

Kelly

(Inspired by Mike C, based on characters in his novel: “James”
Characters and situations copyright by Mike C, 2002)

Chapter 23

While Kelly and Laura and Todd had been upstairs fooling around, Cara and Ami were getting used to the equipment.

“I understand a lot more of what Todd is going to be looking for,” said Ami.

“What’s that, Sweetheart?” asked Cara.

“Well, as unglamorous as it may sound,” Ami said, “we’re just bodies to show off the uniforms. I’ll grant you that we are beautiful bodies but the company is not selling us, it wants to sell uniforms and even all this equipment is just props to make the uniforms look good. I think we can save Todd a lot of time and money by working on poses that show the costumes off and how they’re better than what the schools and the teams are using now.”

“Hey, I just realized – I don’t have to pull the costume down over my cheeks as often!” Cara exclaimed.

“You know, I hadn’t even realized that, I just thought it was a better fit. Anyways, what we need are positions that show off the costumes.”

Cara nodded slowly. “I think I understand. Large body poses instead of tight ones.”

“That’s the idea, Cara.”

“Like an inverted stand on the bars, maybe spread eagle on the vault. Full body flips on the mats,” Cara said.

“Yeah, you got it! We should look at all of our stuff and pick the ones that would expose our bodies, or the outfits the most. Some short routines, maybe one minute max on any piece, and change as fast as we can and do it again.”

“Well,” said Cara. “It’s not like we have to run to the change room to switch outfits,” she laughed. Todd has seen us in all our glory more than once now.”

“That’s what I was thinking, too,” said Ami. If we do six outfits in an hour, between the two of us that means neither one of us will be doing more than 3 minutes on the equipment in an hour.”

“Which means we could easily do four hours in a day,” said Cara nodding enthusiastically. “God, I’m glad you started learning photography! This will make it so easy, nothing like camp or tryouts or competition. We’ll barely raise a sweat!”

“That’s the beauty of it,” said Ami. “We do what we need to get the right poses for Todd, have lunch and a shower and we should be able to do the entire thing in one day!”

“Do you think they’ll send us home early if we finish it so quick?” asked Cara.

“I doubt it,” said Ami, “but let’s ask. I know that Kelly loves what you do for her with your magic massaging fingers, and Todd said I’m his apprentice. I doubt they’ll want us to leave until we really have to.”

“That’s something else I’ve been thinking about,” said Ami. “Why can’t we get our remaining class room hours here? I love my folks, but not being in gymnastics any more... there’s nothing left for me in Laurel Canyon except my family. You and Erin were the only friends I ever had, and Erin is moving on. She might get lucky and make it to the next Olympics. With her new routine, she’ll at least go to Worlds.”

“Yeah, and I don’t really want to go back to sleeping by myself either, Ami. I love you too much. I want us to be together. It just wouldn’t work out back home.”

“Let’s get to work on figuring out what moves will suit Todd the best,” said Ami. “Get showered up and changed before Vanetta’s boyfriend shows up and then we can talk to Kelly and Todd about it tonight.”

~~~~~ //

Vanetta had been real busy on the phones since the three lovers had gone upstairs. It felt so strange. In one afternoon, her entire world had been turned upside down. All great news, and then Todd had dropped his bombshell. What if he didn’t approve of Bobby? What would she do then? Part of her brain wished she could figure Todd out. It was exactly like she had told Bobby. Todd is a real deep pool. It looks inviting on the surface, but you have no idea what lies below. It had never failed to amaze her how he had taken to her mother and her brother. She knew that Todd was totally colorblind when it came to race, but she had no idea how he would take to mixed races. Vanetta realized that in all the years she had known him, she actually knew very little about him. Maybe that was what made her nervous.

But it didn’t keep her from working the phones. The body lotion company was thrilled to be invited to be part of the package, and was willing to not only sponsor 16

months worth of ads, but would supply samples via any reputable magazine and their web site. This would help raise their exposure in the North American market tremendously.

And then she had rung Jorge.

“Jorge, how are you!”

“Vanetta, darling, it’s wonderful to hear your voice!” he laughed. “I have been talking only to Kelly, lately! You have been on vacation, no?”

“No, Jorge, I haven’t been on vacation! Kelly wanted to handle Laura herself” – *‘and how!’* she thought – “and I have been busy doing oth...”

“Oh Vanetta!” he interrupted in a worried voice, “you’re not telling that the beautiful Laura...”

“No, Jorge, no! It’s all right, Jorge! No, I am calling to tell you something that nobody else knows yet, Jorge. And Jorge,” she added in a confidential voice, “I’m telling you this because you are such a good friend to Kelly and Todd and the company. And Kelly doesn’t know I’m telling you, so please keep it quiet until it is announced.”

“Oh ho!” he chortled, “A secret! I am good at secrets, Vanetta, you know that!”

*‘Only when it suits you,’* Vanetta thought. “Jorge, there are two parts to this secret. First, Kelly is pregnant!”

“WONDERFUL!” he bellowed, “Wonderful news! Oh just wait until I tell... Ohhh, Vanetta, you tell me this is a secret, no?”

“Just for a little while, Jorge, until she makes the announcement, probably week after next.” Vanetta was sure that Kelly would be announcing it at the company picnic.

“Very well, Vanetta, but will be hard, oh what wonderful news! And the father Vanetta, who is father of her baby?”

“Todd is the proud new Daddy, Jorge!”

“Ohhh, wonderful news, wonderful news! About time they had family!”

“They’re very happy too, Jorge, but please don’t tell anyone until after the announcement.”

“Oh no, Vanetta, I don’t tell anybody until you tell me.”

“Now Jorge, the other part of the secret. Kelly is doing a photo journal of her pregnancy, and it will appear in a national or international magazine every month for at least a year, perhaps longer.”

“Yes?” Jorge sounded a little baffled. How did this mean something to him?

“And she will be endorsing and be photographed with a select range of products that she already uses, and will be using during and after her pregnancy. And Jorge, you know she already loves and wears your designs.”

“Aahhh!” he said, understanding.

“But Jorge, you don’t have a line in maternity wear!”

“Ohhh!”

“And, Jorge, she will be getting bigger in three months or so! Not long!”

“And Todd, he will be taking the pictures?”

“Jorge, Todd will personally approve every photo released for publication. Would you expect anything less?”

“Oh dear, could be very expensive! Which magazine gets this story?”

Vanetta laughed. “Jorge, we haven’t decided yet, but it will be one where *we* can tell them the advertisers they’ll use, and I’m setting the prices. If you want to use your normal line, we can do that. If you consider a maternity line, you could use the pictures in a special maternity catalog too, and we can work that into the price.”

“Ah, Vanetta, you have any other models pregnant?”

Vanetta felt like she’d been sandbagged. What an idea! TKO’s models usually ‘retired’ while they were having babies, and with over two hundred models on their books, it was guaranteed that there were at least four or five pregnant at any one time.

“Jorge, I’m sure we have two or three ladies pregnant right now, and if you give me an hour I can tell you who. But I will have to check with them if they’re willing to model.”

“That’s okay, you find out and tell me. We can do catalog with four models, six is better. Especially if you get me ladies different ahh... months?”

“I can do that, Jorge. So, you tell me, you are seriously considering the maternity line?”

“Oh ho yes, Vanetta, I have three ideas already! You put down into words, no, and send it to me. We see if I can make new line in two months!”

And that was the way that the next hour went. Vanetta would call agencies and companies that made products Kelly used. From her makeup to her panties to her nylons, companies that made the shampoo that Kelly favored to the vitamin company that made the bulk of her supplements. Each call started basically the same way. Vanetta would verify that the person she was talking to remembered Kelly when she was modeling and then announce that she was pregnant and putting together a complete package deal for a specialty motherhood magazine. No, she wasn't sure which one yet, but was just putting out feelers, especially to those companies that Kelly favored.

Panties, nylons, shoes, they all agreed quickly, with the vitamin company being the most enthusiastic. It was rare that a top model admitted to taking vitamins, and this would help their sales a lot. 16 months of exposure, and with a face like Kelly's, it was sure to pay off for them.

Her thoughts drifted back to Todd. What did she really know about him? He never discussed his family or where he had come from. To Vanetta, he was an enigma. She knew that he belonged to MENSA, though he never mentioned them, or attended any meetings. She knew that Todd avoided public places and people in general if he wasn't behind a camera, and that he had turned down more work for major magazines than most photographers would see in a lifetime. Then she had a thought.

Vanetta knew firsthand who made the film that Todd used, and called the president of the company. Sure, he knew who Todd Ayres was. Doing a special 16-month feature on a top model? Which photography magazine?

Vanetta almost fell off her chair. *A photography magazine of course!* Todd hadn't decided, she explained, but this would be a double. One magazine that Kelly would pick, and a specialty photography magazine that would have the story of the shoot itself.

Sure! They were willing to toss in 100 grand just to have the name of their film listed below his name in the credits section. Send them a contract.

Wow. Vanetta was blown away. She hadn't thought of pushing Todd's role in this but her next call was to Hasselblad's American distributor. Todd Ayres? Yep, not only did they know him, but had wanted him to be a spokesperson for them. He said he was too shy. A 16-month feature on Kelly Jennsen? How much for a “Camera by” line?

Vanetta said, “throw out a price. You realize he only uses Blads, right?”

That call ended with a promise of a brand new camera and another 100 grand.

Vanetta was so flushed with the excitement of the past hour she had completely forgotten what was waiting for her. It hit home when the doorbell rang. She hadn't even realized the time. It was 6 o'clock. With a sigh, she hung up the phone and feeling like a condemned prisoner, walked to answer the door.

~~~~~ // ~~~~~

Bobby waited outside the door, holding two bottles of wine. He had thought of bringing flowers, but at the last minute he remembered something Netta had said about models and cut flowers.

For a long time, Bobby had felt jealous of Todd. The way that Netta spoke about him, and that look she got in her eyes when talking about working for him and Kelly, but over time, that had changed. As he had become more and more intimate with Netta, he realized what he had mistaken for unbridled passion for Todd, was in fact a deep respectful affection. Bobby was good with computers, and though he never said anything to Vanetta, he had researched all he could on Todd Ayres. He seemed to have surfaced about 11 years ago as a photographer, but there was no prior history on him at all. The only way that this could be, based on his research, was that Todd had changed his name. His first thought was that Todd had been a convicted juvenile offender of some serious crime that had kept him in a state run institution, but as he learned more about Todd's swift rise in the fashion world, he discounted this possibility. He had to have started as a photographer in the publishing world a long time before.

Months of speculation about Todd ended with no results. It was obvious that Todd had his reasons and as he learned more about his involvement in helping Vanetta and her mother and brother obtain citizenship, he worried less and less. Over time, Netta had let it slip that Todd and Kelly paid for her schooling. Todd and Kelly had funded Delton's business, and unbeknownst to the vast majority of the people who lived in Charlotte, Todd, and Kelly sponsored many youth programs, most often not receiving any credit for the money they so freely handed out. They were quiet philanthropists.

During his research on Kelly, he had found many photographs, but they did not describe her personality. She was a beautiful woman, there was no doubt about that, but that, and what Netta had told him about her, was the extent of his knowledge. He chuckled. He knew more about Laura than he did of Todd or Kelly. He had been looking forward to this face-to-face meeting for a long time, and had been disappointed when Vanetta had turned down the invitation for dinner with them when they heard the news of Kelly's pregnancy. Vanetta had finally relented and said they would go together to the company's fifth annual picnic at Carowinds. Then out of the blue, without warning, Todd had asked Netta to invite him over for supper.

Robert was a bit nervous. His only assurance during all his time of wondering had come from Gloria, who, when asked one day when Netta wasn't home yet, had been told, "Dey be good people, Mister Todd and Kelly. Don 'ye be frettin' yo self 'bout dem,

or ‘bout Mister Todd and my baby girl. Dey’s no anky panky. You wait, you see, then evry ting be ari.”

And then Vanetta dropped the bombshell that Todd had known for some time that he and Netta had been sleeping together in his studio, but had never mentioned it, not even to Kelly who they thought was the only one who knew.

~~~~~ // ~~~~~

Cara and Ami had heard the doorbell ring as they were drying each other off after a quick shower.

“I used to be worried about my hands and all the calluses,” said Ami, but after what I saw in the pictures of us, it barely shows at all. That lotion the lady from the hair salon gave us has taken the darkness out of them, and while I wouldn’t mind getting another work over with that stone they used on our feet, they aren’t as bad as they were a month ago.”

“I know,” said Cara. “I’ve been watching the changes as well. In a few months it’ll be hard to tell we were once contenders for the Olympic team.”

Ami laughed. “You’re such a dreamer, Cara,” she said. “We would have made it to Worlds this year, but fate was against us. Maybe if we had won at Worlds, then you can say Olympic hopefuls, but me, I’m glad it’s over.”

“Must you be such a spoil sport, Ami?” Cara snapped. “I want to remember that part of my life as a *nearly could have been*.”

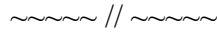
“I’m sorry, Cara. Don’t you see though? We got out of it lucky. No serious injuries, some medals to show off, and we look prime!” Ami yanked the towel away from Cara. “Look at you! There’s not an ounce of fat on you anywhere. If we do what Kelly says, you can keep that shape all your life!”

Cara relaxed and pulled Ami’s towel off. “You ain’t just chopped liver yourself, lover!” she said. “But I wonder if it was all worth it. You’re right, of course. We’ve got a head start on everything in life and getting out with the medals we have will open some doors that would never be open to ordinary kids. I sure didn’t want some of those serious injuries we saw that other gymnasts had. Now come on. We’ve got to get dressed.”

“You’re not going to dry your hair?” Ami asked.

“It’s dry enough. I’ll just comb it back.”

They slipped into their T-shirts and shorts and padded out to meet Vanetta’s boyfriend.



Laura slipped on panties and a T. Thought about it for a minute and then decided to put shorts on, but she was leaving the bra off.

Kelly saw Laura putting on shorts and realized that they didn't want to scare Robert off, so she put some on as well, wondering what Cara and Ami would be wearing!

Todd was still talking as he slipped into a fresh set of scrubs. "I've got it all figured out in my head," he said, "but I need somebody to put it all together for me."

"And you figure that Robert's the one for the job?" Kelly asked.

"Yep."

"How did you come to that conclusion?"

Todd smiled. "Robert Payne. Graduated last semester. Qualified to teach business courses to high school seniors, can't land a job. He's been working part time at a realty office downtown doing their bookwork. A really smart guy. Graduated in the top 5 percent of his class, and could go on to earn his PhD. He's considered too young to be taken seriously as a teacher by students. His mother is a teacher as well, and his father is an editor for the North Carolina Nation. And," he added with a smile, "he loves Vanetta!"

Laura stopped and turned to look at Todd. "How in the hell did you know all that? Have you met him?"

"Nope," said Todd, "Don't have a clue about him other than what I've told you."

"So how come you know so much?" asked Kelly.

Todd raised an eyebrow at her. "Did you forget that we have a security service? And video surveillance?"

"But no alarm ever went off," Kelly said.

"No, but on a routine check of the tapes I noticed a car that appeared more than once in our parking lot and I called and asked about it. They did a couple of drive-bys, ran the plates, and asked me if I wanted to know who it was. Of course I said yes, since I was curious," said Todd.

"And you never told me?" Kelly asked.

"I figured that if Vanetta wanted us to know, she'd tell us, and it seems she told at least one of us! And you didn't think of telling me," he said smugly.

“So,” said Laura, “were you just bluffing when you said you could smell his cologne?”

“Not really. I think I sensed a male presence from time to time which is probably why I started looking at the tapes to start with.”

“How did you know that I knew?” asked Kelly.

“That was easy,” said Todd. “You said at Brookhaven that Vanetta would be at the studio. So I figured that since Vanetta wouldn’t be having somebody over without consent from one of us, she had to have talked to you about it.”

“Smart ass,” said Kelly as she headed out of the bedroom.

“Hey,” said Laura. “I like his ass!”

They were all laughing as they came down the stairs.

~~~~~ // ~~~~~

“Hello, Robert,” said Laura, as she giggled by him.

“Hi, Laura, nice to see you again,” he said.

Kelly gave Robert a hug and said, “It’s nice to finally meet you, Robert.”

Bobby blushed and said he was pleased to meet her at last and congratulations on the happy news.

Todd said, “So, you’re Robert Payne. Glad you could make it,” he said holding out his hand.

Robert shifted a bottle of wine and returned the handshake with a firm hand. “I’m really pleased to meet you, sir,” he said. “Vanetta’s told me a lot about you and Miss Jennsen.”

“Hell, Robert, if you start by calling me sir, and referring to Kelly as Miss Jennsen, then Vanetta hasn’t told you much of anything. I’m Todd, you know Laura, my other fiancée is Kelly, and these two nymphs here are Ami and Cara.”

“Okay,” said Robert. He turned to Kelly and said, “I brought these, thinking they might go well with the pizza.”

Kelly favored him with a smile and took the bottles. “Thank you, Robert, but you shouldn’t have.” Cara offered to put them in the fridge to chill. Kelly looked at the

labels and said, “We won’t chill these, dear. They’re for room temperature. Perhaps we can drink some after we eat.”

“Oh boy!” said Cara, “Beer, Pizza and Wine! Woo-Hoo!”

“Sorry I can’t chat right now Rob, you don’t mind if I call you that do you? Anyway, I got a little behind today, and...”

“I’d say you got more than a little,” said Laura, smirking.

Todd gave her an affectionate look. “Yeah, anyway, I have to do some scans before I can relax. Make yourself at home. You know where everything is, relax and get comfortable.”

Robert didn’t get a chance to answer as Todd asked Ami to get the prints out of the dryer and bring the negatives they wanted to scan.

“Ami,” said Vanetta, “will you get the negatives of Kelly’s best as well. I’ll need jpg’s of them for potential clients.”

Todd moved towards his ‘work desk’ and fired up his large format scanner, the Nikon Pro.

“How’d he know my last name?” Robert asked Vanetta.

“I have no idea,” she responded.

“Did you mention it when you introduced me to Laura?” he asked.

“I don’t think so,” said Vanetta. She pulled him closer to Kelly.

“Kelly, how’d Todd find out Bobby’s last name?”

Kelly laughed. “He’s known for months, guys. Of course he never bothered to tell me. I guess he thought if you were happy, Vanetta, that it was okay by him. He surprised me upstairs with all he knows about you, Robert. Stuff I didn’t even know. I have **got** to learn to never underestimate his powers of observation just because he’s quiet.”

Ami had brought all the pictures from the dryer so Todd could examine them, and of course she wanted to show them off to Cara and Kelly and Laura as well. Though she had left the large nudes in the darkroom, she had forgotten about the 8 x 10’s.

As Todd was sliding the 35mm adapter into the scanner to do Ami’s shots of the wheel being lifted, Ami called everybody over to see what she and Todd had gotten done today.

Robert walked over with Kelly and Vanetta. He had seen enough of Todd's pictures to realize what an artist he was with a camera but was fascinated with the chance of seeing the pictures firsthand.

"Todd thinks I might be able to sell these shots," said Ami, spreading the ones she had taken and printed. "There were a lot of other decent pictures of the people at the marina, but that was just practice. I wouldn't have bothered printing these if Todd hadn't suggested it."

"Ha," said Todd, looking at the first scan to appear on his 21" monitor. "This is a seller." Everyone turned to look at the large-scale rendition on his monitor. He had cropped and sized it so that the picture was perfectly centered and aligned and the focus was on the helicopter and the wheel. He saved the finished file and proceeded to the next one.

It was at that moment, as Todd was examining the 8 x 10 of Ami's second shot that Ami realized that the nudes of Kelly were right underneath.

"I'm sorry, Kelly," Ami said. "Vanetta said she wanted scans of these, and I forgot it wasn't just us girls here."

Kelly laughed. "That's okay, Ami. Chances are that one of them will end up on the cover or at least on the inside of one magazine or other if I know Vanetta."

Vanetta just smiled. She knew that Kelly's casual attitude about nudity would be a great selling point. Maybe they'd do a body paint of her like they had done for Demi a few years ago. At the very least, with strategically placed hands, maybe holding products...

"Go ahead and look at the pictures, Robert. I promise I won't be embarrassed," said Kelly.

Robert picked up the stack and was going through them, when he mentioned how much he liked the Star Trek uniforms.

"Wait till you see the background I'm going to add to them," said Todd. "Then I'll send them to a printer in town for 20 x 30 laser prints."

"Oh, I like these uniforms as well," said Robert, still flipping through the pictures.

"What uniforms are those?" asked Vanetta.

"Looks like Cara and Ami are modeling school uniforms," he said. Then, as he flipped through a few more pictures, he started blushing furiously. He quickly put the rest of the stack down.

“What’s the matter, Robert,” asked Vanetta.

“They aren’t modeling uniforms,” he said.

“Ami!” said Cara, now blushing as well. “Why’d you bring those out? Those aren’t going to be scanned!”

Ami shrugged a little, lowering her head. She was blushing as well. “I just grabbed all the prints in the dryer except for the big ones,” she said. “I’m sorry, Cara.”

Kelly picked up the stack Robert had dropped and carefully examined every picture. “They sure did turn out nice though, Cara,” she said. “Here, Laura, you look.”

Laura did and whistled in appreciation. “Wow. Maybe we should try and sell these!”

Cara was fighting with mixed emotions. She enjoyed being told she looked good, but had never thought that anyone else would see them.

Then Vanetta asked if she could see them.

“Sure, why not,” said Cara. “I’m not ashamed of my body.”

Vanetta slowly went through the pictures. Robert kept stealing glances over her shoulder. Finally Robert had to sit down and pulled Vanetta on his lap to hide his erection.

“This is art, Todd. But, it’s also very, very erotic. It’s even got Bobby excited!” she said with glee.

Todd chuckled. “See what photographers have to put up with, Rob? You spend most of your time taking pictures of dull and boring things and then along comes a request for a series, and with two dolls like these,” he shrugged. “We’re only human.”

“Oh, here’s a great one!” said Vanetta. “This you have to scan for me, Todd!”

“Which one is it?” asked Todd.

“It’s one of three ladies rubbing body lotion all over Kelly!” Vanetta snickered as she showed it around. “And you even got the bottle nice and clear in the shot!”

Todd smiled. “I’ll scan it since you can’t see anybody’s face, but I doubt we’ll see a picture like this in any American magazine in the next few decades. But you do have a point, Vanetta. This should be real helpful in convincing advertisers that we only promote products we believe in.”

“My thoughts exactly,” said Vanetta.

Todd had been busy scanning the pictures of Kelly and saving the files on the server. Before he started to work on the backgrounds for the trek pictures, he made smaller jpeg versions of Ami’s Wheel pictures.

“Vanetta, would you send copies of these to Reuters, AP, and the DOD, too. Oh, and the Armed Services PR department. They might like to see them. Standard cover letter, rates, yada yada. Tell ‘em we’ll do color separated Tiffs at the same rate if they want.”

“Honey,” he said to Kelly, “would you order the pizzas while I finish off the Trek shots?”

“Okay, Honey. The usual?” asked Kelly.

“Yeah, unless Rob is vegetarian or has an allergy.”

Bobby laughed. “No, I like my meat and cheese,” he said.

Ami and Cara took the pictures and negatives back to the darkroom. Kelly went to make the call for delivery and Laura and Vanetta sat around the kitchen table.

“Have you told Bobby yet about your promotion?” Kelly asked.

“I was thinking I’d wait till the company picnic,” she said with a smile. “Besides, I’m more curious about what Todd wants from him.”

~~~~~ // ~~~~~

“I don’t understand why you can’t put the Starfleet logo behind them,” Bobby said to Todd. Both men were seriously engrossed in working out a background for the pictures of Kelly and Laura.

“It’s licensed,” said Todd. “I want to send them a copy, but the uniforms are bought and paid for. If I promote it as something Trek, I’ll get nailed for copyright infringement. And I do have all these free backgrounds from NASA.”

“They sure do make that Starfleet issue underwear look good,” said Robert. “Sorry, I guess I shouldn’t say that about your girlfriends.”

“Why not?” asked Todd befuddled. “The whole point of them being models is to make merchandise look great, and they do, don’t they?” he said with a smile. “It’s my job to make them and the clothes look the best they can.”

“But a 20 x 30 poster of one of these three,” Bobby said pointing to the thumbnails on the screen. “That’s the kind of picture most young guys would hang in their bedroom!”

“These three?” asked Todd. “What is it about these three that turns your crank?”

Robert had selected three of the five that Todd was seriously considering as the final print. The three that Robert had selected were with the girls just touching at the arms, in one actually holding hands and all at an angle away from each other from 90 to 120 degrees.

Robert, figuring he had nothing to lose, spoke honestly about what he felt were the key points. “I like this one,” he said, “because it shows intimacy, some kind of bond. They all do for that matter, but this one especially. While this one, notice the expression on their faces. It’s a ‘come join us’ look, but if I can be really frank,” he said.

“You can be Ernest for all I care,” laughed Todd. “Tell me the truth about the one that you would pick as your favorite.”

Robert laughed. “Okay, this one here. They’re a bit more in line with the camera, which should put them farther apart, but you see they are holding hands, not actually holding hands but interlaced fingers. This one, the expression is different on as well. It’s not that ‘come join us’ look, but more of a challenge to satisfy. And the nipples...” Robert blushed again.

“Yeah, they do stick out a bit don’t they,” laughed Todd. “I agree, I think the vulva is more pronounced as well.”

“I wasn’t going to mention that,” said Robert, “but yes, even though you can’t really see it, the positioning of the legs does attract a fair bit of attention to that region.”

“This is no time to be shy, Rob,” said Todd. “Around here we speak our minds.”

Todd called everybody over.

“We need an opinion here,” said Todd as he swung the monitor around. The screen only held the thumbnail pictures, and once everyone was gathered he turned it into a slow moving slide show. “I need a consensus on the best picture,” he said.

Kelly sat back watching the images go by, looking at them with a professional eye. Laura looked at the pictures in awe, as did Cara and Ami. They looked so much more life like on the big monitor. Vanetta was studying them, realizing that soon she would have to make judgment calls like this.

After the pictures had gone around once, Todd put them back on the thumbnail screen. “How about we start off with elimination,” said Todd.

After only a few minutes, the girls had reduced the series of 24 down to six, and Todd gave them a longer look at the six images.

The girls quickly narrowed the field down to two, the same ones that Robert had selected out of his first choice of three.

“I like the come hither look,” said Kelly, “but the other one shows more of our bodies. It makes the underwear look like it’s painted on!”

“Yeah, that was Rob’s favorite one as well,” said Todd. “They’re both good, actually they’re excellent. Maybe I should get prints of both?”

“I wouldn’t,” said Vanetta. “It’s like putting out a G rated version along with a PG 13.”

Kelly looked at her. “Explain please, Vanetta.”

Todd sat back in his chair with an amused look on his face.

“Okay. This is the way I see it,” said Vanetta. “In the one, you’re selling the clothes. And we aren’t getting paid for that. If Paramount wants to sell their clothes with you two as models, I want a contract. On the other hand, the one that shows the outline of nipples and crotches, that’s sexy. It makes the underwear look good, but it makes the two of you the focus of attention. In my opinion, this would be better suited for showcasing our models.”

Cara and Ami said nothing, not having seen this side of Vanetta before. Laura clapped. “I agree. No contract, then we are the center of attention. We do enough modeling to sell clothes. Since this is a freebie, I say we sell ourselves!”

“You realize we have to work where this picture will be showing, don’t you?” asked Kelly.

Vanetta laughed. “Girl, you’re going to be half naked for 16 months of magazine issues, plus that center spread in Sports International shows a lot more. Don’t be telling me that you’re getting shy! And you,” she said, pointing to Laura. “You’re going to be modeling lingerie and your picture will be in seventy to eighty *thousand* of Jorge’s catalogs plus whatever magazine he decides to feature you in. You’ll be showing plenty of suggestive bumps and skin.”

Kelly laughed, as did Laura.

“Well,” said Todd, “the boss lady has spoken. This one it is!” He quickly burned all the scans to a CD then started on the background while Ami took the negs and the CD to the file cabinet in the darkroom.

Robert stuck with Todd, glad to be part of the decision for the background, and they finally settled on a beautiful Hubble shot of the Tadpole galaxy that was composed mostly of white stars. Using a Trek font, he wrote 'Kelly Jennsen' and 'Laura Williams' in neon plasma blue, converted them to 3D and placed the names across the knees of each figure. Then, in the bottom right hand corner, he placed his trademark signature and the TKO logo. Satisfied with the finished product, he wrote this to a CD in Tiff format, and slipped it into a jewel case to be dropped off at the printers.

They had just finished writing the instructions for three 20 x 30 posters, when the doorbell rang, and the pizza had arrived: two large with pineapple, Italian sausage, Greek sausage, pepperoni and ham and double cheese with of course the standard bucket of hot wings.

~~~~~ // ~~~~~

They were sitting eating pizza and drinking the good Canadian beer when Todd casually threw in a question to Robert about the three musical students he was tutoring.

"What would it take to convince these kids to play for the Williams Sisters?" he asked.

"Lessons," said Robert without a second thought. "Since the budget cutbacks at the schools, there is no music program for them any more. These kids' families can't afford the lessons, and it will kill their chances at pursuing their dreams."

"So how much are the lessons?" asked Todd.

"Their music teacher retired in the early release program. He charges his former students \$10 an hour," Robert replied.

Todd grinned. "Are you always this well prepared?"

Robert smiled. "I certainly try to be."

"Good," said Todd. "After supper, we have a proposition for you."

To be continued...