

New Secrets

Chapter Nine



by
JOHN D

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Preface

This story is part of the “Growing Pains” world. This is the nine chapter book that shows Andy’s relationship with Sarah blossoming while Rhea still has problems with Nathan. Andy gets closer to Scarlet, Grace has a date or two and Abi has a revelation that changes everything.

In this chapter, Zoe finds out Simon’s secret at the Christmas Party and blames Andy for being a bad influence, while Sarah discovers the male strippers. Andy touches Zoe inappropriately in the cinema, experiments with “dry orgasms” and then with Sarah teases her brother. Christmas celebrations are interrupted when Simon and Rhea row, and Abi makes a shocking admission.

I would like to thank my wife for her understanding while writing all of my stories. Alas, as I choose to remain semi-anonymous I cannot name her!

Please let me know what you think of the story; I cannot hope to improve as an author if the readers don't tell me where I succeeded and where I failed!

John D

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Web link: <http://www.johndstories.co.uk>

Twitter: @johndstories

Email: johndstories@gmail.com

Chapter IX

I awoke to raised voices from downstairs and entered the room ten minutes later, with a naked Rhea on one side of the table shouting at Mum on the other side. “He is an English teacher, don't you have any self-respect?” Rhea shouted and crossed her arms, her clothes that she must have put on to do her newsagent work abandoned on the floor. “I mean ... for fucks sake Mum. Are thing actually that desperate down there?”

“Rhea, go upstairs and get ready for school.”

“Mr Russell. I got to look him in the eye today and know that he fucked you last night.”

“He did not,” Mum snapped. “Not that it is any of your business if he did.”

Rhea sighed loudly. “It's sooooo ...”

“Go upstairs and get ready for school. And I don't want you causing him any embarrassment today.” Rhea swore and was ordered out of the dining room but hesitated as she considered the request. She sneered, crossed her arms and stormed out of the room, and I looked at Mum rubbing her forehead as she sat down over her bowl of muesli and cup of tea.

“OK?” I asked, and Mum nodded.

“Yeah.” She took a big breath. “He's not that young,” she moaned. “And ...” She sniffed and pursed her lips.

“And another thing,” Rhea asked as she re-entered the room, still naked. “Just how did you two decide that going out was a good idea? You were supposed to be talking 'bout me at parents' evening.”

Mum gulped and leapt up from the chair, pointing accusingly at my sister. “It's because of you,” she cried. “After the headteacher said all those things about you, Ken overheard and came and found me crying outside, and he told me what you were like in his lessons. He told me that not everything Mrs Wyatt said was true.” Rhea gulped, and Mum snorted. “If you weren't such a nightmare at school, I wouldn't have had a night out last night.”

“So it's Rhea's fault,” I added. “Totally because of Rhea.” I looked at my sister splutter, cry out in anger and then swear again. I waited for my sister to storm up the stairs before asking, “was it?”

“Sort of,” she replied and then smiled. “I'd met him before, he lived on Alicia's street. But I'm not going to tell Rhea that. He is back off to see his family over Christmas, but he is coming over for New Year.”

I laughed. “Rhea'll love that.”

“And another thing,” my sister said storming back into the room, doing her best impression of Colombo. “Just what did you talk about? 'Cause it better not have been about me.”

“Rhea, for the last time, get dressed!” Mum shouted. “And I am not telling you what we talked about!”

“It was, wasn't it?”

“Rhea, my life does not revolve around you,” Mum told her. “Neither does Ken's. We talked about

... we talked about many things and then went for a drink and then ...”

“Oh my God, you did fuck him!”

“I did not,” Mum shouted. “Now go upstairs and get ready for school.”

“But my first lesson is English,” Rhea wailed. “And I know he's going to have a massive smile on his face. And I'm going to know, and ... this is worse than coming home and having Abi scream 'fuck me harder.' This family is seriously fucking me up.”

I waited for her to leave and looked at Mum. “I'd says she's fucked up without us,” I joked, and Mum just chastised me for my use of language with a slightly guilty look on her face. I shrugged and saw an open letter on the table and glanced at it.

“Yeah, and Rhea's been called to a disciplinary hearing,” Mum informed me.

“What's she done now?”

“Swearing apparently, when she was a referee.”

“Ahhh,” I muttered. “Ahhh yes, there was that. She was provoked.”

Mum wiped her face and yawned. “She's always being provoked,” Mum snapped and shook her head. “I so need to have some serious words with her.”

“Yeah,” I muttered. “Good luck with that.”

* * * * *

Sarah met me outside the Common Room with a deep, loving kiss. “Last day of term,” she whispered as we broke our embrace. Zoe and Rosie hesitated in the doorway, and Sarah beckoned them over.

“It's OK,” Sarah said. “We won't bite.”

“We didn't want to interrupt,” Zoe answered, and Sarah gave a sheepish look. “We are off to the café to mark the end of the term after lessons. Wanna come?”

“Got work,” I replied instantly. “Promised Mum I would help her sort out the alcohol for the Christmas Party.”

Zoe rolled her eyes, and I leant over to Sarah. “Did your mum say you can go?”

Sarah nodded. “Of course.” We looked at Zoe who gave a smile.

“Well Rhea said she was going and wanted Simon to go with her, so Mum said he could only go if I go. But we sort of haven't told her ...” Zoe trailed off. “Yeah I'm going.”

Sarah laughed. “Your mum would never, ever, have let you go to a nightclub for a private party a year ago.”

Zoe giggled nervously. “And you wouldn't have gone,” Sarah told her.

“Well finding out that Andy and Rhea both lived above a nightclub was a bit of a shock really, but she doesn't mind too much now.” Zoe shifted nervously. “She's always liked Andy, and she thinks ...” Zoe trailed off as she spoke and shifted nervously. “Well, it was a big shock to find out about

the club.”

Sarah looked at me, and I squeezed her arm, still around my waist, with a wry smile. “And the Mathesons thought you were such a nice sweet boy!” Zoe gave a tense giggle at Sarah's teasing, but I immediately suspected that it was not too far from the truth.

I briefly told Zoe and Sarah about Rhea and Mr Russell the previous evening and guessed Rhea would be moaning about it to Simon. “It's good that your mother has found someone,” Zoe announced. “She deserves a bit of happiness in her life. Be good for her to get some peace with someone.” I looked at her with a degree of incredulity: as Sarah and I had found out, Rhea never allowed peace to break out if she didn't like the partner of a family member. “Well putting up with you and Rhea, and bringing you up on her own. It can't be easy.”

Ray entered the small common room before I could reply, to a few cheers and he revelled in his stardom, twirling as he came in. “Yer the man,” Jez told him and high-fived him as he came passed him. “Porn star. What it is wiv you, man?”

Ray didn't blush and sat down next to Zoe and me. “So how was Lucille?”

“Fantastic!” Ray cried and gave a grin. “I think I'm in love.” Sarah and I both choked on our drinks, and he looked a little hurt.

“Sorry,” I mumbled. “But you only met her a few days ago.”

“Know that,” my friend snapped and rubbed the corner of his eyes. “Know that but we got on so well. And I spent all evening on the 'phone to her and after I got that money I got a mobile with Mum and rang her and went passed the Welly on our way to the station. She said she'd stay the night if I booked it, but she paid in the end. But man, she's just incredible. Always smiling and ... what a body! Tits to die for, and that tongue ...”

Zoe rolled her eyes. “Am I the only one here who isn't a sex addict?”

Ray snorted. “I'm not a sex addict. In fact, I had sex with her for the first and only time last night.” His voice wavered slightly. “Well five times last night, but we never left the bedroom. She does these wonderful things with her ...”

“I don't want to know,” Zoe interrupted loudly and crossed her arms.

“And I spent Saturday and last night at her house.” Sarah raised her eyebrows at him, but he just giggled. “Honestly, we've just been doing ...” He saw a steely glance from Zoe and shrugged. “... All sorts of things.”

“We like to see you happy,” Sarah told him with a smile. “It's good. Eh, Zoe?”

“Yeah,” my friend muttered and Ray beamed.

“She's cool. Just wish Donna wasn't a bitch.”

“Yeah, 'bout that,” Sarah started. “Donna's not too happy with you,” my girlfriend said firmly, which was a massive understatement, but Ray just shrugged, and Zoe glared at him.

“Don't care. She's just a spiteful cow.”

“She'd be a bit less of a 'spiteful cow' if ...”

Sarah didn't get to finish as the Head of the Sixth Form College strode into the room and clapped his hands loudly to get our attention. We were all summoned to the hall and told to be seated as the Headmaster strode onto the stage. "What's this about?" I asked, and Sarah shrugged.

"Anyone who was not at the Christmas Disco last night can go," he shouted abruptly and about a third of the room emptied. I saw Sarah bite her lip and look ominously at me; had they found the Sunny Delight carton?

If they had then they wouldn't be able to prove that it was me, would they? They could do blood tests on the traces of saliva and maybe have proved that it was me but wasn't that a bit drastic over a drop of booze?

"We run the Christmas Disco for you ... not us or me, but you," he lectured. "And we don't normally have any problems from it, but I have some seriously unhappy people at the moment having to clear up your mess from the week before." He strode from one side of the stage to the other and looked at all of us, his eyes and gaze piercing through every student. "You are all adults, and I do not like what I am going to say, but we've found cigarette butts and the ends of illegal drugs. I think you call them spliffs, we call them jail time. Someone has been smoking pot on the premises, and I want to know who. And we've got vomit stains in the girls' toilets and which amorous girl has been in the technology classroom?" My heart skipped a beat, and Sarah bit her lip. "Eight condoms? And if you need eight guys to ..." There was a smattering of laughter.

"It's Ray's bitch," Donna cried from the other side of the hall. "His date would screw everyone."

"Fuck you!" Ray shouted from beside me; there was a collective gasp in the room: Ray was the last person who would shout and swear in school. "And I guess we should know it wasn't you as no-one got pissed enough to want to go near you."

"You fuckin' screwed her," Donna screamed. "We all know you did. I heard you bragging about it today."

The headmaster tried to call order, but Ray was standing up and openly shouting at his ex-girlfriend. "Not at College," Ray shouted back. "It was last night. But what 'bout that guy who you were with? Skanky little runt like you would definitely have screwed him, and all of his friends like you did before." Tears rolled down Donna's cheeks, and the Head of the Sixth Form tried to restore some degree of order, but Ray and Donna traded insults across us. "You screw anything," Ray shouted and Donna burst into tears. "Desperate enough!"

"Well I went out with you ..." Donna and Ray were ordered out, and the exchange between the ex-lovers had certainly taken a lot of the tension out of the room. Ray had always been remarkably calm and quiet, had come out of his shell with Donna, but these last few days had seen him become almost aggressively violent – particularly with Donna.

This distraction aside, the teacher was determined to have some answers: he wanted to know who threw up in the girls' toilets and who was smoking illegal drugs – neither of which was down to me and Sarah.

There was silence and no-one admitted to any indiscretion. I was certainly suspecting that Lucille may have had the spliffs; I didn't see her light up, but I knew she was a pot smoker, and from the stench in her house, she was quite a heavy one at that!

There was a hand emerging from the other side of the hall. "I threw up in the toilets," a voice uttered, and Ingrid stood up. "It was me. And I was responsible for one of the condoms." There was an outbreak of chatter in the room and she wiped her eyes, turning to the girl behind her. "He's my

boyfriend, Lin. I know you used the room as well, and Peter wasn't at the Disco.”

The Chinese girl looked across to the other side of the room and shook her head. “I didn't,” she cried.

“Liar. I gave you one,” Ingrid replied. “You're much worse than me.” The Head of the Sixth Form told Ingrid and Lin to report to his office. There were no further admissions – especially about the drugs – but we got a lecture about the use of illegal substances and were sent on our way. Zoe gave us both ominous glares, and I squeezed Zoe's hand. “What?”

“If there is sex around, you were definitely involved,” she told us as we filed out of the hall. We disagreed with her, and were scandalized by her suggestion, but she was far closer than she realised.

I was a little sad to miss my friend's celebrations for the end of the term, but Donna joined Sarah and Zoe, and with Donna came trouble. Helping Mum sort out the alcohol wasn't an unpleasant task, the little store room was lined with thousands of pounds worth of booze, and she had a giant bucket on wheels that she put the unwanted drinks into. I layered them gently, ensuring that their bottles did not break, and Mum gave little sneering comments with each of them.

“Rep said this would sell at twenty five quid a bottle, couldn't shift it at fifteen. Lying bastard.” I just grinned at her, and she fished out some beer to go with the wine and alcopops, and we had filled up the bucket in just half-an-hour. Mum glanced down at them, most of the drink were where she had just a few bottles left and didn't intend to order anymore, but there were a few lines which she had bought that just didn't sell as well as she had expected.

It all looked like a lot of money, but then I realised how much she charged for drinks and realised that the normal mark-up on the overpriced drinks more than covered the few ranges which didn't sell. Mum wasn't that bothered about it, she made a note of everything that went in and how many bottles of what and mentioned something about “tax” when I asked; I somehow suspected from her laissez-faire attitude that she would not be significantly out of pocket.

Zoe joined me for the team meeting. There was some moaning from some of the girls – the Christmas and New Year closure dates affected the Friday and Saturdays for two consecutive weeks, and these were the days when the club was busiest – but for many they were just happy to have some time off.

We were re-introduced to Elena, who was working Gemma's old shifts. Mum had been relaxed about finding a replacement for Miss Edwards, but Elena was shy and went red as Mum made her the centre of attention; she had covered in the Summer for a few weeks and then disappeared, but I remembered warming immediately to her. She came across as a little vulnerable and shy, and I noticed a crucifix around her neck.

Elena gave a muted wave of the hand and I smiled at her, remembering her photo shoot with fond memories. Her long brown hair and hazel eyes were alluring and warm all those months ago, and Zoe whispered in my ear. “She looks lost!”

After the meeting, Zoe and I made a bee-line for Elena; she was reticent and indecisive as we spoke to her, not quite sure who Zoe was even after we had introduced ourselves. Zoe had spotted the crucifix as well and wanted to invite Elena to her church, something which Elena wasn't quite sure about, but the German girl began to open up to us when I returned from the bar with three lemonades.

Elena was from Hannover: she worked in a couple of residential care homes but had found the pay and conditions to be lower than when she was in Germany and had sought to supplement her

income from work at the club. I suppose I never seriously thought that the girls could have other jobs, but it also seemed reasonable, and Elena was happy to accept the invite Zoe gave her to visit the church the in two days time.

Zoe seemed to be at home as they conversed and I excused myself with the paychecks from Zoe and myself to pay into the Midland Bank a few streets away. I returned to see Zoe still animatedly talking to Elena, and Mum smiled as I entered. "Most conversation anyone has got out of her," she muttered. "But the punters love her. It's her accent, really gets 'em going."

I gave a little titter, but I could tell Mum was serious. "Perhaps you could do a European night. Abi can do Scotland, Elena Germany, surely you can get some Scandinavian, French, Italian, Russian girls in." Mum snorted and just smiled.

"You have quite an imagination," she just told me and left the room to walk to the office.

Elena left a few minutes later after I gave Zoe the stamped proof of paying-in and watched as my friend came up to our flat; she was meeting Simon there. "It was a nasty thing to do!" Simon cried out at Rhea who sat with her arms folded.

"Of course it is, it's Rhea," I told them interrupting the argument they were having. "What's she done now? Burnt down the school? Blackmailed a homeless man?"

"She's ..."

"Shut the fuck up!" Rhea cried, and my heightened interest was piqued. I looked at my anxious sibling, her brown hair brushed back, and she scowled at her boyfriend. "You should be glad," Rhea spat and then stared at Zoe. "Just so you know, I have done nothing to Simon."

"Nathan," Simon told us, pre-empting the question from us and Rhea crossed her arms.

"He did it to himself," Rhea told us and then groaned, running her hands through her hair. "He's a moron. A total and utter moron. I just videoed the proof of his stupidity; nothing really and no harm can be done."

"Rhea, I am used to you lying, but even by your standards that sounds like a total fabrication." She gestured towards us, and I hummed. "Well you are big enough and ugly enough to sort this one out yourself."

"Andy!" Zoe cried. "Don't you want to know what's bothering them?"

"No," I replied instantly. "Rhea will do her own thing no matter what I say. I am not her parent so just let her do her own thing." I shook my head as I walked past them, dumping my bag on the floor and getting a drink from the kitchen. Zoe tried to eke out what my little sister had done, but neither Rhea or Simon were prepared to tell her; I knew I would hear eventually, but Rhea would do what she wanted to do regardless of what anyone told her, and it was far safer for me to be able to be ignorant.

I convinced Zoe to join us for tea, and we ambled off to the bowling alley after eating before having to settle on the cinema when the bowling was too busy; we were not the only people who fancied celebrating the final day of the academic term with a night out!

Zoe and I bickered over paying for everything until we just agreed to split the cost 50/50; she was obstinate! We sat down in the small cinema auditorium, placed our coats on a seat next to us and had a good few minutes to talk. She moaned again about Rhea until I pointed out that the person she needed to complain to was Mum or Rhea herself, and not me. "But Grace can't do much, and Rhea

won't listen.”

“Then give up then,” I told her with a smile. “Just please, stop trying to be everyone's mother. You are not.”

“I am not trying to be everyone's mother,” Zoe replied and gave a huge sigh. “I just ... I just worry about Simon. Don't you worry about Rhea?”

“No,” I told her instantly, but she knew I didn't mean it. “OK, a bit.” Zoe passed me back the popcorn and adjusted herself in the seat, rubbing her back.

“Sorry, bra is digging in.”

“Take it off then.”

“I can't.”

“Sure you can. It's dark, and there's no-one that can see.” Zoe turned to look around, and as she did, I instinctively put my hands to her back and unclipped her bra through her cotton T-Shirt.

“Andy,” Zoe screeched and turned to face me. “That's out of order.”

“What?” I asked with a cheeky smile, but Zoe was not laughing. “You said ...” Zoe raised her hands and pushed her shoulders back.

“Oh, you are such a pain. I gotta go to the toilets now and ...” She glared at me as I shrugged. “I can't be in public without a bra on. I'm not ... I wish you'd ask before you do things like that. I am not a doll for you to play with.”

“You said it was uncomfortable,” I countered as the film started.

“Not as uncomfortable with having a bra on but not done up.”

“Then take it off.” Zoe hissed at me and shook her head, but I squeezed her hand. “OK, sorry, I didn't mean to upset you.”

“Sarah and Abi might go around in public without proper underwear on, but I am not Sarah, and I am not Abi.”

“No, you are Zoe. But come on, let's just watch the film.” Zoe sighed and relented, taking her bra off underneath her T-Shirt and putting it in her coat pocket. There was nothing sexual to it, and we just watched the comedy we had paid to watch. Zoe stopped sighing at me and cuddled into the chair, and I put my arms around her, my hand resting on her unfettered yet covered bosom.

At the end of the film, I just passed her, her red coat, and she slipped it on and was outside the cinema before she realised she was bra-less. I wouldn't let her go back into the cinema to the toilets, and she whined that if she went home without a bra on, her mother would be most disgusted.

I walked Zoe home, and we shared a cuddle at the end of her drive before I returned back to Castle Street. I stopped at the top of the road as I saw Mum and Ken laughing, hand-in-hand. They were heading towards the club and stopped outside. I waited back, around fifteen metres away and out of sight in the darkness as I knew if I arrived, Mum would get extremely self-conscious.

“Go on,” Ken pleaded. “I've never been in one.”

Mum laughed, and she turned to face him. “I never take my dates into my club,” she told him and

kissed him on the cheek. "And anyway, you got a very long drive tomorrow. Do you no good to ..."
He scoffed and Mum crossed her arms. "I am not sure how I should take it that my date wants to see other girls naked when he is supposed to be with me!" Ken spluttered, and Mum kissed him again. "Next time," she promised. "And I might even take you to a VIP room!" Ken gave a hollow laugh and held her hands.

"I s'pose I better get home then and pack." Mum nodded, and I walked off to go in the back way via the fire escape; I had no desire to watch my mother kiss her date, but if Ken and Mum were getting close I could only see Rhea getting extremely annoyed with them.

But then, she would have to accept it. One day, my sister was going to have to grow up.

* * * * *

Zoe had forgotten about Rhea the following day, happily discussing Elena who was a little evasive when they had met again, but eventually opened up. Zoe and Elena had a chance meeting as the stripper was returning home from a night shift at the care home, and they had had a long chat. Elena and Zoe had a number of things in common, and although Elena only spoke English as a fourth language, between Zoe's German GCSE (Grade B) and Elena's good English they could converse happily.

Elena had promised to visit Zoe's church, and as Elena lived at the top of Zoe's road, above the hairdressers on the small parade of shops and was actually quite relieved to have found someone in the local area, apart from her English boyfriend.

"She's kept the true nature of her night-time work a secret," Zoe shouted across the club as we cleaned it. "She reckons her boyfriend will chuck her out if he sees her. That's why she stopped when they got serious, but she needs the money, so she's back again."

"Better hope he never comes in then," I shouted back and Zoe hummed. Zoe never hid the fact she disliked the nudity and "morally bankrupt" element of the club but was not naïve and understood why the club was so popular. She often teased me and said that with my sex drive, I would be a regular, but I never really rose to it. It had been a few days since Sarah and I had had sex and the slowdown in my sexual activity over the past few days had left my body exceptionally horny especially as I could not give in and play with myself.

"Is she coming to the party?" I asked after some silence and Zoe shook her head.

"No, she is out with her partner," Zoe replied back and walked over to get some more cleaning fluid from the trolley. "She said she wanted to though."

I grunted and thought of the party the following day. "Sarah is staying the night," I eventually said. "Why don't you stay also?"

Zoe grinned. "Because Mum says no."

"Simon wants to."

Zoe grinned. "I'm sure he does. But the answer is still no. Your sister is teaching him too many bad tricks."

"Would Rhea do a thing like that?" I teased but already knew the answer.

* * * * *

Abi laughed as she collected her bowling ball from the ball return; I had been discussing Sarah's "no touching" rule for me, and my girlfriend had been "out and about" with her family for the last couple of days. It was a tough time, and Abi listened to my desperate moaning. "So how long?"

I tried to count in my head. "Ummm five days and seventeen hours," I fabricated with a smile on my face. "But I've not been counting."

"Course not," Abi replied with a smirk and then sat down as her ball rolled into the gutter. "But you're desperate."

"Of course I'm desperate," I told her. "She said no touching, I've tried cold showers, tight underpants, loose underpants, not thinking about sex, thinking about sex. It's just hellish."

"Ahh, well." Abi licked her lips as I bowled a strike and sat back down. "How often normally?"

"Well since I was twelve, maybe four or five times a week on average. Course, if I was with you or Sarah or whoever, maybe a little more. OK a lot more. But when you wake up with a boner it needs addressing. And Paula ... well you get the idea."

"Ah, no wonder. Have you talked to her?"

"Yeah, Sarah doesn't believe in Blue Balls. She thinks it's fiction dreamt up by horny boys." Abi laughed loudly and picked up her bowling ball and rolled it down the alleyway; we were one of the only people in the bowling alley and were able to talk quite freely. "I've tried telling her it's hell, but she won't listen. And she is going away over the holidays so I won't get to see her then, and she has jobs to do and family to see before she goes."

"Ahh well, you just need to find an outlet ..." She trailed off as she bowled her second ball and got a spare.

"Well that's just the point, she says no wanking and then makes herself unavailable. That can't be fair."

"It isn't," Abi agreed and adjusted her jeans as she leant over the ball return. "So maybe you need to do something else."

"Like what? Take up origami?"

Abi snorted and rubbed her eyes. "Dry orgasm?"

"What the fuck's a dry orgasm?"

"It's ... OK ... next time you go for a pee, stop the stream and then start it, and stop it again. Those muscles you use are Kee-garls."

"Kee-garls?" I repeated with her pronunciation, and she just nodded.

"Yeah, them. Now, go home, lie on your bed naked and close your eyes. Think about Sarah, sex, whatever you want and just flex those muscles, slowly and then hold it. And keep doing that. You can come doing that."

I looked her sceptically, and she just smiled and passed me my ball. "Your turn."

I didn't believe her, everyone knew you needed to have stimulation to come but thought it was too good to be true; I could get relief without breaking my promise.

We played out two games, and I walked Abi home; I was glad to have spent some time with her and asked her about her love life which she claimed was depressingly flat, but I knew this was probably her own choice in not dating rather than not finding someone who may be suitable.

I skipped home, had some tea and was up in my bedroom by 8pm. I just had to try Abi's suggestion. I lay on my bed and looked up at the ceiling, closing my eyes and thought. I could see Sarah, naked, underneath the tree and smiling at me. I loved her smile, and she pouted, giggled and threw me a moue. I could see her sensational curves as they traced her body and she leant back against the bark and opened her legs to show me, her shaved mounds.

I stiffened the muscles and again and again; my cock was already hard from my imagination, but I began to feel a tension at the base of my testicles. I moved my legs apart wider and moved my hand to touch my cock but put it back.

I was now exceptionally horny and fidgeted; flexing the muscles and keeping them tense for a few moments before releasing them. It felt good and highly arousing, and what I wanted was a warm mouth or a tight pussy to close over the top of it, but I had to grip the sides of the mattress to stop myself from giving in and touching my twitching member.

It was difficult not to relent, but I kept tensing and releasing. It felt good, but a little weird, and I wasn't getting much build up in my testicles. After ten minutes, I got bored and went downstairs.

I tried again a bit later, but it was the following morning when I started to feel something.

The morning erection I always suffered from was present and I was desperate to do something.

I felt a strong desperate longing in my perineum and my entire shaft tingled; I tensed my Kegel muscle, held it and then released it, repeating this and lifting my buttocks at the same time.

I was thinking of Sarah and her naked body covered in baby oil and looking seductively towards me. I grunted, and held the tensed muscle in position. I began to feel real arousal, and my cock twitched. Instead of tensing the muscle I began to pulse it, and it felt glorious.

Just as if someone was touching it, my testicles began to fill with excitement. My cock was rock hard, and my legs began to shake. I grabbed hold of the side of bed and cried out. It was an incredible feeling, my entire body was tingling, and I was panting. My cock was rubbing against the duvet cover and I kept pulsing and tensing my cock as my hips ground into the bed.

I could feel it, and the tip of my cock felt wet and moist. I cried out, I could feel tightness and tension across my body and was hurtling towards a climax. It was a weird feeling, and I had to fight the urge to pull on my cock.

I concentrated hard on the muscles, tensing them strongly and bucking my hips as I did. I could feel it and then a rush, a powerful spark of energy that shot through me and I lay on the bed panting.

All what was coming out of my erect cock was a drop of pre-cum, but I felt as though I had had a release of sorts. I was still horny, but it felt good. Abi may have called it a "dry orgasm" and that wasn't strictly true; I didn't orgasm, but it was a new, pleasurable experience.

What I wanted was Sarah or a wank; what I got was a unbelievably cold shower.

* * * * *

Sarah and I had made Zoe promise to wear the little blue dress for the nightclub Christmas Party, and after a little persuasion she eventually said she would dress accordingly. Sarah tried to get some

lingerie thrown in as well, but that was merely wishful thinking. Sarah wore the red cocktail dress she wore at the Summer party, partly because it was the shortest dress she had, but also as she claimed that her mother wanted her to bin it, and she wanted to get as much use of it before it went.

I had seen Sarah's mother in much less than the red cocktail dress at her party a few months previous, and thought that any objections on the grounds of decency were hypocritical, but I couldn't tell Sarah this; she still had no idea that her parents were swingers.

Zoe and Sarah were both wearing the jewellery I bought them earlier in the year, and I was somewhat relieved that Sarah had been fairly sparse with the make up. Rhea, of course, was waiting to tease. She had wanted to come to the Christmas party, and in previous years I had been in the flat with her, but this year it was no longer the case.

Mum hesitated over Rhea's attendance, but eventually agreed as long as Rhea went home at 8pm; I suspected there would be some more adult entertainment and both Zoe and I had been told the same – we were welcome with our partners, but only up to a point. It was an adult nightclub and, as I was constantly told, I was not, yet, an adult.

Neither Simon nor Zoe had divulged that they would be attending the Christmas party at the night club to their parents, and Zoe even admitted the following day that she had actually told her mum that she was going to a dinner engagement at our flat. I smiled at her duplicity, but Zoe just shrugged and gave me the line, “it's easier that way.”

It would have been pointless for Sarah to lie. Mum and Angela were talking so much recently so Sarah was honest and got an honest response back – she approaching seventeen, nearly an adult, and would be trusted, but she was not to break that trust if she wanted to be trusted in the future.

Rhea had been shopping and purchased a cocktail dress, even shorter than the ones I had seen. Mum gasped when she saw it and I closed my eyes waiting for the inevitable reaction, but it didn't come. Rhea's backless dress had a very plunging neckline, was cut at the bottom in a diagonal line from her waist to about five inches below her waist and was in a shimmering grey material.

“Is that short enough?” I asked, and Rhea raised her eyebrows at me and looked at my trousers.

“I know you want to screw half the girls, but do you need to go with your flies undone?” Sarah giggled, and I did them up. She stroked the velvety soft burgundy shirt and Rhea groaned. “And you two better not keep me up tonight.”

Mum, dressed in a slightly more conservative blue dress, opened the interconnecting door, and we trooped through it, down the stairs and into the night club. It was empty and slightly dark, but she had moved a few of the tables so the dance floor was visible and Ikenna was by the bar.

“You serving?” Ikenna asked, and Mum nodded

“Yes,” she shouted and walked over to him. Ikenna nodded towards Sarah and then his eyes popped out when he saw Rhea.

“You're not a little girl any more,” he muttered and I think he was probably glad that Rhea didn't hear him. Rhea got to the bar and leant across it, tapping.

“C'mon, service, service,” she teased. Mum told her to behave, but Rhea just cackled and turned back into the room. “Disgraceful service. I've got a good mind to go somewhere else,” she shouted and Mum huffed and turned to her.

“Yes Rhea. To bed. Unless you shut up and behave.”

I dragged Sarah and Zoe to a booth, and we sat down. "I still think you two are the luckiest people around," she muttered. "I'd love to work here."

Zoe and I both stared at her and then Zoe replied. "It's hard work."

"And we don't even get to see the girls naked," I added, and Zoe spluttered into laughter. "OK, well I did but only 'cause I had a camera." It was good to talk to Zoe and Sarah; we were good friends at college, and I obviously worked with Zoe, and I dated Sarah but I didn't often spend much time with both of them together when Zoe wasn't nagging at us.

The bonds between us all were strong. Zoe and I went back years, as did Zoe and Sarah, and she warned us that if Sarah and I ever split up she would not choose between us, not that either of us would have expected her to, or even for us to split up!

The dancers arrived, often in pairs, and I introduced them to Sarah and to a lesser extent, Zoe, who couldn't remember half the names of the young ladies. I offered Sarah the choice of a pseudonym, but she just giggled. Rhea was hanging around us, within earshot, and listened as I introduced the dancers, and as much as my sister wanted to be the centre of attention, she knew practically no-one.

I wandered over to get a drink each for us, and there was a small queue. Mum was frantically serving behind the bar, and I asked her if she wanted any help.

Cherry, the small, thin girl who looked like she was younger than Rhea, smiled and Mum looked over as I spoke. "Yeah, c'mon on then! Those drinks are free, the rest are at the usual price," she said, and I looked over at the two fridges stocked full of brightly coloured alcohol. Cherry flicked her hair back and waited for me to look towards her, and she asked for the red vodka alcopop in the fridge, and I took out two and undid the tops, passing them over. She bit her lip and looked coyly at me, thanking me and then disappeared.

Mum watched as Rhea came up to the bar and then saw that she either had to ask Mum or me for an alcoholic drink, and she stopped to ponder whom to ask, before hesitantly choosing myself.

"You need to be eighteen," I teased, and Rhea sneered, glancing over at Mum and then whispered.

"But I have ID!"

Mum saw and told Rhea she could have a couple of drinks, but she was to be sensible and this drew an even bigger sneer than me telling her that she was too young.

I took a few beers to the table once we had served everyone and Zoe scowled as I downed half the bottle. "You aren't eighteen," she moaned, and I just shrugged and drank some more.

"It's not illegal or wrong, you know to drink it. I just can't buy it." Zoe picked the fruit and vodka drink and took a gulp through the straw.

Someone turned some music on and then a few gentleman turned up with a catering spread, which Rhea had first dibs on. Zoe began to enjoy herself and Sarah very much liked speaking to the dancers that kept coming up to us and chatting to me. She seemed almost enchanted by their worldly charm and friendliness, and I was quite glad that neither Juggs nor Alice had come.

Isobel and Heather came bounding over a little late, and my ex-lover asked Sarah if she could have a dance with me. Sarah nodded and then took Zoe to the dance floor for us all to make vague swaying motions. Rhea teased as Isobel, and I hugged closely as we moved across the dance floor and then Isobel did a twirl, her dress fanning out as she spun around.

“Come join us,” I said to Rhea who grabbed the arm of Simon, almost throwing him onto the dance floor and he hugged her tightly. We danced for a bit longer and then I returned to the booth with a few drinks. Rhea and Simon were drinking more than they should, but they were not causing a problem and as long as they didn't drink too much, Mum wouldn't mind.

It was after the buffet had been eaten and the party was starting when I looked around the club for Rhea, and couldn't see her; I guessed that she had been sent back to the flat, but I hadn't heard a row, and it was only 7:50pm. I considered it an impossibility that Rhea would have left early voluntarily and without a fuss, and whispered to Zoe if she knew where Simon was.

Zoe scanned the club and shook her head, and then we both saw them sneak back down the stairs that lead up to the private rooms. “Oh my,” Zoe whispered and I glanced over at Sarah chatting excitably to Jessica and Olivia, the rubber fetishist.

We both made a direct line towards Rhea and Simon, with Zoe pulling her brother, still adjusting his shirt and trousers into the corridor leading to changing rooms.

“Simon,” Zoe called out loudly. “You haven't been ...”

I sighed and looked at Rhea hovering by the doorway who strode forward and put her arm through Simon's. “So what if we have?”

Zoe stared at her brother who just shrugged, and Zoe wiped her face. “Don't tell me, you lost your virginity in a nightclub?”

Simon spluttered, and Rhea scowled in annoyance. “Oi,” she shouted. “It's private. And no, neither of us lost our virginity in a nightclub.”

Zoe was scanning her brother's face, and she looked firmly at him. “What have you been up to Simon?”

Rhea, annoyed at being ignored, tugged at Simon's arm but he didn't move. “Oh, for fucks sake,” she moaned and stared at Zoe. “So what if we've had sex, maybe you should try it and you wouldn't be so up tight.”

Zoe turned to Rhea and then Simon. “Mum'll go ballistic when she finds out.” Simon froze, and Rhea stepped forward and pushed Zoe against the wall. My friend gasped as she did, and Rhea held a finger out in front of her.

“You do not tell anyone,” she said in a fierce voice. Zoe struggled against Rhea's firm hand pushing against her breast bone and Simon put his hand on Rhea's shoulder, but she shrugged it off. “You hear me. What Simon and I do is up to us, not you. Or Emma.” Zoe tried to push Rhea's hand away, but the grip was too strong, pressing her up against the whitewashed wall. “And if you are so worried about it, perhaps you need to ask my brother why we started having sex. In Lancaster.”

Rhea let go of Zoe, and grabbed hold of Simon escorting him out of the small corridor and Zoe stared at me with her blue eyes waiting for an answer. “I left them some condoms in their double room in case they did,” I sheepishly told her, and Zoe puffed out her chest and waved her finger at me.

“He is fifteen,” she whined. “He is my brother.”

“And Rhea is my sister,” I replied. “Only I didn't want them to facing a trip to the abortion clinic.” Zoe sighed and looked at me out of the corner of her eye.

“You're a bad influence,” she muttered. “Rhea is just copying you. She sees you and she copies you.” I stared at her open-mouthed and Zoe just shook her head, pushing her blonde hair back.

“Rhea? Copy me, you must be joking,” I shouted.

Zoe shook her head and pointed at me, shouting back at me. “You love to let everyone know you are the big Andy Williams, sleeping with all those women, have to show everyone and is it any wonder that Simon and Rhea copy you?”

“I didn't encourage her,” I replied angrily and looked at Zoe. “And I don't want everyone to know my business. I slept with Miss Edwards, but no-one knows that.” Zoe gasped, shaking her head and ran out of the corridor; what did I have to say that for?

Zoe and Simon left shortly afterwards, and Sarah held my hand and disappeared to the back of the room. We kissed in the shadows, and I saw Mum look around the club and then called out.

The lights focused on the stage and a handful of scantily-clad male dancers pranced onto the stage to hoots of encouragement. “We should be going,” I whispered to Sarah, but my girlfriend shook her head.

“No chance,” she replied and I glanced down at Mum sitting at a table, looking forward.

“No, come on, Sarah,” I called and Sarah resisted, but eventually followed me down towards the small table. Mum spun around when she saw us and tapped her watch.

“I know,” I murmured underneath the loud music echoing around the hall, and Sarah leant across to ask Mum something. Mum shook her head, and Sarah put her hands together to make a pleading motion before Mum sighed and held out five fingers.

“We have five minutes,” Sarah excitedly said and called out as a muscular guy in Speedo-style underwear flexed his biceps at the front of the stage.

I saw Mum grin as she watched Sarah, but my girlfriend was transfixed, watching the stripping guys and she leant over and kissed me the moment the last guy ripped off his underwear and threw it to the audience. “Can I?”

“Can you what?” Sarah's eyes sparkled, and as the male stripper jumped down from the stage, she pushed herself to the front of the dozen drunken ladies desperately wanting a better look.

Mum held her hands out at me, and I mumbled a “I know!” The gentleman saw Sarah and led her up onto the stage where a chair was brought out, and she was sat down on it.

Scarlet put her hand on mine as the half-naked gentleman – full of muscles and charm – spoke into the microphone. “And who have we here?” My girlfriend, grinning from ear to ear, shouted her name and another naked gentleman came with a blindfold and put it around her. Sarah adjusted herself in the seat, and I saw her lustful smile and shaking hands from the floor.

There was some whooping as the gentleman with the blindfold – all muscles and a bright orange thong that was straining to contain his appendage - came back with some whipped cream and drew silence to the crowd. “OK Sarah, what have you in front of you?”

My girlfriend moved her hand forward and felt the waist of the guy, running her hands over him. Mum shot me a look – this was not part of her plan – but I was relaxed about it; there was no way Sarah would “cheat”, and it was all part of being at the club. Lines were blurred, and I had a contentment that I got when I had been drinking.

Scarlet whispered into my ear, but I didn't make out what she said due to the noise of the dozens of lustful ladies crowing as Sarah touched the stripper and took his thong down. I was leaking oodles of pre-cum in my boxer shorts; my girlfriend was about to touch another guy and all I could do was wish that it was me!

He sprayed some cream onto the end of his cock, and the room went wild as Sarah put it in her mouth, sucking the end. "Cock sucker," Isobel shouted and Sarah gestured towards her.

The naked man gestured for Isobel to come up onto the stage and passed her a pale pink strap on dildo. She advanced to my girlfriend, and the naked man, putting his cock out of reach of the teenager and Isobel moved in.

There was stifled giggles as Sarah touched it and then pushed it away. "That's not a real one," she cried, and there was laughter. Sarah enjoyed being on stage – they tipped water over her, and she had to strip, she had to simulate sex with Isobel and the strap-on and was then spanked by a giant dildo.

It was supposed to be a little humiliating, but Sarah just adored the attention and at the end as she was clapped off the stage, she went up and gave rather full-on kisses to her four tormentors.

Mum was not too happy that we had been caught up in the entertainment and sent us back up to the flat before it got any more risqué or sordid. I made a trip around all the staff wishing them a "Happy Christmas" before leaving. I managed to purloin several bottles of beer in my arms and the live sex show (sponsored by free alcohol) had started again with Hugo being spanked by Susie. Sarah had that look in her eye, and I grinned at her as my naked girlfriend walked with me, carrying her dress.

"That was amazing," Sarah cried. "I so want to do that again." She bounced up and down, and I barely had time to put the beer on the dining room table before she dragged me upstairs to my bedroom.

Sarah practically tore off my clothes; I was incredibly horny from my days of inactivity, but Sarah was like a woman possessed. I think if I had told her that I wasn't in the mood for sex she would either have raped me, or gone back to the club and taken advantage of one of her "tormentors."

She was insatiable, and as I tried to go down on her, she pulled me up. "Later," she promised and lay onto my bed, pulling me onto her. She gave a relieved sigh as I gently pushed my cock into her that I mirrored.

It felt so delightful to have my cock touching something after many days of celibacy, but Sarah's warm pussy was slick and slippery and it accepted my manhood gratefully.

I can only speculate that the sex felt as good to Sarah as I did for me, but she gasped and panted with every thrust. Her eyes flew open as I pounded her teenage body and I felt wave after wave of intense energy flowing to my balls.

I felt the tightness I always felt as I neared the point of no return; it had been seconds and I slowed down, pushing into her harder but less frequent but Sarah gave me a quizzical look. "Don't fuck about," she cried and put her hands underneath her thighs and pushed her legs higher. "Just ... oh shit!"

I kissed her and thrust in as hard as I could manage, jack hammering into my poor girlfriend who squealed and cried out. I was at the point I was trying to avoid, but Sarah was massaging my cock so well and her lustful slickness along with my pent-up horniness was too much. I pushed her shoulders into the mattress, screwed up my face and pounded into her as quickly as my muscles

would permit.

I grunted. “Oh fucking ... I love you,” I cried and pushed deep into my girlfriend to cum well inside her. I gave a relieved cry, a tear rolling from my eye as several shots of semen spewed into her. “Oh shit!”

I stayed panting on top of her, and she was smiling at me, running her hands through my short hair. “Love you too,” she promised. We remained in position for a few moments and Sarah gestured for me to roll onto the bed.

Strings of semen lined her thighs as she sat up and reached for the tissues, gently wiping herself and looking at me. I had shot a decent amount into her, and she needed more tissues, but as I stopped panting, she swung her legs over my head and pushed her wet crack onto my face.

I never minded going down on Sarah – or Abi – even shortly after I had had sex with them, but the presumptuousness of my beau was striking; she was in the mood, so I had to be.

My lips connected with her engorged clitoris, and she gave a satisfied grunt. “Yeah ... there ... do ... hhnennn.”

Her noises trailed off as I sucked on her pearl and massaged it with my lips, running my tongue over her button and lapping up her juices. She still tasted as sweet and as delicate as before, but there was an additional mustiness.

I felt her legs quiver and shake as they pressed against my ears and I rolled her nipples in my fingers, but there was actually no need; Sarah was too aroused from the evening's tribulations to need much help and her body tensed up and then shook violently.

She panted and screamed, crying out my name and descending into hysterical whimpering. She rocked up and down on my face before squealing again and pushing forward to show me her pert rear.

She peered back at me panting. “Wow! That was so ...”

The door to my bedroom flew open, and a naked Rhea stood in my doorway. “For fuck's sake Sarah!”

“Rhea ... get out!”

“Fuck off,” Rhea cried as Sarah hid herself under the covers. “Now me and Simon are trying to watch a porno and all we can hear is you two through the walls.”

“Simon's gone home,” Sarah replied instantly. “I saw Zoe take him.”

Rhea gave a coy smile. “Yeah ... and he can climb out of his bedroom and is now in my room. So we haven't got very long, and I don't want to hear you two fucking, so learn to button it.”

“Oh sh ...” I snapped but was interrupted by the lovely Sarah.

“Yeah, sorry Rhea. We'll keep the noise down. We've sort of finished now anyway.”

“Make sure you do,” Rhea ordered and closed the door firmly. I looked at my girlfriend and shrugged.

“We know how to wind her up,” I teased. “We always manage to irritate my sister.” Sarah looked

up at me and put her head on my shoulder staring at my eyes. I instinctively smiled, Sarah's blue eyes sparkled in the half-light, and I saw a warmth and desire in them. "I love you," I muttered to her. "You are wonderful." Sarah bit her lip and sniffed, the palm of her hand coming up to wipe her eyes.

"I love you too," she whispered. "But you've gone and made me cry."

"Oh," I muttered but she just giggled.

"It's not bad. I just ... it feels so fantastic. I just wish I could spend the holidays with you." Her eyes watered again and I put my arm around her body, squeezing her tightly. "But you'll be here with Abi and Zoe."

"But I'd rather spend it with you," I replied quickly. It was the truth, and I knew that Sarah and I would struggle if we were apart for any length of time. Our relationship was quite intense, and the longing we would feel would get us both down after a few days.

I told Sarah about Zoe and the condoms, but Sarah just shrugged. "She has tried to lecture me before," Sarah admitted. "I am a little fed up with it. I don't know how you can tolerate her at times."

"She's just Zoe," I replied. "Not everyone can be like you."

"But how anyone can be like her?" Sarah moaned. "She is just such a kill-joy. And gets so huffy when people tell her so."

"Well you aren't the most tactful at times," I found myself saying, and Sarah just snorted.

"With her, I shouldn't have to be. The frigid, uptight bitch." I bit my lips and wanted to argue with my girlfriend but knew Sarah privately considered Zoe to be too close to me. She didn't need to worry as I never saw Zoe as "girlfriend-material" and she certainly had similar thoughts to me, but there was no way that I was going to tone down a friendship due to jealousy from my girlfriend.

"She's not that bad," I told her and Sarah scoffed.

"She had a proper go at me at the party and after the Disco. Said that I was being a tramp and a floosy." I gave a half-hearted laugh, but Sarah was annoyed. "What's so funny?"

"She calls me a 'sex addict' and all sorts. It's just her way of dealing with us. You should know that by now."

Sarah scoffed angrily and pushed away from our intertwined bodies. "Well she can stop it. I'm not a tramp. Or a floosy. And I don't like being called one. It's not fair, and it's ..." Sarah didn't finish as I kissed her and then started working my way down her body. "Andy, I'm talking to you. Don't think you can get round me like that!" I pushed her legs apart, and she resisted, but the moment my lips touched her soft folds, she admitted defeat.

I swirled my tongue around her maidenhood, and she became her usual compliant self, groaning and crying out loudly. If the way, to a man's heart is through her stomach then the way to Sarah's heart was undoubtedly through her clitoris!

She pushed her body into the mattress and rocked back as my tongue explored her crack and probed her muskiness. She grunted and panted, squealing very loudly every time she exhaled. "Oh fuck! Oh God! Hhmmmm."

Sarah's cries got louder, and higher pitched; she shouted out to me and pressed my head against her dripping cunt. Her legs twitched, and she held her breath as I flicked her clit strongly and quickly.

Sarah gave a roar as she reached her climax, crying out loudly and panting as if she had just run a marathon. "Oh God!"

I smiled at her, and she threw her head back, screaming into the room. I heard movement outside but just sucked on her engorged button until she had finished her climax.

"I told you!" Rhea barked as the door flew open and she stood there, her face angry and she crossed her arms. "Be fair, Andy. It's not fair hearing you two having sex." Her voice was vexed rather than angry, and she cocked her head. "It would be really great if you two could be a bit more considerate." I noted a sense of begging in her voice, and we apologised – more sincerely this time. "Just make sure you do," Rhea warned us as she slammed the door.

"Yeah, we're going to sleep now," I shouted after her and Sarah gave a half-hearted smile as I curled up with her. "Of course, I can be quiet if you fancy giving me a blowjob," I whispered to Sarah, and she smiled at me, before disappearing under the covers to run her tongue over my glans and suck the head of my cock.

I muttered a warning to her, but Sarah swallowed my semen as I pumped several waves into the coltish girl and she came up and we snogged, before falling asleep in other's arms.

* * * * *

I left Sarah in bed as I got up to go to work. Zoe was waiting for me with crossed arms as we went into the club. Both of us had volunteered to clean the club after the party, even though we knew we would not be paid for it. It seemed fair, we had free food and free drink, and enjoyed ourselves, but Zoe flatly refused to talk to me.

"I can't believe you did that," she said to me eventually. "I spoke to Simon last night. You know him, and Rhea have been at it all term."

"Oh Zoe. It's their choice."

"You knew?"

"Well sort of," I told her. "I didn't know, I just guessed, that's all. Well Sarah did as well."

"And you did nothing!" Zoe threw her cloth onto the table and shook her head, her eyes fizzing and held out her hands. "They are too young. It's wrong Andy, why can't you see that?"

"They are not too young, but it's their choice."

"And to encourage them," Zoe added with a tear in her eye and I took a deep breath. "It's illegal as well as immoral."

"I did not encourage them, but what would you have done? Rhea and Simon sharing a double bed in a room you aren't in? I wanted to make sure they were safe," I said, and Zoe just puffed. "Look, it doesn't matter whether you think I was right or wrong. I did it for the right reasons," I eventually said, and Zoe grimaced. Deep down, she knew I was right, but it would take awhile before she would admit it.

"And I heard you gave Rhea a false alibi," Zoe thundered. "When she tried to commit arson and attempted murder?"

I screwed up my face. "That's stretching it." I sighed and looked at my friend. "OK, Rhea is obsessed with Simon, she really likes him, now he's a nice guy, but I don't know what he does to make her so happy. And in the same way Rhea doesn't know what Sarah does to make me happy, but Rhea is happy. And she thinks the world of your brother. Now, she thinks that him being bullied by Nathan is her fault, and she is trying so hard to make it not happen, but she does it in her way. Which is always going to be a bit excessive, over the top and foolhardy. But that is Rhea. And she was hit by Nathan, defending Simon. And did Simon tell you why Rhea did it?"

Zoe shook her head. "It doesn't matter ..."

"Simon was stripped naked in the snow and beaten up in France." Zoe gasped, and I shrugged. "I protected my sister because deep down, I knew that she did the wrong thing for the right reasons, which is exactly what you think I did with the condoms."

Zoe sighed and glared at me. "I don't know you. I don't know you anymore. Six months ago, you would not have let Rhea have sex, or lied to your mother, or been complicit in a deception."

"And six months ago, would you have watched porn or travelled to another town to get pissed in a pub when you are not eighteen, or spend the afternoon with a pornographer?"

Zoe bit her lip and glared at me. "That's not fair," she told me, and I nodded.

"I think it is. We are all growing up, and we will make mistakes. But I've done nothing to hurt anyone and I have always done what I think is right. You know that. And I have always done, so maybe I haven't changed that much. Maybe it's you that's changed."

Zoe gulped for a moment and then spun 'round. "And what's with Miss Edwards?"

"Ahhh well, I shouldn't have mentioned that. I promised Gem ... Christine that I wouldn't." Zoe's eyes bored into me.

"You cheated on Sarah ... with our teacher, didn't you?"

I sneered at her. "No! It was pre-Sarah. Well it was ... OK Sarah was there anyway. She's a, well she was a stripper, but you are not to tell anyone."

Zoe gasped again and put her cleaning stuff down. "Sarah's a stripper? She's not eighteen and ..."

"No ... not Sarah. Gemma. Sorry Christine. Oh fuck ... Miss Edwards is the stripper ... was the stripper," I flustered.

"Why?"

"For the money," I responded instantly. "Look she was photographed, we did some photoshoots, and she used to give me Maths tuition. It stopped when she started working at the College."

"Oh my God."

"Oh Zoe. Didn't Miss Brown teach you anything?" I asked. "And you know they had a prostitute in the front room when we dropped the purse off. Our teachers have sex lives. Hell, Rhea's English teacher is currently banging Mum. They are humans too."

"But they should be ... well they should be setting a good example. As should you. Maybe if, you went celibate, Rhea wouldn't be so tempted to do it."

“Or ... knowing Rhea ... if you went home with a dozen sex toys, a lifetime supply of condoms and told Simon and Rhea to get jiggy, she'd take up knitting. How about that?” Zoe's scowl deepened, and I threw the cloth back into the bucket. “Or just accept that not everyone can or will live up to your moral code.”

“I know ... but ... but ... but ...” Zoe stammered as she tried to work out what she wanted to say, eventually telling me that I had a duty as a big brother to set an example and sleeping with my Maths tutor was not setting a good example.

Zoe joined us in the flat for a drink and we took a walk to town before swapping presents. Sarah and I had bought Zoe a leather-backed bible, we figured she would probably quite like a properly bound copy of her scripture and also if she opened it in front of her family, their perception of us may improve.

Personally, I never worried what Emma and Andrew thought of me, but Sarah was a little more sensitive and I just part-funded the present after Sarah had chosen it.

For her part, Zoe groaned when she felt the weight of her gift saying that it better had not be too expensive and then gave us our small presents which we said we would open on Christmas Day; Sarah joking said afterwards that it was probably a bible too!

“Grace,” Sarah asked, leaning across the sofa when we returned to the flat. “When I get to eighteen would you let me work in the club?”

Grace laughed but saw that Sarah was deadly serious. “I don't think your mother would appreciate it without talking to her,” she eventually said, and Sarah shook her head.

“But I'll be eighteen in fifteen months time – no fourteen months. Third of March 2000. Or can I do it before I get to eighteen?”

“No. No, you can't do it before you get to eighteen,” Mum replied and then sighed. “But it's not as easy as it looks.”

Sarah nodded and then looked at me. “I do stripteases for him all time, so I have had some practice. And tuition.”

“Sarah!” I exclaimed, and Mum just chortled. “I don't think you need to continue this,” I told her, but Sarah just sneered at me.

“I know what you get up to,” Mum said looking at me. “You forget Angela, and I do talk.”

“Yes I know that,” I replied quickly. “But it is still private.”

Sarah looked at me then Mum. “I really want to give it a go,” she whined. “All your staff were so awesome, and I know I would just love it. I loved being naked on stage, and it felt such a rush.”

“It's good for the first night or even the first week. It gets a bit boring after awhile,” Mum told her, and Sarah scoffed.

“And we might still be going out in March 2000,” I told her, and she just crossed her arms.

“So. You asked Abi out, and she did it.” I went to reply and saw Mum looking at me expectantly. “It'll be my choice what I do, won't it? Or do you think I should dance to your tune?”

I spluttered. “Well, no. But what I mean is, shouldn't we be talking about it, before you did it.”

“Why?” Sarah asked, and Mum raised an eyebrow. “You wanted to date Abi, you didn't mind with her.”

“I know, but it was different.”

“Why?” Sarah asked, her face screwed up, and I took a deep breath and went to respond, but Mum's expression made me stop. I suppose if I was honest that I never worried about Abi doing it, it came as part of her, and while I liked to see Sarah do the stripteases and be seductive, I wasn't sure I wanted her to do it to a room full of horny gentlemen every day.

In the end, I rubbed my nose and just replied. “Because I think it would be too close to your final exams and I wouldn't want you to miss out on Cambridge.” Mum and Sarah both gave me disbelieving look, and I just shrugged. “Maybe after the exams in the Summer?”

Sarah puffed at me as I spoke, but Mum just smiled at her. “If your mum says yes, I will give you a go after the exams, maybe.”

Sarah screwed up her face. “But Mum ain't ever gonna say yes.” Mum smiled and got up.

“You'll be surprised,” she said a little cryptically and then offered us a drink as walked towards the kitchen. Sarah leant over and hissed at me.

“You're just jealous,” she said. “You couldn't handle me being naked in front of loads of people.”

I raised my eyebrows at her. “I can, I saw you at the party or have your forgotten about that?” Sarah's expression changed, and she sat aggressively towards me. “I just worry about you.”

“Well don't,” she fizzed. “I don't want you to.” I looked at her and crossed my arms, causing Sarah to giggle. “OK. I do. But not in that way!”

* * * * *

“I'd rather spend it with you,” Sarah said as she packed the last of her things. “But Dad has got Christmas off, it's the first time in years, so we are off to France.” Sarah had repeated herself quite a few times, but I passed her the underwear she had sorted, and she squeezed it down the sides of the case.

I was certain she had done this deliberately, letting me see that she was taking her “plain” and unsexy underwear for her ten or so days in southern France, but she didn't need to; I trusted her, and with Abi staying at our house for the holidays wondered whether she had her own suspicions.

Of course, it went without saying she didn't need to, and Abi knew the score with Sarah and myself, but I still wondered whether Sarah was worried. It appeared not as she didn't broach the subject.

I teased her over whether Eric was going (he was) and whether she had enough batteries (she hoped so), and Sarah kissed me after we moved her case onto the floor. Our romantic embrace was ended when Angela barged into the room and told Sarah to make sure she was ready as they were leaving early the following morning.

Sarah grunted; it was nine in the evening, and the Baileys had been running around for three hours as they frantically packed. Sarah was due back just after New Year, and we had agreed to have a private Christmas celebration when she returned with a home cooked dinner. Her parents had a party they wanted to attend a couple of days after landing and Sarah, and I would certainly enjoy the freedom of an unoccupied house.

Her mother looked at Sarah and myself; I was staying the night but would be unceremoniously thrown out at 9am when they left the house to go to the airport. Angela had been reticent when Sarah had suggested it, but she promised that she would not sulk at all if I spent the last night with her, and I dutifully promised to be out of the house when they left for the airport.

Sarah's parents had a Christmas party to attend a local property, and this was something they were unable to cancel, but Paul arrived with his girlfriend from Durham University, so we were not home alone. Paul was taking advantage of the free holiday to spend time with his girlfriend, and they had spent most of the last few days since the end of University term with Elsie's parents in the seaside town of Whitby before travelling down to rural Wendover the day before. "You better not get too tired," Sarah was warned by her Mum as she got ready to leave. "We have a long journey tomorrow."

Sarah groaned. "Mum," she grumbled with an annoyed voice. "I do know. But I can sleep on the plane anyhow."

Angela rolled her eyes, and Sarah ran her hand through her hair smiling at me. "I am not going to see Andy until 1999 after tomorrow morning. We got to say goodbye somehow." Angela shook her head and went upstairs to get ready, and was waiting for her husband at the door an hour later with a bag.

"What time are you going to be home?" Sarah asked, and Angela looked at us.

"Late," she muttered and called up to her husband for the second time. Sarah kissed her goodbye and walked into the kitchen.

"Pass my regards onto Robert and Holly for me," I muttered once Sarah had left earshot and Angela smirked at me.

"Will do," she whispered and rubbed her nose. "And you be careful with my daughter."

"I always am," I promised as William appeared and Sarah's parents left for the evening.

Sarah barely waited until the door was closed when she grabbed me by the arm and pulled me towards the stairs. Paul was coming out of his bedroom as we reached the landing and rolled his eyes at his occupied sister. "You OK?" He asked, but I am not sure whom he was referring to.

"Yeah," we both muttered.

Sarah pulled out a bottle from her wardrobe and then two glasses from her drawer. "How good is this?" Sarah asked and turned her television on that was in the very corner of her room. She had a twinkle in her eye and smiled. "OK, I got them off Abi two days ago. She is a very useful contact!"

Sarah had been provided with a bottle of white wine that she poured into the goblets and offered one to me, and then withheld it. "When you get naked."

"Pardon?"

"Naked," she said and put the glass down behind her. She crossed her arms and raised her eyebrows as I disrobed in front of her, cooing appreciatively as my boxer shorts fell to the floor. "Better," she told me.

"So, what are we doing?"

"I got a video to watch," Sarah announced with a smirk and got undressed herself. I held her in my

arms exploring her body with smooth strokes that came down her flanks and kissed her neck from behind. She purred as my hands gently ran over her nipples and then squeezed them. She writhed against my body and giggled. “No, not this, yet.” Sarah passed me my glass of wine and nodded towards her single bed.

Sarah dimmed the lights and sat down, patting next to her with her two remote controls. The video span up and the television switched to “AV” before a naked woman appeared on the screen and a caption. “A porno?”

Sarah cackled next to me, and I took a gulp of the wine. “Sure. I said Abi is a great contact. She's got a decent collection, but a couple were locked away. Hey, they aren't of ... you two ... are they?”

I snorted, and she looked at me. “I don't think so,” I told her honestly as the nude woman was joined by a naked man by a swimming pool. We watched, and Sarah gulped down her drink and reached for the wine to refill her glass.

Sarah wriggled as the couple on screen got amorous and had another goblet of wine, before I had even finished my first. She kept fawning over me, and I put my wine down and kissed her on the lips, and then slid down her body, sucking on her nipples and then kissing the tops of her mons.

She pulled me back up and shook her head. “Can we watch some of the film before I get distracted?” Sarah begged with a titter. “Cos y'know!”

I sighed and cuddled up to her as we watched the amorous couple get joined by more and more men until it became a full-on orgy. Sarah sighed and mewed as she watched it – the woman had an awful lot of men lavish their cocks upon her. “Jealous?”

“Oh yes,” Sarah muttered and giggled at me with a smirk on her face. “But that's too many guys. I mean, eight now. She's greedy.”

“Yeah, I guess with eight you'd need some help,” I told her and moved my hand to her mons, sliding my fingers either side of her slit. “You'd need to have another girl, like Abi or Ingrid, to take some of the strain. 'Cause you can't have all those guys around you, poking you, and touching you.” I spoke in a quiet voice, and my fingers touched her fold as I whispered into her ear. “You'd be getting fucked by one and another would have their cock in your mouth, maybe they would be touching your clit.”

“Hmmmm-nnnnn,” Sarah muttered and I rolled her pearl in my fingers. “We'd photo you, just so you could see what a dirty slut you can be and they'd take you time after time after time until you were full up.” I know my erotic talking was poor, but Sarah was getting off on it, the sounds from the television and the probing of my fingers. She cried and squealed, pushing her body against my fingers as her hips adopted a bucking motion.

She opened her eyes and looked at across at me. “Go down there,” she ordered and I couldn't resist her! She was exceptionally wet, and just groaned the moment my tongue touched her musky crack. She writhed under my tongue's strokes and exhaled loudly with every flick of her button.

I could hear the sounds of our lucky porn actress behind me, and the unfaked sounds of female arousal from the girlfriend in front of me; it sounded like we were at an orgy! My erection dug into the bed, and leaked pre-cum, but I was focused on Sarah; her engorged clit was being forcefully lapped by my tiring tongue, and she was squealing and shrieking loudly.

I plunged my finger into her and wiggled my hand violently; Sarah cried out and screeched, her hands pushing my head into my fingers underneath my chin and her legs squeezing my ears. Her

body shook and tensed up and she held her breath, before letting out a deafening roar.

She panted, and moved her legs out as my fingers pressed against the side of her vaginal wall and she caterwauled lustfully and vociferously, pushing her head back and swearing involuntarily at me.

She gasped and puffed as my mouth made an “O” over her clitoris and sucked. She thrashed her legs and emitted a sound with every exhalation; she was going to orgasm again and I watched her out of the corner of my eye.

Sarah yelled out as her entire body shook violently, and her legs pressed against my head so tightly I thought my eyes would pop out of their sockets! Her climax seemed to last forever, and she rolled over onto her side, squeezing her thighs as my tongue just sucked her clit and my fingers pressed on her wall.

She screeched and yelled as her legs shook violently and her pussy squeezed my intruding fingers. “Stop,” she begged and I pulled her left leg back on the bed and slid on top of her. I didn't need any help in finding her hole, and she gasped as it slid all the way in.

I knew I wouldn't last too long, but Sarah felt unbelievably tight and with every thrust got so close to the point of no return. I resisted for as long as I could but screwed up my face with a grunt and unloaded my cum into the little minx underneath me.

She kissed me as I experienced my aftershocks and beamed as I disengaged our semen-covered genitals from each other. “Love you,” I told her and she smiled.

“Love you too. Gonna miss you!”

Sarah flicked the pornography off with a wave of the remote control and set the tape to rewind. I held out my hand to my lover and pulled her to her feet, ignoring the wet patch on the bed

I walked out with Sarah, we both needed cleaning up and almost walked into a topless Elsie coming out of the door next to us. She shrieked, and her long dark brown hair shook as she spun around.

“Sorry,” I said immediately; I think she was stunned by her toplessness and our nakedness.

“It's OK,” Elsie said as I covered my dripping cock. “We heard you.” Paul emerged from the room and cackled at us stood motionless in the corridor.

“You should learn to be quiet,” Paul said as he put his head around the door with a smirk. “Hearing my little sister like that. It's ...”

“It's enough to make her jealous,” my naked and slightly tipsy girlfriend teased from behind me. “Go on Paul, make your bird scream!”

Paul blushed and spluttered as he wrapped his arm around Elsie to preserve her modesty. “He does fine,” Elsie told her, and I squeezed Sarah's hand. It was a tense moment – we both looked at Paul and Elsie expecting them to make the next move, but Sarah spoke first.

“Not that fine,” Sarah teased. “What you need to is to go down on ...”

“Sarah!” Paul cried and scowled at her. “I don't want to hear it. You're my baby sister.”

Sarah giggled and kissed me on the lips. “There's nothing wrong with a bit of great sex. And I don't think poor Elsie is getting enough.” Elsie spluttered, and Paul squeezed his partner.

“She's had a few,” I explained, and Sarah squeezed my cock.

“Yeah ... orgasms! How many have you had, Elsie?” Elsie looked up at Paul who was scowling at Sarah.

“Come on,” I gestured to my girlfriend and pulled her towards the bathroom to get cleaned up. “What is it with siblings,” I moaned as I took a wad of toilet tissue.. “But that was mean!”

We came out into the landing to hear talking from the other side of Paul's door. “I know,” she giggled loudly. “But if my brother isn't looking after her, she'll dump him. It's for his own good.”

“Not everything come down to sex,” I told my girlfriend as I opened her bedroom door. She smiled at me as she sat on the bed and we heard the unmistakable sounds of female arousal.

“She's faking it,” Sarah muttered, but Elsie was grunting and groaning loudly and Sarah giggled. “I'm not having that!”

Sarah cleared her throat. “Oh yeah ... Oh God,” Sarah squealed with a glint in her eye. “Oh ... oh fuckin' hell.”

“Sarah,” I hissed, but she threw herself back on the bed and started bouncing on it, ensuring her headboard banged against the wall. She shouted and screamed, faking her orgasm very convincingly.

“Come on,” she begged with a grin as “Elsie” orgasmed for the second time through the wall. “She is definitely faking it.”

“How can you tell?”

“Come here you hot ... man,” Elsie shouted. “Cover me in your ... love juice.”

We sniggered, and Sarah shrugged. “She is very sheltered,” Sarah whispered. “God knows what she's been reading or watching.”

I coughed, but Sarah pulled me over to her, and pushed me into her crotch. “Want something?”

Sarah nodded and rubbed her slit as my tongue danced over her labia. She giggled and sighed, pushing her hips forward and muttering gleefully as my lips sealed over her clit.

She was extremely aroused and groaned the moment I started flicking her button. She whimpered and mewled with every touch and ran her hands through my hair. She exaggerated every sound, screaming out my name as my tongue flicked and sucked her to a shuddering climax.

“Fuck yes, don't stop,” Sarah cried out. I shook my head, but Elsie screeched.

“That big, ahh that will never fit and ... oh my God.”

“So naïve,” Sarah murmured at me and my fingers probed her hole and began to rotate as my tongue glided over her slit, my chin resting on my wrist.

Sarah, once again, made loud and crude screams that left everyone with no doubt what we were doing. We heard Elsie yell louder about it “feeling so good” and Sarah giggled.

The battle between Sarah and Elsie continued as Sarah had four real orgasms and about a dozen fake ones, and I lost track of how many Elsie had. Sarah simulated the sound of headboards banging as well as really spanking me on the bed to give the sound of some “kinkiness.”

“Cry out,” Sarah hissed and hit me as hard as she could on my back.

“Ooowwww,” I yelled at her and scowled. “That bloody hurt.”

Sarah giggled and hit me again. “That's the idea.”

“How about me hitting you?” I asked as I put myself out of range. “Or we could just watch a film.”

“No way,” Sarah moaned and then went down on me as a “treat” as long as I made lots of loud cries, groans and praised her loudly. Her ostentatious shows of sexual satisfaction were not making me comfortable, but Sarah loved the idea of teasing her brother with her vocal lustfulness.

We heard Paul and Elsie leave their room as Sarah swallowed my semen and she looked at me. I kissed her on the lips and explored her mouth with tongues. “Not what I expected to be doing on our last night,” I told her and she shrugged.

“What going down on me, and sex, and ... stuff. Sure you did!”

“Come on, let's get something to drink!” Sarah put a T-Shirt over her that barely covered her waist, and I had a pair of shorts to put on to cover my dignity.

“You so need to learn to fake orgasms,” Sarah told Elsie as we got ourselves a drink. Elsie looked up from the dining table and shook her head. “Or you need to learn to give her real ones.”

“I wasn't fakin' 'em,” Elsie blushed and looked at Paul, biting her lip. “I ...”

Sarah cackled and cuddled up to me. “Let's just say you aren't going to be an actress,” she teased and Paul crossed his arms. “Or a porn star.”

“We were just giving you a taste of your medicine. It's not nice to hear your brother or sister having sex,” he told his younger sister, and she just giggled and kissed me on the lips.

“We didn't mean to, originally,” I told Sarah's brother and took the two cups of tea I was making. “But we'll leave you alone. And we'll be quiet,” I promised.

Sarah licked her lips and smiled at me, wiggling her hips as we walked out of the room. “Not that quiet!” I turned back to apologise, but Elsie and Paul were kissing, and Sarah had that glint in her eye: I had boyfriendly duties to perform.

* * * * *

Sarah's alarm clock rudely woke us up at seven in the morning. Sarah had set it so we could have one last kiss and cuddle, but I was too worn out from the night before and we just held each other. We had eventually gotten to sleep after Sarah's parents had returned and we had been having sex off and on for most of the previous five hours! “Either I have butterflies in my stomach, or I am just hungry,” Sarah whispered and I laughed.

“You say the most romantic of things,” I whispered back and kissed her neck.

“I'd rather you kissed me down there,” Sarah said and slid my hands down the bed.

“Aren't you worn out yet?”

“No,” Sarah moaned and I stretched. “I am not going to be gettin' any Andy lovin' for almost two weeks.”

“Ahh ...” I told her. “Well I am not getting any Sarah lovin' either. Or any Andy lovin' 'cause you've banned me.”

“OK,” she muttered. “You can play with yourself again now.” There was a pause, and she bit her lip. “But please, not with Abi or Scarlet or ...”

“Of course not,” I replied quickly. “Why would you think I would?”

“I want us to, but not yet,” I saw her voice croak and hugged her. “I mean, I know us being apart is tough, but I want us to do it with someone together first. Make it ... well special.”

I kissed her on the lips. “I only have eyes for you,” I promised her and held her tight.

“Yeah, but you are spending Christmas with Abi. And you had eyes for her once. And I just know that ...”

“Sssshhh!” I told her and kissed her again. “I am not going to be going wandering. Stop thinking that I will.” She smiled slightly and went to protest. “I spent all summer chasing you, you think I would throw it away?”

“I wasn't saying that, I was ... oh I don't know. I sort of know you won't and I ... I'm being silly aren't I?”

“Yes, you are,” I told her, and she wrapped her naked arms around me.

“Of course, if you were to carry out your threat because of Donna and ...” My eyes clearly told her that I was winding her up as she pushed me after I spoke.

“I think you've done well enough on that score,” she told me. “I know you've made an effort, but she wants to leave College 'cause of Ray now.”

“Shit! Really?”

“Yeah,” Sarah muttered and shrugged. “He is being a right cock at the moment, and I know Donna was a bitch, but he's gone way over the top. Donna blames you for it, reckon it's Rhea's influence.”

I spluttered and shook my head. “No offence but that's whacked out. Rhea and Ray aren't friends; she would tease him mercilessly.”

“She teases everyone mercilessly,” Sarah moaned. “She can be very selfish at times.”

“You think I don't know this?” I asked and put my arms around Sarah. “But you won't need to worry about her for weeks, will you?”

Sarah didn't get to answer the question as there was a bang on the door as Angela told Sarah she had “ten minutes.”

I looked into her eyes and slid down the bed. “Guess I've got boyfriendly duties to perform,” I told her but she hauled me back and shook her head. “69,” she whispered.

“I'm worn out,” I moaned, and Sarah cocked her head. OK; go on then,” I muttered as Sarah got out of her single bed, swung her legs over my head and let her body rest on my face. I probed her slit with my tongue as her mouth slid over my engorged cock and sucked with wild abandon.

I lapped up her sapid muskiness and ran my tongue down her slick runway before sucking on her engorged pearl. Sarah squalled lustfully into my cock as I lapped at her cunt and my hands explored

her body.

She was sighed and gasped as her tongue darted around my head, but I knew she was nearing her orgasm, and I sucked on her clit to bring her to a climax.

She doubled her efforts on my manhood, swirling her tongue around the head as I neared my own climax and I mumbled a warning into her dripping crotch.

She finished me off by stroking my cock, and my whimpers were masked by her body over my mouth. I ran my hands up and down her back before sighing into her slit. "Thank you," I muttered as she reached for the tissues and cleaned me up.

"Thank you," Sarah replied as she wiped herself. "Nice thing to end on?"

"Yeah," I muttered and she grinned at me.

"Come on, we better get dressed."

Angela gave us a knowing look as we came down for breakfast. I had packed my little bag and had it with me, but she was darting here, there and everywhere. She gave me a catalogue to give back to Mum that contained alcoholic drinks and got annoyed with Sarah when she forgot to bring her luggage down.

William and I loaded up their car, and with a few minutes to spare the entire family were ready. I kissed Sarah goodbye, and she promised to ring me with a number I could contact her on before I waved them off. Although, Angela and William offered to drop me off at the station or Aylesbury, it would involve detours from their intended journey to Stansted Airport, and I wanted the time to myself.

By the time, I got to the station I was already missing Sarah, and as pathetic as it sounded the fact that I would not see her for nearly a fortnight made me feel a little empty. There was something about knowing she was in the next town and not busy that obviously satisfied an urge that I had. I wanted her to be here with me, and I wanted to spend Christmas with her.

Zoe didn't say much when I got to the club, she had just arrived herself, but she noticed I wasn't talkative and came across. "She'll be back soon enough," she said softly and touched my arm. "The days will fly by, you'll hardly notice she has gone." I looked up, and Zoe just shrugged. "Honestly."

"Yeah, I'm sure. I just would have liked to spend some of Christmas with her. I spent last Christmas Day with Paula, and the one before that, and the one before that. I just don't know what I'll do. We are having our Christmas in January," I muttered.

Zoe looked up at me and smiled. "You know Simon is coming on Boxing Day."

I screwed up my face and shook my head. "No."

Zoe giggled. "He asked Mum if he could stay the night and she said no, so they had a bit of an argument. End result is that he is coming over after lunch but has to be home by 10pm. Which he didn't like."

"You coming too?"

Zoe bit her lip. "Well I haven't been invited."

"I didn't think you were talking to me," I added, and Zoe took a deep breath.

“I am a little annoyed that you gave them condoms, and didn't tell me, but I s'pose when I thought about it, I expected little else really. I know what you are like, you never betray anyone's confidence, and that isn't a bad thing. I was just shocked.”

I raised my eyebrows. “Here's a thing. Expect the very worst from Rhea, and then you can't be shocked!”

“It was Simon though. He has changed in the last few months.” I gave a chuckle, but Zoe was serious. “I don't think it's all bad, but he definitely changed. He is more confident and happier in himself.”

“So Rhea is a good thing?” I asked flippantly, and Zoe snorted.

“She's not been bad for him, he is different. I just never thought he would be having sex at such a young age. I mean, I spoke to him about it, and he went all embarrassed and then started asking about whether Sarah and I in the summer was biblically OK, which it wasn't.” I sighed at her, and Zoe just stared at the dirty table. “I keep asking myself what should I do? If I tell Mum and Dad they will stop Simon from ever seeing Rhea, but I don't want to keep secrets.”

“You get yourself knotted up,” I said with a calm voice and held out my hand to her, to guide her to the chair. I put my finger underneath her chin and lifted it up, so she was looking directly into my eyes. “You can't solve everything. Let Simon and Rhea do their own thing, just make sure they aren't taking any silly risks,” I suggested to her and Zoe shrugged.

“It just feels so wrong.”

“What that your brother has a sex life? You say that about Sarah and I,” I replied and Zoe snorted.

“Well, you two are immoral,” Zoe said quickly and then looked apologetically at me.

“Well I will not be immoral over the course of the holiday,” I promised, and Zoe grinned at me.

“I should hope not.”

* * * * *

Zoe was keen to get away as soon as possible on Christmas Eve and I found myself locking up alone and dropping the keys off upstairs. Simon was being chased by Rhea around the living room, and I took to helping Simon out by throwing my little sister onto the sofa before going to meet some old friends with a bag of presents.

Scarlet called out to me as I walked into the pub; she was waiting for me in the corner with a pint of beer in front of her and a glass of wine. “Eddie's picking me up in an hour and a half” she told me. “That'll be long 'nough, right?”

I smiled and passed her over two presents – a photographic book of naked women for Eddie and an ankle bracelet for Scarlet. I had deliberately not told Sarah or Mum what I had bought her as I didn't want the questions and Scarlet passed over a wrapped package for me.

“Cheers,” I thanked her sitting down. “You didn't have to.”

“And you didn't have to,” Scarlet replied. “But I guessed you might.”

“So Eddie OK now? You're meeting me for a Sunday drink and ...” Her eyes flickered.

“You arranged it for him to attend an orgy. He thinks your alright.” I laughed at her and she licked her lips, wiping her face. “We have an arrangement,” she confessed.

“What sort of arrangement?”

“Well let's just say I've let him give one of his hands on his farm a good performance review.” I hummed, and she smiled. “I will be away for a month in January, and it'll make life difficult for us, so I told him to.” I looked into her eyes, and she cocked her head. “I was a stripper for months, and he had to accept that. And I saw him with your Sarah. He was shocked but happy with it, and I just feel like it's only fair.”

“I can't see Sarah allowing me to have wandering hands without her,” I joked and then screwed up my face as I thought. “Actually ...”

Scarlet smiled at me. “From what Isobel says ...” she paused as she looked at my expression. “Yes, and I do still see her. From what she says Sarah is just the sort of girl to get you to do that.”

“Well she's told me not to for Christmas.”

Scarlet giggled. “I know. I think Isobel really wanted to do something naughty. You know she is getting quite desperate.”

“Really?” I was a little surprised at how little I had missed Abi's lustful episodes, but then they were replaced by Sarah's libido. What's she doing now?”

“She's in a weird position.” Scarlet continued by telling me that “Isobel” did not want a relationship but did want sex, but also some emotional attachment. “Basically she wants another you.”

“Another project,” I muttered, and Scarlet waved her hand in acceptance of this as she drank her drink. Scarlet was certainly still herself – as upbeat yet calm as ever and just asked subtly about the things in my life.

She looked into my eyes when she asked me about Vanessa and the drugs in the club, and she became the second person I confessed my night of weakness to. “S'ok,” she told me. “Everyone tries it once. Just don't do it again.” I tried to think of something to say, but she just giggled. “Ahh the amount of drugs on set. It's like a Columbian ... well I'm sure you can guess.”

“I'm not proud of it,” I told her, and she nodded.

“Shouldn't be.”

“But I just want to forget it, and now that Vanessa's gone, it shouldn't come up again.”

Scarlet wiped her brow and nodded. “Your mum's always been very sharp on drugs,” she told me. “I've worked in the odd place or two,” the pretty actress confessed. “And Aylesbury is the only place where it is not secretly tolerated.”

“Right ... well you can see why I didn't confess.”

“If your mum asked she probably already knows,” Scarlet told me. “Deep down, she knows. But then if you didn't admit it and you aren't doing Coke any more she's probably not going to find out 'less you tell her.”

“Which I won't be doing,” I replied immediately. “I can own up to all my indiscretions except that one. It is one step too far.” Scarlet gave me a look, and I just shrugged, eager to move the

conversation on. “So what's Eddie up to today?”

“It's down time on the farm. He's talking to a few people. He needs to sort some stuff out in the new year – all about calves and the milk herd. Says he wants to get some new breeds in.” I looked at her, and she just shrugged. “I don't understand much of it,” she confessed. “It's all over my head.”

“He hasn't got you working there then.”

Scarlet's face twisted. “Ahh, he already has help, though I think he needs some more. He ... he doesn't tell me too much.” I went to speak, and she smiled at me. “I know what you are going to say. If I was more of a farmer's wife I'd know but ...”

“But it isn't you. Yes, I think you told me.” Scarlet rocked back in her chair and nodded.

“No, it isn't me. But he has enough girls and guys in the village who do want to help him. I mean getting messy and chasing animals and stuff. I don't mind helping him because he is the one I love, but I won't enjoy doing it. And he thinks I should, but would you enjoy shovelling cow shit?” I shrugged.

“No. But I've told Sarah to get a job, and she hasn't. I am sure shovelling cow shit ...” Scarlet burst into laughter and she spoke about Sarah; she got the impression Sarah was lustfully impulsive and then wondered if it was such a good idea for her to be working with her highly lustful partner.

“I mean, he told me of a game he used to do when he was younger. It's chicken with a muck spreader. Him and his brothers used to stand behind the muck spreader and the last one to run won, unless they got hit. It's disgusting.”

“It sounds like what kids'd get up to!”

We chatted amicably and had a few drinks. Scarlet had got her place on the television series – The Ten Rules of Infidelity – and her dinner had purely been the director giving her the good news and welcoming her to the production team. “No stripping required,” she told me with a smirk.

As we finished our third drink, Scarlet looked at her watch and muttered. “Better go now. Eddie'll be ready.” I looked up at the clock and smiled; we had been talking for almost two hours.

“Sure,” I told her and we got up, walking out of the pub and into the car park where Eddie was waiting. I gave Scarlet a peck on the cheek and waved at her as she drove down the street; Scarlet was fast becoming a close confidant – the sort of person Zoe should be if she stopped evangelising at me.

Another person I did have to see was Ray and I had only just bought his present – a book on how to photograph young ladies naked – the day before (the local bookshop had to order it in.)

I rang him from my mobile, and he told me that he was at home, but his voice was terse and abrupt; I wondered what had happened. The train journey to Ray's house didn't take long as I managed to time my arrival at the station just as a train was due to leave. The ticket office was closed (as usual), and I took my chances on the train.

I was sweating a bit as it approached Stoke Mandeville as there was a ticket inspector working his way through the train, but I got off before he got to me.

I knew there was always an immorality to my “fare dodging” and I always bought a ticket if I was going to Harrow or London, but it was a ridiculous sum of money for just one or two stops and I didn't like the monopoly they had. In essence, it was something that both Rhea and I did, although

we were often careful to have the change on us; if I had been stopped I could have said the ticket office was closed, and I wanted to buy a ticket from the inspector, which was technically allowed.

Ray was in the garden, his arm wrapped around the incredibly fluorescent Lucille; she looked like something from the 1980s, but her skin tight clothes made her look fairly sexy. "Hiya mate," Ray called when he saw me and passed me a bottle of local ale from a bucket.

Lucille and Ray were both smoking, and Lucille offered me the packet of cigarettes to take one, but I declined. "Happy Christmas," I said as I sat down and opened the beer on the bottle opener. "And cheers."

"You staying for a bite to eat?" Ray asked me, and I shook my head as I took a gulp of the brown alcohol.

"Nah, and when did you start smoking?"

"I've smoked for ages," Ray said quickly. I shot a glance as Lucille inhaled and shook my head; Ray hadn't smoked since Zoe, and I tried it many years ago, and it was clear to me that he had adopted a smoking habit to impress Lucille.

"But your parents don't like smoking," I told him and Lucille's eyebrows raised slightly.

"Yeah, I know. They don't like Lucille sleeping in my room either." He paused for a moment and took a swig from his drink. "But her folks are in Bermuda or Barbados or somewhere, so she's here for Christmas. Just wish my folks would fuck off to Bermuda for Christmas too."

I rolled my eyes and heard some footsteps at the end of the garden. "I heard that Master Ashton," a motherly voice told him firmly. "And we've let you have Lucille over and to stay in your room, even though you've only known her for a few weeks. So you mind your tongue."

I laughed and sat back on the chair. "Parents, eh?" I teased Ray, but he just shrugged. I had never seen Ray as being particularly boastful but he was certainly excited and gleeful, happily telling me that he had almost a dozen films developed of intimate photos of Lucille.

The flamboyant fashionista giggled at this, and she tapped at the table with her multicoloured nails. "But it's soooo sexy!" She told me and got up to go to the toilet.

I took the time to ask Ray exactly what had happened with Donna and he flinched as he spoke. "I caught her going out with an old boyfriend," he admitted. "Danny – and she went back to his house with his friends." He gulped and swirled his drink. "When I asked her, she just said she was drunk and that I would forgive her as I always did, so I told her to do one."

"Sorry mate," I muttered and he pursed his lips and gave me a snort.

"Best thing that could have happened" he told me. "Met Luci and she's way nicer." I left soon after I finished my beer and wished both Ray and Lucille happy holidays, setting off towards the train station with some pace.

I heard some running footsteps as I walked down the road to the station and turned to see Jenny – or "Jessica" – catch up with me. I turned to greet her, and she slapped me with a grin. "You deserve that," she said firmly.

"What for?"

"Boasting," she said, but she was smiling. "I know you boasted to Ray about us."

“Ahh yes. Well he got my blood up. Sorry 'bout that.”

“So you bloody should be.” I bit my lip as the sexy girl – dressed in just a T-Shirt and jeans – shivered. “I thought you'd be a little discreet.”

“Yeah, it sort of came out,” I confessed, and she took a deep breath. “I've kept all my other liaisons secret.”

“And I heard you set him up with that Lucille. What were you thinking of?”

“I didn't set them up. I got a commission to do some photography and took Ray along.” Jenny's eyes narrowed, and she crossed her arms.

“But she is ... just dreadful.”

“Ray likes her. Actually Ray says he loves her.”

“Well Ray has seriously shit taste in girls. Donna then Lucille. Do you know the sounds that I have heard coming through the walls? I mean 6am this morning. 6am! Do you think I want to hear her screaming echoing in my room? And they were at it from 6am to 10am. That's four hours. She must have genitals of asbestos!”

“That's not my fault,” I told her and she snorted.

“Every night and every morning since she's arrived. Every bloody day. I know they have only just started going out, but every bloody day.”

“Honeymoon period? I mean, it's only natural isn't it?”

“No!” Jenny cried, and I gestured towards the station; there were not many trains on Christmas Eve and I didn't want to miss the one I was planning to get and have to wait for an hour until the next one. “It's just ... so inconsiderate. It's not Ray.”

“No,” I agreed. “It's not Ray. But his split with Donna's made him self-centred.”

Jenny hummed in agreement and sat down with me on the platform; my train was twenty minutes late. She told me that she had enjoyed going back to the club but had to work on Friday afternoons at her “other job” so that meant she was missing the team meetings, which Mum wasn't too happy about! In turn, I told her what happened at the Christmas Disco with Donna and Ray and she crossed her arms. “I'll have to have a word with him!”

“Well don't tell him that I told you,” I panickily told her, and she grinned.

“You wouldn't keep our secret to Ray,” she teased and then told me that I had nothing to worry about. “He can't go flashing Donna's underwear to his class. That's bang out of order.”

My train arrived a few minutes later, and I wished the Burlesque dancer a Merry Christmas. Aylesbury was almost derelict as I walked back from the train station – the last minute shoppers all but gone and sat down on the couch with Rhea as I came in; there was a classic film on in the background. “Hiya, what you been up to?”

Rhea looked at the door and shrugged. “Nothing. Why?”

I smiled at her evasiveness. Abi sat down next to me and cuddled into me with a glass of wine. She looked at Rhea with a glint in her eye. “What is Santa bringing you?”

Rhea puffed and smiled. "Fat man comes into my room, calls me a 'ho', he is going to get flattened," Rhea told her with a grin.

"Basically nothing," I teased. "You see Santa has a Naughty and Nice list."

"Yeah, and I am certainly on the naughty list. Hell I think I'm past naughty and onto the dreadful list. But that's fine, 'cos all the interesting people are on that list."

"And maybe Satan will treat those on that list."

"Did you know Santa and Satan are anagrams of each other," my sister asked with a grin. "A coincidence? Not friggin' likely!" We laughed at her, and Abi started asking about Sarah. I was reluctant to talk about my relationship with Rhea in the room, but she soon disappeared and with just my ex-lover and I sitting down on the sofa I felt much more at ease.

Mum came back as I had finished telling Abi about Sarah's plans for orgiastic debauchery, and I cut short my description; it felt good to have the long-haired Scottish girl back in the flat as in a weird way I had missed her. Apart from film nights, I rarely had a reason to see Abi, and she never stayed over any more, so I was seeing less and less of her.

Of course, Abi being the liberal, relaxed young lady that she was, she was not upset by the lack of contact and along from the odd game of text message tennis we had played she was apparently happy with the status quo.

I asked her on this, and she just shrugged and rubbed the back of my hand. "S'ok," she muttered. "Seriously, it's OK. It's good to see you with Sarah, I always told you that you'd make a great couple and ..." Her voice mumbled. "I think your happier now."

I couldn't deny this, but I still wanted Abi in my life and she gave me a coy smile as I told her. "And I still want you," she replied.

* * * * *

Abi was the first to wake up, and she poked her head around the door. "Santa's been," she cried, her face dripping with schoolgirl over-excitement. I looked up from my bed and beckoned her inside; I almost felt a little lost that she hadn't spent the night in my bed but knew that I had a promise to keep to Sarah.

Abi's eyes glistened in the weak wintery sunshine poking through the crack in the curtains. "Excited?" I teased, and Abi stuck her tongue out.

"I've not had a reason to look forward to Christmas for years," she muttered and held out her hand to me. "Come on, get up."

I pushed my duvet to one side and showed her my morning erection. "I'm up," I teased, and Abi's eyes flickered to it.

"Too bad Sarah is not here," she muttered and grabbed my hand. "Come on." I slung a dressing gown over my shoulders and walked downstairs to see Rhea and Mum already around the table getting their breakfast. I guessed Abi had woken them up first, and I looked across at their sleepy faces and weary eyes. "Whatcha havin'?"

"Sleep?" I asked with a smile. "Or failing that a fry up – bacon, eggs, sausages, fried bread, hash browns, black pudding, beans, mushrooms, tomatoes ..."

“Have some muesli,” Abi said firmly. “I have’ne a time to make all that.” I laughed as she poured a stingy portion of cereal into a bowl and passed it to me with a splash of milk. There was some tea in the tea pot on the table, and I looked at my family. “Abi woke you up?”

“Yes,” they said in unison but Abi shrugged from behind them.

“Ahh ... but it's Christmas.”

It certainly showed the feelings we all had for the wild stripper from Scotland as anyone else waking Rhea up without a very good reason before 7am was in serious danger of getting their head kicked in, but Abi had not only managed it, but done it so that both Mum and Rhea were not angry.

Everyone had taken Abi to heart; she was a vulnerable and scared woman when we first met her, but in the six months since had morphed into a true member of the family. Rhea finished her cereal and got up, but Abi almost jumped on her and led her to the front room. I followed right behind and walked over to the Christmas tree.

“Wait for me,” Mum cried and reached us as we got to the gift laden pine. Rhea and I started sorting out the presents as Abi watched, almost dancing from one leg to another.

I put Julie's present back under the tree and then looked at Mum. “Is Julie coming down?” I asked, and Mum shrugged.

“She sent me a text a few days ago saying she might pop down after New Year,” she said solemnly. “She is up in Derby with Oliver I think.”

“Oh,” Abi said and then looked at our faces and Rhea just grunted.

“Yeah, well, bollocks to her. She never did like having much to do with us.”

Mum scowled a little; Julie was her daughter, her first child and Rhea's hostile attitude towards her own sister always upset Mum a little. I suppose I knew why Rhea felt like that, Julie had been slowly disintegrating herself from the family for years, she spent most of her college years at her boyfriend's or friend's houses, and since she went to University, I had barely seen her.

Personally, I did not mind too much, I don't think Julie ever really wanted a brother or a sister as we cramped her style too much, and while I could not shake the fact that she was my sister, it wouldn't be too wrong to say that I didn't actually like her that much.

Strangely, I found a far closer affinity with Rhea. She may have hit, poisoned, strangled, drowned, embarrassed, humiliated, gauged and burnt me over the years, but she was my little sister, and for all her faults I loved her immensely.

Abi looked at Rhea and then muttered. “It's not good when sisters don't like each other, Rhea.” I thought back to the disagreeable Moira and nodded, and Mum looked at me.

It was a familial tradition that at Christmas, we took it in turns to pass the gifts we had bought to each person; Mum thought it got confusing when we had a mountain of presents in that we forgot who had bought what, and it also meant we could (and would) thank the person who had got us the gift.

I went first and passed Mum a couple of presents and then Rhea a couple, and then Abi three gifts and put the remainder back under the tree – they were for Sarah. There was already a pile of gifts under the Christmas tree, they were from Dad or other people – and most were for Mum from the club.

Rhea eagerly tore off the poorly-wrapped gift and smiled when she saw an England rugby shirt, putting it over her nightie and cooing. "Awesome bro," she screeched, and I grinned. Rhea did like her rugby, but then it was the most violent game she was allowed to play. I did wonder if they would allow her to box or do a martial art and then decided that it was an unwise thought.

Mum liked her video and CD I had bought her, and Rhea scanned the back of her compilation CD I had bought and scowled. "It has the Spice Girls on it," she moaned, and I shrugged.

"Perhaps if you work out how to use the fast forward button, it wouldn't be so bad," I teased and Rhea just poked a tongue out at me. We watched Abi who was rolling a bracelet in her hand and looked at me.

"It's wonderful," she almost whispered and wiped a tear from her cheek. The silver bracelet had a number of small charms on them, and I had bought it at the workshop in Harrow, I knew how much she loved her jewellery and she just bit her lip, slipping the silver chain over her wrist. "Look Grace."

Mum smiled at it and then looked at me. "It's nice," she muttered, and Rhea's eyes narrowed. Abi opened a book from me and then a giant picture frame of her in bluebells. Rhea spluttered at the suggestiveness of the picture, but Abi was clothed and decent.

Rhea had bought me a book on photography as well as a bedpost (for me to record all the notches), and Mum had bought me some clothes, but I detected that they were Abi's choice. Rhea had a handheld games console that she gleefully powered on, and we looked towards Abi.

Abi had a small box of gifts and started by passing me a small package that I tore open to be confronted with a posing pouch. Rhea cackled at the elephant on the front. "It's from the girls," Abi said. "We couldn't let Christmas pass by without something."

"Which ones?" I asked, and Abi just smiled.

"All of them." Mum replied giggling as I held it up and Abi passed her a heavy box that contained a bottle of vintage wine and Rhea unwrapped some games for her newly held games console.

Lastly, Abi passed me a small cube, and I looked at her smirking. I could tell something was afoot, but I didn't know what. Mum looked on, and even Rhea put down her clothes she had unwrapped from Abi to watch. "What?" I asked, looking at the faces staring at me.

"Well open it," Rhea answered and I tentatively unwrapped the red and gold wrapping paper. I bit my lip and saw a burgundy box a few inches wide with OMEGA stamped across the top.

I looked at Abi who was smirking at me. "A watch?" I asked, opening it slowly gasping as I saw the solid watch.

"It's the same one James Bond wears isn't it?" Rhea asked, and Abi nodded.

"Wow," I said and looked at the small booklet and guarantee that came with it. The watch was solidly built, a sturdy timepiece that fit around my left wrist and felt expensive. Abi looked into me, and put my arms around her to hug her. "Thank you."

Abi choked back a tear. "If you two are going to get sappy then I need to leave the room," Rhea teased, and we broke apart from our hug.

I had sent Dad up an engraved tankard with Rhea, and a small box had arrived from Coniston a week ago that Mum distributed. I saw that she had a small gift, and as I teased her to open it, she

just muttered something about “later.”

Dad had bought me a telephoto lens for my camera, and Rhea had a mobile phone that was newer than mine. There were small gifts for Sarah and Simon as well as something for Julie. “Go on,” I teased Mum. “Open it.”

Mum shot me a nervous look and then Rhea started, the squirrelling away of the gift having passed unnoticed due to the GameBoy Colour in her palm but her eyebrows shot up when she saw the present by Mum's side. “What's Dad got you?”

“I'll look later,” she muttered again, scowling at me but Rhea dived forward and picked it up.

“Feels light. Bet it's jewellery or money.”

Mum sighed and glaring at me, tore open the packaging. It was a diamond necklace, and she rubbed her chin. “He always buys too much,” she muttered to Abi who held the thin chain in her hands.

“It's very nice though,” Abi replied, and Mum picked it up and put it back in the box, getting up to make everyone a drink.

“I thought,” I started, whispering to Abi. “Diamonds are meant to be special.”

Abi smiled. “They are.”

I just shrugged, but Rhea had turned her attention back to the purple box of electronics in her palm. I saw a flash of red under the tree and pulled out the two presents from Scarlet and Ray that I had diligently stashed the day before.

“Who's that from?” Mum asked, still looking at the bracelet Dad had bought her, and I confessed. Rhea groaned.

“Not another one,” she moaned. “How many girls are you sleeping with?”

Abi laughed. “Past tense Rhea. Slept with, he has Sarah now.”

Rhea screwed up her face. “Oh you haven't, have you?” I panicked a little and looked at Mum, Abi and then my little sister; Abi's attempted joke at correcting Rhea's grammar had an unintended effect and I was left with two accusatory stares.

“It was a long time ago,” I muttered and Rhea crossed her arms.

“Just how many strippers have you been messin' with?” I could tell from her assertive tone that it was a rhetorical question, but it did get me wondering: Abi, obviously, Scarlet, Vanessa, Jessica, Gemma. It was only Holly, Paula and Sarah that weren't strippers, although Sarah was hell bent on changing that!

“Too many,” Mum told me and I just sighed and ripped open the small gift Scarlet had bought for me. In the small box contained a set of cufflinks from an Italian jeweller; I didn't recognise the name, but both Abi and Rhea cooed when they saw it so it must have meant something to them. Ray's present of two dozen condoms and a post-it note saying “don't get Sarah knockd up,” with mis-spelt words was well received by Rhea who teased me relentlessly.

I picked up the empty mugs and walked into the dining room and then the kitchen.

She nodded towards the sink as I put them in and then stopped me as I left the kitchen. “You know

Abi spent over a thousand pounds on that watch,” Mum whispered. I stared at her, shocked and Mum shrugged. “It’s a super-luxury watch. Make sure you look after it.”

I gasped, the watch had not left my wrist, but suddenly I wanted to put it down to keep it safe. “But ... why?”

“Because she thinks the world of you,” Mum answered and passed me a cup of coffee. “I told her, it was too much. But you need to ask her really.”

“And what about the diamond necklace from Dad?” I asked, and Mum tensed and then let out a huge sigh. “I bet that cost just as much.”

She hummed. “Probably. I will ring him later,” she promised and looked at me. “I know I said diamonds are only given to people who are special, but your father has always been overly generous. He forgets he doesn’t need to get me a present at Christmas, it doesn’t mean anything.”

I held my hands up. “OK, I wasn’t saying anything.”

She pursed her lips together and nodded. “I mean it. It doesn’t mean anything,” she said firmly, but I wondered whether that was more for her benefit or mine.

I suppose the thought that my divorced parents might still love each other was a complete pipe dream, an overly romantic notion. If they still loved each other then they would be living with each other, but the more I thought about it, the more I began to wonder.

They had never said anything detrimental about each other when I had been present, and I certainly remembered a parcel coming for Mum shortly before her birthday, but then Dad was in a serious relationship with his Spanish divorcee. The more I wondered, the more I detected a fondness between them and immediately wondered about a parallel between myself and Abi – a likeness that I knew could not extend to us ever being together but was still a strong bond.

Mum interrupted my musing and brought out the games; we all ganged up on Rhea on Monopoly, simply because if she gets a foothold in the game she is the worst player, being aggressive and uncompromising. I laughed when she landed on my fully-loaded Fleet Street and then Abi’s fully-loaded Mayfair, and we wiped her out.

Rhea, being Rhea, did not take the loss kindly and stormed off to get her water pistol and then soaked us from the corner of the room!

One thing about Christmas was the amount of alcohol both Rhea and I were allowed to drink. Mum would permit us to go and get it ourselves, but if we were drinking too much she would say something. This policy was always doomed to fail every holiday as Rhea enjoyed vodka and lemonade, and she did her own measures, which was roughly one a one-to-one basis. Mum always wondered how her two litre bottle of spirit could evaporate over ten days, and the real cause was often drinking on the same sofa as her.

I felt somewhat guilty as I went to bed; I had barely thought of Sarah all day and the presents from Abi and Scarlet, as well as the company from my family, occupying most of my thoughts. I tried to ring Sarah at tea-time, but there was no answer, so I just resolved myself to catching up with her on her return.

Mum was busying herself when I came down on Boxing Day, and there was an array of food already laid out on the dining table. I got shouted at for trying to steal a breadstick and glanced over to the sofa with Rhea currently munching one and gleefully holding the other one to taunt me.

I threw her a moue, and dodged the flustering parent as I made myself a drink and a bowl of cereal. Mum moaned about not having any help and having to do everything herself but then refused the offer of assistance I made – even then, the logic of my mother was unfathomable.

Rhea, for her part, was her usual helpful self. The hand-held game console made tinny noises that grated on me, and she was watching a horror film that made Mum shriek when she saw and turned it off. Rhea was lectured about access to the video cabinet (I think she was into treble figures for the year on this) and was sent upstairs to add clothes to her near naked body.

Mum did eventually send me downstairs to the club with a shopping list, and I returned from the stores with a dozen bottles of wine, a few other bits and bobs in a large bag. It clunked as I locked up and walked back up the fire escape and Rhea shot me a knowing look as she lounged on the sofa, the purple noise machine attracting her attention.

I guessed the only thing that could distract Rhea would be Simon, and the moment the doorbell went, Rhea's pride and joy was abandoned on the table, and she shot down the stairs to the front door. Rhea returned a few moments later her arms crossed.

“You never told me, she was coming,” Rhea complained, jabbing her finger towards Zoe who looked shell-shocked at the blatant animosity being directed towards her.

“Well she is my friend, she is always welcome,” I replied with a scowl, annoyed at my sister's rudeness, but Rhea just waved her arms towards me.

“But she is always nagging at me,” Rhea wailed. “At us.”

Zoe sighed and looked at my aggressive sibling. “I don't nag, I just want you to be sensible and stay out of trouble.”

Rhea was still staring at me, frowning and just grunted as Zoe spoke. “You see how unreasonable she is!”

“I'm not unreasonable,” Zoe started, and I raised my hand to cut her off.

“I know,” I replied to her. “Just let Rhea whinge and ignore her. Everyone else does.”

“Nobody ignores me,” Rhea said instantly, her eyes fizzing.

“Can you hear some sort of high-pitch whining?” I asked Zoe who giggled. “No? Shall we get a drink?”

“Oi,” Rhea called, but Zoe and I were gone. Rhea seemed to ignore my goading of her as she had her new toy to show off, as well as the mobile phone. Simon had got a laptop, and they started talking about how they could “I-C-Q” each other to talk online when Mum asked why they didn't just meet up as they lived ten minutes away, but Simon just scoffed.

Zoe had, along with her leather-backed bible, received clothes and a mobile phone. She proudly got out the phone to show me, and how she had a couple of games on hers, as well as a battery life that was measured in weeks. Her phone looked considerably more advanced than mine, and she had already talked about getting a replacement facia for it that contained a picture she wanted.

We swapped numbers and then she showed me “snake” - an addictive and impossibly hard game on her phone that she had also failed to master. Rhea snorted when she saw, her games console re-established as her prized possession and boasted that the games on her device where considerably more advanced.

Ikenna was next to arrive with his family and Angela. Abi and Angela greeted each other, and the living room was suddenly full. I had not noticed the similarity between Ikenna's wife, Alice and Angela before, but they looked so alike and Abi saw me grinning. I had seen Alice a couple of times, normally at Christmas when Mum invited Ikenna around, but the same dark red hair and facial features made them look like sisters.

Ikenna had his two young children, Michael and Daniel. Michael was three, and full of beans, running up and down the lounge with his Action Man toys. Daniel was not even one, and Abi cooed over him. Ikenna boomed out laughing when he returned from the dining room, a beer in his hand and saw Zoe, Angela, Alice, Mum and Abi around the baby staring over it, and playing with it, in the little chair that he was in.

Daniel was babbling and laughing as the women gleefully paid attention to the child and Ikenna patted me on the shoulder. "Babies are such pussy magnets," he joked, and I glanced at Rhea, completely nonplussed by the arrival of little people in the room, but then Rhea did not have a maternal bone in her body.

Mum looked around when Ikenna made that comment and gave him raised eyebrows. Mum and Ikenna didn't talk too much about the club, or anything to do with work, and the fact Abi and Angela were there was almost incidental. I detected a warmth towards Ikenna and Alice from Mum that was certainly platonic, and undeniably reciprocated.

Zoe and I both beat Alice at chess, and Mum got out Twister – that I played with Zoe, Abi and Angela. I was gleefully in a rather compromising position with Zoe when Rhea started tickling Zoe, so she collapsed on top of me, and then I got to tease her by holding her tightly to my chest so she could not escape.

The evening began to wind down, and Ikenna left, taking Zoe with him so he could drop her off at her house. Simon was resolute that his mother had told him that he had until 10pm, and he wasn't leaving until 9.50pm at the earliest. Mum grinned, and asked if I wanted a walk to the corner shop; we were low on milk, and we left as Rhea took a phone call from her friend.

The ruse to get me out of the house was solely so Mum could talk to me. I had taken off my watch, and she had noticed, and was worried that Abi would have seen it as well. I groaned, reassuring her that I did love it, but was now worried about it getting scratched, which made Mum a little relieved.

The sound of Rhea shouting and screaming was a common sound in the house, but as I walked in with Mum, the subject of her anger was not immediately clear. I raced up the stairs wondering if it was Abi but was surprised to see Simon cowering in the corner as a volley of punches and screeching rained down on him.

"Rhea!" Mum yelled, but Rhea either did not hear or had blocked out all other noise.

"It just came out," Simon offered as a defence. "Nathan was saying some nasty things about you."

"You fucking lying shit," Rhea screamed and slapped him hard across his face, leaving a sizeable red mark. "It didn't just come out, you were boasting, Becky said so. She's just been hearing it from Laurence."

Simon shook his head, and Rhea clenched her fists. "Well it coming out means that you won't be coming in anything very soon," she yelled and was made aware of our presence by Mum hauling her away from the battered teenager.

"What the hell is going on?" Mum asked, and passed me the bottle of milk she had bought.

“Nothing,” Rhea lied and her attention turned to Simon and then back to her daughter. Simon shifted awkwardly on the spot and Rhea grabbed her book from the table turning to go upstairs when she was grabbed back by Mum.

“I’ll ask again, young lady. What happened?”

“It was me,” Simon admitted. “I told a couple of people at the School Christmas Disco, Rhea, and I had had sex because of some nasty things Nathan had said, and Rhea found out.”

Rhea sniffed and staring at the skirting-board at the bottom of the wall cracked her knuckles. “No, you boasted. I’ve just been told how often we have sex, when we have sex, how we have sex that I suck your cock, that I massage you. You told Laurence everything just so you could be, the big man, the dragon tamer.”

Simon shifted as Rhea ranted at him, and Mum looked at them both in horror. “Rhea, do you mean ...?”

“Oh don’t look so surprised Mum, I am fifteen. And for what you do for a living you shouldn’t be so prudish.”

Mum gasped, and Rhea glared at Simon. “Nathan said you were a prude and always teased and never did anything,” Simon offered as a defence, but Rhea shook her head slowly, her steely glare not dropping from his face.

“Of course he would. He hates me, you stupid ...” Rhea tailed off and glanced at me and then Mum. “He did it to wind you up. And you fell for it.”

Simon sighed. “Well I’ve said I’m sorry.”

“It supposed to be private,” Rhea told him firmly and jabbed a finger towards me. “He might want the world to know and hear but I do not.”

Simon twitched. “OK. I am really sorry. I’ve been a bit of a shit boyfriend, haven’t I?”

Rhea shook her head. “Yes. And now you are a shit ex-boyfriend,” she said and a few tears rolled down her cheek. I saw her bottom lip wobbling, and she went to turn on her heels upstairs but Mum stopped her, looking at both the shell-shocked Simon and the upset Rhea.

“And when did this start?” Mum asked, and Rhea snorted.

“Awhile ago,” Rhea snapped at her and Simon bit his lip.

“Lancaster. That night we stayed in a hotel,” he admitted.

“You were away for one night, and that is what you do. You better of used protection,” Mum said, her eyes fiery and Rhea threw up her hands. “Leave you out of sight for one night.” She turned to me and raised her finger. “You were supposed to be looking after them.”

I spluttered. “He encouraged us,” Simon blurted out, and Rhea glared at her ex-boyfriend.

“What do you mean, you encouraged her?” Mum said turning to me with a furious look in her face. Her hair was ruffed up and her eyes fizzing dangerously, and I just held out my hands.

“I didn’t encourage her,” I said meekly. “I didn’t say anything. I just put some condoms in her room, just in case.”

Mum puffed angrily and snapped. "You did what?"

"Well there wasn't much we could do. We had to stay in Lancaster for the night, they would be sharing a bed, and I thought if they were going to do it, then they better have protection," I stammered in defence of Mum's accusatory stare. "I didn't encourage them to use them."

"Well what the hell did you think was going to happen?" Mum snapped. "Leave them alone with condoms. Hell Andy, you need to think."

"Perhaps if it was going to happen them having contraception wasn't such a bad idea," I yelled back. "Or maybe Rhea could be here with a pregnancy test."

"It was your job to make sure that she didn't do anything stupid. You were supposed to be the responsible adult," Mum replied, her eyes still boring into me.

I seethed inside, the back of my neck felt tense and I clenched my fists. "She was in a separate room. What should I do, tie her to the bed? 'Cause we had enough trouble finding a hotel that evening, chastity belts would have been a near impossibility."

Mum outstretched her hand towards me, her finger wagging, and I just snarled, at her: I didn't want to hear it. She began by shouting, "you do not," but I interrupted her and snatched at my coat, striding towards the stairs and the front door.

I slammed the door with a "fucks sake" and knowing that I would pay the price for my insolence, but it seemed so unreasonable. I had not asked to be responsible for my little sister that night. Circumstances had thrown me an almighty curve-ball, and I genuinely still thought I had done the right thing.

Of course, going out and getting drunk with Sarah leaving my little sister in the hotel probably wasn't overly responsible but she had made it clear she wanted to spend time with her partner and I am not the parent to tell her what she should and shouldn't be doing; it was my job to make sure she was safe, and I did that.

I kicked a small stone into the road, and it made a satisfying sound against a parked car on the other side of the street. The hypocrisy of Mum's attitude also riled me, she had admitted she had lost her virginity earlier than she would have wanted and no doubt probably at an earlier age than Rhea had. Out of everyone I knew, Sarah was fifteen, I was sixteen, Ray was sixteen and Abi was thirteen. Of course, there were the likes of Zoe who still hadn't done the deed, but that was their choice. Rhea had made a choice and had safe sex with her boyfriend of many months, it was up to her, not Mum or me.

What particularly hurt and riled was that Mum did not understand or want to understand why I did what I did. No-one had given me a manual or a chat what to do in the circumstances I found myself in and whether she thought I did the right or wrong thing, I did it for the right reasons.

As much as I tried to rationalise the shock and reaction of Mum, I just couldn't do it; she was being utterly unreasonable, and I felt in my pocket for my phone. It was no use ringing Sarah, she was in France until the New Year and started walking down the main road towards Abi's house; I needed to speak to her.

Abi wasn't surprised to see me, and she saw that I noticed immediately. "Yeah, your ma just rang," she told me without me even saying anything.

"Did she say why I was so angry with her," I asked and Abi gave me a pained look.

“A bit,” she muttered and hugged me. “You're cold, come in. I've not even unpacked!”

Abi's flat wasn't much warmer, but she had the heater on in her dim front room, and I snuggled under a duvet with her. “Rhea had sex when we were in Lancaster, and I am getting shouted at because I gave her the condoms for her to use,” I said summarising the situation and Abi cocked her head to one side.

“I heard, you think you did the right thing?”

I pursed my lips together. “Yeah, if she was going to have sex she needed protection.”

“I agree. But what if she wasn't going to and when you gave her the condoms, she was then pressured into it?”

“Rhea pressured into anything?” I snapped and then hummed. “Oh I don't know, she is fifteen, old enough to make her own decisions.”

A smile flickered across Abi's face. “I know, but you were seen as the adult in charge. Grace is a bit shocked because she didn't know, but if Simon and Rhea are saying they had sex because of the condoms she will instinctively blame you. Think you guided them into it, and didn't tell her.” I sighed, and Abi put an arm around me. “I would say you weren't in an easy position. Separate rooms and all that. She probably doesn't like the secrecy.”

I stared at her wall, I did kind of know that. I knew the following day Rhea and Simon had used them as I checked but just didn't want to think about it; she was my sister after all. “I know that, she just doesn't treat me or Rhea as adults.”

Abi hugged me tightly and then rubbed her hand over my shoulder. “We do. Or at least I do. But it is hard for a parent, especially for Grace.”

“Why? I am sixteen. Rhea is fifteen.”

“And you are grown up. You have a steady girlfriend, job, sex life and are fairly independent, but Rhea is different, she does have a boyfriend, but isn't that independent whatever she thinks. And she is a girl and your mum thinks you should have protected her from Simon.”

I gazed at her in disbelief. “Me? Stop Rhea. You know what she is like.”

Abi cackled. “She has a tough exterior but is as soft as anyone on the inside, she just never lets anyone see it.”

I scowled. “No, she is just crazy, full stop.”

Abi shook her head. “She is not, she is as vulnerable as anyone else you know, your mum can see it.”

I took a deep breath. “But she is old enough to make her own decisions. I let her make 'em.”

Abi hummed. “I would say that when today has blown over, Grace won't blame you. She'll see what really happened, and that in your own way you were trying to help.” She sniffed and took a deep breath. “She probably thinks you should have spoken to her about it when you got back. And I've experienced that dilemma too. When I was younger – about your age – I fell out with Moira. In a big, big way and a family friend offered me a job and then later a flat above where we worked.”

“Margaret?”

“Yeah her. She reckoned that me getting away from Moira was good for me, but my parents thought that I was too young, but they saw through it and let me move. They were certain at the time that Margaret wasn't doing the right thing, no matter what she thought or what her intentions were.”

“Right ... well how does that?”

“I'm looking at you now and can see you think you did the right thing,” she said softly. “And I would have done something similar.” She looked into my eyes and smiled. “I would have bought them, and then sat down and asked them if they needed them. If Rhea said no I would have put them in my room but where she knew where they were. You left them with Rhea, and then left them alone all evening, right?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, no offence, but they were probably a bit bored.”

“And ...”

“Oh Andy,” Abi cried. “You did the right thing in a less than perfect way. And the real reason why Grace'll be angry is 'cause of the secrecy. If you had told her, she could have spoken to Rhea and asked her. Instead, she gets to find out after most of Rhea's class. You knew and didn't tell her.”

“Yeah, well, I don't think Rhea's mightily chuffed 'bout that. I mean, I get Mum's annoyed about the secrets, but it's up to Rhea to tell her. I can't go and grass on my sister.”

“No. But ... well it's about being truthful and honest.”

“And Mum never keeps secrets from me?”

“It's different,” I was told, and Abi licked her lips. She wiped her eyes and then looked at me. “We all have secrets.”

“Yeah ... and I get told none of them. Mum has them, you have them. Zoe has them. Why should I be the only one that needs to betray confidences?”

Abi coughed and hummed. “You're right. You shouldn't betray a confidence.” She lowered her voice and sniffed. “And you know my secret really ...” She paused and licked her lips. “I s'pose there is something I should have told you before,” she admitted. “Perhaps I didn't think you needed to know or could handle it.” Abi hummed and wiped her face, taking a deep breath. “The real reason why I left Birmingham so quickly,” she said quietly and stared at the skirting-board and then me.

“Your ex-boyfriend, he used to mistreat you,” I replied calmly and Abi steadied herself, shaking. I stared at her, and she bit her lip and swallowed nervously. She was tense and it made me worried.

I stared at her eyes, and her voice quivered. “He did,” she muttered and took a deep breath. “But one night him and his mates, they gang raped me at knife point,” she said calmly and quietly before tears streaked down her cheek. “And I've got to Court to give evidence in the New Year,” she wailed. “I don't want to go,” she told me.

Suddenly, all my problems were totally insignificant.

Abi, Andy, Sarah, Zoe, Ray, Lucille,. Rhea, Grace, Scarlet and Ingrid will return for a new story shortly.