

Charles Coiro

JENNY RHODES



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Part 1

Lauren was an attractive woman of 28 years, a splendid figure and dyed blonde hair that was almost platinum. She had been raised in the Midwest but had ideas that she really should have been born in large, important cities. She struggled desperately to rid herself of her Missourian twang with some success when she wasn't high on liquor.

The time was late 1919, and there had been talk of the gaining strength of the abolitionists who were in favor of prohibiting the producing, sale, distribution and the drinking of beer and whiskey. The country was in an uproar but the forces in favor of prohibition were gaining strength by the likes of the religious leaders and people like Neal Dow, known as the Napoleon of Temperance, Bishop James Conner Jr., and the celebrated and controversial Carrie Nation, among others.

After World War I, the entire world was settling in with new movements in Art, Literature, Movies and the easing of restrictions on women. They could now wear dresses at knee length, bobbed their hair and were given the right to vote in many places. The "new" women were called Flappers and the age was the Roaring Twenties. There were new movements in politics in Russia, Germany, Italy, Spain and Turkey among other countries. The world, it seemed was in a flux of new ideas, and an exalted desire to reach out and move away from the past.

Jack rasped, "What am I supposed to do, it's as much your fault as mine. You should have protected yourself. I'll ask around to see if anybody knows someone who can take care of the problem. Let me get some shuteye now and we'll talk about it later. How late are you, anyway?"

"I'm over three weeks late and normally, I am as accurate as a clock. And don't give me this we will talk about it later bit, I'm not going to have some butcher with a coat hanger treat me. If you didn't drink so much you would know what you were doing. You're like an animal, all you want to do is satisfy yourself and then you turn over and go to sleep; you don't even say good night. In the old days, you used to romance me and make me feel that I was something special.

Lauren could sense that Jack was starting to feel annoyed and so she thought that she would hold her tongue until Jack was fully awake. She had felt his anger more than once and it always ended in her nursing a bruise or a cut lip. But she was determined that she would

not have a child. She wasn't going to be stuck changing diapers or having her breasts enlarged and having them hang down to her knees.

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She and Jack traveled around quite a bit. Jack was tied to a local racketeer whose contributions to a politician brought him the information that prohibition was a certainty and that if he wanted to be among the first to benefit from an illegal booze distributorship, he should start now making the connections that would give him delivery rights when the law was passed. The politician was referring to the Volstead Act which he knew would be enacted. Jack was often sent to Chicago and St. Louis and when he asked Lauren to accompany him, she said, "Do you know how many years it took me to get out of Missouri – no thanks. I'll wait for you to return to New York. Besides, I don't know anybody out there."

When she asked Jack about whether he found anyone who could help her get the abortion, he always said, "Be patient, I'm trying but I have been so busy these past few months that I just haven't had the time."

"I can't wait until you have the time Jack, I need to have this done now or it will be too late. Ask your boss, he has influence with people who could help me."

"Lauren, I can't ask him, he's Catholic and abortion is against his beliefs. Besides, if he knows you want to have an abortion, he's liable to think you were with some other guy and that you were playing around. That's another thing, in the Family, all the women are considered virgins or saints. It would look like I couldn't take care of my own woman and I would become a laughing stock."

"Oh that's great, that paragon of goodness who operates in prostitution, gambling, theft and the other Mafia business thinks that abortion is a sin. I'd like to see what he would say or do if one of the females in his family got knocked up. He would probably have the father killed and think that he was following his religion's belief of not permitting an abortion and therefore justified in knocking off the guy."

"Lauren, listen, I have to go to Chicago and St Louis and I'll probably be away for three or four weeks. Why don't you come out with me and we can find someone there to help you?"

"No thanks, word would get back to your boss and you would become as you say, "a laughing stock". No, I'll work it out on my own. But you can be sure of one thing, I'm not going to mother any brat."

Softening his tone, Jack said, “Don’t do anything rash. I swear , I’ll make it up to you. Besides, I’m making good money and you lack for nothing. Dresses, jewels , great restaurants to eat at and Broadway shows. We don’t want to upset that applecart now, so just bear with the situation a little longer. Each day I’m getting closer in the Family and who knows, someday I might get picked to head a part of the business.”

“Forget it Jack, first of all you are not Italian and they are not going to let some outsider get into their Family business. Second, you’re not Catholic. You know that those wops can do everything that’s wrong but believe that by sticking by the Church, they will come out OK in the end.”

“So maybe I’ll convert and become a Catholic, what do you think about that?”

“Jack, you are even a bigger hypocrite than I thought. You do whatever you want to get into their good graces but in the end, you just wouldn’t fit in.”

“Sure, Jack, I’ll bear with the situation a little longer. Only how do I tell Mother Nature to bear with the situation a little longer?”

In the back of Jack’s mind, he was balancing whether his career would suffer in the long run. As far as women went, there were plenty that had given him the eye and who looked very willing to be with him. They saw his suits, his great car and his spending as something great for them and, they were really good looking and young; some of them 19 or 20. Jack had reached the stage where he wanted his partner’s youth and flashiness to reflect on his own age. Besides, he thought, Lauren is always bitching about something. But now, he was too busy securing his place in the Family but he thought, there are other possibilities without Lauren.

The time passed until Lauren could no longer safely have an abortion. She knew in her own mind that Jack perhaps wanted to have a family but she could not pattern her life the way Jack’s bosses and associates conducted theirs. Yes, Sunday dinners were great with the entire family; kids running and screaming all over the place but that was for the Italians whose wives pretended that their husbands were conducting themselves like Christians. The hypocrites even made a pretense by going to mass on Sunday. Lauren was especially disgusted with that short, fat, unctuous pig of a boss. Carmine who could order the death of someone as easily as ordering a salami sandwich would be no great catch to any woman. Carmine C they called him was not so respectful of Jack’s wife as he was supposed to be. There were numerous occasions when he baited her with questions that were meant to see her reactions to his propositions that she see him secretly. She generally laughed off his propositions knowing that it could cause big problems if it was discovered that she was

sleeping with Jack's boss. Not that would consider the matter in any way whatsoever since she felt Carmine was a pretentious, vain, runt of a pig. But persistence can have its rewards, she would later learn.

Lauren finally accepted that Jack wanted the child and that was the reason he put off trying to help her get an abortion when she had just conceived. She had by this time realized that she would no longer stay with Jack. She would have his kid but then she would either leave the baby at some foundling home with an anonymous note saying that she could not take care of the infant or she would simply leave the child with Jack and let him change diapers. She was sure he would not like that but then, she knew that if the child was to be left with Jack, he would hire some woman to raise it. Whichever way, she would be out of it. Meanwhile, she would remain with Jack and act normal.

On a fresh May morning, Lauren felt her time had come. Lauren had previously arranged to have a mid-wife in Katonah, New York help her with the birth of the child. The trip from Grand Central station was just about an hour and Lauren felt that she would remain undetected. When Lauren was making her arrangements, she asked Eleanor Gans, the mid-wife if there was a room available that was close to Mrs. Gans' since she felt that it would be better to stay close by to Mrs. Gans if she needed to use her services. Mrs. Gans indicated that she had spare room which she used for just such circumstances and that the room included board. The meals are simple and plain but nourishing and that she served no hard liquor, wine or beer but instead served coffee, hot or cold, tea, hot or cold and lemonade. The total cost for room and board would be \$15.00 per day. One morning, at about 6:00 AM, Lauren started to feel pains coming at regular intervals. She called Mrs. Gans who told her that while the pains should be coming at shorter intervals, her advice was to come up now and stay in the room she could rent from Mrs. Gans. It's just a precaution since you will be travelling alone. And it wouldn't hurt to be on the safe side since this was her first birth. Lauren managed to call for a cab and arrived at a midwife's home in Westchester County. Fortunately, the birth was rapid and without complications. Mrs. Gans had recommended that Lauren spend at least two days so that Mrs. Gans could help. When the baby cried, Lauren's response was to ask Mrs. Gans to give the child a bottle.

"Why don't you give her your breast", asked Mrs. Gans?"

"No" Lauren replied, I don't want to start nursing the child. As I told you, I want the baby to have nothing to do with me or its father."

“But giving her your breast now , just for a little while would be so meaningful for her. You know, a baby’s instincts tell it who its mother is and how to cope with the stress of being in a new world. Also, it would do so much for her to hear your voice and to be comforted by your fragrance. After all, she is entirely innocent and didn’t ask to be born. Surely, you can give her a little attention.” Lauren was adamant, but felt herself weakening. When she finally told Mrs. Gans that she had no knowledge of how to give the infant her breast, a triumphant Mrs. Gans simply said, “Put her mouth near your breast, the child will know what to do.”

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Jack, had been sent to Florida to arrange liquor sales so he knew nothing about Lauren’s giving birth. Lauren was afraid what Jack might do to her so she had made plans to go to Toronto, Canada. She had changed her name and she disappeared in the multitude that made up that City.

Lauren Rhodes was never heard from again.

Part 2

Unable to reach Lauren from Miami, a concerned Jack called a friend, Joey G. and asked if he would look in on Lauren to make sure she was alright. He mentioned that she was nearing the time to give birth and that he, Jack was unable to reach her. Jack left the phone number of the hotel he was staying at and that he could be reached between 7:00 and 9:00 PM. While he waited, Jack had poured himself a highball and was listening to the news on the radio. Being alone, and the news being nothing special, he found himself thinking about the birth of his child. “My child”, the sound of his being a man of family had somehow left an impression on him that he was more settled. He would have a child to raise, protect and educate and give the child the advantages he was never able to obtain in his own life. How he used to scoff at any of his married friends that had families when you asked them to spend a few hours having a drink.

“No” they would say, I have got to get back to my family.”

But now, he was understanding that it was a special thing, the type of thing that only you shared with your wife and your kid. Maybe Lauren getting knocked up had settled her too. She wasn't always complaining about something and he felt a closeness that he had not felt for a long time. Before, she was always unhappy about something whether it be that he was losing his romantic feelings about her or being catty about some mutual woman friend that she was not seeing eye to eye with. They had not discussed much about the new child but in a rush of guilt and nostalgia, he had asked that the child be called after his mother if it should be a girl. He had treated his mother harshly, mostly because she was always trying to make him lead a straight life like going to church, getting a decent woman to marry and having a family. Of course, he had ignored all her pleadings and found it offensive to even visit his mother knowing that he was going to hear the same story all over again. But now, he thought, the old lady is dead and can't give me any more advice. I'm 43 years old; when am I going to get some good sense to share with MY family. He mused on this way feeling alone and dejected with self pity.

Even so, he had invited some floozy he met in the bar the other night and after she left, he felt hollow and for the first time like he betrayed Lauren. The girl was attractive and young but the only thing she wanted was his money. With her, he felt like some stranger watching two people screwing and wondered why he felt nothing but disgust both for the girl and himself.

By the time he had awakened from these musings, he sat up and noted that it was past 11:00 PM; the room was dark and he felt a strange sense of something being wrong. He again called his friend, Joey G, and receiving no answer, he started to feel real concern. He wondered whether it would be too late to go sit at the bar and maybe strike up a conversation with some woman who had not connected with anyone that evening and was still waiting to see if some john came along before the bar closed but then his reverie of the reformed man returned and he decided to take another nightcap and go to bed. Jack did not want to be alone.

The next day, Jack dialed his telephone number and again no one answered. He was finally able to reach Joey G. the friend he had asked to look in on Lauren and was told that no one answered the door. The building superintendent was called and asked if he had any news of Lauren. "No" he was told, "You know I don't want to get involved with anyone's privacy and even then, Mrs. Rhodes was mostly in her apartment. Do you think there is something serious?" he asked.

The building super said, "I have a pass key but I wouldn't want to answer to her husband; he's not too friendly you know. Mrs. Rhodes might just be visiting friends or something as simple as that."

Meanwhile, Jack had just about finished his business in Miami and decided to take the train home tomorrow. Jack said to Joey G, “Maybe you could ask her friend Jill if she knows anything. I’ll be taking the train to New York tomorrow and I’m sure we’ll get the answers.”

By the time the train came into the New York Central rail station, it was already 6:00 PM. Jack called from the station soon as he arrived. Again, there was no answer. He realized that there was something really wrong. Hailing a cab he reached his apartment and immediately checked the mailbox to see when the last mail was picked up. He discovered it was the same date that he called and received no answer. So, that was the last time she picked up the mail. As he walked up the stairs, he was reading the envelopes for a clue but there was only the usual bills. Jack and his cohorts rarely used public communications services to conduct business, It was much too dangerous. Instead they used face to face meetings.”

The apartment was still dark and it had the smell of being shut up for some time. The plants, he noticed needed watering and there was the smell of dust. Even though he did not expect to hear any answer, he called “Lauren, Lauren, I’m home.”

As Jack entered each room, he turned on the lights to see if anything looked as though it had been disturbed. Satisfied, that the downstairs portion of their duplex was normal, he cautiously climbed the stairs to the upstairs rooms which were mainly a master bed room with an enormous closet and dressing area, a sumptuous bath with all the bathroom fittings in plated gold and finally his private office where only he was allowed to enter. The apartment was decorated in overly rich furnishings. Even though they had engaged a decorator, they usually rejected his suggestions as to furnishings and instead selected the most expensive articles so that in the end, the apartment was over decorated and lacked the harmony a professional would have given it.

Finally, Jack went into their bedroom and did not notice any great amount of clothing missing and then, at Lauren’s dressing table he found a letter propped up against the lamp.

The letter was written on the expensive paper she bought with thin threads of silk woven through. She wrote:

Dear Jack,

I’m sorry to have to tell you by a letter but frankly, if I told you to you face you would beat me up and I’ve had enough of your beatings.

I had the baby; it was a little girl and as we talked one time, her name is Jenny; after your mother. Jack, I never wanted that baby and I warned you that I was not going to become drained out woman even for your sake. And even if I decided to raise the child, I could never raise it in the way we live. For myself, I could stand it but for a new child, it would be like condemning it to a life of shit because Jack, that is what our life is- shit.

I have decided to change my life; I'm 28; still have my looks and figure and a lot of guys would love to have me. Even that pig-nosed runt of a boss, Carmine who has propositioned me enough times to fill a book. So much for your religious phonies you admire so much. And you thought they would take you into the Family. Hah, don't make me laugh.

I took some of the cash you had hidden because I needed money to make my start but I didn't take all of it. I did take my jewelry though since the jewelry was given to me. As you can see, I left all my clothes since my new life will never need furs and gowns. I plan to study and do something useful with my life. I have always read books but I have never seen you read anything but the funnies.

Don't try to find the baby because I left her with people who will look after her and show her a decent way to live. And don't try to find me, I have changed my name and letting my hair grow to its natural color.

Thanks for nothing,

Lauren

Jack was seething until his face was almost purple. "That bitch," he muttered. That's the thanks I get for saving her from living a life with those foot stomping hillbillies. Bring them into the cities and they suddenly become all knowing leaders of society. To hell with her. If I find her, she is finished- for good.

The one piece of information though that stuck in his craw was that Carmine had propositioned her to have sex. Carmine who was always preaching about one had to respect the wives of the Family members.

"No cursing or using foul language in front of the ladies; always show them respect he warned. We don't want to have that kind of trouble in the Family. The easiest way to betrayal is by an angry woman."

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After his arrival to New York, he was naturally concerned about the baby. After telling everyone that Lauren had a bad time and that she was going to spend some time recuperating with some relatives in Missouri, the word got to Carmine C, his boss that Lauren had really left Jack and was nowhere to be found.

Jack was called to meet with Carmine where Jack was told in no uncertain terms that he did wrong in not letting Carmine know about Lauren's leaving. "She knows plenty about our business already with you making trips all over the country. If she tries to get even with you, she could spill a lot about where we are operating and even who our clients are. I want you to find Lauren and bring her here; we will take it from there. Find out where the kid was born; who helped her and where the kid is now. I'm really surprised at you; you know we had big plans for you. Everything now will depend upon you bringing Lauren and the kid here."

Jack was in a panic, he had no one to turn to for advice. "I'll check all the hospitals and clinics and find out how many white, girl babies were born between the 1st and 4th of May. Then I will check out all the orphanages and adoption centers. At least it's a place to start. But I'll get back at Carmine some day when he least expects it, that phony pig. "Show respect to our women" he says and when my back is turned, he tries to seduce my wife."

Jack hired a part time secretary and had her check all the hospital and clinics in the city with the probable dates of birth of all the white, female babies that were born during those dates and while he only had the name of Jenny to go by, he used that as a possible name to start. After that, the secretary was to find the listings of all the midwives in the New York Area. Then, he asked the secretary to check out any reports made to the police concerning any children found abandoned on or during those dates. He also posted an ad in the various newspapers asking that any information of a newly born, female would carry a reward of \$20,000. After that, he had nowhere to turn.

In the meanwhile, Carmine had replaced Jack on his trips to other cities in dealing with future whiskey sales when the expected Volstead Act finally voted into law. Carmine had perhaps a high school education but he was crafty and his instincts ferreting out betrayal of others was highly developed. Carmine knew in his heart that Lauren would stop at nothing to get back at Jack and had even probably told Jack of his propositioning her. He could always deny that as her way of trying to damage Jack. Carmine only knew that it would just be a little more time before Lauren gave in to his propositions. Hadn't Lauren let him feel her breasts and kissed him at one of their frequent parties and hadn't she remarked how hard he was and that he had

better cool off before returning to the party? Lauren was too frightened at that time and worried that Jack would be finding her absent too long. But she didn't say no to Carmine's suggestion that something could be worked out between the two of them at some future date and that he would call her. He suggested that they could spend a week at some luxury hotel and that he would give her some money to do some shopping. After that, Carmine became extremely busy with his liquor distribution that he had no time for her. At one of the parties, she sidled up to him and whispered, "I'm still waiting for that call." Carmine said he would call her the next day while Jack was seeing potential clients. He called and said he was sorry for not getting back to her sooner and that he was very anxious to see her and that she was in his thoughts but that the timing had

to be worked out. "Don't worry, he said, I'm not going to let this beautiful opportunity pass me by. Just give me a little time, OK?"

There are few things a woman will not tolerate. One is the fact that she already gave herself to a man's pleadings and then to find that that supposed ardor was being put on hold.

This was Carmine's greatest concern. He may not have used Congreve's words of "*Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned*", but his fears were the same. She simply had too much knowledge which could affect his business in a very adverse way and it could even possibly affect him by finding himself in prison. It was a new lesson that he would have to apply. Keep wives and other family members ignorant of the Family's business.

After three weeks of searching, neither Jack nor his newly hired secretary could find any trace of the baby's birth. They concluded that perhaps the birth took place away from New York but that was a field that was too open with too many unknowns to make it viable. Dejectedly, he called Carmine and asked to see him.

"I'm sorry Carmine but I have checked out every possibility and even hired a girl to spend all her time calling, searching. I even offered a \$20,000.00 reward for information. I know that's not the answer you want but I swear, I'll do anything you want if I could only find out where Lauren and the baby are."

A relief came over Carmine's mind in that it did not seem that Lauren had said anything about their proposed plans of seeing each other. As soon as Carmine felt he was in the driver's seat, his demeanor went back to being stern and accusatory.

"Don't you realize that if Lauren talks, I could be sent to prison. I can't live with that sort of threat over my head; Lauren has too much information."

Jack left feeling frightened and impotent. No sooner had Jack left Carmine's office, Carmine called his secretary and asked her to locate Pietro Magliacano and have him come to see me. You can call a few of the bars he generally hangs out in like, Danilo's or Patty's Irish Pub. He usually is there in the evenings.

The following day, Carmine's secretary rang and told him that a Mr. Magliacano was here to see him. "Good," he replied, "send him in."

After friendly embraces and salutations, Carmine asked Magliacano to sit down as he had some important work for him to do. Without any explanations, Carmine said he needed Magliacano's services. There is a problem with one of my own people and I need you to do the job for me. His name is Jack Rhodes and he lives in Manhattan. My secretary will give you his address and his telephone number. You can call him and tell him that you have some information as to the whereabouts of his wife. Don't give him too much information and just tell him that you understand he wants to locate her. You can tell him you want ten grand or whatever you feel is right. When you get him in the car, go to New Jersey, the swamplands. I'll pay you an additional ten grand for doing the job plus the ten he will have on him. Not a bad pay for a few hours work. He is cagey and if he says he will only pay when he is certain the person is his wife, you can tell him to keep the money until you deliver. When everything is done, bring me a finger so I can check if the print is his and the secretary will give you the envelope with the cash."

Jack Rhodes was seen no more.

After Lauren had rested a few days at Mrs. Gans' house, (she decided that it was only fair to feed Jenny from her breasts) she carefully wrapped the child in a new blanket she had purchased along with some new diapers making sure that even the labels were removed. Beforehand, she had obtained the address and telephone number in the telephone guide of a foundling hospital on Fern Street in West Hartford, Connecticut and so at 3:00 AM little Jenny was left at the doorstep of the institution. Then, at a public phone, Lauren called the Foundling Home and reported that a baby had been left at the entrance to the Foundling Home. She left a note saying that the child was born of Irish/German parentage of non-practicing Protestants and that she and her husband could not raise the child and that the child was born on May 2nd at 4:30 in the morning. I thank you with all my heart. Please find parents who can raise her.

Lauren rode back to Grand Central station in New York City where she had rented a locker with her two suitcases. She had to travel light and because she was travelling to Toronto, she carried her warmest clothing. So at 6:00 AM, Laura was on her way to a new life, hopefully free from the influence of Jack and his friends. She would find a small apartment in some average neighborhood, decide on a career and go to college. In the meantime, she had her jewelry which she could sell when she needed cash and have her salary to pay for her expenses. She realized that without any training, her choices for jobs would be limited and also low paying but she had determined that she would be able to conquer her fears and make a new life for herself.

Part 3

Tom and Nancy Wagner were disconsolate. Some six months ago, Nancy had lost her baby during childbirth and was told she could not have any children. She had desperately wanted a son so that Tom's wish to carry his name could be her gift to her husband's wishes. For herself, she would have preferred a girl since you could be closer to a daughter.

After convincing Tom that they should try to adopt a child, Tom reluctantly agreed seeing how torn Nancy was when she lost their child. However, in his mind, the child should be a male to pass on his family name since there were no other males with the name of Wagner. Nancy held that adopting a male child would not fulfill Tom's wishes since the child would not carry his blood. Besides, she argued, a girl will be a help to me while a boy would want to go his own way.

At the Foundling Home, after various interviews and conferences, the Wagner's were told that the Home had recently received a baby girl and that the child was ready for adoption and that the Wagner's had passed all the requirements. "She is one of the most beautiful babies I have seen and I have seen a great many. I know you will just love her. Her mother and father were of Irish/German descent and since Mr. Wagner comes from German parentage and you are Irish, there couldn't be a better choice. We were also told that her parents were Protestant but that they no longer shared that faith. Would you like to see her?"

Nancy immediately said “Yes, we would love to see her.”

Tom interjected, “I suppose you don’t have any male babies, do you?”

“Yes we do, if you would want to have a child of another race.”

“I don’t think so” said Tom while he looked at his wife with a questioning look.

“Well, do you want to see the little girl or do you think you should discuss the matter between you?”

“I want to see the baby now” said Nancy immediately putting to the side, Tom’s indecision.

“Alright”, the nurse said. Meanwhile, let’s wait in my office; it’s private and I can leave the three of you together. This is a big decision for all three and you must be certain and sure that you want to spend the rest of your lives together.” Saying that, she went off to bring the child to the couple.

Nancy and Tom were left alone while the nurse went to bring the child. Both Nancy and Tom felt the enormity of this decision knowing full well that their married life might even be affected.

“You’re sure you want to adopt a girl and not be patient to see if a boy child becomes available,?” asked Tom.

“Tom”, she replied, “I don’t have the least doubt in my mind. As I explained, even if a male child is available, the child would not carry your genes or your blood and so you could never think that you were passing on anything more than just a name. While to me, a daughter would become so close so as to share even our thoughts together.”

They both were tense with expectations and Tom felt a trickle of perspiration running down his back and at the same time feeling the cold sweat chilling him. Finally, the door to the nurse’s office was opened and both Nancy and Tom took that last breath of air in expectation of the following moment.

When the child was finally placed in the bassinet and its clothes removed so that the prospective parents could see her in her entirety, Nancy gave an almost heartbreaking sigh. “Tom, she is so beautiful. Look at her precious little hands and her face with the nostrils so delicately carved as though a master sculptor created her; and her little, perfect feet. Oh yes, I want her now more than ever. May I pick her up, I want to smell her precious fragrance.”

While Nancy was in ecstasy, Tom was examining every physical aspect of the child. He wanted a perfect child with no deformities or any other physical problems. After he was convinced he said, "She is certainly a little princess. I don't think I have ever seen such a beautiful baby. Smiling widely, he said to Nancy, "If you want her, I am all for it too."

Nancy heard nothing of what Tom said, she was so engrossed in holding the child that her face took on an ecstatic look. "Yes, Yes I want her she said as she gently pressed the little hand which immediately grasped her finger. There was now no question whatsoever.

"You can pick her up in a week. In the meantime, someone from the Foundling Home will make a visit to your home to see that the baby will have a healthy home to live in."

"Oh. Can't I take her now? You won't give her to anyone else will you? I would just die if this is just a dream." said Nancy.

"No, Mrs. Wagner, we just want to make sure she is being placed in a good, home."

Little Jenny was then dressed; put back in her bassinet and taken away.

"Tom", Nancy sighed, "I can still feel her little hand squeezing my finger. Oh Tom, I am so happy. Thank you, thank you for letting me have her."

The next week, Nancy changed the curtains, cleaned and made sure the house was spotless and was as nervous as she had ever been in her life. Tom assured her that their home was as good or better than any home Jenny could be lucky enough to live in. So just relax before you over-exert yourself and make yourself a nervous wreck."

All the trauma and un-certainty disappeared after a few months and the household of the Wagner's was almost back to normal. At first, Tom looked with wonder at what a devoted mother Nancy was. But after a while, he started to feel a little jealous; absurd but true. Often times he would return home from work where perhaps he had a difficult day and look for a little pampering. But Nancy had eyes only for Jenny. Even at night when he and Nancy were making love, Nancy would suddenly stop and ask "Did you just hear Jenny?" Nancy would then say, "I'll be right back". The ardor and excitement immediately disappeared and she would say things like, "Now let's see, where were we." This exasperated Tom so much that he would say, "Let's leave off until another night. I had such a terrible day at the office that I really need to get a good night's sleep."

“OK, Tom, you need to get as much rest as much rest as you can.” Nancy said this without the slightest bit of disappointment so that Tom felt, “Well, he thought, she doesn’t even care about our making love. The only concern she has is for the child.” Little by little and in a seemingly invidious way, his feeling were turning from protection and love for Jenny to a resentment at being ignored and unimportant except for paying the bills.

One evening, Tom returned home. His day at the office was very bad and he was in need of consolation. When he entered the house, there was no fragrance of anything being prepared for supper. After calling for Nancy, he received no answer. Concerned, he went through the house looking for Nancy. He found her in bed with Jenny. The child was asleep and when he said, “I got a little worried when you didn’t answer me. Are you alright?”

“I heard you calling Tom, but I had just gotten Jenny to sleep and I didn’t want to wake her.”

“What about supper, what are you preparing?”

“Tom”, Nancy said, I have been so tired these past few days that I wondered if it would be alright to have leftovers? I had to force myself to make Jenny’s supper and bathe her that I just didn’t have the strength to cook. So why don’t you just heat up the meatloaf and mashed potatoes for yourself. I’m not hungry so don’t worry about me.”

“Nancy, I need to talk to you- it’s important. Why don’t you put Jenny in her crib and come down to the living room.

After Nancy put Jenny in her crib, she slowly went downstairs to the living room where Tom was pacing back and forth.

“Nancy, we have got to be reasonable about spending. You buy so many things for Jenny that she will out-grow them before she even has a chance to wear them.”

“But Tom, she looks so adorable and pretty. I am not buying anything for myself so I feel that what I don’t spend for me, I can spend for her.”

“And there is another thing, when I grew up, my folks didn’t have a great deal of money to spend on toys, so I played with clothespins. On the other hand, you have bought so many stuffed toys for Jenny that she doesn’t even look at.”

“Tom, she needs to have an enriched environment to develop her creative abilities. Why are you suddenly becoming so petty about every cent we spend?”

“I’ll tell you why, that is if you have a few minutes to spend with me. Today, I made a big error in calculating the amount of materials we will be needing for a new job in the office. I have been with the firm for more than 7 years and my boss bawls me out for making some stupid errors in front of everybody. He also threatened me by telling me “to watch my “P’s” and “Q’s” if I want to continue working there.” You have no idea how embarrassed and humiliated I felt, his yelling at me in front of the people I’m in charge of. Then I come home hoping that at least I have a place to lick my wounds and I find no supper and a wife who seems to be becoming a wife in name only.”

“Please Tom, I don’t want to fight with you but I have been forcing myself to do anything. I don’t know what it is but I am so totally exhausted, that I can hardly get out of bed in the morning.”

Tom, feeling a little more concern asked, “How long have this way? Do you want to see Dr. Forrest? I’ve noticed that you look a little peaked lately.”

“Let’s wait until next week and if I feel the same, maybe it would be a good idea to see Dr. Forrest.”

The following week, Nancy said, “Tom, I’m feeling so weak that I can hardly lift Jenny. I think we should see the doctor. That week, Tom asked his boss for a free morning so that he could take his wife to the doctor. “I’ve been so worried about her that I feel it has affected my work. I will make up for the lost time by working Saturday.”

Given the OK, Tom now had to make some provision of having Jenny watched while they visited the doctor. “I’m going across the street to visit Miss Dawson and ask if it would be alright to leave Jenny with her while we visit the doctor, OK? I will just be a few minutes.”

Knocking at his across the street neighbor, he finally saw the small curtain covering the door panel move. Ascertaining that she knew who it was, Miss Dawson opened the door to ask what Tom wanted. “Excuse me Miss Dawson for just barging in on you but I have to take my wife to visit the doctor and I wondered if I could ask you to take care of my little daughter until we get back. I don’t imagine it would be more than an hour or two at the most?”

“Gee, I’m sorry to hear about your wife but I’m seeing friends and just don’t have the time. You know, I am now retired and if you don’t keep up your social obligations, you are soon forgotten. Besides, I never had children and wouldn’t know what to do if there was a problem. Sorry and I hope your wife gets well soon.”

Crest fallen. Tom returned to his house and informed Nancy that they would have to be taking Jenny with them. Miss Dawson says she doesn't have time but I know she just doesn't want to take the responsibility. I have no one else to ask so we better get Jenny ready.

They took the IRT subway down to where Dr. Forrest had his office. Luckily, there were only two other patients waiting to see the doctor. When their turn came, Tom was beside himself trying to keep Jenny calm as she was 2 years old at this time and her energy level was at 100%. She squirmed when trying to be held or she cried or she touched things on the secretary's desk. Tom was up every two minutes. Damn Miss Dawson.

As they sat in front of Dr. Forrest, Nancy explained her symptoms. She had noticed that she was too tired to do much housework and with watching and caring for my daughter."

"How long have you felt this way," Dr. Forrest asked

"I would say about 6 months or so. I never mentioned it to my husband because he has a very harassing job and I didn't want to put any more stress on him."

After doing a preliminary examination, Dr. Forrest said I want you to go the hospital so that we can take a series of tests before we come to any conclusions. In the meantime, I am going to give you a prescription to see if we can't build up your white cell count. Just from this examination, I can see that your white blood count is extremely low. The results should be back to me in about a week's time and we can go over the results when I see you next. My secretary will get in touch with you when the next meeting should take place."

In a week's time, Tom, Nancy and Jenny were back in Dr. Forrest's office.

"The results of the tests were not good. They show kidney and liver problems and as I knew, you are very anemic. I would like to make an appointment with a specialist and get his opinion. His name is Dr. Fred Taylor and he is considered tops in the field. He and I will be collaborating so I will always know what is happening. I think you should make the appointment as soon as possible since this could be serious and we should not lose time."

The final results showed that Nancy was suffering from Addison disease and that the condition had weakened her heart. Dr. Taylor said that the Ultrasound tests were at best hazy and if they really wanted to be sure, he suggested that she consider exploratory surgery. Even then, we are not sure we can arrest the damage to your heart."

"What kind of costs would be involved?" asked Tom.

“I’m afraid they would be very large but if you are interested, I can get the information for you so that you can make a decision.”

“I don’t know how we would manage. Our home and our car are already taking our income to its limit and I don’t know if I could get another loan, not with my salary and the debts I already have. If you will not be offended, I think we should try to get a second opinion.”

“I will not be offended in the least and I can send whatever test results so that you would not have to go through the additional costs of new tests.”

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The new tests with the new specialist came back uncertain in terms of whether or not it was Addison disease but “there is definitely cause for alarm because we found that Mrs. Wagner in the advanced stages of diabetes which would account for her feeling tired all the time.”

Tom was frustrated and angry. “It seems none of these doctors is doing more than guessing. And then they ask for fees that are three times my weekly salary and all for less than an hours visit. I don’t know Nancy, we will have to try to work this out some way or another. If we agree to exploratory surgery, not only will it be impossible to get a loan but then, you would be either in the hospital or here and how would we be able to take care of Jenny. It would mean having to hire someone to take care of the baby, clean and take care of you. I would be of no help since I have to work to be able to pay for all this.”

A guilty Nancy said, “I’m so sorry Tom for causing all this trouble for you. If I were dead, at least you could use my insurance money to pay for everything. If it wasn’t for Jenny, I could almost wish I was dead.” Nancy would have liked it if Tom said anything like “Don’t talk foolishly, you are not going to die and we will find a way out of this situation. But no, Tom said nothing at all, almost as if he wished the matter could be settled once and for all. But what about Jenny, how do I take care of her?”

For six months, Nancy lingered on and no slight sign of improvement. Finally, Tom had to hire a woman to take care of the house, the baby and Nancy. He was in a deep depression and sometimes even dared to think that he would just move someplace else and start all over again. Of course, this was just a type of daydreaming to relieve the reality of his present life.

Nancy finally succumbed to the complications of her illness and Tom’s first thoughts after his grief were whether he should sell the house for some small apartment with 2 bedrooms and live quietly while he tried to figure out what to do. He would still need the woman to live in but with the smaller apartment, his paying off of his loan on the house would help him

breathe easier. He survived but paid only little attention to Jenny. He came home after Jenny was in bed and he left in the morning before Jenny was awake and so he saw even less of her than before. He relied completely on the woman he hired.

One Sunday morning, after he had read his Sunday newspaper, a thought came into his mind. "I'm not really raising the child and I honestly don't feel that close to her, I wonder if I shouldn't talk to the Adoption home and see what they can suggest.

Tom called and asked to speak with nurse Hanel. When she came to the phone, Tom introduced himself as Mr. and Mrs. Tom Wagner and said that he and his wife had adopted a little girl with the name of Jenny. Tom said that he had a very important matter to discuss and would it be possible to meet on Saturday since that was his day off from work.

"Does this concern little Jenny; she isn't sick is she?"

"No," he replied, "but it does have to do with health in other ways."

Tom was given a time on Saturday and at the appointed time was led into the office of Nurse Hanel. "What was it you wanted to talk to me about?"

"My reasons for coming here to talk to you are for Jenny's welfare. Tom went on to tell of Nancy's death and how it was necessary to hire a woman to care for Jenny. "I never see the child", he exhorted. I leave for work before Jenny is awake and I come home from work after she is put to bed. I think you probably remember how my wife Nancy loved the child and now, after her death there is only the hired woman to care for her. I believe that this type of upbringing will only affect Jenny in negative ways. The woman who cares for her has never shown any affection for her and while she does everything to keep Jenny fed and clean, the aspect of affection is missing. What I want to discuss with you is to ask if there is any possibility that you can find a foster home for her so that she lives with other children and hopefully caring foster parents? I'm really concerned that she will develop personality problems in the future."

Nurse Hanel had a disconcerted look on her face. She looked at Tom and said, "You know Mr. Wagner, we are not a department store where if the article doesn't fit, you return it. When we offered and you accepted taking Jenny, you accepted all the responsibilities of providing for the child's welfare, health, education and religious upbringing. That was why we spent so much time checking everything out. Now you say that you lost your wife (and I'm sorry for you for she appeared to really be an ideal mother) and that you can no longer care for the child. I'm afraid I cannot do anything for you and you will have to accept the responsibilities

you pledged to give to the child. The adoption home can no longer help, I'm afraid, and I'm also afraid that I cannot guide you in this matter. I hope you can understand. It's as if every family who has a difficulty in raising can just turn to some government agency and say, "I can't raise the child and so I will need your help in placing the child in some home that will raise her."

Tom knew it was a long shot in asking that Jenny be placed in some foster care but while he was disappointed, he half expected that he would be refused. Thanking Nurse Hanel for listening, he left and returned home.

With the hired woman, Tom maintained his household for about 10 years. Jenny grew up as an isolated young child with an uninterested woman who gave her food, kept her clean but who also ignored giving her any feelings of warmth and closeness. Most often, her activities were a visit to the public library where she selected the books she read almost obsessively.

In school, she was generally at the top of her class but at the bottom of the ladder when it came to having friends. The little girl classmates, just coming into their puberty and an interest in the young boys looked at her beauty as a challenge and a threat for the favor of the young boys and ignored her. The young boys though, were delighted and attracted to her and Jenny often got back at the girls by giving the young boys a flirting glance whereby they thought they would be favored. "At least somebody looks interested in me. I bet I could win the boys' interest in me if I wanted to." Jenny was learning that she could use her beauty to gain what she wanted, at least as far as males were concerned.

Tom noticed how beautifully Jenny was developing physically and made it plain that Jenny was not to see young boys without his acceptance. Since he was still on his work schedule, he still did not have much time for being with Jenny.

Then, one day, he asked the hired woman to stay over on Saturday. Tom had been invited to a party by one of his important clients which he could not refuse. That Saturday was to be a turn-a-round for Tom for at the party, he met and talked most of the night with a woman that he found most attractive. Her name was Elly Holmes. Elly was woman who was in her late thirty's, had a fabulous figure and a rather heavily made up face. She was flashily dressed and invited the stares of most of the men who saw her pass by. Her dyed blonde hair was combed in a way that was more suitable for a younger woman and she had an obvious delight in dancing which put her at the center of attention.

While Tom was no great personality, he was an attractive man. His black hair now melded with the silvery grey hair at his side boards and his pencil thin mustache gave him the

demeanor of being a well paid executive, polished in manners and elegantly dressed. Tom also enjoyed dancing, was good at it and as a young man, he and Nancy first wife, danced often. As the saying goes, Tom and Elly “hit it off”. They made dates with each other and finally, Elly asked him to dinner at her apartment.

Tom was dumbfounded when a 15 or 16 year old girl opened the door. Inviting him into the living room, Tom was further surprised to see a young boy of about 13 years old reading a comic book. The radio was a bit loud and the young boy was obviously listening to “Fibber McGee and Molly”, a comical program of the time. He did not even glance up when Tom came into the room so Tom, sauntered over and put out his hand and said, “Hello, my name is Tom Wagner, what’s yours? Are you Elly’s son?”

“Yes” , he answered without looking up, I’m Jake.”

“And you must be her daughter”? he said turning to the young girl. “What’s your name?”

“My name is Kitty and I’m to ask you if you want a drink.”

“No thank you,” replied Tom while his befuddled mind tried to cope with the idea that Elly had a family. Almost without thinking he asked Kitty, “Do you have any other brothers or sisters?”

“Yes”, she replied there’s Benny but he’s asleep now. He’s our brother but his last name is Crane. He ‘s illegitimate.”

“Oh,” I see, answered a now dumbfounded Tom.

By that time, a simply dressed Elly descended the stair. She was prepared to do battle with the stove and to exhibit the domestic side of her.

“I see you have met my tribe, turning to Kitty she asked, “Did you offer Tom a drink? And at the same time directed her voice to Jake, “Jake, how many times have I told you to keep your feet off the sofa and turn down that radio, I can hardly hear myself think.”

“Kitty mentioned that you have another son.”

“Oh yes, Jake. He’s a darling young boy and the apple of my eye. He’s sleeping right now but you will meet him another time.”

The dinner was pleasant with several admonitions for Jake to stop holding his head up while eating. The normal things that happen at dinner. Elly was a fair cook which surprised Tom.

After a quick wash up of the dishes in which Tom helped, Elly sent the children to their room while she and Tom talked.

Tom said, "You know, it came as a big surprise meeting your children. I don't know why I never suspected you had a family, but you know, I have a surprise for you too. I have a 14 year old daughter. She was a child my first wife and I adopted. We shall have to all get together to see how we fit in with each other,"

"Fourteen years old", said Elly, "That's a dangerous age for a young girl. All they have their minds on are boys. Don't I know it. While we are talking, I suppose it's best to really "put our card on the table" as they say.

"After I was divorced from Kitty's and Jake's father, I decided that I would not have any more children . I put in my time changing diapers and that is the end. I hope you have no ideas about having children. Besides, I'm thirty s-----, let's say thirty something and I was told not to have any more kids. So after Benny was born, I decided to have my tubes tied."

"You know," said Tom, I live in an apartment. We would have to live here in your house. I don't know what your expenses are but it will be a bit of a drain having to support a new family of five.

"That's the other thing, Tom. Right now, I'm getting alimony from Kitty and Jake's father. I'm also getting something from Jake's father, especially if he makes a big hit in his gambling. For me, it is not Important if we marry or not. It would probably be easier if you just moved in with your daughter. The alimony I get is more than I need and I wouldn't want that to stop before the kids come of age. What are your thoughts on the matter?"

Tom had not thought much of the getting married. But to find yourself tied down with two more children just about needing money for tuition made him think of the practicality of Ellen's suggestion.

"Yes", he answered, "that makes sense to me. We will have to tell the kids to be patient since there will be some sleeping arrangements that will have to be ironed out."

"Well, Jake and Benny are now sleeping in one room. We will put Jenny in with Kitty. It may be a little tough on the bathroom since w have 1½ baths but, I suppose with some organization we will be able to manage", said Elly.

The following day, Elly got her children together and said that she and Tom had decided to live together here in our home. It will mean having to give up some of the things and make an effort.”

“Where is Tom’s daughter going to sleep? I hope you’re not thinking of my sharing my room with anyone else.”

“We only have three bedrooms and the boys are already sleeping together. We will have to get you a bed so that you both have some privacy.”

“Privacy”!! What kind of privacy will I have with someone always under my nose. I’m not giving my room to anyone else,” she said and went off in a huff.

When Elly next saw Tom she said, “I think we are going to have some problems with Kitty. She wants her room to herself and says it’s the only privacy she has.

Tom thought it over and said, “Let me try to find a solution. Tom went out into the yard and inspected the house. He concluded that they could add on another bedroom and an additional bathroom that the girls could share. Mentioning his thoughts, Tom said, “Since our moving in will cause some inconvenience, I just inspected the house and we can add on an additional bedroom and a bathroom that the girls can share. Kitty is right, they would have to share closet space, I will assume the expense of the addition; that is if you agree.”

“That’s a super idea Tom, the house always lacked an additional bath and at the same time, we can have peace in the family.”

Tom hired a contractor and he and Elly selected the finishes for the new room and bath. The new room had hardwood floors and a large window that looked out onto the rear yard. It was private and bright.

“Who is getting the new room?”, she asked her mother. You know, this is my house and I should get the new room.”

“Correction”, replied Elly. This is my house, not yours. And for your information, Tom has suggested that the new room go to you.”

Kitty had expected that since Tom was paying for the new addition, the new room would go to Jenny. She had been preparing for a fight and was almost disappointed that the matter was settled so suddenly.

“Prepare and get all your things together so that you can move them into your new room.”

“What about the bed and the dresser and the chair. Can I leave them with my old room and get new furniture for the new bedroom?”

“Absolutely not. You get the new room, thanks to Tom but you use your furniture and bed; and don’t give me any arguments. You’re getting a little too brazen in your demands. Just remember, this is my house and I am the one who makes all the decisions. You should thank Tom that you are getting your own room and not having to share with Jenny. You are getting to be a little harassing. Keep it up and I’ll send you to live with your father and then you can see if that will suit you.”

Jenny’s major foe was Kitty. The only explanation was that she was jealous of Jenny’s beauty. Often times, when she passed Jenny, she would pinch her arm. Even Tom asked, “Why is your arm so black and blue, are you knocking your arm against the wall when you pass?”

“I didn’t want to complain but Kitty pinches me when I pass by her and she is just generally horrid towards me.”

Tom first went to Elly and asked her to find out why Kitty was pinching Jenny. Have you seen her arm? If I am going to be part of this family, I am going to have to be able to chastise both my and your children.”

Elly called Kitty and Jenny and asked that they sit and talk to her. “What’s this I hear about your pinching Jenny? Have you seen her arm?”

“She is the one who started it. She’s just mad because I got the new room. She’s really messy. She leaves her toothpaste on the lavatory and the sink is always full of her hair. I am sick of cleaning up after her.”

“I don’t want to hear of this happening any more, understand?” And you Jenny, what seems to be the problem that you both can’t get along together?”

“The problem is that Kitty is just plain jealous. She is the one who put my wristwatch in the water glass and then fibs that I was probably too sleepy to know what I was doing. Kitty is a horrid, fat, jealous brat and I hate her.”

An angry Elly then raised her voice and said, “Now you listen to me, young lady. I won’t stand for your being abusive. Before you came here, I had no problems with Kitty and so you have to be partly to blame. And just because you answered me back in such a way, you are to go to your room and spend the night without supper.” Kitty had a smug smile on her face and made sure that Jenny saw her triumph.

Later, when Tom arrived home from work, the family sat down to supper. Noticing that Jenny was not there he asked, “Where’s Jenny, doesn’t she know we are having supper?”

“I had to discipline her Tom and I sent her to her room without supper. She was very abusive toward Kitty and blamed her for putting her wristwatch in the water glass and answered me back in anger. I don’t want to lose control but I demand more respect.”

“Why can’t the girls get along. There seems to be no problem with Jake and Benny?”

“Tom, you are a big boy but still ignorant when it comes to women. Speaking as openly and as honestly as I can it’s that Kitty is jealous because Jenny is so beautiful, Kitty sees Jenny as the enemy ready to take any man (boy in this case) away from her and that is just too much to take. I don’t know if we will ever be able to solve the problem so we will just have to be patient.”

Another time, when the family was sitting down to breakfast, Jenny said, “Make her stop kicking me under the table or I’ll throw my dish of cereal in her face.”

“Oh no you won’t, I’m getting tired of having to report to your father how you are disobedient and even arrogant. Kitty go change places and sit in Jake’s chair.”

Kitty revolted: This has always been my place at the table. Let her change with Jake.”

Jenny’s response was to get up and say, “I’m not hungry and I’m going to my room.”

“And what about school?”

“Just tell them I’m sick.” Saying that, she left the table and went to her room to read.”

“Well, if you are sick you won’t be wanting any lunch either”, said Elly.

Another time, Jenny was sitting in the living room with a big smile on her face. When Kitty arrived, she said “What are smiling about?”

“Oh nothing, it’s just that your boyfriend Howard came by to go over some details on the project you are working on. After I told Howie that you weren’t here, he said he would tell me about the changes and that I could tell them to you.”

“Howie is it, his name is Howard and keep your dirty hands off him.”

“Oh, by the way, after Howie showed me your project, I asked if a small suggestion would be out of order?”

“I told Howie of my suggestion and he went crazy about the idea.”

“I can’t wait to tell Kitty,” he said, “I’m sure she will be as thrilled about your suggestions as I am.”

Jenny continued, “I suppose I shouldn’t mention it but Howie asked me if I could have a soda with him some time?”

“I told him, ‘Oh no, I couldn’t interfere. Besides, you’re seeing Kitty aren’t you. I thought you both were going steady?’”

“Well Howie said, “No, we’re not going steady. Kitty is just someone I see now and again and when we decided to work on a joint project, it must have seemed like we were going steady. But no, we are both free to see who we like.”

“So I told him, ‘Alright if he was sure that I wouldn’t be causing any problems.’ It is alright isn’t it as long as you are not going steady?”

Kitty went off in tears; she couldn’t tell her mother and she would be a laughing stock among her friends. She swore she would one day get her revenge.

While Jenny was a failure with women, she learned early on that she could always get her way with males. The year was 1936 and she was 16 and could pass for 18 or even 19 with makeup and clothes. Jenny had been secretly going out nights into nearby neighborhoods where she was not known. There she could sit at a bar, order a drink and make herself available to the bar’s clients. At first it was seeing how much she could attract men to sit nearby and ask if she would accept a drink. She usually accepted if the man looked reasonable and could be managed by herself. At first, the men, mostly married who had stopped at the tavern for a drink or two before returning home. They made the usual proposals and offers of money. The men did not dare offer her a small fee because she was too pretty. What she was, was the idealized vision a man has when he thinks of a whore. Normally they are average women, overly made up to hide the defects. And as they say, “with the lights turned out, you could imagine Lana Turner or Betty Grable,” but this woman was actually gorgeous. Jenny learned at the early age of 16 that she could control these Lotharios and that she could make a great deal of money without having to get up early in the morning for a 9 to 5 boring job. After all, even though she was well read, and intelligent, she had no formal education or training and knew that her job opportunities would be banal. She let the idea float around in her head. She would get a nice apartment, furnished with expensive furnishings and sleep for as long as she wanted in the morning. If things went well, should even hire a woman to keep the house

clean and cook, She could do all this because she was blessed with an uncommonly beautiful face and figure.

She practiced her enticement skills for about 1 year learning to judge the men who were making overtures. She found that a 40ish, married man, not necessarily handsome were the most manageable and the most open handed when it came to fees. There was also less chance of complication and also, less chance of disease for she had to take all these matters into consideration. Then, she also had to protect herself from becoming pregnant. She would have to find a good doctor who knew what business she was involved with and could advise or treat her accordingly. She also had to accept an attitude about her profession. This was to be a strictly business affair and she had to make sure there were no personal involvements. There would be no kissing on the mouth; that would be too personal. She would also have to find a way to protect herself from the dangerous men who needed to hurt you or tie you up before they could enjoy themselves. Her mind had to dismiss religious beliefs and had to determine what she could offer her client. There would definitely have to be limit in what she would offer. There were so many things to think about for Jenny did not want to consider that she was preparing for a career as a prostitute.

A married man by the name of Josh was going to be the person with whom she would start her new life. Josh Bendel was a business man involved in the selling of properties. He was 49 years old and Jenny had had drinks with him a number of times. Josh had told her of his unhappy marriage and how his wife was seeing another man. He had hired a detective to follow her and to photograph her with the other man- ironically, his next door neighbor. After he was sure she was deceiving him, he decided that two could play at that game. Josh's wife was denying him his marital rights and was always too tired, or her back hurt whenever he tried to make love to her. After a while, Josh stopped trying to get close and even started to sleep in another room. Josh's wife claimed that he snored and moved around too much and she could never get a good night's sleep.

Jenny felt that Josh would be just the right type of person to start with. After she had accepted his proposal that they sleep together, Jenny said that there are my rules that we have to go by.

Astonished and delighted that his proposition was accepted he said, "Of course, anything you say. What are the rules?"

"First of all, I am still a virgin and you will have to pay me extra for taking my virginity. Then, you will find a hotel, someplace nice where we won't be seen; I don't want to go to some

cheap dump. Next, as far as sex, just straight sex and no anal and no kissing on the mouth, that's too personal. Also, no crazy stuff like hurting me or tying me up. I also expect you to wear protection."

"Will you perform fellatio at least"

"Yes that goes along with the straight sex. And the time will be no longer than one hour," she said.

"What will you charge for your service if I agree to all you ask?"

"For the first time with me I want \$150.00."

"That's a little steep, isn't it?"

"Not if you consider that you will be the first one. If we see each other again, the price will be lower."

Josh thought, "I can get six women for that price but then he said to himself, they would never be so beautiful or so young or still virgins. Finally he said, "It's a deal. When can I see you?"

They agreed to see each other later in the week. "Wednesday will be good for me, my wife is out playing bridge on Wednesday."

Jenny countered, "I thought you and your wife didn't have anything to do with each other?"

"We don't but when she comes looking for a divorce, which I'm sure is on her mind, I don't want her to accuse me of infidelity. The courts would have me paying whatever she asks. So, I'll pick you up here this coming Wednesday. Could we have dinner together, first?"

"No Josh, let's leave it impersonal, I don't want to get involved."

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While Jenny had no doubts as to a final solution, she had the same doubts as do all women when engaging in sex for the first. However, in many instances, there is the passion and the desire that leads most women into that first experience. In Jenny's case, the event to take place was all cerebral, there was no emotion, but she came when she remembered a quote from Anais Nin, one of the several authors she had read. The quote was:

“The day comes when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk to bloom.”

In her own mind, what she was planning, she assumed that her role was always to fulfill the needs of others. To restore or grant the real to the disillusioned; to fulfill the dream into the reality and to ease the suffering of the neglected. In one sense she felt that she was like another quote she remembered from Anais Nin.

“I shall always be the virgin-prostitute;
The perverse angel; the two faced,
sinister , saintly woman.”

I shall give that part of me that is unconnected to my inner feelings to assuage the pains of an unfaithful wife, or a man denied his married rights or to the poor soul who has lost hope of having a beautiful, young woman in his lifetime beneath him. What I will give will be remembered for n entire lifetime.

Jenny bolstered her inexperience with these thoughts and reasoned, almost every woman alive has had to submit to this experience. I will do so with my mind and not with my emotions. I shall be able to understand the needs and create a fantasy fulfill.

She also remembered the words in one of the books she had read that a man with his years of philandering had no more experience than a woman who had just submitted herself to him. She would take charge of each encounter to ensure that she controlled the situation.

When she arrived at the hotel with Josh, she was surprised at how shy he was. He wanted the lights turned off . She literally had to guide him. The painful groans of pleasure assured her of her control since she was like a person witnessing an act and not a participant. She also learned that her sessions need not last an interminable hour but could be cut back to the man’s ejaculation. She would discover that after that first ejaculation, the man had satisfied his needs and was ready to end the evening. (not all, but the majority), men too had misgivings especially if they were married.

Arriving home; she asked that Josh not accompany her, she sat on her bed; decided to place a sanitary napkin in her panties to control any blood flow and then counted her money. It was a small fortune and that first night proved that she could control any normal situation with men. At first, she limited her seeing men to Josh and after the confidence gained with the one man, she decided she could now offer herself to others.

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When Jenny was 17 years old; the U.S, had declared war on Germany. Her “step brother” Jake decided to join the Armed Forces. There was not too much objection from his mother Elly who thought it would be a good experience for him nor was there any objection from Tom who saw the cost of putting Jake through college as an enormous drain on the resources. Kitty too joined the WAC (Woman Army Corps), she was glad to get out of the house where she had to put up with Jenny. Besides, Kitty had been so vexed with Jenny that she had allowed herself to put on a great deal of weight. Kitty felt that the WAC program, with its exercise program would help slim her down and besides that there were all these young men, away from home who would be looking for women to be with and maybe even marry.

Jenny, just before Kitty joined, in order to tweak Kitty one more time said that she too was leaving and going to live in California, “And who knows, I may even try to get into the movies). Again, neither Elly or Tom spoke with disfavor for the house had become a battle field with the two girls always fighting. The only thing that Tom asked Jenny was “What about your school?” Jenny’s reply was that she was quitting school and wanted to start living on her own. Only Benny was dismayed. He and Jenny got along really well together and they shared the only real harmony between the children. Benny made Jenny promise that she would write to him and he promised that he would visit her when he grew up.

“The house is almost empty”, said Elly. “ I’m already feeling like we have been abandoned.”

“That gives me a great idea. How would it be if your uncle Dave looked after Benny for a while. Uncle Dave lives on a ranch and we both know how Benny loves horses. It’s healthy and he could be outdoors most of the time. I would send money each month so as not to burden your uncle.”

“But we would still be here in an even emptier house”, said Elly.

“That’s the beautiful part of it”, said Tom. “The house would be too big for the two of us, and so we would sell the house; buy a trailer and just move around the country seeing places we have both only dreamed about seeing. We are both still young and we both have reasonable health. We can travel until we find our idea of the perfect spot to retire. I am due to retire next year and we can invest the money we get from the sale of the house and invest it in war bonds. That way, you can leave something for the kids. I think the two of us can live on my pension. What do you think of the idea?”

“Actually Tom. I have to admit that I’m not crazy being glued to this place. It has lost all of the glamour it has for me even though we have so much you can do here, we hardly take advantage of seeing a new play or visiting a new art exhibition. I have always wanted to see

Los Vegas and the Rocky Mountains and for some reason, I want to see Seattle. Why don't we sleep on the idea? I don't know how difficult it would be to sell the house and what price we could for it?"

Tom enthused, "With a war on, nobody will be building and the prices for houses will be way over their true value. And best of all, at vacation time, we could pick up Benny and give him a chance to see our country. If you like, I can talk to some realtors to see what kind of price we could get for the house."

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Jenny had been able to save almost all the money she had earned. One early morning in February, Jenny dressed in her warmest coat and carried two suitcases of her belongings. She would be buying new clothes and would ditch the coat as soon as she got to the warmth of California. The train trip would be taking five days with many stops along the way. She had not realized how tiring and boring the trip would be and even though the scenery changed, her mind was on the book she was reading or snoozing. Needing to stretch her legs, she often walked the length of the train and was delighted to find a bar car. She had no idea the railroads served drinks. Tired from reading, she made her way to the bar car and ordered a Brandy Alexander; she had not as yet developed a taste for liquor and the sweetness of the Brandy Alexander masked the taste of the brandy. Seated at a small table next to the window, she felt a sense of assuredness. She was still only 17 1/2 yrs old and had not had the experience of living alone. She was also going to a place she did not know about, where there would also be the strangeness without the reassuring landmarks of knowing where you were. She would have to spend modestly until she could earn money. Where should she look for a room? Where were the exclusive parts of town and where were the dregs of rooming houses? There was so much to learn of a new city. She had nearly finished her drink, and the brandy was starting to take effect. Suddenly a man of some 50 years approached carrying two glasses. One his Whisky Sour and the other a refill of Jenny's Brandy Alexander.

"I noticed that your glass was just about empty and needed a refill. Can a gentleman offer to refresh a lady's glass without making himself bothersome?"

Jenny shook herself out of her unpleasant trance and looked up to see a rather dashing, well dressed man. He was apparently in good shape and he had a bright smile. His face was tan as though he had spent time in the sun.

"Well, that is the nicest gesture anyone has offered me. Please sit down. As the man sat down, he extended his hand and said "My name Bud Strawn. I'm a businessman from Las Vegas and

am returning to my home after a very successful business trip. I was so hoping that I would not be bothersome but I hate drinking alone when one feels like celebrating.”

“My name is Jenny Rhodes and I am off to an adventure to live in Hollywood.”

“Are you an actress or in the theatre? Please don’t take me wrong but you are a beautiful woman and one rarely sees such beauty except in Hollywood.”

“What sort of business are you in?” asked Jenny.

“Well, as you know, Las Vegas is a town that never sleeps. People come from all over the world to gamble. I own one of the casinos there. I don’t mean to brag, but one sees the most famous people trying their luck or their skills to make a great deal of money. Have you ever visited Las Vegas?”

“No, I haven’t but I will one day. I think it might be a great experience seeing all the people you see or read about in the magazines.”

“You mentioned that you are going to Hollywood. Would I be too inquisitive to ask what your adventure is? Where will you be living and do you have a job to go to?”

“I don’t know”, she said, “that’s why it will be an adventure.”

Bud Strawn was a highly sophisticated man with long experience in guessing a person’s intentions. He wondered to himself, “Here is an obviously beautiful woman, perhaps too young to have made any judicious decisions out on an adventure. She has no address as yet nor does she have some potential job. I have a feeling she is relying on her looks and is actually a Hooker. I’m going to take a chance and see if she is what I think she is. If she’s really a hooker, she’s more beautiful and younger than any I have seen and I wouldn’t mind at all having her. If she is just a misguided young girl looking for an honest adventure, she will just give me the brush-off and that will be the end of it. Since you really have no set place to go to in Hollywood, why don’t you stop over in Las Vegas for a while? I can invite you to the Casino and you could see for yourself what a glamorous life it is. I can’t invite you to stay at the hotel but I do have a small apartment I keep for my personal use. Since I have my wife and daughter living at the hotel, I need to be discreet once in a while.” Winking at Jenny, he said, “you know what I mean?”

“So”, do you think you would like to give it a try for a little while? As for me, I would visit you once a week and that should cover everything.”

“My problem is that I don’t have any good clothes to go to a casino.”

“No problem, my secretary will give you the name of a little dress shop that buys beautiful gowns from women who can’t afford to be seen in the Same dress more than once. With my card, the owner will give you a great discount. By the way, how old are you? I want the truth.”

“I’m almost 18, In two months I will have reached my 18th year. Does that create a problem?”

“Not for me personally, but I can’t afford to get in trouble with the law. You can come to the casino but you can’t gamble and you can go the bar but not sit at the bar. There are little tables along side. I am sure some of the men will be friendly enough to ask to sit down. By the way, what are your asking prices?”

“In New York, I was getting \$50.00.”

“That’s OK for New York, but here, take nothing less than \$200 as a minimum. After you have been here for a month, you should be able to find your own place. One more thing, I’ll give you the card of a doctor. Just go visit him, he will know what your there for. I want you to see him before I see you.”

After the month elapsed, Jenny was able to sub-let a small apartment. At first, she was surprised how readily her clients accepted the amount of money she asked and she postponed her idea of travelling on to Hollywood. Eventually, she made enough money to not only buy an apartment with three bedrooms (only one of which she used for her work) but she was able to also borrow enough money from the bank (using her apartment as collateral) to finance the purchase of a second apartment which she rented out at a very high rental. Her investments were generally guided by Bud Strawn with whom she had now made a close friend. She still occasionally met with Strawn but only on occasions when Bud needed to get away from the pressures he was now experiencing. First of all, many of his clients were soldiers who were looking for a wild fling in Las Vegas but didn’t have the money to spend as his old clients. His establishment was also more closely watched by the government to make sure he was not taking advantage of the soldiers.

With the number of clientele of wealthier means diminishing, Jenny had fewer choices for rich clients. Now she entertained soldiers when they had made a surprising run of luck at the tables but still she managed. Her few bad experiences, she was able to resolve by buying a well trained Doberman Pinscher dog. On one of the few occasions in which she had problems was one in which three young men from the Navy were willing to pay her the \$200.00 she charged as a present for one of the lads who was still a virgin. The three had been celebrating

perhaps a little more than they should have and asked Jenny to give their buddy a beautiful and satisfying first time experience.

The foursome hailed a cab and drove to Jenny's apartment. When they had at last entered her apartment, Jenny said: "This is strictly a business affair. I want the \$200.00 up front and I want the two who are not involved to sit in the living room."

The three young men were led by a boy of 22 named Bubba Watson. Bubba was undoubtedly the leader of the three and he was loud, boisterous and rude. Jenny took an immediate dislike to him. The other two, Ollie Burns was quiet and somewhat uncomfortable. This entire adventure was suggested by Bubba. The young man who was to be initiated Timmie Nash was shy, nervous and uneasy. One could see that he was going through this ritual just to be part of the initiated. Timmie was not overly enthused or excited. Escorting the two to the living room, she asked that they keep down their voices so that Timmie could concentrate.

She entered the bedroom where she could try to free Timmie from his extreme uneasiness and timidity. Poor Timmie, was more involved with listening whether his friends were trying to see him that he felt no desire to make love. After some 15 minutes of trying to calm and placing his hands on her breasts and thighs, Timmie decided to postpone everything until another time when he might come alone. He started to dress and was just going out of the bedroom door when Bubba said, "What happened, you can't have finished that fast. Did the bitch try to hustle you?"

"No" said Timmie, "I just don't feel like anything will work out this time."

Bubba gave Timmie a look of disgust and then turned to Jenny. "You are pretty worthless, so "no go, no dough."

"Oh no," said Jenny, "I did my part, but your friend couldn't follow through. I'm not giving back any money. A deal is a deal."

Suddenly Bubba sprang to his feet and grabbed Jenny by the arm and twisting it until she felt her arm turn black and blue. "Fork over the dough, bitch or I'll pull your arm out of its socket."

Jenny called, "Max, come!!" Max, raced out of the room and stood by Jenny's side waiting for Jenny's command. Bubba and the other two boys tried to hide behind the bedroom door. Max growled fiercely. He could tell his mistress's voice had the sound of alarm.

"Call the dog off, a terrified Bubba said. We were only trying to do what was fair."

Jenny then said, "We made a deal, if your friend couldn't respond, it's his fault. I can't make it rain in the Sahara desert." Bubba threatened, "This is not over bitch. We will get even."

"You're threatening me slob boy and I don't like being threatened." Turning to the two other boys, she said, "The two of you can leave but not you pig boy. As the two boys dashed away in relief she locked the door to her apartment and turned to Bubba. "Now you, slob, take off all your clothes."

"What are you going to do? I told you e were only trying to frighten you so that we could get our money back."

"So, you were only trying to frighten me when you almost pulled my arm out its socket? You were ready to really destroy me is more like it you shit. I thought I told you to take off all you clothes, are you ashamed"

Bubber took off all his clothes and was holding his hands over his genitals. Looking at him and assessing him, she said, "I don't ever remember seeing such a small dick on any man. But then you are just a loud mouthed freak."

Bubber's humiliation made him try to reach for his pants but a signal from Jenny had Max snarling and ready to do her bidding.

"Please" Bubber pleaded, "don't sic the dog on me. I'm afraid of dogs. I was bitten by a Rottweiler just like him. Call him off, we'll leave as it is and just chalk it up to a misunderstanding, OK Miss?" First of all, you don't know one dog from another, this is a Doberman not a Rottweiler, jackass. You know Bubber, you're the type of scum that is allowed to exist and to destroy anything that is decent in the world. You are the type of bully, loudmouth that needs to be made to learn the hard way. I was just going to throw you out of my apartment without your clothes. But no, you would have met with your friends and boasted how you convinced me to let you go."

With that, she commanded Max to attack until Bubba was a series of bites. After she called Max off, she said to Bubba, "That's only a sample of what I will have the dog do to you if I ever see or hear from you again, you asshole. A chastened Bubba grabbed his clothes and ran into the hallway to dress and escape.

After that incident, Jenny was trembling. If the three boys reported her, there might be all kinds of trouble. Thinking it over, she decided to talk to her friend and advisor Bud Strawn.

“In one way, it was my fault”, she said, “I shouldn’t have let three young guys who were out on the town convince me to take them to my apartment. But, it sounded legitimate that they were trying to initiate their virgin friend. When things started to get out of control, I was really frightened and that’s when I called Max.”

“Look”, said Bud, “I think you should take a small vacation until this blows over. You have been working without time off for quite a time and you could use a break. You have always been saying that you wanted to go to Hollywood, take a trip and see it for yourself. I have a good friend who operates a very exclusive club that caters to only the crème de la crème. I think he might be pretty pleased having someone like you around. It’s all out of the way and quiet. Go, maybe you will see some movie stars,” he joked.

“I think you have a good idea. Maybe in a month or two, I can come back when all this is over.” After settling some things, she got a friend to take care of the apartment, water the plants, pay any bills etc. and she prepared to take Bud Strawn’s advice and look up his friend in Hollywood who ran the exclusive casino. Before calling on Mel Blaine, she decided to have a look around. She visited various neighborhoods and places of interest. One afternoon, she spotted a small outdoor café and decided to drink some coffee. As she squeezed in the chair, she discreetly kicked off her shoes. “God, my feet are killing me.” She said as she moaned with pleasure while wriggling her toes. She was so absorbed in the relief she felt that she did not notice a sailor standing in front of her. Before she could look up the sailor said, “Would you mind if I sat down. I’m nearly beat with walking.”

Jenny turned to see a broadly smiling Jake, her foster brother. “Jake” she squealed, “How wonderful to see you. What a beautiful surprise! Please sit down and tell me whatever you know about the family. Is Benny in the service or is he still at home? Have you seen action and where is Kitty stationed?”

“Whoa”, he said, “I’ll try to answer all your questions with as much as I know. First of all, Tom and my Mom sold the house; bought a trailer and have been travelling all over the U.S. I hear from them every so often but it is hard to keep in touch because they are never in one place long enough. From their last post card, they are enjoying everything to the fullest. As you know, Kitty joined the WACs and the last I heard, she was in England. She is going with some Englishman and gives us the idea that she will be marrying the guy and staying in England.”

“And Benny. What do you hear about Benny?”

“That’s the sad part and why I’m here in Hollywood.”

“You mean Benny is here in Los in HYollywood?”

“Yes, but he is in the Naval Hospital recuperating from wounds he received.”

“What wounds? I want to go see him. Can we go now?”

“First of all”, Jack said, “he’s very distressed and depressed. He may not even want to see you. Benny was directing a Amphibious Marine landing Craft and he was too close when the ramp opened. Both his legs were amputated. He has been in the hospital for over 8 months doing therapy to get him moving on his false legs. It’s difficult and his being depressed doesn’t help in the therapy. As I said, he feels he got a raw deal. He’s angry, feels sorry for himself and just plain miserable. At times, I don’t know if he was glad to see me or not. I was able to get a short furlough to see him and I have to be returning to my outfit tonight since we are being shipped back to the Philippines, so you will have to get a pass to visit him.”

After getting as much information plus the addresses of their parents and even Kitty’s address. (I’ll have to try to become friends with her since I gave her a bad deal in stealing Howie from her, especially since I only wanted to get back at her. Howie was no catch).

Bu she could not sleep that night. The vision of Benny without his legs and seeing him crushed by this tragedy really disturbed here. Benny had been the one person in her life that she really liked. They had been able to talk about everything and not once was there anything negative between them.

The next morning, she had called a cab and asked him to take her to the Naval Hospital. It was 8:00 AM. She anxiously asked at the desk for permission to visit with Cpl. Benjamin Neal, his last address before being here in the hospital was 1st Division, Shore Party, Company “C”, FMFPAC. I’m his sister and just found out about Benny’s being here.”

“Do you have any idea what time it is? Our visiting hours are from 10:00 AM to 12:00 noon. Can I see some identification, please.?”

After comparing the names, the soldier said; “Your last names are not the same.”

“No,” said Jenny, we are not from the same parents.”

“I’m afraid I will have to check this out. We don’t permit visitors except from the immediate family.”

“Look”, explained Jenny, “His brother was here yesterday visiting him, his name is Jack Wagner. He is in the Navy and was just here yesterday visiting his brother.”

“You say you want to see a patient named Benjamin Neal. You say he is your brother and that Neal’s brother was here to see him yesterday. The visitor’s log shows a Jake Wagner who was here to visit his brother Benjamin Neal and now a sister whose name turns out to be Rhodes wants to see Ben Neal.”

“I know it sounds complicated and is not easy to explain it all has to do with parents who had complicated married relationships. But please, sailor, I just need to see Benny for a few minutes so that he knows he is not alone. My brother Jake says he is very depressed; he lost both his legs and maybe I can help him see the light at the end of the tunnel. What motive could I have for wanting to see a sick, angry depressed Marine?”

”OK, I’ll see what I can do but you will have to wait until visiting hours which start at 10:00AM.”

Jenny thanked the sailor at the desk and went to sit in the visitors lounge until the appointed time. Meanwhile, since she had not had any breakfast, she went to a vending machine and had a candy bar and a cup of coffee. She felt sick to her stomach and ended by throwing up in the Ladies Room.

How was she going to greet him? Should she avert her eyes from his missing legs: greet him with the love she felt for him after she had never once got in touch since she saw him last? She decided that she would act as though nothing had changed since she last saw him.

When she entered the ward, a series of whistles from the other patients greeted her arrival. Wise cracks; nice ones, met her face which she could help smiling in friendship. When she stopped in front of Benny’s bed, the entire ward was whistling and hooting much to Benny’s discomfort.

“She’s my sister, you dummies so cut out the whistling and hooting.”

Out of the corner of her eyes, she could see this half of a man with a look of embarrassment on his face. He was ashamed to have Jenny see him the way he was. He was doubly embarrassed for the heckling he would have to endure and the questions thrown at him after she left.

On seeing him, Jenny let out a wail of sorrow and gladness so that the one or two whistles that still sounded, were rebuffed by the other wounded men who saw the heartbreak and poignancy of the moment and shouted at the whistlers to “knock it off you guys.”

With her eyes glistening with tears, Jenny hugged and kissed him and wailed in his ears at how sorry she felt about having never written to him or kept in touch these past few years.

After the first shock at seeing him, they talked about old times and about how Jenny had now decided to do something she always loved – and that had to do with books. “All my life, the only things I cared for were books and stories. As you know, I was conceited and never was able to make any friends with the girls., The boys were only looking for one thing and so I had nothing to do with them. I seemed to have made enemies with every female I ever knew including our sister Kitty. Well, I have had a chance to see things a more clearly and now I am thinking I will give up what my life was and go to college. I want to teach some day. If I could really have my wish, I would want to be a writer but I am too aware that my gifts are not as an author and just another person who was going to write the definitive novel of the 20th century. I was thinking though that maybe I would open a bookstore and stay with my friends (the books). They will never let you down.”

Benny asked, “You have been way from the family for about 5 years. What have you been doing?”

“Someday, I will tell you everything, but right now let’s concentrate on you. Have you thought about what you want to do?”

“I don’t know. You know that I have been always interested in how things work. (I got punished quite a few times, especially when I opened Elly’s father grandfather clock to see how that worked).” The ice had been broken and they could laugh at some of the recollected times that passed. “Well”, he continued, “I sought of thought I would like to study engineering. At least I can be able to sit down at a desk”, he remarked after looking down at where his legs should have been.

Jenny said, looking into Benny’s eyes directly, “We both know you had a terrible accident and that you lost your legs. But that’s over now, and now we have to be realistic and not try to hide the facts . You will have to live someplace while you study and since I would like to make Hollywood my home, why don’t you figure on living together. We can keep each other company so that it will not get so lonely and we can both attend school.”

“I don’t want to be a burden, that would make me feel worse.”

“You wouldn’t be a burden and anyway, the government will pay for your education and with your disability allotment, you would be pulling your weight. As for me, I have some real estate that will bring in a good amount each month. Let’s think about it, alright? When do you think the hospital will release you?”

“I heard one of the doctor’s say that I would be ready to be released in about three months.”

“August, that would be perfect, it would give us time to make our educational plans and hopefully to start the first semester this September. It will also give me time to tie up some loose ends. In the meantime, I am going to look for a decent apartment with an elevator. And about my not writing, you will understand when I tell you about my life after I left home. I want us to have no secrets from each other.”

The following week, Jenny checked out two of the colleges in Pasadena, California. One was Caltech which had an excellent engineering course. The other was the Pasadena City College which was strong on Literature. She knew that she had not finished her High School and would have to make up those courses before the college would even consider her. Fortunately, her marks were always in the top 10% but with so many students seeking entrance, she would use the three months in making up the deficit. She then rented an apartment that was reachable to Caltech and Pasadena City College. Then a fast trip back to Las Vegas where she conferred with Bud Strawn about her plans to move to Pasadena and how she hoped he had someone who could take care of the apartments, collect rents, make repairs when needed and to pay taxes and utilities when they came due. She offered a very good salary for the work and Bud found her an able lawyer who agreed to manage her apartments. Things were getting organized fast and efficiently and now it was just a matter of time. She left off her ways of making a living and thought at first that might hire a Madam; there was still so much money to be made but decided that she would completely leave off that life if she wanted to really make a change. The plans both made were doable and Benny spent more time in therapy so that in a short time, he not only tried to show he couldn't walk, but now he was anxious to show his nurses his improvement. When he was able to walk a short distance, Jenny picked him up by cab and they drove to a small park where they both walked slowly around a little fountain. They enthusiastically discussed their plans and they were both excited about starting new lives. Jenny decided to write to Tom and Elly, and even included Kitty. She wanted to try to erase the bitter feelings each had and to convince Kitty that she no longer felt the way she did. “I felt alone and estranged and had the feeling that I was not wanted by anyone. The result; I tried to destroy any possible relationship with anyone. She hoped that Kitty was a kinder person than Jenny and would look at Jenny's conduct as a way of trying to get back at things she didn't understand.

To Tom and Elly, she congratulated them on their decision to see the country and hoped that someday, if the two were near Pasadena, they would let her know so that they could see each other. She wrote about Benny's injuries and that he was now living with her; about their plans to go to college; Benny to study engineering at Caltech and hers about studying literature at Pasadena City College. With Benny's disability allotment and his free tuition plus my returns

from some property I have rented, we both are independent financially. Jenny told them about Jake and that he was doing well in the Navy and that he is even considering making the a career. He is interested in becoming a Navy pilot but was told he would have to re-enlist for six years since any training required to fly costs over one million dollars. Jake figured that if he has to re-enlist for six year plus the four he already enlisted he would be halfway to retirement. Anyway, that is his thinking to date. I also plan to write to Kitty. We left each other in less than friendly terms and I want to try to apologize and make it up to her.

Sealing the letter gave her a feeling of relief, something I suppose what a Catholic feels when he is able to confess his sins. Anyway she felt a weight lifted from her chest. At least I made the first attempt; I built the bridge so that if they want, they can cross over. More than that, I can't do.

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The last thing left to do was painful and depressing for Jenny. Her beloved Max, the Doberman Pinscher had to be donated to the K9 Corps. With both Jenny and Benny away at school all day, meant that Max would be without anyone all day. That plus Max's overly enthusiastic way of playing made Benny prone to falling as the dog went after a ball or just simply when he ran all over the apartment in his joy of seeing Jenny. It was, for Jenny, a very sad parting. Jenny said to Benny, "With you being wounded and out of action, the least we can do is substitute Max to do his part."

The two barely saw each other except for breakfast. Some of their classes started as early as 8:00AM and they then went in different directions to their schools. Both put in their days and at supper, they had a chance to go over the happenings of the school day. They talked about the different professors and the different classmates so often that each knew the characteristics and quirks without ever having seen them. But, both were happy, busy and enthusiastic. Study was a challenge and both had an opportunity to expand their knowledge; there was so much to learn and so much more that they would have to learn before embarking on their careers.

It was during his second year that Benny decided that his interests would be geared to the yet to become reality of the space age. His professors saw a space program as something definite in the future and they talked and brought enthusiasm to their students to become candidates for that new endeavor. Benny studied aspects of high speed rockets and aircraft and especially tail section assemblies known as "empennage". These tail components made up the vertical and horizontal rudder and vertical fin. His professors had followed the experimental

progress of high speed aircraft and rocketry and told their students that this was a science that was without doubt the wave of the future. There had been intimations that Russia was also interested in space and so when Russia launched Sputnik, in 1958 the U.S., initiated its NASA program., So, the professors had guessed rightly. Benny realized that he would eventually have to work on a Master's degree and also be a candidate for a Doctoral degree as well. He was not in a hurry. In reality, he was frightened to be known as a man without legs. At the University, he felt everyone knew about his disability; had ignored it and treated him as any ordinary individual. It was just that he didn't feel sure enough to have to go through it all again. Of course, this is what went through his mind. In reality, interest in his artificial limbs would have evoked only a minimum notice and everything and everyone would have gone back to his work and study. His personal relations were with male students; perhaps 5% were women and the assignments were so intense that female companionship would have been an inconvenient intrusion. Besides, Benny felt comfortable with Jenny and no longer felt shame even without his artificial legs.

*

Attending her first class Jenny was rather surprised. She did not know how many students there would be but to find only 12 students made her feel a little awkward. You could be called upon to answer some question too easily. With a large class, you could still hide a bit and just listen and see where you stood as far as the other students were concerned. As she sat at her desk, the other 11 students chatted nervously. There were four male and eight female. At last, the professor walked in. She wondered if he felt a little unsure as she did. His name was Harrison Bounds. Jenny had pictured in her mind seeing a poetic, thin, ethereal man with long flowing hair. Instead, Harrison Bounds was the picture of health. Robust with dark hair that was turning grey, an aquiline nose and a slight paunch as befits a man in his early fifties.

“At least he is not bald and has a poetic nose. I couldn't stand a pug nosed professor teaching literature,” she said to herself. But the saving grace is when he greeted his students. He had a deep voice that resonated so that one could feel the rumble in one's very core. After greeting the students, he called each name, asked the person to stand up to be seen and then started his lecture. Harrison Bounds had written a few books mostly on Elizabethan or Jacobean literature and was considered among the top scholars in the field. A bachelor, he had lived most of his life with his sister who was admired for her musicianship on the harpsichord. This sister, Gabriela Bounds had just been offered the deanship in a British school of music and she decided to take the offer. That left Harrison, her brother, living alone. Since their

parents died, Harrison was living by himself for the first time. Harrison, to avoid being alone had purchased an English Bulldog who he called Winston.

Harrison taught, along with modern authors, a class on 16th and 17th century authors. It was a class for extra credits for students who wanted to use their elective courses as a furtherance of a Masters degree.

Jenny, who had become enamored of the literature of that period, decided to take the class with Bounds. As one of their assignments, Jenny decided to write about John Webster who was a contemporary of Shakespeare but whose career was overshadowed by the great Shakespeare. John Webster had been overlooked by scholars even though two of his works would become somewhat known: “The Duchess of Malfi” and “The White Devil”.

What attracted Jenny to Webster was that he was a dramatist whose violence and pessimism were close to modern sensibilities, a writer who chose to grapple with the dark side of mankind. She saw in Webster aspects of her own life and her struggle to erase those times. When Harrison Bounds asked her what she would be taking on as her assignment, she immediately answered that she was very interested in John Webster.

Harrison Bounds enthusiastically listened as Jenny told him of her interest and especially his recognition of the baser sides of mankind.

“Did you know that I have been given a contract to write about John Webster? It is to be published in the better literary journals. What an exciting coincidence that you chose this as your topic. You know, there is a pretty wooly side to Webster for a nice young lady as yourself.”

“Would he be surprised at this nice young lady’s past,” she thought.

Harrison continued, “But let me suggest an idea to you. Since we are both interested in Webster, why don’t you and I collaborate? Of course, you will have to do all the research and I could only be the person who was giving you a critique as the work progressed. If, in my opinion there is no need for me to write the article, I would include you as the author of the work. It will be a first time for you to have published and there would be no reason to do the work twice, since I will be critiquing your work all along. It would also sidestep any irregularities as to authorship. I was preparing to start my work at this summer’s vacation. That leaves 9 months for you to finish it. Sort of apt, don’t you think; nine months to develop a paper just as though it was a new child. But don’t give me an answer right now, go home and think about it and if you agree, you will be credited as the co-author.”

Jenny could not wait to get home and to tell Benny about what she just been offered. "I know he will be as excited as I am. To think, I will be given credit towards my Masters and at the same time be given publishing credit. It's good to be true."

When Benny returned home, it was quite late. His classes and his time with his fellow students gave him shorter time to work but Benny always said, "When the guys meet, we are always talking about our work so that it is not lost time but a way of learning what others are thinking."

Finally, she said, "You will never imagine what happened to me today."

Benny stopped what he was doing to turn towards Jenny expecting some terrible happening. "What happened?"

"Nothing much except my professor Harrison Bounds has just informed me that I will be collaborating with him on a project and that I will be given publishing credits as well."

"Great!", he said. That is a lucky break. How did it happen?"

"Well, you know I am doing this extra project instead of taking an elective and that I will be given credit for my Masters. When Professor Bounds asked me what I chose as my project, I told him I was interested in John Webster, one of the Jacobean authors I am interested in. Well, he almost fell off his chair and said that he had been commissioned to write an article for some prestigious literary publication but that if I would be interested, we could do the article together with Harrison critiquing my work as it progresses. Isn't that great news? I'm to tell Harrison tomorrow if I accept but I wanted to tell you first to see what you think."

"Well, if Harrison (Benny emphasized Harrison) thinks it is a good idea, then go for it."

"Thanks for your support Benny, I will work with him." (She had noticed the innuendo but said nothing)

The next day, she rushed to Harrison Bounds office before he started his class, He was just getting his papers and books together and she said, almost breathlessly, "Yes, I would love to work together. I have been unable to sleep thinking what a great challenge it will be; whether I am up to it and whether I will disappoint you with my efforts."

"I would not have suggested the working together if I had the slightest doubt about your capabilities in turning out an excellent piece of work. As to the challenge, yes, there will be that since information is scant at best and it can be boring sometimes. But, when and if you find some data that is important and meaningful, you will have forgotten all the boredom in

an instant. Many people think researchers are dull, unfeeling beings but they don't realize the inner joy it brings."

"How do I start?", she asked. I have never researched a project before."

"You start by starting. That means you set out in the morning to find every scrap of information about the subject you are researching. It might be bits and pieces; biographical data; people your subject knew or worked with and then research into those people to try to find a shred of evidence where your subject collaborated in a work or an assistance. Then when we have all the bits and pieces, we collate that date and place it in a chronological order and start writing. It sounds complicated but the logic is there and you will usually find some aspect of the subject that you might want to emphasize and base your work on that. Does that answer your question?"

"Whew", she breathed, "that seems like a few years work rather than the nine months I have to get everything ready."

"That is where I come in, I will be suggesting areas of research that need to be enlarged and places where your information might be redundant. In the meantime, I will be assembling the form in which the project will be written. You are right, it generally takes a great deal of time to amass the information and put it together in some logical form but remember, there are two of us working and that I may be able to give you suggestions as to where the information might be found.

It might even be in order for you to travel to Webster's habitat to seek information during the Summer's recess. Of course, the travel would be paid by the people who are publishing the work. It's a great deal of responsibility and work and you must remember that you have your other classes that need to be attended and passed successfully." Saying that, he walked her to the door and said, "Now for the humdrum, every day side of teaching."

Jenny remained seated in Harrison's office feeling unsure, frightened but at the same time, she felt a sense of elation that she should have been selected to work with Harrison Bounds. She suddenly realized she was sitting in Harrison's office, alone. She left and went to her class which had started some 10 minutes before.

When she talked with Benny that night, she expressed her joy and her delight that such a challenge should come her way. Jenny also talked for the first time about how she looked forward to go to school and also about her enthusiasm about seeing Harrison Bounds. She

suddenly blurted out, “Benny, I think I have fallen in love with Harrison and I don’t know what to do.

“Does he know you have feelings for him?”

“I don’t think so but I know he is attracted to me. A woman can feel when a man is attracted to her and not only for sex.”

“Has he made any advances toward you in any way?”

“Advances,! He still calls me Miss Rhodes.”

“It appears that Bounds is a little unsure of himself. Perhaps you should make the first move.”

The next time that Jenny was doing some work with Harrison, she was very close to him while they were reading some notes Jenny had written. Putting her hand on his she said, “Harrison, I think I have fallen in love with you.”

Harrison turned red and mumbled inchoately some words of confusion. “Miss Rhodes, I don’t understand, surely you are using those words in jest.”

“No, Harrison, I am trying to tell you that I am in love with you.”

“But, that’s impossible. First of all, Miss Rhodes, I am 54 years old and must be twice your age. Just on that basis, it’s impossible. Can’t you see, it’s all in your imagination?”

“It’s not in my imagination and stop calling me Miss Rhodes, call me Jenny. Tell me why you think my loving you is so strange. I know you like me even though you won’t admit it. Does your being 54 permit you to say you don’t think of me?”

“But we know so little about each other.”

“Yes, and that is what I want you to know – everything about my life before coming to Pasadena City College. I want to be able to tell you without softening my actions in anyway except what is true. Can we go someplace to talk and have a cup of coffee after we leave tonight?”

Seated at a booth in a small coffee shop that was practically empty, Jenny said, “This is going to be very hard for me so please be patient with me. First of all, you were right, I’m 27 years old and just one half you age. For me, the number of years has no importance. It’s just that you were simply born before me. That fact changes nothing in what I feel.

When I was born, neither my mother nor my father had any desire to have me. I was so unimportant that my mother left me in the doorway of some Foundling Home. My father never even saw me. The people who adopted me were simple folks and my adopted mother loved me very much. Although I cannot remember that love, I was told she loved me very much. Her husband, my adopted father wanted a son but my adopted mother persuaded him to adopt me. A few months later, my beloved adopted mother died and my adopted father found that he could not take care of me and go to work at the same time. He tried to make the Foundling Home take me back or at least find foster parents to take care of me. He was unable to succeed and so he hired a woman who just took care of my minimum needs. She never showed nor did I feel any love from her. Later, my father met a woman who was divorced and had three children. Her name was Elly. Elly did not want to have another child to take care of and so again, I was put under the care of a housekeeper. The new "home" was a disaster. The daughter, Kitty, hated me with a vengeance. I think she was jealous of me and since I was very pretty, I stole her boyfriend from her just to spite her and to show her that I could take any boyfriend away from her. Of the three of Elly's children, only Benny, the youngest was then one I got along with. Benny was also ignored because Elly had him out of wedlock. The two of us felt neglected and clung to each other in mutual support.

When I was just over sixteen years old, I decided to run away. I was always good at school but I decided to just quit. I did many things that were spiteful just to get back at the people who refused to give me love and affection. Since I had no girlfriends, I started to go out by myself at night and visited a bar. When I was dressed up with make-up, I passed for eighteen. I met a lot of me who propositioned me and I found out that because I was pretty, I could usually get my way. I was still a virgin at that time. These men were usually married and they offered me money to sleep with them. It was then that I decided to take the road I took. I had always read a great deal since I was alone so much. I remembered reading Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* where a married woman takes on a lover because she was so unhappy with her husband and D.H. Laurence's books where the same things happen when a woman is saddened by her life."

There was one man that was married who came to the bar every night before going home. We became friends and later, he told me how miserable he was with his home life. His wife was seeing another man and when he said he would divorce her, she threatened to take everything including his house. He told me that she no longer permitted him to sleep in her bed and that he was sad, frustrated and miserable. I started with him because I felt sorry for him and knew how it was to be miserable. He also got me other clients and I went on that way for about a year. I made a lot of money because I was young and I was pretty.

After about a year, I decided to move to California where I thought that maybe I would meet somebody who get me a break in the movies. On the train to California, I met an older man who had a hotel and a casino in Las Vegas. I guess he knew I was not all innocence. He asked me if I was interested in making a lot of money and why did I want to go to California when I could make a great deal of money in the gambling casinos where a lot of men go to have a good time and are willing to pay \$200 for a good looking, young woman. He also said that I could stay at an apartment he had for one month and that if I didn't like it, I could go to California.

Then I got into some trouble when I allowed three soldiers to come to my apartment. They were giving their friend his first woman. They paid me and the young soldier couldn't do anything. The biggest soldier who was a bully asked for his money back and I told him I did everything I could and that I kept my side of the bargain. Then the bully grabbed my arm and twisted it so that I thought it would break. It was then that I called my Doberman Pinscher, Max who I kept in another room. I let the two soldiers go free but I made the bully undress and I was just going to put him in the hall outside my door but then the bully started to taunt me and so I made my dog attack him.

After that, my friend from the train who usually advised me, suggested I go away for a while until everything cooled down.

While I was in Hollywood, a sailor came to my table and asked if he could sit down. It was Jake, Elly's son. He was visiting Hollywood to see Benny. Benny had joined the Marine Corps and was in the Naval Hospital. He was wounded and both his legs were amputated. After I got to visit Benny, I decided that I would stop what I was doing; study and hopefully open a book store. I figured that Benny could work at the store and that we could live together so that I could take care of him. I wanted a decent life and I wanted to achieve something with my life that I could be proud of myself. I have never felt anything like what I feel for you. My life has been all make believe.

I realize that I was with a great many men Harrison but I swear I never gave myself to them; I lent myself to them to try to take away their pain, their frustration and the misery they felt. I wanted to give them the fantasies they dreamed about because I had known all too well what they felt.

Harrison, I could have hidden my past from you but the one thing I wanted to do was be completely truthful even though I knew I would lose you. I am sacrificing my one chance at love but if I had to gain your love by hiding my past I would have blemished that love and dishonored you. You have shown me that giving is the most important part of life. You never

took from me but instead gave me inspiration and made me believe that I had something to give. And now it is all finished. I will, of course, leave the project. It's strange, the project was the only thing I have ever been enthusiastic about in my entire life."

All the while Jenny was speaking, Harrison had his eyes unfocused and just staring out the window. When he turned to look at Jenny, his eyes were filled with tears. He said:

"I have tears in my eyes Jenny, not only because I heard about the young woman who was blessed and cursed at the same time. I was listening to the sadness of a human being who was crying out for love and acceptance; a girl who existed in another time. The Jenny I know is beautiful and intelligent, she is kind and sensitive and loving. The girl you spoke of never existed for me, I know only the gentle, sweet woman with whom I have been working."

You know he said, I was thinking how wonderful it will be when the report is finally delivered. It will read, "An In Depth Profile of the Playwright , John Webster, researched and written by Jenny and Harrison Bounds."

The End

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