

Kelly

(Inspired by Mike C, based on characters in his novel: "**James**"
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Chapter 13

Slowly waking, Kelly rolled over. The light from the windows brought her mind up from the depths of sleep, the thoughts of their lovemaking the night before bringing a smile to her lips. She sighed with contentment at the memory of both her lovers suckling her at the same time.

She opened her eyes to see the sun well up, and checked the time on the bedside clock.

Ten o'clock!

Moving quietly so as not to wake Todd she slipped out of bed and padded silently to the bathroom where she relieved herself.

She didn't bother dressing. She was looking for Laura.

Laura was on the balcony wearing nothing but a smile. She was lost in thought, her eyes closed, basking in the morning sunlight, when she felt soft hair caress her face and softer lips attach themselves to hers.

"Mmm... Good morning, Sweetheart," she said opening her eyes and kissing Kelly back.

Kelly straddled Laura's lap facing her lover. She held Laura's face with her hands, "How'd I get so lucky?" she asked with a kiss.

"Gosh, Kell, with all the shit you've had to put up with." Laura's eyes moistened. "I wish I could have been there for you when you needed me."

"Shush now, Laura. No tears from you for me. I've shed enough and I have you now."

The two girls hugged tightly. Laura rested her head against Kelly's chest.

"What time did you wake up, Sweetie?" Kelly asked.

"Just after 8:00. I thought I was going to burst, my bladder was so full!"

Kelly laughed. "So why didn't you come back to bed?"

Laura sighed. "I got thinking of what you told me about Todd's childhood and yours, and how lucky I've been. Life's not fair, is it?"

Kelly kissed Laura on the forehead as she slid off her lap. "Fair? Maybe it isn't, but think about this, Honey... If I hadn't gone through this life the way I have, we might never have met. Don't you believe in kismet?"

"I guess I never really thought about it till now. What do you believe, Kelly?"

"What do I believe, or what do I believe in?"

"A little of both I guess," said Laura.

"Hold that thought," said Kelly who went in and grabbed her cigarettes.

After lighting one up, she sat facing Laura putting her feet into Laura's lap.

"I believe there is a Supreme Being, but I also think that She is too busy with the rest of the universe to bother watching me all the time."

Laura laughed.

"As you've probably discovered, Todd follows the Buddhist's philosophy of moderation in all things."

Laura nodded.

"While I agree with Todd on the moderation, I also believe that life goes in cycles and what we do to, or for, others comes back in the form of karma. That's why I try hard not to screw anybody over or hurt somebody even unintentionally. I believe that how I live my life will in some way affect how others treat me."

Laura was silent for a minute, remembering what Vanetta had told her. "Kell, would you like a cup of tea? No, no, you stay put, I'll make us a cup."

Laura went inside and prepared tea for the two of them. Her mind was busy trying to remember exactly what Vanetta had said to her. They had been talking about an old Jamaican fortuneteller that Gloria had gone to see. Vanetta had told her: "He said something about you being the missing piece of the puzzle and now that you are here, you'll make both Todd and Kelly whole again."

Her head was spinning. She knew that she often 'saw' things or 'felt' things others didn't but wow... A chill ran up her spine. That man had said this before the three of them had become so involved! Maybe she was with both of them to make up for the suffering both had endured when they were younger. She hurriedly finished making the tea and took the two mugs out seeing Kelly looking peaceful and content sitting there.

"Tell me more, Kelly."

"Okay," Kelly took a sip of the tea, smiled at Laura and continued on with her story. "I'm not sure how much you know about Judaism, but they have this yearly ritual called Yom Kippur. It means 'Day of Atonement' and on that day they fast and spend the day in reflection of all they have done in the past year. They are very critical of themselves and look for guidance on how they can be better people. From those they can, they seek forgiveness for any wrongs or slights they may have committed, and where

they can't, they vow to God to set things right. They also forgive all wrongs done to them in the hopes of understanding."

"That's a pretty heavy trip," said Laura.

"Yes, well, I guess it helps you to face up to and deal with your own shortcomings. I really liked the idea, but a year in between... That wasn't going to work for me, so at least once a week I set time aside to reflect on what I might have said or done to hurt someone and then I set out to rectify it if possible. I'm not saying that I'm a better person for it, but I often think twice before I speak."

Laura nodded and sat back thinking as Kelly lit up another cigarette.

"Hey, Sweetheart... don't get bummed out by my belief system okay? It works for me, but I don't try to convert others."

"It isn't that, Kelly. I know both you and Todd well enough now to know what kind of people you are. You're both kind and generous to a fault. You do so much to help other people and you don't brag about it like most people I know. If it hadn't been for my dad, I wouldn't have even known about the summer camp you guys sponsor, and I'm willing to bet that there's a lot more you guys do that I haven't even heard about."

Kelly laughed and shrugged. "We do what we can."

Laura looked deep into Kelly's soft brown eyes. "Maybe God *was* watching you." She leaned further forward and gave Kelly a soft and sensuous kiss. "Now it's my turn to watch over you and keep you happy."

Kelly's eyes instantly filled with tears. "I'm so afraid, Laura," she said. "I've never been this happy and I pray like I've never prayed before that you won't just walk out of my life."

"What about Todd?" Laura asked. "He's your best friend and now you two can be so much more."

"Oh Honey, I love Todd, and it took you to show me just how much, but this thing we have going... It wouldn't work without you."

"I agree with Kelly," said Todd from the doorway. "We might have become lovers eventually but I'm afraid it might have ended our friendship." He sat down with the girls after giving each a good morning kiss.

"Growing up, I never learned what love was. Over the years, I just figured that it was for other people and not for me. And I know that Kelly has never been so free in expressing emotion as she has been since the two of you got together. You are the tie that binds us together, Laura."

Laura grabbed both of her lovers and squeezed them in a tight embrace. "Then I'm going to make sure this tie is double knotted and never lets loose. I love both of you so much!"

They hugged and kissed for a long time. Finally Laura said, “But you, Sir, have an appointment to keep and we need our ‘mins and something to eat before you can face a hectic day.”

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It took a bit of coaxing to get Kelly into a bathrobe before room service brought up a fresh fruit plate of chilled melon slices, mango and more, along with blueberry crepes and a large pitcher of freshly squeezed orange juice.

Conversation was light and easy, and they probably would have stayed in the room all day if Todd’s phone hadn’t rung.

It was Peter. He wanted to know when would be a good time to shoot the Monster Cuddy.

“The best time would be between 12:00 and 2:00. After that I have to work around the shadows. Can you arrange it? Good, I’ll see you down at the marina then.”

As he disconnected from the call, he told the girls that if they wanted to come along that he was going to meet Peter in half an hour.

The girls said it would be fun to watch the world’s best photographer at work.

Todd blushed at the compliment. “Let’s just say one of the best,” he said with a laugh.

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Kelly had decided to wear the new Starfleet issue underwear when she got dressed. It was nicely form fitting but as Laura pointed out, it left little to the imagination when it came to defining her “Final Frontier.”

“No problem,” said Kelly as she tied one of the ‘Property of Starfleet’ sweatshirts around her waist. “Now the arms cover my ‘Twilight Zone’ and I have something soft to sit on.”

Laura sighed as she slipped off her T to put a bra on. “Damn, I hate wearing these things now. I wish I could go free like you all the time Kell.”

“But Honey,” said Kelly as she cupped the two full mounds, “they give you lift as well as support. Guys will notice you coming before you make it round a corner!”

Laura laughed and gave Kelly a soft kiss. She did project in the expensive bra, severely deforming the lines of Todd’s T-shirt which otherwise hung loose on her. A pair of very short shorts and sandals like Kelly’s completed her wardrobe.

Both girls carried small clutch bags.

“If we do go bicycling later, we’ll have to change again,” said Kelly.

“Gosh, after last night, I’m not sure I could ride a bike today! I’m still so sensitive down there that even the thought of rubbing it on a bicycle seat is making me horny!”

Todd, as always, was dressed in less than a minute. Scrub pants, one of his new T’s and moccasins. It took him longer to brush his teeth. He had the camera bag over his shoulder ready to go but had to wait for the girls to carefully brush their hair so it wouldn’t look like they had worked on it.

They walked to the marina at a leisurely pace, the girls getting plenty of attention on the way. Kelly and Laura flanked Todd and the three held hands all the way.

As they approached the office more than a few young couples had waved at them, but now, more and more were wearing caps, and dancing and waving on boat decks as the trio passed by. Kelly and Laura waved back good-naturedly with pleasant smiles. Todd blushed.

“How many people did you say were at that restaurant?” he asked Kelly.

“I’m positive the sign said licensed for 100.”

“And of course they all ended up here, at this very spot, at this time,” grumbled Todd.

“Don’t pout, Todd,” Laura said with a smile. “Look at the way the guys are looking at you. Envy doesn’t begin to describe it!”

“I told you,” added Kelly, “some legends are born but others are laid!”

She and Laura were still laughing at the joke when they reached the security gate. Peter was just coming out of the marina office with Al and Sara. The two men were in deep discussion about something with Sara.

“Hi, Peter, Sara,” said Kelly. “Good afternoon, Al.”

After pleasantries and introductions were made, Todd started to question Peter about the boat. Kelly and Laura drifted away looking for a seat while Todd did what he did best.

Todd had put down his case, totally at ease in his own element.

“So, I see a boat,” he said. “It looks nice, but obviously there’s something special about this one or I wouldn’t be here and the stock wouldn’t be climbing through the roof.”

“It is?” said Peter with feigned innocence.

“Let’s cut the bullshit, Peter,” said Al. “Todd and Kelly already know the market’s been moving on IC stock. Let’s get to what the man wants to know. How to show the performance of the Cuddy.”

“Okay,” said Peter. “Then you also probably know this boat is a speed demon, faster than anything else in its class. I know you can only show so much in a still picture, but that’s what we need. A still image that will show off the power! Have you seen the wing JamPC designed?”

Todd shook his head. “Nope. I take it this is something under the boat? Like a hydrofoil?”

“Ah, you’ve got the idea, but it’s not a foil. Hell, Sara, help me out here.”

Sara laughed. “No Todd, it’s not a foil. That would lift it out of the water. It’s a small stabilizing wing that’s mounted under the hull to prevent the boat from getting sloppy or hard to handle under all the power she now has.”

“Okay, cool. I think I’m getting the drift. It holds the bow down, right? Does this ‘wing’ ever ride on the water?”

“Only if I want it to,” laughed Sara. “But seriously, it shows well if it’s cutting through waves or somebody’s wake.”

“And you don’t want a showroom picture then,” Todd said to Peter, “you want to show it in action.”

“Exactly!”

“I can do a head on shot,” said Todd after looking at the boat a while, “maybe do a close up of the wing when it comes out of the water, but otherwise, you’re going to be seeing a lot of bow. I’ve got a lens that will get me good and clear and close up from...” Todd did some math in his head. “Probably 100 yards. Can this thing turn away in time in that short a distance? And can you get me on something stable so I can set up a tripod?”

Sara looked at Todd. “I can clear you with less distance than that if you’re on a stationary platform.”

“Something stable I can get you,” said Al, “but only 100 yards? Damn. That boat’s going to be doing around 70 barreling down on you. But the girls did something else yesterday when they were checking out the course. It put a rooster tail behind that boat that looked like fireworks. I think that would be a great shot.”

“A show off shot. Okay, I can take a few of those, but if you want to show the wing and the boat properly, I’d say get me down to water level and I’ll catch it at a 30 degree angle.” Todd looked up at the sun and then at the channel. “Is this where you want the pictures done?”

Peter nodded.

“Okay, let’s get moving on the angle shots first while the sun is directly above. The channel runs east to west, so I can do the close up afterwards. Now can somebody show me how this thing actually runs?”

“Todd, I can guarantee the 100 yard safety margin, but not if I have to throttle back to pull the bow up,” said Sara.

It was Todd’s turn to laugh. “How about we make some waves then? I wouldn’t want it to look like you were easing up. Defeats the purpose of this picture. Besides,” he added with a wink and a stage whisper, “these guys want to sell power!”

Sara laughed with him. “Okay, how about we get a decoy to run a wake at the 100 yard mark? All I need is something over six inches to slice through.” They walked off together discussing the best ways to create the effects that Todd would shoot.

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Sara was still laughing when they returned.

“Are you sure about this, Todd? I was only kidding when I suggested it.”

“No. It’s a great idea! The only problem I see is that when word leaks out, and you can bet it’s going to, you’re going to become hot property. There aren’t a lot of female stunt drivers in this line of work. I’ll bet that in less than three months you’ll be offered more video work than you can dream about, IF you and I can pull this off.”

“Okay. If you’re sure.”

“The only thing that does concern me is a possible conflict with Chuck.” Todd said. “He’s putting a lot of money into a magazine spread that clearly identifies you. Definitely not just by your name, as you saw on the pictures Chuck sent to you. You are very photogenic.”

Sara sighed. “The price of fame and glory. Not to worry, Todd, before we left Max’s, Peter was there with a video crew and James had me put a racing suit on with a helmet.”

“That’s good Sara, but a racing suit isn’t going to look quite right on a boat this size for publicity shots. And a helmet might scare some people off.”

“Well, I saw that Al has nylon windbreakers and caps for sale in his office. They’ve all got IC embroidered on them.”

“That would be good! This won’t be as close a shot of your face as Chuck’s so if we get that blonde mane of yours tucked up, or maybe pulled through the back in a ponytail, and a windbreaker will conceal most of your body...”

“Why is everybody trying to get me dressed these days?” she pouted.

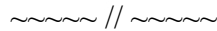
Todd laughed. “Well, I won’t insist that you have to wear panties. Brenda and Amanda seem to think you’re allergic to them or something.”

“Those big mouths! Wait until I catch them.” But her blush and grin gave her away.

Todd called Al and Peter over and explained what they would need.

It turned out to be quite a list, and Al was on the phone scrambling to get the needed supplies.

“I’m also going to need about 10 people for the test runs,” said Todd. “I’ll need them along the shore at 50 foot intervals from the position that I take.” He held a special zoom lens spotting scope in his hand. Military issue.



Todd picked a spot that would allow him to stay clear of people and underbrush, but level with the water line. Al had supplied him with a two-way radio that Kelly now held as he had told the girls that he needed help with this shot. Kelly would relay his signals to Al who was coordinating things with Lucy who they had decided would ride as Sara’s co-pilot and relay instructions. On Todd’s word, Laura would note the position of the person who was standing closest to the point where Todd thought the boat would be captured best in a still life “action” shot. The background would be perfect from this location if Todd’s calculations proved to be correct.

“Okay Kell, tell Sara to let it rip. When they pass our first human marker, Sara should be doing the speed they’ll use for these shots, so make sure that they don’t vary once they’ve settled on it. I want to run this twice before we actually start shooting.”

Kelly relayed the information to Al and minutes later they heard the rumble of the Cuddy’s heavy-duty engine.

Timing was critical. Sara was up the channel, and a Coast Guard tug conscripted by Al to create a good size wake started up, ready to cut a diagonal swath in the general direction of the marina office.

“They have to get the timing just right to avoid an accident and still to get the wake deep enough to let this wing come out of the water.”

“Have you seen this wing, Todd?” Kelly asked.

“No, the boat was in the water when we got here, but Sara says it’s gleaming silver.”

“That’s what Celeste brought them yesterday,” said Kelly, “I thought at first it was some kind of trophy or a real shiny model. But JulieAnn explained what it was and what it was made of. Now that I think about it, I guess that it did look like a wing, but not a standard airplane wing.”

Todd was looking through the spotting scope and he could see Sara coming down the channel.



“Sara promised me that as soon as she spotted me she would veer off at full speed to show that she could safely miss me. That’s why the diver’s buoy is here,” he explained.

The tug ran across, coming from Todd’s left from the far bank and was just as quickly out of sight from the center of the waterway.

As Sara tore through the course she hit the first leading wake and the boat remained stable as it tore through it and the next and then the first flash of silver shone beneath the hull. As she broke through the next, Todd hollered “Now!”

Laura quickly stepped to the closest human marker and held her spot.

Sara veered as promised and with no more than a ten degree course correction showed Todd that he would be pretty safe on the pontoon boat Al had commandeered.

“Have one of the guys drop a diving buoy into the water where Laura is standing and secure it.”

Kelly relayed the information to Al as Sara, who had powered down after changing direction headed back their way. She waved at Todd who gave her the thumbs up. Sara throttled up and headed back to her starting point.

It took another ten minutes before everybody was back in place. The human markers were now gone and Laura stood with Todd and Kelly.

“Tell Al to let her go.”

The second run went as successfully as the first so Todd unpacked his gear and secured the tripod and camera. He focused on the marker buoy, compensated for the diagonal cut and set the aperture to hyper focal.

The trial runs were over and this time when Sara cut through the wake, Todd had his eyes glued to the viewfinder. With the sunlight reflecting off the water, he had compensated his exposure time to 1/250.

“Snap!” went the camera.

“At the speed she’s going I can’t even use the auto winder to try for a triple exposure,” said Todd. “Sara’s only going 60 for my benefit, but she said that this boat has topped 85!”

“That’s probably why the rush for the picture and why the stock is climbing,” said Kelly.

The radio crackled and Al asked if they were ready for another run. Todd nodded and Kelly relayed the information.

Ten minutes later and a small adjustment to the ‘Blad and another shot was in the can. Sara ran the gauntlet six more times before Todd said to Kelly, “have Al tell Sara that we’ll be ready for her special run in 20 minutes.”

Kelly relayed the information as Todd pulled out large rain slickers.

“Here you are ladies,” he said with a grin. “Better put them on and cover up!”

“Todd Ayres... Just what have you got up your sleeve?” Kelly demanded.

“Peter and Al want a show off shot, and Al was gung ho on this thing that Sara and Sherri pulled off Friday. Peter hasn’t seen it, but knows the terminology. I figured if it was that common, I’d want to do something uncommon, so Sara and I arranged for a little surprise.”

“Todd...”

“Don’t worry, Kell, Sara asked me if I trusted her. You can see that she handles boats with a natural skill and we came up with something really spectacular.” He laughed a wicked little laugh. “Why don’t you ask Al and Peter to join us down here.”

Kelly radioed Al and passed on the suggestion, and soon, Al and Peter were on their way.

The thought of Sara asking Todd if he trusted her ran through Kelly’s mind while she waited. That seemed to be a key line with the James Gang and every time Kelly heard it, she thought back to Brenda. Whatever was going to happen, she already knew it was going to be an experience nobody would forget.

“Just make sure you get those slickers done up tight or we’ll have to go change.”

“But Al and Peter aren’t wearing slickers,” said Laura.

“Yeah,” Todd chuckled. “I know!”

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“Are you sure this is okay?” asked Lucy.

“Trust me, sweetie. I know what I’m doing. Just be sure you hold on real tight.”

“Okay. If you’re sure.”

“We’re just going to have a little fun, that’s all. We’ve been running the same course for over an hour and this will be the last time before we change for the head on shots.”

Peter asked why the girls had the heavy rain slickers on.

“We’ve been catching a little bit of spray,” said Todd with a straight face, “and the girls aren’t really dressed for it.”

“So why do YOU have one on now?” asked Al.

“You’ll notice that mine isn’t done up,” said Todd, “I’ll drop it over the camera just after I take the shot. Wouldn’t want me to ruin this camera, would you?”

Both Al and Peter allowed that was good thinking. What they didn’t know was that Todd had slid the lens back to a wider-angle mode.

Peter and Al stood close to Todd and on his word, Al notified Lucy and the tug.

The tug plowed by once again and seconds later Sara came barreling down the straightway but more towards the bank where Todd was standing.

“Sara... you’re going too fast.” Lucy shouted out.

“Ya think?” Sara shouted back. “Maybe I’ll have to make an adjustment here.”

“Has Sara been running this close to shore every time?” Al asked. “From the office it looked like she had been right down the middle.”

“Listen to that engine!” said Peter. “That sounds faster than what she was running before.”

Todd didn’t reply, he had his eye locked on the viewfinder waiting for Sara’s next move. With one hand on the shutter and the other holding the slicker ready to drop it over the camera, he waited.

As Sara hit the leading wake she checked for the buoy, and goosed the throttle to full open as she yanked on the wheel pulling away from Todd. As James had done on the ride over, she bounced off the next wave and pulled the boat into a sideways skid exposing the starboard side to Todd. “I hope you get this on the first take,” she thought to herself as a wave of spray shot up and away from the Cuddy.

“Yes!” Todd thought before he pulled down the slicker. He had the boat perfectly in his sights when Sara had cranked the wheel. This really was stunt driving! The wing was mostly exposed as was much of the hull, and Todd had gotten his shot just as the fountain of water started to cascade up and towards them. Todd had caught it just as it was forming, and then yanked the slicker down to protect the camera. He felt the water hit like a wave. He knew that Peter and Al were going to be soaked. What he had failed to tell them was that by dropping the slicker over the camera, his own shoulders and front were well protected from the torrential onslaught!

Kelly and Laura, having been clued in by Todd as to what to expect had quietly slipped off their sandals and moved them along with all of the other camera equipment and Todd’s moccasins out of harm’s way. They watched as long as they could as the wall of water came at them like a tidal wave and turned at the last minute to protect their hair, but could hear Al and Peter cussing like sailors.

“Jesus Christ! What the fuck was that stunt?” Peter asked.

“God damn it, I’m soaked right to the bone,” said Al. Then he started to laugh.

“What’s so fucking funny,” Peter demanded.

“Did you see the boat?” Al asked him.

“Yeah, I saw the fucking boat. I was damn near in it!”

Al grabbed Peter by the shoulders. “No. I asked you if you saw the boat!”

“Yeah, it skidded...” slowly it began to dawn on him. Brushing the wet hair from his forehead, he asked Todd, “Did you get that on film?”

Todd just smiled.

“You are one crazy mother...” He stopped himself as he realized Kelly and Laura were standing there.

“Anybody can do a rooster tail,” said Todd. “Now how about we get set up on the pontoon boat so I can get a few head on shots?”

Sara radioed in as she motored back at a moderate pace, “Got to fuel up! Give me half an hour!”

Todd gave her a big two thumbs up, then picked up his camera and took it to where his moccasins and case were lying. The girls had already shed the slickers and Laura handed hers to Peter. “You might need this if you intend to stand so close to the water, Peter.”

Kelly laughed.

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It was nearly two o'clock by the time the Cuddy was refueled and the pontoon boat was in position. They couldn't overcome the rocking of the boat caused by the tug so Todd decided to shoot by hand without the use of a tripod. It was a bit trickier, but with a shorter, lighter lens, Todd was sure that he could make it work.

They had all the details worked out regarding the tug and the speed so it was just a matter of repeating the same motions, except this time Todd would concentrate on the silver of the wing. With the sun behind him it really gleamed in his eyepiece. He had switched the large open viewfinder for the single, closed eyepiece when he decided to change the lens.

It took less than an hour to complete the shots, the last of which was one of Sara's ideas. The tug dug in deeper and faster. Instead of the diagonal line it had run towards Sara on an opposing path before, now it was cutting and swerving seconds before Sara hit the huge whitecaps it had churned up, sending the Cuddy up and out of the water with barely the screws touching. It was an excellent shot showing the Monster Cuddy handling heavy waves with ease, remaining nearly parallel to the water. Todd was sure he could see water running off the wing as he snapped the shutter.

Sara headed in to dock the boat and the pontoon boat, though faster than most, took more time to reach the pier. Todd used the time to unload the film and had it safely on ice and the camera packed away when they tied up.

Kelly and Laura had waited on shore for this series of pictures and greeted Sara as she pulled the boat into its berth. A crowd of onlookers had gathered and cheered as Sara and Lucy got off the Cuddy.

“That was pretty impressive, Sara,” said Laura. “Do you have to apply for a special pilot’s license to fly that boat?”

Sara laughed. “You know, I’ve never gone that fast in a car! Well, except maybe one time when Celeste was driving. But on the water... I can’t explain the rush.”

“So,” asked Todd walking up, “what do you do for your next number?”

“Actually, I’ve got to catch up with Celeste and Sherri. We’re doing a few numbers during the amateur talent time while the ‘cook-off’ is taking place this afternoon.”

“What kind of numbers?” Laura asked with more than a bit of curiosity.

“Well, Sherri plays the keyboard and Celeste kills cats,” Sara said laughing.

“Celeste does what?” Todd asked.

“I think she means Celeste plays the violin,” said Laura, to which Sara nodded.

“And I pretend I can sing. Aren’t you guys going to be coming?” Sara asked.

“We never heard a thing about it,” said Kelly.

“You’ve got to come!” said Lucy. “Sara’s been helping Dave out with a secret recipe!”

Al and Peter were walking towards them after discussing some business plans.

“Dad, you’ve got to invite them to the ‘cook-off,’” Lucy demanded.

“Actually,” said Al, “I just assumed they were coming, but now that you mention it, Kelly, you’re a pretty big name celebrity. How would you like to be on the judging panel?”

“Well Al, I’m...”

“Please, Kelly,” said Al. “It will give the entire affair more glamour... and if you would do this for me I would be really grateful. And I’ll be sure that Todd can keep his hat on.”

“Oh God, is there anybody who doesn’t know that line now?” asked Todd.

“I’m sure there are a few people staying by the wildlife preserve who haven’t heard yet, but I’ll be happy to send someone over there and pass along the good news.”

Al was smiling at them. Kelly shook her head.

“Okay Al, but just for you.”

Sara had been watching the entire scene unfold. “I haven’t heard,” she said, then noticed the time. “Sorry, I’ve got to run. Need to rehearse.”

“Hold up, Sara,” said Laura, “I’ll go with you and tell you all the tawdry details!” She gave Kelly and Todd both a chaste kiss goodbye, promising to catch up to them at the cook-off.

“I better get this equipment back to the room,” said Todd. “No use in lugging it around all afternoon.”

“Er, how soon can I see the prints?” asked Peter.

Kelly turned back and looked at him. Todd had seen that look before and remained quiet.

“If I recall, Peter, you forgot to book this session and called Todd and I away from a very pleasant vacation that we haven’t had for a long time. You said you needed photos taken this weekend. Seems to me Todd has gone far out of his way to do just that.”

“Ah, come on, Kelly,” Peter pleaded. “This is something really big for IC, and my career especially.”

Kelly eased up a bit from her stare. “Well, you did introduce us, in a roundabout way, to the ‘James Gang’ so you get some brownie points for that, but even under normal circumstances it would be a week before Todd could print them properly. We were sort of hoping to stick around here for a while longer and pick up on our vacation time.”

“Well, can I take the film? Maybe I can find one of those one-hour photo shops to print them up?”

“Jesus Christ!” spat Todd. He glared at Peter for a moment, then turned and walked away, while Kelly regarded Peter with a shocked look on her face.

Peter sighed. “Is this about money?”

“You don’t understand, Peter,” Kelly explained patiently. “Todd doesn’t give a damn about the money. You pay a fair rate, but we have other commitments to customers who have been with us from the beginning. Todd’s going to be working 18 hours a day in the next week. He only has a few days left before his vacation is over. And I know there is NO way that Todd would ever trust his film to a generic chemical bath even if you could find a place that could handle that size film.”

“I’m sorry, Kelly,” Peter said. “What can I do to make things right with you and Todd?”

Kelly thought about it for a few minutes. IC had some clout and Kelly would rather have them for customers, but still, TKO was not a part time or even a small time operation. “A trip,” Kelly finally said.

Peter looked at her blankly.

“A vacation to make up for this one. We’ll give you plenty of notice. A vacation to Jamaica on one of your biggest boats.”

“Ah, but Kelly... we don’t make anything over 30 feet, and you are talking about two days cruise time.”

“So? Are you saying you can’t arrange something for a group of us?” Kelly asked.

With a sigh Peter said, “I can arrange something.”

“That’s the spirit, Peter!”

“That’s it?” Peter asked. “You don’t want my first born?”

Kelly laughed. “If I wanted a child I’m sure I could manage without you, Peter. A vacation will do just fine.”

Al laughed and slapped Peter on the back. “I don’t understand why you don’t have these kids on a permanent retainer, Pete. You know Todd is the best, why wouldn’t you have him doing all of your advertising and publicity pictures? That little stunt he and Sara pulled off there where we got soaked? Just imagine how that’s going to look on the cover of ‘Marine Quarterly’ magazine!”

“I better catch up with Todd,” Kelly said. “I’ll see if I can’t get him to rush these through for you. Monday midnight, how does that sound?”

“That would be great, Kelly!” Peter said. “The papers will be here tomorrow but they won’t run it till Tuesday, so if I can get the prints by Tuesday morning, my ass will be covered.”

“And the vacation?”

“Hell, I don’t see any problems at all. Let me set it up so that you have a full crew and lots of good food!”

“Okay. I’ll want that in writing of course, but otherwise, we have a deal,” she said shaking hands with him. “Al, I’ll catch up with you later at... where the hell am I supposed to be?”

Al laughed. “Yes, we have some more to talk about as well. The ‘cook-off’ starts in an hour, so how about I have Lucy come and pick you up at the hotel?”

“That would be good, Al. See you gentlemen later.”

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Sherri and Celeste were working out an arrangement that Sara wanted to try out during the “cook-off” entertainment hour.

“If it doesn’t work with the violin, Celeste, I’ll pick another number,” Sara said.

“It’ll work,” replied an exasperated Celeste. “It’s just that it’s basically an acoustic guitar piece, light drums and a harmonica.”

“Which song?” Laura asked.

“It’s ‘Stay A While’ by The Bells,” answered Sherri. “I’ve got the synthesizer set for the acoustic guitar and the drum tracks laid in. I can even do the harmonica piece cause it’s only one chorus, but it’s not written for more instruments.”

“And you want this song because...”

“I want to sing it for James tonight,” said Sara. “Actually, it’ll be my voice but the three of us want to do it for him.”

“I think I understand why,” said Laura with a gentle smile. Turning to Celeste she asked, “Can you make that fiddle talk, girl?”

Celeste tilted her head as if trying to see what Laura was getting at.

“Okay, sorry, that’s my country roots showing,” Laura laughed. “Look, I know the song. I remember it as a duet. Why don’t you just take the man’s part, you know, really drag that horse hair over the catgut and make it talk.”

Sherri arched her eyebrows as if she had been listening to an alien, but Celeste started to nod, understanding.

“Start playing, Sherri,” she said. “Let me try this out.”

Sherri played the opening verse and chorus of the song and backed off a bit when it came time for the second verse. Celeste had been standing quietly with her violin at her waist tapping the bow against her leg. As the first chorus ended, she raised the violin up and on cue, pulled out the most beautiful if somewhat mournful sound ever. Her eyes slowly closed as she got further into the piece. She continued on through the chorus and as the third verse started, Sara joined in. It made for a lovely combination, and after a repetition of the chorus, all three instruments, violin, acoustic guitar, and voice faded out. Sara and Celeste had played beautifully off each other on the third verse. It made for a powerful and deeply emotional love song.

“That was a great idea, Laura!” Sherri said. “I guess I was thinking too much in the classical sense.”

“The violin is used more as a single voice in country music, so I automatically think of it as another singer,” said Laura. To Celeste she said, “You ought to try ‘Faded Love’ sometime. That’s my favorite piece for a singing violin.”

The three girls of the “James Gang” went through the song once more from top to bottom. Sara started right after the lead in riff from Sherri.

As the song wound to the end Laura was clapping. “That was great! Are you guys doing all the music this afternoon?”

Sara laughed. “No, we’re special guest performers doing this for Dave. We plan on doing three songs and getting off stage. Finalists and runner-ups from the talent contest will be filling the rest of the time. Why did you ask?”

Laura blushed. “Well you know how you guys are doing this one song for James? I was kind of hoping I might get a chance to do one for Todd and Kelly. I didn’t realize that all the time had been allotted or that it was only going to be for finalists of a contest. When Sara said it was going to be amateur entertainment, I thought I might try and slip in.”

Sara looked at Sherri and Celeste. “Nobody said how many songs we were going to do, right?”

“Not that I heard,” said Sherri.

“Me neither,” echoed Celeste. “Which song do you have in mind Laura?”

“You guys ever hear of Rod Stewart?”

“Yeah, my dad still listens to him once in a while,” said Sherri. “Something about a girl named Maggie?”

“Yep, that’s him, but that’s not the song I’m looking for. He’s still recording, you know, and he has this great love song...”

The girls talked it over and realizing they only had a half hour to prepare, ran for the nearest computer and downloaded the lyrics and music.

“This will work out great!” said Celeste. “I can fill in for the cello and Sara can help with the harmony... If you want us to that is.”

“That would be great!” said Laura. “And I would love it if you guys helped me with this. You realize that if it hadn’t been for you guys, I probably wouldn’t even be here right now.”

Sherri and Sara just nodded. They remembered how Kelly was at the Regan shoot, and how different she was now.

They had time enough to go through the song three times and each time it sounded better and better. Celeste packed her violin away and carried it off stage with her as a crowd was slowly starting to form.

“So,” said Sara, as they sat at a table with large cups of iced tea, “tell us all about this tawdry night and Todd’s hat. Sounds interesting!”

Laura explained the whole story of how Todd, being as shy as he is, didn’t want to get on the dance floor with Kelly and her and how they had finally convinced him to get out of his chair.

“I think he was more hoping to escort us off the dance floor before we got arrested for indecent exposure,” Laura said, “but once he was on the floor, well, Kelly and I just trapped him and then he got right into the groove of it with us and the band played that song from ‘The Full Monty’ and all day long people have been reminding him of his little show and tell last night!”

“It sounds like you guys are really getting along fantastic,” said Sherri. “We’re so happy for all of you.”

More people started to arrive and Laura started to look around for Todd and Kelly. “Hmm... I wonder what’s keeping them?”

“So when you see us get on stage, you pay attention, okay, Laura?” asked Celeste. “We’ll set it all up for you after the second song and you be ready to come on up.”

“Okay, Celeste.”

“You aren’t nervous about this?” asked Sara. “The first time I did it I was literally shaking.”

“Nah, in my family it was a given that you would sing for your supper. All four of us girls were in choir, the younger three still are. Daddy got us all into the Christmas pageant by the age of five and we went with the Policemen’s choir every year to nursing homes and such singing carols. Singing is as common around our house as talking is!”

“You’ve got three sisters?” Sherri asked.

“Yep, Cathy, she’s sixteen now, and the twins, Sam and Jen. They turn fourteen in September.”

“Wow,” said Sara, “I hope you guys have a lot of bathrooms in your house!”

Laura laughed. “Nope, just the one, but it should be a bit easier now that I’m not living at home anymore.”

“Are the twins identical?” asked Celeste.

“So much so that even I have trouble telling them apart,” laughed Laura. “And don’t think they don’t use it for all it’s worth either!”

People were starting to set up the big Texas style BBQ. A long row of halved oil drums, with palmetto and mesquite over oak logs was fired up by workers from various restaurants with help from the island maintenance crews. Picnic tables arrived on the back of a flat bed trailer pulled by a tractor and soon an area large enough and comfortable enough to easily handle over 200 people was all set up.

“We better get a move on,” said Sherri. “See where Jules is and get ready.”

“Remember to keep an eye out, or maybe I should say an ear out for us,” said Celeste to Laura. “We’ll bring you up in style!”

“Thanks guys!” said Laura as she waved goodbye to them. She sat back sipping on her ice tea wondering where Todd and Kelly were.

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Kelly never did manage to catch up with Todd but found him sitting on the balcony with his feet up.

“Hi Honey, I’m home,” she said as she stepped out on the balcony.

Though he was pissed off with Peter, he couldn’t hide the smile from Kelly. For the past three nights, she had given of herself to him in a way that could only be described as love. And Laura had been the same, giving and not demanding nor expecting anything other than to be loved. He was sure it was love and he basked in it. Not even the Peters of this world could take that feeling away from him.

“Hi, Babe,” he said as he pulled her into his lap. He kissed her soft and gentle and then held her against him in a snug embrace.

For minutes they sat quietly just holding each other.

It was Todd who broke the embrace by giving Kelly a loving slap on her butt.

“Okay boss... what did you get me into?”

Kelly laughed as she got up from his lap and perched herself in a chair facing him. Taking her time, she lit up a cigarette. “How would you like a real vacation, Todd? Not just a weekend away but an extended one, back to Jamaica where we first met?”

Todd smiled. “That would be nice. What’s the catch?”

“I mean a real long vacation. No flying.”

Todd looked at her quizzically.

“An all expense paid cruise courtesy of IC, complete with a full crew to attend to our slightest wishes.”

Todd laughed out loud. “For real?” he finally asked.

“Absolutely. In writing even. And with proper notice, any time at all we want to go.”

“Okay, that does appeal to me, but what do I have to do?”

“Develop what you shot today to get one really excellent shot for IC for Monday midnight.”

Todd leaned forward and rubbed a hand over his face. “I really do need to get an assistant, Kell,” he said. He sat silently for a minute.

“Not a problem, Sweetheart,” he finally said. “I’m only sorry that we’ll have to leave here tomorrow morning.”

Kelly looked at him. Todd was generally an easygoing guy, but one of the reasons he had been ready to quit shooting models was because of the pressure and unreasonable demands by agents and clients.

“I’ll hate to go too, Todd, but you seem to be taking this a lot easier than I expected.”

“Oh, I was good and pissed when Peter asked for the film,” said Todd, “but as I was walking back here all I could think about was that I had two gorgeous women who love me and nothing else really mattered.”

Kelly smiled a gentle smile, her eyes getting a bit moist. “I do love you, Todd. And I know what you’re talking about. Nothing else does seem to matter, does it?”

“And if I’m not wrong, marriages performed on international waters are legal,” he added.

Kelly laughed. “You are incorrigible, Todd Ayres!”

“Honey, just out of curiosity, how come you’re not using the digital back for the 503CW? I thought that would cut down on your time in the darkroom,” Kelly asked.

“Ah, it’s okay if all you want is some test shots,” said Todd, “but the quality and definition isn’t up to par yet with real film. It’s like an MP3 compared to an original recording. Most people can’t hear the difference, but when you want to expand it, that’s when you find your limitations.”

“Oh, okay, I can understand that.”

“That’s what ‘Stan the Man’ was using at ‘Reliving History,’” Todd said. “He was using a 4 gig Minolta dImage. It’s fine for his kind of instant print tourist shots, but if you ever wanted to enlarge it, well, the quality would really degrade.”

“But it’s not like I’m ruling it out for the future,” he continued, “Canon is going to start shipping their new EOS-1Ds near the end of September. Now that’s a camera I want to try out. It’s an 11 mega pixel with a full 35mm frame. It’ll shoot three frames a second for up to ten shots. I sure could have used that this afternoon!”

“Did you place your order yet?” Kelly asked with a grin.

Todd laughed. Kelly knew him too well. “You bet I did, Sweetheart! The body alone is going to cost me 8 grand, but I can use all my 35mm lenses with it.”

“So you’ll have a new toy to play with in the fall and forget all about me,” Kelly pouted.

“There’s no way that any camera is ever going to come before my ladies,” he said swatting her playfully on the butt.

“Promise?” she asked.

“Would I lie to my wife to be?”

“Argh... Dream on, lover!”

“You better call Chris and have somebody pick us up in the morning,” Todd said.

As Kelly went inside to call Chris’s office, Todd thought to himself, “It could happen. I know I could make it happen.”

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As promised, Lucy picked them up at the hotel, calling from the front lobby. Together they strolled down to where the “cook-off” was getting underway where they found Laura sitting at a picnic table under an old leafy tree talking with Al.

“Sorry, Laura, but we have to leave tomorrow morning,” Kelly said. “And Al, as soon as I have a figure for you, I can fax it over with all the details. I’d prefer to discuss it in person, but like you say, duty calls.”

“That sounds great, Kelly,” he said. “I really appreciate that you would even consider the job after seeing what Todd can do with a camera. If you got one of those shots of the wing, IC stock is going to soar! But I’m sorry that you have to leave so soon.”

“So are we, Al,” said Kelly hugging Laura. “We really wanted to spend more time here, but as you heard...”

“Yeah,” Al sighed. “Sometimes work gets in the way of the life we want to live.”

“Hey guys,” said Laura. “Why the gloomy faces? We’ll be coming back, right?”

Both Kelly and Todd laughed. Leave it to Laura to show the positive side.

“I’m quite sure we will be,” said Kelly. “So Al, when is the judging and where do you want me?”

“The preparations are underway now,” said Al, “but the actual judging won’t take place till 5 o’clock. We’ve got some live entertainment performing shortly, and I’ll call the judges up on the PA when it’s time.”

“Just out of curiosity, Al, how can you guarantee fair judging?”

Al laughed. “All prepared dishes will be delivered to me and Lucy’s mother in a private secure room. There will be nothing to identify the cooks by, and a number will be assigned to mark each sample. You just write down the number of the one you think tastes best, and then I compare the numbers from the different judges and announce the winner. Wouldn’t want anybody to think we were biased in any way.”

“That sounds fair,” said Kelly.

“I’m curious,” said Todd looking around. “There’s no admission price, I see all kinds of people cooking up a storm, so who’s picking up the tab?”

Al shrugged his shoulders, “It’s part of the tax program on the island. Sort of a recreational fee for times and events like this. Then the restaurant chains with franchises here, they donate their time and food, it’s one of the conditions before we even consider letting them open a place here. The big hotels help out with staff and food as well.”

“It sounds like you’ve got a great community growing here Al,” said Todd.

“We want it to be a family,” Al said. “Things like this bring people closer together. Now, if you will excuse me, I have to get back to it. I’ll see you in a while,” he said to Kelly, “and I hope to see all of you before you have to leave.”

As Al walked away with Lucy, the girls from the “James Gang” came up to join them at the table.

“James is going to go nuts if he doesn’t get back in time,” said Jules.

“In time for what?” asked Laura.

“In time to eat copious mountains of ribs!” said Sara. “That man of ours sure likes to eat!”

“Where are the parents sitting?” asked Todd looking around.

“Oh... They all left this morning after a final round of golf,” said Sherri. “My dad still can’t decide what he’d like more. An autographed picture of Kelly from that SI Swimsuit Edition or a PhaseMetal driver for my snotty brother!”

Kelly laughed. “If I remember correctly, it sounded like your brother would be better off with a putter!”

A guitarist got up on the bandstand and after getting some help adjusting the volume levels managed to wrestle out a version of “Wind Beneath My Wings.”

Another singer got up and with the help of a Karaoke tape mangled a song by Dido.

“I guess we should start moving up,” said Celeste picking up her violin. “See you guys later.”

“You’ve got to hear this,” said Laura, “they’re doing a song for James, and he isn’t here to hear it. What a pity.”

“They’ll probably do it again tonight then,” said Jules. “I hear you helped them arrange it this afternoon,” she said to Laura.

“No, they had it, they would have figured it out by themselves,” said Laura.

A man got on the stage, told a few jokes and then announced that the other finalists of Salty Dave’s amateur contest would be up shortly to entertain them but now by special request of Salty Dave himself, “Sherri, Sara and Celeste!”

The girls took to the stage and Celeste took out her violin as Sherri seated herself at the synthesizer.

Sara, with microphone in hand, said, “We’d like to thank Dave for his wonderful taste in music.” She waited for the laughter to die down, then continued “We’d like to dedicate this number to someone who is near and dear to us. It’s called ‘Stay A While.’”

Sherri opened the riff and silence descended on the crowd as Sara began, her voice soft yet strong and vibrant.

*Into my room he creeps...
Without making a sound,
Into my dreams he peeps...
With his hair all long and hanging down.*

*How he makes me quiver,
How he makes me smile,
With all this love I have to give him,
I guess I’m gonna stay with him a while.*

When Celeste picked up on the second verse after the chorus, it sounded like an angel had come to earth to weep. As Celeste and Sara worked their way through the third verse and a double of the chorus, the crowd was whistling and clapping and shouting for more, but none were clapping louder than the table where Kelly, Todd, Laura and Jules were sitting.

Sherri and Celeste did a duet together of “Orange Blossom Special.” Sherri had set the synthesizer to a harmonica like sound, and Celeste made “Sweet Girl” sound just like a mournful train whistle. It wasn’t the conventional version of the “Orange Blossom Special” as Sherri added more instruments yet and laid on a drum track that had Celeste sawing her bow at a frantic pace. When they ended their version, Celeste wiped her forehead. As the applause started to settle down, Sara came back on stage with bottled water for Celeste and Sherri, and once again took the mike in hand.

“We have a special treat for you this afternoon as well, something Dave doesn’t know about, something that we have been fighting to keep a secret from some other very close friends.”

Laura got up and walked towards the stage.

“We have a special guest vocalist with us today, Miss Laura Williams!”

Though the crowd had never heard of her before, the introduction made it seem like they should have, so they applauded loudly while Kelly and Todd just looked at each other with an expression of “did you know what this is about?”

Jules just smiled smugly. The other three had told her what was going to happen. Laura made it up the steps and took one of the microphones from Sara.

“Thank you,” she said to the crowd. “It’s an honor to be performing with these talented ladies.” The applause rose again for the three girls of the James Gang. “I’m proud to call them my friends, they’ve been very ‘instrumental,’ no pun intended in helping me find my dreams.”

“I’d like to dedicate this song to two very special people who made all of my dreams come true. Todd, Kelly, this song is for you. I love you guys.”

Laura looked to Sherri who keyed in a single note to start the music and with a voice as pure as mountain dew Laura began:

*It’s been a long road
Getting from there to here
It’s been a long time
But my time is finally here*

Celeste joined in with her violin,

*And I can feel a change in the wind right now
Nothing's in my way
And they're not gonna hold me down no more
No they're not gonna hold me down*

Sara joined in on the chorus, wrapping an arm around Laura,

*'Cause I've got faith of the heart
I'm going where my heart will take me
I've got faith to believe
I can do anything
I've got strength of the soul
And no one's going to bend nor break me
I can reach any star
I've got faith
Faith of the heart*

By the time the four girls had reached the last two choruses, Sherri had added celestial effects to the instruments on the synthesizer.

The applause was thunderous. It was a song that many people could relate to whether or not they recognized it as the opening theme from Enterprise or just as a Rod Stewart hit.

Laura gave a small bow and then pointed to her co-conspirators that resulted in a lot of table pounding. Looking to the table where Todd and Kelly sat, she blew a kiss and then blushing slightly got off the stage.

Kelly sat with tears in her eyes as she and Todd waited for Laura with open arms.

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After a few more numbers by other finalists, Dave himself came out and called for a big round for all the performers and a special thanks to his guest performers.

“And if you want to catch them live again, I hear they will be at Carnegie Hall sometime soon. Just stop in at Salty Dave’s for details!”

Al came on to the stage and announced that the “cook-off” was complete and asked for the judges to come forward and render their verdicts.



It was Kelly's turn to head to the front of the stage where four other visiting dignitaries were waiting.

Even with hot burgers and ribs, roasted corn on the cob, hot dogs and cold drinks and so much more food, the crowd seemed to want a bit more. A quick thinking Al sent Lucy scurrying back to the table where the girls of the "James Gang" were sitting with Todd and Laura having a great laugh as Todd told the story of Sara's little slide to Jules, Celeste and Sherri.

"I would have loved to have seen that," said Sherri. "We did a spin yesterday that got the crowd wet but that was from a distance. I'll bet this was like a monsoon!"

"Kelly and I turned at the last minute," Laura laughed. "We saw this wall of water coming and decided not to get it in the face!"

"Poor Al," said Celeste. "That was really naughty of you guys!" but she couldn't hide her smile.

"Al thought it was great!" said Todd. "He's the one that had to explain to Peter just what the boat did."

Lucy was nearly out of breath when she reached the picnic table. "Dad asked if Sherri and Celeste and Sara could do a few more numbers... the crowd is asking for more live music."

"Care to join us Laura?" Celeste asked as she picked up her violin case.

"Thanks, Celeste, but it's you three who should be up there. Maybe we'll do another set together another time and place."

The trio got up and moved quickly to the stage, leaving Lucy and Jules with Laura and Todd.

"I wonder how Kelly is making out?" Jules said.

"Why do you ask?" said Laura.

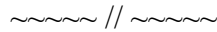
"We made a new friend here, you saw him on stage. Dave from Salty Dave's. He's one of the competitors in the 'cook-off' today. He used to be the reigning champ until one of the other restaurants won the title last year. He thinks this is a thing of honor now."

"Redeeming his honor?" Todd asked. "Sounds like he would make a good Klingon! Of course if he were, he would have skewered the p'Tag and roasted him over a slow fire last year, but I guess that's frowned on by humans."

Jules and Laura laughed.

"Maybe we should get something to eat while she's judging," Jules suggested.

Laura looked at Todd. The smell of the open barbeque drums was enticing. He nodded.



Since the “James Gang Trio” was on stage at Dave’s request, Jules suggested they grab some burgers from him. Lucy who was helping out quickly spotted them.

“Come here guys!” she waved them over. To Todd and Laura she said, “this is Dave and his girlfriend Janet.”

Dave handed over the grill to one of his staff and he and the lanky brunette slipped away so they could talk. He shook Todd’s hand with a firm grasp. “You’re the photographer,” he said.

Todd nodded, “And you’re the cook who’s looking to redeem his honor. Q’pla!”

At Dave’s puzzled look, Laura translated. “He’s wishing you success in Klingon.”

Janet laughed, lightly punching Dave in the shoulder. “Told you that song was from Enterprise!” To Laura she said, “You really did a great job on that song. I never thought of it as a love song before.”

“Thanks,” said Laura blushing at the compliment. “I wanted to tell the whole world how I felt about Todd and Kelly. This seemed to be about as big a piece of the world I could find!”

Janet looked at Todd who was beaming. “So... you two are?”

“This is my girlfriend Laura.” Todd said.

“But I thought your girlfriend was one of the judges,” Dave said.

“Yep! That gorgeous one at the end is Kelly,” said Laura.

Janet put a hand to her forehead. “I think I need a drink.”

“I’ll get you one,” said Lucy running off.

“She’s a sweetheart, but she won’t get the kind of drink I need right now,” said Janet slowly sinking to an open bench seat. “I should have stuck to my turtles. They’re a lot less complicated.”

Jules turned to hide her smile. If only Janet knew!

“Life is only complicated if you let it become that way,” said Laura.

“You’re going to tell me that you don’t get jealous?” Janet asked.

Laura shifted her eyes from side to side as if waiting for a punch line. “Am I supposed to?”

“God, I need a double!”

“Al was telling us about a turtle sanctuary on the island. Is that where you work?” asked Todd.

Janet looked up. "Yes. We actually recover the eggs after the female has laid them and hatch them ourselves. We've been quite successful at it, but we'll never bring the population back to what it was."

"Why not?" asked Laura.

"Because people don't give a damn about turtles," said Todd.

Janet's head whipped around. "Yes they do!" she hissed.

"I'm sorry, Janet, but I've been around the world a few times. You might give a damn, your friends might, but people in general couldn't care less. If they did, you wouldn't have to hatch eggs to try to save the species."

Janet looked like she was going to cry. Dave was about to say something but Todd held his hand up to him.

"I'm sorry, Janet, I remember people like you from university. I love what you try to do, but as long as people buy drums made from turtle shells, or think that soup made from a turtle is a status thing, you're fighting a losing battle."

"So you think I should just quit? Is that it?"

"No," said Todd in a softer voice. "Never quit. We all have to keep fighting, not just for the turtles but also for the whales and the dolphins and the rain forests. It's better to die on our feet fighting than to kneel in submission and accept defeat."

"I'm sorry," she said. "I know you're right... It's just we could do so much more but it always comes down to money."

"Well, I'll tell you what," said Todd, "we're quoting a job for AI for a new brochure for the island. He's proud of what you do. If we get the job, I'll work with you on some pictures that will show just what can be done."

"Thanks, Todd. I'd really appreciate that."

"But I'll tell you something else," Todd added. "You need to talk to more people, the way you just talked to me. Make them listen. Appeal to their good nature. While it won't create a miracle cure, these people," he waved his arm in a sweeping motion over the crowd, "they will help. Most people are basically good and want to do the right thing."

Dave nodded in agreement.

Lucy came back with a box full of cups with iced tea and started to hand them out.

"Honey," Dave said. "Todd's right. People want to do the right thing. It's just sometimes they need to be shown what the right thing is. I know you've been avoiding the club cause you think it's just a bunch of teenagers that hang out there, but they're the ones that you should be talking to. Make them believe that hope for the future lies with them. You'd be surprised at how many are interested."

“You really think so, Dave?” she asked turning a hopeful eye towards him.

“I know so, Janet. I’ll even prove it to you after the BBQ is over.”

Todd and Laura took a couple of burgers and some corn and headed back to their table after saying goodbye to Dave and Janet. Jules had loaded up a plate for herself and asked out loud, “I wonder how Dave’s going to prove it?”

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Kelly was having a hell of a time. There were six plates of ribs in front of her with numbered tags. From the small tastes she had of each, rinsing her mouth out between tastes with Perrier, she had quickly eliminated two.

The first to lose out was one that was so heavily spiced with various peppers it nearly burned Kelly’s tongue. Somebody had gone a bit heavy with the Scotch Bonnet peppers. Kelly remembered the distinctive taste from her time in Jamaica.

The second one to bite the dust was one where the chef had killed the taste with too much dry mustard. It might be a unique flavor, but Kelly felt it was not properly utilized on the ribs. This left her with four that were rather good, two of which were actually very good, but even though she knew one of the recipes she was tasting had been helped along by Sara, she had promised herself to be a fair and impartial judge, and if asked, would be able to state why she had turned down the “also rans.”

She gave number six a failing grade for being overly dry, and number four, though a good mixture, had used too much honey trying to emulate an oriental flavor. Kelly felt it took away from the taste of the meat.

Having definitely eliminated the four from competition, Kelly tried both numbers five and three again. Both had a similar flavor on the palate. A pleasant taste, though as she looked closer at the two remaining plates, she noticed a distinctive orange tinge to both plates. It took some will power but Kelly forced herself to overcome the memorized taste of saffron. Scraping the meat of all sauce she instead focused on the other tastes. Without the sauce, one was rather normal with no distinctive flavor at all, but the other had just enough kick to it to appeal to her sense of taste; spicy, but not overly so. The meat was tender and easy to chew. Rinsing her mouth after each bite, she tried both again to make sure her decision was accurate. It was definitely number five she preferred as her choice of best ribs.

Slipping her personal comments into her purse, she marked number five as the winner and sat back from the table. She was surprised to find that she was the last of the judges to finish, but satisfied herself that neither Emeril nor Jamie could have done a better job!

Seeing she was done, Al came and collected all of the judging cards. He thanked the judges for their efforts and announced to the crowd that the winner would be announced a bit later but for now, the food was going on the grill!

Kelly realized she had really been into a mindset with the tasting of the ribs. While she had been aware of music playing behind her, she hadn't realized it was Sara and Sherri and Celeste. She gave a thumb's up to the girls and headed back to her table.

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"Are we too late?" asked a familiar voice.

Todd looked up and gave James a friendly handshake. Jules and Kelly had their backs to him and hadn't seen him and the three girls approach.

JulieAnn jumped up and hugged James. "You're never too late, Sweetheart, especially when it comes to food!" Since Jules was the only one who knew everybody at the table she made the introductions.

"Kelly, Todd, this is Erin, James' sister, and these two ladies are Cara and Ami.

We'll leave you to get acquainted while we get this big lug a few pounds of ribs!"

Todd leaned back and scrutinized the two gymnasts. Cara was about 5'7" with a natural gymnast's physique. A bit gangly, but he knew enough about gymnastic competition to realize she had gone into a growth spurt. "How bad is it?" he asked her.

Cara blushed. "I could have kept competing, but it would have meant surgery, and the doctors said that I'm still growing. I won't qualify for the nationals this year, so rather than getting scarred for life, my coach suggested I quit now."

"Smart coach," said Todd. Her hair was tied back in a ponytail but was a nice rich brown. She had some nice curves, but her muscles detracted from them. "Can you still hold a pose on the major equipment? If you don't have to worry about a dismount or any maneuvers?"

"I was still doing it all last week," she said.

"Welcome aboard, Cara," said Kelly. "All I can promise right now is this one shoot but if you are interested, I could find more work for you."

"Actually, I'm not sure if I want to pursue it as a job. I've got plans to go into sports medicine, but I thought this would be fun and a great way to close out my years of training."

"Smart choice," said Todd.

"So Ami... What's your story?"

Ami was just a bit shorter than Cara but with more curves. Shorter, darker hair but very nicely built.

“I won’t make the national team this year either, and I’m getting a bit too old to continue trying to make it again. This year I was plagued with a rare disease in gymnasts.”

“A disease?” Kelly asked.

“Yeah,” said Erin. “She caught a bad case of the Klutz!”

Todd laughed. “Well that won’t prevent you from being photographed. What are your plans for the future?”

“I’m not sure yet. I want to stay near the action but I don’t want to be involved the way Cara is planning. Actually, I was thinking of going into sports photography.”

“Well, that’s a lofty goal,” said Todd, “but there aren’t too many women in the field, so you could corner a niche market. But it’s not instant pictures.”

“Oh, I know that,” said Ami. “I’ll have to finish school and then hope someone will take me on as an apprentice.”

“Ooff,” said Todd as Kelly’s elbow hit him in the side.

“You understand that we’ll need you in Charlotte for at least four weeks, right?” asked Kelly. Both girls nodded.

“Can you be ready to go in a few days? We’re already running behind schedule.”

“We’re ready when you need us,” said Ami. “But where will we stay and how will we get there? Our folks don’t want us traveling alone.”

Kelly turned to Laura, “Would you mind another flight to pick these girls up?”

Laura smiled. “I’d be glad to help.”

“Okay, how about Laura comes to the Summerville airstrip on Wednesday and picks you up at your homes so your parents can see that you have an escort to take you to Charlotte. As for a place to stay, if you don’t mind sharing a room, I have a guest room you can camp out in.”

“That would work!” said Ami. “Cara and I are used to sharing quarters. It’s like a professional necessity.”

Kelly shook hands with the two girls, “Then we’ll see you on Wednesday! Maybe you want to go and grab some food and come back and join us here. I know that James and JulieAnn will be back shortly.”

With a laugh and giggles the three girls ran off in search of food.

“Don’t you want something to eat, Kelly?” Todd asked.

“Not now, Sweetheart. I had so many bites of ribs that it’s all I can taste.” She sat back and lit a cigarette. “I told you that your assistant would find you!”

“Who? Ami?” Todd asked.

“Why not? You were younger than she was when you started,” Kelly said.

“And she might as well apprentice under the best,” added Laura, “Besides, she can do home study and be free to really give you a hand when you get busy.”

“I don’t know,” said Todd. “Maybe I’ll let her try some film on a 35 and see if she can develop it. A lot of people think photography is just snapping off pictures.”

“Trust me, Todd,” Laura said. “I’ve got a feeling about her.”

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James and Jules came back to the table. James was carrying two plates of ribs.

“You’re going to eat all that?” Kelly asked.

“This is just his appetizer!” Jules laughed.

“Hey,” said James as he dug into the first plate. “Did you hear the girls on stage?”

Kelly laughed. “They’ve been up there most of the afternoon. They seem to be a big hit with the crowd.”

“I was just getting my first plate loaded when they started on this one song...” His eyes drifted away.

“Laura was up there earlier with them,” Jules said. “You should have heard the four of them! Laura did a special love song for Todd and Kelly.”

Kelly wrapped her arms around Laura. “She’s such a sweetheart!”

Laura gave Kelly a kiss. She sat back and looked at James with such curiosity that he stopped eating.

“What? Have I got rib sauce all over my face again?”

Laura laughed. “No, it’s just that I’ve heard so much about you that I wondered what you would look like. Now I’m just comparing the physical you to the one I had pictured in my mind.”

“And do I measure up?”

“I’m not really sure,” said Laura. “I think I was mentally prepared for a Brad Pitt/George Clooney combination but now I think you look more like Matt Damon.”

“It’s not his outside appearance that attracts us girls,” said Jules, “it’s what he’s got in here,” she said tapping his heart.

“Now that, I can understand,” said Laura.

“I wonder what’s going on with Dave and Janet,” James said. “When I got my ribs, Janet was acting a bit strange. Actually a bit dazed.”

“Oh,” said Todd, “that might be my fault.”

James looked at him for an explanation but it was Laura who explained to Kelly and James what had happened. “She might love her turtles, but I think she realizes now that without people to support her, she’s fighting a losing battle.”

“She’s got to get people involved,” said Todd. “And Dave told her that she needed younger people as they were the ones that would take up the cause, and then Dave said something about he was going to prove that point to her after the barbeque was over. I’m curious as to what he has up his sleeve.”

The music stopped and Al got up on the stage. Taking the mike from Sara, he announced that the rib cook off winner had been determined. Cara, Ami and Erin made it back to the table in time to hear the results.

“I’m pleased to say that all the participants gave a good showing, but in the end there can only be one winner... Reclaiming his title as the grand master of ribs is Dave Michon of Salty Dave’s!”

The applause was loud and gratifying. Sara, still on stage, was beaming from ear to ear.

“Dave, get up here to pick up your trophy and say a few words.” Al said.

Dave got up on the bandstand gently pulling a reluctant Janet with him. He thanked Al and held his trophy up high. He looked to the side of the stage and gave a nod to Lucy who took off running.

“I’d like to thank the judges first of all,” said Dave, “but also my fellow contestants. You made me try harder!” This brought another round of applause from the audience.

“But,” he said in a more somber voice, “I learned a valuable lesson this year as well. I’m not perfect. And I can’t do everything alone. We are all, all of us, dependent on other people.”

Lucy scrambled up the steps carrying a wooden box the size of a shoebox.

“Sometimes we have to let others help us carry the load. This box is the result of a year’s worth of donations from teens that have spent a few nights at my club. Nobody asked them to donate, we just told them what it was for, and they gave of their own free will.”

“Janet,” he said turning to her, “this is just a small offering from the young people who live on or visit Brookhaven to help save the turtles.”

Janet’s eyes misted over and a tear ran down her cheek.

“How much?” someone from the audience hollered.

Dave turned back to the crowd with one arm around Janet. “I have no idea. We were going to count it tonight, but someone told us this afternoon that this was as big a

piece of world as she could hope for in one sitting. Al said there's over 200 people here right now, so I'm saying that we need to do more!"

Kelly looked at Todd who whispered in her ear. She quickly climbed on to the top of the picnic table and hollered out, "Whatever is in that box, TKO will match it!"

Jules looked at James who nodded. She too climbed on to the table and hollered out, "And JamPC will match it as well!"

Peter, vice president of InterCoastal, shook his head and said a silent "what the fuck," got up and said "And InterCoastal will match it!"

The applause got louder and louder as one after another, various visitors who represented corporations also vowed to match it.

The tears were running down her face as Janet tried to thank everyone. Al brought a screwdriver up on the stage and cracked the top of the box open for every one to see. Sherri started playing Queen's "We Are The Champions" in the background as Janet and Al carefully counted out the money in the box.

Al stood up and taking the mike announced that all those who had volunteered to match the generosity of the teens that visited Brookhaven were now responsible for \$428.73 each!

Laura, who had always been good with numbers, did the math quickly in her head. She confirmed the numbers with Jules and announced to their table that Janet had just lucked her way into 9,850 dollars and 79 cents.

As Janet and Dave left the stage, Al waited for the crowd to quiet down. "I would ask for everybody's cooperation tomorrow. Short Creek Channel will be closed to all boat traffic starting at 9:00 A.M. InterCoastal will be running speed tests between 11:00 A.M. and 1:00 P.M. You're welcome to come down and watch, but please, stay out of the channel during that time."

"Where are you going, James?" Jules asked.

"Back for more ribs! It's probably the last good meal I'll have with you giving all our money away."

"I shouldn't have asked," said a smiling Jules.

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The "James Gang Trio" did two more numbers, thanked everyone for the applause and got off stage. On the way back to the table they picked up some food and drinks and caught up with James on his way back with two more plates of ribs.

Janet and Dave stopped by a few minutes later and sat to talk with the group that now occupied two picnic tables.

Laura introduced them to Kelly.

“That was really something special you guys did,” said Janet as she sat down.

“Actually,” said Todd, “what we did today was try to prove something to you. What’s really special is what this will do for you next year.”

“What do you mean?” asked Janet.

“This was a drop in the bucket as far as fund raising goes. What we, and JamPC and IC and all those other corporate heads gave is nothing. Next year... That’s when it’s going to cost us!” he said laughing.

Janet looked at Todd like he had grown a second head.

“I know what he means, Janet,” said Laura. “Dave had a donation box up in his cafe. Teens that dropped money into it, well for them it was just pocket change, but it came with good intentions. What they saw happen today, and what they will hear about over the next year if Dave prints out a good sign to go with the box, is they will put in more money cause they’re going to want to beat whatever today’s total was. And they’ll know Janet, they’ll understand that the companies only matched what they contributed.”

“She’s right, Janet,” said Dave. “Those kids will work even harder at it now!”

“And you can put it right on the sign, Dave,” said Todd, “TKO will again match whatever they contribute. Sight unseen. Make it a challenge for them!”

Dave laughed. “You don’t mind if I tell some of the other companies that you’ve already committed yourselves?”

“I’d be surprised and shocked if you didn’t!” said Todd.

Dave and Janet got up to leave.

“If you’ll excuse us,” said Dave, “I find people more approachable on full stomachs.”

Todd laughed. “That’s the spirit. But Janet, remember what I said. It’s you who has to talk with the same passion as you did earlier.”

As they walked away, Kelly said, “They seem like a nice couple.”

JulieAnn and Laura smiled at each other and then at Todd.

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“I wish we could stick around a bit longer,” Kelly said to the group. “I’d love to be able to fill Cara and Ami in on what they’ll need to bring and what they won’t need...”

“It’s okay, Kelly,” said Ami, “We’ll just bring our stuff that we took to the camp with us if that’s okay. We’re used to packing light.”

“That would probably be all you need,” said Kelly, “anything else we can pick up in Charlotte for you. Contrary to how it looks, we don’t work all the time! Just remember that Laura will be picking you up Wednesday morning.”

Todd stood up. “James, ladies, I guess we’ll see you next weekend.”

Laura gave each of the “James Gang Trio” a hug. “Thanks guys. I really appreciate you letting me do a number with you.”

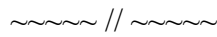
Kelly sighed. “JulieAnn, would you like an advance peek at the pictures? I know that you guys were the driving force behind this IC venture, and I guarantee that no news photo is going to compare to what Todd shot off this morning.”

Sara laughed. “Damn right it won’t come close. Todd’s a pro, and we planned it all out before we tried it and then ran test runs. It’s not something I would try with anybody else.”

“That would be great, Kelly. You’ve got our email address, and then I can let Al have a look as well.”

Kelly smiled a warm smile at the group. “Till next weekend then.”

After the goodbyes Todd and Kelly and Laura strolled off back to their hotel to get ready for an early morning flight out.



“You told her WHAT?” asked an incredulous Kelly.

“Well,” said Laura defensively, “Janet asked and I saw no reason to hide the truth. At least she only thinks Todd is the lucky one to have two girls. I didn’t tell her that you and I were involved as well!”

Kelly laughed. “No wonder James thought she looked a bit dazed!”

“Well, at least she wasn’t at the restaurant last night,” said Todd. “Then there would have been no doubt in her mind!”

Both Kelly and Laura laughed at that. “I’m sure that she’ll hear about it soon enough.”

“I take it then she doesn’t realize all the other girls are with James!” Kelly said.

“Wouldn’t that blow her mind?” said Laura.

Kelly was laying out the clothes she would be wearing in the morning and packing the rest away. Laura decided to help. Todd just picked out another t-shirt and concentrated on making sure his ice packs were well frozen and that his camera equipment was all packed up tight.

It was still fairly early but Todd had gotten enough information about the size of the island and all of the businesses and activities available from the Hampton’s manager,

plus a couple of the older brochures. As usual for Todd, with all things taken care of, he flopped down in front of the TV to catch up on the latest news.

“How about steak for supper?” Kelly asked. “I really feel like chewing some protein tonight.”

“Just steak?” Todd asked.

“Smothered in mushrooms.” Kelly added. “If you want fries or a baked potato with it, I’ll be glad to order one for you, but I’m just going to have a Caesar salad with mine, and a deluxe jumbo size Pina Colada!”

“That sounds great!” said Laura.

“Yeah, that would do it for me too,” said Todd. “But how about we slip the drinks into the freezer when they come and have them on the balcony afterwards?”

“Now you’re talking. And while we’re waiting for the food, I better call Vanetta and let her know we’ll be coming home earlier than we planned.”

“Are you sure she’ll be at home?” Todd asked.

“No, but I do know that she’ll be at the studio.”

“At the studio?”

“Yep. She thinks we don’t know, and obviously you didn’t, but whenever we’re out of town she stays at the studio 24/7.”

“Why would she do that?” Todd asked.

“She’s trying to protect the place. By having lights on and off at different times it looks like there is someone there all the time, which there is.”

“Doesn’t she have a social life?” Laura asked.

“I can’t see how she can,” said Todd. “She’s always studying or at work.”

Kelly just smiled as she dialed the studio’s private number.

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Kelly and Laura and Todd were sitting on the balcony again after a delicious meal of steak and mushrooms. The Pina Coladas had stayed nicely frozen in the freezer and after their meal, all three had stripped off what little clothes they had left on and were just enjoying being in each other’s company while sipping on their drinks.

“What was the proper name of that song,” Laura asked looking up from her straw. “Which song is that, Honey?” Kelly asked.

“I know!” laughed Todd. “She’s thinking of ‘the Pina Colada song,’ right Babe?”

“Yeah! That’s the one,” Laura said.

Kelly laughed as well. “It’s called ‘Escape’ by Rupert Holmes. Why did you want to know that?”

“Before yesterday, I’d never had one of these,” Laura explained. “Maybe that’s why the song didn’t really mean that much to me. Or it could be because now I understand the other stuff he sang about.”

They sat silently for a while contemplating what Laura had said.

“My boobs are a bit tender tonight,” Laura said.

“I think they’re always tender,” laughed Todd.

“Are you due?” asked Kelly.

Laura did some thinking and finally nodded. “But usually I get bloated and get cramps just as I come due,” she said.

“I told you the vitamins would help,” said Kelly.

“Wow! They’ve really made a difference,” said Laura.

“I know,” said Kelly. “I have to keep an eye on the calendar myself to avoid little accidents.”

“If you two will excuse me for a minute, I think I better slip something in.”

“You know, Todd,” said Kelly, “as well as I thought I knew you, I have no idea if you have any hang-ups about sex with a woman on her period.”

“Not me,” said Todd. “It’s just a part of life. I haven’t done it often, but it’s nothing that washing won’t take care of.”

“Did somebody mention washing?” asked Laura. She was wearing a pair of panties now.

“Yeah, I was just asking Todd if he had hang-ups about having sex with a woman while she’s menstruating.”

“Oh, gross!” exclaimed Laura.

Kelly laughed. “I never thought I would see anything about sex that would turn you off.”

Laura finally grinned. “Maybe it’s because I’ve never done it, or because of the whole society thing.”

“That’s what I was trying to explain to Chuck the other night,” said Todd. “We let North American mores and rules dictate a way of life to us when in reality we are part of a much bigger social system.”

“Well, I’ve been brought up on those standards and rules,” said Laura, “so maybe we can just let me adjust to it slowly before I try it, okay? I mean, I went to school where everyone still refers to it as ‘the curse.’”

“Really?” asked Kelly. “I haven’t heard that since I was twelve. But then again, I can understand your view. When I was in Europe, there were a lot of women who didn’t shave their legs. I thought that was going extreme!”

“How about the ones who don’t shave their pits?” added Todd.

Kelly turned to him. "Ladies don't have armpits, Sir, we have underarms!"

Laura and Todd both laughed.

"I know that when I first started growing hair under my arms, my sister Cathy used to call me Chia-Pet!"

"Well, I won't rush you into trying anything new," said Todd. "When and if you want to, I'm sure you'll let me know."

"But that doesn't mean I can't..." and with that Laura sat in front of Todd and dropped her mouth over his cock.

Not bothering with preliminaries, she sucked until the head was deep in her mouth, then tongued the vein at the base, drawing back slightly as his cock grew rapidly, almost penetrating her throat. Slowly, she drew her teeth lightly down his shaft then laved the head, drooling spit so it ran down his shaft and onto his ballsack and suddenly dived back down engulfing the full length of him. She couldn't quite deep throat it all and pulled back to suckle on him, her tongue working against the sensitive underside of his throbbing head.

Kelly had been surprised by Laura's spontaneous action, and, smiling, she leaned back against the railing giving encouragement.

"Suck that cock, Laura, make him cum. Oh, he's feeling it already, I can see his balls tightening up!"

Todd was moaning out loud as Laura cupped his balls with one hand and with the other gently twisted on the portion of his shaft not currently in her mouth. Laura started to hum as she continued to suck sending even stronger sensations into his glans and seconds later Todd could hold off no longer and shot his load into her eager mouth. Laura got up and shared her reward with Kelly, the two girls mashing breasts against each other as they shared a deep soul kiss.

"Something about this place..." said Todd.

"What's that Honey?" Kelly asked. "Because the three of us are naked outside basking in the moonlight?"

"Yeah, we couldn't do this at home," he said. "Maybe on the roof of the studio, but that would be risky."

Laura sighed. "I guess we'll have to wait for times when we're out of town then, someplace a bit more private."

Kelly laughed. "You should have arrived at Chuck's the night before. All the girls were skinny dipping!"

"Now that would be cool!" Laura said.

Kelly was sipping at the last of her jumbo Pina Colada. “Laura, I’m not trying to be pushy or anything, but if you have an issue with sex during your period, how are we going to give you any pleasure?”

Laura thought on that a moment. “Like we do with each other in the shower?” she ventured.

“I’d do that with you anytime,” laughed Kelly, “but what about Todd? You know he wants to pleasure you as much as I do.”

“Jesus. I’ve never had to think of any of this before. Maybe it will be okay as long as you’re okay with it, Todd.”

“You already know that I’m okay with it, Sweetheart.” Todd said. “But don’t worry about it. When the time is right, let’s just let it happen.”

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Todd fetched bottles of Evian from the fridge and they shared some of the fruit from Chuck’s basket as they sat on the balcony, listening quietly to the sounds of summer. The rest of the evening was occupied with small talk, touching and smiles as they thought of their return to Charlotte the following day.

“I wonder when I’ll meet Nicole,” Laura said. “I’m curious now to meet the last member of the ‘James Gang.’”

“Probably at the grand opening of Celeste’s ‘Wheel’ next weekend,” said Todd. He yawned. “I’m about done in. Anybody else ready for bed?”

“You go ahead Babe,” said Kelly. “I think Laura and I need a shower first.”

To be continued...