

The Server

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[In honor of the new server being added to ASSTR]

It was our semi-regular Guys' Night Out. We try to have one every month or so, schedules permitting; it's a way of keeping in touch.

Dave had suggested it, right before he quit the company to take a better paying job with a competitor. He, Jerry and I had been coworkers and friends for a couple of years, and we all wanted the friendship to outlast the job. These little outings give us a chance to unwind and shoot the shit.

The place for this night -- a folksy little pub off Georgia Avenue in upper Silver Spring -- was my choice, and I was pleased with it. The beer was good, and flowed freely. The wings and assorted snacks were equally good. And the server who brought them to us was exactly my type: tall, broad-shouldered, and generously curved, with a dazzling smile and a sassy manner to go with her great body. I took a long, appreciative look at that body as she brought us a fresh round, letting my gaze follow the plunging neckline of her top as she bent over to distribute glasses. She caught me looking and treated me to a suggestive wink, then turned and walked away.

"She wants your body, Mark," Dave declared, watching the sway in her retreating hips.

"Nah ... she just wants a big tip."

"I'll give her a big tip," Jerry offered, gesturing toward his crotch. "And back it up with eight inches of prime American beef."

Dave and I chuckled. "Why don't you tell her that?" I suggested. "You put it so elegantly she's guaranteed to swoon over you."

"Bite me." Jerry thought about it for a second, then spoke again. "Then again, I might as well. It's gotta work at least as well your Svengali routine."

Here it comes, I thought. Ever since I'd told the guys about my secret hobby, writing hypnoerotic stories and posting them on my ASSTR web site, I'd opened myself up for cracks like that. Jerry in particular seemed to find my online activities endlessly amusing, and seldom missed an opportunity to needle me about them. Dave was a regular visitor to my site and occasionally offered constructive criticism, but always from the point of view of a skeptic.

"You'd be surprised," I told Jerry. "Everything I do with hypnosis in my stories is possible in real life. Everything."

"Bullshit," Jerry argued. "You can't just swing a watch in front of some hot babe and make her want to screw your brains out."

"Sometimes you can," I said. "It's just a matter of making the right suggestions."

"Not entirely," Dave injected. "It would take a very good hypnotist, for one thing. And a willing participant for a subject, too -- preferably someone who had been hypnotized by him before and already trusted him. And even then, the suggestions would have to be something she was already willing to do."

"Ever the wet blanket," I replied with a grimace. "So you don't think that I, for instance, could successfully hypnotize someone here and get her into bed?"

"No," he said, smiling. "Not unless she was already sleeping with you and wanted to play it out as a fantasy."

I returned his smile with one of my own. "Tell you what," I said. "I've got 50 bucks here that says I can hypnotize a woman in this bar and get her to sleep with me tonight."

Jerry almost choked on his beer. "You gotta be kidding!"

"No kidding," I assured him. "You want in on this, too?"

Jerry thought about it for maybe two seconds. "Sure, I'll take your money. What are the rules?"

"Very simple," I said. "We'll agree on a woman subject. I'll hypnotize her, and while she's under hypnosis I'll suggest to her that she really wants to take me home with her and have sex with me. When she asks me back to her place, you guys pay up. If she leaves without asking, I lose."

Dave looked thoughtful. "I don't know, Mark," he said. "It seems to me that, assuming you can get the girl into trance, it wouldn't take much to get the invitation to leave with her -- having her actually follow through on it would be an entirely different thing, and we wouldn't be there to verify it. I think I'd rather see more evidence of hypnotic control inside the bar."

"A blowjob," Jerry suggested. "Make her give you a blowjob right here in the bar. If you can do that, it'd be worth the fifty to me."

"That would certainly prove hypnotic compulsion," Dave allowed. "It's not something a stranger is likely to want to do. Do you seriously think you can pull that off, Mark?"

I considered for a moment. "I think so. I'll just have to be a little more careful in picking the woman."

"No way," Jerry objected. "We'll pick the woman. Otherwise it could be a setup."

I shook my head vigorously. "No, Jerry. You'd pick the ugliest, meanest woman in the place. I'll pick the subject based on her appeal to me, since I'm the one who'll be getting into her pants later."

"How about our server?" Dave suggested. "She looks like your type and isn't wearing a wedding ring. And unless I miss my guess, she's already attracted to you -- that should give you a slight advantage."

I looked over at our server, who was busy settling up with the group at another table out of earshot. "Excellent choice," I agreed. "In fact, I would have suggested her myself if you hadn't. Is she okay with you, Jerry?"

"Doesn't matter," he shrugged, grinning. "You're not gonna win this bet anyway."

"So we're on?"

We shook hands on it. It took all the self-control I had to suppress a wicked grin -- the server was as good as mine.

She came over a few minutes later, flashing that 500-watt smile. "Do you guys need anything else?"

"We could use another round," I answered since she was looking at me, "and if you have a minute, we could use your help to settle a bet."

"Oh, really?" She had a hint of laughter in her voice. "Let me get your other round first. I've got another table to cash out, then I'll have a few minutes free. Okay?"

"Great."

While the server dealt with her other table, I took a small felt bag from my shirt pocket. Inside was a teardrop-shaped crystal on a black thread. The crystal was about the width of my thumb at the bottom, and the surface was covered in tiny facets that reflected light in a hundred different directions. I'd bought it to hang from the rear-view mirror of my car, but ended up keeping it by my writing desk instead -- I found it quite inspiring.

Dave found it interesting, too. "Can I see that?" I handed it to him and he turned it over between his fingers, looking deeply into the glass. "Yeah," he conceded, "I can see how this might do the trick, but you'll still need her cooperation."

Just then the server came back to our table. "What's up, guys?"

"An experiment," I said, taking the crystal back from Dave. "We need an impartial observer. I don't want to tell you too much up front because it might prejudice you, but the gist of it is that I'm going to have you study an object for a minute or two and then answer a question about it. Can you do that?"

She took a look around the room. "Things have quieted down," she said. "You're my last table before I go off shift. Sure, I've got a few minutes."

"That's great." I scooted out of the booth and gestured toward my seat. "This will work better if you're sitting down."

"Okay." She took my seat and looked up at me. "Now what?"

With a practiced hand, I let the crystal drop in front of her face. It twirled slowly as I rolled the cord between my fingers, reflecting the room lights in

a hundred tiny dots of color across my subject's face. "Now I need you to look closely at this crystal," I said, letting my voice drop slightly and smooth out. "I'm going to hold it up near the light so you can really see into it well. If you don't mind, I'd like you to really focus on the crystal. Try to see every detail you can, every facet and every line in it. Watch very closely as the colors glint off of it. If you relax and sit very still, and concentrate, you'll be able to see between the facets into the very middle of the crystal itself."

She sat quietly on the bench staring intently into the crystal, a tiny hint of curiosity in her eyes and on her lips. The blood started pumping a little faster in my veins -- she was doing exactly what I needed her to do.

"Look even more closely into the crystal," I continued. "Find the center point, the still point. You can do it if you focus your mind on finding the center. Try not to think about anything in particular; if an idea or a question crosses your mind, just let it flow right out again. Let the crystal fill your vision, fill your mind, draw you into itself. Let the colors soothe and relax you as you focus completely on finding the still point in the center of the crystal."

Her face showed no thought or emotion now; she simply stared into the crystal. Her breathing had slowed as well. I willed myself to relax, knowing that her subconscious would pick up the relaxation in my voice and respond in kind.

"That's it, you're doing fine. Staring deeply into the crystal, deeper and deeper, letting all other thoughts fall away. The deeper you look into the crystal, the more you find yourself relaxing and drifting, thinking of nothing, just letting your mind relax and be drawn into the crystal. Soon you will feel as though the world is slowing down, and you'll be able to relax even more, taking nice, deep, slow breaths and letting everything inside you slooow dooooooowwwwwwnnn..."

As I spoke I slowed my own voice and, at the same time, slowed down the motion of the crystal itself. Her entire body seemed to sag in response; her jaw went slack and her mouth opened, and it suddenly seemed as though she was having trouble keeping her head up high enough to watch the crystal. She was mine.

"And now you've found the center of the crystal," I continued. "Now you can see it clearly in your mind, and you can feel the world slowing down all around you. As the world slows, you feel yourself slowing with it, becoming very sleepy and drowsy. It's a good feeling, a comfortable feeling, and a pleasant feeling. The more you see the world slow, the

sleepier you become, the more your eyes want to close. When the crystal stops moving, your eyes will be too tired, the lids too heavy, to keep open even another second. But that's all right -- you can let them close down, let them sleep, and your mind can just take a nice rest along with them. You'll still be able to hear me, and you'll be able to answer my questions and obey my suggestions, even while you are deeply, deeply asleep."

While her glassy eyes remained fixed on the crystal, I stopped rolling the string between my fingers. As the motion of the crystal slowed, her eyes began to droop, struggling to stay open. I kept my fingers totally still, and soon the crystal stopped swaying. My subject's eyes closed and her body heaved a slow, easy sigh as she slumped back into the cushioned bench.

"Very good," I commended her. "Sleep now, and listen only to my voice. Any other sound that you hear, you can simply ignore. Any other sound will only serve to relax you even more deeply, so you can concentrate on my voice. My words become your thoughts; my suggestions become your desires. Every time your mind accepts one of my suggestions, you will feel pleased and happy with yourself."

Only then did I take my eyes off her face to see what my companions were up to. Jerry was staring in awe at my subject, his mouth agape and eyes bulging. Dave was trying to play it cool, sitting back in his seat, but I could tell he was surprised at what he'd just seen. He noticed me looking at him and gave me a grudging nod of approval.

"Okay," he said quietly, "I'm impressed. You seem to have her in a moderate trance. But you haven't asked her to do anything yet."

I grinned back at him, then turned to address my subject. "What is your name, please?"

Her lips parted slowly. "Lindsay," she muttered in a woozy tone.

"Lindsay, my name is Mark. You are in a state of hypnosis right now, Lindsay. How do you feel?"

"Dreamy," she replied. "Feels good."

"Hypnosis always feels good," I told her. "In fact, every time you go into hypnosis for me, you'll find it feels more pleasant than the time before. You'll always want to go into hypnosis for me, won't you Lindsay?"

"Sure."

"That's good. In fact, from now on, whenever I say the word 'zeitgeist' to you, Lindsay, you'll relax and return to this very pleasant, dreamy state. Whenever I say 'zeitgeist' to you, you'll return to hypnosis without even thinking about it, sinking deeper and deeper for me each time. Will you do that, Lindsay?"

"Yes, Mark."

"That's wonderful. I'd like to talk with you some more, but you still have work to do. I'm going to count to three now, and when I reach three you will wake up feeling refreshed and alert. You will not have to remember that you have been hypnotized; you will simply remember that you helped me to settle a bet with my friends. When your shift is over, you will come sit down with us for a while. Do you understand?"

"Okay."

"Good. One, feeling the energy returning to your muscles. Two, waking up, and fully awake on ... three."

Lindsay's eyes fluttered open and she looked around at us. "Sorry, I sort of zoned out there for a second. Is there anything else you guys need?"

"Not this minute," I answered. "We may want another round in a bit, though."

"That's fine," she said. "I'm supposed to go off shift in a few minutes, though, so I'll give your ticket to Phil. He's my relief."

"In that case, we can settle up now," I suggested. "No sense in Phil getting your tip."

That got me a wink and a laugh. "Sure thing, guys. I'll be right back." She slipped out of my seat and headed back to the bar.

As soon as Lindsay was out of earshot, Jerry poked me in the ribs. "Why didn't you follow through, man?"

"Because there wasn't time," I explained. "How long do you think her boss would let her sit down with us on the clock? We'll finish this when she's off duty, so I can do it right."

Dave snickered. "So, you expect her to come sit with us?"

"She agreed to it," I pointed out.

"And you expect her to just drop back into trance when you say 'zeitgeist'?"

"Do you doubt she will?"

"It's not guaranteed by any means," he said. "You don't know what her trance depth was, and you didn't do anything to reinforce the suggestion. I'd say it's fifty-fifty at best."

Lindsay came back with our tab, which we put on my Visa. I overtipped; it was the least I could do under the circumstances. A short while later, she walked up to the table minus her apron and name tag. "I'm off duty now, guys," she announced.

I scooted over and patted the bench beside me. "Why don't you sit with us for a bit?"

Her eyes met mine and she smiled sweetly. "Thanks," she said. "I think I will."

We summoned Phil and ordered Lindsay a beer. She accepted it graciously, raising her glass to us. "What are we drinking to, guys?"

"To zeitgeist," Dave answered slyly.

"Okay," she said, completely unaffected by the word. "To zeitgeist."

We clinked glasses. As soon as Lindsay's was back on the table, I turned to her. "Zeitgeist, Lindsay." A look of puzzlement came over her and then faded quickly as her eyes glazed over and closed. Her body slumped toward me, totally relaxed. "Very good," I said. "Keep sinking, deeper and deeper, relaxing and drifting. Going deeper and deeper with each breath you take, with each word I say. Deeper and deeper." I kept it up, deepening her trance until she was so limp and still that I had to hold her to keep her from sliding to the floor.

I looked across the table at my friends. "Tell you what, guys," I said. "I know you didn't think I could even get this far; right about now, you may be regretting the whole bet. So I'll give you one chance to back out of it, right now. I'll wake her up and we all go home, or you can stick with it and we'll see what happens. What do you say?"

Jerry looked to Dave, who examined Lindsay's face thoughtfully. "You're right about one thing at least," Dave said. "I didn't think you had the skill to successfully hypnotize someone this deeply on the first attempt. Obviously you've been practicing."

"Maybe a little," I admitted with a shrug. "Strictly in the name of research, of course."

"Of course. And has that research included hypnotic seduction before?"

I grinned slyly. "According to you, that's not possible."

"That's not an answer."

"No, it's not. I'm not going to give you a straight answer to that question. But I will tell you this much: everyone that I've hypnotized prior to tonight was a volunteer who knew what I intended to do and gave permission first. Does that help?"

Now Dave was grinning. "Probably more than you intended it to, Mark. She didn't give you permission for anything; that tells me that the first time you suggest something she doesn't like, she'll wake up and slap you. I'll stick with the bet."

"Okay. Remember, I gave you the chance. What about you, Jerry?"

I could see the nervousness in Jerry's face. He gulped some of his beer before answering. "Dave seems pretty sure of himself," he finally said. "I'll call your bluff."

"So be it." Shifting in the seat, I turned my attention back to Lindsay. "Tell me, Lindsay, do you have a boyfriend?"

"Yes," she murmured.

"Does he live with you?"

"No."

"Do you have sex with him?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever had sex with him in a public place?"

"No."

"Do you like to suck his cock?"

She giggled lightly. "Yes."

"Would you consider sucking his cock in a public place, if you thought nobody could see you?"

Another giggle. "Yes."

Dave groaned and looked pained -- the bet was lost, and he knew it.

"Listen to me carefully, Lindsay," I said, fighting to keep my voice down despite the growing sense of triumph. "Tonight, I am your boyfriend. We are lovers, and have been for some time. I love eating your pussy, and you love sucking my cock. Just being with me, hearing my voice and sitting next to me in this bar, is enough to get you sexually aroused. In fact, the longer we sit here talking, the more aroused you will become. You will try to ignore the growing sexual desire that will come over you, but your body will continue to want sex more and more the longer we sit here. You will long for my cock. You will fantasize about having sex with me on top of this table with a roomful of people watching, and that fantasy will get you even more aroused." I checked my watch and saw that it was 10:10 in the evening. "By 10:30, you will be so aroused that you can no longer control the desire for any kind of sex. You will find an excuse to get under the table. Once you are down there, where nobody can see you, you will crawl up between my legs and suck my cock. You will keep sucking, getting more and more aroused, feeling more and more pleasure, until I have an orgasm or tell you to stop. If I do have an orgasm, then you will have one too. Do you understand?"

"I understand."

"Good. At the count of three you will wake up. Your conscious mind won't remember any of these instructions -- you won't even realize you have been hypnotized tonight -- but your subconscious will make sure that you obey my suggestions. One ... two ... three."

Her eyes opened again, found mine, and almost immediately began to smolder. She put a hand behind my neck and pulled me in for a deep, soft kiss that seemed to last an hour. She was a great kisser. I relaxed and

enjoyed it, playing the role with gusto, until we were interrupted by Phil. "Can I get you anything else?"

"I have what I need," she told him with a lusty wink.

"So it seems," he observed. "Are you going to introduce me to your friends?"

"This gorgeous hunk," she replied, tussling my hair, "is Mark. And these guys are his friends ... uh ... " Her face showed confusion.

"Dave," I prompted, pointing to Dave. "And the other guy is Jerry."

"That's right," she said, relief spreading over her pretty features. "Dave and Jerry. Mark's friends, Dave and Jerry."

We waved Phil off and settled into small talk. Each of us had an eye on Lindsay, studying her, as we talked sports and politics, for signs she was responding to my suggestions.

The signs weren't hard to pick up on. Within a minute of Phil's departure, Lindsay had scooted herself up against me on the bench. She touched me often on the arm and hand, and with increasing frequency on the leg. Her right hand toyed unconsciously with the top button of her blouse, and at the slightest witticism from me she would lean into me and laugh heartily. By 10:25 she was practically sitting in my lap, stroking my thigh with her right hand while her left played with my shirt collar. My right arm ended up behind her, my hand resting lightly on her outside hip. I was hard as nails and everyone at the table knew it.

At 10:28 Phil brought us what would be our last round. Lindsay was squirming in her seat by then, her legs grinding against each other, her arm brushing hard against her own chest as she stroked my thigh. The heat seemed to rise from her body in visible waves.

At 10:30 by the Budweiser clock on the wall, she seemed to suddenly calm down. She sat up a little straighter and reached for her beer to take a sip. Somehow the glass slipped from her hand and landed -- you guessed it -- right in my lap. I groaned as cold beer soaked the front of my pants.

"Oh, honey!" she gasped. "I'm so sorry. Don't move, I'll get a towel." She jumped up and accosted Phil, who provided her with two towels from behind the bar. She dropped one on the seat next to me to sop up the

pool of beer there, and crawled under the table with the other. "Just a second," she assured me. "I'll get this taken care of."

I felt her wiping around the floor at my feet with the towel. She handed the glass up to me, undamaged, and wiped some more around my seat area. Then I felt the towel pressing hard against my bulging crotch, and her hand took a firm grip on the outline of my cock and squeezed. "Oh, dear," she said lustily. "This beer really has a head on it."

Before I could respond, I saw her leering up at me as her fingers opened my zipper. In a moment my cock was free. She made a show of wiping it off with her towel, then breathed on it gently, sending tingling sensations up and down my shaft. Then, while Dave and Jeff watched in disbelief, she took my cock into her mouth and deep-throated me.

My mind went into sensory shock. *Holy shit, she's doing it*, I kept thinking to myself, while every nerve ending in my cock sang Hallelujah. I became dimly aware of Phil bringing Lindsay a new glass and asking if we were all right, and Jerry shoos him off. Meanwhile, Lindsay was taking care of me with such skill that I really couldn't think straight.

Between the anticipation and the thrill of the semi-public locale, it was the shortest blowjob of my life. I exploded into Lindsay's mouth very soon, and as I did I felt her sucking suddenly get longer and stronger as she climaxed too. We remained locked together while we rode out our orgasms, Lindsay draining every drop from my spigot, then slowly relaxed. Lindsay tucked my little guy away lovingly, zipping with care and giving me a tender pat on the crotch, then slithered back up to the bench beside me. She took a long pull of her new beer, savoring it, and then put it down. "Thanks for the drink," she said to Dave and Jerry, then slipped out of the booth and sashayed to the ladies' room.

"Jesus H. Christ," Jerry said, shaking his head in wonder. "How the fuck did you do that?"

Dave answered for me. "Part luck, part technique. Mark convinced her that he is her boyfriend, and that sucking him off is something she normally does; that made it less of a stretch to ask her to do it now. He also stressed that nobody would see her do it, to make it easier for her to agree. He got lucky in that she turned out to be a really good hypnotic subject with no hang-ups about oral sex; if she were more inhibited by nature, she would have rejected the suggestions."

"Maybe," I said, smirking. "Then again, maybe I'm just that good. Either way, I believe we have a debt to settle." Wallets came out and a pair of fifty-dollar bills crossed the table in my direction. "Thank you," I told them. "Now I hope this will put an end to disparaging my hobby."

Jerry grinned sheepishly. "You're still a pervert -- but I don't think I'll be betting against you again soon."

Dave just sighed and extended his hand. "I still think there was more luck than skill involved here," he said. "But I'll admit your writing is closer to reality than most. The next story should be interesting to read."

Lindsay came back from the bathroom with the glow still radiating from her face. Rather than sit down, she took my hand and pulled me toward her. "I hate to break up the party, guys," she said to my friends, "but do you mind if I take Mark home now? We've got some urgent business to attend to." The heat in her gaze left no doubt about what the urgent business was.

"Not at all," Dave said, gulping. "We'll take care of this. It was really nice meeting you."

"Same here," she purred, and led me out the door. I barely had time to grab my coat.

I followed Lindsay back to her place in my car. She had a nice townhouse in Aspen Hill, with ample parking. My cock swelled with anticipation as she unlocked her door and led me inside.

As soon as the door closed I was whipped around and a pair of hot, sensuous lips locked onto mine. Hands grabbed hastily at the back of my shirt, yanking it free from my pants. I felt her fumbling at my buttons and responded in kind, pulling open the front of her blouse and reaching inside to grab a handful of breast cupped in satin. She moaned at my touch, let go of the shirt and snaked a hand straight down the front of my pants. She found my cock and locked onto it, letting out a pleased grunt as it grew hard between her fingers.

With a caveman grunt of my own I put both hands under her firm, toned buttocks and lifted her off the floor. She yanked the bra upward, exposing her breasts, and smothered my face between them. My mouth found a nipple and teased it into rigidity while my hands squeezed her

butt. I hefted her up a little higher, tilting my head to see where I was going, and walked her toward the living room.

"Upstairs," she moaned, her hands clutching at my shoulders. I veered toward the stairway and mounted it slowly, keeping her weight balanced. I spotted the bedroom and kicked the partially-open door out of my way. My pants were down to my knees by the time I reached the bed, so I let them fall the rest of the way as I dropped Lindsay onto the bed. She squealed in delight at the impact and quickly set about getting the blouse off the rest of the way. I hooked my fingers around the waistband of her shorts and yanked them off, soaked panties and all. Her glistening slot beckoned to me so I dropped to my knees right there, letting her legs ride on my shoulders, and dove in.

Her taste was delicious. I had her writhing and squealing, blouse still halfway over her head, bra still hanging loosely around her collarbone, as I brought her to orgasm with my kisses and caresses. She grabbed at me, trying to pull me up to her, and succeeded in ripping my shirt as it came off over my head. Finally, when she'd had at least two good orgasms, I let her pull me up onto the bed next to her and kiss me, sharing her taste, fencing with our tongues while she caught her breath. I fondled her breasts, teasing the nipples into erection once again, until she pushed me onto my back. "Don't move," she instructed.

Lindsay slid down the bed and pulled off my briefs, then kissed her way up my thighs slowly. I felt fingers playing with my balls, a warm hand pumping my cock, and then the velvety-smooth sensation of breasts enveloping me. She rubbed herself up and down my shaft, bringing impassioned groans from me, until my hips started to flex up and down on their own. Then she mounted me, her socket so wet that she slipped right down over me without a hitch. Her inner muscles clamped down tight and she reached back behind her, tickling my balls with her finger tips. "Come on, lover," she said, staring into my eyes. "Come for me now. You know you want to ... you know you're going to ... come for me."

It was inevitable; even with the blowjob in the bar, I only lasted a few seconds under that treatment. I came hard, pulsing inside her, my toes curling and my eyes rolling back into the top of my head. She rode me all the way, running her hands over my chest, encouraging me with her voice, until I was spent. Then she slid off me, snuggled up inside my arm, and we both went to sleep.

I woke up alone the next morning, still on top of the covers. The shower was running; I got up and found Lindsay there, soaping up. On an impulse, I slid the discreet glass door aside and joined her.

"Morning," she said with a contented smile. "Sleep well?"

"Very." I took the cloth from her hand. "Allow me?"

She stretched out her arms and leaned back against the wall of the stall. "By all means."

I finished soaping her up, paying loving attention to her breasts and bottom, being extra gentle with her center, just loving the opportunity to caress her entire body. I snuck a quick suckle at her breast, but she gave me a playful slap on the back of the head. "Didn't you get enough last night?"

"I never get enough," I declared.

"Don't I know it? Okay, my turn." She took the cloth from me, put some fresh body wash on it, and soaped me up. She made very sure my cock and balls were nice and clean.

With a little more fooling around we dried off. I went to the closet and pulled out fresh clothes for myself. When I got back to the bedroom, Lindsay was holding up the pants I'd worn the night before. The two fifty-dollar bills from Dave and Jerry were in her hand.

"You do intend to give this back to them, don't you?" she asked.

"Do I have to? I'd rather spend it on you."

She chuckled at that. "Nice try," she chided me. "But you know you can't do that. It wasn't a fair bet, Mark."

"Hey -- they never asked me if we knew each other already. I didn't lie; I didn't even pick you, Dave did."

"If only he knew," she said, smiling.

"You were a great subject," I said, smiling back.

That got me another chuckle. "I was, wasn't I?" She dropped the pants in the hamper and came closer, letting her bath towel fall away. "You know

something, Mark? There are a few parts of last night that I don't remember all that clearly. I must be a method actress."

I embraced her and took a deep breath, loving the mixed fragrances of soap and shampoo and Lindsay. "It was a lot of fun," I said.

"Yes, it was," she replied. Too late, I saw the mischievous gleam in her eye. She reached out with a forefinger and touched the bridge of my nose. "Now it's my turn."

Her voice echoed in my brain as the world faded away ...

-wg
2/17/01