Notes by Author:

English is my second language. Because of the subject matter, it was not possible for me to ask my usual editor to review the text. Although I have done my very best to eliminate as many grammatical errors as possible, I am sure quite a few remained. Please excuse any verb tense confusion or any other grammatical errors and enjoy the contents for what it is, some erotic fun with a touch of sadness.

At the time of writing the exchange rate between the South African Rand the US $ and was about 14 to 1.
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Connect with Phil van Wijck
CHAPTER ONE - PHIL

I first noticed her as she crossed the street, still some distance away. There was no doubt that she was very beautiful. An oversized hairpin, like an adornment on the headdress of a warrior queen, flashed triumphantly in the sunlight as she walked. Despite a pair of huge sunglasses obscuring most of her face, I could see, as she drew nearer, that she was immaculately groomed, generous red lips against pale, pastel skin.

Long-legged I sat at a little street cafe on the edge of the public square, sipping a tall, cold pale ale. It was a beautiful sunny Friday in Cape Town. The small table hidden in the deep shade of the surrounding trees was the perfect place to seek shelter against the late afternoon sun. It also was an excellent observation post from which to leisurely observe the hustle and bustle of city life, as it passed me by. Particularly city life as pretty as she was.

The white fabric of her blouse was light and crisp against the midsummers heat, allowing the presence of a black lacy bra underneath, to be easily detected. Quite apparent also, was that this undergarment was structurally wholly inadequate to restrain the jovial quavering of her perky breasts as she walked. Based on this observation, I could only speculate that its primary purpose was to celebrate her high proud bosom, rather than to serve as foundation wear. If the intention was the latter, the manufacturer got the structural specifications all wrong. If, however, it indeed was the former, it was a spectacular success.

After appreciatively lingering around the region of her chest for a few more moments, my eyes resumed their downward journey. The skinny blue jeans did nothing to hide her incredible figure. Her legs were long and sculpted, her calves subtly accentuated by high stilettos. With every step, her shapely hips oscillated provocatively on a narrow waist, barely the span of my hands, I was later to find.

With the late afternoon sun behind her, she made a pretty picture as she sauntered down the sidewalk in my direction. The perfect ‘girl-about-town’ image. Dressed to impress, I had no doubt.

Her gait was easy, her strides long and confident. The swaying of her hips was seductive, a soft hesitation, a double take if you will, every time they reached the end of their amplitude, before resuming their return journey. Yet, despite her relaxed appearance, I detected an air of concern, even anxiety, about her, as she talked animatedly on the phone, one slim hand gesturing loftily in apparent exasperation. Only a few yards away by now, I noticed a degree of wobbliness in her stride. As if her steps were overlong, her heels a mite too high.

I watched her still as she stepped down from the sidewalk onto the stone-cobbled surface of the square. I did not know it then, but she was to be my first, she was to be my Faith.

Don't get the wrong idea. I don’t mean my first woman; I was not a virgin by any stretch of the imagination, in fact, quite the contrary. In order to explain, however, I have to digress. I have to take a rather lengthy detour in my narration. To my formative years, to a series of events that occurred in my youth, almost all but forgotten by middle age.

The coincidental alignment of spatial and sensory stimuli would, within a few hours of leisurely sipping my beer, result in the sudden and unbidden recall of those events. Memories, which, like a long-delayed storm caused by a butterfly, flapping its wings all those years ago, were to unexpectedly impact on my life. It was to lead to some extraordinary
escapades with three remarkable women; the lovely Jo, luscious Hannah and the young and beautiful little Lisa. This is how it started.

I grew up in a dusty little town not too far from Cape Town, where my father was the local pastor. As I was the youngest of four children by a wide margin, I was pretty much left to my own devices. I grew up the loner I still am today.

When I was fourteen, in the early 1980s, a vague comprehension started to dawn on me that girls were not put on this planet solely to irritate the boys. That there indeed was another, more sinister, reason for their existence. It also was that year that a younger couple moved in next door to us.

The man was to be the new motor mechanic at the local repair shop, the woman, a housewife. This news was broken to me by my mother, who sternly stipulated that I should mind my own business and not bother myself with them. As they were from Johannesburg, it quite logically followed that their moral standards were dubious, to put it mildly, she explained. No doubt, wild parties and unseemly behaviour were to be the order of the day, my mother assured me. In the face of this onslaught, I should stand strong and not allow my moral compass to waiver.

To my juvenile mind, the prospect of new neighbours from the faraway Sodom and Gomorrah was wildly exciting. I imagined endless, fascinating possibilities. Maybe she will be an elegant and beautiful young wife, scantily dressed, no doubt, as she was from the big city after all, who would pay special attention to me. I imagined myself doing small chores around the house for her in the afternoons after school, to be rewarded with a kiss afterwards, if not more. I dreamt of glimpses, through open curtains, of naked bodies engaged in undefined, yet highly indiscreet activities. Those thoughts alone were enough to bring powerful stirrings to my still underdeveloped manhood.

For this reason, I secretly took a keen interest in the new arrivals. From the high branches of a large tree on the boundary between our properties, I had a good view of their house and garden. Indeed, I had a good view of the whole of the town. The tree was evergreen and dense, with the lower branches extending well beyond our boundary, over the flat corrugated roof of the neighbouring garage, constructed as it was, right on our common boundary.

It was the hiding place of my youth. A safe place to escape the narrow confines of our household. There I had previously constructed what can only, by the longest stretch of the imagination, be described as a tree house. As an added benefit, the telephone party line ran through the foliage from pole to pole along the boundary. Innovative as I was and inspired by our ninth-grade science curriculum, dealing with the basics of electrical current, I painstakingly stripped away the rubber insulation to expose the wires. By means of a set of earphones, carefully connected to the exposed wires with crocodile clips, I was able to happily listen in on the gossip of the inhabitants of the town. I spent hours there, undetected by anyone. What bliss for a lonely young boy.

But that day my focus was limited to the feverish activities of the people next door. Moving vans and cars arrived, doors slammed, boxes and furniture were carried in, all accompanied by random shouting and gesturing. Filled with youthful optimism I carefully kept watch.

I was deeply disappointed. His name was Clive, a squat, bow-legged figure with a bulging stomach, bad skin and thinning hair. I cannot remember his wife’s name. In my mind, however, I always referred to her as Betsy. To me, she looked like a Betsy. In keeping with
her husband’s stocky trunk, her figure was quite matronly, with the ratio of height-to-width not far from one to one.

Next to us they lived for two years, a courteous neighbourly existence. We established a distant relationship by means of a waving hand in greeting, or a respectful ‘thank you’ for the return of a wayward ball. Throughout this time, there never was, to my initial disappointment but subsequent relieve, once I realised how physically unattractive they both were, any unseemly activities. No glimpses of naked bodies through half-drawn curtains, nor any boisterous parties or loud music.

Then, the year I turned sixteen, things changed. At that time my hormones ran rampant, to the extent that even portly Betsy at times appeared positively attractive. I was by now totally convinced that the opposite sex was placed on this earth solely to sexually torment the male of the species. Tantalizing in their inaccessibility, I drooled over brief glimpses of exposed panties on the netball courts or the swelling of pert young breasts underneath tight school uniforms.

It started when Clive inherited an undisclosed amount of money from his grandmother. This inheritance triggered the series of events referred to earlier. Events that, so many years later, were to lead to my encounters with the three women, described in some detail in the following pages of this narrative.

Not long after his inheritance, rumours about him spending extraordinary amounts of time in the local pub, began to surface. The main source of this information was my father talking to my mother in hushed tones at the kitchen table after supper and evening prayers, while I was eavesdropping from behind the half-closed door.

My father was quite distressed about the rapid degeneration of the moral values of this member of his flock, not that Clive ever was a particularly enthusiastic participant in any of the flock-related activities. My father’s voice hushed but urgent, I listened to him saying that, whatever time Clive was not in the pub drinking, was spent between the legs of Faith, the new girl at the hairdresser’s. Faith... my father said, of all the names in the world; her name was Faith. Jezebel or Delilah, in his opinion, would have been much better suited.

All the talk of sex and money did nothing but to pique my youthful curiosity. I had a vague idea about what happened when a man was between a woman’s legs but was astounded by the fact that someone could be so fortunate as to spend extended periods of time in that glorious location. Nevertheless, the very thought excited me tremendously, so much so, I had to steal away to the bathroom briefly to find relief, before again returning to my listening post.

Faith was a hot topic amongst the boys at school. It was not every day that such a beautiful woman moved to our little backwater. The older boys reckoned that she once was a prostitute in the city, others were convinced that she was divorced and others still, that she moved here because of a scandalous affair with an important married man. Whatever the truth, everyone agreed that she was tainted and therefore, to every boy’s imagination, fair game.

Every afternoon after school, I assumed watch from the high branches of the tree, my earlier, youthful optimism that some scandalous activities might be playing out next door, rekindled by my father’s earlier outrage at Clive’s behaviour. Not only that, the view from the tree extended right to the back door of the hairdresser’s, three street blocks away. I even had a sidelong view of the gaping cavern which was the open door to Clive's workshop. There was
no doubt that I was well positioned to observe any comings and goings potentially related to this juicy scandal playing out in town.

Yet, in all the time I spent up there, I never saw anything remotely connected to the Clive-and-Faith affair. I spotted Clive a few times, rather unsteadily returning from the pub. Of Faith, I caught sight only once, when she came out the back door of the hairdresser to put out the rubbish. Even putting out the rubbish, she appeared very elegant. The glimpse of a tall woman in tight jeans was enough, even at this distance, to convince my adolescent mind that she was exceedingly beautiful. That her body was far superior to anything I had ever witnessed before, which at the tender age of sixteen and given my sheltered existence, was of course not much.

Then Clive’s visits to the pub ceased abruptly. Through my reliable source of information one evening, I learnt from behind the kitchen door, that he was fired from his job due to his drinking. To make it worse, he was given an ultimatum by Betsy to stop his drinking and philandering, otherwise, she would leave him.

To my amazement, the next day, after school, as I was making my way up the trunk of the tree to assume watch, I heard a soft cough and the unmistakable clinking sound of ice in a glass. I ascended slowly, to carefully peer over the edge of the parapet wall of the garage roof. True enough, there Clive was, on the roof of the garage hidden by the low branches of the tree, sitting rather comfortably in a rickety folding chair with a red cooler box beside him. Two bottles were precariously balanced on top of the lid, one half-full with some unidentified clear liquid, the other what appeared to be green cream soda. In his hand, he held a glass, filled to the brim with a diluted green mixture. He rotated it slowly between his fingers, causing the ice to clink merrily.

I was sure I was undetected and was about to slip away, when Clive said, “Hello Phil.”

There was nothing to be done but to respond sheepishly. “Good afternoon uncle Clive.” He, of course, was not my uncle, but in the way of rural South Africa, as a sign of respect, every adult male is addressed by children as ‘uncle’ and every female as ‘auntie.’

“Thanks for showing me this hiding place,” he continued and took a deep draft of his drink.

“I showed it to you?” I responded, climbing over the parapet wall to join him on the roof.

“Indeed, you did. I noticed you a few times, hiding in this tree here, spying on us. Then, when I was looking for a place to hide, well, I knew where to look.”

“You were looking for a place to hide?” I asked, my youthful mind overwhelmed by this sudden and unexpected development of events.

He looked at me askance and repeated, “Indeed I was. I had to get out of the house. Now that I am not allowed to drink at the hotel or the house anymore, I had to find somewhere discreet to do my drinking.”

“You are not allowed to go to the hotel anymore?” I asked.

He sighed heavily and looked at me. “Phil, Phil, are you totally incapable of a normal conversation. Don’t they teach you at school how to talk to people? What is it with all the questions?” With that he drained the last of the green liquid from his glass.
I looked at him in awe. He had no idea how many questions really bounced around in my mind. Here was the man who, according to my dad’s information, was spending extraordinary amounts of time between Faith’s legs. I was about to ask him what one does for such extended periods between a woman’s legs. Surely, from my experience, with my hand as companion, the action was over within ten seconds, especially with the benefit of a picture of a woman with naked breasts stolen from one of my mother’s medical books. I wanted to ask about feelings, responses, desires and urges, but in the end, a lame, “Sorry,” was all I could muster.

While I stammered uncomfortably, he proceeded to mix himself another drink. I looked suspiciously at the pale green liquid. I was by no means an expert on alcoholic beverages, having never even tasted alcohol in my life before, but this mixture was beyond comprehension. He must have sensed my unspoken question. “Cane spirits and cream soda,” he explained. “Not my usual poison, but I believe it does not smell on one’s breath. The aim here is to go undetected.”

That statement, of course, brought to mind a host of other question, but I remained silent. I was fully aware that Betsy down in the house did not approve of his drinking.

“Not very talkative now, are you, my young friend?” he said.

Silently still, I continued to stare at him. I felt very honoured to be considered the friend of a man who so intimately knew Faith, but had no idea of how to reciprocate. After a moment's consideration, I felt it appropriate to thank him for that honour. “Thank you,” I said. I was silent for a moment before realising that there had been a question embedded in his statement and added uncertainly, “No, yes, I don't know.”

He chuckled and shook his head, then changed the subject. “Phil, my friend, can I ask you a favour? Do you have ice in your freezer?”

Confused by the sudden change in topic and unsure of how it could be considered a favour to have ice in one’s freezer, I nodded dumbly.

“Can you bring me a bag of ice tomorrow at shall we say, three, after school? I can hide my booze here on the roof but I cannot hide my ice.” He gestured towards the cooler box. “And taking ice out of the freezer before heading into the garden will be like a red flag to a bull, or in this case, a cow,” he continued, chuckling. Then laughing a little louder, he added, “and my wife, as you probably know, she looks like a bull and acts like a cow, or is it the other way around.” He continued to chuckle merrily at his own little sally.

Still uncertain of how to respond and not quite sure if I understood the play on words correctly, I again just nodded. Ice was something I could manage. There always was an adequate supply of ice in our freezer against the heat of the summer. “Sure,” I said at last.

He drained the last of the green liquid and carefully stored the glass and the bottles in the cooler.

“Great,” he said, “see you tomorrow, then. And don’t forget the ice.” He moved across the rusty surface of the roof and with surprising agility for a man of his stature and alcohol intake, clambered down onto a pile of firewood stacked against the wall for that purpose, and was gone.
He did not come the next day, as arranged. I sat on the roof, listening to the cicadas the entire time, a soft droning, a supernatural humming if you will, that waxed and waned throughout the afternoon. I sat there, staring out over the town until all the ice had melted and I was left with nothing but a leaking bag of cold water. Bitterly disappointed, with the light fading and the wet plastic bag clutched in my hand, I left. I thought that day was to be the day I was going to learn about Faith’s legs.

He did arrive the day after though, but was clearly in a vile mood. He took the bag of ice without apology for his absence the previous day and proceeded to concoct his green mixture. We sat in silence for a while. At last, he said, “Phil, I think today I would like to do my drinking alone, don't you have some homework to do?”

Once again, I was crestfallen. I slinked away quietly, with tears of disappointment in my eyes, leaving him to do his drinking in silence.

For the rest of that summer, we occasionally met like that. Instead of waiting in the tree, I monitored events from my bedroom window and as soon as I noticed some activity, I rushed to the kitchen, grabbed the pre-prepared bag of ice from the freezer and climbed up the tree to be in time for Clive to mix his first drink.

But I did not learn about Faith’s legs that summer. Clive's state of mind remained morose, and his consistent intake of alcohol did not improve matters. I did learn however, that he possessed a slippery intelligence, a rat-like cunning if you will, no doubt born out of a lifelong struggle for social survival. Although he was very perceptive, a cynical scepticism and unwavering believe that the entire world was pitted against him, distorted his outlook on life to the extent that even I, with my limited life-experience, sometimes listened in disbelief to his twisted assertions.

Often, we just sat in silence, staring into the distance, noting the slow progress of the crops ripening on the distant hills of the farms beyond the national road, while he steadily sipped away at his never-empty glass. It was only the next spring that I was told the story about Faith, and so much more.

When the days grew shorter and the evenings cooler, Clive stopped coming to the roof altogether. His cooler box was gone one afternoon when I got there. After that, I once again took up my lookout post in the tree and listened in on the party line most afternoons. It was on one of those afternoons I overheard a conversation between Betsy and what I presumed was her mother. I could hear her clearly, while the response from the other party was distorted.

“He sits in front of the television all day and does nothing but drink,” Betsy said. She paused to listen to a garbled response from the other side. That was news to me. So, he had bought a TV. It was in the mid-eighties and television was slow to come to rural South Africa. I had only had occasion to watch TV a few times through the display window of the local furniture shop. The other part of the news was that he was no longer drinking in secret, which explained the disappearance of the cooler box.

“I can't stand this anymore. What little there was between us, if anything at all, is gone. He confessed that he had slept with that whore from the hairdressers, but claimed it happened only once. Regardless, there is nothing left between us. I am coming home tomorrow. I have arranged for a taxi to pick me up at nine. The train is at ten, and I should be home by five. We can talk then,” she rambled. Once again there was a long pause while she listened.
“Of course, I am sure. I am all packed. I leave tomorrow.”

I was very disappointed that I would be at school in the morning and therefore unable to witness Betsy’s departure. But it happened. The next evening, I overheard my parents discussing the event in hushed tones around the kitchen table.

After that, the pattern of activities next door once again changed. For a month, no hide nor hair of Clive was detected. Then suddenly, twice a week, normally Wednesdays and Saturdays, rather nattily dressed, Clive would leave in the early afternoon, his souped-up Ford Cortina throatily announcing his departure as it roared down the main street, on his way out of town. He would normally only return around midday of the next day.

All throughout the rest of that winter this was the pattern. It was also the winter I discovered I really could draw. I always knew I had a bit of a talent, but as the cold wet winter weather kept me indoors most of the time and my active mind needed stimulation, I sketched away ceaselessly. My older brother’s well-thumbed collection of comic books, carefully hidden in the ceiling void against the prying eyes of my parents, was a huge source of inspiration. At first, I simply copied the clever sketches, then started to invent my own. Hundreds of sheets of scrap paper got filled with sketches of every description. Quite a number of those, later to be stowed away once again in the ceiling space, imaginatively reflected my own idea of naked female bodies, given that I had never seen a live one before.

That winter added four inches to my height and probably half as many to my dick, largely due, I believed, to all the attention it received in the bathroom, drooling over my mother’s medical books. Unfortunately, those were locked away after I had been caught coming out of the bathroom with one hidden under my shirt. But by then, the damage was done. With my well-developed dick, I soon became the envy of many of the other boys at school, when comparing assets, as we often did, under the showers in the locker room after a rugby match.

I also discovered that some of the girls were not quite as unwilling to share their favours as I had first imagined. Indeed, I had the opportunity to clumsily fondle some young breasts under thick layers of clothing on a few occasions and even managed to briefly get my hand inside a pair of panties on another. Afterwards, I considered myself quite experienced in the ways of women.

It was one Sunday afternoon in early spring when I suddenly noticed some activity around Clive's garage roof from my bedroom window. It has been almost six months since I had last spoken with him. Over the last few months, the intervals of his absence had become less frequent. I had also noticed that he once again, patronised the pub at the local hotel.

I grabbed some ice out the fridge and hastily made my way towards the tree. Slowly I peeked over the parapet wall and sure enough, there he was, lounging in his folding chair, the red cooler box next to him.

“How have you been keeping?” he enquired, cocking one brow in my direction as he took the bag and stuffed it into the cooler box.
“You're looking good, have grown some,” he remarked dryly, even before I could respond.

I was a little shocked at his appearance. He looked bloated, his face round and red, little veins crawling all over his nose and cheeks. His eyes were watery and his fingers, holding the glass, puffy, like little sausages.

“I am well, thank you uncle Clive and how have you been keeping?” I responded rather formally.

“Oh God, Phil, please drop the uncle stuff, I am not worthy to be anybody's uncle. And thanks for asking, but I am not all that well.” He leaned forward, planting his elbows on his knees and looked down into his glass. “I am leaving tomorrow. I found a job in the city. I am outta here,” he continued. “I have to get out of this shithole. I cannot exist in this…” he struggled for a word, “…void any more.” He made a sweeping gesture with his arm. I was unsure if he was referring to the town, the deserted expanse of the surrounding countryside, the current emptiness of his own life, or indeed, all of the above.

I was taken aback. “You are leaving? You found a job?”

He spewed a stream of foamy liquid in a spectacular arch over the uneven sheet metal roof as he burst out laughing. “For fuck sakes, Phil, are you still incapable of a normal conversation. How many years do you have left at school? One, two? You had better step up my young friend, for you’d be done with school even before you have had a proper education.”

I looked at him steadily. I was seventeen now and I knew something about women, I wasn't going to allow someone like Clive to talk down to me any more. “I can converse well enough with anyone, uncle Clive.” I responded. “I was just a little surprised that you have found a job elsewhere and are leaving. I thought you had inherited a fortune and don’t need to work anymore. I thought now, that your wife had left you, maybe you might hook up with Faith and live happily ever after.”

My language teacher would have been proud of my eloquence, if not the topic of the conversations. His opinion of me was rather low and he quite often jokingly remarked that he had me pegged for the gallows before I even was twenty-one. If I made it past that age, he held, the fault would entirely be that of the country’s justice system and not at all a reflection on his personal judgement.

Clive found my response very amusing. Once again, a stream of brown liquid shot from his mouth. This time his laugh was loader, somehow hollow. “Phil, Phil,” he said and shook his head slowly. “Faith and I are over. There never really was a Faith and I, and as for the ‘fortune’, well, that is all gone too.” He was silent for a moment, shaking his head slowly, as in disbelief. After a while he continued cynically, “And about living happily ever after, Phil, my son, they say money can’t buy happiness, but the thing is, let me tell you, happiness can’t buy money. And with a woman like Faith, there can never be happiness without money.”

As if to rid his mouth from a vile taste, he noisily gathered some phlegm from deep inside his throat and spat it in a wide arch over the parapet to land in the dust beyond, with an audible ‘plop’.

I witnessed his rather gloomy disposition and was worried. He will be leaving tomorrow, and I simply had to know about Faith.
“Tell me about Faith, uncle Clive.” Desperation gave me courage. I have been waiting to hear about Faith for almost a year now. “Please,” I added lamely.

“What do you know about Faith and me?” He asked, eyeing me angrily from under his heavy brows.

“Not much, only what I had heard my father told my mother.” It was a big confession. I was very reluctant to bring my parents into the conversation, sensing that Clive would scoff at them. I was right.

“Aha, yep, there you are then. You know a lot. All of it probably lies,” he replied quickly.

I cringed at the insinuation. He noticed and tried to make amends.

“Sorry, Phil. I get upset when people say things without knowing the truth. The thing is, if I tell you about Faith, I will have to tell you about life and sex and relationships. I am not sure that I am best qualified to do that. And in any case, I don't think it is my place to tell you about that at all, it is your parents’ responsibility.”

Now it was I who turned on my parents. “But they have told me nothing. I don't know anything about all that.” I said. My heart thumped in my chest at the betrayal, but the promise of having all the secrets revealed in one foul swoop, somehow justified my blatant disloyalty.

He stared into the distance for a while. I followed his gaze. Despite it being early spring, heat waves were already dancing on the bare fields in the distance where a number of tractors spewed black plumes of smoke into the air, as they prepared the fields for the planting season. In our tree, the stirring of new life was evident in the lighter green at the end of the small branches against the darker of last year’s growth.

Without looking at me, he asked, “Phil, have you had a woman yet, or a girl?” He smacked his lips.

I blushed. I did not expect that part of the deal was for me to reveal my intimate secrets, scant as they were. But, I sensed that total honesty was required.

“No uncle Clive. But I fingered one girl behind the stage at the school fete a few months ago. And I have touched the boobs of two others under their clothes.”

For a third time that day, a stream of brown foamy liquid exited his mouth rather forcefully, as he burst out laughing. The surface of the rusty metal roof was fast turning into a sticky mess.

He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and said, “Ok Phil, your experience is limited. I get that. And equally limited I guess, are your prospects for appropriate sexual guidance. I get that too. But remember this, what I am about to tell you, is the gospel according to Clive. Many people, most people I would imagine, will strongly disagree with my take on life.” He fiddled with his cooler box and poured himself a generous slug of brandy, mixed with a less generous measure of coke. He pushed the bottle of coke towards me, indicating that I should have a drink. As there was no spare glass and I was very thirsty, I took the bottle by the neck and drank deeply.

“I will start with Faith then, and I will end with Faith,” he continued eventually.
He made himself more comfortable in his folding chair and again fixed his gaze on the rolling hills beyond. “Faith was my first.” He simply said and was silent. This caught me by surprise. He was married to Betsy; he was a man of the world. How could Faith have been his first?

He noticed my puzzled expression and explained quickly. “No, no, it is not that I have not had a woman before, no, not by a long shot. But...” He held up his finger to indicate that there was more to come, cleared his throat and once again wiggled his heavy bottom in the folding chair, the frame of which creaked loudly in protest, before he continued. “The relationship between a man and a woman, any man and any woman, is about power,” he started. “Each one has something to trade in order to get what he or she wants. Such an exchange will only happen when a kind of a balance is reached. When the woman gets what she considers adequate to trade, and the man gets what he considers adequate to trade, each will uphold their side of the bargain and wham bam... there you have an agreement and fireworks to follow! In that sense, it is like any other business deal. The one with the most power, gets the best deal.”

I listened to what he was saying but understood none of it. I expected talk about sex and Faith’s legs and physical satisfaction, not about the balance of power. Nevertheless, I remained silent and listened attentively.

Warming to the subject, he continued. “Beautiful women have their bodies to trade, beautiful men have theirs to trade too, so if both of them are horny enough, say after a long hot day in bikini’s and speedos on the beach, they will get together and wham, a trade is made. She gets what she wants from someone she considers attractive enough to satisfy her, and he gets what he wants from a beautiful woman, a trophy for her, a trophy for him. See, it simple.” He was quiet for a moment, then continued. “But it really is only simple if you are an apex alpha male. Twenty percent of all men gets 80 percent of the women. And if you are not part of the twenty percent, like me, what do you do, what do you do?”

I was disappointed. I still had no idea what he was talking about. “I am not sure I understand. What does this have to do with Faith?” I was impatient to hear the juicy details.

He sighed deeply. “Is all of this lost on you young Phil?” he asked, “because if it is, I will stop wasting my breath and continue to focus on my drinking.”

“No, please continue, I am sure I will understand.” I was terrified that I will never learn about Faith and her legs. I decided to rather keep quiet and hope he got to the point.

He continued after a lengthy pause. “Nature has conditioned women to always be attracted to the top dog. That way the survival of the strongest of the species was ensured in primitive times. Women are intended to be the gatekeepers of evolution. So, for the rest of us, the so-called ‘beta’ males, the question is, what else is there that women so desired, that they will trade their favours for. That is their bodies, if you do not understand what ‘favours’ mean. That is a key question most men deal with on a daily basis. Do I have something, anything, enough, for a woman to be interested in me?”

“Let's consider this,” he continued. “We have established that women will trade their favours for beautiful male bodies, six-packs, biceps, big dicks, large balls and the like. The apex alpha male. That is nature, that is the most important one, the one every human is striving for.” I blushed at his frank use of the words.

“But there is more. Why do you think girls do their nut when they listen to pop concerts, you know, throw their panties on stage and some such things?” He smacked his lips and
continued. “Why would girls throw themselves shamelessly, in sexual abandon, before goofy looking guys, even ugly ones, with pigeon chests and lanky limbs, guys who have nothing more but a talent to strum a guitar, or to hold a note?”

I thought about that while he was pouring himself a refill. I had heard guys at school talking about things like this, but have never really believed it. Pop music was not allowed in our house, so my knowledge was limited. I realised it was a rhetorical question, but replied, nevertheless.

“Because girls are weird?”

He chuckled at my remark. “Not such a bad reply, my young friend, that is a given. But why are they weird? I will tell you. Because everyone of them wants to get laid. Every single one. They don't always realise it. No sir, no, they don’t. Yet they are all waiting for it, waiting for the scales to tip. For someone to stir beneath their budding breasts something that certainly is not motherly, as they used to say about Sinatra. For someone to ignite in them that thunderclap of raw sexual desire. To offer enough for them to trade their bodies, and believe you me, given the circumstances, they are willing.”

As he continued to eloquently and enthusiastically expressed his take on the nature of female sexual behaviour, I grew increasingly optimistic about the future. This most certainly was excellent news to me. But were they really out there waiting? A wolf pack of horny women, just waiting to get laid. Was this really true? On second thoughts, I grew more sceptical.

He took a sip of his drink and continued. “You must have heard girls say that they are waiting for their knight in shining armour?”

I nodded dumbly, too scared to admit that I never had.

“That, my young friend, is code for ‘I am waiting for someone to fuck me.’ The ‘knight’ is code for a man looking for a lay. The ‘shining armour’ is code for something a girl would trade her favours for.” He paused for a moment, then repeated forcefully, “It is as simple as that!” In a gesture that even my father in full flight on a Sunday morning from the pulpit would find hard pressed to improve upon, he spread his arms wide and turned his eyes heavenwards to indicate that this revelation really is so profound, that it could as well have come from that direction. Then he sighed deeply and shook his head slowly, privately amazed at the inability of the common man to fully grasp this fundamental truth which was so obvious to him. He repeated slowly, emphasizing each individual word, “It is as simple as that.”

After a few moments to gather his thoughts, he continued. “Girls go nuts for singers and actors, because fame is one of those things that will make the scales tip. Have you ever seen pictures of the Beatles, Phil, you know, when they were young, twenty years or so ago?” he asked.

His jumping about topics was confusing and I had no idea what the Beatles had to do with the topic of our current conversation, but I confessed that I have seen many pictures of them, especially after John Lennon’s assassination, a few years ago.

“And do you consider anyone of them an attractive man?” I thought about it, and again confessed that I did not, with their floor-mop hairstyles and weird looking clothes.
“My point exactly,” he exclaimed. “Yet I am sure any of them could have had any young women on the planet they desired, even with their pasty faces and sticky limbs. Women will have sex with any man who is famous, just to be able to tell their friends that they were able to get him to bed. To them, that is a huge achievement, even if not a particularly gratifying physical experience. To them, that is what makes them a woman.” Pensively, he stared into the middle distance for awhile, well pleased with his ability to bestow these pearls of wisdom upon an innocent like me.

“One more example. Do you play sports at all?”

I was beginning to catch his drift, but the connection to Faith was still very unclear. “I do uncle Clive, athletics, cricket and rugby. Not very well, I’m afraid, but I do play.”

“Have you ever had any highlights in your sporting career, you know, where you scored the winning try or hit a six in cricket?” he asked.

I thought about it for a moment. “There was that one time, last summer, when I scored the winning runs in a cricket match.” I was about to confess that it really wasn't a big deal, as we have been so far ahead at that stage of the game, that it would have been hard for us to lose, but he briskly continued.

“Good, good,” he said. “And afterwards, what did the girls do? Did they congratulate you? Were they exited?”

I thought some more and remembered that indeed it was the case. “Yes, there was much laughter and congratulations. I got a kiss from one and hugs from others.”

“There you go then, achievement, that is something else girls will trade for. Is it not true that the first team rugby captain at school has a whole harem of doting teenybopper admirers?” He coughed and cleared his throat. “All this talking is making me thirsty,” he remarked and topped up his drink, this time with neat brandy.

The sun was getting low and touched orange upon the dark brown of the ploughed fields on the distant hills. The tractors were lining up to go home. We were running out of time.

“Ok uncle Clive,” I encouraged, “so beautiful bodies, fame, achievement, those are all things that will tips the scales,” I concluded, only too glad to be learning at the knee of the master. “What else?”

“Oh there are lots more. Power is one, why do you think Solomon of the Bible had so many women? Another is intelligence. Many women are overwhelmed by quick witted men, they will jump into bed at the blink of an eye with a man of superior intelligence. Success, yep, that too.”

I noticed that he was speaking slower and repeating himself, that his speech was slurred and his concentration wandering. To bring the conversation back on track, I said. “I understand uncle Clive, but what about us. We are not good looking, famous, powerful or successful. How do men like us tip the scales?”

He was focused immediately and looked at me with watery eyes. “My young friend, you are a genius after all. That is exactly the right question. Us ‘beta’ males. How do we get women?”

He took a long swig from his glass, drained almost half of it.
Mockingly pretending that he was announcing a winner of a competition, holding his glass as a substitute for a microphone, he loudly proclaimed; “And my friend, the answer is… money! We buy them!” He paused for effect and then continued conspiratorially. “I am not talking hookers and whores here, my young friend, I am talking beautiful young women with regular jobs, some with boyfriends, others with husbands. It is an indisputable fact of life that any beautiful and sexy woman can have any man she desires.” He took a sip with a smug smile before he continued. “And happily, it also is an indisputable fact of life that any guy with enough money can have any woman he desires.” Upon revealing yet another universal truth, he again smacked his lips self-congratulatory.

Annoyed by the perplexed expression on my face, he frowned and continued to explain. “Take me for example, honestly, if you were a woman, would you have looked at me twice?” I looked at him once and immediately decided that the answer was an unconditional no. The pale skin of his bulging stomach peeked from beneath the hem of his too tight t-shirt while his fat short hairy legs extended gnome-like from beneath his dirty white PT shorts. His watery eyes squinted at me from below heavy brows and his thin oily hair was plastered tightly against his skull. He certainly, even by the longest stretch of the imagination, cannot be described as an apex alpha male, indeed, not the apex of anything human.

Scared that I might offend him, I shook my head tentatively.

“For you it might be different. You are a smart, a beautiful boy. You might find that the scales tip more easily for you than it ever did for me.”

“But I have, well, I had...” he corrected himself quickly, then continued, “money. I have squandered most of an inheritance on women and booze within a year.”

He paused for a moment to sigh deeply. “And I lost my wife in the process. We were happy together - after a fashion.” For a few moments he reflected with alcohol induced sadness on the state of his erstwhile marriage, then drained what was left in his glass before smacking his lips and shook his head as if to clear the cobwebs.

For a while there was just the noise of his heavy breathing, the tinkling of ice and the fuzzy sound of soda as he poured himself another generous slug.

At length he continued, as if starting on a whole new topic. “Do you think a girl like Faith will have sex with a guy like me for ten rand?” He looked at me with his heavy brows raised.

I looked again at his bloated little body and again shook my head uncertainly. I doubted it, although to me course ten rand was a sizeable amount of money, equivalent to my monthly allowance. If Clive was going to confirm that Faith would indeed be prepared to have sex with him for ten rand, I could see myself tottering off to the hairdressers first thing on Saturday morning to clinch a deal with her. The end of the month was still two weeks away, but maybe we could agree on some kind of a payment arrangement. My confidence was boosted by my recently attained status of biggest dick in the locker room and I believed I did have a bit of an edge over Clive as far as the looks department was concerned.

When he continued, though, my short-lived dreams disappeared in a puff of smoke. “No, of course not, no girl would.” He continued. “But do you think a girl like Faith would sleep with a guy like me for ten thousand?” He looked at me expectantly, but before I could reply, he continued enthusiastically. “Of course, she would. So, now that we have established the
lower and upper limits of the financial offer, all that remains is to find the sweet spot. The point where the scales would tip.”

He was silent for a while, again staring into the distance. Still uncertain about the drift of the conversation and not knowing how to respond, I followed his gaze. The light was fading fast. I could hear pots and pans in the kitchen as my mother prepared supper. She would soon call me and yet, I have not heard anything about Faith.

As if he had read my mind, he smacked his lips again and continued. “So that brings me to Faith. I first noticed her at Jimmy’s takeaways shortly after she started working at the hairdressers. I used to buy my lunch there. I bought her a cup of coffee and we had a long friendly chat. The second time I bumped into her, I made some advances, just to be told in no uncertain terms that she was not interested in me and that I should bugger off.” He smiled tightly at the unpleasant memory.

“She looked at me in the mirror,” he continued, “she knew what I wanted. ‘You mean…’ she asked. ‘A thousand,’ I replied and leaned forward to peel a note. ‘Nine ninety,’ I said. ‘Wait no!!’ she almost cried, making the other people in the salon turn their heads. It was a lot of money to her, probably the equivalent of two, three month’s salary. ‘Put it back,’ she said. ‘Tonight, at eight, my place,’ she whispered, her eyes bright and her breath quick. She finished cutting my hair in silence. The scales had tipped. I had found the sweet spot.”

He sighed deeply. “Oh Phil, you have no idea how sweet she was. Those warm and soft tits, man, huge with nipples as long as my pinkie. A man can get lost in those forever. Once she has built up a head of steam, she was insatiable. She has a knack, man, she pulls you deep inside her by clamping those long legs around you tightly, and then she holds you there until you want to explode. I fucked her three times that night my man, three times, until midnight. Oh God.” He said and closed his eyes and threw back his head, as if he was praying. “Three times,” he whispered to himself. I was all but forgotten.

My mouth was hanging open, and I was sure I was drooling. Nipples as long as his pinkie. That was too much to bear. I was as hard as a rock. My dick was straining uncomfortably against my too small underpants. This is what I was wanting to hear, those juicy details. Just to be able to listen to a man who knew what it was like to spend time between Faith’s legs, was, to my youthful mind, as if I had been there myself.

His eyes remained closed, his mind a million miles away. I noticed a few pearls of moisture squeezing from between his lids, pooling for a moment in the hollows beneath his eyes before
rolling down his cheeks. After a while he again sighed heavily, wiped his eyes and continued sadly. “I tried again with her, after my wife had left. I went up to three thousand, but she refused. Said she had hooked up with Jake from the supermarket, he was looking after her and she would never do it with me again. I thought of offering more but then I realised there were other fish in the pond.”

My mother called from the kitchen door, “Phil, supper in ten minutes, go wash your hands!”

I knew her ten minutes really meant twenty, so I turned back to Clive. “What then, please, quickly?”

He chuckled. “Once I had made that discovery, about tipping of the scales with money, I decided to try other women. Every weekend after my wife had left, I went into the city. I would walk into a smart hotel, up to reception. If there was an attractive girl, I would wait until she became available and then put the roll of notes in front of her. Five hundred to start. Normally they would say something like ‘Good evening sir, would you like a room?’ and my reply would be, ‘not unless you are in it.’ ” He chuckled at his own cleverness. “Some would immediately cotton on and say, ‘sorry sir, we are not that kind of establishment,’ or ‘who do you think you are, offering money like that?’ I would add another five hundred.” He was talking faster now, whether excited by the memories or because he realised that our time was limited, I did not know.

“Then they would say something like, ‘I am not for sale,’ and I would say ‘consider this a modest contribution to your family trust.’ Or they would say ‘I have a boyfriend,’ and I would reply ‘then I am sure the money would come in handy when planning the wedding.’”

“The thing to watch for, Phil, my friend, is the quickening of the breath. Once your offer has reached the point where the scales are beginning to balance, they would open their lips slightly and breathe faster. Their eyes are bright and they cannot take it off the money.” He hesitated, “That is the other trick, Phil, my man, you must have the money ready, the smackaroos, note by note, so they can see it, smell it, taste it, almost. It makes it real for them.” He realised he got carried away and gathered himself, clearing his throat and slowly started to pack the bottles into the cooler box.

“Some women get excited, are flattered even, by the fact that you consider them so desirable that you are prepared to pay vast amounts of money to have sex with them. For others the prospect of selling their bodies, of being whores for a night is wildly exciting. Once the scales have tipped, once they have agreed to the amount, they are unstoppable. There is something of a slut in just about every woman.”

Then, draining the last of his drink, he concluded. “For the others, all you are to them at that stage, is but an obstacle in their way to the prize. They are not after you, my friend. Don't make that mistake, it's the money, it's the excitement they are after,” he continued without looking up. “That is also the stage where you start taking away instead of adding, they will stop you immediately. Then you will know all that remains to be done is to agree on a time and a place. There is a sweet spot for everyone, a point where the scales will tip. Everyone Phil, listen to me, every single one. You must have heard it said in the gangster movies, ‘every man has his price,’ that is the same for women.”

I have never seen a gangster movie. Entertainment of that nature is frowned upon in our household. However, I nodded. I have read a similar thing in one of the comic books.
“The difference, Phil, my young friend, between tipping the scales like this and paying for a hooker is that with a hooker you pay for her time, she is a sure thing. If you offer another woman money to tip the scales, you pay for an opportunity, not for her time. An opportunity to have something you would never otherwise have had.” After a cavernous clearing of his throat, another blob of phlegm found its way in a wide arch over the wall.

He continued, one finger raised to indicate that this was an important point. “And the other difference, the most important one, is that for a hooker, it is business as usual, allowing you access to her vaginal passage for ten- fifteen minutes, less if possible, so she can service the next customer. For the other women, once the scales have tipped, it becomes an event. It becomes not only about the money, but an opportunity to experience a good fuck without the lovey-dovey stuff. The agreement to the financial side of the transaction has already stripped away whatever moral objections there could possibly have been from their side.”

Once again, a blob of phlegm made its way across the wall. Then he continued, “Very soon it becomes about raw and unrestrained sexual desire. In no time you will have them dancing on your dick like there is no tomorrow. If they have crossed one line, they will cross another. They sometimes enjoy it so much that you almost want your money back.” He laughed out loudly at the very thought, then added wistfully, “Faith was like that.”

Slowly he hoisted himself out of the chair and not without difficulty, managed to fold it. Unsteadily he stood in front of me, a good few inches shorter than me. “One more thing, Phil, my friend, never get to them when they are too vulnerable. The needy ones will suck up to you and keep on sucking up.” He smiled a bit and added, “in more ways than one.” I did not fully understand what he meant, but realised it had something to do with the sex. With the smile still on his face, he continued, “They will see you as easy money. Don't go there, you will never get rid of them. It's OK if you pounce on them if they are a bit down and out, you know, just to get them through a tough spot with the money, but get what you paid for and then, get outta there.”

My mother called again. Quickly I asked, “How many have you had, uncle Clive, what was the most you paid?”

Clive laughed at my state of excitement. “Phil, Phil,” he said, “calm down. The highest I ever went was three thousand two hundred. Most of them toppled around the one-five to two thousand mark, that seemed to be the general sweet spot, a few held out for more. For this one, I went to three thousand two hundred, and she was worth every cent. Tall, blonde, with legs that go on forever. Smallish tits though, that was a bit of a disappointment. And I had eight girls, not counting Faith. Faith was the best. She was my first.”

I needed to know more. “Uncle Clive, please stay another day. We can meet again tomorrow afternoon please. I will bring ice. I want to hear more, please, please.” I begged like a small child would for a Christmas gift.

He laughed again. “You gotta go, my young friend, and so do I. You have your whole life ahead of you to find out more. There is nothing I can tell you that you will not be able to discover for yourself.” He extended his hand and took mine, firmly. “Go well son,” were his last words. He then made his way off the roof quickly and disappeared into the gloom. I never saw him again. That discussion concluded my sex education as a boy. With nothing but Clive's twisted advice on the topic, I was about to enter the world as a man.
The end of the following year I left home to study architecture at the university in the city. I soon found that it was not difficult for me to find women. The scales tipped easily for me. I did not need the money to convince them. A loner by nature, I never bothered to build up much of a relationship beyond the physical. Throughout my career I stumbled from one relationship to the other. Some ended amicably, others less so. I married twice, both marriages ended in disaster, both due to my inability to remain faithful in the long run.

In contrast to my disastrous personal life, I excelled professionally. Very quickly I built up a reputation for someone who could get things done. An architect able to deliver an exceptional product on time and within budget. My list of clients was long and included the very rich, the very best.

Since I never needed his advice to tip the scales, Clive and his take on the relationship between a man and a woman, was soon forgotten. Until the day I met Jo.

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I watched her still as she stepped down from the curb onto the cobbled surface of the public square, not two meters away from where I was sitting. I believed it was a combination of the expressive wave of the arm, the general lack of attention and the shaky balance of the high heels on the uneven cobbles, that caused her to lose her balance.

There was that moment when she teetered on the edge, her momentum still carrying her forward. Fighting to regain her balance, her arms flailed wildly at her sides in search of her centre of gravity, the phone still clutched in one hand. But as the heel of her left shoe gave way, awkwardly angled as it was, any chance she might possibly have had, was lost.

I watched her face as she realised there was nothing she could do to prevent the fall. With an expression of disbelief, her eyes wide, her lips parted and her arms extended, she fell forward, full length on to the cobbles. It was a spectacular fall. The mobile flew out of her hand and shattered a few meters away against the unforgiving surface, while her sunglasses went the other way. With a sharp ‘umph’, the wind was knocked right out of her lungs.

It was like one of those moments one sees in the movies, in slow motion, to emphasise the action, the reactions, the detail, the drama. The waiter at the table next to me, in the process of delivering frosty beers to a couple of German tourists, stopped in mid-stride, the expression on his face shifting in a split second from amiable to alarm. A street vendor, polishing his fake little African artefacts at his stall a few meters away, was so alarmed that he started, with a loud expletive, away from his kiosk.

I was halfway out of my seat before she hit the surface. Quickly I was at her side, holding her shoulders. “You OK?” I enquired, like an idiot. Of course, she wasn't.

At first her lips opened and closed like fish, a few times, before she was able to utter a sound. “Fuck fuck fuck,” she whispered, breathlessly. Her grey eyes were unfocused, large, dark and watery, her face pale. The very red of her lips was the only colour on her pale face.

“Let me help you,” I said. Slowly she pushed herself up on her knees and turned around into a sitting position. I moved my arms underneath her, picked her up and carried her the few steps to my table.

The quick-witted waiter arrived a few seconds later with a glass of water into which I deposited a couple of sachets of sugar. Stirring it with my finger for lack of a spoon, I offered it to her. She focused on me for the first time. “Thank you,” she said and took a long, urgent drink. “Thank you,” she said again.

The trader arrived a few moments later with her sunglasses, which have miraculously survived. In his other hand he clutched the remnants of her phone, clearly damaged beyond repair. Like an offering he laid out the small pieces neatly alongside each other on the table and stepped back, watching her, hoping to be of more assistance. Sympathy was written all over his face. “Thank you,” she said again, this time directed at him. I touched his arm and pointed at the broken shoe which was laying against the granite curb stone. He retrieved it quickly and dutifully placed it next to her bare left foot.

“Can I get you something?” I asked. “Some more water, coffee, tea, something stronger?” Still regaining her breath, she did not respond immediately.
After a few seconds she looked at me and then said, “I want to go home.”

“I'll take you. Where is home?”

Still staring at me, her eyes suddenly flooded with tears. “Home is not here.”

Not understanding what she meant, I frowned and paused for a while. “Where do you live?” I re-phrased the question.

This time her response was more practical. “Two blocks away. In an apartment.”

“Can you walk?” I enquired. Her left ankle was visibly swollen, and the heel of her hand skinned, while a dark stain was slowly spreading across her one knee.

“I can,” she responded bravely and stood up. But clearly, she could not. Dizzily she tried to take a step, then sat down quickly. “I will, in a moment,” she corrected herself.

There was no doubt she wasn't going to make it on her own. “I will take you,” I simply stated. She offered no objections. I wrapped my arm around her waist and arranged hers around my shoulders. Hobbling along, we started to make our way towards her apartment. It took us ten minutes and many strange glances to arrive at her building. It was on the fringe of the city centre, retail below, parking above, some office levels and loft apartments on top. A redevelopment of a dreary office block about ten years ago, when inner city living became fashionable. It looked a bit dated, not so trendy anymore.

“Top floor.” she said. I installed her in the corner of the car where she was able to support her own weight and pressed the button. She looked worse for wear. Pale, out of breath and in pain. We stood looking at each other while the lift wheezed its way up the seven floors to the top.

The loft apartment was very small but well laid out. There was no furniture, and the floor was littered with unopened boxes, stacked everywhere. The lounge was double volume, with tall windows to the one side. On the opposite side was a tiny kitchen, neatly located beneath the mezzanine level of the sleeping area above. The mezzanine appeared to be floating, the edge protected from the open lounge below only by a light-weight balustrade. But its best feature was the view through the tall windows towards Table Mountain, bathed as it was in the light of the late afternoon sun. It simply was spectacular. Despite its lack of furniture and curtains, it was a very pleasant apartment.

“I like what you’ve done with the place,” I remarked dryly. “The views are quite something,” I continued.

She grunted and said, “I moved in only a few days ago.”

Carefully I helped her up the narrow stairs to the bedroom area, step by step, to where she collapsed on an unmade bed. From this level, suspended over the lounge below, with the huge windows affording the sweeping view beyond, there was a sense of floating in space. Of being totally isolated from the city. With the bed neatly tucked into an alcove under the ceiling, the cupboards to one side, a tiny bathroom to the other, it was a very cosy little space.

I turned around to look at her, stretched out on her back on the bed, panting a little. I offered my mobile phone. “Is there someone you would like to call? Someone you might want to come and help you?”
She raised herself onto one elbow and extended her hand. “Thanks,” was all she said as she took my phone.

I went downstairs to the kitchen to allow her some privacy. The fridge I found empty but for a bottle of wine and a tub of yogurt. In the freezer compartment were a few trays of ice. Some plastic shopping bags were stuffed into a bin next to the fridge.

I heard the muted sound of her voice, talking on the phone upstairs, and continued my exploration of the rest of the apartment. Apart from a limited supply of crockery, cutlery and some basic staples, the kitchen cupboards were empty. After a while, she stopped talking. While I listened to her moving about upstairs, a slow uneven shuffle, I shoved ice into some of the shopping bags. When the toilet flushed, I gathered the wine and yoghurt, along with two glasses and started upstairs.

“You decent?” I called at the foot of the stairs.

Her voice was small but clear, as she replied, “No, but I cannot get more decent than what I am.”

“I am coming up then,” I called back.

She was sitting on the side of the bed, her jeans around her ankles. The duvet was tucked around her body, half covering her legs, carefully arranged in such a way that it did not touch the raw knee.

“The jeans,” she explained, “I cannot get them over my ankle.”

I looked at her pretty feet and the ankles above, the one swollen, the other beautifully shaped. The swelling was not as bad as I had expected, but there was no way the pants were going to slide over.

“Sit back, I will put on some ice. That will take the swelling down. Do you have some painkillers?”

She motioned towards the small bathroom and moved back against the pillows obediently, modestly dragging the duvet along, but not without allowing me a fleeting glimpse of a pair of very shapely upper thighs and tiny polka dot panties. I turned my eyes away. She was a maiden in distress, and my dirty mind was wandering.

Tucked away in the medicine cupboard next to a box of tampons and behind an array of little bottles of makeup, creams and stiffies, I found some painkillers. Two of those, some yogurt and a glass of wine will see her right for now, I argued. If not immediately, it will make her sleep, which is what she needed.

As I entered the bedroom, she was sitting upright in the centre of the bed with the duvet pooled around her, undoing the tight bun of her hair. With her arms raised above her head, her lace cradled breasts appeared more pronounced, even more beautiful than I had imagined before. I paused to watch her.

The ease with which certain women deal with long hair had always amazed me. A few turns, a quick knot, a pin, maybe a claw or a comb, even a pencil, and you would believe they had spent hours at it. In the door of the bathroom, I stood for a while, watching her, fascinated as she first removed the large shiny Japanese hairpin, then continued to quickly remove one small hair slider after another. Not one or two clips, but ten, I counted. Finally, she shook her
head and the bun became untangled into long, flowing hair, cascading down over her shoulders, to reach those beautiful breasts. The femininity, the womanliness, of the scene took my breath away. She looked at me, watching her and smiled uncertainty.

“Here,” I said at last, “take these, wash it down with some wine. And eat some yogurt. It will help.” I poured two glasses of wine, offered her one and kept the other. I watched as she swallowed the pills. She took an extra sip of wine, placed the glass next to her and reached for the yogurt. Wine and painkillers, not exactly what a doctor would have prescribed but I was doing the best I could with what I had.

I reached for the bag of ice to put on her ankle. It had already started to melt, and the cold water was slowly seeping through the seams. That is when it hit me. Like a fist between the eyes. I believe the memories were triggered by the combination of the bag of melting ice, the heat of the afternoon and the loftiness of our location, perched as we were, high over the city, as if on Clive’s garage roof once more.

I was startled by the vivid and unbidden recollection of that afternoon on the garage roof thirty-five years ago, sitting with the ice fast melting on my lap, waiting for him to arrive and tell me about Faith’s legs. And that Sunday afternoon many months later when he finally did tell me about her. I remembered him explaining about the tipping of the scales, about all the other girls he had had. Impulsively I turned to look out the window, fully expecting to see the black exhaust plumes of the tractors lining up to go home. Instead, the sun touched orange upon the crags of Table Mountain, as it had the hills beyond our town, all those years ago. I sat still for quite a while, remembering, as she silently ate the yoghurt, her eyes fixed on me.

“You look like you’ve seen a ghost. What are you thinking about?” she asked at last.

“Just some sudden memories, some kind of Deja Vu, I guess,” I said at last and motioned for her to extend her left leg towards me. With the memories were still swirling in my head, I moved the tight pipe of the jeans up over her calf to expose her ankle. I placed a bag of ice on either side of her ankle and wrapped the towel tightly around it. “Is someone coming to help you?” I asked at last.

She looked at me and dropped her eyes. “No,” she simply replied, a sudden defensive tone in her voice.

I raised my brows but said nothing. After a few moments of silence, she looked up at me and said, “My name is Jo, by the way and thanks for your help.” She smiled tightly and continued. “I hope you are not an ax murderer or a rapist.” She hesitated. “Though, I suppose if you were, I would have been raped and dead by now.”

I finished with her ankle and reached for my glass. “Phil,” I simply said and smiled wryly. “And I am not a murderer of any kind, and yes, if I were, you would probably have been dead by now.”

“Is it Jo for Joan, Joanne?” I enquired after a few seconds.

She shook her head, her long hair flying. “No, its Jo for Johanna.” She paused, then added by way of explanation, “Dutch family name.”

I nodded silently and looked at her for a long moment. Her recent ordeal did little to detract from her beauty. With her vulnerability exposed, the veneer of confidence was peeled away, which made her even more attractive.
“So, tell me about it,” I simply said.

She looked at me sharply as if to retort but then, suddenly, leaned back into the big pillow. With brimming eyes and a deep sigh, she started. “I moved here a few days ago to start work as a graphic designer for an advertising company, a big new campaign they were appointed for. Very lucrative. I was due to start next Monday, everything signed and sealed. However, I went to the office this afternoon to finalise the arrangements and was told that the campaign was postponed for three months. I am not required to start until then.” She was silent for a moment, then added quietly, “I left a permanent job in Johannesburg to move to Cape Town, just to be told I can only start in three month’s time.”

“Yet, here you are,” I added.

“Yet here I am,” she responded.

Sensing there was more, I casually added, “There are worst places in the world to hang around for three months with nothing to do than in Cape Town.”

As expected, she reacted sharply. “That is hardly the point.” In measured tones, through clenched teeth, she continued, “I do not have any money.”

She backtracked quickly, realising that she had over-reacted, divulged too much personal information too quickly. “Look,” she explained, “we have used all our savings for me to move here. Our financial reserves are, well, depleted. I cannot carry myself for three months, rent and living costs and all, without an income.” She shook her head. “Not possible.”

“We?” I raised an inquisitive brow.

She exploded again. “Do I have to tell you everything about my personal life, who are you anyway?” Her abrasive attitude had returned.

“I am sorry, I didn't mean to pry.” I stated flatly. If she was going to be difficult, so be it. “I think I should be going.”

“Wait, wait, I'm sorry, please don't go,” she apologised, backing off again. “I am upset. It has been a bad day. The job not yet happening, the spectacle I made of myself just now and on top of everything, I have to depend on a stranger for help. Please, I am sorry if I offended you.”

Without waiting for me to reply, she continued. “‘We’ are my fiancé and I. He is doing an MBA up in Joburg and has invested all his money in his studies. We plan to settle in Cape Town once we are married, kinda towards the end of next year. The plan was for me to move here to find a place to stay and to settle into a job so that he can join me when he graduates. All our savings have gone either into his studies or my move here.”

“You were talking to him on the phone when you fell.” I framed it as a statement rather than a question.

She responded with a nod. “And I phoned him just now to tell him I dropped my phone. I did not tell him I fell. He will worry.”

“Let's finish our wine,” I said, “then have a look at your hands and knee. You will have to get out of those jeans, though.” She flashed me an angry look and was about to make a remark, then thought the better of it.
I took the ice off her ankle. The swelling had gone down somewhat.

“Let me help you get the jeans over your ankle. I promise I won't peek. Let's have a look at your knee, see if you can stand and maybe have a shower. Then try and get some sleep.”

“You?” It was her turn to raise a pretty brow inquisitively. “Are you leaving?”

“I will go and get you something to eat. I will be back in about two hours.”

“There is nowhere else you should rather be, no one waiting for you?”

I shook my head. “Nowhere and nobody,” was all I said.

She threw me a curious glance but simply nodded, then lifted her butt to slide the jeans down while keeping the duvet tightly wrapped around her. Carefully I edged the pipe over her swollen ankle, trying not to take too much notice of her bare legs. I managed to get it off all right but not without some oh’s and ha’s from her side. Her knee had some bruising and a nasty cut, but had stopped bleeding. I padded it clean with wet tissue paper.

“Your hand?” I enquired. She held out her left hand for me to look at. The heel was badly skinned, but the wound was not very deep. I cleaned it out as well as I could.

“I am going to go now,” I said. “Get some sleep. I will buy some plaster strips and something to clean the wounds with.”

Her voice was small when she asked, “You will be back?”

I looked at her and smiled dryly. Despite her abrasive attitude, she was just a scared little girl in a strange city, without any friends and only a stranger to rely on.

“I'll be back. I'll take the keys. Get some sleep.”

Night was falling when I returned two hours later. The heat of the day was abating. I was well supplied with French loaves, cheese, cold cuts and wine as well as some groceries to stock her fridge, enough to keep her going for a few days. I also bought a first aid kit and an inexpensive mobile phone.

I had gone back to the street cafe where I had been earlier. Both the waiter and street vendor enquired eagerly about her well being. I assured them she was well enough, before settling down with a cold beer, compliments of the waiter, to do some thinking. I was quite disturbed by the unexpected memories of my conversations with Clive all those years ago. Throughout the thirty-five years since, I had sometimes fantasized about tipping the scales with money, as Clive had done. However, I have never done it. I never needed to. And as I grew older, those memories had all but faded away.

But today, I decided, I was going to try. I had nothing to lose. I was sex starved and relationship shy. She was everything I fantasized about as a seventeen-year-old boy. She was Clive’s Faith. Beautiful with long legs in tight jeans and beautiful boobs. Maybe nipples as long as my pinkie, I though, who knows. I smiled sadly at the memories of my juvenile sexual fantasies.

As an opportunity for tipping the scales, she was everything Clive had told me about. She was in a relationship, vulnerable at the moment, yet strong enough not to be needy, certainly not in the longer term. I felt a little like the axe murderer she had referred to earlier, stalking
my prey and planning when to strike. But no harm will be done, I rationalised. I will help her and she will help me.

Deep in thought, I busied myself in the kitchen, preparing a platter for two while sipping a glass of wine. After a while I heard her move above.

“Phil, is that you?” she called.

“The very same,” I responded. “I am making something to eat. Do you want to come down, or shall I bring it up?”

“I’d rather have it here, if you don't mind. Give me a while, I will call when I am ready.”

The shower went upstairs and I finished the preparations. From the remnants of her broken phone, dumped on the kitchen counter earlier, I fished out the little SIM card and installed it into the new phone. I then powered it up to make sure it worked.

When it was done, I turned to look at the view of the mountains silhouetted against the dying light. It was then that I realised that I could see her moving on the mezzanine level upstairs, in some detail, reflected in the huge double volume windows against the gloom outside. She stood naked, towelling herself dry, totally unaware that I was watching. Her body truly was beautiful. Tall and lean, yet well proportioned with long legs and a narrow waist. Her ample breast were high and firm, pear shaped with no hint of giving way to gravity.

Ashamed of my peeping-tom act, I turned away. But I couldn't help but look again. She hobbled along laboriously to the cupboards, and while I watched, put on floral baggy pants over a tiny g-string and a loose t-shirt over her naked breasts.

I turned back to the counter as she started to comb her long, wet hair, to aimlessly rearranging the snacks on the platter.

“I am ready,” she called cheerfully after a few more minutes.

She was sitting up in the bed again, half covered by the duvet, looking much better. Her hair, still wet, made damp patches on her t-shirt. She had removed all her makeup, but there again was some colour in the cheeks of her little oval face and her lips were full and rosy. Lips shaped for easy smiling, lips shaped for easy kissing. She looked at me with huge grey eyes and a shy smile.

“How are you feeling?” I asked.

“I am fine, thank you. I feel much better.”

She crossed her legs Indian style under the covers and leaned forward as I placed the platter in front of her. I caught a soft whiff of shampoo and body lotion as she moved.

“This looks awesome, you’re a wizard, thanks,” she said and unceremoniously started shoving food down her throat. I poured some wine and placed the bottle and the phone on the bedside table before I sat down on the corner of the bed.

She picked up the phone and looked at it for a long moment, then looked at me and silently mouthed, “Thank you.” She took a long sip of wine and looked at me with serious eyes. “I don't know how to thank you,” she said. “I would not have been able to cope without your help.”
“That's OK,” I responded indifferently, as if helping young women in distress was something I did every day.

Still looking at me, she said, “Tell me about yourself. How is it that you have nowhere to go and nobody to go to?”

“Not much to tell. I am a retired architect, I live alone and I'm rich.” The last remark was the opening line of my play. Following Clive’s advice of so long ago, I closely watched her lips and eyes. Indeed, her eyes widened a fraction when I mentioned my wealth.

I could sense that she wanted to know more, but instead simply asked, “Why alone? You are not unattractive, maybe a little old and sun-baked,” —she giggled behind her hand—“but otherwise quite presentable.”

I smiled to try and take the sting out of her remark about my age. It was true, old age was creeping up on me. I probably was about twenty years older than she was, if not more. “I am not very good at relationships. I have been married before, but that just didn't work out. So now I live alone in a little cottage on the beach.”

“Aren't you lonesome sometimes?”

“Sometimes I do feel lonely, but then I rescue innocent young women in distress and viola, I have company for the evening.” That remark brought about a moment of uncomfortable silence between us, as it was meant to. It was my intention to get our conversation on shakier ground.

“You're not thinking of taking advantage of me?” she asked innocently, after a moment's hesitation, and I thought I noticed a glimmer of caution in her eyes. “A vulnerable damsel in distress, like me?”

I smiled at her. “No, I am not, not unless you want me to, but you are very attractive, and I am a man. Forgive me if a few thoughts had crossed my mind.”

Without allowing her to respond, I continued. “But I do want to help you.”

This was the second move in my play, for Clive, it would have been his first. From my wallet I took five thousand in hundreds and placed it on the bedside table next to her. I watched her while I took a sip of wine.

Her eyes were fixed on the money, her lips slightly parted, her breath quick. “No strings attached,” I added.

After a long pause, she raised her eyes to me. “I can't take your money,” she said.

I allowed the silence to lengthen. At last I said, “Money means nothing to me, apart from the fact that it buys nice things.” The sentence was laden with innuendo, but it was lost on her.

I continued, “Of course you must take it. I figured the rent for this place is around three grand per month, that leaves you another two to see you through the rest of the month. Not much, but at least you will be OK for a month.”

Round-eyed she stared at me. Then, in an opportunistic moment, she fell right into my trap. “What about the other two months?”
Gently I smiled and stretched forward to touch her hand. “Five grand a month, three months, that makes fifteen. I will give you another ten if you will allow me to stay the night.” I figured allowing for inflation over the years, that amount was roughly equal to Clive’s two thousand of thirty years ago.

Her jaw dropped. Again there was a long silence between us, her eyes riveted on me. Quietly she repeated in measured tones as if to come to terms with my suggestion. “You will give me fifteen thousand if I sleep with you tonight? I don't believe it.”

“Well, I have given you the five already with no strings attached, it's only the other ten we are talking about,” I said philosophically, watching her carefully, expecting a slap in the face at any minute.

She kept on staring at me, then suddenly smiled broadly. “You are pulling my leg. You should not do that to a girl. Just now I will believe you and then you will be in deep trouble.”

I smiled back. Time to retreat a bit. “Give me your leg so that I can pull it some more while I put on a plaster. And your hand.”

Unsure what to think, she hesitantly extended her left leg and hand towards me, keeping the duvet tightly wrapped around her waist with the other. Her eyes did not leave my face. Carefully, with the antiseptic, I first cleaned the heel of her hand and then the cut on her knee. I stuck oversized plasters on both her hand and knee and gave her leg a gentle tug.

“There, there,” I said, as if speaking to a child, “It's all better now. Consider your leg cleaned and pulled.” I hesitated then added more seriously, “But I am not joking. I am serious.”

The uncertain smile slowly disappeared from her face and her huge grey eyes locked into mine. Ignoring my attempt at jest, she said, “Do you think I am for sale?” Her tone was even, yet it carried a serious challenge. “Do you think I am a whore?” she continued, somewhat louder. I knew I was on thin ice and had to carefully navigate my way through the next few moments.

For a split second, I remembered my mother’s low opinion of the moral standards of people from Johannesburg. I was about to make a joke, but then thought the better of it. Instead I looked her squarely in the eyes. “You can never be a whore. If I thought you were, I wouldn't make you this offer. I am powerfully attracted to you. I want you. How else would I, if not for money, ever have a chance to convince you to have sex with me? Through my charms, a woman like you?” I smirked.

Without waiting for a response, I continued. “I am probably twenty years older than you are. Would you ever have considered sleeping with me under any other circumstances?”

She silently shook her head.

I continued, “That then makes me the whore, not you, does it not? I am the one who is shamelessly trying to make a business deal out of something that should be the wonderful result of a spontaneous mutual agreement between a man and a woman.”

She frowned. “But how can you expect me to do something like this and live with myself afterwards? I won't have any dignity left.”

Suddenly I was angry. “Let me tell you something, while we are on the topic of whores and dignity,” I said and emptied my glass. “I am an architect. I have been for thirty years. I sell
my time, my talent and my knowledge. That is what I do, or rather, used to, before I retired. More often than not, I walked away from projects, feeling worse than any whore could ever feel, after having been paid for her services. I felt raped, abused, my soul wrenched from my body. As if I had betrayed myself, by having to bow to the demands of Mammon. My ideas and designs distorted and sacrificed at the altar of pragmatism. My principles violated, my dignity in tatters.” I was silent for a while, bitter memories swirling about in my head. “Why do you think I retired?”

My outburst was not scripted. It was spontaneous. I was as surprised as she was about my sudden, spirited outburst. I did not realise how close to the surface the resentment still was.

I got up to refill our glasses. Her eyes followed my every move. To make space for her glass on the side table, I moved the money aside. She started when I touched the notes, her lips parted slightly, as if to utter a protest.

Standing, I looked down at her, then said quietly. “This will be different for you. I will pay you very well for your time, your talents and, well, your knowledge. And I promise you, I will be kind and gentle, you will have no regrets in the morning. As for your dignity, it will not be dented, not even scratched. No one will know apart from the two of us and I will never tell. You will not regret this.” I smiled reassuringly.

For the first time, I think she seriously considered my offer. I allowed the silence to spread. The time has arrived.

Then I repeated, “I am not pulling your leg, this is a genuine offer.” I hesitated for effect, “I tell you what, I will make it twenty. Twenty thousand to make sweet love to your beautiful body throughout the night.” Confident about my abilities as a lover, I added, “I will make it worth your while. I will pleasure you beyond anything you have ever experienced. To make sure you are OK, let's add a condition, you can call a stop any time and I will pay you half anyway.”

There was no expression on her face. She just stared at me with slightly parted lips. I knew the scales were balanced evenly, just a slight nudge, and they will tip.

“I don't know why I am not kicking you out,” she said, sipping her wine. “How rich are you anyway, to offer a girl twenty thousand for her favours?”

I knew all along she was going to get back to the topic of my wealth. “Very,” I simply said.

“How?” she asked, her head angled in curiosity.

“I often took equity in lieu of fees and sold it at a profit later. Some property I still own. I have also written some books on architecture. Technical, design, practice manuals, that sort of thing, they are being used widely around the country and elsewhere.” I replied curtly, I did not want to talk about myself.

“So?” I added after a while.

She continued to look at me, her eyes bright. Then she sucked in her breath slowly and puffed her checks. It was decision time.

Just as Clive had predicted, all those years ago, she asked, “What about my boyfriend?”
I used his angle, responding quickly, “Think about it as your contribution to start your life together here in Cape Town. A small sacrifice of one night of your time that might make a huge difference to your future.”

She simply nodded and looked down at her hands. Clive, you are a genius, I thought.

Still following Clive’s advice, I started to retreat. “Let's rather leave it, then,” I said. “You are uncomfortable with the idea. You have the five, at least you are covered for the first month.” I could see the wheels were spinning more rapidly in her head. Five sounded meagre against twenty, and she had three months ahead without any income.

“I am gonna go now,” I said quietly and got up.

Then the scales tipped. She sat upright, raised her eyes and looked straight into mine. The expression on her face had shifted from saint to sinner. “Twenty-five, I will do it for twenty-five grand,” she said with a cagey smile. There was a moment of silence between us, our eyes locked. She took a long sip from her glass. Again, she smiled lopsidedly and dipped her head slightly in acknowledgement of her capitulation, then continued, “I am a woman, I need to be wooed. I reckon twenty-five thousand equate to an adequate amount of wooing.”

I laughed. “Consider yourself wooed.” I said, “you won't be sorry.” Across the silence between us, we again stared at each other for a long time. An unspoken alignment of expectations.

“There are some conditions. though. Non-negotiable. No kinky stuff, no hitting, no back door, just ordinary vanilla sex,” she suddenly continued.

I looked at her in surprise. She caught my glance and smiled wryly. “I am not without experience. Not quite the ingenue I made out to be earlier, probably more like a femme fatale.” She giggled, a little high on the wine and the expectations of money and sex. “Oh, and no kissing on the mouth.”

I smiled at her choice of words. The not-kissing part was a disappointment. I was looking forward to kissing those beautiful, full lips. I shrugged and said, “You sound like Julia Roberts in Pretty Woman.” She looked puzzled. I am getting old, I realised. “The movie, with Richard Gere?”

“Never seen it.” She responded quickly. Now that agreement was reached, there was a nervous energy about her, her movements hurried, as she swept her hair from her face. She kept on sipping until the wine was depleted, then put the glass aside. I quickly topped it up.

“When do you pay me?” she continued with a sidelong glance at the pile of notes on the side table, her breathing through parted lips even quicker now.

“I can do a transfer now, from my phone, but then you can't cop out during the night, or I can do it in the morning.”

“Do it now,” she said. “I won't cop out.” She was very excited, whether from the money or the prospect of sex, I did not know. But I suspected it was what Clive had mentioned, some women are turned on by just having a high monetary value attached to their favours.

Silently I punched in the numbers while she gave me her banking details from memory. Her new mobile chirped. For a moment she looked confused, then grabbed it and looked at if for a long second. “Done,” she said.
Her eyes still shining, she looked at me with a broad smile. “Let's get started,” she said and reached for her t-shirt. Spot on again Clive. All I am now, I thought, is an obstacle between her and the money, well sort off, since she had already been paid. She might as well have said, “Let's get it over and done with.”

I smiled back and responded. “Let's.”

Looking at me all the while, she slowly lifted the hem of her shirt to expose first her long, flat tummy, and then her magnificent breasts. It was my turn for my breath to quicken through parted lips. She smiled at my reaction before lifting it all the way over her head.

Her tits were beyond description as they appeared from underneath the shirt. The milky white skin of her breasts contrasted with the tanned edge along the line normally covered by her bikini top. They were high, widely spaced and firm, rather elongated, with well-defined puffy areolas, pointing slightly upwards in defiance of gravity. There was no sign of sagging. They swelled gently as they rose from her chest to peak in there in a darker rosy colour against the milky white of her skin, where her even darker nipples, erect, not quite as long as my pinkie though, topped her areolas, a little mound on a mound on a mound.

She watched me, looking at her. She knew what beautiful breasts she had, she knew what effect they had on men and she enjoyed displaying them. I saw it in her eyes.

I lifted my hands to touch her, but my hand shook so much that I dropped them back into my lap.

She laughed. “It seems I am not the only nervous one.”

I laughed too and responded. “Or excited. I'll tell you what, if it's OK with you, I am going to have a quick shower, and then we'll see how it goes.”

She nodded and without an attempt to cover herself, leaned back against the pillow in full display, a broad smile on her face. Now that she had committed, she was almost as enthusiastic about the prospect as I was.

I had a quick shower and dried myself with the damp towel that earlier was wrapped around her ankle, the same one she had used after her shower. It seemed to be the only one. With the damp towel wrapped around my hips, I stepped out of the bathroom and, for the second time, that evening, stopped dead in my tracks in the doorway.

The lights were dimmed, so she was largely in silhouette against the borrowed light from the streets below. She had arranged herself on top of the duvet in a sexy pose, facing me, full length on her side, her head propped on her arm, her long legs naked. She had removed the baggy pants and was wearing only the tiny white G-string I had seen her donned earlier, reflected in the window. It was as if she were a different person. The abrasive reluctance had totally disappeared. In for a penny, in for a pound, must have been what she was thinking. Once again, Clive was right, if they have crossed one line, they will cross another.

She looked ravishing. The line nature had drawn for her swept smoothly from her ankle (not the swollen one) along her calf to her slightly bended knee, and further along the curve of her thigh to dip sharply into her impossibly narrow waist. It lingered there for a moment, before it continued its way along the span of her ribs, each of which was neatly defined through her taut skin, before it raced up the soft smooth curve of her breast to terminate in a swirl at the darker skin of her hard, little nipple. But no, it continued further along, to her
collarbone, to that sweet soft spot at the base of her neck before it wandered joyfully along her small firm jaw, her chin, her lips, nose and cheek, along her dark brow, to disappear in the jungle of her thick, dark hair.

My dick responded enthusiastically to her nakedness. It made an embarrassing tent of the towel. In the half-light I saw the flash of her white teeth as she smiled at my involuntary response to her unspoken invitation. I stepped nearer and sat down on the side of the bed, next to her. Her heady smell rose in my nostrils. I could not take my eyes off her. Hers were in shadow, but I could see a soft glint somewhere below her dark lashes.

“May I touch you?” I asked, my voice hoarse. She nodded wordlessly.

I touched her softly, her skin like gossamer. Slowly my hands glided down her side to touch, with the one hand, her firm breast, warm and inviting. The other wandered further, over the curve of her hip, around to the sweet fullness of her butt cheek.

She moaned slightly as I touched, very gently, her swollen areola with the hard, little button of her nipple. I felt the full weight of her breast in the palm of my hand, lifting it slightly and squeezed, ever so gently. My other hand followed the curve of her butt, down to her thigh and back again over her hip bone.

She sighed deeply and turned onto her back. Eyes closed and arms extended above her head, she offered the full length of her body for me to explore. I allowed my hands to wander aimlessly whilst my eyes drank in her beauty. With both hands I cupped her breasts, squeezed them slightly and tweaked her nipples softly. A shudder ran through her body, and she gasped, a little louder this time. I moved my hands down along her rib cage, to her flat, hard tummy and her narrow waist. The little dimple of her navel was small and elongated.

Further down I went, my thumbs just dipping under the elastic of her panties, as a tease, no more. Her breath quickened when I moved my hands over her hips and around her butt cheeks. I allowed my fingers to gently brush against her pussy from behind through the sheer material of the panties, as it stretched across her swollen lips.

With my hands still exploring, teasing around her mons and covered slit, I lowered my head and took first the one, then the other nipple into my mouth. It might be stating the obvious, but her nipples were made to be sucked. I sucked gently at first, then a little firmer. She groaned loudly.

I looked up into her face. “Are you ok?” I asked.

Her eyes flew open. Round-eyed she looked at me. “Yes, yes, I am OK.” she responded quickly before her eyes closed, and her head fell back against the pillow.

I continued my ministration and allowed my hand to cup her still cladded mons, finding through the fabric, her pussy lips wet and engorged. Her body quivered, and she moved against my hand, hesitantly grinding herself against me. For a long while my hands roamed freely over her body, exploring every curve, every hollow, teasing her all the time but never wandering underneath the fabric of her panties.

Suddenly I felt her hand moved to underneath the towel, still tucked around my waist, searching for my dick. It was not difficult to find. Hard as a rock it stood, like a whip antenna, straight and proud. Her long fingers found the hard shaft and encircled it, squeezed it tight, to gauge it potential, before she continued to stroke it, feeling for my balls.
On my part I figured, if she touched my dick, surely that was an invitation to reciprocate. I slipped my hand under the elastic and moved down, my fingers feeling for her clit, her lips, her slit. Through a soft carpet of down, I could feel it was drenched down there, her clit a tiny, hard little button against my fingers. I played gently with her tumescent lips, my fingers dipping into her entrance ever so slightly from time to time.

She moaned softly, shuddered suddenly and gasped for breath. Hoarsely she whispered, urgently, “Oh Phil, please fuck me, fuck me quick. I can’t wait.”

Unceremoniously she tugged the towel from my waist while I slid the panties down her long legs. Once they were free, she immediately lifted her legs and spread them wide, her pussy red and inviting, her large eyes locked into mine. This time it was my turn to gasp. I was planning on making it last, on taking my time, but clearly, she wanted it urgently, but then, so did I.

I moved into the sweet cradle of her thighs and teased her slit with my dick a few times, then, with our eyes still locked, I slowly inched into her. Through parted lips, soft hoarse moans escaped her every time I moved a little deeper. Then she could not take the waiting any more and clamped her legs around my, pulled herself tightly against me and in the process impaled herself full length onto my dick. She uttered a long loud moan and, her body quivered as she was engulfed by waves of ecstasy.

The tight, wet embrace of her pussy was nothing short of exquisite. Her pussy muscles contracting around my shaft involuntarily as she orgasms. To be inside her like that was to be in heaven, I was sure. The feeling of her naked body under mine, the way she moved, the way she smelled, the way she felt.

The grasp of her legs around my body was so tight, I could hardly move. Slowly we rocked together, joined like that, both of us breathless. But I had to move, I could wait no longer. Without withdrawing, I rolled both of us to one side and pulled her one leg up high against me, clamping it under my arm. I moved down to get a better angle, and then side by side, I started fucking her. With every move, she pushed back hard. The sensation of this beautiful woman responding to my pounding in this passionate way, was indescribable.

My urgency grew and I increased my pace, then stopped to delay my own climax. I knew I was going to be quick, not having had sex for such a long time. She was having none of it.

“Don't stop, please,” she whispered, her voice croaky.

I rolled back on top of her and picked up the pace again. Quickly I fucked her at a vigorous pace, my own climax now inevitable. With equal enthusiasm she responded. Then both of us simultaneously exploded. Hers ended in a protracted moan and mine in a deep sigh as I deposited my sperm deep inside her, a release of more than six months of sexual frustration.

For a short while we laid like that, our sweaty bodies entwined. Her muscles clamped around my dick in post climactic spasms, while it shrank slowly from an erect shaft to a useless, flaccid appendage. When my dick finally slipped out, I rolled onto my back next to her. There was silence between us as we both recovered from the unexpected intensity of our copulation.

When I leaned over to fill our glasses, she wordlessly got up and hobbled to the bathroom, closing the door behind her. I gulped down half of my wine and stretched out on the bed.
She appeared a few minutes later, her naked body silhouetted against the bright light of the bathroom behind. There she lingered there for a while, allowing me time to once again appreciate her beautiful shape. The mass of her hair cascading down over her shoulders, the slight sideways bulge of her breast, her narrow waist and her flaring hips. My eyes were particularly attracted to the delicate inward curve of her upper thighs as they meet her body each side of her little pudenda. Because she was so slender, the fir covered gap between her legs was wide, soft and full of promise.

I could just make out a soft smile on her face, as she stood there in a naked pose for me. At last I was able to utter, “You really are beyond description.”

Her smile widened. “Thank you, a girl likes to be appreciated. Even though she gets twenty-five grand for her efforts.”

I smiled back. “That was quick, I am sorry, but I was somewhat sex-starved.”

She shook her head. “No, no, it was me,” she said. “When you touched me like that, I suddenly realised how much I wanted it. It must have been the stress of moving here on my own, the disappointment today, lack of company, everything. The way you helped me, the way you looked at me, your gentle touch, it all made me want you so much, immediately, I could not wait for another second.”

I smiled a little self-consciously and changed the subject. “How is your ankle, by the way, not taking too much strain?”

She hobbled forward to climb onto the bed and sat down, cross-legged, next to me. “It's not my ankle that is taking the strain.” She giggled at her clever remark.

I watched as she made herself comfortable, not a hint of modesty as she displayed her full nakedness for my benefit. The play of light and shadow accentuated the sensuous curves of her breasts. Her fur covered pussy, snugly nestled between her widely spread thighs, was displayed wantonly for my scrutiny. I found her pose hugely unsettling, making it difficult to concentrate on anything else. I suddenly felt a fresh stirring between my legs.

Sipping wine, watching me, she asked, “Tell me about yourself, I need to know who really is fucking me tonight?”

I continued to study her for a moment more, before I tore away my eyes and responded. “I told you all there is to know. I am a lone wolf, no strings, no responsibilities, just freewheeling through life. To me, eventually, the promises of life did not amount to much,” I said and changed the subject. “Rather tell me about yourself. How come you are ‘not without experience’, as you put it?”

She wriggled her bare bottom before she started. “I had a boyfriend at varsity. He was also doing art. Let's just say his creativity was not limited to just the visual arts. Our relationship ended when he became increasingly interested in the darker side of sex, BDSM, you know, nipple clamps, leathers, whips, that sort of thing. That's not for me. At heart I am a simple girl, I like my sex to be gentle, sweet and preferably with someone I love.”

She looked at me expectantly, waiting for my reaction. I pondered for a while. “You know, I am not just saying this, but essentially I am the same. It is said that there are two types of people in the world. There are lovers, and there arefuckers. Lovers can befuckers, butfuckers can't be lovers. I believe I am a lover. I know how to fuck and have done it on
occasion, but I don't believe I am a very good fucker. I cannot control my climax, or maintain a never-ending erection, or have the stamina to pound away for hours.”

I continued, “I prefer long nights with the ebb and flow of passion, sensual wet kisses that last for hours, gentle caressing and the occasional explosive orgasm.”

She sighed, carried away by my description. After a while, she glanced at me and said, “There is one important difference between us though, as I said, I prefer my sex with someone I love. It is that much better. According to you, you have no one to love?”

Framed as a question, I had no alternative but to respond. “That is a sad fact. I have never been able to find someone I could really relate to on every level, to the extent that I felt I could commit forever. I have tried, believe me, I have. So now I am reduced to someone having to find love where I can.” The last part was meant in jest, but she took some offence.

She shook her hair angrily and said tersely, “And today you couldn't find it anywhere so you pounced on an innocent victim and pay her for it? Do you do that often, pay for sex?”

“It is not like that,” I objected solemnly. “I have never, ever paid for sex before. Let me tell you where this comes from.” So, I told her about Clive and the unexpected recollection earlier. She mellowed during the long narration, sipping her wine quietly while she listened.

When I finished talking, she smiled and said. “A genius, your Clive. Every word he said is true. Everybody, rather, every woman, has that point where she would go to bed with someone for money. Most women might beg to differ, but it is true. Maybe not on such a basic level, he described, or the way we did it tonight, as a direct trade of sex for pelf. However, it is part of our genetic makeup. We are attracted to good providers, for security ensured by money. That's what we are searching for.”

“I am your perfect example,” she continued, then hesitated for a moment, realising what she had just said. “No, no, not with you tonight.” She scoffed a bit and continued. “After I broke up with my kinky creative varsity boyfriend, I fell in love with the opposite extreme, an unimaginative accountant, doing a masters in business administration. You know why, because deep down I realised that he is solid, dependable and that he would one day be able to provide well for me and any offspring we might have together.”

She smiled slightly at the ironic contradiction with their current precarious financial situation and continued. “One thing my varsity boyfriend had taught me though, is that, contrary to popular belief, held by many innocent young women, love and sex are not one and the same. I believe they can be mutually exclusive. Sex can be enjoyed on a purely physical level with someone else, even with more than one at a time, if you are that way inclined. To me, though, it is just so much better to be intimate with someone you do love.”

She was on a bit of a roll. “I believe one person cannot give you everything you need on an emotional level in life. You need a girlfriend to gossip with, a mother to mother you, a grandfather for wise words, a husband for love but maybe someone else, if you need it, to simply have sex with. I am not sure, I have never been there. But as a theory, it does hold a measure of appeal for me.”

“Wise words from a beautiful woman.” I remarked. “Believe me, I cannot agree more. I have been there and I am moving more and more into that direction. I really live my life very much along those lines.”
I looked at her silently for a few minutes. “Don't take this the wrong way, but one thing I have noticed is that you are very comfortable with your own body, are you not?”

She laughed, a bright, happy sound. “You are very perceptive. I do love my body. I find it beautiful. I like people to look at it. I am not a nudist or a naturalist or an exhibitionist or any other ‘ist’ for that matter, but I do know I am beautiful and I love to challenge people to acknowledge it. I like to flaunt it, in a way. Hence, as you no doubt have noticed, the see-through blouse and tight jeans.”

In the half light, I made out a sudden sultry smile as she continued in a soft and seductive tone, “I love my tits, my nipples, they are different from others. I know men love them.” With both hands she cupped her breast, her thumbs and index fingers stoking the puffing nipples tenderly. “I love my flat stomach.” Her one hand slid down her body, stroking her smooth skin provocatively.

I watched her slim hands and long, red-tipped fingers lovingly caressing herself. I recognised her performance as a teasing act as I felt my dick responding, the earlier small stirring quickly growing into something more substantial.

She continued. With her eyes closed and her head thrown back, as if carried away, she moved her one hand down to between her legs, the other one still caressing her breast. “I love my pussy. I love the softness of the hair, it makes it so different from the rest of my smooth body. I love the soft lips, how they flower when touched, how they become wet and slippery, yearning for something to slip inside. I love my tiny clit, a little pleasure button to be used when finally, I need release.”

I was mesmerised. I watched her hands stroking herself and listened to her voice whispering softly, while I grew hard as a rock. Involuntarily I extended my hand to feel between her legs, first touching her hand as she rubbed her clit, then beyond to her slit, drenched with fresh love juices from her own self-induced arousal and remnants, I supposed, from our earlier lovemaking. Gently I tugged at her distended lips and slipped my finger deep inside her, slowly moving it in and out.

She opened her eyes and looked at me, with parted lips and a hurried breath. With a predatory grin, she noticed my manhood, hard with promising intent. Hurriedly she swung her leg over me in a wide arch, allowing me a shadowy glimpse of her lovely pussy. Using her hand, she aligned my dick with her entrance and lowered herself onto me, slowly, until we were fully enjoined. Because of her injured knee, she squatted rather than kneeled which caused her womanhood to be once again magnificently displayed to my hungry eyes.

With her fully impaled on my dick once again, she sat on top of me while I laid back against the pillows. The moment was magic. We both recognised it. I could see it in her breathless gasps, in her momentary struggle to keep her composure, in her attempts to contain a wild urge of total abandon. My dick throbbed inside her love canal and her muscles contracted around me.

After a while, she pushed down on me and still straddling me, continued her monologue in a seductive tone, as if her earlier recital was never interrupted. She strummed her clit with one hand, the other roaming all over her body, then continued “I love feeling you inside me, throbbing as you do. I love your dick, it is so…” —she struggled momentarily for words—“ample, it fills me so… completely,” she finally said, her voice trailing off.
Slowly she moved up and down on my shaft before, abruptly, allowed me to slip out of her. “Too soon,” she said hoarsely, “too soon.”

After a few moments of silence, she continued in a firmer tone. “Here you are, fully at my mercy,” she said. “That really is what I do not understand about BDSM. That men pay exorbitant amounts of money to be humiliated. Whipped even. Why would anyone pay thousands to be humiliated and whipped? That, to me, is an inexplicable paradox. Some dark anomaly, maybe echoes of primitive times, hidden in the dark recesses of our minds.”

I was too distracted to reply. Slowly, while talking, she started moving up and down along my body, her pussy trailing rather pleasantly against my stomach and chest. She was excellent at multitasking, talking, rubbing and getting excited, all at the same time. Down she slid, to where my flag pole of a dick was yearning for her, then up again, slowly up along my body. Only this time she did not stop at my chest. She moved up even more, lifting herself on her knees, and presented my face with her sweet little pudenda, the neatly trimmed bush right in front of my eyes. Underneath the carpet of fur, I could see the corral pink of her sweet pussy lips, excitedly anticipating my attentions. The heady scent of her arousal was heavy in my nose.

I looked up at her as she towered over me. Along the valley between her breasts, I saw her large grey eyes looking down at me, brightly lit with excitement. With our eyes locked along this awkward line of sight, I extended my tongue to taste her for the first time, exploring her slit as I moved up and down, the tip of my tongue playing softly with her lips, wet and engorged. Her juices were like heavy syrup on my tongue. I could not get enough. Her breath quickened and her eyes became even brighter as she watched me eating her. My tongue found her clit and flicked it a few times. I sucked as much of her womanly flesh as I could into my mouth, my lips firmly clamped around the ornamentations of her entrance.

Her body jerked as she moaned softly. She clearly enjoyed the attention she was receiving. However, the angle was awkward and after a while the position became uncomfortable. She sat back onto my chest and looked at me for a while, panting. Then, nonplussed, she said, “I only know you for a few hours but it feels as if I have been waiting for this evening my whole life. You are paying me for sex, yet it feels as if you are the one doing me a favour. You are old enough to be my father, but it feels as if I could spend the rest of my life with you. How is that?”

We were on dangerous ground. I did not want to get into a discussion about feelings beyond feeling horny. “I told you,” I responded, “I am just a regular guy in a kind of a midlife crisis, paying an exorbitant amount of money for casual sex with an extraordinarily beautiful woman. No more, no less.”

“Well,” she said, “I’ll give you that. You sure know how to please a girl.”

It was her turn to allow her hands to roam all over me, stroking me lightly. She felt for my dick behind her and grabbed it around the shaft, squeezing it repeatedly. Then, slowly, she turned around, swinging her leg over me, presenting me once again with a view of her pink pussy, flaring in expectation right in front of my eyes. She took my dick into her mouth and groaned softly as she tasted herself on me. Slowly she moved up and down, sucking me rather expertly. Then she took me deep into her mouth, trying to swallow me, but gagged in the process. After a few gasps and swallows, she gave up on the deepthroating and continued to just suck and lick.
For quite a while I laid back, enjoying the attention afforded my dick by this amazing creature. The view of her drenched, pulsating, corral pink womanhood nestled between two perfect butt cheeks was amazing. I tried to imprint that unforgettable view deep into the recesses of my memory, to be hauled out and savoured during some lonely moment in the future.

However, when she wriggled her behind in encouragement, I did not hesitate to continue with the delightful task of eating her out. At first, I simply licked her like one would an ice cream cone, with the flat of my tongue, up and down. Then, once my tongue found her entrance, I tried to penetrate her as deeply as possible, while my fingers deftly massaged her tiny clit and pussy lips.

Her excitement grew as my ministrations increased. After a while, she changed position and still facing away from me, she lined up my dick with her entrance again, and slowly impaled herself onto me once more.

While moving slowly up and down my shaft, she said, looking back at me over her shoulder, “I think the sex between us is so good because it is a business transaction. There are no expectations beyond giving and receiving. The joke is on you though, my friend, all you are getting is a good fuck, while I am getting a whack of money as well as a thorough fuck by someone clearly well skilled in the art.”

I laughed and ground myself against her, as if it was possible to enter her even further. “Thank you for the compliment,” I said. “I aim to please.”

But by now she wasn’t listening anymore. With her head was thrown back, her dark hair extending all the way to her naked waist. She steadied herself with her one hand to counter my movements and increase the pace. “Fuck, fuck, fuck,” she whispered. Briefly she disengaged herself from me to turn around and face me again. Almost panicky, she searched for my dick to align it with her entrance and again lowered herself onto me. Then she started to ride me wildly. Breathlessly she said, “I cannot take this. Your dick inside me drives me crazy.”

Suddenly, to my surprise, in unscripted rapture, she fell apart completely. Her body quivered in anticipation of the galloping approach of an immense orgasm and her movements became uncoordinated. Loudly she uttered unladylike grunts, rather like a small animal in heat. A beautiful animal, I must haste to add.

She was a screamer. She suddenly uttered a long continuous wail while she moved even more vigorously, a protracted siren song, if you will. I increased my efforts in response. It was only by a miracle that we stayed copulated. For fear of slipping out of her, I grabbed her by the waist, holding her tightly against me and, in one swift motion, flipped her over, so that once more, she was on her back with me on top. Then, in full conquest of her womanhood, I claimed her. By swiftly and vigorously fucking her very hard, I drove her into erotic overload.

Her arms flailed helplessly at her sides as she arched her back to counter my robust pounding. Wave after wave of sweet agonising pleasure swept through her, causing her legs, elevated high above me, to jerk in uncoordinated spasms. While her body convulsed uncontrollably, she loudly and without apology proclaimed to the world that she was brought to the pinnacle of sexual pleasure and intended to linger there awhile longer.
Her almost violent reaction had a sobering effect on me. I slowed down, whispering soothing sounds into her ear, while I gently moved in and out of her. But she wanted none of that. She wanted to be ravished. Urgently she kept moving against me.

To regain control, I lifted her legs over my shoulders and leaned forward, folding her almost double. This made her pussy even more accessible. I kept on fucking her with long, measured strokes. She calmed down a little, retreating only from the frantic to the enthusiastic. Her hands remained entwined in the duvet, searching for something firm to grip. With her lower lip clamped tightly between her teeth, she continued to make continuous suppressed sounds.

Rhythmically I kept on fucking her for a long time, enjoying the sensation of the tight embrace of her love canal. She rode along, meeting my thrusts with counter thrusts, uttering an endless array of squeals and grunts of delight. Slowly I felt myself ratcheting up, the friction against the tight embrace of her pussy taking its toll.

She sensed it too, as she pulled me closer to her and hoarsely whispered, “Take me doggie, take me from behind.”

I pulled out as she turned on all fours, her knees planted wide, looking back at me. Her drenched pussy lips were like petals hanging from between her legs. I saw her flinch as she put weight on her injured knee. Gentlemanly, I enquired, “What about your knee?”

Unladylike she responded, “Fuck my knee,” and hesitated for a second, then grinned wolfishly and said wryly, “Rather fuck me, finish it off.” She hollowed her back to expose herself even more.

I touched her pussy with the flat of my hand first, allowing my fingers to play, for a few seconds only, with her lips, tumbling like tracery from her slit, then entered two fingers and finger fucked her quickly. She was very wet and her distended lips flared wide in anticipation of my stiff rod about to enter her. I hesitated to fully appreciate the view but impatiently she took up a rhythm.

Without further ceremony I entered her from behind, my stiff dick welcomed in silent salute by her entrance. She leaned forward onto the pillow to make her tunnel even tighter, if that was at all possible. Then I started fucking her, slowly at first, but soon my urgency grew and I pounded faster, allowing the passion to get the better of me. Spiritedly I went along my business, my hands groping for her wildly swaying tits. She took up her continuous wail again, as she too was quickly again moved on to a plateau of ecstasy.

Then, with consequential waves of warm physical delight washing over me, for the second time that night, I deposited my seed deep inside her womb. Whether it was the warm gush of my sperm hitting the back of her pussy, or if she was on the edge anyway, I do not know, but she immediately followed me down the path of climatic bliss. Then, not unlike a baying carnivore whose mode of copulation we were imitating, she again loudly announced her delight for all the world to hear. Finally, the spectacle over, she collapsed forward, with me on top of her.

“Jesus Christ,” she muttered into the pillow. Whether in gratitude or in despair was unclear. It was hot, and we were both drenched in sweat. I rolled off her and stretched full length next to her, thoroughly spent. Naked, panting and sweating we laid stretched out on the bed, for a while.
She turned on her side and looked at me. “Jesus Christ,” she repeated quietly, still breathless. “What is it with these explosive bouts of fucking? I thought you said you were a lover, not a fucker.”

“I said that,” I acknowledged, “but I also said that when called upon, I know how to fuck. The emphasis here is on ‘when called upon.’ You are not holding back much yourself now, are you?” I grinned to take the edge off my remark.

She grinned back. “A shameless hussy, that's what I am,” she said in mock outrage. “At most I was supposed to reluctantly allow you to have your way with me, just enough to earn my twenty-five grand. And yet, here I am, the insatiable one.” She looked away, suddenly shy. When she looked at me again, there was a slow smile on her lips. “I must confess, though, I needed this. I did not know how much until you touched me for the first time. The last two weeks were really very stressful. I needed…”—she hesitated for a moment—“release,” she finally said.

That made me wonder. “Would you have,” I said in an enquiring tone, “gone to bed with me had I made a pass at you earlier without offering the money. You know, a boy and a girl in unusual circumstances, together in a bedroom, the one half naked, the other very horny?” I lifted my brow in anticipation.

Her hand casually stroked my chest as she was silent for a while, thinking. Then she said, “Probably not. I probably would have declined you politely, slightly offended by what I would have seen as an opportunistic move by a desperate dirty old man. I did not see the boy and girl thing. Don't be offended, but I saw you as an old-fashioned older gent, courteously assisting a damsel in distress without ulterior motives. For me, there was no ‘boy-girl’ magic in the moment. Sorry.” She pulled her face into what was supposed to be an apologetic expression.

Then she continued in a conciliatory manner, “But I did like you. I do like you. You were, and you are, gentle, considerate and helpful. If I did not like you, I would probably not have finally agreed to our…”—she searched for a word—“business arrangement.” Again, she was silent, then added with a mischievous smile, “in any case not at the price agreed. Maybe for another twenty grand or so.”

A frown suddenly creased her pretty brow. “Would you have offered more, had I not agreed to the twenty-five?”

With my male ego somewhat wounded by her earlier confession, I responded curtly, to get back at her a little. “I would have gone to thirty. I wanted you very much.” Quietly we laid side by side for a while, the buoyant mood a little deflated by the sudden reminder of the contrast between the make-believe of our little love nest and the stark reality of our arrangement.

Her fingers trailed lightly across my body and played with the tuft of hair on my chest. It followed the trail of soft fur down across my navel to between my legs. Softly she fondled the useless appendage resting there, then moved down to cup my balls. She sighed contently and nestled against me. I am not one for post coital cuddling but have paid good money for her attentions, so I was happy to let it ride and simply enjoy the unfamiliar intimacy of her gentle caresses.
When I opened my eyes again, the light of early dawn weakly tinted the sky beyond the large windows. She was breathing softly and regularly next to me, her mouth slightly agape. The apartment was stuffy from lack of fresh air and the latent heat of the previous day.

I rolled off the bed and padded the short distance to the bathroom. Without bothering to turn on the hot tap, I stepped into the shower. The cold water felt good on my body. I stood there for quite a while, allowing the water to wash away, not only the stickiness from my body, but also the festoon of cobwebs from my mind.

Suddenly, softly and tentatively, I felt her hands on me, stroking my back, then my shoulders, as she joined me. I turned to look at her. Her face, framed by the dark hair, was like a pale moon in the half-light, as she looked up at me. I watched the water streaming off her body, little waterfalls off the tips of her breasts. Between her legs, the hair was drenched, clinging in lost little tufts to her smooth skin.

In a small voice she asked, “Are you going now?”

I smiled and replied, “I am. Remember we agreed on one night only.”

Disappointment flickered in her eyes. “That we did.” She hesitated, “But it is only just getting light outside, the night is not quite over yet.” She dropped her hands to touch my limp dick. Then, smiling sadly, she said. “If I can get this going again, this one is on me.” With that she dropped down on her knees and took me into her mouth. Gently she sucked me, her hands massaging my sack.

It was morning and despite the cold water and the strenuous activities of only a few hours ago, I was quick to respond. I felt myself stiffening rapidly in her mouth.

In the confined space of the shower cubicle, I pulled her up. Her wet, naked, body pressed against mine, her breasts soft and sensuous against my chest. I held her tightly, while she looked up into my face. If I was allowed to kiss her, this would have been the moment.

She must have sensed it too. “Remember,” she whispered, “this one is on me, the kissing rule does not apply.” With that she raised herself on her toes and kissed me softly full on the lips. For a long time, we kissed, her tongue darting into my mouth and mine into hers. Her soft lips were all I imagined.

I held her slim body tightly against mine. Holding her butt, I lifted her slightly off the floor, and allowed her to wrap her legs around my waste. Then I entered her again, slowly, tenderly. She uttered a loud moan of delight. Joined together like that, we rocked to and fro in the confined space of the shower for a short while, staring into each other's eyes, the water streaming down our bodies.

Then she shivered. Still copulated, she looked into my eyes and said, “It's cold. Take me to bed.”

I laughed, my breath caught in my throat. Croakily I said, “Those words are the most beautiful words I have ever heard. What more can a man wish for, to be asked to be taken to bed by a beautiful woman like you.” Holding her tightly with her legs around my waist and her arms around my neck, still copulated, I carried her into the bedroom.
Unceremoniously I dumped her wet body on the bed and tumbled upon her, my dick still buried deep inside her. She laughed joyfully and rolled us over, to straddle me. Then she started moving up and down my stiff rod.

“This one is on me,” she repeated. “You don't have to do a thing.”

Very slowly she moved up and down on me, her hands caressing her own body. Our eyes remained locked. She was provocatively silhouetted against the grey of the growing morning light, my fingers tingled with excitement, yearning to touch her. My eyes drank in every detail, imprinting it into my memory for later reference.

Then, in the same seductive voice she used earlier that night, she started whispering. “Now we are going to make love. We have fucked enough.”

With smoky eyes she looked at me as she continued to slowly slide up and down on me. The sensation caused by the tight embrace of her pussy was incomparable. Her muscles clamped around me as she moved up, released as she moved down. With her left hand she steadied herself, while her right softly caressed her pussy lips around my shaft as I moved in and out of her. The sight of her moving on top of me excited me beyond description. Her beautiful breasts juggled provocatively as she moved.

She clearly was also overwhelmed by the physical sensation of our slow movements, as she threw back her head, her lips parted and her breathing deepened. My hands roamed her body but returned to her soft full breasts every time, sacred as they were. So feminine, so full of life and promise. Witnessing her incredible beauty, fully and intimately dedicated only to me at that moment, I was unexpectedly overcome with emotion. Suddenly, acutely aware of the gloom of my own lonely existence, my eyes filled with tears and my breath caught sharply in my throat.

She stopped moving and opened her eyes at the sudden sound, to look down at me. Leaning forward, her naked breasts soft and warm against my chest, she kissed my eyes, her lips wet with my tears. Then her lips trailed down my cheeks to my mouth. Tenderly we kissed, long and wet. Her tongue traced the line of my lips, then entered my mouth softly, a tease to mine. Her closeness was intoxicating. The taste of her mouth, the smell of her hair and the sensation of her lips on mine, were exquisite. The overabundance of sensory stimulation made for such an intimate moment as I have never, ever, experienced before.

She did not move but allowed her pussy muscles to sporadically contract around my shaft, causing my dick to pulsate in response. At length, she slowly started to gyrate her hips against me, then increasing the pace, she moved against me at a rapid rate. This time, I was overcome by erotic overload. I felt the sensation creeping up along the inside of my legs towards my dick. There was nothing I could do to stop it.

I broke our kiss and whispered into her ear. “I am going to come.”

She stopped moving and lifted her head to look into my eyes. “It's OK.” Her eyes held mine.

“What about you?” I said, still croakily, “You haven't climaxed yet.”

She smiled sweetly and stopped. “As I said, this one is on me. I have had plenty of orgasms last night, enough to last me a while. And a girl does not always need an orgasm for it to be special.” She hesitated for a moment, then continued. “But let's rather do it this way.”
She pulled out quickly to move between my legs and took me into her mouth. Deftly she started to blow me. While her one hand massaged the base of my cock, the other squeezed my balls gently. Even with her head moving up and down, her eyes remained fixed on mine, and mine fixed on hers. Soon I was overtaken by an approaching climax, and I closed my eyes to groan loudly, arching my back against the waves of pleasure. I was vaguely aware that her face was showered by my juices, but was so consumed by my own gratification that I hardly paid any notice.

Slowly I relaxed back into the oversized pillows. Her little semen-drenched face peered at me for a few moments, a lopsided smile playing on her lips. Then, suddenly, the bright yellow light of the early morning sun exploded into the apartment. Instantly our cosy love-abode was exposed for what it really was, a cheerless, unfurnished little cote, perched on the top of a high building. Ruthlessly the bright light, through the tall windows, emphasised the evidence of our inappropriate liaison. Immediately, the mood shifted from high illusion to stark reality. Her smile faded slowly as she, too, realised that there now was nowhere to hide. The night was finally over.

Without a word, she got up and hobbled to the bathroom. Allowing her a moment, I followed. Suddenly there was an urgency for me to leave. Our business was done. Still naked she came out the bathroom as I went in. For a third time in twelve hours, I stepped into the shower to wash away the sticky residue of our love. Three times Clive, I thought. You had your three times with Faith, I, my three with Jo.

I dried my self with the same and by now very damp, towel and stepped back into the bedroom to dress. She was sitting upright against the pillows, the duvet covering her legs. Her upper body and breasts were naked. Her eyes followed me as I dressed wordlessly. When I was done, I turned towards her. “This is goodbye,” I simply said.

This time her eyes brimmed. “Please Phil,” she said, “take me with you, just for a few days. I don't want to be here alone. Your cottage on the beach sounds delightful. We can have sex all the time. I will never put on a stitch of clothes. Just for a few days.” Then lamely, she added, “No extra charge.”

I dropped my head before looking up at her again. “I am sorry Jo. I can't do that. As it is, I am already too fond of you for my own good. You have a life planned. A commitment. I really have to leave.” I sat down on the bed next to her, as I had the previous evening.

Silently she looked at me, tears running down her cheeks. She also caught the similarity between the present and the previous evening. From under the cover she extended her leg towards me.

"At least have one last look at my ankle. See if it's ok.”

I took her foot into my hand and tenderly stroked her ankle. There was little evidence of swelling, but there was a faint discoloration across the bridge of her foot. “Does it still hurt?” I enquired.

“Some,” she replied, “but only if I move too much.”

“I apologise for the strenuous activities I imposed upon this poor little joint last night. It was not my intention to ever overstrain it.” I said, gently mocking her.
She smiled sadly. “It was worth it.” For a long moment we looked at each other. Then she continued. “This is it then. At least kiss me goodbye.” The tears had dried and again there was a sparkle in her eyes.

As I leant forward to kiss her, she threw off the covers and laughed. “Not on my lips, on my lips,” she said and spread her legs wide, exposing herself to me. I smiled and bent down to kiss her full on her pussy lips, as one would on the mouth. I knew then that she would be OK.

As I moved towards the door, she said, "Phil, I will never forget tonight." I turned back to look at her. She chewed her lower lip and looked down at her hands. Then she looked up at me again. "It was more than just the sex, wasn't it? It was much more than about the money. There was some magic there too, wasn't there, Phil. Did you feel it?"

I stared at her. She was astoundingly lovely sitting up, crossed legged, on the bed like that, staring round-eyed at me, her naked glory bathed in the early morning sunlight. Then I confessed. "The money was just to tip the scales. I wasn't looking for any magic. The intention was for it to be just a business transaction. But it was there for sure, I felt it too." I hesitated, then continued, "And that is why I am running."

"But what about me, where do I run to?" she enquired, a tone of distress in her voice.

"Back to your life. Unpack your stuff. Make a home for yourself. Use some of that money to fly your fiancé down here for the weekend. Spend some time with him. Fall in love all over again."

"Will you call me sometime?"

"No, Jo, this is it. It was always meant to be a fleeting moment, and that is what it was. It's over now, I will cherish it, but it is over." I opened the door. “Bye Jo," I said quietly.

"Bye Phil," was the last I heard before I gently closed the door behind me.

*****
A ramshackle cottage on a secluded beach is a good place to do some thinking. For the rest of that summer, it was all I did. I slept, surfed, jogged, ate, drank and thought. My encounter with Jo shook me to the core. The lie I was living was exposed. My existence as a beach-bum was far from idyllic, even if the setting on the beach against the backdrop of the mountains was. It was the closest to happiness I was ever going to get.

Her beauty and our range of sexual activities, from vigorous fucking to tender lovemaking in the space of one night, effortlessly peeled away the coarse layers of protection I had so carefully erected around myself over the years. So much so, that I even cried in front of her. I have never cried in front of another woman.

Yet, as summer marched on, I convinced myself that it only was a weak moment. An emotional lapse due to unusual circumstances. In essence, I concluded, my solitary life was adequate. I thought about Clive a lot. The way he described his episode with Faith, the far-off look, the soft voice. There was no doubt that on some level his Faith was my Jo. That last day on the garage roof, Clive cried remembering. I, in turn, cried experiencing.

I thought about his description of the process of ‘tipping the scales’. His approach was rather barefoot, slapping a roll of money in front of a woman, asking her if it was enough for her to have sex with him. Yet, purely as a fantasy, it suddenly somehow resonated with me. It was the very rawness of the process that attracted me. The calculation of the cost of the product in comparison to the benefit, ignoring the undefinable and undeniable spiritual magic moments such as those could and should, hold. The focus always to remain on the transaction, rather than the emotional experience. There was something inexplicably intriguing about such a notion. Yet, probably due to my confused state of mind, I was unable to fully untangle the complex permutation of possibilities within the equation.

Maybe I should give it another try, I argued. I will find someone who will be persuaded by the money to have sex with me, for no other reason. Somebody, not a hooker, who will allow the physical intimacy to occur as the result of an agreed business transaction. I get what I want, she gets what she wants. It could not be simpler.

It was only in late autumn, during Easter, that I ventured out again, only because the first of the new year’s wines were available for tasting at some of the vineyards. There was a harvest festival at one of my favourite wineries, complete with long rough-sawn timber tables and benches under huge oak trees, copious amounts of wine and food, live music and with lots of fun to be had by all.

I saw her sitting opposite me, distracted by her kids, as at last I found a vacant spot at one of the long tables in the shade of a massive oak. Having tasted a number of younger wines, I have concluded that none was good enough yet and bought a bottle of ten-year-old full-bodied cabernet.

I couldn't help but to overhear their conversation, as I poured myself a healthy glass. Her two kids, a girl of around ten and a boy probably two years older, were nagging her about money. Her husband, his preposterous hat aslant, stood a few paces away, sheepishly grinning as he looked on. He was ridiculously dressed in striped short pants, long blue socks and a checked shirt. Even if I tried, I could not possibly have dressed in worse taste.
I overheard her saying, “For heaven's sake, how much more money do you want!” She dug in her oversized bag and pulled out her purse. “Here is fifty each. This is the last. Off you go and leave me in peace.”

As the children ran off, her husband continued his foolish grin. She looked at him and repeated, “For heaven's sake, you too?”

Still with the foolish grin, he responded, "Hey, the rides are expensive. I don't spend a lot of time with the kids. At least let me have this.”

Wordlessly she pulled another fifty from her purse and handed it to him. Like the kids, he ran off to where the whining sound of small engines and clouds of dust announced the presence of small quad bikes racing along a circuit between scattered hay bales.

Fully aware that I have had no option but to witness the minor domestic squabble, she raised her eyes to me and said, a little exasperated, “The joys of motherhood. Not only mother to your children, but also mother to your husband.” She sighed heavily and reached for her glass.

I grinned back. “Yep, I can see they are your pride and joy,” and raised my glass in a mock salute.

She smiled dryly, raising hers as well. “They actually are, well the children are. The husband…” She hesitated, a pause heavily laden with meaning, before she continued, “Well, husbands are what they are, are they not?” Self-consciously she took another sip. A half empty bottle of white was standing in front of her.

“I suppose,” I simply responded, still grinning, this time at her awkward phrasing.

“You're not one?” She asked, her brows raised, a slight smile on her lips.

I looked at her as I shook my head slowly from side to side. She probably was in her mid to late thirties. Her dark blonde hair was pulled back into a tight ponytail. A pair of sunglasses was lodged on top of her head, pushed well back. Her skin was a dusky tone and her eyes large and dark brown, peering at me from between long heavy lashes. Her mouth was wide and generous, with well-defined lips. The combination of blonde hair, brown eyes and olive skin made her very striking. I noticed how beautifully the colours of her hair, her eyes and complexion were echoed in the rich autumn colours of the surrounding landscape.

Against the impending autumn chill, she had on a short denim jacket over a tight white T-shirt, tightly hugging a pair of ample breasts. Above the edge of the table, I was able to just see the beginnings of a pair of blue jeans.

“Long divorced, no commitments, no dependents,” I said at last. After my preliminary observations, I decided she was worth getting to know a little better. Maybe even to see if an opportunity arose to test my new theory about Clive’s approach. I extended my hand. “Phil,” I simply said.

She bestowed a wonderful wide smile upon me, showing a row of white, even teeth. “Hannah,” she responded and shook my hand firmly. Little crinkles appeared merrily at the corners of her eyes and on either side of her pretty nose, three on each side, I counted.

“Hannah,” I repeated. “I love that name. It is so strong. Beautifully bookended by two well grounded ‘H’ es. Wonderfully symmetrical. From what I can see, it suits you well.”
She frowned uncertainly at my unexpected response. “What?”

I laughed. “It just that the name ‘Hannah’ is a palindrome, it can be read from either side. And the combinations and shape of the letters and the perfect symmetry make for such a beautiful graphic.” I hesitated for a second, then continued. “And so, do you.”

“How in the world,” she said after considering my words for a moment with raised brows and a slight smile, “can I be read from either side.”

“Now there is a question,” I responded, enjoying the verbal sparring. “It is an indisputable fact that you are a beautiful graphic, so let’s just say, you are as beautiful if I look at you from head to toe, as you are from toe to head.”

Her smile broadened and in a subconscious reaction to my flattering, she adjusted her glasses and smoothed her hair.

“Thanks for the compliment but I have to challenge that statement. You have not yet seen me from head to toe, or the other way around. I am sitting behind a table.”

"True, very true," I conceded, “yet, it does not take a genius to know that it is, or rather will be true, once I have had the privilege to see your full extent.”

She smiled and shrugged her shoulders, a little embarrassed. To change the subject, she asked, “So what do you do for a living, that you have such an appreciation for symmetry and beauty?”

“Me?” I asked innocently, looking somewhat perplexed, as if it the question could not possibly have been directed to me. “I am retired,” I simply said at last, after my little bout of play acting.

She frowned. “You seem a little young to be retired, what did you do before you retired?”

She tilted her head inquisitively, her smile somewhat diminished, as if she did not quite believe me.

“Yet, I am retired. A retired architect. I don't practice anymore. I don't need to work, I have enough money.” After studying her reaction for a moment, I added, “for a lifetime.”

Her question was short and direct. A no-nonsense girl. “Are you telling me you are rich?”

“Yep,” I replied, looking squarely into her beautiful eyes.

Her curiosity was clearly piqued. She opened her mouth to ask another question but snapped it shut, as she thought the better of it.

I motioned towards her wine. “Can I fill your glass?” I asked.

She nodded and pushed the bottle of white wine and her glass towards me. While I topped it up, I asked, “So what do you do for a living?”

“Animal health,” she responded curtly.

“A vet?”

“Nope, not quite. I studied to be a vet but dropped out. I am a rep for a pharmaceutical company selling animal health products to vets, farmers, that sort of thing.”
“Ah, so you travel a lot?”

“Some,” she responded, peering at me over the rim of her glass.

“For long periods of time?”

“No, normally just a night away from home, sometimes two, but not very often. My husband is not very good at running the household without me.”

“I suppose mostly to the rural areas, to farming communities?” I enquired, trying to keep the conversation going.

“Yep,” she responded. “Next week Wednesday and Thursday day I am in Robertson.”

Roberson was a little rural town about two hours drive away, deeper into wine country.

“That's nice, I love Robertson. I go there quite often to buy wine. And I love the little hotel. It so old fashioned, so solid. As if it had been there forever.”

The band was playing a catchy tune. She rocked her shoulders gently to the beat of the music, silently mouthing the words of the song as she listened.

“That's true,” she agreed, still moving with the rhythm of the music. “That is where I usually stay as well. And the food is great.”

Our conversation was getting a bit boring. I was silent for a moment, considering the possibilities. She was attractive enough. Her relationship with her husband appeared a little strained. Even though her financial situation probably was not quite dire, I was sure she could do with a little extra cash to spend on herself. Her reaction, when I mentioned that I was rich, was a giveaway. Clive, I thought, let's give it a try.

“So, what do you want from life?” I asked, leaning back against the rough sawn timber backrest. I knew full-well what her response was going to be and I also knew how I was about to respond in turn.

“To be happy,” she responded, unknowingly following the script.

“And you have found happiness?”

“I think so. I have two beautiful children, and I am happily married. Isn't that what everyone wants?” she said, with the emphasis on ‘I am’.

I allowed the silence to lengthen, then quoted Clive’s words of so long ago. “Maybe. But a friend once remarked that happiness can't buy money.”

She smiled broadly at my remark, flashing the crinkles. “That is rather cynical and although it might be true for some, I strongly disagree. There is a lot to be said for surviving on love and water, or living in a little house with a leaking roof, as long as you are with someone you love.”

“Hah,” I said quickly, “There you are then, a romantic at heart.” I leaned forward to continue in a more serious tone. “You do not really believe all that, do you? The kids need money for rides and so does the husband. There are bills to pay, school fees, mortgage repayments. The love and water and leaking roof scenario really is only make-believe.”
Her smile faded as I poured cold water over her illusions. “So, if you are so cynical, what do you have to live for?” she asked, her eyes suddenly serious.

“Oh, I live from day to day, drifting from one little island of ‘happiness’ to another. Right now, chatting with you is a little island of happiness. I expect nothing more from life, nothing more from today.”

“Nothing more? No one to love, nothing to look forward to? Surely that can't be true. If it is, it's sad. Especially if you are as well off as you make out to be.” The smile and crinkles had returned, her eyes were soft and sympathetic. She was enjoying the exchange of wit as much as I was.

It was also the opening I was waiting for. “Well, of course you are right. There always is something more to strive for or something to desire. Sipping wine under an old oak tree on a late autumn afternoon with a beautiful woman across the table, one cannot help but desire the woman.”

Her smile faded slowly as she comprehended the meaning of what I had just said.

“Are you hitting on me?” She leaned back, her body language suddenly defensive. “I do not believe that. I must say, it's been years since someone made a pass at me.” She smiled Sadly and looked at me. Shaking her head, she repeated, “I don't believe it.”

Despite her defensive reaction, I could see that she was flattered, her eyes bright. Then, probably privately scorning herself for the unbidden feeling of excitement stirring in her breast, her reaction quickly turned to indignation. She leaned forward and in soft, measured tones, she said, “I am not available.”

She stood up to go. “It's getting late, I have to go.”

She was all I expected, well shaped, the jeans maybe a bit too tight for her mature figure. A cynic would call it ‘mutton dressed as lamb’, but I thought of it as ‘looking well for her age’.

“It's true, beautiful from head to toe and vice versa.” I said quietly, just loud enough for her to hear. “Let's just have coffee,” I continued hurriedly, scared that she would rush away. “Or lunch. You say when and where.”

She leaned forward, her eyes flinty, jaw firmly set as she repeated, “I am not available.”

I knew I had to keep her attention and promptly made a bold move. Looking her straight into the eyes, I said, “I will pay you ten thousand if you have coffee with me.” I took a chance, of course, it could have gone either way but I was quite confident that she would not be able to resist such an offer. Maybe not so much for the money but because the suggestion was so outrageous. I was equally confident that, given the opportunity, I would be able to tip the scales in my favour and go beyond just coffee. I viewed the ten-grand as a deposit. A confirmation of intent, as it were.

I was right. She sat down again immediately, her square little jaw suddenly slack in surprise. “You will pay me ten thousand just to have coffee with you?”

“Or lunch,” I responded quickly, pushing my luck.

She stared at me for a while, her mind clearly in turmoil. Suddenly distracted, her eyes flashed over my shoulder. “My husband and kids. I have to go,” she said and got up again.
“I'll tell you what,” I said hastily. “I'll meet you for lunch in Robertson on Wednesday. The hotel at one. If you are there, you are, if not, I will understand and not bother you again.”

She nodded silently, thoughtful for a moment, then suddenly smiled brightly, crinkles and all. “With the ten-grand?”

“With the ten-grand,” I confirmed and smiled back.

I watched her as she walked away to meet her husband. She was taller than I had thought. From behind, she looked very attractive. Her body beautifully filled every available bit of space within the tight jeans. The boots and short jacket completed the picture of a no-nonsense country girl. A slight thickening around the waist added a dimension of maturity to her full, lush figure.

Probably aware I was watching, she hugged her husband tightly and kissed him full on the mouth before, like a mother hen, she gathered her children around her. I smiled to myself. There was no doubt in my mind that during the next few days, she was going to be a lot of soul searching.

Wednesday dawned cold and stormy as autumn made way for winter. I left for Robertson shortly after nine. In an envelope I had ten-grand in cash and optimistically, another fifteen in my pocket, just in case. I reckoned that if Jo was prepared to accept twenty-five, then surely Hannah would fall for the same, if not less. Time will tell that indeed I was sorely mistaken.

The weather had cleared somewhat as I arrived in Robertson, half an hour before lunch. However, over the distant mountains, ominous dark clouds were again gathering. A new storm was brewing.

I went straight to the hotel. The eternal optimist, I headed to reception to book a room for the night. The receptionist was a plump happy go lucky young girl whose already broad smile unexpectedly broadened when I mentioned my name.

“Here you go, sir,” she said as she pushed the key towards me. There was a folded note along with the key. “And there is a message for you as well.” She added with a twinkle in her eye. I smiled back conspiratorially as I took the key and note.

The note was from Hannah. It was written in a strong feminine hand, short and sweet. ‘Phil, I cannot make lunch. Can we rather do dinner, say six?’

My heart jumped. There was a short PS. “Same price.”

I looked up from the note into the eyes of the still smiling receptionist. “Good news or bad?” she asked.

“Time will tell, but it could have been worse. What's for supper?”

“Ah, tonight is special because of the cold weather. A choice of lamb stew, various curries, salads, veggies. Very good.” Her enthusiasm was infectious.

“A table for two then, at seven. What wines do you have?”

Her enthusiasm waned somewhat. “We have some reds and whites, yes, but our selection is somewhat limited.” She leaned in to whisper, “I think it might be better if you bring your own.”
I returned just before six. A fire was roaring in the lounge, and I settled into a deep comfortable chair to thaw. It had snowed on the mountains and was very cold. The rain and wind had started again. Despite the cold, I had taken the opportunity to spend a pleasant afternoon visiting a number of wineries. I was well armed with a few cases of excellent wine for my cellar.

It was a few minutes after six when she breezed in, wind-blown but ravishing. She wore her trademark tight jeans, this time with long tan leather boots, topped by a thick, knitted polo neck jersey. Over her shoulder was a large leather swing bag, the same tan colour as her boots.

Her hair was pulled back, but instead of the pony tail, this time it was held by a claw so that it fell loosely down to her shoulders. Her golden hair, skin tone, huge brown eyes and tan-coloured bag and boots, along with the reflection of colour of the fire light created a rich golden image as she hesitated for a moment in the doorway. The epitome of a beautiful, mature, strong and self-assured woman, quite oblivious of her allure.

“Hi Phil,” she said and extended her hand towards me.

I stood. “Hi Hannah,” I said and took her hand in mine. Her handshake was firm, yet feminine. Her gaze was frank, searching my face for clues to my thoughts.

“Please sit down. Can I offer you something to drink?”

She motioned to my glass of red wine. “The same please.”

I signalled the waiter, who was well briefed beforehand, to bring a glass of red from my private stash.

“I took the liberty of booking a table here, unless you want to go somewhere else?”

“In this weather? No thanks, this is nice and cosy.”

We spent an hour making small talk, during which time I established that they were living on a smallholding, keeping, amongst other animals, two horses. Her husband was a moderately successful (I read between the lines that it is was a euphemism for a moderately unsuccessful) estate agent, and that she considered them to be a happy, average middle-class family. In other words, her life was average by any standard. I told her as little as possible about myself but she did manage to drag out of me that I lived in a cottage on the beach, that I have no specific purpose in life and that I consider myself as happy as I will ever be.

A few minutes after seven the waiter appeared at my shoulder, indicating that our table was ready. Outside, the storm had arrived and rain was beating forcefully against the large windows. The dining room was empty bar for two unhealthy looking middle-aged men in ill fitting suits, both probably traveling salesmen, busy demolishing a bottle of whiskey while pecking away at some snacks.

Our table was close to a fire, next to the large plate-glass windows overlooking a drenched and windswept garden. Chivalrously I seated her, before taking my own seat. I tasted the wine, (my own) and nodded to the waiter. We waited in silence while the waiter poured.

“Cheers,” I lifted my glass. “To a beautiful woman.”
In silence she lifted hers, took a sip and put it down. She knitted her fingers under her chin, planted her elbows on the table and peered at me. “So, here we are, upgraded from coffee, right through lunch to dinner, all at the same price.”

“I consider myself privileged. And thank you.” With that, I took out the ten-grand, neatly tucked into an envelope, and placed in on the table. Her eyes followed the money.

I was about to continue when we were interrupted by the waiter. I watched her as she placed the order. There was an economy of movement about her. She was certainly not given to much demonstration. Quickly she pointed on the menu to what she wanted, smiled one of her brilliant smiles, crinkles and all, and handed back the menu. I did the same, sans the brilliant smile.

She looked at the thick envelope and asked, “Is it really worth all that money to you to simply have dinner with me?”

I nodded. “Please don't take this shameless flattering, but I do think you are extraordinarily attractive.”

She smiled. “Even with this thirty-eight-year-old body and after two children?” I could see she enjoyed the flattering, so I continued.

“That is exactly what makes you so attractive. You are so much a woman, so rich and full of promise, it takes my breath away.”

This time she laughed out loud. “Slow down with the compliments, no need, you are paying me for my time.” She cleared her throat self-consciously behind her fist, “I am nothing but an ordinary housewife.” Sipping her wine, she waited for my response.

“Well, that is simply not true. Apart from the fact that you are beautiful, you are unassuming, direct, a no-nonsense type of woman. I like that.”

A slight frown creased her brow and said sharply. "I don’t like to be typecast. I am not anybody's 'type of woman'. I am what I am."

I was taken aback by her abrupt response and backtracked quickly. "My apologies. I don't mean you are just one of a herd of other no-nonsense women roaming about. I mean that you are a woman apart from the others. You are different."

She was about to respond, the frown still visible, when the waiter once again interrupted, this time with two heavily laden plates. The aromas were wonderful. Suddenly there was a small, uncomfortable silence between us. I topped up our glasses. Hers was almost empty, as she had been drinking steadily. We both were quiet for a while as we tucked in. I gave her a sidelong glance as we ate. Her movements were quick and decisive, no frills.

“So what do you expect from me?” she asked at last, between bites, “for ten-grand.”

“Nothing much. Dinner, a bit of your time. That was the agreement, was it not?”

She was silent for a while, enjoying her food. “Well ten-grand seem an awful lot of money to pay for something I would enjoy anyway.”

It was my turn to laugh. “Well, ‘would enjoy’, probably, but not ‘would have enjoyed’, not without the ten-grand incentive.” Then, gathering my courage, I quickly glanced at her and
continued. “Since you mentioned it, let's add another ten-grand to do something else you will also enjoy. Allow me to sleep with you tonight.” I watched her reaction carefully.

Slowly she put down the fork on her plate before folding her arms. For a while she stared down at her food. Then her eyes lifted, the expression unforgiving. There was no smile, as she said. “Do you really mean that? You will pay me to sleep with you?”

Once again, taken aback a little by her reaction, I allowed the silence to lengthen. “I do, I will.” I said at last.

Frowning deeply she said, “What are you trying to achieve? Are you just a rich guy going around trying to get women to sleep with him for money?”

I could see she was not really upset, yet, for decorum sake, she had to pretend. Even so, whatever I said next was going to determine the outcome of the evening, so I backed off a little.

“I am sorry if I upset you. I didn't mean to. It really is no big deal. What I will admit it that it is a little game I play, a fantasy if you will. But I do not go around finding woman to sleep with me for money, as you just said. That is not what I do. I liked you when I saw you. You are attractive, you are strong, independent, mature and beautiful.” I paused a little, “and I want you very much.”

I hesitated and took a sip of wine. Momentarily I was distracted by the two business men staggering past us towards the door, clearly worse for wear. Outside the rain was hammering against the plate glass. Then I looked back at her. Her eyes were fixed on me, but she remained silent.

I continued. “You know and I know that under normal circumstances I would never have had an opportunity to sleep with you. You made that point very clear the other day when you emphatically stated that you were not available.”

I was silent again, allowing my words to sink in. “For some reason I have a problem with long term commitments and relationships. There is no one in my life and it is unlikely that there ever will be. So, if I find myself powerfully attracted to a woman, like you, who, for all intents and purposes is unattainable, what are my options? I cannot pursue her, because I have nothing to offer her. I do not wish to court her because I have no intention to ever enter into a long-term relationship with her. So, what are my options?” I repeated.

She was eating slowly now, her eyes locked into mine. She put down her fork again and said, “You offer her an exorbitant amount of money to go to bed with you. That not only gets you the girl, but allows you to walk away without any obligations. Very clever.”

My silence was her response. Her mood had suddenly changed. She clearly was intrigued.

“How many times have you done this?”

“Only once before,” I said truthfully, then lied a little. “Some time ago. She was younger. She needed money and we reached an agreement.”

“And hookers?”

“Never hookers, it's not about the sex as much as it is about the woman, the chase, the conquest. I am very honest with you,” I said, feeling a little guilty about my distortion of the
truth a little earlier. Then I repeated Clive’s line. “With a hooker, one pays for time, with
someone like you; one pays for a privilege. An opportunity one would otherwise never have
had.”

Then, taking a chance that I have done enough talking to steady the ship and that the rest of
the talking must be done by the money, I took out another ten thousand, a thick bundle of one
hundred notes, this time not in an envelope, and put it on top of the other.

She eyed the pile of money, her eyes bright, then folded her arms and leaned forward over the
table, her face close to mine, staring me squarely in the eyes. “Ok, I will do it. It is going to
cost you, though. To start off, you will have to double that amount. Secondly, I call the shots.
When I say no, it's no. Thirdly, we fuck, we don't make love. And we fuck the whole night
through.” She hesitated. “If I am going to do it, I want my money’s worth.” She stopped,
realizing what she had just said and smiled lopsidedly. “Well, maybe not my money’s worth,
but my effort’s worth,” she ended lamely. Then added quickly. “And I want everything in
cash.”

This time I was totally taken aback by her sudden decisiveness, then slowly realised that,
once again, the joke was on me. She knew all along that she was going to go to bed with me.
Over the weekend she had had enough time to think about it and had developed a strategy to
counter mine. Forty-grand was a lot of money, even for someone with my means. But I could
hardly refuse. By now I have worked myself into such a state of anticipation that I was no
longer only thinking with my head. My dick was stiffening, already convinced that it was a
bargain at any price. Yet enough sense remained to respond.

“You want this as much as I do, don't you? Apart from the money. You secretly craved a
night’s good old-fashioned fucking without any emotional baggage.”

The flicker in her big brown eyes told me I was right.

"The thought had crossed my mind," she conceded with a tight little smile, her eyes still
bright.

“Let's do it then,” I said and pushed the pile of money towards her. “I'll get you the balance in
the morning.”

“I will meet you in your room in half an hour. What’s the number?” She got up from the table
and stuffed the money in her bag.

“Dessert, coffee?” I asked innocently, gesturing towards her vacated chair. The withering
sweep of her eye convinced me not to fool around. “Room one oh two, first floor,” I quickly
responded, rather meekly.

She turned on her heel and was gone. The waiter, a little bewildered by her sudden departure,
approached me with a look of concern on his face. I smiled and asked him to bring a bottle of
bubbly and two glasses to take up to my room. The expression of concern on his face slowly
transformed into a knowing smile before he scurried off to arrange the necessary.

I left the door of my room slightly ajar, so she could enter on her own. My immediate
observation was the hotel most certainly will not win any awards for interior decor. However,
it was clean and comfortable. The room was enormous, with high ceilings. The timber floors
glowed richly in the light of a very bright old-fashioned chandelier, suspended from the high
ceiling. A set of French doors in the one side-wall, now closed against the incessant rain,
presumably led onto a small balcony. Despite the huge space, the room was rather sparsely furnished. An outsized brass bed was located in an arched alcove, with an easy chair next to it, while a small Victorian batwing dresser stood forlornly against the side-wall. The door leading to the bathroom was to the left, with a TV suspended from a dubious looking bracket against the wall next to it.

After a quick shower, I slipped into a fresh pair of jeans and a tee shirt. I opened the bubbly, tuned the TV to a channel with classic music and turned down the lights. I switched on the radiator heater and tried to adjust the setting. There was no point, the ancient heating system, when switched on, only had one setting; full blast. As if reflecting my upbeat spirit, it creaked merrily as it heated up rapidly.

A brief look through the glazed French doors confirmed the existence of a small balcony outside, overlooking a garden and the dark, wet, night beyond. The rain, chased by the strong wind, hammered fiercely against the glass panes of the doors.

In an attempt to curb my excitement, I breathed deeply. There was nothing more I could do, I was ready. Apparently so was she, because a few seconds later there was a soft knock against the door, before it was pushed open.

She stood there, framed in the opening, dressed in a sweater top, soft baggy pants and a pair of easy slip-on shoes. Her body was tall and rich and full of promise.

“Hi,” she said uncertainly.

“Hi,” I repeated, equally uncertain. Suddenly I had doubts about my own abilities. Was I man enough for this woman? She was so much a woman. I suddenly felt skinny, old and decrepit.

I held out a glass of bubbly. She stepped forward to take it and sat down on the easy chair. Her ample breasts had a life of their own. Clearly, she was wearing nothing underneath.

“Are we really going to do this?” she asked, sipping slowly.

“Only if you wish, I would like to, but it's your call.”

She drained the glass and was quiet. I filled it again.

Then she said, looking up at me, “I have a confession to make.” Once again, she took a generous sip.

“You may have guessed it, but I would have done this anyway.” She looked down at her hand holding the glass. “Even for no money. I know the other day I said that I was not available and thought I wasn't. But I realised over the last few days that deep down, I really was. Very available. I crave another man’s attention.” Warming to the subject, she continued more rapidly. “For one more time in my life, I want to be carnally desired, to be had, to be conquered on a purely physical level. I want to be a slut. Nothing to do with the lovey-dovey stuff. I want to live intensely, and I want to walk away well satisfied.”

Her reference to the ‘love-dovey stuff’ made me think of what Clive had said all those years ago, ‘To some of them it is an event, an occasion to experience a good fuck without the lovey-dovey stuff. Some of them will dance on your dick like there is no tomorrow.’

She was quiet for a while, then continued. “In that sense, I am the same as you. How can I go looking for it, or start an affair that could damage my marriage and my relationship with my
husband and children? While I was thinking about it over the last few days, I thought that if I accepted the ten-grand, I could walk away afterwards, same as you. It's done, it's paid for. Let's move on. No emotional or long-term implications. I refused you at first because at the time, I was not even aware of these dark desires hidden somewhere deep in the grey grooves of my soul. It was only when I thought about it some more, that I realised I really felt otherwise.”

I quietly enjoyed watching her while she talked. When she paused for a moment, I opened my mouth to respond, but she was not done yet.

“So now that we know where we stand, I will give you back your money. I got carried away a little bit earlier when I asked you to double the amount. I just wanted to see how much you really wanted me.”

I held up my hands in protest, “No, no, absolutely not, the money is yours. And the other twenty. It is a business deal. Tomorrow we each can walk away without regret. That was our agreement. In the morning, I will go to the bank and get you the money.” I held up my hands again. “No arguments. It's cash. No one needs to know. Go and spend it on yourself.”

She looked at me over the rim of the glass for a moment, then smiled brightly before she drained the last of her drink.

“Ok,” she said without further protest and put the glass down. There was an unmistakable invitation in her eyes. The alcohol had stripped away most of her inhibitions. She had crossed the one line, she was ready to cross the other. I filled her glass again.

Tenderly I touched her face. Touched her for the first time. Her skin felt soft and smooth. I moved my hand to feel the shell of her ear, and then around to under her hair. With the fingers of my other hand, I touched her generous lips, stroking it gently. A current of electricity passed between us. Her large brown eyes were staring up at me in open wonder, her breath quick, her breasts heaving.

Then the dam wall broke. I had seen this in movies, Glenn Close and Michael Douglas in Fatal Attraction over the sink, and again in the lift. And for those who can remember so far back, Jessica Lange and Jack Nicholson in The Postman always rings twice, the hardwood floor fornication of Kathleen Turner and William Hurt in Body Heat. Unrestrained, raw sexual desire, ripping away each other's clothes, the almost violent copulation, and then release. I always thought it was make-believe, stuff from the movies. Until it happened to me that day.

With a small animal cry, she rose to her feet and grabbed me, pulling my mouth onto hers. Her mouth was hungry, warm and wet and tasted like wine. Her breathing was rushed. Urgently her hands moved over my chest, searching for the hem of my tee shirt. Simultaneously I lifted her top to remove it. For a brief moment our passionate kiss was broken to allow the removal of the restrictive garments.

I was vaguely aware of the soft mounds of flesh against my chest but my hand had already slipped inside her panties to feel for her pussy. It was generous and wet, very wet. I grabbed a full hand of soft pussy flesh and tugged at it. More urgently she cried again when I touched her and urgently yanked at my belt, while I, with little regard for decorum, slipped her baggy pants and high-cut black lacy panties down her thighs to reveal her clean-shaven mons.
With equal disregard for modesty, my pants were hurriedly pushed down to reveal my dick, stiff as a steel rod. Her eyes flashed down to my manhood momentarily and her hand grabbed it to assess its state of readiness. Then, with a small jump, holding tight around my neck with one hand, she wrapped her thighs around my waist to support her weight. The other hand, still holding my dick, guided me inside her. Quickly and forcefully I entered her. As hard and as deep as I could. Once again, she uttered a cry of delight, louder this time, with her head thrown back and her long hair tumbling down in a swaying mass.

She was a tall woman of not inconsiderable weight, so I struggled to retain my balance. Tightly holding onto her bare thighs and with her arms and legs wrapped around me, I managed to take a few awkward steps towards the bed and still buried deep inside her, lowered both of us onto the welcoming covers. Vigorously I rammed into her a few times when suddenly, in convulsing spasms, she climaxed spectacularly. She cried out loudly, her body quivering, her legs clamping tightly around my waist to keep me deep inside her. There had been no slow build-up of increasing waves of ecstasy, just a sudden violent spasm of pleasure that quickly tore through her body.

Within thirty seconds of touching her for the first time, I had been inside her and another thirty seconds later, she had climaxed forcefully. I kept still, waiting for the convulsions to calm down. After a while, when the last of the aftershocks of her orgasm had winked out, I started fucking her again, slowly this time. Her pussy was not as tight as that of a younger woman, but she clamped around my dick with every move.

Her head was thrown back against the pillow and she continuously uttered soft ‘mmmmm-mm’, noises as I fucked her with measured strokes. Her hands spasmodically clutched at the duvet covers on either side of her. With this slower rhythm, I had an opportunity to study her body in more detail. The firmness of a youthful body had been replaced by the richness of maturity. The curves of her body were smooth and the proportions still those of a beautiful woman, even though a softness had settled upon it. Her neck was long and slender and her skin subtle as it rose towards her square little jaw, above which were her generous lips, now firmly clamped between her teeth.

Her breasts, naked and quivering, were substantial, more than substantial, I should say. They quivered attractively every time I banged into her. Her nipples were erect little buttons on large darker areolas, topping the rich mounds of flesh. Beyond that, her stomach was long and curved, with the memories of motherhood faintly visible in the traces of stretched skin. But somehow it made her more attractive, adding to the rich layers that made her so much of a woman. The stark contradiction between this obviously sex-starved woman with her deep need to be fucked, and the loving caring mother I had witnessed a few days ago, added to the mystery of her complex nature.

Without withdrawing from her, I leaned back, spread her legs and lifted them over my shoulders while I slowly kept on fucking her. This new position allowed me a better view of her drenched womanhood, with my dick slowly sliding in and out. Her pussy lips were a deep red, like the wine we were drinking earlier. Her little clit was turgid, glistening as it peeked shyly from underneath its hood.

I touched it lightly but her reaction was violent, her body jerked and her eyes flew open, fixing me for a moment with the same withering stare I had noticed earlier, before closing it again dreamily, allowing her head to drop back against the pillow. She was obviously still very sensitive so soon after her first climax. Having to find something else to occupy my
hands, I spread them butterfly wing-like and moved them up slowly, sensually along her stomach towards her tits.

I cradled her heavy breasts in my hands, my thumbs instinctively rubbing her nipples. The little buttons were not as erect as a few minutes before, but quickly retained their perkiness under my attentions. Her tits really were quite big, not the oversized balloon-types displayed in some girlie magazines, yet far from the bee-sting sized mounds sported by so many fashion models. They felt wonderful to my touch, soft, full and inviting.

So inviting that I allowed her legs to slip from my shoulders and withdrew from her. She moaned softly when I did. I shifted my position and leaned forward to take first the one, then the other into my mouth, sucking and licking gently. Then I traced upwards, to the little hollow of her neck and onto her full wide mouth. I kissed her lightly at first, but she responded hungrily, and our kiss deepened. For a while we kissed sensuously, experiencing as new lovers, the wonderful unfamiliar sensations of each other’s tastes and smells.

I broke the kiss to look at her. Her huge brown eyes stared back at me. I rolled off her, sideways.

“That was intense,” I said after a few seconds.

“Rather,” she responded with a weak smile. She hesitated for a moment, then confessed. “I had myself worked up into such a state beforehand that I was just about ready to explode. I just needed you inside me. I couldn't wait.”

I smiled back. “I’m not complaining.”

I allowed my hands to roam the surface of her body, savouring the richness of its contours. Every time, though, they returned to her full breasts. She lifted her upper body to allow her breasts to hang free. Now that I had unrestricted access, I used the flat of my hands to explore their curves, feel their weight, and with my fingers, investigate the shells of their hard little nipples.

“What do you like my tits?” she asked, eyeing me.

“I do. I think they are wonderful. Rich, soft, full of promise.”

“Not too big?”

“Never, just right. One could get lost in them for days.” I responded.

“Would you like to fuck them?” she asked, breathlessly.

I laughed. Fucking tits was not something very high on my list of priorities, but the idea clearly was exciting to her. She was living out her slut fantasy, after all. “Sure,” I said and straddled her.

She pressed her tits together to make a tunnel for my dick. Slowly as first I started moving up and down between her tits. Her eyes were locked onto my dick, watching it’s head appearing and disappearing between the mounds of her breasts as I moved. As she squeezed her boobs together, I tugged at her nipples quite forcefully which, at this stage were all but incandescent with arousal. Her breath raced through parted lips. She shifted her gaze from my dick to my eyes. Her huge brown eyes were looking, doe-like, into mine.
Tit-fucking was pleasant enough, but it was nowhere near rocking my boat. With my one hand I felt behind me for her pussy. Her mons was pronounced and smooth, devoid of any hair. Clearly, she had done some preparation for the evening's activities. My inquisitive fingers travelled down south to confirm my earlier preliminary observations. True enough, her pussy was extremely generous, open like a tulip.

I was gentle, aware that she was sensitive. Yet, she moved purposefully against my hand, rotating and pressing firmly against me. I slipped my finger in and out of her slit a few times, rubbing against her clit. She was very hot inside. Her breathing was becoming faster as her excitement grew. I wasn't too keen on another explosive bout of fucking just yet. Easy does it for me.

I stopped the tit-fucking and started to move down to taste her pussy, but she had other ideas. “No,” she said, “not like that,” as if she was the one paying for my services. Surprised, I looked at her. Eyes bright and with a naughty smile, she sat up and continued, “Have you ever seen the old movie, ‘The Sailor who fell from the Sea with Grace?’ with Sarah Miles and Kris Kristofferson?”

I confessed that I never had, but was aware of the movie. “Well,” she said, “this is how they did it.”

She turned around and stood up on the bed, leaned forward with her hands against the wall and parted her legs. She motioned for me to turn on my back and move between her legs. “Now you can eat me,” she said. I sat up against the pillows, legs extended. Her pussy was right there, in my face. I found her blatant sexual demands rather exciting. I touched her lightly. The first order of the day, for me, was to really intimately examine what was presented to me. Beyond her clean-shaven mound, her slit opened up like a tulip, from where her sodden inner pussy lips joyfully tumbled from their usual hideaway, enthusiastically welcoming the arrival of my exploring digits.

After careful scrutinization, I licked it, tentatively at first. It tasted delicious, just like an aroused pussy should. With my arms wrapped around her parted legs to hold her steady, I started to lick her more urgently with the flat of my tongue, from the heart of the blossoming tulip to the shy little pleasure button at the top of her slit. She expelled the air in her lungs forcefully and ground herself against my mouth. There was far more urgency in her than in me, yet her excitement was infectious. For some time, I worked her over thoroughly with my tongue, trying to probe as deeply as I could, into her love canal. I sucked as much as possible of the external decorations of her pussy into my mouth, almost as if to chew on it. Her reactions became increasingly urgent, with the initial squeals of delight turning into protracted moans of pleasure and eventually into cries of passion.

Suddenly her legs turned to jelly and she collapsed forward against the wall, before slowly sliding down onto my body, until we were again face to face. Her big eyes were bright as she looked into mine for a long second. After a few moments she suddenly turned around to face away from me and lifting herself, felt for my dick to guide it into her entrance. In the reverse ‘cowgirl’ position, her tunnel was much tighter. She moved up and down, squeezing me with her muscles, as we moved. It was my turn to gasp for air. By leaning backward or forward alternatively, she continuously changed the sensation. We fucked like this for a while with an ebb and flow of urgency. Eventually, unable to control my passion, I started to move quicker, pounding her.
She responded by pushing back at first, then moved forward on all fours, causing my dick to slip out. I groaned in disappointment but quickly realised that it really was an invitation to take her from behind. For a moment I hesitated to admire the view presented to me. Her knees were planted well apart, emphasizing her beautiful smooth butt cheeks and their prominent crack, ending in a sopping slit, decorated with the deep red of tumescent pussy lips.

She demonstrated her irritation at the delay by moving her behind invitingly from side to side, uttering a low growl. Smiling to myself at her impatience, I moved behind her and entered her again. Then, quickly overcame by passion, I started pounding her, slapping hard against her smooth butt cheeks.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck,” she cried, countering my moves with her own. “Fuck me, oh God, fuck me,” she continued, her passion quite untempered still, despite our earlier copulation.

My hands felt for her wildly swaying tits, but was unable to hold onto them, as our movements had become too vigorous. I fucked her from behind harder and longer than I have ever fucked someone in that position before. And she gave as good as she got.

However, the cumulative effect of all the fucking was taking its toll on me. I could feel myself ratcheting up towards a climax, unavoidably.

“I’m gonna come,” I shouted forcefully and repeated, a little more subdued, just to eliminate any chance of misunderstanding, “I’m gonna come.”

She glanced at me over her shoulder, “Then fucking come,” she commanded through clenched jaws, an instruction I immediately and joyfully obliged with. After another few vigorous strokes, and with much groaning and huffing, I exploded deep inside her, a blissful release of not only one load of love juice, but of a few months of pent up frustration. Without pausing the rhythm, she too exclaimed loudly, as she felt my warm seed flooding the inside of her pussy.

We stayed copulated for a minute more with me feebly pumping away, until there was not enough substance left in my dick anymore to stay inside. I collapsed back against the pillows, exhausted. She did too, turned and stretched out fully on her back next to me.

Our bodies were covered in perspiration and in danger of overheating as the room had become very hot due to the efforts of the over enthusiastic heater. I turned my head to look at her.

“So?” she said, looking back at me.

“So what?” I responded after a while.

“What is next?” She smiled, sowing the crinkles at the sides of her nose.

“A break?” I responded, a question in my voice.

“Well, maybe.” Her smile faded slightly. She did not sound very taken with the prospect. “But a short one. I am nowhere near done.” She was silent for a moment, then continued. “We are here now, we have fucked, we are fucking. I am cheating on my husband. I probably never, ever, will again. I want to make the most of this one opportunity. I want to be thoroughly fucked tonight.”
I laughed at all the ‘fucks’ and got up to, once again, try and adjust the heater. I also needed a bit of time to think. I was sticky and thought briefly of taking a quick cold shower, when the splattering of the rain against the doors caught my attention.

“All right,” I said, “but first come here.” Hesitantly she got up from the bed and stood in front of me, in all her naked glory. The soft light was behind her and turned her blonde hair into a golden halo. Her body was in silhouette, the richness emphasized by the play of shadow and light on the curves, as she moved tentatively.

After a long moment of silent admiration, which both of us enjoyed equally, I leaned forward and took her gently by the wrist. “Come,” I repeated and opened the door to the small balcony. Then I led her outside into the wild night. Immediately both of us were drenched by the cold rain, our hair flying violently in the gusts of wind. She squeaked at first as the rain pelted her naked body, then laughed jubilantly in response to the unexpected sensation. She raised her arms above her head and did a little jig of joy, which made her tits shook provocatively. In the borrowed light through the glass doors, I could see her nipples piqued from the sudden cold.

I reached out to touch her. She came to me eagerly, lifting her face towards me to be kissed. Her wide mouth and soft lips were warm against my mouth. Her tongue probed deep into mine. With the flat of my hands I washed away the stickiness from her body. Once again my hands roamed all over, from her heavy breasts, which, incidentally, received more attention that was strictly required, down her stomach, around to her soft well rounded arse and between her legs, where her inner lips had retreated into their hiding place, against the cold. She did the same to me, her hands softly fondling my, by now very much diminished dick and balls.

Finally, the cold became too much and drenched, we retreated into the overheated room. She laughed gayly and disappeared into the bathroom to reappear with two big soft towels. We dried each other slowly, giving, once again, extraordinary attention to tits, dicks and pussies. The loving attention slowly convinced my dick to once again respond in the positive. She noticed immediately and dropped the towel. Then, on her knees she took me into her mouth and started to work me over.

Satisfied at last with the fruits of her labour, when my dick had fully regained its earlier rigidity, she disengaged herself from me and raised her eyes to meet mine. Round-eyed, with mock innocence, while cupping my balls and stroking my shaft, she asked, “Are you ready for me?”

"Yep,” I replied, smiling. "As ready as I'll ever be."

She stood up and looked me square into the eyes. "This time I want to see you fucking me. I want to look at your dick entering me. I want to watch your cock disappearing deep inside my pussy. I want to see it sliding in and out, wet with my juices."

Once again, I was taken aback by her frankness, by the calculated way in which she was planning our bouts of fucking. Before I could say a word, though, without ceremony and in all her naked glory, she grabbed the little dresser and dragged it from its location against the wall across the floor to the foot of the bed. Its ancient brass castors, scraping grooves into the timber flooring, protested loudly against the unfamiliar motion. I cringed at the thought of guests in adjacent rooms, unlikely as it may be.
She carefully positioned the dresser at the foot of the bed and angled the mirror so that the whole of its rumpled surface was reflected in the glass. I was about to comment, when suddenly, she dashed off again towards the door, to turn to full brightness the lights I had previously dimmed.

I laughed. "You are quite the busy bee now, are you not? Where would you like me to be?"

She was quite serious now, her breath quick, whether from the physical exertion or excitement, I did not know. "On your back, on the bed," she said curtly.

Without any protest, I obeyed her command, propping my upper body against the pillows in order to have a clear view of the mirror. Witnessing her beavering about, has caused my dick to lose some of its firmness and it slumped lazily, as I lay back. She was not much disturbed by my apparent lack of interest, as without hesitation, she squatted over me, her back towards me, facing the mirror. Allow me to be clear on this, she did not kneel, she squatted. Her feet, angled outwards, were planted on either side of my hips to allow her knees to spread as wide as possible, in order to get maximum exposure of her pussy towards the acutely angled mirror.

Visible over her shoulder, reflected in the mirror, was her generous pussy on display, the inner lips once again jubilantly tumbling from the recesses of her sodden slit. This image was more than enough for my temporarily unenthusiastic dick to rapidly regain its earlier zealouosity.

Slowly at first, she rubbed herself against me, her pussy blossoming wet and red against my shaft. Fascinated she watched herself in the mirror while she moved up and down, her breathing growing increasingly more rapid. Steadying herself with one hand, she allowed the fingers of the other to examine the contrast between her soft, soaked pussy and my hard, engorged dick.

I was unable to see her face but her breathing, which had become quite audible, was testimony to her ever-increasing excitement. She rubbed herself against me a little while longer, up and down, before lifting herself higher. Then, for the second time that evening, she presented me with an unforgettable view of her smooth behind, where in the crack, her little bung hole perfectly punctuating the end of her spine. Between her legs, an ensemble of glistening pussy flesh was quite visible, plunging it seemed, from the penetralia of her essence. Her hand moved to between her legs where it felt for my dick to align it with her entrance, after which, slowly, she impaled herself on me.

I now fully understood why she was so excited at the prospect of watching me penetrating her. I witnessed, through eyes watery from pleasure, I must add, this deliberate, calculated act of copulation, engaged into by both of us for no other reason than lust. My excitement was intensified by the fact that I could not see her face. With her shapely naked back and the avalanche of thick blonde hair turned towards to me, for a while, she was more object than person. The personal connection was removed, only the intimate physical act of coitus remained. The very thought of the exorbitant amount of money I was paying for the privilege of fucking her, elevated my excitement to new heights, if that was even possible. It was the fulfilment of the ultimate male fantasy. Fucking each other for the sake of fucking each other. Eat your heart out, uncle Clive.

Mesmerized I watched as my dick slowly disappeared into her tunnel. The experience was extraordinary. It was a full-on assault on all my senses. The smell of woman and sex hung
heavily in the overheated room. The feeling of the inner walls of her love canal, parting, as they did, in welcoming my shaft, before closing again in tight embrace, was incredible. From behind, beautifully framed by the gap between her legs, my dick was visible as it slowly entered her, while from the front, reflected in the mirror, the mechanics of our sex were blatantly on display in the bright light. She uttered a long, protracted groan, as I entered her deeper. The amalgamation of smell, sound, touch and vision created such an overwhelming sensory overload, it took my breath away.

She simply sat on me for a long time, watching the reflection of our joining, her breathing regular but hurried. I felt her clasping and releasing around me before she slowly started to move. Up and down she moved, her eyes, I was sure, riveted on our sex organs, conjugated as they were. Her swaying tits were momentarily visible, reflected in the mirror every time she moved down. If she was carried away by this explicit display of male and female copulation in the bright electric light, I was totally enthralled. My heart was racing and my breath catching, while my eyes remained nailed to the multidimensional vision of our shameless fucking.

She took it slow at first, riding my pole with slow measured strokes for some time, the image of my dick moving in and out of her vividly reflected in the mirror. But passion eventually overtook her. She started to move quicker, with more urgency, her breathing more hurried, every move accompanied by a small, high pitched, squeal.

I must confess that I was not lagging much behind as far as the passion stakes were concerned. Not only was I gasping and groaning in perfect counterpoint to her squeals, I was equally spellbound by the reflected image in the mirror. Up and done she went, my dick sliding in and out of her pussy, now at a more rapid rate. Her wishes were fulfilled. This is what she wanted. To see every detail of our intertwined sex organs reflected in the mirror, no mitigation whatsoever offered by the bright light of the ceiling pendant.

I was surprised by how much this image stimulated me. If it was not for my earlier climax, I would have shot my load there and then. She, on her part, was on a plateau of ecstasy by now. No longer looking in the mirror, she was in a pleasure paradise of her own. With her head thrown back and her eyes shut tightly, she whimpered continuously while she wildly rode me like a rodeo champion.

I was also beginning to ratchet up. Her enthusiasm and the pleasure she took from the visual and physical stimulation was infectious. I tried to slow down, to make it last a bit longer, but she was having none of it.

There was nothing I could do to hold back any longer. For the second time that night, I cried, “I’m gonna come, I’m gonna come!” Her sudden reaction, this time, so much different from the previous, caught me totally off guard.

“Oh my tits!” she shouted, “On my tits!” With that, almost violently, she pulled out and fell on her back next to me. “On my tits!” she shouted again and grabbed my dick to vigorously pump it. Despite my extreme state of excitement, I had to bite my tongue not to burst out laughing. My concentration was suddenly lost and with that, my urge to climax. Yet, I allowed her to frantically work me over. This woman truly was living her fantasy.

Still stifling a laugh, I moved onto my knees over her, my stiff member swaying to-and-fro over her tits. Using her right hand, she vigorously continued jerk me off. For a casual observer, had there been one in the room, the scene would have been hilarious. The energetic
fucking, the urgent shouting, the hurried scramble for new positions and then... nothing. She continued to pump me, her eyes shut tightly against the impending shower of love juices. After a minute of no response, she opened one eye to look at me. I grinned a little sheepishly.

‘What?’ she asked.

“Go for it,” I said, “I am almost there,” I lied. My climax had totally receded.

Without missing a beat, she moved her head between my legs and started licking my balls. Her big juicy tits were wobbling attractively. I am not a big one for kinky stuff, as I mentioned before, not that shooting one’s load over a woman’s tits can really be considered kinky. All I am is a normal, missionary position, with a few variations, type of lover. To me, nothing is more pleasant than my dick buried deep inside a woman’s pussy, shooting my load up her love canal, feeling the very essence of her, as she pulsed around my rod, while kissing deeply, or staring into her eyes. The rest to me is white noise.

She was working me quite aggressively while I did everything I could to regain my previously impending climax. Yet it was not her vigorous endeavours that finally got me there, nor was it my attempts at mind over matter. It was the unexpected view of her inflamed pussy, reflected in the ever-present mirror, still acutely angled towards the bed. Whether it was by accident or design, I don’t know, but reflected in the mirror were her widely splayed legs, her knees drawn up and her pussy wonderfully presented once more, nestled as it was between her soft inner thighs, red and wet. It has to be said, and I may have said it more than once before, but there are few things in life so enticing, so utterly fascinating as a woman’s wet pudenda on full display, red, swollen and inviting, a shameless expressing of female sexual intent.

Notwithstanding her spirited ministrations to my dick with mouth and hand, she had moved her other hand to between her own legs. Her long, manicured fingers were gently paging her engorged pussy lips, the bright red of her fingernails in sharp contrast to the deep red of her labia. Intermittently, and with bouts of vigour, she strummed her little clit, arching her back to ride out her private waves of pleasure.

It was witnessing this unwitting show, that triggered a new approaching spasm. From the instep of my left foot first, then the right, as it sometimes does, it worked its way up along the insides of my legs to collide explosively at my crotch. “I’m gonna come!” I shouted, tilting my head back to raise my eyes heavenwards, as was quite appropriate under circumstances like this.

With me obviously rocking at the edge, she continued to vigorously jerk my throbbing dick to and fro. I could not hold back any longer, I finally exploded over her.

My juices sprayed the contours of her upper body, not unlike water from a fireman’s hose. And not unlike a fireman (or woman in this case) spraying the flames, she moved my dick from side to side to ensure an equitable distribution of my emissions across her breasts.

As effectively as water from a hose would be to douse a fire, so the soaking from my juices was to extinguished the flames of her passion. The fire inside her dissipated within seconds. When I was spent, so was she. We were both done.

After a few more idle tugs at my fast diminishing manhood, she allowed it slip out of her hand and leaned back against the pillows with a heavy sigh, her eyes closed and her fingers trailing absently through the milky juices scattered across her chest. Exhaustion overcame me.
like a heavy blanket and I flopped down on the bed, my eyes closed. Next to each other we laid for a while, our breathing slowing. The rain was still beating incessantly against the French doors leading to the balcony, but the wind had died down.

After a while, she rolled over and kissed me full on the lips. “Thank you,” she simply said.

Through half closed eyes, I smiled and watched as she silently got up and walked, her naked body shining with perspiration, across the room to the bathroom. The overenthusiastic heater had turned the room into the next best thing to a sauna.

I was vaguely aware of the shower going and after a few minutes, the door to the room opening and closing, before I descended into the deep sleep of the well-fucked.

The next morning was clean and crisp, as I headed back towards the city through the countryside. Lazily, the last of the rain clouds were lifting finger-like from the deep shadows of the valleys. The previous night’s heavy rain brought about a multitude of small waterfalls, brightly catching the rays of the morning sun, as they cascaded from the high crags of the surrounding mountains.

I had gone to the bank early that morning, as they opened, to withdraw the balance of the cash I owed her. Back at the hotel I found her at the breakfast table, eating toast and sipping black coffee. Wordlessly I slipped the brown envelope with the money across to her as the waiter, the same one from the previous night, placed a cup of strong vile smelling hotel coffee in front of me. When I glanced up at him in thanks, his face remained straight but with a twinkle in his eye, he winked at me as he retreated.

Hannah had noticed. “What was that?” she asked, motioning with her head towards the waiter. “A conspiracy?” I shrugged but said nothing, sipping the strong black liquid that was passed as coffee. She continued to look at me, her brow creased inquisitively.

“He organised the bubbly last night,” I said at last, with a crooked smile. “He knows.”

The corners of her mouth plucked slightly. Then she said emphatically, “He knows nothing.”

She was quite for a moment, as we looked at each other across the awkward silence. Then she smiled, a little more brightly. “He thinks he knows, but he knows nothing.” The sides of her nose wrinkled, yet the smile did not quite reach her eyes.

Pushing the coffee aside I finally said, quietly, “What a night, what a woman. Whatever happens in your future, never feel sorry about last night. To me it was spectacular. The money is nothing. It's not enough. The value of money can never be exchanged for the value of last night’s experience. Go away with a song in your heart and be thankful that you, that we, have had an opportunity to share this incredible experience.”

“I know, I know,” she responded and smiled, this time the smile included her eyes. “But a woman is differently configured. It’s harder just to walk away from something like this. And there always is the feeling of guilt, of deceit.” She was quite for a little while, then she grabbed the envelope with the money and held it protectively against her bosom. “But the money helps, retail therapy always helps.”

Relieved, I got up and extended my hand rather formally.

“Thanks, and goodbye, Hannah.” I said. She raised and grabbed my hand firmly.
“Go well Phil, I hope you find happiness somewhere in the future. And thanks for this.” This time she smiled brightly, crinkles and all, as she held up the envelope in a final wave of farewell.

Happiness, I thought as I navigated the last of the mountain passes towards the coast, the faint smell if the sea carried on the fresh breeze. Why would she think I am not happy?

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CHAPTER FOUR - LISA

After Jo and Hannah, I thought I had experienced enough of Clive’s ‘tipping of the scales’ for a lifetime. However, the uneasy feeling that with both of them I had drawn the short straw persisted. I had paid a lot of money on both occasions. Without doubt, I got my money’s worth, there was no denying that. Yet, I felt as if I had not yet quite experienced what Clive had described. He had said that the money was only to tip the scales in exchange for an opportunity you would otherwise never have had. That was true enough. He also said, optimistically, to my juvenile opinion at the time, that with him, the women had equally enjoyed the experience. His words were that ‘in no time they will be dancing on your dick like there is no tomorrow’. And again, he was right. It happened with both Jo and Hannah. They had walked away after a pleasant night of fornication, each with a fat lot of money. That somehow deflated me. I felt as if I needed my money back, as if on both occasions, the exchanges had been one-sided.

It felt as if something within the equation was missing. There had not been any real sacrifices from either of them. Hannah said as much. ‘How can I take money for something I will enjoy anyway?’ she had asked. On both occasions, the joke had been on me. That somehow didn’t feel right. There had to be something more. I felt as if some more weeping and gnashing of teeth were required before the scales were to tip, even if there was to be some dancing on my dick later. And afterwards, maybe a bit of wailing with some repentance in dust and ashes will be appropriate.

I will give it one more go, I decided after much consideration. Just one more time and only if I think it will be different this time.

One Saturday afternoon, four months later, with spring still strongly competing with winter for its rightful place, I was making my way back from an inland conference, where I had presented a paper on alternative building methods. My old Land Rover wheezed and rattled as we negotiated the winding road down the escarpment back towards the coast. After six long hours of driving, I was exhausted. And with enough road ahead for another six hours, there was no doubt that I will have to take a break for the night. I found myself in a sparsely populated region, sheep-farming country, with little rural hamlets few and far between. According to my mental map though, there should be a small town about half an hour’s drive ahead. Hopefully, I will find some accommodation there for the night.

The sunset over the escarpment was spectacular. Red skies at night, shepherd's delight, I thought, as I negotiated yet another curve. With the diminishing of the light came the cold. What had been a pleasant enough day quickly turned into a chilly evening. The cab on the Landy offered scant protection against the cold. The outside air carried with it a dire threat of frost.

The lights of the town suddenly became visible as I topped a hill. The road swept down the mountainside to double back at the bottom of the valley. There a dust road turned off the national road for a straight stretch into the little village. After passing a few houses, scattered about, the road entered the centre of the town, such as it was. The main street was flanked by a number of dreary buildings with dirty, plate glass shop fronts, most of them unlit. Though it still was early evening, not a soul was to be seen. With the deepening dusk and a few dust devils along the sidewalks, stirred by a wisp of cold air, it seemed as if an eeriness, almost a post-apocalyptic air, had settled onto the small town.
Further along the main road, right at the end, beyond the last of the yellow drooping heads of the streetlights, where the road once again disappeared into the gloom, a neon light, flickering intermittently, caught my attention. As I drew closer, I could see that the neon sign, suspended from an old double storey building, reluctantly proclaimed the existence of a hotel. ‘The Willowmore Hotel and Restaurant - vacant rooms,’ it sputtered resolutely.

Though it could have done with a lick of paint, the old building was quite beautifully preserved, as these types of buildings quite often were in deep rural areas. Not so much because of a sense of conservation, but rather because of a lack of economic incentive for change.

I pulled into the parking bay outside the front door and with much huffing and puffing, the old Landy came to rest under a cloud of dust, as thankful, I was sure, as its master, to at last have arrived at some kind of destination.

The lights were on but inside, but no one was visible. With my bag over my shoulder, I pushed open the door. A little bell at the top of the door merrily announced my arrival. The entrance hall was large, with an old-fashioned reception counter to the left, tucked in under the staircase. With the dark wood panels against the walls, the polished timber floors and heavy antique furniture, it was as if I had suddenly stepped back a hundred years into the past. A shiver ran down my spine as I recalled the eerie feeling I had experienced just a few minutes ago.

To the right was a large opening, through which a huge fireplace with a low burning fire, a couch and some easy chairs were visible. Beyond that were a few tables and farther beyond, were the brighter lights of what appeared to be the entrance to a kitchen. On one of the tables was a laptop next to a pile of books, some open, fanned out, as if someone had been working.

The walls were adorned with large paintings in heavily ornate frames, most of them clearly originals. I was studying one of the smaller paintings, a beautiful watercolour of a South African landscape, trying to make out the signature in the dim light, when suddenly a clear voice behind me said “It’s an Andersen.”

Somewhat startled, I turned around, like a naughty schoolboy caught smoking in the schoolyard. My first impression was that she was tiny. Tiny, weird and cute. I doubted if she was taller than five feet, hardly reaching my shoulder. She was dressed in a curious kind of ‘Pippi Longstocking-meets-French-Chambermaid’ attire. Her black skirt was short and flared wide from her tiny waist, with an equally wide white frilly apron. She had on a white blouse buttoned to the top, hugging her bosom agreeably, with long sleeves and tight cuffs. Her mass of jet-black hair was topped by a feminine little bowler hat, precariously balanced. Below the hat, two short and untidy plaits emerged on either side.

But it was the funky looking stockings, covering her rather short but very shapely legs, that drew my attention. They were patterned with bold, alternate black and white rectangles, each decorated with red Alice in Wonderland playing cards motifs, some distorted, as they stretched over the curves of her legs. On her feet were ankle boots with one-inch heels, for a bit of added height, no doubt.

With huge green eyes, she watched me. Her features were fine and regular, a sharply defined straight nose with a small rosebud mouth. She had a square little chin, with just a hint of a dimple, sternly set, as she looked at me. She was not only beautiful, she was flawless.
“Can I help you?” she said and then, promptly, when my response was not instant, she added bluntly, “you’re staring.”

“Yes, thank you,” I muttered, mentally pinching myself to make sure she was real. Quickly, I gathered myself and responded. “Yes, to the you can help me, no to the staring, I was admiring, rather.” In an attempt to hide my embarrassed at being caught gawking, I looked back at the painting and tried to change the subject. “It is rather beautiful.” I said.

“Admiring the painting or me?” she shot back, the white of her teeth flashing briefly in an indifferent smile.

“You,” I acknowledged. “Sorry I didn't mean to make you uncomfortable.”

I turned back to the paintings. “Originals?” I enquired.

“Yes, all of them. My grandfather’s collection.”

I raised my brows in surprise. They must be worth a lot. Then politely, to make amends, I asked, “Would you perhaps have a room available for tonight?”

“Eight,” she responded curtly. She had an air of defensiveness, quite an abrasive attitude, about her.

I looked at my watch. It was half past six. “I’ll wait” I said. “Is there somewhere I can have a drink and a bite to eat in the meantime?”

“Eight rooms,” she responded. “I have eight vacant rooms,” she emphasised, as if speaking to an idiot, then continued in a more conciliatory manner. “There are nine rooms in the hotel, I use one, the other eight are available.”

“Ah, in that case I will take the presidential suite.”

Her white teeth gleamed briefly again. She had a curious way of sporadically flashing a smile, somewhat detached, on and off, like the broken neon sign outside. No arguing, a pretty smile it certainly was.

“They all are equally presidential, or should I say un-presidential,” she responded cheekily, then continued. “You can have the one with the best bed, the one my great-great grandpa died on, in 1922.”

“Gee, but you are a feisty one,” I could not help to say, as she moved behind the reception counter to reach for a key.

Instead of the quick off-the-shelf smile, this time, unexpectedly, I was awarded with a brilliant smile and a self-conscious shake of her hair as she handed me the key. “I’ll take that as a compliment, thanks. Please sign the book.” A large leather-bound ledger was pushed across the polished counter towards me.

Signing my name, I remarked, “This probably is the same book your great-great grandpa used for his guests in 1922, is it not?”

She only shrugged and turned the book around to look at my name.
“Hi Phil,” she said rather formally, “My name is Lisa. Welcome to the Willowmore Hotel. I trust you will enjoy your stay. Allow me to show you to your room.” Her smile flashed on and off again.

With her leading the way, we ambled up the rather steep stairway. Her short skirt bounced attractively as she moved up the steps in front of me, allowing brief glimpses of naked flesh above the top of her funky stockings. Suspenders? I ventured to guess. No, certainly not, that will be far fetched, although with these bizarre surroundings, I would not have been surprised had she transformed into Frank N Furter of Rocky Horror fame and started singing ‘Sweet Transvestite’, from the top of the stairs, suspenders and all. Nothing seemed impossible.

The room was spacious with lovely wide timber strip flooring, a big window facing the street and a huge four-poster bed positioned against the opposite wall. The very bed her great-great grandpa died in all those years ago, I presumed. A bathroom was awkwardly tucked into the one corner, clearly a later addition.

As I studied the room, she leaned against the door jamb, arms folded across her chest, watching me. I turned around to face her. For a few long seconds, we looked at each other across the emptiness of the vast room. In reaction to my gaze, she self-consciously pushed back her hat somewhat to expose a high forehead, covered by a dark fringe of hair. Then, defensively, she folded her arms again, unwittingly emphasising her lovely breasts. The purist might have considered them a touch out of proportion to her tiny frame, but hey, who’s complaining?

“This is great, thank you.” I said at last. “Would it be possible to get something to eat?”

“The kitchen is closed, I am afraid. We had no bookings for tonight, so I sent the staff home early.”

I grimaced and asked, knowing full well it was not the case, “A McDonalds’ somewhere in town, perhaps then?”

She laughed mockingly and moved away from the door. “I’ll conjure up something to eat. A steak, French fries and a salad? That’s the best I can do.”

“Perfect,” I said. “And if possible, a beer and a bottle of wine.”

Her eyes flashed over her shoulder in mild irritation, as she walked away.

My nose led me straight to the kitchen half an hour later, after a satisfying hot shower and a change of clothes. She was behind the stove, frying onions, as I entered. An attractive looking solitary steak was on a plate next to the griddle, waiting to be fried.

“It smells great,” I said after quietly admiring her pretty little figure for a few moments.

“Beers are over there, in the fridge, wine in the wine rack in the pantry, if you don't mind helping yourself. Just check the wine prices before you select, there are some quite expensive ones.”

“Thanks, I don’t mind. But why only one steak, surely you have not had supper yet? Are you not joining me?”

“I am the hotel manager, the cook and the waiter; you are the guest. Normally nor the manager, nor the cook, nor the waiter eats with the guests.”
“OK, granted, but let’s make an exception this time. Or rather let’s say once the food is ready, you stop being any of the above and become a normal person having dinner with me. I will pay for your meal, as if you really are my guest.” I respond.

She smirked. “Dinner like a dinner date? Me, you? Haha.”

I cracked a beer and held it out to her. “Want one?”

She shook her head in response, then asked, “How would you like your steak done?”

“Rare,” I simply said and settled my bum on the edge of a counter, my legs stretched out in front of me to watch her work, sipping the cold beer.

She gave me a sidelong glance. “Guests are not allowed in the kitchen,” she said, curtly.

It was my turn to be mildly irritated. “Based on the fact that this guest had to get his own beer out off a fridge in the kitchen, that regulation cannot possibly apply.” Then I continued. “What about dinner with me? Just imagine how awkward it will be with me sitting in the one corner of the dining room, munching away, while you are sitting in the other, behind that pile of books, studying away.”

She turned around and struck a school girl ballet pose. With hands on her hips, the spatula projecting at an acute angle from one hand, feet at right angles to each other, left leg slightly bent and the knee facing outwards, the other locked straight, she looked at me. Her eyes examined me in that direct way I had noticed earlier. Her lips parted slightly as if she wanted to retort but then hesitated. Once again, we looked at each other for awhile. A half-smile briefly flickered across her face before she shook her head slowly.

“You are a difficult one,” she said, after a few long moments. Then she opened the meat cooler and took out another steak. “I will have a glass of red wine please, since you fancy yourself a temporary employee of the hotel. And check the prices before you open the wine,” she repeated, then, as an afterthought, added, “since you are paying for the meal, as I have been assured.”

I didn't check the prices. I checked the labels and selected a well matured bottle of Cabernet Sauvignon. Their selection of wine was surprisingly good.

“What’s with the outfit?” I asked, giving her a sidelong glance as I opened the wine. I splashed a good measure of the deep red into a glass.

She threw me a glance in return, unsure if I was mocking. Then, with quick movements, she flicked back of one of her plaits, took a sip of wine and flipped the steaks. While they were sizzling, she turned back at me. “It’s a little game I play,” she explained. “The outfit depicts my various daily roles in the hotel.” The half-smile again played around the corners of her mouth. “The hat is for the management, the apron for service and the stockings for customer relations.”

“Customer relations?” I raised a quizzical brow, sipping the last of my beer.

“Yep, the framers from the surrounding area come into town on Saturday mornings and usually meet here for lunch and a drink. My stockings are a hot topic of conversation amongst them, next only to the drought and the severity of the sheep’s bluetongue disease. I have quite a selection.” She giggled self-consciously and took another sip. “It shows you to what lengths I will go to solicit business, shamelessly using my body to attract customers.”
“Aha,” I said, as understanding dawned on me. A pretty girl running a hotel in town must be a huge attraction to the young farm boys, especially if she was a bit wacky. “I would have thought that they talked about your legs rather than your stockings.”

“That is true enough,” she said smiling, then continued. “I did ballet at school, so references to my ballerina legs are not uncommon amongst the more forward of the younger ones.” Distracted, she turned back to the stove again. “Probably more than only my legs. But if so, they are too polite to talk in front of me.”

“Any special farmer?” I asked after contemplating her response for a while.

‘Naw,” she smirked. “They all try, but naw...”

She plated the steaks deftly, added the onions, a generous helping of fries and a mixed salad, before she continued. “I have to finish my studies before I can seriously think of relationships. Hopefully by then I will be far from here.” She motioned with her head towards the bottle of wine. “Please bring the wine.”

With her short skirt swinging merrily, she marched out of the kitchen into the dining room, carrying the two laden plates. It was now fully dark outside and the lights in the dining room were low. Despite the nondescript piped background music, barely audible, the ambiance was quite cosy. Placing the plates on the table next to the windows facing the deserted street, she remarked dryly, “I hope the noise from the traffic won’t be too disturbing.”

As I held her chair for her, she removed her hat and visibly relaxed as she sat down. Her attitude less brusque, she again bestowed a lovely smile on me. Without the hat, her dark hair was in shambles, with the plaits just about untangled and the rest of her hair standing at all possible angles. Her hair in disarray and pixie-like baby bangs covering her high forehead, she looked soft, quite vulnerable, despite her earlier abrasiveness.

“And the studies?” I asked, once we were seated.

She sipped her wine, staring at me over the rim of the glass. I noticed that her fingernails were painted alternately red and black, to match the colours of her stockings, I supposed. Quite funky. With wide and innocent green eyes, she continued to examine my face. A little embarrassed by her frank stare, I started to eat. The steak was delicious, the fries crisp and the salad fresh.

“Research for an M Phil in Environmental Ethics,” she replied curtly, once decided that the question was worth responding to.

“Research or writing a dissertation?” I asked.

She took another sip before responding. “Still researching, I am saving up to register at the university next year. Or the year after, depending on my financial status. For now I am only doing research to write my proposal.”

“And that is what you are doing here, working to save money?”

Shaking her head, she scoffed, “Bah!” Then she laughed, a flat, silly little sound. In a sudden rush of revelation, she added, “No, the hotel belongs to my parents, or to a family trust, rather. They live on the farm about ten kilometres out of town. My mum used to run it, but my dad got ill, so now she is trying to run the farm while he is getting better, while I am managing the hotel. Both the hotel and the farm are scraping by, a kind of a fight for survival.
on both fronts. No, I don’t even draw a wage, things are so tight, the drought and the bluetongue disease, you know.”

Somewhat disconcerted by her impulsive and candid admission, she smiled wryly and looked down at her plate for a while before starting to eat again, slowly, her face hidden. I allowed the silence to lengthen, studying her while I sipped my wine.

“You?” she asked at length, glancing up at me from under her dark brows. “What do you do? What brings you here?”

“Architect,” I said and continued, “retired, I was at a seminar inland and am on my way back home.”

“OK, a seminar. And what did you learn?”

“I didn’t learn, I taught.”

Again, her wide eyes examined me over the rim of her glass. “Aha,” she said with a sardonic smile after a second’s hesitation. “An academic in our midst. And here I am trying to get enough information together to do a paltry little degree, not to mention working my butt off to find the money.” She looked down at her plate again.

I topped up both our glasses, which by now, were quite depleted. I sensed that she was vulnerable and lonely, desperate even, and that the abrasive attitude was nothing but a hard, defensive shell. I thought about the tipping of the scales. Was this worth a try? She fitted the bill, vulnerable but strong enough not to be needy, somewhat down on her fortunes. Beautiful in a diminutive way, she certainly was. And very sexy, the way smaller women often are. Like Salma Hayek and Eva Longoria, to mention but two.

“Cheer up,” I said, raising my glass. “Feel better. Look at life differently, find a solution. It cannot be so bad. You are young, beautiful, talented, intelligent, and you do own a hotel. How bad can it be?”

She smiled, leaned forward, quite close to me and raised her glass. “Thanks for the encouragement,” she said, again looking directly into my eyes. My heart fluttered a bit at her sudden close proximity. She took a sip, then added, with a fading smile as she leaned back, “You don’t know the half of it. There is very little I can do about my situation. And it is not good.”

‘How come? Surely if things were that bad, you could sell something, the paintings, the hotel, some other assets?”

Suddenly, defensively again, she frowned. “It’s not that simple. Everything is held in a trust, hotel, contents, farm, even the disease-infected sheep. Nothing can be sold without the consent from the majority of trustees. There are four, my parents, me and my brother. My mother and I want to sell, my father and brother don’t. To make it worse, my brother is gallivanting overseas, has been for years. But he keeps on saying he is coming back to take over the farm. So here I am, stuck with a hotel and a farm, neither of which is making any money. There is no way to raise any capital... no way out.” She sighed deeply and looked down at her plate, once again hiding her face.

I popped the last of the steak into my mouth and raised my eyes to the ceiling in a mock pose of deep thought. In fact, the pose was fake but the thinking was real. Uncle Clive, I thought,
hotel receptionists were your favourite. And you did say it's OK to pounce on them if they are a bit down and out, just to get them through a tough spot with the money.

Money clearly was an issue to her. But I will be taking advantage of her vulnerability, her loneliness. On the other hand, it is only sex, not even kinky, at that. Just good old-fashioned fornication between two consenting adults. Aha, I decided, consenting is the operative word here. I will not intimidate her into any situation without a way for her to get out. And with her abrasive attitude, I sensed that there will be adequate gnashing of the teeth before consent is given, if given at all. I will push her a bit, see where it leads but back off quickly if I get a sense of real distress.

To introduce a bit of comic relief, I cleared my throat and said, “Here’s an idea. You could marry me. I will pay for everything and we will live happily ever after in my shack on the beach.”

She looked at me for a long moment and then laughed. Laughed out loud. Not a snort or a grimace, but a throaty genuine laugh. I suspected the effects of the wine had something to do with her newfound merriment. Her eyes were bright and full of laughter when she eventually looked at me again.

“You are funny.” She continued to look at me, sipping wine. Then it was her turn to assume a mock pose of deep thought, eyes turned heavenwards. After a few moments, she looked back at me, her eyes still bright. “Maybe I should consider your offer. But how do I know your intentions are pure, mister? For all I know you are already married with a string of children and are trying to take advantage of a vulnerable young damsel. And judging by your mode of transport and your admission that you live in a shack, you probably are poorer than I am.”

It was my turn to laugh. I was quite nervous about my next move. “I am not married, have been before, but have not been for some time. What I really am at heart is a footloose, fancy free wanderer. I don’t have any children and am living alone in a cottage right on the beach. Even if the cottage really is more of a shack than a house and the Landy is held together with wire and duct tape, I have more than enough money. I just hate conspicuous consumption, hence the old Landy and the dilapidated shack.”

I continued, a little less jovial. “As far as my intentions are concerned, they may be not entirely pure but then again, I am not an axe murderer or a serial rapist, just an ordinary guy flirting with an extraordinary girl.”

I could see she was taken a little aback by my more deliberate response, also somewhat flattered. She giggled uncertainly before continuing with the game. The wine was most definitely taking effect. “Well,” she fluttered her eyes playfully and continued, “I will let you know that with this extraordinary girl, flattery won't get you anywhere, definitely not.”

This was my opening. “So, it would have to be more substantial than flattery, then.” I said quickly.

“Indeed,” she responded, as quickly.

“Like money?” I shot back.

“Indeed,” she repeated once again, a knee jerk response.
“Aha, I have lots of those,” I said and smiled sweetly. “How much?” I enquired.

Suddenly she realised what she had gotten herself into and backtracked quickly. “No, I was only joking, no, not money.” Mockingly she turned her eyes heavenwards again for a second before she continued. “And if it was money, you couldn’t afford it anyway.” She grabbed her glass and took two quick gulps.

I topped up our glasses again with the last of the bottle. Things were going swimingly for me. I have been able to get into a negotiation position without offending her, and she was on the back foot. What I needed from her was a number. Any number. That will lead to a firm negotiation and hopefully a commitment to hold her against.

“Try me,” I said quietly.

She was still smiling but less certain of herself. “You mean… What do you mean?”

Time to retreat a little, I thought. “No, no don’t worry. It’s just a game I play.” I smiled broadly, then continued. “What I meant was, hypothetically of course, how much will it costs to get anywhere with this extraordinary girl?”

She relaxed a bit. “Anywhere or everywhere?”

“Alright, give me two figures. First anywhere, second everywhere, a bottom line and a ceiling figure.”

“I’d say for anywhere it would be mmm… say ten-grand. But anywhere is not far. Everywhere is everywhere but that would be, say, unaffordable.”

I slowly got up while looking at her. Standing, I said, “Hold that thought. Let me think about that while I get us another bottle.”

When I returned, she had moved to the huge leather-covered couch in front of the fireplace, away from the windows. Boots kicked off and legs folded in underneath her, she stared vacantly into the fire. She must have added some wood as the flames were leaping enthusiastically. It looked very cosy.

She glanced quickly at me with one of her bright smiles, then at the bottle, while I filled her glass. Noticing the label, her smile faded as she did a double take.

“Hey, that is very expensive wine. That is twelve years old. It’s the very best we have. Are you sure you can you afford it?”

I smiled. “I know it’s the best, that’s why I picked it.”

I sat down on the couch next to her and said. ‘Why are you so concerned about what I can afford and what not? Let me worry about that.” I hesitated for a second, then leaned towards her in a conspiratorial way. “Let me tell you a secret. I am very rich. I hardly ever think about affordability. If there is something I want and I consider it value for money, I buy it.”

Wide eyed, she looked at me for a few long seconds, then forced a throaty laugh, clearly not quite convinced. “I worry about not getting paid, of getting ripped off by a smooth-talking middle-aged gentleman without any money,” she said at last.
“That’s not me. I promise.” I responded quickly. Time to establish a measure of trust, I thought. With a serious expression, I continue. “I really do have more money I can use. The one thing I will not do, is rip you off.”

Her eyes continued to search my face for a while, then she smiled uncertainly and said, “OK, I believe you. No ripping off of an innocent young female hotel manager by a smooth talking, very rich, wayfaring, middle aged gentleman.”

I smiled and shrugged. “Maybe not quite middle aged yet, I do believe I am still adequately raging against the darkness of the dying light. But rich, wayfaring and smooth talking, you have me there.”

She did not respond immediately which allowed me to quickly return to the earlier topic, “So, define the ‘anywhere’ I will get to for ten-grand.”

She sipped her wine, raised a brow and asked, “We are still talking hypothetically now, are we not?”

“Yes, of course. Let’s say it’s a variation of the game you say you always play. You know, the hat, apron and stockings game. By booking me in so efficiently earlier, we have established that you are a very able hotel manager, that is the hat-part. The price for the hat-part has also been established, that is the cost of the room. Furthermore, we have established that you are an accomplished chef and waiter, the food was delicious and impeccably served. That is the apron-part. The price for that is the cost of the meal.” I raised my brows and said with mock sarcasm, “Including the very expensive wine.”

I settled back comfortably into the deep sofa before I continued. “All that remains to be tested is the customer relations-part. The stockings-part. Both the price and your ability.”

She looked at me uncertainly for a bit, then smiled broadly, once she caught my drift. Again she stuck that mock-thinking pose for a moment, then leaned back and unfolded her legs from under her. Like a little girl, she kicked her stocking-clad legs out stiffly in front of her, the Alice in Wonderland playing cards motif clear despite the half light of the fire. “OK, I’d say that ten-grand will buy you a long leisurely look at my legs. Ballerina legs. There are some of the farmers that will easily pay that amount for the privilege.”

She looked at me expectantly while I admired her legs for a while, then responded. “There is no denying that those are spectacular legs. There also is no denying that they are rather short and of course clad in those ridiculous stockings.” I frowned while she watched me. “Nah,” I continued, “it will have to be more than that for ten-grand, even for ballerina legs. And I don’t really believe that with the drought and the blue tongue disease, many farmers will be prepared to pay that amount, however keen they might be, simply to look at your legs. They could come here, have a meal or a drink, with a leisurely look at your legs thrown in for free.”

She eyed me for a second, then pulled the hem of her short dress a little higher, to the top of the stockings, to where the elastics just became visible. Once again, she peered at me with those dark brows raised.

“Nope,” I said. “A few more inches of stockings ain't gonna cut it either.”

“Would you rather I remove the stockings?” she asked.
“Well, no, I rather like the stockings, despite the fact that they're outrageous. I would be interested in how they are kept up, though. Suspenders?”

The smile flashed, accompanied by a bit of a giggle, once again, the wine talking. “Nope, no such luck, just elastic tops.”

“Aha, so here is a suggestion, I will pay you five thousand if you show me your legs right to the top.” It was my turn to flash, what I hoped, was a disarming smile.

She looked at me with a mock expression of shock. “What happened to the ten thousand?” she asked.

“It’s still on the table, but not for looking at your legs only. Five is for the bottom half.”

She eyed me suspiciously, then said exactly what I wanted to hear. “So, for the other five, would you like to see the upper half as well?”

I nodded. Then said gently, “What about for five grand you lose the apron and skirt and for another five you lose the blouse? It still is part of the game, the part where you said you shamelessly use your body to attract customers. And I am a very good customer after all.”

She became very still for a while, allowing her extended legs to drop to the floor. Quietly she said, “We are no longer playing the hypothetical game now, are we?”

I nodded. “We can continue the hypothetical game if you wish, but I thought you had abandoned it by showing me your legs. That was real, was it not? Also, if we continue the hypothetical game, you will not earn the easiest ten-grand of your life.”

“You will really pay me ten-grand if I strip to my undies? You really will?” She tilted her head.

I was delighted that her question was about money, not morality. It was time for total honesty.

“Look, I am everything I told you, architect, retired, academic, rich, living alone, not a serial rapist, not an ax murder. Just a lonely guy, far from home, sharing a bottle of very good red wine with a beautiful young woman in front of a cozy fire on a dark, cold night in the middle of nowhere. I like you very much.” I hesitated for effect. “Sure, I will pay ten-grand to see you in your undies in a sexy pose.”

Her lips parted slightly as her bright eyes flashed in the light of the fire. She said nothing for a while.

That is it, uncle Clive, I thought, the quickening of the breath, the bright eyes. The scales were evenly balanced. About to tip.

“No touching, just looking, undies and stockings stay on and the light stays low?” She swallowed hard. “Ten-grand for just a few minutes?”

I would pay a lot more to take you to bed my lovely, to make sweet love to you throughout the night, I thought, but instead just nodded in response.

She slowly got up from the chair and started to unbutton her cuffs. “Am I really going to do this?” she asked softly, more to herself than to me. “For ten-grand? God knows, I need the
money.” Suddenly she stopped and looked at me. “How are you going to pay me?” she asked and sat down quickly, somewhat relieved that the practicalities of arranging payment might have prevented her from doing something she might regret later.

But I had it covered. I took out my smartphone and waved it around. “Electronic transfer. I will do it now.” I said. “What is your account number?” I asked while I opened the app.

She had second thoughts, though. Suddenly upset, she said, “Wait, wait. You are pitiless. How can you come in here and offer me money to expose my body?”

“Do you want more?” I simply said.

Without responding she gave me a withering look, so I decided to retreat a little. I remembered Clive’s advice, ‘Once the scales are about to tip, at that stage, you start backtracking, they will topple soon enough.’ This was a cat-and-mouse game.

“OK,” I said. “Let’s leave it then. I don’t want you to be uncomfortable.”

She sighed deeply and slumped back into the chair, moping.

I was intrigued by the startling unpredictability of her behaviour. In a matter of minutes, she had alternated from an immature girl to an assertive young woman and back to a young girl again. From happy to angry to sulking to happy again in the span of a heartbeat.

“How old are you, if I may ask?”

She glanced at me from behind the jumble of hair.

“Twenty-two.”

“Boyfriend?”

“I told you, no.”

I looked at her. She was still sulking. “I don’t mean the farmers, somebody else?” I said.

She sighed. “No, not at the moment. There was a boy; we were undergrad students together. He came to visit me a few times but didn’t like it here. It is godforsaken, he used to say. The climax of desolation. I haven't heard from him in six months, more, even. But I am still hoping. I love… loved him. He said he might come and visit again sometime. Soon I hope.”

I scoffed unsympathetically. “Don’t waste your time waiting.” As if I was eminently qualified to render advice on relationships. I, the one who had been unable to commit to anyone for more than a few years and even then, not without difficulty. Yet, I continued, “If he really felt anything for you, where and how you live, would not have mattered to him. You know, the highest mountain, the deepest sea and all that shit.”

She glanced at me askance, ready to defend herself. Then quietly, with another deep sigh she conceded. “That is rather cynical... but I suppose you are right.”

“There you are then. You are your own woman. Single, independent, strong, young and beautiful, your destiny in your own hands. Do what you must to improve your circumstances.”
With wide eyes she looked at me in that direct way I have noticed earlier. For what felt like a few minutes our eyes remained locked, her inner dialogue clear as it played over her face.

“The ten-grand still is on the table,” I urged.

“Will you pay more?” she asked, her head tilted.

I nodded. “I will pay more for more. But let’s start with what we have agreed upon. Down to the stockings and the undies, no touching.”

Of course, we had not agreed on anything but she did not pick up on that. She simply nodded. I could see she was a little bewildered.

Pensively she sat for quite a while, her eyes on the fire, then suddenly the pendulum swung again and as if a new revelation had dawned on her. She smiled suddenly, eyes bright, as she said loudly, “You know, you are right!”

“You are right!” she repeated and jumped up out of the chair, grabbed her glass and drained the last of the wine. “You are right,” she said once more, wiping her mouth with the back of her hand in a careless manner. “I have to answer to nobody and no one is going to help me. I have to look after myself. I need that ten-grand. My brother is sowing wild oats left right and centre overseas and I, like a goody two-shoes, am the one keeping the home fires burning. I have no boyfriend, no social life, no opportunities.” Her eyes were wide and serious as she looked at me. “Where is your phone?” she said at last.

I took it out again, opened the banking app and looked at her expectantly for her account number. She had undone the other cuff.

She gave me a cheerful grin. In a mock husky voice, while undoing the top button of her blouse, she gave me the first number. She had been drinking steadily, and with her small body, I was sure she had had enough. I decided to hold back on topping up her glass, lest she passed out on me.

“Zero,” she said.

I punched it in.

The second button brought about the next digit.

“Seven,” her husky voice continued.

The third button, the third digit. By the second last button, the app had timed out. I was so mesmerised by the sight of her naked flesh slowly being revealed, I was unable to enter the numbers fast enough.

“No, let start again,” I said, shaking my head in desperation. “Not with the buttons, with the numbers only.”

She giggled and flopped into the chair, the front of the blouse sufficiently undone to reveal the inviting curve of a beautiful, silk cradled breast.

This time, I managed to get the numbers punched in successfully. A cheerful chirp from her mobile phone from somewhere in the kitchen behind us, confirmed the arrival of the money
into her account. The modern equivalent of Clive’s hard cash, his ‘smackeroos’ of so many years ago.

Gleefully she jumped up and ran to the kitchen. “You transferred twelve thousand,” she said, frowning, as she walked back.

“Yes, the extra two is for the services rendered by the hat and the apron, including the wine and the room. The ten is for the stockings-part, as agreed. I trust it will be sufficient to cover all of the above. No ripping off of a young female hotel manager by a smooth-talking middle-aged drifter, as promised.”

The scales have tipped as she looked at me, her eyes bright and her breath quick through parted, rosy, lips. She looked at me but did not respond.

“Now, about those last few buttons then,” I said.

She moved to stand in front of me, so that with the fire behind her, I was presented with her body in silhouette. The mane of her hair was a halo against the brighter light of the fire, the two plaits now totally undone. Slowly she undid the last two buttons and allowed the blouse to hang free, the front open. She stood quietly, arms at her sides, looking at me.

I was able to follow the outline of her upper body and the flare to her hips through the thin free hanging material. It was difficult to restrain myself from raising my hands to touch and explore the beautiful curves that were so tantalizingly close. When she lifted her arm to remove the blouse from her shoulders, I held up my hands.

“No wait,” I said. “Leave it on. The apron and skirt next.”

Without a word she untied the apron and allowed it to drop to the floor. Her hands moved to the side of her skirt. Even with the background music, the sound of the zipper was loud as she pulled it down. Unheeded, the she allowed the skirt to pool on the floor around her feet.

Despite being an architect, or maybe because of it, I always found it difficult to describe, in words, true beauty. I recognised it immediately when I saw it, I experienced it intensely, but I always understate it in a description. I found words never to be adequate. This was such an instance.

Her little body was sublime. Registered in outline, I followed the hazy line of the silhouette of her upper body through the thin material of her blouse, down to the gentle curve of her hips into her thighs, down her stocking-clad ballerina legs, to her slender ankles and feet. It was indeed flawless. Between her legs, just above the lacy elastic tops of the stockings, where the inside of her upper thighs curved back gently to meet her body, there was a breach, a luscious thigh gap, about three fingers wide I would guess, through which the merry antics of the flames behind were quite visible. The subtleness of the elongated indentation in the tight fabric of her panties, emphasised in silhouette by the fire behind, belied the profound promises the entrance to her young body held.

She assumed her school girl ballet pose in a clumsy attempt to appear sexy. It was not necessary. Any pose she could possibly have struck, would have been sexy. Motionless she stood, watching me watching her. Then without asking permission, she slipped the blouse off her shoulders and allowed it to join the apron and the skirt on the floor. Without her clothes, I realised just how small she was. But her smallness made the proportions of her body more
acute, her curves more pronounced. She was all woman, beautiful and strong, make no mistake.

The black bra, cupping her breasts, was silky and black, matched by her full, high cut, panties. The elastic lace of her panties hugged her waist tightly, high, just above the protrusions of her hip bones, spanning across her flat stomach where it slants away and down towards the gentle protuberance of her mons Venus.

I sighed deeply, then said, “I have always believed that a woman's beauty does not belong to her alone. It is part of the bounty she brings into this world.” I gestured towards her. “How can something as beautiful as this be denied the world simply because of social conventions?”

Unexpectedly overcame by emotion I said croakily. “You really are exquisite. Let no person ever tell you different. You must be so proud of your body.”

She looked at me strangely for a while before she replied. “I never thought of it that way. I suppose I am, in a way, but I would not have expressed it as pride. More like gratitude for the hand I was dealt. I could have done with a few extra inches, though,” she said and laughed quietly.

Then, after another minute. “Seen enough?” she asked quietly, “pose sexy enough?” She flashed me a quick glance from under her hair as she picked up her clothes. “A ten-grand eye-full?”

I simply nodded.

She sat down on the couch next to me, her clothes bundled on her lap. We were quiet, both of us staring pensively into the flames of the fire for a few minutes.

“Are we done?” she asked at last.

“Yes, we are,” I said. “Thank you.”

Her teeth flashed white as she smiled at me. “Thank you for the money,” she said, “and thank you for not overstepping the boundaries.”

I smiled back. “Well, we have certainly been ‘anywhere’ for the ten-grand. I would not quite agree with your earlier statement that ‘anywhere’ is not far, I think we have travelled quite always down the road.”

She continued to look at me without saying a word.

I gathered my courage and said, “Could we possibly travel a little more along that road to ‘everywhere’, to see where it leads?” I hesitated. “I will pay more.”

Her eyes dropped to the floor. “Like what?” she asked shyly and then looked up at the fire.

“Like five-grand more for losing the bra and panties. Same as before, just looking, no touching.”

She quietly continued to stare into the fire for a while before saying, “Five-grand to see me naked. You have seen so much already.”

“I have, and you are so beautiful, I want to see more.”
“Flattery again? You think it will get you everywhere?” then she added lamely, “with this extraordinary girl?”

“This ain't flattery, this is the God-honest truth,” I said quickly.

“Nope,” she said. She hesitated, then repeated, ‘Nope, not naked for five-grand more.”

I leaned back into the soft couch and nodded. “Fair enough, how much then?”

She was caught between a rock and a hard place. She knew that if she agreed to strip naked, she will have crossed a line. And yet, she really wanted that money. But she just could not bring herself to name a number.

“Ten?” I said, at last.

She looked at me for a long while, then, suddenly jumped up and stood before me, like she did previously. Without hesitation, without any pretence, she unhooked the bra and let it drop to the floor, then bent forward, pulled down the panties and stepped out of them.

“Before my courage deserts me,” she said quickly, standing full length in front of me, her clothes scattered on the floor.

Naked, bar the stockings, she stood in the golden light of the fire. She lifted her arms horizontally and slowly turned around to allow the light to play hide and seek across every curve, every indentation, every protrusion of her body. If there was any doubt before that she was truly beautiful, there was none now. Her compact body was lightly muscled, the legacy of the years of school-ballet, I supposed. Her breasts were full and firm, with small pink nipples on darker areolas erect, aroused. Even with her knees together, there was this delicious thigh gap through which, as before, the brighter light of the fire flashes occasionally, as she turned. In the light of the fire her pussy mound appeared more pronounced, covered as it were, by a well trimmed growth of soft down.

The muscles of her flat stomach rippled gently as she moved while the yellow light emphasised the regular array of her ribcage. Her youthful body had a fresh perfection of line, just short of angular around her thighs and hips, with her upper body, her generous breasts and shoulders, soft and smooth.

I felt myself stiffen in recognition of her nakedness. I did not think she was even vaguely aware of the real depth of her allure.

“Are we done, now?” she asked after turning around a few times. It entered my mind that in some way and at some level, she had also enjoyed this moment of blatant exhibitionism.

I sighed deeply. “We are, if you say so.” I said and continue after a moment's pause, ’Unless you would like to make ten-grand more.”

“For ‘everywhere’?”

“Just touching,” I said.

“Touching is ‘everywhere’, you know that. Once you have touched, you will not be able to stop,” she said, still standing naked in front of me.
I optimistically wondered if she was talking about herself, or me. Wishful thinking on my part, I concluded.

She thought for awhile. “No, I don’t think so.” Then she repeated with finality in her voice, “No, we are done, not even for ten-grand more.”

‘Twenty-grand?’

In the half-light, I saw her eyes widened.

“You want me so much that you will pay twenty-grand to… touch me?”


“That’s a lot of money. Twenty already and twenty more, that is forty-grand.”

I smiled at her mental bookkeeping. It was what I had paid Hannah. But she was very special and I really wanted her. Besides, there was not enough blood left in my brain to think clearly. This was crunch time. She was either in or out.

“Make it forty-five to spend the night together, to go ‘everywhere’. I will be gentle. You call the shots, say no and we’ll stop. Nothing kinky, we will only use the orifices intended for the purpose. You don’t even have to touch me if you don’t want to. By now you should know you can trust me.”

She said nothing but her eyes widened even more and the tell-tale sign of the quick breathing and parted lips suddenly were evident.

Then she said, “But I don't know, you, I don't love you, how can you expect me to be that intimate with you. Posing naked is bad enough, but that can be justified somehow, like a ballerina, no, let’s say worse, like a stripper on a stage. It’s distant, it’s not personal.”

Her little face was stern, her jaw set, her eyes serious. I felt sorry for her. There was too much distress. A moral dilemma. Visibly torn she was between the need for money and her deep-rooted natural sense of modesty. I thought the gnashing of teeth process would appeal to me but this was heart wrenching. It was time to retreat.

“That is OK then, really, I said. “Let’s leave it a twenty and call it quits. Let’s share a last glass of wine together and call it a night.”

Once again, I thought a bit of comic relief might be in order, so I leaned forward, finger in the air to make a point, thinking about the eerie feeling I had experienced earlier and said, jokingly, “In fact, I may be the one at risk here. What's to say I have not stumbled onto a post-apocalyptic zombie fancy dress party. The old hotel in a deserted town at dusk, a beautiful young hotel owner dressed like Alice in Wonderland, ready to transform into a soulless corpse, just waiting for her prey?” With that I again splashed some wine into our glasses, less this time and leaned back into the couch.

She merely snorted dismissively but did not say anything. Sitting next to me, still naked, her clothes bunched on her lap, like before, she continued to sip her wine.

I remembered Jo’s words from a few months earlier. I am going to give it one more gentle nudge, I thought. Let’s just see where it leads.
“You know,” I said softly, “contrary to popular belief love and sex are not one and the same thing. I really believe they can be mutually exclusive; sex can be enjoyed on a purely physical level with someone else, someone you like but not necessarily love, although I will admit, it is more special with someone you do love.”

She still said nothing, just continued to sip her wine, staring quietly into the fire.

After a sidelong glance I continued. “It is impossible to get everything you need in life from just one person. From your boyfriend or husband one day, you will get the love, the comfort, the sex, sure, but there is more to life than that. For instance, you need your mother or girlfriend to talk with about girl-things, a father to give you advice, and yes, even a wandering, wild-oats-sowing brother to tell you about the world beyond. In much the same way you need, sometimes, a different physical experience, something intense, profound even, specifically if your current support system does not provide for something like that.”

She still said nothing for awhile, then got up and stood in front of me, close enough for me to touch her.

With her eyes closed, an intense expression of distress on her little face, she said, “I will do it for fifty, with fifty I can pay all the accounts in arrears and still have enough left to register for university next year.” She closed her eyes tightly and pulled a determined face, then continued, eyes open, drilling into mine intensely. “If you hurt me, I will kill you. I will hunt you down, and I will kill you.”

We looked at each other; the decision was made. We were going to have sex.

Then she said quietly, hesitantly, “I do not have much experience.”

“You mean you still are a…?” I asked incredulously and immediately continued. “Then I don’t want to do it, no, I don't want your first time to be like this.”

She smiled sadly. “No, I am not still a virgin. But I have only had sex six times in my life before, twice at school with my then-boyfriend. We did not really know what we were doing, and four times since, with the boy I told you about. It was not much better.”

She sighed deeply, then continued. “But let's be clear on one more thing; I only do this for the money, a business arrangement. Because I am broke and desperate. I will not enjoy it. I do not desire you, please do not try and love me, or make me love you. Do not expect any enthusiastic participation from my side beyond what is strictly necessary to deserve the money.”

We were quiet for a while and just looked at each other. I thought about what she had just said.

Then I raised my glass to her in a salute. “I understand. But just to fully align our expectations, I have to clarify one thing, though. Despite what you have just said, for me it is more than just a casual encounter, like say, sharing an evening meal. Having sex is a profound experience, and it does involve high emotions and intense physical sensations, even if one wants to reduce it to just a ‘business arrangement’.”

She just nodded and said, “I know and I also understand, but what I mean is that this is not the beginning of an affair, a relationship. It is one-time sex for money; you are not buying love or commitment.”
I nodded. “That I completely agree with.”

“Ships in the night, that is what we are.” I continued after a moment of silence. ‘You know the poem? Longfellow?’ Her vague expression told me she did not.

“At this moment we are two people who have just met, about to share, even if momentarily, something significant. Possibly meaningful, perhaps even magical. But then it will be over. We probably will never see each other again. Like two ships passing in the night, never to do it again. And yet I believe we will both remember this encounter for a long time to come.”

I cleared my throat, took a breath and recited:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Ships that pass in the night, and speak each other in passing,}
\textit{Only a signal shown and a distant voice in the darkness;}
\textit{So on the ocean of life we pass and speak one another,}
\textit{Only a look and a voice, then darkness again and a silence.}
\end{quote}

Wide-eyed she looked at me. I allowed the silence to spread.

“This is surreal,” she said at length.

I raised my brows quizzically but could read her thoughts. Who is this strange old man who came to her door in the evening, with whom she is about to have sex for money, reciting poems in front of the fire? What the fuck is this?

‘What?’ I said in mock confusion.

She jumped up and lifted her hands heavenwards. With fingers extended upwards, she wiggled her naked little body to give physical meaning to time and space. “This,” she repeated. “Us, this moment. Here I am, butt naked in front of a man I have met for the first time, not two hours ago, about to have sex with him. He recites poems to me. He drinks wine with me. He wants to pay me fifty thousand rand for sex. Is this real, is this a dream?”

I wasn’t really listening to her little monologue; I was mesmerized by her naked beauty.

Her little navel was level with my eyes, her skin gossamer-like in the yellow half-light of the fire. Lower down, against the light of the fire, between her legs, half hidden by the soft fur of her unshaved pussy, the irregular shade caused by her engorged lips was evidence that she was not quite so indifferent to the idea of sex as she would have liked me to believe, as she probably had believed herself, only a few minutes ago.

I suddenly realised that she had stopped talking. In a lame attempt at humour, I said, “At least you will be fifty grand richer and you are not completely naked, you still are wearing your stockings.”

She fixed me with one of her withering stares, then snorted in disgust, before she continued her soliloquy, a little more subdued. “It probably was meant to be, destined for us to meet, to share this moment, for the two ships to pass in the night like this, as you say,” she ended fatalistically.

I realised that it was nervousness that made her talked like that, but sensed her mood had shifted, from apprehension to a strange excitement. As if the ‘surreal’ circumstances, as she described it; the cosy atmosphere, the small drama around my little recital, somehow was
justification for her decision. That this moment of madness should be blamed on some mystical force beyond her control, to destiny, karma, if you will. She was not to be held responsible for what was about to happen, she merely was a victim of circumstances beyond her control.

Finally, I lifted my hands and touched her hips lightly. It was the first time I touched her. Her skin was soft and smooth like satin. She quivered slightly at my touch. The smell of woman, more seductive than any perfume, rose strongly in my nose.

Without looking at her, I said softly, “Be sure to tell me if you want me to stop. But I will be gentle.” I croaked, my throat parchment dry. “I will show you how it is done.”

She did not reply, just stood there, motionless. After a moment’s hesitation, I allowed my hands to move to her stomach, then to roam lightly across the sweet contours of her body, down her hips, and along the exposed part of her upper thigh, to the lace-edged tops of her stockings. Then around to the sweet little creases behind, where her upper thighs meet the downward curve of her firm little butt cheeks.

Her breathing was heavier now, whether from apprehension or anticipation, I did not know. I looked up at her face, just visible beyond the two beautiful mounds of her breasts. It was difficult to make out her expression in the low light. Like a victim, she stood in front of me, her face tilted upwards slightly, her eyes closed and her lips squeezed tight. Her arms were hanging limply at her sides, her hands open, seemingly relaxed.

Once again, I said, “Tell me if you want me to stop, I don’t want to do anything you do not want me to.”

She expelled the air from her lungs in a long heavy sigh and responded rather testily, looking down at me, “Please stop saying that. I know you will stop if I ask you to. I haven't asked yet now, have I?” She was quiet for a while, then, playing the sacrificial lamb, she said. “Let’s get it over with, shall we?” and closed her eyes again.

I smiled wryly at her determination and after a moment’s hesitation, allowed my hands to continue their journey, this time up, across her flanks and upwards still towards her full round breasts that had clearly been sculpted with very great care by nature. To the touch, they were much more than what they promised to the eye. The little nipples were shell-hard tips to the soft mounds of firm flesh, heavy and real in the palms of my hands.

It was the first time she actually responded to my touch, with a soft groan her hands, in an involuntary reaction, clamped over mine, pressing tightly against her chest. I used the opportunity to edge her a little closer, close enough for me to kiss her little naval, for my tongue to play briefly in-and-out with that small indentation. I pulled back to again try and gauge her reaction. Her eyes were closed, but her hands still pressed mine tightly against her breasts. Her lips were parted and her breathing was quick and shallow.

My lips moved down across her flat stomach, kissing her softly and farther south still to the soft hairy down of her pussy mound. I hesitated there. Gently but firmly I pulled one of my hands free from hers and moved it to between her legs. While still kissing her mound, I touched her pussy lightly, stroked it softly with my fingers. It was as dry as the landscape outside. Slowly I moved my fingers across her inner lips, feeling their soft texture, waiting for them to part.
Her legs opened involuntary, yet hesitantly, to allow me easier access. Then, under my fingers her pussy suddenly opened, the lips fully distended and very wet. Gently, I allowed my fingers to play with her folds, to test the depth of her opening a few times, before I moved on to the tiny button of her clitoris.

She uttered a long soft groan, more protracted this time, before suddenly collapsing forward on top of me, as if her legs had turned to jelly. Gently I allowed her to slide off me, sideways, on her back, next to me on the couch. I could see she was very agitated, her breathing fast through open lips. I was still uncertain whether her excitement was brought about by alarm or sexual anticipation.

The fire combined with the increase of my own excitement made the room quite hot. I quickly stripped off my t-shirt, before leaning forward to gently push against her stockinged legs. She resisted for a moment, but finally allowed her legs to part. Within the sweet cradle of her thighs, her pussy was open like a small flower, tiny and neat, just what I had expected from her slight frame. The ensemble of soft womanly flesh seemed to blossom around the portal to her essence. There, reflected in the dancing light of the fire, was a hint of glittering moisture, an inkling of the wondrous promises of love, life and joy held by her delightful little pudenda.

I took a deep breath to steady my own excitement before working my way down, from kissing the insides of the thighs, to the deep coral pink of her pussy. Lightly with my tongue, I traced along her folds, tasting her sweet juices for the first time. I revisited her clit at the top of her drenched slit, this time with my tongue. I found it in its rightful and honorary position as the primary pleasure button. I wasted no time in teasing this little protrusion, sucking at it gently at first, then more greedily, until I had just about all of the external trimmings to the entrance of her pussy in my mouth.

She reacted to my ministrations with sharp, sudden movements, the intensity increasing in direct relation to the progress of my exploration. Apart from the sudden jerks, soft groans and periodic suppressed squeals, she was quite passive. I could feel though, as my hands resumed their journey across the contours of her body, from the gentle slopes her hips, across the flat plains of her stomach to the hills of her breasts beyond, how her little body quivered. Still, whether it was from apprehension or anticipation, I was not sure.

While my hands marvelled at the softness of her breasts, I continued to enjoy the richness of her womanhood, her juices like honey on my tongue. With my fingers tweaking the little shells of her nipples gently, I felt her body suddenly tensioned in anticipation of an approaching climax.

If I have mentioned a protracted moan before, this time it was all that and more. It continued for a good few seconds and culminated in a rapid series of quick convulsion. Her legs snapped closed rather forcefully and I was lucky enough to just escape decapitation. Immediately she turned on her side and curled into a tight foetal position on the couch next to me, the moans diminishing as the orgasm winked out across her body.

This is it, I thought, it was over. She had climaxed. She had had enough of me. It no longer was a business deal. It was too real, more than what she had bargained for, more than what she could deal with. I leaned back against the couch and tried to curb my disappointment. Sorry uncle Clive, I miscalculated. She still is too much of a girl. I banked on her being enough of a woman to want me in return, even just a little. I closed my eyes and threw back my head. The heat of the fire was pleasant, I was tired. Just as well, I thought, just as well...
I was about to drift off when I sensed a slight movement next to me, just enough to make the couch move slightly. With one eye, like a child stealing a look at a surprise gift, I peeked sideways. Unwound from her foetal position, she had moved on to her stomach, one leg slipped to the floor. Slowly, while I watched, this time with both eyes wide open, she lifted her little behind towards me, supported on one knee. Was this an invitation, was she about to get up and run away? Mesmerised I continued to watch. Then, this time, clearly as an invitation, her butt still towards me, she opened her legs slightly, left knee on the couch, right foot on the floor, her forehead lodged against the stuffed armrest. She was ready to proceed; she was holding her end of the bargain. We are not done yet, let's carry on. The fifty thousand was beckoning.

There between her little butt cheeks, invitingly, her pussy nestled, with the fine filigree of her inner lips tumbling from inside her tight slit. I touched it lightly at first. She moaned softly and moved against my fingers. With my hand I cupped her Venus mound, my index finger seeking my old friend, her little clit. Sure enough, there it was, hard as a tiny pebble. She moved more firmly against me as I touched it again, her small body once again quivering.

With my other hand, I inserted first one finger into her tunnel, then two. She whimpered at first, then groaned loudly as the second digit entered her tight canal. Slowly I started finger-fucking her, her body involuntarily picking up the rhythm. While still lightly massaging her love button, I noticed the inviting swaying of her breasts as she moved and reached forward to cup a pendulous mound of flesh, to feel its weight as it moved, its richness, the little shell of her nipple hard in my palm. I sensed that she was again rocking on the edge of an orgasm, so I slowed down ever so slightly to allow more time.

My dick was straining painfully against my pants. It was time to get rid of the rest of my inhibiting garments. Clumsily, with one hand only, I undid my belt and button before sliding down my jeans and underpants, while trying to keep up the finger-fucking rhythm with the other. Glad to be released from its constraints, triumphantly, my stiff dick sprang free. I kicked off my shoes and managed to slide my pants down my legs and over my feet. She must have realised what was going on as she looked around, her eyes widening in awe as she noticed my naked dick, proud, hard and ample.

I guess it was the inevitability of what was about to happen, the realisation that she really was about to get fucked, that edged her on. She shut her eyes and again buried her face in the stuffed armrest, while she proceeded to utter her trademark protracted moan, more of a wail this time. She moved more urgently against my fingers, faster and faster, her tiny body a blur as she chased the orgasm.

This, I said to myself, is where I start fucking her. She was more than ready, so was I. Quickly I removed my fingers from her love canal and moved to enter her. She suddenly became very still, in anticipation, when she felt my dick pushed against her entrance. I may have mentioned earlier that I am fairly well endowed, and she was very small. With my hands on her hips, I slowly entered her tight canal. Very slowly. Gasp after gasp she uttered, a convulsive catching of her breath with every inch I penetrated. To have said that her embrace was tight would have been an understatement. So tight was she that for a few moments I happily contemplated the possibility that I might never again be able to get out of there. Fully coupled, both of us were still for a while, for me in recognition of the magic of the moment, for her, I am not sure why, but would like to think the same.

After what felt like a few minutes of waiting, she tentatively pushed back against me, eager to feel me move inside her. Slowly I started fucking her. Quietly, in and out we moved until an
easy, steady rhythm was established. I knew I had to take it slow because once I came, it will all be over. I will only be allowed one climax. Her urgency grew as her pleasure increased. Small little animal sounds emitted from her mouth each time I moved inside her. I knew she was again rocking on the edge, so I started to pump faster.

It was then that her phone chirped. It was on the coffee table next to the couch where she had left it earlier. We both stopped, shocked by the sudden and rude invasion of reality into our very private little world.

“Leave it,” I said, my own breathing heavy.

“I can’t, its my Mom, she will worry and come over,” she said, equally out of breath. “She always phones this time of night before she goes to bed.”

She was pinned between my body and the armrest, unable to move away. I decided I was not going to let her go. With me still inside her, stuck like that, she managed to reach over to pick up the phone.

“Hi Mom.” Her voice was croaky, her breathing quick but she somehow managed to hold her pose. “What’s up?”

There are worse things in the world to do than to listen to a one-sided phone conversation, with your dick buried deep inside a young woman’s pussy. I remained still as I listened, my dick pulsating deep inside her. Silently, I followed the conversation, guessing at her mother's responses through the quiet in-between intervals.

“No, I’m OK, just busy. I had to run for the phone, that is why I am out of breath.”

“Really, I am OK.”

“We have one guest. He arrived a few hours ago. I had to make him supper and even had to serve him.”

She was quiet for a while, listening, before she continued. “He is quite demanding, I must say, but at least he paid for everything in advance, so that’s OK.”

I stifled my laughter. What a feisty girl she was.

“No, he’s OK. No, I don’t think he is an axe murder or a rapist.”

“Yes Mom, I know.” She hesitated a bit then added, for my benefit, I was sure. “I know men only have one thing on their minds.”

There was a long pause, her mom’s voice faintly audible.

“No Mom, I will be OK, I will lock my room tonight and I have the panic button.” She paused for a moment and then, again aimed at me rather than her mother, she added, “and he is an old man, Mom.”

Old man, what, me? I moved in and out of her a few times, quickly, just to remind her that I might be quite a bit older than her, yet not too old by a long shot to ram my stiff dick up her tight little pussy.

She gasped loudly into the phone, then quickly tried to turn it into a cough. Her left hand waved frantically behind her back in a vain attempt to stop me.
“Sorry Mom, I dropped something. Look, I really have to go. I’m kinda in the middle of something.”

“Cleaning the kitchen Mom. I am on all fours cleaning the oven.”

This time I really had difficulty holding back my laughter. On all fours cleaning the oven, really? Come to think of it though, cleaning an oven does require bending over with one’s head stuck into something.

She continued her conversation, but I sensed a bit of irritation.

“I really have to go now Mom, thanks for calling.”

There was a long silence. Again, I could vaguely hear her mother’s voice rambling. Then she continued.

“We have four bookings for lunch tomorrow. I am making leg of lamb and roast potatoes. I have not yet thought about veggies or salads. I will message you with what I need first thing in the morning.” One again there was a long pause.

“OK, Mom, I will do it early. Bye for now, love you too, talk to you tomorrow.”

Then there was quiet. She dropped her head onto the armrest while simultaneously allowing the phone to slip out of her hand, onto the carpet.

I wiggled a bit, just to let her know that the old man was still inside her, still hard, maybe not as hard as a few minutes ago, but that could be remedied without delay.

But for a deep sigh, she did not react. I took up a slow rhythm again, concerned that the dose of cold reality might totally have spoiled the moment. She moved with me, but her heart was not in it. After a few strokes, I stopped and pulled out. Despite my disappointment, I again took a few moments to appreciate the beautiful picture her elevated little butt presented, specifically with her drenched pussy squeezed tightly between her thighs.

She sighed again and then gathered herself into a tight little bundle, sitting next to me. I stood up to put more wood on the fire, which was burning quite low. Then I sat down next to her, both of us, bar for her stockings, butt naked.

In an attempt to lighten the mood, I said, while filling our glasses with the last of the bottle, “So what did it feel like to have a discussion with your mom about tomorrow’s lunch menu with my dick inside you?”

She snorted and sipped some wine. Then she said, “From hero to zero, if only she knew.”

“I don’t understand?” I said, my statement a question.

She was pensive for a few more moments, then got up from the couch and entered into a mini tirade, gesticulating as she spoke “Good dependable little Lisa, the rock of the family, holding the centre while the wheels are coming off everywhere else. If only she knew I was discussing Sunday’s lunch menu with her, while being fucked from behind. Not only getting fucked but fucked by a stranger. And not any stranger, nooooo, a stranger paying me for the fuck. What a slut I am. What will they think of me if only they knew?”
Silently she shook her head and continued. “I gave up university to come and help out; I am doing everything for them, tracking the finances, meagre as they are, managing the hotel, organise doctors’ appointments, get tractors and trucks fixed, I pay the staff on the farm and the hotel, I am doing everything. I even gave up the boy I thought I loved to come back and help out.”

I gave her a sidelong glance. “Are you angry with them, or with yourself?” I asked.

Her eyes were bright, tears streaming down her cheeks as she looked at me. “I am the fuck angry with you. It was going to be a quiet night, until you arrived. Early to bed, an early day tomorrow, an uneventful weekend, as is every weekend.” She got up and stood in front of me, cheekily taking up her hands-on-the-hip ballet pose of earlier in the kitchen and continued, “You fucked it all up.”

She made a very pretty picture, posing in front of me like that, stark naked but for the funky stockings. Comic and erotic all rolled into one. Her outward angling left leg displaying her little down covered pussy beautifully. And in that delightful little thigh gap, her pussy lips were visible in silhouette, as they had been earlier, tumbling invitingly from inside her.

I found it very difficult to take her seriously. Despite her anger and the large number of ‘fucks’ in her language, I smiled.

Then I laughed out loud. “You must admit it was rather funny. It was a first for me, listening to someone discussing a lunch menu with her mother while buried deep inside her. Not to mention the part where you said to you mum, ‘not to worry, it's all paid for in advance.’” I smiled broadly, paused for a moment, then continued, “I am sure you are aware that you are quite naked, standing here in front of me, are you not?” I looked her up and down. “But I am not sure you are aware how much more attractive you are, if such a thing was even possible, being so angry and standing in front of me, like you are, with nothing but your stockings.”

She said nothing but looked down at herself. Suddenly, a sad smile plucked at the corners of her mouth.

“God, you are impossible. Look at me, what am I doing?”

Frowning a bit, I offered some, dare I say, fatherly advice. “Remember, despite everything, they will always see you as their little girl, that will never change. What will change though, and must change, is the way you see yourself. As you said earlier, you are your own woman; your destiny is in your own hands.”

The sad smile continued to play around her mouth. “You said the bit about being my own woman and my destiny, not I,” she corrected. “I merely agreed, but I don’t quite see myself quite as that... yet.”

I sensed she wanted some comfort and reached forward to gently pull her closer. Reluctantly she stepped closer to me. With my hands again moving softly along the curves of her hips and along to her ribcage, I said, “That is what is called growing up. Unfortunately, it has to happen.”

Involuntary my dick reacted as I touched her. I felt it stiffened slowly. Suddenly she remarked, with curiosity in her voice, “I have never seen that.”
I followed the direction of her eyes. ‘What, a man’s naked dick, you have never seen one before?’

She giggled a little. “Of course, I have. I have seen them limp, and I have seen them stiff. But I have never seen one growing from limp to stiff.”

I moved my arms away so that she could have a better look. I looked down myself. The old soldier was half erect, but with the sudden unexpected attention, stage fright caused it to diminish again.

“May I?” she asked and gestured towards the now almost limp member nestling between my legs.

“Sure,” I said, “help yourself.”

Daintily, like one would pick up a pencil, between her thumb and index finger, she touched my dick. Petitely, she picked it up and squeezed it lightly for a second, as if to judge its consistency, before dropping it again. ‘Drop’ might not be the appropriate word in this context though, as at her touch, tentative as it was, the previously apathetic appendage returned to life immediately. Within a few seconds, it was pointing heavenwards shamelessly, without any need for supplementary support whatsoever.

I watched the expression on her face shifting from curiosity to mild disgust, to surprise and finally delight. She uttered a small cry and looked at me. “Was that me?” she asked naively in a little girl’s voice. It probably was the very first time she truly realised that she, as a beautiful woman, held some kind of mystic sexual power over a man. To what extent, of course, she had no idea. It was one of my pet theories that the collective sexual bargaining power of women was realised by very few, otherwise women would certainly have ruled the world. A beautiful twenty-two-year-old woman with a body like hers, fully aware her powers, could wreak havoc in the world, much more than any man with an arsenal of weapons and bad intentions could. It had been proven throughout history. Ask Cleopatra, ask Helen of Troy.

“Of course, it was,” I replied blithely and raised my hands to touch her again. Slowly I moved my hands over her hips and around to her firm little butt cheeks to pull her even closer.

At first, she looked at me, almost pensively. Then she sighed deeply and surrendered to my touch. With her eyes closed and her head thrown back, my hands were again free to wander all over her body, to feel the satin of her skin. The one hand cradled a breast, the thumb lightly stroking the little nipple into erection, while the other was drawn irresistibly to that sacred of places between her legs. First to explore the tantalising soft flesh above the elastic tops of her stockings, the slow, soft curve up to the tightness of her upper thigh muscles, to that special corner where her legs meet her trunk. And then on to the soft folds of her pussy, again, suddenly inflated and drenched when I gently parted the lips.

My middle finger dipped between the folds tentatively, as before, then deeper, while my thumb gently massaged her little clit. She was quick to respond. Quick to get back to the level of excitement she was at, when we were so rudely interrupted earlier. So was I. If possible, my dick grew even harder. Proudly it stood, rock-hard, once again with promising intent.

Then she uttered one of her trademark groans and collapsed forward, her knees on either side of me on the couch. Her head still thrown back and eyes tightly shut, she held still while I massaged her pussy with increasing vigour. She again groaned loudly and shuddered deeply.
Then, hastily and clumsily she felt for my dick. It was not difficult to find. This time, less
daintily, she grabbed it and aligned it with her entrance. I was briefly and unexpectedly
entertained when my dick rubbed pleasantly up and down her slit, whether by accident or
design, I did not know.

Then she found the sweet spot and slowly lowered herself onto me. It was my turn to groan.
Like before, the feeling was exquisite. The parting of her canal as I entered her and the tight
embrace, once I was inside her, was almost too much to bear. When she was fully impaled on
my rod, thankfully, she sat still for a while. Silently we sat like that for a few long seconds.
Then she leaned back, with her hands on my knees behind her, presenting me with a stunning
view of the full picture, from her mons with my dick disappearing inside her, along the
expanse of her flat stomach to the edge of her rib cage, the gentle furrows of her ribs and the
two firm mounds of her breasts, tipped by two erect little nipples. The rivulets of perspiration
running down her smooth skin subtly reflected the dancing light of the fire.

As two strangers in the most intimate of embraces, we sat, quietly experiencing these
extraordinary circumstances and sensations. Surreal, as she had pointed out earlier.

Then she started to move, a little awkward, because of her position, an attempt to get a
rhythm going. I tried too, but we were working against each other. Frustrated, I leaned
forward, grabbed her butt and pulled her close. Still inside her, I lifted her and stood up. She
was light as a feather. Immediately her legs clamped around my waist and her head dropped
to my shoulder.

With my hands holding her butt, one, two, three steps, I took, to the wall next to the fireplace.
Pushing her against the wall, I started fucking her. Standing up, in and out I went, gently at
first, but more vigorously as the passion increased. I was vaguely aware of a sharp and
persistent pain on my left shoulder, where, I was later to find, she had bitten deeply into the
soft flesh, drawing blood. The noises she made were subdued, but not less passionate, than
earlier.

Then suddenly, she was quiet before uttering a long and explosive lament, exhaling more air
that I thought could possibly have been contained within her tiny chest.

“Couch, couch...” she suddenly urged into my ear. Whether I was hurting her with my eager
grinding against the wall, or if she was otherwise uncomfortable, I did not know. I however
did not hesitate to reverse my previous steps and returned to the couch. As gently as possible,
but without pulling out, I let her down onto the couch on her back, her lovely legs still spread
wide to accommodate me.

She looked a bit distressed, her face contorted and her breath quick and shallow. I paused for
a moment to ask, “Are you OK?”

She stopped breathing, and her eyes flew open wide. For a moment she fixed me with a
crushing stare as if to say ‘how dare you.’ Then she closed her eyes again and hoarsely
whispered ‘Don't stop, don’t stop.’

I resumed a slower rhythm. With long and measure strokes I continued to move in and out of
her. She responded by countering each thrust enthusiastically, accompanied by an array of
subdued noises, from groans to squeals to shrieks. By now she had reached a stage of erotic
overload, a plateau of climatic bliss which men can only but imagine.
I increased the pace, ratcheting towards my own climax. This was the home stretch. Hastily I gathered her legs and moved them to my shoulders, folding her double as I increased the pace even more. Her arms were flailing helplessly about, impaled as she was on my dick.

Then, as often happens with the advent of a titanic climax, I felt the sensation plucking playfully at the muscles of my inner thighs, for a moment making me believe it might recede, before colliding massively in my balls and then into my dick. I groaned long and hard before depositing what felt like gallons of juices deep inside her womb.

She, in turn, with an equally hard and long wail, arched her back to receive my gift of love. Her body continued to jerk spasmodically as my own passion diminished. For a while she kept up the pace even after I had stopped. An unreserved servant of Eros, unable to keep herself from wanting more. For a few moments, she continued to rock hard, spasmodically, uncontrolled, against me, struggling to return to full sanity.

Then, when my dick was limp, I slipped out of her. She uttered a last sayed moan and relaxed deep into the old couch while I collapsed on top of her. Entwined we laid there with our naked bodies in full contact. But it lasted for a few moments only. Sensing that the with the return to reason also come the return of boundaries between strangers, I sat up, primly, next to her on the couch.

The crackling of the fire was the only sound. Even the reedy piped music had inexplicably ceased. It was very hot inside the room, and I was parched. The exertion, the heat of the fire, the perspiration and the amount of liquid I have just deposited inside her, have drained the last of my reserves of moisture, I was sure.

I looked at her. She had not moved. With her eyes closed, still on her back, with her arms stretched above her head, her legs wide open as they were, she laid beside me. Visible between her pussy lips, opaque and milky, my love juices slowly seeped from inside her. Small and vulnerable she appeared, as she laid there.

Despite her earlier insistence that she will not enjoy the encounter and that she will not participate beyond what was strictly required, she certainly had been quite a spirited participant, specifically towards the end. I suspected that the experience would impact profoundly on her life. That it might leave her baying for the moon for a long time to come.

“I am going to get a beer,” I said at length. She moved her bottom as a sign of irritation at my voice and nodded slightly without opening her eyes.

“You want one?” I asked. Once again, her bottom moved slightly. This time she shook her head.

I stood up and went to the kitchen. Standing naked in front of the open fridge door to cool down, I drained half of the beer, then took a second, in case she had changed her mind.

She had not. When I got back to the lounge, she was gone. All that remained was the indentation her body had left in the couch and the smell of sex. I sat down and finished the first beer, then opened the second. Faintly, upstairs, I heard a door closed.

The fire had all but gone out, but the room was still very hot. I sat there for quite while, sipping the beer, while the room turned colder. What an evening, I contemplated. While it had brought everything I could possibly have hoped for and more, there was a vague sense of disappointment I did not experience with either Jo or Hannah. As if with the other two, what
was done, was done. But that with Lisa, unfinished business remained. As if I had some explaining to do.

Eventually, when it had turned too cold, still naked, I hastily gathered what clothes I could and went upstairs, to my room and the bed her great, great grandfather died in, in 1922.

*****
Despite my exhaustion, I slept very little. Even before there was a glimmer of the approaching dawn, I was wide awake. Downstairs in the kitchen, I found the makings for coffee and brewed myself a mug. As sat I sat on the couch, slowly sipped the coffee, I made the transfer of the balance of the money. The muted chirp of her phone, vaguely audible from somewhere upstairs, confirmed that our business was finally concluded, financially, if not otherwise. It was time for me to leave.

I drained the last of the strong brew and went outside into the cold morning. It was still very early, and the watery winter sun was just touching upon the tops of the high mountains, while the valley was still in deep gloom. I threw my bag into the back of the Landy and moved to get in.

The tinkling of the doorbell behind me made me turn. She was standing on the steps, arms folded across her breasts, wearing only an oversized white t-shirt, her little feet and legs naked. In the cold morning air, we stood looking at each other for what felt like a very long while. Her eyes were red and her cheeks tear stained.

She stepped down and moved across the sidewalk to be very close to me. Quietly she leaned forward with her forehead against my chest, her hair even more dishevelled than last night. Her eyes were downcast, and her arms hung limply at her sides. Sensing that she wanted comfort rather than intimacy, I lifted my hands to hold her shoulders.

Then, barely audible, she said, “I don't know if I should thank you or curse you. If I should laugh or cry, if I should jump for joy or commit suicide,” she paused, still looking downwards. She breathed deeply, trying to suppress a sob, then continued. “I don't know if you have given me something or have taken something from me. I need to still figure that out.”

Her little body shook as she silently cried. Her tears made dark stains on the sidewalk between us as they splashed into the dust. Then, she looked up at me, her green eyes swimming, her small face pale. Bravely she continued, stammering a little, “It feels like, sometime last night, let’s say between the third and the fourth orgasm, I had stopped being a girl. I became a woman. This morning, in any case, it feels as if I have travelled a very long way, in a very short space of time.”

The confession of her loss of innocence was heart-breaking. I was looking for some weeping and gnashing of teeth, but this was not what I had expected. I tried to hug her, but she resisted, her hands against my chest.

“Go now,” she said, “go.” With that, she turned around. I watched her as she quickly crossed the sidewalk. At the bottom of the steps, she paused and turned, to look at me one last time. It was only then that I realised that she was wearing my t-shirt, the one I had on the previous evening. My heart lifted a little. At least she somehow acknowledged our intimacy of last night, even if on a different level, she resented what had happened. She had a lot of figuring to do, I thought.

“Phil,” she said, her eyes locked into mine, “if ever you happen to be in this vicinity again, please resist the urge stop over, ever again. Just keep on driving.”
Then, quickly, she turned and with the t-shirt flapping against her small body, ran up the steps, into the building, and was gone. The little door bell tinkled dutifully, but sounded markedly less merry than it had the previous evening.

The deserted street stretched away in both directions. The climax of desolation indeed. A Sunday morning in a deserted little town far from home is devastating for the wellbeing of one’s soul under any circumstances. Our friend Kris Kristofferson was not wrong when he sang that ‘there is nothing short of dying, half as lonesome as the sound of the sleepy city sidewalk on a Sunday morning coming down’. I am sure he would have agreed that it was especially true for a tear-stained, dusty sidewalk, of a little town in the middle of nowhere.

I coaxed the reluctant engine of the Landy into life. As I waited for it to find an even rhythm, I leaned forward, my head against the steering wheel. This was enough uncle Clive, I thought. I have been there, done that... and lost the t-shirt. No more stops along that road. I will just keep on driving, as she had asked. Keep on running, as I have done for most of my life anyway. In search of what, happiness? Nah, I thought, I’m OK with not being OK. In my opinion, happiness is overrated anyway. I pulled away from the curb, leaving only a cloud of dust as evidence that I had ever stopped over.

###

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