

## ***Kelly***

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### **Chapter 1**

(Mike)

Kitchen's closed. She said hooking a thumb towards the darkened pass thru.

Her name tag said Kelly, with a little gold star next to her name.

Just coffee, with cream, please.

I was sitting on the first counter stool next to the cash register, in some coffee shop in the middle of nowhere, not having a clue as to how I got there.

This is not new for me. Seems to be happening a lot, this last six months. Since Danny was killed.

I found it difficult to pay attention to anything but my thoughts of my only son.

At least it wasn't a bar like usual.

Thanks, I said, as she set the cup on the counter in front of me.

Well the elephant had to piss some time.

This was delivered in such a normal tone that I damn near missed it.

My mind heard Welcome and not much else.

She paused about five seconds, and then started away.

*Wait, what was that? Welco... no...*

I replayed what she had said, and got it.

HA!

Welcome back, she said, with a smile over her shoulder.

Not sure, but I think I just got here. Thanks for waking me up.

No problem, let me know when you want a re-fill.

Yup. Smooth talker, that's me.

*Hmm. Five feet nothing, bet she never weighed 100 pounds in her life, blond, blue, pearly whites.*

*Pretty as a speckled pup, in a black skirt and white blouse.*

*Keds? And Bobbi socks? They still make those?*

*22 to 25, leaning towards the upper.*

*What the hell is she doing in this place?*

Well, now that my eyes have started taking note on her, let's just see what else is going on around me. There was a cop, about my age, sitting at the other end of the counter, where Kelly just stopped to pour. They're both were looking at me, as they talked, but at least Kelly is smiling. Two 30 something guys drinking iced tea half way down the counter between me and the cop. The only other folks in the place were sitting at a large table behind me. A group of people having some sort of party...  
Oh. A soldier send off.

*Dear sir, We regret to inform you that your son...*

*Danny's never coming home.*

I drifted away, into thoughts of my son.

You okay?

I flinched and looked up at Kelly. I hadn't noticed her coming back over to me.

I shook my head a second, then said, Oh, um, yeah, I'm alright. Just lost in my mind.

The two counter stool jockeys were getting up to leave, and the cop was still looking at me. After she rang out the thirty somethings and they were gone, Kelly came back over to me.

Ready for a warm-up? She asked.

Sure, thanks. I leaned towards her and said quietly, Listen, That table, with the soldier? I get their check, okay?

But please, don't tell them it was me.

Um, are you sure? It'll be, like, seventy five bucks. She spoke just as quietly, and I silently thanked her.

I dug out my wallet and handed her two fifties. Put my coffee on it and keep the change?

Okay, if that's what you want.

Thanks, I said. I don't think she understood what I was doing, or why, but that didn't matter to me. It's just my way of supporting our troops. I do it when I can.

She looked at me oddly as she stepped over to the cash register. After she rang up the bill, she walked back over to the cop, and topped up his cup, again.

I sighed, sipped, then stirred in a little more cream.

A moment later, Kelly went over to the table, and asked if anyone wanted anything else, and soldier boy said, Just the check.

Already taken care of. she said. One of the guys that was here got it.

What? No, this ain't right. he said as he stood up.

I looked around and saw Kelly start looking a little scared.

It's already a done deal, she said.

He was arguing with her as she backed towards the counter, shaking her head. The cop stood up, paying close attention. I could see that Kelly was about to give in and point me out.

Then I noticed his rank tabs.

AT EASE, Corporal, I said, in Command Voice. He stopped and looked at me.

I saw what went down, I said. And, more, I understand why. That guy saw you sitting there in uniform, and knew you were going out to fight for us. To protect us. He can't do that. For what ever reason, he can't go. So he pulls out his wallet and picks up your tab. Now, he don't want to embarrass you or create a scene, so he takes off, feeling good about it. He knows damn good and well that you'd refuse to accept his offer, if he made it to you. But he feels that's the least he can do. If for no other reason than his own self pride. It's his way of saying Thank You for doing what he can not. Hell, he just beat me to it, or I'd a picked it up, myself. For the same reasons. So thank the pretty waitress, and go.

God bless you and keep you safe.

I turned away from his stunned expression and sipped my coffee.  
I almost lost control, when I felt his hand on my shoulder.

Thanks, he said, very quietly.

I just nodded, not even looking up.

*You're welcome, Danny.*

I heard the door close after them, and I closed my eyes.

*On behalf of a grateful nation, please accept...*

That was a good thing you done. said a voice. It was the cop.

He said, They don't have much, and this was the best they could afford to send Billy off to Iraq.  
Him and Jeanna just got married last week, and I think she's more scared than he is, that he won't come back.

I know how she feels.

He patted my shoulder, twice.

Kelly? I gotta get back out there.

By, Dad, see you later.

*Dad?*

The door closed again. So did my eyes.

*Please accept our deepest...*

SLAM!

Kelly had slapped the counter, right next to me. So what in the HELL was that about? Jesus, I thought he was going to hit me or something.

No, he'd never of hit you. And just like I told him. I can't.

Can't what?

*Can't kill the fuckers that set the IED.*

*Can't pick up the slack.*

*Can't bring Danny back.*

*Danny, my only son.*

*My only child.*

Hey, don't you fade out on me!

I can't go to Iraq.

Why would you go there?

Danny.

Kelly looked confused for only a second, and then she... just... came... apart.

Then I had my hands full of a wailing, sobbing puppet, who's strings had been cut.

It was all I could do to hold her from hitting the floor.

God must have been having a good laugh.

I knew what the gold star on her name tag was for, now. I can't explain how I knew, but she had lost a Daniel, too.

*Shit.*

So I did what any man would do in a situation like this. I fell apart.

We both let out all the anguish, all the fear and despair, all the longings we had been holding in. We both felt the terrible power of each others emotions and the grief of our losses.

We found each other who knows how much later, still in each others arms. We both turned from our own misery and tried to comfort each other, kneeling there on the floor. I kissed her, and we both moaned. Then she was kissing me, her tongue driving into my mouth to wrestle with mine.

Kelly gasped out in short breaths, I need you. I need you in me right now.

I need you, too. So very much. I was panting too, like I'd just run a mile.

My apartment is upstairs; will you come with me?

Of course.

We helped each other up off the floor, and she led me into the back hallway. She unlocked a door that looked like a closet, to reveal a stairway leading up. At the top, was her loft apartment. She had the whole second floor of the building.

As soon as we got to the top of the stairs, she turned and urgently kissed me again. She moaned into my mouth as I cupped her breasts through her clothes, and hissed, "Yess, that feels so good." Kelly pulled me across the apartment, into her bedroom, and then she pulled her panties off from under her skirt, and started reaching for my belt. I managed, or Kelly managed to get my pants down to my knees, and then she pushed me onto the bed on my back and mounted me. She was incredibly wet, and incandescently hot.

We did not make love, there was only pure primal instinct sex. My vision tunneled until I could only see those blue eyes, staring into mine, and their terrible need. A need that matched my own. Defying death with the promise of new life.

Kelly's first orgasm started almost instantly. I could feel her vagina clamping and releasing my cock, in a quickening tempo as she drove herself upon me. It was all I could do to match her thrusts with my own. When she came, she went stiff and stopped breathing. She clamped down so tightly I couldn't move. I saw in her eyes the changes from need to wonder to rapture.

Then, with a gasp, she did her damndest to drive my ass through the bed and into the floor. I reached up and ripped open her blouse, buttons flying. I pushed the cups of her bra up off those perfect tits and palmed her nipples, gently rubbing and pinching them, as her second orgasm quickly approached.

Then we fell off the cliff together.

I passed out.

## **Chapter 2**

My eyes were closed. There was an amazingly comfortable weight on top of me, and my dick was wet. It had been a long time since I felt this good.

I could hear soft purrs coming from the weight on my chest. No words, just contented sounds. I felt a hand gently caressing my cock, and started getting hard again. This produced some happy sounds from the weight on my chest. I realized I hadn't felt this good since Lisa died.

*Oh God, what have I done?*

*Lisa.*

*Danny.*

*Kelly?*

My dick instantly shriveled to nothing, bringing a sigh of protest from the soft weight atop me.

I opened my eyes to the darkened bedroom, and looked down at the blond head resting on my chest.

Kelly?

Hmm...

Mike.

Wha...?

I'm Mike. I thought you should know.

Hmm, Mike. A soft chuckle, I like that.

Kelly?

Hmm...?

Kelly, darlin', We have to get up.

She made a soft sound of disapproval, as she snuggled tighter.

Yes, you do, said a voice from the other room.

We froze, fear coursing through both of us.

Daddy?

*Daddy? OH SHIT!*

I have to use the restroom, said the voice. You two get yourselves together, while I do that.

I heard his footsteps fade, then the creak of a door.

Kelly looked up at me and I met her eyes.

Sparkling laughing blue eyes.

Oops, She said.

We got ourselves upright and fixed our clothes.

Easy for me, but Kelly had to overlap the tails of her blouse and tuck them into her skirt.

Thank You, she said, softly I needed that more than you could ever know.

You're wrong, and Thank You, too.

She smiled, and the world stopped to take notice.

I reached out and drew her into a hug.

The cop (*Dad, oh shit*) was waiting for us in Kelly's living room, and we walked out and faced him, our arms still around each other.

He stepped closer to us, and looked into Kelly's eyes, searching them.

Then, his eyes softened and he gave a faint smile.

He turned his head and his eyes bored into mine. I felt him in my head, kicking over the furniture, opening the closets, searching. This scared the shit out of me. He knew it too, as his hand slowly came up and gripped mine.

Don't hurt my little girl. She's all I have to live for.

His eyes were telling me the same thing.

I just nodded, not knowing a single thing to say.

He said, I have to go, but you two need to talk.

He looked at Kelly, searching her eyes, again.

I love you baby. I'll lock up the coffee shop on my way out.

Eyes back to me. Searching. Kelly? Don't hurt him either.

I'm Ron, by the way.

As he turned away, he glanced back at the two of us and said, I want you both to know something. It's okay to live.

He went down the stairs.

## Chapter 3

(Ron)

As I stepped into the patrol car, I thought about all I'd witnessed this last couple of hours.

I was at Mom's Coffee Shop getting a last cup of coffee for the day and chatting with my daughter when a guy about my age walked in. Having never seen him before, I did the automatic cop thing, noting his description in my mind. Five nine, one sixty five, brown, brown. Dressed business casual, no hat, no tie.

He sat at the first counter stool he came to which put him right next to the cash register.

I noticed because it is a favorite seat for bandits wanting to grab when the drawer opens.

This guy, however seemed too out of it, and too well dressed to be trying that kind of scam, so I dropped the thought.

I kinda drifted off, thinking about what the rest of my shift might bring, while Kelly went to tend her new customer. Clyde, the cook, and Raul, the dish washer had already gone home for the night and I hoped I wouldn't have to go over to Raul's house, again. He was a great kid, unless he started drinking.

HA! I heard, bringing me back to the present. He and Kelly exchanged a few more words, and he looked a lot more alive. Kelly came back over to me with the pot in her hand.

What was that?

Nothing, Dad. He just seemed so sad and lonely...

You told him the Elephant thing, didn't you?

Yeah, she was looking back at him, smiling.

I haven't seen a lot of smiles from Kelly, lately. Not since Daniel went and got himself killed in a training accident at Ft. Bragg 2 years ago. Those chutes are supposed to open as you exit the plane. Static line, they call it.

I looked at him too, idly wondering if he was drunk, or what. It's just me. I don't like drunks.

I asked Kelly if he seemed sober, and she said yes, he just seemed to be thinking about something that bothered him.

Looking back, the guy at the counter had the look. Shell shocked. He'd lost someone. I'd worn that look myself, for a long time after Audry was killed by the drunk driver. I don't like drunk drivers. Kelly didn't remember her mom. She'd been only three, twenty two years ago.

Kelly went and checked on Bill and Bob, sitting in their usual seats in the middle of the counter. Bob asked for their check, and Kelly wrote it out.

Then she went over to the new guy, and got his attention.

Bill and Bob got up and went to settle at the cash. Bob gave her a five and told her to keep the change. Just like they always did. Tomorrow, it would be Bill's turn to pay.

As they were leaving, Kelly topped up the new guy's cup. He leaned towards her and they had a whispered conversation. He fished out some money and handed it to her. She looked at him like he had a third eye for a second, there, but rang him up.

She came back over to me and poured just a little more coffee into my cup.

She still had a strange look on her face.

What, I asked.

He just paid for the Martins' check. Said not to let them know it was him.

Hmm, that's different. Wonder why he did that?

She shrugged, and went over to the table the Martins were at.

When Billy Martin stood up, looking all tense, I got to my feet, too. Billy isn't the smartest kid around.

He tends to hit at things he doesn't understand. Kelly looked a little nervous, too, as she backed towards the counter.

AT EASE, Corporal! I know Command Voice when I hear it. My eyes snapped to the guy at the counter.

He was talking to Billy in low tones, but I heard enough to get what he was saying. I eased back on my stool for a moment, and came to a decision. I needed to say something to this guy. I drained my cup and set it in the tub under the counter.

I saw Billy reach up and lay his hand on the guy's shoulder. The guy nodded. Billy and his family started filing out the door, and I got up and went towards the guy. When the door closed, he just sagged. Like he wasn't there any more.

I stopped behind the stool next to him, and said, That was a good thing you done. He straightened up a little, and looked up at me. I told him a little about the Martins and how Jeanna and Billy had just got married.

I know how she feels, he said.

Some how I knew it was the truth. I patted him on the shoulder and told Kelly I had to go make a patrol, and walked out to my cruiser.

As I got in the car, I looked back. Kelly was talking to the guy, and She did not look very happy.

Oh well, she'd be closing in about fifteen minutes, and I'd be back in less than half an hour, unless I made a stop or got a call. I knew Kelly would have a cup of hot chocolate waiting for me. Just like every night for the last two years.

Two years since her husband died, and she came home.

Right as I pulled out onto the street, Don, my night patrol officer came on the radio to let me know he was on duty. I told him I was going to take one last lap around the south end, then I would call it quits for the night.

After I finished my patrol and radioed Don that he was on his own for the night, I drove back to Mom's, and was surprised the guys car was still at the curb.

I looked in the window, but I couldn't see anyone.

*What the hell?*

Before I got out of my cruiser, I called Don, and asked him to head over this way. I told him something didn't seem right, and to check out the car outside the coffee shop. He told me he'd be there in about five, unless I needed him sooner. I said that would be fine, but if I called him again, to be ready to light up.

I got out and drew my revolver as I approached the door. When I pushed it open, I heard Kelly say, In me RIGHT NOW!

I still didn't see them. But I could hear them. I looked around the corner, and they were on their knees with their arms wrapped around each other, kissing. Kelly hadn't shown any kind of interest in any one since she came home, so I was very surprised to see her kissing a stranger. I leaned back, and wondered what to do. I heard Kelly ask him upstairs to her apartment, and saw them as they stood. They walked to the back hall so wrapped together they seemed to be one person.

I turned back, to the door, and locked it. I sighed, and noticed my revolver still in my hand. I re-holstered it, and flipped the sign to closed. Then I used my portable to let Don know everything was okay, he could drop it, and that I was done for the night.

I leaned back against the door, and thought: *What to do? She's my daughter! She's a grown woman. She's my daughter. She's old enough to make her own decisions. She's my daughter. I love her. I have to let her have this.*

I sighed, and turned out the lights, my decision made. I quietly followed them upstairs, skipping the squeaky fourth step.

As I got to the top of the stairs, I saw Kelly pulling him into her bedroom. I couldn't help myself, but had to go over and peek around the door frame just in time to see Kelly shove him back on her bed, and

straddle him with her skirt bunched to her waist. I pulled back and rested my head against the wall. I couldn't figure out what my feelings were.

I looked again, just as she came. Hard. She went rigid, and stopped breathing.

Just like her mother used to. I knew what was next, in three; two; one...

A huge gasp, and she was doing her best to drive the guys whole body into herself.

Just exactly like her mother.

A few moments later, I heard his groan, and her scream.

I went over by the couch and turned on one of the end table lamps. I knew they wouldn't notice. Been there, with Audry.

I couldn't help it. I went back to the door, and looked again.

They were both still caught in the throws of their orgasm. They seemed to almost glow in the dark. They were beautiful. Then I saw his head hit the bed, and Kelly just collapsed on top of him.

Been there too. God, I still miss my wife.

I sighed, again and walked into the kitchen, filled the teakettle and set it on the stove. I left the spout open, so it wouldn't whistle. When the water was hot, I grabbed a mug and made myself a cup of hot chocolate. It was way too late for coffee. I sat down on the couch, and sipped at my cup. I knew they'd be out of it for at least a few more minutes. I used the time to try and figure out my feelings.

My thoughts turned back to the first time I had sex after Audry was killed.

...

*I was walking home from the subway station after getting off shift. My dream job of being a New York City Police Officer had turned to ashes the night my wife had been killed by the drunk driver.*

*My head was down and I was not even looking to see where I was going. I was on auto pilot, as usual.*

*Kelly's fifth birthday was in two weeks, and I didn't have a clue what to get her.*

*New York sucked. If it weren't for Kelly, I'd just put my gun in my mouth and end it all. That option has been looking better and better, lately. I needed to stop at a package store on the way home. I was out of whiskey. Drinking too much, and alone, but so what. What did it matter? Audry was gone.*

*I turned a corner and ran into some one. Sorry, I mumbled, and tried to step around her. She stepped with me. I stepped the other way, and she matched me. I was getting mad, and looked up ...*

*And fell into the saddest eyes I have ever seen.*

*Come with me, she said.*

*She took my arm and started walking back the way I had come from, never breaking her lock on my eyes. I didn't know why, but I just followed her lead.*

*About half way down the block, we turned onto the steps of an old brownstone. Her apartment was on the first floor. She pulled me into her living room, and stopped.*

*When she turned to face me, her eyes, those terribly sad eyes, began to fill with tears as she stared into mine.*

*She was holding both of my arms, Her eyes locked to mine. Tell me. she said.*

*I don't know how I knew what she meant, but I did. Those two words caught me so much by surprise, that my knees buckled. She caught me as I fell, going down with me to our knees on her rug, holding me, hugging me, rocking me gently in her arms.*

*I have no idea if I said one single word. All my pain, all my anger, all my fears, all my grief sobbed and wailed out of me. I cried. I screamed. I shook my fists at God.*

*I'm still ashamed of that last.*

*Through it all, she never let go of me.*

*I still don't know how she got our clothes off.*

*When I finally got to a sort of catharsis, I saw her eyes again. I saw in her a need that matched my own.*

*I need you. I NEED you in me NOW. She said, and pulled me on top of her as she fell back on the rug, splaying her legs in open invitation.*

*There was no love making. There was only pure instinctive sex. The drive to replace death with life.*

*As I drove into her, I could feel her matching me thrust for thrust. A perfect synergy as we drove each other up that mountain, and went over the cliff together.*

*I think we died. I know I did. For a while at least.*

*When I came to, She looked me in the eye, searching. After a moment, she gently smiled.*

*Let's get you dressed. You are late to pick up your daughter.*

*Oh, shit! Kelly!*

*She laughed a bit, low in her throat, as I rushed around getting myself together.*

*As she walked my to her door, I came to enough say thanks, but I never got the chance. Just when I opened my mouth, she put a finger to my lips. Now you can live again. Just remember it's okay to live.*

*Help your daughter learn that when her turn comes. Now go. Your daughter needs you. She needs you*

to live.

*I never learned her name. I never saw her again. I stopped by that brownstone a couple of days later, but the apartment was empty. I can't to this day remember even what she looked like. Only those great sad emerald eyes that saved my life.*

...

I finished my cup of hot chocolate, and took it to the sink to wash out. After I set it on the drain board to dry, I went back to Kelly's bedroom door.

I heard Kelly's soft mews of contentment.

She was happy. For the first time since Daniel died, she was happy. I knew I could never take that away from her. Mom had been right, when she told me that some day, some one would come along, and Kelly would be healed. I could only hope that that some day was now.

Kelly? The guy said.

Hmm...

Mike.

*Mike. His name is Mike.*

There were a few more quiet words, then I heard mike say, Kelly, darlin', We have to get up.

I couldn't help it. I said, Yes, you do.

I almost laughed out loud as they both gasped. The bittersweet irony of the whole situation tickled me, somehow.

Daddy?

I have to use the restroom. You two get yourselves together, while I do.

As I leaned against the wall, draining my bladder, I came to the conclusion that my baby would live. I saw the similarity to my own past, and I knew what I had to do.

I went out to them, and noticed their arms protectively around each other.

I looked into Kelly's eyes, searching for those raw places I'd seen all too often since Daniel's death. They were healing. That made me smile.

I looked into Mike's eyes, and I noticed the same kind of wounds as I saw in Kelly. Only lots more of them. Most were older, more like poorly healed scars, but some were very fresh. I could see that they were all just beginning to heal. Kelly and Mike were good for each other, right now.

I looked to see if there was any evil in this man. I didn't find any. I was scaring the shit out of him, and I could tell, so I reached out and firmly clasped his hand.

Don't hurt my little girl. She's all I have to live for, I said.

I spoke the same through my eyes, and recognized that he understood my meaning. I had no idea where this was going to go, but then, I didn't really need to. Not right now, at least.

I need to go, but you two need to talk.

I looked back into Kelly, wondering if she was OK with that. She was. I love you, baby. I'll lock up the shop as I leave.

I looked back at Mike.

I could still see all those fragile wounds just beginning to heal. I understood a bit what he was feeling. I felt a bond starting to form, so I said, Kelly? Don't hurt him, either.

I'm Ron, by the way.

As I turned away. When I got to the stairs, I looked back and said, I want you both to know, It's okay to live.

Kelly would be all right.

I went down, let myself out, and went home.

My baby girl will live.

## **Chapter 4**

(Kelly)

It's okay to live. It felt like the weight of the world lifted from my shoulders when Dad said that. I looked at Mike, and could tell he felt the same.

Your Dad's right, you know. We need to talk. We need to figure out what happened, and where we go from here.

I know. And it's going to be... Difficult.

Of course, The important things usually are.

Why don't you go sit on the couch. I'll get us some hot chocolate. Or would you rather have coffee?

I think I'd like some hot chocolate. I haven't had any in years.

My thoughts were in turmoil, as I got another cup down from the cupboard. I grabbed the cup off the drainboard for myself, and feeling the dampness, realized that Dad had been here long enough for a cup, at least. And the kettle was full, and still hot, too.

*Oh god, what have I done?*

*How long had Dad been here?*

*How much did he see? He seemed okay about it, but is he really?*

*I feel so good right now, but that's wrong, isn't it?*

*I just about raped a man I never met before!*

*No, not rape, but what was that? I never had sex like that before.*

*What must Mike think of me?*

*Damn, I acted like a total slut, but the only thing I can think about is how I want to do it again.*

*But I feel cleansed, some how, too. The pain is still there, but it doesn't hurt nearly as bad.*

I was a little confused by what I'd done with Mike, but I was most worried by what he might be thinking of me. All I knew for sure, was that I didn't want to let go of him right now. With that thought, I finished making the hot chocolate, and took our cups over to the coffee table

Mike stood by the couch, waiting for me. When I set the cups on the coffee table he gestured for me to sit first. I sat on one end, chewing my lip. He sat at the other side. I had to say something, but how?

Mike, I'm sorry for...

Saving my life? Showing me that I am not alone in my grief? Letting me care for something, anything besides my losses? No, don't be sorry for that. We both had a need to fill. I think it a wonderful thing that we were able to fill each others need. We found each other without even knowing that we were looking. At least that's the way it seems to me.

Mike hung his head, and said, Like your Dad said, it's okay to live. The hard part is letting go of the guilt. Guilt for living I didn't even know I had.

I reached across the space between us, and wiped his tears from his face, and then my own. I know what you mean. Could you hold me Mike? I need to feel you holding me.

He was across the couch and holding me, hugging me close before I finished, Whispering in my ear, Shh, I have you. Nothing bad can happen now. I'm here. I won't let you go. Lots of other soothing meaningless words. He gently held my head against his chest and rocked me like a child. I needed that very badly; the comforting feel of being held by a man that cared. My Dad used to hold me that way, but that was years ago, when I was just a girl.

After a couple of minutes, I looked up and said, We need to know each other. We... we need to tell each other our story. But I am so scared, because some of my life I've never told anyone, and I think I should tell you. Can you go first, though? Because I don't think I can, right now.

Sure, he said. He paused for a moment, then said, How should I start? Where?

I didn't know what to tell him. I thought a moment. The one thing we had in common, was we each had lost someone named Daniel. Tell me about your Danny. He was your son, right? How did he die?

I could see the pain in Mikes eyes, but he nodded, and when he started talking in a quiet voice, I rested my head on his chest to listen. He kept his arms around me, and said, I have to go back further, to explain.

He sighed, and said, Danny joined the Marines, after 9-11. He was in his senior year of High School, and the recruiters made him finish. They told him a GED wasn't good enough, and that his placement could very well depend on his grades in school. Danny had never received good grades. C's mostly. I think he was bored by the classes. But after 9-11, he found purpose. Those last three quarters, he made deans list with 4.0s He ended up number four in his class.

I was so proud of him, and his grades. At the same time, I was both proud and saddened... and a bit scared, of his joining the Marines.

Well, his purpose, and study habits held with him all through his training. Danny graduated boot camp number one, and was promoted to Private First class. He was number one in his Advanced training class, too. But he had to wait a few weeks for his promotion, to Lance Corporal. Something about required time in grade. All I knew was that he had been promoted twice, when the rest of the guys in his ...I guess you'd call it 'class,' hadn't earned any promotions. Again, I was very proud.

He never forgot what he wanted to do, though. He wanted to take the war that had been declared on us to the enemy.

Danny had chosen and been accepted for something called expeditionary unit training. He said it was like reconnaissance and scouting. I found out later that he spent most of his time WAY behind the enemy lines, for weeks at a time, and that he rarely had any support other than his partner, Tommy. Two man teams were the rule. Those guys that do that stuff? They're the guys that the rest of the Marines talked about with awe. Yeah, there is no other word to describe it. And Danny was one of them.

Danny was assigned to a unit that was stationed in the Kandahar Province, in the southern part of Afghanistan. He was given a recon mission in the mountains near a town called Zaranj, on the border of Iran. They were to report on any insurgents Moving towards the border, so that fire teams could interdict them.

What's that mean? Interdict? I asked.

It means, basically, to get into a position on the enemy's route of travel to capture or kill them. I doubt there was much capture, though. Iranians would rather be killed than captured.

Oh, I get it.

Any way, Mike said, they had spotted a few groups, and called them in. Those groups were stopped. Iranians are not stupid, they knew there had to be someone watching. Long story short, the Iranians found them, and Tommy was wounded badly in the leg. Danny carried him out, even though he'd been hit, too. Danny was awarded a purple heart, and the Bronze Star. The citation for the Star says that Danny carried Tommy more than twenty miles back to safety. Neither Danny, nor Tommy ever talked about it. I do know from Danny's Commander that the twenty miles took them nine days. I can not even imagine what they went through. Tommy couldn't even come to the funeral. He wouldn't say why, just that he couldn't come.

By the time Danny was recovered, his unit was cycling back to America, and he took a months leave to come home. I was so proud of him, that I took him out to dinner, the first night he was back, insisting that he wore his uniform. It was just the two of us, though, because the girl Danny had been seeing in High School, had run off while he in Afghanistan. Her parents still haven't found her.

Anyway, we went out to dinner, at a place called Kenny's in Boardman. It's just about the best restaurant in the area. When we were getting ready to leave, we found that someone had picked up and paid our check. The Maitre d' said it was someone wanting to say Thanks. Seeing what that meant to

Danny, some stranger doing that, is what got me started doing the same thing. Danny cried on the way home. He told me that he was not worthy of such an honor, and that he wished it hadn't happened. I told him much the same thing I told that young man tonight, that someone wanted to say thanks for doing something they couldn't; and to accept it in the manner it was given. That some of us recognize just how important our soldiers are to us.

Danny kicked around town, but never wore his uniform out again. He said he didn't want to tempt fate. After he went back to duty, he was reassigned to another unit going to Fallujia, Iraq. He'd only been in country about a week, and on his second patrol when a car bomb went off in a market square near them. Danny and the rest of his squad ran to help with the wounded. He was helping load a little girl with broken legs into an ambulance when some one detonated an IED. twenty two more people, including Danny were killed. That little girl lived, though. Danny's body had shielded her from the blast. I guess I kinda gave up on the world, after the funeral.

That was six months ago.

He stopped talking, and after a moment, I asked Mike as gently as I could, How's your wife taking it? You haven't mentioned her once,

Lisa.

Mike was looking at his past, again; but fondly, this time.

Lisa died of breast cancer. Danny was eleven, then.

Mike fell silent, still in his past. I got up and made us each another cup of hot chocolate. When I sat back down next to him, I set the cups on the table and said, You really loved her, I can tell

Still do, he said. Then he sighed. I hear of people who claim to talk with their loves after they've passed, but it was never so for me. Oh, I've asked Lisa for help thousands of times, but I never felt that she answered me. If those other folks are getting answers, then all I can say, is that I envy them.

The thought seemed to make Mike feel a little bitter, so put my arms around his neck, and my head back on his chest. I could hear his heart beating. I asked, How did you meet Lisa?

Hmph, he snorted. then he smiled the first real smile I'd seen on his face. Well, believe it or not, it was a blind date. My sisters boyfriends sister. Scott's parents said he had to get Lisa a date to use the car. Since my first girlfriend had dumped me a while back, my sister Nance asked me, of course, telling me that Lisa was my age. I didn't want to go, at first, not on a blind date. All I could think was that this Lisa must be huge or have a third eye or something. But Nance talked me into it. The fact that it would be the first movie date my parents had let me go on was the deciding factor for me.

When Scott pulled up in front of our house, and honked his horn, I looked at Nance, and said that didn't seem cool. She said that Scott thought it was, but it wasn't. I pride myself that I've never done such a thing. I made it a point to always go to the door. Then again, it was always Lisa's door.

Nance and I walked down to the car, and when Scott didn't get out, I opened the door for my sister. Then I opened the back door to get in, and came face to face with a green eyed Goddess. at least that's what she seemed to me. I froze so badly that my sister had to reach over the back of the seat and pull me into the car. Lisa just sat there, with this funny little smile on her face, looking at me. I don't think I was able to say a single word on the way to the drive in theater. All I could do was look at her.

After Scott parked the car, he and I went to the snack bar for sodas and popcorn. He told me I had to get a grip, that I was acting so un-cool. I asked him how could he stand living with someone as beautiful as Lisa, and he laughed at me, saying that she was just his kid sister.

When we got back in the car, Scott pulled Nance over next to him and put his arm over her shoulder. I could tell by how stiff Nance was, that she didn't care for it. When I looked back to Lisa, She was staring at me. I froze up, again.

Lisa smirked. That is the only word I can think of for the look that came over her face. Then she very deliberately took charge of the goings on in that back seat. She scooted over to me, took the drink out of my hand, and put it on the floor next to hers. Then she raised her hands to my face, holding me in place. She kept her eyes open, almost hypnotizing me, and kissed me. Her soft lips gently pressed against mine, and the electricity flowed. I had never felt anything like it. Years later, Lisa told me my eyes had rolled up and she was afraid I had passed out. I think she was right.

The next thing I knew, Lisa had her tongue in my mouth. This was a first, for me, and my dick went straight to attention. Lisa knew what she was doing, and she knew what she wanted. The fact that I was a frightened, clueless virgin was not going to stand in her way. She scared me so bad when she grabbed

my hard on, that I jumped out of the car, and ran to the bathroom. I wasn't going to come out, until my hard on went down. That idea lasted about twenty minutes, until Lisa came into the mens room after me. Then I was too embarrassed by her being in there calling my name to be scared. I left with her, trying to hide my hard on the whole way.

When she got me back into the car, Nance was pressing against her door. I don't think I've ever seen Nance that mad before, or since. I noticed that the top two buttons had been torn off her blouse.

Scott had a bright red hand print on his face, and was sulking behind the wheel. Lisa closed her door, took one look, and said, Lets go. Scott started the car without a word, and pulled out. Lisa climbed into my lap and leaned over the seat to whisper with Nance. A couple of minutes later, Lisa leaned back and started whispering to me that she wasn't finished with me yet, and that I had better get some rubbers before we met up again. That was my responsibility, after all.

I had been so stunned by what we found when we got back, that I totally forgot about being scared, or even that Lisa was sitting on my hard on. I remembered after she started kissing me again, but it felt so good, I just went along with it.

When we got to our house, Nance was out of the car, and up on the porch before I could even get my door open. Lisa grabbed me as I was getting out, and gave me a dollar bill with her phone number and address on it in red ink. Call me, she said, as she stood beside me, or I'll hunt you down like a rabid dog. Scott was telling her to get back in the car, and she said, Shut the fuck up, or I'll tell Dad you wouldn't stop when Nance said, No. You KNOW what will happen then. She looked back at me and said, Call me. Then she kissed me again. When she let me go, and was getting back in the car, she said, Or Else! I could hear the capital letters.

I did call her, of course. And I still have that dollar bill. The sad smile on Mikes face as he said that gave me an idea for later.

Turns out, Lisa lived just six blocks away from my house, but the other side of the city limits. She went to the township high school, while I went to City. We met at the Burger Barn almost every day after school, and then walk either to her house or mine. We did our home work together. We became each others best friend. We ate dinner at which ever house we were at. Our parents would just smile, and set the extra place at the table. The only thing bad, was, Nance never went to Lisa's house, and Scott was never welcome in ours.

Years later, I learned that the Sunday, after our date, their Dad had taken a razor strop to Scott's ass so hard that he would have the scars for the rest of his life. Lisa swears she never told her Dad. Nance told me after Lisa died that their Dad had overheard Scott talking on the phone to a friend. Scott was telling his friend that Nance a prick tease, and had slapped him for no reason. Their Dad had come over to our house, to talk to Nance about it. I guess it took a while but Nance finally told him what happened. Our parents became close friends, after that, and even started going on summer vacations together after we graduated high school. A place called The Pines, in South Carolina.

Lisa's mom took her to their doctor when she turned sixteen, and got her prescription of birth control pills started. We did experiment, but we didn't really have a clue what we were doing. Back then, we just didn't see what all the hoopla was about.

Lisa and I graduated from high school, and went to State together. I was a Business Administration Major, with Accounting minor, and She was Communications, with Advertising. We had to live in the dorms our freshman year, but just before summer break, we found an apartment we could afford that would be available when we started our sophomore year. When we moved into that apartment, together is when we started sleeping together and enjoying sex regularly. When we mentioned it, our parents were all surprised. They thought we'd been having regular sex ever since we started going together.

During our senior year, we finally realized that, in addition to being best friends and lovers, we were truly in love with each other. I'm sure that Lisa knew it sooner. Probably years before me. But I managed to figure it out, and buy a ring after Thanksgiving. I asked her to marry me in front of our families -less Scott- on Christmas morning. We planned the wedding for the fourth of July, that summer.

We had started an internet ISP company our junior year, and saved the income from it to use as the down payment on the house her folks found for us out in the township. I did most of the front office and networking work, and Lisa did all the advertising. She also started a separate ad consultancy business that made her a lot of money. She was good at it. She was so good at it, that, without telling me, she paid off that thirty year mortgage in seven years. I made the regular payments, and she sneaked in to the bank and made the extra payments.

We moved into that house, right after we were married. Danny was conceived the first night we slept there.

I still live there, but that old house is empty, now, with just me there. Mike stopped for a moment,

frowning. Then he sighed and said, I'll keep it, though. I know where everything is.

Suddenly Mike looked at me. Where the heck are we, anyway? I just realized I don't have any idea where I am. I left work, and just drove. I don't even know which way is home.

I said, Well, this little crossroads is called Elkton.

Where's Cleveland from here?

Oh, about an hour and a half north.

Mike sat back with a sigh. I've woke up further. Then he looked at his watch. Ten thirty. I should be going.

I started to panic, and tightened my grip around his neck. Mike, please stay. You're not done and I still have to tell you my story. Stay here, and call off work in the morning. I need to wake up next to you. Just so I'll know it was real.

Mike frowned as he thought about it. There is nothing I'd rather do than wake up next to you in the morning. But is it really a good idea? Your reputation might suffer.

Dad knows you're here. I have NO reputation, other than un-touchable. I'll be okay no mater what. Tell me more about Lisa and Danny? Please?

Okay, though there's not a lot left to tell. But first, point me to the bathroom?

I got up, and showed Mike the way, and went to the kitchen to make us each another cup of hot chocolate. I refilled the tea kettle, and started it heating again, in case we wanted more. Then I sat the cups on the coffee table, and went to stand in line.

When Mike came out, I said, My turn, I'll be right out. I went in and, after peeing, cleaned myself as best I could. That's when I realized we'd had unprotected sex. As I sat there, I figured out that I wasn't worried about it. It was just a few days until my period was due, and I was fairly certain Mike was

healthy. I finished up, with a smile, and went back out to the living room.

Mike looked up at me and said, I still don't think it a good idea for me to spend the night.

I sat down beside him and snuggled into his side. Let's just see when the time comes. Now, as Paul Harvey says for the rest of the story.

Mike chuckled a bit and said, Okay. Well, Danny was an only child. That wasn't our choice. Lisa and I both thought three was the perfect number of children. The hospital mixed up the charts when Danny was being delivered, and the doctors cut Lisa's tubes. We didn't find out for three years. Her OB/GYN knew about the mistake almost immediately, but chose to hide it. That's why Lisa didn't trust doctors.

Her not trusting them may be why she waited too long to go get the lump in her breast checked out. Anyway, when we found out, we sued. We won a lot of money, the OB/GYN lost his license and the Nurse that actually mixed up the charts got fired. None of that really helped, though. Lisa was bitter about it all the way until her cancer was diagnosed. Spayed like a pound bitch, she'd say.

We used some of the money trying to have her tubes fixed, but it never worked. The rest was supposed to be for Danny's college. Lisa's medical bills used up about half of it, and after she died, I donated some to the Breast Cancer Foundation, but the rest is just sitting in renewable tax free bonds.

After Lisa died, Danny and I did the best we could. We'd catch ourselves saying things like, When's mom going to be home? They always hurt, but, at least we had each other. It took the cancer almost a year after she was diagnosed, to kill Lisa. She was in so much pain at the end, we were almost relieved when she finally passed. In some ways, Danny and I had already moved on.

From then, until Danny joined the Marines, it was just day by day. Me working, Danny going to school. Danny never went out for sports, or any other school activities. He just wasn't interested.

Well, Kelly, that just about covers my life. Danny and I just making it day by day. Now? I don't know. With Danny gone too, it just seems kind of pointless, you know?

You never found another woman?

No, but to be truthful, I never looked. In fact, I probably pushed a few away.

So before tonight, how long since you've made love?

Ten? No, twelve years? Doesn't seem that long. Lack of interest, more than anything. None of them were Lisa.

Neither am I.

I know, and I'm not ready to try and figure that out, yet. Now, your turn.

## Chapter 5

I nodded, and then did something I haven't done since I was a little girl. I crawled into Mike's lap, and snuggled into him. Mike, please, just hold me. I'll never be able to do this if you don't.

He rested his chin on top of my head. Holding me, he again began gently rocking me like a small child. I could hear his voice rumbling in his chest, when he said, No harm can come to you now. You're safe here, with me. I will protect you. It all felt so soothing and comforting. I sighed.

And began.

Dad has been a police officer ever since he got out of high school. First in the Navy Shore patrol, then in NYPD, Finally, here in Elkton. He worked his way to Chief, here. He and mom met in New York. I don't know why she was there, but she was. I was about three years old when mom was killed by a drunk driver. I don't remember her at all. But I do remember that Dad was terribly hurt by her death. Maybe that's why I tried to draw you out tonight. You were lost in your memories and pain, just like Dad was, then. I remember that I was scared all the time because my poppa was gone, even when he was right there.

Then, when I was about five, something happened and, all of a sudden my poppa was back. The next thing I knew, we moved back here to Elkton. Dad bought a small, two bedroom house from his parents where we lived until I went away to college. He still lives there. Hmm, I smiled, I had such a good life in that house.

Daniel's Dad and mom bought the house across the street when I was eight. Daniel was nine, but we were in the same grade. Something about his birthday being so late in the year. There were no other kids our age on the block, so we naturally started palming around together. Even back then, he hated being called Dan, or Danny. My name is DANIEL! he'd say.

Oh, the trouble we'd get into. If two kids could do it, we did. Never anything really bad, mind you, but I'm sure most of my dad's gray hair came from Daniel and I.

Up until we went to high school, Daniel and I had every class together. Our teachers never tried to keep us apart, either. Funny thing, we never caused any trouble in class. Even in high school, we had a few classes together, and we always shared lunch period.

It seems, that from the day his family moved in, we were best friends. When we started the teen crush years, we started seeing other people, but we never dated each other. We were just always there for each other. We helped each other through every heartbreak we had. We both knew the other had not had sex, yet. Nothing past 'heavy petting,' anyway. We did know about rubbers, because one of the other girls in our class had gotten pregnant that year. She'd been having sex with her boyfriend for months, but they'd always used protection, except for that one time on New Year's day. She left to 'spend time with her aunt,' at the end of February. She never did come back. Her boyfriend left after graduation, and no one knows where he is, either.

Any way, my first date with Daniel was our senior prom. Daniel had broke up with his girl, and I with my boyfriend the grabby bastard about a month before the dance, so we decided that we'd go to the prom together. We also decided that we were going to go all the way, after the dance. Hmph, best laid plans and all that...

What a disaster.

I mean, picture it. two teen age virgins, with no experience whatsoever, trying to figure it out as they went along... We had climbed into the huge back seat of his mom's old Impala, and started kissing. I was damn near giddy at the thought of finally losing my virginity. Best of all, it was to be Daniel! I was happy, and excited. And horny, too. When Daniel started rubbing my breast, I broke from our kiss, and stripped. There really is no other way to describe it. I got naked just as fast as I could.

Poor Daniel, he didn't stare, but that's just because he couldn't get his eyes to stop bouncing from my chest to my crotch and back. He actually started drooling! I got him to give me the rubber, and started trying to get his pants undone. Daniel finally got it together enough to get his pants down to his ankles,

but he couldn't get them off because he had forgotten to take off his shoes. I was in so much of a hurry, that I just pushed him back a bit, and tore open the foil pack. That's when I started to stare. And drool. My first live, naked dick. It was beautiful. I was in awe. I looked at Daniel's face, but he had his eyes closed, and was panting like he'd run a mile. I asked him if it was for me, and he kinda jerked his head in a nod, yes.

That's where it all went to hell.

I pulled the rubber out of the foil, and started to roll it over his erection, and, of course I had it backwards. So I took it off, and got it right side around, and started to put it on him again. When I'd rolled it about half way on, Daniel gasped, and came. Needless to say, I didn't understand, but I was still amazed. I loved the feeling of his dick twitching and spurting in my hand. I loved watching the rubber fill with his seed.

That's when I did the cruelest thing I've ever done in my life.

I laughed.

I laughed because it was the coolest thing I'd ever seen.

I just didn't understand. I was so busy watching and playing with Daniel's dick, that I didn't see his face. I can only imagine the look he must have had when he heard me laugh. He didn't understand, either.

Suddenly, Daniel yanked his pants back up, and climbed back into the front seat. He started the car, and said to put my clothes back on. When I asked him what was going on, he just put the car in gear and hit the gas. I kept asking him what was going on, what was wrong, and where were we going, but he didn't say a word the whole way home. By the time we got home, I had my dress back on, but my bra, panties and hose were still on the floor of the back seat. I was getting angry, because I didn't understand.

When Daniel told me to get out, I refused. I said I wasn't going anywhere until he told me what was wrong. He just shut the engine off, took the keys and got out himself. By the time I realized what he was doing, he was already closing the front door of his house. That's where I started getting worried, because I still didn't know what I'd done. I ran up and knocked on his door, but he wouldn't answer.

After knocking and yelling for about ten minutes, his mom opened the door.

She didn't let me in. For the very first time since we'd met, she wouldn't let me in to see Daniel. I didn't understand. She told me to go on home. Every time I said that I wanted to see Daniel, or asked her what was wrong, she'd only say, Not tonight. Finally she closed the door, gently, in my face.

That's when I got scared.

By the time I got to my house, I was crying so badly that I couldn't get the door open. My Dad finally let me in, and said to go take a hot bath, then go to bed. Then he went into the living room and picked the phone up off the table. I knew he was talking to Daniel's mom or Dad, so I just did what he said, and went to take my bath.

After I'd gotten in bed, my Dad came into my room. He wanted to know what had happened that evening. I started crying again, and he sat on my bed and held me. After a while I told him everything.

Dad didn't say anything for a few minutes. Then he said that everything would get better in time, and that I should get some sleep. He said he was going to take me out to Grandmama's the next day, that she'd be able to help figure it all out.

## Chapter 6

(Mike)

Kelly had come to a natural pause, so I hugged her a little tighter and said, How about holding that thought, and let me go to the bathroom, again? Too much coffee earlier.

Oh, sure, sorry, she said as she got to her feet.

No need for sorry, but I prefer an empty bladder while I'm holding you on my lap.

I walked into the bathroom, and closed the door. I had flinched rather badly when Kelly had mentioned the rubber in her rambling story. I didn't think she'd noticed, though. Damn, I hadn't thought about rubbers in like twenty five years. And now I'd had unprotected sex with Kelly. For the first time I was

experiencing the teen age terror of the consequences of that. I knew that I had to discuss this with Kelly before I went home. If we figured out nothing else, we had to resolve how we'd handle things if she were pregnant.

I flushed the toilet, and, as I washed my hands, I looked at myself in the mirror. I hadn't done that since Danny was killed, but I did now. I looked like hell. My hair was at least two inches longer than it should be, and totally unkempt. I had so many wrinkles I had not seen before. I would have to get on a scale, but I looked to be at least fifteen pounds under weight. My face looked gaunt. There really was no other word for it. I certainly could not see any reason for Kelly to have any interest in me.

How did I feel about Kelly? I knew, but I couldn't describe it.

How did I feel about the possibility of a baby? Terror. And happiness. Mans only immortality is through his children, after all.

Then I realized that what I felt most, was peace. If Kelly was not pregnant, all ends well. If she is, I'd be there for her however she needed or wanted me. If she would have me, I'd marry her. If she wouldn't wed me, neither Kelly, nor our child would ever have a want or need. That much I could make sure of with the settlement moneys. I would be involved, either directly or from a distance, but it would be up to Kelly.

The thought of having another child warmed my heart. I caught myself almost hoping she WAS pregnant, but then thought, no, that might not be what was best for Kelly.

I looked closely at that thought. Yep, I loved her. Now, was I IN LOVE? Hmm, no, not in love... Not yet, any way. My feelings didn't reach the level of what I'd felt with Lisa, but they far exceeded anything I'd ever felt about any one other than family.

Suddenly I realized that my introspection had taken a bit of time, and Kelly was waiting. I concluded that, for whatever reason this had come about, I was okay with it. No, I was actually happy. Happy for the first time since Lisa had been diagnosed, and I would be content, no matter where Kelly and I went from here.

I shut the water off, and dried my hands. I snorted to myself, as I realized how carefully I'd re-hung the hand towel. Lisa had trained me well. With one more glance in the mirror, I went back out to find Kelly.

She was over by the kitchen sink, and when she saw me, she asked if I wanted another cup of hot chocolate. No thanks, I replied. I think I've had enough.

She nodded, and started to rinse out the cup I'd been using. I walked over and said, Here, let me get that. I need something to do with my hands for a minute. Kelly just nodded, and handed me her cup, too. I finished washing out the cups, and put them in the drain rack. Then, with a sigh, I turned to see Kelly leaning her butt against the table. She had a funny little smile on her face, and I could tell that the laughter in her eyes was about me.

Kelly, I started, then paused as I saw her eyebrow crook up in question. Um, about earlier... Her little smile grew a tiny bit, and the skin around her eyes started to crinkle, but she remained silent, waiting for me to get out what I had to say. When we... Ah... had sex.

I win, She said.

What?

I said, 'I win.' I made a little bet with myself, when I saw the look on your face, while you were washing out the cups. You're worried about if I might be pregnant, because we didn't use any protection. Well, I could be, as I'm not on the pill. I'm due to start the day after tomorrow, so, we'll find out soon enough. If I am, I want you to know, that I'm happy with the thought. Daniel and I weren't ready, but some how I am now. If I'm not, well, that's okay too. What we did, and what Dad said about living, fixed something in me. Something I didn't even know was broken.

It's almost like I've been lost in the dark, and now the sun is up and I know where I am.

Mike, I'm asking you now; to stay here, tonight. It's late, and I still have to finish telling you about me. It 's already too late for you to try and drive back tonight. When I've finished, then we'll take a shower, and go to bed. In the morning, we'll figure out us, but I was serious when I said I need to wake up next to you. So I'm asking you. Please. Stay with me?

I watched Kelly while that all poured out of her. I knew how she felt. Hell, I felt the same way. The need to wake up in the morning with proof that it all hadn't been just a dream. Yes, I said gently.

Yes, I'll stay.

Thank you, she replied in the same quiet tone. Then she hugged my neck like she was drowning.

Hey, hey, now. I said I'll stay. No need for tears. I could feel them wetting my neck.

Kelly just sniffled, and said, Happy tears. I was so worried that you'd leave, and I'd never see you again.

Kelly, that just isn't going to happen. You and I share something, now that is stronger than both of us.

She relaxed a bit, and so I said, Now that we have that settled, shall we continue? I kind of miss you sitting on my lap.

I could see the blush running up her neck. For some reason, it surprised me a bit. Just as I began to think I might have pushed her too hard, she looked down and said, Mike, I'm a little embarrassed by how much I want you to hold me. My Dad hasn't just held me since before Daniel and I started dating. When you are holding me, hugging me, I feel like a little girl, safe in her daddies arms. I've missed that. A lot.

Then she snorted, Hell, I'm twenty five years old, I shouldn't be so insecure as to need that.

Kelly, I'm forty two. And I need that. Getting a hug; giving a hug; everyone needs comfort from a friend or loved one from time to time. I learned a long time ago, there are never enough hugs. Sometimes I think just cuddling with someone you care about can be better than sex. More intimate, and certainly longer lasting. Now, shall I carry you to the couch, so you can continue?

No, I can walk.

Okay, but can I still hold you?

I'd like that.

I sat back down on the couch, and Kelly snuggled back into my lap again. When she asked me where she was, I told her that she was going to see he Grandmother.

Oh, yeah. Okay, well, the next morning, Dad brought me here. Grandmama lived in this apartment then. She's my dads' mom, and she's rich, smart, and she's a wonderful person. She has a farm outside of town where she lives, now. You'll have to meet her, one of these days.

Anyway, Dad brought me to her, and told me I'd be staying with her until graduation, at least. She made me some hot coco, sat me down at that kitchen table, and made me tell her the whole story.

She was quite peeved with me. Those were her words, Quite peeved. She was upset that I hadn't come to her, when I had questions about sexuality, or relationships, or even life in general.

What she said when I told her about that night is burned into my mind, *You laughed?* Oh, my! Why didn't you just take a knife and cut his nuts off? My God, I'd be surprised if he ever talks to you again!

That's when I finally understood what I'd done to Daniel. I totally freaked out, and it took a bit of time for Grandmama to get me to settle down. I wanted to go find Daniel and beg his forgiveness, but Grandmama said that now was not the time.

Grandmama asked me all kinds of questions about my boyfriends and what I'd done, sexually, and how my relationships had ended, why I'd tried something with Daniel but wouldn't with another guy...

I didn't want to answer a lot of those questions, but she insisted.

Then she gave me The Talk. It wasn't anything like what I had in health class, or what other girls had said in the locker room. Basically, she started teaching me about how to have sex and enjoy it. She taught me about boys, and how they are just as scared, insecure, subject to peer pressure, and nervous as girls are.

She showed me how to explore my body, and learn for myself how and where I liked to be touched. I'd done some of this before, but I'd always thought it was dirty, some how. Grandmama explained that there was nothing wrong with it, just that I shouldn't do it in public.

She also said that everyone masturbates, and that if someone says they didn't, they were a liar, or there was something wrong with them.

I couldn't help myself, I interrupted her by saying. I haven't masturbated in years.

That just proves my point, Mike. First Lisa, then Danny? Your sorrow is why. That qualifies as, something wrong, in my book. I haven't either, since Daniel, and for the same reason. But I know I will, and soon.

Then she blushed, smiled and ducked her head back onto my chest, and said, I... I think I'd like it if you thought about me while you did. I know I'll be thinking about you. I saw the corner of her smile, when she felt my dick stirring under her butt.

Kelly got right back into her story. Grandmama even got undressed with me, and showed me how to masturbate, both with just my hands, and with a vibrator. Hell, she bought me my first vibrator. She wouldn't share hers, saying there was nothing wrong with toys, but that sharing them wasn't the best idea unless I was certain of my partners health, and that I'd been active with people she didn't know.

She told me that I had to know these things, because I'd have to show my lovers how to please me. How could I do that if I didn't know, myself? I also learned that everyone is different, and that I'd have to find out what each of my lovers would like, so I could please them.

She also started me working as a waitress in the coffee shop, downstairs. She wanted me to have business skills and to understand where money came from and that the only right way to get it was hard work. I run the place now, and I wait on tables to be able to take it easy at the end of the day.

When she found out that I wasn't on the pill, she called my Dad some really bad names. She took me to her doctor, and I got my first prescription. She made me pay for it myself, even though she paid the doctor for the exam. She told me that birth control was my responsibility, and that the best form of birth control was not to have sex. She said that was not realistic, so the pill was the next best thing.

Kelly looked up at me, and smiled at me. Mike, I'm going to make an appointment with my doctor tomorrow, to get back on them. We can enjoy each other tonight, because if tonight is not safe, it's too late to worry. But I want to see you again, and it IS my responsibility. I'll also be getting an STD test report, and I'd appreciate it if you would, too. Just to be safe and sure.

Not a problem, I said. In fact, that is a good idea. Even though Lisa is the only one I've ever been with until you, they didn't even have those kinds of tests back then. We could have had something all that time and never known, because we were both monogamous. I'll call my doctor tomorrow, too. Damn, the things you have to worry about, these days...

Yeah, but it doesn't seem so bad, because it just is. She shrugged and continued. Grandmama also told me about sex with women. She explained that, again there was nothing wrong with it, but that it wasn't accepted by society. She said that she enjoyed sex with certain women, but that there were only a few she trusted enough. I'm curious, but I haven't found anyone I trust enough to try that with yet. There was one girl at State, but, well, let's just say I couldn't trust her. Grandmama says that when the time is right, it'll happen if I want.

She taught me that sex is not love, and that love is not sex. Anyone can have sex with anyone, and it would be just sex. From what I understand, it's not much more than mutual masturbation. Grandmama said that was not love, but called lust.

Anyone can also love anyone, and that sex didn't have to be a part of it. I love my Dad, and Grandmama but there's no sex involved. Yes, they're family, but I also love Daniels' parents. No sex there, either. She called that kind of love storge.

But when you love a person you are not enjoying sex with, she said that was called phillia. Best friends, would be an example. Some one you trust, and that trusts you but it's not sexual.

Personally, I think I'd have to have SOME feelings towards a person to want to have sex with them. She said that this is the kind of love that really close emotional bonds come from, and if I had a lover that I was not committed to, it would be called eros. I think that's what we have, Mike. And that's a good thing. Emotional attachment, sex, but no commitment.

Best of all, is what Daniel and I had, being In Love. Grandmama showed me that I could love many people. all in different ways, but could only be committed to one person at a time. Like you and Lisa, or Daniel and I. A combination of phillia, with eros. She also told me that even when committed to one person, I could love and even enjoy sex with other people. She said that the only way was to be totally honest and talk about it with Daniel BEFORE I did it. Daniel and I did swing with another couple on

our last spring break, and it was fun. Swinging isn't something I wanted to do a lot of, but once in a while, a little lust once and a while can be a good thing. It helps you realize what you have.

She choked a bit, saying that, but held herself together.

You mentioned The Pines, She said. My grand parents went there every summer for years. Grandmama still goes for at least a weekend every summer. I think the only summer she didn't go was the first one after grandpa died. She may know your or Lisa's parents. I'll have to ask her about it when she comes in tomorrow.

She taught me so much. Heck, she still does. She doesn't run the coffee shop any more, she just owns it. But she comes in almost every day, and checks how things are going. I think she's planning to give me the business, but I don't really want her to. I'm afraid that if she does, she'll stop coming by. I'd miss that.

Any way, while she was teaching me the things I needed to know about love and sex, and life, Daniel was getting the same thing from his parents and my Dad. They all kept us mostly apart all the way until graduation. The only times we saw each other was at school. We did start talking there, and I did tell him how sorry I was for laughing. I told him why I had laughed, too, and he forgave me.

On graduation day -after the ceremony- Daniels parents handed him the keys to a five year old Crown Vic that they'd bought from the police department. Yeah, my Dad got it for them. Dad told me I'd get his cruiser next year, after he got a new one.

Dad told me that he'd packed me a bag, and that it was in the trunk of Daniels car. He said that Grandmama wanted us to drive up to her cottage on lake Erie for the weekend. We weren't expected back until Monday Evening, and that Grandmama had given me Monday off from work.

When I asked him what was going on, He just looked at me with this sad smile on his face. Then he asked me If I still loved Daniel. I said yes, of course, and he asked me I still wanted to go to bed with Daniel, If I wanted Daniel to be my first.

Suddenly, it all clicked. All those talks with Grandmama, telling us to go to the cottage for the weekend, all of it. I jumped up and hugged my daddy's neck, and kissed him. Don't hurt him, Kelly, he said. The boy is just as nervous as you are. More, probably, and you already laughed at him once. I

turned beet red, when he said that.

Dad said, You've got the whole weekend. Everything you need is already there. Mom is cooking your dinner, but she'll probably have left by the time you get there. But Kelly? No drinking, Okay? You know how I feel about that.

I promise, Dad, I told him. No drinking.

Then have a good time, he said. Remember to talk to him. Let him know what you want, and get him to show you what feels good to him. Give me a call on my cell when you get there, and another when you leave. I love you baby, have fun!

Daniel drove us up there, and we saw Grandmama's car pulling out on the road just before we got there. She beeped her horn, and drove off.

She had left some soft jazz playing on the radio, and candles on the table. Dinner was in the oven with a note that it would be ready in another fifteen minutes. Just enough time to wash up.

Grandmama had made us a wonderful shrimp Alfredo, with steamed veggies. When I went to her wine cabinet, I saw that she intended for me to honor my promise to my Dad. All the wine was in the back seat of her car. She had left a note to me, though. It said that there was some sparkling white juice in the pantry that would be almost as good. The note also said that removing the wine wasn't her choice, but that she respected my Dad's request, and that she and I could talk about it after we got home.

After we finished eating, and washed the dishes, Daniel and I sat out on the back porch. We snuggled together on the glider, just watching the waves, until the sun went down. We didn't really talk much, just cuddled.

Just as the sun set, Daniel pulled me into a hug. I could feel him trembling, and when he tried to ask me if I still wanted to, I remembered what Dad had said about boys being just as nervous as girls.

I kinda interrupted him... I pulled back and looked Daniel in the eyes, I wanted him to see the truth of what I had to say. I told him that I had chosen him to be my first a long time ago. Long before I was ready to go all the way. Then I told him that I loved him, and that I was ready. Oh, so ready.

We took turns in the shower, and went to bed. The only thing else I'll say about that night, or the rest of that weekend, is that it was wonderful. And that it was worth the wait.

They say you never forget your first time, I said. I'm glad yours was special.

I hope their right. That weekend is one of my most cherished memories.

I hugged Kelly, and said, I know what you mean. I remember my first time with Lisa, too.

Kelly surprised me by hopping up off my lap. She said, I'm getting a glass of water, because I'm thirsty with all this talking. Would you like one too?

Sure, I said I could use one.

As she strode briskly into the kitchen area, I again noticed and admired her trim figure, and cute ass.

I recalled what she'd said about her first time. Yeah, mine too... Wonderful. And worth the wait.

I sighed and leaned my head back on the couch. My mind drifted back to that Thursday night...

## **Chapter 7**

(Mike)

My mind drifted back to that long ago Thursday night.

...

Mike, phone! my mom called up the stairs.

Got it mom, I yelled back, picking up the extension in my room.

Hello?

A soft sultry voice said, I want to suck your dick , big boy. I want to kiss it and suck it and feel it in my throat, throbbing with your excitement. I want to take it so deep, I can't even breath, then I'll raise up and give just the head a tongue bath and lick the slit until you can hardly stand it.

I was groaning and my knees were so wobbly I could hardly stand as I listened to Lisa. I shut my bedroom door, and slipped the hook to lock it.

Oh, God, Lisa... I gasped.

Don't you DARE come yet! I'm not ready for you to come! Not yet! Get your hand off!

I let go of my dick, that I'd been stroking, and groaned again.

Lisa listened to my breathing for a moment, then she started talking to me again. I'll drive you crazy, but I won't let you come. Every time you almost get there, I'll stop. Then I'll start just licking your hot, hard shaft, and I'll tickle your heavy sperm filled balls. Maybe I'll suck one of them into my mouth and gently rub it with my tongue. Then I'll suck and lick the other one. When I'm done with that, I'll start kissing your shaft again. I will nip you a little, as I slowly work my way back up to the head.

Then, because you aren't expecting it, I'll thrust your whole length into my mouth and throat. I'll wrap my lips around the very base of your monster cock, and slowly pull back, sucking as hard as I can until just the head is in my mouth.

I'm watching your face, and because your eyes are closed, I'll do it again. But this time, I'll be rolling and kneading your balls in my hand.

I was gasping and panting. It was all I could do to not grab my dick. It wouldn't have taken me two strokes, and I'd have blasted my come across the room. It had happened before, but Lisa acted angry when I came before she said I could.

Mike, go lay down on your bed. Lay on your back on your bed. Are you there yet, Mike?

Yes, I hope I gasped it out loud.

Good, because now you're going to do your share. You're going to tell me how you are going to eat me, Mike. Eat me until I scream, just like I taught you, Mike. But, Mike, even while you are eating me, I'll still be sucking you and trying to make you come. You know the rule, Mike I come first, if you want to fuck me. If you come before I do, Mike, it's no nookie for you!

You DO want my cootchie, don't you Mike? Don't you want to sink your iron hard shaft into my steamy molten depths? COME NOW, MIKE!

I tried to hold back. I really did. I groaned, I grunted, I almost screamed aloud. But, I managed to clench my teeth as I shot into the waiting wad of tissues.

My vision narrowed down and grayed a bit, and the sweat was rolling off my body. I just lay there on my bed, twitching and quivering for I don't know how long.

Then I heard Lisa's voice softly saying, Breathe, Mike. Come on, Lover, breathe. Take a breath, Mike, come on.

I gasped a huge breath of air, as Lisa told me what a good boy I was. Finally my panting and heart beat started to slow, to where I could think.

She'd done it again. Lisa had made me come just by talking to me on the phone. I hadn't even touched myself after she'd told me to keep my hands off. Ah, but now it was MY turn.

Are you rubbing yourself, Lisa? I knew damn well she was. Take your hands away from your pussy, Lisa, That's mine, now. You can play with your tits, if you want. You can pinch and twist, and tug on your nipples, but your pussy belongs to me, now. And I'm going to eat it until you scream for mercy. I'm going to tease you worse than you teased me, and you'll finally beg for me to fuck you so you can come.

I'm going to start by licking you, Lisa, in that nice spot just under your collar bone. Kissing and licking that spot, oh so gently until you try to pull me tighter. Then I'll kiss my way over to the other side, and maybe give you a hickey, there.

Then I'll push back, and move down to your belly button, licking and sucking on it. I can feel your tummy trembling under my lips, Lisa. I know you like what I'm doing. Which way to go, Lisa? Which way should I go? I could kiss my way down to your beautiful pussy, or up to your wonderful tits. This time, I'll kiss and lick my way up to your left tit, and tease you by licking, and kissing, and nipping all around your tit. Every where except your nipple. Yes, I can feel you trying to get your nipple into my mouth. I know you want me to nurse it, but I'm not going to do that yet. Maybe not at all. I'll just do the same thing to your other tit, and maybe, just maybe I'll put a little sucker bite just under the aureole. I know how much you like that.

It was Lisa's' turn to be moaning and gasping. We played this game at least a couple of times a week. We played around with each other almost every day. We explored each other and ourselves, but her I come first or no nookie, rule still held. I had yet to get Lisa off before I exploded. That box of condoms still sat, unopened, in my sock drawer.

Our parents all knew what we were doing. I think they thought it was funnier than Rowan and Martins' Laugh-in. My dad teased me mercilessly.

Lisa's' mom had got her on the pill right after she turned sixteen. And she gave us the rules. Nothing more than hugs and LIGHT kissing in public. If even one button would be un-done, then it had to be either at my house or theirs, and an adult had to be home. This was for our own safety, and the safety of our reputations.

In other words, we could do what ever we wanted as long as we followed those simple rules. If we didn't, we'd be grounded.

We never even bent those rules.

Oops, I might have sucked a little hard, there. I hope it doesn't hurt. I move up and kiss you hard, mashing your lips against your teeth as an apology. Then I break our kiss, and latch my lips on your right nipple. I suck hard, and hear you gasp in pleasure. At the same time, I start gently raking my teeth against your nipple.

While I'm doing that, I drag my finger nails up and down your sides, lightly scratching you, but hard enough not to tickle. I switch over to your other nipple and do the same thing. Sucking. Raking your

nipple with my teeth. This one feels even harder than the other did. Your nipples are SO hard, like diamonds, so now I start swirling my tongue around the aureole. Are you trying to force your nipple back into my mouth? You know better than that! I go back to your other tit, and swirl my tongue around your aureole again. I'm careful to avoid your nipples

I can feel your body starting to writhe under me. You must be VEY hot, I think it is time for me to find out, so I start kissing and nipping my way down your chest and belly. I pause to ream your belly button, again with my tongue. Then I move further down, until my lips are in your beautiful red pubic hair. I grab with my lips and tug gently, then let go and do it again. And again. Over and over. I can tell how much you like it by the way you are moving against me, thrusting your hips off the bed. Or is it that you can feel my hot breath against your swollen labia?

I can smell your arousal, now. A heady scent, that feeds my own hunger for you. It's setting my brain on fire! I work my way, slowly, oh so slowly down, licking, kissing, little nips against your soft skin, and just as I get to the top of your slit, I stopped talking, and listened to Lisa's' breathing. She was close, so I waited.

Lisa moaned, and after a moment, she growled, Don't you DARE leave me hanging like this.

I smiled and she gasped, when I said, I rake my fingernails down the insides of your thighs, Kinda hard. Hard enough to leave four thin red lines from the edges of your mons, all the way down to your knees. Then I start to follow those lines with my lips. Kissing my way down to your knee, and then back up to your sex. I don't kiss your lips, as much as I want to. Instead, I blow short puffs of my hot breath against your pussy. I watch as your outer lips part, and your inner lips spread and grow like an orchid. Your pussy is more beautiful than any flower, though, and I know there is plenty of nectar in it for me later.

I move on to your other leg, and kiss, and nip, and lick my way down and back, following the lines that are still visible against your skin. I trail my lips and fingers back up your leg, and blow gently on your beautiful pussy again. I can see the droplets of your honey dewing up on the edges of your inner lips. I long to taste you, and reach my tongue to your pussy. As lightly as I can, I lick those droplets off and savor the taste of you. Oh, the sweet, tangy taste of you.

MIKE! it was almost a shout. I was jerked out of my fantasy description and into shock.

What's wrong? I asked, beginning to panic.

Enough; Get over here, NOW. This has gone on long enough! I want you. I need you now! And bring your condoms.

I didn't ask any questions. I just said, Five minutes.

I grabbed the box of condoms from my drawer, and pulled on my sweat pants and shoes.

Going to Lisa's I yelled as I hit the bottom of the stairs.

School night, Dad said as I was yanking the door shut.

I ran the whole six blocks. I was panting and trying to ease the stitch in my side when Lisa's mom opened the front door. She must have seen me through the living room window.

I could tell she knew what was going on, when she handed me a towel, and told me to put it under Lisa in case she started to bleed. Go slow, and ease in a little at a time, Mike. Don't be in too much of a hurry, but don't stop moving, either.

She hugged me, and with misty eyes, she said, Be good for my girl!

I finally had caught my breath, so I nodded.

As I walked towards Lisa's room, the shock of what her mom had said hit me. I paused outside the door, trying to get my head around it, until I heard Lisa moaning my name. I tapped on her door and opened it.

I had never before seen Lisa looking so wildly excited, or sexy, as she right then. She was laying on her bed, writhing and pulling at her tits. Her flame red hair was in marvelous disarray on her pillow. When she saw me, she rolled to her hands and knees, with a look of insatiable hunger in her flashing green eyes. That look was almost frightening. She froze, looking for all the world like a great jungle cat, ready to strike down her prey. If you are not naked in five seconds, I'll never speak to you again, she

growled.

I dropped my sweats, pulling my shirt over my head at the same time. Then I stepped my shoes off, still trapped in the legs of my pants.

Fast as I was, Lisa had the head of my cock in her mouth well before I was undressed. I thought I'd last at least a little while because of the massive orgasm I'd had not thirty minutes ago. I was wrong. It didn't take Lisa more than two minutes before I was trying to drown her in sperm.

She moaned, as I flooded her mouth. But, she kept sucking and swallowing to get all my come. She was cautious with her lips and tongue, remembering how sensitive I'd be, but Lisa refused to let me go soft in her mouth.

Get a rubber and put it on, she said, releasing my cock. Lisa knew I was confused, so as I was going to do as she'd told me, she said, We're going all the way, tonight, Mike. I'm probably going to bleed a bit. Protect the open wound, as they say. She shut the door, and went back to her bed, waiting for me.

Oh, I get it. Your mom gave me a towel to put under you. Not the wittiest repartee, but Lisa didn't mind.

I got myself wrapped in latex, and retrieved the towel from where I'd dropped it, and brought it to her. As she got herself situated on the bed, I asked her, Can I eat you, first?

Hell no, I want you in me NOW! Right now. So get up here and do me good.

Lisa got me positioned to her satisfaction, then looked up at me. When she saw and felt my hesitation, her wild green eyes softened. Mike, it's time. I'm ready. No more teasing. Please, take me now. I love you. Make me a woman. Your woman.

I said the only thing I could, I love you, too, Lisa.

Remembering what her mom had said, I started rubbing my cock up and down her slit, spreading her natural lubrication. Then I found her opening and started to push. Lisa tensed up as I entered her, so I

stopped pushing and just held my self in place, until she relaxed a bit. Then I eased forward a bit more, and pulled back. In again, and I felt a constriction release. Lisa gasped, and said, That stings... No, Don't stop.

I still pulled back a bit, and then pushed forward, slowly working my way into the wet furnace of her pussy. Lisa came. And came again. Not big ones, but her first ones with me inside her. I could feel the fluttering in her pussy walls. I could also feel the increase of heat and moisture inside her.

The ecstasy on her face was a wonder for me to behold. I felt proud that I was able to make her feel so good. In, out. In a little further, out...

When our pubes finally meshed. Lisa's eyes snapped open. Now fuck me! Get your ass moving. Oh, this feels SO go-oo-od!

I began thrusting into her with full length strokes, and she began pushing her hips up to meet me, saying, Faster... Harder, faster, harder, in a kind of chant, over and over again. I tried to do like she said, until I was pounding into her as hard as I could.

Lisa hooked her heels around my ass, and was trying to spur me into greater effort.

Suddenly, a moan started deep in Lisa's chest, and a dark red flush covered her from her hairline to under her tits. The moan turned into a shriek, and she locked up. Every muscle in her body went tense, and I could no longer move. My dick was trapped in her pussy, that was clamping me in like a vise.

Lisa shuddered, and the grip in her pussy started gripping and releasing me, like a squeezing fist, suddenly blinded me with my orgasm.

My arms gave out, and I collapsed on top of Lisa, but her back was still arched, holding me off the bed.

I opened my eyes, just as she went totally slack. Lisa's eyes were closed, and she was panting harder than I was. I remembered to hold the condom, so there wouldn't be any leakage as I withdrew. I pulled out and took it off, knotted it, and tossed it into the wastepaper basket.

I was sitting on my heels, between Lisa's legs, and when I looked back at her she was staring straight into my eyes. My brain was still in a post coital shock, so I just looked at her, while we both tried to catch our breaths.

Just as our breathing was slowing to something like normal, there was a light tapping on the door. Lisa made an "Uh," sound and her mom came in and shut the door behind her.

She had a washcloth, and a face towel in her hands, and a smile on her face. That sounded like a GOOD one," she said. "Now, Mike, pay attention, here. This will be up to you from now on.

Pay attention? Hell, I was still trying to figure out why I wasn't freaked out over Kelly's mom being in the room with us. But I did watch as she gently wiped Lisa's pussy with the wash cloth.

Have the water hot when you wet the cloth, it'll only be warm when you get back to bed. Have it soaking wet, but not dripping. Be VERY gentle. Lisa's so sensitive right now, that if you rub too hard, it'll be very painful. Then, to dry her, just press the towel against her, again, be very gentle.

Did you come, Mike? I don't see any semen.

I used a rubber," I said.

Why?

Lisa told me to.

She looked over at Lisa, and arched an eyebrow.

Lisa blushed brighter than I'd ever seen her. "In case I bled," she mumbled.

Her mom just nodded, and said, "Okay, then I'll just get out of here so you two can be together. She left, closing the door quietly behind her.

Lisa and I looked back at each other. That was weird, I said. I mean, we're naked and your mom...

Yeah, a little weird, but, it was nice. You are going to have to do that for me from now on, you know. That was really nice of mom to show you how to do that.

We stared at each other for another minute, then we both said at the same time, Wow.

I crawled around behind Lisa and wrapped my arms around her. She leaned back into me, purring, That was fantastic, Mike. Better than I ever imagined.

Yeah... I know what you mean. I had to ask her, Lisa; not that I'm complaining, but, why tonight?

It just felt right, Mike. I know you've been ready for a while, now, and you've been great, waiting for me. When we were on the phone, I just felt that NOW was the right time for me. I'm glad, and you were great, but, man am I sore.

I started to panic, I hurt you? I half yelled.

No, silly. You just filled me so full. I'm not used to anything as big as you in me, so I'm sore. I will be better tomorrow. Now, I'm feeling sticky from sweat, so let's go take a shower together. I know mom is going to ask a bunch of questions, and she's probably got your mom on the phone already.

I nodded, and then asked, Are you sure about showering together? Your mom won't be upset?

I think my mom kinda expects it. Besides I love the way you wash my hair. Let's go.

Just like always, My dick got hard as I stood behind Lisa, washing her hair. God, I loved doing that. Rubbing my fingers through that dark red mane.

After she'd rinsed the shampoo out of that lovely red mop, she spun around and dropped to her knees. She inhaled my shaft with a smile, and tried to suck my guts out. After the three massive orgasms I'd enjoyed already, I thought I'd last a bit. A bit is all I lasted, before I groaned and came across Lisa's tongue.

After she'd finished swallowing, and licking me clean, she said, "There, now you won't get hard in front of mom."

I just groaned again.

Lisa shut off the water, and we got out to dry each other. Yeah, another of our favorite games. We got dressed, and went down stairs to face the music. I don't know for sure what we were expecting, from her mom, but, it wasn't what we got.

Lisa's mom was sitting at the kitchen table, with a glass of wine and a far away look on her face. Lisa and I just stood there, my arm around her waist, until her mom noticed us.

"You two, why so nervous?" she asked.

Lisa looked at the floor, and said "We; no, I figured you'd want to ask a bunch of questions, about, well, you know..."

Her mom looked thoughtful for a moment, then smiled a little sadly and said, "Well, I guess I do have one question for each of you..."

Lisa looked up at her, still worried, and her mom's eyes went all soft and shiny. "Are you happy?" she asked quietly.

I felt Lisa hunch into me, and she gasped., like someone had punched her in the stomach. "Oh, yes! it was so wonderful!" Lisa started crying, and rushed into her mothers arms, hugging her hard.

I knew I must have had a worried look on my face, because Lisa's mom said, "Happy tears, it's okay."

I relaxed, and then she asked, "How about you, are you happy?"

I don't think I knew what happy was, before.

Oh, good answer!

Lisa had settled down some, and her mom noticed how she was sitting. Sore? she asked.

A little, mom. Not too bad.

Then go start a warm bath in my tub. I'll be along in a few minutes. Now kiss this handsome lad so he can go. It is a school night.

Lisa kissed me, and whispered, See you tomorrow, lover. I love you.

I love you, too, Lisa. Good night. I didn't whisper, and her mom just smiled.

Lisa hugged me, and then went towards her parents bath.

As Lisa's mom walked me to the front door, she asked, Did it hurt her, Mike?

Well, ma'am, she flinched a bit, and gasped. I tried to go slow, like you said, but, she kept saying faster, faster, and kicking my butt. I didn't see any blood, after, but I did feel a little; I don't know; a pop?

Oh, she's so lucky. I had to have my doctor cut me, my hymen was so thick. Mike, she's going to be sore for at least a day or two. It might be a good idea to wait until the soreness is gone.

Okay, but we can do other things, right?

Like what?

Blushing, I said, Um, like going down on each other?

You do that?

Sure, I love it. Lisa tastes better than chocolate.

Damn, Mike. Where were you when I was her age? Never mind, that was a silly question. Yes, you can do that. I think it's great that you do.

I felt a good sense of relief when she said I could still have oral sex with Lisa. I loved her taste, and her scent. I also loved watching her face as she came, with her clit in my mouth, and my fingers in her beautiful pussy. The flood of juice when she came was ambrosia to me, and I could never get enough to satisfy. I always wanted more.

Now, you need to get home. You two here after school, tomorrow?

I don't know, ma'am, Lisa hasn't said, yet. Which ever she wants.

Okay, good night Mike.

## **Chapter 8**

(Kelly)

I hopped off of Mikes lap and said, I getting a glass of water,because I'm thirsty with all this talking. Would you like one too?

Sure.

I walked over to the kitchen and grabbed two glasses down from the cupboard. I filled them with ice and water, and turned back to Mike.

I paused, on my way back to the sofa, because for a second, I thought he'd fallen asleep. His eyes were open, though, and, staring at his past. I also noticed that he was hard.

*He's thinking about Lisa,* I thought

I put our glasses on the coffee table. and left him to enjoy his memories.

I went into my bedroom, and straightened the covers that we'd rumped earlier. My god, I'd needed that. A large part of me had been... Not 'dead,' exactly, but definitely not alive. Not like I was alive, now.

I pulled off my blouse, and looked at it. The buttons had been scattered all around, but I thought, I'll just leave it the way it is. For the memory. Evidence of my wake up call. I took my name tag off and set it on my dresser. I pulled a sweat shirt out of my dresser, and put it on.

I went over to the chair, in the corner and picked up the old green Army tee shirt that Daniel had given me three years ago. I'd been wearing this shirt to bed every night since Daniel had died. I smiled as I held it to my chest. *I still love you Daniel, I always will,* I thought. I gently folded it and put it away in my bottom dresser drawer. It was time. Time to get on with my life. I didn't know, yet, what I was going to wear to bed, tonight. With a sigh, I went back out to the main room.

Mike was still lost in thought, but it was time to bring him back to the here and now. Mike? Mike? I sat next to him and shook his shoulder a bit, Earth to Mike, I said.

He jumped a bit, and his eyes came back into focus. Oh; Kelly. Sorry, I was-

You were thinking about Lisa, I interrupted. I could tell. That's okay, because I could also tell they were happy memories.

I was afraid that you'd fall asleep, here on the sofa, so I called you back. I hope you don't mind...

No, I'm kinda glad you did.

Good. I sipped some water, and put the glass back on the table. I only have a little bit left to tell, and then we can get to sleep. It has been a long day.

Daniel and I worked that summer. I worked downstairs as a waitress, and evening manager. Daniel worked for the park district. I did what you'd expect, and Daniel did everything from mowing grass, to building a ball field.

We both went to State, for college, and Daniel joined the ROTC program. He chose an engineering major. I didn't choose a major, just core classes, because I didn't really know what I wanted to do. I laughed. I still don't know.

Any way, we lived in the dorms, our freshman year, because the school required it. That really sucked, but, we made do.

During spring break, Daniel had to go do his first two weeks of Basic Training, and it was really hard being apart. I was working downstairs, again, or I think I'd have gone nuts.

That summer, he finished his Basic Training, and then went back to his park district job for the rest of the summer. It didn't seem too bad, while he was gone, that time, even though it was longer. I guess that I knew from experience, that he'd be back.

Grandmama made me be the manager, in the coffee shop. I had to do it all, just like now, but, she looked over my shoulder all the time. She'd ask why I made each decision, the way I did. She'd tell me if she would have done something different, and why. But, she never let me go back on something. If I made a decision, I had to live with it.

Now, of course, I run the place. She still checks behind me, but, I think it's just for show.

Sophomore year was more of the same, living in the dorms, classes, friends, all of the college experience.

We were at a New Years Eve dance, with our folks, here in town, when Daniel got on his knees, in front of every one. As the ball was dropping on the tv, he asked me to marry him. I totally freaked, and didn't say yes until a good five minutes past midnight. Daniel liked to joke that it took a year to get an answer from me.

We were married the second day of spring break, and our parents sent us to Cancun for our honeymoon.

That summer, Daniel went on active duty for orientation. He spent two weeks each in various jobs, learning about the different parts of the army. He got to drive tanks, shoot cannons, fire missiles, and, finally went for parachute training.

I found that I'd crawled back into Mike's lap, as I was talking, and that he was holding me tightly, and rocking me again. His support gave me the strength I needed to finish what I had to say.

Daniel had to make ten jumps, and then he'd be able to come home for the rest of the summer. He made nine jumps, with no problems. On his last jump, something broke. His parachute didn't open right.

I was in shock, and mostly a zombie, after we were told. Daniel's parents, and Dad, had to make all the arrangements. I just went where I was told. I could hardly move unless someone was guiding me. Grandmama, usually.

At the funeral, a bunch of nasty people from some church in Kansas showed up. They were saying all sorts of terrible things about Daniel, the war, and the country. I thought Dad was going to start shooting at them, when a group of bikers, called Patriot Guard Riders, showed up with American flags. They got between us and the protesters, revving their bikes, and blocking our view of the signs. A few of them even came into the church, and offered their sympathy and thanks on behalf of the entire group.

They rode their bikes in the procession to the interment, and formed a line, holding their flags. After we'd buried Daniel, Dad and Grandmama went down their line, shaking their hands. Grandmama told me how surprised and grateful she was to see almost every one of them had been crying. They all said how honored they were to be allowed to attend. Grandmama asked them to come for coffee any time and that it would always be free. Some of them do come in occasionally, and, even though they try, I never let them pay.

I didn't go back to school, that fall. I just kept working downstairs. I would wake up, go to work, and go to bed. With no direction, I just kinda dropped out of life.

Until you.

I suddenly noticed a dampness on my shoulder, and when I looked up at Mike's face, I was shocked.

Still hugging and rocking me, Mike was silently crying. Tears were rolling off his face and soaking into my sweatshirt. Tears for me. For my pain and loss. And, because he was crying for me, I didn't have to.

I reached up and wiped tears off his face. Oh Mike, please don't. I'm okay, now I'm okay, because you saved me. Don't cry. I wrapped my arms around his neck, and hugged his head to my chest, offering my comfort to him, as, had given comfort to me.

I could feel his tears soaking into the front of my sweatshirt, now, as we held each other. After a few minutes, Mike regained his composure, and I felt him sigh. I leaned back, and grabbed some tissues from the coffee table, and gently wiped his face and eyes.

Thank you, Mike, I said, very quietly. That means more to me than you can know.

Now, it's late, and we need to get to bed. Let me up, now. Come on, you get the shower first.

I pulled Mike up off the couch, and held his hand, walking him to the bathroom. Go on, there's plenty of hot water, so take as long as you like. I'll get you a towel, and a new tooth brush, and leave them on the counter for you.

Thank You, Kelly, Mike said, as he closed the door.

A few moments later, I heard the shower start, so I went to the closet, and got a towel and tooth brush for Mike. On the bottom shelf, I noticed the terry cloth robe my Dad had liberated from some hotel, and given me, so I pulled it out for Mike to use.

I opened the bathroom door, and saw that Mike had folded his clothes and stacked them neatly on the counter. *He's neater than I am,* I thought to myself. I put the robe and towel on the counter, with the tooth brush on top, then I got the tooth paste from the cabinet behind the mirror and set it next to them.

It took all my willpower to not peak at Mike through the glass shower door. *There's a man, here.* The

thought made me tingle in very nice places.

Smiling, I quietly left the bathroom, pulling the door shut, when, what I really wanted to do, was jump into the shower with him.

I went over to the coffee table, and picked up our glasses to re-fill them.

I was just puttering around. waiting for my turn in the shower, and thinking about what I was feeling.

First, I felt whole and clean, again. I knew that I'd make it, and be okay, now. The shell I was hiding in was gone, blown away by our sex, I was alive, again, and finally able to look outside my self to interact with the rest of the world.

The sadness was still there, but the pain of loosing Daniel had been washed away.

I felt a warm fondness for Mike. Love? Yes, I love him. Not the kind of love I'd had with Daniel, but a love that included sex. I knew I wasn't in love with Mike I didn't feel the need to be exclusive with him. I didn't feel the need for him to be exclusive with me, either. Somehow, I just knew that, whenever I felt a need, he'd be there for me. No matter what. Just like my Dad. And that, more than anything else was my rock.

My rock. What if I'm pregnant? Mike will be there for me. For my baby and I. I knew that Mike would want to marry me, but I wouldn't, unless I or my baby needed that.

Tomorrow, I'd make an appointment to get tested. Pregnancy and STD. If I'm not pregnant, I'll get back on the pill, because I wanted more sex. I had not felt aroused for two years, and now, I knew how much I missed enjoying sex. And life.

I felt good.

I went into my room, and, after turning down the covers on my bed, I got my robe out of my closet. I took my clothes off and put them in the hamper, and, hearing the shower shut off, shrugged into the robe.

Mike came into the room wearing the robe I'd left him. He was looking a heck of a lot better than he had earlier. His hair was still damp, but combed neatly. He'd even shaved.

I stole a new razor from you, he said.

I stroked his cheek with my hand, and then kissed it. I don't mind, Mike. If I'd thought of it, I'd have got one for you.

I pulled him over to the bed, and sat him down. Don't fall asleep, but go ahead and get comfortable. I'll be back in a few minutes.

I showered quickly, and shaved my legs. Note to self, get that bush trimmed! I'd wash my hair tomorrow.

After shutting the water off, I ran the squeegee around the walls, and grabbed my towel to dry off.

After brushing my teeth, and dragging a comb through my hair, I donned my robe and went to my bedroom.

Mike had turned off the overhead light, and turned on one of the night stand lamps.

I stopped in the doorway, and just looked at him. Damn, he looked good. He was laying on his side, nude, with his head propped in his hand, looking back at me.

Mike had pulled the blankets down to the foot of the bed, and I could tell by the way they'd been folded, they'd be easy to pull up over us later.

I smiled, and slowly dropped my robe.

You really are so beautiful, he said.

Thank you, kind sir, you're looking mighty fine, yourself.

Mike scootched over, offering me the warm spot. I climbed into the bed, and snuggled to him.

Mike, earlier was wild, but, could you just make gentle love to me now?

Yes, because I don't know if I could ever live through that again, and, because, more importantly, it's what you want and deserve.

I found out why some young women like older men. Mike kept me riding a wave for more than an hour with his hands, and his mouth. Then he entered me, and rode with me to the crashing end. I had never had such an experience.

Then, Mike rolled over, pulling me on top of him. He held me, caressing my hair, and my body, as my glorious convulsions slowed to completion.

Finally, I caught my breath enough to say, Mmm. That was exquisite.

Yes, it was. For me also, Mike said. Now, let me up. There's one more thing I have to do, before we go to sleep.

I rolled off of him, and started reaching for the blankets, but Mike said, Not yet, please, just wait for me a moment.

Okay, I said, but don't be too long.

He smiled, and left the room.

When he came back, he had a towel, and a warm, wet wash cloth. I lay there in amazement, as he gently cleaned and dried my pussy, and legs. When he'd finished, I jumped up and hugged him hard, my eyes misting.

Oh, Mike. No one has ever done that for me before. That was so sweet.

He just smiled and returned my hug. Then he folded the wash cloth inside the towel, and put them on the floor.

Mike pulled the covers up over us, and snuggled to me. I love you Kelly, but, I'm beat, he said.

Me too, and I love you too. Good night, and sweet dreams.

Of you. Good night.

One last kiss, and...

## ***Chapter 9***

(Mike)

I woke up feeling better than I had for a long, long time. The reason I felt so good was still asleep, spooning her cute butt into my waist.

Ever since Lisa and I started college, I wake up every morning at five thirty. This morning was no exception, but I don't feel the need to inflict early wake ups on others.

I extricated myself from the bed without waking Kelly, so I could take care of my morning needs.

After making sure Kelly was well tucked in, I padded naked, to the bathroom. I emptied my bladder, and brushed the fuzz off my teeth. Now for the important part. I went in search of the coffee.

I found the can in her freezer. Same place I keep it at home. I set up the pot, and hit the switch to start it brewing. Since Kelly had the same kind of coffee maker as I had at home, I knew it would take about twenty minutes to finish.

I went over to the bedroom door, and looked at the angel still laying there, curled in her bed. Her tousled golden hair, the only thing showing above the blankets, in the pre-dawn light, had to be one of the most beautiful things I'd ever seen.

I remembered Kelly saying last night, that she needed to wake up next to me, so she'd 'know it was real.'

I quietly got back into bed, being careful to not let a draft under the covers, and snuggled up against her back.

Of course I fell asleep, again.

When I woke up again, the early morning sunlight was streaming through the windows, highlighting and illuminating a golden halo around Kelly.

She was sitting cross legged on the bed, with her robe around her shoulders, casting a shadow across my face. She was just looking at me.

When she saw that I was awake, she said, quietly, 'Thank you. This is the first morning I've woken up since Daniel died, without pain. This is the first time, I've woken actually looking forward for what the day might bring.'

I just looked at her a moment, trying to figure out my feelings. 'Me, too,' I said, with a sense of wonder. 'I don't want to say I feel good, but at least I feel alive.'

Exactly. She was still looking at me, studying me. It was like she was trying to create a mental picture of me. 'You made coffee. I poured you a cup a few minutes ago. I used milk, I don't have any creamer up here. It's on the nightstand, behind you.'

As I reached for the cup, I asked her if she'd stuck her finger in it to sweeten it. Finally, a smile quirked across her lips, and, surprisingly, a blush across her cheeks. Ignoring my question, she said, 'I'm glad you came back to bed, Mike. After you made the coffee, I mean.'

You said you needed me here, so I'm here. I love you, Kelly. I sipped my coffee, 'Mmm, just right.'

Thank You.

Would you like some breakfast? I can make something, or the coffee shop is open.

How about we go downstairs after a bit. First, how about we talk about where we go from here?

She sighed, and looked away from me. Yeah, we need to do that, but I wouldn't mind putting it off. Then she looked back, and, with a catch in her voice, Kelly asked, Mike, are you going to forget me?

I saw the tears spring into her eyes, as she asked me that. Kelly looked so scared and forlorn, that I almost spilled my coffee, setting the cup back on the nightstand.

I rolled back and gathered Kelly into my arms. I hugged her into my chest, and started rocking her. Oh, my darling Kelly, I could never forget you. You already mean more to me than air. Don't you understand? You've given me back my life!

Kelly was quietly crying as I said this, but, somehow, I could tell that her tears were of relief.

Kelly, I love you. That can never change. I will always love you, no matter what the future holds for us. I pulled her head back, and made her meet my eyes. No. Matter. What, I said, with all the conviction I could.

Kelly was fast regaining her composure, and said, I love you, too, Mike.

Kelly, I don't... Are you in love with me?

Looking a little scared, again, she said, Mike, I said I love you, but, no, I'm not in love with you..

Good, I interrupted, Because that is how I feel about you, too. Don't get me wrong, it would be very easy for me to fall in love with you, but I feel that's not where we are, or need to be.

Kelly slowly nodded to show agreement with me, so I continued.

If you are pregnant, we will have to figure out what is best for our child. But, for now, today, let's not worry about it, and just enjoy the fact that we found each other, and that we're alive. Okay?

Oh, Mike, that's exactly right. All of it. I was just so frightened that you'd disappear from my life, or, try to tie me down to you, or something. Heck, I can't even say just what I mean. I want you in my life, yes. But at the same time, I need to explore myself a bit. I need to find my place in the world. I just thank God we met.

Best friends? Lovers, even. But not married... And, like best friends, Kelly, You know you can call me any time, for anything, and I'll be there. I'll be how did your Grandmama say it? - Quite peeved, if you don't.

Kelly laughed, So how am I supposed to do that?

"I'll give you one of my business cards. It will have all my contact info on it. Cell number, e-mail, the works."

I suddenly noticed that I'd been in every room of Kelly's loft apartment, and I hadn't seen a computer.

"Kelly, don't you have a computer? Aren't you on-line?"

"No, Daniel and I had one at State, but I guess I abandoned it when I didn't go back. I don't even know where it might be by now. I've never been on-line. I never really felt the need."

"How do you do your business? Your inventory, your ordering? Heck, how do you do your payroll?" I shook my head in amazement. "How do you stay in contact with your friends?"

"By phone. I use a service for payroll, and I call my suppliers with my orders." Kelly looked away from me, then, and said, "I don't have any friends other than people that come into the coffee shop. I... Don't go out. I get up in the morning, and go to work downstairs. After work, I come up here and read, or listen to the radio. Then I go to bed, and do it again the next day."

Kelly looked back at me, again, and said, "It hurt too much to try and do anything else."

"Well, I'll just have to get you set up, then. That's what my company does, after all. I can do that this week end, if you don't mind my coming down to see you."

"You don't need to do that, Mike. Just bring yourself. That's all I'll be looking forward to, anyway."

"Kelly, you need to be on-line. It's the best way for us to stay in contact. You can even finish your college on-line. Best of all, I can write everything off my taxes!"

Kelly grinned at that. "Well, in that case, okay."

"Kelly, I don't know how religious you are. Do you go to church regularly?"

"We used to. Daniel's parents do, but, I haven't, since Daniel died. Why?"

"Because, I feel the need to go to Gods house, and thank Him, personally, for showing you to me. I haven't been to church, other than funerals, since Lisa was diagnosed." I looked at nothing for a moment, then said, "I need to apologize to Him."

"Then we'll go. I'll ask Dad if he wants to go. He'll refuse, though. I don't know when the last time was he went to service. He usually works the Sunday shift so the other cops can go, if they want. Would you mind if I asked Daniel's parents if we can sit with them? That way we'd be sitting with someone I'd be comfortable around, at least."

"No, I don't mind at all. In fact, I think that would be great." I took the opportunity to hug Kelly, again. She felt good in my arms.

"So that's settled, then," I said. "Shall we get ready to have breakfast? I need to get back home, so I can see if there is anything salvageable of my company. I've been ignoring it for the last six months."

"Okay, we can do that, but, I'm buying." Kelly said that last with a defiant look to her eyes.

"Oh, no argument, there. It's your place, after all."

It felt disgusting, to be putting on yesterdays clothes. Going 'commando' helped some, but I really wanted clean clothes.

While I was waiting for Kelly, I got out one of my business cards, and wrote all my numbers and addresses on the back. I needed to get her numbers, too. I wondered if she even had a cell phone. I'd have to get her one of those, too.

I grabbed my cell, and called the order line at my company. I left a message for Jules, my sys-op / system builder to start putting together a top of the line system, maxed out on memory and hard drives. I wanted it shipped for arrival no later than Friday. I wanted it here, for me to install Saturday.

Then I called my office manager's desk. I left Jennifer a message that I'd be in late, not to worry. I also asked her to make sure everyone was in the office, after noon, so that we could have a meeting when I got there.

Kelly came out, ready to face the day. She was dressed much the same as yesterday, except that her blouse was an old ivory color. "Shall we?" Kelly asked.

"After you, my dear," I replied.

We went down the other set of stairs, and out the front door. When we entered the coffee shop, it was a madhouse. It looked like every seat in the place was taken.

A waitress came up, greeted us, and said, "Kelly, your grandmother is holding a table for you and your guest. She told me to seat you there." Then she looked at me. I could tell she wanted to say something. Probably warning me to treat Kelly well, or something. But she didn't. She just grabbed a menu and started leading us.

"Uh, oh," Kelly said. "Well' I'm not surprised."

"Why uh,oh?" I asked.

"It's a small town. Your car is out front. I'm down two hours later than usual. She knows."

"Well, I'm not going to run back out the door, so you'll just have to introduce me. From what you've said, she seems a wonderful person."

"Oh, she is. She's, well, you'll find out. When it gets too bad, ask for a lawyer."

The waitress, Darla, guided us to a four place table near the windows, where Kelly's grandmother was sitting with her back towards the rest of the room, so she could see out the window.

I could see clear white hair, and tanned skin. Good posture belied her apparent age.

As we arrived, Kelly leaned over, and kissed her. Then Kelly introduced us.

"You seem a nice man, Mike. You may call me Ruth."

"Why, Thank You for the honor, ma'am, Ruth." I took her offered hand and turned it palm down, grasping just her fingers in mine.

"And gallant, too," she said. "Please, be seated, both of you."

I held a chair for Kelly to Ruth's right, then seated myself across from Kelly, at Ruth's left. I did these things Ruth called gallant, because that was the way my parents trained me from the time I first started eating at the family table.

Ruth caught Kelly's eyes with the same searching look as Ron had used. She must have been satisfied with what she'd found, because she nodded once, and turned her gaze upon me.

It seemed a much gentler search through my mind, but, for all that, it was much more thorough. I knew without question, I had no secrets left. Ruth knew every single thing in my mind.

"Mike," Ruth said, laying her hand on my arm, "This is going to sound strange, but, I am so sorry for you. And, so happy for you both."

"You are right, Ruth. It does sound strange. I do, though, understand what you mean."

Though Ruth smiled fondly at me, I didn't expect what she said next.

"We are, and can only be the product of our experience. Coming through the fire as you have, made you a better person. It tempered you, if you will. It made you what both you, and Kelly need for you to be, right now. And maybe what Ron needs, too.

"I'm working from a position of advantage, Mike. You see, I knew you the moment I saw you. I know yours and Lisa's parents, intimately. I've seen your baby pictures. I was at your wedding to Lisa, and I have held Danny on my lap, once, when your mom was baby sitting for you.

I know all about the hell you went through, first with Lisa, then with Danny.

But, Mike? Your parents, and Lisa's parents went through those hells with you. They all need to know that you are finally recovering. Lisa's mom, especially. They all need you. Maybe even more than Kelly does.

I could only sit there with my jaw hanging while she said all that. Surprise doesn't even begin to cover what I was feeling.

Mike, it's a small world. My late husband and I did a lot of business with Doug and Marilyn York, We'd known them for years, before they started their summer camp. We were charter members of The Pines, and I'm even thinking of buying old Bernie Kestrel's house, if Susan doesn't want it.

They say the Lord works in mysterious ways. Well, to me, the mystery is how you come to be here, in this place, yesterday, when Kelly was especially ready to notice the pain of a stranger. Your picking up young Bill Martin's check didn't hurt, I'm sure. I heard all about it. My son wasn't able to get much sleep, last night. He loves his daughter, and worried. One of these days, you and I will have to sit down so you can tell me from your point of view. I'll hear Kelly's version today, and it will be fun for an old

lady to compare your versions.

Wow, Ruth. You can be rather intense, I see.

Kelly was sitting there, looking as stunned as I felt. I suddenly could tell that Kelly was feeling that she wasn't a part of that "small world."

I was reaching for her hand, as Kelly suddenly looked like a frightened seven year old.

Grandmama? she asked, just as I grasped her hand and squeezed. I was letting her know that she wasn't alone.

Then Ruth's hands enfolded both of ours, and with a gentle smile, she said, "Kelly, you need never fear being alone. You never need fear being un-loved. I love you, your dad loves you, and, now, Mike loves you. Oh, yes, Mike, I can tell. Mike will be here for you, Kelly, as long as he is alive. Your dad, and I too, of course, but we're family. Mike is better than family. You can have sex with him!"

Kelly blushed, when Ruth said that, and I was relieved that Kelly was over her fright.

Ruth chuckled, and continued, "But if you get tired of him, let me know."

My turn to blush, and Kelly was a picture of outraged sensibilities. "Grandmama!" she chided, "Be nice."

Deciding I should follow her light line, I looked Ruth over a bit, and, to my own surprise, thought, 'damn fine for her age.'

Ruth noticed my appraisal, and, just as she was about to say something, I said, "I'll just bet that you could teach me a thing or two."

Now Ruth was blushing, and looking pleased. It took twenty years off of her.

I can only guess at the look of wonder that must have come over me, as Ruth and Kelly, both lost their smiles and asked "What?"

"A quote just popped into my head. I have no idea who it's by, or where I read it.

There is an age in which a woman has to be beautiful to be loved. And comes the age in which she has to be loved to be beautiful.

"Ruth, you are beautiful. Therefore you are loved. I find that I am beginning to add to your beauty, even though we've just met.

I looked at Kelly, meeting her eyes, and said, "And you, you will always be beautiful, for you shall always be loved."

There was silence at our table for a moment. Even the noise of the coffee shop seemed to fade a bit.

"Oh. my," They both said.

"My God, Grandmama, he's right, about you" Kelly said. "You really are beautiful."

"And, he's right when he says you will always be loved, Kelly."

Fate had Darla arriving, just then, with coffee for Kelly and I. She also warmed up Ruth's cup. "Ready to order?" She asked.

Kelly grinned, "I'll have my usual, Darla. Mike, how hungry are you?"

Very.

Grandmama?

Just a blueberry muffin, for me, Dear. Thank You, Darla.

Kelly was still smiling when she said, Farmers Breakfast for Mike, Darla.

Ruth and Darla both snorted a laugh, and smiled.

"Well, he did say he was very hungry," said Darla. "Okay, back in a bit."

I said thanks to her, then turned my attention back to Kelly and Ruth. "Okay, what's so funny?"

"You'll find out," they both replied.

A faint frown came over Ruth's face. "So where do you two go from here? I can tell that you made love last night. Hell, A blind man could see the glow from the two of you. I can see that you love each other. I can also see that neither of you are IN love with the other. My concerns right now are for the future."

I looked at Kelly, silently asking to let me take the question, and she nodded to me.

"Ruth, do any of us really know what the the future holds for us? I know what you're really asking, here. Ruth, don't worry.

"We have talked, Kelly and I. We are friends. Life friends. Occasionally we'll be lovers. We love each other, and will be in each others lives as long as we live.

I reached into my shirt pocket, and removed the business card I'd written on earlier. I handed it to Ruth, and said, "Give this to Kelly, when you're done with it. All my information is here. Business, and personal. You, or Ron can call me any time. In fact, I hope you will, if there is something I need to know. There is more than enough information here, for Ron to check me out, if he hasn't already. He is a cop, after all." A thought crossed my mind. "I'd be surprised if he hasn't at least run my plates. He's a father, too."

Ruth looked at the card, turning it end for end in her hands. "If he did, he didn't say anything to me about it. Like you said, though, he is a father. And a concerned one at that. Did Kelly tell you about her

mother?"

"Yes, she did. And I understand."

"With what you've gone through, I'm sure you do. So you also understand better than Kelly, what Ron is even now, going through. No, Kelly," She gazed fondly at her grand - daughter. "We aren't talking around you. Talking these things out, well, we have it to do. For all our sake."

Just then, Darla brought our breakfast to the table. She placed Ruth's muffin down, and set a fruit plate in front of Kelly. And then I found out what the three of them thought was so funny.

Four pancakes, Hash brown potatoes, three eggs, and the biggest chicken fried steak I'd ever seen. It took three plates to hold it all. I'm not sure what Kelly or Ruth made of the look I was giving my breakfast, but they both started chuckling. Darla had pity on me, though, she set a styrofoam 'to-go' box on the chair, next to me. "For the left overs," she said.

Kelly was still smiling when she said, "Don't bother with saving the pancakes, Mike. They don't re-heat very well. I hope you aren't too cholesterol conscious."

Ruth broke in, "We have several customers that eat this, every morning. They say it's less than they'd eat at home."

"Yes, I get the humor, now. But even if I manage to eat all this, it would take me an hour."

"So-kay," Kelly said, "Just box up any left-over steak and potatoes, and take them with you. "

With that, we fell to, eating.

Needless to say, I came no where near finishing that meal, in spite of how good it was.

I sat back, with a sigh, and said, "That was very, very good. But I must admit, I wouldn't try to make a habit of a breakfast like that."

Ruth and Kelly both had another laugh at my expense. I didn't mind. I'd know better next time.

"Ruth, I'm going to have to leave, before too much longer. I'm going to be back this weekend, though, to see Kelly. We will be attending church, Sunday, and I'd be honored if you'd join us."

"You want - no; need - to thank Him," Ruth said. It wasn't really a question.

I nodded acceptance of her terms. "And apologize," I replied.

Ruth nodded, "I understand. I think I will join the two of you. It has been, well, a while."

"And with that, we need to get back to the immediate concerns. I know Kelly isn't on the Pill, so..."

I interrupted, "And we didn't use any other protection, either. The first time, it just happened. neither one of us was remotely in control of our emotions. So, the second time, we decided wouldn't matter. If Kelly is with my child, we will determine between us what is best for our child. A quote May September unquote marriage might not be best. I will be here for Kelly and our child as much as Kelly will allow. I'll not say I hope she is, but the thought of another child makes me feel... comforted. Content.

"If Kelly isn't, that's okay, too. We'll both take steps to avoid that, if it hasn't already happened.

"Ruth, we really have discussed these things, and we've worked most of it out to our satisfaction. We're only putting off some things because it's not yet time to worry about them."

"Accept things the way they are. Just wait and see," Ruth said. "That's what you're telling me Mike?"

"Yes, Ruth, that's what I'm saying. We'll know by the end of the week if Kelly is pregnant. Right, Kelly?" At her nod, I continued, "If she is, okay. Then we talk about what's best for the baby. If she isn't, okay. Then we talk about what's best for us. No harm in either of our minds, which ever way it goes.

"I really don't see Kelly and I as a couple. We are just too far apart in age. That's your biggest concern, isn't it, Ruth."

"Yes; yes it is. You two are twenty five years apart. But, then again, if Kelly is," and her eyes went all soft and dreamy as she looked upon her grand-daughter, "I know you both will do what's right."

"If nothing else, I'd be the best uncle slash Godfather any kid could have." And with that, I fell silent.

"We're both happy, Grandmama. And we're both alive, again. Can you just accept that, for now? Can Dad?" Kelly asked.

"I can, and I believe your father will, too. Enough for now." She stood from her chair, and I rose, too. "Kelly, you need to get to work. Mike, you need to go home. I need to , well, never mind what I need to do.

"Mike, it was wonderful to meet you, in person."

"Ruth, the pleasure is mine. Thank You for your support for Kelly and I."

"You are most welcome. Now, Kelly, walk him out to his car. I'll see you Sunday morning, Mike." And she was gone.

I sat back down at the table, and looked at Kelly. She laughed, when I commented that I hadn't really needed a lawyer.

"Come on, Mike," she said. "Lets get you on your way home."

I noticed then, that Kelly had boxed up my left-overs, while we'd talked. I agreed that it was time, so I rose with Kelly from the table, and brought out my money clip.

"I said breakfast was on me," Kelly said.

"And I agreed, but I think I should get the tip. Darla gave excellent service, and I always try to reward that. " I tossed a ten on the table, and turned to escort Kelly out.

As we reached my car, Kelly hugged me, and said, "I'm so glad you came into my life, Mike. I have no idea how much longer I'd have been able to go on the way I was."

"Kelly, I feel the same. That's why I need to go to church, this Sunday. To thank Him for dragging me to you." I smiled, and said, "And thank YOU for elephants pissing."

Kelly laughed out loud, and then asked, "So , what time Saturday?"

"I'm not sure. Early afternoon, probably, around three-ish. "

"Sounds good, Love. I'll see you then."

I started my car, and with a last wave, drove away to the future."

Author's note: Here ends the first story.

I have decided to serialize everything from this point on, because of diverging story lines, and because I am much more comfortable writing short stories, than long.

In the future, after the whole tale has been told, I will most likely do a major re-write, and consolidation.

Kelly and Mike have a lot of stories left to tell me, and you, and I'll try to keep them in some semblance of order.

I take this opportunity to thank my editor, Donna, My checker, her husband Tim, and my lovely wife. Without her urging, this story would have never been posted.

~Scribbler