

Kelly

(Inspired by Mike C, based on characters in his novel: “James”
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Chapter 6

Kelly woke first in the morning and found she had moved through the night ending on her back with Laura’s arm draped across her. Finding her resolve, she kissed the beautiful girl quietly sleeping beside her.

“Good morning sleepy head,” Kelly said. “Time for us to get up and go see if Todd is hard at work yet.”

Laura smiled at Kelly before reaching up to give her a tender kiss.

“My god,” Laura said suddenly, “It’s Monday already. I have to go to work this afternoon.”

“No problem” said Kelly. “It’s still early and we need to have breakfast.”

“Hmm, sounds good,” said Laura getting out of bed. Pulling on one of the multitude of T-shirts Kelly had in her closet, Laura followed her to the kitchen where Kelly was setting out two bottles of juice, a fist full of vitamins, a few stalks of celery, a carrot and an orange.

Laura groaned. “Don’t tell me this is your idea of breakfast.”

“Chew slowly baby. It’ll last longer that way.”

Laura swallowed the pills and drank the juice and sat forlornly chewing on the celery and carrot when all of a sudden she felt her stomach growl in a menacing way.

“Ah Kelly. I think I might have eaten something that disagreed with me last night. I’m getting cramps.”

“Well it wasn’t me,” Kelly said with a pretend pout. “But seriously, you might want to think of moving to the bathroom. The first few times with the ‘go-juice’ can be an experience on its own!”

“Oh no!” screamed Laura as she made the dash for the bathroom. “Argh... I should have known... Prune juice...” Her voice faded away as the bathroom door slammed shut.

Todd woke up to an empty apartment and an empty feeling. It felt strange, because for Todd, women had come and gone from his life on a regular basis, but he had never felt empty in the morning. He loved women. He treated them right and never made any promises. In the years since his sexual awakening, he had never had to look far for female companionship. The strange thing was as his reputation as a photographer grew he looked less and less, though the opportunities increased. He had convinced himself he would remain a bachelor for life - he liked his life and had rationalized that a woman would crowd it, but so much had changed in the last week.

First there was Kelly. She had changed since their encounter with the “James Gang” at Regan’s. For the first time in a long time he had seen her really happy, and then these last few days, she had taken a nose-dive. He felt her pain and wished he could do something to take it from her, but she didn’t want to share this with him. Todd knew she had spent the previous night with Tony, and tried to call him at his hotel. Todd knew Tony well enough to know where he would be staying and was surprised to hear he had checked out already. And Todd was not one to pry. If Kelly wanted to tell him she would do so in her own good time.

Then there was Laura. There was no denying she was a beautiful girl, but beauty did little for a photographer who had made so many models famous. It was the rest of her that captured his heart and mind. She was a free spirit who had been wounded, but still had managed to keep her pride and sense of humor. He loved the way she could read his thoughts and her playfulness - she laughed with him and her laughter was contagious. He could see himself spending a great deal of time with her, possibly the most time he had ever considered spending with a girl, but she had brought up the one secret love in his life. Laura had seen through his façade and made him admit his feelings towards Kelly. In a matter of just three days, he found himself in love with two women. One he had loved for years but had never acted on because he feared it would end their friendship and another who he had known just a few days but with an adventurous streak to match his own.

Finally, the call from Kelly last night, freely admitting her love for him, had boggled Todd’s mind. Laura had made it clear she didn’t expect him to be sexually faithful and had more than hinted she might have feelings towards Kelly herself. There was a lot of love going around right now and yet Kelly was still hurting.

Shaking his head he climbed out of bed. A quick shower, his vitamins and juice and in his usual attire of scrubs, he headed downstairs. While the studio hardly ever had any walk in clients, especially since Todd stopped portrait work, Gloria’s daughter Vanetta would be coming in to take care of the phones while Todd worked in the dark room or dealt with advertising clients.

New York would be calling with their reports and questions and then there would be the inevitable calls from their models with the usual complaints or complimentary remarks. He hoped Kelly would show up soon – he really didn't like this part of the business, preferring to stay behind the camera and create art. Yet he still felt concerned about Kelly and if need be, Vanetta could route any important calls through to him on his cell or to Kelly's.

Vanetta had been a godsend. Todd and Kelly had been in business just over a year when Gloria had called Kelly out of the blue saying she was in Charlotte. Todd remembered Gloria from the swimsuit shoot in Jamaica and knew the ever-outgoing Kelly had made friends with the older woman.

Gloria had eased a lot of Kelly's problems with the house during those first years when Kelly would be gone for days at a time. Then, about a year later, Gloria's daughter arrived. She wanted an education and Todd had pulled a few strings at the University of North Carolina, and Vanetta was enrolled in a MBE program. Her grades put her in the top of her class and everyone was delighted with her. When she mentioned wanting to find work to supplement her allowance, Todd had suggested to a willing Kelly that Vanetta would be great for handling the phone and correspondence. For a 22-year-old student, she was level headed and goal oriented. Now Todd and Kelly could easily leave for days at a time without worries about answering services or call forwarding.

Delton, her brother arrived a year later, and Todd had helped him set up his own landscaping business, something the 20-year-old seemed to enjoy very much. Again, using contacts Todd and Kelly had made in the Charlotte community, Delton had quite a few corporate clients. Delton also had a real knack for growing things and had a small greenhouse outside of the building where he kept his equipment parked. Delton grew a wide assortment of vegetables, and to Todd's delight, some of the best medicinal marijuana to be found in the southern states. Delton only grew a few plants each year for his family and for Todd. Boiling the seeds made a great pain killing tea, though Todd was less interested in headache relief than he was in the buzz he got from smoking the leaves.

Seeing it was nearly 9 o'clock, Todd grabbed an apple from the kitchenette in the studio and unlocked the door just in time to see Delton dropping Vanetta off. He often felt envious of the close family relationship Gloria had with her kids. Todd gave a wave to Delton as he pulled away.

"Good morning Todd," said Vanetta, smiling as she entered the studio. "Mom sent some muffins for you this morning, in case you were hungry."

Todd laughed and thanked her.

Vanetta dropped her schoolbooks on her desk, turned the studio phone on and checked the answering machine while the computer booted up. Ten minutes later she had a stack of neatly written notes from the answering machine, and a larger stack of email printouts. "Do you want to look through these Todd?" she asked. "Mom said Kelly might not be in this morning. Is she feeling okay?"

"Just put them on Kelly's desk," he said. "There can't be anything too important or the phone would be ringing off the hook by now. If Kelly doesn't show up soon, I'll give them a look over, but thanks for asking about her. She has a friend staying with her right now who will see she gets feeling better, though I'll probably give her a call and check how she is feeling if we don't see her in the next hour."

"Okay," said Vanetta as she walked back to her desk. "By the way," she said with a coy smile, "Mom says you've got a new girlfriend and this one is special."

Todd blushed. Vanetta laughed.

"Oh, and before I forget," she added, "Delton is going to tear out his ganja this week and wants to know if a pound will last you till the next time he plants some."

Todd smiled. His one small vice and this past weekend had been made more memorable because of the high quality pot.

"That should be more than enough," Todd said. "Just tell Delton to let me know when I should come around to pick it up, and no arguments about me paying for it either this time."

"You just don't understand do you Todd?" Vanetta said with a hint of impatience. "Delton grows it for Mom and the family. You've become part of the family, so Delton doesn't mind giving it to you. Otherwise, what we don't need, he would just burn. If he takes money from you, it would make him a dealer, and that goes against everything Mom ever taught us."

Todd held up his hands surrendering. "Okay, enough already," he said laughing. "I see your point. Now since the phone isn't ringing off the hook, don't you have some home-work you could be working on?"

With a self-satisfied smirk, Vanetta turned in her seat and opened her books. Her mind though was on Todd and Kelly. She couldn't understand how these two had managed to survive without family support, and keep their sanity. But what she had said to Todd was true. They had become part of Gloria's family by way of an unspoken adoption. They were nice people and went out of their way to help. She knew the studio was not so busy that they couldn't take care of the phone calls, except for those rare times they were away on the road. She had promised her mother she would not let this opportunity go to waste and studied extra hard to make both Kelly and Todd proud of her.

Todd, after minutes of indecision finally picked up the phone and dialed Kelly's number.

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Kelly answered the phone on the first ring. An ashen-faced Laura sat across from her slowly sipping a cup of herbal tea with honey.

"Hi Todd," she said. "I was wondering when you would call."

"Is everything okay?" Todd asked, concern in his voice.

"Well," Kelly laughed, "I'm feeling better, but I'm afraid Laura has a minor problem."

Laura quickly shook her head no. She didn't want Todd to know she had spent 20 minutes on the toilet.

"What's the problem?" he asked.

Being tactful, Kelly asked him if he remembered the first few days after she had started him on the go-juice.

"Oh, god... How could I forget?" He said. "Hey, wait a minute, you didn't give her that stuff did you?"

"Not to worry Todd," Kelly said. "I just started her on a regimen of proper herbal care. She's taking something right now that will make her feel better in a little bit. We'll be in as soon as she is up to it, but I think I'll call her boss and tell him that she won't be able to come in to work today. You won't mind if she spends the day at the studio will you?"

"Of course not," said Todd.

"Good, then you should see us in about an hour." Kelly said. "We both send our love! Oh, and while I think of it, Laura said you shot some good pictures of her in some lingerie. Could you be a sweetheart and scan some of the film? I was thinking about Jorge's idea of expanding his catalog to include his new lingerie line and I think she would be the perfect wholesome model for the catalog. Of course I haven't seen the prints, what do you think?"

"Hmm..." said Todd thoughtfully. "You're right. I've made some prints and she would be ideal for his catalog. Besides, Mike is his studio photographer and last I heard Marge was still doing make up for Mike. This could be a decent way for her to break into the business. But how does she feel about it?" Todd asked.

"I already told her that she wouldn't be showing anything in print that she doesn't want seen and I said the same thing about Mike and Marge that you did. I just think she needs a bit of prep work and some confidence building."

“Okay” said Todd, “I’ll get the scans done and sent off to see how interested he is while I wait for you two to make it in.”

“Sounds like a plan!” Kelly said. “See you when we get there.”

“Oh god,” Laura said. “It’s happening again,” and with the words trailing behind her she dashed off to the bathroom.

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Kelly had suggested to Laura, after her first unexpected encounter with the porcelain seat of relief, that she call in sick, but Laura had refused saying the assistant manager who was in charge of the shift she was on would turn nasty and cruel. He liked to belittle the staff in front of customers. Seeing that Laura would not be able to handle an eight hour shift, when Laura had left for her second run, Kelly decided to call Arby’s herself.

Someone obviously in a hurry answered the phone brusquely.

“May I speak to the senior manager in charge please?” Kelly asked nicely.

“You’re talking to him,” replied the voice on the other end. “No, we aren’t hiring, no we don’t deliver, and no, you can’t talk to any of the staff. Any other questions not covered by those three answers?”

Kelly was a bit put off by the man’s demeanor, but since she was calling on Laura’s behalf, decided to bite her tongue.

“Actually I’m calling on behalf of Laura Williams who won’t be able to make it in to work today,” Kelly said. “She’s feeling a bit under the weather.”

“Listen lady, I don’t care if she’s feeling under a hurricane, you tell that little tart to haul her cute little ass in here on time or she’s fired.” And hung up the phone.

“Well,” thought Kelly, “so much for the friendly call.”

She punched in another number on the phone and after letting the receptionist know who was calling was immediately put through to her favorite lawyer.

“Kelly,” said a warm voice, “what can I do for you today?”

Kelly and Todd had met Steve, a bright and ambitious young lawyer, when they first settled in Charlotte. At the time he was struggling to build up a corporate clientele for himself, as he didn’t want join an established firm. He was the self-confident type who knew what he wanted in life and would work hard for it. Steve was just the kind of person that attracted Todd and Kelly, quick to cut to the heart of the matter, not interested in wasting time, meticulous in his details and careful in his research. Steve was the one who had finally come up with a suitable name for their new business venture. Now he was paid a yearly retainer by “TKO Inc.” and made a healthy income keeping all

contracts legal and enforced. In the years since they had opened, Steve had moved to a larger office, and gotten himself a partner who specialized in entertainment law. Between the two of them, they made a formidable team.

Kelly quickly explained her phone call to Arby's leaving not a single detail out.

"Hmm" said Steve after a few minutes thought. "Does she want to go back to work there?"

"No" said Kelly. "She probably would have given her notice today anyway, but she really is under the weather. I can get medical papers to prove she is quite dehydrated right now and in no condition to work."

"No, I don't think it will go that far Kelly," Steve said. "And he referred to her as a tart and said to get her cute little ass in?"

"Yep!" said Kelly with a smile he couldn't see. Steve could be ruthless, and many of the people who knew him regarded him with a mixed amount of fear and respect.

"I happen to know the owners of that franchise," he said. "I guess the question is, do you want to make an issue out of this?"

Kelly laughed. "No, no issue Steve. Laura herself didn't hear it and she was going to give her notice, but I think a written apology would be nice and a severance check would fit the bill. I'm sorry I can't tell you which assistant manager I spoke to, but from what Laura has told me, this is not his first time badgering female staff."

"It's okay Kelly," Steve said with that confident tone. "You asked to speak to the senior management and he said he was it, right?"

"Yep."

"Are you going to be at home for a while?"

"Probably for the next hour anyway," Kelly said, "then we'll be at the studio."

"Okay, leave it with me. I'll get back to you as soon as I can."

"You're a sweetheart Steve."

"How about you tell my wife that next time I'm working late?" he said.

Kelly laughed, said she would and said goodbye.

Just as she hung up the phone she could hear the toilet flushing, and a few minutes later Laura walked back into the kitchen on shaky legs.

"God," Laura said, "I have to be 50 pounds lighter now. I'm not sure if I like this healthy living stuff."

Kelly put some ice in a zip lock bag and wrapped a tea towel around it and placed it on Laura's forehead.

"Hold that there," Kelly said. "It will break the sweats down. Actually, it's only the first day that you get this reaction. After today you will be as good as new, and this

will only be a memory. What you are losing now has been sitting inside you for some time. Stick with this program, and you will lose some weight, but not 50 pounds.” Kelly said laughing.

“Now, I need to get some fluids into you, and then I can tell you how long before the worst of it is over.”

“How can you tell that?” Laura asked.

“Easy” said Kelly as she lifted half a watermelon out of the crisper. “This will give you vitamins and fluid and you will swallow the seeds. When you see them come out, you will know that you have been thoroughly cleansed!”

“Ugh” said Laura. “I never swallow the seeds.”

Kelly arched her eyebrows at Laura and said, “Never?”

Laura realizing what she had just said laughed. “Well, almost never.”

With a bit more herbal tea and honey to help the watermelon and seeds go down, the color started to come back to Laura’s cheeks. Assuring Kelly she was feeling better, the two girls got dressed and ready to head to the studio.

“I usually don’t drive down,” Kelly explained, “I enjoy the nice leisurely stroll, but considering your ‘condition,’ a ten minute walk might be too long, so I thought it might be safer if I drove.”

“Well, I hope I’m through this cleansing soon,” Laura said, “I have to be in to work by five.”

“Oh,” said Kelly. “I’m sorry but I forgot to tell you that you have the day off. I called in for you when you were occupied.”

“And Tim didn’t put up a big stink?” Laura asked amazed. “He can be such a prick.”

“No,” Kelly lied, “He was the perfect gentleman and hoped you would be feeling better soon.”

“No way did you talk to Tim then,” Laura stated.

“Oh” said Kelly backing the Elantra out of the driveway, “I can assure you that I definitely talked to Tim.”

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“Hello Vanetta,” said a smiling Kelly as they entered the studio. They had arrived just before lunch.

“Hi Kelly,” came the lyrical response.

“Laura, this is Vanetta,” Kelly said making the introductions. “Vanetta is G’s daughter and works us to the bone!”



“Hi Laura,” said Vanetta rising to shake her hand. “I’ve already heard about you,” she said with a big smile. “And don’t believe a word Kelly says about me making her work, she barely stops moving long enough for me to catch her!” she added with a laugh.

Kelly looked at the stack of notes and letters on her desk. “No rest for the wicked,” she said with a smirk. “By the way, speaking of the wicked... where’s Todd?”

“After he called you, he said he had to make some scans from the negatives of Laura,” Vanetta said. “He had me email them to Jorge and then went back into the darkroom. He said he wanted to run some more prints.”

Kelly looked at the light above the darkroom door; turned and said to Laura, “See... I didn’t barge in Saturday, I’ll bet the bulb is burned out on his busy sign!”

Vanetta looked curiously at Kelly while Laura blushed.

“Laura, would you mind telling your man that I’d like to see the pictures as well, and then tell him to fix his light?”

Laura’s face lit up with a smile as she headed for the darkroom.

Kelly got herself a bottle of mineral water from the well-stocked fridge and asked Vanetta if the herbal store had delivered on time that morning.

“Yes they sure did!” Vanetta laughed. “Poor Todd didn’t realize you always tip the delivery guy for bringing it all in and the guy stocked the fridge and the closet and then stood there while Todd thanked him for being so courteous!”

“Oh God, he didn’t?” Kelly asked. “I can’t believe he’s been here this long and has never seen me tip for delivery. I know he does with his food delivery...”

“It’s okay Kelly,” Vanetta said. “I took ten dollars out of petty cash for the poor guy and then tried to explain it to Todd afterwards. But I’m still not sure if he got it.”

“I know,” sighed Kelly, “he’s a genius with a camera but sometimes he can be so immersed in his work he forgets the rest of the world.”

Kelly asked Vanetta if she wanted a drink.

“Diet 7-Up please,” she replied.

Kelly pulled a cold one out of the fridge and a glass for Vanetta and set it on her desk as she sauntered over to her own.

It took Kelly about half an hour to go through all the messages. None of the phone calls required return calls, and with her own computer fired up she responded to a few emails from clients and a few from models. She kept a database of all complaints and compliments her models gave regarding assignments they had been on. Too many complaints and the client would end up on their ‘unwanted work’ list. Good clients who treated her models like people with feelings always got the best service. Although the New York office sent her weekly updates of who had worked for what company, Kelly

kept a personal log of models reactions and experiences. Once a year she would compile the information and update her preferred client list. These people would receive a personal letter from Kelly thanking them for treating her models well, and advising them of their preferred status. It also helped to cross-reference how much work each client had provided in the year, and which models they preferred. Kelly had seen the change in models requested over the last few years. It helped her when people applied for work or when, as in the case of Laura, she met someone who would be perfect for a client.

Kelly was just finishing her last response when the phone rang. Vanetta answered, “TKO, how can I help you?” Looking up at Kelly she put the caller on hold and said, “It’s your lawyer. Are you free for him?”

Kelly nodded as she hit the send button on her email and heard Vanetta say, “Just one moment sir, I’ll patch you through.”

Kelly picked up the phone and pushed the blinking button. “Steve, what have you got for me?”

Steve laughed. “Well Kelly, if it’s okay with Laura, there is a letter of apology waiting along with a check for six months wages if she signs an agreement not to pursue any further action, AND, Tim Blake, that’s the Assistant Manager’s name, will have to attend ‘sensitivity classes’ if he wants to keep his job. Standard restrictions of course will apply to Laura not discussing this incident with anyone or disclosing any details of the settlement. If she’s agreeable to this, we can have this wrapped up before the day is over.”

“That’s great Steve!” Kelly said. “I’ll have to pass it by Laura, but I’m pretty sure this will be more than satisfactory.”

“I’m glad to be of service,” Steve said with a laugh, “I’d like to have gotten more for her, but I think this is the best we can expect without taking it to court. I didn’t think you wanted to go that route. This is a very fair settlement and she gets the money immediately without any mudslinging.”

“You’re right as always Steve. It’s fast and fair, and there’s no reason to make this some titillating news filler.”

Steve just laughed.

“Just one more thing Steve,” Kelly said. “Don’t take your fee out of her settlement okay? Bill TKO for it. Laura is one of our special people.”

“Not a problem Kelly.” Steve knew about Todd and Kelly’s special people, after all, when he was a struggling young lawyer he had been one of them. Although he had told them his idea for TKO was an abbreviation for “Techno-graphical Knock Outs”, the idea had come from their contagious enthusiasm and had sparked the idea of “Todd and Kelly Overwhelm.”

“Great,” Kelly said. “Love and hugs to Melanie.”

Kelly sat back in her chair well satisfied with Steve’s results. It was the 21st century and no one deserved to be treated like property.

She wondered for a minute what was taking Todd and Laura so long, and then slapped her forehead. “Duh Kelly. Where have you been?” she thought to herself.

Vanetta finally closed up her books. “I’m sorry there isn’t more I could do today Kelly. I always feel like I’m getting paid to study. The least you could do is let me clean up in here.”

“Oh” Kelly said. “Now I’m forgetting things. You’ve got classes this afternoon right?”

“Yes, right through till eight tonight,” Vanetta said.

“Okay, but I want you to understand something Miss Etta. You are doing a great job doing just what you do. So today was a quiet day, and I wasn’t here most of it anyway, but you know there are days when things aren’t so quiet, and neither Todd nor I are free. You do a wonderful job of making our clients feel important and they know their messages will get through. We have someone come in to clean the studio once a week, and you know there are times when we’re not here for days. It makes both Todd and me happy, and secure, that you’re watching out for our interests when we’re on the road. As for you studying... If there is nothing happening, you might as well get in all the study time you can. God knows you’ve taken on a course load that would make the average student cringe. You just keep on doing what you’ve been doing, and everybody’s happy okay?”

Vanetta leaned over and gave Kelly a kiss on the cheek.

“Thanks Kelly,” she said. “I’ll see you tomorrow.”



Todd knew that Jorge would want to see real prints of the model that might introduce and represent his new lingerie line.

Jorge had wanted to expand his catalog into this market for some time, but had been reluctant. His clothes were meant for real people, and though Todd and Kelly had a fine group of models, none had captured his eye as being “the” one. He didn’t want a standard fashion thin thing, he wanted to appeal to the young newlywed wives, so the model could not make his lingerie look like it only fit the “beautiful” people. He wanted a wholesome “girl-next-door” but with just the right spirit.

Todd knew what Jorge wanted and was quite sure that Laura would fit the designer’s needs. After he had scanned some of the less revealing negatives and given

them to Vanetta to email to Jorge, Todd had brought out his trays and started to print up a storm of 8 x 10 glossies. Those that were a bit too daring, he dodged by hand to blur details until he was satisfied he had a dozen good quality prints. Laura looked sexy and exciting in the photographs and Todd was getting aroused remembering the day he took them. Todd wished he could be the one to do the shoot for Jorge, but the bottom line was that besides not being able to pay Todd what he was worth, it would also infringe on Mike's bread and butter. Mike was the catalog photographer who did all of the shoots for Jorge. Still, Todd thought, it would be a great thrill to be the one who brought Laura into the public eye. He was wondering how Laura was feeling when he heard the darkroom door spin around. There she was, the woman of his desires.

Todd quickly threw the last of the prints into the rinse water and after rinsing and drying his hands he took Laura's head in his hands and kissed her like he hadn't seen her for months.

Laura melted like butter in his embrace and as their tongues dueled her hands slid down the front of his pants, feeling his stiff cock swell more at her touch. His hands moved down to cup her unfettered breasts and as she slid down, he lifted her t-shirt over her head. She returned the favor, pulling his scrubs down, then taking his ever-growing cock into her eager mouth, kissing it all over from the head to his balls before sucking on the helmet and slipping her tongue under his foreskin swirling around and around while her free hand cupped his balls. She could feel him approaching his critical peak and pulled her mouth back just before he shot, reliving the moment they had shared on Saturday. She caught most of his spunk in her mouth, which she eagerly swallowed before latching her hot mouth back on his twitching cock. Todd shook and groaned as her hot tongue washed the last of his seed away, his fingers locked in a white knuckled grip on the counter's edge.

Todd wanting to reciprocate tried to lift Laura on to the counter, but she held him back saying later would be better. They held each other close for a little while, as Todd regained his breath and his heart slowed back towards normal.

Seeing he still had all the chemicals out, Laura asked if he would make an 8 x 10 print of her "best" pose for Kelly.

Understanding a bond was forming between the two girls, the two loves in his life, he slipped the negative into the enlarger and made sure the focus was crystal clear. Finishing this last print, Todd emptied the chemicals into their proper containers while the prints dried.

Laura glanced at the clock and realized they had been in the darkroom over an hour. Slipping her t-shirt back on she helped Todd finish clearing up and they stumbled, blinking out of the darkroom together laughing.

Kelly tried to look sternly at the couple who were still flushed with sexual excitement, glancing at them and her watch, but the lovers were all smiles and Kelly couldn't keep her pretense up any longer.

Pointing to the warning light above the door, Kelly said, "I'd sure fix that light Todd, unless you like people walking in on you with your pants around your ankles."

Todd laughed as he said, "Only if it's you Kell." He gave her a huge smile, he was glad to see her back in good spirits. So much had changed in the last week. He now saw her in a totally different light.

"Honest Kelly," Laura said with a sly smile, "we weren't doing anything except exposing film."

"Aha..." said Kelly, "then maybe you can explain why your t-shirt is on inside out now when it wasn't when you went in there?"

"Oh my God!" Laura said, her cheeks quickly turning beet red. Then she looked down and saw the t-shirt wasn't inside out.

"Gotcha!" Kelly laughed.

Laura laughed, as did Todd. A feeling of free familiarity was forming between them. Laura had brought this to them.

"Lunch time," Kelly said, and headed to the studio kitchenette.

"Oh lord... I don't think I could or should eat another bite," said Laura.

"But I insist sweetie," said Kelly. "You need your nourishment." She stopped and looked closely at Laura. Noticing a small spot on her cheek Kelly kissed it away and smiling, said, "More than what you just had!"

Todd was the one blushing now as he realized Kelly had just licked a drop of his cum from Laura's face. Laura just smiled knowingly, and kissed Kelly full on the mouth, sharing more of the essence of Todd. It was erotic and sensual, but finally they broke their kiss leaving a slender string of saliva stretching and finally breaking from their lips. The silence was heavy in the air. The girls gazed at each other, breathing deeply; still not sure about the feelings they were experiencing.

And Todd got hard.

Kelly pulled out some fresh pita bread and slicing three open she stuffed them with sliced smoked turkey breast, a low fat cheese, lettuce, tomatoes and some chopped cucumber and onion. It took a little while to prepare the lunch and Kelly was grateful that Laura pitched in without a word.

"Beer anyone?" Todd asked.

Kelly looked at him quizzically.

"It's okay Kell," he said. "I did the prints and don't plan on any more darkroom work today. I'll get to the Regan stuff when we get Sherri's release."

“Well in that case,” said Kelly, “I’ll have a glass of dry red wine, thank you.”

“Laura?” Todd asked.

“Oh not for me,” she quickly responded. “I have a touch of a stomach flu and wouldn’t want to risk it.”

“Okay, at the very least some mineral water,” said Kelly.

“Just what I need,” Laura grumbled, “more fluids. I already feel bloated.”

Todd missed the message, but Kelly was quick to run to the storage closet and pull out a fresh bottle of celery seed capsules. “Take two of these with lunch Laura. You had two this morning, but you can’t overdose on them and it will take that bloated feeling away.”

“Are you sure all this healthy stuff is good for me?” asked Laura with a laugh.

“Hey, I used to be an acne faced, 98 pound weakling with limp hair to boot,” said Todd, “now look at me!”

“Okay already” said Laura. “So you have nice hair now and a clear complexion, but you’re still a weakling!”

Kelly laughed and Todd flexed his well-trained and muscled arms.

“So you think I’m a weakling?” he asked defiantly.

“You bet!” said Laura. “I can lick you any day of the week!”

Kelly snorted her wine out through her nose, coughing and sputtering and choking and laughing. Laura got up to hold Kelly’s hands over her head and slap her on the back. “Don’t you laugh too hard Missy. And don’t be tempting fate too much either cause I’m pretty sure I could lick you too!”

Kelly finally caught her breath and wrapping an arm around Laura’s waist softly said, “Tempt, tempt, and tempt.”

Todd got a towel to wipe the table, and lunch was finished in relative quiet and small talk. Todd noticed both girls seemed to be occupied with their own thoughts.

After lunch, Kelly got out the standard contract form, while Todd went to change the light bulb and get the prints out of the dryer.

“I’m sorry Laura,” Kelly said, “but we can’t protect you without one of these.”

Laura just smiled as she signed. “Don’t worry about it Kell. You already told me there were rules and such, and I like what you told me last night. This is business.”

“Thanks Laura,” Kelly said with a smile. “It’s the only really formal thing we do around here. It’s usually a lot easier when we’re less emotionally attached to the person signing. Just to get it perfectly clear though, this does not make you an employee of TKO. We just act as your agents, and I guess in a way, we also act like your protectors.”

“I suppose I should start thinking about giving my notice at work then,” sighed Laura.

“Oops” said Kelly. “That’s something else I sort of forgot to tell you. Tim said you were fired.”

“But, but you said he said I could have the day off.” Laura blurted out standing up. “I need that income!”

“Well, I guess in a manner of speaking that’s what he said, but don’t you worry honey... I got your ass covered!” With that Kelly placed her hands on Laura’s butt and pulled her towards her until Laura was so close she had no choice but to sit in Kelly’s lap to avoid falling over her shoulder.

Kelly calmly explained that Tim had been a bit rude on the phone and that she had taken the liberty of calling the company lawyer.

Laura sat quietly listening but her eyes grew big as she heard the outcome.

“Wow” she finally said. “Tim taking sensitivity classes. Who would have thought...?”

Kelly was surprised to see Laura was more impressed with her former boss having to take the course then the six months wages. This girl sitting in her lap, the one she had the strange attraction to, was definitely not a user. She gave and gave, never expecting a thing. Kelly could see how she had been so easily duped by the jock.

“So,” said Kelly, “if those terms suit you, all you need to do is say yes, and a check will be waiting for you at the lawyers and you can pick it up any time tomorrow. You’ll be working long before the money runs out, I promise.”

Laura kissed Kelly. “You’re too good to me Kelly. What did I do to deserve you AND Todd?”

Kelly gave Laura a kiss back as she said, “That’s funny, and I was just wondering what we did to deserve you!”

Still holding Laura around the waist she dialed Steve’s office and after Laura answered his queries she handed the phone back to Kelly.

“It’ll be all done by tomorrow afternoon Kelly,” he said.

“Thanks Steve. And remember you and Melanie have to come to the company BBQ August 3rd. If we don’t run into any more urgent problems, we’ll get a chance to catch up then.”

“Right!” Steve said. “Nice touch you added this year. We have the invitation on the fridge. ‘A full day of food and fun courtesy of TKO, at Carowinds Park. Bordering a new adventure.’”

Kelly laughed. “So call me hokey,” she said. “Todd’s got a site set up at the campground where real chefs will cook you culinary delights. Those of us from around here will be meeting at the studio where we will take a charter bus to the park. Our people from New York will be picked up at the airport and shuttled over.”

“We’re looking forward to it,” said Steve.

“Great!” said Kelly, “talk to you later.”

Kelly swiveled her chair taking Laura for a spin as she hung up the phone. The motion caused Laura to wrap her arms around Kelly just as Todd was coming out of the darkroom.

“Hey,” he said. “No necking on the job!”

“You’re just jealous,” said Laura giving Kelly a kiss.

“I am not jealous,” said Todd with a three-dollar pout, “just feeling left out is all.”

Suddenly Laura’s eyes widened and she jumped off Kelly’s lap and raced down the hallway. Kelly put her hand to her mouth to cover her smile.

Todd had two envelopes in his hand. The first contained the prints he made in case Jorge called. The other was Laura’s special picture. He spread the pictures for Laura’s portfolio on the desk. Kelly whistled as she went through them.

“She really does stand out on film doesn’t she?”

“Yeah,” said Todd, “and when she relaxed and just had fun with it, she posed like it was second nature to her.”

It was 15 minutes later when a shaky Laura re-appeared. She sank down in the chair facing Kelly. Holding her hand to the side of her mouth so Todd couldn’t see, she silently mouthed the word “watermelon.”

Kelly nodded slightly. “Todd, be a dear and make a pot of tea.”

Todd looked befuddled but went off to make tea. When he was well across the studio and out of earshot, Kelly said, “The worst is over now. What you have to do now is just relax for the day and rest. Now that your system has cleaned out last year’s fast food, drinking a bottle each day will not have this affect on you. If you like you can ask Todd. He’s been taking it for over four years now.”

“Thanks,” said Laura, “but I’ll take your word for it. I’d rather that Todd didn’t know that right now my butt hole feels like it’s on fire!”

Kelly smiled. “Poor baby. You need to put some Aveeno cream on it.”

“I know what that is!” said Laura. “I’ve used that on kids I babysat. It’s diaper rash cream. I think we have some at home.”

“Maybe after you have some tea Todd should take you home to get some. I guarantee you will feel a lot better after a good night’s sleep. Then tomorrow we’ll put out a week’s worth of vitamins for you to take in the morning if you are here. I always have lots of extras at my place if you happen to be there.”

“Thanks Kelly, but I can drive home myself. Remember? I’ve got my car here. Todd drove it back last night after dropping me off at your place. I really should put in



an appearance at home anyway because they have no clue as to what has happened to me in the last few days.”

“Now you just sit and relax. I’ll fix you a cup with lots of honey.”

“Thanks Kelly.”

Kelly got up to help Todd fix the tea and returned with one for Laura and one for herself. Todd wasn’t a big tea drinker and he just had a bottle of mineral water.

They sat quietly looking at the pictures with Kelly commenting on every one of Laura’s best features. Laura looked to Todd who handed her the other envelope.

“Kelly,” she said softly. “I asked Todd to print this one up especially for you. Only Todd has a copy of it and I will NEVER give a copy to anyone else.”

Kelly took the envelope and pulled the print out which Todd had dry mounted on a stiff foam backing. It was a beautiful matte finish, some of Todd’s best paper stock. She looked at the picture and felt her heart race a bit. Her eyes were slightly misted when she looked up again at Laura.

“Thanks Laura. I’m going to keep this in a special place.”

The two girls looked long and deep into each other’s eyes. It was Laura who reached out with her hand taking Kelly’s, and with her other held Todd’s. Todd nodded slowly and thoughtfully. He took Kelly’s other hand forming a circle. All was quiet as they basked in their own thoughts.

It was the ringing of the phone that finally broke the spell.

“TKO, Kelly speaking,” said Kelly.

“Kelly, darling. How are you?”

“Hello Jorge.” Kelly said winking at Todd, “I’m fine, how are you doing?”

“Today, I am doing wonderful. Tell me where you have been hiding this angel?”

“Oh?” said Kelly, “you’re calling on business. Let me put you on speaker phone so Todd can hear what you are saying.” Kelly held a finger to her lips to Laura.

“Todd, you crazy bastard,” said Jorge. “I was just trying to find out from Kelly where you have been hiding this angel. Why didn’t you send me her photos before the last catalog?”

Todd laughed. “Because I knew that you would want her and I think she would look better in your fall catalog.”

“Have you got any prints of her? You know how I hate seeing jpeg’s on screen.”

“I might be able to find some prints Jorge, but you have to realize she is one of our special models. She has been on hold for some time and has never appeared in any magazine or catalog. We want to make sure that she comes out as a fresh face in something worthwhile and not for a single shoot.” Todd smiled as he winked at Laura.

“Let me see the prints then you crazy bastard. If she looks as good in print as on the computer, I will pay for her to come down so Mike can take a few test shots.”

“Whoa there Jorge,” Kelly interrupted. “You know we think you are one of our best clients, but if you want Mike to shoot a roll or two, she gets paid.”

“Ah, always business with you Kelly. Let Todd do the talking. He knows that an artist is never appreciated.”

Todd laughed. “Not that simple Jorge. If I let you have her for a day or two and it’s not a paying job, Kelly will kill me. But trust me. She looks better in print, and if you want her for a test run with Mike, then I’ll see if Kelly won’t let you try her for a reduced rate. You do realize though that the model will not sign a release for you to use anything you shoot unless she gets full payment.”

“Ah, you are starting to sound just like Kelly now.”

“Come on Jorge,” Kelly said, “you mailed what... 300,000 catalogs last spring? You are one of the top ready-to-wear designers and you want to quibble prices for what could be the most stunning girl-next-door this century?”

“Okay, okay. You send me the prints overnight and I’ll pay \$300 per hour if I use the film.”

“Jorge, Jorge,” Kelly said. “You’ll pay \$400 an hour with a guaranteed two day four hour sessions and if you decide you want to use her for your new line, I’ll be nice to you because I like you and let you have the freshest new face for an additional \$200... unless of course you want to arrange for an exclusive.”

“You two,” Jorge finally laughed. “Okay. Deal. I’ll pay for first class tickets, two days at four hours per day at \$400 and if she is as good as you say, I will make her the center piece for my lingerie line.”

“Okay Jorge,” said Kelly, “but only because you are a friend and a good customer. If you like the prints and want Mike to shoot her, Marge does the make-up okay?”

“Okay.”

“Then if you want her as your introduction for your new line, and you place her in your flyers and magazine ads as well, we’ll make you a real good deal.”

“Fair enough,” said Jorge. “So I will see the prints tomorrow?”

“Yes Jorge, just for you!” said Kelly with a laugh.

“Okay then. I’ll call you tomorrow after I see the prints.”

“Bye Jorge.” And Kelly hung up the phone.

“Me?” said Laura incredulous.

“Yep,” said Kelly, “You. Do you like to fly?”

“I don’t know. I’ve never flown before. I’ve never been out of the Carolinas.”

Todd looked at Kelly. "What do you think? Have someone from New York take her by the hand for her first outing or one of us?"

"Preferably one of us, but we haven't been back to the office in New York for quite a few months. So maybe all three of us should go?" Kelly said hopefully.

"That sounds like fun!" Laura said. "Can we share a room?"

"Let's wait to see what Jorge thinks of the prints first before we make any solid plans okay?"

"Okay," said Laura. Her mind was already mulling over the possibilities.

"But now, I have really got to get home and tell my mom what's going on. She's never going to believe this."

"Will you be coming back later?" Todd asked hopefully.

"If you want me to," Laura said shyly. "Besides, I owe you a shower."

It was Kelly's turn to be confused but she didn't pry. "By the way Todd," she said, "Laura wants to get back into school. Do you think you can make a phone call on her behalf? She wants to become a psychologist, and the Applied Health department at the UNC has a part time class schedule and off campus learning. I checked this morning. She's a couple of weeks late for the summer semester, but I'm sure..."

Todd cut her off. "No problem. I'll make a call later this afternoon and see if I can't take her in tomorrow for an interview."

"Wow," Laura said. "You guys seem to know everybody."

Kelly laughed. "Not everybody, but Todd is an easy mark for a good cause and a few years ago, there was this gentleman who gave the university a brand new wing. Todd already had a well-deserved reputation, and when he volunteered to do the portrait, including picking up the tab for the printing, the man was thrilled. So now when you enter the main building you see Todd's handy work front and center on the founder's wall. You can't miss it because we printed 48" wide and 70" high! Needless to say, Todd has a bit of influence at UNC and sometimes teaches creative photography there."

Laura just stared at them.

"If you will excuse me a minute I have to call FedEx for a pick up," Kelly said.

Todd got up and got a FedEx shipping envelope and Kelly wrote out the address label and the instructions after she got off the phone.

Laura was gathering the photos Todd had printed for her on Saturday to take home, as well as the clothes she arrived in, when the phone rang again. Seeing both Todd and Kelly busy she answered the line. "TKO, Laura speaking. Hold on a minute please and I will see if she is available." Laura pressed the hold button and said to Kelly, "a girl by the name of JulieAnn from JamPC wants to know if you are in."

“Oh. This must be important,” Kelly said. “I’ll say good bye for now then Laura, give me a call later on and let me know what your mother said.”

Laura gave Kelly a sweet kiss on the cheek and said, “You bet!”

Todd helped Laura out to her car as Kelly picked up the phone.

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“JulieAnn, to what do I owe the pleasure?”

There was the usual exchange of pleasantries before Jules explained the reason for the call. It seemed Sherri’s parents wanted to meet with Todd and Kelly before they would sign the consent to let Sherri model.

“That’s no problem JulieAnn,” said Kelly. “Do you have an address and phone number for them? We might be able to get this straightened away by the weekend.”

Jules gave her all the information. Kelly wanted so badly to ask about Brenda but wasn’t sure if JulieAnn knew or would understand her particular interest, so she bit her tongue. Jules filled her in on what the “James Gang” had been up to and seemed to remember something.

“Kelly, do you think you could take on a couple of gymnasts? James and I were at his sister’s training camp and there were two girls there who were very interested in modeling.”

“As a matter of fact,” Kelly said, “we just landed a major sportswear and equipment account that Todd will be shooting here in the studio. How about you have them give me a call when the camp is finished and we’ll see if they fit the criteria we are looking for. Just give me their names so I know they were referred by you.”

Kelly made a note on her list for Vanetta and herself: Cara and Ami, gymnasts.

“Thanks for the tip.” Kelly said. “At least I can take a breather not having to worry about finding someone comfortable on the equipment.”

“Great. I think James is bringing them to the Eyrie with his sister for a day or two and I will have them give you a call then. Thanks Kelly.”

“See you at the opening then JulieAnn.”

After she had hung up the phone, Kelly wanted to kick herself. She had not been brave enough to ask for Brenda, and she desperately wanted to talk with her. She wasn’t sure if she was still at Regan’s or back at the marina.

Kelly still had another hour before FedEx would be stopping off to pick up the parcel, so, with Todd busy doing other things, she wrote an email to Brenda.

Dear Brenda,

I've been thinking a lot about some of the things we 'discussed' last Thursday at Regan's. I seem to be a bit lost emotionally and was hoping to discuss more of this matter with you.

Todd has a new girlfriend, and she and I seem to get along famously... nearly as well as you and I did last week.

My recent relationships have all ended in disaster, though Todd and I seem to be crossing new ground which after all this time has been a real eye opening experience for both of us. We have no plans to pursue this course at present, as I am not sure it would not end in a disaster as well in which case our professional relationship would suffer, and that is not a chance I am willing to take!

Now I find myself in a quandary over my 'friendship' with his girlfriend. I don't want to intrude on his life or be a leech. Yet...

HELP!

*Affectionately,
Kelly*

Kelly shut off the computer and headed for the studio kitchen. Todd was sitting watching CNN on the small TV.

"How are you feeling Kell?" he asked cautiously.

Kelly came up behind him and wrapped her arms around his chest and kissed the top of his head. "Right now, I feel fine. A bit strange, a bit different, but really Todd, I'm feeling good."

Todd reached back with his arms circling Kelly's waist, resting the back of his head against her breasts. "I'm glad to hear that Kell. I really do worry about you."

Kelly knew he was telling the truth and took her hand and softly stroked him under his chin, her other hand now softly swirling his sparse chest hairs.

"Todd..."

"Yes?"

"I don't want to come between you and Laura."

Todd turned in his chair and pulled Kelly to his lap, drawing her head to his shoulder. For a while he just hugged her. Not tightly, but with affection.

"I don't own Laura," he whispered softly in her ear. "I want to spend as much time with her as possible, but she has a mind of her own and I think her feelings for you are pretty clear. It's funny but she asked me early on if I would still have room in my heart for her when I realized I loved you. Now I'm wondering if she will have room for me."

“Oh god yes,” Kelly said. “It’s clear she adores you, and before your imagination runs away with you, we aren’t doing anything other than a bit of kissing.” Kelly realized she was blushing as she said this.

Todd hugged her a little tighter sliding his hands up under the back of her shirt and rubbing her bare back. “What ever happens Kell, my feelings for you won’t change. Just let life happen. Enjoy the good times and forget the bad.” He gave her a small kiss, which might have led to more but the FedEx truck pulled up.

“Damn,” said Todd. “This is the story of my life. Every time I have wanted to get close to you, something interferes.”

Slipping off his lap, Kelly said with a sigh, “maybe it’s better this way Todd. I really need to get my head on straight.”

“I’ve waited this long Kelly,” he said as he got up to send the parcel on its way.

When he returned the spell had been broken and Kelly was the consummate professional again.

“With the rush, I forgot to tell you about the call from JulieAnn,” Kelly said. “Sherri’s parents want to meet with us before they sign the release allowing her to model.”

Todd sat facing her. “Okay, I guess I can see where they’re coming from.”

“So can I,” said Kelly, “but the entire ‘James Gang’ lives in Laurel Canyon, outside of Charleston.”

“Damn,” said Todd. “A whole day wasted driving. Want to call Chris and fly down?”

Chris was a friend who owned a small fleet of light aircraft.

“Let me give Dr. and Mrs. Prevan a call and see what day would be good for them. You’ve still got the Regan photos to print, and we can’t use any of the pictures Sherri is in without the release. And I’m willing to bet we’re off to New York as soon as Jorge sees the prints of Laura, that’s a lot of time to be away from our work.”

“Yeah,” said Todd, “and I’ve got that entire catalog of gymnastic equipment and clothing to shoot before the end of August, and I still haven’t found one of our models who can do anything on any of the equipment.”

“Aha,” said Kelly, “JulieAnn gave me the names of two gymnasts who are friends of James’ sister and who want to give modeling a shot. Their summer camp is nearly over and we should expect a call from them. If they look reasonably good, that’s one less problem to worry about.”

“Thank god for small favors,” said Todd. “Are you going to call Sherri’s parents now?”

“I’ll get right on it boss,” Kelly laughed as she picked up the phone.

“Hello, Mrs. Prevan? This is Kelly Jennsen from TKO... I understand you and your husband would like a bit more information about our agency before allowing Sherri to model for us.”

Todd fetched a couple of Molson’s out of the fridge, looked at the dwindling supply, and loaded the last four bottles from the case in the supply closet.

“Okay then, we should arrive somewhere around 2:00 o’clock Wednesday then. Thank you, it was a pleasure to talk with you as well.”

“So I guess we’re a go for Wednesday then,” Todd said when Kelly hung up the phone. He opened one of the cold beers for her.

Kelly looked at him and the beer. “Are we celebrating something, or are you just trying to get me drunk so you can have your way with me?” she said smiling.

Todd laughed. “No, unless you’re celebrating the last 6 bottles. I locked the door, the day is over and it’s been a good one.”

Kelly took a long pull off the bottle. “To answer your question, yes we are a go for Wednesday. I made it late enough so you can decide if you want to fly down or drive.”

“Let’s fly,” said Todd. “It’ll be quicker and easier and we can have a cab drop us off so we don’t have to run around in circles.”

Kelly called Chris who said he would have a plane fueled and a pilot waiting at noon Wednesday. Todd reached over and took the phone from Kelly.

“Chris, it’s Todd. I was just wondering if you have one of those planes that can land on water. You know what I mean, the pontoon type used by people wanting to get to a private island. Yeah? Great! Thanks Chris, see you soon.”

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Chris was always glad to help out TKO. He had retired as a Navy Captain after the Gulf War, having done his 30 years - and having seen his share of action. His love for flying had never left him and being in his early fifties on his retirement, had opened up his own charter service.

His little charter business had grown slowly but steadily. Todd and Kelly had met him when they were doing the Charlotte Tourism & Convention Bureau brochure. Chris had mounted a gyro pack into the open doorway of an old Jumpmaster so Todd could shoot aerial scenes of the city both in the daytime and at night. Since it wasn’t a standard job and involved low-level city overflight clearance, Chris had done the flying himself. It had taken four days and nights before Todd was satisfied with the results.

What surprised Chris was that as they had taken off on a number of occasions, Todd had taken shots of the planes lined up on the tarmac when they were at various heights and from various angles. And on one occasion they were airborne when Chris' pride and joy was coming in for a landing near dusk. Todd had shot a number of pictures of the Challenger 300 with its landing lights on and an orange sunset behind it.

A week after the job had been completed; Todd presented Chris with a portfolio of finished glossy 8 x 10's and a poster sized one of the Challenger. Todd refused to take any money for them, it was a gift from TKO to Chris, he said. Kelly had put Chris in touch with a reliable yet inexpensive printer and Chris had brochures in every major hotel and convention center in Charlotte. Since then Todd had regularly taken another set of runway shots each year of the ever growing fleet.

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Todd hung up the phone and Kelly said, "Care to clue me in?"

"I was just thinking that when I get old man Regan's shots done, since we don't need to bring down all the equipment, we could fly in."

Soon after the Tourism shoot, Todd and Kelly had started to book all their short overland trips with Chris. He was a friendly man and a straight shooter.

"Smart thinking!" said Kelly. "It would save time and we wouldn't look so road weary."

Kelly lit up one of her Cameo's. "No beer and hardly any cigarettes! Guess I better make another call." She looked at the clock. "I'll make that one from home though. It's about time I headed that way."

"Are you sure you don't want to stick around?" asked Todd. "Laura might be coming back..."

"Thanks sweetie, but I stole her from you last night. I really don't want to interfere with your personal life."

"Jesus Kell, we've been through all kinds of shit together. What makes you think this will be the straw that breaks the camel's back?"

"Fuck," said Kelly. "Look at me Todd. Look right into my eyes. You've known me for seven years now, when have you ever seen me with another woman?"

Todd thought this over carefully. He could see the emotions building in Kelly and didn't want to cause her anymore pain. But he was also her friend.

"Okay. I've never seen you with another woman Kelly, but then again, I've never seen you with a normal man either. You're right. I've known you for a long time, and as

your friend I'm going to tell you that every single guy I've ever seen you with has ended up hurting you. That's why I didn't want to mess with you and fuck up our friendship."

Kelly sighed. It was true. From her early start in the business, she had been only with men who desired her for how far it could take them or their careers and the occasional flings with male models.

"So," she said, "instead of a normal man, I'm now strangely attracted to a normal woman."

"I'm not sure I would call Laura normal," Todd laughed. "She's very unique, but she didn't come looking for anything. She didn't want anything from either of us. She didn't hop in the sack with me to find a new career, and she didn't stay with you last night to advance it either. If you could have seen her Friday, she was so shy and withdrawn."

"I guess you brought out the animal in her then," Kelly said with a smile.

"I think it was in her all along. I'm not sure, but I think she was hurt bad by someone."

"She was," said Kelly, "but it's history now, and I'm pretty sure she's never had a relationship with another woman either."

"So," said Todd, "where do we go from here?"

"Home," said Kelly. "I don't know what's going to happen next. As much as I realize I have feelings for you that go beyond friendship Todd, I'm not sure I could or should take that next step yet. Especially since you seem pretty committed right now. Don't let me fuck up your life."

Kelly got up and gave Todd a kiss and headed home.

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The phone was answered on the second ring.

"Allo? Celine?"

"Oui"

"C'est Kelly, comment ca va?"

"Tres bien! Et toi?"

"Ah, comme ci, comme ca, tout va bien."

"Tu as besoin de plus de contrebande?"

"Huh?" said Kelly.

Celine laughed dropping back to English. "Hey girl, you need more practice. I asked if you were calling for more of our fine Canadian tobacco and beer!"

"Oh that hurts Celine. I don't just call when I run out of my favorite smokes."

"I know," said Celine. "I was just razzing you."

Celine had been a top earner as a magazine model and had come up the ranks with Kelly in the early years. She was FBI, Full Blooded Indian, and a Mohawk of the Iroquois nation. Taking Kelly's advice before Kelly left the modeling part of the business, Celine had started off campus courses in education and finally quit the business herself to earn her Master's. The last time they had spoken, Celine was into her doctorate of native studies - fluent in French, English and an assortment of Native American languages, she wanted to teach native culture.

"Have you found a school yet?" asked Kelly.

"Yes," said Celine. "Actually I will be starting at a number of high schools this September, I've been hired by the District School Board of Niagara. Imagine Kelly, 23 schools, a different one each day of the month for eight months!"

"I'm happy for you Celine. I'm so glad it's working out the way you wanted. What happens when you get your doctorate?"

"You mean besides doubling my already hefty salary?" Celine asked laughing.

"Come on Celine... teachers don't get paid that much."

"You forget Kelly. This is Canada. I'll be starting off at 60 grand a year plus I get subsidized by the First Nations as well."

"Jesus. I didn't realize Canadian teachers made that much," Kelly said.

"Yeah, and nearly tax free for me too," Celine laughed.

"Okay, don't rub it in."

Celine and Kelly talked for an hour more catching up on the latest news in their respective lives. When the subject of the contraband came up again, Celine said she would have her cousin Jimmy run it over the Rainbow Bridge at Niagara Falls and then shipped down via a native trucking company in Buffalo that ran regular trips to Florida.

"We've had to change the way we do it now," said Celine. "The government has it's ass all cranked up about the amount of stuff coming into the country. I'd bet that at least half of the males in my family are running booze and tobacco into the country. Jimmy is going to feel real strange shipping it out! One of my uncles owns the trucking company and has three warehouses in Buffalo where he stores stuff to bring back in."

Kelly was nearly on the floor laughing as she listened to the antics of Celine's family. Finally promising each other they would get together for some real quality time, Kelly hung up the phone.

Kelly had just made it to the kitchen to fix herself something to eat when the phone rang.

Seeing the caller display read "Williams" Kelly answered instead of letting the machine pick up the call.

A warm feeling came over her the minute she heard Laura's voice.

"Hi Kelly," said Laura, "how are you feeling?"

"Physically pretty good, emotionally I'm a bit mixed up, but how are you doing?"

"Well, my butt still hurts somewhat, but emotionally I'm about the same as you."

"Why's that Laura?" Kelly asked.

"Well... do you remember last night?"

"Yes, very clearly," said Kelly. "I don't think I would have been able to hold on to my sanity if it wasn't for you."

"I'm sure you would have made it through by yourself Kelly," Laura said.

"You're a tough cookie! But I was thinking about later last night when we had our bath and then watched the movie and what happened then..."

Kelly blushed at the memory. "Yes," she said softly, "I remember."

"I just wanted you to know that before this weekend, I haven't been naked around another girl since the first year of high school, and I never touched another girl before this weekend either."

"God Laura, I hope you aren't on the family phone!" Kelly said.

Laura laughed. "No, I'm on my own phone in my bedroom."

"Well, obviously I've been partially nude around other models and at different beaches, but if you want to know the truth, last night was the first time I just sat nude with another woman for the sheer enjoyment of it."

"Well," added Laura shyly, "I have never ever masturbated in front of anybody before. And afterwards... I have never slept nude with another girl. Not the way we did last night."

"Are you feeling regret now," Kelly asked with concern in her voice.

"No, quite the contrary. God, I'm glad I called about this; I wouldn't be able to look at you and tell you this. The truth is it really turned me on. I mean, I really love Todd, but I think I love you too."

"Well," said Kelly, "I'm pretty sure I am falling in love with you as well."

"No... I mean I think I could really *love* you." Laura emphasized the last part of her sentence.

"I understand Laura," Kelly said. "I think I feel the same way, but I don't want to screw up anything between you and Todd."

"Why would it?" Laura asked.

"That's what I'm trying to figure out and deal with Laura."

"Well, I was thinking of heading back to Todd's in a bit. Do you want to come over?"

“Thanks sweetheart, but I think I’ve got to do a lot more soul searching and come up with some kind of answers myself. You enjoy yourself and I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Okay,” said Laura, “but the invitation is open, and if that isn’t what you feel like right now, I’ll just have to come over for another girl’s night.”

Kelly laughed. “I think I would like that.”

“Count on it then,” said Laura. “Sleep well tonight and remember I really do care for you.”

“Have a good time tonight Laura.”

Kelly hung up, and stared at the phone for a moment, her thoughts whirling, then with a shake of her head headed to the kitchen.

After a quick bite, she took a shower and headed off to bed. It was still early but two good ground-shaking orgasms relaxed her before she drifted off to a deep and restful sleep with Laura’s picture clutched to her breasts.

***To be continued...***