanks.”

The Dilaudid was just taking effect and I tried not to let go of the joint and drop it in the water. Billy undressed and took the joint from my hand, holding it between his lips as he eased into the bathtub across from me. The tub was just about full, so he shut off the faucet. My head rolled back as I leaned against the back of the tub.

“Annie? You sure you’re okay?”

“Yes, sweetie. He was so big, it hurt. But I took a pill.” Billy looked at me, a worried expression on his face, a look of almost brotherly concern.

“Shotgun,” he said, leaning forward in the tub. “Just breathe in.” He took the joint from his mouth, reversing it so the lit end was between his lips, and blew, sending a dense stream of smoke from the damp end. I sucked it in, thinking how much it looked like a stream of semen as it disappeared between my lips. Billy leaned back and reversed the joint again, taking a big hit as I held the smoke in my lungs.

“Thanks,” I said, exhaling just as he did, our breath forming a grey cloud of smoke over the tub. When we just about finished the joint, Billy flicked the roach out the window. I watched the orange dot disappear into the blackness of the alley.

I began to soap up my breasts, washing off the stick remnants of semen that lingered on my chest, but my arms felt like lead. Billy leaned forward in the tub and took the soap from me, gently lathering my breasts and belly. I leaned forward so he could do my back, and I noticed that his cock was stiffening as his hands roamed over my slippery skin. I reached out with soapy fingers and began to stroke him.

“Annie, you don’t have to...,” he said.

“Billy, Billy, Billy. You’re so sweet,” I murmured, wasted on the pot and Dilaudid. His penis hardened in my hands as I fondled it. Billy leaned back in the tub, having finished lathering my back, but I kept both hands on his cock and balls, cupping his hairless nuts as I stroked his smooth young boycock. He leaned forward again to rinse off my soapy breasts and belly, and his hips began to move, sliding his penis in and out of my fingers.

“Ow!” I exclaimed, when Billy touched the top of my slit, hitting a sore spot.

“I’m sorry,” he said, pulling back and withdrawing his cock from my soapy hands.

“No, no, it’s just a little sore,” I said. “Come back...” I reached for his cock and balls again, and he began to rock his hips, his cock dancing between my fingers, his hands back on my breasts again, gently rinsing them, letting the warm water cascade over my little boobs, over my puffy nipples. Billy cupped them lightly, treasuring them, caressing them. I felt his hips begin to shudder and his cock start to twitch in my hands, and then he spurted a single blob of semen. It dripped off of the soapy tip of his boycock and landed in the water. He leaned back in the tub, pulling his penis from my slippery hands, and let out a contented sigh.

We smoked the other joint and then got out of the tub when the water began to cool, drying each other off and getting dressed. Billy had to help me a bit; my legs were rubbery from the narcotics and I was a bit dizzy from the pot. Billy looked out the door, making sure the coast was clear before helping me back to my room across the hall. He sat me down on the bed and helped me get undressed again, tucking me in under the blankets before turning to leave.

“Billy...wait...stay...,” I said. I wanted to hold him; I wanted him to hold me, to take care of me, to kiss me before I fell asleep. I reached out for him.

“Are you sure?” Billy said, his freckled brow furrowed with concern. I think he was afraid of hurting me, touching a sore spot by accident.

“Please,” I said, taking his hand and pulling him closer to the bed. He got undressed and crawled under the blankets next to me. I snuggled against his warm body, threading my hand between his waist and the mattress to pull him close to me.

“Thanks,” I whispered. Billy kissed my forehead and laid his head on the pillow next to mine, watching me as I fell asleep.

* *

Chapter Eight

Just a Girl

Billy was gone when I woke up. Since I was excused from class, I stayed in bed late, only getting up to wash and dress in time to catch the end of breakfast. After some toast and a cup of tea, I went back upstairs and retrieved the money Father Ken had given me, grabbed my coat, and headed off to the subway to go downtown. I'd have loved to go shopping for undies on Newbury Street, but the cash I had with me would have only covered the cost of one or two of those expensive imported bras. When I emerged from the smelly subway station, I headed for the department store where I had bought my chemise the week before.

I picked up a couple of soft cup, everyday bras in the Juniors' department, along with some skimpy string bikini panties, and a camisole I hoped would satisfy Sister Katherine's order that I wear a bra, in spirit if not in letter. I also picked up a kimono-style bathrobe, so I could walk across the hall to the bathroom without getting dressed. Remembering Father Ken's request that I buy something "special", I looked around for something racier, but other than a bra and panty set in scratchy black lace, there was nothing really sexy to be found. I paid for my purchases and headed back to the street, intending to try the other big stores downtown. Something down the street caught my

eye, though, a lacy yellow negligee in a window display, the kind of short babydoll nightie that my mother used to wear. I closed my coat against the chilly wind that whipped down the street and headed over to get a closer look.

Other than that nightie, the rest of the things on display looked like things an older woman would wear, full slips, long nightgowns, girdles and thick, bullet-shaped bras. Still, there was that short nightie. Maybe they had it in pink, like my mother's. "Lady Fair" the place was called. I opened the door and stepped inside.

It was warm in the store, and the place smelled like potpourri with a hint of mothballs, like one big underwear drawer. A short, older woman with blue-tinted grey hair and a tape measure draped around her neck came over. She wore a pink wool cardigan over her grey dress, the corner of a lace handkerchief peeking from inside the sleeve of her sweater.

"Hello, darling," she said, pronouncing the words like "Hullo, dollink." She smiled and looked me up and down.

"Hi," I said.

"Are you here for the fitting?"

"Fitting?"

"Our expert bra fitter comes in twice a week. She's here now. Would you like a fitting?" She held up the tape measure for effect, holding it across my breasts as if to measure them.

"Um, okay," I said. I remembered my mother taking me for my first training bra before she died, to a department store in Miami, the saleslady making me hold my arms

up so she could wrap the measuring tape around my chest, coming back with a plastic package of three stretchy cotton bras, how scratchy they felt over my sensitive nipples until they went through the laundry a few times and softened.

“She’s with another customer, but it’ll only be a couple of minutes. Would you like a cup of tea?” the proprietor asked.

“No thank you, ma’am. I’d just like to look around if that’s okay,” I said.

“Look! Look all you want, dollink! Let me know if I can help you with anything,” she said. I went over to the rack of nightgowns, looking at the shortest ones while the fitter attended to the other customer. Their muffled conversation filtered out from a curtained area in the back corner of the shop.

I pulled a skimpy pink nightie from the rack, holding it against me and looking in one of the many mirrors that adorned the walls and columns of the boutique. Just then the thick curtain parted, revealing two women. A woman in her early thirties was pulling on a sweater while an older woman in her fifties, measuring tape around her neck, looked on. The younger woman got up from a stool and said something to the fitter, making them both laugh out loud. Then the younger woman reached for her purse and took something out, pressing it into the fitter’s hand. The fitter stuffed it in her smock before I could see what it was.

“Patricia! My lovely Patricia, what can I get you?” The proprietor came out from behind her counter, handing the younger woman a hot cup of tea on a matching saucer.

“Thank you so much, Mrs. Pomerantz,” Patricia said.

“More tea, Denise?” Mrs. Pomerantz called out to the fitter.

“No thanks, Greta,” she said. “My teeth are floating already.” This made Mrs. Pomerantz laugh heartily. As Denise disappeared into a back room, I leaned over a display case, looking at all the different kinds of stockings the store sold.

“Miss, miss? What’s your name?” Mrs. Pomerantz asked as the fitter returned from the back room.

“Anne,” I said.

“Anne, what a lovely name, Anne. Denise will see you now.” Still carrying the short pink babydoll nightie, I followed Mrs. Pomerantz back to the curtained area. Patricia smiled at me as I passed by her. She was quite beautiful, with dark brown hair carefully styled and pale blue eyes, a small, sharp nose and a chin to match.

“Let me take that,” Mrs. Pomerantz said, taking the nightie from my hands. “Would you like this gift wrapped?”

“No, thanks. It’s for me,” I said.

“Such a grown-up nightie,” she said. “Are you sure...?”

“My mother used to wear one just like it,” I said. I didn’t have to add “...before she died.” It was in my voice. Mrs. Pomerantz looked so sad for a second, but then her expression brightened.

“Such an adorable face,” she said, reaching out and gently pinching my cheek the way Ramon’s older sisters used to do, back in a happier time long ago. “You’ll look so pretty in this.”

“Have a seat and take off your coat, Anne,” Denise said, ushering me on to the stool. I shrugged off my jacket, a hand-me-down from Del, and draped it over the back of the seat. Denise closed the curtain and told me to take off my sweater.

“Nice,” she said when she saw my bra, one of the ones Julia had bought for me on Newbury Street. “Expensive.”

“It was a gift from a very dear friend,” I said. There was something about Denise that reminded me of Julia, her silver hair, her long fingers, her graceful neck. Then I realized what it was: her perfume. As Denise unclasped my bra, I closed my eyes and took a deep breath, imagining that I was with Julia again, a long day of shopping with her, hoping that when the curtain opened she’d be standing there, sipping tea with Greta Pomerantz. I felt my nipples stiffen and I began to blush.

“Cold, dear?” Denise said, wrapping her measuring tape under my breasts and bringing the end around my back.

“Yes, ma’am,” I said.

“I’ll be quick,” she replied, measuring me again with the tape over my breasts this time. “You’re still growing. You’re fourteen?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Your mother, was she...big on top?” she asked.

“Not really, ma’am.”

“Don’t be so formal,” she said. “Call me Denise.”

“Thank you, ma...um, Denise.” She laughed and handed my bra back to me, helping me into the straps and fastening the clasp behind my back. I pulled my sweater

back on as Denise opened the curtain. My hope that Julia would be standing there vanished like a ghost.

As Denise and Mrs. Pomerantz pulled different boxes down from the tall shelves behind the counter, I noticed that Patricia was still browsing through the racks and hangers, even though she'd already paid for her purchases. I chose a pair of white lycra bras, lightly underwired and edged in delicate lace, a pair of cotton soft cup bras like the ones I'd already bought at the Jordan Marsh store, except of much better quality, and a sheer black bra. This last item earned a raised eyebrow from Mrs. Pomerantz, but when I pulled out the two hundred dollar bills to pay for everything, she threw in matching panties for the lot and a couple of pairs of nice warm knit tights, all for free. Denise brought me back behind the curtain to see how the bras fit, adjusting the straps and making sure the underwires didn't poke me. We swapped the sheer black bra for a slightly smaller size, but everything fit perfectly otherwise.

"You're a dream to fit, Anne," Denise said. "Some women are no end of trouble."

"Come back anytime, dollink. Such a cutie you are," Mrs. Pomerantz said, pinching my cheek again. I couldn't help but smile; her warmth and her affection were so contagious. I liked this place.

"Thank you so much," I said, picking up my shopping bags and heading to the door.

"Stay warm, dollink," she called out, waving good -bye. "So adorable," I heard her say to Denise as I left the store. I started back towards the subway when I heard someone behind me calling out my name.

“Anne? Anne!” It was Patricia, shopping bags in hand, her cashmere coat buttoned up against the cold wind.

“Um, Patricia?”

“Trish. Call me Trish,” she said, her breath turning to steam in the chilly air. “Would you like to get some lunch?”

“Um, sure,” I said. Toast and tea hadn’t been enough for breakfast and I was hungry again. We walked down the block together towards a coffee shop. It was packed with the lunchtime business crowd, as was just about every other place we passed.

“Let’s go to my place,” she said. “It’s not far. I’ll make us something.”

“Sure,” I said, following her to a cab stand where a lone taxi waited. We got in and she gave the driver an address, and he shifted into gear and drove off, threading through a crowd of shoppers and businessmen.

“You’re a student?” Trish asked me as the cab passed by the bus station. I looked around, wondering if I’d see that prostitute who threatened to kill me that first night in town.

“Sort of,” I said, once the block had passed. I didn’t know how to say that I was staying in a shelter for homeless boys. “Are you?”

“Student?” she said. “Not for years. I’m a reporter, the Herald, been there six months. I was in Des Moines before that and a small town before that.”

“Des Moines? What’s that like?”

“Dreadful,” she said. She was about to say something else, but the driver was about to miss the turn on to her block and she had to yell at him a bit. The cab parked in front of

a brownstone on a dead end street, the end of the block cut off by railroad tracks set below street level, guarded by a chain link fence.

“We’re here,” she said. I got out of the taxi and waited while she paid the driver. Then she led me up a flight of stairs cut from coffee - colored stone, and through the polished wooden doors of her building. There were six mailboxes in the lobby, six apartments, two on each floor of the narrow brownstone. We walked up another flight of stairs to the second floor, where Trish fished through her purse for another set of keys. Finding them, she unlocked her apartment door, two above the knob and one in the middle, set into a square metal plate held by four round rivets.

It was a nice place, the nicest place I’d seen in Boston so far, other than the rooms at the Ritz and the Cabots’ place on Beacon Hill. No peeling paint, no water stains on the ceiling. The floor was an expanse of polished wood, unadorned except for a couple of small rugs. A whole long wall running the length of the living and dining area and the open kitchen was brick instead of whitewashed plaster. Past this was a small hallway that led to the bathroom and a single bedroom.

“I still haven’t really furnished this place,” Trish said, taking off her coat and dropping her purse and shopping bags on a black lacquered dinner table. Other than the table and four chairs, there was a couch and a glass coffee table, a television and small stereo, and a single painting, an abstract like the stuff Michael painted, hanging from the bare brick wall.

“Have a seat and I’ll whip up something to eat. Salad okay?”

“Yes, thank you,” I said, taking off my coat and putting my things down next to hers. “Is there anything I can do?”

“Sure,” she said, reaching into the refrigerator and pulling out an open bottle of white wine. “Tell you what, why don’t you rinse off the lettuce, okay? It’s in the bottom drawer in the fridge.”

“I’d be happy to,” I said, rolling up the sleeves of my sweater. I pulled the lettuce out and Trish handed me a colander. As she poured herself a glass of wine, I began to break off leaves from the head of lettuce and wash them under the tap.

“Could I have a sip?” I asked.

“I’m sorry. Where are my manners? Would you like a glass?” she said.

“Please.”

“Sure thing,” she said, reaching into a cabinet for another glass and pouring some white wine. “A toast, to Mrs. Pomerantz.”

“To Mrs. Pomerantz.” We clinked our glasses together.

“That was your first time there, wasn’t it?” Trish asked as she sliced a tomato on the carving board set into the counter.

“Yes, it was,” I replied, shaking the last drops of water from the colander.

“You’re not from around here, are you?”

“No. I lived in Maine for the last year, and Florida before that.”

“What brought you to Boston?” Trish asked.

“It’s a long story,” I said, taking a sip of wine.

“I’ve got time,” she said.

“Don’t you have to get back to work or something?”

“Anne, I love my job but every so often I have to take a ‘mental health day’, you know? Besides, the Legislature isn’t in session until next week. State House. That’s my beat.”

“Annie.”

“Beg your pardon?” she said.

“You can call me ‘Annie’,” I said.

“Annie. Lovely. So, tell me, Annie, what brought you to Boston?” Trish was cutting an onion into thin, nearly transparent slices.

“I ran away.”

“You what?” Trish stopped slicing the onion.

I stood in her kitchen, sipping chilled white wine from a nice long - stemmed glass, and told her about how my mother was killed, how my papi moved us to Maine. I glossed over a lot of things, mostly about me and Julia, and when I began to recall how Ramon and the boys died, my eyes began to mist up and a lump formed in my throat. Trish listened quietly as I choked back my tears and told her about the foster home, how Mr. Hubbard tried to rape me in the bathroom, how I sneaked out in the middle of the night.

“Annie, I’m so sorry,” Trish whispered. She tore a piece of paper towel from the roll over the sink and handed it to me so I could dry my tears.

“It’s okay, I’m okay,” I said.

“Where are you staying now?” she asked.

“Father Ken took me in.”

“Ken Foley? The street priest?”

“Street priest?” I’d never heard that phrase. It sounded rough, like streetfight or streetwalker.

“His ministry is the street, runaways like you are his flock,” Trish said. “Except I was under the impression that his shelter took in boys only.”

“Girls too,” I said, even though I knew I was the only one.

“Interesting,” she said, pulling a container of leftover grilled chicken from the fridge. “Ken’s a sweet guy. I met him at a reception at the Parkman House last fall.”

“Father Ken,” I corrected her, without even thinking.

“Right, Father Ken. Sorry,” she said, pulling the cold chicken breasts apart with a fork and tossing the pieces into a large stain less steel bowl along with the lettuce, tomatoes, onions, and some croutons. Trish grabbed a bottle of dressing from the shelves inside the refrigerator door. “Vinaigrette okay with you?”

“That’s fine,” I said. She poured dressing over the salad and began to toss it with two forks. Then she reached into the cabinet for a couple of plates and into a drawer for silverware.

“Let’s eat,” Trish said, bringing the salad and plates over to the table. “Grab my wine, would you?” I picked up our glasses and brought them over to the dining table, putting my shopping bags on the floor next to the couch. Trish loaded my plate with salad and topped off my glass with the last of the wine. I attacked my salad with gusto; Sister Bernice wasn’t big on serving fresh veggies at the shelter. There were too many mouths

to feed, and it was easier to open a huge institution - sized can of creamed corn than to serve fresh corn on the cob to a dozen or so hungry kids.

There was something about the salad, though, something that dredged up a memory of the summer before. Julia, white wine, the table in her garden, under the shade of a tree, grilled chicken and salad, bees buzzing around her flowers.

“Something wrong, Annie? Is the salad okay?” Trish asked, seeing my distant expression.

“It’s fine, really. It’s just...”

“Tell me,” she said.

“This reminds me of a friend I had last summer,” I said, gesturing towards the salad with my fork. “We used to sit in her garden, eat lunch, drink wine.”

“You miss her?”

“Yes.”

“You were lovers?” I hesitated a moment before answering, wondering if I could confide in this person I’d just met. There was something in her eyes, though, a softness, sympathy.

“Yes. She passed away late last year.” I felt a tear begin its journey down my cheek.

“Annie, I’m so sorry,” Trish said, reaching out for my hand. I felt ashamed for getting so emotional in front of this woman I barely knew. She was really sweet to me; I didn’t want to burden her with my sorrows.

"I'm sorry...I don't want to...I can't..." I picked up my napkin and tried to dry my tears.

"Annie. Come," Trish said, getting up from the table and leading me to the couch. "Lunch can wait. Let it all out, sweetie." We sat together and she held me while I sobbed, and in between crying jags she blotted my tears with a tissue. I knew this was coming, ever since I caught the scent of Julia's perfume when Denise and I were in the fitting room. I felt like a spinning top, my emotions delicately balanced on a single point, waiting for the lightest touch to send them wobbling out of control.

"Tell me about her," Trish whispered. And I did, starting with the day I first met Julia, when I had stopped to smell the flowers that grew in her front yard and she suddenly appeared, looking like a ghostly apparition in a gauzy white dress, how we made love in her garden, in her bed, the poetry we read to each other, the scent of her hair, the freckles on her chest. By the time I'd finished painting Julia's portrait with words, my tears had stopped.

Trish had held me the whole time, stroking my hair, rocking me in her arms. I lifted my head from her breasts and looked at her, shining blue eyes misting up as she shared my pain. There was a long, silent moment as the distance between our lips narrowed, and then we kissed, her soft lips meeting mine, parting, her tongue seeking mine, touching, the taste of wine and tears.

"Annie. I can't take advantage..."

“Shhh...” We kissed again, harder this time, passion instead of sorrow. I cupped her breast through her soft sweater and I felt her hand seeking mine, burrowing under my sweater and resting on my bra.

“Show me your bedroom,” I said.

“Annie, are you sure?”

“Show me,” I repeated. Trish smiled and stood up, extending her hand and leading me into her bedroom. Like the rest of the apartment, it was sparsely furnished, with just a bed, dresser, and night table. A full length mirror leaned against the wall, waiting to be mounted inside the closet door. Trish closed the door behind her and unzipped her long wool skirt, stepping out of it and then pulling her sweater over her head. I sat on the edge of the bed, wriggling out of my jeans and pulling off my sweater.

“Nice,” Trish said, running her finger over my bra strap. “Did you buy that today?”

“No, it was a gift from Julia,” I said, unclasping the bra and shrugging the straps off of my shoulders. Trish took her bra off as well and then gently pushed me back on to the bed and crawled on top of me. She had full, round breasts with big brown nipples that stiffened when they rubbed against mine. As we kissed again, our thighs intertwined, pressing against each other’s cleft. We rolled around on the bed, kissing, necking, smooching, sucking on each other’s lips and tongue as our hands roamed everywhere.

And then we were head to toe on her big brass bed, skinning off each other’s panties, parting thighs, a gentle kiss and then a probing tongue. I teased her little pearl from its hiding place, slowly circling it before touching it directly with my tongue.

Trish's head was buried between my thighs, and I could feel her soft breath on my nether lips before she touched me with her lips, kissing me, licking me, pleasing me.

I hadn't come the day before, not with Mr. O'Hare, not with Father Ken, not with Billy, and I'd been too sore down there to do anything about it. I felt my pleasure build almost immediately, even before Trish began to lash my clitoris with her tongue. My thighs began to quiver, and I had to make a conscious effort not to pin Trish's head between them as she ate me. I concentrated on her sex, gently nibbling her swollen clit as I cupped her bottom in my hands. Unlike Sister Katherine's bony figure, Trish had a bit of flesh on her, not too fat but not too skinny either, enough to give her a softness that I hadn't felt in a while. Since Julia.

Trish was close to her release, too, but I came first, all the pent-up sexual tension in my body coming out in an explosive climax. With her lips glued to my sex, she lashed my tender clit with her tongue and probed my slit with her fingers, staying with me even as I thrashed around on her bed. I hadn't been eaten like that in a long time —again, since Julia—and I let her ravish me even after my orgasm faded, until I felt too sensitive down there and had to make her stop.

"Do me. I'm close," she said, looking up from between my thighs. Her hair was a mess and her face moist with my juices, a look of pure, unadulterated lust in her beautiful blue eyes. I kissed her thighs and returned to her cleft, her thighs beginning to quiver as I kissed and licked her sex.

"Annie...yes...yes...oh...oh...omigod...ungh!" Now that her mouth wasn't busy pleasuring me, Trish was free to vocalize her lust. As she came, she pressed her mouth

against my mons and screamed. Even muffled by my flesh, it seemed loud enough to hear on the street, and it sent a rather pleasurable feeling through my belly. I held her shuddering thighs apart and lashed her clit mercilessly, backing off when her climax seemed about to fade, only to return to it and push her over another peak. When she finally pulled her sex away from my mouth, her blue eyes were misting again. She reached for my arm and pulled me up from between her thighs, a tear of pleasure rolling down her cheekbone. We kissed again, the taste of our nectar now mixing with the white wine that lingered on our lips. Trish held me in her arms, caressing me as I laid my head on her breasts.

“Beautiful Annie,” she whispered, gently kissing the top of my head. I held her tighter and kissed her breast, feeling like a massive weight had been lifted from my shoulders.

I could have spent all day in Trish’s big comfortable bed, her breasts my pillow, her gentle caress my blanket. After lying quietly for a while, she tenderly lifted my head and kissed my lips.

“Let’s finish lunch, then you can show me the pretty things you bought today, okay?” she said. We kissed again, and then we got out of bed. Trish pulled a plush bathrobe from the bedroom closet and handed it to me.

“Actually, I just bought one today,” I said. Trish wrapped her robe around her and we left the bedroom. I rummaged through my shopping bags and found my new kimono - style robe, pulling off the sales tags and slipping it on.

“You missed one,” Trish said, kneeling next to me and plucking a small tag from the hem of my robe. “That’s lovely. Where did you find it?”

“Jordan Marsh, in the Juniors department,” I said, taking a sip of wine and sitting down to my half-eaten salad. We talked about clothes while we ate, mostly I listened to Trish talk about cheap places to shop. She had a mere fraction of Julia’s money, but every bit of her sense of style, albeit a style more suited for a younger woman. I helped her clean up afterwards and then we took our shopping bags into her bedroom, modeling our new purchases for each other. Trish thought I looked just darling in the short pink nightie, and I envied the bra and panty set she’d picked up at the boutique, a lacy fire-engine red ensemble with garter belt and red stockings. It was fun, an opportunity to primp, show off, and, of course, to fondle and caress, fingers grazing across a bra cup or pantied bottom.

We made love again, Trish slowly pulling my new sheer black panties down my legs and kissing my sex, bringing me to another climax, not as intense as the first, but wonderful anyway. I returned the favor, curling up between her stocking-clad legs and making her scream again. We lay together, on the edge between afterglow and sleep, until the sun began to set.

“I have to get back,” I said. “They’ll be serving dinner soon.”

“I wish you could stay,” Trish said.

“I’d love that, too.”

“Will I see you again?”

I answered her with a kiss. It seemed as if I could always find another lover, someone with whom I could share my body, my pleasure, but I felt like I'd found a friend in Trish, and that was as precious as a diamond. We kissed for a while and then she helped me fold and pack my new lingerie in the shopping bags. We got dressed quietly in the orange rays of the setting sun that streamed through her bedroom window. She walked me out to the apartment door.

"Hang on a sec," Trish said, going to her purse and riffling through it, coming up with a small white business card. She wrote a number on the back and handed it to me. "Call me. Anytime. Even if you just want to have a glass of wine and talk. Okay?"

"Thank you, Trish," I said, putting down my bags and hugging her.

"Take care of yourself, Anne. I'll see you soon."

"Bye." I gave her another kiss, a quick one on the lips before I left.

* * *

The shelter actually wasn't that far away from her place, though it took me a minute or two to get my bearings. It was even chillier as the sun fell below the skyline, but soon enough I was back at the shelter, the familiar sound of steam hissing from the radiators, announcing the heat. I went up to my room to drop off my things and headed back downstairs just as dinner was served.

"Where'd you go today?" Manny asked, stuffing a forkful of franks and beans into his mouth. "I didn't see you in class."

"Shopping," I said, sitting down next to him with my tray. I was still a bit full from lunch and I just picked at my dinner for a while. The nagging feeling that something

wasn't quite right began to bother me. I looked around. Someone was missing. Billy was here, sitting at another table with some boys his age. Father Ken was in the kitchen, talking with Sister Bernice. It was only after I cleaned off my tray that I realized Chris was gone.

"Annie! Where are you...?" Manny called after me as I rushed upstairs. The door to Chris's room was closed. I knocked out of habit before walking inside. The sheets and pillowcases had been stripped from his bedding, and all of his things were gone, clothes, comic books, the baseball he kept on the table by his bed. I sat down on his bed and picked up his pillow, clutching it to my body the way he used to do, trying to pick up his boy scent on the striped ticking. The material was old, yellowing, stained with the tears of a hundred scared boys.

I tried to cry, but I couldn't. I'd purged my sorrows with Trish and I had no more tears to give for my beautiful, scared, little Chris. I just sat there on his bed, rocking back and forth with his pillow in my arms, remembering how happy he'd been when I agreed to be his 'pretend mommy'.

Manny walked into the room and sat down next to me, putting his arm around me and pulling me close. I swung my legs up on to the bed and, still holding the tear-stained pillow, laid my head in Manny's lap. He leaned over and kissed my cheek before caressing my hair, my shoulder, my arm.

"He left today after lunch," Manny whispered. "Father Ken took him out to the lobby. There was a woman waiting and his things were already packed."

“I’ve got to talk to Father Ken,” I said, lifting my head from his lap. I kissed the pillow, just once, a kiss for Chris, and put it aside before getting up from the bed.

“Annie, wait...” Manny called out. But I’d already left the room.

Father Ken was just pouring an after-dinner drink for himself when I entered his office. He looked startled for a moment—I hadn’t bothered knocking—but his composure returned in a split second. He gestured towards a chair, but I remained standing.

“To what do I owe this unexpected pleasure, Anne?”

“Where did Chris go?” I asked him. I was in the anger stage of loss, and I had to try my best to conceal my rage.

“Sit down, Anne. Let’s talk.” His face softened, the sincere look that made him such a successful counselor, minister, fundraiser, forming on his face. I took a seat, crossing my legs and folding my hands in my lap.

“We’ve managed to place Christopher with a family, an adoptive family, not a foster home. He’s one of the lucky few. It’s exceedingly rare that we find a family willing to accept one of our boys into their home. You should be happy for him, Anne.” Father Ken’s words took a moment to sink in, and I realized that this was the best possible outcome for Chris. He’d have a real family again, a loving father and mother, not a fourteen-year-old ‘pretend’ mother. I felt my eyes begin to well up with tears, tears I thought would never come. Father Ken pushed the box of tissues on his desk over to me.

“You were close, Anne?” he asked as I dried my eyes.

“He was so scared. He missed his mother so much,” I said. My anger had melted, only the raw feeling of loss remained. “I’d hold him and rock him in my arms until he’d stop crying.”

“Anne,” Father Ken said, getting up from behind his desk and coming over to kneel next to me. He brushed a strand of hair from my face and stroked my teary cheek. “You’re an angel, Anne. But Christopher needs a real home.”

I could just nod my head. The lump in my throat was too big, blocking the words I wanted to say. I wanted to ask Father Ken to hold me, to rock me in his arms and dry my tears.

“Can I get you something?” he asked. “A drink? Would you like a pill?”

I shook my head. Manny knew what I wanted, just some comfort, a gentle caress, a tender kiss. All Father Ken had to give me was intoxication, escape.

“Thank you, Father. I just wanted to know.” I got up from the chair and left his office. I went back up to my room and lay on my bed, quietly sobbing into my pillow. My feeling of loss was tempered by shame; I felt selfish for missing Chris now. He was probably sleeping in a nice warm bed at this moment, with a mother to tuck him in and a father to read him a bedtime story. Still, even though I’d known him for just a week, I couldn’t help but feel like he’d been torn from my womb.

Even though I turned down Father Ken’s offer of a pill, it was to the little orange plastic vial he’d given me that I turned. I tapped a few pills into my palm, painkiller, tranquilizer, sleeping pill, painkiller, tranquilizer, sleeping pill. I took a painkiller, a Dilaudid, swallowing it dry. As I laid my head on my pillow, waiting for the flood of

warmth to spread through my body, there was a soft knocking on the door, and then it opened.

“Annie? Are you okay?” Manny asked. Billy was there with him. I nodded, my tears already starting to dry up on my eyelashes.

“I’m sorry about Chris,” Billy said, standing next to the bed.

“He’s in a good home now,” I said. “It’s all for the best.”

“What can we do?” Manny asked. “Is there anything we can do?”

“Just lie with me,” I said. “Both of you. Please?” The boys shucked off their shoes and crawled into bed with me, one on either side, holding me, gently kissing me.

“He was my little boy,” I whispered, right before I fell asleep.

* * *

I woke up early the next morning, still dressed in my jeans and sweater from the day before, my eyes crusty from dried tears. Manny and Billy were already gone. It was that quiet time in the shelter, before anyone was awake, before the sound of traffic began to filter up from the street. I skinned off my clothes and put on my new kimono, padding barefoot across the hall to take a shower.

The boys were all still asleep as I went downstairs for breakfast. I felt dead inside, especially when I passed Chris’s empty room, the bare mattress and the stained pillow. I thought about sitting in there for a while but I’d only be torturing myself.

Sister Bernice was busy in the kitchen, preparing breakfast. I decided to help her, and she was glad to have an assistant. I was just content to be doing something that would get my mind off of things, even a simple task like cracking two dozen eggs and beating

them in a chipped porcelain bowl. She wasn't used to having an assistant in the morning, and we bumped into each other often as she went from freezer to counter to stove, my skinny hips bouncing off of her broad bottom.

"I'm sorry, Sister," I said, feeling like I was in her way.

"Nonsense, Anne. I'm happy to have some company this early," she said, as if she could read my mind. "Are you all right dear? Something troubling you?"

"I miss Chris," I said, picking a stray bit of eggshell from the bowl.

"He was a darling little boy, an angel," she said. "I miss him, too."

Sister Bernice made me sit down while she prepared her special scrambled eggs for me, not too runny, not too firm, with some cream cheese added into the mix. It was delicious, but I began to have a craving for eggs the way Ramon's sisters would make, fried in oil and served with salsa and a hot tortilla, fresh from the stove. I thanked Sister Bernice for her kindness and cleaned my dishes, heading back upstairs to write for a while just as the shelter's residents began to stir and rub the sleep from their eyes.

Classes seemed to drag on forever that day. It didn't help that Sister Josephine never once left the room, so Manny and I couldn't talk or pass a note, except during lunch. I was feeling a bit better, and I could tell that he knew this. We held each other's hands under the table during lunch, and once, during afternoon classes, he reached for my hand while Sister Josephine's back was turned and gave it a gentle squeeze.

I missed Chris, but I still had Manny and Billy, Sister Katherine, and even Father Ken, who could sometimes be affectionate after we made love, though he usually fell asleep. And then there was Trish. Before dinner, I called the number she'd written on the

back of her business card, but there was no answer, not even a machine. I tried again after dinner, but still no one picked up the phone.

Manny was sitting on his bed, a baseball mitt in one hand, ball in the other, trying to work the glove into the proper shape. For a moment, he could have been Del, who used to sit on his bed the same way, doing the same thing.

“Hey,” he said, looking up.

“Hey,” I answered. “Let’s get fucked up.”

“Let’s get Billy, too,” Manny said. “He’s got some primo hash.” We knocked on Billy’s door on the way up to my room. He put aside his comic book and followed us upstairs, stopping off at the bathroom across the hall to get a wet towel for the door. Once inside my room, we pulled the mattress off of the bed and on to the floor and began to undress, stripping down to our underwear.

While Billy rolled a joint from my stash, sprinkling crumbs of hashish into the pot, I passed around the Valium and we washed it down with a pint of rum that Manny had scored the day before. Just as I missed the taste of eggs and salsa, I missed the smooth sweetness of rum as well. It was a reminder of a happier time, a golden time. I began to smile as I remembered those times.

“It’s good to see you smile again, Annie,” Billy said, lighting the joint and taking a big hit before passing it to me.

“I was just...nevermind,” I said. I couldn’t explain; I just kissed Billy on the cheek, and then Manny, happy to have them with me, glad that I wasn’t alone that night. We finished the joint and had some more rum before we began to make out, Manny and I

locking lips while Billy kissed and suckled my breasts. Billy had just pulled my panties down my thighs when I remembered that I had to put in my diaphragm. The boys watched, fascinated, as I went through the familiar ritual, filling the latex cap with spermicidal jelly, folding it, and slipping it inside me.

The taste didn't bother Billy, and he ate me out like a champ, making me quiver and moan on the lumpy mattress while Manny attended to my breasts. Afterwards, I sucked their hard young cocks, first Billy, then Manny, until they glistened and throbbed, ready for my pleasure. Manny lay on his back as I straddled him, guiding his lovely penis inside me, and then I presented my bottom for Billy, who had already greased his pole with hand lotion.

With Billy in my ass and Manny's cock in my hungry pussy, we found our rhythm and fucked slowly, steadily, our heads full of rum, pot, and Valium. Their hard boycocks pressed against each other inside me, a delicious friction that brought me to another climax. I pressed my lips against Manny's, trying not to cry out as I came. Billy clung to my back, his hands traveling around to my breasts, squeezing them as he pumped my tender bottom. I felt him twitch inside me, spurting once before he softened and slipped out, climbing off of my back to wipe off his messy cock with the wet towel he'd stuffed under the door.

Manny lasted a bit longer, even though I began to hump his hard pole faster after Billy had pulled out of my ass, but eventually his body stiffened and he let a quiet gasp escape from his lips as he came. Unlike Billy, Manny's cock spurted a few times as it twitched inside me, filling me with his hot boycum. I clenched myself around his

softening cock, trying to milk the last few drops from his fuzzy balls, and then I collapsed on his chest, satisfied. Billy lay next to us, gently caressing my back.

We smoked another joint and finished off the rum. I would have loved to have them both spend the night in my bed, but after our little scare with Father Kevin, this was just tempting fate, last night notwithstanding. The boys got dressed and helped me pull the mattress back on to the bed before leaving.

“Thanks,” I said, kissing them both.

“Hey, anything for my sister,” Billy said. “Right, bro?”

“Yeah, anything. Anything at all,” Manny said. I hugged them both and then watched them leave before putting my kimono on and heading across the hall to take a bath.

I was heading back to my room when I heard it. A quiet sobbing, coming from Chris’s room. My heart pounded as I stood there listening, wondering if I was hallucinating, wondering if he’d returned to the shelter, his new family rejecting him. I stood outside his door. It was real, not my imagination, but it sounded different. I knocked on the door; there was no answer. I knocked again and opened it.

She was young, so terribly young, no older than eight or nine years of age, lying on the bed in a fetal position, sucking her thumb and crying into her pillow. I walked over to the bed and sat on the edge, reaching out to caress her, comfort her. She flinched from my touch, rolling over on to her other side, her back to me, her body heaving with each thumb-muffled sob. It was then that I noticed that she’d wet herself. There was a yellowish stain on the fresh sheets and her panties were wet .

“Sweetie, honey,” I cooed, brushing her red hair from her tear -stained face. She rolled over again and looked at me. The front of her little t -shirt was wet, too, but from tears. “Let’s get you out of those wet things, okay?” She looked at me for a second and nodded, her thumb still firmly clamped between her lips. Such beautiful green eyes, fair skin, some freckles, but not as many as the red -headed Billy. She sat up in bed and accepted my embrace, and I rocked her gently in my arms as her sobbing began to cease.

“Come, let’s get you into the bath. Would you like a nice warm bath?” She nodded again, still silent, still looking as if the tears were about to start again. I took her by the hand and led her to the bathroom next door. The tub had just finished draining from my bath, so I sat the girl down on the toilet seat, rinsed the last suds from the bathtub, and began to fill it with warm water.

While the tub filled up, I knelt next to the little girl, drying her tears before helping her out of her t-shirt and wet panties. I let them soak in some soapy water in the sink while I helped her into the tub. She was a tiny girl, a scared girl, the last traces of babyfat plumpness remaining on her little body. As she sat quietly, sucking her thumb, I gently washed her with a soapy washcloth.

“My name is Annie. What’s yours?” She said nothing, didn’t even take her thumb out of her mouth.

“You don’t want to tell me your name?” She shook her head.

“Such a pretty girl. I’m sure you have a lovely name to match. Is it Bertha?” She shook her head again.

“Gladys?” Another silent shake of the head.

“Griselda? I’ll bet your name is Griselda,” I said, rinsing the soap from her creamy skin.

“Megan,” she said in a raspy voice, a voice that sounded like she’d been crying for days. “My name is Megan.”

“Megan. That’s a beautiful name. Come, let’s dry you off.” I helped her out of the tub and dried her with a towel, wrapping her up so she wouldn’t catch a chill. Before we returned to her room, I rinsed out her wet panties and t-shirt and wrung them out, hanging them on a bathroom hook to dry. I took Megan’s hand and led her back to her room.

“Let’s take care of this in the morning,” I said, stripping the wet sheet from the mattress. Someone must have anticipated this happening, as there was a rubberized mattress cover underneath the sheet. I stripped that off as well and left the soiled bedding on the floor. There was a little valise on the floor, next to a tattered dress she’d been wearing before someone put her to bed. I opened the valise and looked inside. There were some clothes, underwear, a hair brush, nothing else. I picked out a fresh pair of panties and helped Megan step into them.

“Do you have these accidents a lot, Megan?” She shook her head, her thumb back in its usual place.

“Just this once?” She nodded.

“Would you like to sleep in my bed? With me?” She nodded again.

“Okay, baby. Come,” I said, holding out my hand. We went to my room, where the smell of pot and hash lingered. I tucked her into my bed and took off my kimono. Though I wanted to wear my new nightie, I didn’t want to risk wearing it to bed. Megan might

have another “accident” during the night. Wearing just a pair of cotton panties, I crawled into bed next to her. Immediately, she snuggled up against my body, her warmth mingling with my own. She finally pulled her thumb from her mouth and closed her eyes, resting her head against my shoulder. I gave her a tender kiss on the cheek and turned out the light.

* * *

“Mommy! Mommmmmmyyyy!!!” Megan was sitting up in bed. It was still pitch black outside. I turned on the light, and we both began squinting against the sudden brightness.

“Annie’s here, baby,” I said, taking her in my arms, holding her trembling little body. “Annie’s here.”

“Mommy,” she said, softer this time, like it was a special magic word that would protect her.

“I’m here baby.” I didn’t want to say that, I didn’t want to be a ‘pretend’ mom again, like with Chris. But it just came out, naturally.

“Annie,” she said, in the same quiet voice.

“I’m here baby. I’m here. Just a nightmare, sweetie. You’re safe with me.”

“Annie,” she said again, clinging to me, hugging me. Her face was wet but the bed was dry. Just tears, just a few tears. We held each other, a gentle rocking calming her, reassuring her. Her trembling stopped, her breathing became regular again.

“I’ve got to go pee,” she said.

“Okay, climb out,” I said, pulling the blanket aside.

“Come with me,” she said. “Please?”

“Okay, just a second.” I put my robe on and led her across the hall. As she pulled down her panties and sat on the toilet to empty her bladder, I wrung out her wet undies again and put them back on the hook. They’d be dry in the morning. Megan wiped herself, pulled her panties back up, and flushed the toilet. I took her hand and we went back to my room, to bed.

I was a bit disoriented when I woke up, lingering effects of the drugs I’d had the night before. It took me a moment to remember who was in bed next to me.

Megan was fast asleep. She looked so pretty, so angelic as she slept, no tears, no thumbsucking, no wet panties. I watched her sleep for a while, not wanting to break the spell, reluctant to wake her up. She lay on her back, her red hair spilling over the pillow, her legs askew. Such a pretty little girl. There was something about her flat chest, tiny brown nipples atop nothing more than small pads of babyfat, that reminded me of Luci, my best friend from grade school. I wanted to kiss Megan’s little buds, to suckle them, to give her a taste of the pleasure I felt. Her panties pressed against her babyfat labia, and it was all I could do to keep from kissing her down there, to make her squirm and squeal, to make her come.

Too young. She was too young. In a year or two, she’d have the same curiosity about sex that drove Luci and I to explore each other’s bodies, to find our pleasure. I softly kissed Megan’s round little tummy and wondered where Luci was right now. Probably still in Ohio or wherever she’d moved with her mother, probably still asleep or getting ready for school. I wondered if she had a boyfriend, or a girlfriend, or if she was

lonely, if she was thinking about me, wondering where I was at that moment. I looked out the window, in the direction of what I thought might be the west, towards Luci, wondering if my thoughts could travel that far.

“Wake up, sleepyhead. Time to get up,” I whispered, kissing Megan’s cheek, gently rousing her from her slumber. She opened her beautiful green eyes and smiled.

“Annie,” she said, putting her arms around me. I pulled her tiny body on top of mine, cupping her little bottom and stroking her hair.

“Good morning, angel. Sleep well?”

“Yes, Annie,” she said. I could have laid in bed and held her all day, but we had to get up, get dressed, get ready for breakfast and everything after. Megan rubbed her eyes as we got out of bed, and, after I wrapped my kimono around me, we went into the bathroom to wash up. Megan’s t-shirt and panties were still on the hook behind the door, dry now, and I took them with me as I led her back to her room to get dressed.

She followed me to my room and sat on the bed while I changed my panties and put on my plaid skirt and blouse for class. I wore one of my new bras, a cotton soft -cup.

Megan sat next to me at breakfast, letting me butter her toast for her. She sat close to me as if we were joined at the hip. After we finished eating, Father Ken and Sister Bernice came out of the kitchen and walked over to our table.

“I see you’ve met Megan,” Father Ken said to me. “Come, Megan. You’re going to spend the day with Sister Bernice while Anne goes to class.” The nun smiled and held out her hand.

“I want to stay with Annie,” Megan said.

“Come, dearie. We’ll have fun together,” Sister Bernice said. Megan looked up at me; she looked like she was about to start crying again.

“Go with Sister Bernice,” I said. “I’ve got to go to class, but I’ll be back in a couple of hours for lunch. I’ll see you then, okay?” Megan didn’t cry, but she got up from the table slowly, reluctantly.

“Do you like to color, Megan?” Sister Bernice asked as she led the little girl into the kitchen.

“Anything I should know about, Anne?” Father Ken asked.

“I heard her crying last night, so I held her for a while. But she had wet the bed, so I bathed her and let her sleep with me,” I said.

“I noticed that when I went to check on her this morning,” he said. “I figured she might be with you.” I began to wonder if Father Ken had poked his head into my room while we were asleep. He sat down next to me and leaned over.

“She’ll probably be placed with a family very soon,” he whispered. “Enjoy it while it lasts.” As he got up and left, that word, “enjoy”, stuck in my head. It was an odd choice of words. What did Father Ken think went on last night?

As slow as class was the day before, the morning went by quickly, and it seemed as if I had just finished breakfast when I sat down for lunch. Megan came bounding out of the kitchen when she saw me sit down to eat with Billy and Manny, wrapping her arms around me and giving me a big hug.

“I missed you, Annie,” she said. I remembered how just a couple of hours could seem like a year when you’re that age.

“I missed you, too, angel,” I said, kissing her forehead.

“I want to show you what I colored,” Megan said, bounding back into the kitchen and returning with a coloring book, the Official Pope Paul VI Coloring Book. Megan sat between me and Billy, showing me how well she’d colored in the Vatican’s coat -of-arms.

“Let me show you the house,” she said, opening the coloring book to a blank page in the back. It was a typical child’s drawing of a house, an open square, a peaked roof with a chimney, curls of smoke rising past the sun’s simple yellow disk. Inside the open square were stick figures, one next to a square stove, two smaller ones together, holding hands.

“That’s me, and that’s you, and that’s Sister Bernice making us breakfast,” she explained.

“What about Billy and Manny?” I said. “Don’t you want two strong, handsome brothers to keep the dragons away?” Megan wrinkled her little button nose, a gesture of mild disgust. I looked at my two “brothers”. They rolled their eyes in unison.

“It’s a lovely house, Megan. We’ll live there some day,” I said, leaning over for a kiss on the cheek from my little angel. Megan wasn’t as upset to see me go when lunchtime was over, like she’d been after breakfast. She seemed to enjoy Sister Bernice’s affectionate company. I watched her bound back into the kitchen before heading back to class.

I was distracted during afternoon class, fantasizing about Megan’s little home, except it was Julia cooking for us instead of Sister Bernice, and it was Julia’s house, her

flowers, her garden, her bed. I thought about the three of us sharing Julia's big four - poster, and I was holding Megan in my arms while Julia lapped at her puffy labia.

No, no, no. I tried to erase that image from my mind. Too young, Megan's too young. Too young to understand, too young to comprehend, too young to feel anything but the love of a mother and father, not the kind of love I shared with Julia. In my distraction, I didn't hear Sister Josephine calling on me until she cleared her throat. I managed to croak out the correct answer, though it was more of a lucky guess. Even so, I was given an extra assignment for not paying attention to the lesson.

After classes let out for the day, I went upstairs to do my punishment assignment, resisting the temptation to go into the kitchen to check up on Megan. I so badly wanted to hug her, to kiss her, to see her drawing of the house again, but I was afraid of getting too attached to my little angel. I knew she'd be gone soon, like Chris, to a loving family. Besides, she was in good hands with Sister Bernice.

Megan was so happy to see me again. She had a whole new set of crayon drawings, the two of us on a boat, riding horses, even another house, this time with stick figures of Billy and Manny. She drew Billy's hair in the same orange-red hue as her own. The four of us ate dinner together, and Megan talked a mile a minute, much to the disdain of Billy and Manny, not that they were known for sparkling dinner conversation. I was pleased to see the change in Megan's demeanor from the night before, when she'd been a terrified little girl, unwilling to even tell me her name.

Megan stopped talking as soon as she saw Father Ken approach. There was something about him that scared her, cowed her back into silence.

“Megan,” he said, holding out his hand. “Come with me, dear.”

“Where are we going?” she asked.

“Just to my office. To talk. Come,” he said. She stood up slowly, leaving her drawings at the table, giving me a look of fear as Father Ken led her from the dining room.

“I don’t like this,” I said. Billy and Manny said nothing, but I could tell that they were thinking the same thing: Father Ken was going to give her an “examination”.

We were back in my room after dinner, the three of us sitting on the floor passing around a hash-laced joint, the stack of Megan’s drawings on my lap.

“I don’t like it. She’s too young for this shit,” I said, passing the joint back to Billy.

“Maybe he’ll just look at her, or touch her just a bit,” he said. “He didn’t really touch me until the second time.” This was brave of Billy; he didn’t like to talk about the things Father Ken and the other priests did to him. He repressed it all, hid it deep inside. For him to remember something like this was a bold step.

“I don’t like it either,” Manny said. “But what can we do?”

“We could go to the police,” I said, remembering the scandal that surrounded the guidance counselor back in Maine, the one who took a student into a motel. She was seventeen. Ratting out Father Ken would produce an even bigger shitstorm.

“No, no cops, no way, no how,” Manny said. “They just fuck everything up.”

“Then who?” I asked. “Another priest?”

“They’re all in on it,” Billy said. “Every priest in the city comes here for a piece.”

“Fuck. Then what?” I said. We finished the joint in silence. Worrying about Megan really killed the mood. I’d wanted to party with Billy and Manny, to be sandwiched between their smooth young bodies, to come like I did the night before, to feel their warm semen drip out of me as we lay together. But little Megan’s safety was on all of our minds. I passed up the offer to smoke another joint and after a while the boys left to scrounge up something to eat, leaving me alone in my room, alone with my thoughts.

About an hour later I heard footsteps in the hallway. Hard shoes, not the sneakers most of the boys wore around the shelter. Then I heard Megan’s door close, and the footsteps receded into the distance. I counted to 10 and went into the hall, pressing my ear against her door. Silence.

I knocked twice before going in. Megan was lying on her bed, wearing just her panties. Her ratty little dress hung over the foot of the bed. She was curled up on her side, her back to me. I walked over to the bed and sat next to her.

“Megan? Sweetie? Are you all right?”

“Annie...,” she rasped, rolling over and holding out her arms. I hugged her, kissed her, relieved that she seemed to be safe and unharmed. Her eyes were red and puffy, and I knew she’d been crying, but she was quiet now.

“What’s this?” I asked, feeling something sticky on her chest. “Lay back for a second, sweetie.” Megan let go of me and I checked her for bruises, scrapes, any visible sign of abuse. She was fine, but it was obvious that someone had done something; the stickiness was semen. Most of it had been wiped off, but some traces remained.

“Let’s take a bath, okay?” I said. Megan nodded, and I led her to the bathroom. While the water ran, I knelt next to her and held her, wondering what had happened in Father Ken’s office. My questions were partially answered when I helped Megan step out of her panties. Her smooth little labia were red and tender.

“Does it hurt down there?” I asked her. She nodded, her thumb stuck in her mouth.

“Did Father Ken touch you there?” Another nod. I checked the temperature of the water and helped Megan into the tub.

“What else did he do?” I asked her as I soaped up her chest, washing away the priest’s semen.

“He pulled his pee pee out,” she said, her voice still hoarse from crying.

“And then what?”

“He rubbed it on me and then it squirted pee.”

“White stuff?” Megan nodded. Remembering this scary incident brought the tears back. I held her and washed the tears away with a washcloth.

“I won’t let him hurt you, baby. I promise,” I whispered. She nodded again and pressed her head against my breasts. After I finished bathing her and drying her off, I wrapped her in a towel and hustled her back into my room. Megan climbed into my bed, and I could see the chafing on her labia as she slid her legs under the blanket.

“Let me see you again, honey,” I whispered, pulling the blanket down. “Does it still hurt?” She nodded her head. I wanted to give her something, maybe a little piece of a Dilaudid, but I was afraid of the effect it might have on someone so young. Instead, I

reached for the small bottle of hand lotion I kept next to the bed and squeezed some into my palm, rubbing it around with my fingers to warm it up.

“Tell me if this hurts, sweetie,” I said, gently rubbing her inflamed labia. She was wary of being touched there again, holding her arms up in a defensive posture. But I was especially gentle and, as the lotion soothed her tender area, she relaxed, settling back into my pillow.

“Feel better, Megan?”

“Yes, Annie,” she sighed. “Thank you, Annie.”

“My poor little angel,” I cooed, kissing her belly, her chest, her nose, her forehead. She closed her eyes and smiled as I rubbed the lotion on her abused little cunny. I pulled the blanket up over her again and gave her a tender kiss on the lips, and then I watched her while she fell asleep.

It was still early in the evening, but I was exhausted from worrying about Megan and tired from the joints I’d smoked with Billy and Manny. There was one thing I had to do first, though. I pushed my dresser over to the door, slowly, quietly, trying not to wake up Megan. It was made of cheap veneer and almost empty, not heavy enough to block the door. I pushed it until it was a few inches away from the doorknob, hoping that if someone did try to enter the room in the middle of the night, the sound of the knob hitting the dresser would startle the intruder, or, at the very least, wake us up.

I got undressed and slipped under the covers, putting my arm around Megan’s slumbering form, giving her a light kiss on the cheek before settling my head on the pillow next to her angelic face.

That night I had the strangest dream. We were on Ramon's boat, Megan and I, just the two of us, drifting in the middle of the ocean. It was sunny, but the waves were enormous, towering over the fishing boat and tossing it up and down. We were huddled in the forward cabin, where Del and Paco slept, listening to the waves crest and splash against the hull. The boat reeked of diesel fuel and rotting fish, but somehow I wasn't sick, despite the heavy seas.

We were wet, our clothes were soaked, and I was helping Megan out of her dress and underwear, drying her off with a towel that bore a Ritz-Carlton monogram. Then it was my turn to undress. I was wearing my long peasant skirt and the wet fabric clung to my legs. After I stepped out of the wet clothes, I pulled off my panties and looked down: I had a penis. It was small and smooth like Billy's boycock, devoid of hair. I looked back up at Megan, who was lying on the cushioned bunk. She spread her legs and looked up at me with an expression of anticipation, a strange lust in her eyes.

Without a word between us, I lay on top of her and we began to kiss, not the motherly kisses I'd given her before, but passionate kisses, intense kisses, lovers' kisses. Megan looked down between her legs and then back up at me and she nodded. I pressed my hips forward, feeling my dream cock press into her folds, inside her, through her cherry. Megan winced slightly as I tore through her hymen and then she smiled again and started sucking her thumb. I began to thrust.

Something woke me up, a sharp sound and a loud thump. I sat up in bed and saw that my door was open slightly. I tried to remember if I had closed it before I went to sleep. I must have. I always did. I quietly climbed out of bed and went over to the dresser.

There was a small mark on the side, exactly level with the doorknob. After I closed the door, I slid the dresser against the door, just to be sure, and went back to sleep. Whomever it was probably wouldn't come back, or so I hoped.

I was wide awake, though. I watched Megan sleep peacefully for a while and then decided to take a sleeping pill. There was a can of flat soda from the night before, so I washed it down with that. I laid my head back on the pillow and waited for the pill to take effect.

* * *

We slept undisturbed for the rest of that night. In the morning, I checked Megan again before she got dressed. The chafing looked better, but there were a couple of small bruises on the insides of her thighs, roughly the size of a finger or thumb print. Megan was in a happy mood that morning, with Father Ken's "examination" the night before a fading memory.

I didn't share her bright mood that morning. Her bruises lingered on my mind, especially after I remembered having similar marks on my thighs after a night with Del. He liked to hold my thighs when we fucked, my legs resting on his shoulders as he pounded my pussy with his hard cock. His thumbs would dig into my flesh, something I'd hardly notice in the heat of our lovemaking, but some faint bruises would show up afterwards. I'd see them the next morning when I showered. They didn't hurt, and because I liked it when Del was a little rough, I never said anything to him about it. But I couldn't bear to see these same bruises on Megan's creamy skin.

Megan went with Sister Bernice after breakfast. Just like yesterday, I was distracted during classes, but I managed to pay enough attention to Sister Josephine to keep from getting hit with another penalty assignment. Manny kept glancing over at me, his brow furrowed with worry. When class broke for lunch, he caught up with me as we headed towards the dining room.

“How is she?” he asked.

“She’s okay, but...”

“But what?” I told him how I found her the night before, the dried semen on her skin, the chafing, the bruises. Manny clenched his teeth and shook his head as he listened. I could feel his rage, the tightness in his chest. He kept balling his hands into fists and then relaxing them.

“Annie, we gotta do something,” he said.

“What?” I was at a loss, I couldn’t think of who to turn to. Sister Bernice? Sister Josephine? Trish? Michael? If only I could remember the name of Julia’s law firm. Maybe they could help.

“I dunno. Something,” Manny said, still seething.

“Manny, don’t do anything stupid. Promise me,” I said. When it came down to it, I really didn’t know him all that well. He was a strong kid, a street kid, and I had no doubt that he could beat the crap out of Father Ken.

“Yeah, okay. I promise. But if he hurts her again...”

“I know, I know,” I said. I pictured myself kicking Father Ken in the crotch, over and over again.

Megan still wore her sunny disposition as we had lunch together. We sat with Manny and Billy flanking us, like bodyguards, looking around between bites to see if Father Ken was near. I felt somewhat safer having Billy and Manny with us, acting protective, safety in numbers.

I didn't see Father Ken until after lunch. He was waiting by the door to Sister Josephine's classroom, and he pulled me aside as Manny and the other boys entered the room.

"Father Steve is coming by tonight," he said. "He'd like to see you again."

"Okay," I said, a sinking feeling in my stomach. "Father..."

"Did you buy something nice with the money I gave you?" he said, cutting me off.

"Yes, Father," I replied.

"Good, good. Wear it tonight," he said. "I'll see you after supper."

"Father? I'd like to talk..."

"Sorry, Anne. I've got to run. There's a meeting of the board of directors and I'm running late. We can talk later."

"Yes, Father," I said. As he turned on his heel and left, I entered the classroom and took my seat. Manny looked over and shook his head, and I returned the gesture. Even if Father Ken had the time to talk, I couldn't think of anything to say other than "You hurt Megan, you prick". As for sleeping with Father Steve again, I dreaded it, feeling his clumsy hands on my body, squeezing my breasts and bottom as he speared me with his fat, stubby penis.

But I had no choice. If I didn't do it, Megan would probably take my place in Father Ken's bed. I shuddered to think what would happen if Mr. O'Hare decided she was ready for her First Communion. I'd gladly sacrifice my body for her, for Billy and Manny, too, for all the boys in the shelter, whether I knew them or not. I pretty much knew all of their names by then, Joey, Gregg, Scotty, who everyone called "Scooter", Marcel, who was the only black child in the shelter, Fat Mario, who always had a smile for me, Bobby and Lenny, my classmates with Manny, Billy's friend Max, Barry, the really shy kid with the curly black hair. Even though almost all of the priests who visited the shelter in the evenings seemed to prefer boys, giving me a wide berth, I knew that every time I slept with one it meant that one of the boys would be left alone that night.

"Manny, do me a big favor," I said.

"Anything, bonita," he said.

"I've got to see Father Steve tonight in Father Ken's office. I don't know how long it will take. Could you stay with Megan? Keep her company in my room until I get back?"

"Sure. No problem," he said. He and Billy followed as I led Megan upstairs to my room. They stopped off in Manny's room for a minute and were knocking on my door as I was getting ready to go downstairs to Father Ken's office. Megan sat on my bed and watched me undress, exchanging my plaid skirt, white blouse, and cotton underwear for the sheer black bra and panty set, my shortest skirt, and my tightest sweater. She was especially curious about my diaphragm, her eyes wide as she watched me insert it inside my vagina. I didn't know how to explain it to her without going into the whole sperm and

egg thing or that “When two people love each other a lot...” bullshit. Love had nothing to do with what I’d be doing that evening.

“Smoke before you go?” Billy asked, pulling a fat joint from his pocket. I nodded, not wanting to go down there straight. As Billy went to get a wet towel for the door, I considered taking a Valium or something to calm my nerves, but it would only keep me from confronting Father Ken. A bit of pot, that’s all I wanted, though a drink would be nice, too.

Before I left, the boys showed me what they had stopped off to get from Manny’s room. Billy had a folding knife, sort of like the one Ramon wore on the boat, with a dark brown wooden handle stained from sweat and skin oil. Manny had a collapsible baton made of some shiny black metal, a rubber handle, and a leather loop at the end. There was a small metal ball on the other end, the size of a marble, and it looked pretty nasty as Manny whipped it back and forth.

“Megan’s safe with us,” Manny said. “No one’s gonna take her anywhere.”

“No one,” Billy repeated.

“Megan, honey. I’ll be back in a little while, okay?” I said, sitting on the bed next to her. She nodded her head and held out her arms for a hug. I kissed her precious red hair and her peachy cheeks.

* * *

Father Ken was seated behind his desk, but Father Steve was nowhere in sight. I sat down across from the desk and Father Ken poured me a drink, bourbon mixed with cola. He pushed it across the table.

“Father Steve is waiting for you,” he said, nodding his head in the direction of the bedroom.

“Yes, Father. Could we...?”

“Did you wear something special?” he asked, cutting me off.

“Yes, Father. Could we talk about...?”

“Let me see.”

I put down my drink and raised the front of my sweater so he could see the sheer black bra, the dark circles of my areolae showing through the thin material.

“Come here,” he said. I got up and walked behind his desk, over to his chair. He lifted the front of my skirt, exposing the matching panties, the dark line of my cleft visible through the crotch. He brushed against my sex with his fingers, a distant look in his eyes.

“Father, I want to talk about Megan,” I said quietly .

“I know,” he said. “We’ll talk later, I promise. He’s waiting.” He nodded his head towards the bedroom and let go of my skirt, letting it fall back over my thighs. “Go.”

“Yes, Father.” I left his office as he was pouring himself another drink. The lights in the bedroom were off, but I could make out a shape on the bed once my eyes adjusted to the darkness.

“Andie? Is that you?” Father Steve asked.

“Annie. It’s Annie.”

“Oh, right. Annie. How are you tonight?”

“Fine, Father.” I didn’t want to make small talk. I just wanted to get it over with. I took off my clothes, sweater, skirt, bra, panties, and climbed into bed with him. Last week he had been tentative, clumsy, but this time his hand went straight to my breasts, cupping them, kneading them, not as roughly as before.

“That thing you did with your mouth,” Father Steve said. “Do that again.”

“Yes, Father.” I sat up and leaned over his belly, taking his stiff cock and heavy balls in my hands, guiding his fat glans into my mouth, sinking my lips down his thick shaft. He sighed and ran his hand over my back, caressing me as I sucked him. He was already hard and twitching, a drop of precum weeping from the tip of his tool.

“That’s enough,” he said, tugging at my arm and pulling me back on the bed. Then he rolled over on top of me, spreading my legs apart with his knees and stuffing his stubby cock inside me. I wasn’t nearly wet enough for this, but there was enough of my saliva on his penis and it didn’t hurt too much. As he began to thrust, I loosened up a bit, getting wetter as his glans dragged across the sensitive spot inside my cunny.

He fucked me slowly, steadily, his bulk pinning me to the bed, nearly cutting off my breathing. I held his flabby waist, grabbing his “love handles” as his hips kept up an even rhythm, pushing his plug of a cock in and out of my slit. I was actually starting to enjoy this. Father Steve was a little too heavy, but I was reminded of the times that Ramon would make love to me, how I loved to feel him on top of me, feeling almost helpless as he pounded my tender pussy.

I felt that familiar tension start to form in my belly, the harbinger of an orgasm. I tried to move my hips, to feel Father Steve’s cock go deeper inside me, but he was too

heavy. I could barely move. He just kept rocking his hips against mine, his face buried in my hair, his hot breath against my neck, smelling of bourbon or something. The squeaking of the bed got louder, faster, and then I felt him hesitate for a moment, a hitch in the rhythm of his hips right before he came inside me, a torrent of sperm flowing from his bulbous cockhead, a week's worth of unrelieved sexual tension flooding my pussy. He grunted once and rolled off of me, lying on his side, his softening cock laying across his thigh like a discarded cigar butt.

I sat up and bunched the sheets between my legs, hoping to stem the flow of semen that leaked from my slit. I hadn't come, and I was close, so close that I felt dizzy. Maybe Father Ken would lick me like he did the last time, maybe fuck me, too. Maybe that would make it easier to talk about Megan. I started to get out of bed, but Father Steve grabbed my arm.

"We're not done yet," he said. "Get back here."

"Yes, Father," I said. He reached for my breasts again, rougher this time, pinching my nipples until I began to flinch away from him. Then he put his hand on the back of my head and guided me down to his crotch. It smelled musty this time, sweaty, damp from the exertion of our last coupling. I took his flaccid cock in my mouth again, licking and sucking it until he was hard again, at which point he tugged my arm, pulling me back up on the bed.

Father Steve mounted me once more, this time pulling my legs up and holding my thighs in his hands as he pushed his cock into my messy slit. It was much easier this time, with his penis riding on a slippery carpet of his own spunk, making obscene squishing

sounds as it pistoned in and out of my sex. He tightened his grip on my thighs and began to fuck me faster. I knew I'd see bruises in the morning, but I was beyond caring at this point. Better me than Megan, I thought. Better me than Megan.

My interrupted climax began anew, the tension spreading from my belly to my thighs. As Father Steve pounded me, I cupped my breasts, circling my fingers over the nipples he'd pinched, feeling my pleasure spread through my chest, my legs, centering in my pussy and clit as his thick shaft slammed inside me. I began to come, letting go of my breasts and grabbing Father Steve's hips, lifting my bottom from the bed to feel more of his cock inside me. There was just a nest of wiry pubic hair, the base of his shaft, scratching my labia with each stroke. If only he was an inch or two bigger...

Father Steve answered my moans with a grunt, thrusting faster, his fat - padded pubic bone slamming against my clit, and then he came again, burying his penis inside me one last time, adding to the river of semen I felt dripping down my ass crack and pooling on the sheets. He released my thighs, letting my legs fall to the bed, and without saying a word he pulled out of me and got up from the bed, wiping off his cock with a towel and quickly getting dressed.

My pussy began to ache, a soreness I hadn't noticed while we fucked, a slight throbbing and a feeling of rawness on my labia where his coarse pubes had scratched me. I bunched up the sheets between my legs again, listening to the murmur of conversation drifting in from Father Ken's office. I couldn't make out what they were saying, not complete sentences, just a phrase or a word or two, "hundred", and "liked it", "next

week” and “morning mass”. I thought I heard Father Ken say “Megan”, but it could easily have been the word “naked”. Still...

I waited until I heard Father Steve leave, the door to the office closing behind him, before I gathered my clothes and left the bedroom. Father Ken was sipping his drink, a small stack of \$10 bills stuck into the corner of the blotter on his desk, money that hadn't been there before.

“Everything go okay?” Father Ken asked. Not “Are you all right?” or “How do you feel?”. I nodded anyway.

“Good. Come here,” he said. I put my clothes down on his desk as he unzipped his fly, fishing his half-hard cock from his trousers. Father Ken spread his legs and nodded towards the floor. I knelt before him, the hard plastic sheet that protected the carpet from his chair making my knees ache, a thick stream of Father Steve's spunk dripping down my thigh. I leaned into his crotch and took his cock in my mouth, slowly sucking it, swirling my tongue over the underside of his shaft. He leaned back in his chair and took a sip of his drink as I pleased him with my mouth.

Only he wasn't getting hard. He'd twitch a bit, his glans would swell, but he never got more than half way there. I licked and sucked him as best as I could, but it just wasn't happening. I pulled his penis from my mouth and gently squeezed it, to no effect.

“What's wrong?” Father Ken asked.

“You're not...it's not getting hard,” I said.

“You must be doing it wrong,” he replied, a coldness creeping into his voice.

“Maybe if you close your eyes and think of Megan,” I blurted out, instantly regretting that I had said this.

Father Ken froze in mid-sip, his face turning red, burning with rage. His eyes narrowed, he slammed down his drink, and rearing his arm back, he slapped me hard, right across my cheek. I fell back on the carpet, landing on my ass, tasting blood where his ring had hit my lip.

“Harlot!” he shouted. It was a word I knew from the Bible, but I’d never heard anyone use it. Father Ken stood up from his chair, and I began to back away, crab-crawling backwards, but he reached down and grabbed my ankle, kneeling between my legs, his cock now hard and as red as his face.

“Father...no...please...” This only served to stoke his anger. He let go of one of my legs and unbuckled his trousers, pushing them down before grabbing me again. I tried to kick back, to struggle, but he was too big, too strong, too angry. He grabbed my thighs in the same spot as Father Steve had done and thrust himself inside me, covering me with his body so I couldn’t crawl away. I closed my eyes and tried to be somewhere else as he stabbed me with his cock, I thought about Megan, about Manny and Billy, I tried to imagine the boys taking on Father Ken with knife and baton. From somewhere deep inside me, a prayer I’d heard at the cathedral, and at the church in Florida during my mother’s funeral, drifted into my consciousness...

“Hail, Mary, full of grace, our Lord is with thee...”

Father Ken kept slamming into me, forcefully, spitefully, punishing me with his penis, punishing my impertinence, my disrespect. He moved a hand from my thigh to my breast, squeezing it until I began to cry out, tears running down my face.

“Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb...”

I kept pushing back at him, grabbing two fistfuls of his chest hair, hoping to return some of the pain. Father Ken just grunted and swatted my hands away. I could feel hairs that I’d ripped out on my fingers, sticky with sweat.

“O virgin Saint Mary, O Mother of God...”

Father Ken let go of my thighs and held my wrists, laying his body on me and thrusting even faster. I was already sore down there from Father Steve, and it was getting worse. I tried to clench myself around his shaft, hoping to make him come and get it over with, but it hurt too much.

“...now and at all times, and at the hour of our death.”

I stopped struggling. I was spent. It was no use fighting him, it was just too much. I turned my head and closed my eyes, feeling the tears rolling down my face. Father Ken accepted my surrender, and I felt him twitch inside me, his glans flaring as he poured his cum into me, adding to the mess that was already there. I wondered if my diaphragm was still set in place, thinking that I’d slit my wrists rather than carry this man’s baby in my womb.

He let go of my wrists and got up off of me, pulling his softening cock out quickly, not wanting to linger inside me. He pulled up his trousers and returned to his chair,

sweeping my clothes off of his desk with the back of his hand, the same hand he'd slapped me with.

"Go," he said, pouring another drink. I grabbed my clothes and dressed quickly, my back to him, unwilling to look him in the eye. Without a word, I left, so sore that I was barely able to walk. I couldn't even make it up the stairs to the top floor. I had to sit and rest half way, until the throbbing subsided. My cheek hurt as well, and my lip was swollen. I sat in the bathroom on the second floor, the one I'd barged into while Billy was in the bath, holding my thighs together, my head in my hands.

I wept.

* * *

The pain subsided enough for me to make it the rest of the way, back to my room, to Megan, to the boys, to the last Dilaudid in the little orange vial. Manny and Billy looked up as I walked into the room, a look of horror turning to anger on their faces when they saw my split lip.

"Annie? What the fuck?" Manny asked, the collapsible baton stuck in his waistband. He and Billy helped me into bed, and I laid down next to Megan, who looked even more frightened than she did that first night.

"Could you get me a cold washcloth, please," I said, my swollen lip making it hard to speak. Billy immediately went across the hall and came back with a damp washrag. I held it on my lip.

"What happened?" he asked.

"I don't want to talk about it," I said.

“Who did this to you?” Manny asked. “Father Steve? Father Ken?”

I nodded at the last name, and his expression darkened, his eyes narrowed with rage. Manny pulled the baton from the waistband of his pants, flicking it with his wrist so it extended to its full length. His hand was shaking with barely repressed anger, making the ball end of the baton quiver.

“I’ll kill him,” he said, in a quiet, measured tone, just the barest edge of ire in his voice.

“No, he’s pissed right now. He’ll kill you,” I said. “Manny. Don’t. Please.”

Manny tightened his grip on the baton and then he relaxed, taking a deep breath. Billy was all wound up as well, the folding knife in his hand. Maybe they both could have taken on Father Ken, but who knew what he had in his desk? A knife? A gun? Even if it was a fair fight, there would be hell to pay later. No doubt the police would get involved.

I thought about going to the cops myself, but something Manny had said stuck in my mind: “They just fuck everything up.” I’d be sent back to Maine for sure, back to the foster home, back to Mr. Hubbard, though after what I’d just been through that didn’t sound so awful.

I sat up and reached for the vial of pills, washing down my last Dilaudid with a sip of Billy’s soda.

“I’m gonna get some ice for your lip,” he said. “Should I get Sister Bernice?”

“No, dude,” Manny said. “She can’t help.”

“Why not?” Billy asked.

“You don’t think she’s blind to what goes on here?” I said.

“She knows,” Manny agreed. “She won’t do shit.” Billy nodded and went down to the kitchen, returning with a handful of ice cubes in a dishtowel, twisted into a compress. I put down the cold washcloth and held the ice to my lip. The pain began to fade, lip, cheek, breasts, wrists, thighs, and cun ny, as the painkiller took effect. Laying back on the bed, I put my arm around Megan, who snuggled up against me, tears in her eyes. She was frightened, scared for me, scared to see me like this. I promised to protect her and now I felt like I couldn’t even protect myself.

“Help me up,” I said, “I’ve got to take a shower or something.” Manny came over and supported my back as I sat up and swung my legs over the side of the bed. I probably could have made it into the bathroom under my own power, but Manny held me up, putting my arm around his neck as Billy got the door. Megan followed us across the hall to the bathroom, and as Manny set me down to sit on the toilet seat, Billy wiggled the faucets, filling the bathtub with warm water.

I had to pee, badly. Megan helped me unzip my skirt and pull it down, even helping with my panties. They were a mess, the crotch soaked with semen. As I sat down on the toilet again, she helped me step out of them, her eyes on the greyish fluid that pooled inside them. I emptied my bladder, unselfconsciously, wincing at the pain I felt, pain that penetrated the Dilaudid haze. When I was done, I wiped myself carefully, lightly. Manny helped me take off my sweater and bra, and guided me into the bath. I sat down slowly.

Bruises had already begun to form on my thighs, my breasts, my knees. Without even looking, I knew my ass and tailbone were probably just as bad, bluish circles with a

sickly yellow tint. Megan was right there with the soap and the washcloth, and she gently washed me, just as I had done for her.

“Angel,” I whispered, leaning over to kiss her cheek. She still had a frightened look on her face, but now she had a task, a purpose, something to take her mind off of her fears. Billy helped as well, lightly scrubbing my back with a soapy washcloth; Manny just stood by the tub, staring at my bruises, his anger rising and falling like the tide.

Megan and Billy rinsed me off and, as Manny helped me emerge from the tub, they carefully dried me off, avoiding all of the bruised places on my body. Megan ran back to my room to get my kimono, and Manny wrapped me in it before he helped me back to my room.

“Thank you,” I said, sitting down on the bed.

“Anything for you, Annie,” he whispered. I tilted my head and he kissed me, gingerly, touching his lips to mine, kissing the part that wasn’t swollen. I had avoided looking in the mirror when we were in the bathroom, afraid of what I would see. Megan and Billy came in, carrying my clothes, which she carefully folded and placed on my dresser.

“Do you want us to stay tonight?” Manny asked.

“No, but thanks. We’ll be okay,” I said.

“I’ll watch her,” Megan said, trying to sound as grown-up as she could. I smiled at her, even though it hurt to do so. My angel.

“Take care of her for us,” Manny said, reaching out and playfully pinching her button nose with his fingers. Megan laughed and swatted at his hand. Even Billy smiled. I hugged her, kissed the top of her head as she put her arms around me.

We smoked a last joint before they left, not even bothering to stuff a wet towel under the door. Let Father Ken bust us. We didn’t care. The boys would have loved to have a chance to take him on. After they went back to their rooms, Megan helped me push the dresser against the door and we climbed into bed. She pulled her dress over her head and slipped under the blanket next to me, putting her arm around me and resting her head on my shoulder.

“Megan, honey?” I whispered after I turned out the light.

“Annie?”

“I want you to promise me something, angel.”

“Okay.”

“Listen, this is important, okay?”

“Okay,” she said.

“If Father Ken or anyone else touches you again, I want you to scream. Scream as loud as you can, bite, kick, punch, whatever. But scream, okay?”

“Scream,” she said. “I will. I promise.”

“I know you will, baby.” I kissed her and closed my eyes, listening to the sound of her breathing slow as she fell asleep. I wondered what she dreamed about. She must have had a family at some point, a mother at least, maybe brothers and sisters, too. I wondered how she ended up here, what horrible things she might have seen, what abuse she was

subjected to. For the millionth time in the last couple of months I wished Julia were still alive. She'd help us, she'd know what to do. Maybe she was watching over us, from heaven, like a guardian angel. I wished I was in her arms again.

"I love you, angel," I whispered, right before I joined Megan in Dreamland.

* *

Chapter Nine

Let it Bleed

Megan woke me up the next morning. She had to go to the bathroom and she couldn't pull the dresser away from the door by herself. As I crawled out of bed, the pain between my legs returned. I let Megan out of the room and laid down again. My tits hurt, my cheek hurt, everything hurt, and my head was throbbing. Megan came back into the room.

"You'll miss breakfast, Annie," she said, tugging at my arm. "C'mon."

"Screw breakfast. I'm going back to sleep," I muttered. Screw classes, too. I had every intention of staying in bed all day.

"Annie, I don't want to go down there without you," she pleaded.

"Baby, I can't move. It hurts too much," I replied. "Go on without me, sit with Manny and Billy or stay close to Sister Bernice." Megan bit her lip and nodded, giving me a kiss on the cheek before leaving the room. I lay in bed, watching the snow fall outside, wishing I had another Dilaudid for the pain.

I remembered the first time I saw snow, back in Maine, just a few months before. Del and Paco were ecstatic, and so was I. We'd seen it in movies, on television, but nothing could prepare us for the real thing. Ramon cursed it, because it meant that he'd have to drive down to the docks and sweep the snow from the deck of his boat, but we

were fascinated with it, making snow angels and building a snowman and throwing snowballs at each other, laughing and screaming with joy.

Later that day we walked over to Julia's house with a couple of snow shovels that we found in the garage, clearing off her driveway and the walkway to her front door. She rewarded us with hot chocolate and sat us down in front of her fireplace to warm ourselves, telling us the story of a huge blizzard she experienced when she was just a little girl.

It seemed to snow almost every day in Maine, and when it began to pile up and turn to grey slush it didn't seem so very magical anymore. But the wonder of that first day would stay with me forever.

Staring at the snow relaxed me, calmed me. I could feel the warmth of Megan's body lingering on the sheets. I rolled over and pulled the blanket up to my neck, falling asleep again.

Megan was lying on Father Ken's desk, naked except for the frilly ruffled panties that held her ankles together. Father Ken stood by her head, Mr. O'Hare at her feet, both of them holding her down, restraining her squirming body. I was sitting in one of the chairs, an unwilling observer.

As is often the case with dreams, I wanted to scream but I couldn't, I wanted to run away, but I couldn't, I wanted to close my eyes, but my eyelids were made of glass and I couldn't look away. I sat there, paralyzed, as Mr. O'Hare took his thick club of a cock and pressed it against Megan's puffy lips, pushing, pushing, pushing his way inside. As Megan began to bleed, dark red fluid gushing from her slit, she looked at me, her eyes

pleading for me to do something, anything. She opened her mouth to say something but Father Ken stuffed it full of cock. Her cheek bulged and she twisted her head back and forth, trying to dislodge the invading member. Then Mr. O'Hare pulled his bloody cock out of her ruined cunny and he and Father Ken flipped her over on her tummy. O'Hare pressed his cock against her tush, trying to shove his enormous member into her tight little bottom.

That's when Megan screamed.

That's when I woke up.

That's when I heard the screaming.

It was real, not a dream, not a hallucination. It was real and it was coming from the hallway, along with the sound of hard shoes, and something being dragged along the floor. I sat up, swung my legs out of the bed, and tried to stand, nearly falling in the process. I heard a door slam, heavy footsteps heading back down the hall, and then the screaming stopped.

I was nauseous with pain, staggering down the hall to Megan's room, opening the door without knocking. She was lying on the bed, curled into a tight little ball, her arms wrapped around her knees, her face wet with tears. Each step I took sent stabbing pains through my lower belly, but I made it to her bed, nearly falling on her, wrapping my arms around her curled-up form.

"What happened?" I asked her. "Megan, baby, tell me what happened?" She was crying so hard she couldn't speak, and all I could do was hold her, rock her, stroke her

hair. Gradually, she began to calm down, her shaking becoming a mere tremble, her tense body relaxing little by little.

“Megan, honey. Tell me.”

“He hurt me,” she croaked, her voice a toneless rasp.

“Who? Where?”

“Father Ken. Down there,” she sobbed.

“Let me see, baby. Let me see where he hurt you.” I gently tugged at her legs, trying to uncurl the knot she’d made with her limbs. Her dress had bunched up around her waist.

There was blood on her panties.

“Bastard,” I said under my breath. “I’ll kill him.” I took Megan in my arms and held her as the sobbing started again, her tears nearly soaking through the shoulder of my robe. I cradled her in my arms, rocking her, gently kissing her, wishing that whatever blind idiot god looked over us would have mercy on her. Give me her pain. Take it away from her and give it to me. I don’t care if it kills me, just make her pain go away.

“I did like you said, Annie,” she whispered. “I screamed when he touched me. I screamed and he hit me.”

“Baby, oh baby, I’m so sorry,” I said, my own tears starting now. “I’m sorry. I’m so sorry.”

“He hurt me, Annie,” she said again. “He put his thing...down there.”

“It’ll never happen again, angel. I promise. I promise.” My mind was racing, trying to figure out what to do next. I felt a warm wetness on my leg, under Megan’s bottom.

For a second I thought she'd wet herself, but it turned out to be more blood. Her panties were soaked through, and even more was oozing out from between her legs. This wasn't from her hymen, she was really bleeding badly. Something was very wrong.

"Megan, can you walk?" I asked her. I felt her nod. "Let's go to my room first, then I'm taking you to the hospital. Come." I grabbed her coat, a nice warm parka with a hood, and took her by the hand, hustling her across the hall to my room. Her dress was also stained with blood, but I didn't want her to change, not even her soggy panties. Better that the doctors and nurses should see this, see what a monster Father Ken was.

I got dressed quickly, stuffing my journal into the pocket of my coat. Trish's number was in there, scribbled on the back of her business card. I poked my head out into the hall, making sure the coast was clear, and we ran down the stairs as fast as our pain would let us. It was lunchtime already, and I could hear voices in the dining room. It was a clear shot through the front hall and out the door. There was no one to see us go, let alone stop us.

Boston City Hospital was only a few blocks away. We ran, the snow crunching beneath our feet, cars passing us as we stumbled down the sidewalk, their tires shushing through the slush, turning it grey in their wake. Megan fell down a couple of times, and the third time she didn't get up.

"My ankle," she sobbed. "Annie, my ankle." It was then that I noticed the trail of blood, one for each pace she'd taken, leading all the way back to the shelter.

"Hold on to my neck, baby," I said, my heart pounding, my hands trembling. "I'll carry you there." She wrapped her arms around me and I picked her up, holding her

blood-soaked bottom as I staggered towards the hospital. Just one more block and we're there. Just one more block and we're safe.

"It hurts, Annie," Megan sobbed.

"We're almost there, angel. Hang on. Try to hang on." She was small for her age, but her body felt heavier with each step. I heard her breathing become labored, shallow. The color was draining from her cheeks. My hands were slippery with her blood.

Don't let her die. Oh, please don't let her die.

I somehow found the energy to make the last block, despite the pain, despite the exhaustion, staggering up the driveway past a row of parked ambulances. The emergency room's double doors automatically opened, that hospital smell hitting me like a slap in the face.

"Help me, she's bleeding! Somebody, please help me!" I called out for someone, anyone. A nurse rushed out from behind a long counter and called for a doctor, taking Megan from my arms. As they laid her on a gurney I sank to my knees in the middle of the reception area, out of breath, my whole body throbbing with each beat of my heart.

I could taste blood in my mouth; I must have bitten my lip while I was carrying Megan. A second nurse knelt next to me, her hands on my back, my belly, my breasts. I squirmed away.

"Relax, honey. I just need to check you for stab wounds or gunshots."

"I wasn't shot. I wasn't stabbed," I said. "Where are you taking her?"

“She’s in good hands,” the nurse said. “Don’t worry. Let’s just have a look at you.” She helped me up from the floor and guided me back, past the reception desk, past a door that said “TRAUMA”, and into a curtained area with an examination table.

“Let’s clean off your hands, first,” she said, filling a basin with warm water. I looked at them under the cold fluorescent light of the cubicle. My hands were covered with Megan’s blood. The nurse took a green cloth, the same color as her tunic and pants, and began to clean the blood from my hands and wrists.

“What happened to you?” she asked, dipping the cloth in the bowl. The water began to turn pink.

“He raped her. That bastard raped her.”

“Is she your sister?”

“No.”

“Is the person who did this also the one who beat you?”

“Yes.”

“Did he rape you, too?”

I hesitated for a second. I knew that if I said “Yes” a doctor would examine me, and he’d find the diaphragm inside me. I couldn’t take it out the night before; it hurt too much to try. But the mere fact that I was wearing it might cast doubt on whether I was really raped. I wasn’t even sure of it myself. I would have willingly slept with Father Ken that night, but he forced himself on me anyway, beating me up with his cock instead of his fists.

“No, he didn’t.”

The nurse finished cleaning off my hands in silence. I looked at her ID tag. Serena Hadley. A pretty name, Serena. She was short, buxom, a round face and coffee-colored skin, her hair set in a myriad tight braids, each one with a little multicolored bead at the tip. They made a soft clicking sound when she moved.

“What’s his name, honey? The man who did this.” Her voice was soft, but there was an anger lurking beneath.

“Kenton Foley.”

“Father Ken Foley?” she asked, flabbergasted.

“Yes, ma’am.” I caught a glimpse of my reflection in a chrome-plated paper towel dispenser on the wall. There was blood on the corner of my mouth, but the swelling had subsided. What made me catch my breath was the black ring under my eye, the swelling of my cheek robbing my face of its usual symmetry.

“Lie back honey, let me look at your face,” she said. She gently examined me, turning my head this way and that, carefully prodding my injured cheek. Then she dumped the pinkish water from the basin and filled it again, daubing the blood from my lip with a fresh cloth.

“What’s your name, dear?”

“Annie.”

“And hers?”

“Megan.”

“Her last name?”

I didn’t know her last name. I gave Serena mine.

“Annie, I’ve got to look at you. This isn’t going to hurt, I promise. I just need to look, okay?” She snapped on a pair of beige latex gloves.

I nodded and laid my head back, staring at the fluorescent light fixture in the ceiling. Nurse Hadley lifted my long skirt, stiff with Megan’s drying blood, and tugged at my panties, pulling them down my thighs.

“You’ve got some bruising, Annie. You say he didn’t assault you?”

“No, ma’am.” She touched my labia and I flinched, bolting upright.

“Sorry, Annie. I’ll let the doctor finish examining you. Is there someone we can call for you?”

“No, ma’am.” The nurse pulled my panties back up and gently smoothed my skirt over my thighs. She peeled off her latex gloves and tossed them into a trash container, returning to the exam table and taking my hand in hers.

“Honey, the doctor will be in soon to look at you some more, and we might have to take some x-rays of your face, just to rule out a fracture. It’s probably just a bruise, but we need to make sure. Do you understand?”

“Yes, ma’am. I understand.” She squeezed my hand and smiled at me.

“Annie, in cases like this, we’re required to notify DYS.”

“DYS?”

“Department of Youth Services. And the police.”

“Police?!? No, you can’t...” I sat up, trying to swing my legs off of the table.

“Shhhh...calm down, dearie. Lie back. Shhhh...” She squeezed my hand again. “It’s the law, Annie. We’re required by law to notify them.”

I laid back down on the table and sighed, wondering what would happen to me, to Megan. Would I ever feel her arms around me again? Nurse Hadley had me roll up my sleeve, and she wrapped a sphygmomanometer around my arm, inflating it by pumping the little bulb. She read the gauge and made note of her readings on a chart clipped to an aluminum clipboard.

“Can I see her?”

“I’m afraid you can’t, at least not right now. The doctor’s still with her.”

“Is she going to be okay?” Serena gave my hand another squeeze.

“She looked like she was in shock from loss of blood. I’m not sure what her condition is right now, but I think you got her here just in time.”

“Just in time?” Just in time for what?

“Stay here, dearie. I’ll see how she’s doing. Be back in a minute. In the meantime, change into this.” She gave me an open-back hospital gown and then she padded out of the room, her white sneakers squeaking on the tile floor.

I sat up on the table. My first thought was to leave, to walk out, but Serena had been so nice, so comforting. I managed to get my clothes off, and it didn’t hurt too much, though I had trouble tying the back of the hospital gown. Megan’s blood was all over my clothes, my sweater, my skirt. Del’s old coat wasn’t too bad, just a couple of streaks of blood on the sleeves.

The nurse returned with a young man in green scrubs, stethoscope slung over his neck, ID card clipped to his pocket.

“Annie, this is Dr. O’Hare. He’s going to take a look at you.” She snapped a plastic band around my wrist. I looked at it; my name was printed in letters made up of tiny black dots.

“Hi, Annie. Where does it hurt?”, he asked, pressing his stethoscope to my chest.

“Everywhere.”

Nurse Hadley stood by while the doctor examined me, feeling my ankles and wrists, my arms and legs, palpating the glands under my chin. He lifted my gown and looked at the bruises on my thighs and labia, and then he had me sit up and pull the gown off of my shoulders, carefully inspecting my back, my breasts, my belly.

“Serena, I need a tox screen, chem seven, blood gas. And get a rape kit.” She nodded and left the cubicle.

“Father Ken did this to you?” he asked, once she was out of earshot. I nodded.

“I don’t believe you. He’s been a friend of my family’s for years,” he said. “Years. He’d never do something like this.”

I was speechless. I wanted to tell him it was all true. I wanted to give him my journal. It was all right there.

Then I read his ID tag again. “Dr. Fred O’Hare, Jr.”. His father had fucked me on Father Ken’s desk.

“If you don’t tell us who really did this to you and Megan, you’re going to juvi hall, to jail,” he said, turning and leaving the cubicle.

I was about to get up from the exam table and leave when the nurse returned, needle, vials, rubber band, and a plastic container in hand. She set the last item the

counter and wrapped the rubber strip on my forearm, making the veins near my elbow appear. Then she rubbed a spot on my arm with an alcohol wipe and jabbed me with the needle, filling a glass vial with my blood.

“How is Megan?” I asked her.

“She’s up in surgery right now,” she said. “It was close, but she should be okay.”

I sighed, feeling relieved for the first time that day.

“I heard what he said to you,” she continued. “I believe you.”

“You do?”

“Boy came in here last year, right before Christmas, a kid from the shelter. All torn up like Megan,” she said. “Kept saying it was Father Ken, Father Ken.”

“What happened to him?”

She shook her head, drawing another vial of blood and loosening the rubber band, putting a gauze patch over the puncture and fastening it with surgical tape.

“Megan,” I said. “I couldn’t keep her safe...”

“Annie,” Serena said, taking my hand in hers. “You saved her life. If it had been five more minutes...”

My lower lip quivered as I thought about Megan, how close to death she’d been. Despite what Nurse Hadley said, I still felt responsible. I was the one who told her to scream. Had that served to inflame Father Ken, to stoke his ire? Had he taken out his rage against me on this helpless little girl? My tears began to flow, and Serena held me against her green smock, rubbing my back as I cried, holding my hand, caressing my cheek. Then she tied the back of my gown for me and made me lie down on the table.

“I’m going to run these down to the lab. I’ll be back in a few minute s,” she said, patting my hand. “Don’t worry. O’Hare can’t start the rape exam without a female staff member present. Policy.” She squeezed my hand and left with the vials of blood.

I wasn’t about to have Dr. O’Hare examine me again, even with a nurse prese nt. My clothes were draped over a chair. The skirt was a mess. There was no way I could wear it. The sweater was stained with blood, too, but I could put it on backwards and wear my coat over it. A little bit of surgical tape on the back of the hospital go wn made it look like a skirt. A funny skirt, but a skirt nonetheless. I put on the coat and rolled up the sleeves, hiding the blood stains.

It was just as easy to leave the emergency room as it was to leave the shelter. On my way out the automatic doors t hat led to the ambulance bay, I passed a pair of policemen on their way in. A minute later I was on the corner of Mass. Ave. and Albany Street, dialing Trish’s number from a pay phone.

There was no answer from Trish’s home phone, so I tried the number that was printed on the other side, her work number. She picked it up on the third ring.

“Trish, I need your help,” I blurted out. “I’m in trouble.”

“Where are you, Annie?” I gave her the address of the nearest apartment building, a brownstone on Mass. Ave.

“Stay there, honey. I’ll be there in five minutes.”

I hung up the phone and went over to the apartment building. There was a basement entrance under the stairs, a few feet below street level. I huddled behind a row of battered aluminum garbage cans, the cold wind blowing up and under the taped -up

hospital gown. I'd started to shiver from the frigid weather when a taxi pulled up to the curb. The back door opened and Trish stepped out, looking around. I jumped out from my hiding place, tripping on the stairs and skinning my knee. Trish ran over and helped me up, sliding into the back seat of the cab after me.

"Annie! What the fuck happened?"

"I can't...I can't..." I stammered. The driver turned to look back through the scratched plexiglas partition.

"We need to get you to a hospital," she said.

"No, please, no," I said, as tears began to run down my cheeks. I held up my wrist with the plastic identification band Nurse Hadley had given me, slipping my finger under it and stretching it until it snapped off, landing in Trish's lap. Trish realized that I had just come from City Hospital. She gave the driver her address and the cab pulled away from the curb.

Trish helped me up the stairs to her apartment, holding me under my arm as I negotiated each step, step by painful step. Once inside her place, she guided me into her bedroom and made me lie down, still in my coat, sweater, and the thin hospital gown.

"Warm up, Annie. I'll make you some tea," she said, pulling the thick quilt over me. I huddled underneath the blanket, still shivering, still crying. She returned a few minutes later with a steaming mug of peppermint tea. I sat up in her bed, shrugging off Del's old jacket, and held the mug in my hand, bringing it up to my nose and inhaling the aromatic steam.

"Annie, tell me. What happened?"

“Father Ken,” I said. She shook her head. I sipped the hot tea, feeling its warmth spread through my body. The shivers stopped, the tears stopped, and I began to tell Trish everything that had happened. By the time I finished, the mug was empty. Trish put her arms out and held me, kissing my bruised cheek.

“I need to know about Megan,” I said. “I need to know that she’s okay.”

“Let me try something,” Trish said. She picked up the phone and dialed Information, asking for the direct number to the hospital’s pediatric intensive care unit, writing it down on a narrow spiral bound notepad. Then she called the PICU, clearing her throat while the phone rang on the other end.

“Hi, this is Francine DeLeo from DYS. To whom am I speaking? Mar cie? Marcie, my boss needs to know the status of a little girl who was brought in earlier...about an hour ago...her name is Megan.” Trish turned and winked at me.

“What’s her last name?” she whispered, covering the phone’s mouthpiece.

“I gave mine. Mercer,” I said, sotto voce.

“Megan Mercer,” she said into the phone, using that weird Boston accent, the first “r” in “Mercer” sounding like a “w”, the last “r” mutating into “ah”. Mewsah. “Yes, that’s right...yes, I’ll hold.”

“She’s checking,” Trish whispered.

“Oh please, oh please, oh please let her be okay,” I whispered. Trish reached out and put her hand on my arm, gently squeezing it.

“She is? They did? Great, that’s good to hear. Thanks a bunch, Marcie.” Trish hung up the phone and put her arm around me.

“The nurse said she’s in stable condition, but she might need surgery again. They’re going to wait overnight and monitor her condition first.”

I let out a deep sigh and closed my eyes, settling back into the bed and relaxing for the first time that day.

“Sleep, honey. Get some sleep and we’ll talk later, okay?” She kissed me on the cheek again and began to get out of bed.

“Wait, Trish,” I said. “Here. It’s all in here.” I pulled my journal out of the coat pocket and handed it to her. She opened it and riffled through the pages, stopping on one and reading it to herself, her jaw dropping as she scanned the page.

“Annie, do you mind if I photocopy this?”

“No, go ahead,” I said, rolling over on to my side. Trish shook her head slightly and left the bedroom. I heard her leave a few minutes later, heading for a copy shop a few blocks away. I looked out the window at the dull grey sky. The snow had stopped. I fell asleep.

* * *

“Wake up, Annie. Honey, wake up.” Trish gently shook my shoulder, rousing me from my sleep. The dull grey sky had turned television blue as the sun began to set. “How do you feel?”

“Okay, I guess.” My limbs felt stiff, but the pain between my legs had begun to recede. I sat up in bed and I heard my stomach growl. “Hungry.” I hadn’t had anything to eat since dinner the day before.

“I’ve got nothing in the house right now except cereal,” she said. “I can have something delivered. What would you like? Pizza? Chinese?”

“Pizza,” I said, my voice raspy from thirst.

“Pizza it is,” Trish said. I leaned forward to stretch and Trish noticed the bloodstain on the backwards sweater. “Let me get you something to wear, okay?”

“Thanks,” I said, pulling off the sweater, my favorite, warmest wool sweater, now stained with Megan’s blood. Trish rummaged through her dresser and came up with a grey sweatshirt with the word “Georgetown” printed across the front. I pushed the quilt aside and shrugged off the hospital gown.

“Annie, wait. Let me see you,” Trish said, seeing the bruises on my thighs. “Can I?” she asked, gently tugging at the waistband of my panties. Her eyes began to tear up as she saw my bruised labia. There was a spot of blood on the crotch of my panties, even though my period wasn’t due for another two weeks. She gave me a pair of her panties to wear, plain cotton bikini panties that were a little too loose. I put on the sweatshirt and got out of bed, following her into the dining area. While she called for a pizza, I had a bowl of Cheerios, nearly finishing it before she hung up the phone.

“Thirty minutes,” she said. I was starting my second bowl of cereal when she sat down across from me. “Annie, there’s sort of a problem with your journal.”

“Problem?”

“There’s stuff in there that’s going to get you into big trouble. The drugs, Billy, Chris...”

“What about Billy and Chris?”

“Well, it’s possible that if we show this to the police, you might be charged with contributing to the delinquency of a minor.”

“But I’m a minor.”

“I know, but it doesn’t matter. They were younger than you. Manny? Not a problem. He was your age, right?”

“Right.”

“It’s not like it’s a federal case, but you might end up in juvenile hall until you’re eighteen,” Trish said, her face taking on a grave mien.

“What if we don’t show them that part?”

“Won’t matter. Defense will want to see the whole thing. Something called ‘exculpatory evidence’.”

“What about my bruises?” I asked.

“It would have been better if you stayed at the hospital, let them check you out.”

“I couldn’t,” I said, explaining the link between the doctor and his father, Mr. O’Hare.

“Fred O’Hare? Big guy? Grey hair? Fiftysomething?” she asked. I nodded. “Shit. He’s the district attorney.”

“That’s bad?”

“That’s bad,” she said.

“What do we do now?”

“Let’s eat first. I’ll think of something.” Trish went over to the kitchen counter and reached into a cabinet, pulling out a bottle of red wine. She opened it and rinsed out two glasses, pouring one for me. It was a weird combination, cereal, milk, and wine.

We sat quietly at the table until the intercom sounded. Trish buzzed the delivery person up and got some money from her purse. The pizza smelled wonderful, garlicky and cheesy. Despite having had two bowls of cereal, I wolfed down four big slices, washing them down with a second glass of wine. Afterwards, Trish wrapped up the two remaining slices and put them in the freezer.

“Could I take a bath, please?” I asked.

“Sure, honey. Stay here and I’ll start the tub and get you some towels,” Trish said. She poured me a third glass of wine and disappeared into the bathroom. I heard the sound of running water, and between that and the wine, I needed to pee. Picking up my glass of wine, I walked into the bathroom. While Trish went to get fresh towels, I pulled down my panties and sat down on the toilet. Then I remembered that I was still wearing my diaphragm. Before I emptied my bladder, I reached inside my sore little pussy to remove it. The stabbing pain returned as I fished it out. There were streaks of blood on the latex, and I nearly passed out. I was sitting on the toilet, my head between my legs, the bloody latex disk sitting in the sink, when Trish returned with fresh linen.

“Annie? Annie?” She dropped the towels on the floor and stroked my hair.

“It hurts,” I murmured. “It hurts.”

“Baby, let me get you something,” she said, straightening up and opening her medicine cabinet. As she looked through an assortment of orange plastic vials, I let go of my bladder, voiding into the toilet. I felt a burning down there.

“Here, I’ve got some Percodan left over from when I broke my wrist skiing,” she said, tapping a pill out into her palm. “No more wine for you, though.”

Trish fetched a glass of ice water and returned as I was taking off the sweatshirt she gave me. After I swallowed the pill, she unhooked my bra, clucking her tongue at the bruises on my breasts. She helped me into the bathtub and knelt next to it, gently washing me with a soapy cloth, trying to avoid the bruises on my body.

“What a piece of work that guy is. What a piece of work,” she said, rinsing me off with her hands.

“He was nice to me. Sweet. Until last night,” I said.

“He pimped you out to other priests. That’s sick,” she muttered.

There was nothing I could say to that. I leaned back in the tub, submerging my body in the warm, soapy water up to my neck. Trish sat next to the tub, lost in thought.

“Annie, we’re going to pretend that your journal doesn’t exist, okay? I’m going to take my copy to the office tomorrow and shred it. No one will ever know, okay?”

“Okay. What about the original?” I didn’t want to just destroy it. It had been my faithful companion for the last few weeks, my patient listener, hearing my confession. My heart was in there.

“We’ll figure something out, like stashing it somewhere. A bus station locker or something, or maybe you can get a post office box and mail it to yourself.” I didn’t like

the idea of going to the bus station again, but the post office box sounded like a good idea.

“Okay, but what are we going to do about Father Ken? Or the police?”

“I’ve got an idea,” she said. “Finish up your bath and we’ll talk about it later.” She left me in the bath, the warm water soothing my aches and pains. After a little while, I got out and dried myself off. The Percodan had done its magic, and I felt better than I had all day. Even my skinned knee had stopped throbbing. I washed off my diaphragm in the sink. Not knowing what to do with it—the case was still on my dresser back in the shelter—I left it to dry on the bathroom sink.

Trish was sitting on her living room couch. On the coffee table in front of her was a glass of wine for herself, a steaming mug of tea for me, my journal, her notepad, and a small black tape recorder, the kind that takes those tiny cassettes. I sat down next to her and took a sip of tea.

“Annie, I want you to tell me your story. Start at the beginning, before Father Ken took you in. Don’t tell me anything about drugs, except for what Foley gave you. Don’t tell me about any boys younger than you. You can talk about comforting Chris, but not about that night on your floor, okay?”

“Okay, I guess.” I regretted letting Chris fuck me that one time, partially because of his vulnerable emotional state, partially because I was out of control when we did it, wasted on coke and pills. Now I regretted it even more.

“I need to tell you about ground rules. You’re a confidential source. I can’t and won’t reveal your name to anyone, not my editor, not his boss, not the police, not even to

a judge. I'll even disobey a court order and go to jail for contempt before I give up your name," Trish said, her notebook in her lap, pen poised and ready. "Do you understand?"

"I do." I didn't really, but it sounded like Trish was going out on a limb for me, and I didn't want to disappoint her.

"Now, there's something called 'off-the-record'. When you want to tell me something that might get you in trouble but is necessary for me to follow your story, say 'off-the-record', okay?"

"Okay."

"The tape will be paused, and I won't write it down or use it."

"Use it for what?" Trish took a big sip of her wine.

"I need to write this. I need to tell your story. This is big, this is huge," she said.

"I don't know about this," I said. "I don't know."

"Annie, I know you don't want to go to the police. You have your reasons and I respect that. But we need to do something. They won't shut down the shelter on the basis of an anonymous phone call. We need something bigger."

"I don't know," I said again. Trish put down her notepad and pen.

"Look, it's your call, Annie. If you don't want to, we don't have to."

I thought about that for a minute. I thought about Billy and Manny, wondering if Father Ken would take out his anger on them in my absence. I thought about Chris, seeing the tears that ran down his face when that priest shoved his prick in the boy's bottom.

“Start the tape,” I said, feeling an icy ball form in my stomach. I didn’t know where this would lead, but I had to do something. Anything.

It took almost three hours to get it all out, with about a dozen pauses as I choked up and cried, unable to speak. At the end, when I was recounting the events of that morning, I became nauseous and barely made it to the bathroom before I lost my dinner. Trish knelt next to me, holding my hair while I puked, stroking my back, pressing a cold, wet washcloth to my forehead. She helped me into her bed and brought me a cup of chamomile tea to settle my stomach.

“Brave girl,” she cooed, her arms around me. I lay my head on her shoulder while she rocked me, caressed me, comforting me just as I had comforted Megan. “Such a brave girl you are, Anne.”

We slept together in her bed. I had wanted this since the day we met, only now I wished the circumstances were different. There was something in Trish’s demeanor that was different from that day we met at the boutique. She was more like a mother to me than a lover now, and I had the feeling that it would have been a breach of her ethics for us to make love.

And I did want to make love to her. I wanted to escape into pleasure, to lose myself between her thighs, to feel a lover’s caress instead of a mother’s. As I closed my eyes, I could tell she was looking at me, watching me, worried about my condition. The bruising looked even worse now, but the swelling in my cheek and lip had all but disappeared.

* * *

She was gone when I woke up, a handwritten note on the pillow instead of her head. It said that she had gone into her office, to shred the copy of my journal, to have the tape and her notes transcribed, and to meet with her editor. She left a couple of numbers where she could be reached, and promised to be home before dinner. There was a \$20 bill if I wanted to order pizza, along with the number of the place that had delivered the pie the night before.

I stretched and got out of bed. After a bowl of cereal, I turned on the television for company, but there wasn't anything on that was worth watching. I took a shower and brushed my teeth, using my finger because she didn't have a spare toothbrush handy. My diaphragm was still on the sink; I wrapped it in tissue paper and slipped it in the pocket of my coat.

I sat around her living room that morning, bored and restless. Manny and Billy were on my mind, what they were doing right now, whether they were safe. It was Saturday, chore day. I wondered who was doing the laundry; that had been my task the last two weekends.

I ended up passing the time by writing in my journal, basically repeating some of what I had told Trish the night before. By the time I finished I was hungry again. The night before I'd thrown up recalling the same series of events. Now I was famished. I must be healing.

I didn't feel like pizza again, but I remembered seeing a sandwich shop around the corner, and I had a craving for a hamburger or a sub. I rummaged through Trish's dresser, looking for a skirt or pants that would fit me, ending up with a pair of drawstring pants

that matched the Georgetown sweatshirt. I threw on my coat and grabbed the money she'd left me.

Trish hadn't left keys for me, expecting that I would stay in her apartment all day, but there was a spare set hanging from a hook on the side of her refrigerator. I tested them in the front door, making sure they were the right keys, and then I locked up her place and headed downstairs. There was a locked door leading out of the lobby, but I had a key for that one, too.

The burger was greasy but good, as were the fries. I got a can of soda to go, and began to head back to Trish's place. The weather had turned and it was nice outside, unusually warm for a winter day in Boston. The sun was shining, the snow was melting, forming slushy puddles at every corner. I decided to take a walk instead of heading straight back to the apartment. The pain between my legs had diminished, just a dull ache now, and because I had spent most of the previous day sitting or lying down, I felt especially restless, with energy to burn.

I didn't mean to go back to the shelter. I just sort of ended up there, like I was led back to the place by an unseen hand. Sitting on the stoop of a brownstone across the street, I finished my soda and watched the shelter, hoping to catch a glimpse of Manny or Billy or someone.

Something was different, though. Something was wrong. I sat there for a half hour and no one entered or left. It was after lunch, and I expected to see one of the boys sweeping the steps or polishing the glass of the front doors, typical Saturday chores.

“Something’s wrong,” I said to myself. I tossed the empty can of soda into a trash can and crossed the street. My fear began to rise in my throat, but I choked it back and mounted the shelter’s steps, opening the door, stopping in the middle of the front hall. It was dead silent. Nothing. No one.

I walked through the dining room, into the kitchen. There were dirty dishes in the sink, syrup and bits of waffles, breakfast. The stove was cold; lunch hadn’t been served and there was no one starting dinner. I went upstairs. All of the rooms were open, clothes and personal effects strewn everywhere, as if someone had been looking for something. Billy’s room was open, his comic books were scattered around the floor, an empty knapsack sat on the bed. Manny’s room was open, too. His baseball and mitt were on the floor along with all of his clothes, his mattress had been ripped open with something sharp, and the stuffing was everywhere.

My room had been given special treatment. The bed had been overturned and the dresser was toppled on its side. I felt around the inside corner of the boxspring, my hiding place. The bag of pot was gone, as was my money, but my vibrator remained, sitting on the windowsill, like a middle finger raised at the world outside.

I went back to Billy’s room and grabbed the empty backpack. Before I left, I picked up one of his t-shirts and held it to my nose, inhaling his familiar scent. Stuffing it into the bag, I stopped off at Manny’s room, too, and while I was deciding whether to take his ball or his glove, items I hoped to return to him someday, I noticed something sticking out from behind the radiator, something dark, made of wood, with the glimmer of brass. I reached behind the radiator and pulled it out, Manny’s folding knife. I slipped

it into the bag instead of the ball or the baseball glove, stuffing one of his sweaters in as well.

Back in my room, I packed my clothes, everything except the frilly things Mr. O'Hare had bought for me, stuffing it all in Billy's pack. I found my diaphragm case, along with the spermicidal jelly, and I even found my bag of pot, pressed flat against the floor by the mattress. Still no money, though. Right before I left, I grabbed the little vibrator and put it in my pocket, not so much that I needed it, but I didn't feel right leaving something so personal behind.

One last stop before I left the empty shelter: Megan's room, which had also been Chris's. Unlike the rest of the bedrooms, hers was undisturbed, her valise sitting on the floor where she'd left it. There were still blood stains, on the bed, on the floor. I stood and looked at the bed where I'd held her, rocked her, kissed away her tears, feeling my own eyes welling up. I had nothing to dry them with, so I used one of her little pairs of cotton panties. Unlike Billy's t-shirt, it was fresh from the laundry, it didn't bear her scent. I daubed my eyes with it and stuffed it into the pocket of my coat, wanting something tangible to remember her, something that wasn't a blood stain on a sweater.

Then I did something I hadn't done since I was six years old. I prayed. I knelt by Megan's bed, right by the big brownish stain of dried blood and I prayed for her safety, for her health. Not to God, but to Julia, my guardian angel.

"Please, Julia. I know you're with me, I know you can hear me. I'll be okay. I'll be fine. Watch over Megan instead. I love you, Julia, and I know that you loved me, and I know that you can love her. Please, Julia. She's still a little girl. She needs your help.

Please, please keep her safe, help her get well, stay with her. She'll be scared, so scared, and she needs you more than I do. Please, Julia. Please."

"Amen." I turned, startled by the sound of another person's voice. It was Sister Katherine, standing in the doorway, a string of rosary beads in her hand.

"God will hear your prayer, Anne," she said, coming over to me, kneeling next to me, her arm around me, her soft cheek against mine. We held each other for a few minutes and then we got up.

"You've got to go, Anne. They're coming back to shut the shelter down for good," she said.

"Who is? What happened? Where did everyone go?"

"Come, I'll tell you on the way downstairs," she said, leading me by the hand, out of Megan's room.

"They came right after breakfast. Two of them went straight to Ken's office and led him out to the car," she said in a hushed tone. "Ken", not "Father Ken". Just "Ken".

"Who? Who came for him?"

"The Cardinal's driver and the others, his bodyguards. He's had them ever since that psycho tried to kill Pope Paul, that trip to Manila, ten or eleven years ago." She stopped in the middle of the stairs, fear visible in her eyes. "They're all ex-cops, ex-FBI. The rest of them got the boys together and marched them into a bus they had waiting. They were allowed to take one change of clothes, and that's it. Nothing else, not even pictures of their families. They were so scared, Anne."

"Where did they go?"

“I don’t know. Maybe out to the Residence in Brighton, maybe even to Fall River. The Cardinal spent twenty years there as a priest.” She continued down the stairs. I followed her, listening to her frazzled account.

“One of them told me to stay in the kitchen, and then they tore the place apart, looking for what? I don’t know. They had guns, Anne. I saw one of them when he took off his jacket. They were looking for something. I don’t know. I don’t know what. I just don’t know.” Sister Katherine’s voice trailed off. She had nothing more to say.

We stood in the front hall together, holding hands, listening to the silence.

“Come with me,” I said. “I know a safe place.” Trish had a couch, big enough for Katie to sleep on. And maybe Sister Katherine could tell her story, maybe she could confirm mine. I had no illusion over what would happen if I had to testify against Father Ken in court. It would be my word against his, absent any other corroborating testimony. The word of a fourteen-year-old girl of dubious morals against a man of the cloth. Not a chance in Hell they’d believe me.

“Come,” I said again.

“No, Anne. I can’t,” she said. “They’re coming back for me, and I will go with them.”

“But they might...you might...,” I couldn’t even think it, let alone say it. They had guns.

“I know, Anne. I know,” she said, suddenly calm. “And I deserve it. I committed the sin of lust, Anne. I deserve whatever I get.”

“Sister...”

“Go, Anne.”

“Please...”

Sister Katherine pressed her rosary beads into my palm, covering my hands with her own, her eyes misting up, her lower lip trembling.

“Take these, Anne. I know you don’t pray to God, but you have faith. You have true faith, Anne. God will always look over you.” A single tear rolled down her pale cheek.

“Katie,” I whispered. “I love you.”

“I love you, too, Anne. Now please go. Before it’s too late.”

I kissed her on the lips, a gentle kiss, a tender kiss, and then she turned around and walked down the hall, towards her room, towards her fate, to pray while she waited for them to return. I watched her fade into the darkness, and then I left. Hefting the overstuffed backpack over my shoulder, I headed back towards Trish’s place. I held Sister Katherine’s rosary in my hand, fingering the smooth white beads, ten beads, then one, then ten beads, then one. Five hundred and fifty one beads later I was back at Trish’s apartment, letting myself back in with her spare keys.

While her words were still fresh in my mind, I took out my journal and wrote down everything Sister Katherine had told me. By the time I finished, the sun was setting. I settled down on the couch and watched figure skating on television, distracted, preoccupied with thoughts of Billy, Manny, Megan, Sister Katherine, waiting for Trish to return from the Herald.

I must have dozed off, because it was dark when the telephone woke me. The network news was on, so it must have been dinnertime. Trish still wasn't back yet. I got up from the couch, rubbing the sleep from my eyes, and picked up the phone in the kitchen on the sixth ring.

"Thank God you're there," Trish said. She must have been at a pay phone; I could hear tires on wet pavement in the background, the "dink dink" sound of a car pulling into a gas station. "Listen carefully. I don't have time to explain. Just do what I tell you." There was an anxious edge to her voice, an urgency.

"Trish! Where are...?"

"Listen! There's no time! You have to get out. You have to go. They're coming for you." Trish sounded as if she was on the verge of tears, trying hard to keep her composure, to stay cool.

"Who? Who's coming?"

"They had me locked in a room for hours . They made me tell them where you are. You only have a couple of minutes. Go. Get out. Now."

"What about you? Can I meet you somewhere?"

"They're watching me, Anne. I can't see you. You have to go," she said, sobbing on the other end of the line. "There's money in the top drawer of my dresser. Take it. Take it and get out. I gotta go..."

"Trish! Wait! Trish!" She'd already hung up the phone. It clicked again and then there was just a dial tone.

I didn't even hang it up. I let it dangle from the wall unit and went into her bedroom, where my bag and coat had been parked. I didn't even have to pack. Rummaging through the top drawer of her dresser, I found the money she'd mentioned. It was her underwear drawer, bras and panties and pantyhose, the smell of pot pourri wafting up from a sachet at the bottom. It smelled like Mrs. Pomerantz's lingerie shop.

Only \$30. I had a strange thought: more than enough for a bus ticket back to Maine. Mr. Hubbard would make me suck his smelly cock, even fuck me. Maybe I could get money out of him to do it. If a priest would pay for my pussy, why wouldn't he?

No. No way. I stuffed the cash into my jacket and grabbed the knapsack, dashing out the door and not even bothering to lock it. I ran down the hall and reached the top of the stairs when I heard a loud banging coming from the lobby. Someone was kicking the front door. There was a splintering sound, wood giving way to shoe leather, and heavy footsteps, in the hall, on the stairs.

I dashed up the steps to the third floor just as the footsteps hit the second. There was another flight of stairs; these went to the roof. I quickly ran up them, coming to a stop at a locked door. The ceiling light bulb had burned out, and I cowered against the door in total darkness, listening to the sound of Trish's door opening. A few minutes later it slammed shut.

There were more footsteps, coming up from the second floor.

"You check the basement, I'll look up here." Someone in a pair of heavy shoes descended the stairs, while his partner came closer.

I heard a click, and a dim beam of light began to probe the darkness. The beam traveled along the wall of the staircase, coming closer. I huddled against the door, into the corner, into the shadows, holding my breath. If it hits me, I'm dead. If it misses, I live.

It missed.

The yellow flashlight beam flicked off, and I heard the sound of footsteps descending the stairs. I took a deep breath as soon as they were out of earshot. A pair of voices filtered up from the lobby, followed by the sound of the broken door banging shut. I jammed my hand in my pocket and counted the rosary beads. Six hundred and fifty three beads later, I emerged from the darkness and descended the stairs.

Were they waiting out front? Did they think I might come back to the apartment? I couldn't take the chance. I went downstairs from the lobby, down to the basement. There was a familiar smell, the odor of heating oil. I recognized it from the house in Maine, that dripping tank in the corner of the cellar. At the end of a dimly lit passage, between padlocked wooden storage stalls, there was a steel door. I opened it slowly, peering through the crack, then around the edge. No one. Just silent green dumpsters. I slipped through the door and ran down the slushy alley, down to the next street over, Blackwood Street.

I stopped running when I hit the sidewalk. Whoever it was that was looking for me didn't know what I looked like. Sure, they had a description, and maybe they had some idea of what clothes I was wearing when I left the hospital, but I was wearing Trish's sweatshirt and sweatpants, and the backpack slung over my shoulder obscured the Miami

Dolphins logo on the back of Del's jacket. I straightened up and headed towards Mass. Ave.

There was only one place I could think of, one place that they wouldn't find me, the abandoned building around the corner from the shelter. In the nook under the stairs was a gap in the boards that I might be able to squeeze through. Even if I couldn't, the nook was enclosed, a place to hide, a place where I could figure out what to do, to take stock of my situation.

The gap was just big enough. I passed my backpack through the hole in the boarded-up doorway and just made it through, getting a splinter in my leg in the process. It was dark, pitch black, but I had a pack of matches. I lit one, hearing something scurry in the darkness. I didn't want to know what it was. There was a rotting staircase, half the wooden steps gone. It creaked beneath me as I gingerly transferred my weight from one foot to the other, keeping a firm grip on the railing.

There were lights on the first floor, utility lights, low wattage bulbs strung around the walls, bare except for a wire cage on each fixture. It looked as if someone had started to work on the building, boxes of nails, sheetrock, and lumber piled up in the hallway. The old walls, cracked and peeling paint on plaster, were broken through in various places.

Like Trish's building, there were two apartments on each floor. Only the first floor was lit, so I didn't go up stairs. One apartment was filled almost to the ceiling with black plastic garbage bags. The floor creaked beneath my feet, and I saw a dark shape scurry from under the bags. The other apartment had been cleared out, half the walls dressed in

new wallboard, the others stripped of plaster and lath, just beams, pipes, and wires. There were still dirty dishes in the sink, as if the previous residents had no time to wash them before they were evicted. I thought about the shelter, how I'd seen the same thing, breakfast dishes undone, no one to do them.

I turned on the faucet. It coughed to life, brown water followed by clear, cold water. No heat, no gas on the stove, no hot water. In what might have been a living room, there was a bare mattress, a brown stain in the middle, a black smear on the floor, the remains of a candle. Someone had lived here, squatted here. Were they coming back? The mattress had a coating of plaster dust. So did the floor, and only my footprints were visible. I flipped the mattress over. There was an even larger stain on that side.

I was tired. I didn't care. I dropped my bag and sat on the mattress, holding my head in my hands. I was hungry. I was cold. I was lonely. I was scared. Scared for me, scared for Trish, scared for Sister Katherine. Scared for Manny and Billy and Megan, and I knew that they were scared, too.

I wanted a pill or a drink more than anything else, even food. I was hungry, too, but I wanted to get high, low, sideways, anything but what I was feeling. I had my bag of pot, stuffed into the bottom of my bag, but nothing to smoke it in. Then I remembered my tampons, recalling something Manny had said when he saw them on my dresser one night. Rummaging through my pack, I pulled out the pot and a tampon, carefully peeling the wrapper from the latter. I cleaned the seeds from a pinch of weed, sprinkling the pot along the length of the paper. I twisted it into a tube and licked it. Not too much, just enough to make it adhere to itself. I shook it until it dried and then lit it with a match. It

crackled from seeds I hadn't caught, and it tasted pretty bad, but that didn't matter. I lay on my side on the filthy mattress and got stoned, Manny's knife by my side. It made it easier to fall asleep.

* * *

The rats woke me up the next morning. As the sun came up, they began to retreat to the darkness from their foraging grounds. One must have run across me. I could still feel its feet running across my breasts as I sat up, knife in hand, frozen in fear. I heard skittering, the sound retreating, leaving me alone with my pounding heart.

I was freezing, even though I'd taken most of my clothes out of my backpack and used them in lieu of a blanket and pillow. I huddled in my coat, shivering, the zipper pulled up over my nose, trying to warm myself with my breath. Reaching into the almost-empty pack, I pulled on two pairs of tights and put my jeans on over them.

I was hungry, too. I'd skipped dinner in my haste to leave Trish's place. There was a 24-hour store a few blocks away. I packed my knapsack, intending to take my stuff with me rather than leave it behind. It was pretty heavy, even with both straps around my shoulders, but lugging it was better than losing everything I had in the world. I pushed it through the gap in the boards and followed it, emerging from the building into the pink light of dawn. There was a cold bite in the air; today wasn't going to be nearly as warm as the day before.

I bought a couple of sandwiches, cold cuts on rolls with soggy lettuce, a couple of cans of soda, and a pack of rolling papers, so I wouldn't have to use a tampon wrapper. The sandwiches were pretty expensive, a couple of bucks more than freshly made food

from a sandwich shop, but this was the only place open at this early hour and I was too hungry to care. The cashier rang up my meal and gave me back a dollar in change from a \$10 bill. Before I left I tried calling Trish from the store's pay phone, but there was no answer. I thought about trying to call the hospital, using Trish's little ploy to check on Megan's condition, but I wouldn't have been able to pull it off. I sounded too young.

Back in the derelict brownstone, I sat on the mattress and wolfed down one sandwich and half of the other, stashing the leftover half in my bag so the rats wouldn't get to it. Eating so fast on an empty stomach made me sort of queasy, so I rolled a joint and smoked half of it.

The sun was up now. I had nowhere to go, nothing to do but hide, stay out of sight. The shelter was just around the block, but I still felt like this was the safest place I could find, short of taking a bus out of town. I thought about Portland again, just for a second before dismissing the thought. Given a choice of sleeping with rats and sleeping with Mr. Hubbard, the rodent option still came out ahead.

And so I spent the day on the stained mattress, wrapped in Del's old coat and two sweaters, mine and Manny's. I was numb, from the cold, from the events of the last 48 hours. I read my journal for a while, leafing back through the past few weeks, and then I wrote a couple of pages. Afterwards, I finished off the second sandwich and the last soda.

Both of the bathrooms on this floor were gutted. No fixtures, just a hole in the floor. I briefly thought about using the sink, but I squatted over the hole in the other apartment, the one with all the garbage, and emptied my bladder.

Between the cold, the rats, the brown water that ran from the faucet, and the demolished bathroom, I was motivated to find somewhere else to stay, even just for a night. There was a homeless shelter near Michael's loft, but they wouldn't take in someone my age; DYS would have been there as soon as they called. There might be another abandoned building I break into, but as bad as this place was, it had lights and running water, and the gap in the boards downstairs was just big enough for me to squeeze through. Someone bigger wouldn't be able to make it.

I decided to stay as long as I could. Those men who were looking for me would eventually give up, or so I hoped. I spent the rest of the day on the mattress, hugging my knees and rocking back and forth to keep warm.

The sun was setting when I began to get hungry again. Despite the inflated price of their sandwiches, I went back to the convenience store, buying just one sandwich and a soda this time. The sandwich looked fresher than the ones I'd bought earlier, and as I walked back to my hideaway, my stomach growled with anticipation.

I was about to turn the corner near the brownstone when a taxi pulled up to the curb. The window whizzed down and the driver called out.

"Hey!" he said. I turned to look, wondering if I knew him. Maybe he was the guy who took Trish and I back to her place the day before. I walked over and leaned through the window. He didn't look familiar.

"You cold?" he asked. "C'mon in." He had a cup of coffee in his lap, from the store where I bought my sandwich. I hadn't noticed him in there. The heat wafted out of his car, nice and inviting. "C'mon," he repeated, pressing a switch on the armrest to his

left. The door lock thumped open. I opened the door and got inside, wanting to feel some delicious heat before I returned to the derelict apartment. The driver handed his coffee to me and I just held it in my hands for a while before taking a sip. I didn't have gloves and my fingers felt pretty numb.

"Thanks," I said, handing the coffee back.

"How much?" he asked.

"How much?" I repeated. Did he want to know how much of his coffee I drank?

"How much for a BJ," he said. "Thirty? Twenty?"

I felt a chill spread through my body, despite the car's heater, despite the coffee. The cab driver didn't invite me to sit here out of the goodness of his heart. I began to reach for the door handle.

"Thirty-five. I'll give you thirty-five," he said, taking my reluctance as a bargaining position. \$35 was more than twice the money I had in the world at that moment. \$35 just to suck his cock. \$35. I took my hand off of the door and looked at him. White, middle-aged, thinning hair, mustard stain on his shirt, bit of a gut.

"Fine," I said. "Thirty-five."

He reached into his trousers and pulled out a wad of cash, peeling off a twenty, a ten, and five \$1 bills, stuffing them in my hand as he moved his seat back as far as it would go. Then he unzipped his trousers and fished out his hardening cock. There were people on the sidewalk, some coming home from work, some walking dogs. I thought about bolting from the car with his money, but instead I stuffed the cash into my jeans and looked around before leaning over his spread legs.

Other than the fact that he was circumcised, his penis was like Father Steve's: short, thick, fat head. He smelled like dried sweat, and there was a faint urine taste when I swirled my tongue over his glans. With one hand on his shaft, jerking it up and down, I wrapped my lips around his stiff tool, sucking him quickly. His ass shifted in his seat, his hips pushing up towards my face, stabbing my mouth with his hardness.

"Faster," he muttered, and I picked up the pace, bumping my head against the steering wheel a couple of times. "Faster..." I wrapped both hands around his cock, and sucked harder, faster, wondering how many people could see my blonde head bobbing in his lap from the sidewalk and the buildings on this street.

"That's it...that's it...that's it...yeah..." he groaned, his thick thighs tensing as he erupted in my mouth, filling it with his bitter seed. He must have been hoarding semen for a month; he just kept coming and coming, spurt after spurt of hot juice flowing from his fat cockhead. His cock began to soften, he sighed, and his thighs relaxed. I milked the rest of his cum with my lips and released his flaccid penis from my mouth.

"Good. That was good," he said. "You from around here?"

"Sorta," I said, licking a drip of spunk from the corner of my mouth.

"Here. Here's a tip," he said, pulling a \$5 bill from his shirt pocket and pressing it into my palm. "See you 'round." He put his foot on the brake and shifted out of park, my cue to leave.

"Sure. Thanks," I said, opening the door and pulling my backpack on to one shoulder. I closed the door and heard the locks thump again, the little chrome posts

receding into their silver receptacles. The cab turned the corner and motored down the street as I headed back to my hideaway.

My stomach had stopped growling, the cabbie's semen in my tummy quelling my hunger, for a while at least. I popped open the soda and sat on the old mattress, washing the taste of his cum from my mouth. Then I ate half of my sandwich, saving the rest for breakfast, cursing myself for not buying a newspaper that I could spread over the mattress's stained ticking.

I smoked another joint and read my journal again, changing a few words here and there, filling in some of the details I'd left out. I began to wonder if Trish had actually had a chance to shred her copy. Maybe they had it, maybe they were reading about the things I had done with Michael, with Manny and Billy and Chris, with Sister Katherine, with Trish, with Father Ken and his colleagues, with Mr. O'Hare. That last name made me laugh out loud, the thought of a district attorney trying to explain away the fact that he'd fucked me with his big prick on Father Ken's desk.

There were other things in my journal, even more personal things. I reminisced about my life with Ramon and the boys, with Julia, and I even wrote about some of the things I'd done with Luci and Tina. Not everything, though, but enough to make my skin crawl at the thought of strangers reading my journal.

I stayed up late that night, until I could hardly keep my eyes open, falling asleep to the sound of rats scratching in the half-demolished walls, in the broken ceiling, under the floorboards. I'd moved the mattress to the middle of the room, where the light from the low-wattage bulbs was brightest. Manny's knife was open, laying next to me on the

mattress where I could grab it quickly if I needed it. The last thing I saw before I closed my eyes was the glint of dim yellow light shining on the steel blade.

* * *

Chapter Ten

Girls on Film

I stayed there in the abandoned building for three days, eating convenience store sandwiches, peeing in the hole in the bathroom floor, walking to a nearby coffee shop each day for a hot meal and a real bathroom. My only concessions to comfort and hygiene were the newspaper I spread over the mattress, a toothbrush and toothpaste, and a roll of toilet paper. I swiped a wad of napkins from the store, using these to give myself a cold water sponge bath, standing next to the sink and taking off one piece of clothing at a time, putting them back on when I was done. Even so, I could tell that I was starting to smell a little ripe.

I saw the taxi driver again on the second day, sucking him again for another \$35. No tip this time, even though he filled my mouth with his sperm again. By now, I had a little over eighty bucks in my pocket.

On the third day, I put on my shortest skirt and tightest sweater, the clothes I'd worn that last night with Father Steve and Father Ken. But for the knit tights I wore under my skirt, I would have frozen my ass off, standing on the corner, watching cars slow down and drive away. Two of them stopped, though, a youngish guy, still in his twenties, overweight and acne-scarred, and an older black man in a decrepit sedan that smelled like

a pine forest inside. I sucked them both, one for \$25 and the other for \$30. After buying food, drink, and a fresh newspaper, I still had over \$100.

The next morning, the fourth day of hiding, the lights went out. I was getting dressed, about to head out for something for breakfast other than a deli sandwich, looking forward to sitting in the nice warm coffee shop. I could almost smell the bacon I'd have with my pancakes. The lights just flickered out, leaving me in near-darkness, just what dim rays found their way through the broken and boarded up windows.

My heart pounded, and I heard or imagined tiny claws scratching all around me. I stuffed everything I could into my backpack and hurried out of the place, poking my head out of the nook under the front steps to see if the coast was clear. A truck from the electric company was parked outside, the driver writing something on a clipboard before driving off. He must have cut the power, probably because the owner stopped paying the bills. The electric meter that was mounted on the facade was gone, just a blank plastic disk where the meter and glass bubble had been. I shouldered my pack and headed down the block, still intent on having a decent breakfast.

As I sipped my second cup of coffee, I concentrated on figuring out what to do next. I was trying to recall the locations of other abandoned buildings I'd seen in the neighborhood when I remembered a sign I'd seen on a brownstone near the convenience store, "ROOMS FOR RENT". I paid for breakfast and grabbed my bag, heading to where I thought the building was located. It wasn't where I thought it was, but I found it eventually, two blocks down. There was another "ROOM AVAILABLE \$35" sign in the lobby, with the name "ANTONELLI" written on the bottom in a shaky hand. I pressed

the button with that name on it and the front door buzzed open. There was a door on the first floor with that name, so I knocked.

I heard movement after the second knock, a muttering, slow footsteps. The building smelled like cooked onions, with a faint undertone of urine . I was about to give up and leave when the locks on the door began to click open. The door only opened a couple of inches, a brass chain across the gap.

“Can I help you?” someone said through the gap.

“Um, you have a room for rent?” I asked, trying to keep my voice from cracking. The onion smell drifted out of the apartment.

“Who’s asking?” the voice demanded, the door opening a bit wider until the chain was taut.

“Anne,” I said. “My name is Anne.” I saw a faded hazel eye appear above the chain, a wrinkled cheek, a shock of snow white hair.

“How old are you?” he asked.

“Eighteen,” I said.

“Bullshit. Go away.” The door began to close, the gap narrowing by an inch.

“No, please, I have money,” I blurted out, digging in my pocket and coming up with all the money I had, waving it in front of his eye.

“No.” The door closed another inch.

“Please!” I cried, sticking my toe in the gap and leaning against the door. “I’ll suck your cock,” I said, quietly. “Please?”

“Get away from the door,” the man said. Disappointed, feeling ashamed for having offered myself just for the chance to rent a room, I retreated, pulling my toe from the door and stepping back. The door slammed shut, but as I was turning to leave, I heard the scraping of the chain and the door opened again, wider this time, an elderly man in a white shirt and black trousers standing in the doorway.

“Come in,” he said. Mr. Antonelli stepped aside as I walked through the door. His apartment was a mess, newspapers and magazines strewn about, the sink overflowing with dishes, something noxious cooking on the stove. Still, you could tell that it had once been meticulously cared for. Lace curtains, old photographs carefully arranged on the walls, pots and pans hanging from the kitchen cabinets, the remnants of a woman’s touch. I stood in the middle of his messy living room while he slowly picked his way through the only clear path on the rug and settled down in an overstuffed easy chair with a torn armrest.

“You serious?” he said in his thick accent. “You suck me for a room?”

“Yes, sir,” I said, looking down at my feet.

“Hrmph,” he grunted, and then he eased himself up from the chair, going to an old wooden side table next to the front door. It was piled high with unopened mail, and when he opened the drawer and began to rummage around for something, a few envelopes fell off the stack and on to the floor. I went over and knelt down, picking up the fallen pieces of mail.

“Don’t bother,” he said, pulling a set of keys from the drawer. “I show you the room now.” Mr. Antonelli unlocked the door and I followed him out into the hall, up the

stairs, all the way to the third floor. He took it slow, one step at a time, but he was wheezing heavily when he reached the top of the third flight. Despite this, he pulled a pack of cigarettes from his pocket and lit one, coughing wetly when he exhaled the smoke.

“This th’ bathroom over here,” he said, opening a narrow door at the end of the hallway. It was tiny, hardly enough room for the tub, sink, and toilet. The tiles on the floor and walls were cracked, the paint was peeling, and the sink looked like it hadn’t been cleaned in twenty years. A single bare light bulb hung from the ceiling, swaying back and forth when he pulled the chain that turned it on.

“This your room over here,” Mr. Antonelli said, opening another door with the keys he’d fished out of his drawer.

It was only slightly larger than my room at the shelter, but it faced the south side of the street and the bay window was flooded with morning sunlight. I sat down on the bed, hearing the mattress and boxspring squeak. Not too lumpy, not too firm, either. There was a dresser, a table by the bed, a lamp, and, in place of a closet, a tall metal cabinet with a rod and hangers. The wooden floor was bare, and there was a sink in the corner, white porcelain with a spiderweb of fine cracks in the glazing.

“Is all right?” Mr. Antonelli asked me. “Is a good room.”

“Yes, it’s fine, thank you,” I said, twisting the sink’s hot water faucet. It coughed, spitting air and fizzy brown water before the stream began to turn clear. It took a while for the water to turn warm, then hot.

“Okay?” he said.

“Yes.”

“Let’s go back,” he said, shuffling into the hallway. “We talk.”

I followed Mr. Antonelli back to his apartment, his halting gait beating a n irregular rhythm on the broad wooden floorboards. He went into the kitchen and stirred whatever he was cooking, and after a couple of minutes of pots clanging and water running, he returned with a spoon in his hand, sinking back into his easy chair.

“You suck me now?” he said. I hoped it wouldn’t come to this.

“Yes, sir.” I put down my backpack and knelt between his legs, putting my hands on his knees. He stroked my hair with a shaky hand and smiled.

I wasn’t ready for the smell. It was as if he hadn’t b athed in weeks, a musty, sweaty scent that permeated his yellowed boxer shorts. I had to help him pull his trousers down, and he farted loudly when he lifted his butt off of the chair’s cushion.

“scusa me” he muttered, seeing me turn my head. I held my br eath and leaned into his crotch, his cock and balls in my hands, the tip aimed at my mouth. Even though his stubby penis never really got totally hard—he was even older than Father John—he seemed to enjoy my attention, and, after a few minutes of vigorous sucking and stroking, he came, his cock dribbling a thin stream of foul tasting semen. I choked it back, swallowing his cum, despite the awful taste.

Mr. Antonelli leaned back in his chair, looking as if he were about to go to sleep. Then he snapped out o f his trance and had me help him pull his boxers and trousers up, shuffling over to the table where he’d fished for the keys, pulling out a receipt book and a pen.

“You name?” he said, pen in shaky hand, poised to write on a fresh receipt.

“Anne Mercer.”

“Anna Mercero,” he repeated.

“No. Anne. Anne Mercer.”

“Right. Anna Mercero,” he repeated. “Two weeks up front, I give you the room for \$25 a week.”

“\$25?” I said, puzzled. “The sign said \$35.”

“Rent due on Saturday. You suck me then, no?”

“Every week?” I shuddered at the thought at sucking him again.

“You want the room or no?” he asked.

“Yes, sir. I’d like the room, please.” I handed him \$50 and he gave me the keys and a receipt.

“Buono. I gonna like having you ‘round,” he said. “Bella Anna.” He pinched my cheek like Mrs. Pomerantz had done, his eyes sparkling, a smile on his face.

“Would you mind if I cleaned the bathroom up there?” I asked.

“’ey, knock y’self out,” he said. “I got some stuff for that.” He retreated into the kitchen, returning with sponges, a can of Ajax, and a roll of paper towels, all sealed and unused.

“Thank you, sir,” I said, preparing to take my leave.

“Gustavo. My name Gustavo. You call me Gus, okay? You let me know if you need anything, okay?”

“Yes, sir. Thank you...er, Gus,” I said. I’d just sucked his cock, but I still didn’t feel comfortable calling him by his first name. He seemed old enough to be my great-grandfather. I shouldered my pack and picked up the cleaning supplies, letting myself out of his apartment as he turned on his television and eased himself back into his seat.

The room was drafty and cold, especially at night, until I stuffed newspaper in the gaps around the window sash. Mr. Antonelli lent me a wrench, and I figured out how to bleed the air from the radiator, bringing steam heat into my little room.

Little by little, I settled in, made myself comfortable, made the room mine. I kept the bathroom clean, swept the stairs and hallway, washed years of accumulated grime from my windows. There was a Salvation Army store in the neighborhood, and I picked up things to make my room more of a home, a rug for the floor, a nice warm comforter, a lamp with a dented shade, a hotplate and some pots and dishes, so I could make myself a can of soup after a cold day on the corner.

I hardly ever saw my neighbors in the rooming house. There were two other apartments on my floor. One was occupied by Luis, a Hispanic man in his thirties who barely spoke English. He’d leave for work early, just as the sun was coming up, and wouldn’t return until well after midnight. Mr. Antonelli said Luis worked two jobs, as a janitor at a hospital by day, and cleaning office buildings at night. Luis sent almost all of his money back to El Salvador, to his family.

Miss Kass lived in the other room. She was a retired school teacher in her sixties, rail thin, with the rigid upright posture of someone who had learned to walk with books balanced on her head. She rarely went out, not even to the bathroom, and I began to think

that she peed in the sink in her room rather than walk ten steps down the hall to the toilet. She'd peek through the door when she heard someone coming up the stairs, and once I caught a glimpse of her room; neat, tidy, cleaner than mine. I often heard the sound of a broom behind her door, sometimes two or three times a day. She had a large collection of books, old leather-bound volumes stacked on thrift shop shelves. On her dresser was a half-gallon jug of S. S. Pierce vodka, the cheapest brand you could buy, about a quarter full. Next to the dresser, stacked in three neat columns on the floor, were two dozen cans of cat food.

Miss Kass did not have a cat.

* * *

In the weeks that followed, I developed a routine, a daily and weekly schedule that kept me busy, kept my mind from wandering into painful territory.

I'd wake up and make tea, washing my face in the sink while I waited for the water to boil. Most mornings I'd have a roll or muffin, bought at the bakery on Tremont Street the day before, but sometimes I'd go out for breakfast. Usually, I'd eat light, because sometimes I got nauseous when I worked, and throwing up on someone's lap while you were sucking them was bad for business.

I'd work the streets during lunchtime and during the evening rush hours. Those were the busiest times, and I tried to make the most of them, standing on the corner and waiting for men to drive by and stop. I typically had one or two during lunch and as many as five during the evening commute.

The bulk of what I did was sucking cock. Some guys just wanted a hand job, the cheap ones. They'd usually try to talk me down to five dollars, or offer some dubious drugs in trade, but I wouldn't do it for any less than ten. With the exception of Larry the cab driver, and another regular, The Photographer, I rarely saw the same man twice. Most of them were middle-aged, paunchy, balding. Too many of them had wedding bands on their fingers. Sometimes I'd see someone younger, like the man in his thirties with the horrible acne scars, or a young man in his late teens or twenties, driving in from the suburbs in his parents' car, looking for a blowjob.

Actual fucking was pretty rare, made difficult by the logistics of having sex in a car parked on the street. I let Larry fuck me in his taxi while we were parked behind his company's garage on Albany Street, and once I took him up to my room, the only time I ever took someone up there. It was his 48th birthday, he seemed so down, and I felt like doing something special for him. I put in my diaphragm, sucked him until he was hard, and then I climbed on top of him, clinging to his round belly as I rocked my hips over his crotch, sliding up and down his glistening pole. Larry closed his eyes and smiled as I rode him. I actually would have done him for free, because he was so nice to me. But he left \$100 on my dresser anyway, giving me a kiss on the cheek before he left.

I never kissed these men I serviced. Sometimes one of the younger ones would try, but I'd turn my head. The older men knew the score. This was business. Some of them wanted to feel me, to cup my breasts through my clothes or squeeze my ass while I was bent over on the front seat, my head bobbing in their lap. I let them, as long as they weren't too rough. It made them come sooner. It made my job easier.

Only a couple of times did I feel scared, in danger. It was important to read every situation; my life depended on it. Was he sweating too much? All of them were nervous to some degree, even Larry, but some just radiated anxiety, and I could tell even before I opened the door. Once I refused to go with someone, a cabbie who said “Get in the car, bitch.” I just gave him the finger and walked down the block. He followed me for a while and then drove off in search of easier prey.

The cops were a minor annoyance. The corner I worked wasn’t known for hosting prostitutes, unlike the streets near the bus station and the Combat Zone downtown, where I’d found that adult bookstore. When I saw a police car in the area, I’d start walking, looking as if I had a destination. I usually carried my knapsack, empty except for a couple of cans of soup. This was my main weapon, and it came in handy when a drunken homeless man tried to grope me on the street. I swung it, and it hit his head with a satisfying “thump”. After that, he’d cross the street whenever he saw me. I also carried Manny’s knife, until Larry gave me a small can of pepper spray, telling me I’d get in more trouble for having a blade if I got picked up by the cops than for working the streets.

In the afternoon, between lunch and rush hour, I’d do my shopping, go to the library, browse through used book stores, walk around the city for a few hours. Sometimes I’d stay in and read, or clean, or just take a nap. At night I’d sit in my room, listening to music on a cheap radio I’d bought at the Goodwill store, writing in my journal or reading old textbooks I had purchased. I felt like I was missing out by not being in school, that I’d end up like Luis, working two menial jobs, eighteen hours each

day. Sucking men for money had no future, I knew that. Eventually, my luck would run out, the law of averages would catch up with me, and I'd end up sick or dead.

I pored over the texts, trying to do the problems at the end of every chapter, writing my answers in a spiral-bound notebook. But the texts never came with the answer key, so I had no way of knowing if my solutions were right or wrong. Math was hard for me, algebra more than geometry, but I ate up science and English and history, snapping up every used text I could get my hands on, even college-level books. There were plenty of those in Boston.

And there were other nights when I lay in my bed and stared at the ceiling, my head full of whatever drugs I could get my hands on, mostly stuff that Larry had given me. I'd see him just about every day; he'd stop by whenever he knew I'd be on the street, not for a quick BJ, but just for a minute to let me warm up in his car. Sometimes he'd bring me coffee, sometimes he'd give me a couple of pills, Valium, Percocets, codeine, even a Dilaudid once in a while. Larry liked his pills.

Twice each week, Larry would come by at the end of the rush hour, I'd get into his cab, and we'd park behind his garage for a while, sometimes as long as an hour. We'd smoke some pot, maybe do a line or two of coke, and I'd suck him, twice on some occasions. There were times, though, when all he wanted was for me to talk about some of the men I'd serviced. He really liked to listen to me describe their cocks and balls, what they'd say when I sucked or jerked them, how their semen tasted. Larry would sit behind the wheel, jerking his cock while I quietly described the shape of one man's cockhead, how spongy it felt between my lips, how his shaft tensed when I stroked it with

my fingers. He'd close his eyes, his fist working his tool, and spurt his spunk on the cab's floormats when he came.

As far as my own pleasure was concerned, I'd take things into my own hands, back in my room, lying under my comforter, late at night. Even when I fucked a guy I had no expectation of anything other than a quick boning. I'd fake orgasms just to make the guy come, just to get him off of me, out of me. Sucking cock, an act I sort of enjoyed performing when I was with someone I liked, became just another thing I did with my mouth, like eat or talk, something that would make the cum and the money flow. I dipped into my savings, pressed between pages of an algebra textbook, and splurged on a better vibrator. Just because.

* * *

Weekends had a different rhythm, a different routine. On Saturday mornings I'd take a nice long bath. I had spent most of my first week in the rooming house just cleaning that bathroom, scrubbing the sink, the tub, the toilet, the floor, even the tile walls. I bought a small rug at Goodwill to serve as a bathmat, a shade for the bare light bulb, and except for the peeling paint it looked pretty good.

After my bath, I'd head down to Mr. Antonelli's apartment and pay my rent, watching him write out a receipt in his shaky handwriting. After that was done, he'd pull down his trousers and sit in his easy chair while I used my hands to work his penis into a state that somewhat resembled an erection. Then I'd suck him, fast, the way he liked it, until he came. Usually, he was pretty quick, but there were a couple of times when he just got numb, and my neck and jaw would get sore. He never complained, or asked for two

the following week to make up for it. He'd just zip up his trousers, light a cigarette, and then we'd have coffee, thick, sweet coffee that he'd brew on his stove.

Before I left, I'd tidy his place for a few minutes. Not too much or he'd bitch about his stuff being moved. I'd stack a few of his piles of magazines or wash a few of his dishes. Once I found a telephone under a pile of dirty shirts. It was dusty, and I couldn't recall ever hearing it ring, but there was a dial tone when I picked it up. Little by little, I cleaned his apartment, and though he never said anything, I know he appreciated it.

I even got Mr. Antonelli to bathe a bit more frequently. Sometimes it was hard to conceal my disgust at his body odor; more than once he caught me wrinkling my nose involuntarily. When I stopped by during the week to get his laundry, which I'd throw in with mine down at the laundromat, towels and washcloths began to appear with his boxers and shirts, some of them still damp. He began to smell cleaner, not exactly like a rose, but better than before. And he started to comb his hair, even getting it cut at the barber shop on Mass. Ave., looking more like the handsome young man in the old photographs that hung in his apartment.

As for Sundays, that was my day to catch up on sleep, do laundry, clean my room and the bathroom down the hall, sweep the stairs. Miss Kass would hear the sound of my broom as I swept the hall outside our rooms, and she'd open her door about an inch and watch me, just staring, not saying a word. I'd say "Hello" to her, but she never returned my greeting. I sometimes wondered if she was crazy or just so lonely she'd forgotten how to speak to another human being.

* * *

One Saturday in late February, I came down to pay my rent and was surprised to see Mr. Antonelli waiting for me, dressed in a sharp pinstripe suit, a dove grey fedora on his head, his walking stick in hand.

“Let’s go,” he said, holding out his hand.

“Where?” I asked.

“Surprise,” he said, trying to suppress a smile.

“I’ll get my coat,” I said. I quickly ran upstairs, startling Miss Kass, who was peeking through the door, and returned to the first floor with my jacket just as Mr. Antonelli was locking his apartment. We went out to the street, the first time I could recall seeing him in direct sunlight. He hailed a cab on the avenue, flagging down the taxi with his cane. We headed downtown.

I’d never been to the North End, and there was something about the narrow streets that reminded me of the older parts of Coopersport, near the docks, old brick buildings with interesting shops and cafes. Mr. Antonelli bought us espresso and fresh rolls at a bakery with tables on the sidewalk. It was still too cold to sit outside, so we ate inside the bakery, the best smelling spot on the planet.

After that we strolled around the neighborhood. It seemed like every other block Mr. Antonelli would run into an old friend, and they’d have a brief conversation in Italian, shake hands again, and move on. After a few hours of window shopping, we walked under the Expressway to Haymarket, where people sold fresh fish, meats, fruits, and vegetables from old wooden pushcarts. There were stores, too, open to the street, and Mr. Antonelli knew plenty of people here as well. While he had a short reunion with the

man who sold fresh poultry, I bought a carnation for his lapel from one of the pushcart vendors.

We took a cab back to the rooming house, carrying bags of groceries with us, fresh food from the pushcarts. I helped Mr. Antonelli bring them into his apartment.

“You stay for dinner?” he asked.

“Thanks, but I couldn’t,” I said, putting his carton of eggs in the refrigerator. I liked to eat out on Saturdays, even just a sandwich or burger, and I didn’t want to impose on Mr. Antonelli.

“Please,” he said. He put his hand on top of mine and looked me in the eyes.

“Okay,” I said. “I’d like that. Thank you.” He wanted company, badly. Truth be told, so did I.

Mr. Antonelli declined my offer to help. I would have, anyway, but he began to work up quite a head of steam as he puttered around the kitchen, so it was just as well that I stayed out of his way. I went upstairs to drop off my coat, and decided to change, to dress up for dinner, just for fun.

I’d found some great old clothes at the Goodwill and the Salvation Army stores, just things I ran across while I was shopping for things to make my room a bit more comfortable. There were always vintage dresses, some from the Sixties, some even older; expensive dresses with fine beadwork and nice material. I’d try on a dress or two whenever I was there, and if it didn’t fit perfectly, it went back to the rack. Though there were always sewing machines for sale in the thrift stores, the thought of lugging one back

to the rooming house and up three flights of stairs kept me from buying one, so I had no way of altering a dress that didn't quite fit.

Still, I had about a dozen old dresses, none of them more than \$10. I picked out one of my favorites, a burgundy silk cocktail dress with spaghetti straps. The only dressy shoes I had were a pair of black pumps from the thrift shop. They were a size too big, but I'd stuffed tissue paper in the toes to make them fit better. Before I headed back downstairs, I put on a little makeup, just some eyeliner and lipstick, a hint of perfume. I'd been wearing makeup on the street; it made me look just a little older, like I belonged out there.

Mr. Antonelli had dimmed the lights and lit candles on the table while I'd been gone. The carnation I'd bought for him was floating on about an inch of water in a brandy snifter. I picked it up and inhaled its scent, watching the flickering tapers reflect off the glass.

"Ah, there you are," Mr. Antonelli said, emerging from the kitchen. He had a bottle of wine and two glasses. "Bella Anna." I smiled and turned around for him.

"Thank you," I said, taking a glass of wine from him. He poured one for himself, and then he turned on the old radio next to his couch, finding a station that played the sort of music that was popular forty years earlier.

"May I?" he said, putting down his wine and taking my hand. I had no idea what he was going to do until he put his other hand on my hip and began to ease me into the middle of the living room, his feet moving to the sound of the violins.

I'd seen people dance like this, and I thought it looked easy. It wasn't. I had to concentrate on where my feet went, trying not to step on Mr. Antonelli's feet while we danced. Eventually, I began to get the hang of it, letting him lead me, matching his steps. We swayed together on his living room rug, wine and candles and violins, our shadows dancing on the wall.

"That's it, that's right," Mr. Antonelli murmured, guiding me around the floor. He held me closer, moving in a tighter circle, and I laid my head on his shoulder as we slowly spun around.

"I like this," I whispered in his ear. I did like this; I liked the way his hand felt on my hip, the way his body moved, the scent of his cologne. I liked the closeness, something I hadn't felt in a while, something I missed. Eventually, we just stood there, not even trying to dance, just holding each other. I wanted to kiss him.

"Dinner," he said, slipping from my arms. We held hands and looked at each other for a moment, and then he left for the kitchen. I took a seat at the table and sipped wine while he banged pots and stirred things for fifteen or twenty minutes. He emerged from the kitchen with a bowl, which he set in front of me. It was some sort of rice dish, creamy, with snow peas and shrimp.

"What is this?" I asked, picking up my fork.

"Risotto," Mr. Antonelli said. "Try!" I tried a forkful; it was the most amazing thing I'd ever tasted. He saw my expression and laughed, clapping his hands together. "You like?" he asked. I could only nod.

We had baked fish after the risotto, with green beans served with a bit of garlic and tomato sauce. For desert, there were fancy pastries from the North End and sweet, thick coffee. I helped Mr. Antonelli clean up after dinner, and then we sipped our wine and danced some more.

This time I did kiss him, during a lull between songs, when the announcer was giving the station's call letters. He seemed startled at first, but then he opened his mouth against mine, his hands in the small of my back, pulling me closer. After the kiss, we looked at each other for a moment, silent, our eyes nearly level.

"Mr. Antonel..." I began to say.

"Anna," he said. "Call me Papa."

"Yes, Papa," I whispered, kissing him lightly on the lips. We just held each other for a while and then I turned in his arms, taking his hand, leading him to the bedroom. We stood next to the bed and held each other again, and then I turned around so he could unzip my dress. It had a low back, and I could have easily reached it myself, but I wanted him to do it. I shrugged off the thin straps and let the dress fall to my feet. I stepped out of the dress and started to pull off my panties. I'd worn a plain cotton pair, not expecting this to happen, that anyone else would see them.

Mr. Antonelli stopped me from taking them off. He ran his hands over my bottom, between my legs, smoothing the white cotton over my skin, pulling them taut over my labia. Only then did he let me take them off, and I stood before him nude except for the black high heels.

He looked so sharp in his suit and tie that I almost didn't want to undress him. He stood there, smiling as I helped him out of his jacket, undid his tie, slowly unbuttoned his shirt, held him as he stepped out of his trousers and boxers. Nude, he was like I imagined Mr. Hubbard looked like, pale, paunchy, greying hair on his chest and between his legs. I didn't care. I wanted to be with him anyway.

As we climbed into bed and curled up together, Mr. Antonelli kissed me and caressed my cheek.

"Anna," he whispered. "Why?"

"Because you're so nice to me," I said. He smiled and kissed me again.

Mr. Antonelli loved my breasts, as small as they were. I held them to his lips, and he suckled my puffy nipples as he ran his hand over my thighs and belly. When I curled up between his legs to take him in my mouth, he was already hard, as hard as I'd ever seen him. I sucked him slowly this time, not like the quick blowjobs I gave him each week. When it came time to feel his glistening cock inside me, he wanted to be on top, missionary, like he'd done for years when his wife was still alive. But his hips just weren't up to the job, and he sighed as he rolled on to his back so I could mount him.

Mr. Antonelli gasped as the tip of his cock slipped between my labia. I was wet down there, as I had been when we started dancing together, hungry for his morsel. I slid down his shaft, laying on top of him so we could kiss some more, my blonde hair spilling around his head. He held me by the hips, guiding me up and down on his pole, setting the pace of our coupling. I felt the tingling in my belly, something I seldom felt with someone else these days, the feeling growing as I rocked my hips against his.

“Oh, Papa,” I whispered. “Papa...Papa...” Mr. Antonelli held my hips tighter, pulling me closer to his hardness as I felt my climax approach. I nestled my face in the crook of his neck, my nipples grinding against his. He cupped my bottom, fingers spreading my cheeks as his cock thrust in and out of my sex. He pressed against my ass with the tip of his finger and I began to come, moaning and quivering on top of him, clenching my muscle around his shaft.

I couldn’t remember coming that fast, not even with a vibrator. It kept going, too, reaching a second, higher peak when he probed my bottom with his finger. I wondered if Mr. Antonelli wanted to take me back there. Some other time, I thought as he began to twitch inside me. He let out a low, hoarse grunt when he came, and I wasn’t sure he did at first. I couldn’t feel his spunk, that sensation of warmth. But as my hips slowed down and stopped, he softened and slipped out of me, and I felt something drip from my cleft.

I rolled off of him and we curled up again, facing each other. “Papa,” I whispered. He smiled, and our lips brushed together, lightly, briefly. Then he closed his eyes and slept, still smiling, still happy.

I watched him for a while, and then I kissed his forehead and gently smoothed his snow white hair back, slipping out of bed and back into my dress, snuffing out the candles that still flickered on the table, letting his door click behind me. I felt like just lying in bed, savoring the afterglow of the evening. Then I noticed the case to my diaphragm on the dresser. I hadn’t worn it when I slept with Mr. Antonelli. I felt a sudden chill.

On the verge of panicking, I ran to the bathroom and started a bath. While the tub was filling, I went back to my room, stepped out of my dress, and grabbed a towel, running back to the bathroom in just panties and heels. I sat on the toilet until the tub was half full, and then I stripped and got in, frantically washing my pussy with soapy water. It burned.

I washed myself out three times, all the while hoping that Mr. Antonelli's little swimmers had the same hip problems he did. Back in my room, I slathered spermicidal jelly over a tampon and stuck it deep inside me. In retrospect, that probably wasn't the wisest thing to do. I should have just let my vagina's natural cleansing flow take its course. Fortunately, my period started a week and a half later, right on schedule. I'd been lucky, but it was a pretty tense ten days.

* * *

It was March when I met the Photographer.

I'd been doing pretty good. When the weather went from frigid to merely cold my business on the corner picked up, especially in the evenings. I started charging \$40 for a blowjob, and no one complained. I stopped working the corner during lunchtime, except to meet Larry for lunch and a quick suck every so often. Instead, I'd stay out later, working until 8 or 9.

It was almost nine on a somewhat balmy March night when I met him. I was waiting for Larry to come by; he had some pot for me. A young man with long black hair and a leather jacket crossed the street, heading for where I was standing between parked

cars. I tightened my grip on my pepper spray as he approached, mid -twenties, torn jeans, sneakers. He stopped about two feet away.

“Hi,” he said.

“Hi.”

“You’re, um, working, right?” he asked, a tentative expression in his eyes.

“What’s it to ya?” I tried to sound tough.

“Well, how much just for me to shoot you?” he asked. I stepped back and was about to give him a shot of pepper spray when he added “Photographs. Shoot photographs, I mean.”

“What kind of photographs?”

“Like fashion poses and stuff. Nothing dirty.”

“Nothing dirty?”

“No,” he said. Too bad. I thought he might pay more for dirty. I wondered what I should ask for.

“How long will it take?”

“An hour or two,” he said. I looked him over. He wasn’t really cute; stringy hair, a bit of acne, stooped posture, hawklike nose. What the hell. I’ve done worse.

“Hundred,” I said, picking the first number that came into my head.

“Okay,” he replied, not even batting an eye. “Can you come to my studio?”

He had a loft, not far from Michael’s, but I still wasn’t sure about him. Larry had been talking about snuff films not long before. I didn’t think they really existed, but he

claimed to have a buddy that saw one once, a grainy 8mm strip where a woman had sex with two men and was killed afterwards.

Just then, Larry pulled up in his cab and rolled down the window.

“Everything okay?” he asked, seeing me edge around the man in the leather jacket, towards Larry’s cab.

“Fine,” I said to Larry. “Just a sec.” He leaned back in his seat and rolled up the window.

“What’s your name?” I asked the man.

“Cecil. Here,” he said, reaching into his pocket for a card with his name and address on it. I slipped it into my coat.

“I’m Annie,” I said. “Listen, I’ll do it. But can I bring a friend?”

“Who, him?” he said, motioning towards the cab.

“Yes.”

“Don’t trust me?” Cecil asked.

“No.”

“I wouldn’t either. Sure. Bring him. Not a problem.” He walked off down the street and I climbed into Larry’s cab.

“He bothering you?” Larry asked.

“No, not at all. He wanted to take pictures.”

“Nudie pics?” he asked.

“No, clothes on.”

“How much?”

“Hundred.”

“Damn,” Larry said. “You should do it.”

“Will you come with me?” I asked him. “It’s just going to be an hour or so.”

“Sure,” he said. We drove behind his garage and smoked a joint, and then I sucked him. Then I called the number on Cecil’s card from a pay phone at the garage. It was only a couple of blocks away, but Larry drove me there. He parked the cab and Cecil buzzed us into his building, waiting for us at the door to his loft, second floor.

He had a bigger place than Michael’s. He wasn’t an amateur, either. There was a big white scrim at one end of the loft, a forest of lights, a darkroom built into a windowless corner. He lived here, too, but it didn’t look like he cooked for himself. There was a trash barrel overflowing with wrappers and bags from fast food restaurants, flanked by a empty beer bottles and soda cans.

“Beer?” Cecil said. I declined but Larry accepted one, a long brown bottle of Budweiser from Cecil’s mini-fridge. It was cold in the loft, and I huddled in my coat.

“You’ll be plenty warm under those lights,” he said. “Wanna get started?”

“Sure,” I said, heading over to the scrim. There was a chair in the middle of it, and I sat down while Cecil turned on lights and fiddled with his camera. He was right: it did get warm, and soon I shed the jacket. It was bright, too, and I could hardly make out Larry from under the lights.

“This okay?” I said, sitting down in the chair, crossing my legs at my ankles and folding my hands in my lap. I felt sort of awkward, self-conscious.

“Yeah, that’s fine,” Cecil said, holding a small brown gadget next to my face. “Light meter,” he said.

Then he picked up one of his cameras and started to shoot, three of the lights flashing every time he hit the shutter, the bulky green boxes on the floor next to the scrim emitting a high-pitched whine in between flashes. He coaxed me out of my stiff pose, telling me to lay across the armrests or stand behind the chair, always reminding me to relax, to enjoy myself.

I began to get into it, posing like I thought a real model would do, pushing my hair up with my hands, stretching my leg across the chair. I was wearing the clothes I had on when he met me, a flouncy little black skirt and a red turtleneck sweater , just tight enough to show off my small breasts.

Cecil pulled the chair away and had me lay on the scrim, propping my head up with one hand and resting the other on my thigh. My skirt began to ride up my legs, and the way Cecil was clicking away with the camera, I could tell that he could see my panties. I began to draw the hem higher up my thigh.

“Take five,” Cecil said. “Film change.” He disappeared into the darkroom while I stood up and stretched.

“He seems okay,” Larry said. “Still want me to stay?”

“You have somewhere else to be right now?”

“No, no. I just thought you might want to be alone.”

“Stay. I don’t mind,” I said. I could tell Larry was enjoying himself by the way he was playing pocket pool while he watched Cecil photograph me.

Cecil emerged from the darkroom with his cameras, and Larry asked him where the bathroom was. I stretched out on the floor again as Cecil resumed his shooting.

“He your pimp?” Cecil asked while Larry was out of earshot.

“No,” I replied. “Just a good friend.”

“Oh,” he said, puzzled. “I thought all of you had...nevermind.”

“I don’t,” I said. Cecil seemed to relax when he heard that, and I wondered if he’d had run into some kind of trouble with another girl’s man.

“You do this a lot?” I asked him, standing with my back to him, facing the white scrim.

“What, photography?”

“No. Well yes, but with girls.”

“No, not really,” he said, putting down his camera. “I shoot rock bands, mostly, some actors. Headshots, you know.” I didn’t know, but he pointed to a wall where he’d pinned up some of his work, glossy pictures of bands, portraits of handsome young men and women, a few artsy shots of flowers and factories. Larry returned from the bathroom, a curtained off corner of the loft, zipping up his fly.

There wasn’t much more conversation. I posed for Cecil, getting a bit more daring, lifting my skirt for him, for Larry, kneeling on the floor with my hem flipped over, showing my bottom, touching myself suggestively, giving the camera come hither looks. I posed until Cecil ran out of film, about an hour and a half after we started.

“Great stuff, Annie,” he said, helping me to my feet.

“Thanks. When can I see it,” I said.

“Tomorrow, day after. I have to get some more developer. Almost out,” he said. He disappeared back into the darkroom with his cameras and came out with money, \$100. Larry finished his beer, I put on my coat, and we started to leave.

“I’d like to shoot you again,” Cecil said. “If that’s all right.”

“Sure,” I said. I’d had fun, pretending to be a model, and it was easy money.

“Maybe next time you can bring some different clothes, maybe one or two nice outfits,” he said. I agreed to come back later in the week, to model some more. This would give him time to get the film developed.

“You looked really good tonight,” Larry said. He had driven me back to my place and we were parked there, smoking a joint in his cab.

“Thanks,” I said, reaching into his lap and unzipping his fly. “I could tell you liked to watch.”

“Yeah,” he said, settling back into the seat. I scooted over, snugglin g up next to him while I fished his hard cock out of his pants and stroked him. I didn’t even have to suck him, he came so quickly. He liked to listen to me tell him about the men I’d been with, so I knew that seeing me pose for Cecil was a sexy treat. Lar ry wanted to pay me for the hand job, but I told him to keep his money. This one was on me, because he was sweet enough to come with me to the loft and keep an eye on things.

That’s how I started posing for Cecil. He hated his name, preferring to be calle d “Ceece”, which rhymes with “fleece”, and he joked about how he always thought he was named after Cecil B. DeMille, an old Hollywood director, but his mother had actually named him after a hand puppet from a television show. I always thought of him as “Th e

Photographer”, and that’s how I referred to him when I was with Larry, but never to Cecil’s face. He could be pretentious sometimes, explaining the finer points of photography in a somewhat patronizing manner, so that was my way of deflating his sense of self-importance, at least to myself.

Larry was with me the next time I posed, but that was one of the last times he accompanied me. I could tell that Cecil didn’t like having him around, and his discomfort rubbed off on me. I gave Larry one of Cecil’s pictures to keep, a shot from that first night, taken from behind while I was on my hands and knees, with just a bit of white panty peeking out from under my skirt. I gave Mr. Antonelli a picture, too, not a sexy one, a shot of me in my burgundy cocktail dress, the one I wore for him that night we first danced, almost a formal portrait. He loved it, had it framed, hung it on the wall in place of a sepia print of his great-aunt Mirabella.

* * *

I posed for Cecil once or twice a week, always for \$100, even when the session went past two hours. My poses got racier, sexier, more daring, and I started looking for short skirts and sexy dresses to wear for him. He began bringing clothes for me to wear, too, though not all of the things fit properly at first. I started going shopping with him, to stores that sold punky, rock ‘n’ roll fashions, studded leather and leopard prints, high boots and microskirts, corset tops and chokers.

I was wearing my old school clothes when I crossed the line. Up until then, I’d always posed clothed, showing a lot of leg and panty, but never exposing my breasts or my sex. I’d touch myself, too, but it was all part of posing, just a suggestion of sex, never

explicit. But that night Cecil had his lights set up around his bed, and after an hour my plaid skirt was hiked up around my waist, my white blouse partially undone.

The school clothes had been my idea, really more of a joke, a change from the slutty rock chick look he liked to shoot. But I could tell Cecil was loving it; an obvious erection in his trousers made it hard for him to squat and shoot from a low angle. He kept focusing on my cotton panties, the white triangle between my thighs, like he was chained to my cleft. I reached down and smoothed the material between my nether lips and I thought I heard him grunt. Lifting my skirt a bit higher, I slipped my fingers under the waistband of my undies, teasing my moist slit.

“Yeah,” Cecil said, encouraging this new development. “Yeah, more of that.”

“Like this?” I said, pulling the crotch of my panties aside. I didn’t care if he was shooting at this point. I didn’t care if he watched. I felt horny as hell and I wanted to do something about it. I parted my labia and began to tease my clit, dipping a finger into my hole, seeing it glisten when I pulled it out.

“Perfect,” Cecil said. “Keep going.”

I lay back on his bed, under the hot lights, reaching into my shirt to cup my breast, circling my nipple with my wet finger while my other hand danced over my button. I pulled my panties down around my thighs, squirming on his futon while he shot from one side and then another, pausing only to switch cameras.

“Last few frames,” he said, clicking away, as I brought both hands to bear on my pussy, rubbing my clit and banging my box, arching my back as I came for him, shooting

the last frame on the roll as I fell back to his bed, spent and sweating from having climaxed under the lights.

Cecil looked flushed as he headed towards the darkroom to remove the film from his cameras. It was the last roll of the night, so I climbed off his bed and took off my school clothes, intending to change back into a sweater and jeans. He was usually done with the film pretty quickly, but this time he was taking a while. I changed into my other clothes and waited for him to come out with my money.

It was taking longer than ever. I walked over to the darkroom, standing outside the double curtain that kept out the light. I could hear a faint slapping sound, heavy breathing, a low moan. I slipped through the curtains, into the red light of his little booth.

“Cecil? Is everything okay?” I asked, my eyes still adjusting to the tinted light.

“Annie, he gasped, surprised. A moment later I could see him, standing next to his work bench, his pants down around his ankles, holding his cock.

“Cecil,” I said again, almost laughing this time. “Let me...” I cupped his balls as he let go of his penis, and then I began to slowly stroke him. His hips began to move, pushing against my hand with each stroke. I got on my knees in front of him.

It was hard to see him in the womblike red darkness, but I could feel him just fine. Nice long cock, sort of thin, tight foreskin, hard shaft, a small glans, almost arrow-like, and an upward curve to his cock that made me wonder what it would feel like inside me. I leaned forward and guided him between my lips, tasting the precum that dripped from the tip. I could take all of Mr. Antonelli’s cock in my mouth, most of Larry’s, but just slightly more than half of Cecil’s before I felt his pointy glans hit the back of my throat.

He'd been alone in the darkroom for a while, whacking away before I entered, so I sucked him slowly, knowing he was close. I slid my lips up and down a few times, swirling my tongue over the underside of his shaft, and then he came with a twitch of his cock and a blast of semen. It was bitter and beery from all of the crappy food he ate, but I choked it back, letting it slide down my throat so I wouldn't have to taste it. Cecil sighed deeply, rocking back on his heels as I milked the last of his spunk with my lips and hands. I released his cock with a slurp and sat back on my feet, looking up at his shadowy red face.

Cecil gave me an extra \$50 that night, and every other night I sucked him. He started buying toys at a store in the Combat Zone, dildos and vibrators, beads, a feather boa. I was posing nude at this point, taking my clothes off for the camera and then masturbating for him while he click click clicked the shutter. I never knew what he did with all these pictures, whether he jerked off to them alone or sold them somewhere.

I knew I was too young to be posing for pictures like this, and none of the magazines would buy them, not even the really raunchy ones that Larry liked to buy in the Zone, the ones that came shrinkwrapped, three to a bundle, some in foreign languages. They reminded me of the ones Luci showed me, the ones I shared with Del and Paco, the ones that sparked our naughty experiments together. All of the girls in the magazines were older than I was, even the ones who put their hair up in pigtails and shaved their pussies.

One evening I went over to Cecil's loft, to pose in some new clothes I had bought, a pair of short skirts and a sexy sundress I picked up downtown. Larry had picked me up

after shopping and we'd had dinner together at a cafeteria-style place on Washington Street. He seemed down again, and his ex-wife was giving him trouble because he was a week behind on his child support payments. His daughter was seventeen, looking to go to college, and Larry didn't know how he was going to afford tuition. I invited him to watch me pose for Cecil, thinking it would cheer him up.

Cecil was fiddling with something on his workbench when we entered the loft. It was bigger than a camera, with a longer lens and a pistol grip. He was attaching a cable with a big silver connector, hooking it up to a boxy contraption that had a leather shoulder strap. He picked up a black cassette, about the size of a paperback book, and inserted it into a slot in the boxy thing, pressed a couple of buttons, and picked up the camera-like device, aiming it at me.

"Video," he said. "Shit. Not enough light."

Larry and I watched while Cecil set the camera up on a tripod, and then Larry helped him drag his futon from his bed, carrying it over to the scrim, under the lights. Cecil adjusted some of the lamps, removing the umbrella-like shades that covered them, turning the bright diffuse light to an intense glare that fell upon his futon. I changed into my new sundress in the bathroom and returned to see Larry peering through the camera's viewfinder while Cecil explained something about the camera, which he apparently had borrowed from the school where he was taking graduate courses.

"Ready, Annie?" he said, taking Larry's place behind the camera and making a small adjustment to the lens.

“I’m ready for my close-up, Mr. DeMille,” I said. It was a line I’d heard in an old movie I’d seen once, something about a boulevard, an old movie star who looked like Miss Kass who had a weird affair with a younger man. Cecil didn’t catch the reference, but it made Larry laugh. He must have seen the same movie. I sat down on the futon, cross-legged, while Cecil fucked around with the lights.

I pleased myself twice under the hot lights, hiking my dress up over my breasts, pulling my sexy black sheer panties down around my knees, fingering myself, toying with my sex, arching my back and lifting my bottom off of the futon when I came. I couldn’t see Cecil or Larry because of the intense light, but I knew they were there, watching me, reaching into their pockets for a quick stroke. The first time, Cecil kept the camera on the tripod, pausing only to move from the foot of the futon to the side, for a different angle. We took a short break afterwards, so Cecil could change tapes and I could get a cold drink of water. Then he shot me again, holding the camera in his hands this time, zooming in to my breasts, between my legs, my face as I came.

Cecil didn’t have a television, so we watched the tape playback through the tiny black and white viewfinder on the camera. I thought it was pretty cool at first, until we got to the part where I began to come. I looked spastic, like I was having a seizure, my mouth forming a silent “O”.

“That’s what I look like?” I said. It was like the first time I heard my own voice on a tape recorder, Julia’s answering machine. My voice didn’t sound anything like what I thought it sounded like, what I heard when I spoke. Seeing myself climax felt much the same.

“You looked great,” Larry said. “Ver y sexy.”

“Yeah, it was perfect,” Cecil said. “Really.”

“If you say so,” I said, still unconvinced. Eventually, I got used to seeing myself on video, and after that night it was pretty much all we did. Sometimes Cecil would shoot stills, before and after taping, but after he bought his own camera and recorder, and a large television monitor, video was all we did. Cecil started paying me \$200 a night, not including the blowjobs I gave him, which were worth an extra \$50. He had a pretty good business shooting bands and actors, but he also had money from his family; they were paying his grad school tuition.

It didn't take long before we were shooting hardcore scenes. It started when Cecil began to tape my after-session blowjobs, and soon after that sucking became the session itself. He'd position the camera on the tripod so his face was out of the shot and then I'd curl up between his legs and go to town on his long, thin cock. He didn't want to come in my mouth; he wanted me to stroke him to completion, letting his spunk jet on to my face or my breasts. It was something he called a “money shot”.

My first video fuck wasn't with Cecil. It was with Larry, who was with me that evening. I sucked him for the camera, and it took him a while to get hard. He joked about stage fright and all, but soon I had him erect, and while Cecil circled the futon with his camera, Larry entered me from behind, fucking me doggy-style while he groped my titties and lightly slapped my bottom. I was going to fake an orgasm, so it would look good for the camera, but I came anyway, falling forward on to the futon while Larry pounded my bottom with his thick cock. Cecil kept saying “Money shot, money shot,”

and Larry, porn hound that he was, knew exactly what to do, pulling out of my pussy and coming all over my back and bottom. I smiled for the camera, exhausted from fucking under the hot lights, rubbing Larry's cream into my skin.

Of course, Cecil had to get into the act. He was really nervous the first time, and I wondered if he was a twenty-five-year-old virgin. I sucked him until his cock was hard and glistening, his foreskin taut against his thin, veiny shaft. Then he mounted me, sliding his hardness inside me. The upward curve of his long cock pressed his glans against the top of my tight hole, rubbing against my sensitive spot. It was heavenly, and even though he didn't last very long, he had me coming hard in no time at all. I felt him begin to twitch inside me, and as he began to pull out to do the money shot thing on my belly, I grabbed his ass and pulled him back in me, clenching my cunny around his tool, squeezing the cream from his balls. I'd taken to wearing my diaphragm to these sessions even before we started fucking, and I wanted to feel him come inside me.

Cecil was a little pissed off about not getting the money shot, and he insisted on rolling tape while he kneeled next to me and jerked himself off and shot his spunk on my tummy. There was some consolation in the sight of his first load dripping from my pussy, and Cecil gleefully shot a few minutes of sperm oozing from my hole, glistening under the bright lights. He said he wished that he had more tape, so he could make a twelve hour movie of a dripping pussy, like a porn Warhol.

He talked about doing different things, too, like finding another girl for me to play with or getting a guy from one of the bands he shot to join in on the fun. He bought me more toys, too, vibrators and dildos, even a butt plug. One night, Cecil taped me while I

fucked myself with the neck of an empty beer bottle, zooming in as I licked my juices from the glass after I came. By this point, at the end of April, I had been over two months since I first posed for him, and I'd pretty much do anything he asked, short of anything too icky or kinky or painful. He was paying me good money, and I stopped working the streets during the evening unless I needed some extra cash for clothes or something special, like a new fedora for Mr. Antonelli. I'd still see Larry at least twice a week, sometimes just for lunch or dinner, sometimes just to give him an ear to bend with his troubles.

What Cecil really wanted to do was to make a full-length porn movie, with a script and scenery and costumes. He was a terrible writer, something he blamed on his dyslexia; it made it hard for him to even read, let alone write a script. It took him a couple of weeks of banging keys on an old typewriter he'd found in a dumpster which was missing the letters "s" and "a", letters he'd add later with a pencil, and in that time he only produced three pages and an outline of the story. It was enough, though, because this movie wasn't about dialog or plot, really. It was about fucking and sucking and groupies and rockers; all the rest was "foreplay", as Cecil liked to say.

For the price of a case of beer, he got a couple of kids from one of the bands he photographed, Matt and Luke from the Pragmatics, a punk band that rehearsed down the block from Michael's loft. They were brothers, identical twins in their late teens, scruffy looking but not scrawny like a lot of the musicians in town. They grew up in Dorchester, a working-class neighborhood, and used to work out in their basement together when they were younger, lifting weights and doing one-handed pushups. You could tell that

their healthy years were behind them; they looked pallid, like they never saw the sun, with dark circles under their eyes. They were nervous, too, and they didn't talk to me when we first met at Cecil's place. They just chain -sucked cigarettes and drank Cecil's beer while he ran us through the story behind the movie and worked out a three night shooting schedule.

Cecil shot everything in sequence, and the first scene was out on the street. He borrowed a new camera, one that didn't need as much light, though he had me stand under a streetlamp, anyway. The basic story was that I was a groupie or hooker or something, and I was fucking both brothers but they didn't know the other one was doing me. In this first scene, I meet Matt for the first time, though his name was Pete in the script. Luke, his brother, was Paul. Matt looked over a copy of the script, his lips moving as he tried to memorize his lines.

"Ready?" Cecil said. "Okay, 'Punk Rock Hookers', scene one, take one. Camera...action!" He hunched down a bit, the camera balanced on his shoulder while Luke held the heavy recorder.

"Hey there. You got the time?" I said, leaning on the lamp post and thrusting out my hip suggestively. Matt looked flustered for a moment and then he remembered his line.

"Um, it's, um, midnight. What are you, um," he said. "Cecil? What's my line again?"

"What are you doing here?" Cecil said, a bit annoyed. "Keep going, I'm rolling here."

“Oh, right,” Matt said. “It’s, um, midnight. What are you doing, um, here?”

“I’m waiting for you, Pete,” I said. “You wanna go up to my place and have a good time?” Cecil’s attempt at a script was awful, and I had a hard time keeping a straight face.

“Um, okay,” Matt said. We were supposed to walk together towards the camera and Cecil was to turn and follow us, but Matt started walking in the wrong direction, heading away from the camera. I grabbed his arm and yanked him in the right direction, but by this time I was cracking up, nearly doubled over laughing.

“Cut! Cut! Goddammit!” Cecil swore, stopping the deck and rewinding over the first take. Between Matt’s inability to remember two lines, my hysterics, and the odd pedestrian passing by, it took us a dozen takes to get it right, though a few of those were shot from another angle.

We wrapped up that shot and headed back upstairs to shoot inside. The next scene was supposed to be me and Matt/Pete partying and making out on my bed. Matt and Luke helped Cecil set up lights around his bed, and then they helped themselves to his beer, puffing on Marlboros and watching Cecil set up the camera and tripod. Cecil’s bedroom was just like Michael’s, a screened-off area of the loft with a futon on a board supported by cinder blocks, and a stack of milkcrates with clothes, shoes, a couple of books, and a lot of taxi-cab yellow boxes of photographs and negatives. He had a spiral-bound portfolio, too, and I leafed through this, looking at his old art school stuff while I waited for him to set up the camera.

Finally, we started shooting again. Matt and I sat on the bed, an array of intoxicants arranged on a small table at our feet: lines of coke, rolled joints, beer, pills, a

pint of bourbon, even an empty plastic syringe with the needle partially broken off. Except for the syringe and the pills, which were really aspirin, all the rest were real, meant for on-camera consumption. Verite.

“...and action!” Cecil said.

“So, um, you want to, um, get high?” ‘Pete’ asked, even though this was supposed to be my place, and Cecil had draped a feather boa over the lamp to accentuate that point, the only feminine detail in a bedroom that obviously belonged to a reclusive photographer.

“I really love to get high,” I said, following the script, “I like to have a good time with a cute guy like you.” Crap, did Cecil really think people talked like this? How hard was it to write? I always found it easy; the words just flowed from my pen when I wrote in my journal, as soon as they popped into my head. Maybe it was different, writing things that hadn’t happened yet. But sitting on the bed, in front of the camera, I could think of a hundred different ways to get across the idea that I was a horny little groupie who was going to fuck this kid.

Fortunately, those were the only two lines in the scene. Cecil zoomed in as we did the lines, smoked the joints, drank the liquor. My short, tight skirt was riding up my thighs, exposing my shaved cunny inside my sheer black panties. My tube top had started to fall, and I didn’t bother to tug it back up, something I usually did every 26 seconds. I wasn’t big enough on top to keep it up, and I could hear Cecil adjusting the lens as I leaned over the coffee table to Hoover up a line, trying to catch a quick shot of my tits.

And then it was time for sex. Matt shrugged off his black leather jacket and pulled off his t-shirt—he'd worn one with the name of his band on the front—and while I slipped off my black mini and pink tube, he struggled out of his sneakers and tight blue jeans, the tightest pair he owned. He didn't have underwear on beneath his dungarees, and his cock was hard and throbbing, as big as Manny's, but circumcised. As I leaned over into his lap, I wondered if he and his brother had identical cocks, too. I'd find out soon enough.

Matt groaned when I sucked him, leaning back on the bed as I took his shaft in my mouth, bathing it with my tongue, licking the tip, cupping his balls. Cecil had the camera off the tripod, in his hands, taking close-ups of Matt's glistening penis disappearing between my lips. Cecil decided that this was enough sucking, so he had Matt pull down my panties, and I laid down on the bed, on my back, legs spread.

Matt wasn't much for foreplay. He was an adequate kisser, but I had to practically grab his head and press his lips to my breasts before he'd suckle me. I figured cunnilingus was out of the question, but I needed at least this to get wet enough to take him in me. By the time I was ready, he was half-hard, so I had to revive him with my lips. Matt positioned himself between my legs, and I guided his cock to my sex. He still wasn't completely hard, but I managed to stuff him into my pussy, his cock stiffening as he began to thrust.

"Damn," he whispered as he started to pump my tight hole. "How old are you?"

"Fourteen," I said. I'd worn a lot of makeup for the camera, heavy eyeliner and mascara, deep red lipstick that stained his cock when I sucked him, a studded leather

choker. He'd seen me without much makeup on when we first met, but I guess I looked older this time.

I rocked my hips against his, holding his waist as he began to pound my cunny, fast and hard, right from the start. Cecil had him support his weight on his knees and elbows, so he could the camera could catch Matt's shaft plowing between my legs. I looked down and saw the lens, Matt's swinging balls reflected in the dark glass, Cecil twisting the focus ring as he shot us.

Matt had his eyes closed and was starting to sweat as he fucked me, and I figured he wasn't going to last much longer before he came, so I began to fake an orgasm for the camera, squeezing my breasts, screaming and flailing in the bed beneath him, humping my hips against his and curling my toes. Cecil was smiling, unable to tell my act from the real thing. Maybe he could but didn't care. It looked good on camera, and that was what really mattered.

"Money shot, remember the money shot," he said to Matt in a stage whisper. Matt pulled out of me, jerked his cock a couple of times, and he erupted, sending four hot jets of sperm over my body, the longest one landing on my chin, the rest falling on my breasts and belly. Cecil zoomed in on the pearly grey strands and then said "...and cut!", putting down the camera and clapping his hands, a big smile on his face.

"Perfect! That was perfect!" he said, twisting open a beer and handing it to Matt. While Cecil, Matt, and Luke clinked bottles and toasted Matt's performance, I grabbed the towel next to the bed and wiped myself off, wrapped myself in the blanket, and sat up on the futon, lighting the remains of one of the joints.

“Oh, shit. Sorry Annie,” Cecil said. “Here you go.” He opened a beer and handed it to me. I didn’t really like beer that much, but I was thirsty, and this time it tasted pretty good.

That was it for shooting for the night, and we sat on Cecil’s futon and smoked and drank for an hour. Matt and Luke were my best buddies by this point, telling me about their band and how they were psyched, psyched! to start recording the soundtrack for Cecil’s movie. Cecil was pretty quiet, and I could tell that he couldn’t wait for us to leave so he could go over the footage he had shot, and maybe jerk off while he watched. I finished my beer and got dressed, and the brothers gave me a ride home in their big, old sedan, a clunker with about fifty different band bumper stickers slapped on the rear.

Back home that night, I took a nice long bath, wrote about the evening’s events in my journal, and then slipped under the covers, finishing what Matt had started with my vibrator. As I pleasured myself, I thought about all the men who would watch this movie, should it ever get released, much less finished. How many orgasms would this movie bring? Hundreds? Thousands? How much cum would be spilled on carpet or spurted into a tissue or a hand. Pints? Gallons? I knew that at least one orgasm, one palmful of jizz would result, provided Cecil was jerking off while he watched the tape we made.

It was a delicious thought, though, trying to picture all the penises this movie could please, big ones, little ones, fat ones, thin ones, men who jerked fast, men who stroked slowly, teenagers in their bedrooms, old men who never left the house, the morbidly obese and the underweight, maybe even a woman or two, watching by herself or with a boyfriend or husband. Despite how avidly I sought out porn when I was ten, that was just

to sate my curiosity about sex, and I came to know that those magazines and movies were mostly for men, gay or straight, rich or poor, married or single. Even old Papa Antonelli had some, stuffed under his mattress. I'd seen a corner of one peeking out when I was tidying his apartment. Larry, of course, couldn't get enough, the raunchier the better.

So I was imagining a thousand jerking, spurting cocks when I came, seeing them all in my mind's eye, like that video effect where the screen splits in two, and then those two split into four, and then those four split into eight, and before you know it there are 1024 little cocks on the screen, 1024 jets of cum, 1024 hands relaxing, releasing 1024 softening shafts. I came so hard thinking about them that afterwards I heard Miss Kass open her door, her footsteps in the hallway outside my door. I was quiet at that point, and she didn't knock or anything. She just went back to her room and closed her door. I turned off the light and went to sleep.

We shot again, a few days later. I tried to drop hints on Cecil, asking if I could help him with writing the dialogue, but he was oblivious. What's more, he thought his script was great, Oscar material. I could tell that even Matt and Luke thought it was cheesy; they knew their porn, having spent their adolescent years hoarding magazines and trying to sneak into Combat Zone peep shows to watch the film loops. In the end, I let the subject drop, not wanting to antagonize Cecil. He had a tendency to sulk when he felt that his genius as a photographer or filmmaker wasn't properly appreciated.

This night of shooting was just like the first, except with a few important differences. For starters, it went smoother. Luke/Paul had a some time to go over his lines, so the first scene we shot, where he meets me under the street lamp just as his

brother had, had only taken about six takes to get right, and two of these were redundant, shot from the other angle. I didn't crack up, either, which helped a lot. We then went upstairs, up to Cecil's bed area, though this time it was meant to be Paul's loft. Instead of a feather boa draped over the lampshade, there was a guitar leaning against the table by the bed, the only prop. Same bed, same coffee table with drugs, same milkcrates full of yellow photo paper boxes.

The other difference was that I was dressed like a school girl instead of a slutty groupie, with my hair up in pigtails, white cotton panties under my skirt instead of sheer black ones, sneakers and socks instead of knee -high vinyl boots. This was a major plot point, and was meant to explain how two brothers could bang the same girl without knowing it, Schoolgirl Jekyll and Groupie Hyde.

Other than that, everything else was the same. We did the drugs, Luke and I undressed, I sucked him, and he screwed me just like his brother, the only difference being that he lifted my legs over his shoulder and fucked me nice and deep, lasting longer than his brother and almost making me come. Cecil was running out of tape, though, so I had to fake it again. Like Matt, Luke pulled out and whacked his cock a few times, though he didn't shoot any on my chin and managed to get all his spooge on my tits. I looked at the camera, licking my lips as I massaged Luke's juice into my breasts.

"Cut...perfect," Cecil said, lowering the camera. Matt was there with a towel this time, and Luke wrapped the blanket around me as we sat on Cecil's bed and toasted another successful night with longneck bottles of Bud. I sort of wanted someone to finish me off, but I figured I could wait until I was home. They were in the mood to party, do

some lines, drink some beers, smoke a joint. I stayed for an hour, got dressed, and headed back home.

For the record: Matt and Luke did have identical pricks.

The next night was supposed to be the last night of shooting, starting with Pete and Paul fighting each other, the big secret having been revealed. Instead, I helped Cecil carry his camera and other gear over to Matt and Luke's loft, where their band rehearsed, and Cecil shot footage of the band playing a few of their songs.

The drummer and bass player were pretty cool, cute even, and I wondered how much they knew about the movie. They must have known something, because they talked to Cecil about doing the soundtrack in a certain recording studio, and how much that would cost. But I didn't know if Matt and Luke had talked about their roles in the movie. Fucking a fourteen-year-old whore on camera didn't seem to me like something you'd brag to your friends about. It didn't really matter, though, because like that first night I'd met the brothers, the other guys in the band didn't say a word to me. I thought it was just coldness, acting cool and aloof and all that, but after getting to know Matt and Luke, who were really very sweet, I realized it was actually shyness.

I followed Cecil around the space as he shot from different angles, the heavy recorder hanging off of my shoulder, trying not to trip over all of the band's cables that snaked along the floor. They were loud, awfully loud, and I ended up with cigarette filters plugging my ears. By the time we were finished shooting, I had a horrible headache. A cup of tea and one of Larry's Percocets took care of that back in the quiet of my room, though when I woke up the next day, my ears were still ringing.

We had a long day of shooting scheduled for a Sunday, and Cecil hoped to wrap up the movie then. We all started out on the street, walking towards the camera and then walking away, alone and in pairs. Cecil said that he needed more footage in order to “flesh out his vision”. He shot Matt and Luke sitting on the steps of his loft, just hanging out and smoking cigarettes, trying to look like rock stars. He shot me sitting on the same stairs, both dressed like a rock slut and as a schoolgirl, holding a few of his old textbooks to my chest as I sat with my knees together, trying to look demure.

After a couple of hours of this, we headed over to the rehearsal space for what Cecil said were “the climactic scenes”, not a trace of irony in his voice. I could tell that he thought he had a monster of a movie on his hands, a huge hit just waiting for an eager audience. I had no doubt that there were plenty of people willing to watch teenagers fuck on video, but the script wasn’t the only awful thing about this movie. Cecil’s camerawork was pretty grim, shaky and hard to watch even when he used a tripod. Some of the handheld shots bounced up and down rhythmically, and you could sort of tell that Cecil had his hand in his pocket, stroking his hard-on while he shot the scene.

Up in the Pragmatics’ loft, Cecil and I set up the camera and lights while Matt and Luke prepared for their scene. It was Sunday, and the liquor stores were closed because of some 300 year old law, so the beer supply was dangerously low. Larry knew where to get some, from one of his cabbie friends who sold liquor out of the trunk of his taxi on weekends. I called him from a pay phone on the street, and about an hour later he showed up with a case of Naragansett and a bottle of Jack Daniels. He even had ice, plastic cups,

and some pot and coke, too. We partied for a while and then Matt and Luke started their big scene.

The idea was that they were supposed to start fighting, having found out that they were both boning the same girl. How they found out wasn't really clear, though Cecil said something about identical brothers knowing everything. He saw me roll my eyes at that explanation, so he conceded that he might have to write and shoot another scene that would clear things up.

"She's mine, Paul," Matt said, reading his lines from a big piece of cardboard that was leaning up against a guitar stand, stage right, out of the shot. "She's a bone slut who craves cock. Mine." As bad as Cecil's script was, he still managed to get some things right.

"You're wrong, Pete," Luke said reading his lines from a card placed stage left. "She's a sweet girl and she's gonna be mine."

With that brief exchange, it was time for Matt and Luke to pull off their shirts and start grappling like a couple of Mexican wrestlers. And as weak as their line reading had been, this was their true *métier*. They knew all the tricks, having watched professional wrestling on television since just about the time I was born. Body slam, piledriver, the fake punches and slaps, the simulated kicks and stomps. The hardwood floor rumbled as they rolled around, Cecil trying hard to stay out of their way and shoot them at the same time.

Larry was holding the recorder for Cecil, so I just sat on a beat-up old couch and watched Matt and Luke fight, smoking one of Larry's cigarettes and sipping a bourbon

and coke. Cecil had insisted that I smoke during some of the scenes, so I'd look just a bit more slutty, and though I hadn't liked it at first, now I did. It gave me something to do with my hands and mouth, burning off a bit of nervous energy while I waited to do the final scene.

Ten minutes of fighting was enough for Cecil, and the brothers were getting tired and sweaty. He gave them a five minute break to towel off, have a smoke and a beer, while I got ready. The outfit I wore was my idea, a fusion of schoolgirl and groupie. I'd spent hours hemming the plaid skirt by hand with a needle and thread and a thrift store iron, so it was extra short, barely covering my bottom. I wore fishnet stockings and boots, and a tight black turtleneck sweater with the sleeves cut off and reattached with safety pins. Larry called it "Frankensweater". My makeup was heavy on the eyeliner and lipstick, but I had my hair in pigtails. Cecil loved the look; so did Larry for that matter.

It was time for the last scene. Like the fight, this one was shot with the band's drum kit and amplifiers as a backdrop. Cecil had Matt and Luke lay on the floor, to show that their fight had ended in a draw. Then, on his cue, I entered the shot, kneeling next to them with a towel, blotting the fake blood Cecil had squirted on their lips and foreheads before he rolled tape. I mumbled my last line, something about how they could both have me, I was woman enough for two, blah blah blah. I was just glad that I didn't have to speak Cecil's stilted lines anymore. All that was left was sex, and I didn't need him to tell me how to do that. Cecil had tried, before we rolled tape, to sketch out what he wanted to see in general terms, like he had before the other sex scenes with Luke and Matt.

“Cecil,” I said, cutting him off in mid -sentence. “Just trust me and hold the fucking camera. I know what I’m doing.” He’d been getting on my nerves lately, and it felt good to put him in his place.

After I cleaned their fake wounds, I helped them to their feet and stood between them, kissing ‘Pete’ and then ‘Paul’, kissing Matt and then Luke. Sandwiched between them, their hands all over me, I began to undress them, unzipping their jeans and pulling them down, stroking the two identically hard cocks that popped out. Sinking slowly to my knees, I began to suck them in turn, beginning with a kiss planted on each bobbing cockhead, and then a longer, deeper suck, until their shafts were shiny and wet.

Cecil paused the tape to let Matt and Luke wriggle out of their tight jeans and then we were rolling again, both boys, now naked, helping me out of my skirt and sweater. I wore the lacy black crotchless panties Father Ken had bought for me, without the peekaboo bra, just to be “accessible” for this scene, and I stood between them, stroking their cocks while they felt me up. I had just started to be able to tell Matt from Luke — they had beauty marks in different places —but now I was having trouble distinguishing between them. Was it Matt with his fingers in my pussy or Luke? Was it Luke sucking my nipples or was it Matt? It didn’t matter and I didn’t care. All I knew was that their hands and lips on my body felt wonderful.

We paused again, and while Cecil cleared a space on the floor, rerouting cables and picking up bottlecaps and cigarette butts, Matt or Luke pulled a rolled -up sleeping bag from underneath the couch, unrolling and laying it on the floor on top of some of the

foam rubber sheets they used to soundproof the loft. Despite the apparent lack of continuity, this would be our bed for the last scene.

I got down on my hands and knees, Matt on one side, Luke on the other, two hard cocks poised at my mouth and pussy. When Cecil said that the tape was rolling again, I guided Matt (or was it Luke?) into my sex and parted my lips to take Luke (Matt?) into my mouth. They began to thrust at the same time, at the same speed, one pounding my slit while the other fucked my face. Cecil had promised me \$500 for the day, so I put on a convincing show, wiggling my ass and twisting my head, pleasuring the two cocks inside me.

I didn't have to fake it this time. There was something about fucking and sucking for the camera, identical twin cocks in my mouth and pussy, on the floor of a rehearsal space, that really pushed my buttons. It also helped that in this position it was easy for me to rub my clit and squeeze my breasts, keeping me ahead of the twitching tools inside me. I felt my pleasure begin to rise, the tingling between my legs becoming a fire in my belly. I began to moan around the cock in my mouth, releasing it when I began to cry out. Suddenly, the hardness in my sex withdrew, and I was left with this emptiness, just as I was about to reach the peak of my climax.

"No...please...don't stop...don't stop," I pleaded. It had been Cecil's idea to have Matt and Luke switch places, which they did quickly, and a moment later I had a different cock in my pussy, and the one in my mouth tasted just like me. My pleasure resumed, just where it had been interrupted, and I began to come, clenching my muscle around the hard shaft in my sex, milking the cunny-flavored penis in my mouth.

They didn't last long after that. They couldn't. The cock in my mouth withdrew, spurting cum all over my face. Then I felt the one in my cunny pull out, and I could feel hot semen squirting over my back and ass. Cecil took close -up shots of the sperm on my face and body and then we were done.

"That's a wrap," he said, handing me a towel. He had an obvious erection in his trousers, as did Larry. It wasn't until I was sitting down on the sleeping bag, wiping the cum from my face, that I noticed Danny, the band's drummer, sitting on the couch, smoking a cigarette and drinking a beer as he watched.

"So, this is the movie you guys are making," he said.

"Punk Rock Hookers, man," Matt said. He had his black jeans on, whereas his brother was wearing blue jeans that day.

"Punk Rock Hookers!" Luke shouted, pleased at his performance. Cecil had called the movie "Punk Rock Hookers", even there was only one punk rock hooker in it.

I'd brought my kimono with me when I packed some clothes for the shoot, and I wrapped it around me as we toasted the end of shooting, barring some supplementary scenes that Cecil might want to do later. Larry went out to get some pizza, and we relaxed and watched as Cecil played back the tape, hooking the video recorder up to a television that the band had.

Larry returned about a half hour later, and we ate pizza and drank beer while we watched all of the footage, even the scenes of the band playing. Especially the scenes of the band playing. It made me realize how vain musicians were, listening to Matt, Luke, and Danny pick apart their performances.

“Annie, you see that?” Cecil asked, rewinding to a spot where Matt and Luke looked at each other while they played. “That’s when they know. That’s when the truth comes out. Am I right? Am I right?” I wasn’t in a mood to disagree.

“Yeah, Ceece. I see what you’re saying. Maybe some more close-ups is all you need,” I said.

“Close-ups! Yeah! Let’s do a shot right now, while we’re still set up. Matt, Luke, get your guitars on,” he said, bounding up from the couch, his slice of pizza flopping around in his hand. While Cecil scrounged through his equipment case for a fresh tape, I gathered my things together and changed my clothes, getting my money from him and leaving with Larry.

“It looks pretty good,” Larry said, when we were in his cab, heading back to my place. “Could be a hit.”

“If Cecil ever finishes it,” I said. I’d heard him talk about his movie enough to know that shooting wasn’t even half of it. He had to edit it, assemble a sound track, and then find someone to distribute it. Home video systems were extremely rare back in 1981; most porn videos were still sold as 8mm and 16mm film.

Just editing the video was a problem for Cecil. He only had one video tape recorder and he’d said that he needed at least two, preferably three to edit the movie and dub the soundtrack. At the Pragmatics’ loft, he talked about renting a couple of decks or taking the raw footage to his school and doing it there, during the late hours.

“Lousy band,” Larry said as he maneuvered the cab out of its parking spot. I could tell he didn’t like them, wrinkling his nose while we ate pizza and watched the video of the band’s rehearsal. Then again, Larry didn’t like anything recorded after 1972.

“I liked them,” I said. Even though they were the loudest thing I’d ever heard, louder than a planeload of tourists landing at Miami International, they were fun to listen to, full of energy. They had a song about one of their strict parochial school teachers, “Sister Sabrina”, and it reminded me of Sister Josephine, who ruled her class at Father Ken’s shelter with an iron hand that gripped a wooden ruler. I wondered if any of the boys in the band had met a priest like Father Ken, or Father John, or Father Steve, or Father Bernard, or Father Kevin...

Larry drove me back to the rooming house, and we parked down the block. I gave him a blowjob, knowing how horny he was watching me fuck, and how nice of him it was to get us beer and bourbon on a Sunday and then go out for pizza after we wrapped up the shooting. He caressed the back of my head, stroking my hair while I sucked him, holding me close after he came.

“Thanks,” I whispered in his ear.

“For what?” he said.

“For being so sweet,” I said. It was true, he was nice to me, protective, like an uncle or a big brother. Or a father.

“I wish you could live with me, Annie,” he said. “I’d always take care of you.” It was a tempting offer. I knew he had a house in the suburbs, not a big house, but the way he described it made it sound like a cozy place. But I knew his ex-wife had a private

detective watching him, watching how he spent his money, waiting for him to fuck up so she could drag him into court and garnish his wages. He bitched about her every chance he got. Having me live with him was his pipe dream, something he knew would never happen. I kissed him on the cheek for being so nice and grabbed my stuff, heading back to the rooming house and a nice hot bath.

* * *

I called Cecil at his loft a couple of days later and got a busy signal. I called him again that evening. Still off the hook. I decided to walk over to his place. It was a warm spring evening and I was feeling sort of restless anyway. I arrived at his building and was about to press the intercom button so he could buzz me in when I noticed that the front door was broken, like it had been kicked in or something. I went inside and headed upstairs to Cecil's studio.

His door was padlocked, and there was a bright orange sticker above the lock that read "BOSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT - CRIME SCENE - DO NOT ENTER". The sticker was placed in such a manner that opening the door would have split it in half. There was also a handwritten date on the sticker; the loft had been sealed the day before.

My heart pounded in my chest. Were the police looking for me? Did this have something to do with Megan and Father Ken or the men who were looking for me at Trish's place? Trish had disappeared shortly after I left her apartment, and her phone had been disconnected a few days after that. Not even Mrs. Pomerantz knew where she had gone.

Maybe Matt or Luke would know something about Cecil. I flew downstairs, checking for cop cars on the street before leaving the building, and ran all the way to the band's loft, leaning on their intercom until someone buzzed me up. Matt was sitting on the ratty old couch, changing strings on his guitar. I was out of breath from running and had to sit down and pull myself together before I could even speak.

"Cecil...where's Cecil?" I gasped, still short of breath.

"Cops raided his place yesterday," Matt said. "Me and Luke were going over there to redo some shots when we saw the cops kick in the front door. Must have been twenty of 'em. Started bringing all his shit down in boxes, cameras, photos, everything."

"Why? What happened?"

"Danny's girlfriend goes to the Museum School and she said that Cecil was editing the movie there and someone saw some of the last scene we shot," he said. "Cops were there in like five minutes and about two hours later they raided his loft."

"So where is he now?"

"In jail, I guess," Matt said. "They took him away in handcuffs and grabbed the tapes."

"Shit."

"Yeah, shit," he repeated. "We canceled rehearsal tonight. I'm just waiting here for the police so they won't have to kick our door down."

"I better go," I said. I got up to leave.

"Hey, Annie," Matt said.

"What?"

“You take care of yourself, ‘kay?”

“Thanks,” I said, leaning over to give him a kiss on the cheek. He smiled wanly and went back to tuning his guitar when I left.

I walked around for a while, sort of aimlessly, down the block past Michael’s loft—his lights were on—and past the taxi garage where Larry kept his cab, up to the Herald where Trish had worked, and then back towards the rooming house. On the way back, I stopped in front of Shelly’s store, still vacant after all these months.

“She closed up last year, right after Thanksgiving,” a voice behind me said. I turned around and saw a young woman, mid -teens, creamy milk chocolate skin, miniskirt and tube top, a working girl.

“You knew Shelly?”

“Sure did. Nice lady. Used to let me warm up in her shop when it got cold out,” she said. “Maggie liked to make me tea .”

“Do you know where they went?”

“San Francisco. Shelly’s brother got sick, so she closed the shop and went out to the coast to take care of him.” I was glad that I finally knew what had happened to her, but it didn’t do much to lift my spirits. I felt like crying.

“Hey, you okay?” the girl asked.

“Yeah, I’m fine,” I replied, even though I wasn’t.

“I seen you on the block, near where I live,” she said. “Been a while, though.”

“Yeah, I was making a movie.”

“Cool. When’s it coming out?”

“Never. Guy got buste d yesterday,” I said.

“No shit,” she said. “Hey, I’m Cami. Short for Camille.”

“Annie,” I said, taking her hand. “Long for Anne.” She laughed and gave my hand a squeeze.

“Hey, I’m heading back to my place, smoke a joint or something. You smoke?”

“Yeah, sure,” I said. “Sounds good.” I needed the company more than the pot, and Cami seemed pretty nice. We started walking down the avenue towards her place, which was just a couple of blocks away from my room. Occasionally a car would slow down at the curb, but Cami just ignored them.

“Sometimes I think I need one of those ‘off duty’ signs like cabs have,” Cami said, making me laugh. There was something different about her, something I couldn’t quite put my finger on. Her hands were big for a girl’s, as were her f eet. I figured she was still growing or something, and that the rest of her would catch up eventually. Even so, she was pretty tall, but her breasts were fairly small, smaller than mine.

Her apartment building smelled like boiled cabbage instead of the on ion aroma that permeated Mr. Antonelli’s rooming house. We walked down to the basement, where her apartment was, and she fished out a key from her purse.

“Shhh...Dee might be taking a nap,” Cami said.

“Dee?”

“Delia. Lady I live with.”

“Oh.” We entered her apartment, and the cabbage smell became something else, something spicy and smoky.

“You mind rolling?” Cami asked, handing me a lumpy plastic bag and a pack of papers. “I gotta change and take a leak.”

“Sure, I don’t mind at all,” I said, sitting down on the couch. Cami pulled a record from a shelf next to the old stereo, an Eartha Kitt album, handing it to me so I could use it to clean out the seeds and roll a joint. Then she left, disappearing down the hall, past the bathroom, into her room. I looked around the living room of this basement apartment. Everything was old but nice, like Mr. Antonelli’s place but maybe ten years newer.

I rolled a joint from Cami’s bag. Larry had taught me his secret, pinching the ends of the paper before rolling it into a tube, which kept the weed from spilling out. I was shaking it like a thermometer, trying to dry the adhesive, when I heard Cami come out of her room.

She walked into the bathroom but didn’t close the door. I saw her stand in front of the toilet, open her short yellow silk kimono, and a straw-colored stream of urine began to arc into the toilet. When she’d finished, she shook something and closed her kimono, reaching down to flush, and walked out of the bathroom to join me on the couch.

“What’s wrong?” Cami asked. “You look like you saw a ghost or something.”

“How did you do that?” I asked.

“Do what?”

“Pee standing up,” I said. I remember trying it once when I was little and making an awful mess of the bathroom.

“It’s something called a penis,” Cami said. “You’ve seen one or two, right?”

Now it all made sense, but at the same time I was as confused as ever. I was sort of aware of transsexuals and people like that; there was that tennis player who was in the news a few years before, the one who had a sex change and then was barred from playing in professional tournaments. And there were times I got into some guy's car to blow him and he'd be wearing panties under his trousers or a bra under his shirt. More often than not these guys had wedding rings. But I'd never met someone like Cami, someone halfway between male and female.

"Light that joint," she said. I snapped out of my trance and lit it, taking a drag and passing it to her.

"Can I ask you something?" I said.

"Sure."

"Are you going to get an operation?" Even though I didn't have a penis, the thought of having one cut off made me squeamish.

"Costs a fortune," Cami said. "Right now I'm just saving up for titties." We passed the joint back and forth a few times and Cami started telling me her story. She'd grown up in Georgia, in a small town north of Atlanta. Always felt different, always felt like a stranger in her own body. When she was just five she used to tuck her penis between her legs and wish she had a cunny like her older sister, used to pray every night that she'd wake up with a vagina. At nine, she started wearing her sister's hand-me-downs, at twelve she was wearing eyeliner and lipstick to school.

To say that this didn't go over very well in rural Georgia would be an understatement. Cami, who was still Charles at that point, would get beaten up on a daily

basis. When she had been caught at age fifteen, sucking her cousin's cock at a family picnic, her father kicked her out of the house. Cami went to Atlanta first, and then Boston, where she had a sympathetic aunt. But the aunt's health started to fail so she moved down south, leaving Cami alone in a vacant Roxbury apartment. She stayed there as long as she could before ending up on the streets, sleeping in bathrooms and parked cabs, just like I had before ending up at the shelter. A couple of months later, Delia took her in, letting her have her spare room.

We were just about finished with the joint when I heard a door open, and a figure entered the bathroom and closed the door. Running water, a flushing toilet, and the figure emerged, a statuesque black woman in a long silk robe.

"Who's your friend?" she asked Cami.

"Dee, this is Annie."

"Pleasure to meet you," Delia said, extending her hand. As I took it, her robe opened slightly, revealing a small brown penis between her legs. "Sorry," she said, closing her robe. "I just woke up." I just smiled, stunned that this tall woman with the lovely cheekbones and luscious breasts had a cock.

"Honey, you know I don't want you using Miss Eartha for this," Delia said to Cami, picking up the album cover I'd used to roll the joint.

"Sorry, Dee. Forgot," Cami said. She offered the roach to Delia, who lit it and inhaled it through her nose.

"S'okay," Delia said. Her voice was husky, smoky, sexy, while Cami's was sort of artificially high with a touch of Southern belle. "Annie staying for dinner?"

“Want to?” Cami asked. “It’s gumbo. Good stuff.”

“Yes, thank you,” I said. Delia went into the kitchen to cook some rice while Cami rolled another joint, this one on an old Dia na Ross album cover. She brought it into the kitchen for Delia and returned to smoke the rest with me. We sat on the couch, getting stoned, listening to pots banging in the kitchen.

“Cami?”

“Yes, Annie?”

“Can I ask you something else?”

“Sure.”

“Can I see it?”

Cami smiled and put down the roach, standing up from the couch and opening her kimono. She wore lacy yellow string bikini panties, a slight bulge at the crotch.

“Go ahead,” she said. I tugged at the waistband and pulled the panties down her chocolate thighs. Her cock popped out, having been tucked between her legs, and dangled pendulously, the pinkish purple tip peeking out from a foreskin that was just a bit darker than the rest of her skin.

“Touch it. I know you want to,” Cami chuckled. I looked up at her, into her heavily lidded eyes, still bearing a trace of blue eyeshadow that matched the skirt she’d worn on the street. It wasn’t the first black cock I’d seen or touched, not by a long shot, but it was the first one I’d seen attached to a body with soft skin, swelling hips, budding breasts. I held it gently, feeling Cami harden between my fingers. Her balls were shaved, as was the rest of her pubic hair, just a bit of stubble and a few ingrown bumps. I leaned forward

and took her in my mouth, making her hard with my lips and tongue. She sighed and tilted her head back, rocking back and forth as I began to suck her.

“Nice,” Cami whispered, stroking my hair. I bathed her shaft with my tongue, swirling it over her head, sliding her foreskin back and forth as I pleased her with my mouth. Her skin was so soft, so smooth, her bottom so round and full. I couldn’t keep my hands off of her, and I wondered how it would feel to have her inside me, to slide up and down on her pole as our breasts rubbed together.

I’d have to find out some other time, because I could tell Cami was about to come. I sucked her harder, cupping her hairless balls, dipping my fingers between her cheeks, pressing a fingertip against her ass and feeling it yield. Cami gasped when I did that, squeezed my shoulder, and her cock began to twitch in my mouth, a couple of spurts of semen flowing from her purple glans. She began to soften almost immediately, and Cami tugged at my shoulder, pulling me up from the couch.

“Cum kiss,” she said, pressing her full lips against mine, her tongue scooping her semen from my mouth. Our breasts pressed against each other as we kissed, Cami’s hands roaming over my body, inside my sweater, under my skirt.

“Dinner’s ready,” Delia said, interrupting our kiss. “Pull your panties back up, girl.” Cami tugged them up from her knees and tied her robe, leading me into the kitchen where she helped Delia set the small table.

Dinner was delicious. I’d never had gumbo before; I didn’t even know what it was. Delia had lived in New Orleans for a few years, and she’d picked up some Louisiana cuisine there. She’d lived in a lot of places, having been in the Army when she was

younger, before she became what she called a “female impersonator”. Bit by bit I began to pick up pieces of her story. She’d been on female hormones for years, and they’d made her balls shrivel and her dick shrink. Her breasts were implants, a gift she received years before from a wealthy man who may or may not have been her lover. Delia was coy about it, saying that it wasn’t proper for a lady to tell all of her secrets, even if he had been dead for over a decade.

Delia performed five nights each week, mostly in nightclubs or at the gay bath house near the Expressway, singing songs made famous by Miss Earth a Kitt. It was always “Miss Eartha” or “Miss Kitt” with Delia, and she said her name with a reverence most people reserved for God or the Virgin Mary. She’d even met Miss Eartha once, and the autographed glossy photo Miss Kitt had given her had a place of pride on the living room wall, right next to the shelf of her record albums. Delia also had a Catwoman costume, just like the one Miss Eartha wore on “Batman”.

Delia sang a few bars of “Love for Sale”, acapella, at the dinner table, rolling her Rs and purring just like the lovely and talented Miss Kitt. She’d been singing like her for almost twenty years, and had her voice down perfectly.

I helped Cami clean up after dinner while Delia showered and got dressed for her evening show. Then we smoked another joint in the living room, sitting on the couch, watching television. Delia came out from her bedroom wearing a long red sequined evening gown, a mink stole wrapped around her shoulders, looking like the long lost twin sister of Miss Eartha Kitt. She had a few hits of the joint and then she was off, leaving the sound of rustling sequins in her wake.

* * *

Chapter Eleven

Heart of Gold

I went home later and wrote in my journal, writing about Cecil getting busted, how I was worried about the police picking me up after seeing his tapes and photographs, about meeting Cami and Delia, about how depressed I was that I had to go back out to the streets again, now that the Cecil money train was off the tracks for good. I'd saved up quite a bit of money, though, so much that I couldn't hide it between the pages of my algebra text. I'd bought a vintage beaded purse and stashed my money in there, hiding it under the sink, wedged behind the water pipes.

It was Cami that helped me get past my predicament. She invited me out to work the street with her, keeping an eye out for the cops with me, even lending me a long black wig that she didn't need anymore, since she'd grown her hair longer. Larry loved the look, loved to feel the long strands tickle his thighs as I sucked him. I wore the wig on the street for about three weeks, just to be safe, until I figured that the whole Cecil thing was yesterday's news.

It was amazing how many men thought Cami was a real girl, and just as amazing how many of the ones who knew she had a cock also assumed that I was a boy, too. One man, a middle-aged executive in a big BMW, seemed downright disappointed that I

didn't have a penis. He wanted to pay both of us to come back to his hotel downtown, for something that involved three penises, though he was pretty light on the details. We haggled over the price and ended up going with him anyway. Back in his hotel room, I watched the man suck Cami's cock, and then he watched Cami fuck me while he jerked off. Afterwards, he sucked Cami's cum from my pussy while Cami tongued his asshole. We ended up with the three of us in bed, Cami fucking the man in the ass while I sucked his cock. We left that night with \$500 between us, \$300 for Cami and \$200 for me. I guess having a penis would have earned me an extra hundred.

Cami's street was a lot busier than the one I'd worked before. There was a constant stream of cars, cruising slowly, some moving on to the next block where the boys worked. There was an hidden boundary here, girls like Cami on one street, boys on the other. I got to know almost all of the girls on the block, and they accepted my presence, albeit grudgingly. It wasn't like I was taking significant business from them. The cars I'd get into were driven by men who were looking for younger stuff.

One night I thought I saw a kid from the shelter, working the next block, but before I could get a good look at his face, he got into the front seat of a Volvo and they drove off. Seeing him made me wonder about Manny and Billy, where they were, how they were doing.

That was also the night I met the man I called the Beacon Street Daddy. He became my best customer, even better than Cecil. I could count on him to show up at least three nights a week, often paying for the whole night, and for good money plus a tip.

He drove a nice car, wore expensive suits, and had a huge place in Back Bay, a duplex apartment that was almost as big as the entire rooming house.

His name was George Sheffield, at least that's what it said on his door, but he wanted me to call him "Daddy", even on that first night. It was a warm mid -summer night, and I would have gone with him just for the air conditioning in his car. I gave Cami a good-bye kiss and got into the front seat, seeing her walk to the back of the car, her lips moving as she memorized the license plate. It was something we always did for each other, just in case.

Mr. Sheffield parked in the basement garage, and we headed up to his place in the elevator, bypassing the doorman in the front lobby. His place was the lap of luxury, fine furniture, a panoramic view of the Charles River; it was nicer than the Ritz. He poured himself a drink and loosened his tie while I sat on the big leather couch, watching cars on the parkway across the river, a stream of white headlights and red tail lights.

"\$400 for the night, right?" he said, swirling the ice in his drink and reaching into his pocket, pulling out a thick wad of money held together with a sterling silver clip. He peeled off a few bills and handed them to me, taking a sip of his drink.

"Thank you," I said, stuffing the money in my purse.

"Can I get you anything? Soda? Milk?"

"No thank you," I said. "What would you like first? Blowjob?"

"No, not yet. Come with me," he said. I followed him up a spiral staircase and down a carpeted hall, into a room filled with stuffed animals and toys, a four -poster bed and pink curtains, a little girl's room.

“My daughter’s room,” Mr. Sheffield said. “She lives in Paris with my ex -wife now. I only see her twice each year.” He sounded wistful, al most sad when he said this.

“I’m sorry,” I said.

“Don’t be. I was a prick to her mother,” he replied. “Anyway, here are her clothes. They should fit you, I think. Why don’t you put these on and meet me back downstairs when you’re ready.” He pulled a plaid skirt and white blouse from the closet, laying them on the bed, and then he opened her dresser drawers, showing me where she kept her socks and underwear. Then he left, the sound of clinking ice fading down the hall.

I took off my clothes, miniskirt and ha lter top, and skinned off my black lace panties, standing naked in this girl’s room. I found a picture of her and her father on her desk, a recent photo I guessed, and I figured her to be twelve or thirteen at the most, with long straight blonde hair like mine, except in pigtails. Her name was Suzie or Suzette, at least according to what was jotted on the inside cover of some of her old textbooks, written in perfect penmanship with a little heart over the “i” in “Suzie”.

I pulled on a pair of her panties, w hite cotton briefs with a tiny rosebud pattern. Either she was a little big for her age or I was a little small for mine; regardless, her clothes fit me well though her training bra was a bit too tight, as were her shoes. I checked myself in the mirror, ty ing my hair into pigtails with elastics like she did, and headed downstairs. Mr. Sheffield was sitting on the living room couch, dressed in a plush beige terrycloth robe, a fresh drink in his hand, watching me descend the spiral staircase.

“Come sit with Daddy, Princess,” he said, putting down his drink and patting his lap.

“Yes, sir,” I said, climbing up onto his thighs.

“Call me ‘Daddy’, punkin,” he said, wrapping his arms around me and pulling me close to his chest. Unlike most of the men I serviced, Mr. Sheffield was in great shape, broad chest and firm abdomen, probably from running or regular workouts. I rested my head on his shoulder as his hands caressed my thighs, roaming under his daughter’s plaid skirt, over her soft cotton panties.

“How was school today, punkin?” he asked.

“It was fine, Daddy,” I said. I began to realize that he wasn’t just paying for sex, he was paying for me to pretend that I was his little girl, his absent daughter. I knew there would be sex involved sooner or later, mostly from the way I could feel his erection pressing against the back of my thighs, but this was his foreplay. I wondered if he had ever touched his daughter or whether it was all by proxy. Maybe that was why he was divorced, his ex-wife and his little girl an ocean away. I decided that he hadn’t, not if, as he had said, she still visited twice each year.

“What about that class you’re having problems with?” he asked.

“What class?”

“Weren’t you flunking out of Sex Education?” Mr. Sheffield had a script, though it was all in his head and I could only guess at my lines.

“Yes, Daddy,” I said, feeling him squeeze my bottom. “I’m sorry, Daddy.”

“Maybe I can help you, Princess,” he said. “What are you having trouble with?”

“Well, um, it’s about a man’s thing,” I said, feeling his hardness pressing up against my thighs. I’d never had sex ed in school, other than a quick gym class discussion

of contraception and venereal disease given by a physical education teacher with a crew cut and thick legs, a lecture that lasted all of ten minutes. I didn't know what was covered in a real sex ed class, so I had to improvise.

"You mean a 'penis'?" he said.

"Yes, Daddy. A...a penis."

"What about the penis do you need to know?"

"Well, it's like I don't understand what it does," I said. "And the seeds that come out, are they like pumpkin seeds or something?" Mr. Sheffield laughed at that and gave me a wink.

"Would you like to see mine, Princess?"

"Could I, Daddy?"

"Sure thing," he said. "Get down from Daddy's lap and I'll show you." I scooted off of his legs and knelt between his knees as he opened his bathrobe. His cock was hard, twitching in anticipation, a pearly drop of precum at the tip.

"Can I touch it, Daddy?"

"Go ahead, punkin. Just be very gentle," he said, a gleam in his eye. I hesitantly moved my fingers closer to his twitching tool, lightly grazing the shaft with my fingertips before curling my fingers around his penis.

"It's so big, Daddy," I said. It was pretty big, but I would have said that even if it wasn't. Men love to hear things like that.

"Stroke it, punkin, rub it up and down slowly," he said. I began to slide my fingers up and down his cock, slowly jerking his veiny shaft.

“What’s this wet stuff at the tip?” I asked.

“That’s Daddy’s seed. There’s millions of little tadpoles swimming around.”

“Tadpoles?” I said, giggling like his daughter might have done.

“They just look like tadpoles, sweetie.” He reached forward for his drink and took a sip.

“What’s it taste like?” I asked. Mr. Sheffield smiled.

“Go ahead and try it, Princess.”

“Okay, Daddy,” I said, leaning forward and extending my tongue, scooping the drop of precum into my mouth and swirling it around. “It’s yummy, Daddy.” Actually, it had that sort of cloying sweetness that the semen of some of the more alcoholic men I’d sucked had, but it lacked the bitterness of someone who lived on junk food.

“Keep doing that and I’ll make some more, punkin,” he said. I guessed that this was my cue to start sucking him, and I did, parting my lips and taking his cock into my mouth, bathing the underside of his shaft with my tongue, making him groan and sigh and settle back into the couch. I sucked him slowly, carefully, trying for a cross between a girl’s first blowjob and something a bit more professional. I figured that he’d tell me if I wasn’t doing it the way he wanted. He didn’t seem to be complaining, and after he filled my mouth with more of his little tadpoles he murmured “Perfect...”.

“Thank you, Daddy,” I whispered, climbing back into his lap.

“You’re welcome, sweetheart,” he said. He held me in his arms for a while, caressing me like I was his own daughter, not a girl he’d picked up on the street.

“Time for bed, punkin,” he said, finishing his drink. Go upstairs and change into your nightie and I’ll be up to tuck you in.”

“Okay, Daddy,” I said, kissing him on the cheek. I climbed off of his lap and went upstairs, back to Suzie’s room, where I hung up the skirt and blouse and found a nightgown hanging on a hook on the closet door, a flannel gown that went down to just above my knees. I folded my own clothes and stashed them with my purse, under the bed, before turning down the blanket and climbing into the four -poster.

Mr. Sheffield came up a few minutes later, yet another drink in his hand. He sat on the edge of the bed and stroked my hair for a while, looking at me like I really was his daughter. There was something in his face that made me wonder if he really had gotten this far in his mental movie, whether he’d rehearsed this part of his imaginary script.

“Will you rub my tummy, Daddy?” I asked him, remembering my first encounter with Father Steve, how I had to keep things moving.

“Does your tum-tum hurt, Princess?”

“A little, Daddy. Please?” I said, trying to knock a few years off of my voice.

“Sure, baby,” he said, pulling aside the blanket. He slid his hand under his daughter’s nightie, gently rubbing my belly.

“How’s that, kitten?” Mr. Sheffield asked.

“That feels good, Daddy.” I pulled the nightie up, exposing my thighs, panties, belly. Mr. Sheffield’s eyes were glued to a spot between my legs, where the cotton material of his daughter’s panties had ridden up between my cleft. His hand began to roam lower, down past the waistband, finally resting on the imprint of my labia on the

white cotton. He looked almost hypnotized as his fingers lightly traced my slit. I spread my legs a bit wider for him, and he began to stroke my thighs, working his way back to my sex.

I had a hand under the nightie, cupping my breast, circling my nipple with a fingertip. Mr. Sheffield saw the movement under the nightie and seemed to snap out of his trance. He pulled the nightie up even further, exposing my little titties. I thought I saw a look of disappointment when he saw that I wasn't flat-chested like his daughter, but a moment later he smiled.

"My little princess is growing up to be a big girl," he said, leaning over and taking one of my nipples between his lips, his tongue lightly lashing it until it stiffened and puckered.

"Oh, Daddy..." I sighed. "So good..."

"Take this off, babycakes," he said, tugging at the nightgown. "Let me see how you're growing."

"Yes, Daddy," I said, pulling his daughter's nightie over my head. His hands were all over me, his lips moving from one nipple to the other. I ran my fingers through his thick head of hair, arching my back as his lips sent a pleasurable chill down my spine. I felt him tugging at the panties, and I lifted my bottom off of the bed so he could pull them down and off. Then he kissed his way down my belly, all the way to my shaved mons. I could feel his breath on my sex as he stared at my cleft, his lips poised just inches away, making me shiver with anticipation at what was to come.

It had been months since I'd been licked properly down there, since that day I met Trish at Mrs. Pomerantz's boutique. Cami would eat me out sometimes, especially if she'd just fucked me and I didn't quite get off. She loved the taste of her own cum, but wasn't the most cunning linguist. I often thought she'd be more enthusiastic if I had a cock instead. Larry practically begged me to let him tongue my box sometimes, but he always seemed disappointed to find that I hadn't been fucked by a dozen guys, oozing a dozen different flavors of semen. Cecil had eaten at Chez Annie as well, mostly as foreplay, and he did as well as you'd expect someone who had been a twentysomething virgin until recently. In other words, poorly.

Mr. Sheffield was good, even better than Trish in some ways. He kissed me reverently first, his lips pressed against my slit, inhaling the perfume of my sex, his eyes closed as he imagined his daughter in my place. Then he cupped my bottom in his hands and brought me up to his mouth, probing my slit with his tongue, savoring the taste of my nectar. He actually said "Mmmmmm" a few times, as if he was tasting an exotic dish at an expensive restaurant. I suppose I was an expensive restaurant, one he could have all to himself for a few hundred dollars in cash.

Unlike Larry, who went straight for my clit, or Cecil, who couldn't find my clit even with written instructions and a full-color diagram, Mr. Sheffield teased my little button, swirling his tongue under and over, around and around, making me moan and writhe in his hands as I tried to anticipate when he'd start lashing it directly. He took his time, trying to make it last, to control the pace of my pleasure, to keep me at the tip of his tongue forever. When he did finally tongue my clit, I felt an electric sensation spread

through my body, making my limbs stiffen and my cheeks tense up in his strong hands. He squeezed my bottom and lashed me harder, pulling my body closer to his face, drinking from my chalice.

It didn't take long at all. From the moment I had put on his daughter's clothes and sat in his lap, feeling him caress me and call me "Princess", I'd felt that delicious tension in my body, centered in my lower belly, like an overflowing dam waiting to burst. Not only could Mr. Sheffield believe that I was his daughter, I was willing to believe that he was my Daddy, and not a girl he bought for the night. When the dam broke and my pleasure spilled out, I cried out for him: "Oh, Daddy...oh, Daddy...ohdaddy ohdaddy ohdaddy...". He kept lashing me with his broad tongue until I had to squirm away from his lips, so intense was my climax.

"Princess..." he whispered, lowering my bottom to the bed and kissing my belly. "Are you ready?"

"Yes, Daddy," I said, knowing what was to follow. Mr. Sheffield shrugged off his robe, his erection bobbing between his legs. He felt my slit with his finger, dipping it inside me to gauge my wetness. I was moist even before he ate me, even before I sucked him in the living room earlier.

"It might hurt a bit, punkin," he said. "Let me know if it hurts too much, okay?"

"Yes, Daddy," I said, realizing that we were back on his mental script, and that in his mind he was about to take his daughter's cherry, to penetrate her virgin cleft. I spread my legs wider as Mr. Sheffield knelt between them, stroking his hardness and aiming it at

my wet slit. He reached for one of the pillows behind my head and slipped it under my ass, rubbing the tip of his cock between my labia to moisten his spear.

“Ready, baby?” he asked, his cockhead poised at my entrance.

“Please be gentle, Daddy,” I said.

“Always,” he replied, leaning down to kiss me on the lips. I felt his hips start to push forward, the tip of his cock pressing into me, slowly, carefully, towards a hymen that wasn’t there. “This part might hurt a little,” he whispered, and then he pushed further, thrusting deeper, breaking through an imaginary barrier. I wondered how many times he’d rehearsed this moment in his mind, lying alone in his bed at night, stroking himself as he thought about Suzie.

“Ow, Daddy,” I softly cried. “Stop. It hurts.” It really did hurt, not as bad as a torn cherry, but I felt a little stab of pain. Mr. Sheffield’s cock was the largest one I’d had inside me in a while, since Mr. O’Hare fucked me with his horse-like cock on Father Ken’s desk.

“Want me to pull out, Princess?” Mr. Sheffield said, a look of genuine concern on his face.

“No, Daddy. Don’t,” I said. “Let me get used to it for a minute, okay?”

“Okay, sweetheart,” he said, kissing me on the forehead and on the nose, trying hard not to thrust even though he wanted to more than anything in the world right then.

“Does it really hurt?” he asked, out of character for a moment.

“A little,” I said. “You’re really big. I don’t usually...”

“You don’t?” he asked.

“No. Blowjobs and handjobs, mostly.” Except for the rare client, or Larry, Cami, or Mr. Antonelli, my work was pretty much confined to a suck or a quick jerk in the front seat of a car.

“Okay, I think I’m ready,” I said. My pussy had stretched to accommodate Mr. Sheffield’s fat cock, and I squeezed him with my muscles to let him know it was all right to start thrusting.

“You’re my special little girl, Princess,” Mr. Sheffield said, back in his Daddy role, his hips starting to move, sliding his penis in and out of my tight slit.

“Thank you, Daddy,” I said, holding his hips, feeling his muscles move beneath his skin, rocking my own hips to his tempo. He felt as hard as iron, and I could practically feel every vein and bump on his shaft as he slid in and out, lingering with just his fat cockhead inside me and then plunging deeper, until he filled me completely. As he stretched out on top of me, I moved my hands from his hips and up to his broad back, feeling his shoulders tense and relax as he began to thrust faster.

“How’s that feel, Princess?” he whispered into my ear.

“Wonderful, Daddy,” I cooed. “It feels soooo good...”

It felt wonderful, it felt delicious, his magnificent cock stretching my box, the thick ridge of flesh on his glans pressing against my sweet spot with every stroke. I moved my hips back and forth, pressing them against his, trying to take him as deep as I could. Mr. Sheffield realized that he didn’t have to be so careful now, that my pain had melted into pleasure, that my body was his now. He started moving his hips in a circular motion, his

cock corkscrewing in and out of my sex, touching me in places no one had touched in ages.

By this time Mr. Sheffield was screwing me nice and hard, not quickly but with long, powerful strokes, like the way those men who rowed on the Charles River would pull on their oars, using their whole body to propel their sleek, sharp shells through the water. I felt another climax begin to build, different from the one he'd given me with lips and tongue, more like a full body orgasm that I felt all the way down to my toes and out to my fingertips. I wrapped my arms around his body, trying not to scratch him with my nails as he pumped my pussy with his big tool, a patina of perspiration building on his forehead.

When I came I felt my whole body stiffen, close to paralysis, until I passed the first peak. Even when I felt myself regain control of my limbs, my vision seemed dim, as if someone had turned down the lights. I wrapped my arms and legs around him, holding him even tighter, and I clenched myself around his shaft, squeezing him as I passed into another moment of ecstasy. Mr. Sheffield's hips began to shudder, a hitch in the smooth motion of his thrusts. I knew he was close, so close.

"Come for me, Daddy," I whispered. "I want to feel your seeds inside me."

"Oh, Princess," he gasped, slamming into my pussy once, twice, three times before he came, taking a deep breath and letting it out as his cock twitched inside me, the fat glans flaring as hot spurts of semen filled my sex. I clenched my pussy again and again, milking his tool, each additional spurt sending a shiver of pleasure through my belly.

“You’re a special girl,” Mr. Sheffield said, after he’d slipped out of my pussy and rolled off of me, laying next to me on his daughter’s narrow bed, caressing my belly and thighs.

“Thank you,” I said, not sure if he was talking to me or to his absent daughter. He leaned over and kissed me, a passionate kiss, a lover’s kiss, pressing his lips to my mouth, a mouth that had tasted hundreds of different cocks.

“Do you want to sleep in Daddy’s bed tonight, Princess?” he asked, giving my forehead a fatherly kiss.

“Could I, Daddy?” I said.

“Sure thing, punkin. Put your panties back on and I’ll carry you in like I used to do.” I reached into the bunched up duvet at the foot of the bed, finding his daughter’s cotton undies hidden in a fold of the thick comforter and slipping them back on. I could feel his semen start to ooze from my slit, soaking the panty crotch. Mr. Sheffield climbed out of bed and put his robe back on, lifting me off the bed with his strong hands. I wrapped my arms around his neck as he carried me into his bedroom, gently laying me down on his big platform bed. He shrugged off his robe and lay down next to me, wrapping his muscular arms around me as I snuggled up against him. Then he reached over and turned out the light, giving me one last kiss for the night.

* * *

I woke up the next morning as Mr. Sheffield was putting on a pair of running shorts, the straps of his jock framing his firm buns. He turned around and saw that I was awake, a ray of early morning sunlight falling across my breasts.

“I’m going to run for about a half an hour,” he said, lacing up his sneakers. “Feel free to grab something to eat. Kitchen’s downstairs.” He gave me a kiss on the tip of my nose and pulled on a t-shirt, heading out of the bedroom. I thought it was sort of strange that he trusted me, a girl he just met on the street, alone in his apartment. Not that I would steal anything, but it just seemed strange.

I went back into his daughter’s room and changed into the clothes I’d worn when he picked me up. There was a wet spot on his daughter’s sheets from our lovemaking the night before, and the panties I’d worn were still soaked with his semen.

Mr. Sheffield’s kitchen was almost as big as Mr. Antonelli’s whole apartment, with a huge stainless steel refrigerator, a gas stove with six burners and two ovens, a myriad cabinets and drawers. He didn’t have much in the way of food, though, just some cereal in the cabinets, take-out food containers in the fridge, some low-carbohydrate beer, a quart of orange juice. I made myself a bowl of cereal and poured a glass of juice, watching the morning news as I ate my breakfast.

After I ate, I noticed that there was a combination washer and dryer in a corner alcove of the kitchen. I went back upstairs to Suzette’s room and grabbed her sheets and panties, bringing them back down and putting them in the washer. I was just adding some detergent when Mr. Sheffield returned.

“You don’t have to do that,” he said.

“That’s okay,” I replied. “Just trying to be helpful.”

“Sweet of you,” he said, putting his hands on my hips and pulling me closer. He was damp with sweat from his run, a big dark stain on the front of his shirt. “I must smell awful. Let me take a shower and I’ll drive you back to the South End.”

“Could I join you,” I asked. A shower sounded nice.

“Sure, but we have to be quick. I have to be in the office in an hour.”

I followed him into the bathroom, a suite off of his bedroom that was as nice as any I’d seen. There was an anteroom with four rows of suits on hangers, arranged by color and style. The bathroom itself was a monument to hygiene in black marble and terra cotta tile, and the giant tub had not one but three shower heads, including a detachable one with a massage feature.

I soaped him up from his neck to his toes, working my way back up his steel thighs to concentrate on cleaning between his legs, lathering his hard cock and heavy balls. I knew we didn’t have time to do much, but I gave him a soapy hand job anyway, stroking his beautiful prick until he came, shooting rosy jets of semen all over my breasts.

Mr. Sheffield returned the favor, showing me some of the more interesting features of the detachable shower massage, including a pulsating setting that, when directed between my legs, made me weak in the knees. I almost slipped on the wet marble when I came, but he caught me before I fell, holding up as I trembled with delight at the warm jets of water that pulsed against my pussy. I wondered if Mr. Antonelli would let me buy one of these and install it in the rooming house’s bathroom. I’d never leave the tub if that happened.

We rinsed the soap from our skin and dried off with plush towels that probably cost as much as I made in a night. I watched him get dressed, white shirt, dark grey suit, yellow tie, black Italian shoes, and then we descended in the elevator, back to the basement garage where he kept his car. He pressed a small black trinket on his key ring, making the car chirp, its headlights flashing twice as the doors unlocked electronically. Mr. Sheffield opened the passenger side door for me and I slid inside. Ten minutes later I was back on the corner where he'd picked me up, his phone number written on a piece of paper. I didn't have a phone, relying on pay phones or Mr. Antonelli's line when I had to make a call, but we agreed to meet two nights later, same place, same time.

* * *

I'd stay with George Sheffield at least three nights a week, sometimes all day on Sunday, lounging in his big bed with him, reading the Sunday papers, eating brunch, generally acting the part of the loving daughter of a very affectionate father. Most of the nights I spent with him were just like that first night, with just a few minor variations. Sometimes, he'd have me pretend to be asleep, and he'd creep into his daughter's room where I was staying, quietly lifting my nightie and caressing my sex through her little white panties. He'd nibble my tender slit through the cotton crotch, and then he'd pull them aside and slowly penetrate me with his hardness, watching for signs that I was waking up. I would feign sleep until I began to come, at which point he'd start pounding me with his fat cock until he filled me with his hot seed.

On other nights, I'd crawl into his bed while he pretended to sleep, slipping under his sheets to take his cock in my mouth, slowly sucking him until he pulled me on top of

his body, spearing me with his manhood. I'd ride him until I was a quivering mass of jelly, shuddering and moaning on top of him, urging him to fill my spasming cunny with his daddycum.

One night in early September Mr. Sheffield picked me up, asking if I had anything nice to wear, something formal, something elegant. He drove me to my rooming house and waited in his car while I went upstairs to change, coming back down in a vintage cherry red satin cocktail dress, knee-length and strapless, with crinoline petticoats under a swingy skirt. I'd found white pumps that fit and dyed them red to match, along with a beaded red purse. His eyes lit up when he saw me, and he got out from behind the wheel, dashing around his car to open the door for me, helping me gather the swishy dress around my legs so it wouldn't get caught in the door.

"You look beautiful, Princess," he said, leaning over the car's console to kiss me.

"Thank you, Daddy," I said. "What's the special occasion?"

"I'm taking you out for your birthday," he said, reaching into the glove compartment and pulling out a little gift-wrapped box. My birthday wasn't until December, and I realized that it was really his daughter's birthday instead. "Go on. Open it," he said, handing me the box. I carefully peeled off the wrapping paper, revealing a blue velvet covered box. Inside was a gold heart pendant on a fine gold chain.

"It's beautiful," I gasped. "Thank you, Daddy." I threw my arms around him and kissed him. It was genuine gratitude, not just for the lovely little bauble he'd given me, but for all of the affection he showed me, even though it was meant for his biological child. The money he'd given me pretty much kept me off the street, though I'd still hang

out with Cami while she worked, keeping her company, holding her money for her, and memorizing the license numbers of the cars that picked her up, just in case.

“Let me help you with that,” Mr. Sheffield said. I turned a round in the seat as he clasped the chain around my neck, pulling down the passenger side sun visor so I could see my reflection in the vanity mirror. The gold heart glimmered in the light of the street lamps. He put the car in gear and we drove off to dinner.

Mr. Sheffield took me to a fancy place on the waterfront. A valet parked his car and we entered the restaurant. He was on a first name basis with the maitre d’ and he introduced me as his niece. I was also on a first name basis with Marco: he lived around the corner from where Cami and I worked, and he was always very friendly to us, stopping to chat whenever he and his boyfriend walked their dogs in the evening. Marco gave me a knowing wink and seated us by a window that looked over Boston Harbor.

We drove back to his apartment after dinner, and Mr. Sheffield opened a bottle of champagne. I’d only had it a couple of times, always with Julia, and I still loved the way the bubbles tickled my nose. We toasted my “birthday”, and then he left to make a phone call from his den.

Mr. Sheffield returned a few minutes later, his eyes moist and rimmed in red. He poured himself a scotch, and sat down heavily on the couch. I picked up my champagne flute and sat down next to him.

“Did you speak with her?” I asked.

“It was late,” he said, in a defeated tone. “She was asleep.” I guess it would have been 2AM in Paris at that time.

“I’m sorry,” I said, rubbing his shoulders. “Should I go?”

“No. Please. Stay with me, Anne.” He rarely used my real name. I snuggled up against him, resting my head on his shoulders, drying his tears with my fingertips, kissing his cheek. He turned his head and pressed his lips against mine, gently at first, and then with passion. My skirts rustled as we kissed on his couch, hands running over t highs, backs, faces.

I held his hand as we went upstairs, into his bedroom, where I helped him out of his suit, shirt, and shoes. Then it was my turn, and he slowly unzipped my dress. I let it fall to my feet, stepping out of the formless mass of satin and crinoline, unclasping the red strapless bra I’d bought to wear with this dress. He was hard already, even before I sank to my knees and took him in my mouth. He sat down on the bed and I knelt between his thighs, slowly sucking his shaft, swirling my tongue over his fat glans.

“I want you,” he said, tugging at my elbow, pulling me into his lap. He cradled me in his arms and began to pull down my red lace panties.

“No, wait,” I said. “My period.” It had started the day before.

“Damn,” Mr. Sheffield said, clearly disappointed.

“I’m sorry,” I said, running my hand over his chest. I could feel his erection, which had been pressed against my bottom, starting to wane.

“Not your fault,” he said.

“What about...?” I said. I didn’t even have to complete my sentence. He knew that I was talking about taking him in my bottom.

“Are you sure?” he said.

“Yes,” I whispered, tightening my hold around his neck and kissing his cheek.

“It might hurt a bit,” he said.

“I know. But you’ll be gentle,” I said. I knew he would be. He always was.

Mr. Sheffield kissed me and laid me on the bed, sliding a pillow under my belly, pulling my panties down off of my ass, tenderly kissing both of my upturned cheeks. In the table next to the bed he had a bottle of lubricant, probably for jerking off in bed while he dreamed of his little Suzette. It was that flavored stuff that Larry liked, the stuff they sold in the bookstores in the Combat Zone. Larry went through about a quart each week.

Before he opened the bottle, he knelt behind me and I felt his breath on my crack. Suddenly his tongue was probing my bottom, penetrating me as he licked my tight little hole. He grabbed both of my cheeks and fucked my bottom with his tongue, in and out a few times before licking the length of my crack. I heard the bottle open and then I felt a cold finger back there, smearing lubricant around and inside my bottom. My ass clenched involuntarily, trapping his finger inside me for a moment. He withdrew and then he penetrated me with two fingers, trying to lubricate and loosen my tight muscle.

He withdrew again and I heard him squeeze some lubricant on his rod, smearing it around and stroking his shaft to warm it and work it in. Then he knelt behind me, and I felt his greasy knob press against my nether hole. It rebelled and then yielded to his cock, stretching to accommodate this glistening invader. I groaned and grabbed a pillow, burying my face in it to keep from crying out.

“Does it hurt, punkin?” he said, pausing with only the tip of his penis inside me.

“A little,” I said.

“Want me to pull out?” He was playing the virginity scene again, only this time the pain was real for me. He felt huge back there, and I wished he’d spent more time fingering me, stretching me, readying me for his thick tool.

“No, no, no,” I said. It hurt, but I could bear it. I wanted to make him happy.

Fortunately, he had the good sense not to plunge right in, as if piercing an imaginary hymen. He entered me slowly, steadily, even adding more lube when he was half-way inside my bottom. It seemed like forever before he filled me, his pubes tickling my cheeks. Mr. Sheffield stretched out over my back, kissing me between the shoulders and then on the cheek. He stayed like that, motionless, his cock buried inside my bottom.

I began to make the first move, slowly moving my hips under him, back and forth, side by side. I felt his hips begin to move with mine, sliding his slick shaft in and out of my bottom. As I began to relax, I felt something different, a feeling I’d never felt when someone was in my ass. I realized that his big cock was squeezing my insides, making the tampon in my pussy press against that sensitive spot on the top wall of my vagina. I reached down between my legs and pressed against my mound, squeezing the place where my clit was hidden, trying to increase the pressure.

I probably could have come like this. If only he could have lasted longer. But between the tightness of my bottom and his excitement he began to come just as I was getting close. The fact that I was moaning pretty loudly and humping his cock faster didn’t help matters any. Mr. Sheffield gasped loudly and his twitching tool began to fill my bottom with his cream.

I wanted him to stay inside me, to try again to see if I could come this way, but his penis softened and slipped out of me. Mr. Sheffield got out of bed to wash off his cock, returning a minute later and climbing back into bed. He held me from behind, and we nestled like spoons, his soft prick resting between my cheeks.

“You’re a special girl,” he whispered. I kissed his hand and placed it on my breasts, and we fell asleep together.

* * *

It was mid-September when Mr. Antonelli passed away.

Roughly once every month, always on Saturdays, when I came down to pay my rent, he’d be waiting for me in his pinstripe suit and grey fedora, walking stick in hand, and we’d go out to the North End where he’d see his old friends, we’d have lunch, buy groceries at Haymarket, and then return to the rooming house, where he’d cook dinner while I changed into a nice dress and heels. Just like that first Saturday, he’d make me risotto and a nice meal, we’d have some wine, and then we’d slow dance in his living room, soft music and candlelight. Then we’d go into his bedroom and make love, always with me on top, slowly riding him as he kissed and caressed my little breasts.

I came to believe that, despite the sixty year age difference between us, this was the most conventional relationship in my life. Dinner, wine, dancing, candlelight, and love, the way I always thought it was supposed to be. Sure, he liked me to call him “Papa”, but it was different from how I called Mr. Sheffield “Daddy”. Mr. Antonelli wasn’t pretending I was his daughter or granddaughter; he was reliving his youth. His late

wife had called him “Papa” when they were first married, since there was a fifteen year difference between their ages.

This weekend was something he’d been looking forward to, an annual feast to honor a saint that was also the patron saint of his old village in Italy. He looked especially sharp that day, wearing a gold tie clip and cufflinks I’d given him as a gift. I took his arm and we headed out to hail a cab.

It was exciting, not just for me but for him as well. He seemed almost giddy as he taped a string of dollar bills on to a statue of the Virgin that was being carried through the narrow North End streets. We bought food from the sidewalk vendors, fried dough sprinkled with powdered sugar, spicy sausages on toasted rolls, cannoli, shaved ice flavored with syrup. We had dinner there as well, in a classic bistro with red checkered table cloths and a candle stuck in the mouth of a wicker-bound Chianti bottle.

Mr. Antonelli was feeling awfully frisky that night. We took a cab home, and he began to grope me in the back seat, earning some funny looks from the driver. He was tipsy as well, since we’d shared a whole bottle of wine with dinner and he’d drunk most of it. He was singing an old Italian tune as we emerged from the cab, tipping the driver generously.

Back in his apartment, he couldn’t keep his hands off of me, slipping them under my short skirt, squeezing my breasts. We didn’t dance that night; he took me by the hand and led me straight to the bedroom, nearly tearing off his suit as he got undressed.

“Papa, Papa, slow down,” I urged.

“Bella Anna,” he crooned, unzipping my skirt and running his hands over the back of my panties. Not a minute later I was undressed as well, and he guided me into his bed.

“Papa, what are you doing?” I said, as he spread my legs and dived between them, kissing and licking my pussy. He’d never done that before, and I knew that the wine and the excitement of the day had gone to his head. But he ate me good, even if he was a little out of practice, finding my clit and lapping at it like a kitten with a bowl of fresh cream. The wine had affected me as well, so I stopped worrying about him and laid back on his bed, enjoying his attentions. He had me coming in no time at all, probing me with his fingers while his tongue lashed my clit. I tugged at his shoulder and he got up from between my thighs, his wrinkled face glistening with my juices.

“No, no, Anna,” he said as I turned in bed so he could lay down and let me ride him. “We do it this way.” He gently pressed me back against the bed and knelt between my thighs, his amazingly hard cock bobbing as it approached my moist slit. He entered me in one quick motion and started thrusting, and I could feel his hips popping and snapping with each stroke.

“Oh, Papa,” I whispered as he fucked me like his bride on our wedding night. He was so pleased with himself, the wine having banished his aches and pains for a moment at least, forgetting about his bad hips and his arthritic knees. His penis pistoned in and out of my sex, making the bed squeak, making me moan and sigh. I was getting close again, a second orgasm growing in my belly, wishing that Mr. Antonelli could be even just ten years younger.

I had my eyes closed and I heard him grunt, softly, the smallest of sounds. Suddenly his creaking hips stopped, the bed stopped squeaking, and he froze inside me. I thought he might have come already and I opened my eyes. His face was frozen in a pained grimace and he clutched his chest, his fingers digging into the broad patch of grey hair between his nipples. As his face began to turn blue, I felt a warmth streaming from his cock, a wet spot spreading under my cheeks as a hot liquid dripped from my pussy. He wasn't coming; he was peeing inside me. Mr. Antonelli was having a heart attack.

I crawled out from under his body, feeling his dripping cock slip out of my sex, the feeling of panic taking hold of me. I ran into his living room and picked up his phone, dialing 911.

"Please help me! My papa's having a heart attack!" I blurted out as soon as someone picked up the line. The operator told me to calm down, keep cool, and I managed to give the address of the rooming house and the phone number, leaving the phone off the hook and the line open when I ran back into the bedroom.

I turned Papa over, and tried to remember a short course in CPR we'd had in school. Loosen clothing: he was already naked. Airway: I tilted his head back and got his tongue out of the way with my fingers. Pinching his nose, I breathed into him, once, then twice, before pressing down on his chest with both hands balled together. Twelve compressions and two breaths. Twelve compressions and two breaths. Twelve compressions and two breaths.

I kept this up until I heard a banging on the door. The paramedics were here. I answered the door, still naked, and ushered them inside, two young women with a

stretcher on wheels, orange bags of supplies, and a small green oxygen bottle. One of them knelt by the bed and held an oxygen mask to his face while the other one grabbed Mr. Antonelli's bathrobe from the hook behind the door, draping it over my shoulders, steering me away from the bed.

There was nothing more to do. He was gone, probably dead while he was still inside me. The medics placed his body on the stretcher and wheeled him out of the bedroom, not even bothering with chest compressions. I started to follow, picking my clothes up from the floor, but one of them stopped me.

"Wait here for the police," she said. "They'll want to talk to you."

"Police?" I asked. "Why?"

"Look, kid," the other medic said. "You answer the door naked and he's got a wet dick. You think we're stupid?"

"Can I come with you to the hospital?"

"Are you a blood relative?" the first medic asked.

"No."

"Married to him?" She said this with a chuckle. I was obviously too young.

"No."

"Then stay here and wait for the cops," she said. And then they were gone, their siren fading into the distance.

No, I wasn't going to wait for the cops. Even in my distraught state I knew the trouble I was in. Everything was about to come crashing down on my head, Cecil's movie, prostitution—even though the police were nothing more than an annoyance, they

had to have seen me on the street with or without Cami, and the circumstances surrounding Mr. Antonelli's heart attack would give them no choice but to arrest me — and on top of this, drug charges would result if they searched my room. Worst of all, I knew that all this could end up on the desk of a district attorney named O'Hare. He'd probably figure out some way of blaming me for all of Father Ken's sins.

I was fucked, and not in the good sense of the word.

Still wearing Papa's bathrobe and holding my clothes, I dashed upstairs to my room just as the door to the building opened. I badly needed a bath; my crotch and thighs were still soaked with Mr. Antonelli's urine. But there was no time, no time at all. I locked myself in my room and hid behind the tall metal armoire, listening to heavy footsteps coming up the stairs, the cops knocking on every door in the rooming house, looking for me. It was like Trish's apartment all over again, except there was no place to hide, no escape. As the cops went from room to room, I grabbed Billy's old knapsack and packed what I could, some clothes, my journal, my bag of pot and bottle of pills, all courtesy of Larry, and my money, still in the beaded purse that was wedged behind the sink. Then I toweled myself off and got dressed in a pair of jeans and a sweater, my running away clothes.

I heard footfalls on the stairs, then a knock on Luis's door. He was still in the middle of his eighteen hour workday and there was no answer. Then there was a pounding on my door, and a voice called out "Police! Open up!". I crouched on the floor next to the cabinet, thinking that maybe I could rush out behind them if they kicked down

the door. But the pounding stopped, and I heard another door open, from the room next to mine.

“She’s not here,” Miss Kass said.

“Do you know where she went, ma’am?” one of the cops asked.

“I don’t know. She said something about taking a bus somewhere. New York, maybe. I think she has family there.”

“What was her relationship with the deceased?” another voice said, probably the first cop’s partner.

“He was like a grandfather to her, and she was like his granddaughter,” Miss Kass said. I wondered how she knew this. So far as I knew, she never spoke to anyone; her window on the world was through a partially open door, a gap about two inches wide.

“There was nothing improper about their relationship, I assure you.”

“That’s not what the EMTs said,” the first cop stated.

“C’mon, let’s call this in,” his partner said. “Thank you, ma’am.”

“You’re quite welcome,” Miss Kass said. I listened at the door as the cops headed back downstairs. Then there was a soft knocking at my door. I opened it.

“They’re gone,” Miss Kass said, standing in my doorway wrapped in an old chenille robe that clung to her slim figure. “But they’ll probably be parked out front while they report in. You can use my window. The fire escape leads down to the back alley.”

I grabbed my bag and followed her into her room. It was as tidy and orderly as I imagined it would be. She opened the window next to her bed and moved a potted plant out of the way.

“Quick, before they decide to come back,” she said. I climbed atop her bed and stuck one leg out the window, but then I stopped and looked at her.

“Why?” I asked.

“Why what? I don’t understand.”

“Why are you doing this?” She’d never even said “Hello” in all the time I’d been here. Why was she going out on a limb for me? She’d just sent the two cops on a wild goose chase and now she was helping me, clearly a fugitive from justice, to escape.

“You cleaned up the bathroom, you swept the hall, you made Gus a happy man,” Miss Kass said, her severe expression softening. “I wanted to tell you how much I appreciated that. Gus loved to talk about you. ‘Apple of his eye’ he called you.”

“Thank you,” I said, taking her hand in mine. She squeezed it and I suddenly wished I could have gotten to know her better.

“Go,” she said. “Take care of yourself.”

That’s what Matt had said to me when he was waiting for the police to show up at his rehearsal space, the day Cecil got busted. I took a last look at Miss Kass and crawled through the window, climbing down the rickety fire escape. The movable ladder at the bottom was frozen in place, so I had to jump down into an open dumpster filled with trash. As I climbed out of it and shouldered my backpack, I could hear the rats inside panicking and scrambling around.

Unlike that cold night when I’d left Trish’s place, I had more options to work with, places to crash even though it was still warm enough to sleep outside if I really had to. But I knew I didn’t have to. My first thought was to call Larry’s cab company and have

him paged, to send him a message to meet me somewhere. Then I remembered he was taking the weekend off; his daughter was visiting him. Explaining our relationship to her might be tricky.

I thought about Mr. Sheffield. He'd be happy to take me in, to have me as a full - time substitute daughter. But I couldn't go to him, not now, if only for his sake . Should the cops find me with him he might lose any visitation rights he had; he'd lose his little girl forever, unable to watch her grow up. Plus, the public scandal would cost him his job. Currency analysts at investment banks don't get much leeway when it comes to harboring underage fugitives. In the end, I decided to go to the closest place, only a couple of blocks away.

* * *

"You look white as a sheet, girl," Cami said as she opened the door to the basement apartment. "What happened?" I walked in to the apartment without saying a word, dropping my backpack and sitting on the couch. I was safe, at least for now, and that meant that the tears could flow. Cami sat next to me, her arm around me, comforting me. Even Delia came out of her bedroom to see what the commotion was all about, and she, too, sat next to me and rubbed my heaving shoulders.

After a nice crying jag, I managed to pull myself together and explain to them what had happened that evening. Cami was now on the verge of tears, listening to me describe how Mr. Antonelli collapsed on top of me, how I tried to revive him, how the cops were looking for me. Delia went and drew a bath, insisting that I should take one, that it would make me feel better. She and Cami undressed me, sitting me down in the tub, and while

Delia scrubbed my skin with a tattered old loofa sponge, Cami held a joint to my lips and told me to inhale.

Dee was right: the bath did make me feel better, soothing my frazzled nerves. She found an old prescription bottle of Libri um, a tranquilizer, and gave me two with a glass of water to wash them down. A few minutes later they were helping me from the tub, Cami drying me off with a fresh towel. Cami rolled another joint, and after we smoked it she went over to the rooming house to see if the cops were still around. They were gone. I'd given her my key, so she went up to my room and packed the rest of my clothes in some old shopping bags and brought them back to Delia's place.

"You got some nice stuff, Annie," Delia said, pulling my cherry red cocktail dress from one of the bags. "Good thing it don't fit me 'cuz you'd never see this again," she said, laughing.

"Annie, this one is adorable!" Cami said, holding up the burgundy silk dress I'd worn for Mr. Antonelli.

"Give me that," I said, holding out my hands. She gave me the dress and I pressed it to my face, trying to catch a lingering trace of Papa's cologne, or the smell of candlelight and soft music. I began to sob again.

"It's silk, Annie," Cami said, quietly. "You don't want to stain that pretty dress." I let go of it and she carefully folded it up.

Cami made another couple of trips back to my room, bringing back my books and some of my furnishings. I told her she could have whatever she wanted for her own room, and that whatever she didn't want she should leave in the hall outside Miss Kass's room.

With all my worldly possessions packed in four shopping bags and a knapsack, I spent the night at Delia's, sleeping on her couch.

* * *

That's how I came to live with them. It was a temporary arrangement at first, camping on Delia's living room couch. To show my gratitude, I cooked and cleaned for them, doing laundry and vacuuming the rugs. Cami took me under her wing, as did Dee, who liked having me around during the day when Cami was out on the streets. We'd cook together, Delia showing me how to make file gumbo and pan-fried catfish. I loved to listen to her voice, how she softly sang the songs of Miss Eartha Kitt while she cooked.

Little by little the arrangement became permanent. I began to contribute money for rent and groceries, for pot and big jugs of red wine. While I sometimes slept on the couch, usually I shared Cami's bed, and even Delia's on occasion. I loved sleeping with Cami; she was like a loving big sister who happened to have a penis. We liked to please each other, to make each other happy, to do for each other what a thousand men cruising the streets in their cars couldn't do for us.

My relationship with Delia was more maternal on her part, though sometimes I'd curl up between her legs and try to suck her, to help her find her release. She'd been on hormones so long it was hard for her to maintain an erection, much less come, but when she did come it was like fireworks on the Fourth of July, moaning and shaking, shuddering and crying, a stream of thin, clear semen spurting from her small dark chocolate penis. Afterwards, she'd hold me in her arms and rock me like I was her very own child, as if it were possible for a black transsexual to have a blonde daughter.

I didn't see much of Larry that fall. He was working long hours, trying to catch up on his child support payments and save something for his daughter's college tuition and living expenses. He'd cut back on the porn, the drugs, not to mention my services. I'd still see him now and then, sometimes just for lunch during his midday lull. When he did need release, more often than not it was just a hand job.

In October, Mr. Sheffield told me that he'd accepted a transfer to his firm's London branch, where a position had just become available. He said he'd miss me dearly, but he needed to be that much closer to his daughter. I kissed him and told him I understood, and we made the most of our last few nights together. The night before he was scheduled to fly to Europe, he gave me a present, a diamond bracelet that must have cost a fortune. He said it was a birthday present, for my birthday, not his daughter's, for the birthday he'd miss while he was in London that December.

"I wish you were mine, Annie," he said, entering me for the last time on his bed. There was no role-playing this time, no daddy-daughter script. It was just Annie and George, laying together like lovers who fit each other like pieces of a puzzle. As we cuddled together afterwards, I wondered how I could somehow follow him to London. It was a pipe dream; I didn't even have a passport then.

So, as the first snows of winter fell, I was back on the street. The money I'd saved over the last few months was safe in a bank account. Whatever I earned I gave to Delia first, just as Cami did, and Dee became my de facto pimp. She'd even arrange meetings between me and some of the men she met at the clubs she worked, men who wanted a

little blonde girl for a change of pace. I had to do more than just suck or jerk them off, but they paid well, and I wanted for nothing.

I kept up with my journal writing, leafing back through the pages frequently, looking for some pattern in my life that would give me a hint of what might come next. One thing that stood out to me was my need to create an artificial family wherever I was. What had started with Ramon and my stepbrothers, after my mother's death, continued at the shelter and beyond. Even Larry was part of it; he was like an older brother to me. It didn't stop there, either. I had another family right here, with sister Cami and mother Dee, and a nice cozy home filled with the smells of gumbo and pot, where I could stretch out and relax in a warm, bubbly bath and chase the winter chill from my bones.

And I believe this is where we came in.

* *

EPILOGUE

Rescue Me

January 1982

Let's talk about happy endings.

You can't live without hope. Sometimes it's the little things, like "I hope Dee didn't use the last of the conditioner" or "I hope this guy who's pulling up to the curb doesn't smell too bad". Sometimes it's the big things: "I hope Cami is okay. She should have been back an hour ago" or "I hope that my knight in shining armor comes for me".

This last one, the "knight in shining armor", was sometimes the only reason I'd get out of bed in the morning. The hope that somewhere out there was another Mr. Sheffield, someone who could take me away from my life, someone who would love me and protect me, someone I could spend the rest of my days with, pleasing him, loving him. I wasn't even particular about who or where; it could have been a woman like Julia or Trish, or even a cash-strapped cabbie like Larry. Love doesn't know from dollars or sense. Love doesn't discriminate between cock or cunt.

Don't get me wrong; I loved Cami and Delia, and I liked living with them, even though the basement apartment was a bit cramped for three people. But I'd always have a sense of foreboding whenever I hit the streets. The boys on the next block over were all talking about something they called "gay cancer", some mysterious disease that was

going around. Even the doctors we saw at the free clinic were puzzled about it. It was deadly and incurable, and if the opportunistic pneumonia didn't get you, the fast-spreading sarcomas surely would. The clinic started giving out free condoms, telling us to use them even for oral sex. I met a lot of resistance from the men who picked me up, thinking that only gay people caught it, that they were somehow immune.

I began to obsess about my knight in shining armor, retreating into my adolescent fantasy even when I was out on the street, when I should have been more aware of my surroundings, my situation, the danger I placed myself in every day. Sometimes I'd even imagine I could see him, charging up the avenue on a white steed, street lamps reflecting off of his polished armor as he dodged taxis and buses and men cruising for a piece. He'd lean over as he approached, scooping me up from the sidewalk and on to his saddle, and we'd gallop off into the sky, making the clouds our highway. I'd dream about him, too, always waking up just as I reached for his visor, lifting it so I could see his face. Or hers.

It was the week after Thanksgiving and I was on the street one evening. The long weekend had been dead slow, the streets virtually deserted, our clientele more concerned about family and Christmas shopping than a quick suck in a car or in an alley. I'd just given one guy the brush-off. He wanted to fuck me, but he didn't want to pay for the room. Cami and I and some of the other girls on the street had an arrangement with the owner of a rooming house on Chandler Street, above one of the neighborhood's gay bars. He'd rent one of his rooms for \$20 per hour, with a \$50 deposit for the key, refundable upon return. It was safer and more comfortable than trying to do it on the cold vinyl seat of someone's car, parked in an alley where no one could hear you scream.

I was disappointed. It would have been nice to feel some heat for a little while, both from the radiator in the rented room and from a warm body on top of me, inside me. The money would have been nice, too. On the other hand, I was proud of myself for not giving in to the guy; doing things on my own terms had kept me alive and healthy so far. I wasn't about to change now, not for the \$100 he'd offered me to do it in his back seat.

Another car approached a few minutes later, a nice car, a big car, the orange tint of the city's street lights glinting off of metallic silver fenders. As it came closer and slowed down, I saw it was a Mercedes, just like Julia's, only newer. The car stopped and a dark tinted window lowered with an electric whine. There were two people in the front seat, a man and a woman. I couldn't make out his face because it was dark, but there was something familiar about the blonde lady in the fur coat.

"Anne?" she called out. "Annie?" I stepped off the curb to get a closer look. Then it clicked: her hair was different, but I recognized her face.

"Helen? Helen?!?" I rushed to the car's door and she threw her arms around me through the open window. As I hugged her, I realized that it was Bradley at the wheel. He leaned over and squeezed my arm, holding on to me as if something was about to snatch me away.

"We thought we'd never see you again," Helen said, kissing my cheek.

"Helen...", was all I could say, more of a sob than a name. She and her husband had been Julia's closest friends, and hugging her felt almost like I was hugging Julia herself.

“Annie, what are you doing out here?” Bradley asked. I couldn’t answer, but it must have been obvious: I was wearing a red miniskirt and fishnets, and a fuzzy white cashmere sweater under a short red jacket with fake fur trim around the cuffs, hem, and hood. Cami jokingly called this outfit my “Santa Whore costume”.

“Annie, get in the car,” Helen said, releasing her hold on me so she could open the door. She got out and had me scoot over the seat next to Bradley, and then she got in, holding me again as I sat between them. I leaned my head against her shoulder, burying my face in her fur coat while she caressed me and kissed my cheek. Bradley put the car in gear and pulled away from the curb. A couple of minutes later we were on the turnpike heading west to their house in the suburbs.

The house was just as I remembered it, tall white columns flanking the front entrance, double doors with gleaming brass knobs and knocker. Helen held me as we left the car in the circular driveway, holding me up because my knees felt weak and rubbery. It hardly felt real. It was like a dream.

If it had been a dream, then Julia would be waiting for me, sitting on the couch, dressed in her silk nightgown, a glass of wine in her hand and a book of poetry in her lap. But it wasn’t a dream. Julia wasn’t there, waiting to give me a hug and a kiss.

The leather couch felt real, though, as did the snifter of brandy that Bradley put in my hands. I inhaled the woody scent and sipped it, a welcome feeling of warmth spreading through my body. Helen put away her coat and sat next to me on the couch while Bradley mixed a drink for her.

“After Julia passed away, we looked all over for you,” Helen said as Bradley handed her a Manhattan in a highball glass. “Child Services up in Maine gave us no end of trouble when we were trying to track you down.”

“By the time we found where you were, you’d run away,” Bradley said.

“Julia...” I said. Until now, my grief had been private, no one to share it with. But now, sitting on the couch with Helen holding me in her arms, I began to let it all out, pressing my head against her breasts and sobbing. I could feel her chest heaving, too, as she cried with me, her tears dripping on to my face and mingling with my own.

“Poor baby,” Helen whispered. “Let it out, Annie. Let it all out.”

It could have been ten minutes. It could have been an hour. I lost track of time, but by the end, when no more tears would come, I felt as light as a feather. Bradley handed me another glass of brandy and Helen dried my puffy eyes, black streaks of my mascara staining the tissue.

“What were you doing in town?” I asked. “Were you still looking for me?” Bradley cleared his throat, and Helen lifted my chin, looking me in the eye.

“Not exactly,” she said. “Brad?”

“We, um, like to have company sometimes,” he said, swirling his drink, making the ice clink against the glass.

“Sometimes it’s a boy, sometimes it’s a girl like you,” Helen said. What she didn’t have to say was that they shared their bed with whoever they picked up, paying them and driving them back to the South End the next morning. It was pure chance that they happened to be looking for a girl that night; they could have easily passed on to the next

block, where the boys were. Pure chance, a flip of the coin. And had I gone with the guy who was too cheap to rent a room, I'd never have seen them, either. I wondered how many nights I'd been out there, just missing them by a minute or an hour or a day.

"Helen," I whispered, pressing my lips against hers. I sometimes dreamed that I was back in the old house in Maine, and the house was on fire. A fireman would ascend a long ladder and rescue me, carrying me out of the house on his shoulder and laying me on a stretcher. Invariably, the dream would end with me wrapping my arms around his neck and kissing him passionately, to show my gratitude for being rescued, for saving my life. I could smell the smoke in his clothes, taste the sweat on his skin, and then I'd wake up. When I kissed Helen, I felt the same way.

"Annie, you don't have to..." she started to say, but I cut her off, kissing her again. This time her lips yielded, parted, and our tongues melted together. I felt Bradley sitting down next to me, his hand on my thigh, caressing me through the mesh of my fishnet stockings. I sat between them, still kissing Helen as he brushed the hair from my face and began to nibble my ear and kiss my neck. A few minutes later, they helped me up from the couch and into their bedroom.

I'd forgotten how big Bradley was down there, as big as Mr. Sheffield. As Helen kissed and caressed my back, I greedily licked and sucked his cock, trying to resist the compulsion to give him a quick front-seat-of-the-car blowjob, forcing myself to slow down, to make it last. He took me from behind as his wife played with my breasts and fingered my button, and afterwards, she licked his cum from my pussy, making me come

over and over again on their huge bed. I returned the favor, licking her juicy slit, getting her ready for her husband's thick tool, suckling her nipples while he pounded her snatch.

We sat in the kitchen afterwards, Bradley mixing another round of drinks while Helen made me a can of soup, having given her maid the night off, as she usually did when they went looking for someone to share their bed. I called Cami on the phone, just to let her know I was okay. Helen had asked me to spend the night in their bed with them, and I jumped at the chance. I felt safe with them, like the whole year had been a nightmare and I'd just woken up.

We talked for hours, and I told them everything, holding nothing back, starting with the foster home and Mr. Hubbard, running away, sleeping in bathrooms, meeting Michael, getting beaten up and kicked out by his girlfriend, the cathedral and the shelter, Father Ken and the other priests, Manny and Billy and Chris and Megan, Mr. O'Hare, Trish, the men who were looking for me, the abandoned brownstone, Mr. Antonelli, Larry, Cecil, Mr. Sheffield, Cami and Delia, my life on the street. It all came out in a torrent of words, punctuated only by sobs when I recalled a particularly painful memory. Bradley held my hand and Helen dried my tears as they listened to me recount the events of the past year.

"Such a hard life," Helen whispered, kissing the tears from my cheek.

"I've got something to tell you," Bradley said, rubbing my shoulders. "Might make you feel a bit better."

Julia had remembered me in her will, leaving a trust in my name. It wasn't a fortune, but it was more than enough to send me to the college of my choice, as well as

provide for my living expenses from now until after graduation. That's why Bradley and Helen were searching for me in Maine. He was co-executor of Julia's estate and my trustee. Helen held me while I cried again, tears of joy this time. It was Julia's way of showing her love for me even in death. She really was in Heaven looking out for me; she really was my guardian angel. I whispered a silent prayer for her, Hail, Julia, full of grace...

I spent the night in bed with Bradley and Helen, too exhausted from my emotional catharsis to do anything but curl up between them and fall asleep, feeling secure between them, truly safe for the first time in a long, hard year. The next morning we had breakfast. It had snowed overnight and the trees looked beautiful, limbs and branches draped in heavy white clumps of snow.

"Annie, we have something to ask you," Helen said, putting down her coffee cup and reaching out for my hand.

"We'd like you to stay with us," Bradley said.

"Another night?" I asked.

"No," Helen replied. "Permanently. As a member of our family."

I didn't know what to say. Part of me wanted to be back with Cami and Delia, in the tiny apartment we shared, my artificial family. I loved them and I didn't want to feel like I'd be deserting them. Who would watch out for Cami? Who would memorize the license plates of the cars she got into?

But there was also a calm voice in the back of my mind, telling me that this is what Julia would have wanted. I could be a normal fourteen-year-old girl again, worrying

about homework and tests, obsessing over boys and clothes, and not putting my life and health in jeopardy every time a car pulled up to the curb. No more sweaty, smelly crotches, no more shivering in the cold.

I said yes.

While Bradley went into work that day, Helen drove me back to Delia's place to pick up my things. Cami and I held each other and cried, and even Dee got teary, holding the two of us as we wept together.

"I'm so sorry, Cami," I sobbed. "I don't want to leave you."

"I know baby," she said, her voice cracking. "But you gotta take this. It's a once-in-a-lifetime thing."

"I'll miss you," I said. "I promise to visit. I promise."

"I know you will," she said. "Sisters forever?"

"Sisters forever," I repeated. I hugged Dee again, and then Helen helped me with my stuff, loading it all into the car. Before we headed back to her home, I had her drive me around the neighborhood, showing her the shelter, Mr. Antonelli's rooming house (which was boarded up), the abandoned building where I'd hidden for a few days, Cecil's loft. And then we were back on the turnpike, leaving the city behind, heading back to the snow-covered trees and the blanketed lawns of the suburbs.

* * *

Bradley and Helen took wonderful care of me. Carrie, their daughter, was living with her boyfriend in Manhattan while she attended Columbia, so I stayed in her room whenever I wasn't sharing their bed. Helen took me to her doctor, and I was examined

and tested for various sexually transmitted diseases. None were found, fortunately. The doctor knew about my sexual history and told me I had lucked out. I knew differently; it had to be my guardian angel, Julia, watching over me.

Bradley managed to get legal guardianship over me. It wasn't easy, but he was an experienced lawyer, and the fact that he was already my trustee certainly helped. I had to speak to a family court judge, and tell him that this was something I wanted to do. I was nervous sitting in his paneled chambers, but I managed to convince him. There was a thirty-day waiting period until the arrangement became permanent, with those small public notices being placed in the classified section of the newspaper, as well as a perfunctory search for my biological father, my only living blood relative. Until these formalities were taken care of, I was in Bradley and Helen's temporary custody.

Helen hired a tutor, to get me up to speed before I started school again in January. I showed the tutor my spiral notebook, the one I used to write down answers to the problems in the used textbooks I'd bought while I lived at the rooming house. Somehow, I'd gotten more answers right than wrong, even the algebra, which sometimes twisted my head into knots. I'd been a bit lax while I was staying at Delia's place, spending most of my time on the street or doing housework and laundry, but between the textbooks and the tutor I managed to pass an entrance exam for a private school, the Country Day School, and get accepted for the next semester. It was an expensive place, but Helen insisted on sending me there, saying that she and Bradley could easily afford the tuition.

As Christmas approached, Bradley bought a tree for the living room, even though he and Helen were Jewish. It was just for me, to make me feel at home, part of the family.

Brightly wrapped presents began to appear under the tree, and Helen was more than happy to take me shopping so that I'd have presents of my own to give. I celebrated Hanukkah with them, helping Helen light the candles every night, listening to her tell me about a miracle that happened ages ago.

I began to believe in miracles again. The fact that Bradley and Helen had somehow found me was proof enough.

Helen loved to take me shopping, happy to have a "daughter" she could dote upon again, buying me clothes and shoes and jewelry, things that were more "age-appropriate", as Father Ken would say. Though my beloved vintage dresses had a place of pride in the closet in Carrie's room, I began to pack away the things I'd worn when I was working, the short skirts, the tight sweaters, the tall boots and high heeled shoes. Though short, flouncy skirts were coming into style back then, my new wardrobe took on a somewhat preppy flavor, demure plaid skirts and pastel twin sets.

I looked forward to going to school again. Sometimes I'd feel restless in the house, and I'd spend an hour or so burning off energy on the exercise bike in the basement. There were weights down there, too; Brad, their son, the blond Adonis I'd fallen for the year before liked to use them. I didn't lift them, but they were a reminder that I'd see him soon, when he came home from the Deerfield Academy for winter break.

I was intellectually restless, too. Bradley and Helen had seemingly thousands of books, and even had a room just for reading, with comfortable chairs and a comfortable couch. I'd spend hours in there, picking random titles from the shelves, sitting down to read with a warm quilt in my lap. Helen would bring me tea with milk and honey and join

me, her reading glasses balanced on her nose, the room silent except for the sound of pages turning and the singing of the winter wind outside.

There was one book that I found, not on the shelves but among the things that Carrie had left behind when she moved in with her boyfriend in New York, a book that struck a deep chord within me. It was *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank. I opened it to a random page and started reading, and then I started at the beginning, reading practically the entire book in one sitting. I was reduced to tears at times, sometimes sobbing hysterically. Helen held me and comforted me, dried my eyes and made tea for me, but she never made me put the book down. She knew it was important to me.

It wasn't just that her situation sometimes mirrored my own, especially the days after I left Trish's apartment and hid in the derelict building while faceless men were searching for me, or that we shared a first name. What grabbed my heart was how Anne was always trying to maintain some semblance of a normal adolescence even though she and her family were hidden away in an Amsterdam attic, where even the slightest sound would betray their presence. I wept for Anne's lost childhood, the years that were robbed from her, the love she'd never know.

I began to have nightmares after that, vivid dreams in which I'd be back in the abandoned brownstone, rats scratching in the walls, jackboots on the stone steps, the sound of the boarded-up door being kicked in while I shivered on the old stained mattress, clutching Manny's folding knife in my trembling hand. Sometimes I'd dream that I was back in the shelter or the foster home, unseen hands holding me down on

Father Ken's desk while old Mr. Hubbard forced himself inside me. I'd wake up screaming and Helen and Bradley would hold me until I calmed down.

Helen took me to a counselor, a middle-aged woman with a soothing, softly accented voice who had an office just outside the city, in Brookline. I'd lie on her couch and close my eyes and talk about whatever came into my head, my nightmares, my guilt that I couldn't prevent Megan from getting hurt, how I felt as if everyone that I loved who had died, even Mr. Antonelli, had somehow abandoned me, betrayed me. I began to realize what a mess I was inside.

The therapist, Mrs. Horowitz, listened patiently as I talked, sometimes gently steering my monologue, helping me to realize that my answers were all there, within me, locked away in my head. I needed only to find the key.

When she asked me what had triggered my nightmares, I began to talk about Anne Frank, her lost youth, how hard it was to stay sane in an insane world. There was a long, deep silence when I finished, and I looked over at Mrs. Horowitz, who was gazing at me with a distant look in her eyes, a single tear falling down her cheek. Suddenly I realized that had Anne survived, she'd be Mrs. Horowitz's age. I felt a chill creeping down my spine.

"You were there, weren't you?" I asked her. "In the camps."

Mrs. Horowitz nodded, reaching for one of the five boxes of tissues in her soundproofed office.

"Why? Why do these things happen?" I thought about Anne, dying of typhus just weeks before the Allies liberated the camp. I thought about Megan, who had been so

close to death that if I had tripped on the slippery sidewalk just one more time she might have bled to death.

“At Belsen there was a rabbi, a learned man, who said that it is God that lets these things happen,” she said, her voice cracking, her accent thickening just a bit. “That faith and love must be tested sometimes.”

“Do you believe that?” I asked her.

“No,” she said, shaking her head slowly.

“What do you believe in?” I asked. I had struggle with my faith ever since my mother was killed. My answer had been to pray to Julia, hoping her memory would give me strength when I most needed it.

“In spite of everything, I still believe that people are truly good at heart,” she said, paraphrasing Anne’s very words.

This was one of the keys I needed, to free me from the chains of guilt and betrayal that held me down, the nightmares that made me dread falling asleep at night. Mrs. Horowitz gave me a prescription for some pills, tranquilizers and soporifics, just something to get me through this stormy weather, to calm my emotional winds. I hardly needed them; just talking to her made me feel so much better. The nightmares stopped, and soon Mrs. Horowitz told me that it was time for me to stand on my own two feet. She encouraged me to keep writing in my journal, that it was an effective form of therapy, and that I should always try to go back and read what I’d written periodically, to maintain a sense of perspective. At the end of our last session I hugged her and thanked her, and I left her office seeing the world anew.

The other sour note that winter was Brad's return from school for winter vacation. He came home with a load of dirty laundry and some bad grades for the semester. He seemed like a completely different person, too, sullen, withdrawn, never once looking me in the eye. I'd been so excited to see him again having just missed his Thanksgiving visit home, carefully primping myself in preparation for his return, and now it was all ashes in my mouth. He'd wolf down his dinner and then go up to his room, and whenever I knocked on his door to talk to him, he'd turn his music up, drowning out my voice. I even tried sneaking into his room at night, just to talk, since making love with him was out of the question, but his door was always locked. Brad stayed for two days and then left to go on a skiing trip with friends of his, and it was as if he'd never been home at all.

I was still seeing Mrs. Horowitz when this happened, and when I asked her why he was so cold, so rejecting, she had but two words to say: "People change". I could accept the truth in these words, but it was a different thing entirely to experience it first hand. Most of the people in my life had been taken from me before I really had a chance to see this happen. I wondered if even Julia could have fallen out of love with me, and the thought made me shudder.

I got over it, though. I still had the memory of his visit to Julia's house two summers before, though what I'd thought was the beginning of our love affair was merely a three-day fling, a mere bauble instead of a precious jewel. Maybe there was someone else, maybe he didn't want a girlfriend who was just fourteen, almost four years younger than he, maybe he'd heard about my year on the streets somehow and thought of me as "damaged goods". Helen swore to me that she hadn't mentioned anything to her son, but

I knew she'd mentioned a few things to Carrie, in whose room I was staying. Perhaps that's how Brad knew. Regardless, I tried not to let this ruin my holidays. Christmas at the foster home had been a drab affair, with a scrawny tree, unadorned, forgotten in a corner, not a single present underneath. I wanted this one to be extra special.

* * *

On Christmas Day Helen woke me up with a kiss, bringing me downstairs to the living room, to the tree that they'd bought for me. Bradley was waiting with coffee, and they watched, seated on the rug with me, as I opened my presents. They had bought me a lovely new sweater, a skirt to match, a strand of pearls to go with them, and a cherry red silk chemise. There were fun gifts, gag gifts, too, like a new vibrator, batteries included, and even one of those puzzle cubes with six different colors on each side. There were presents from me under the tree as well, a nice Italian silk tie and jeweled cufflinks for Bradley, a supple ivory satin nightgown and a gold necklace for Helen.

There was one last gift, a gift that hadn't been under the tree. Helen handed it to me, a flat, square object wrapped in gilt paper and tied with a red ribbon. I opened it carefully, trying not to wrinkle the pretty wrapping paper or tear the ribbon. Inside was a framed photograph of Julia, taken when she was younger, her not -yet-grey hair flowing in the breeze, a broad beach and blue ocean water in the background. She was smiling, her eyes sparkling in the bright sunlight.

"It was taken on her honeymoon with Thomas," Helen said.

“Julia...” I whispered, bringing the photograph to my lips and pressing the m against the glass and then clutching the frame to my heart. Tears began to form in my eyes.

“She wanted you to have it,” Bradley said. “It was in her will. She wanted you to always remember her like this, young and in love.”

“Thank you,” I whispered to B radley and Helen, the lump in my throat choking my voice. “Thank you,” I said again, this time to Julia. Helen put her arms around me and held me. Bradley must have known this would happen, because he was right there with the box of tissues, blotting the t ears from my cheeks.

After we had breakfast, Helen drove me in town, back to Delia’s apartment. I had gifts for Dee and Cami, but most of all I just wanted to see them again. Delia was still asleep, but Cami had just woken up, and she answered the door in her yellow kimono, still groggy, rubbing her eyes. While Helen put on some coffee, Cami and I exchanged gifts. I’d bought her a locket on a gold chain, a heart just like the one Mr. Sheffield had bought for me. I knew Cami loved the one I had, the one I st ill wore under my sweater. I also bought her a translucent white babydoll nightie, a lacy little confection that she just adored.

There were gifts for Dee, too, a dangly pair of earrings that I thought would go well with one of her many sequined evening g owns, and an Eartha Kitt album, one of the few she didn’t already own, that I’d found in a vintage record store in town. There was one last gift for Cami, and I was glad Delia wasn’t awake to see it. I pulled an envelope

from my purse, about half of the money I'd saved up while I lived there, withdrawn from my bank account the day before.

"Don't let Dee see this," I told Cami. "She'll want her cut. This is just for you, okay?"

"Annie, I couldn't..." Cami said.

"Please. Take it," I said, pressing it into her hand. "I know it isn't enough to get the breast implants you want, but it's a start. And maybe you can see a real doctor and get some better shots." Cami got her female hormones from a man in Chinatown who may or may not have gone to medical school, and who injected her with grey-market hormones that he had shipped over from Singapore.

"Annie...I don't know what to say," she said, kissing me again. "Thank you."

"Sisters forever," I whispered, hugging her again.

"Forever," she said, a crack in her voice.

"Hey, before we both start crying you should try on the nightie," I said. "I want to make sure it fits." Cami kissed me once more and smiled, taking off her kimono and panties and slipping into the sheer white babydoll. Just as she was pulling the matching sheer panties up her milk chocolate thighs, Helen came out of the kitchen with a mug of coffee for Cami. There was a thud as the coffee cup hit the wooden floor. The mug broke into two pieces and Helen took a frantic step back, avoiding the splash of hot coffee.

"I...I'm sorry," Helen stammered, her eyes fixed on a spot between Cami's legs. "I'll clean this up right away."

"I'll help," I said, leaving Cami and accompanying Helen back into the kitchen.

“I’m sorry,” Helen said again, once we were out of earshot. “I know you told me about him...her...but...”

“I know. It’s different in person,” I said, pulling a wad of paper towels from the roll over the sink. “She’s not a freak, Helen.”

“You’re right,” Helen said, taking the paper towels from my hand. “It must be so hard for her.”

“You have no idea,” I said, knowing the adversities Cami had faced growing up in a small town in Georgia, born into a body that wasn’t really hers.

Delia came out of her bedroom just as Helen was kneeling on the floor outside the kitchen, wiping up the coffee that had spilled and collecting the pieces of the mug. She was wrapped in her long robe and looked disoriented, as if she’d been up late and hadn’t had much sleep.

“There’s a white woman cleaning my floor,” Dee said. “I must’ve died and gone to Heaven.” Even Helen laughed at that.

Cami and Helen disappeared into the kitchen to dispose of the damp towels and make more coffee while Delia and I sat in the living room, opening the gifts I’d given her. She loved the earrings, but the Eartha Kitt album left her speechless, her lower lip trembling as her eyes began to water.

“I miss having you around, Annie,” she said, trying to compose herself.

“I miss you, too,” I said, hugging her.

Cami and Helen came out of the kitchen with fresh mugs of coffee, and then Cami disappeared into her bedroom, returning with a pair of gift wrapped boxes, handing them to me. I really hadn't expected a present from her, and this caught me by surprise.

"This is from me and Dee," she said. I opened them. One box had a pair of white patent leather go-go boots, straight from the Sixties. The other contained a vintage a-line minidress with a pop art motif, thick black lines and blocks of primary colors, like a painting by Mondrian, something Twiggy might have worn in 1968. I knew that Cami had picked these out for me, and probably paid for them as well, but I hugged both her and Delia, thanking them for these wonderful gifts.

"What can I do to make it up to her?" Helen asked when we were back in her car, heading home.

"Who, Cami?" I asked.

"Yes," Helen said. "She saw me staring at his...her penis."

"Cami's got thick skin," I said. "She'll be fine."

"Still...," Helen said, frowning.

"You're curious, aren't you," I said.

"Curious?"

"I was when I first met her," I said. "I was dying to know what she'd feel like inside me, our tits rubbing together." Helen shifted in her seat as we slowed down to pay a toll on the turnpike, a flush blooming on her cheeks.

"Sometimes I have to remind myself that you're fourteen going on forty, Anne," she said, lobbing coins into the white plastic basket at the tollbooth.

* * *

It was on New Year's Eve when we drove into town to pick up Cami. Delia was singing that night and Cami left a note telling her where she'd be. We went out to dinner at a nice place in town and then drove back home, back to the suburbs. While Bradley uncorked a bottle of Moet, Cami and I changed into our nighties. She donned the sheer white babydoll I'd given her for Christmas, and I wore the pink nightie I'd bought at Mrs. Pomerantz's shop that day I first met Trish.

We rejoined Bradley and Helen in their bedroom. She wore the ivory nightgown I'd given her for Christmas but Bradley was naked, his half-hard cock bobbing between his legs as he poured champagne for us. We sat in their big bed and watched 1981 turn to 1982, toasting just as the brilliantly lit ball in Times Square descended.

Helen made the first move, lifting Cami's nightie and suckling her nipples as she stroked Cami's penis through her sheer panties. Bradley lay behind me on the bed, caressing my thighs as we watched Helen and Cami make love. I turned around and began to suck him as he watched his wife take Cami's cock in her mouth. Once Cami was hard and glistening Helen mounted her, guiding the dark spear into her cleft. Bradley had my panties off by this time, licking my pussy and climbing on top of me. I held Cami's hand as we lay on the bed, Helen riding her hardness while Bradley slowly pumped my moist snatch.

We spent hours in that bed, coupling in all conceivable combinations. Cami sucked Bradley's cock and then he took her from behind while Helen and I fingered each other and watched. Then we licked the cum from each other, making each other buck and

thrash on the satin sheets while Cami and Bradley rested up. I mounted Bradley again, taking Cami in my ass, Helen laying next to us and playing with our tits while we rocked together, trying to find the right rhythm. We all ended up spent, tired from the meal, the champagne, the sex, falling asleep in a twisted pile of arms and legs and naked bodies.

When Bradley drove her home the next morning, Cami was \$1000 richer, enough to be able to afford the tits she wanted.

“You were right,” Helen said, making coffee for us while we waited for Bradley to return. “Her tits felt wonderful against mine.”

“You know, you can always buy me a strap-on,” I said, making her laugh as she poured water into the coffee maker.

* * *

In those first days of 1982, I managed to tie up some of the loose ends of my life. I’d sent a Christmas card to Mr. Sheffield, through his firm, and he sent letter in reply, telling me about his holiday with his daughter. I wondered if he’d touched her, or if he’d somehow gotten it out of his system when he was with me. The truth was somewhere in between: he’d found someone in London, a girl who looked like me, like his daughter, another surrogate for his desires.

Larry was doing pretty well, having dug himself out of his child support hole, even buying another taxi medallion. He called it an investment in his daughter’s future, as that piece of tin riveted to the trunk of a cab was appreciating rapidly, already going from the \$65,000 he’d borrowed to pay for it, approaching the \$100,000 mark, giving him some equity to work with. The last I’d heard from him he was about to buy another medallion.

Larry had followed Cecil's travels through the legal system, mostly relying on what was reported in the newspapers and on television. Cecil had pled guilty, sparing himself and his family the public humiliation of a trial, and was sentenced to twenty years in prison on various charges. The cops had stopped looking for me, the trail now cold.

I tried to find out what had happened to Manny, Billy, and especially Megan. Bradley made some discreet inquiries through a Family Court clerk magistrate who was an old friend from college. Their records weren't merely sealed; they were missing altogether, a bit of legerdemain worthy of the Witness Protection Program. Bradley had to drop his search, lest he leave a trail that could lead back to me. The Church had circled the wagons, and the real story behind Father Kenton Foley and his shelter wouldn't come out for another twenty years, courtesy of a Boston newspaper's investigative reporting team.

There was one other loose end in my life. On a cold day in early January, Bradley and Helen drove me to a cemetery in Cambridge, a place where many famous people had been buried. Julia was laid to rest here, and we stopped off to buy flowers for her grave, long-stemmed red roses instead of the usual calla lilies.

Her headstone was in a copse, a small depression surrounded by tall trees with bare branches. A cold wind blew that day as I knelt by her grave, placing a dozen red roses on the mound of earth beneath which she lay in repose, at rest, at peace forever more. It was close to the anniversary of her death, and though I would have liked to visit her sooner, but between the nightmares I'd been having and Brad giving me the cold shoulder, Helen felt that I wasn't strong enough to do this until now.

But on this day I had the fortitude, the strength to kneel by her grave and talk to her, to lay my flowers on her final resting place. A single tear streamed down my cheek, nearly freezing as it stopped at my chin, Bradley and Helen keeping a respectable distance, letting me commune with her, speak to her.

“I’m safe now, Julia. You can rest now, you can stop worrying about me. I’m with Bradley and Helen and they’re going to take good care of me. Thank you for watching over me, for keeping me safe.” I touched the cold headstone that had her name engraved in it, just below the name of Thomas, her husband.

“I’ll always love you, Julia.”

Bradley and Helen each placed a pebble on Julia’s headstone, next to a few others. It was a tradition, something to show that the grave had been visited, that the departed one hadn’t been forgotten. I did the same and then we drove back home in silence.

There was a message waiting on the answering machine, and Bradley went into his den to return the call. He came back out a few minutes later.

“Annie, I think I’ve found your father,” he said.

* * *

So, here I sit in Terminal C at Logan Airport, writing in my journal while I wait for my flight to be called. Bradley and Helen drove me to the airport and saw me off at the gate. School doesn’t start for another two weeks, but I’ll be flying back to Boston from Phoenix after a ten day visit.

The search for my father had come up empty at first, but it had to be done in order for Bradley and Helen to become my legal guardians. Even though the search was

fruitless at first, due diligence had been satisfied. It wasn't until later that it became known that a folder had been misfiled, and though it was too late to affect the results of the guardianship petition, I still felt like I had to see my father, my only living blood relative. Even so, in talking to him on the phone, I felt like I was talking to a stranger. He was eager to see me though. It had been over ten years.

My father, Frank Mercer, lives just out side of Phoenix, in a development called Rancho Paradiso, a community of nice homes built around an 18 - hole golf course. He sells real estate there, and lives in one of the first homes built at Rancho Paradiso, along with his third wife, who is seven months pregnant with his child. Also living with him are two children from his previous marriage, a boy and a girl, their mother having run off a few years before to live with some religious group at their ashram in Oregon.

Talking to my father reminded me of one of my earliest memories, from when I was three, sitting in the bath while my he rubbed a washcloth between my legs, pressing the cloth into my cunny. The memory made me feel uncomfortable, and I shifted in the terminal's plastic seat, wondering if he was the same person who had been caught with the babysitter by my mother, an event that led to their divorce. The words Mrs. Horowitz had said to me when I was upset over Brad's sudden coldness came back to me: "People change". I guess I'll find out how true that is in this case.

They're calling my flight now. I'm sitting across from the tall glass windows that look out on the apron, the runways, the ocean beyond. The plane is directly opposite from me, the sun glinting off of its shiny silver skin. In a few minutes I'll be airborne, galloping off into the sky, the clouds my highway.

Coopersport, Maine February 2003