

NEW PLEASURES

Chapter Nineteen



By
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Credits and License

Codes: MF, oral, exhib

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Preface

This story is the next instalment of the “Growing Pains” universe: Sarah refuses to talk to Andy and Rhea has some interesting homework to do. Abi has an interesting way of taking Andy’s mind off his troubles and Zoe drags her friend down to London to see her un-Christian uncle.

“New Pleasures” is set from June to October 1998.

The “Growing Pains” universe is a set of stories that centres around the life of Andy Williams and all those who got to know him as he grows up. While everything may not be totally clear, it will be the time the Universe is all released. For a fuller explanation please see my website under “Site and Story Credits.”

All stories should work well on their own but I believe there is more to be gained from the unfolding characters and plot lines to read it them order.

I shall try and keep to a regular posting schedule and will upload all stories to StoriesOnline.net, asstr.org, Feedbooks and my website. Completed stories will also be uploaded to Amazon Kindle, Smashwords and FirstyFish, where their internal policies permit but some instalments may be absent where the content is not compliant with their rules.

Please provide feedback to me, either by e-mail, Twitter or website review, whether you enjoyed it or not; I like to be told and it is the only payment I ask for.

Kind regards, John D

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Chapter XIX

“Are we going to talk?” I asked Sarah as I came up to the table in the library where she was studying with her friends. Zoe had been needling me every time she saw me to make some sort of peace with Sarah as she was fed up with the poison my troubled friend had been leaking all day. She said that the longer our feud had gone on, the more upset I felt and the more angry Sarah got. I didn't want to fight with her, and what seemed like I was making a point at first soon descended into despair when I saw what our pigheadedness had actually achieved.

“No,” Sarah replied abruptly and returned to her book. “You keep saying that you like me and go out of your way to upset me.” Zoe shrugged her shoulders at me and put her hand on Sarah's.

“Maybe, you do need to speak,” Zoe suggested and Sarah snapped her book shut with a bang. “It's gone on for long enough.”

“So you are on his side, now?” Sarah asked aggressively and Zoe recoiled. “He knew where I would be 'cause of football practice and waits in a doorway so I can see him snogging ... her.”

Zoe looked vexed; she had already told me in no uncertain terms what she thought of Abi's “lesson” and sighed. “No, I just want ...”

“What he wants,” Sarah suggested angrily. “He's always said she is special to him, so let him have her. They are made for each other.”

I cleared my throat. “She is but ...”

“Oh fuck off,” Sarah shouted disturbing the quiet calm of the library, causing a dozen heads to turn towards us. She picked up her book and her bag and stared at me shaking her head. “You knew what you were doing.”

“What the fuck is her problem?” I muttered and Zoe shot Ingrid a tortured look.

“You,” her Swedish friend replied tersely. “You've really upset her.”

“Don't I fucking know it.”

“And you know she is now off her football team for good,” Zoe added. “It kicked off again with Lisa last night so they've banned her completely. And then she saw you and Abi, and then she went home and had a big row with Kev. So she's been so upset today 'cause of what you did.”

“Well Abi doesn't want to go out with me and I don't want to go out with her, I want Sarah if she'll have me.” Ingrid scowled at me, telling me that I had a funny way of showing it and I packed up my things before catching up with Sarah, striding across the College green.

“What do you want?”

My intentions withered under her aggression and I took a deep breath. “I just want us to go back to the way we were,” I confessed. Sarah sneered and I looked into her eyes. “I mean it.”

"You've made it really obvious," she hissed. "That you want Abi. And Abi wants you."

"I don't," I told her, almost running to keep up with her. "And she doesn't want me. Look Sarah, I don't want to fight with you," I begged and Sarah turned to face me.

"Then don't," she screeched. "But I don't want to talk to you." I sighed and watched as Sarah stormed off. Zoe appeared behind me and shrugged. "She says she doesn't want to go out with me but resents me for spending time with people who do. Well, who may do. I can't win."

Zoe gulped. "You've confused her. She isn't going to walk away from her long-term deal with Kevin. It's been ages and there is a love there, but ..." Zoe looked at me. "You don't understand."

"No, I don't understand how her mind works."

"If Sarah wanted to go out with you, would you?"

"In an instant," I told her and Zoe smiled.

"What about before Paula left? What about if Paula was still here, would you then?" My face changed and Zoe looked at me. "It's the same situation. She likes you and she trusts you more than just about anyone else, but all she's seen is you getting annoyed and childish and then doing your best to show off." I went to protest and she put her finger over my mouth. "Not the sort of person you want to break up a long-term relationship for, eh?"

I sighed. "But it's not like that."

"And if she did want to split up with Kevin, she isn't going to do that over the 'phone, she's got more class than that."

I gulped. "Split up? You mean she might?"

Zoe groaned. "I don't know." Her body relaxed and she wiped the corner of her mouth. "She is upset, and she thinks you are taunting her. What were you thinking of ... snogging Abi just 'round the corner from her football? Of course she was going to see you, and you knew it."

I pursed my lips. "Abi was teaching me ..."

"I don't want to know."

"To date. She thinks the only reason Sarah and me aren't going out is 'cause I'm useless."

"Well you are that," Zoe told me. "Both you and Kev have been utter bastards to her, and at the moment you've both made her miserable."

"Don't I fuckin' know it," I muttered and looked at her. "OK, then Smart-Arse. How do I make amends?"

Zoe took a deep breath. "Well I don't know," she told me. "But first of all you just need to get her talking to you and she doesn't want to do that." She cocked her head and coughed. "Sorry, I just don't know Andy. I keep telling you that you are both impulsive and fiery characters and this is what happens when you act without thinking. I keep trying to tell you to think before you act but no-one will listen to me. And then I get Sarah ringing me up

crying and you moaning about it all.”

I sighed and shrugged; Zoe suggested we go for a drink and chat but I didn't feel like talking and just ambled home intending to curl up on my bed and think. I certainly didn't plan to go the Supermarket but Mum needed an extra pair of hands when she did the weekly shop and Rhea was at school or out with Simon so I had no choice but to go. I wasn't talkative and Mum kept sending me off to get things but at the end of the penultimate aisle I nearly ran into Zoe and her mother with the shopping trolley.

“Hello,” she cried in a surprised voice. “Do you know where the jam is?” Zoe asked as Mum appeared. “They've moved it.” I pointed to an aisle three rows back and Mum, clearly sensing an opportunity, sent me to the front of store to get a cucumber, which she had “forgotten” to pick up. I groaned and scooted off to find one.

I returned to find Zoe and Mum alone and still talking; I expected little else to be honest but they stopped as I approached. “He's so insensitive. And she is so pigheaded,” I heard Zoe mutter and Mum glanced over at me. She gave a “ssshh” and it didn't take a detective to work out what they were talking about.

“Do you mind?” I asked and Zoe looked apologetically at me. “It is private.”

Mum looked at what I had in my hand and tutted. “Half a cucumber, not a whole one,” she grumbled and I was dispatched to the other end of the store alone to replace it, giving Mum and Zoe ample opportunity to complete their conversation; I walked slowly, just enough to hear the first sentence from my friend. “They just need to talk 'cause if they were both honest with each other they'd be ...”

Why did Zoe think she needed to talk to Mum? It was Sarah with the problem.

* * * * *

“It's a fucking disgrace,” my sister moaned as she burst into the lounge and Simon just groaned. “Fuckin' not 'aving it. He can fuck right off if he fucking thinks he can fuckin' say that. What the fuck is his fucking problem?”

Simon groaned. “Haven't you calmed down yet?”

“Fuck no. He can fuck the fuck off if he fuckin' thinks ...”

“Problem?” I asked and Rhea, still scowling threw herself down on the sofa.

“Can you fuckin' believe it?” She ranted. “Mr Russell, the fucking prick, fucking reckons that I need to expand my fucking vocabulary. What the fuck is his fucking problem?”

I laughed and even Simon smiled but Rhea huffed. “Can't think why.”

“Said that my language needed expanding. I'll fucking give him narrow use of the English fucking language. I wonder if he knows that knife can be a verb as well as a noun. Or slash, as in tyres. Or ...”

“Expelled. As in Rhea,” I teased and chuckled. “What exactly has he asked you to do?”

“A short story as homework,” Rhea moaned in a haughty voice. “Using words I have not used before.”

“Like calm, forgiveness, respect, peace?”

Rhea frowned. “He just said that Rhea's stories used the same words month in and month out and thought she could benefit from stepping outside her comfort zone,” Simon clarified and I nodded.

“Perfectly reasonable.”

“Perfectly reasonable?” Rhea thundered. “I'll fuckin' give him reasonable.”

“Just ...”

Rhea sighed. “He picks on me. He fucking hates me. I got better grasp of the English language than any of the tarts in my class but he has a go at me 'cause I dain't sit on the front row and flash me knickers at the perv.” She rubbed her mouth and shook her head. “I'm not 'aving it.”

I licked my lips. “I'll leave you with this one,” I told Simon. “This is your problem.”

“His problem?” Rhea shouted. “Oi,” she cried as I left the room. “Oi, come the fuck back. What the bloody hell am I supposed to do?”

“Fornicate yonder, Rhea,” I told her with a smile which was worryingly reproduced.

* * * * *

It was an unseasonably warm Friday, and I was idling back towards the flat; I had some work to do and then the team meeting. I found that my mind kept wandering and instead of doing my physics work I kept thinking of Sarah. Eventually I got bored and wandered downstairs via the fire escape with a book in hand. I wanted to get out of my room.

I helped Mum move the tables. “I hear you and Sarah aren't on speaking terms.”

“No,” I finally admitted.

“That's a shame,” Mum said and then glanced over studying my body language.

“Yeah, it is, isn't it.”

She pursed her lips. “You can talk about it,” she offered but I shook my head; there was only person I could talk to, to sort it out and that was Sarah.

The team meeting was as raucous as usual with Isobel tickling me as she came in which caused me to reach over and pull her onto me and pin her over my lap. “Spank her,” a voice cried and I pulled down her trousers to do so.

“When you've quite finished,” Mum barked and I flashed her a look and hit Isobel once on her bare bottom that caused her to give a giggly shriek.

“Yep, OK done,” I told Mum with a smirk. “Carry on.” She sneered and Isobel reacquainted her waist with her blue cotton trousers as she got up. I got a disapproving glance from my mother but she didn't chastise me and just continued with the meeting. A couple of the girls had left that week – one who I didn't really know but also Gemma. I made a mental note to go and stop by her flat when I had a moment but wondered if she had left the club then had she moved out of Aylesbury; there wasn't a lot of employment in the local area

for people in the adult industry, unless she had got her teaching job she so desperately craved.

Scarlet walked with me towards the bank again along with Isobel and Heather. I did ponder if the cashiers ever wondered why there was a considerable influx of young, attractive women every Friday afternoon coming to pay in large deposits but they never asked any questions if they ever did.

Scarlet was quiet and she sighed when I asked what was wrong. "Eddie's being a pain," she told me. "I've been offered a small part in a film but it means going abroad to film for a week or two."

"Oh, that's ... well done."

She looked at me and licked her lips. "It's a nude part. He doesn't want me to go away and he doesn't want me to be prancing around naked."

"Oh," I muttered and smiled at her. "I wouldn't mind, dating a film star and all that."

She laughed as we waited to cross the road. "I am sure he thinks that I am going to find someone else, but I won't. So he's pissed off with me 'cause I've said yes."

"Oh well. He'll get over it," I found myself saying and Scarlet took a deep breath.

"Yeah, hope so. I don't want to fight with him but he is making it so hard for me." She shrugged and bit her lip. "There's a big gap in age, experience and all sorts, but he is great. I just wish he could be more relaxed and trusting. I mean, he spends all day with his farm girls and I don't get jealous."

I laughed and she flashed me a smile. "I don't think he is going to run off with them though, do you?"

"No," Scarlet admitted and giggled. "But he likes them, I know he does. And he wants me to be one, but I don't want to."

"Perhaps one day, as a surprise you should dress up as a farm girl, help him and take him behind the bales." Scarlet giggled.

"I don't want to encourage him." We parted outside the bank and I wandered back to the flat to get some dinner, before going out to see Olivia.

Olivia was clearly a little under the weather when she opened the door. "Andy," she croakily greeted me. "You better come in."

I closed the door behind me and followed her into her lounge where Emily sat watching television. "Hiya," she said with a warm smile. "I've been looking at your pictures."

"Oh," I said. "Any good?" Emily nodded, still grinning. "Who's the girl from the hotel?"

"Holly? You know her Mum right?"

"Yeah," Olivia told the young lady but gave her a stern look that ended any further questions.

"They were amazing. I loved them," Emily added as Olivia sat down and passed me an

envelope.

“Kara and Steve, how were they?”

I spluttered as I sat down on the faded chair and blushed. “Weird,” was all I could come out with and she snorted.

“Yeah, sorry, should have warned you,” she croaked. “I didn't realise it would be like it was.” I pocketed the envelope; it contained money but I did not know exactly how much. “They reckon they could use some more but I ...”

My face twisted. “It was a bit weird. But I guess I could stand it but ...”

Olivia put her hand on mine. “Listen kid, you don't want to, you don't do it. It's fine.” She coughed and reach into a drawer and passed me a set of pictures. “I was asked to give you those.”

I opened them tentatively and saw the smiling face of Holly; I bit my lip as I quickly leafed through them; she was exceedingly hot. “Oh thanks.” Olivia smiled at me and promised me more work after the half-term break that was approaching and I thanked her.

It seemed weird to be so rich; there was £120 in the envelope and I still had most of the cash from the swinger's party in my bedside drawer.

All I needed was a girlfriend to spend it with.

* * * * *

For weeks I had been trying to tempt Zoe to see her uncle. She told me that he had been in contact around her birthday and had provided her with an open-ended invitation to go down to London and see him whenever she wanted.

I tried to get her to open up about him, but she just said that her family had always said he did “immoral stuff” and she didn't want to have anything to do with him. I snorted at this, and eventually blackmailed her, by saying I would ask her out on a date if she didn't. This seemed to do the trick as she eventually agreed to go and see him with me. I was finding my weekends a little lonely at times, especially without Ray, and wanted something to do that Saturday; meeting an immoral relative of Zoe seemed ideal!

I had to get up really early to clean the club from Friday night. There were a lot of spilt drinks and ominous stains and it took me a little longer than usual, so I was a little late getting to Zoe's house. She had rung him to arrange to meet him at his house at midday and had a rough map that she had copied from a London A-Z.

Zoe was holding a couple of envelopes and I glanced at them. “Mum says I can take his birthday and Christmas cards when I go,” she muttered and ran towards the kitchen to go to the toilet when I caught the sight of familiar face peering over the banister.

“Hello Rhea,” I said gleefully and saw that she was wearing a dressing gown. She shushed me and I chortled as I walked up the stairs to see her.

“Is the coast clear?” Rhea whispered and a naked Simon came up behind her.

“How much?” I asked mischievously and she scowled.

"I won't hit you all day," she promised, and I smiled.

"No, I want no teasing or goading all week in the Lakes," I negotiated and she huffed.

"First day," she promised. "And that is all." I shrugged and she held up her fist. "OK, can I go?"

"Yes, Andrew and Emma are out, and I'm just about to go with Zoe."

Rhea breathed a sigh of relief and turned to Simon. "I think we probably have another hour or two if we want it."

I chuckled and saw Zoe coming back into the hallway and I walked back down the stairs, deciding that telling Zoe that her brother was naked with my sister would probably delay us further.

I hadn't made any lunch and neither had Zoe so we were resolved to having to buy or scrounge something to eat but I doubted this would be too much of a problem. As we passed a bakers however, I quickly bought us a pasty each, just to stop our stomachs from rumbling too loudly!

She was a little quiet on the train and eventually told me as we walked around the corner to her uncle's house exactly why he was a pariah. "Well he is a pornographer. He was arrested in the US for breaking obscenity laws, has half-a-dozen love children, forever in sinful relationships and now owns a company producing porn."

"Ahh, sounds just like your family," I teased and she glared at me.

"I've not met him for a few years. Mum had a big row with him the last time we were down and she has refused to talk to him since. It's a bit of a testy subject," she admitted. "I mean, she talks to her other brother but almost pretends Neil doesn't exist." She wiped her eye with the heel of her hand and forced a smile. "He is a nice guy, just preoccupied with sex. A bit like you really."

"Or you," I teased and Zoe snorted. "When you read steamy romance novels."

"No. Well maybe that's where I get it from," she mournfully added and I resisted the urge to giggle.

I took a glance at the map and we turned into a little cul-de-sac. The road was lined with big, impressive houses, some of them garishly adorned with statues or flamboyantly-shaped hedges.

We walked to the end and onto a small drive in the corner. The property didn't look any bigger or smaller than the neighbouring houses, but instead of BMWs or Porsches in the drive, there was a shiny red Ferrari.

Zoe sighed when she saw it and glanced up at the door before knocking on it. I could tell she was nervous; I knew that her parents were not overly impressed that she wanted to go and see Neil but reasoned that he was family, no matter how much her mother wanted him not be and didn't object too much. There was some shuffling and noise behind the door and a tall, slightly balding man opened it. I could see Zoe in him immediately, the soft smile and welcoming eyes that she had, were present in him.

"Zoe," he called and held out his arms to her. He was wearing a soft dressing gown and

she embraced him, nervously smiling. "You look so well," he cooed and glanced over at me.

I held my hand out and introduced myself before we were beckoned in. His hallway had a few small statues, and was very much decorated to look like a Roman villa with naked nymphs lining the room. His kitchen was smart, far more tastefully decorated and was big. He went behind his breakfast bar and leant across. "Drink?"

Zoe nodded silently and then spoke as he clapped his hands. "Orange, Cranberry, Pineapple, Tropical Juice, or wine, or do you fancy a beer, we got all the spirits if you fancy a cocktail."

Zoe froze and bit her lip, humming. "I'd love an Orange Juice," I said and he smiled, opening his fridge, which was easily bigger than our fridge and freezer combined and took out a large bottle which he opened and poured into a glass, passing it over. Zoe opted for the same and he then took us outside to his garden.

His garden consisted of a few flowerbeds, a pool, patio and a hot-tub, but that was not what drew my eye. Sitting in the hot-tub reading a book was a girl, easily pretty enough to be a model. She looked up when she saw us and put her novel down, next to an empty cocktail glass and called over.

"We were in the hot tub with cocktails," he told us smiling. "Nice way to spend the morning when the weather is a bit cool." He took off his dressing gown and climbed in, the brightly-coloured shorts with naked women on it raising a smile from me.

"We didn't bring swimming costumes," Zoe said quickly and his partner giggled.

"No, neither did I the first time I came," she said. "We often go in naked. Jump in."

I laughed and looked at Zoe. "Remember that pool in Cholesbury," I teased and she took a deep breath.

"Yeah, but it's ..."

"Oh come on," I encouraged her and took off my T-Shirt and jeans. She stared at me, shaking her head and I gave her a look out of the corner of my eye. She watched as she took a seat next to the hot tub, while I lost my underwear and leapt in to the bubbling water.

"You wouldn't think she is getting shy, especially after she played strip poker with six people?" I teased and Zoe took a sharp intake of breath.

"No, it wasn't like that," Zoe said quickly and then glanced over at me and relented after a short moan. Her uncle turned away as she got undressed and while she wasn't entirely comfortable with the idea, the warm water was very nice in the cool October air and the bubbling liquid covered up to her neck.

Neil's partner was "Emmie" and was at University although she was originally from Devon and had met Neil while he was doing a photo shoot in Exeter when he stayed at the same hotel she worked at.

They seemed to have hit it off quite nicely and she had travelled to London regularly to meet him before starting her course in September. While her parents disapproved of her relationship with the much older man, she spent most of her time at his house and was

actually very intelligent. I had almost expected the vacuous stereotypical gold-digger when I first saw the age gap but this was unfair.

We conversed about many things and she was warm and friendly. Zoe spoke very little until my hands started massaging her thighs and she gave me a wry smile. I knew what she was thinking and I let my hands wander in the bubbles.

She didn't move her hand over to my body to reciprocate and I took that as the touching was something she was uncomfortable with and withdrew. I was only teasing her and when I stopped she giggled, looked at me and came closer.

Her uncle made a few teasing comments, I think he assumed that Zoe and I were going out, which we weren't and we corrected him. Emmie noticed Zoe's necklace and crowed over it, scooting across the small hot tub to get a better look and then Zoe had to admit it was a birthday present.

"From a boyfriend?" Emmie said slyly and looked at me. "Or just an admirer?"

Zoe blushed and I answered for her. "It was a close friend who does admire her, but not in a romantic way." Neil and Emmie gave me knowing looks and Zoe went bright red.

"I said it was too much," she blurted out and I looked over at her uncle.

"It was her seventeenth birthday present."

"Yeah, and the dresses and the underwear."

Neil went a little sheepish and Emmie glanced over at him. "He forgot mine."

"I had a stropmy model. Banging on about not doing anal on a film called 'Ass Stretchers' but still wanting to get paid. And then I had LA on the line and all the days blurred together. I am making it up to her though."

"We are off to the Maldives at Christmas," she said with a gleam in her eye. "I can't wait."

Zoe went to reply and I squeezed her thigh. "See, I could have bought you a holiday," I whispered and she giggled.

We spent another hour in the hot tub. I liked Neil, he was care-free and good natured but had a streetwise aura about him. He had a couple of scars on his arms and I could easily have seen him in a few scrapes over the years. He brought us all cocktails and we sat drinking the (very) alcoholic drinks he had provided while Emmie gently gleaned titbits of information about us from Zoe and myself.

Neil was happy to watch and certainly doted over his girlfriend, rubbing her tummy or stroking her hair and she leant into him. Zoe was far more stoic with me, even after the cocktail and by 2:30pm we were all hungry and thought about getting something to eat.

Neil said he knew of a lovely little bistro down the road and he got out to retrieve four big beach towels, adorned with his company logo. He saw me smiling at the pictures from the films he had produced and laughed. "Yeah I love to wipe myself dry with those against me skin," he joked as I pushed a models big breasts into my crotch. I blushed a bit and he just chortled. "We got loads for a promotional event a while back. I'll let you take a couple back if you like."

“Does your Mum do big towels with her dancers on them?” Zoe asked and I then had to explain exactly what sort of entertainment the nightclub I lived on top of provided to its clientele.

Neil was interested; he wanted to do a film in an adult nightclub in the New Year and desperately wanted to find a business that would lend their premises to him for the shoot. I promised to ask Mum and he said he would pay handsomely if it was suitable. “Most of it won't be in the club, but some of the scenes need stage and the like. Only need it for one or two days I reckon.”

We got dressed and walked down his cul-de-sac and he cut through down a footpath and before long we were at a small restaurant. Emmie took Zoe's hand as we walked, she was keen to know more about her and they chatted like old friends.

When I first saw her I wondered about Emmie's intentions. She was with a man, who was at least 20, maybe 25 years her senior, who worked in the adult industry, and I could only see her latching onto him for his money, but as we spent more time with her I could see past that.

She was genuinely interested in us, and certainly got on well with Zoe. She told us that she wasn't in any of his films while we were in the hot tub but I noticed a guilty look and wondered if she had assisted in another capacity. She also said that she had refused to let him pay for her student costs and that this had caused a row between them, but was keen to accept nothing more than his company and hospitality. Despite the age gap and financial disparity there was certainly love and it warmed my heart. If Neil could ensnare a beautiful and lovely girl like Emmie, then maybe I could repair relations with Sarah.

The bistro welcomed Neil warmly and I guessed he wasn't an infrequent visitor. We were shown to a table near the back of the restaurant that was a little secluded and the waitress gave us all menus as we sat down.

I glanced at the prices and my eyes widened in shock. Starters were more than ten pounds, the main courses started at twenty-five and the drinks were all at six pounds or more. While I earned good money it was very expensive and Neil looked over at us.

“It's my treat,” he said firmly and looked at Zoe. “I mean it. I know how stubborn you can be. You get it from your mother.”

Zoe sighed and she looked back at the menu. “Don't worry 'bout the cost,” Emmie told us. “He won't let you pay a penny.”

I ordered the Venison steak with a fruity sauce and vegetables. I had only had venison once, and liked it, but as the mains were pretty much all the same price I reasoned it didn't matter too much what I picked.

As it happens, Neil also picked the venison while Emmie had her favourite vegetable dish and Zoe selected the duck. Neil also ordered a bottle of champagne and then looked over at us. “It's not every day your niece comes to visit,” he reasoned and Emmie rubbed his hand.

“He's been proper excited all week,” she said with a glint in her eye. “I've had Zoe this and Zoe that. If I didn't know better I would have thought he'd found another woman!”

“Well. I've not seen you or Simon or John for four years. Or Jay for even longer than that.

Emma and Paul don't talk to me, so it's good that at least one person in my family wants to still know me."

Zoe blushed and bit her lip. "You're my uncle," she said firmly. "But you don't make it easy for us. I mean, you grew up in a vicarage and end up producing hardcore and vicious ... stuff."

Neil chortled. "I know. But I've always wanted to do it,"

"Why?" Zoe asked. "No one else in the family did!"

Neil gave a chuckle. "Ahh yes, well, ever since I read the Venus in Furs. I found it when I volunteered to do a church bring and buy sale and it was left over. It's a lot for a ten year old to take in."

Zoe smiled at her uncle who leant towards Emmie, put his head on her shoulder and they kissed briefly. The waitress returned with the champagne and poured Neil a glass, and when he was happy that it was fine, filled everyone's flutes up to the brim.

Zoe tensed when it was full up and I giggled at her looking at the glass. "It won't bite, unless you are worried what you will do when you get drunk."

Zoe mouthed silently at me to be quiet and Emmie raised an eyebrow. I wasn't going to say anything, but liked teasing Zoe nevertheless. The meal was absolutely superb, to be expected from food at those prices, and the vegetables were tossed in a light mint dressing which made them heavenly.

The champagne was lovely and sweet and I laughed when the bubbles went straight up Zoe's nose. We ordered desserts and coffee, and Neil asked for the bill. I tried to pay at least some of what I had eaten but he scoffed at me and eventually leant across the table. "I live in a million pound house, drive a hundred grand car and have a company valued at two mill. Money isn't a problem," he said firmly. "When you have that, I'll let you pay for the meal." I felt a little derided but Emmie looked over at me and just grinned.

"Zoe coming down has made his week, just let him. He likes to be generous."

Zoe giggled. "He can't accept things from other people," she replied on my behalf about me and I sighed. I did add a note to the two Neil put down as a tip and he gave me a fleeting glance.

We got back to his house and he showed us around his property. The rooms were like his hallway, garish and brilliantly decorated. He had a photographic studio where one of the bedrooms once was and I started talking about cameras and the girls from the club when Zoe gasped. I had forgot she didn't know all about my money making schemes and gently shook her head.

Neil then showed me his portfolio, and said that while he didn't take many photos professionally any more, he still enjoyed it. I found a lot of his images very striking, he was a good photographer and used his subjects and props well. A large number of the images were bondage or bondage-related but a few were of naked people looking very sexy, including several of Emmie.

I realised that my pictures were very amateur looking and he started talking about lighting and depths of focus, as well as using grayscale effectively before proudly showing me his camera that was worth a hundred times more than mine.

It was nearly 5pm when we left, I had enjoyed Neil's company immensely and wished to have stayed for longer but we had promised our parents we would be home for six thirty. Neil had dug out a few of the promotional goody bags from his company's latest event that each contained a towel just like the one I had used, full of explicit images. "We have them made up every time we are at an event," he explained. "There is one coming up soon but any left over just go to waste."

I thanked him and we walked back towards the train station. "You can have my ones," Zoe said. "Mum will go ballistic if she sees them."

As expected, Zoe quizzed me about my photographic money making scheme on the train home. I tried to be a little evasive about it but she saw through it and eventually I admitted what she already knew. "Every time I see you I think you are a little more immoral and shameful," she admitted and I scoffed. "Andy, you are producing pornography."

"Just like your family," I told her and Zoe gasped, moaning at my assertion. "I could end up being as successful as Neil," I teased her.

She hummed and didn't respond. I was glad that Zoe had enjoyed herself; I did wonder if she would, but Neil was very kind and just delighted to see her. He had offered to give us a tour of his office and facilities in "east London" which I would have loved to see, even spend a day with one of his professional photographers as they snapped some images for his company's offerings but Zoe snorted when he suggested this and I guessed that it was maybe one bridge too far for her.

Mum glared at me as I came up the stairs with five big bags, each one containing the logo of the company he owned. "Zoe's uncle owns the company," I said with a smile. "These are left over goody bags."

"I don't want to know what's inside them," Mum said and Rhea replied that she most certainly did. I went to pass her a bag and then thought better of it and took them to my room. I knew Rhea would definitely go in and sneak a peek, and didn't raise any arguments when I later went to my room and found only four.

I briefly told Mum about our trip, and the restaurant before mentioning his offer about borrowing the club. I could tell Mum was a little uneasy discussing it in front of Rhea so I just slid his business card over and Mum filed it away in her pocket.

The bags not only contained a beach towel, but also a face cloth, a video, pens, pencils, a pad and a catalogue. I saw the bags at the end of my bed and knew exactly who would like one, and wondered if a bag full of pornographic merchandise would be just what was needed to get Sarah to start talking to me again.

* * * * *

I cleaned the club the following morning and decided that I would go and see the stubborn girl. I set off and stopped off to buy flowers and chocolates; Sarah liked them last time and I reasoned it was as good as any peace offering.

I was missing her friendship and reasoned that one of us needed to make a first move, and knew that it probably wouldn't be her. She was too angry with me to want to suspend hostilities and while I knew that I was within my rights to see other girls, I only really wanted Sarah. I had only taken Vanessa and Lisa out because Sarah was steadfastly unavailable.

Sarah answered the door, glared at me and then went to shut it before I could speak. I held the door with my palm and she opened it again to tell me that she had nothing to say to me.

"I know you don't want to speak to me but I want to speak to you. Please, Sarah."

"No," she replied resolutely and shook her head before glancing down at the flowers. "Those for Lisa I suppose."

"I am not going out with Lisa," I said firmly and she snorted.

"I bet you had sex with her as well. To think that I actually liked you. You are nothing but a ..."

"I did not have sex with Lisa," I said calmly and firmly. "I never really liked her, we went out, we didn't get on. I am here because I do like you." Sarah sneered and I rolled my eyes. "Can we talk please, on the bench?" I pointed to the front garden and she just shook her head.

"No Andy. You went out with her," she yelled and slammed the door. I heard raised voices in the house and Angela opened it and then looked at Sarah storming up the stairs.

"Can you give her these," I asked, passing my flowers over to her.

"You two still fighting?" Angela asked and I sighed.

"Yeah. But she won't accept my apology or even talk to me," I replied and wiped my eyes. "And I just don't want to fight with her any more."

Angela pursed her lips. "She is quite emotional. OK, I will see she gets these," she told me as I turned to go.

I looked back. "You know you told me and Sarah to work out what we wanted. Whether I wanted Abi or Sarah?" Angela nodded and I bit my lip. "I know now, I think I've always known to be honest. But I think it might be too late for her to believe me."

Angela gave a cursory smile. "I'm sure you'll be fine," she said quickly and gave me a smile. "Honestly. You're not the first teenager to upset someone they like and you won't be the last." I gulped and thanked her, but I needed Zoe's help now. Whatever I had or hadn't done with Lisa, Sarah was definitely overreacting.

I was angry, upset and bored and meandered home from the station, kicking every stone into a passing car and only didn't send a cat propelling through the air as I had a last minute change of heart mid kick.

"Where's Mum?" I asked the moment I saw Rhea in the lounge.

"Alicia's," Rhea told me and then watched me as I went into the kitchen, got a drink and came out.

"What?" I asked as my sister stared at me.

"Now is that polite?" Rhea snapped. "The question is, 'can I help?' not 'what?' Do you know how rude that is?"

"I'm not in the mood Rhea," I dismissed her, shaking my head and downing the last of my bottle of beer. "Really not in the mood for you."

Rhea waited until I was at the foot of the stairs and sniffed. "After all what I have done for you," she barked. "All the effort I've made for you and that is how you repay me."

I stopped and looked around at her. "What?"

Rhea huffed and then smiled. "In your room, big brother, is some clothes on the bed. Wear them and come downstairs."

"What is this?" I demanded and my sister just prodded me upstairs.

"Just get ready," she snapped and I looked to see ironed trousers, shirt, underpants (yes, really) and socks on my bed alongside a bottle of cologne. "And have a shower and shave," Rhea shouted up the stairs. I groaned, but knew that it was silly to argue. My sister was up to something and it was almost futile to resist.

She sat me down when I got to the lounge and giggled. "Now you have a date," she said with a giggle. "A proper date, nice young lady ..."

"Oh Rhea, what makes you think ..."

"She is perfect for you. Now you have a date, Micco's Italian on the Buckingham road."

"But that's miles away."

"Perfectly walkable," she said with a sneer. "But a nice restaurant. Now, remember. No silliness on your date, remember to compliment her, listen to her. Don't argue and remember, you aren't going to get your end away on a first date. She isn't Abi."

"Rhea ..."

"Right, and lose that scowl. It's not very attractive." She checked her watch and walked over to the side of the room, taking a bunch of red roses and passing them to me. "Remember, compliment her, tell her she looks nice. She's a nice girl."

"Who?"

"I'm not telling you. And no, it's not Becky." I sniffed and watched as her lips curled and she tutted. There was the sound of the bell and Rhea prodded my shoulder. "Well go on then."

"Go where?"

"Micco's of course. And don't forget you are paying." I snatched at my wallet and tentatively walked down the stairs to the front door at street level. Standing in the cold was Simon and his sister. "Zoe," I cried and Rhea just nodded.

Zoe had her coat over her clothes, but it was clear she was wearing a dress and I saw a flash of blue; she was wearing the present I had bought her from Cambridge. "Sorry we're late," Simon told my sister. "Zoe doesn't walk too good in heels." Her eyes flashed at Simon and then at me.

"What is this?"

"A date," Rhea announced. "You and Andy."

She looked at me. "Andy? What is this?"

"Oh for God's sake," Rhea barked, her arms crossed. "Just go out Zoe. You two are made for each other, just go out and have some fun. We've booked the restaurant and ..."

"But Andy?" Zoe asked just as I objected but Rhea was resolute. She brought Simon into the flat and crossed her arms blocking my path.

"Go," she ordered and licked her lips, and pushed me out into the street. "And I am locking the door. Don't come back until you are loved up."

With that the door closed and I looked at my friend. "Shall we?"

"Have you set this up?" Zoe asked me and looked at me gesturing down the street. "Cause I am not sure ..."

"I've not," I promised truthfully. "I knew nothing about it. She's just presented me with this." I passed her the flowers and her face flickered into a smile.

"For me? You shouldn't have."

"I didn't," I told her as we started walking. "Rhea did."

"Oh," Zoe muttered but held my hand as we navigated the evening half-light to our restaurant. Rhea had picked a lovely eatery but it was some distance away and Zoe did not walk quickly in her high heels. I offered to give her a piggyback ride but she refused.

I did compliment her on her appearance; she looked lovely and her blue eyes matched her pendant and dress wonderfully. She blushed as I spoke and then had to reassure her that I wasn't trying to adopt her as my girlfriend.

There was something unique about Zoe; we had always got on very well and she had always made time for me to talk to her, but we had an understanding where it was almost impossible to upset each other. Any disagreements we had were always forgotten almost instantly and unlike my behaviour with Sarah, and earlier in the Summer with Abi, there was no lasting annoyance. "What are you thinking?" She asked me as I held open the door to the small restaurant.

"Nothing," I murmured and explained that we had a reservation. Rhea had booked it under "Mr and Mrs Williams" - a name that caused a degree of amusement from my date and we were shown to a small table in the corner and next to a log fire. It wasn't cold outside but it wasn't warm either, and the fire was snug.

Zoe took off her coat and I held out her chair, taking a moment to admire the beautiful blonde girl as she sat down. She smiled back at me as I passed her a menu and sat down opposite. We both ordered pizzas and a soft drink (Zoe told me not to buy wine) and she licked her lips. "So what do we talk about, I know all about you? As blind dates go this is pretty poor."

I bit my lip. "Well you do need the practice," I told her. "You do need a boyfriend, I've told you that."

"No offence, but I don't need you as a boyfriend."

I bit my lip. "That's you and Sarah then. And Abi." Zoe crossed her arms.

"Do you think it would be a good idea for us to go out? I mean, I would definitely kick you into shape but I guess we will probably end up hating each other."

"That bad," I teased and yawned. "Sorry."

"And Sarah, well she still likes you but is angry with you."

"That doesn't make much sense," I told her and Zoe sniffed.

"That's Sarah for you. You say you want to spend time with her, you better get used to her silliness."

I took a deep breath. "I am. I just ... oh I don't know. In one breath she is leading me on and other times she is saying she doesn't want me. I know where I stand with Abi. And certainly with you. And Paula was always really good, but with Sarah I just don't know, and she likes it like that which pisses me off."

Zoe tucked her blonde hair behind her ears. "Have you considered that maybe Sarah doesn't know?" She waited for me to shrug and then looked at me in the eyes. "Or maybe she does know and is scared. Sarah does many things but she doesn't make rash decisions. Well, not important ones. She can be impulsive about everything, except big decisions. She's a bit weird like that, to be honest." She sighed and took a deep breath. "She had a happy relationship," she looked at me and turned her hands on the table. "She said she did," Zoe corrected herself. "But you confused her. She would tell me how much she liked you and didn't want to in that way and every time you would see her, she would like you a bit more." I gulped and Zoe smiled as she saw my eager expression. "And you had your rows and I know you were a bit of a prat."

"I was a complete cunt at times," I admitted and Zoe winced before telling me not to use "that word."

"And you weren't easy. But you went and played football in the park with her, and took her to the woods, and even went down to London so she could see Kev and just gave her space. And she's upset. She thinks that ... well she wonders if you ever did really want her like you told her or if it was a bit of an infatuation."

"I do, but she wants another."

"She wants both of you," Zoe told me. "She wants Kev and you for different reasons. And when you messed around you did it front of her, you were taunting her showing her that you wanted other people."

"I'm not," I snapped and Zoe's eyebrows shot upwards.

"Well she thinks you did it to upset her. I told her that if you did it was out of frustration but she doesn't know. So she still likes you, but really doesn't want to be with you."

"All I want is things back to where they were. I was annoyed with her, she told Rhea that I was never going to be her boyfriend while I felt I was being led on a merry dance but I never wanted to upset her like this. And she is way overreacting."

Zoe didn't disagree but just flashed her smile at me and thanked the waitress as she put two drinks on the table. "Just talk to her. 'Cause you both think you know what the other

one wants, and you keep telling her all you want is an intimate friendship and I know that isn't true." I sighed and steered the conversation away from Sarah; it may not have been a "proper date" but it was still a "date" and talking about other girls was most inappropriate!

My companion winced and smiled in equal measure as I brought up our visit to see her uncle the day before. She still wasn't completely comfortable about him but I really enjoyed my time there and suggested we go back to see him.

I also tried to get Zoe to agree to let me photograph her; I would have been happy with clothed shots, but I had Sarah, Abi, Paula and dozens of other people from the club but none of my close friend. She refused and swiftly moved the conversation onto Ray. I was still avoiding him at College due to Donna and Zoe thought it was petty.

Our pizzas, and ice cream were gorgeous and I paid, much to Zoe's annoyance before we started walking back. They had not been quick serving in the restaurant and we had been almost two hours since we had left the flat.

"I know our siblings mean well," Zoe muttered as we neared the flat. "And I love you to bits, but we'd kill each other if we went out, right?"

"Yeah," I agreed. "Definitely."

"But I know I go on about Rhea, but it shows that she has a good heart."

I laughed and Zoe stared at me incredulously, before slipping in her heels. "Haven't you worked it out yet?" I asked her, helping her to her feet at the top of Castle Street and Zoe shook her head.

"Work what out?"

"Tonight."

"Don't tell me you set it up, 'cause Andy I said I like you but ..."

"No, Rhea did. But that's the point." I watched her scowl and then licked my lips. "Where have we gone for a meal?"

"Restaurant," she told me and then she screwed up her face.

"Yeah, about a mile away, there are closer restaurants. Rhea picked it. She also picked your heels,"

"Simon did but ..."

"Rhea did, I can guarantee it. And they not easy to walk in, are they?"

"No," Zoe admitted and sighed. "But surely ... what's this to do with Rhea?"

"Where's Simon?"

"Your flat."

"Where's Mum?" Zoe's eyes widened and shrugged. "Out. Where's Rhea?"

"Your fl ... oh what? Andy if you knew ... They better not be having sex, it's your fault if they are."

"They won't be," I quickly told her but she dragged me down the street, before tapping impatiently as I unlocked the front door. I watched as she flew up the stairs, abandoning her heels by the front door and crashed into Rhea emerging from the dining room, dressed in an elegant ball gown and holding two drinks. "Do you mind?"

"Simon, you haven't done something stupid, have you?"

Simon shook his head while pushing the empty wine bottle out of sight. "No," he replied indignantly.

"Are you two an item yet?" Rhea asked and came behind her partner putting the drinks on the dining table. "You've had long enough."

"No," Zoe cried and she stared at Simon.

"No?" Rhea asked and looked at me. "Why not?"

Zoe ignored her. "What is going on, getting me out of your way so you can ... do things?"

Rhea sighed. "And what have we been doing?"

"Things."

"God Zoe, you are so untrusting. We go out of our way to make you happy and this is the thanks we get."

"You have, haven't you." Zoe rubbed her face, looking at her brother and shook her head.

"Can't you sort her out?" Rhea asked me. "Why can't you just give her one?" Rhea spat at me and Zoe gasped. "I mean she is so uptight, it'll be like screwing a virgin every night. I know Sarah and Abi are loose but surely a guy likes a tight one every so often."

"Rhea," I interrupted and Simon looked at his girlfriend. "That's enough."

"We did think ... well we do think ... you would make a good couple," Simon told her, squeezing Rhea's hand.

"Yeah, and the fact that I am fucking fed up with you being on my case," my little sister told her. "So what that I don't go to Church every week or that Simon and I like to cuddle up naked from time to time or that we kiss or that we drink or whatever."

Zoe gulped and Simon nodded as Rhea spoke. "You are on at me a lot. More than Mum. I do my homework and don't get into trouble so there's no need."

"Cause she is a bad influence," Zoe said firmly.

Rhea cackled. "Is she for real? I'm his girlfriend, of course I'm a bad influence. I'm meant to be a bad influence. Talk about fuckin' naïve."

"And you are immoral and just always up to something ..."

"Flattery will get you nowhere," Rhea sarcastically interrupted my distressed friend.

"Rhea," Zoe cried. "This is not a joke. You are leading my little brother astray, of course I am not going to be happy. You are too young to be flaunting yourself."

Rhea turned to me. “Ya see, this is the problem. Can't you tell her what teenagers are supposed to do. Or better still show her. The closest another person's got to her chuff is Sarah, and ...”

“Rhea,” Simon called to get her to stop but my sister was in full flow and stared at Zoe.

“Now I've been very patient,” Rhea told her and looked at my friend out of the corner of her eye. “And normally I'm not this forgiving, but this has to stop or I will hurt you. And I know you would rather Simon was dating anyone else but you don't get to choose, and we need you to get off our case 'cause I want to kill you, feed you to the crows and bury your bones under the patio.” Zoe gulped and looked at me. “And it made a terrible bloody mess the last time I did it, and Si has asked me not to use fatal force but it's a promise I won't keep.” Zoe rolled her eyes at my sister's silliness and Rhea waved her arms around dramatically. “Now Andy needs a girlfriend and you need to get laid – or at least be with someone so you're not always bitchin' at us. It's for your own good.”

Zoe took a deep breath and shook her head as she looked at the floor. “I'm sorry Rhea, but if you are doing things that are wrong ...”

“Us being naked and kissing is wrong, is it?” I groaned; I could see where Rhea was going and watched as Zoe agreed with my little sister. There was no hesitation as she discarded her clothes the moment Zoe told her that her actions were inappropriate. “Wrong answer,” Rhea told her and threw her dress at my friend. “Cause there ain't anything wrong with my body and I don't care if he sees it. Hell I want him to see it,” Rhea told her and pulled her knickers down to her ankles. “I want him to want to see it. 'Cause I love him Zoe, does that scare you?” Simon gulped as Rhea opened her arms out wide. “Does it frighten you that someone loves your brother? Someone other than you?”

Zoe gulped and Rhea threw her arms around her boyfriend and kissed him on the lips; Zoe averted her eyes and cried out. “That's enough,” she told them but Rhea ignored her and slid her hands underneath her boyfriend's T-Shirt. “Rhea. Simon. Come on. Stop this. Andy do something.”

“Yeah kiss her Andy.” Rhea held her boyfriend and shook her body towards Zoe. I grabbed the hand of my friend who squeezed it. “See, perfectly innocent,” Rhea told my companion as Simon broke the kiss. “Now, do that with Andy; you'll like it. Go on. You've done it with Sarah now try and do it with a man. Or a reasonably close approximation, anyhow.”

“Oi,” I complained and Rhea smirked.

“No,” Zoe cried and Simon looked at me.

“What's wrong with my sister? Why can't you ask her out or kiss her?”

I bit my lip and smiled at my blonde friend. “Cause I don't want to destroy a friendship,” I muttered and Zoe breathed a sigh of relief.

“Kiss her,” the naked Rhea barked and crossed her arms. “Cause there has to be something to unfreeze the Ice Witch.”

“Ice Witch?” Zoe cried and grabbed Simon by the arm.

“You. Home. Now.” Simon tried to argue but it was no use and Rhea kissed her boyfriend goodbye. Given her state of dress she could hardly come down to street level, and I escorted the Mathesons downstairs. I gave Zoe the briefest of kisses on the cheek and

watched as she took her brother homewards, before returning to the lounge.

“Rhea,” I told my naked sister as I walked past her. “Don’t ever, ever, ever set me up with someone again. You’re shit at it.”

“OK, I won’t,” she promised and gave a grin. “But thanks for taking her out. Si and me had a good couple of hours peace.”

“I don’t want to know,” I told her and wandered up to my room. If what Zoe had said was right, then maybe I was closer to Sarah than I thought; but then as she wouldn’t speak to me maybe I was as far away from her as I could get.

* * * * *

“Oh come on,” Rhea teased me as I ate breakfast. “You got to admire the ingenuity of it. It was brilliant!”

“It was deceitful,” I told her and she licked her lips.

“I knew you’d be impressed!” Rhea waited for a response and when one was not forthcoming smirked. “I don’t care actually. I got to have two hours with Si having a lovely home-cooked meal and then a kiss and a cuddle without Zoe watching us and a bottle of wine to boot. It was well worth it.” I sniffed and she rocked back on her chair. “And the best bit, it wasn’t even my idea. Si came up with it. I think he’s a natural,” she proclaimed.

“Either that or you have well and truly corrupted him.”

Rhea sneered and then smiled; I wasn’t quite sure if she considered a compliment or not. “Oh, and I’ve done my story for Russell,” she told me proudly. “And it is brilliant.”

“Uh-oh,” I hummed. “What have you done?”

Rhea smiled and bit her lip. “It came to me as we walked back from booking the restaurant. We went past the library.”

“Oh Christ, you’ve not copied ...”

“Oh hell no. Did you know there are around 700,000 words in the English language,” she announced. “And they are all in this big book.”

“We call that a dictionary,” I teased and Rhea stuck out her tongue.

“Well even the most swotty of cunts only use around 25,000 tops so that’s loads of words for me to use which old Mr Russell won’t have a clue.”

“Oh Rhea, why can’t you just write something normal?”

She sneered. “It was your ‘fornicate yonder’ that got me thinking. So I have a fifteen page love story with as many complicated words as I can squeeze in. Let’s seem him mark that! Simon thinks it’s well funny.”

I shook my head and left the flat; why couldn’t Rhea just be normal? Zoe was waiting for me as we went into the common room with a furious expression on her face. “You need to talk to Rhea,” she said without even greeting me. “Or I’ll have a word with Grace.”

"It'll do no good," I said immediately. "But hello, how are you? Good morning. Did you have a good evening?"

"You know perfectly well what evening I had," she snapped. "I can't believe your sister would be so devious."

"Welcome to the world of Rhea," I just replied and crossed my arms. "And anyway, it was Simon's idea." Zoe scoffed and I slid my bag off my shoulder. "I've never known Rhea not take credit for her own deception, she is always very proud of her scheming. If she says Simon thought of it, then Simon thought of it."

Zoe rubbed her creased brow and sniffed. "Well, then I should be even more worried about him then. Rhea is definitely making him do things he wouldn't do."

I gulped and sat down on the benches outside the door. "Don't you think he is old enough to make his own decisions?" I asked. "I mean, I know you mean well but you keep trying to sort out Simon and Rhea and they aren't thanking you for it."

She sighed. "But ..."

"But why aren't we going out?" I asked her and her face fell. "You think we will end up fighting all the time, right?"

"Well yeah, I guess so."

"Then why aren't you applying that line of thought to Rhea and Simon?"

"Because he is fifteen and I am worried about him."

"He's happy, right?"

"He thinks he's happy," Zoe replied and I rolled my eyes. "There is a difference. Drug addicts think they are happy, but it's not good for them."

"You think Rhea is like heroin?" I laughed. "Actually, I think you mightn't be that far from the truth!" Zoe groaned and I just smiled. "You aren't going to stop Rhea. Mum barely manages it, and I can't do it, so you ain't got a chance in Hell." Zoe flashed an awkward smile at me and I just looked at her. "Honestly, just let them work it out for themselves. They'll be happier for it and Rhea'll leave you alone which is a very good position to be in."

"I'm ..."

"... worried about him? Just as you are worried about Sarah, and me and Ingrid and everyone else." She sighed and I licked my lips. "Not everyone will live up to your standards. Just let them and us do our own thing," I asked her and she snorted derisively. "Your objections and concerns have been noted."

"If not listened to," Zoe added and I just shrugged. We watched Sarah storm past us, saying "good morning" to Zoe and not to me.

"I'll have a word with her," Zoe promised and I took a deep breath.

"Yeah, I was thinking of going and watching her do football tomorrow," I told her and Zoe snorted.

"She's been thrown off the team," she reminded me and as the bell went, we got up.

"Bollocks," I muttered and Zoe told me to give her a day to talk her round.

"I'll sort it out so you are talking," Zoe promised. "If you promise me you have admirable intentions."

I sighed. "This isn't Jane bloody Austen," I snapped and Zoe just winced at me. "But I do miss her smile."

"Yeah, we all do."

* * * * *

I had a miserable day at school and was only really cheered up by Rhea demanding my presence (along with Mum) at her school talent show. I would normally have baulked at his but I was feeling a little sorry for myself and getting out of the flat was just what I needed to do.

There were a number of acts before Rhea and apart from the obligatory girl band who couldn't sing, the boy band who equally could not sing or dance, the magician who couldn't do magic and the actors who couldn't act, it was the same as any teenage talent show.

Rhea wouldn't tell us what she had planned, other than she had got inspiration from one of our videos. Given that my video collection now included the video from Neil, as well as Disney titles, comedy, thrillers, action and romantic films this left plenty for us to worry about.

Rhea strode into the stage dressed in starlet red fishnet stockings, a short starlet red skirt, a bright red bustier, a bright red cape and a headband with horns sticking out. She was carrying a trident in one hand and a clipboard on the other. She was dressed as the Devil and I didn't think this would need much acting.

"Settle down...settle down," Rhea shouted when she got the microphone – there had been some wolf-whistling. "As the cleverer ones among you have realised, that I am Satan and this is Hell." She waited for a moment and pointed into the corner of the room. "Of course this is Hell, we have French teachers in the corner, you think you get this in Heaven?"

There was the briefest of titters and I smirked. "She does make a very convincing devil," I muttered and Mum laughed. Rhea was speaking with confidence and had the audience's attention, perfectly; they knew, from past experience, that this would probably end up in her getting into trouble!

"Murderers, over here. Looters, pillagers, if you could join them. And Maths teachers – you're over there too."

Rhea waited for the laughter to die down and then continued, speaking dramatically with plenty of comic inflexion in her voice. "Canteen staff, you here? You're in the lake of fire to be burnt to a crisp. Or like a school dinner?"

"Fornicators. Step forward. My GOD there's a lot of you." She glanced over towards me and raised her eyebrows before continuing. "Lizzie Harper, if you just want to wipe your face ... and your knees first ... tidy yourself up." There was a heckle from the front row and Rhea pointed to it. "Extra whippings for Miss Harper please, actually better not, she enjoys it rough."

I shook my head as the hall erupted into nervous giggling; Rhea was sailing very close to the wire. Rhea leaped forward and peered at the clipboard. "What's that Miss Forbes. You shouldn't be here. It says clearly you made a Year 9 class read Romeo and Juliet. I fear our torture equipment may not do justice to your crimes. We have a full library of Jeffrey Archer, just for you." The hall erupted and even the young English teacher on the corner of the room could not suppress a smile.

"Ahhh ..." Rhea cried and turned to the front row. "Our star football player, Adam. I know you like you kickarounds," she told him and gestured with her hands. "And as a treat, the demons and I will play football with you." She cackled and put her hands around the microphone to speak in a husky voice. "But I'll have all the possession."

"ATHEISTS? Yes, you're not feeling quite so bloody clever now, are you?"

Rhea continued, gently poking fun at the teachers in the room, some of her classmates and even the headmistress. She did swear a couple of times and she left with a threat to the jury that if she didn't get full marks she would allow the Spice Girls to sing in their pit all night long.

It didn't work as Rhea came second when the jury, which contained the headmistress, marked her down for swearing and physical threats. Rhea was not in a good mood when she got home, angry that the headmistress had objected to her use of "bollocks" and "bloody." "I mean, it's not as though I said fucking or piss or cunt or ..."

"That's quite enough," Mum said cutting across her and sent her upstairs to get changed with her arms folded.

"Bloody will next time. Fuckin' headmistress. Useless pile of shitty ..." Rhea moaned she stomped up the stairs. I did feel sorry for her though, she was the best entrant in the entire competition and deserved to win, even if her own brand of humour was a little too close to the line for some.

It was a nice way to spend a Monday, but I had better ways. Alas, Hell was more likely to freeze over than Sarah talk to me and I just hoped Zoe could get Sarah to listen to me.

* * * * *

Sarah pettily sat on the other side of the room when she came in but I just sat down and ignored the teacher for an hour, in lieu of actually doing any work. Mr Clarke was dull, he spoke in a monotone voice and I just tuned out and looked over the quadrangle outside.

Maths and Physics were my thing and I began to calculate the force required for a missile fired from my spot to arc over the open area and hit the tower block, and at what angle. I was shaken from my crude gunnery table by the sound of the bell going and got up.

I knew Sarah had Chemistry next and went into the library for an hour. I didn't know what I was going to say to her, but she couldn't keep up with being annoyed with me all term, could she?

I was still a little angry about the way Sarah had spoken to me but then that was to be expected, I would rather have Sarah as a friend than nothing.

I was waiting outside the Science block when the bell went and caught up with her as she strode past.

“What do you want?” She spoke venomously, her consonants harsh and her tone angrily edgy and vitriolic.

“To talk,” I replied and she snorted.

“I got nothing to say to you.” Sarah was striding out of the College and was having to run to keep up. She went past a school bench and I took both her shoulders and pushed her onto it.

She scowled at me. “Please,” I pleaded and she growled.

“You can't just throw me around when you want to talk to me.”

“OK. Well listen to me,” I said, slightly annoyed. “Listen to me and then I'll leave you alone. I am sorry for the way I spoke to you. I was upset and I shouldn't have been so petty. I acted like a child but you really upset me.”

Sarah was still frowning at me. “And so you went out with Lisa.”

I gulped. “We went to see a Watford match. Just to get out of the flat and do something. I'd barely call it a date.”

“But I would have loved to go with you,” Sarah snapped and I wiped the tear rolling down her cheek. “You never asked me. And you knew that it would upset me to see you with her.”

I took a deep breath and squatted in front of her. “I sort of did,” I confessed. “But I didn't tell you 'cause I knew it would. You weren't supposed to find out. But it went awfully.”

“And what about that girl in the café or Abi.”

“There is nothing between Holly and me, or Abi and me and certainly not Lisa and me. If you must know Holly was a swinger I met, and she wanted naked photographs. I would loved to have had an assistant but you weren't talking to me.” Sarah sniffed and I stared into her puffy eyes. “I've been waiting for you. Hoping for you to realise your relationship with Kevin is just crap.” Sarah glared at me but I continued; I felt annoyed but this was one argument I had to keep my cool with. “I mean, I tried so hard to be what you want me to be. I've tried to be less aggressive but you didn't want me as a partner despite all the come ons and teasing.”

“You didn't want me as a partner either. You kept saying that you were happy with us as friends.” Sarah sighed and wiped her eyes. “And I didn't say I didn't want you as a partner, I said you weren't. You keep telling me you don't want anything to do with me while I have a boyfriend and then play with me. You are teasing me just as much.”

I coughed and looked at her. “OK, Sarah, let me take you out to a restaurant on a date at the weekend?” I asked firmly and watched her eyes widen. “I want to go out with you; I'm asking you out. Now it's up to you.”

“You're just saying that,” she snapped and got up, wiping her eyes. “You are just ...”

“Sarah,” I interrupted, allowing there to be a pause for dramatic effect. “Through all of this, you are still the person in the photo I have on my desk. Not Rhea. Not Mum. Not Paula any more, Zoe, Abi or Dad. But you.” She went to speak and I pursed my lips. “And that's because of what I think of you.” She shook her head before she ran off down the path

towards the road, her bag slapping against her side.

I wasn't sure if I did right or wrong?

I went around to see Abi and she just gave me her knowing look as I recounted the previous hour. "What does that mean?" I asked and Abi just gave a wry smile.

"It means I think you should stay the night, I think you need cheering up."

My heart sank. "That bad, eh?"

"No, just that she ran off crying and that can mean two things. And anyway, you two will be getting together and then our dalliances will be history."

"Dalliances?" I asked and scowled. Abi laughed at me and put some pasta onto boil. The kitchen was small and we had to keep moving around each other as she cooked but I didn't mind her body being pressed up against mine.

Abi smiled at me as we sat down to eat and the talk was of Sarah and little else. Abi was delighted that I had asked her out, but told me I should have done it in August. "It's good in some ways," Abi told me. "Cause it means that I got to have you for a while, but I am going to be without now."

"I dunno," I mused. "I mean, she just left me, didn't give me an answer, just left me."

Abi sniffed. "Well I want to know what am I going to do now when I get horny."

I smiled at her and cocked my head. "I can set you up on a date if you like. A couple of Jez's friends would be over the moon at dating a stripper."

Abi sighed dramatically and looked at me with an annoyed expression. "I am not just a stripper," she barked. "I am a woman. And you never got to the dating bit of a stripper."

"Vanessa?" I asked and she sneered.

"Apart from her." Her expression changed somewhat. "I'll be sort of proud of you in a weird way," she admitted. "I've seen you ... well, mature and get the person you really want." She pursed her lips and took a deep breath. "To think that I showed you all the naughty things you've done." Abi giggled; this wasn't totally accurate but I let this pass. "But promise me that when you do get together with Sarah that you won't be a stranger."

"Of course not," I told her. "But I still don't know," I told her. "I still wonder if being with you would be simpler and just as rewarding." Abi sneered at my comment and shook her head.

"No. We agreed, good as friends, great as lovers, shit as partners," Abi told me and then giggled at my expression; I was joking (of sorts) but I did wonder: Sarah was quite a demanding young lady at times. All Abi wanted was respect, love, a good fucking and an open mind.

She took the empty plates and wouldn't let me wash them up, guiding me to her double bedroom and throwing me onto the bed. "And what do you want?"

She licked her lips and grinned. "You know what I like. Oh Andy, don't look like that."

"I got homework," I told her, quite truthfully.

“Fuck homework. By tomorrow you could be Sarah's and I won't get to have your tongue. I ain't missing out like that without have a good night tonight.” I laughed at her and she implored me with her eyes. “It's partly thanks to me that you've got Sarah, so get naked and start looking after me.”

I couldn't help but laugh, but Abi quickly disrobed and pulled at my trousers when I was not as quick as she wanted. She was on top of me in no time at all, pushing her genitals into my face and I guided her thighs back so I could gently flick her crack.

Abi's juices lingered on the tongue like a fine wine and I felt a rush of excitement run through me: could this really be the last time I got to go down on her? I still thought of her as my Abi, my beautiful, elegant, wonderful friend, teacher and lover.

She groaned as my tongue found her clitoris and she began sliding gently forward, gyrating her hips in time with my flicks on her pearl. She cried out vocally and fell forward slightly but my hands righted her and, as I felt a bead of her juices and my saliva drip down my chin towards her pubic hair, her legs quivered and her body lurched into her first orgasm.

Abi wanted a night of debauchery and that was what she was going to get; she tried to move off but I wouldn't let her, holding her thighs down before sliding her forwards slightly, and flicking her bud. She squealed as I did, I had not rimmed her for some time and she reached forward to grab my erect cock.

I didn't let her play; I knew if she did I would come very quickly and didn't want that, so I just played with her nipples and kissed her rear until she erupted for a second time, her thighs squeezing my head.

Abi allowed my tongue to return to her clit and her crack and didn't stop crying out, moaning and mewling until I had brought her to another climax, clearly stronger and more intense than the other two. She sounded a bit like an animal in distress and almost pleaded with me to let her rise up from my face.

I watched as her body twisted away from me and rolled forward, panting towards the end of the bed. I moved up and gripped her waist. “You think you can escape,” I jokingly told her and felt her reach underneath, to stroke my erect cock, and then pull it gently towards her.

She helped guide me into her “doggy” style and I grunted; she was very wet and slippery and I pushed in hard, savouring the frisson of lust that enveloped over my loins. Abi groaned loudly; she was exceptionally horny and I started pumping into her unprotected sex forcefully.

I tuned out of her noises; I felt her body tense up but I was thrusting into her quicker and faster. I loved sex with Abi and she was the person who I had given my virginity to, and the thought of our sexual activities drawing to a close was not a happy one. She reached down and began to play with her clitoris. I continued to pivot on her hips, bringing her body down forcefully on mine, and began to lean back slightly; it changed the angle of my manhood and Abi squealed in appreciation.

I felt myself nearing my climax and gripped the tops of her legs; closing me eyes and pushing it harder and deeper. I grunted and reached the point of no return. My legs shook and several squirts of my seed left my cock and oozed into my lover.

I rocked back a few times to enjoy the last of the eruptions and sighed. She smiled at me and I reached over to get a couple of tissues. She licked her lips. "I love teenagers," Abi teased. "Love 'em."

I reached over and dragged Abi onto me, kissing her on the cheek and then the lips. "I love Scottish women," I replied back. "Love 'em."

"Cept Moira," Abi replied and I shrugged. She cocked her head and bit her lip. "You stay the night?"

"I got homework," I told her but she pursed her lips.

"For me. Ring your mum. Ga'an." She looked at me with her pleading eyes. "Promise I'll look after you," she told me and I sighed.

"OK I'll ring," I told Abi and picked up my mobile phone from the floor. "And only because it's you." Abi smiled at me, and dived under the covers as I dialled home. As the phone rang, I felt a pair of lips engulf my cock and groaned, just as Rhea answered the call.

"Hiya," I mewed breathlessly and Rhea asked who it was. "It's me ... ohhh. Andy. Tell Mum I'm ... I'm staying at Abi's," I told her as Abi sucked hard on the tip of my cock and I groaned.

"Bro, are you OK?" Rhea asked and I hummed.

"Yeah," I squealed. "Just at Aaaah-bees."

"You sound weird," Rhea told me and Abi's mouth sucked harder on my cock.

"I'm fine," I muttered and grunted.

"So why are you at Abi's?"

"Oh, ya-ahhh know," I replied evasively; I wasn't concentrating on the phone call. "I gotta go," I breathed.

Rhea cackled. "See ya tomorrow. And tell that dirty bitch to stop sucking you off when you are talking to me," she barked and put the phone down. I panted and felt the climax coming. I closed my eyes and, still holding my phone, swore and felt an intense rush come over me, filling Abi's mouth with my cum.

Abi peered up at me. "Phone sex," she teased and smiled before returning under the covers.

* * * * *

"Andy!" Zoe's voice echoed around the courtyard and I ambled over to her. "Sarah needs to speak to you"

"She knows where I am or is she too scared to come and talk to me in person?"

"Oh Andy, don't be like that," Zoe replied and put her hand on my shoulder. "She's with our Biology teacher. After Physics, you have a free, right?"

"Yes I do but I want to speak to her alone and not communicate via a messenger."

"Then meet her in the canteen."

"But..."

"Andy. Please. This silliness gone on long enough. She tried to ring you last night but you weren't in and spent three hours on the 'phone to me. I'm fed up being the agony aunt for both of you when I should just bang your bloody 'eads together."

"Finished?" I sighed and she shook my arm. I reluctantly agreed but I did not want Zoe to have to be referee or witness. "Can I just see her instead of you being there?"

Zoe groaned. "I want to make sure you two both sort this out," she said firmly. "It would be so much easier if you both were less impulsive." Physics passed slowly and at 10am I navigated me way past a scowling Donna (with Ray) to the canteen where Zoe and Sarah were waiting for me.

I threw my bag down and flopped into a chair. She didn't smile at me and I felt my heart sink. "How are you?"

Zoe answered for her. "Honorable intentions, Andy? You do pick your moments don't you?"

I snorted. "I keep being told differing things by different people, and it's all contradictory. So I've done what I think is right. I think Sarah is fantastic and I can't expect her to choose me over someone else unless I tell her I want her, so it's up to her. It's something I've wanted to do for months."

"Should have done it earlier," Zoe muttered. "Save a lot of heartache."

"If you think I am that fantastic then why did you go out of your way to take me to see Kev in London to salvage my relationship? If you wanted to ask me out, why didn't you do that in the Summer?" Sarah asked.

I gulped. "Because ..." I stalled and shrugged. "Because I thought it would be a shitty thing to do. And you led me on but I felt you would make your mind up when you were ready. I felt as though you were just ... well ... trying before you buy." There was a titter as I shrugged and pursed my lips. "I mean, I guessed that you would tell me when you were ready."

"Well it's not that easy," Zoe muttered and looked at Sarah. "She thought she knew what you thought of her but has spent the last two months confused and crying over you and Kevin, not knowing why Kevin has been as he's been and why you've not made a move."

"But ..."

"You didn't waste any time with Abi," Sarah told me and I glared at my blonde friend. "If you really wanted me to be anything other than a friend you would have told me. You've spent months making sure that I knew that you just want to be friends with me and nothing more, despite what I wanted."

I gulped. "Despite what you wanted?"

She sighed. "At the dinner party with Jez and Jodie, you said I was fantastic but never said you wanted to go out with me. And you told your mum you just wanted us to be friends."

“But I was waiting for you ...”

Sarah snorted and shook her head. “No. I was waiting for you. All you wanted was uncomplicated fumbings with me and uncomplicated sex with Abi. You didn't want to replace Paula, it was obvious.”

Zoe smiled. “He has commitment issues.”

“I do not have commitment issues,” I cried. “I was waiting for Sarah to split with Kev. Ages, I've been waiting.”

Sarah looked at the table and wiped her eyes. “And well I was ...”

“So we were both waiting for each other?” I asked and looked at Zoe. “But ... if you knew this why didn't you tell me?” I asked her.

“Because it is up to Sarah to tell you. Which is why she was upset when you went out with Lisa. And then saw you with Abi. And Holly. She worked out ... well it's up to Sarah really.”

I looked at Zoe, away from the distressed Sarah as I could feel myself feeling guilty. I scrunched up my eyes and rubbed my face. “You said you didn't like me. You told Rhea you wanted Kevin not me.”

“I didn't,” she cried. “I said Kev was my partner.” Sarah sighed. “I am seeing him at half-term and I need to sort this out. I want both of you in one way but I can't ring him up to dump him, it wouldn't be right. It wouldn't be fair and you can't expect me to. And I can't start going out with you while I still have Kevin, that wouldn't be fair.” I pursed my lips and Sarah snorted. “You know how much I like you,” she told me. “Don't I show you often enough?”

“Yeah, but ...”

“Yeah but, of course I like you and I've been waiting for you to ask, but you never did. Hell, I tried harder than Rhea did with Simon and it only took Simon two weeks. But I knew we couldn't rush anything. It's very different being close friends to being a relationship. And even when Mum said we had to make up our minds, you didn't appear as though you had.” She gulped and rubbed her nose.

“But if you liked me ...”

Sarah laughed. “Of course I liked you. I knew we had a close friendship but I wasn't sure what more you wanted, no matter how much I secretly did. You never really told me.”

“And then you go nasty on her and then start flaunting your dates in front of her, bit silly,” Zoe added. I groaned and Sarah reached over and touched me on the hands.

“But can we move on now?” Sarah pleaded. “I just wish you'd told me what you were thinking.”

Zoe shuddered in horror; she knew perfectly well what some of my thoughts were like! “Yeah, you too.” We embraced and kissed. I turned to Zoe.

“Why didn't you just tell me to ask her out?”

“I'm not encouraging you to mess things up,” Zoe replied immediately. Her facial

expression changed. "All I would get is you telling me how much Sarah meant to you but you didn't want to upset her, and Sarah saying how much you meant to her, but you clearly didn't want to date her."

"I did," I spat.

"And all I did was to tell you to stop messing with her and sort it out properly. And all you both said was that you were happy with the friends-with-immorality thing."

We both laughed. "Only because I couldn't date her, she didn't want to know."

"You never asked," Sarah told me and smiled. "You wanted the friendship thing so I thought that was all you wanted. I didn't want to be a rebound relationship from Paula. I'm not splitting up with anyone to be a rebound date."

"Well now Sarah knows." I shook my head and held out my hand for my friend. "That I do want to go out with her, and is no rebound relationship." We took a walk around the College grounds chatting warmly. I had certainly missed her smile and her bounce and she kept smiling at me.

In my mind, I always thought I was trying to punch above my weight and that she was happy with her useless boyfriend. I never considered she was waiting for me to ask her out in the same way I was waiting for her to split up with him.

"Let me sort Kevin out," Sarah promised. "And we can talk about when you get back from half-term." I wasn't sure I wanted to wait that long but she looked longingly at me. "We've waited months, a couple of weeks'll be fine. Yeah?"

I nodded. "Yeah," I told her. "But can I have a kiss first?"

"Lunchtime," she told me. "Go back to your flat?"

* * * * *

"So go on," Sarah asked, twirling her hair. "I know about Abi, and obviously about us. I know you haven't been with Zoe. And I know all about Lisa, and what happened at Abi's, 'cause I was there. But I don't know about Vanessa."

I laughed nervously and Sarah crossed her legs sitting on my bed and looking at me as she ate her sandwich. "Well," I stuttered and she gave me a knowing look.

"Oh come on Andy. I know, your denials were too quick," Sarah giggled and then cocked her head to one side. "But why do you think it was something silly?"

I closed my eyes and rubbed the bridge of my nose. "Cause I do."

Sarah finished the last of her sandwich and lost her cheeky grin, pursing her lips together and shuffling down the bed and rubbed her hand over my shoulder. "Tell me, what's wrong?"

I gulped and took a deep breath. "Ummm ..."

"I won't tell Zoe." I snorted and Sarah cocked her head. "Or your Mum. Or anyone. But something is worrying you 'cause you won't talk about it."

"It's just ... embarrassing," I told her and picked up my bag. "Now I got Physics in twenty minutes, I know you have the afternoon off, but I ..."

Sarah prised my fingers from the bag and crossed her arms. "Andy, what's wrong? You didn't have trouble ... you know ... getting it up."

"No," I cried and she apologised. "If I tell you, this stays between us. And I mean it, if Zoe finds out or Mum finds out. Or even Abi, I am a dead man."

"She's not pregnant?" Sarah asked and gasped at me.

"No," I spluttered. "No she isn't. Well I don't think she is." I took a deep breath before starting. "I went on the date, we went to a restaurant and she was just giggly and very pissed. So afterwards we went bowling and met Jez and she was just talking 'bout sex all the time."

"I heard," Sarah muttered. "Jodie never stopped talking about it."

"Well I take her home and she invites me in. Gets me to strip and pours loads of vodka down my throat and then gets out ... she gets out ... she ..." I look away from her and stare at the skirtingboard, taking a big sigh and close my eyes. "Cocaine."

Sarah gasped. "You didn't? Oh my fucking God, Andy, you did?" I nodded and she licked her lips. "You crazy? What the ..."

"Yeah I know," I said forcefully and Sarah cocked her head.

"Is that it? What's it like?"

"Well it was a weird feeling, just everything was in my control and we had sex ... we had unprotected sex ... and ..."

Sarah gasped again. "You did what, Andy ... have you been tested?"

I rolled my eyes. "I haven't got an infection," I told her and Sarah crossed her arms.

"How do you know? You scored with a drug whore." I gulped and she looked in her bag. "I was at the doctors two days ago about my contraception and they gave me this." She gave me a blue leaflet and got down from the bed.

"What is it?"

"You are goin' to get tested. It's a free, drop-in ..."

"But ..."

"But it's confidential," she told me promptly and raised her eyebrows when I asked about my Physics lesson.

"I'm not sure that I need to and it ..."

"Andy," Sarah shouted to get my attention. "You need to get tested. You had unprotected sex. With a whore who takes drugs. You need to find out." I hummed and she pointed to the paper in my hand. "It's 'round the corner at the hospital and if you don't go ..."

"You'll what?"

"I'll tell Zoe and Grace."

"Sarah," I moaned. "You promised."

"Well that was before I knew what you did. You are doing Class A drugs."

"Yes, I know. And it's been fuckin' with me ever since."

Sarah picked up my hand and pushed me towards the door. "Go," she cried and then threatened to tell Rhea: Mum and Zoe I could deal with my little sister would be relentless. Sarah spent most of our walk to the bus station, and then on the bus, chastising me gently and then asking what Cocaine was like.

I tried hard not to glamorise the drug but for the twenty or thirty minutes (I wasn't sure of the time) after I took it, I felt on top of the world and Sarah gleefully lapped it up. The Thursday afternoons at the clinic were for "drop-in" visitors and Sarah strode in confidently, talking to the receptionist and asking for us both to see a nurse.

Sarah filled in the forms for us and told the receptionist that we wanted to be seen together which she strongly advised we see different nurses. She looked at me for agreement and I just nodded. "Be seen together is fine," I told her. "She's here to support me really." Sarah wouldn't have it any other way and I felt out of my depth in the clinic; it wasn't anything like I expected and I just didn't feel comfortable.

The nurse called us ten minutes later and was surprised as we both joined her in a small consulting room; she was a curvy, slightly plump lady in her thirties but had a big beaming smile and pointed us towards the seats. I had to get the spare chair out of the corner of the room, but Sarah stretched and barely waited for "Pauline" to sit down when she cleared her throat and started talking. "Andy needs to be tested," she said confidently and rubbed her hands. "He has had unprotected sex during a drug-taking session with a prostitute."

I felt my cheeks burn and even the nurse looked shocked as Sarah rubbed her eyes. "Right," the nurse said and raised her eyebrows. "We aren't here to judge."

"I've already told him," Sarah told her and the two girls smiled at each other. "If he was my boyfriend he'd been in serious trouble."

Pauline turned to me and picked up a clipboard, and began running through some questions: when I last had sex; when I last had unprotected sex; what symptoms I had had; how many partners I had had since Vanessa and whether I used contraception.

I was considerably more embarrassed answering the personal questions with Sarah in the room but she squeezed my hand as I did and the nurse picked up some rubber gloves. "Where are they going?" I asked as she did and Sarah laughed.

"I need a urine sample, blood sample and I need to do a genital examination," she said confidently. "But we'll do it behind the privacy screen."

Sarah almost looked disappointed but I was told to get onto the bed, with a cold mattress, and the nurse watched as I took off my trousers and boxer shorts. She had put on the gloves, and slowly peeled back my foreskin and checked all over. "Does it hurt?"

"No," I told her, honestly and then she asked about itching and burning sensations. I was told to get dressed, and then dispatched the toilet outside to fill up a small sample bottle with urine and then she took a blood test. Sarah was tested also (she rationalised that she

might as well get sorted while she was there) and we left with my tail truly between my legs.

"We find out next week," Sarah told me. "We can come and get the results after lunch." I gulped and Sarah looked at me with raised eyebrows. "And that means no unprotected nookie for you 'til then."

"Have you had lessons from Zoe?" I asked as we queued up for the bus but Sarah just shook her head.

"It's not funny Andy. You could be seriously ill. And for what?" She cocked her head and stared at me. "I don't want you to be ill, I quite like having you here."

I snorted. "You've only started talking to me again," I told her and Sarah just giggled.

"I know. But look at the trouble you get into when I am not around," she teased. "I'm going to need to keep a close eye on you."

* * * * *

"I've just had the 'it's OK to be a lesbian or experiment' chat with my Mum. Any idea why?" Sarah asked as she came into College the following day. She had been dropped off by her mother at our flat and we were walking down the road talking. Angela seemed genuinely happier that we were talking again and Rhea even rolled her eyes when I got a kiss in the morning.

"Ah, yeah. Rhea let slip about you and Zoe," I told her answering her question. "But it was two weeks ago."

"Right, well when she did that, your mum ran off and phoned Mum so that I get subjected to, quite frankly, an absurd conversation with my parents I didn't want."

I grinned. "Well, you know Rhea."

"Unfortunately, I do," she grumbled. "I've had to explain to mother that I am not a lesbian but she didn't believe me."

I grinned. "You know there is nothing wrong with being bisexual, and you have had more female partners than male," I told her and she puffed.

"Sorry, I forgot you were so enlightened," she said sarcastically. "I wonder if you'd say the same thing if you found out one of your male friends was bisexual?"

I snorted. "You'll never know, will you. They aren't?"

She grinned. "Oh little Andy," she replied patronisingly. "They are. I know of two of your friends who have had gay experiences but they won't tell you, or anyone else, because you are all small-minded homophobes."

"Who?" I asked immediately and she grinned.

"Well you are so enlightened, I'm sure you can work it out. And tell your little sister she needs her vocal chords removing."

"I already know that. Who?" Sarah didn't respond.

Neither Zoe, Sarah or myself had a lesson between our first period on Friday and the Maths lesson before lunch and after finished talking and going through some Statistics work, we ambled to our classroom on the first floor of the tower block. I pushed open the door to the empty classroom five minutes before the lesson start and was confronted by a familiar face – Gemma.

“Oh sh...” I started when I saw her and she looked at the three of us in the doorway.

“Andy?” She asked and immediately put her hand to her mouth. “And Sarah.”

“What's going on?” Zoe asked immediately.

“Can we have two minutes, alone?” I asked my blonde companion and Zoe nodded with a wry smile.

“I'll just go get a drink.”

I passed her a coin. “Can I have a Fanta please?” I waited for Zoe to leave and looked at her. “You look great,” I told her, anxiously not mentioning what we needed to talk about.

“Andy, Sarah, you aren't going to tell anyone, please?” she begged and I took a deep breath.

“I presume that's why you left the club so quickly,” I guessed and she suppressed a nervous smile.

“Yes. I wasn't looking for work in Aylesbury, I had applied in London but this is only a short-term contract but couldn't turn it down. Now please, you aren't going to tell anyone?”

“Where you worked? Of course not,” I replied and looked at her shapely body.

“And the what happened at Heather's house?”

“Heather?” Sarah asked and I raised my eyebrows at her.

“She knows her as Heather.”

“Thought it was Isobel?”

“Isobel and Heather.” I gave a smile. “Every student dreams of sleeping with his teacher, right?”

Gemma blushed. “What about the photos?”

I nodded. “Look Gemma, or actually what is it?”

“Christine, um, Miss Edwards.”

“Miss Edwards, they are safe. You have two copies and the negatives, I have a copy in my portfolio.”

Miss Edwards froze for a moment and looked at me. “And you won't let anyone see them?”

“I won't even let Sarah see them,” I replied and Sarah threw up her hands in disgust.

“He won't. It's not fair. And I am sort of his girlfriend-to-be.”

Miss Edwards bit her lip and I knew she was not happy that I still had copies. I didn't want her to feel uncomfortable and breathed in deeply. “If you come to the flat later, I'll let you have all of the ones in my portfolio if it'll make you happier.”

She nodded and thanked me. “I'd really appreciate that.”

I snorted and grinned at her. “Pity, they are some of my favourite,” I admitted and she blushed.

“You know I can't, um, I can't give you any preferential treatment this term.” She looked wide-eyed at me and I nodded. “Mrs Buckingham has been in accident.”

“Of course not. But I told you at the time you were the best Maths teacher I ever had so I am guessing I won't need it.” Miss Edwards went redder and straightened her desk. “And by the way, you look very good. I was very lucky.”

Sarah rubbed my back and leant over. “Stop flirting,” she told me giggling and then looked at our teacher. “But he is right. You do look very good.”

Miss Edwards was nervous, I could tell, but she was wearing a bright red top that hugged her figure wonderfully and an elegant skirt. There was no way you could tell that she had any tattoos but I knew they were there, along with the truth about her.

She was a good teacher, she delivered her material well and captured the class's attention, drawing extra examples on the board to illustrate the concepts from the book clearly.

The talk at lunchtime was unsurprisingly about the new teacher and one of the lads in the class, Jason, reckoned that she went to a convent school and had the air of a Catholic about her.

I could almost see where he was coming from, her long black hair coming down her face almost meant she could easily have been Spanish or with Spanish blood, which I think is what he meant. The suggestion that she was a good Catholic girl took hold and by end of lunchtime it was being reported as fact, and I was certainly not going to detail exactly what Miss Edwards had been up to in the previous few weeks, but it certainly wasn't “good.”

* * * * *

It took Sarah and I, twenty minutes at the park to properly make up. We procured some bread and fed the ducks, and in the end, Sarah admitted that she was wrong to act the way she did.

I had a new status; I was “prospective boyfriend-to-be” and laughed at her as she rubbed the back of my hand, before idling back towards the flat.

Sarah and I had barely been in the house two minutes when the 'phone rang while I was preparing sandwiches. Sarah leaned across and answered and then came into the kitchen, her face white.

“It's the school. They said can Grace go in immediately as Rhea has been involved in an incident”

“Mum's away all day,” I told her and then strode over to the phone, my heart beating fast; was incident a code for accident?

“Hello?” I asked. “It's her brother. What sort of incident?”

“Oh, hello Andy,” the School secretary replied, clearly remembering me from the previous year. “Is your mother around?”

“She is on a business trip. What sort of incident?”

There was a silence for a moment. “Someone needs to pick Rhea up. She is going to be suspended.”

Note from the author

The “Growing Pains” universe is a set of stories that centres around the life of Andy Williams and all those who got to know him as he grows up. While everything may not be totally clear, it will be the time the Universe is all released. For a fuller explanation please see my website at <http://www.johndstories.co.uk>

I shall try and keep to a regular posting schedule and will upload to StoriesOnline.net, Feedbooks, asstr.org and my website. Completed stories will also be uploaded to Amazon Kindle, Smashwords and FirstyFish, where their internal policies permit.

The next two stories to be released are:

New Pleasures Chapter XX

Rhea is in serious trouble while Andy and Ray fight and Sarah receives a shock.

Excerpt: Out of nowhere Ray pushed me on my shoulder and I fell back against the small wall. I left my bag drop on the floor and without hesitation launched myself at him. His face contorted with apprehension as I threw all my bodyweight into my hands and propelled him back across the path and into the flowerbed on the other side.

“GET UP,” I yelled at him and Donna shrieked at me. “FUCKING GET UP AND FIGHT.”

“Leave him alone!” Implored Donna as she helped him out from the roses, but I could feel a tightness and anger inside of me.

“He wanted a fight, he started it,” I shouted at Donna as Ray got up.

To be released on, or before: 12th October 2012

The wooing of a London soubrette

Young Terry Williams is desperate to woo a shockingly independent young lady, Grace Hardy, and needs all of his charm – and some help from Grace's friend – to get him close.

Excerpt: Terry was waiting for Grace at the entrance to the theatre on Old Compton Street with a big bouquet of flowers. “My friend recommended this show. Reckon the guy is going to be big and it is ideal place to take my young lady.”

“We can go to the show, it is a date, but am I really your young lady?” she teased and Terry smiled.

“Sorry. I know. I would like you to be my young lady.”

“And babe, I know you are trying to be nice, but please, stop the gifts. You are spending too much on me,” she told him and he looked at her with surprised puppy-dog eyes. He hesitated and Grace continued. “You don't buy people's affections with gifts.”

“I'm not trying to buy your affections, I just want you to be happy.”

To be released on, or before: 19th October 2012