

Amy & Friends

This is a sequel to my previous story, Next Door Neighbor. Reading NDN is not 'required', but certainly helpful.

I first met Amy when I was doing some computer work for a next door neighbor of mine, Lucy. Lucy and I had become something of an item when Lucy had to help out one of the clients of the company she worked for. In the process, she found some questionable financial activity, and asked me to come and help her out - I was a free-lance programmer and computer jock, and she trusted me.

As it worked out, I found a **big** chunk of money missing, and where it had gotten off to. The FBI was brought in, and because of the people involved, Lucy and I wound up getting FBI protection. Amy was head of one of the details assigned to us. Along the way, Amy had gotten to be good friends with us - **very** good friends. Good enough that I'd helped get Amy over a fear of physical intimacy with men, while Lucy helped her get past a question about her sexuality.

I'd worked with the FBI people toward getting the money back while under contract with Lucy's client. I worked for a percentage of the 300 million bucks that was missing; my cut left me with twenty-five million and change. I continued to work as a programmer, but mostly for something to do with my time. By being a little more choosey about what jobs I took, it left me with enough free time to let me expand my knowledge about computers, and other technology.

After the criminal case was done, I went on to marry Lucy, and adopt her daughter Robyn - who had actually been the one to get Lucy and me together. Amy later married one of the other agents that had been in charge of protecting us. In the couple of years afterward, Amy and her husband Tom came to visit us, and we became even closer friends; Tom knew about Amy, Lucy, and I, and was fine with it - all he cared about was Amy. I felt the same way about Lucy, and didn't mind when she wanted to spend a little time with Tom.

Amy had kept in touch with us of the last couple of years, and I knew that she'd been moved up to head an FBI office when the former Agent in Charge, Clara Hawkes, was bumped up the chain of command to Bureau headquarters - due in large part to the results of the criminal case I'd been involved with, according to Amy.

So it wasn't much of a surprise when I got a call from Amy one Saturday evening; I just figured that she was calling to see if she could spend some time with Lucy and I while she was on a trip or vacation.

Boy, was I was wrong.....

"Dan, I need your help." I heard Amy say over the phone.

"Sure, Amy - you know you're welcome any time."

"No, Dan, I mean I really need **your help**." The emphasis she gave to the last couple of words clued me in that something was going on.

"Okay, you've got my attention. Why do you need **my help**?"

"We've got a problem here, and it's something that's just right up your alley, especially after the TechoDynamics thing."

By mentioning the case that I'd been involved in, I knew that she was after me for my technical skills, for a change.

"Okay, tell me about it.", I told her.

"I told you before that we've been having some problems with the local druggies forming their own mini cartel, right?" she asked. Strictly speaking I wasn't on the 'need to know' list for FBI operations, but Amy knew I could keep a secret - nobody would hear about anything she told me from ME.

"Yeah."

"Well, one of them finally slipped up, and we've got him cold. But it comes with a couple of problems. The first one is that they somehow got techno-savvy, and all the records on the computer we seized are encrypted somehow. The second part is that his former friends have decided that they don't want him talking - either in person, or through his records. We've got HIM covered pretty good, but we've lost a couple of technical people just **trying** to get into their data. I've sent copies of the data to headquarters, but the people there tell me it's a long shot of getting anything any time soon. I'm out of official techs, and the freelancers I can hire don't want anything to do with it - even with the protection I can give them. I need somebody that can do computer stuff AND cover their own ass if they need to."

"Lost technicians how?" I asked.

"One dead, one wounded and out of action for at LEAST six months." was the reply.

I thought it over for a bit, and asked "This is an official request?"

"Authorized straight from the Directors office official - Clara listened to what I told her was happening, and picked it up from there. If it means anything, you'll be a genuine FBI agent, a Special, with a rank equal to mine, and the pay to go with it, three month

minimum - longer if that's what the job takes. Please, Dan, I need the help - and you're the best one for the job."

She knew the pay wouldn't motivate me in the slightest. The official status convinced me it was serious, but the thing that really got my attention was that she came right out and asked for the help - particularly MY help. Amy wasn't the kind of person to ask for help unless she really *needed* it.

"My first inclination is to say yes - but let me talk it over with Lucy first, okay?"

"Absolutely. I know she's got a voice in it, too, and I don't want you here at THAT cost."

"Thanks, Amy. Let me talk to her, and I'll get back to you as soon as I can."

"That's fine, Dan. I'll be waiting."

With that, the conversation ended, and I went off to find Lucy.

I found her out by the pool, cuddled up with Sandra, Robyn's best friend - the two of them still gasping and sweaty after obviously having pleased each other tremendously. I knew neither would be coherent for a few minutes, and went over to get a beer out of the small fridge we had by the pool. I opened it up and had a swallow before sitting down on a chaise, to watch them. This wasn't the first time I'd found them in this condition, and knew it wouldn't be the last - which was fine with me, since Lucy didn't mind in the slightest if Sandra and I spent time together - hell, she was as likely as not to join us.

After a couple of minutes, Lucy had her wits about her again, and came over to sit on my lap - a big shit-eating grin on her face. I grinned back, and said "I'd ask if you enjoyed yourself while I was on the phone, but I can see you did."

She just grinned wider, and asked "So who was it?"

"Amy", I replied.

"She's coming for a visit?" Lucy asked, in anticipation.

"Nope, she was calling to ask for help. MY help."

Lucy got a puzzled look on her face, and asked "Your help? What for? Or with?"

"Her job", I replied, knowing that Lucy would immediately understand.

She did.

"What is it?"

"You know that miniature drug cartel she told us about? They finally nailed one of them. Got him dead to rights, from what she says", I replied.

"So why does she need YOUR help, then?"

"A couple things. First, the guy kept all his records on a computer, encrypted. Good enough that Amy's people can't get into the data. Even their headquarters techs don't hold any hope of breaking it any time soon."

"And the other thing?" she asked.

"The couple of FBI techs Amy put on the job got hurt. One of them died; the other one is out of action for several months. The druggie's buddies didn't want to take any chances with the records. Amy needs somebody to try and break the encryption; and that can watch out for themselves in the process. The local civilian techs won't touch it, even with the protection Amy can give them."

Lucy got a serious look on her face, and asked "It's that bad?"

"Yeah. Amy even came right out and **asked** for the help."

"Do it, then."

"You're sure?"

She smiled at me, and said "Yeah, I'm sure. I'll be worried about you, but this is something **important**, even if it wasn't Amy. How soon does she need you?"

"She didn't say, but I got the impression sooner is better."

"Then call her back, and get it going."

"It might take a while - if their headquarters people aren't happy about trying it, it can't be easy."

"I figured. But I know you won't get *too* lonely with Amy around, and if I wear out the mailman and the delivery boy from the grocery store, I can still come to visit, right?"

The last part was a standing joke between us - the mailman had to be pushing 70, and looked like the next sexual encounter he had would be his last. The delivery boy from the grocery store was a pimply-faced nervous type - every time he saw one of the girls in the skimpy-to-nonexistent bikinis they favored, he'd be hit with an asthma attack.

With that, she got up off my lap to go back and cuddle with Sandra while I went in to call Amy. As I'd expected, she wanted me there as soon as I could make it. I told her I'd be there Monday morning, and promised to let her know what flight as soon as I had the

details. She made it abundantly clear that I was expected to stay with her while I was in town - her husband, Tom, had told her to invite me before leaving on some training assignment that would have him away from home for the next several weeks.

Monday morning found me wearing my bulletproof vest under a sport shirt that also served to conceal the .45 caliber pistol I'd bought during my first pass at helping the FBI. There wasn't any fuss at the airport when I showed them my Federal permit and walked around the security stations.

I saw Amy waiting for me in the terminal after the flight landed. She spotted me quickly enough, and moved off to the side so that we'd be out of the flow of traffic when I got to her. The first thing she did was wrap her arms around me and give me a big hug and kiss - and when Amy kissed someone, they knew they'd been kissed!

With that out of the way, Amy led me to a small stand, where she opened up her briefcase and pulled out a small sheaf of papers. She handed them to me, saying "I want to make this official as soon as possible. Read these, then sign and date them where indicated."

I quickly went through the stack: one was a reactivation of my security clearance. Another was notification of what my pay was to be, and outlining my insurance coverage. A third was official authorization for me to be an armed FBI agent, even though I'd never been through the FBI academy. Last was a contract, spelling out my duties as an official FBI agent and the duration of my contract - it placed more obligations and limitations on the FBI than it did me. To my surprise, there was extremely little in the way of weasel-words or limitations expressed in my duties and authority. When I asked Amy about it, she said "Clara had them draw this up. She knows you're not going to throw your weight around, but that you might need to do things we haven't anticipated. I told you, we - **I** - need your help, in whatever form we can get it."

I signed and dated everything in the appropriate places. I handed the papers back to Amy, and after she gave back my copies, she handed me a small leather folder. When I opened it up, I saw that it was my official FBI identification. When I looked up at her, Amy just smiled, and said "I know we could have done all this at the office, but I wanted to get **that** into your hands as soon as I could manage. Anything that happens from now on is **official** FBI business - Special Agent Andrews!"

With that, she gave me another kiss (!!), and the two of us headed down to rescue my luggage from the airlines. Bags in hand, we headed out to her car, and on toward the FBI offices. Along the way, Amy brought me up to date on how things were going, and what the full situation was. By the time we pulled into her parking space, I had a pretty good idea of what was needed.

Once inside, Amy said "Dan, if you don't mind, I'd like to introduce you to the other agents."

I voiced my agreement, and Amy led us down the hall, then through a door. Inside was obviously a small training room: in front was a podium facing several tiers of seats, amphitheater-style. All told, there must have been room for nearly a hundred people in there - and every seat was filled, with quite a few standing in the back and along the sides. Amy went directly to the podium, and the low-level chatter quickly died down.

"Ladies and Gentlemen. I expect that most of you have heard the rumors to the effect that something is about to happen regarding the mini-cartel - or as it's come to be called, the Cartelita - case that we've been working. I've called you here to put an end to that rumor.

"There is not a some*thing going to happen, but a someONE - specifically, the gentleman you see standing to my right. His name is Dan Andrews, and he's the one that *literally* handed us the TechnoDynamics case - you may have heard of it." - here there was general laughter; they all had, of course.

She went on "He is here with us to help get the Cartelita situation moving again. Further, he is here in an OFFICIAL capacity. Official enough that he is carrying FBI credentials, as authorized by the Director's office."

There was a low murmur at that, and Amy told them "As you know, that is a **most** extraordinary event. Here is a **declassified** synopsis of Mr. Andrew's qualifications from the Army, and our own file on him."

With that, she began to read from a folder on the podium - apparently, the same one Clara Hawkes, her predecessor, had used:

"Andrews, Daniel William, U.S. Army. Assigned Special Forces with all appropriate training; then assigned to Strike Team Alpha, a prototype for the Delta Force. Qualified with all personal weapons in the Army inventory. Rated Expert Pistol, Expert Rifle. His assigned duties were team sniper and explosives expert; with backup duties including communications and medic. He is fluent in Russian, German, and Spanish. Received advanced sniper training, and advanced ordnance training. In both cases, the class instructors requested he be retained for instructor duty. His Ordnance instructor is reported as having said 'I think he could blow the Hoover dam with three matches and a can of lighter fluid, if you pushed him. He's that good.'

"He was his unit's instructor for unarmed combat, as well as for guerilla warfare tactics and strategy. He was sent on multiple missions, all classified. From them, he received a Silver Star, two Bronze Stars, two Purple Hearts, other commendations. He was also recommended for a Medal Of Honor - which was denied for what appear to be political reasons. Offered Officer school three times, all refused, last time saying "once through boot camp was enough". Some of the people he served with describe him as "Smart", "Nerveless", "Gutsy", "fast-thinker", "integrity out the wazoo", and "unflappable". His Commanding officers uniformly praised him in the highest terms.

"He served two tours before being discharged. Upon leaving the military, he attended M.I.T., majoring in computer science, where he graduated top one percent of his class. Mr. Andrews then got his Masters degree in computer science, with a paper on 'Data Recovery Through Forensic Analysis Techniques'. Offered doctorate program, refused, and saying "I've got my schooling, now I need an education". He has a standing offer from his dean to join their doctorate program.

"After M.I.T., he attended Princeton, where he graduated with dual degrees - Philosophy and Mathematics. He was questioned at Princeton about a surveillance system that was apparently used by unknown persons to provide information to help bust a chemistry professor for manufacture and distribution of several drugs - but no evidence actually linked him to the situation.

"Several jobs followed, each a move up. Supervisors uniformly disappointed that he left, but not upset. Started his own business several years ago. File maintained because he is a contractor and contributor on several Department of Defense contracts. According to the contractors, his work has been invaluable - every one of them praised his intelligence and the innovation of the work he's done."

Amy paused to look over the group before telling them "That, ladies and gentlemen, is what convinced us to let him help us last time. Add to that the **significant** contributions he made to the TechnoDynamics case, and you can understand why he's here."

To the deathly quiet in the room, she added "Yes, boys and girls, he's **that** good. What you just heard was, as I said, the DEclassified version. I've read the source, and I promise you, he's even better. If you need any verification, simply look at the sequence of the last few records on the combat range. You know I hold it now; what you'll find is that it took me SEVENTEEN tries to get it back. From Dan Andrews, who took my OLD record - which took me thirteen tries to set! - on his **first** run through the course. And he's smart, too - HE had to show our technical people where the TechnoDynamics money went, and how it was done; Dan gave us a laptop computer with the proof we needed to put them all away - that's why I say he **literally** handed us the case. He also managed to convince Benny Falcone to leave him alone; those of you who know about old Benny will understand what a trick *that* was.

"On a personal note, I was head of one of the protective details assigned to him during TechnoDynamics. I, and everyone who dealt with him, found him to be a patient, understanding, and most of all, **AGREEABLE** individual. I expect you'll find that he will be happy to work *with* you on the case; he's not pushy or demanding or anything of the sort. But I must caution you that if he insists on something, you would be doing well to listen to him. On the Cartelita case, his authority is equal to MINE; but I am also giving him permission to offer any suggestions, thoughts, ideas, or anything else he wants to contribute to the rest of the staff here. He is **extremely** intelligent and thoughtful; as an 'outsider' he will undoubtedly have a different perspective on things, and he may well help us get out of any mental ruts we may be in. People, he's here to help us. Let him.

"In closing, I have one more thing to point out. You know that we don't always have the best relationship with local law enforcement. But when we told them that we were bringing Mr. Andrews in on the Cartelita case, it actually made them **happy** - they know how effective he was the last time he was here."

That done, Amy thanked them for their time, and led me out of the room while a hundred-plus pairs of eyes followed my every move.

Back out in the hall, she told me "Sorry if all that embarrassed you, but I want them to know just who they're dealing with. I **want** them to come to you - you know things these folks have no clue about, and I want them to learn anything you have to share with them, no matter what. Your first priority is the Cartelita case; after that is for you to provide any assistance to these folks that you think would help. We're starting to deal with crooks that are a lot more hard-core than we're used to, and my agents need to learn to deal with it."

"I'll do what I can, Amy. You know that."

"I know, Dan. I just don't want to lose any more people."

I gave her a discrete hug, and she smiled up at me, saying "I do have a couple of things for you, though. Well, four, I think."

I looked at her quizzically, and she said "Even though you're an extra-special FBI agent, the Bureau still wants to make **sure** you're okay to turn loose on the public. So, you've got to pass the self-defense exam, and qualify on firearms" with a grin.

I grinned back, and said "I think I can do that. Lucy got me to sign up with a gym, and we've been working out a couple times a week. In return, I got Lucy interested in shooting, and the two of us have been hitting the practice range after our gym workouts."

Amy got a mock-horrified look on her face and said "You've been practicing ?!"

I nodded, and she said "Now I KNOW I'll shoot you if you get anywhere NEAR my range!" - and then blushing when a couple of passing agents looked at her, not entirely sure if she was joking or not.

With a sigh, she looked up at me and said "Well, I guess we might as well get this over with!" before leading the way through a series of turns, finally showing me the way into their workout area.

Inside were perhaps a dozen people, one of them a muscular - but not overly so - man in his mid-20's who was obviously the instructor. When they saw us, all but the instructor moved off to the side. He approached us, and extended his hand, introducing himself.

"Mr. Andrews, I trust. I'm Al Johansen, the fitness and defense instructor. I understand you have to pass our exam?"

I shook with him, and answered "Glad to meet you, Al. Yeah, she says that's one of the rules that are part of my being here."

"Don't worry about it, sir. If you were in the military, it shouldn't be any problem", he responded, looking at Amy when she snickered. "Do you need or want to change clothes first?"

"No, I don't think so. If things get interesting, I expect I'll be dressed pretty much like this, so we might as well find out if it'll work, or not."

He nodded, and led the way out to the middle of a heavy foam mat that occupied the center of the floor. Once there, he told me "This exam isn't particularly structured. I just come at you in a variety of ways, with an assortment of weapons. All I'm looking for is how you react, and what you do in response."

I voiced my understanding, and he suddenly lunged at me, as though to punch me in the face.

Looking up at me from the floor, he asked "I'm going to guess you've had some self-defense training?" with a grin. I admitted that I'd had some - Amy snickered again, getting a look from him - and he got to his feet.

Next, he tried to tackle me; as he peeled himself from the wall, his grin was a little forced when he told me "Yup, you've definitely had some training."

He nodded to one of the other people, and I saw them toss him a rubber knife. He hadn't any more than caught it when he lunged at me, as though trying to stab me. When he was back on his feet again, I tossed him the knife. When he turned to face me, the people behind him suddenly gasped. He turned to look at them, and I saw a bright blue line across the back of his shirt - apparently, the edge of the knife contained some kind of marker to show where 'hits' would land. After one of the observers told him what had happened, he was visibly shaken when he faced me again. I just stood there, waiting to see what was next.

In short order, he tried a club, a bigger knife, and a paintball gun held to both my stomach and back. He wound up with a welt across his left kidney, a blue line across his abdomen, and a pair of bright yellow splotches - one over his heart, the other on the back of his head.

He was looking at me with considerable mistrust when he picked himself up off the floor the last time. Amy interrupted things to tell him "Forget it, Al. Dan there was Army Special Forces, and helped start the Delta Force. He **taught** self-defense, military style. If you got three or four people involved, you **might** have a chance - but I don't want any of you getting hurt. I trust he passes?"

Looking at me warily, he answered "Oh, yeah, he passes. Why didn't you tell me?"

"A couple reasons. First, I had to see it for myself. Second, if I'd said anything, you might have been tempted to give him anything BUT the real exam."

He nodded in understanding, and hesitantly reached out to offer his hand. I shook it, and told him "Thanks, Al."

"Glad to be of help, sir."

From the workout room, Amy led the way to the firing range. There was a different range instructor than I'd met the first time, and he eyed me carefully. Amy didn't bother pulling any stunts, telling him "Bob, this is Dan Andrews. He's ex-Army Special Forces. We just need to get him officially qualified."

Bob just nodded, and asked "His weapon or one of ours"? When I told him "I've got my own", he nodded again, and quickly set a target into some spring clips, then sent it 25 feet down the range. That done, he told me "It's an easy process. Starting with your weapon on the counter, put two mags into the target; one fast, one slow. Keep them all inside the nine ring, and it's an automatic pass."

I just told him "Got it. When do I start?"

"Whenever you're ready. You've got thirty seconds from the first round."

I nodded my understanding, and pulled my pistol from its holster and set it on the counter in front of me. Next to it, I set a second magazine. He saw the .45 I carried, and said "Nice weapon" before stepping back and to the side of where I was standing. At that point, we all put on our hearing protection and safety glasses.

I took a few moments to collect myself before picking up my pistol. I took my time with the first clip, then ejected it and emptied another in the rapid-fire portion. After I dropped the second clip, Bob moved next to me and said "Fourteen seconds. Pretty damn good time. Let's see how the target looks."

He hit a button on a small controller, and the target quickly moved up to where it was within easy reach of the counter. Bob gave a low whistle, and looked at me - the 'X' at the center of the target had been turned into one not-so-large ragged hole.

"I take it he passes?" Amy asked, with a grin.

"Oh, yeah, no problem. Tell me, Mr. Andrews - do you ever compete?"

Amy laughed, and told him "Bob, that's the Mr. Andrews that I had to beat to get my record back on the combat range. He's rated Expert in both rifle AND pistol. Don't bet anything you don't want to lose."

Bob looked at me with a new sense of respect, and smiled, telling me "Thought the name sounded familiar. Didn't figure it was YOU though. No hard feelings?"

"Not on my end. You're doing what you're supposed to be - making sure the folks with guns around here know which end the bullets come out of, and how to hit what they're aiming at. Can't fault you for that." I answered as I reloaded the magazines from a box of ammo he provided.

At that point, Amy spoke up to tell me "There are still a couple more things we need to take care of, Dan."

With that, Bob and I shook hands, and I followed Amy to her office - which she'd apparently inherited from Clara Hawkes, her predecessor. Inside, I saw two women sitting off to the side of Amy's desk. One of them I recognized as Abigail O'Malley, a young lady that had taken charge of Lucy's daughter Robyn and her friend Sandra while I'd been out with the agents busting the TechnoDynamics bunch. She seemed pleased when I recognized her, and greeted her by name. She still looked much like an out-of-place surfer girl: brown hair slightly longer than I'd seen before, hazel eyes, slender, and nicely curved.

The other woman was someone that I'd seen in the workout area, standing off to the side with the other observers. She was still dressed in workout clothes - but even baggy sweats couldn't completely hide the figure underneath, or the coal-black hair surrounding an attractive face. Amy introduced her as Erika Simpson; I could see that she was older than Amy, but I wouldn't have cared to guess how much.

When we were seated, Amy told me "Dan these two are the other two surprises I have for you. You obviously recognize Abby O'Malley, from your last visit. She's going to be your assistant while you're here - she's better with computers than anybody else here. Since you were here last, she's been out in the field a bit, so working as your gofer is actually a little bit of a step down for her - but she *specifically* asked for the job. Erika is here from Headquarters; she's head of training for protective detail agents there. Don't let her looks fool you: she got the job **after** working her way up through the ranks, including doing actual protective and training duty. I'll let her tell you why she's here."

I turned to look at Erika, and she smiled at me before saying "You've gotten some **serious** attention at headquarters, Mr. Andrews. When the decision was made to bring you in on this case, a special request was made that the Army turn over your entire service record. Believe me, it made **quite** an impression on those privileged to see it - myself included. I'm here for two reasons. First, my primary job is to try and learn from you.

"You see, we're running into the problem of gang activity more and more; it's not like the old days when even the Mob had **some** decency. The gangs we're running into today are **vicious**, far beyond anything organized crime ever did. From your record, you seem to have a peculiar talent for spotting trouble, and dealing with it effectively - particularly the kind of trouble that we're running into with the gangs. Most of your military experience

was dealing with the kind of people that we're having to deal with now, and we **need** to learn how you do it. So my function, first and foremost, is to learn that, so that we can share your knowledge and skills with our agents.

"Second, I'm here to serve as your backup, if you wish. Make no mistake: I am here for YOU, to follow YOUR instructions, while I watch your back. The people we're dealing with here are animals, pure and simple. ANY help you can give us in this case is greatly appreciated, and one way we want to show that appreciation is by taking every measure possible to ensure that you aren't hurt or killed. I already know how good you are with weapons, and in personal combat; but you've only got one set of eyes and ears. My function, if you'll have me, is to watch your back. I will not interfere with whatever actions you find necessary; I am here SOLELY to observe and protect."

I looked from Abby to Erika and back again for several moments while I thought things over. I finally told them "If you will excuse us while I talk this over with Amy?"

Abby looked crestfallen, but Erika was made of sterner stuff. Both quietly stood, and left the office, closing the door behind them.

When they were gone, I turned to Amy and asked "Okay, Amy, what's **really** going on?"

Amy just looked at me, and answered "There's nothing going on, Dan. Why do you ask?"

"I just find it curious that the people I get for two perfectly reasonable jobs both happen to be women. Attractive women, at that."

Amy grinned, saying "That's the luck of the draw. I promise you, Abby really asked for the job - ahead of six others, only four of them female. As for Erika, she's telling you the truth - the Bureau really does need someone to teach us how to deal with these gangs. She was sent simply because she's the head of the training department - a job she got on merit, by the way. Even the man she replaced said she was better qualified for the job than he was when HE got it. Both are more than qualified to be here doing this."

"But why would two **women** take these assignments? You said yourself that Abby is taking a step back to do it; and I don't doubt for a minute that Erika could come up with someone else to send, instead of doing this herself" I told her.

"Dan, it's perfectly reasonable to **ME**, as a woman. I don't think you appreciate what kind of affect you have on us: you're ruggedly handsome, strong in so many ways, and smart; things that affect us deep down in our chromosomes. That you're patient, and caring and all the rest only hits us in our hearts and minds. You're the kind of guy that damn near any woman wants to have around. I hate to admit it this way, but you're simply a shining example of an Alpha male, and we're attracted to you because of it, viscerally and intellectually.

"That's also part of the reason that I didn't tell Al about your military experience. Either he'd have let you off easy, or - as I would have expected - felt challenged by you and tried to prove something. Either way, it wouldn't have been appropriate."

I nodded my understanding, and told her "Well, that being the case, then I don't have any objections to either one of them."

Amy voiced her appreciation, and went to let them back in, closing the door behind them again.

When they were seated again, I looked at each in turn before saying "I want you to understand: I do not have any objections to having either one of you for any personal reasons. I simply had to make sure that you were here of your own choosing. You're FBI, I **expect** you to know your jobs, and how to do them.

"Abby, Amy said you'll be my 'gofer'; but what you'll really be doing is guiding me through the way things work around here. I generally get my own coffee and such; please understand that if I ask you to do something, it's because I really do need your help. I'm Dan, not Mr. Andrews; if we're going to be working together, I think it's better if we aren't formal with each other. Erika, the same applies to you: I'm Dan, you're Erika. You've got a question, ask - I'm sure as hell going to!"

"For both of you, I'm going to expect a lot of question-and-answer as we get to know each other. You know things I don't, and I know things you don't - the fastest and easiest way to get around that is communication. If I don't understand something, I'm going to ask you to explain; and I'll expect the same from you. If you think something needs my attention and you're not getting it, don't be afraid to insist. Fair enough?"

Both nodded and voiced their understanding. Then Abby spoke up, saying "Amy's already assigned you an office. I'll go ahead and make sure it's supplied and organized for you, if that's okay?"

"That would be great, Abby. Thanks." I replied.

She smiled, and headed out the door, while Erika stayed seated. When Abby was gone, Erika spoke up, asking "Please forgive me, but I haven't heard any details about where you'll be staying, Dan, or what the schedule will be."

Amy spoke up for me, saying "Dan will be staying with me. I have a second bedroom - I moved to a different place since you were here last, Dan - and it seemed to simplify the logistics. Scheduling is whatever Dan thinks it needs to be: he's here helping us, so we're not going to tie him down with any more regulation than we absolutely HAVE to."

Erika got a slightly puzzled look on her face when she learned where I'd be staying, then turned to look at me when I said "I'm a little jet-lagged, so it'll be a short day, today."

Tomorrow, I figure to get started here about 8:00, or little before. After that, I can only promise to keep you advised as much ahead of time as I can."

Amy told her "I was on his protective detail last time, and he was exceptionally good about letting us know what was going on, and even asking for advice. I don't think you'll have any problems, at all. Since you didn't already know, I'll tell you: I was a bridesmaid at his wedding, and he was best man at mine. It was because of Dan that Tom and I got together."

That seemed to clear things up for Erika, and Amy told her "If you want to change clothes, I've got to show Dan where he'll be working, and his office."

Erika thanked her, and after Amy made a brief call to someone, the three of us got up and headed out the door. Erika turned one direction while Amy steered me the other. A few twists and turns later, I was facing a door with the nameplate "Special Agent Andrews" next to it. Amy just smiled when I gestured at it, and led me in to where Abby was industriously organizing things - making sure the coffee pot was set up, that we had plenty of office supplies, and so on. Through another door, and Amy showed me my actual office, telling me "We deliberately put your office in the middle of the building, or as close as we could get. It will be swept for bugs daily, and it's rigged to prevent eavesdropping. We figure if they're savvy about computers, we'd better play it safe about other electronics, too. This Cartelita thing is THE case we have now, and we don't want to risk **anything** jeopardizing it."

That said, she led me out to the hallway again, and pointed out a door across the hall, saying "In there is the computer we seized. The room is shielded nine ways from Sunday against ANY kind of eavesdropping. There's no phone line, no intercom, NOTHING in there that could be used to gain access to that computer. The door is cipher-locked, and only 3 people have the combination: me, Tom, and our Security officer. She'll be here in a bit to set the new combination to whatever you tell her; at that point only TWO people will have access to that room - you, and her. We've got reason to believe that our little group here has been working with others in other cities; if we can pry open this case, we think we can use the info to break the others, as well - so you can see why we're taking this so seriously."

About that time, a female agent appeared - a surprisingly statuesque platinum blonde - and Amy told me "Dan, this is Agent Littlejohn; she's our Security Officer. I'm going to go in your office while you tell her what combination you want on this lock and she gets it set up."

And she did that very thing - immediately going not just into the first part of my office, but all the way into the back, taking Abby with her. One other agent started down the hall, but when he saw Agent Littlejohn with me, quickly found a different route to where he was going.

Both Agent Littlejohn and I watched all this, and when I looked over at her, she had a slight smile on her face. She saw me looking at her, and said "Mr. Andrews" - "Call me Dan, Agent Littlejohn" - "Please call me Katherine. As you can see, that room is something special - as much as we want to bust the Cartelita, NOBODY wants to do ANYTHING to mess up any chance we have of doing it. That, and people here have a real healthy respect for security!"

I laughed, and said "I can see that - and I appreciate it, too; I've been in situations where security meant a LOT to me."

She laughed, too, and said "I know. Besides Amy, I'm the only other person here that got to read your Army file. In this job, I don't get to meet many people that have a higher clearance than I do. Shall we get to it, then?"

I nodded, and she told me "I can set this lock to any combination of up to six numbers. Numbers may duplicate, but not repeat. The lock is electronically monitored, so if you enter a bad combination more than ONCE, it will trip an alarm in my office, and disable the lock until someone - that is, ME - clears it. ALL combinations entered into it are logged, so if ANYONE tries to open this door, even once, we'll know. For the sake of formality, I want to tell you that combinations involving a birthday, anniversary, or other similar event is bad security. Do you have a combination you would like to use, or would you like a little time to think of something?"

"I've got one in mind." I told her.

She asked me to wait a moment as she opened a small locked box and took out a serial numbered ledger. Opening it, she carefully held it so that I couldn't see what was inside. Ready, she asked me for the combination I wanted to use, then had me repeat it to make sure that I not only gave her the same numbers, but to ensure she wrote them down correctly. Satisfied she had the numbers right, she quickly closed the book and re-secured it in its box. She moved to the door, and I pointedly turned away from her, letting her know that I didn't WANT to know what the previous combination had been. I listened as I heard her working on the lock from inside the room for a couple of minutes, and when she was done, she came back outside to find me still standing in the same place in the same position; she cleared her throat to let me know it was okay to turn around. When I was facing her again, she told me "Now, while I'm here, I'd like you to open the door, if you would. That gives us final confirmation that the combination I set is the same one you gave me."

I agreed, and easily punched in the numbers I'd given her, and both of us heard the lock emit a solid 'thunk' as it released. I opened the door a bit, and then closed it, making sure that it latched and locked. She smiled at me again, and stuck her hand out, saying "Thank you, Dan. You made this a LOT easier than most people do."

I shook her hand as I assured her it was my pleasure, and as she headed back down the hall, I went into my office to let Amy and Abby know we were done. I found the two of

them talking about possible courses of action once I had something for them to go on. With my arrival, Abby readily started to review what they'd already talked about; but I stopped her by suggesting that she wait until Erika joined us, so she'd only have to go over it once. As though on command, Erika came in; and the four of us found seats as we went over the different options we had, and what kind of timeline we were looking at.

It finally got down to the point where we had everything worked out that we could; but all of us knew that nothing of any real significance was going to happen until I got inside that computer.

"Amy, if it's okay, I brought along a laptop with some special utilities that I'd like to take into The Room if I could." During the previous discussions, any time we talked about the secure room where the computer was, everyone had pronounced it in such a way as to emphasize the capitals, as I just had.

"That's fine, Dan. You've got carte blanche in there. Our technical people have already duplicated the contents onto another drive, so we're not worried about losing any data. You'll probably have to wipe the drive in your computer before you leave, but I figure you expected that."

"I did. As for duplicating the drive, I don't doubt that your people did the best they could, but I've got a couple tricks they probably don't know about. I'm willing to bet that I can come up with more data than they thought was on there."

"How?"

"After our last little adventure, I got together with Lacy" - he was someone I knew that could work miracles with hardware; he'd recovered data from a formatted drive to help the TechnoDynamics case - "and the two of us managed to work up some new techniques for data recovery. I don't know how much it will help, but right now, I think anything we can get would be a step in the right direction."

"Damn right. New techniques, you said? Who else knows?"

"Right now, just me and Lacy. Before I leave, I'll go through it with your people, if you want."

"I want, I want! Shucks, if you've got time, I don't have any problem with you teaching CLASSES in this stuff to them. I've talked to the lead tech; those guys want to get into that machine so bad they can taste it, but every last one of them is afraid to touch it because they're afraid they'll mess something up; it's not their careers they're worried about, it's losing the **case**. If you can teach them some of what you know, I'm sure they'd all appreciate it."

"I'd be glad to. Well, if you'll give me a few minutes, I can get things started In There."

Amy handed me the keys to her car and said "Go ahead, we'll be here when you get back."

After I'd retrieved the laptop from her car, I entered The Room, and got it powered up. Then I got it connected to the desktop system, and loaded the desktop system with a little program Lacy and I had developed. In just a few seconds, my laptop was able to assume complete control over the desktop machine: watching every byte of data that went through it, controlling the different parts in ways the manufacturers had never thought of. Getting the exact hard drive parameters, I had my laptop start copying **everything** on the desktop's drive - instead of being limited to just the tracks the manufacturer specified, I was able to guide the drive heads to read BETWEEN them, as well. And by forcing the drive to output the raw data from the heads, I could easily go back and look at data that had supposedly been 'erased'. I'd wind up with several times as much data as the desktop drive supposedly held, but in that data would be stuff that everyone else thought was "gone".

I watched for a few minutes as my laptop started sucking every bit of data it could find from the desktop systems drive, and storing it. Calling up another utility, I could go through the 'ghost' data, and look at it as though it were still on the original drive, and compare how and when and where the data had changed over time. Satisfied that things were going as they were supposed to, I left the computers to their task, and went back to my office - carefully making sure the door was latched and locked behind me.

When I saw Amy, I told her "I'm going to need a hard drive from your tech people - probably late tomorrow morning. It looks like we're going to get a little less than twice the data off the hard drive on that thing, and I expect you'll want to courier it to Headquarters, right?"

Amy just stared at me for a few moments, then asked "How did you... oh, never mind, I wouldn't understand the answer. You'll have the drive as soon as you need it; and yes, I want to have it couriered to Headquarters." Then she picked up the phone, and gave somebody a heads up that she'd need a courier the next day.

Erika and Abby were both looking at me as though I were a wizard on the verge of turning them into toads.

Heeding my own advice, I told the three of them "How I did it was relatively easy. I told you that Lacy and I came up with a couple techniques, right? Well, I'm using one of them. A little background, first. The way a computer stores data on a drive is with magnetic fields - north-and-south one way for a logical 'one', and the reverse for a logical 'zero'." The three of them indicated their understanding, and I went on "okay, that magnetic field is *centered* around a set of pre-defined 'tracks' on the hard drive - kind of like the lanes on a freeway. BUT, the operative word there is CENTERED: the magnetic fields that are generated are actually a little bigger than the tracks themselves, and the tracks are spaced so that the 'overflow' doesn't interfere with adjacent tracks. Now, what happens is that the magnetic fields aren't always exactly on the center of the tracks; in

reality, they rarely are. So what happens is that there's almost always magnetic 'residue' between the tracks, and it's always closest to the track that it was originally written to. It used to be that if you wanted to read that residue, you had to disassemble the drive and use some pretty specialized equipment. What Lacy and I came up with was a way to get inside the drive electronics - it's 'smarts' - and take over, so that we could read that residue without having to take the drive apart. It takes a while because we have to read the residue several times to make sure we're getting real data and not just noise, but it's still faster and easier than taking the drive apart. The benefit is that while we're doing that, we also read the data that the computer already knows it has, so we can compare the two. With a little software and some applied theory, we can make some pretty good guesses as to when the data was changed. In Lacey's lab, we were able to detect, and figure the sequence of, SEVERAL data changes. Using the freeway analogy again, we're essentially pulling tire tracks from near the lane markers, instead of where most people drive. I'll have a lot better idea of what happened, and when, tomorrow after I've read more of the data off the source drive; but right now, it looks like we're going to get roughly double what the drive says it will hold. I'm guessing that nearly all of the excess is going to be stuff related to the Cartelita situation."

The three of them looked at each other, then me, then each other again. Finally, Amy spoke up, telling Abby and Erika "RELATIVELY easy, he said. The fact that he's doing something our own technical people - even the ones in Headquarters - can't do just slips right by him." Then she looked at me, and said "Whatever else happens here, you've just earned your contract fee. When you show our tech people how to do what you just described, you'll have given us a tool we'll be using for YEARS to come." Amy still looked a little dazed at my explanation, but Erika just nodded her head in agreement, acknowledging the truth of what Amy had just said.

A moment later, Amy spoke again, saying "Well, Dan, you've already performed one miracle, and you've only been here a couple of hours. You ready to get some rest so you can pull more rabbits out of the hat tomorrow?"

"I don't know about rabbits and hats, but yeah, I am a little tired from the flight."

Amy looked at Erika and Abby and told them "I figure to just take it easy tonight, but I *would* like to invite the two of you over tomorrow evening. I'm thinking of it as an informal, kind of get-to-know-each-other thing. Outside the office, we can all just relax and get ourselves psyched up for all the work we're looking at."

Erika and Abby both readily agreed to Amy's idea, and with nothing else to talk about for the moment, the four of us got up and headed for home - or a hotel, in Erika's case.

I was surprised when Amy drove us to the same small cluster of duplexes that she'd lived in when Lucy, Robyn, Sandra and I stayed with her before.

"I thought you said you moved?" I asked.

She grinned at me, and answered "Yeah, I did. Didn't say where I moved TO, though, did I?"

"Smart ass."

"With you, I've got to take 'em when I can get 'em", she laughed, adding "I - well, Tom and I - just moved to one of the larger units, a two-bedroom job. We're not **trying** for kids, but want to be ready if it happens."

She stopped in front of one of a different building than she'd lived in before, and helped me carry in my little bit of luggage. Inside, the rooms I could see were pretty close to the size of her other place; I figured the difference was probably in the size of the bedrooms, and the bathroom.

Amy led us into the main bedroom, and I could see that I was at least partially correct - it was a bit smaller than what she'd had before. We set my luggage down, and she gave me a brief tour of the rest of the place. The bathroom in this one was still large, but not as huge as what she'd had previously. She and Tom had set the second bedroom up as something of a study, but been careful not to fill it up - I could see that it would still easily hold a crib and the other furniture that an infant would need. Back in the living room, we found her cat, J. Edgar, who deigned to sniff my hand and allow me to give her a little bit of an ear-rub.

Having seen their new place, I followed Amy into the kitchen, where she opened the fridge and pulled out a bottle of beer for each of us. After we'd each taken a swallow, she told me "Dan, I really do appreciate your help with this Cartelita thing. Hell, I think the whole Bureau does! If we - you - can peel these bastards open, it'll do wonders for us. Not just here, but in a lot of other places, like I told you."

"You know I'm glad to help, Amy. I've got Robyn to worry about, and even Sandra. If I can help do something that gets these **things** off the street, I'm more than happy to do it."

"There's one more thing I hope you'll do, too", she said, mischievously.

"What's that?"

"Me" was the answer, as she moved to stand in front of me.

Her eyes locked on mine, she first unbuttoned and removed the blouse she was wearing, then her skirt. Those gone, she reached between her breasts to unfasten her bra, and let it drop to the floor, where it was soon joined by her panties - leaving me with quite a view.

I saw that she still had smooth pale skin and a light dusting of freckles across her shoulders. Her breasts were medium-sized, with small pink areolas and nipples. A trim,

flat belly that merged into a pair of smooth muscular thighs. Her mons was covered with a small triangle of dark red, curly pubic hair; her arousal was obvious from the erect clitoris I could see above the edges of her vaginal lips.

Without hesitation, she knelt in front of me before unfastening my belt, then my pants. After unzipping them, she pushed my pants down to reveal my shorts - then eased them down my legs, as well. Faced with my semi-erect penis, she reached to cup my testicles as she leaned forward to take the head of my member in her mouth. Applying a gentle suction as she let her tongue dance along my length, it didn't take her long to get me fully erect.

When she was finally satisfied that I was ready for her, she pulled her lips from around the head of my glistening erection before standing up long enough to unbutton my shirt - and nodding in approval when she found me wearing my bulletproof vest.

Stripping me of both shirt and vest, she held me steady as I slipped off my shoes before stepping out of my pants and shorts so she could guide me toward the kitchen table. There, she unhesitatingly moved to lay back on it, her legs hanging off the edge as she looked at me with lust in her eyes.

It was my turn to kneel, then, as she spread her thighs in invitation. Looking between them, I saw the blossom of her womanly flower: thin, straight, delicate labia parted and glistening with her feminine oils. Rising out from under the hood of her clitoris, they flowed around her opening to fade into her perineum. The soft, fine hairs of her incredibly thick bush - which she apparently kept trimmed - did nothing to conceal her arousal, particularly where it thinned out at the bottom of her cleft. Though still not close to her, I could still smell her musky excitement and anticipation.

Moving closer to her, I slipped my tongue between her labia before sliding it up between them - dipping slightly into her opening - to finish with a soft caress of her erect clitoris. She gasped her pleasure at my first contact, and her hips arched to keep my tongue in contact with her clitoris for as long as possible.

Over the next few minutes, I continued my oral ministrations to her womanhood; only when I had her moaning almost constantly and her feminine essence all but flowing out of her did I raise up to stand over her. Her eyes watched my penis sway as I moved forward to stand between her parted thighs, positioning my erect member against the opening of her vagina. She pulled her knees up and apart to open herself to me even more before putting her hands on my hips to pull me closer. I could see her erect nipples harden even more as I started to press myself into her while she lifted her pelvis in welcome.

My first thrust got perhaps a quarter of my length in her, accompanied by her groan of pleasure. Withdrawing a bit to spread her lubrication, I pressed in again, sinking nearly two thirds of my manhood into her. Back out again, and a final arching of my hips buried my length in her - resulting in Amy's deep moan of satisfaction.

Reaching forward, I took her breasts in my hands, feeling her hard nipples pressing into my palms. I gently squeezed her breasts, my fingers dimpling them as though they were filled with a warm, firm gel. Amy put her hands on top of mine, then squeezed, letting me know how much pressure to apply. I followed her lead, and felt her vagina flutter around my penis in response.

I leaned over to take one of her nipples in my mouth as I slowly slid myself out of her, until I felt the ring of muscle at her entrance gripping me just behind the glans of my member. I paused a moment, then filled her again in a single long, slow thrust of my pelvis. I continued to nurse at her breasts for the next couple of minutes as I repeated my slow-motion lovemaking with her; with each penetration, I could feel her getting hotter and wetter inside as she panted her steadily increasing arousal - and groaned her frustration at my slow pace.

When I had both of her areolas puckered and glistening with my saliva, I raised my body again and started ratcheting up the pace at which I was pistonning in and out of her. I felt it as a small tremor ran through her; an apparent mini-orgasm, judging from the way her womanhood clamped down on me for a few seconds.

From the angle that I was entering her, I knew that each time I slid into her, it was pulling slightly on the entrance to her vagina - and thus applying a slight pressure to her clitoris. That added stimulus of her clitoris as I penetrated her each time resulted in her vagina briefly clenching; the effect was that not only was she incredibly hot and wet inside, but felt wonderfully tight around me, too.

As much as I was pleasing her, she was pleasing me, too. It wasn't but a few minutes before I felt myself heading down the road to release. Not wanting to leave Amy behind, I moved my hands to her breasts and started squeezing them and gently pinching on her nipples. I felt her breasts get firmer and tighter under my hands, and knew that the added stimulation would keep her with me.

Looking down between us, I could see that my erection was thoroughly coated with her feminine oils and that her labia were so open that they were barely moving as I slid myself in and out of her.

After a couple more minutes, I felt my balls start to tighten up; it wasn't going to be much longer before I unloaded her. Still determined to bring her as much pleasure as she was bringing me, I started thrusting into her faster and harder, bumping her clitoris with my pubic bone even as my entry in her was applying a different pressure on it. Amy's head immediately started twisting from side to side as my actions brought her even more stimulation, and moved her even closer to her orgasm.

It couldn't have been another minute before I felt myself tighten up as I reached my peak. When she felt the first hot jet of my semen erupt, Amy fell into the chasm of her own release; I felt her tighten around my length before the rings of her internal muscles started a rhythmic spasming that ran the length of my penis, milking it. Our respective climaxes

continued like that, in almost perfect counterpoint to each other: the feeling of Amy's hot vagina tightening around me would trigger another eruption from me, which seemed to trigger Amy into another round of HER release. Back and forth we went, the intensity and duration of our climaxes prolonged and intensified as a result.

Still, our human limitations finally kicked in, and the power of our mutual release began to taper off - leaving us both nearly exhausted.

When we'd both gotten our breath back, Amy suddenly had a fit of the giggles. When she was nearly over them, I asked "Okay, so what was THAT all about?"

Grinning, she said "I was just thinking that we didn't even last fifteen minutes before we were going at it like a couple of newlyweds, right here on the kitchen table. Then it hit me that we're both married - and that Lucy and Tom not only wouldn't mind, but would probably approve!"

I grinned back, and answered "True, it's probably not a situation that comes up much in the rest of society. As for Tom and Lucy, they'd probably have been at it, too!"

And with that, BOTH of us started laughing at the situation - until my penis finally pulled free of Amy to let our mixed juices start leaking out of her. THAT started her on another fit of the giggles, even as she gestured she wanted one of the small towels near the sink. I handed it to her, and she quickly wiped up what had escaped her already, and then positioned it to stem any further leakage. Satisfied, she opened her arms in invitation for me to rest over her again.

I did, and the two of us shared several loving kisses as we held each other for a few minutes.

After giving me a brief hug, Amy whispered "I think it's time we got moving. I think you'd like to clean up a little, and I know I do."

I hugged her back, and stood up before helping her to her feet. To give Amy a little time to herself in the bathroom, I stayed behind to pick our clothes up from the kitchen floor before laying them out in the bedroom. When I was done, I knocked at the bathroom door, and heard Amy's okay. I went in to discover that the bathroom wasn't much smaller than the one she'd had before - her shower easily held the two of us as we took a quick shower to rinse ourselves off.

Dried, dressed, and back in the living room, Amy asked if I had anything in particular I wanted for supper. I said anything was fine, and she disappeared for a few minutes before coming back with a tray of sandwiches and chips, along with a couple of sodas.

After we'd finished, I took the leftovers into the kitchen and put them away, returning with a couple more sodas. We spent the rest of the evening just watching TV as we snuggled on the couch. When Amy saw me yawn for the second time in five minutes, she

turned the TV off and *told* me that it was time for bed. On top of the 'exercise' we'd shared, I was feeling a bit jet-lagged, and didn't offer any argument - particularly when she led me into the bedroom and started undressing me. When both of us were naked, she pulled the bed covers down, and guided me between the sheets, then climbed in next to me. After nudging me onto my side, she moved to spoon with me, her arm around my chest as her breasts pressed into my back. I took her hand in mine, holding it as I fell asleep.

I woke up the next morning to find that Amy and I had reversed positions during the night - her firm ass was neatly tucked against my semi-erect penis, and my arm around her ended with my hand cupped over one of her smooth breasts.

Reluctantly, I released her breast and started to ease myself back, so that I could get out of bed. When I did, her hand held mine as I heard her say "It's only six o'clock; you don't have to get up, yet."

My answer was simple: "Yeah, I do - too much beer and soda last night!"

I could almost **hear** her smile as she let my hand slip free of her grasp. When I got back, I found that she hadn't moved; I didn't hesitate to resume my previous position - including holding her breast in my hand. She put her hand over mine, holding me there, before saying "You know, I never get tired of waking up like this - having somebody I care about next to me."

"Yeah, it **is** nice. Makes it easy to understand what the real priorities are in life."

She snuggled back against me before answering "That it does."

We lay together like that for a while longer, content to be with someone we cared about, before the alarm went off at 6:30. Reluctantly, we parted, each to get up on 'our' side of the bed. As I got dressed, Amy went in to the bathroom to take care of her morning routine; when she was out, it was my turn as she got dressed.

Breakfast was light and casual as we each read different parts of the newspaper; then it was into her car for the trip to the office.

There, I found Abby and Erika pouring themselves a cup of coffee, having obviously arrived just ahead of me. Abby poured one for me, too, then handed it to me. I took it, and reminded her "Like I said, I generally get my own coffee and such. The moving around to get it helps me keep my head clear, and kind of forces me to stop and **think** a little bit about what I'm doing, so I don't get into any mental ruts."

Erika looked at me skeptically, and said "Somehow, I don't think that kind of thing is much of a problem for you."

"Well, no, it usually isn't. But it's something I want to avoid if I can, so I try to do things to keep it from happening", I admitted.

I invited them into my office, where we chatted for a few minutes as each of us sipped at our coffee.

As we got to the bottoms of our cups, Abby wanted to know if I had anything in particular I wanted her to do. I thought it over a few moments, and said "Well, since Amy doesn't mind if I talk to the tech people, you can find out if there's anything in particular I can do for them. If there is, get it set up. You know, like if they want classes in something, we'd need a time and place to hold them, that kind of thing. Anything you can share with me about the case would probably be good; it'll give me an idea of who we're after, and what kind of threat they present. Like I said yesterday, I'll need a hard drive to copy data to, so it can be couriered to headquarters; I'll need your help getting that set up. You can find out from the other agents on the case if there's anything they think I can help with. Amy told me that she's willing to let me do pretty much anything I can to help whoever needs it, so let's find out who and what. It's probably going to be a couple of days before we really get organized, here. While that's happening, I'm open to suggestions and invitations. Abby, you're going to be MY boss, after a fashion - a lot of what's going to need to happen in there can be done by computer; so it's going to be up to you to help me get into a schedule that lets me get the computer started on the grunt work so I can do the people stuff while it's busy."

She nodded her understanding, and headed out to get things started, leaving Erika and I alone.

I looked at Erika, and said "God's honest truth, I don't know what to say to you. As long as I'm in the building, I don't think I'm in much danger, so that doesn't leave much for you to do."

She smiled wryly, and answered "Yeah, I thought of that. And I expect that you're still pretty unsure about how to deal with me, too."

"There is that", I admitted, adding "You're a senior agent, head of the training division. I don't feel comfortable asking you to help Abby, but I don't know of anything else. Quite frankly, I'm open to suggestions."

She smiled and said "I was going to offer to help Abby, anyway, just for something to do when you're in the building. Dan, I want to emphasize this: I'm here to learn from you. Anything and everything you want to share with me. Hell, even if all you want to do with me is tell me war stories, I'm willing to listen; even THOSE will give me information I need to train our agents better. Like I said yesterday, I'm here to help you in any way I can while I'm learning from you. You leave this building, and I'm your backup, if you want. If you need something from headquarters, I'll help Amy get it for you. Need your laundry done? Fine, I've got a car, and I'll take care of it for you, no problem. Want to hit a bar and get drunk? I'll drive you home. I meant what I said yesterday: I'm here for

YOU, to follow YOUR instructions. You have a unique combination of knowledge and skills that we in the FBI need - not just for this case, but for all of our agents. If it meant saving one of my people from getting killed, I'd HAPPILY spit-shine your shoes every day you're here, no questions asked. So don't hesitate to ask me to help you with **anything** on this case."

I looked into her eyes, and saw that what she was telling me was God's honest truth. That was all I needed to be sure of before I told her "Fair enough. That's all the salve my conscience needs; I'll ask for your help when and how it's needed."

She smiled again in acceptance of what I'd just told her, and we toasted each other with our coffee cups before draining them. Together, we went in to where Abby was talking on the phone with someone. Erika and I filled our cups, and as I was putting the pot back, Abby got off the phone. She looked up to tell me "The tech people have a drive whenever you want it. When you're ready, someone from security will bring you an unlocked case to put it in. When you lock the case, that's IT - nobody outside of headquarters will have the combination to open it. When you bring the case out, security will handcuff it to the courier, who will fly it to headquarters on a commercial flight. Security needs just five minutes lead time to get it here."

I nodded my understanding, and told them "Well, then I expect I'd better get in there and make sure things are happening the way they're supposed to. What do you say about me taking you two to lunch?"

Both of them smiled before Erika answered "I *never* turn down lunch when someone else is buying!" - which prompted Abby to nod in agreement.

"Twelve, then?" I asked.

Both agreed, and I took my cup of coffee with me as I headed for The Room.

Inside, I found that my laptop was nearly done sucking data off the host machine; another hour or so, and I'd be able to transfer the data to the drive that was going to Headquarters.

While I was waiting for the transfer to complete, I started going through what had already been collected, looking to see what had been on the drive. Using the software Lacy and I had developed; it didn't take long to get it organized. From there, I quickly filtered out the basic stuff - operating system files, commercial software that came with the computer, and so on. That still left me with a lot of ones and zeros - but not as many, and I knew that what was left had **SOME** significance. I still had to find out how **MUCH** significance, but at least I'd gotten rid of the stuff that patently didn't apply.

By the time I got to that point, my laptop had finished what it was doing. I shut it down long enough to add the hardware Lacy had put together for me, and fired it up again. While it was booting up and testing itself, I left to get myself some more coffee, and the hard drive I needed.

As soon as I told Abby I was ready for the drive, she was on the phone to the tech people; my coffee had barely cooled when one of them showed up with it. I thanked him, and he assured me he was glad to help before heading off. I told Abby that I'd need the courier in about twenty minutes; she was on the phone with them even before I got out of the office.

Back inside The Room, it didn't take long to get the drive connected to the hardware Lacy had provided. Essentially, it was just an additional set of connections for a hard drive - but it was capable of handling virtually ANY kind of drive, from the older MFM/RLL drives, to the more common IDE, to SCSI. Between all the different connector and cable combinations, and being software configurable, it was about as universal as Lacy could make it.

Powered up, I found that the tech people had been thoughtful enough to provide a drive that was already formatted. As the data was being transferred, I created a text file with the details of the file structures and filenames for the tech people in Headquarters, so they would be able to look at it the same way I did. When the data was copied, I went ahead and made a separate directory, then copied over the software utilities that I'd come up with; I knew they wouldn't have any trouble figuring out how to use them once they'd had a chance to look them over.

It was barely fifteen minutes when everything done. I carefully powered down the target drive then disconnected it. I went into my office where I found a couple of agents waiting patiently - Baker and Michaels, when Abby introduced them. The one with the courier case - basically an armored briefcase - readily gave it to me, and I went back into The Room to put the drive in its well-padded interior. Once the case was closed and locked (I checked **twice**), it was back to my office.

Back in my office, the case in my hand, I asked them "Okay, who gets this?"

The larger of the two - Agent Baker - stuck his arm out, saying "That would be me, sir."

I held the case up, and after both of them checked to make sure it was locked, Agent Michaels carefully handcuffed it to his partner. As he did, he told me "Sir, these handcuffs are a special alloy, and use a special key that is available ONLY to law enforcement - they have to be ordered on letterhead, and are shipped ONLY to the published address for an organization. That means that some kid with a computer and a laser printer can't pretend to be from the Podunk Police Department, and get a set to play with. Additionally, given the nature of this case, I will be traveling with him, but at a distance, to provide additional protection."

Following their example, I verified that the handcuffs were, in fact, connected to the case and Agent Baker's wrist - and locked at both ends. When they were ready, Agent Michaels handed me a sheet saying "Sir, if you'll sign this, and put the date and time on it, we'll be on our way."

I did as he asked, and after they left, asked Abby why the time and date. She told me that was an additional security measure to make sure that the case traveled directly between source and destination. I thanked her for the explanation, and she smiled that she'd been able to help.

I topped off my coffee, and made another foray into The Room, where I spent the rest of the morning going over the data that had been collected.

When it got close to noon, I carefully noted where I was and what I was doing before leaving The Room, making sure it was latched and locked behind me. In my office, I found Abby and Erika going through a small mountain of manila folders.

When they saw me enter, Erika looked up and told me "These are the files on the case - every person we've talked to, every agent's reports, every bit of information we could come up with. Abby and I are just going through it to make sure it's all here."

"Well, I'm ready for some lunch, whenever you are. I'm in no hurry, though, so go ahead and finish, if you want." I answered.

A few minutes later, when they'd finished going through the contents of the folders they'd had open when I came in, they decided that they were hungry, too. Carefully putting the folders into a secure file cabinet (*heavy steel and a combination lock, it was a safe with drawers), they got their things and told me they were ready to go. Neither Erika nor I had any real idea of where to go, which left it up to Abby - who drove us to a local restaurant. They seemed to recognize her, and we were soon shown to a small booth in the corner. It being lunch time, Erika and I were both kept busy watching all the other patrons for any signs of hostility or unusual interest. My problem was that I was having a hard time deciding if the interest we were shown was because of ill will, or just the presence of my two lovely companions.

The food was surprisingly good (particularly for a rushed meal like lunch), and the service was fast and efficient; we didn't dawdle over our meals, but didn't feel rushed to hurry through them, either. All together, it was quite a pleasant experience. The company I was keeping helped considerably.

I'd paid the quite reasonable check and left a hefty tip for our waitress, and we were on our way back to Abby's car when something tripped a circuit in my brain. Abby and Erika were on either side of me; each got a hard shove to the side, even as I was taking a step forward and crouching down. A fraction of a second later, I heard the sound of a shotgun blast, and felt the air change as the pellets passed over me. Turning as I drew my .45, I saw the muzzle dropping as the guy holding it tried to target me again. He was about halfway there when the slug from my pistol caught him under the chin, lifting him to his toes before he fell backwards.

I was moving toward him, my pistol still aimed at him, as Erika and Abby both hurriedly drew their weapons and got to their feet. Both were looking around to see if there was

anyone else targeting us as I kicked the shotgun further away from my attempted killer. Looking down, I could see that he wasn't a threat to anyone else, any more - his eyes stared, unblinking, at the clouds overhead.

The other people in the parking lot barely had time to react before it was all over. A few of them started our direction, but all three of us got our ID out, and asked them to stay back. Between the guns and the badges, they all decided that whatever had happened, it wasn't anything that they needed to get involved with - at least, until a couple of police cars came roaring up a couple minutes later, lights flashing and sirens going full blast. The cops were initially pretty nervous, but when they saw that all three of us were shouting "FBI! FBI!" while waving IDs and being careful not to point our weapons at them, they calmed down a little. In the next minute, several more police cars showed up, and they went about the business of securing the crime scene. The cop in charge of marking stuff seemed disappointed that there were only two ammo casings to flag: my spent .45, and the empty shell from the other guy's shotgun.

As the detective finished his interviews with Abby, Erika, and me, Amy showed up in her own vehicle, lights flashing. She didn't have any trouble getting through the police line, and immediately came over to me to ask what had happened. I told her, and when I was done, she asked "But what **happened**? What told you he was going to shoot?"

Erika was listening with considerable interest, as was Abby, when I told her "Thinking back on it, I figure it must have been the safety on the shotgun."

Slightly exasperated, Amy said "What?!"

"Only thing I can figure is that I heard it as he flicked the shotgun's safety off, and I just **reacted**. I didn't even know why, until I heard the blast when he fired."

Erika was looking at me in amazement when she asked "You did all of that just because you heard him flip the SAFETY off?"

I shrugged, and said "Yeah. Like I said, I didn't even know exactly why I was doing it at the time; I was just **reacting**, on instinct."

"But the SAFETY?"

I shrugged again, and told her "It's a pretty unique noise. I'm packing a .45 and wearing a vest, so I'm kinda on alert, you know?"

About that time, the detective that had interviewed the three of us came over. He recognized Amy, and nodded to her before telling us "The dead guy is part of the local drug operations. Real vicious type; killed an entire family, including the kids, when the old man stiffed them on a deal. We never could pin anything on him, though - he was always too careful. Not careful enough this time, though." - that last part with a smile. Somehow, I doubted that he'd be going to the shooter's funeral.

He went on to tell us "Anyway, it's a clean shoot. The witnesses are all clear that the shotgun went off before you shot him: boom, then bang, they said. There's some paperwork that I don't mind in this case, but nothing else. I'll tell you one thing, Mr. Andrews: you impressed the hell out of a lot of cops with this, including me. Ain't many people that escape being ambushed with a shotgun, then turn around and take out the bad guy with a single shot."

With that, he started to walk away, then paused before turning back to say "Mr. Andrews? Thanks." That said, he headed toward the cluster of uniformed cops around the crime scene. The four of us watched as the guy's body was bagged and loaded onto a stretcher for the trip to the morgue.

Amy stayed with us until the scene had cleared enough for us to have a way out of the parking lot. Only then did we discover that we hadn't gotten away without *any* casualties: Abby's car had lost the rear driver's side window to the blast, and her car would need some minor bodywork and a new paint job from some of the other pellets.

Though still shaken from all the excitement, Abby actually started to laugh when she saw the damage to her car. We all looked at her as though she'd lost her mind; she saw the reaction she was getting, and managed to stop long enough to say "I was just thinking how I was going to explain this to my insurance agent. What clause in my policy covers damage caused by an assassination attempt?"

That broke the tension, and got the rest of us laughing, too. When we'd caught our breath, Amy told her "Don't even bother with your agent. The Bureau will cover all the repairs. Take it in, get it fixed, and give me the bill. I'll see that it's paid."

With the back seat full of glass particles, Abby and Erika both understood when I accepted Amy's offer to ride back to the office with her.

On the way, she told me "Now you see why I needed YOU. The people in my protective details are good; but there's no way they could have stopped something like that. You did. And you probably saved the lives of two agents in the process. The Bureau owes you. **I** owe you."

"I'm not keeping score, Amy. You know that." I replied.

"I know", she answered before continuing "I just want to make sure you know that **I** know what you did."

I was just as happy that she changed to subject to ask me "So, how's it going In There?"

"I got all the raw data copied, and the drive is on its way to headquarters, along with a copy of the utilities that I'm using. I've filtered out the stuff that wouldn't have anything to do with the files you're interested in - you know, the programs that came with the computer, and so on. There's still a lot to go through, though. When I get a handle on

what software or whatever they were using, I should be able to give you some idea of how long before we have some real answers. Right now, the best I can tell you is that it's going to be a few days before I can give you even a vague idea of what kind of time frame we're looking at."

"That's fine, Dan. I know you're not going to milk this job, and I'm DAMN sure not going to jiggle your elbow while you're working. It takes however long it takes. If it can't be done, I know you'll tell me as soon as YOU know. So don't worry about the time, okay?"

"Yes, Boss!", I teased.

She gave me a mildly reproachful look, then laughed.

Back at the office, I spent what was left of the afternoon going through the remaining data to get it back to its original structure. When I was done with that, I wrote a couple of simple utilities to go through the data and find out what parts of it were simply data, and what parts of it were actual programs. I figured my best shot was to try and disassemble it - that is, to read in the bytes and see if they represented actual computer code. For each block of data, though, I had to make several passes through it to make sure that I tested for all possible combinations of processor instructions. My utilities simply automated the process: read in a block of data, disassemble it, and look at the results. If they made **some** sense, save them along with an identifier that told me which block it was, and which test gave me the results. Repeat for the next block, and so on. I wasn't going to get the original high-level language that the programs had been written in; instead, I was going to have the machine code that those programs had compiled to. Not as easy to read, but usable.

I got everything set up and started, then watched as the first couple of blocks were tested. One of them turned out to possibly be a program; the other was simply data. Satisfied that things were working as planned, I was surprised to realize that it was well after 5:00. I quickly checked to make sure the computers were properly connected and operating, and then left The Room, securing it behind me. I wasn't surprised to find that Amy waiting for me; when I went into my office, she told me "I went ahead and told Abby and Erika they could leave. They wanted a chance to clean up and change before they come over at seven."

"That's fine. If I'd noticed the time before, I'd have told them to leave, anyway." I replied.

Amy didn't bother asking what I'd been doing - she knew that I'd tell her when anything of significance happened. Together, we made our way down to her car, then back to the apartment.

Once there, Amy was surprised when I dug into one of my suitcases, and pulled out a box of ammo for my pistol. She was even more surprised when I took it into the kitchen, and went about replacing the ammo I was already carrying with it. She finally looked a little

closer at it, did a double-take, and looked at it again before asking "What kind of ammo is that? I've never seen anything like that before!"

I grinned at her, and said "Oh, a little something I came up with. It's not on the commercial market; I hand-loaded all of this."

"Yeah, but what IS it?"

"It's a couple of different loads I thought up. One of them is just bird shot that I poured into a mould and pressed together. The pellets kind of fuse together - until they actually hit something, then they all separate again. Kind of a cross between a regular slug, and a shotgun round: it fires like a regular pistol round, but when it hits, the pellets scatter like a shotgun blast. Puts all of the energy into the target, and does more damage. If I miss the target and hit a building or something, it breaks up enough not to hurt a bystander."

"And the other one?"

"I came up with that one to defeat a bulletproof vest - at least, the commercial ones sold to civilians. Police vests stop it just fine."

She gave me an exasperated look, and I went on to tell her "It's just a basic hollow point round, except I added the very tip from a broadhead hunting arrow. The edges stay sharp enough to cut through most civilian vests, letting the bullet in. Because of the steel from the arrowhead, if it hits something solid, it breaks into smaller pieces, too."

"And those are legal loads?" she asked.

"As far as I know. I checked, and nobody said they were **illegal**."

She gave me a dirty look, but let the subject drop to ask me "And you're alternating them because...?"

"Because if I have to shoot anyone else, one or the other of them is going to do what I need done."

She thought that one over for a moment before telling me "If it was anyone but you, I'd cuff them right now."

I grinned again, and held my arms out before telling her "Sounds kind of kinky, but I'm game if you are!" - causing her to break into laughter before she leaned over to give me a kiss that I happily returned.

She watched as I finished loading all three of the magazines I had, and then put a loose round into the chamber of my pistol before loading it with one of the magazines. I cocked it, set the safety, and carefully holstered it before setting it on the table. The other two magazines followed the pistol, sliding into their pouches on the holster.

Finished, I eased my chair back, and Amy didn't hesitate to plant herself in my lap when I held my arms out to her. After a brief hug and kiss, we sat there holding each other for several minutes before Amy said "As nice as this feels, I still have company coming over. I need to clean up and get supper started."

She stood up, and I gave her a pat on the butt before asking "Is there anything I can help with?"

She grinned and said "Yeah, you could help with a shower. After that, just get yourself something to drink and stay out of my kitchen!"

I stood up, too, and grabbed my pistol and ammo before following her back into the bedroom - where we 'helped' each other undress before heading in for a mutual shower.

Dried and freshly clothed, I did as I was told: I grabbed a beer from the fridge and parked myself in the living room to watch the evening news. I was only mildly surprised to hear that one of the stories was the death of a drug gang member after an attempted killing of an FBI agent. When she heard that announcement, Amy came out of the kitchen long enough to watch the segment with me, kiss me when it was done, and disappear again.

As it got closer to 7:00, the smells coming out of her kitchen were enough to make me think about investigating them despite her warnings to keep out.

A few minutes before the appointed time, Amy and I both heard the doorbell ring. She immediately headed for the door, but I gestured for her to wait before I headed for the bedroom - and she did, until she saw me reappear with my pistol. I stayed in the doorway, pistol ready, while she answered the door after looking out through the peephole. She opened it then, to let Erika and Abby in. Both of them looked over to where I was standing, Abby slightly confused to see me with my pistol in hand - but Erika smiled, and nodded in approval. When no one followed them in, I put my pistol in its holster, then on a small table.

Only then did I take the time to look over the two of them. Abby had opted for the casual look: faded blue jeans hugged her legs as they did an excellent job of molding to the curves of her small, obviously firm, ass. She was wearing a blouse that revealed an equally firm, but tanned, stomach as it followed the shape of her small bust. I wasn't quite sure if I was seeing the darkness of her nipples behind the material, or not - their location was a certainty, though, since they tented the material slightly. Over the blouse, she was wearing a long, loose vest; when she turned, the way it hung told me that she had her holstered pistol at the small of her back.

For her part, Erika had opted to go *slightly* more formal. Instead of jeans, she was wearing slacks, though they did just as good a job of emphasizing her female shape. Erika's blouse was more modest, but didn't leave any doubt that her bust was a bit fuller than Abby's, and apparently, just as firm. What appeared to be a light sweater served to cover - but didn't really conceal - the weapon on her hip.

Amy offered them a tour of the place, which both accepted; before they got too far, though, I asked if they wanted anything to drink and listed their choices. Both said that beer sounded good, and I went to get it while Amy showed them around. Back in the living room, Amy told us that supper was almost ready before disappearing into the kitchen again.

The three of us sat there chatting until, a few minutes later, Amy came in to tell us it was ready. We went in to find that she'd prepared a nice meal of roast beef and all the fixings. All of us tucked into it, discovering that it tasted as good as it looked; Amy blushed slightly when all of us complimented her on it. When we were done, we all helped to clear the table and put things away, despite Amy's protests.

When we'd all found seats in the living room again, it was Erika that got conversation started again by telling me "Dan, I've been thinking about it all afternoon, and I'm still amazed that something as simple as tripping the safety on that shotgun was enough to get you moving like that. Remembering that I'm here to try to learn from you, is there **anything** you can tell about what happened or what was going on in your mind or whatever?"

As all three of them watched me, I thought it over. They waited patiently as I ran through what had happened in my mind, and got my thoughts in order.

I started by telling her "The first thing I can think of to tell you is obvious: I'm *military* trained. Think about how differently military and law enforcement operations are: when you send a G.I. into combat, he doesn't have much in the way of rules that he has to operate under - there's no Miranda warning in a combat zone, for example."

"Second, it's a question of **attitude**. When you go into a war zone, you've got to keep your wits and stay alert. Those that don't, DIE. Like I told you, I'm wearing a bulletproof vest and carrying a sidearm - my gut KNOWS I'm in 'combat', to some degree; it's not just intellectual, or some abstract concept. And that brought up a lot of reflexes and skills and other things that I spent YEARS learning and developing. When you're in a combat zone, you don't necessarily have the time or luxury of calling for backup - something happens, you have to *deal* with it."

Erika and Amy were both nodding in understanding; Abby was paying attention, but only seemed accepting of what I was telling them - she simply didn't have the experience to understand it.

Erika asked me "Is there anything you can suggest that would help our agents?"

I thought a moment before telling her "Like I said, a lot of this is just attitude. If you can, try running your agents through some kind of combat training. It doesn't have to be with real weapons, but there have to be real consequences."

"What do you mean?" Amy asked.

"For example: I went through your combat range - but none of the targets ever shot back. Change it so that people going through it run the risk of being shot with something like a paintball gun, and see what happens. Add some real-life obstacles: dust and smoke, unsteady or noisy footing, dim lighting, that kind of thing. Toss in some 'trigger' events, like safeties going off or rounds being chambered. Maybe even fire a few blanks or even live rounds to keep things interesting. I know you do training for different situations; don't just stop them when someone makes a mistake - drive your point home with a sledgehammer, if you have to: actually SHOOT them with something like a paintball gun. It hurts, but isn't lethal; you'll be surprised at how fast people learn to respond!"

I could see the lights going on in Erika's mind, and even Amy's, as they thought about what I'd just told them.

It was Abby that got me going on something else when she asked "What about the druggies we're after?"

"Scuse my language, but fuck 'em. They know drugs are illegal. They're using force and violence to get their way; they shouldn't be surprised when the same tactics are used against them - not just by other gangs, but law enforcement, too. If it's going to be a 'war on drugs', then by-god wage WAR. Don't force the courier planes down and put the pilots in jail; just shoot the pukes out of the air and go looking for the next one. Don't just go after the dealers and suppliers, nail the damn USERS, too. As long as there's demand, someone's going to supply it."

It was Amy that said "It sounds like you aren't much for the war on drugs."

"I'm not. More because that it isn't really a war, than anything else. It's a typical government foul-up: come up with a slightly catchy slogan, throw some money at it, and call it good. As far as I'm concerned, if they're not really serious about making it a WAR, then legalize the stuff, and be done with it."

Erika looked at me, surprised, and said "Maybe I'm wrong, but I get the idea that you aren't necessarily against drugs."

"You're right, I'm not **necessarily** against drugs. I don't care what people want to shoot, snort, smoke, or rub into their bellybuttons - as long as they don't do it in a way that puts me or my family in danger. Up until the 1930's, marijuana and cocaine usage were legal. Shucks, even Coca-Cola started out as a cough medicine with a cocaine base. Some used, some didn't, but there wasn't much in the way of fuss about it, and damn little crime associated with it. That all changed when it became illegal - prices went up, and folks went into the business of filling demand. Same thing as when they declared Prohibition - most of the big Mafia families got their start running booze, and expanded from there when Prohibition ended. Now the same thing is happening with the druggies, except now there's more money in it - mostly because of the half-assed 'war on drugs', which primarily serves to keep profits up."

"But drugs are ILLEGAL." Abby tried to argue.

"Sure. And so was that beer you're drinking, during Prohibition. Legality aside, what's the difference between somebody going home and drinking a beer or martini; and them going home to smoke a joint, or do a line of coke?"

She looked at me as though I'd just proved myself to be an alien life form, and I told her "Abby, I can't think of **anything** against drugs that isn't already a reason not to use alcohol, either. What consequence of using drugs in a bad way wouldn't be just as bad if it was alcohol, instead? Suppose some guy driving a car hits a kid while he's stoned. Would the kid be any less dead or injured if the guy was 'just' drunk?"

Erika looked at me strangely, and asked "Then why are you here, helping us?"

"Because the maggots we're after have killed people. Because they're pushing the stuff to kids that are no more mature about dope and coke than they are about beer or liquor. If you'd called me about some guy with a pot patch in his back yard that he grew ONLY for his own use, I'd have told you I was too busy or something."

Abby tried one more time, telling me "But people ABUSE drugs!"

I just looked at her and asked "Is there any reason to think there are actually any more people ABUSING drugs than there are ABUSING alcohol? Or even tobacco? Hell, there are teenage girls that abuse **laxatives** - do you want to bust them, next?"

Amy asked "So you're not against drug use?"

"No, I said that I'm not **necessarily** against it. I think of drugs the way I do alcohol: some folks can use a little, and they're fine. Others get even a taste of it, and it's all over. I'm sitting here, drinking a beer. If someone else wants to sit somewhere and take a hit off a joint, that's their business. But the minute, the **SECOND**, that either one of us uses too much of our chosen vice, then we become dangerous, if not to others, then at least to ourselves. Take a hit of a joint, you're relaxed. Drink a beer, you're relaxed. Smoke the whole joint at once, you're stoned. Drink the whole six-pack at once, you're drunk. It's the same thing, only different."

"You sound pretty open-minded about that kind of stuff." Erika observed.

"Probably. I drink beer responsibly. If someone else wants to smoke dope, snort coke, or rub blue mud on themselves, and they do it responsibly, I'm fine with it. I've got my hands full being in charge of me; I don't have any interest in telling other folks what they should do, as long as whatever it is isn't hurting me or mine. Good sense and morality **can't** be legislated, no matter how much Congress tries."

"You don't sound too impressed with the government, either!" Amy laughed.

"I'm not, really", I answered, continuing "I tend toward having as little government as we can get by with, and keeping it on a short leash. I'm in favor of term limits - *including* my own congresscritters. It was the writer P. J. O'Rourke that said 'Giving money and power to government is like giving whiskey and car keys to teenage boys.'; I haven't seen anything yet that makes a liar out of him."

All three of them smiled at that, and the conversation changed over to more casual subjects. The three of them took turns telling each other how they'd gotten to where they were in the Bureau, and after a little prodding, I let them convince me to tell them a little about myself, too - stuff that wasn't in my Army records.

When it got late, Erika and Abby decided that it was time for them to head home.

Over the next few weeks, I had plenty to do. Most of my time was spent going through and analyzing the data from the Cartelita hard drive - but Abby did her share to make sure I didn't get bored by doing 'just' that. I held a few 'classes' for the local tech people, who proved to be pretty sharp - they knew what they didn't know, and weren't bashful about asking questions, or having me explain things they didn't understand. Amy approved, and the head of the tech department readily accepted, my offer to take some of them - one at a time - into The Room to demonstrate some of the techniques I'd told them about. I also noticed that Erika and Abby both seemed to be watching me a lot, and that Abby seemed even more eager to help than was really necessary; but I just let it pass, figuring that it was just the novelty of the situation having an effect on them.

Abby also got me together with the lead agents in the investigation, where it was MY turn to ask for help in understanding the how and why of what they were doing. With my fresh perspective, and a Machiavellian mind, I was able to suggest a couple of things that they seemed to think were genuinely good ideas.

It was Erika, though, that had the idea to get me and the lead FBI investigators together with the local Police Department for a meeting. When it started, there was a little tension on both sides, caused by a traditional 'rivalry' between police and the Bureau; I didn't have the time or patience for that kind of nonsense, and made it clear that the **real** bad guys were the Cartelita members. By virtue of having actually taken out a member of the Cartelita, the local P.D. decided that I wasn't "an effete suit-wearing snob whose shit don't stink" - as one of the cops described the FBI - and would probably make a good cop. But by carrying their credentials, the FBI people figured that I couldn't **possibly** be one of "Mayberry's finest", as they thought of the local police department.

By the time the meeting was over, both sides had decided that the other wasn't really all *that* bad, and were actually starting to work together. The cops were understanding how the information they were collecting fit into the investigation the FBI was running, and the FBI people understood that the cops were doing locally what the FBI was trying to do nationally. With everyone working from the same book, and playing nice with each other,

the meeting ended on significantly better terms than it had started. In the days following the meeting, the two sides started exchanging information - hesitantly, at first; but as each side demonstrated their good will, bonds of trust started to develop.

That trust even extended to letting the FBI know, one Monday morning, when the police managed to capture one of the lower-level Cartelita members over the previous weekend. Amy asked if I wanted to go with her and some of the other agents when they went to interrogate him. I accepted, and stood behind the mirrored window during the process. The character they'd caught wasn't all that bright - but street-smart enough to keep his mouth shut, except for telling them he knew his rights.

In fact, every time someone asked him something, his response was to say something along the lines of "I know my legal rights - I don't have to tell you shit." It happened so often, that it gave me an idea. After I pulled Amy off to the side and told her what I had in mind; she got together with the police to talk to them about it. They were agreeable, and they and Amy each called their respective legal authorities.

It wasn't until the next day that we got approval to try my idea. Abby called the local Army National Guard unit and managed to talk to the Commanding Officer - who was agreeable, but needed authorization. Amy got Erika to help by getting word up the line in the FBI, which made an official request for assistance from the Army. The Army was more than willing to approve it, and by mid-afternoon, I was entering the Guard's Commanding Officer's office.

"Colonel Richardson? Dan Andrews." I introduced myself.

"A pleasure, Mr. Andrews. Or should that be Sergeant Andrews?" he answered, with a smile.

"Just 'mister', Sir, but Dan would be better" I replied.

He grinned, and said "From the tone and speed of the orders I got, I don't think for a minute that it's 'just' Mister. I've had a little time to learn something about you, Dan; I've still got friends in the high places, and they were able to give me a little background. Just exactly what can I do for you?"

"I just need to borrow some used fatigues, if you have them."

"What's on your mind?"

"We're going to pull a scam on a druggie. Me, the FBI, and the local police, that is. With your help, of course."

"What do you need with the fatigues, then?" he asked.

"I'll lay it out for you, Colonel. I just need to look military, but without any rank or other insignia. Kind of 'black op' looking, if you will; my plan is to scare the bejeezus out of a druggie they caught. You'll get all the gear back, of course."

He nodded, and said "That we can do. We keep our used stuff for giveaway to local homeless, so we've got plenty of hats, shirts, pants, and even boots you can use. You won't even have to wash any of it; it's all clean. C'mon, we'll get you fixed up."

A half hour later, I had a uniform I hadn't thought I'd ever wear again - slightly faded camouflage uniform, boots, and cap. None of it had any kind of insignia, but the places where it had been were visible to anyone that looked. From the spots on the sleeves, I knew that they'd even found a shirt that had previously belonged to another Sergeant. As we were getting me outfitted, I told the Colonel and his supply sergeant what the plan was - both of them thought it was both terrific, and highly amusing. The Colonel even went so far as to fix me up with a web belt, holster, and ammo pouches for my pistol.

I assured them that I'd have the stuff back to them the next day; the Colonel laughed, and said "A decorated Delta Force Sergeant? Hell, you've got more right to that uniform than anyone else I can think of. Keep it, if you like; I'd rather give it to someone that's earned the right to wear it."

The supply sergeant looked surprised when he heard that I was a vet, and asked "You were Special Forces?"

I admitted that I was, and the Colonel added "Silver Star, two Bronze, two Purple Hearts, and a few others. He helped get the Delta Force off the ground."

The supply sergeant looked me over with a new respect, and said "Sir? If you'd like, I'd be more than happy to get your uniform straightened out tonight - so's you look more official, like: block the hat, shine the boots, and all that." Blocking the hat was to wash and starch it, so that it held its shape.

"I don't want to trouble anyone, Sarge" I replied.

"No trouble, sir. Be my pleasure, in fact. What you're gonna do with that doper, and you bein' Special Forces and all, well - I just want to do my part, too."

I could see that he really was serious about wanting to help, and I accepted his offer. I didn't bother offering to pay him for it or anything; I knew if I did, he'd just be insulted. Instead, I offered what I knew WOULD be acceptable to him.

"Colonel, I don't think anyone would mind if you watched while I do my act. And I think the Sergeant here would like to know how it went, too."

Both of them seemed pleased at the idea, and readily accepted. The Sergeant excused himself to get started on my uniform, and the Colonel and I went back to his office. Once

there, he had an idea that sounded like icing on the cake for my plan; I called Amy to let her know how things had gone, and tell her about the Colonel's suggestion. A few minutes later, she called back to let me know that his suggestion was approved, and how we should do it.

The next morning, Amy dropped me off so that I was at the Guard offices a couple minutes before the time the Colonel and I had agreed on. I was met by the supply Sergeant, who led me back to where my uniform was waiting. I changed, and made my way to the Colonel's office - saluting him as I entered. He didn't even seem to recognize me for a second, then did a double-take before saying "Oh, yeah. I think that's going to work just *fine!*" with a smile.

Together, we went out and got into one of the Guard vehicles - his suggestion for scamming the Cartelita member I was going to see. When we got to the police station, we found a uniformed officer holding a spot for us. The Colonel quickly filled the space, and the two of us went up to join Amy, a few FBI agents, and some of the local police outside the interrogation room.

We again went over **exactly** what the limits were about interrogating prisoners, and then it was show time. The rest of them watched from behind the one-way glass as I entered the interrogation room.

The character was sitting in a chair behind a table. He looked up when I came in, surprised to see a different uniform than he'd expected.

I studiously made notes on the clipboard I'd borrowed, ignoring him, for a couple of minutes - letting the curiosity and tension build in him a little.

I finally spoke, asking him "Your name is Charles Montague?"

"Yeah, that's me, man. Why?"

I ignored the question, and scribbled on the form on the clipboard before asking him to verify his birth date. He did, and wanted to know what was going on. I didn't pay any attention as I wrote some more. Next was his height, then his weight. When he verified that, I let him hear me mutter "That'll change soon enough." He asked what I meant, and I just said "Oh, nothing." - then wrote some more notes.

Speaking as if to myself, I 'verified' a few of his more obvious physical characteristics: eye color, hair color, and so on. Finally, he was nervous and frustrated enough to ask "Hey, man, what the fuck is goin' on here?"

I looked up at him in feigned surprise, and told him "I'm just making sure who you are."

"Why?"

"We can't be taking the wrong guy, now, can we?" I asked, in a perfectly reasonable voice.

"Takin' who where?"

"You. With us."

"What, you some kinda cop? You ain't scarin' me!"

"Do I **look** like a cop?" I asked. Technically, I had to declare myself as FBI - if asked for identification. My plan was not to be asked. The rules said I couldn't outright LIE to him - but they didn't say anything about not letting him jump to wrong conclusions. It was a very fine line I planned to walk - thus all the consultation with authority figures and legal experts.

He thought that one over for a minute as I continued making notations on my clipboard. He finally interrupted me to ask "So what's goin' on, man?"

It was the opening I'd been waiting for.

"You've heard about the 'war on drugs' haven't you?" I asked.

He snickered, and answered "Yeah, I've **heard** about it. Haven't seen it, though."

His amusement ended quickly enough when I asked "Ever stop to think about what would happen if they decided to make it an actual WAR?" With me standing there in an 'obviously' military uniform, the question didn't strike him as being academic.

He looked at me, doubtfully, and I said "Now, just imagine how things might change if was an actual WAR. Wars are fought by soldiers. Soldiers don't have to worry about any of that Miranda warning stuff. Soldiers just find the bad guys, and DEAL with 'em. If the bad guy wants to give up, that's fine - saves a bullet. But if he **doesn't** want to give up, then that's fine, too. Either way, he's not a problem any more."

"You don't look like no soldier. Where's all that stuff that's supposed to be on your uniform?"

"Technically, I'm not IN the Army any more." I answered. Strictly speaking, that was true. Absent rank and insignia, what I was wearing didn't constitute a 'uniform' in a military sense. What it *looked* like to a druggie civilian wasn't my problem.

"So what're YOU gonna do?" he asked, hesitantly. He was definitely losing control.

"I'm just making sure you're the right guy. Somebody else would be taking care of you." Ultimately, the FBI would. But I wasn't obliged to tell HIM that.

"But you can't DO that!"

"Hey, it's a war on drugs. You're the enemy. The local cops get first shot at you. If you don't want to talk to them, then somebody else gets you."

"Whaddya mean?"

"I mean you're going to talk. If it isn't to the cops, then it'll be to someone else."

"What, you do that brainwashing shit? Or torture, or whatever?"

"I told you - not ME."

"But that's against the law!"

"Yeah, it's against the law for COPS to do it."

He thought that over before asking "I thought there was some kinda law or convention about doing that kinda shit."

"Oh, you mean the Geneva Convention?" He nodded, and I went on "As far as I know, that really only applies if you're a citizen of a country that signed it. Of course, I'm not a lawyer, so I could be wrong." And probably was. So?

"I'm an American! Didn't we sign that Geneva thing you said?"

"Sure. But the thing is, you're part of a drug gang. I don't think your gang signed it, did they?"

He was visibly shaken at that idea, and didn't say anything as I made a few more notes on my clipboard.

He seemed to have some of his old confidence back when he said "I think you're just bullshitting me!"

I just looked up at him and answered "Okay" before making a few more notations.

My apparent indifference to his declaration seemed to shake him up more than anything else. He interrupted me again to tentatively declare "Nah, this is some scam you're trying to run on me."

I looked up again, and said "Haven't you heard about anybody just disappearing? Guys that just aren't around any more?"

He thought that one over for a little bit, and then said "That happens all the time. Guys get dead, some of 'em get busted."

I just grinned, and said "Yeah. Happens all the time, doesn't it?", then made a couple more notes. I let him hear me say to myself "Okay, that's got it" before I looked up and said "Somebody will be here to get you, probably in the next couple of days. A word of advice: save yourself some trouble and don't fight it."

He was starting to sweat by then, and asked "Is this it? I mean, I gotta go with... them?"

I told him "Like I said, cops get first crack at you. You talk to them, they keep you. They think you're holding out on them, they give you to us. Look, I gotta go - I've gotta get my jeep before I get a parking ticket." - and left.

Outside, I joined the others - who were being quietly amused at the change in his attitude. We waited a couple of minutes, and watched as he went to the caged window of the interrogation room, and saw the Colonel's jeep parked on the street outside. A minute later, one of the cops signaled a uniformed officer to take him back to his cell.

When he was gone, Amy and the detective in charge of the police investigation all but laughed as they talked over what they thought the results of my 'visit' would be. Even the Colonel seemed amused at what had gone on.

It was Amy that asked what I'd been writing. All of them - including the Colonel - broke out into laughter when I showed them: I'd filled out a missing person report on him.

The next morning, Amy caught me as I was taking a break from The Room - telling me that the police had called to let her know that our little friend seemed to have had a change of heart: he was telling them anything and everything they wanted to know. Their biggest problem was getting him to slow down so they could take good notes. He wasn't high enough on the food chain to provide them with any critical information, but he *was* helping fill in some of the blanks in the organizational structure; that, along with the information he was providing for his own group, was going to be enough to give the cops plenty to work with.

In turn, I called the Colonel, and let him know how it had turned out; he was amused and pleased at the results, and he assured me that he'd tell the supply sergeant, too.

With the news from Amy, Abby apparently decided that a small celebration was called for, and invited all of us over to her place the next evening, Friday, for a small cookout. With all four of us together, the time was easily settled.

I took the opportunity to ask Amy if there was any problem if I got some outside assistance. She asked what I wanted to do, and I explained that I'd finally gotten the

disassembled code in the proper order: I wanted to send some of it to the companies that sold commercial encryption software, to see if it matched up; if it did, then I'd know what software was used, and would have another piece of the puzzle.

"How will that help?" she asked.

"If they were using commercial software, and I know which program, then I'll know what possible encryption algorithms they were using. It might be something as simple as a substitution cipher, or something as complex as elliptic curve. There are a lot of choices, and none of them work exactly the same: Vigenere, Caesar, public key, Blowfish, Twofish, DES, Triple-DES, there's even a new one discovered by some girl in Ireland. Whatever it is, if I know what the choices are, then I won't have to waste time trying stuff that doesn't apply."

She nodded her understanding, and after I reassured her that I wouldn't be sending any of the actual data, she approved it.

Abby and Erika both took their cues from that, and began making phone calls, starting with the companies that I knew about and adding others as they learned about them. In short order, they had a couple dozen companies signed on - eagerly, and at no charge. It didn't take me long to load up some floppy disks with some of the disassembled code, and we got everything out to them by overnight delivery.

By late the next afternoon, we'd heard back from all the companies that we'd sent the code to. The last calls to come in were from two of the largest, and they let us know that it was their software being used. They went on to voluntarily provide us with a wealth of information: what encryption algorithms they used, expected ranges of password or key lengths, and so on. Some of what they gave us was clearly proprietary, but they didn't hesitate to do it. I took the time to call both companies and thank them for their help, and the information they'd given us - and to assure them that their company secrets would be protected. Both said that it was their pleasure, and that if I had ANY questions or ANY problems to let them know - they would be more than happy to assist in any way they could.

Our little get-together at Abby's home that evening was going to be more than just a morale building event - we all felt like we actually had something to celebrate.

Amy drove us to Abby's place - the end place in a building of four two-story units. Even from the street, I could see that there was an open area between her building and the one behind it.

After I rang the doorbell, Amy and I were both surprised when it was Erika that answered the door and invited us in. She responded to the expressions on our faces by saying "Abby and I got to talking, and she said if I wanted to get out of the hotel, I was welcome

to stay with her. We get along pretty good, and the hotel was just too much like a hotel, so I took her up on it. C'mon, I'll show you the place - it's pretty nice."

Downstairs was the kitchen, living room, a small dining area, and a half bathroom. The living room sported a sliding glass door out to a partially covered and screened patio. Upstairs were two fair-sized bedrooms, separated by a bathroom. Throughout, the decoration was feminine, but without being 'frilly' - light and airy, the place felt a lot more open and spacious than it really was.

Erika finally led us out to the patio, where Abby had a grill fired up and cooking a number of steaks. She welcomed Amy with a hug, and granted me a kiss on the cheek before turning back to keep an eye on the steaks. Erika disappeared for a little bit, reappearing with cold sodas for all of us. She, Amy, and I sat there chatting with Abby while the steaks were cooking. When they were done, Erika left us to return with baked potatoes and corn on the cob. The meal went quickly enough, despite all the talking we did with each other. Actually, it was mostly Amy and Erika telling Abby about the mind game I ran on the drug gang member - causing her to stop and laugh several times as they described the conversation between us, and his reactions. Even after the meal was over, the four of us sat around the patio table, chatting about all manner of things.

After a while, Erika got up to take the dishes into the kitchen; shortly after she left, Amy excused herself, as well. Abby and I were sitting there quietly when she suddenly told me "You know, I'm starting to fall more than a little bit in love with you."

She must have seen the surprise on my face, because she went on to tell me "It's been a couple of things that made me realize it. First, when that druggie tried to kill you, the FIRST thing you did was push me and Erika out of the way. If you hadn't, both of us would have been caught by the blast - and easy for him to pick off after he got you. I don't think it's unreasonable to figure that you almost certainly saved our lives. But since then, you haven't said a word about it - no bragging, no reminding us about it, nothing. You just kept doing your job, like nothing happened.

"Working with you these past few weeks, I understand now just how **smart** you are; it's really amazing sometimes to listen to you talking about things. It's like you remember everything you read or see or hear, and you're always trying to see how all of it fits together. But even as smart as you are, you're still so patient with people when you have to explain things to them. And it still amazes me how friendly you are with people. I know I made some mistakes at first, but once you knew **I** knew I'd made them, you let them slide. I know that you **TRUST** me - and Amy and Erika, too. Erika told me that you beat Al on your self-defense exam; I mean that you really beat him **bad**. But she said that when it was over, **YOU** thanked *him*, and shook hands with him.

"There's stuff you've said that I don't really agree with - but I still respect what you said, the same way I respect **YOU**. I've seen how much authority and influence you have in our offices, but you don't throw your weight around like a lot of other people would. That's something that makes **ALL** of us regular agents respect you, and appreciate how much

you're doing for us. Erika told me how you got our people and the P.D. talking, too, by reminding everyone who the REAL bad guys are; and how you were the one that got us and them talking, and sharing information.

"But it's not just that stuff - the brave and smart and friendly and all that. It's the way you bring all of it together; the way it makes you one person. I've talked to other people about it, and all of us - men and women - agree about something: you make us want to be like you. If I thought you would, and that Lucy wouldn't mind, I'd want to take you to bed with me."

Abby had spoken slowly, and softly; she was only about halfway through her little speech when Amy, then Erika, showed up in the doorway behind her. Both of them simply stood there, listening to her in silence. So it was that both of them heard the last sentence that she uttered to me.

Amy was in the doorway behind Abby, and Erika was standing behind Amy; I was the only one to see the surprised expressions on both of their faces when Amy finally spoke, saying "I expect that he would, Abby. And I don't doubt for a moment that Lucy would be fine with it."

Abby whirled around in surprise and shock before saying "You heard?"

"Yes, I heard."

"Me, too", Erika answered.

Even from behind, I could see Abby's ears turn dark as she blushed furiously.

Amy didn't seem to notice, or care - she only reiterated her previous statement "Abby, I don't think you heard me. I think Dan WOULD be willing. And I have no doubt that Lucy wouldn't mind."

"Wh- Why do you say that?" Abby asked.

"Because she's fine with him making love with me - the same way Tom is."

I could only think that Abby was looking at her in disbelief; it was Erika that said "Abby, I think you can believe her. What she just said explains something I saw at her place."

Abby's head moved slightly, and I heard her ask "What did you see?"

"I saw Dan's suitcase in Amy's bedroom. At first, I thought it might just be one that her husband hadn't taken. But when she showed us the other bedroom, and there wasn't a suitcase in it, I figured that it was probably Dan's, and he was staying in HER bedroom. It wasn't any of my business, so I didn't say anything."

Abby seemed to think that one over as Amy and Erika came out onto the patio to take a seat with us at the table. She nodded slightly in acceptance; as though Erika had given her reason to review a mental recording that had validated what Erika had just told her.

When all of us were seated and facing each other again, Abby looked at Amy and asked "You've had sex with him?"

Amy smiled, and answered "No. But I **have** made *love* with him. Believe me, it's a world of difference!"

"And Lucy knows?"

Amy laughed, and said "Yeah, she knows. It was her idea!"

"And Tom is okay with it?"

"Sure. It was TOM that told ME he expected Dan to sleep with me while he was here. His exact words, and I quote, were 'There's no sense in both of you sleeping by yourselves and getting lonely when there's another perfectly good human being in the next room.'"

Abby looked from Amy, to me, to Amy, and back again. From the expression on her face, I knew that she still wasn't quite ready to believe it.

"Amy, if you want, I can prove to you that what Amy said is true - at least, the part about me and her and Lucy." I said.

"How?" she asked.

"I want you to listen to a phone conversation."

"What, you recorded one?"

"Nope. I want you to listen to the talk I have when I call Lucy from here, tonight, now."

Abby didn't move for a moment; Erika surprised all of us by being the one to get Abby's cordless phone and set it on the table in front of me.

I dialed the number, and let Abby start listening as it rang. It was Robyn that answered "Hello. Andrews residence."

"Hi, short stuff. Is mom home?"

Abby heard Robyn's delighted squeal before she answered "Yeah. She's up taking a bath, though. She had an extra-hard workout at the gym, and wanted to relax a little after supper. Is everything okay?"

"Everything's fine. You remember Abby?"

"Sure! She's the really cute one that showed us around their lab and stuff. Why?"

"I'm at her house now, with Amy. She invited us over for supper, and there's something I need to talk to mom about. Would you take a phone to her?"

"Yeah, just a sec."

It was closer to a couple minutes, but we eventually heard Lucy's voice on the line:
"Hello? Dan?"

"Hi, honey."

"Hi, yourself. What's up?"

"You remember Abby? The one that showed the girls around the lab while I was busy that day?"

"Of course. Why?"

"She invited us over for supper, and I'm at her place with Amy and the other agent I told you about."

"The good-looking brunette? From their headquarters?"

"That's the one."

"And you're calling me because... ?"

"After supper, Abby told me that she thinks she's in love with me, and that she'd like to take me to bed."

"So what are you doing on the phone? Or are you calling FROM her bed?"

"Nope, not there. She's having trouble believing that you wouldn't mind if I did - even after Amy told her a little about us."

We heard Lucy sigh, and say "Yeah, I suppose I can understand that. Do I need to talk to her? Tell her myself that it's okay?"

"I think so - she's here listening as we talk."

There was a slight pause, and Lucy said "Abby, I'm really fine with it. You can borrow him for a little while, just like Amy does. Hell, if the other woman - what's her name? Erika? - wants him, she's welcome to him, too."

It was a very surprised Abby that asked "You really don't mind?"

We heard Lucy laugh before she said "Not even a little bit. He makes me happier than I thought I ever could be. If you want some of him, you're welcome to him - he'll still be coming home to me and Robyn. I **trust** him. I already know that Robyn and I are more important to him than anyone or anything else in the world; that's why I say you're only borrowing him. When you two - or three, or whatever - are done, I know he'll still have more love for me and Robyn that we'll ever need. So go ahead and enjoy yourself."

With that, Abby seemed satisfied, and pulled her head away from the phone. Lucy and I talked another minute or two before we ended our conversation. Since we'd talked just the night before - I called home every other night - there wasn't much we needed to say, other than for us to say that we loved each other.

When I closed the connection, Amy asked "Well?"

Absently, Abby said "She told me straight out that I was welcome to 'borrow' him, if I wanted. She even said she didn't mind if Erika did, too."

Only after she'd said it did Abby realize that she'd said something that Erika might not appreciate; when she looked, it wasn't clear if Erika hadn't heard her, or simply didn't mind the offer.

Abby was still in her own world when Amy mischievously asked "So, Dan - Would you?"

"Would I what?"

"Make love with Abby."

That got Abby's attention, of course - causing her to blush furiously before I answered Amy's question "That depends."

Abby's curiosity got the better of her, and she couldn't help asking "Depends on what?"

"On why you wanted me to."

Abby looked surprised, and asked "What difference would it make?"

"If you wanted us to be together just to thank me for that afternoon, I'd say 'no'. You'd be doing it as a kind of payment, which is nothing more than a form of prostitution, as far as I'm concerned - and I have no interest in that kind of thing. If you did it because you liked what kind of person I am, then I'd say 'yes'."

Abby - and even Erika - looked at me in amazement. It was Erika that asked "You wouldn't have sex just because a woman thought she owed you something?"

It was Amy that explained to them "Dan doesn't JUST 'have sex'. With him, it's always about making LOVE; and like I said before, there's a *world* of difference. That's something he showed me the first time we were together. He doesn't have sex with a woman for the purpose of getting his rocks off; he'll only be with a woman like that if he really **cares** about her, if there's some kind of love and affection and respect. It's something he taught me, and that's why you keep hearing us referring to it as 'making love' - because that's what it is, with him; and with me, now."

Abby and Erika were both looking at me speculatively; but it was Abby that asked "Dan? Would you? Make love with me, that is?"

I looked into her eyes, and saw her sincerity; she'd meant all the things she'd told me. I could see that her motivation was her feelings for me, not any sense of duty or obligation for what had happened before.

"I would be honored", I told her.

With that, Erika excused herself, saying "I'm thinking I'm not needed here for this. I'm just going to make myself scarce."

Amy and I both thanked her for her company that evening; she just waved it off as she was leaving.

That seemed to cue Amy, as well, who told us "I expect I'm the third wheel here, too. Abby, I don't think you're going to be disappointed. Dan, give me a call when you've worn her out, and I'll be happy to come get you" - the last part with a wicked grin.

Abby looked at Amy as though not believing what she'd just said; Amy saw it, and told her "You're young enough that you **might** outlast him - but I wouldn't be willing to lay money on it."

Abby seemed somewhat dumfounded by Amy's statement, and sat quietly as the two of us watched her collect her things and head for the front door. Once she had the door open, Amy turned to give us a smile and small wave before closing it as she left.

With the two of us left alone, I could see that Abby didn't seem quite as sure of herself as she'd been when she told me that she loved me.

I took her hand in mine, and told her "It's okay, Abby. We've got all the time you want. You can even change your mind, and I'm not going to be hurt or offended. We've only really seen each other at the office; how about if we just sit here for a little while and talk, and learn a little more about each other?"

She nodded, apparently not trusting herself to speak, and I started telling her about myself - where I'd grown up, my childhood, and so on. I kept to 'neutral' subjects at first, to help her relax and get involved. We spent nearly two hours outside, just having a quiet,

pleasant talk with each other before she finally asked me about Lucy and Robyn and Sandra. I caught her up on what all had happened since the TechnoDynamics case, and finished up by asking her "And how about you? Any guy you're particularly interested in?"

"No, not really. I've got a couple of guy friends, but not a boyfriend."

"Why not? You're certainly a nice enough young lady - intelligent, outgoing, and attractive. I'd think you'd have to fight them off with a stick."

I got a grin out of her with that, before she told me "I think it's the guys I meet - so many of them seem so... well, **immature**. When they find out I'm in the FBI, it scares most of them off. The ones that stay after that either act like I'm some kind of personal challenge to them, or they're just turned on by the idea of a girl with a gun. None of them want to stick around after they figure out that I'm not just some bimbo with a badge and gun - that I'm really an agent for the **FBI**, and that I like my job."

I nodded, and told her "I can understand that. Just by virtue of being an FBI agent, you've shown that you're someone special: intelligent, brave, honest, dedicated, and whole lot more. The first thing they see about you is how pretty you are; when they find out that there's a real person underneath - and particularly one with more character and substance than they likely have - it's not something they know how to deal with. If you think about it, if you were anyone BUT an FBI agent, I'll bet you'd find most of them acceptable to some degree. But because you set higher standards for **yourself** to become an agent, you're holding the guys you meet to a higher standard, too - whether you realize it, or not."

"So what's the answer? Not be so picky?"

"That's one solution - but I don't think for a minute that you'd be happy with it. The other choice is to **recognize** that you're 'picky', and understand WHY."

"What do you mean?"

I thought for a moment, and asked her "Have you ever bought something from one of those super-discount stores? The ones that always have the lowest price for about anything?"

"Sure."

"Did it break?"

"Of course. That stuff is so cheap!"

"Did you go back and buy another one from the same place, or did you go find something better?"

"I went and got something better."

"If you aren't willing to settle for flimsy cheap stuff in your home, why would you be willing to settle for the human equivalent in your LIFE?"

She sat there for a couple of minutes, blinking at me as she thought that one through, before she said "Go on."

"The same way you wouldn't keep buying junk in stores, don't keep spending your time with junk people. I expect you know what kind of people you like to be around. All you have to do is be just as 'picky' about what kind of people you let into your life. Hold other people to the same standards you hold yourself to; accept or reject them on YOUR terms, not theirs. If someone doesn't respect you for who and what you are, there's no reason to waste time with them - there are plenty of people in the world that CAN see what's good about you. Think about this: the kind of people you like to HAVE around will also be the kind of people that want to BE around you."

As she was mulling that one over, I got up to take our cold coffee cups into the kitchen, and return with a couple of sodas. She thanked me, and asked "How do I know them?"

"I'll bet you can spot a cop, or another FBI agent, or some other law enforcement officer, can't you? And they can spot you?"

She nodded, and I went on "It's the same thing, only different. Think back to the first time you met different people, and look at what it was that you liked or didn't like, and what you first thought about them. Then think about how your relationship with them turned out. If you will consciously and consistently apply your standards to the people you meet, I can promise you that you'll never again have a difficult relationship with someone. It might not be what you want or like, but as long as you're honest about it, it won't be **difficult**."

"What about the people that try to be something they aren't?"

"What about them? They're easy enough to spot. Like I said, the whole thing is to be conscious and consistent - the fakers can't do that. They may **talk** a good game, but when it gets right down to it, they can't **DO**."

"And what about sex?"

"Sex is what the animals of the field do. If your heart isn't involved, then all you've got is prostitution - whether it's for cash, security, status, or whatever. Love can be anything from 'I *like* you' to affection to 'spend my life with you'. People - with hearts, and minds, and SOULS if you wish - make LOVE. To my way of thinking, the difference between love and lust isn't a sharp line; it's more like a gradual transition in the importance of one or the other. At one end, you've got raw lust - sex for sex' sake. No love involved, it's just

the process of making more of the species. At the other end, its pure love - physicality is of no consequence."

"What do you have with Lucy? And Amy?"

"What I have with Amy is strong affection and physical attraction. Lucy's happiness is the most important thing in the world to me - whether we make love, or not. Amy knows that - and she accepts it, because that's how she feels about Tom. That's why Lucy said that you were only borrowing me: you'll get my body - and even a piece of my heart, otherwise you wouldn't even get my body - but she knows that the little bit of my heart that you get will be insignificant, compared to what she has. And so you don't have to ask, yes, Tom and Lucy have been together, too."

"And me?"

"What I feel toward you is affection and attraction. The affection is because of the good things that I told you I know about you - your honesty, determination, courage, dedication, and all the rest. The attraction is simply in recognition of a very pretty young woman."

"I should believe that your affection is because of what's inside us, and not what we look like?"

"Yes, you **should** - because that's honestly why I find you attractive. Whether you do, or not, isn't up to me. But consider this: from a purely physical standpoint, Amy isn't the most attractive female that was on any of our protective details when we were here before. But it was Amy that I came into contact with, more than the rest; and so, I got to know her better - and learn what kind of person she is, inside. The affection I felt for her developed AFTER that. Do you think I would have a conversation like this with you when I first got here? Would you have made me the offer you did?"

She shook her head, and I went on "The same way your feelings about me changed as you got to know me, my feelings about Amy, and you, and even Erika, have changed as I've gotten to know all of you. The only difference has been that I know how, and why. And I've told you those things, tonight. How much of it you understand, how much of it you accept, how much of it you apply - those are up to you. That's why I told you that you could even change you mind about us being together: so you could decide **for yourself** what, if anything, you wanted us to do. I think you know by now that whatever you decide, I'll accept it without any kind of muss or fuss."

She smiled at me, and said "Yeah, that I **do** know - I've known it since the first day you were here. You don't try to force people. You just lay out for them why you think they should do something, and let them make up their own minds."

I smiled back, and stood up before collecting our soda cans. I took them into the kitchen and crumpled them before dropping them into the aluminum recycling bin Abby had.

After a pit stop, I wandered into the living room, where Erika was sitting in a chair, reading a book.

Surprised when she saw me walk in, she set it aside and looked up to ask me "Something wrong?"

"I don't think so", I answered, then continued "We've just been talking out there, and I think she's got a couple things she needs to think about. I'm just waiting for her to get them settled in her mind, is all."

Erika looked up at me, curious, and asked "What kind of things?"

"Oh, the usual. Love. Lust. Life. The Universe."

She grinned, and said "Oh, the **small** stuff. Love and lust, huh? I think I'd like to hear what you think about them, sometime. And I KNOW I want to hear what you think about Life. It must be really something if your wife is okay with you fooling around."

"Except what she knows is that I'm not just 'fooling'", I replied, calmly.

That visibly shocked her, but before she could say anything, Abby came into the living room and told me "Dan, I've been thinking about what you said - and I think you're right. Now I **know** I want to share my bed with you - and why."

It was Erika that spoke next, asking "So you're going to sleep with him?"

Erika and I were both surprised when Abby calmly looked at her and answered "Only after I make love with him."

An obviously shaken Erika asked her "What have you two been talking about? What has he done to you?"

Abby answered "We've been talking about what's important, and what isn't. I think Amy or Lucy could explain it to you. As for what he's done to me? Not as much as I hope he will."

With that, Abby took my hand, and turned to lead us toward the stairs - leaving a silent, VERY surprised Erika to sit watching us.

Once we'd entered Abby's bedroom, she quietly closed the door behind us before moving to stand in front of me. As she did, I removed my holstered pistol from its place at the small of my back and set it on her dresser.

She looked into my eyes as she told me "Everything you told me made sense - I understood it even as you were talking to me about it. But what really convinced me was something simple."

"What's that?" I asked.

"Every time you talked about Amy, or me, or Erika, you started out by telling me what you liked about us - our character and all of that. The LAST thing that you mentioned about us was our looks. I've seen what kind of person you are - and if those were the things that you mentioned first, then those are the things that you noticed first; and I know that those are the things that are most important to you."

"Well, yeah."

"See? That's what I mean - you just confirmed what I said, but you did it in such a matter-of-fact way that NOBODY could doubt that's just how you look at things. I was sure that you were being honest with me before, about what's important to you, and why you would make love with somebody; but the way you just answered me - well, it just put the final seal on things. Now, even more than before, I know I want you to teach me what it's like to *make love* ."

With that said, she reached forward and hesitantly pulled my head down a little bit so that she could kiss me. I put my hands on her hips, and kissed her back, with only as much enthusiasm and desire as she was showing me. My lips parted only when hers did; our tongues dueled in my mouth before hers. When the kiss finally broke, she was softly panting in obvious arousal; her face was slightly flushed from her excitement.

She took a couple of slow, deep breaths before she hesitantly said "I... I want to look at you... naked." - her voice barely louder than a whisper.

I smiled at her in reassurance, and reached up to start unbuttoning my shirt. She quickly put her hands on mine to stop me, saying "Let me."

She'd only gotten one button undone on my shirt before she realized that I had my vest on underneath it. She gave me a smile of approval, and quickly moved on to finish undoing the rest of the buttons. That accomplished, she let me help her slip it off my shoulders and down my arms before she carefully hung it on the back of a chair. With surprising speed and eagerness, she reached out and pulled the tabs on the hook-and-loop fasteners that kept the vest in place; she didn't need any help getting it off of me, and hung it on the back of the chair, too, over my shirt.

Naked from the waist up, I stood there patiently as she looked me over - her eyes meeting mine as she saw the few scars I had. She reached out to touch them, letting her fingertips trace their size and shape as she held her bottom lip between her teeth in apparent sympathy for the pain she knew I must have felt from the wounds.

Her hands moved all over my torso as she caressed every part of my skin she could reach. Only when she was satisfied with what her hands had told her about me did she let them move to her sides again.

Without hesitation, she knelt down to untie my shoes, and then slip them and my socks off my feet to put them next to the chair. She was still kneeling in front of me as I watched her hands - shaking slightly - move toward my waist. She held them there for a few seconds, as though anchoring herself, before moving them to my belt. She awkwardly unfastened it - her uncertainty telling me that this was something she hadn't done much before, if at all. When she reached for my waist again, I discretely pulled my stomach in a bit; leaving plenty of room for her fingers as she slowly unfastened my pants. The last obstacle was the zipper of my fly; I saw her hesitate briefly as she reached for it - but reach it she did, drawing it down slowly and carefully before she moved her hands to my waist again to slide my pants down my legs.

The eroticism of what she was doing had me semi-erect - which had the front of my shorts tented a bit. Again, her movements were slow, and again, she hesitated slightly before softly laying her hand on top of the bulge my genitals were making in my underwear. Just as I could feel the coolness of her hand, I knew that she could feel the heat she was bringing to my manhood - I saw her eyes widen slightly at her first contact.

She left her hand there for several long, wonderful seconds before she lifted her other arm to use both hands to slide my briefs off my hips. I heard her gasp slightly as my penis and balls popped free of the confines of my underwear - her eyes never left them as her hands guided my shorts to join my pants around my ankles.

I just stood there patiently as she reached up, one hand going around my penis as the other moved to cup my testicles. I knew that I wasn't appreciably longer or larger than average; but there seemed to be something about MY penis and MY balls that had her almost worshiping them as she knelt in front of me. It was fully a couple of minutes before she realized how focused she'd been on that part of me; I could see it as she gave a small shake of her head when her 'trance' ended. I could see her ears darken slightly as she blushed before she moved to remove my pants and shorts when I lifted each foot in turn. She carefully set them on the chair, where my shirt and vest would keep them company, before she moved to stand in front of me again.

She looked deep into my eyes, and seemed satisfied with what she saw in them - she reached up to again pull me into a kiss. As before, I let my hands rest on her hips; but this time, her hands were all over me: shoulders, chest, waist, hips, thighs, and back - all were re-explored by her wandering hands as she quickly led us to the intensity of our previous kiss, and then beyond.

When it ended, she pulled back from me a little; her face and what I could see of her shoulders and chest were tinged slightly with the blush of her arousal.

She reached up to the top button on the blouse she was wearing before stopping to ask me "Do you want to?"

I smiled, and replied "Go ahead. I never was any good at all those hooks and things."

She grinned back at me before letting her fingers continued their work. Calmly, deliberately, she went about the process of undoing the buttons on her blouse - and when she was done, she just as deliberately took it off, hanging it on the closet doorknob. When she turned back to face me, I could see that that she hadn't been wearing a bra under it - her breasts were each about the size of half a tangerine, generally cone-shaped, and capped with dark pink nipples (erect, and about the diameter of a wooden pencil) and areolas (puckered, about an inch in diameter).

Abby looked up at me, hesitantly - when she did, I could see that she was uncertain I would find her attractive. I quickly put her fears to rest, simply telling her "Beautiful"; she visibly relaxed and brightened with that single word.

Her next action was to slip off the sandals she'd been wearing; kicking them over to the general vicinity of where she'd hung her blouse. Satisfied with where they'd landed, she reached for her waist to unfasten, and then unzip, the denim shorts she was wearing. They hugged the curve of her hips and the globes of her ass as she started to slide them off; once they were past those two obstacles, they easily slid down her smooth, tanned legs to pool around her feet. She stepped out of them, and again kicked them in the direction of the other things she'd removed - and in the process, revealing how firm and muscular her legs were.

She stood still again, letting me look her over as she calmly waited for my reaction. Wearing only a pair of French-cut panties, her entire shape was clearly visible to me - and I delighted in it. Her body smoothly flowed into a trim waist, back out again to slender - but nicely curved - hips, then on down to her long, smooth legs. Her belly was smooth and flat, her abdomen displaying the faint paunch resulting from the extra internal organs that made her a woman. I could see very faint tan lines on her breasts; the pale areas caused by the cups of the bikini suits she obviously favored covered only half of each breast. Around her hips, I could see another tan line, and from the way it traced toward her pelvis, I didn't think that the bottom part of her suit did much more than cover her pubic area. She voluntarily turned to let me look at the back of her, revealing that the tan lines I'd seen around her hips met right above the crack of her delightfully shaped ass, then disappeared between its cheeks. When she was facing me again, she was less apprehensive than she'd been when she'd shown me her breasts - but I could still see a faint concern in her eyes.

I simply smiled at her, and nodded in approval at what I was seeing. She smiled in return, and with only a moment's hesitation, moved her hands to her waist to slip her panties off.

When her panties had joined her skirt and Abby had risen up again, I had a clear view of her pubic patch. Slightly darker than the hair on her head, it was only a little wider than the mound it covered, and extended only a couple of inches above her mons. I couldn't tell from just looking at it if that was the way it grew naturally, or if she kept it trimmed to allow for an obvious preference for skimpy bikini swimsuits.

What WAS obvious to me, though, was how thick and dense it was - unlike most women, with her it was barely possible to see the skin underneath, even at the edges of it; her cleft was completely concealed. Between her thighs, I could see where it parted slightly, revealing her arousal even more.

For her part, Abby could tell that I liked what I saw from the way my penis had become semi-erect. She smiled at the sight, and play-coyly asked "Is that for me?"

"If you want it", I teased.

"Oh, I *want* it, all right!" she declared, before moving to pull my head down for another kiss. As before, her hands were all over me while I simply moved mine to her waist again. When I didn't move them after a bit, she broke our kiss long enough to tell me "TOUCH me, dammit!" in a hoarse whisper. That was the encouragement I'd been waiting for, and I eased my hands up to cover her breasts - and feeling her nipples harden in my palms when I did. She moved closer, and I could feel her fleece pressing against me: soft to the touch, yet somehow firm, too.

Her breasts were only a little more than I could hold in my hands, but they were delightfully warm and firm to my touch. Using my fingertips, I mapped them, feeling the change in their texture when I got to her areolas. Hard and crinkled in her excitement, they led my fingers on to discover the hard pebbles of her erect nipples.

From her breasts, I let my hands drift downward to softly caress her back as I moved them toward the globes of her ass. As she felt my hands moving across her, I felt her shudder slightly under my touch. When I finally had her ass cheeks under my hands, I discovered that they were apparently constructed of a thin layer of warm, soft sponge rubber, with a foundation of harder rubber underneath; they were wonderfully soft to the touch, and delightfully firm when squeezed.

With my hands on her ass, Abby started to rhythmically press her pelvis against mine, and trying to capture my inflating penis between her thighs. When that didn't work, she stood on one leg, putting the calf of the other one against my ass as she tried to pull herself even closer to me. It also made for a dramatic increase in the clean, musky smell of her arousal.

Doing that, she opened herself up to me, and I let one hand slide between her thighs - slowly, to give her time to respond.

And respond she did: with a pleased moan into my mouth - where our tongues were dueling at the time - she arched her back slightly to make it easier for me.

My middle finger was the first to make contact with the core of her femininity: it easily slid between her extended labia to lie across the entrance to her vagina. I was amazed at the heat coming from her opening, and surprised at the amount of her female essence I could feel on my finger. From the response I'd gotten when I started, I knew she wouldn't

mind (!!) when I slid my finger back and forth between her inner lips, slightly pressing against her opening. In a matter of only a few seconds, I could feel that my finger was thoroughly coated with her oils. When I slightly lengthened the range of my strokes, my fingertip happened upon her clitoris, too - where it stuck out from under its hood for what must have been nearly half an inch. Each slow stroke of my finger between her vaginal lips brought a slight contact with it, and each of those contacts resulted in a gasp and shudder from Abby.

After a couple of minutes, though, she finally tired of standing on one leg. When I felt her start to lower the one she had wrapped around me, I let the hand between her thighs slide back up to cup her ass again - accompanied by a disappointed moan as she arched her back further to try and maintain the contact for as long as possible.

When she had both feet on the floor again, she surprised me by softly pulling my arms from around her - only to take the hand that had been between her thighs and pull it up to her mouth. Her eyes locked on mine, she didn't hesitate to wrap her lips around the finger that had brought her pleasure, and then proceed to lick and suck it clean of her own oils. Only after she'd consumed every last bit did she let it slide free of her mouth with a small noise - and a big smile.

She was surprised - but not displeased - when I moved to her side, picked her up, and moved her the short distance to the bed before laying her down on it. Then she watched as I moved onto the bed to lie next to her on my side.

Propping myself up with my elbow, I reached over to lay a hand on her stomach as we looked into each other's eyes. She took my hand and started to move it toward her breast, but stopped when I gave a small shake of my head, saying "There's no hurry. We've basically got all weekend. I think we'll both" - I said 'both', but she understood that I meant her - "enjoy this more if we just **ease** into it. Instead of just making good memories, how about if we make **happy** ones? Not GRAB at pleasure, but ACCEPT it?"

She nodded her understanding, and released my hand - only to smile when I started softly caressing her body. I touched every part of her I could reach; but carefully avoided her pelvis and breasts. She slowly started to relax under my touch, and as I continued my Braille memorization of her, she even closed her eyes to help her focus on the way my hand felt on her skin.

As I'd found with her ass, her skin was soft and smooth and blemish-free - and covered firm muscles. While I was caressing her, I continued to speak to her, softly, telling her what I thought of what I found. After several minutes, she was completely relaxed, and all but purring in pleasure.

She was so accepting of my touch that she didn't even open her eyes when I finally let my hand find its way to one of her breasts - a passing touch, at first, but soon followed by another, and another. Before long, my attention was focused on both of them; they'd

flattened only slightly from her lying on her back, and both were still capped by her puckered areolas and erect nipples.

She lay there, calmly and patiently accepting the attention I was paying them: gently squeezing their firm sponginess, tracing their size and shape with my fingertips, running my thumb and fingers across and around their peaks. From the way she'd looked when she first showed them to me, I knew that she thought they were 'too small'; I wanted to let her know, without words, what **I** thought of them.

As I was holding one of them in my hand, I let my head drop slightly, so I could place a kiss on the other - but rather than her nipple, as it would be for most men, my target was the upper slope of her breast. It was meant as a first offering of my affection, and she accepted it as such with a small, gentle smile.

Over the next few minutes, I gradually shifted my attention; my hand slowly extended its range as I kissed her breasts more and more. It was such a slow and gradual process that she didn't react to it - other than to release a faint sigh of pleasure when my lips finally fastened over her nipple, even as my hand was making its first fleeting contact with her pubis.

Again, my hand didn't immediately zero in on my ultimate target; I continued to softly stroke her lower belly, then her thighs as I gently and slowly sucked on her breasts and nipples. From knee to mid-thigh at first, my touch on her thighs shifted to begin from the middle of the inside of her thighs, and ending when my hand made contact with her pelvis. Even then, though, my contact wasn't sexual; instead, I was making it sensual - the apparent neglect of her labia and clitoris was only serving to emphasize them.

From the faint blush on her face and shoulders, I knew that she was feeling the slowly increasing arousal I intended. But from her calm acceptance of what I was doing, I also knew that this was probably the first time in her life that she had really **focused** on the sensations that her body - not just the conventional erogenous zones - could give her. And the faint smile on her face told me that she was feeling the affection that I had for her. With all of that, I didn't doubt that our time together **WOULD** be a happy memory for her.

She'd lain down with her legs slightly parted; there was more than enough room for me to get my hand between them for what was next. My first touch to her mons was butterfly light - and still resulted in a soft sigh of pleasure from her. The increase in my attention to her womanhood was as slow and deliberate and indirect as it had been for her breasts.

The first thing I did was to properly 'investigate' the dense growth I'd seen between her legs. A slow, careful examination convinced me that what I'd seen was a natural growth - short, amazingly dense, and delightfully soft. Underneath it, her pudendum and mons were well-defined, but not 'fleshy'. Near the top of her cleft, her large clitoris had thrown back its hood, to stand proudly to a height of what I figured was nearly half an inch. Below, her vaginal lips, short and slightly thick, had extended; slick with her juices and

slightly parted, they allowed some of the incredible heat from her vagina to escape. When I drew my finger between them, I found that she was producing a more than ample supply of her oils, which I shifted to her clitoris as I softly circled it with the very tip of my finger - and getting a low moan of pleasure as my reward.

I let my fingertips trace the delicate folds of her vaginal lips, with frequent side-trips to transfer some of her liquid essence to her clitoris when I circled and rubbed it EVER so softly. When I raised my head from her breasts, I could see that the blush she'd had before had not only darkened, but expanded to the upper slopes of her breasts. With that, I knew that I could move ahead again.

Over the next several minutes, I reversed the position of my head and hands in slow, minuscule movements - as my kisses gradually moved 'south', my hands were moving 'north'. When the time came, I started moving myself between her thighs, too - though 'moving' would have been too abrupt to describe it. Rather, it more like I *flowed* between them in infinitely small increments. If anyone had been there to see it, I doubt they'd have been able to point out when I'd made even ONE definitive movement.

Finally, the deed was done: without noticeably disturbing Abby, I was looking at the blossom of her womanly flower from between her thighs, my hands on her breasts again.

Yet again, I didn't immediately move to take advantage of what was openly available to me. Instead, the insides of her thighs were showered with a rain of feather-light kisses and lip-nibbles that imperceptibly moved toward the center of her womanhood.

By the time I was ready to taste the essence of her for the first time, she was visibly more aroused than when I'd first looked: her vaginal lips had grown a little longer, and darkened with her increased excitement; and there was a small, but visible, trickle of her juices coming from her opening.

It was that small sample of Liquid Abby that became my first taste of her - light and thin, but slightly musky to the nose and tongue. It was wonderful.

I paused a couple of seconds to really savor her taste before I extended my tongue, and drew it up between her inner lips to collect enough of her juices to get the full flavor of her. When I did, she willingly spread her legs even farther for me, moaning softly in response.

That sampling of her was everything I'd expected - and more. The essence of her flooded my mouth, teasing and delighting my taste buds even as I stuck my tongue out to do it again.

Over the next several minutes, I could hear the pace of Abby's breathing slowly increase as I carefully and deliberately went about easing her toward an orgasm - as slowly as I could.

I licked at her labia and opening as though they were an ice cream cone - until she started responding too much. Then I switched over to circling her clitoris with my tongue in a slow, soft motion. When that got to her, it was back her vagina - only this time, penetrating her with my stiffened tongue. As that got too exciting for her, I went back to her clitoris, only taking it between my lips and softly sucking on it in a slow, gentle rhythm. Back to her vaginal lips, pulling on them with my lips and thoroughly washing them with my tongue. Then on to her clitoris again, only pressing on it gently in a slow, steady rhythm. Again to her vagina, trying to leech her oils as I let my tongue flutter across her opening. Using the very tip of my tongue to lick her clitoris. Softly 'chewing' on her labia with my lips as I sucked on them. And so on, and so on.

I finally gave her the relief that I knew she was after by fluttering my tongue across her clitoris in a soft, rapid motion. In only a few seconds, I felt the tension in her body steadily increase; until her thighs suddenly slammed over my ears - thankfully, just ahead of what I suspected was a fairly loud scream of release.

Under my hands, her body was a single tense, rigid muscle; but beneath my lips, the entrance to her vagina was going through a series of spasms as the first wave of her release overwhelmed her.

After several long seconds, I felt her legs fall away from my ears. Deciding that she hadn't broken an eardrum, I listened as she started to draw a deep, ragged breath - only to have it cut off by a second, smaller, release that left her laying there gasping.

I waited a little bit, and when it seemed that there wouldn't be a repeat of the repeat, I moved to hold myself over her on my knees and elbows. My position also left my erect penis resting on her mons.

I was close enough to her that I could feel the hard points of her nipples pressing against my chest - but I was far enough away that that was ALL I could feel of her: I wasn't doing anything to prevent her from getting her breath, and senses, back.

I looked into her face, seeing that her eyes were closed and that she'd developed a fine sheen of perspiration from the physical effort of her orgasm.

Another minute or so, and she suddenly opened her eyes - and looking up at me in surprise, managed to gasp out "Dear GOD! I didn't know it could BE like that!"

I just smiled down at her, waiting patiently as she got her breathing under control. When she had, she suddenly wrapped her arms around me, and pulled me down to lie on her as she hugged me fiercely.

When she finally released me, I propped myself up again before lowering my head to give her a kiss - which she greedily returned with deep affection.

After our kiss slowly broke off, she looked up at me again, and said "I mean it. I really didn't know it could be that **intense**. I mean, I've had some big orgasms before, but they were nothing compared to *that* . It was like my whole BODY was in it, not just my, um..."

"Parts. I think the word you want is 'parts'", I teased.

She blushed and grinned, then answered "Yeah, parts. That's the word I was looking for."

"Your whole body WAS in it. Remember what I said about accepting, instead of grabbing?"

She brightened, and said "Yeah, I do. And you're right, that WAS the difference. Before, it was always just my, uh, parts that had a good time. What you did, you got my whole body involved."

With that, we shared another kiss; softer and more affectionate than the one before.

We stayed like that for perhaps a couple of minutes before Abby gave a small start and said "You're... You're hard? You're ready to make love with me?"

"If you want", I answered, with a smile.

She got a look of absolute delight on her face, and answered "After that? Oh, yeah, I want!"

She felt me move over her, and felt my erection start to slide into position; she quickly grabbed my arms and said "No, let me. You did everything to make ME feel good; now it's my turn. Just lay down on your back, and I'll take care of it."

I lowered my head to give her a soft kiss on the forehead, and did as she asked - except that I propped myself against the headboard of her bed in a 'slouching' position.

Satisfied with what I'd done, Abby quickly rolled to her side, then moved her leg over my hips. Gracefully, she moved the rest of the way, until she was straddled over me.

I reached to her waist, and she willingly let me pull her down so that I could lick her nipples a few times before taking each of them into my mouth and sucking them back to erection. When I was done, both were hard and fully extended - and glistening with my saliva. Abby looked pleased with what I'd done, and leaned forward a little more so the two of us could share a deep kiss, tongues dancing in her mouth. When it ended, she gave me a radiant smile, and eased herself backward until she was poised over my erection.

Taking it in her hand, she stroked me gently several times before looking into my eyes to say "I want you inside me, now, even more than before."

My hands had moved to her thighs, and I gave them a soft squeeze in acceptance of what she'd just told me; with another smile on her face, she raised herself up and positioned me at her hot, wet entrance. Flexing her wrist a little, she drew the head of my penis back and forth between her vaginal lips - thoroughly coating it with her ample oils.

Assured that I would slide into her as easily as possible, she held me in place as she started to lower herself onto me. Apparently, she wasn't quite satisfied with her position, and she moved herself backwards a little. When she eased herself down again, the 'fit' was apparently what she wanted: holding me steady, she pressed herself onto me more and more - until the head finally popped through the tight ring of her opening and slid into her for a short distance.

She paused for perhaps half a minute, apparently letting herself adjust to my presence. Once she was satisfied that the adjustment was complete, she raised herself a bit before pushing herself down onto me again - and taking more of me inside. There was only the slightest pause before she did it again, with the same results. With me firmly in place, she released my penis to put her hands on my chest to steady herself. Ready to finish what she'd started, she lifted herself again before filling herself with more of my manhood. Several more times she repeated her actions; each downward thrust finished a little lower than the one before, until a final motion left her with her ass resting on my thighs. Only then did she make any noise - and that was only to whisper to herself "Oh, God, that feels so good!"

With her securely wrapped around me, I reached up to start caressing her breasts and softly pulling on her nipples and running my thumbs over them. She sat there on me, clearly pleased to have me inside her. As I waited to see what she wanted to do next, I took stock of the sensations she was creating on and around me. As I'd expected, she was incredibly hot and wet inside; and she was a lot tighter than I'd thought she would be. She wasn't virgin tight, but she didn't miss it by a whole lot, either. It was obvious to me that it had been quite some time since she'd last had a lover, since I'm pretty close to average length and girth.

After a couple of minutes, she leaned over so the two of us could share a deep, passionate kiss; when it was over, she raised up and steadied herself with her arms before lifting herself off of me a bit. Letting perhaps half my length escape her, she settled herself back down with a soft moan of pleasure. A few seconds later, she did it again. Another brief delay, and she lifted herself until only the glans of my erection was inside. With a look of intense concentration, she surprised me by moving down only perhaps an inch, then rising up again, several times. Only when she impaled herself on me again did I understand what she'd been doing: she'd apparently been making sure that the end of my penis was thoroughly coated with her lubrication: as her body lowered, I slid into her a lot faster and easier.

When she was settled on my 'lap' again, she paused a bit to let me start playing with her breasts again. As I continued to caress and gently squeeze them, she held her body steady for me as she started moving her hips in a series of small movements.

That continued for a minute or two before she decided that what she **really** wanted was to feel me *moving* in her. She started by lifting herself up in slow, short movements; but over a period of just a few minutes, she increased the speed and range of her motion so that she was taking nearly my entire length in a steady, continuous rhythm. Her upper body remained relatively still, so I was able to continue playing with her breasts as she moved.

After a bit, she changed position slightly, so that she could slide herself on and off of me by arching her pelvis instead of lifting herself with her legs. With the change in her position, her breasts were a little closer to my face, and I lifted my head to suck on her nipples as I used my hands to caress her. When she felt me take her nipple in my mouth, she threw her head back and I heard her release a deep groan of pleasure and arousal. As I nursed at her breasts, I moved my hands all over her body - caressing her from shoulders to sides to hips, then down the tops of her thighs. Back along their sides until I could curve back to hold her incredibly tight ass cheeks in my hands, then up her back until I was at her shoulders again.

With her body under my hands that way, I appreciated even more what a compact bundle of soft skin over firm muscle she was.

After several minutes, I felt her gradually slow her movement, then shift it. Instead of just sliding herself up and down my glistening erection, she was only letting about a third of it escape before taking it in again - but when it was fully inside her, she was adding a small arching of her waist that applied a little extra pressure to her erect and visible clitoris.

A few minutes more, and she was letting even less of me out of her hot, wet sheath as she continued rubbing her clitoris against my pubic bone - accompanied by a constant moaning and gasping. As she got closer and closer to her release, I started sucking on her nipples a little harder, which seemed to please her tremendously. It was only a couple more minutes before I heard her cry out as I felt her try to get as much of me as she could inside - she'd finally gotten the results she wanted so much. Even as snug as she'd been around me, I was still surprised at how tight she became when she suddenly raised her body up and cried out her release. As her climax started, it was as though my entire length was suddenly wrapped by something several sizes too small; on top of that, I felt a series of ripples running from groin to glans as her already-tight vagina spasmed around me. If I'd been anywhere NEAR ready, it would have been more than enough to cause me to unload everything I had in her.

I don't know how long her orgasm lasted. I only know that it lasted too long, and ended too soon: the sensations she was creating around me were incredible enough to move me along toward my own climax; but as wonderful as they felt, I was still sorry when they finally began to taper off.

With the end of her orgasm, Abby let herself relax enough to lay on me as she got her breath back. Her hard nipples pressed into my chest as I wrapped my arms around her, holding her as I gave her a series of small, soft kisses to her head and shoulders.

After a couple of minutes, she'd recovered enough to tilt her head so the two of us could share a number of soft, gentle kisses. A bit later, she started to move over me - and suddenly realized that I was still hard, and still inside her.

I could see the surprise and pleasure on her face when she asked "You didn't... You're still ready to make love some more?"

"No, I didn't, and yes, I'm ready to make love some more - if you are."

The look on her face was one of pure delight when she answered "Oh, I'm ready! That was terrific, but if we can do it some more, that's even better! Uh, can you do it this time, though? My legs are kind of tired."

"I'd be glad to. How about if we make things easier on both of us, and I do you from behind?"

Her answer was a big smile and nod of agreement.

As she pulled herself free of me, I could see the mixture of reluctance and anticipation on her face - reluctance to let me go, and anticipation of what we were to do next.

When the head of my penis finally pulled free of her, she gave a slight shudder before moving to take position next to me. Free to move again, I moved to my knees, and then behind her. But rather than immediately bury myself in her again, I chose to stoke the fires of her arousal. Leaning forward slightly, I leaned over to start caressing her - starting with the sensitive insides of her forearms, and working my way toward her shoulders. After brief massage of her neck and shoulders, I let my hands move along her ribcage to her stomach; then up between her breasts, half-cupping them as I circled them before sliding my hands gently down her sides to her waist. From there, it was to the small of her back, then on to the delightful globes of her ass - then on down the backs of her thighs. Once at her knees, my hands circled around to the front part of the insides of her thighs, and then back up to finish at her hips again.

The softness of my touch, and the slowness at which I moved, had the desired effect: by the time I finished, she was breathing heavily as she quivered under my hands. I took her ass cheeks in my hands again, and pulled them apart slightly; when she felt me do that, she moved her knees a little farther apart and lowered her shoulders, bringing the rosette of her anus into view - along with the glistening opening of her vagina.

Arching my back a little, I was able to lower the head of my erect penis and wedge it between her warm, slick vaginal lips. When she felt me pressing against her slightly, she held still in eager anticipation of my entry. Knowing that I was in position, I released the firm moons of her ass to hold her by the hips - and steadied her as I slowly pressed my hips forward to slide my still-slick erection between her labia, accompanied by her low groan of pleasure and satisfaction.

When I felt the tight ring of her opening clenched around the base of my penis, I paused long enough to reach forward again and take her breasts in my hands to give them a soft squeeze before pulling on her nipples a little bit. I knew she appreciated the attention when she pressed herself back against me, trying to get even more of me inside her.

Knowing that she was ready for me to continue, I released her breasts and held her by the hips again as I looked down to where we were joined; watching as her labia extended, trying to stay with my penis as I pulled out of her. I stopped when I was about halfway out of her, and with only the briefest of pauses, moved to fill her again. My next stroke was longer, and the one after that even longer. It didn't take me long to get into a rhythm of pistonning in and out of her in long, steady strokes, accompanied by the liquid sounds of our joining and her gasps of pleasure.

After a few minutes of making love like that, Abby lowered her shoulders to the bed. Whether it was because her arms were tired, or she just wanted a slight change of position, I don't know. All I'm certain of is that it meant that I was sliding in and out of her at a different angle. As I penetrated her, the pressure of her vagina would be around the head of my penis, and along its top; but as I got farther and farther into her, it would shift over so that the pressure was against the underside. It also meant that my entry was pulling on her opening a different way, increasing the pressure against her clitoris. In only a couple of minutes, I could feel that she was even hotter and wetter inside. I could also tell that she was again getting close to an orgasm from the way she would shudder every so often as her breathing caught in her throat: even as she was panting faster and faster, her body was shuddering and convulsing slightly more and more often.

With each reaction of her body, she would tighten around me for longer and longer periods. And when the periods got long enough, I could also feel it as her vaginal muscles would spasm along the length of me. The feeling of it was incredibly arousing, and with the steadily increasing frequency of them, it wasn't long before I felt myself pass the point of no return - I knew that there wasn't any way for me to put off my own climax. Knowing that what I was doing to Abby was pleasing her as much as she was pleasing me, I gave myself over to seeking my own release.

Even as the length of my movements in Abby started decreasing, their speed was increasing. By the time I was allowing only half of my manhood to pull free of her, I was moving twice as fast - and Abby's responses were keeping up with, if not surpassing, me. I looked down to see that she had both hands full with part of the bed coverings, her eyes closed in concentration on what she was feeling. Her head was turned to the side, and I could see how flushed she was as she gasped and moaned and panted her steadily increasing arousal and desire.

Even though her spasms were coming almost continuously, I managed to hold off for another couple of minutes before I felt my balls tighten up. I all but slammed my pelvis against her as I tried to bury as much of myself in her as I could before the first hot jet of my semen flooded her insides. Even as I felt it erupting out the end of my penis, I heard Abby's loud cry of release as her own orgasm overtook her.

Even now, I'm amazed that I was able to empty my balls in her. As tight as she'd been during her first orgasm with me inside, she got even tighter with this one - looking back on it, I'm not entirely sure that there was anyplace for my jism to GO, once I'd unloaded it in her.

My climax ended well ahead of hers - and I couldn't believe the sensations she was creating around me as her spasms seemed to go on and on and on. Along with the clenching and fluttering of her vagina, she was arching her hips, too, as though trying to draw me even farther inside her. The feeling of it was more than enough to keep me hard until her orgasm gradually began to taper off. When the effects of it were finally mild enough for her, I heard her draw a deep, ragged breath. Knowing that she was nearing the end, I eased myself out of her with regret before moving next to her to guide her down onto the bed.

When she was settled, I lay down next to her, and pulled her close to hold her in my arms as she slowly got her breathing back to normal. I could see the love and gratitude in her eyes as she clutched at me feebly - it was obvious that she'd used up a lot of energy.

When her breathing was finally close to normal, I asked if she wanted something to drink. She nodded slowly, and I went into the small bathroom she had and got her a glass of cold tap water. Back in bed, I held her up and in my arms as I helped her hold the glass and take a drink from it. By the time she finished it, she seemed to have improved quite a bit - though she was still somewhat weak.

I asked if she wanted more, and she shook her head 'no'. I took the glass back to the bathroom, returning with a damp washcloth and small towel. Over her mild protests, I wiped the sheen of perspiration from her face before letting her lie down again. A quick glance showed that our lovemaking had left her soaked from groin to mid-thigh. She tried to object when I began to gently clean up the visible signs of our activities - but she simply didn't have the energy to do anything about it.

Back in bed, she didn't hesitate to cuddle up next to me, pulling my arm around her as she snuggled into my side. We lay like that for several minutes before she was able to tilt her head back and look into my face.

She studied me for several seconds before finally saying "I've had sex before. But I've **never** experienced anything like THAT - now I know why Amy said there was a difference."

She paused a moment, and I hugged her before she went on "I know how dedicated you are to Lucy. I don't doubt for a moment that what she said was right - that she's only letting me borrow you for a little bit before you go back to her. I'm both grateful and sorry that she let me have you tonight: I'm grateful for what I've had with you; and I'm sorry that now I know what it really means to make love - I'll never be happy with anything less, again. I'm actually jealous - well, not jealous, but envious - of what she has with you. I can only hope that I have something CLOSE to it, some day."

"You will" I told her.

She looked at me in surprise before I went on "Just remember what I told you before. Don't settle for less than what you already know you deserve. As long as you do that, the kind of people you want will be around you - including the kind of guys that you want. The only 'trick' is that you have to be clear in your own mind what you want, and not accept anything else."

"How can you be so sure?" she asked.

"Doesn't it work already?" I asked in return.

"What do you mean?"

"Aren't most of your friends - your REAL friends - people that you really like? Aren't the people you respect the same people that you know respect YOU? All you have to do to make it work better and more consistently is to be more consistent in how you think about it, and how you apply it. I'm not going to blow smoke up your butt; it isn't easy, and it doesn't happen quickly - but it DOES work."

She looked at me speculatively for a few moments before saying "I believe you. I've seen how *you* have to work at it, sometimes. And I've seen the results - hell, I've experienced the results, firsthand" - the last part with a grin and shiver.

With that, she put her head on my shoulder and hugged me. The two of us lay there like that, happy to simply BE there with each other. After a while, Abby that finally got up to disappear into the bathroom for a few minutes; when she opened the door again, it was to ask if I wanted to join her for a quick shower before bed. I assured her that I'd be delighted, and the two of us enjoyed a quick - but fun - wash before snuggling together in bed.

In the small hours of the night, I woke up to find Abby spooning against my back - with her arm around me as she held my erect penis in her hand. Feeling the need to unload some fluids, I managed to get her to turn loose of me before I eased my way out of bed, accompanied by a small noise of complaint from her. When I was done, I found that she'd rolled over onto her other side. When I rejoined her under the covers, she gave a happy sigh as she wriggled herself even closer to me.

I woke up the next morning with an erection - which was thoroughly encased by a warm mouth, judging from the tongue dancing along its underside.

When I opened my eyes and looked down, I could see the delighted expression on Abby's face when she saw that I was awake. She lifted her head long enough to tell me "You did me last night, so I thought this would be a nice way to wake you up this morning!"

"It is that", I admitted, getting a grin in return before she enveloped me with her mouth again.

She didn't have a lot of technique or talent - but she more than made up for it in enthusiasm, and willingness to learn when she got a favorable response to something she did. It wasn't too long before she had me close to emptying myself into her mouth.

"If you keep that up, you're going to get a surprise" I warned her.

She just nodded her approval, and kept going.

A couple more minutes, and I let her know "I'm getting close!" - and felt it as she cupped my balls in her hand before she paused long enough to tell me "Do it!".

Knowing that I was near my climax, she applied herself even more to the task at hand - and felt my balls draw up in her hand shortly before the first jet of my cum filled her mouth. She didn't hesitate or slow down; if anything, she displayed even more enthusiasm as she tried to suck every bit of my semen out through the end of my penis. Only when she felt me start to soften between her lips did she finally release my balls from her hand. Then she took my entire penis in her mouth and tightened her lips around it before sucking on it as she pulled her head back - effectively using her lips as a squeegee as she suctioned the last traces of my cum from my penis. Only when she was sure that she had every drop of it did I see her swallow my entire load - then lick her lips for any that might have escaped, and swallow again with a grin on her face.

Satisfied that she had satisfied ME, she got up and went into the bathroom. A moment later, she reappeared with what I could see was a damp washcloth which she used to wipe me off, saying "Last night, you gave to me. This morning, I give back." When she was done, she took the washcloth back into the bathroom, then climbed into bed to lie next to me - only to be surprised when I gave her a big good-morning kiss.

When it ended, she looked at me in curiosity and asked "You don't mind kissing me after I...?"

"Not at all, why?"

"Most guys don't want to kiss a girl after she did that for them."

"I'm not most guys."

"I'll vouch for that!" she said, with a laugh.

I explained to her "You didn't mind kissing me after I used my mouth on you last night. I don't see why I should be any different."

She grinned, and said "I like the way you taste. Kind of salty, but nice." She hesitated a moment, then added "I wanted to do more with you, but I'm a little sore from last night. It's been a while since I had, uh, overnight company, and you filled me up pretty good."

With that, she gave me another grin before snuggling up next to me again. I don't know how long we lay there like that. I only know that it was Abby's stomach that growled some time later; I could FEEL how warm her face got when she blushed.

I teased her by saying "I could use a bite to eat, myself. How about if we head down and get some breakfast?"

I felt her blush again before she said "That sounds pretty good. How does eggs, toast, and all that sound to you?"

I told her that I thought it sounded just fine, and the two of us finally managed to get out of bed and head downstairs - Abby dressed in a cotton bathrobe, and me wearing only my shorts.

Abby parked me in a chair as she went about getting coffee started, and after she'd brought me a cup, preparing breakfast. She refused all my offers to help as she went about making lots of scrambled eggs, bacon, toast, and hash browns. By the time we finished eating, though, there were only a couple slices of toast left. Abby got up and cleared the table, again refusing my offers to help, and refilled our coffee cups before parking herself in my lap.

She was sitting there, feeding me toast, when Erika came into the kitchen, dressed only in shorts and a light blouse - her nipples clearly visible underneath it. Erika didn't even blink at the sight of Abby sitting astraddle my lap as I rested my hands on her hips.

Instead, all she did was to pause and wait for both of us to look at her before she said "I owe both of you an apology for last night."

She must have seen the mild confusion on our faces, because she went on to explain "I was kind of bitchy with both of you, and it was about something that was none of my business. I've had problems before with guys cheating on me - like my ex-husband, for starters - and I know it's a chip I have on my shoulder. What I said to both of you was out of line; particularly since I really didn't know the whole story."

Abby was sitting quietly, and I just nodded for Erika to continue, which she did by saying "While you two were, uh, busy, I called Amy and talked to her for a while. She set me straight on just how good an agent you are, Abby; and just what kind of guy you are, Dan. She also convinced me to call Lucy; but she only told me what your home town was, so I'd have to get the number from Information. I guess it was her way of making sure I knew that I was really talking to Lucy. It took me a while to get the nerve up to make the call, but when I told Lucy who I was, she just acted like I was an old friend she hadn't heard from for a while. She really set me at ease, and we talked for quite a while.

Long enough that Lucy heard it when Abby yelled - not just the first time, but the second one, too."

Abby blushed as Erika went on "Both times, she just said something to the effect that it sounded like she was enjoying herself. The first time, I couldn't understand how she could just **accept** it like that. But by the second time it happened, I was starting to. Lucy finally told me that she thought I needed to change the way I was thinking. When I asked her what she meant, she told me 'You're trying to figure out how bad things could be done by a good person. Change your perspective. Start from what you KNOW, and see if what you THINK is the problem.'

"It was getting late by then, so I told her I would, and that ended the call. But I couldn't get what she said out of my mind; I spent a couple of hours down here, running it through my mind before I finally got it."

Abby and I both looked at her expectantly, and she told us "Where I was going wrong was that I was thinking that what you were doing was bad, and trying to figure out how you could do it. What I **should** have been doing - and finally did - was to start from what I **KNEW**: that both of you are good people. From there, I had to look at what I thought about it, and **WHY** I was thinking about it the way I was. That's when I realized the mistake that I'd made with both of you - and that I owed you both an apology."

Abby seemed to realize, as I did, that there was more to it. Both of us waited patiently until Erika told us "Dan, from what I've read in your files and from my own experience being around you, I know that you wouldn't 'fool around'. And Abby, from what I've seen of the work you do and the talking we've done, I know that you wouldn't take just **anyone** into your bed. From that knowledge, and what Lucy and Amy told me last night, I know that what you had together last night was something special - something FAR more than just sex. And I know that it's something that deserves more respect than I gave the two of you last night."

Erika finished up by giving us a wry grin and saying "Now that I understand it a little, I actually envy you, Abby. And Amy. And Lucy, most of all. I'm actually awed that she's the focus of Dan's care and love and all that. But I guess knowing that she **IS** the center of his universe, she can afford to be generous and share him with other women - because she knows that she'll **always** be first with him."

It was Abby that answered, telling her "There's nothing to be envious **ABOUT**. Yes, I had an **incredible** time with him last night - like you said you heard. But I know you're forgetting at least one thing; and I'll bet you didn't pay attention to something else."

Erika looked at her curiously, and Abby told her "Last night, I said that Lucy told me that I was welcome to borrow him - and that you were, too, if you wanted. And even when you were talking to Lucy, I'd bet that she said something like that again, but that you didn't really hear it."

Erika blinked in surprise when Abby reminded her of what Lucy had told her the night before; and Abby and I both watched as Erika got a look of concentration on her face as she obviously reviewed her memory of the onversation she'd had with Lucy.

It wasn't long before Erika got a look of consternation on her face when she realized that Lucy HAD said something to that effect to her - as I'd expected.

Erika looked at Abby in curiosity and asked "You wouldn't mind? Him being with me, so soon after...?"

"Of course not. No more than Amy minded sharing him with me, or Lucy minds sharing him with any of us. What I learned from him last night was how powerful a heart and mind can be when they're working together - and how happy two people can be when they share the same goal of making each other feel good. He gave me a little bit of his body, and it was great. But when he gave me some of his heart, too - well, that made it **wonderful**. If he can do that for me, why would I mind if he does it for you, too?" With a glance at me, Abby added "Besides, I think you're a pretty good person, too. You deserve time with him as much as Amy or me."

When Abby finished, Erika turned to look at me in a mixture of concern and speculation. I just sat there, looking back at her patiently, waiting to see what she would say or do next.

She surprised me by coming right out with it, asking "Dan? Would you make *love* with me?"

Abby looked extremely pleased - whether it was with herself or Erika, I wouldn't have guessed. I simply answered "If that's what you'd like, I'd be proud and delighted."

Erika's expression changed to one of relief - until Abby got up and said "I'm going upstairs to shower. You two have fun, and I'll be in the living room whenever you're done" - and leaving the two of us alone in the kitchen.

I could see that Erika was in shock at the suddenness of the situation. I tore the last slice of toast in half, and offered it to her with the simple query "Toast?"

It was such a low-key, incongruous, out-of-place thing to do that it did what I wanted: it broke the tension. The expression on Erika's face went through several changes before she finally smiled and laughed, saying "Thanks, don't mind if I do" before taking it and nibbling at the corner.

A minute or so went by before I said "Abby's heart is in the right place, but I think a little more tact would have been nice. She acted like she thought we were going to just go at it right here on the table."

Erika looked at me with a surprisingly shy grin, and asked "Are we?"

I grinned back, and answered "Only if you want to. Me, I'm kind of partial to comfort and privacy."

"That's more like what I had in mind, too. It's still kind of awkward, though."

"Yup. I'll tell you what: how about if we finish our toast and coffee. Then we'll go upstairs, and I'll head into the bathroom for a quick cleanup. If you're feeling frisky, you can join me in the shower. If you're not sure, you can leave the door to your room open a bit; I'll come in and we can visit for a little while, while you make up your mind. If you don't think you're ready just yet, then you leave the door closed and we can get together some other time, if you like."

My answer was a relieved smile and nod before she told me "That sounds fine. No hurry, and no expectations."

With that settled, we took our time finishing our toast and coffee - and chatted a little after Erika complimented me on how polite and courteous Robyn had been when she answered the phone the night before.

I finished my coffee first, and put the cup away before telling Erika "I think I'd better defur my fangs before I clean up. I'll see you later" - the last part to reassure her that our next meeting would be at a time of HER choosing. She nodded her understanding, and I headed up to the bathroom between Abby's and Erika's bedrooms. Inside, I was pleased to see that Abby had left a disposable razor - new, thankfully - some shaving cream, a new toothbrush, and a sample-sized tube of toothpaste. It didn't take me long to take care of those parts of my anatomy; next was the shower. I got the water started and the temperature adjusted (just short of scalding) before I got in and closed the shower curtain. I'd barely had time to work up a good lather with the soap when I heard the bathroom door open. A few moments later, a very naked - and very nervous - Erika moved in to keep me company.

I could see that it had taken every bit of courage she had to join me like that. I could also see that she was more than a little concerned that I wouldn't find her attractive enough: she was holding her hands together with her arms held straight in front, partially covering her breasts and pubic area.

But she wasn't covering everything. Enough of her breasts were exposed that I could see they were fuller than Abby's had been, and more rounded. Capped with dark half-dollar sized areolas, they also sported nipples that were about the same diameter as a large crayon. Behind her hands, her bush was a medium-sized wedge of longish dark hair. Her fairly trim shape showed that she obviously worked at keeping herself healthy, but her job of driving a desk most of the time meant that she was softer and more curved than she probably liked.

I gave a low whistle of approval after I looked her over. When she heard it, she knew I appreciated what she was revealing to me; I saw the apprehension drain out of her, though she was still visibly nervous.

Moving slowly, I reached up to take her shoulders in my hands before telling her "It's okay, Erika. It only happens as fast as you want, when you want, and if you want."

"I know. It's just that it's been so LONG since I had a man - and particularly one that I've only known for a little while. I'm older than Amy, and even Lucy; and I KNOW that I don't look *anything* like Abby. I'm just not SURE."

With that, I could see her eyes start to tear up, and I quickly moved to take her into my arms. She tried to object for a few moments, then finally gave in, letting me hold her as she cried out her fear and frustration. After a little bit, she put her arms around my waist as she continued to cry into my shoulder.

Her crying spell didn't last long; when it ended, I could see that she was embarrassed by it. I opened my arms a bit to let her move away from me slightly, but kept my hands clasped at her back. When she finally looked up at me, I told her "Erika, there's nothing to be afraid of, or worried about. You said it's been a long time since you were with a man?"

She nodded, and I went on "Then that just tells me that you don't let just **anybody** share your bed - and makes me feel honored that you would consider letting **ME** in it with you. And so what if you're older than Amy and Lucy? That's what happens when you spend a pretty fair chunk of your life doing something for this country. I'm older than **YOU** are - should **I** be embarrassed?"

She managed a grin, and shook her head 'no' before I continued "You don't look like Abby? So? You're NOT Abby, so why should you look like her? Do you think she's still going to look **exactly** like that when she's your age? No? Then why worry about it?"

I finished by telling her "And for not being sure, you sure showed a lot of guts to go skinny-dipping in the shower with me."

She finally smiled at that; when she did, I told her "Good. Now that we've got that nonsense out of the way, I'm going to have to frisk you. I'm working on a special case, and I have to make sure you're not some assassin in drag - for all I know, you're packing C-4 or something in those things. So assume the position."

She laughed, and turned around to face the showerhead before putting her hands on the wall above it and spreading her feet. I frisked her thoroughly, and slowly - a couple of times. Along the way, I learned that though she was obviously softer and more curved than Abby, the muscles underneath were almost as firm. I also discovered that her breasts were a bit larger than I'd thought - a C-cup wouldn't have been **that** loose on her - and that her pubic hair was thick and soft. But no explosives.

After I was done, her nipples were visibly erect when she turned around and archly asked "And what about you?"

"What about me?"

"How do I know you're not carrying a stick of dynamite in THAT thing?"

"Good point. Well, if you must, you must..." I answered, in feigned regret. She saw right through it, of course, and just laughed as I mirrored her previous position.

And she checked to make sure I was safe. Completely, several times, and with enthusiasm.

When she was done, I turned back around to face her. She had a grin on her face when she told me "Okay, I guess you're not **concealing** any weapons - the only one I found is sticking right out there in front of you. But I'm still not too sure you're not going to take advantage of me."

"Ah, but there's the flaw in your thinking. If you want me to, it isn't really 'taking advantage', is it?"

She got thoughtful for a moment, then her grin got even wider before she answered "No, I guess it isn't. And that being the case, there's no reason I shouldn't be a more active participant, is there?"

"Not that I can think of."

She responded by taking me by the arms and reversing our positions, so that the water from the showerhead was hitting between my shoulder blades. With that done, she didn't hesitate to wrap her hand around my penis, stroking it as she got to her knees. Once there, she lifted my penis before tilting her head forward and taking my entire length in her mouth. She went on to start applying a soft suction on me while cupping my balls in her hand - then rolling them around as though testing their weight and density.

I started to grow in her mouth, and she let the surplus escape from between her lips as she began running her tongue along and around my inflating member. When I was semi-erect, she started moving her head back and forth, sliding her lips along my steadily increasing length so far that I could feel the end of it touch her throat when she took me in. It didn't take her long to get me completely hard, and glistening with her saliva.

Apparently satisfied that she'd accomplished what she'd set out to do, Erika finally let the head of my erection slip from between her lips. As she started to stand again, she turned the water off before telling me "I... I want you... in me."

"I'd like that, too", I assured her.

From the expression on her face, I knew that she wanted it to happen *soon*. So instead of putting it off any longer, I simply picked her up long enough to move us to the countertop next to the sink. When she felt her butt on its solid surface, she drew her feet up, using them to help brace herself on it. She ended up sitting on the very edge of the countertop, her feet resting next to her ass, her crotch exposed even though her legs were together in front of her.

My hands were on her hips when we shared our first real kiss - but as that kiss heated up, I slid them up her body as her legs parted. Finally, I was able to cup her breasts as I ran my thumbs over the hard nubbins of her nipples - and feeling them erect even more in response.

When our kiss finally ended, both of us were panting; she more than I. Her eyes were hooded in her lust as she watched me lean forward to give her a soft kiss on the lips. From there, I branched out to include her ear lobes - which I also gently bit - and the line of her jaw. From there, I worked my way generally south. On reaching her breasts, I found that they sagged slightly only because of their size; otherwise, they were firm enough to stand out from her chest quite well, thank you. Her dark areolas were crinkled in her arousal, and her erect nipples simply begged for my oral attentions.

Taking one of them between my lips, I nursed at her breast for a few seconds, teasing it to even greater length and hardness. When she started her increased excitement, I happily switched over to the other, which I quickly brought to the same level of arousal.

Satisfied with what I'd accomplished so far, I replaced my lips with my hands and started kissing my way down her body again. Shortly after I passed her navel, she realized what my goal was. I could feel her tense slightly before she told me "You... you don't have to do that..."

I paused long enough to smile up at her and answer "No, I don't. But I want to!" before continuing my journey. When she heard my response, I felt her relax. When I got to her pubis, a quick glance at her face revealed that she'd closed her eyes in an apparent effort to let her concentrate on what I was doing to her - and what she knew I planned to do.

Directly in front of me, though, was her pubic area; and as I'd seen, her hair there was slightly long. But my closer examination revealed that it wasn't very thick, and extended only about a third of the way between her pubic bone and belly button. Her skin was visible underneath it, as was the cleft of her sex.

As my lips moved farther and farther down the curve of her belly, her legs spread to make room for me. And that additional room also opened her up to my gaze, exposing more and more of her womanhood as the slightly musky scent of her got stronger and stronger.

What was revealed to me was a pair of vaginal lips of medium thickness that flowed down from where her clitoris was peeking out at me from under its hood, around her

obviously wet opening, then fading into her perineum. Her labia were dark with blood from her arousal, and as I moved in taste the source of her heavenly aroma I could see that the area between them was glistening with her liquid arousal.

My tongue dipped between the petals of her female flower, and she moaned in response even as the musky-sweet flavor of her was spreading across my delighted taste buds. Another dip, another moan - and before long, I was licking at her opening as though it were a lollipop, pausing to dip my tongue into it to draw out even more of her female taste.

In only a couple of minutes, she was moaning and gasping almost continuously in response to my ministrations. When I discovered that her clitoris had finally made an appearance, I moved my attentions to it: circling it with my tongue several times before lightly fluttering my tongue across it. Her response to that was a loud cry as she spasmed in obvious pleasure at what I was doing.

When it was over for her, I felt her take my head in her hands. In obvious reluctance, she eased my head away from her to tell me "That felt great - but what I really want is to have you IN me. Please... make love to me!"

I smiled back in response, and moved to stand up. When I leaned forward to give her another kiss, she didn't hesitate to kiss me back - hard.

After our kiss ended, she looked into my eyes as she said "I'm SO hot, and SO ready - please, don't make me wait any more!"

My response was to reach down and take my penis in hand, guiding it between her labia. There, I slid the head up and down between her vaginal lips a couple of times, wetting it with her intimate oils. When it was thoroughly covered with her lubrication, I slid it to her entrance.

When I arched my hips, both of us looked down to watch as my penis started into her. There was a brief pause, until the force I was applying was enough to pop through her tight opening. She wasn't as tight as Abby had been - but she was still more than tight enough.

Once past her opening, filling her the rest of the way was relatively easy - she was wet enough inside that I only had to 'back out' slightly a couple of times before my pubic hair merged with hers. Every motion I took was accompanied by a deep groan of arousal and pleasure from her - she was easily as ready as she'd told me.

She was right about something else, too - she WAS hot. I was both surprised and pleased at how hot she was inside, in addition to how tight she was. Buried in her, I paused a few seconds to savor the delightful sensation of her hot, wet, tight sheath wrapped around me.

Only when I felt her trying to hunch herself against me did I start moving in her again - easing myself out of her as I watched her vaginal lips clasp at my penis as though trying to hold me in. When perhaps three quarters of my length were free of her, I paused for only a moment before pressing myself into her; again accompanied by her sounds of pleasure as her labia all but disappeared as they guided me back in.

Over the next couple of minutes, the two of us got into a slow, steady rhythm: as I slowly thrust into her, she would arch herself toward me in welcome until our pubic thatches met; when I was inside her, I would continue to press myself against her, applying a slight pressure against her more exposed clitoris.

A couple more minutes, and our actions were faster and more enthusiastic. I was moving in and out of her almost constantly, literally bumping our pelvises when I was fully inside her. For her part, Erika was gasping and groaning almost constantly as she ran her hands across my body - and pulled on my hips in encouragement of what I was doing to her.

With the wakeup call Abby had given me, I didn't feel any particular need to hurry or seek my own release. That left me free to devote all my efforts and attention to taking care of Erika. My hands wandered her body, caressing anything I could reach: feather-light touches of her breasts, silky strokes of her thighs and body, gently squeezing her breasts, tweaking her nipples, and nibbling her shoulders and ears. All of it worked together to bring her to higher and higher levels of passion and arousal.

I was still far from my own climax when she suddenly pulled my hips hard against her - and cried out loudly as I felt her vagina tighten around me. My hands were on her breasts at the time, and I gently pinched and pulled on her hard and erect nipples in time with the spasms I felt around me: with each wave of her orgasm, her vagina would tighten around my entire length before going through a fluttering that ran from the base of my erection to the glans.

As her climax moved toward its end, I slowly slid myself in and out of her a couple of times. Each time, I savored how the added stimulation would create more and stronger internal reactions from her - and felt pleased when she would release a deep-throated moan of pleasure in response.

When she was left with only small aftershocks, Erika opened her eyes to look at me and gasp out "Dear God! I've had sex before. What we just did wasn't it. What the hell was it?"

"Love" I answered, simply.

"Love?" she asked, in disbelief.

"Yup."

"You... love me?"

"To an extent. Not run-off-to-Mexico love; but care about what happens to you, yeah."

"But how can love make so much difference?"

"If you love someone, you care about them. The more you love, the more you care. All I did was to care - to love - enough to want to bring you pleasure before I concerned myself with my own."

With that, she seemed to suddenly realize that not only were we both still naked, but that I was still inside her - and hard.

Surprised, she asked "Why are you still hard? Didn't you finish?"

I just smiled, and said "I'm still hard because no, I didn't finish. I had a nice wakeup call this morning, so I don't feel any particular need to hurry. You seemed 'anxious', so I wanted to make sure you were okay, first."

Erika looked at me with a lop-sided grin, and said "Yeah, that's one way of describing how I was feeling: 'anxious'. You sure as hell took care of that! But why did you stop? Why not just keep going until you got off too?"

"I wanted **both** of us to enjoy our time together. I figured if I took the edge off for you, you'd find the rest of our time a little more enjoyable."

"Oh, you took the edge off, all right" she replied. Then a moment later, she added "You mean that you still want to...?"

"If you do. Or, if you want, we can just cuddle or talk or even clean up and go on with our lives. Like I told you, it's your call, not mine."

To the extent that she could, she moved herself back and forth on the countertop to slide herself along my still-slick penis before she looked up at me again to say "If you can make me feel that good just from wanting to 'take the edge off' for me, I've **got** to find out what you can do when you really want to. Yeah, I want to *make love* with you some more. But not here. This was fine for a quickie, but for what I've got in mind, we need something larger and more comfortable."

"That sounds pretty good to me, too" I answered.

She looked down to where she could see the little bit of my erection that wasn't inside her, and said "If you'll unplug, I think we should adjourn to my bedroom."

My response was to back out of her, slowly, as I watched her watching me slip free of her womanly grasp. When I was about halfway out of her, I heard her mutter to herself "I didn't know it could *look* so sexy..."

As the head of my erection slipped out past the tight ring of her entrance, I saw her shudder slightly as a look of disappointment briefly crossed her face. But she got over it quickly enough, and let me help her down off the countertop to stand in front of me. I'd softened slightly, so the end of my penis had dropped enough that it was touching the upper fringes of her pubic hair when she put her hands behind my head to pull me into a brief - but passionate - kiss.

We quickly cleaned up the bathroom and collected our things before Erika opened the door and led us into her bedroom. With her in the lead, I had plenty of time and opportunity to watch the firm globes of her ass clench and unclench as she walked ahead of me. I also had time to look over the rest of her, too: her curves were softer and smoother than Abby's, but it was still clear that she was fit and trim.

When we were both in her room, she let me go by her so she could close the door behind us before making a small pile of her clothes on the end of a dresser; I followed her example, using a chair.

I stepped forward to take her hands in mine, lifting them to my lips and kissing them. When I was done, she took hold of my hands in return and led us to the bed. There, she guided me to first sit, then lay down before she moved to lie next to me.

By that time, I'd shrunk to semi-erectness; with her head on my shoulder, she reached out to take me in her hand and start stroking me as I caressed her back and sides.

When she felt me stiffening in her hand, she started moving her body down mine until I felt her warm breath across my pubic hair. A little longer, and I felt her lift her head before taking my erect penis into her mouth. As she started a soft sucking of it, I reached down to put my hand between her thighs to start drawing a finger between her labia and across her warm, wet opening.

In only a minute or so, she had the entire length of my erection glistening with her saliva as she softly moaned her pleasure at the sensations my finger was generating on her womanhood. We went on like that for a couple more minutes before I couldn't resist any longer, and gently nudged her hip to get her to move her pelvis. She didn't understand what I wanted at first, and it took a little more encouragement before she finally moved to put a knee on each side of my head - opening herself up so that I could return the oral favors she was bestowing on me.

With my new and different perspective, I took an even closer look at the view she was presenting me. Even though she'd already had a climax, it didn't seem to have affected her arousal any: her labia were still dark with blood, and had gotten a little longer and thicker. Between them, her opening all but drooled the essence of her excitement. At the top of her cleft, her clitoris had made an appearance, glistening slightly. Surrounding all of that was the dark wedge of her pubic hair - slightly long, but straight, as it quickly faded out past her opening; above, I could see the dark pink rosette of her anus.

Lifting my head, I took turns taking each of her labia between my lips and softly sucking on them as I 'chewed' them with my lips. As I did that more and more, her moans of arousal became more frequent, and louder. When I changed over to placing my mouth over her entire opening and tried to gently suck her womanly oils from their source, she released a deep groan and arched her hips to try and press herself even harder against my mouth. I responded by making a spear of my tongue, and trying to see just how far I could penetrate her with it before trying to lick her vagina from the inside out. She squealed her pleasure around my penis before burying her nose in my pubic hair as she took my entire penis in her mouth; I could feel the muscles of her throat flexing around the head as she applied a firm suction to it.

When she lifted her head to start breathing again, I moved my attentions to her clitoris by sliding my tongue along her cleft before finishing with a light 'flick' across it. I heard her breath catch when I did it, and repeated my actions several more times. Finally though, I settled into fluttering my tongue across its surface with a wide combination of speeds and pressures as I experimented to find what worked best on her.

As it happened, pretty much anything worked - she didn't respond any better to any one thing I did more than anything else. What she DID do was to respond to all of it: by the time my tongue started to tire, I knew that she was very, very close to having another orgasm.

I finally gave my tongue a rest by moving my head slightly and putting my mouth over her clitoris, sucking on it gently as I pulled on it with my lips. In only a couple of minutes, I felt her entire body tense before she let my penis pop free of her lips so she could release another loud cry as her orgasm took her over.

I could feel the muscles at her opening clenching as each spasm of her climax washed through her; I prolonged her pleasure by simply 'pinching' her clitoris with my lips, in time with her spasms. As the waves of her release tapered off, so did my ministrations to her clitoris. A little longer, and I could hear the she was breathing almost normally, even though she was still having the occasional aftershock from her orgasm.

After the last shudder of release passed through her, she suddenly seemed to realize where she was - and what she'd been doing before it happened. With a soft growl of lust, she quickly lowered her head again to take my entire length into her mouth.

Over the next couple of minutes, she continued her oral attack on my manhood - and it felt great. Between periods of deep-throating me, she would lick and suck on as much of my penis as she could get into her mouth while twisting her head back and forth as she slid her lips up and down my length. Along with that, she was holding my balls in her hand, rolling them around and **ever** so gently squeezing them. What she was doing felt so good that all I could do was to lick at and mouth her labia and vaginal opening, collecting as much of her oils as I could.

During a lengthy period of having the end of my penis bouncing off her tonsils, I felt myself starting down the path toward climax. When Erika lifted her head again, I managed to reach down and nudge her high enough to release my hardness from between her lips.

I heard her take a deep breath before I told her "If you keep doing that, I'm going to cum."

"Good! I want it!"

"So do I; but I want to be *inside* you when it happens."

"This is inside!", she declared.

I laughed, and admitted "Yes, it is - but you know what I meant."

She laughed, too, and said "Yeah, I know. I just wanted to taste you, too. Particularly after what YOU just did for ME. Or should that be **to** me?"

"The answer to your question is 'yes'" I teased, before continuing "But wouldn't you like us to finish that way, too? Shouldn't we save something for next time?"

She moved forward a bit, then turned to look down at me and asked "Yes, I WOULD like us to finish like that. *Will* there be a next time?"

"If you want."

She gave me a wide grin and answered "Oh, I want, all right! Uh, what do you want to do? Or how?"

"How does the old me on top, us facing each other sound?"

She thought it over a moment, and answered "How about you do me from behind?"

"Suits me." I answered.

With that, Erika moved from above me to take a position on her knees beside me. She watched as I got to my knees, too, and when I got close enough, she pulled us into a kiss that soon had us taste-testing each other's tonsils.

When the kiss finally ended, she kept her hands on my head long enough to look into my eyes and tell me "Go ahead and enjoy yourself. Don't worry about me: what you've already given me this morning is way more than I could have asked for."

I just smiled and give her a kiss on the forehead before she turned slightly, and lowered herself to her hands.

She looked back at me from over her shoulder as I moved between her legs, then forward so my penis was resting in the cleft of her ass cheeks. I was surprised when she told me "You can have me... **there** if you want. I've never done it before because I was afraid it would hurt - but I know that **YOU** wouldn't hurt me that way."

"Perhaps next time, if you still want. For now, let's just enjoy what we have, okay?"

I could see the relief on her face - and mixed with it, a trace of disappointment, too. I didn't doubt that our next time together would be 'interesting' for **both** of us.

Looking down, I took my saliva-slick penis in hand and angled it down lightly to where Erika's wet opening was waiting. Wedging the head between her labia, I pressed forward slightly so that I was firmly against her opening. Putting my hands on her hips to hold her steady, I arched my hips forward and felt only a slight resistance before the head of my erection popped through. Looking into Erika's face, I could see her eyes close in concentration as I pressed myself into her even further - burying my length in her in a single slow stroke.

When she felt my pelvis pressing against hers, she opened her eyes again before I heard her groan the words "Oh, GOD, that feels so good!"

As I started to back out of her, I felt her vagina clamp down around me - as though she was trying to hold me inside. But she was so wet inside that I didn't have any trouble slipping free of her. The added pressure and friction felt *wonderful*, though.

With nearly 2/3 of my length free of her, I paused only the briefest of moments before moving to fill her again. Even though our previous lovemaking had loosened her, she was still delightfully snug around me. That, combined with how hot and wet she was, made sliding into her a form of exquisite torture.

We started out with me moving in and out of her in slow, easy strokes; but over the next several minutes, the pace steadily increased. That increase was due in large part to the added stimulation Erika was giving me: without realizing it, her moans and gasps and groans of pleasure and arousal were doing as much for me as the sensation of her already tight vagina clenching around me with every move she made.

As our enthusiasm increased, so did the volume of fluids that Erika was creating. With each passing moment, with each thrust and withdrawal, her liquid essence was forced or drawn out of her. It wasn't long before I could feel my pubic hair becoming soaking up her oily overflow as my balls swung forward into the damp mat of her pubic hair. Of course, as her lubrication escaped, the scent of her arousal and passion saturated the air.

The sounds and smell of her excitement combined with the sensations she was creating around my pistonning penis excited me more and more. Trying to hold off the inevitable, I leaned forward enough to reach under her to take her full breasts in my hands. I held her erect nipples between two fingers of each hand as I felt their warm, spongy weight shift

with each thrust of my hips. With her nipples trapped between my fingers, the shifting of her breasts resulted in a pulling on her nipples that seemed to excite her almost as much as my thrusts into her womanhood.

I saw as she shifted her weight to one arm, the other disappearing underneath her - and a moment later, felt it as her fingers found her clitoris and began rubbing it in time with my penetrations. The finger she had on her clitoris was long enough that it was also touching the underside of my penis, caressing me each time I slid in and out of her.

The added stimulation was all I needed to start me toward my own release: try as I might, I simply couldn't put it off any longer. A dozen steady, hard thrusts, and I could feel my balls tighten up. A half dozen more, and it was time - pressing myself into her as far as I could, I could feel it as the first pulse of my semen erupted in her. Even as I felt it leaving the end of my penis, she threw her head back and screamed as I felt her get almost painfully tight around me.

My second wad of jism was literally unable to get through my penis, she had clamped down on me so tightly. But when her spasm had passed, and her internal muscles had relaxed a bit, it shot free with as much force as the first had - and was quickly followed by a third before she tightened around me again. The second wave of her orgasm wasn't as strong as the first, and I was able to pump a couple more shots into her before she relaxed around me again.

A few more spurts of my semen, and I was done. Tired, sweaty, and feeling damn good - but **done**. Even the light clenching of her hot vagina wasn't enough to keep me hard inside her; gasping for breath, I let my rapidly-deflating penis pull free of her so I could manage a controlled collapse onto her bed. It was only a second more before she seemed to do the same thing, managing to land next to me on her stomach.

With no small effort, I managed to roll onto my side and then put my arm around her to hold and comfort her as we both tried to get ourselves back together...

When I woke up, I was flat on my back with Erika kneeling next to me as she used a damp washcloth to clean up most of the surplus of our mixed fluids from my crotch. When she saw that I was awake, she blushed slightly and said "I was feeling kind of icky, and cleaned up. Then I thought you might like to clean up a little, too. I didn't want to wake you up, so I just went ahead and did it."

I smiled, and said "Thank you. 'Icky', huh?"

She blushed even more, and said "Yeah, icky. Damn good, and damn relaxed, but icky. I'll be right back." before heading toward the bathroom. I heard the water run a few moments, and she was back.

Climbing into the bed, she settled herself so that she was half-lying on me, with most of her weight on the bed. She put one of her legs across mine as she propped herself up on

an elbow, then put her other arm on my chest so she could start playing with my chest hair.

Looking down at me, she said "When I found out you fell asleep, I started to get upset. Then I remembered that you not only pleased me three times today, but Abby at least TWICE last night. Then I wasn't upset any more - only impressed, and grateful."

"Impressed? Grateful?" I asked.

"Yeah, impressed and grateful. Impressed that you could satisfy two women several times each in so short a time, and grateful that I was one of them."

"There's no need for either one. That's just what happens when two people that really care about each other try to make each other happy. That's why it's called 'making *love*'" I replied.

"I thought about that, too. I know that what you did that made me feel so good wasn't just your technique - though that's incredible! - but the fact that I knew that you were doing it because you cared about me, and not just to get your rocks off. What you were doing felt great, and I would have had orgasms from it anyway. What made them so strong was that it was YOU doing it, and that you were doing it to make ME feel good, not just yourself. And I realized just how much of a **turd** I was last night."

Wanting to change the subject away from myself, I asked "You said earlier that you realized why you were thinking about me and Abby the way you were. What happened that got you going that way?"

She let herself down to lie on her side, still propped up against me. Settling her head into my shoulder, she said "I was married before - until my husband started cheating on me. I didn't find out about it until one of his girlfriends called me because she was pissed he was cheating on HER. It was a messy divorce that left me really torn up inside. The only good thing about it was that we didn't have any kids to get hurt by it. But it was still several years before I had anything like a regular boyfriend. He asked me to marry him, and we'd set the date and everything else when I found out that HE was fooling around on me, too."

She laughed, and went on "I was so pissed; I actually threw him out of his own apartment. That was almost six years ago, and I haven't had a boyfriend - at least, nothing steady - since then. And even the few guys I've been out with, it's been more for company for an evening out than anything **personal**. Hell, it's been almost three years since I had a guy in my bed, if you can believe it."

She rose up to look into my face as she told me "So that's the story of Erika, and why she was such a catty bitch last night. Every guy I've loved has cheated on me; and that's why I was so upset last night when you and Abby seemed so ready to just jump in the sack. I

didn't know it then, really, but I loved you; and it seemed like you were letting me down by doing what all the other guys I've loved have done."

I put my arm around her and gave her a hug before she went on "But then I talked to Amy and Lucy, and got my head on straight. You're NOT like the other guys I've loved - and I know that I **do** love you. Like you said, not the run away with each other kind of love, but the **caring** kind."

Finished, she let herself down to rest her head on my shoulder again. I gave her another hug, and said "What's past is past. No blood, no foul - you know better now, so there's nothing for you to be upset about. You didn't hurt me, and I'd be surprised if you hurt Abby. By the time you talked to her, she was already starting to understand what you discovered last night."

"What DID you tell her last night?"

"Knowing your own worth. Not settling for less than you're willing to accept. Being honest in your heart and mind. Integrity of the mind and soul. Trusting yourself and your own judgment. Consistency in how you apply your standards of living."

"And?"

"And that's pretty much it. There was a little more, later, but most of it was said while we were still outside."

"So tell me."

"Like I said, know your own worth. In your particular case, you're head of the training division; I doubt that the FBI would let just any goofus in that job. You don't have to trust anybody else's opinion of what you do or how you do it - if you're honest with yourself, you already KNOW if you're doing the best you can, and doing what needs to be done. If you know your own worth, then you don't have any reason to settle for anything less than you know what you deserve."

"Go on."

"From what I've seen, a lot of people's internal conflicts are because of a contradiction between what their minds and hearts tell them. If you're honest in both, then there **can't** be a conflict. If you can get your heart and mind working together, from the same page, it's amazing how happy and content you can be. And if you have the integrity to consistently use what's in your heart and mind, you'll get consistently good results - as long as you trust your own judgment."

"And?"

"And you learn to trust your own judgment by knowing what your standards are in life, consistently applying them, and paying attention to the results."

"Sounds pretty complicated, and like a lot of work."

"Actually, it's not that complicated, but it is something of a package deal. If you cheat on any one part of it, it pulls the whole thing down, not just that one little part. As for being a lot of work, it is, at first. But once you start doing it, it gets easier and easier as you learn."

"And this making love business?" she asked, with a giggle.

"A physical consequence of abstract ideas. Abstractly, my values tell me that you're a good person: brave, intelligent, dedicated, and attractive. Because my heart works WITH my mind, I feel affection toward you for those reasons. Within my standards, there's room for me to express that affection physically - with the amount of physical affection depending on the amount of emotional affection. Remember what I told Abby last night about why I would make love with her, and think about it a little."

She did just that for a little while before asking "And how does Lucy fit into that?"

"Lucy is my wife. Her happiness and well-being matter more to me than anything else. My commitment to our marriage demands that I do nothing that would hurt her. But her commitment to me is just as great, and she both knows and honors the standards I have. When Amy called, it was Lucy that ultimately decided whether I would come here, or not. If she'd said 'no', then I would have stayed home - I'd have done everything I could to help anyway, but I wouldn't be HERE. I would never be together with a woman like this without Lucy's knowledge and approval. I don't quite know WHY she's willing to give that approval; you'd have to ask her."

"Actually, I did ask her. She told me that she knows what kind of person you are. She told me that she **trusts** your judgment, completely: if you're willing to give enough of your heart to a woman to be willing to make love with her, she knows that woman is a **good** person, and worth your attention - and that she can trust the woman to know that you're only on 'loan'. She also said that any woman you make love to starts out as a good person, and they're better when you're done. On that part, I have to agree with her - seeing Abby this morning, and my own experience, tell me it's true. I **do** feel like a better person - as much from what you've talked to me about as from the physical part of it."

"How so?" I asked.

"I was carrying around a lot of baggage from my marriage and ex-boyfriend, and talking to you like this is helping me get rid of it. Before I came here, I was feeling a little 'down' about my job - but being out in the field, particularly with you and Amy and Abby, has helped jump start me again. Talking to Lucy and Amy has helped me learn a few things about relationships and what's important in them. And on top of all that, the way you

went about making me feel **so** good while we made *love* ; well, that was just the icing on the cake. I know that having been around you, I'm a better person. From talking to you and the others, I know that I can be even better - the way I **want** to be. And after making **love** with you, I know what it *really* means to be close to someone."

With that, she lowered herself to lie on me, her head resting on my shoulder. I put my arm around her and the two of us just lay there for a little while, content to be close to each other.

Finally, though, we both felt the need to get up and get moving. After a quick rinse in the shower - accompanied by a fair amount of groping and fondling - we 'helped' each other get dressed, and made our way downstairs. There, Abby greeted us with a big grin and the comment "I don't need to ask if you enjoyed yourselves!". Erika blushed, and retorted "No more than **I** had to last night!" before grinning in return.

Abby looked at me and said "When I heard the shower running, I called Amy, and she's going to bring you a change of clothes. If the two of you are up for it, I thought it might be fun to do a little shopping."

I thanked Abby for calling Amy, then Erika and I both admitted that a little cruise through the mall sounded pretty good.

Several minutes later, Abby got up to answer the knock at the door - and letting Amy in. Amy came into the living room to find Erika sitting on my lap as we checked out which stores had what on sale, the two of us parked at one end of the couch.

Abby went back to the chair she'd been sitting in - dressed only in panties, the top of her cotton robe open and revealing her breasts.

Amy set a small bag down, and looking around her, told us "This is **not** the same group of people that I left last night!", with a smile.

Erika looked up at her and answered "No, it's the same group. It's just different people."

Abby followed that by saying "Yeah, *better* people. At least, two of us are. The third one was already as good as they get."

Amy just laughed as she took a seat at the other end of the couch from Erika and me, as we put the newspaper aside.

As she settled into the cushions, Amy asked "I'm going to take it that everything went well last night, then."

Erika and Abby both looked at me, then each other, before Abby answered "Everything was **way** better than that last night. Now I know why you said that there was a world of difference between sex, and making love. Any you were right about me not being

disappointed. Boy, am I not disappointed!" Erika and Amy both laughed at the enthusiasm Abby put into the last sentence before Erika told her "Abby was done with him this morning - I found her sitting on his lap feeding him toast. After I talked to you last night - I told them about it - and talking to Lucy, I knew that I owed both of them an apology. I said I was sorry, and they surprised the hell out of me by both acting like it wasn't any big deal. Now I know it wasn't, but then it was kind of a shock. We talked a little bit, then Abby reminded me that it was okay for ME to make love with him, too."

She shot Abby a reproachful look, which Abby ignored, and continued "She wasn't real subtle about it, either, before she left us alone. I was **so** scared, but Dan just put me at ease. We talked a little more, and then I had *my* turn with him. And you're right - there **is** a world of difference. I didn't even mind when he fell asleep - AFTER he gave me three incredible orgasms."

Abby and Amy both laughed, and when they saw the surprised/curious expression on Erika's face, Abby told her "Right before she left last night, Amy told me that I **might** be able to keep up with him - but that she wouldn't put money on it. I'm glad I didn't take her up on it: it took TWO of us to wear him out!"

Amy gave both of them a big grin, and said "I wouldn't bet that he's worn out just yet. Worn down, *maybe*, but not out!"

That earned me an appraising look from both Abby and Erika before the three of them started discussing what their plans were for the rest of the day. As they talked, I couldn't help noticing that Amy and Erika both let their glances at Abby include the view of her breasts, exposed by her open robe.

After they'd been talking a little, I decided to save a little time by changing into the clothes that Amy had brought. I made my way upstairs to Erika's bedroom to change. I was just tying my shoes afterwards when Erika came in, saying "If we're going out in public, I'd better change, too" - and doing just that, giving me a big smile as she stripped to bare skin.

I nodded my head in appreciation of the view before I stood and moved behind her. I cupped her breasts in my hands - feeling her nipples erect in my palms - before I kissed her on the nape of her neck and telling her "Thank you." She turned her head to grin at me, and said "It's me thanking YOU, Dan. Now, you'd better get back downstairs before they have to wait for us to clean up again!"

I gave her nipples a little tweak as I kissed her shoulder, then released her breasts to make my way back downstairs. There, I found only Amy - Abby had apparently gone to get ready for our little outing, as well.

When she saw me, Amy stood up and gestured that she wanted me to join her outside. We stepped out onto the patio, and Amy closed the door behind us before telling me "I'm not sure, but I think Abby would welcome more than just YOUR company in her bed."

"What, just because she was flashing her tits at all of us?", I teased.

Amy laughed, and said "Yeah, I figured you'd notice that. No, not just that she was flashing them, but the *looks* she was giving me - and even Erika - while she was doing it. And I'm not sure, but I think Erika might be tempted to take her up on it, like I am!"

"If you want, I can hint around at the subject, and we can find out if you're right."

Amy smiled, and answered "Yeah, I think I'd like that. I'm Abby's supervisor, so I'd have to think about it real carefully before I let anything like that happen between us - but if Erika's interested, I wouldn't have any problems like that. And I don't think Tom would, either!", the last with a laugh.

About that time, we heard the sliding glass door open behind us before Abby stuck her head out to tell us "We're ready, if you are."

Amy and I followed her back into the living room, where the three of them hashed out the details of getting to the mall - finally settling on Amy and I going in her car, with Abby and Erika in Erika's rental.

Once at the mall, it didn't take long to decide that the first order of business was for all of us to grab a bite to eat. With that out of the way, the next phase was shopping. The little bit of shopping I had in mind took longer than I'd expected - due, in large part, to the unexpected necessity of getting a consensus of opinion from the three of them on almost everything I bought; color, fit, style, all were subject to not just one but THREE reviews.

Finally, though, I got the things I was after - and the situation was sort-of reversed when the three of them all sought my opinion on virtually everything they had an interest in. Of course it DID have its benefits when they all decided that some lingerie and sleepwear were needed. The expressions on the different sales clerk's faces was priceless: having THREE attractive women all asking the *same guy* his opinion on their selections didn't seem to be something they'd ever run into before. Amy, Abby, and Erika all noticed the appraising looks I was getting from the clerks, of course - and that only spurred them into trying to do out-do each other in coming up with the filmiest, almost-nonexistent, outrageous outfits they could find. It was after they all but dragged me into a 'themed' lingerie store, and proceeded to line up with French Maid (Amy), Leather Goddess (Erika), and Cheerleader (Abby) outfits that I called a halt to it: the two salesgirls were paying more attention to me than the other customers (who were, in turn, giving me The Eye).

As the four of us were walking around, checking out the different stores, I kept noticing several different faces. After a few casual route changes (at my suggestion), I was sure of it: we were being followed. I eased us over toward an interior decoration store that had a few mirrors on display, and while we were all looking at it, let the others know we were being followed.

Amy spoke up first, asking "Which ones have you spotted?"

I told her, and she and Erika both used the mirrors we were ostensibly looking at to locate them. Amy added "Okay, I missed the one in the blue windbreaker. There's also the kid with the pony tail and red tie-dye T-shirt."

Erika added "There's also a girl, early twenties, short black hair, in frayed jeans and a lime green tank-top. I didn't catch the kid in the tie-dye."

Abby surprised all of us - I think - by telling us "I'm pretty sure the guy in the black suit, mid-twenties, short pony-tail, has been following us, too - but he's been staying back farther than the others."

Once we'd all pooled our identifications of who was following us, we decided that we needed to find out if there were any others. Erika had an idea, and Amy and Abby quickly adapted it to the particulars of our situation.

We wandered around the shopping mall for a little while longer before Abby left us to make her way toward the ladies' room of the store we were in. She returned several minutes later, and discretely returned Amy's cellular phone. As we passed by the hallway to the 'public' restrooms, Amy separated herself from us - her goal was the mall security office, just past the restrooms. The rest of us stood in a small cluster, as though waiting for her - but generally facing each other so we each had a different view of the crowd around us.

I wasn't surprised when, perhaps twenty minutes later, one of the detectives from the local police department - dressed as casually as anyone else at the mall - started walking a couple feet behind us. What he had to tell us, though, wasn't as casual as his attire: the FBI had several cars of agents in the parking lot, backing up an equal number of local cops. The Deputy Chief of Police and a senior FBI agent had taken a back way into the mall security office, and were working out details with the security force to get, and keep, the shoppers away from wherever they decided to take down the people following the four of us. When the details were worked out, Amy would get a call on her cell phone to let her know where it was all supposed to happen. When Amy discretely acknowledged what he had to tell us, we stopped to look in one of the store windows while the detective continued on past us as though he didn't have an idea in the world who we were.

It was about ten minutes later that Amy's phone rang. She answered, giving only short answers as she listened carefully for about five minutes before the conversation ended. Only then did she tell us "They've settled on the northeast entrance. Almost nobody uses it, and there's a bend in the hallway that will let us out of their sight or force them to close in a little. Outside, there are several trash dumpsters with police and agents behind them. Local PD has already gotten officers into the last couple of stores before the hallway; as soon as our tail gets past, the cops will fall in behind them. Mall security isn't armed, so they'll keep any civilians from following us. Once we're outside, and have some protection, we close the trap on them."

I thought that over for a few seconds, and suggested "Call them back. Tell them to keep the outside people as hidden as possible. There may be a crew outside waiting for us, too. There's too many following us for them NOT to be up to something, and in a place like this, I'd leave some of my people outside to act as an anvil against my hammer. Also, see if mall maintenance can put a few more of these concrete waste cans in the hallway, and even outside - us or the cops might need them. Have them give you another call a couple minutes after they're ready, too. We can use it as an obvious reason why we're leaving by a different exit than we came in."

Erika and Amy both nodded, and Amy pulled out her phone to make the call. It took only a minute before she told the rest of us "Done. They just asked for five minutes so maintenance could get the cans in place."

We gave them their five minutes - and a couple extra - before easing our course around toward the desired part of the mall. We were perhaps a half-dozen stores from the designated entrance when Amy got the call. I mentally applauded whoever was orchestrating this - our departure by this exit would seem perfectly reasonable. Amy did her part perfectly: her conversation with whoever had called was clearly serious, as the rest of us stood there looking at her in 'obvious' interest. The conversation lasted only a minute or so, and after it was over we just as 'obviously' discussed it before Abby gestured toward the desired entrance. The four of us then made our way toward it - not rushing, but not dawdling, either.

Only afterwards did we find out that our act had gone off perfectly: every last one of the people following us thought that Amy had gotten some kind of official call that needed her attention, and the rest of us were just going along to keep her company. Since not one of them was a 'professional', they all decided that this was the *perfect* opportunity they'd been looking for, and moved to follow us - making themselves obvious. Only the guy in the black suit held back - and that only long enough to radio the car full of people he'd left outside, and tell them where we were heading.

The four of us were nearing the bend in the hallway when we heard their footsteps behind us. We shared a smile with each other, and continued toward the exit. Once there, the area outside looked like a Monty Python bit on "How Not To Be Seen" - the only thing moving was a discarded Styrofoam cup as it did lazy circles in a wind eddy.

The outside walls of the mall veered away from the entrance at 45-degree angles; along both walls, there were a number of trash dumpsters resting at the bottom of slight inclines (apparently to keep the wind from blowing the empty ones out into the parking lot); that put their bottom edges just a little below the level of the ground behind them - it was all but impossible to tell that they were serving to conceal a number of local and federal law enforcement.

The four of us had gotten perhaps fifty yards into the parking lot - just past a couple of large cement trash bins sitting next to each other - when a station wagon came screeching

to a halt some twenty feet in front and to the side of us. It had barely stopped when a half-dozen people poured out of it and started leveling an assortment of weapons at us.

Behind us, we heard someone shout "Police! Drop your weapons!", shortly followed by another person shouting "You're surrounded! Drop the guns!"

In front of us, several police cars came screaming around the building to take up positions on the other side of the station wagon in front of us before a panel truck pulled in a little farther on. The back of the truck opened up, and a number of the local S.W.A.T. people came pouring out to back up the uniformed officers.

Even as all this was happening, Amy, Abby, Erika, and I were taking places behind the concrete trash containers near us. Our weapons drawn, all of us peeked around the trash cans to see what was going on in front of us - a look behind showed that the bunch following us were outnumbered four to one, just counting the law enforcement we could see on the outside of the mall - and most of those were between us and our erstwhile tail.

One of the characters in front of us decided to try and keep the cops busy - apparently so his partners could do what THEY had come for. Trying to muscle around what looked like an FN-FAL, he caught a couple of shotgun blasts, firing his rifle only once into the air before he fell. But that gave his buddies time enough to find other cover, and start shooting at the four of us.

We returned fire, of course - but carefully, since we knew that the cops would be looking to move in on the shooters. Abby was a little slow getting under cover once, and got a grazing wound along her forearm. It bled like hell, but didn't stop her from trying to take out the guy that had done it.

One of them was smart enough to try and move around to get a better angle on us. Erika forced him down, and when she dropped to cover, I stayed up - and watched a red fog develop behind him when I got an aimed shot off.

When he didn't reappear, it seemed to give the others something to think about, and the shooting slowed considerably - and that gave the SWAT people the opportunity to move in and get the drop on them.

As soon as I heard the cops in front of us start yelling "Clear!", I stood up and yelled for a medic - and it wasn't thirty seconds before a Fire Department rescue vehicle pulled up and a couple of EMT people were heading for us. Abby was fired up on adrenaline and tried to wave them off, but Amy wasn't having any - "Dammit, O'Malley! You WILL sit down, and you WILL receive medical treatment, or I'll have you back in the Academy before dark!"

With that prospect in front of her, Abby sat down again - and proceeded to have a case of the Shakes. Erika moved to sit with her, and started talking to her to calm her down while the medics got her immediate needs taken care of before moving her.

While they were doing that, Amy and I went forward to check on the bunch in front of us, finding that the one I'd taken aim at had a half-inch hole in his forehead - and was missing the back quarter of his skull. The side of the vehicle behind him was an abstract mess in red and gray.

Back at the mall entrance, the cops had gotten everyone disarmed and handcuffed. Every last one of our watchers had been scooped up - including the guy in the black suit. I told Amy "From the way he was hanging back, I'd bet he was in charge of this bunch. Probably high enough up the food chain that it would be worthwhile keeping him separated from the rest of them." Amy nodded in agreement, and said "I'll make sure they keep him isolated.", and headed off to talk to one of the supervisors.

By this time, of course, we'd drawn something of a crowd from the mall - along with a couple of TV news trucks. Some reporter got past the police lines and stuck a microphone in my face before asking "Who are you? What happened here?"

I gave her a look that let her know she wasn't welcome, and answered "Santa Clause. One of my reindeer threw a shoe."

She puffed up and started to get indignant, but before we could exchange any more words, Amy showed up, telling her "Miss Ross, this is a crime scene. You have the right to report the news, but not interfere. Get back behind the police line before I have you arrested for obstruction of justice, tampering with evidence, conspiracy, and anything else I can think of."

Miss Ross turned to look at me again, and I just showed her the empty pistol magazine in my hand. It took her a few seconds, but she finally got the message: it's probably not a good idea to piss off people with loaded guns. Especially when those people have just demonstrated a willingness to USE those guns.

She paled slightly, and didn't object as Amy got a uniformed cop to 'escort' her back to the other side of the police line.

When she was well out of listening distance, Amy told me "The PD has identified the suit. He's not one of the bosses, but he's high enough up to know who the bosses are. The rest of them are just gofers, from a couple of different gangs. Same with the crew from the car - just hired guns, but from even OTHER groups than the mall bunch. This was planned, and coordinated across several gangs. The Cartelita is **definitely** running scared - they heard about what you did in the jail, and how you got help from the software companies."

It was when she said that that I got a sudden feeling of dread.

"Amy, there's a leak."

"What? Where?"

"There's a security leak. Somehow, the Cartelita is getting information about what's going on about this case."

"What? How?"

"I don't know how - but the what is that they're finding out about the operations against them. How else would they know who the other agents were that you assigned to try and get the data off that computer, and get to them? How else would they know enough to try and ambush ME only a couple days after I got here? Yeah, they might have heard about the jail thing from some of the inmates; but how would they know about me asking for help from the software companies? We only *got* the help from them in the last couple of days!"

I could see on Amy's face that what I'd just said made sense to her - and that she **definitely** didn't like it.

"So what do we do?" she finally asked.

"I'm sure you've got your own resources. Use them. In the mean time, we've got to cut back on who knows what's going on. You, me, Abby, and Erika, for starters. Any time we have to talk about it, we do it someplace we can be sure we're not being bugged."

"Damn right! Dan, you've probably got more experience in this kind of stuff than I do. What else can we do?"

"I'd think the first thing to do would be to narrow down where the leak **MIGHT** be. Right off the top of my head, it's either inside the FBI, or the PD."

"How do we narrow it down, then?"

"We put out two versions of the same thing, each a little different than the other. One to the local cops, the other just within the FBI. Make it something the Cartelita has to act on; **HOW** they act tells us which group the leak is in."

"The locals aren't going to like that."

"Tough. If the leak's on their side, they'll understand why. If it's in the FBI, we apologize. But the important thing is to find it."

She thought that over for a couple minutes, and said "Okay, how about if one story is that we've got enough data to start going after the leaders, and the other is we're on to their suppliers? They'll either go into hiding if they think they're going to get busted, or prices will go up if they think their supply will be hurt."

"I'll take your word for it - I don't know enough about it to offer anything constructive."

Amy nodded, and said "That's what we'll do, then. I'll get things started right away."

I nodded my agreement, and she headed off toward where a cluster of senior cops was talking. I started toward where Abby was still be tended by the medics. When I got there, I found that they (and Erika) wanted to get her to the hospital just to be sure there wasn't anything else wrong. She was insisting that she was fine. I settled it by telling her to get in the damn ambulance and get herself checked out - she wouldn't be any good to ANYONE if she developed an infection or something; if she was okay, then I'd *personally* collect her from the hospital. Suitably chastised and encouraged, she agreed - though insisting that she was by-god going to WALK to the ambulance under her own power. The medics had had enough trouble with her that they were past caring **how** she got there - just as long as she WENT.

When she was gone, Erika turned to me and said "I'm glad you showed up when you did. I was tired of trying to argue with her, and was about ready to just shoot her in the leg to get her moving!", with a smile.

"I expect she'll be all right. This is her first shootout, I think, and she's just a little jazzed from it, is all. Next time, she'll be okay."

"IF there's a next time." Erika responded.

"I don't think this is the last one." I told her. When she looked up at me in surprise, I added "And that's not the least of our problems."

"What is it?"

I responded by telling her about my suspicion of a leak, and why. She was quick to accept it, too, and just as readily agreed to limiting the REAL information to just the four of us until we found out where the leak was. I went on tell her Amy's idea for how to find out which side of the fence the leak was on, and Erika nodded her understanding and agreement.

As we were walking over to where Amy was still in conversation with the local police, Erika told me "This is the reason that I'm here, Dan - to LEARN from you. Honestly, it didn't occur to me that there might be another group besides the ones that were following us. But when you mentioned it, it made perfect sense; and I was DAMN glad you thought to have some extra cover put where we could use it in case there WAS shooting. And that thing about staying up to get one of the bad guys - I've never seen anyone do that before, but it obviously works."

"It only works a little while on any particular group - then they get the idea to use it themselves. It's not something to count on, past the first couple of times - at least, not unless you're REAL careful about it."

"Well, it worked this time, that's for sure. I saw the guy you shot; I didn't know a .45 did that much damage."

"It's not the pistol, it's the loads", I told her.

She looked at me quizzically, and I pulled out the other full magazine I had, and extracted the top round from it so she could see both types of loads. She asked, and I explained to her about what the two rounds were meant to do. She looked up at me in surprise, and I told her "I hand-loaded all these - and they're a little 'hot', too." She understood that by 'hot', I meant that I'd put in a little more propellant than was normally used. I followed that by telling her "I changed ammo after that first attempt - I figured that anyone else that came after me would be a little tougher to take down."

She turned around to look at the assortment of rifles propped against the station wagon - one had been a FAL from Fabrique National; the others were a mix of AK-47s and M-16s. When she turned back she said "I can't fault your judgment, or your thinking, Dan."

"Yeah. Now if we can just get these pukes before anybody really gets HURT", I answered.

By that time, we were standing next to Amy as she listened to the Deputy Chief thank her for her assistance. He looked over at me, and said "And a special thanks to you, Mr. Andrews. Without your help, I don't think we could have gotten these people without a LOT more bloodshed, and some innocent civilians getting hurt."

"My pleasure, Chief. Whoever made the last phone call timed it perfectly."

Amy turned to tell me "That was the Deputy Chief, here, in fact. And I've also expressed my appreciation to mall security for keeping people out of the way, too."

I saw a character standing behind and to the side of the Deputy Chief - his uniform was the same as the rest of mall security, if a bit flashier. I nodded to him, and gave him a 'Good Job. Thanks!', too.

Amy turned back to the cops and said "If there isn't anything else right now, Chief, I think we'd like to go home and try to relax, if we could."

"Go right ahead, Amy. We already know all we need for right now, and if there's any questions, well, they can wait till Monday. I'll get a couple of uniforms to escort you."

"We appreciate it. Thanks again, Chief", She answered.

"My pleasure, my pleasure."

With that, the three of us turned and headed in the general direction of where the cars were parked. As we got close to the police line, a couple of uniformed officers broke loose to go to their cars, and then follow us.

As we walked, Amy told us "I kind of let it slip that some of the information we got off the computer involved the suppliers for the Cartelita. The Deputy Chief and his bunch lapped it right up - they think I didn't know I let it slip out. If the leak is on their side, we should know in a few days as prices start to go up. If not, I try the other story on OUR people."

Erika and I both nodded, and Amy went on "I really **hate** doing this kind of crap - but if there IS a leak, and I think there must be, then we've GOT to know who and where it is."

By then, we'd gotten to where the cars were parked. I told Amy about my promise to pick up Abby personally, and she just smiled and nodded her head in understanding. Together, we went over to let the two cops assigned to escort us know what we would be doing.

Amy told me where the hospital was that Abby had been taken to; I would take Amy's car while Erika drove the two of them to Abby's place.

Once at the hospital, I started to drive around the parking lot to find a place to park until the cop escorting me pulled alongside and let me know that I was welcome to use one of THEIR spaces. I did, and he quickly moved to park next to me. Apparently taking 'escort' literally, he got out and followed me into the hospital - though staying a discrete distance away. It didn't take me long to find out where Abby was, after showing them my FBI ID (the only use I'd gotten out of it since Amy handed it to me).

Abby was in one of the exam areas, fussing as the doctors finished checking her out. She quieted down when I pointed out that the more she fussed, the longer it would take before they turned her loose - assuming that they didn't just get aggravated with her and keep her overnight just on general principles.

On hearing that, one of them turned to give me a grin before making a few notations on a clipboard. With me standing there holding her (other) hand, she was a lot more tolerant and patient as they re-dressed the wound on her arm, gave her a shot of antibiotics, and prescribed some mild pain-killers and more antibiotics. She tolerated the lecture to go easy on the pain meds and take ALL of the antibiotics, and they finally released her.

As we were heading toward the exit, she asked "Why the uniform?"

"I think he's there as much to make sure we don't get into any more gunfights, as to keep people away", I answered - and looked behind me to see him grinning in response.

Amy saw it, too, and laughed.

Back outside, we got into Amy's car, and Abby navigated us to her place, with the cop keeping position a short distance behind us until I got the car parked. When I got out, I gave him a small salute, which he returned with a smile before driving off.

Inside Abby's place, we found that Erika and Amy had found the liquor, and both had fair-sized glasses of what looked like pretty strong drinks. Both of them got up to greet us, and check to make sure Abby was going to be okay. Assured that she was, Erika left us long enough to make a drinks for Abby and me after asking our preferences. Amy guided us back to the living room and got us seated before taking a seat herself.

A few moments later, Erika reappeared with our drinks. On accepting hers, Abby protested that she really didn't need it. Amy barely beat me to the punch, telling her "Yes, I think you do. You just don't know it, yet."

Abby looked at her curiously, but took a sip - quickly followed by another, much larger one. Only then did I tell her "Abby, you're going through the same thing that the rest of us have - the after-effect of your first gun battle. Right after it ended, you had an attack of the Shakes. That was all the adrenaline in your system burning off. Then you tried to tell everyone that you didn't need medical attention - that's the second phase, the 'high' of surviving, when you feel immortal. I think you're finally starting to hit the third, and final phase: the What-Ifs, when it finally hits you that you COULD have been killed. You'll start wondering 'What If' this or that, and it'll scare the bejeezus out of you. It's nothing to be ashamed of - it's happened to ALL of us, including me. It's perfectly natural, and there isn't a damn thing you can do about it. And before you ask, yes, every time you get involved in something like that, it's going to happen again - not as much, maybe, but it'll be there. That's why you see the REST of us drinking, too - because we're going through the same thing you are, only not as bad, since we've been through it before. And that's why we're here - to help you through it."

Abby took another deep swallow of her drink before setting it down and turning to me to say "Now I understand what you were talking about that night - about how the combat range is, and how it needs to be different. The whole time they were shooting at us, it was like I was watching myself shooting back - and even as I was thinking 'oh, that's like when the back guy pops out of the store', I was thinking that the bad guy that pops out of the store wasn't supposed to shoot BACK. And I could see them shooting, you know? I mean, the muzzle flashes, and it was so **pretty**, like fireworks; but then I'd hear the bullets hit the garbage can, and the way they'd go screaming off hurt my ears. Then I saw the one guy, that was trying to shoot me, and I tried to duck down, and I felt this *burning* on my arm and I thought "Damn him! He HURT me!", and it made me mad so I tried to shoot him back to hurt him the way he hurt me... and... and... And I could have DIED out there!"

The whole time she'd been talking, her speech had gradually sped up. It only hit her - the What Ifs - as she was talking it out, admitting to herself just how close she came to death. With that realization and admission, all three of us saw as she stared into the face of her own mortality before collapsing into my arms, great wracking sobs shaking her body. I'd

heard that it hit women harder than men - but I'd also seen a few guys react like this, too. I hadn't cried, but I hadn't gotten over it easily, either. And I wasn't about to load her down with the nightmares and guilt that came from killing another human being - enemy or not. I knew that I'd have my OWN regrets and bad dreams about what I'd done that day. The necessity of it wouldn't change in the slightest the effects from it.

With a scared, crying, Abby in my arms, all I could do was hold on to her and try to comfort her. Erika and Amy were soon next to us, doing their part to help her past it, too. All three of us gently caressed her arms and back as we muttered soft words of reassurance and comfort to her. It took a while, but she eventually started to cry herself out. When she did, Erika got up to get her a small hand towel from the kitchen, so Abby would have something to dry her eyes and face with.

Eventually, Abby got herself together enough to pull away from me, and start dabbing at her eyes and face as she snuffled and sniffed her way toward something approximating normalcy.

Once settled back into her seat on the couch, she picked up her drink again - and took a couple of big swallows from it to help settle her nerves before setting it back down again. The rest of us shared a look - none of us had the courage to tell her that it wasn't over yet. We all knew that for days to come, she'd wake up in the middle of the night to seek out the company of other human beings to reassure herself that she still existed.

We were all surprised when we heard a knock at the door. Amy was closest, and got up to go answer it - with me behind her, my pistol drawn. It turned out to be a uniformed cop, bringing us the bags that we'd left behind at the mall - the bags holding the stuff we'd bought before realizing we were being followed. One of the detectives had realized who they'd belonged to, and detailed someone to get them back to us.

Back in the living room, Abby was staring off into space. Deciding that a little distraction was called for, I rummaged around in one of the bags I held until I found something I knew she'd bought. Pulling it out, I held it up for everyone to see, and declared "That's weird. I don't *remember* buying anything like this. I don't think it would even FIT!"

Erika and Amy both grinned at me as I stood there holding an almost nonexistent G-string in my hand - until Abby noticed what I was doing. Blushing furiously, she stood up to snatch it out of my hands as she exclaimed "That's not yours, it's MINE, you dummy!" When she realized that I'd been teasing her, she blushed again, accompanied by laughs from Amy and Erika.

"I don't know why you're so fussy about it now - God knows you were waving it around enough in the store when you wanted to know what I thought about it!" I teased, adding "Shucks, the way you were acting, I thought I was going to get to see you in it!"

That was a challenge that Abby couldn't let pass. Looking me square in the eye, she said "I'll model MY stuff if they'll model THEIR stuff!"

With that declaration, she turned around to see Erika and Amy looking at her - then each other. Erika broke the silence first, saying "If Amy will, I will!"

That was quickly followed by Amy's declaration "Well, **I'm** not going to be the chicken, here! Shucks, I'll even go first, just to get things started!"

And she did just that, taking one of the bags of her stuff into the downstairs bathroom, and reappearing a couple minutes later wearing only a pair of French-cut bikini panties and camisole. Behind the material, her trim bush and erect nipples were clearly visible. As she walked to a point in front of all of us, we could see her breasts swaying slightly; as she turned to show us the back of the outfit, she revealed her nicely-shaped, firm ass to us.

When she was done, she moved to sit on the arm of the couch, next to me, before asking "Okay, so who's next?"

"I guess that would be me, since Abby made the challenge", Erika said as she started toward the bathroom.

She reappeared a bit later to show us the sheer black bustier and thong she'd picked up. Neither came even close to hiding the charms she had underneath; and I could see that both Amy AND Abby had a more than passing interest in both the clothing AND the wearer.

Erika followed Amy's example, and took up station on the other side of me; that left Abby with nothing to do but to head off to make her own change.

She opened the door to reveal that she'd put on the G-string I'd commented on, along with an incredibly sheer teddy. The G-string was enough - barely! - to cover her pubis; the teddy did absolutely nothing to impede the view of her small, firm breasts - or the erect nipples capping them. The only discordant note was the bandage on her arm.

As Abby walked toward me, Amy stood up and moved to make her next change while Abby took her place on the couch arm.

The three of them each went through several such changes - and each outfit seemed to out-do the one before. It was the damnedest collection of G-strings, teddies, body stockings, baby-dolls, negligees, panties, thongs, bustiers, half- and demi-cup bras, and so forth that I'd ever had the pleasure of seeing. The only way they didn't show up was naked - and with the things they'd bought, THAT would have been a let-down.

With the revelation of each outfit, the wearer would draw that much more attention and interest from the other two. By the time Amy showed us the last of her purchases - a gossamer baby-doll outfit apparently made of a **single** spider web - there was a distinct aura of aroused female in the air; or, more correctly, the scent of THREE of them.

By the time they finished, it was late afternoon, close to evening. With the drinks we'd had (we'd each gone through a couple), and the lateness, all of us were feeling pretty relaxed when my stomach growled - causing the three of them to start laughing.

When they'd calmed down again, Abby spoke up, saying "Dan's right - it IS getting close to supper. Amy, you and Dan are certainly welcome to stay, if you want."

Here, Erika spoke up to tell us "I don't know about *you* , but **I'm** not in any mood to cook. How about we just send out for pizza?"

All of us readily agreed that that sounded like a FINE idea; after a brief discussion to settle on toppings, Abby got on the phone to order it. When she hung up, she said "My invitation, so it's my treat - but I think I'd better change into something a little more 'public' so I don't give the delivery guy a heart attack!"

Erika and Amy both agreed that they should change, too, so when Amy started for the bathroom, Erika and Abby went upstairs. Amy had been sitting next to me on the couch for only a minute or so when they came back into the living room, taking chairs across from us.

The four of us chatted about a number of different things until the pizza arrived. As Abby brought it into the living room, Erika got us something to drink from the kitchen. Reappearing with four bottles of beer, she told us "As far as I'm concerned, pizza is like Mexican food: the only way to eat it is by washing it down with beer."

All of us agreed, and with the pizza opened up on a table between us, we all took a slice. When all we had left was the empty box, Abby took it into the kitchen, then asked if anyone wanted anything to drink. We all responded that a soda actually sounded pretty good, and she brought in a can for each of us.

As Abby settled into her seat again, Erika asked me "Well, Dan, did you see anything you liked?" with a mischievous grin.

"Yup. All of it."

"Anything you liked in particular?" Amy asked.

"Well, that body stocking you showed off looked pretty interesting", I admitted, before adding "I think I'll get one of those for Lucy - I think she'd like it, too."

Surprised, Abby asked "Lucy wouldn't mind you getting her something you saw on another woman?"

"Not at all. Anyway, I read someplace or other that women like that kind of stuff for a different reason than men do."

"What's that", Erika asked.

"I read that women buy clothes like that to BE SEEN in them - mostly by other women. Speaking from experience, I know that us guys usually buy it in the hope of getting the woman OUT of it!", I answered, making them all laugh.

"Where would Lucy get a chance to show something like that body stocking off to another woman?" Abby asked.

"Beats me. If she found one she wanted to show it off to, though, she would. Might even get the same response she'd get from me."

Erika and Abby were both looking at me curiously when Erika asked "You mean that Lucy might wear it for another woman - and then take that woman to bed?"

"She might."

"And you're okay with that?"

"Sure, why not? If Lucy's okay with me being with other women - like she is with you three - why should I mind if she does the same thing?"

"That doesn't bother you - two women er, making love?" Erika asked.

"Not in the slightest. Lucy loves me, and I love her. If she can find happiness and pleasure with another woman, I'm not going to fuss about it. I'm just going to be happy that SHE'S happy."

"Have you, uh, ever been with another guy?" Abby asked, hesitantly.

"No, that never interested me. If it's what someone else wants to do, more power to them - it's just not for ME."

"But you're still okay with Lucy having another woman. You don't get jealous, or upset, or anything." It came out as a statement, but I knew that Abby meant it as a question.

"You got it." I answered.

Amy finally spoke up, telling them "I know that what he's telling you is the truth - because he's been there when Lucy and I have made love, the same way Tom has. Like Dan says, they're both just happy that Lucy and I are happy. Sometimes Lucy and I get together with one or the other of them, and sometimes we're just with each other. When that happens, Dan and Tom just go someplace else and find something else to do."

Erika and Abby both looked at Amy with a look of surprised interest.

Abby spoke up first, asking "You and Lucy have..."

"Plenty of times. Don't get me wrong: Tom's a wonderful lover, and so is Dan, as you know. But Lucy and I can please each other in ways that only another woman could."

Erika surprised all of us by admitting "I've never been with another woman - but I've always wondered what it would be like..."

For her part, Abby told us "I tried it a couple of times, you know, in college; but it never really seemed to DO all the much for me."

Amy laughed, and said "I'll bet sex - making love - wasn't all that big a deal for you, either, until you met Dan!"

Abby and Erika both got thoughtful looks at THAT idea.

Amy went on to tell them "What Dan did for me about making love with guys, Lucy did for me about making love with another woman. I can tell you from my own experience: it doesn't matter if it's a guy or another woman - if the love and respect are there, then what happens is **wonderful**."

It was Erika that brought up an obvious question: "But what about the Bureau's attitude about its agents engaging in homosexual acts?"

"What about it?", Amy responded, "We're supposed to protect the rights of others - including homosexual and bisexual people. Why shouldn't we be free to exercise those same rights? Aren't WE citizens, too?"

"What will you do if someone finds out?" Abby asked.

"Nothing."

"NOTHING?"

"Nope. If it comes out, it comes out. If the Bureau doesn't like it, they'll have to decide which is more important: keeping a good agent - and I know I'm good! - or who I find pleasure with. Worst thing that can happen is they fire me, and I go to work someplace where they pay better and don't care who's in my bed." Amy answered, with a smile. "Please understand: I'm not going to rub anyone's nose in it, but I'm not going to hide it, either."

Erika spoke up, asking "And how about you, Dan? And Lucy?"

"I work for myself, so the only ones **I** have to answer to is my family. Lucy's good enough at what she does that I don't think they'd **care** what she does with her private

time. But even if they did, we've got enough money that she could tell them to get stuffed, and we could still be more than comfortable."

After a few false starts, Abby finally managed to ask "Uh, how much DID you make from the TechnoDynamics case? If you don't mind?"

"I was working for eight percent of what could be shown I was personally responsible for recovering. Clara Hawkes put that at something over three hundred million, so that left me with twenty-five mil, and change. Uncle Sam took a chunk, of course; but I've got a pretty good accountant, and I got to keep more than I expected I would."

Amy had seen my house, of course, and knew that I'd gotten a pretty good paycheck out of the TechnoDynamics situation. She didn't know exactly how much, though. All three of them just sat there looking at me - Amy with only a little less wonder than the other two.

Erika finally recovered enough to ask "So why are you here, then? It's obviously not for the money. And from the way you act with other folks, I know it's not for prestige or status. So why?"

"Like I said the first night: because these characters are pushing this crap to kids that don't know enough to make informed decisions. Because they're killing and hurting people to do it. Because Amy asked for my help, and I CAN."

Abby asked "Isn't Lucy worried about you being here?"

"Of course. But when I told her that Amy had asked for my help, it was LUCY that told me to go ahead and do it, without me even having to ask. Sure she's worried about me - but she's also learned a little bit about what I did in the Army, and she knows that I can watch out for myself - and that I'm not afraid to ask for help if I need it. So, yeah, she worries about me - but she **trusts** me, too."

Just as Abby was about to say something else, Amy's cell phone rang. She looked surprised when she answered it, listened intently for a few moments, and handed it to me.

Of course, I immediately recognized Lucy's voice when I heard "Dan? something's happened here. Sandra's parents were coming home from someplace or other, and they were in an accident. Both of them are dead. The cops say that the car that hit them was stolen, and they can't find the driver. I need you to come home."

"Is Sandra okay? Where is she?"

"She's fine, physically; she's here, with us. She's a wreck, of course."

As I was talking, Amy had quietly let the others know what had happened; all three were making no pretense of not listening in to my side of the conversation.

"I'll be home on the first thing pointed that direction. I'll be heading for the airport right away; I should be there in a few hours."

I had a sudden thought, and asked Lucy "Are there any cops there with you?"

"Yes, a couple of detectives."

"Put one of them on."

"Why, what's going on?"

"I'll let you know in a minute. Please, let me talk to one of them."

"Okay."

I could hear as Lucy got the attention of one of the cops, and got him to the phone.

"Detective Sergeant di Napoli."

"Detective, this is Dan Andrews. I'm currently working on a drug case with the FBI, and I'm a little suspicious about the accident. Could you assign a couple of officers to keep an eye on my house until I get there - it'll only be a few hours."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Andrews, but I don't have the authority to do that. A request like that would have to come from my Captain."

"Detective, like I said, I'm working a case for the FBI - its official enough that I'm packing FBI credentials. Would that make any difference?"

"No, sir, not over the phone. I think I understand your worry, but I really don't have the horsepower to do anything like that."

I sighed, and said "I understand, Detective. I'll go at it from the other direction. Could you stay there for a little while, until it becomes official? I **really** don't want to leave my family exposed, if what I think is really happening."

"Yes, sir, I'll be happy to do **that** - but I can't stay here more than another hour, even so."

"I think you'll hear something well before then, Detective. Thank you. Could you put my wife back on, please?"

"Glad to, sir."

"Dan? What's happening?"

"Honey, I might just be seeing things that aren't there, but I don't like the accident happening while I'm here working this drug case. I'm going to get some more people to watch out for you. Until then, the detectives are going to stick around, just to make sure you and the girls are safe, okay?"

"Okay"

I could tell from her voice that Lucy thought it was anything BUT 'okay', but that she'd do what I asked, and keep herself together until I got there.

"I'm sorry, honey. I'll be there as soon as I can - a few hours, tops."

"Hurry, Dan. I don't like this."

"I don't either. But I'll be there soon, and it'll be all right. Love you."

"Love you, too."

With that, the conversation ended. I looked at Amy and asked "Can you get in touch with the Bureau office at home, and get them to make a request for protection for my family?"

Amy's response was to simply take the phone from my hand, and start dialing. A moment later, we listened as she got the weekend duty agent, and got patched through to the Bureau Agent in Charge.

"Sam? Amy Jones here. You know that drug case I've been working on? Yeah, that one. Well, I've got someone from your area helping me with it. Dan Andrews. Yeah, him. Listen, his daughter's best friends' parents were just killed in a suspicious traffic accident, and he's worried about them. Yeah, we don't like the coincidence, either. The thing is, the cops can't put anyone around his place until there's some kind of official request. Thanks, I knew you'd understand. Listen, he's already made a lot of progress for us - and they've tried to kill **HIM** *twice* already. Yeah. Okay, he's heading back to be with his family for a while. As soon as I know when he's arriving, I'll call; could you have someone meet him and get him home? Thanks, Sam. Yeah, I'll talk to you later."

As she was dialing another number, Amy told me "He's calling the police right now. You'll have at least two agents at your place in ten minutes; the cops should be there pretty quick after that. Whenever you get in, he'll have an agent ready to drive you home."

She stopped talking to me to tell whoever she'd called "Mike? Amy. Listen, Dan Andrews needs to get home **now**. Get on the airline system, and get him the first thing smoking. Better make it two seats. This is hotter than hot, so make it happen. No, I don't know when he'll be back; right now, it doesn't matter - we think our Cartelita players might be up to something. Yeah. Okay, we'll be at the airport as soon as we can - an hour, tops. Thanks, Mike."

Amy looked at Erika, and said "I figured it would be a good idea if you went with him, if you don't mind."

Erika just told her "Of course. I'd have wanted to, any way. Just give me a couple minutes to grab some clothes" before starting toward the stairs to her bedroom.

Amy told Abby "Effective immediately, you are staying with me. If these assholes are going after his family, I want all of us where we can keep an eye out for each other. Get a couple days worth of clothes, we'll be going to my place after we get Dan and Erika to the airport."

Abby didn't argue - she just went upstairs to do her own packing. A couple minutes later, Erika reappeared in different clothes, with a small suitcase in her hand. She hadn't any more than set it on the floor when Abby made her own appearance - changed and carrying her own small bag.

Outside, Erika and Abby put their suitcases in the trunk of Amy's car before the four of us piled in. Amy didn't **break** any traffic laws getting us to the airport, but did manage to bend the hell out of several.

We'd been moving about ten minutes when she got a call on her cell phone. The conversation didn't take long, and when she'd put the phone away, told us "That was Mike. He's got two seats for you; the airline agreed to hold the plane for you. Airport security has gotten a heads-up, so you won't have to screw around with the security checkpoints - someone will be taking you directly to the plane. You'll be home as soon as we can get you there, Dan."

I managed to pull myself out of my own thoughts long enough to tell her "Thanks, Amy."

Even as she'd been talking, Amy had dug out the flashing red light she had under the dashboard, and stuck it to the roof before turning it on. With the public at large suitably warned, she got **serious** about getting us to the airport.

When we got to the terminal, there were two uniformed security people waiting for us with one of their electric carts. Erika got her bag out of the trunk, and the two of us took the back seat of the cart. We hadn't any more than sat down when the driver pushed the accelerator to the floorboard, and we were off. Five minutes later, we pulled up in front of the gate for our flight; one of the gate staff was holding the door open for us as the others stood well out of the way. As Erika and I hurried down the jet way, we could hear the engines spooling up as the pilot prepared to get the plane moving.

They'd barely closed the door behind us when the plane started backing up; the flight attendants got one look at the expressions on our faces, and hurried to show us our seats. The other passengers were obviously wondering who we were that their flight was held up for us; Erika and I both ignored them. Our seats were at the back of First Class; the

whole time the plane was moving to takeoff position, the other passengers kept turning around to stare at us.

We must have had priority clearance; we made the last turn to line up on the runway, the pilot twisted its tail, and we were off.

The flight lasted forever, and ended about ten seconds after we took off. The whole time, Erika had her hand on my arm, trying to reassure me that everything would be okay.

Our landing and trip to the gate were pretty much the reverse of our departure; the flight attendants escorted Erika and me to the door and the ground crew let us head up the jet way before they'd gotten it properly aligned with the plane. At the gate, the FBI agent waiting for us simply gestured which way we should go; he had another electric cart waiting for all of us. As we rode, he introduced himself as Agent Klein, and told me that there were four agents and a dozen police watching my house that very moment. I absently thanked him, and he told me "They're okay, Mr. Andrews."

I saw him blanch when I looked at him and said "Yeah. But whoever's after them isn't going to be."

When we cleared the terminal, I saw that there was a car waiting for us - running, and with someone at the wheel. Agent Klein took the other front seat, leaving Erika and me to share the back. It was red lights and sirens all the way to my house - where I saw a half-dozen cop cars parked, their occupants standing guard.

I'd barely gotten in the door when Lucy, then Robyn and Sandra, came flying into my arms, crying. I kissed all of them, and started reassuring them that everything was going to be okay. Erika simply stood back a little bit while the other FBI agents looked away to give us SOME semblance of privacy.

When they'd all calmed down again, I got them and Erika introduced. While the four of them got to know each other, I met with the man in charge of the agents in my house.

"Mr. Andrews? I'm special agent Garrett Littrick. My orders are to see to the safety of your family, and assist you in whatever manner you ask."

"What's the situation?"

"The house is secure. I've got two agents on roaming patrol inside, and two more doing the same outside. The agents outside are also acting as liaison with the local PD. Their Superintendent has promised their full cooperation; you've got the cops twenty-four hours a day as long as you need them. The same with the Bureau - we'll be here as long as necessary. Detectives are trying to run down who the driver of the other car was, and where he got off to. Eyewitness statements indicate that he didn't even slow down before the impact. Initially, it was thought to be a drunk driver, hit-and-run; but your

involvement with the Bureau changed that. We can't PROVE that this was a deliberate action, but none of us likes the coincidence, either."

"Thank you, Agent... Littrick?"

"Yes, sir."

"All of you have my thanks. You can pull the men from inside the house; anything or anyone gets inside, I'll take care of it."

"Yes, sir." The expression on my face must have told him that it wasn't something open to discussion.

"Help yourselves to whatever's in the kitchen. Make yourselves some coffee, however much you need or want to keep everyone alert. If you can limit yourselves to the kitchen, and the bathroom just off the door to the garage, I'll know that anything else is hostile. We won't be going outside, so if anything moves that you can't identify, blow it the hell away."

"Yes, sir."

"And Agent Littrick?"

"Yes, sir?"

"If you find him? I want a piece."

He didn't seem too sure about that idea, but answered "Yes, sir."

As I turned to go back to the others, I saw him pull a radio out, and heard him give instructions to the other agents to clear the house. A couple of them passed me on their way, and none of them seemed particularly reassured by the expression they saw on my face.

The last one to leave was Agent Littrick, who approached me just long enough to hand me a radio and say "Just so we can keep in touch, sir. We'll all be outside, now."

"Thank you, Agent."

When he was gone, Lucy came up to me and said "Dan, we're safe, now. I think Sandra needs you more than Robyn and me."

I nodded, and went over to where Robyn and Sandra were talking to Erika; I put on my best 'everything's fine' face along the way.

All three of them looked at me, and I asked Robyn "You going to be okay, short stuff?"

She tried to smile, but couldn't pull it off before she answered "Yeah, Dad, I will." After Lucy and I were married, Robyn had decided that me being married to her mother made ME her Dad, not her biological father. As she'd explained it "You've been more like a **real** dad to me than HE *ever* was. I'd rather call YOU 'Dad', than him - YOU deserve it, and he doesn't." Lucy and Robyn both knew how proud I was at her choice.

I knew that I was going to have to have a talk with Robyn, too - but I could see that Sandra was the first priority: she was holding it together by the thinnest of threads.

"Sandra? C'mon, let's go someplace private, okay?"

She nodded, and Erika and Robyn both watched in sympathy as I walked with her to the family room. Once there, I parked myself in 'my' chair, and pulled her down onto my lap, then against my chest, my arms wrapped around her.

She tucked her head under my chin, and listened as I told her "Sandra, I'm sorry. I'm afraid that what happened to your mom and dad might be because of what I was doing to help Amy. We don't know for sure yet, but none of us likes the fact that they were in that accident at the same time I was helping the FBI. If I could, I'd change what happened to them in an instant. If I'd had ANY idea that something might happen to them, or you, I would have done everything I could to protect all of you. Sandra, I'm afraid they died because of me, and what I was doing, and I'm so sorry."

I could feel her body shake as she started to cry into my chest. I could only sit there and hold her until she pulled away from me a bit. She looked up into my face and told me "I don't blame you, Dan. I know - THEY know... KNEW - that what you were doing was important. They... **were**... so proud to know you and Lucy, and they were so happy that you welcomed me into your house and family; especially because Mom couldn't have any more kids. I heard them talking, sometimes, and they were always so glad to know that I was here with you and Lucy and Robyn - they thought all of you were a good influence on me. Mom used to worry about it sometimes, but Daddy was in the Army, too, and he'd tell her about what kind of people got to be in Special Forces; and then he'd tell her how much better soldiers had to be - and not just about the Army stuff - to get into something like what you did. Both of them were so PROUD of me when Clara Hawkes sent me that letter, thanking me for helping with that case you worked on with them."

She went on to tell me "Dan, I know you would have done anything to keep them from getting hurt, and to protect us. That other lady - Erika? - told us how much you've already done to help them break up that drug gang, and I know Mom and Daddy would have wanted you to do it. Lots of times, I'd hear them say that they wished people WOULD go after the dealers and suppliers and all of that. And several times, I heard Daddy say he wished there was something HE could do, too - both of them were SO worried that *I'd* start using drugs. I think that even if they'd known something might happen, they would have told you to do ahead and help stop those people. So don't blame yourself, okay? I know you try, real hard, to keep people from getting hurt when they don't deserve it, but you can't protect EVERYONE."

That said, she leaned against my chest again, letting me hold her close. I'd gotten her in there to try and comfort HER - and she'd just turned it around and put MY mind a little more at ease. Yeah, she was one hell of a kid.

We sat there for several minutes, Sandra quietly crying into my chest before I asked her "Sandra, is there anything you need? Do you have some family that you'd rather be with, or someplace else you'd rather go?"

I felt her shake her head before she told me "No, I don't need anything, really - just to be here with you and Robyn and Lucy, is all. I don't have any other family, except my grandma and grandpa. They live a couple hundred miles from here; I don't get to see them very often. This is the only place I want to be."

"If it's okay, then, I'll call them and ask if they mind if you stay with us for a while. They're your only family, so they'll probably be the ones appointed as your guardians, until you get old enough."

"That's okay" she replied - then suddenly sat up and asked "You mean that I might have to go live with them?"

"Probably. They're your only family, and the court would almost certainly ask them to be your guardians. Why?"

"Because I don't really **know** them. Like I said, I only saw them every few years; it's been at least TWO since the last time! And besides, they're retired, and they really don't have much - how are they going to take care of themselves AND me? I think they barely get by, now!"

I pulled her back to my chest and told her "Okay, okay. Don't worry about something that hasn't happened yet. Maybe something else will happen so you don't have to go live with them."

"You think so?"

"Maybe. Don't worry about it right now, okay?"

"Okay", she replied, as she snuggled into my chest.

I don't know if it was exhaustion, that it was ME holding her, or what, but Sandra eventually fell asleep on my lap. As I sat there, listening to her soft little snores, I thought. Hard. About a lot of things.

A while later, I heard the phone ring in another room, but ignored it - I knew someone else would answer it; I was surprised when Robyn brought it in to me, though. Before I could ask, she told me who it was: "Muddy". "Muddy" Waters was a guy from my outfit in the Army. As soon as she handed me the phone, she disappeared.

"Talk to me, Muddy."

"Boomer, we saw the news tonight, where you and those FBI ladies got into a shoot-em-up at the mall. You okay?"

"I'm all in one piece. But I'm not okay. Not now."

"What is it?"

"You remember the kids with me and Lucy? Well, somebody decided to off Sandra's parents. It was supposed to look like a drunk driver that ran off, but..."

"Yeah." Muddy didn't believe in coincidences any more than I did. He went on to ask "Is she okay?"

I looked down at her, and told him "About as okay as she can be. She's not physically hurt."

"That's somethin', Boomer. I got a call from Speedy and Gomer; both of 'em recognized you in the piece the TV lady did. They wanna know if there's anything they can do."

"Not yet, Muddy; maybe in a couple days. Right now, I've gotta break up a clusterfuck."

"Roger that. Listen, I know it's late, and you've done had one bitch of a day. Get some sack time. I'll check back with you later."

"You've got it, Muddy." - and that ended the call.

I thought about what Muddy had said about hearing from Speedy and Gomer.

David "Speedy" Gonzalez was simply the best Intelligence guy I'd ever seen. He had a talent for blending in with whatever group he was in, in some rather spectacular ways. With my own eyes, I'd seen him walk down a street in a village - while wearing full Army gear! - without raising a fuss. In fact, people didn't even seem to notice that he was there; he'd been able to eyeball the location of some rather unpleasant people that we'd been sent in the deal with, and get back out without any problems. The information he'd brought back from his little stroll was the difference between our mission being the success it was, and a complete failure. I was convinced that he could lose himself in the crowd in a phone booth.

Andy "Gomer" Piles had been our team scout - I was convinced that he could track a single lizard across the desert, if need be. More than once, he'd spotted the booby traps, trip wires, bunkers, and other occupational hazards that had made life difficult for the rest of us. His skills were all the more amazing when you learned that he'd grown up in an inner-city ghetto, instead of the rural environment one would have expected.

I was still sitting there, deep in thought, when Lucy came in. She apparently had to speak my name a couple of times before she got my attention - I could see the look on her face that she always got when she re-discovered how intense my concentration could be.

"Dan, it's getting late."

"I know."

"It's time for bed."

"I know."

"She'll be a lot more comfortable in bed. And Robyn will be there with her."

"Okay."

Lucy waited a bit longer, then finally moved to take Sandra from my arms - no small feat, since Sandra (and Robyn, too for that matter) had both grown significantly in the last couple of years. Sandra's only reaction was to stop the soft buzzing of her snores.

When I was standing again, I took Sandra back into my arms, and with some help from Lucy, got her into position to carry her upstairs to Robyn's room. Along the way, Erika spotted us, and fell in behind.

I could see the surprise on Erika's face when we got to Robyn's room, only to find her standing there naked, waiting to help us with Sandra. Erika got another shock when Lucy and I both helped undress Sandra, getting her down to bare skin before laying her on the bed with Robyn's help, then covering her.

By the time Robyn got into bed, and moved to hold Sandra in her arms, I think Erika was past being surprised by us. She only looked on in sympathy with what she knew Sandra must be going through.

Lucy, Erika, and I stepped out into the hall, closing the door to Robyn's room behind us. Erika looked at Lucy and me, and it was Lucy that answered the obvious question, telling her "You might say we're all closet nudists, if that isn't an oxymoron. Robyn and Sandra have been best friends since they were toddlers, so Robyn's the perfect one to stay with her tonight."

Erika just nodded, and I told her "There's another bedroom right across the hall there. It's got its own bathroom, so you don't have to worry about bumping in to one of us during the night." Erika nodded, and I went on to tell her "I don't think anything's going to happen tonight - but if it does, your job is to watch out for them. **I'll** take care of anything else."

Erika saw the expression on my face and knew that her best bet was to do just that: there simply wasn't going to be any discussion on the subject. She just nodded again, and turned toward the bedroom door.

Back in our bedroom, I wasn't surprised when Lucy wrapped her arms around me and started quietly crying into my chest. I didn't say anything because there wasn't anything **TO** say - Lucy already knew what **I** thought about all of what had happened. All I could do was to put my arms around her and hold her, my cheek resting on the top of her head. As she cried, I gently rubbed her back as I softly murmured words of reassurance and comfort - the only things *I could* say.

After a bit, she'd calmed down again, and gently pulled herself away from me. She wiped her eyes and face, then looked up at me - and saw what **I** thought about everything that had happened: the pain, the hurt, the sadness, everything that had run through me from the moment I'd ducked behind the trash containers at the mall earlier that day.

Just as quickly as she had before, Lucy moved into my arms - only to be the comfortor instead of the comfortee. Only when she felt my arms loosen around her did she speak, saying "I didn't know before, but now I realize that this has been even harder on you than the rest of us."

She moved away from me again - but only long enough to quickly take off her own clothes. Naked, she guided me over to stand next to the bed before starting to undress me. When she removed my holstered pistol, I saw her pause to sniff at it and give me a look before she set it on the dresser. After that, it didn't take her much longer to get me nude, too.

I let her guide me to a laying position on the bed; she quickly took position next to me, half-laying on me as she held me close. I put my arm around her, and the two of us stayed like that until both of us had fallen asleep - quite a while later.

The next morning, I showered, shaved, had breakfast, and even a second cup of coffee - all as much to delay my next task as to prepare for the day - before I got Sandra to sit in while I called her grandparents and had a lengthy, honest talk with them. They admitted that they were living on a pension, and that having Sandra come to live with them - which they were quite willing to do - **would** put something of a dent in their budget. But they also eventually accepted my offer to take Sandra myself, and even formally adopt her, after I assured them that I would do everything I could to make sure that they stayed in her life. As her grandfather put it "We love her, and would take her in no questions asked. But we're both getting' up in years, and God's honest truth, I don't think either one of us has any idea how to raise a teenager any more. On top of that, we couldn't take care of her needs the way you could, what with you havin' a proper income and such. Besides that, everything she's grown up with is there, with you, and I know it'd break her heart to have to leave all that to live with us. It hurts me some to admit it, but you can do more for her than we could, and do it easier. As much as we love her, we both know that you could do better with her than we could, and that's what's important - **Sandra's** welfare. She's

told us some about you, and you sound like a right decent fella, Mr. Andrews. If you're willing to take her in, I think that'd be best for all of us. We'll get us a lawyer here to do up the paperwork, all legal-like."

I thanked him for his time and trouble, and said that if they'd send me the bill for the lawyer, I'd take care of it. He sounded relieved when he accepted. With the hard part out of the way, I got Sandra on the phone with them so they could all have a talk - telling Sandra "Take your time, talk as much as you want. If you want to go see them, let me know when, and I'll take care of it."

While Sandra was on the phone, I went to find Lucy - and found her, Robyn, and Erika sitting around the table in our breakfast nook. I poured myself a cup of coffee, and joined them.

With a mischievous gleam in her eye, Lucy came right out with it, asking "So, did you have a nice time at Abby's place the other night?"

Erika sputtered on her coffee, much to Lucy's (and Robyn's) amusement. I deadpanned "It had its high points" - deliberately playing along, and prodding Erika a bit in the process.

"So did you just do Abby? Or did Erika, here, get some, too?"

Erika managed to keep her coffee in her mouth that time, but turned an interesting shade of red as she tried not to react.

"Judging from the way she's blushing, I'd say that Erika had a turn, too", Lucy observed, then faced Erika directly and asked "Right?"

Erika looked at Lucy, then me - and finally realized that Lucy was pulling her chain. Knowing she'd fallen for it, Erika blushed a bit, grinned, and finally admitted "Uh, yeah, that's right."

"Did you enjoy it?"

Erika looked surprised for a moment, and after a glance at Robyn, answered "Damn right!" - with enough enthusiasm that all four of us started laughing.

Lucy told her "Good! That's what I lent him to you for. While we were talking, I heard Abby tell us she was having a good time!"

Erika laughed, and after another glance at Robyn, said "Yeah, she did."

Lucy had seen both of Erika's looks toward Robyn, and told her "Erika, its okay. Robyn knows that I share him with other women. She's one of them. Sandra is another."

That stopped Erika dead in her tracks. She could only stare at the three of us - from Lucy to Robyn to me, and back again - for nearly a full minute before she could finally say "Robyn, too? And Sandra?"

"Yeah, both of them." Lucy answered, as Robyn nodded her head in confirmation.

"Uh, aren't they a bit young?"

Lucy just smiled as Robyn answered "Not as young as we were when we gave him our virginity."

Erika just stared again, and Robyn finally told her "I was 13, and Sandra was 15."

Erika turned to Lucy and asked "And you're okay with this **why**?"

"Because of the kind of person he is. Because Robyn and I were having our share of mother-daughter problems; and he helped us find a way through them. Because I remember what it was like for me when **I** was growing up - and out! Because I wanted Robyn to be able to find pleasure with men, the way **I wasn't** - until after I met Dan. Because I knew how mature Robyn and Sandra **really** were, despite their ages."

Seeing the look on her face, Lucy went on to ask "Erika, do you **really** think he would have done anything like that unless he was absolutely sure they were really, truly *ready* for it?"

Erika thought that question over for a moment, and finally shook her head, saying "No, I know he wouldn't. And I can see your point about the other stuff, too. I wish there'd been someone like him around when **I** was going through all that."

About that time, we saw Sandra in the kitchen; she spotted us, and brought herself a cup and the rest of the pot of coffee before taking a seat next to me. Lucy told her "We were just telling Erika that Dan was the one Robyn and you gave your virginity to."

Sandra didn't even blink - she just looked at Erika and told her "What she said is right. **Dan is** the one I *gave* my virginity to - but only after he was sure I was ready in my heart and mind for it."

"He didn't hurt you? You being that young, I mean?" Erika asked.

Robyn and Sandra both just smiled before Sandra told her "Not at all. My hymen was already gone, so **that** part of it was easy. As for the rest, well, he was just so gentle with me that not only didn't it hurt, but I actually had **orgasms**."

Robyn chipped in by telling Erika "The same with me - except that I still had my cherry. But even when we got to that part, he was so careful with me that it only hurt for a little bit; then I had orgasms with him, too."

Robyn and Sandra shared a look before Sandra followed that by saying "We've heard some of the girls at school talking, and almost all of them say it hurt them the first time; and NONE of them had orgasms like we did. When they hear what it was like for us, they're almost jealous of us." A quick glance at me, and Sandra continued "I can think of probably a dozen girls that would be willing to let him have their virginity, if he was as careful with them as he was with us - even though they don't know exactly who we were with."

All four of them could see the surprise on my face at THAT bit of news. Robyn and Sandra both looked a bit guilty at the revelation; Lucy just looked bemused. Erika wasn't sure **what** to think.

Lucy and the girls shared a Look before Lucy broke the silence to say "While we're at it, we might as well tell you the rest of it."

Erika didn't look all that surprised when she asked "There's more?"

Lucy just smiled, and told her "They haven't only been with Dan."

Erika looked from Robyn to Sandra and back again, and asked "Each other?"

Both nodded before Lucy said "Yeah. And me, too."

I don't know if it was because she accepted the situation, or we'd simply burned out her circuits, but Erika didn't have any visible reaction to that - other than to simply look at me for a few moments before she got a distant look on her face.

When she came out of it, Erika gave each of us a look before saying "And I'm thinking that you've all been with Amy, too."

Lucy and the girls looked to me for guidance - they weren't aware of the conversation that had gone on in Abby's place the day before.

"Yup. Separately and together." I confirmed.

"Together as in... all four of you? With her?"

"Yup. And all three of THEM with Tom."

Erika just looked at all of us, quizzically, before asking "Okay, I'll play. Why?"

It was Lucy that answered "Why not? Amy and Tom BOTH helped protect us when we were there before. We love Amy, and she married Tom. We love Tom, too. So why not? It's not like we all just jump on a bed and have at it; sometimes it just one of us with Amy or Tom or both. Other times, it's a couple of us with one or both of them. It's whoever's interested AND *willing* ."

I told Erika "It's been about any combination you could think of, except for me and Tom - neither one of us has any interest that way. When all of THEM get going, Tom and I just find someplace to talk and drink beer until they're done. As long as they're all happy, Tom and I are happy."

"And as long as Tom's happy, Amy's happy; the same way WE are when HE'S happy." Robyn added.

Erika looked at all of us again, and asked "And that's what it's all about with all of you, isn't it? About loving each other, and wanting each other to be happy?"

Sandra grinned and told her "You got it. That's the whole secret."

Lucy told Erika "When you had him in bed with you, I'll be you asked him about it, didn't you? And he told you pretty much the same thing that the rest of us have, didn't he?"

Erika didn't even respond to Lucy's comment about me being in her bed; she just nodded in reply.

Robyn told Erika "That's WHY we do it - because we all love each other, and want to make each other happy. The HOW we do it just isn't as important to us, is all."

Sandra spoke up again, saying "Robyn and I both have boyfriends from school. But because of what we have together, and with Dan and Lucy, neither one of us felt like we had to 'do' anything with any of they guys we went out with, or they guys we have now. Because we have more choices to us, we're both a LOT more choosy about who we go out with, and what we do with them. Neither one of us feels pressured to do anything we don't want to. Don't you think that's a *good* thing?"

Erika slowly nodded in response before telling us "That much I have to agree with. When I was your age, there was a LOT of pressure to go out with certain guys - and most of them didn't deserve the attention. If you two can resist that kind of pressure, then good for you! But don't the other girls say anything about you?"

Robyn and Sandra shared a look before Robyn told her "We've heard a few comments - but we don't much CARE what other people say. Our friends like us because of who we are, and know that the ones talking about us are either jealous of us, or are the ones that would do anything with any guy they went out with. If they don't respect themselves, why should anyone else respect what they have to say about other people?"

Erika just blinked at that before turning to Lucy and asking "Were they that mature when they were younger - when they gave themselves to Dan?"

Lucy smiled, and said "When it mattered. Do you think he would have taken them up on it if they weren't?"

Robyn spoke up again to tell Erika "At first, all I wanted was for Dad to have sex with me - and he wouldn't do it. I know I pushed him pretty hard a few times, trying to get him to, uh, DO me; but every time I threw myself at him, he'd just stand me up and send me on my way. It wasn't until I really **understood** what it was I was asking him - and could prove to him that I did - that he finally even **CONSIDERED** it."

Sandra followed by telling Erika "The same with me. Even when I was trying to get him to be my first, the **MOST** he'd do was do something else to make me feel good - showing me that I didn't have to do **THAT**."

Lucy spoke up again, saying "I don't doubt for a minute that he gave both of them **PLENTY** of chances to back out without feeling bad, even **AFTER** they showed him they were ready. He did the same thing with me, a grown woman. I had to make myself **REAL** obvious to get him started with me."

Erika gave me an appraising look before asking Lucy "And how did you get started with them?"

Lucy laughed, and said "It's actually pretty funny, looking back on it. They knew Dan and I were getting intimate, and I knew about Dan and them, and the two of them together. Dan and I shared some 'pillow talk' one night, and he got me to admit about my own first time with another girl. But the smart son of a bitch caught on that there was more than I was willing to face, and finally got me to admit that I found **THEM** attractive, too. After I heard the truth about some of the stuff he did in the Army, I decided it was time I started being honest, too - and I told the two of them that I knew they were making love with him. Then I told them I knew they were making love with each other - and that I was a little jealous of what they had, and why. **THEY** told **ME** that I was welcome to make love with them. I was **so** scared - but they calmed me down, and we had a *wonderful* time."

Erika looked surprised, and said "THEY invited **YOU**?"

Lucy laughed, and said "They sure did. All the talks I'd had with Robyn, and the ones they'd **BOTH** had with Dan, made them comfortable enough with the idea of making love with another girl that they simply didn't see any reason *not* to. They were **that** relaxed about it!"

Erika turned to Robyn, who just said "We both know we like guys - at least, ones like Dad - just fine. But sometimes it's nice to have fun with another girl, too. I just figured if I - we - could make Mom feel the way we did when Sandra and I are with each other, why not? I mean, I love her and everything, and I like it when she's happy."

At that, Lucy just smiled and said "See what I mean? They're both so at ease with it. It took me a while before I was as relaxed about it as they are. Different upbringing, of course, but I finally got past it."

Seeing the look on Erika's face, it was Robyn that finally dragged it out in the open by asking "Erika? You've never been with another girl? Not even a little bit?"

"No, never. Not even a little bit."

Robyn and Sandra exchanged a look before Sandra told her "If you want to... Well, Robyn and I - or just one of us, even - would be glad to help you find out what you've been missing. You don't have to be embarrassed or afraid or anything, and if you decide you don't like it, well, that's okay with us, too. I mean, nobody HERE is going to care, either way; and I think it would be too bad if you didn't at least find out if you like it."

As she looked around at all four of us, we could see Erika thinking about the offer she'd just received. Lucy and I each got a fair amount of attention from her; but when neither one of us indicated any concern about it either way, she gradually let herself focus on Sandra and Robyn. The two of them just sat there, waiting to hear what she had to say, ready to accept whatever answer she gave them.

Several minutes went by before Erika finally spoke, telling them "I... I think I'd like that. I know how happy Dan made me feel, and I want to find out if I can feel that way with someone else, too."

Both of them smiled at her answer, and it was Robyn that asked "Would you like it to be both of us, or just one?"

Erika hesitated a moment before answering "Uh, both, I think. I'd like to see what you, uh, do, and kind of join in when I'm ready."

Sandra told her "That's fine. Nobody's going to push you to do anything you don't want. Whatever you're comfortable with, whenever you're ready."

Erika gave them a nervous smile and asked "Um, would now be okay? Before I chicken out?"

Sandra and Robyn both laughed before Robyn told her "I don't think you'll chicken out. We'll be happy to help you learn whenever you want; now is fine, but if you want to wait a little while, that's fine, too. Like Sandra said, whenever you're ready."

Erika was visibly relieved to hear that the timing was up to her - she was a little more certain of herself when she told them "I think I'm ready now."

"If you want, I think I can help you KNOW if you're ready now", Sandra offered.

Erika just nodded her agreement, and Sandra got up to go around the table to kneel down next to Erika's chair. Reaching up, Sandra took Erika's face in her hands, and gently pulled it down so the two of them could share a kiss. Even from where I was sitting, I could see that Sandra was making it as soft and **inviting** as she could.

The kiss lasted only a few seconds, but when it ended, all of us could see that Erika's mind was made up. She confirmed that by telling Sandra "Yes, you DID help me. I **know** I'm ready."

Robyn got up then, and went around to Erika's other side while Sandra stood up. Together, they guided Erika to a standing position before Robyn kissed her, too - the same way Sandra had, and with the same results. None of the three of them took any notice of Lucy and I as Robyn and Sandra each put an arm around Erika, and started walking with her toward the stairs that led to the bedrooms upstairs.

When they were out of sight, Lucy looked at me mischievously, and said "I think we've got another one!"

I just laughed, and said "Looks like. If she can like girls, too, those two will sure help her find out!" - and earning a laugh from Lucy.

When we'd finished our coffee, Lucy suddenly got a serious look on her face, and told me "Dan, I know **something** happened - I could smell that you'd fired it when I took your pistol from you last night. I know you can take care of yourself, and I can see that you weren't hurt; but, dammit, don't hide stuff like that from me, okay? I already knew you were in danger when you went there - YOU told me that Amy lost a couple of her people before she even called you, remember? You don't have to tell me all the gory details of what happens, but at least tell me when it DOES happen, okay? Even if it's just to say that there was some trouble, but you're not hurt?"

I saw the concern in her eyes, and had to admit to myself that she DID have the right to know.

"Okay, something happened yesterday, but I'm okay." - that prompted Lucy to stick her tongue out at me - "There were some people following us - me, Amy, Abby, and Erika - at the mall. We got some help, and we managed to catch all of them. Some of them didn't want to give up, and there was some shooting. Abby got a little grazing wound on her arm, but she's fine; a couple of the bad guys got killed."

"Abby's okay? Really?"

"She's fine, other than being shook up about her first shootout. She got a scratch on her arm; it didn't even need stitches or anything. They took her to the hospital to make sure she was all right; the docs just put a bandage on it, gave her some mild painkillers, and a load of antibiotics to make sure it didn't get infected. She was well enough to join in the lingerie show they all gave me after we got back to Abby's place and had something to drink to calm our nerves."

"Lingerie show?" Lucy asked, amused.

"Yeah. We all went to the mall so I could get some stuff for me; while we were there, they all decided they needed some new filmy nothings - and had to know what I thought about everything they bought."

"And there was a lingerie SHOW because... ?"

"Because Abby was kind of rattled by it all. I thought it might help get her mind on something else, so I pulled something out of one of her shopping bags - a g-string, I think - and waved it around a little while I pretended I couldn't remember buying it."

Lucy laughed, and said "And then?"

"She snatched it out of my hand, and claimed it was hers. I teased her by saying that after the way **she'd** waved it around in the store, I thought she was going to model it for me. Surprised the hell out of me when she said she **WOULD** - if Amy and Erika would, too. They agreed, and damned if they didn't."

"Broke your heart, too, I'll bet." Lucy teased me.

"Broke it something fierce", I teased back.

"See anything you liked?"

"Sure. But nothing as nice as what I knew I had waiting for me at home."

The smile I got for THAT line was enough to remind me why I loved her so much.

Lucy came around the table to take a seat on my lap before asking "So, did you miss me?"

I got a mock-surprised look on my face and asked "You were gone? When? How long?"

She grinned, and playfully slapped at my chest before saying "No, you were, silly", followed a few moments later with "I missed you."

"Me, too."

"Even with Amy to keep you company?"

"**ESPECIALLY** with Amy to keep me company."

She got a puzzled look on her face, and I told her "Amy's nice - but she's not **YOU**."

Lucy got a delighted smile on her face, and stood up. Taking my hand, she told me "C'mon. I'll show you how much I missed you."

I stood up, too, and answered "And I'll try to show you how much *I* missed **you**."

"I was hoping you would!"

As we went down the hall to our bedroom, we heard gasping and moaning coming from behind Robyn's door. Lucy and I both knew what Robyn's and Sandra's voices sounded like, of course - and that wasn't it. Lucy and I just shared a grin as we kept going.

Back in our bedroom, Lucy closed the door behind us before the two of us embraced long enough to share a kiss as each of us tried to let the other know how much they'd been missed.

When we finally came up for air, Lucy stepped back from me a bit. Looking up at me, she told me "One or the other of the girls - or even both! - kept me company most nights. It helped, some - but it's just not the same, either. They don't hold me the way you do, they don't kiss me the way you do, and they **sure** don't feel the same laying next to me."

I just smiled, and answered "That's what I felt, too. I know we both love Amy, and I'm sure you'll feel the same way about Abby and Erika. But **you're** the one I want, not them."

"And I want you, too - *now*."

With that, I could see Lucy's nipples harden under the light blouse she was wearing - even as she reached up to start unbuttoning it. In less than a minute, she shrugged it off her shoulders to let it fall to the floor. As she did, her firm breasts wobbled slightly on her chest and caused an involuntary twinge in my inflating penis.

Next to go were the pants she was wearing, revealing the minuscule and nearly transparent panties she had on underneath. Only a few seconds later, she stood before me, naked as the day she'd been born - but certainly much better looking.

From her short blonde hair and beautiful blue eyes, to her medium-sized breasts with their small dark pink nipples, to her firm belly and trim hips, and ending at the neatly-trimmed dark blonde vee of sparse pubic hair topping her slender, shapely legs, she was a delightful vision. I could feel my erection growing in the confines of my pants as I looked at her for a minute or so before starting to take my own clothes off.

Lucy stood as I had, watching and waiting patiently, as I did; only when I was as naked as she was did she move forward to let me put my arms around her again. Just as she knew I could feel her hard nipples pressing into my chest, I knew she could feel my semi-erect penis pressing against her belly. As we shared another kiss, I could feel her nipples get longer - just as my increasing hardness pressed against her even more.

When our kiss finally broke, both of us were panting slightly in our desire. Without a word, Lucy took my hand and led me over to the bed, then on down to lay on my back.

Satisfied with my position, she moved to kneel across my hips so that her soft bush was tickling my penis. Leaning forward, she put her hands above my shoulders so that her smooth breasts were hanging down in invitation. Our eyes locked, and we silently exchanged our vows of love and commitment to each other. With that reaffirmation, I lifted my head to take one of her nipples in my mouth.

The taste of her skin on my tongue delighted me all over again as I felt her areola erect in my mouth. Only when I couldn't get her nipple any longer or harder did I move my attentions to the other breast, and start repeating my actions. As I did, I heard her soft moan of pleasure as her hips started an almost involuntary rocking. When I moved my hand up to hold and softly squeeze the firm/soft mound of the breast I'd just abandoned, I felt her press herself down to start rubbing the outside of her vagina along the length of my almost fully-erect penis. Even as I was sucking the end of her breast to the same puckered peak, I felt her female essence being deposited on the underside of my penis.

Over the next few minutes, I went back and forth between her breast to suckle at each of them in turn as my hands caressed and gently squeezed them. In return, Lucy continued to stimulate herself by rubbing herself against my erection - spreading her oils along my length and rubbing her clitoris against it.

When she was ready, Lucy raised herself up enough to let my erection lift free of my belly. With only a little wriggling, she managed to get the head of it positioned against her opening without using her hands. With only minimal squirming, she managed to press herself back against me enough to get me past her slick opening. Satisfied that I was suitably captured, she raised herself up so that she was sitting above me. Closing her eyes, she moaned deeply as she let herself down - taking me into her in a single, slow motion. She stopped only when she felt her pubis pressing against mine; and only then did she open her eyes to look down at me with a gentle, satisfied smile on her face.

Both of us enjoyed the sensation of being joined that way; it was several long moments before Lucy leaned forward again to put her hands on my chest to steady herself as she slowly raised her hips to let me slightly free of her intimate grasp.

As she did that, I reached up again to take her breasts in my hands. They were far enough away that I couldn't reach them with my mouth, so I let my hands do what my lips couldn't: hefting them slightly to refamiliarize myself with their size and weight, caressing them to marvel at how smooth the skin was, gently squeezing them to delight at how soft - yet firm - they were, and tracing their tips with my fingertips to keep her areolas erect and nipples hard.

In response, Lucy did much the same to me. Her hands traced the shape of my pectorals, digging her fingers into the muscle, and letting her fingertips map the scars that I knew both hurt her because of their existence, and made her proud because of how I earned them. In addition, she would pause to rest her legs every so often, using her internal muscles to continue stimulating me.

As time passed, our mutual arousal increased - as did Lucy's gasps and moans of pleasure. Under my hands, I could feel her breasts tightening as her pleasure increased; under my fingertips, I could feel that the ends of her breasts continued to stand at attention, as well.

With the steady increase in her pleasure and excitement, the frequency and duration of Lucy's 'rest' periods decreased. Along with the decrease in pauses, there was a steady rise in the liquid sounds of Lucy's self-impalement on my male sword - and the musky, heady scent of Lucy's female essence.

After I felt Lucy's vagina clenching around me a few times, I knew that she was getting close. I wasn't surprised, then, when she suddenly froze above me for a moment before pressing herself down onto me as hard as she could. I felt her vagina tighten around me even as she released a deep moan of pleasure. Having made love with Abby and Erika so much and so recently, I wasn't feeling any real need to seek my own climax - at least, not until I felt Lucy's hot, wet sheath start fluttering around me in a pattern that ran from the base of my penis to the head, then start again at the base. By the time her orgasm started to taper off, I was looking forward to my own release.

When the sensations of Lucy's vagina clenching and fluttering around my erection began to taper off, I gently pulled her down into my arms, then carefully rolled both of us over so that I was resting over her on my hands and knees. Still embedded in her, I saw her eyes fly open when I eased my hips back to slowly slide my glistening penis out of her. When only the glans was still inside her, I hesitated a moment before pressing myself back into her - and delighting in the way her hot, wet vagina clenched around me until our pubic hair merged.

As I backed out of her again, I looked down to see her vaginal lips being pulled away from her opening, only to disappear again as they guided me into her hot, oily sheath. Her pelvis rose up in welcome as she spread her legs to let me plumb her depths even further.

Over the next few minutes, the speed of my strokes in and out of her tight channel slowly increased. With the increasing tempo of our love-making, Lucy spread her legs even farther apart, then raised her knees to tilt herself up to me - opening herself to me completely. With each inward thrust, I could feel our pubic bones bumping and knew that each such collision was applying pressure to her erect clitoris. Even as I was looking at her during this, I could see her face, and then neck and shoulders darken with her blood as her arousal increased. By the time it spread to include the upper slopes of her breasts - capped by her puckered areolas and extended nipples - I was finally getting close to my own climax. My erect penis was a steel bar, wrapped in flesh and coated with her oils; her tight, hot, slick sheath - and the sensations she was creating around me - were incredible. There finally came the time when I couldn't hold back any longer: I felt my balls draw up and my penis tighten as I prepared to flood her with my juices.

A few fast, hard thrusts and I buried myself in her as far as I could - feeling the first fiery hot jet of my semen erupt from my erection. Even as I tightened to fire another load of

my sperm into her, she all but screamed her pleasure as she clamped down on me yet again.

Back and forth we alternated, a flood of my hot jism washing over her cervix followed by the feeling of her vagina milking my penis to pull even more out of me. Only after she'd gotten every last drop of semen I had did I feel my balls relax. But Lucy's orgasm wasn't over yet, and the sensations she was creating around me kept me erect in her far longer than I would have thought possible. Finally, though, she lowered her legs to the bed before looking up at me with an expression of delighted satisfaction on her face. Without her added stimulation, it didn't take long for my penis to soften; then finally shrink far enough to pull free of her. When it did, she only guided me to lie down on the bed next to her. I moved to lie on my side, and she lifted her legs in invitation for me to curl them under her - it was one of her favorite ways for us to cuddle: me curled up on my side while she 'sat' on my 'lap', her legs draped across mine. I put my hand on her belly, and she quickly took hold of it and moved it up to her breast, holding it there as she let her other hand rest on my thigh as her fingertips drew soft, lazy patterns on my skin.

I let my thumb softly drift back and forth across her nipple while I held the firmly spongy mass of her breast in my hand. She turned her head to look at me, and she won my heart all over again - I couldn't help but wonder and delight at my good fortune at having her in my life.

I kissed her on the forehead, and she smiled at me before saying "Yeah, I guess you DID miss me!"

We lay there like that for quite a while before finally deciding that we'd better see if Erika needed rescuing from Robyn and Sandra.

Showered, dressed, and both of us considerably more relaxed, we left our bedroom, only to find the door to Robyn's room open slightly. Inside, we could hear Robyn's shower running. We shared a look, and made our way to the kitchen, where we were surprised to find Robyn and Sandra engaged in making lunch for all of us - including the FBI and cops, if the amount of food they were preparing was any indication.

When they saw us, both girls just grinned at us before turning back to their cooking. Lucy asked "Where's Erika?"

Sandra paused long enough to tell us "Oh, she's coming."

I couldn't resist the temptation, and with a surprised-sounding voice, asked "STILL?!"

It took a moment before the two of them got the joke. They just looked at each other, and then broke into laughter. Even Lucy thought it was funny, and joined in. By the time the three of them started to calm down again, Erika had joined us - which only prompted them to have another fit of laughter when they spotted her. Erika was left standing there, smiling uncertainly, while she watched the three of them laughing so hard they cried.

It was Lucy that finally noticed Erika's expression, and took the time to explain what had first prompted their laughter - earning me a dirty look - and how her appearance had gotten them going again, which caused Erika to blush furiously.

With lunch nearly ready, I got on the radio that Agent Littrick had left with me. The person that answered identified himself as Agent Williams, and said that he'd be right with us. A couple minutes later, there was a knock at the back door; Erika kept me company as I went to let Agent Williams in. He seemed to know who Erika was, and didn't pay much attention to her as I told him that we had some food ready for anyone that was so inclined: fixings for roast beef sandwiches, chips, and their choice of sodas or coffee.

He thanked us, and I asked him "Any word yet?"

He shook his head and answered "We've got some tips, but nothing solid yet."

I nodded my understanding, and pointed out where the food was set up. He thanked me again before Erika and I took seats in the breakfast nook. While the five of us were having our lunch, we saw a number of the cops and Bureau people come in to get something to eat. Each time they saw us, they'd give us a smile and brief wave of thanks.

Erika turned to me and said "That's a nice touch, feeding everyone."

I responded by telling her that it hadn't been my idea - that Robyn and Sandra had done it. She looked surprised, and turned to ask them "What made you think to make lunch for all of them?"

It was Robyn's and Sandra's turn to be surprised before Robyn told her "Why shouldn't we?", to which Sandra added "*I'd sure want something to eat, if I was them. And besides, it's US they're watching out for!"

Erika just shook her head, and told Lucy and me "Whatever you folks are doing to raise these young *ladies* , you should bottle it, and sell it. I know so-called **adults** that wouldn't think about the stuff these two do."

Sandra and Robyn both looked pleased at the compliment, and Lucy just smiled before telling her "It's easy, really. Love them. Be honest with them. SHOW them how to be the kind of person you want them to be. Be there for them when they need you. After that, the rest of it pretty much falls into place."

Erika just gave her a wry grin before turning to me to ask "Anything going on for this afternoon?"

I thought for a few moments before telling her "Not that I know of, at the moment. I'm going to check to see how some of my customers are doing, is all. Lucy already called in, and the school is fine with Robyn staying out with Sandra", and getting a nod in return.

With that settled, Robyn and Sandra excused themselves to go up to Robyn's room. I followed by telling Lucy and Erika that I'd be in my office; Lucy told Erika that it was the small building next to the pool. Lucy and Erika seemed content to sit where they were.

When I stepped outside, I saw Agent Williams and another man talking. Agent Williams hurried over to see what I needed. I just told him that I was going to be doing some work in my office. Then I let him know that none of us had any plans to go anywhere the rest of the day - but that if we DID have to go someplace, we'd be sure and give him plenty of warning. Satisfied, he went back to the other agent so the two of them could continue their conversation.

Once inside my office, I moved to my computer and checked to see if any of my customers needed anything. A couple of them had sent emails telling me that they had some work for me, if I had the time. I responded to them by telling them that I was involved in a family emergency, and didn't know when I would be free, but thanking them for contacting me.

The next order of business was to get myself a soda from the small fridge I kept in my office, and get comfortable - I had some **serious** thinking and planning to do.

It was late afternoon when the phone rang. I looked at it and saw that it was a call on our 'home' line, not my business line, so I was surprised a few moments later when I heard Lucy come on the intercom to tell me that it was Muddy calling.

I quickly picked up the handset, and answered "Good to hear from you, Muddy."

"Good to hear you soundin' better, too, Boomer. You doin' better today?"

"Some better. Lucy and the girls are covered, and we're getting things straightened out."

"Glad to hear it. But do YOU need anything?" he asked.

"Answers, mostly."

"Any that I got?"

"As a matter of fact, yeah. You said Speedy and Gomer called?"

"That they did. Why?"

"What are they up to these days?"

"Speedy's got his own detective agency. After he got out, he got his Private Investigator papers, and he spends most of his time chasing after husbands that done forgot they're married. Gomer's got his own gig being a private guide for hunters and such. He ain't gettin' rich, but he's having more fun than's legal, and he's getting along okay. You got something in mind?"

"Maybe. They busy?"

"Its off-season for Gomer, and Speedy told me that if you wanted him, he had plenty of worker bees to take his cases. And you damn sure know you got my help."

"If I needed you, I'd ask, Muddy. No, Speedy and Gomer are just the guys I need, if they're still willing."

Muddy just snorted before answering "Damn straight they're willing. We been through too much shit for them not to - we still gotta watch out for each other, right?"

I sighed, and answered "Yeah, I guess we do at that, Muddy. Okay, have them give me a call tomorrow morning, would you? Together would be better, but separately is okay, too. Collect, if it's easier or better for them."

"You got something planned? What is it?"

"Yeah, I got something in mind - kinda like what we used to do. Nothing I'd talk about over an open line, though."

I could **hear** Muddy's smile as he said "Gotcha. Sure you can't use me, too? It's been a while, but I 'spect I could still remember the moves."

I laughed and told him "Hell, I **know** you could! But I'm going to be headed back that way in a couple days, and I might need some help there, too. Better you stay where you are."

"You got it. I'll get word to Speedy and Gomer", he answered, before adding "Check six" as a reminder to watch my back, my six o'clock position.

"Damn straight!" I answered before we both hung up.

Supper - for us and our protectors - was pizza, after we let the Bureau agents know to expect the delivery guy. One of the agents volunteered for the job when Lucy suggested that we should probably get more sodas for the folks outside.

We spent the evening watching movies on cable TV; Lucy and Sandra kept me company on one couch while Robyn and Erika snuggled on the other. Wacko, our cat, decided that

Erika's lap was an acceptable place to nap on, and purred loudly whenever Erika would rub her ears. When it got late, we all decided that it was time for bed by mutual accord. As Robyn and Sandra were straightening up the den, Lucy pulled me aside to tell me "She hasn't said anything, but I think Sandra would like some private time with you. Robyn and I will stay with Erika." I nodded my agreement, and when the five of us headed out of the den, I casually moved to put my arm around Sandra. When he others moved ahead of us, Sandra just looked up at me and smiled.

When we got close to the bedrooms, we all wished each other good night before Robyn, Lucy, and Erika went into mine and Lucy's bedroom. Sandra and I continued on to Robyn's room, where I closed the door behind us. We had our own system of signaling each other as to whether or not company was welcome: an open door was an invitation, a partially closed door indicated how willing the occupant was to accept company, and a closed door was better than a Do Not Disturb sign. Until Sandra or I unlatched the door, nobody would disturb us for anything short of a fire, no matter HOW long we were inside.

When I turned back to her after closing the door, I could see Sandra reach for the buttons on her blouse. She saw me looking at her, and when I shook my head slightly, she smiled and let her hands fall to her sides again - ready to let me have the pleasure of undressing her.

My feelings toward Sandra had started with affectionate lust. But as I'd gotten to know her and learn her personality and character, the lust had remained while the affection - and even respect - for her steadily increased. She was all but unflappable in any circumstances, and carried herself with a grace and dignity and even serenity that I seldom saw, even in adults. Added to that was what I knew to be a fine intellect, a good heart, and gentle character and disposition.

As I slowly undressed her, I was also granted the privilege of looking at her unquestionable beauty: straight ash-blonde hair framed her oval face with its incredibly blue-gray eyes, delicate nose, and full lips before it fell over her slender shoulders. Opening her blouse revealed her full - but not overly so - bust, her breasts capped with areolas barely darker than her skin and small, pencil-eraser sized nipples standing at attention. Slipping the blouse off her, I let my hands trace down her smooth back before tossing the blouse across the back of a chair. She smiled at me when I put my hands on her sides, even with her breasts, then closed her eyes to savor the feeling as my hands glided down her side to rest on her trimly curved waist. I kissed her softly on the forehead, and she opened her eyes again, using them to invite me to kiss her again. I did, letting my lips find hers so the two of us could share a soft, gentle kiss.

Our kiss broke slowly and gently; when our lips were finally apart, I looked into her eyes and told her "I love you, you know."

She gave me an absolutely radiant smile, and answered "I know. And you know that I love you, too."

I could see in her eyes that my answering smile meant as much to her as hers had meant to me.

She continued to watch me as I slowly started to kneel down, pausing along the way to kiss each of her nipples, barely touching them with my lips before continuing on to give her navel - positively cute - similar treatment.

On one knee in front of her, I let my hands slide down to her waist, then back to cup her tight, round ass cheeks before giving them a gentle squeeze.

Easing my hands back to her waist, I moved them around to the front of the shorts she was wearing so I could unbutton them. As each button was undone, the fly of her shorts opened up a little more; only when the last button was free did I see the top of the pale blue panties she was wearing. With only a slight tug, her shorts slid past her hips to form a pool of fabric around her feet. Directly in front of me was her smooth, flat belly - and below it, the triangle of her panties, drawn tight across the mound of her pubis. Behind the fabric, I could see the small wedge of her pubic hair - the same pale color as above. The vee of fabric was barely enough to cover her pubic area; only thin strands of fabric running across to her hips indicated that there was anything holding the material in place.

I slipped my fingers under those threads and gently eased them off her slim hips. A second later, they, too, were pooled around her feet - and allowing the spicy/sweet, yet musky, that was uniquely Sandra waft into my nostrils.

Even as my sense of smell was being caressed, my eyes were in for their own treat: the unimpeded view of Sandra's womanhood. Over the last couple of years, her pubic hair hadn't grown beyond the thin (barely wider than her mons) strip that ran from just over her pubic bone straight down between her thighs. What had changed, though, was that it was now somewhat thicker and a trifle longer - but it was still as soft and silky as the first time I'd touched it. At the bottom, I could see a slight parting of her luxurious thatch, revealing to me that her inner lips had extended and parted.

I leaned forward to kiss her at the very top of her downy pubes before slowly standing up again.

Again on my feet in front of her, I opened my arms in invitation. She quickly moved into them, and the two of us hugged each other tight before letting each other go. She wasn't surprised when I moved to pick her up in my arms, and didn't object when I carried her over to Robyn's bed, where I put her down. She watched as I stepped back and began to take my own clothes off. I didn't hurry, nor did I delay - I simply undressed the same way I did every evening before I went to bed.

When I was finally naked, I went over to lie on the bed next to her, lying on my side so that I could put my arm across her. She turned her head to face me, and raised her arm to cup my face in her hand. I tilted my head slightly to kiss her palm, and she responded by using her other hand to move my arm so that my hand was cupping her breast.

Looking down, I told her "Sandra, I know you're trying to be brave about losing your folks. But you don't have to be as brave as you think you do. We love you, and we're all here for you, whenever and however you need us."

At that, I saw the dam break - as I knew it must, eventually.

With great wracking sobs, Sandra started crying. I quickly took her into my arms and held her close as she finally release **all** the hurt and pain and fear I knew she was feeling from the loss of her parents. It went on for quite some time: she'd cry so hard that I knew it hurt her, physically; then she'd spend a little time getting over the coughing and hiccups she'd develop - then it would be back to crying again. She went through several cycles before she finally got it all out of her system; all I did was hold her in my arms and try to reassure her that everything was going to be okay.

She'd been quietly crying into my chest for a few minutes when I suddenly felt her pull away from me. I readily opened my arms to let her go, only to be surprised when she moved back only enough to look up into my face and ask "Dan? Will you promise me something?"

"Of course I will. What is it?"

"Get them. Find the bastard that killed my mom and dad. Get the ones that wanted to hurt them. Make them pay. Hurt them the way they hurt me!"

That was the first time I'd **ever** heard Sandra express such sentiments, or speak so forcefully. It was several seconds before I could answer her by saying "I will, Sandra. I will."

She looked at me closely, and saw that I was determined to do that very thing. Satisfied, she let me gently pull her close and hold her again.

A while later, I knew that she'd stopped crying; but I was content to continue holding her next to me as long as she wanted to stay there.

Only after I'd felt her tears on my chest had dried did I feel her move in my arms. I relaxed my gentle hold on her even more, and she asked me "Will you stay with me tonight?"

"Of course I will."

Satisfied, she went on to tell me "I think I'd better get up for a little bit. I must look like a mess, and I have to go to the bathroom."

My only answer was to open my arms so she could get up. She did, and quickly headed for the bathroom, closing the door behind her. A few minutes later, she reappeared,

carrying a washcloth in her hands. When she got close to the bed, she shyly told me "I think maybe I made a mess on you. I mean, my nose was running and everything..."

I screwed up my face, and told her "You got SNOT on me? Eeeewwwwww!" to try and tease a smile out of her. It worked when she started to get a mildly indignant expression before realizing that I WAS teasing - and giving me at least a little smile in response. She quickly wiped the residue of her tears - and, probably, a little mucous - before taking the washcloth back into the bathroom. She was back out a moment later, and quickly reclaimed her position next to me.

I could sense her hesitancy, but when all I did was put my arms around her, she relaxed again - I didn't figure that she would have any interest in anything more.

A few minutes later, she rolled onto her side before looking over her shoulder to ask me "Cuddle?"

I quickly moved close behind her, spooning with her, before letting my arm drape across her belly. Again, she took my hand, and moved it up hold it on her breast.

After a while, I could feel her breathing become slow and steady - but I knew that she wasn't any closer to sleep than I was. So I wasn't surprised when I heard her ask "Dan?"

"Yes, dear?"

"Did you really mean it? About wanting to adopt me, like you told Grampa?"

"If it would make you happy, I'd be proud to."

"I... I think I'd like that."

"I would, too, Sandra."

A few moments later, she spoke up again, asking me "Dan?"

"Yeah?"

"Would it be okay if I... I called you Uncle Dan? Like you really were my family? And I called Lucy 'Aunt'?"

"Sandra, nothing would make either one of us happier. We both love you as much as we do Robyn, you know."

There was a brief pause before she answered "Yeah, I guess I knew that. But it's still nice to hear you say it."

A while later, I heard her ask "It isn't going to be easy, is it? The next little while, I mean."

I knew that she meant the funeral and all the other things that would have to be taken care of in the coming days and weeks, and even months.

I'd never lied to her before, and damn well wasn't going to start now. "No, it's not going to be easy. But we can do it. You're not alone in this, Sandra. Like I said, every last one of us - me, Lucy, Robyn, even Amy and Abby and Erika - are here to do whatever we can to help YOU."

Satisfied, Sandra fell quiet again. But it was still some time before either of us fell asleep.

I woke up the next morning to discover that Sandra and I had reversed positions during the night: she was spooning against my back with her arm draped across my chest. Between enjoying how nice it felt to have her there, and not wanting to disturb her, I tried to resist the hydraulic pressure telling me I needed to get up. The necessity of shedding some fluids finally forced me to move, carefully, so I didn't wake Sandra.

When I got out of the bathroom, though, I saw her laying there in bed on her back. She watched as I made my way back to bed, and as I lay down, she indicated that she wanted me to lie on my back. I did, and she rolled onto her side to cuddle next to me, her arm and leg across my body as she nestled her head into my shoulder.

We'd been lying like that for several minutes before Sandra finally spoke.

"Uncle Dan?"

Hearing those words, my heart ached for her all over again, even as I felt pride at the title.

"Yes, dear?" I responded.

"Thank you."

"Whatever for?"

"Last night. For promising me that you'll get them, and saying you'll adopt me, and letting me call you 'Uncle', and all the rest."

I just hugged her in response, and she went on "I was afraid, until you put your arm around me and just HELD me like that. When you did, I knew that I was safe and that everything was going to be okay. I know it's going to be hard for a while, but I know that when everything's over, it's going to be okay, too."

"You've got my promise on that, Sandra."

She tilted her head back to look up at me and say "I know, Uncle Dan."

I moved my head forward enough to place a soft kiss on her forehead before giving her a gentle hug. She smiled at me before tucking her head into my shoulder again.

We stayed like that, lost in our thoughts, for quite a while before I felt Sandra's hand move down to take hold of my penis.

I couldn't help but respond, and when she felt me getting thicker and longer in her hand, she started slowly stroking me.

When I was semi-erect, I told her "Sandra, you don't have to do that, you know."

She tilted her head back to look up at me again before saying "I know, Uncle Dan. But I **want** to. Even more than before, I want to make LOVE with you."

I knew that I hadn't done anything to move her toward this kind of contact; her words told me that she was doing it because she *wanted* to and not because she thought she 'had' to.

I wasn't in any hurry, and certainly didn't want to 'push' her, so I just laid there and let her move at her own pace. Her touch was slow and gentle, so it was several more minutes before I was completely hard in her hand. Only when she was satisfied that I was fully erect did Sandra lift her head to kiss my chest, and even briefly suck on my nipple for a few moments before letting her kisses start moving down my body. Her movements were slow and deliberate, the path erratic - but she finally did find her way down to where my engorged penis was encased by her firm grip.

When she got close enough, she released my penis, but kept her hand on it to steady it as she started tonguing and 'nibbling' the shaft with her lips. There wasn't a square millimeter of it that didn't receive her attentions from the base to the head. Only when she'd left a faint glaze of her saliva over the entire surface did she raise her head far enough to take the head between her lips. Even then, it was JUST the head that she held in her mouth as she used her tongue to stroke and caress me. What she was doing felt good - easily enough to keep me hard, but not enough to stimulate me any more than that.

Looking down at her, I could see that her pale areolas had begun to crinkle as her arousal grew; at their peaks, her nipples stood proud. I continued to watch her as she started slowly bobbing her head up and down - at first, the motion was only enough to let the glans of my erection pass between her lips. But the range of her motions expanded **ever** so slowly, so that after several minutes, she was sliding her lips along almost my entire length. Still, the speed and pressure she was applying wasn't much more than needed to keep me erect. When I looked down at her again, I could see that the ends of her breasts had puckered and hardened even more. Only when I had a glance between her smooth thighs and saw her extended labia and the wetness between them did I understand: she

was doing what she was to arouse and stimulate HERSELF - that I was only the means, not the purpose.

But I loved her too much to begrudge her her pleasure, no matter how or why she sought it that way. After losing her family so suddenly and so completely, I simply didn't have the heart to object, even if I'd been so inclined. If that action, done that way at that time, was what she wanted, then I was damn well going to do my best to let her find whatever relief or comfort she was after.

So I simply laid back and let her do with me as she wanted, saying nothing - until I saw her other hand slip between her thighs.

When I saw her start caressing herself, I reached out and gently put my hand on the calf of the leg closest to me. When she looked at me, I asked "May I?"

She paused only a moment before letting her hand slip free of her crotch, and pivoting herself around where she had her lips wrapped around me - letting me guide her leg over my head so that her exposed pelvis was right above my face, even as the soft slurping sounds of her mouth around my penis continued to fall on my ears.

I first placed a gentle kiss to the inside of one of her soft, smooth thighs, then the other a few moments later. Back and forth I went, slowly but steadily working my way closer and closer to the wetly glistening center of her womanhood. When my lips finally brushed her soft fleece, I paused a moment to reacquaint myself with the blossom of her femininity.

The pale strands of her luxuriously soft and thick bush quickly faded as it passed the extended lips of her vaginal opening. Her labia shined from the oily coating of her liquid arousal; slightly thick, they were dark with her excitement as they bracketed her visible entrance. Where they joined at the top of her cleft, I could see that the nubbin of her clitoris was making an appearance out from under its hood.

Even if I'd been blind, my nose would have told me that she was aroused - VERY aroused. The slightly musky scent of her threaded its way into my nose, pleasing yet another of my senses. Touch was next when I let my hands drift along her firm and slender thighs, warm and silky smooth.

Last was taste, when I extended my tongue to let it collect a few drops of her precious nectar. The sweet and spicy flavor of her flooded my mouth, a taste like no other.

Lifting my head, I happily took advantage of the gift she was offering me. I let my tongue dip to graze across her clitoris before sliding it upward, between the slippery lips of her vaginal opening - and getting a full sample of the heady liquids she was producing. With the full taste of her in my mouth, I started gently 'chewing' on one of her labia with my lips as I gently sucked on it - then releasing it to perform the same action on the other.

It wasn't but a minute or so before I heard Sandra's soft moan of pleasure, and felt my lips being wetted with the overflow of her female essence. I released her from my mouth so that my tongue would be free to slowly lap up the flavorful oils she was starting to produce in quantity.

As I continued laving her opening and labia, I could hear and feel Sandra's arousal steadily increasing - the sound of her soft moans became more and more frequent; her hungry mouth around my erection became more demanding as she pressed her pelvis against my face in small, insistent movements.

When I started dipping my tongue into her opening, it served to ratchet her arousal a bit higher - so I kept doing it, penetrating her a little farther each time. By the time I had my tongue inside her as far as it would go, the sounds of her excitement and lust were easily heard, and nearly constant.

Rather than simply continue to spear my stiffened tongue in and out of her, I opted to do something different: with my tongue inside her as far as I could get it, I started wiggling the end of it around, as though it were a tentacle - effectively trying to lick the inside of her hot, wet vagina from the inside. It didn't take me long to discover that if I moved a certain way, and hit a certain spot, it had a dramatic effect. In only a couple of minutes, I had raised her arousal considerably: her moans were loud and continuous as she pressed herself against my face, trying to get even more of me inside. The increase in her excitement also brought a commensurate rise in the amount of her liquid arousal - which I happily drank in.

Even as I was bringing Sandra closer and closer to orgasm, her actions on my penis remained surprisingly subdued - she continued to lick and suck on my erection as she caressed my balls, but it was clear that she wasn't trying to bring ME to climax as I was trying to do for her.

And it hit me: it wasn't the sharing of our bodies she was interested in; what she wanted was the *intimacy* of it - the closeness, the bonding of sharing our **hearts**. She'd told me exactly what she was after, and I hadn't paid attention: "...I want to make LOVE with you".

With that understanding, I immediately determined to give her what she wanted.

Over the next few minutes, I deliberately slowed my actions and reduced my efforts to bring her to orgasm. Then I set about making things **right** between us.

After getting her attention, I guided Sandra's leg as she moved it so that she was again on her side next to me. Then I sat up enough to reach her arm so that I could gently pull her hand from around my penis before telling her "Sandra, that's not the way."

She paused a moment, looking at me, and I said "I know what you want. That isn't the way to get it. Let me."

She lifted her head enough to let my saliva-slick erection pop free of her mouth, with a look of surprised curiosity on her face. I softly nudged her arm, and she understood that I wanted her to move - to lie next to me.

When she was on her back next to me, I turned on my side and lowered my head to kiss her. When our lips parted, I looked down at her and told her "Sandra, I'm sorry I misunderstood. Will you let me make **LOVE** with you?"

She gave me a pleased smile, and answered "Yes, Uncle Dan. Make **love** with me."

We kissed again, and as I moved over her, she readily moved her legs apart and lifted her knees to make room for me. When she felt my still-slick erection against her mons, she reached between us with her hands. Using one to take hold of me, she used the other to open herself for me before positioning me at her opening.

Our eyes locked, and I saw hers widen slightly as she felt me slowly press myself into her - between the saliva she'd left on my penis, and her own internal lubrication, I was able to fill her in with a single, steady push.

Our pubic hair merged, I lowered my head again so the two of us could share a deep, *loving* kiss. When it ended, we smiled at each other for several moments before I lowered my head again to place a number of soft, gentle kisses on her face and shoulders and throat.

Only then did I start making **LOVE** with her. Slowly. Gently. Even tenderly, we made **LOVE**.

I don't know how long we made love that way; I vaguely remember hearing the grandfather clock in the hall strike the half-hour, and some time later, the hour. It may have sounded again, I don't know.

What I DO know is that Sandra and I shared our hearts during that time - as well as our bodies. With each of my patient thrusts into her, she would lift her hips in welcome, and each withdrawal was met with a tightening of her vagina as she tried to hold me in. We would share long kisses - long enough that I would be able to stroke in and out of her several times before our lips parted. Her hands would wander across my body, caressing it, when I would lower my head to put my lips to her shoulders, her breasts, her throat. She would hold me tight, softly kissing my face and shoulders when I would lower my body to rest my arms. Our eyes would meet, and we'd share long, deep looks into each other's eyes as we both savored our joining.

Of course, our union wasn't without its physical pleasures. They simply grew at the same slow, steady pace as our lovemaking.

Just as surely, they grew to the point where they were clear and distinct in each of us.

Beneath me, I could see Sandra's puckered areolas and erect nipples. Around my pistonning penis, I could feel that she was hotter and wetter than when we'd started. In her eyes, I could see that she was feeling the rise of her own passions.

Our eyes had met again; we could see the mix of love, arousal, and desire in each other's faces even as we felt our own pleasure.

And somehow, we LOCKED.

Just as it had happened with me and Lucy once, it happened again - only with Sandra. I saw her eyes widen briefly - as I knew mine must have - when it did. Somehow, we were both sharing the exact same time and place in the universe: WE were ONE. Without asking, without knowing HOW I knew, I knew what she was feeling - from HER perspective. I **knew** how tight and hard her breasts and nipples felt; I **knew** how much pleasure she felt from the motion of my erect penis in her vagina; I **knew** how sensitive her skin was, how everything that touched it felt to her; I **knew** how her orgasm was getting closer and closer. And she knew the same things, from MY point of view.

Without word or gesture, we joined our wills as we'd joined our bodies. Both of us knew that she was closer to her release than I was to mine; nothing needed to be said for her to slow her own arousal as I let mine increase - so that we would each reach our shared goal at the same time. No words were needed for her to know my deep sadness at her loss or the greatness of my love for her. Nor were they needed for me to know her pride in me and her joy at being accepted as a part of our family.

I don't know how much longer our lovemaking lasted - outside of the US, nothing existed. All I know is that by unspoken choice and agreement, we let our climaxes happen: not with the sudden sharpness of a lightening strike, but the slow, deep, inexorable push of a tsunami.

I could **feel** the hot, wet sensation as the first jet of my semen flooded her insides; she could feel the sudden delightful tightness around me as my eruption triggered her own release.

Back and forth we went, by turns: the tightening of her around me resulted in another flood of my male juice washing her cervix; that triggered another round of spasms in her, which prompted another flood of my jism, and so on.

Again, I don't know how long it lasted - other than to say I was sorry to see it end, and relieved it was over. From the expression on Sandra's face, I suspect she felt much the same - even as our respective climaxes ended, so did the bond between us. The next time I knew where I was, I was still over Sandra, my body covered with sweat. I was gasping as though I'd just run ten miles at top speed, and my entire body felt as though it didn't have a muscle or bone in it. I was still - barely! - inside Sandra; a frothy mixture of our combined juices leaking from where we were joined was silent testimony to what we'd just been through.

With no small effort, I managed not to collapse on her; falling instead to lie next to her on my back. Even as we were both gasping for air, I found the strength to move my arm enough to locate her hand and hold it. I felt her squeeze it, weakly, in reply.

Gradually, I got my breath back and felt my heart slow. A few more minutes, and I was ready to move again; but only enough to roll onto my side so that I could put my arm around Sandra. If she felt the same way I did, I was lucky that she found the energy to put her hand on my arm, holding it in place.

She turned her head to face me, and we looked into each other's eyes. No words were needed that time, either, for us both to know how much we loved each other.

Several minutes had gone by when Sandra rolled over to wrap her arms around me, and start softly crying on my shoulder. I tightened my arms around her, and just held her - somehow, I knew **those** were tears of happiness.

When she'd finished crying, we continued to lie together, holding each other until we both heard the clock in the hall chime the hour.

On hearing it, Sandra pulled back from me a little, and turned to look at Robyn's alarm clock. When she was facing me again, Sandra said "I think maybe it's time we got up, don't you?"

"Only if you want to, Stinker."

I'd taken to calling her that shortly after I first met her. She knew it was my way of letting her know that I enjoyed being around her, and that she wasn't being any trouble for me. Using it then was a way of reassuring her that I was happy to have spent time with her.

She smiled, and said "I really don't WANT to, but I think we should."

"If you insist", I answered, with a mock-heavy sigh.

She smiled again, and told me "Uh, if you want to give me a minute, we can wash up together."

"Deal!" I answered, with my own smile.

She got up and headed into the bathroom, closing the door behind her. While she was in there, I took the opportunity to change Robyn's bedding - between the two of us, we'd managed to leave a considerable wet spot in the middle of Robyn's bed. I was just finishing up when the bathroom door opened a crack and I heard Sandra's voice tell me "Come on in..."

The shower was long and luxurious, with plenty of gentle touches and soft kisses.

After dressing, we held hands as we went downstairs, where we found Robyn, Erika, and Lucy around the table in the breakfast nook. All three of them smiled when they saw the change in Sandra; Robyn got up and told us "You two sit down; breakfast is omelets, and you'll have them in just a minute."

Sandra smiled her thanks, and both of us accepted a kiss from Robyn as she passed by on her way into the kitchen proper.

Once seated, Lucy looked at Sandra and asked "Feeling better now?". Lucy didn't know what had happened since the last time she'd seen us, nor did she care. All she needed or wanted was for Sandra to know that we loved her, and were there for her.

Sandra smiled again, and told her "Much better. We talked a little bit last night, and I'm feeling a LOT better now."

When Sandra and I had poured ourselves a cup of coffee, the four of us sat there chatting until Robyn reappeared a few minutes later with our breakfasts. Omelets, as promised; with hash brown potatoes, English muffins, and tall glasses of orange juice to wash it all down.

When we'd finished, I got up and took our dishes back into the kitchen, loading them into the dishwasher. On my way back, I heard Sandra say "Lucy, Dan told me that since you're going to adopt me, it was okay if I called him 'Uncle' and you 'Aunt'. Is it okay with you, too?"

Lucy and Robyn both knew, of course, that I'd offered to adopt Sandra - and both wholeheartedly agreed to it. With Sandra's statement, they knew that she'd accepted.

"Of course it is, dear!" Lucy answered, leaking a few tears - as was Robyn, and even Erika. All three of them got up to give Sandra a hug, then sat down again.

We sat there talking for a while longer, when the phone rang. Robyn got up to answer it, listened a few moments, then held it out to me saying "It's for you, Dad. Speedy? And Gomer?"

All four of them looked at me curiously when I got up and took the handset, saying "Guys, can you hold on for a moment while I get to another phone? Thanks."

I set the handset aside, and asked Robyn "Would you hang that up in a minute?"

She agreed, and I quickly grabbed my coffee and headed for my office. Once there, I picked up the phone and said "Okay, Robyn, you can hang up, now."

I heard the click of the phone, and a moment later, the voices of Speedy and Gomer.

"Everything clear there, Boomer?"

"Five by, Speedy."

"Boomer said there was something we could help you with", Gomer offered.

"Roger that. Did he give you the background?"

"Yeah. Fuckin' druggies!" Speedy answered, followed by Gomer's "Roger that."

"So what's the deal, Boomer? Muddy said you've got something like our old line of work." Gomer asked.

"I do, if you're willing."

I heard both of them snort before Speedy said "Like you gotta ask. What is it?"

"I want the puke. I want him **bad**. The cops have to play by rules. We don't."

Speedy asked "What's the plan?"

It took me only a few minutes to go over the outline of the plan I'd come up with the day before. I knew these guys - all they needed was what I'd given them: a starting point and what the objective was.

Gomer had their only question: "When do we stop?"

"Whenever you have to, or whenever you think it's enough. What do you need from me?"

"Just buy the first round, next time you're in town", Speedy answered.

"You got it. I owe you guys one."

"Like hell" Gomer answered, with Speedy telling me "Boomer, this ain't something to keep score on. This is just **housekeepin'**."

"Just the same, I won't forget."

Speedy was the one to put an end to it by telling me "Don't sweat it, Boomer. We'll be there, and we'll handle it. Just take care of the rest of 'em when you get back this way. I don't like those maggots any more than you do."

"That I'll do."

"Later, then", Gomer told me before the line went dead.

When I got back to the house, the others were still sitting around the table. When I sat down, Lucy pointedly didn't ask me about the call; Erika didn't know any better.

"Dan, who was that?" she asked, somewhat suspiciously.

"Just a couple guys I used to work with."

"Anybody I need to know about? Officially, that is?"

"Nope. Nothing official about it."

She didn't like the sound of that, and started to say something else when Lucy told her "Forget it, Erika. He's not going to tell you anything, and if you keep asking questions, he'll just shut up and not say **anything**. Whatever it is - and I know he's up to *something* - there's nothing you can do about it until it happens, if there's anything you can do at all. Just trust that whatever it is, it'll end up **right**."

Erika looked at me, and I just looked back - levelly, without saying a word. She finally shook her head, and said "Okay. I'll trust you, Dan. I only hope I'm doing the right thing."

Lucy reached out to pat Erika's arm and tell her "You are, and so is he."

Sandra, with her usual flawless timing, chose that moment to ask "Uncle Dan? Aren't there things I'm going to have to do? About my stuff, and... Mom and Daddy?"

The change of subject was welcome by all of us, I think. I answered Sandra by saying "Yes, there is. There's going to be a lot of paperwork and such that has to be dealt with. Your folks almost certainly had life insurance and a bunch of other stuff like that that we'll have to take care of. I can help you with most of it, but we'll have to get your grandfather in on it, too; at least, at first. And you're right, we should get your clothes and such, too, so you can move in here. I guess you'll want to sell your house?"

She looked at me, surprised, and asked "MY house?"

"It's not that simple, but basically, yeah, it's your house. Your legal guardian would have to be the one to sell it, but the decision should be yours, not theirs. The same with the stuff IN the house - furniture, appliances, that kind of thing. That's not something you have to deal with any time soon, but you might want to start thinking about what you want to keep - pictures, and that kind of stuff."

Her face saddened at that, and I took her hand before telling her "Don't worry about it, Stinker. If you want, I can handle most of it; and we'll be there with you for the rest of it."

She nodded, and answered "I know, Uncle Dan."

About that time, the phone rang again. Lucy, Robyn, and Erika were all holding on to Sandra to comfort her, so I got up to answer it. It was the police, telling me that the Coroner had finished the autopsy of the bodies, and wanted to release them to a mortuary. I said that was fine, and they let me know which one, and what the phone number was.

When the call ended, I promptly dialed the mortuary, and was soon talking to the funeral director. It didn't take long to make the preliminary arrangements, and I told him that I'd be there in a few hours, which he readily agreed to.

They all looked at me, and I told Sandra "The funeral home will have your folks early this afternoon. Do you want to go with me to get something for them to wear, and to decide about the funeral? You don't have to, if you don't want to."

Sandra shook her head, and told me "It's okay. We can go to my... the house, and I can pick something out for them. I- I don't want to have to go there any more than I have to, so can we get some of my stuff, too?"

"Of course we can."

I caught Lucy's eye, and she got up to come over to where I was standing. I quietly told her "I need to get the lawyers started on all the rest of this, too. You think she'll be okay with you three while I spend some time on the phone?"

Lucy nodded, and gave my hand a small squeeze before going back to sit next to Sandra. I watched them a few moments before quietly heading out to my office to get my lawyer started on all the paperwork.

I got in touch with him easily enough, and it didn't take long to let him know what the situation was, and what we wanted to do. He said he'd take care of it, and I gave him the phone number for Sandra's grandparents, so he could call them and get any additional information he needed.

The next call was to the mortuary again. I explained to the funeral director who I was, and that I'd be helping Sandra as much as I could. He was quite willing to help, and it was mercifully short work to minimize the number of decisions that Sandra would have to make.

Another call was to Amy, letting her know how things were going, and when she could expect me to return. She didn't hesitate to tell me to take as much time as I needed.

My last call was to Lacy. That conversation didn't last long. I simply told him that I needed the best security system person he knew, and I needed them *yesterday*. He assured me that he knew just the guy, and that I'd hear something no later than the next day.

That done, I went outside and found Agent Williams, telling him of our plans for the afternoon. He nodded his understanding, and told me that everyone watching the place had expressed their sympathies, and asked me to pass them along. I assured him I would.

Inside, I found that the others had found something to distract Sandra from going into a funk - since Sandra was going to be living with us, they'd decided that she *really* needed

to think about how she wanted her room to look. They had a wide assortment of catalogs out, and were swapping ideas and suggestions.

I figured I'd toss in my own two cents' worth, and told Sandra "If you want the room next to Robyn's, it wouldn't be too much to re-do the bathrooms. Kind of make one really NICE bathroom, that you could share. That way, you could go back and forth to visit each other without having to run out into the hall every time. Or, we can remodel that side to make one *big* bedroom for you to share, if you'd prefer. You two talk it over and let me know."

Sandra just stared at me for a moment before asking "You'd do that?"

I just gave her a Look, and she smiled in answer. With the possibility of something completely different opened up to them, Robyn and Sandra excused themselves to go have a look at the possibilities. With Sandra gone, I told Lucy and Erika about the other phone calls - and arrangements - I'd made. Lucy looked sad, but relieved, at hearing what the lawyer and mortuary had to say; both of them looked relieved when I told them that I planned to put in a security system.

A few minutes later, Sandra and Robyn came back discussing what they thought they might like to do about their bedrooms. Lucy and Erika both offered to help them decide, and were taken up on it. I just found a seat off to the side and watched.

About mid-afternoon, I knew that it was time to go - first to Sandra's, then to the mortuary.

We took my car; Erika rode up front with me so Robyn and Lucy could ride in back to comfort and reassure Sandra. A police car and FBI vehicle kept us company, each carrying two people.

Inside the house, I asked Sandra if she knew where her dad and mom kept all their important papers. She told me that they had a desk in the corner of the den before she and the others headed back toward the bedrooms. I asked one of the FBI people with us to keep me company, he understood that I wanted a witness, and readily agreed.

It took only a minute to find the spot Sandra had told me about. I was happy to discover that her parents had been pretty well organized: the really important stuff was kept in a fireproof box, with everything else in neatly labeled folders in a small file cabinet. I found one key to the document box in the desk, clearly identified; I expected that the other one was on her dad's key ring. I checked her dad's address book, and was pleased to see that he had the name of a lawyer that he used for legal matters. I called the fellow, and told him what had happened; he readily assured me that he'd be happy to help any way he could, and that he didn't have any problems with my lawyer handling most of the paperwork. I gave him my lawyer's name and phone number so the two of them could get together and make whatever arrangements they needed to. When the call ended, the agent

with me watched as I collected the necessary papers and put them in the lock box before securing it in the trunk of my car.

As I got close to the bedrooms, Erika passed me with a couple of suitcases as she headed for my car. Inside the room she'd come from, I found Robyn and Lucy packing more suitcases with as much of Sandra's clothing as they could. Lucy told me that Sandra had gone to her parents' bedroom to get something to take to the mortuary.

I found Sandra sitting on her parents' bed, quietly crying as she stared into their closet. I sat next to her and put my arm around her before she told me "Uncle Dan, I miss them so much already!"

"I understand. I know you'll always miss them. But you've got me and Lucy and Robyn here with you, too, even if it's not the same."

She turned and looked at me before saying "No, it's not the same - but it's more than enough."

With that, she wiped her eyes and stood up. She moved to the closet and didn't hesitate to pull out a black dress and lay it on the bed, saying "That was always Mom's favorite dress. Any time she and Daddy went **anywhere** nice, that was the one she'd wear."

She turned back to the closet and selected a suit next, laying it on top of the dress as she told me "That was Daddy's best suit - the one he wore whenever he was going out with Mom. He was always so proud to show her off!"

That done, she quickly selected the rest of the things that I'd told her would be needed. We collected the things she'd picked out and carried them out to the car, where we found the others waiting for us. Erika took the clothes that Sandra was carrying, and helped me put them in the trunk - where several suitcases of Sandra's things were already stowed.

The ride to the mortuary was quiet - but somehow, not sad. Inside, Sandra kept herself together surprisingly well, handing over the things we'd brought from the house and answering the necessary questions with little hesitation. When she'd dealt with everything that needed HER attention, Lucy and the others quietly got her back outside while I dealt with the mortician on the last few details.

Back at our house, I saw that our answering machine was blinking. When I checked it, I was pleased to discover that it was Lacy's choice of who to install a security system. I quickly called him back and made arrangements to meet with him the next morning.

We got the suitcases unloaded from my car. A couple of them went into Robyn's room; the rest were put in the bedroom next to it. When it was done, we all breathed a sigh of relief - the hard part of the day was over.

That evening was a close copy of the night before - except that Robyn and Sandra cuddled on the couch that Lucy, Erika, and I weren't occupying, and it was Chinese food instead of pizza for supper. Halfway through the evening, Erika whispered to Lucy and me "I feel so sorry for her!", to which Lucy replied "All of us do. But she knows that she isn't alone - and that's **something** for her to hold on to."

When time for bed came around, the groupings didn't change - Sandra stayed with Robyn, and Erika kept company with me and Lucy.

The next few days went by quickly. My meeting with the security guy was short, and to the point. I was relieved when he didn't get dollar signs in his eyes when I told him that I wanted the best system he could come up with. I was reassured when he didn't flinch after I told him "If anything happens and it turns out there was a problem with the system, I'm going to come looking for you." He just answered "Mr. Lacy told me this was a special job for a special friend. I've heard about you, Mr. Andrews, and what happened to the girl's folks. I'll take care of it."

Sandra also got a number of sympathy cards - including several from Amy's office. One of them, signed by Amy, Abby, and the other remaining people that had been on our protective detail, seemed to comfort her more than the others.

And, of course, she spent a lot of time just snuggling with one or more of us. It wasn't sexual; she just wanted the closeness and security of another human being next to her.

The funeral was well attended; her parents had been well liked by the people that knew them. Even Muddy showed up, gently hugging her before telling her "Missy, you need something - any time, any where, no matter what - you come see me. I'll take care of it. Okay?" She smiled at him, and nodded. When she turned away, he looked at me and I could see it in his eyes - her loss had hurt him nearly as much as it had me.

Sandra kept it together the whole time. The only time I heard her start to lose it was when she placed flowers on her parent's caskets at the burial. She'd just put the bouquet on her father's casket after doing the same for her mother; I heard her whisper "Goodbye, Mom and Daddy. I love you, and I'll always miss you."

When the graveside service was over, Lucy tried to convince Muddy to stay the night with us; he politely declined, saying that he really did have to get back to his restaurant - he was already running a bit late for his flight.

Lucy nodded, and went with Erika and Robyn as they kept company with Sandra.

The two of us were alone, and Muddy told me "It looks like she's holdin' up okay."

"She is. She knows we love her, and we're there for her."

"Any clues yet?"

"Not yet. I think Speedy and Gomer are in town, but I haven't heard anything yet. Don't expect to hear from them, of course - just the results."

Muddy grinned at that, and said "Yeah, that's all you'll hear about. When you gonna be back my way?"

"Another couple days. I've got a guy I trust putting in a security system. When that's done, they'll pull the security off my place, and I can head back. While I'm gone, though, they'll be keeping a couple cops on Robyn and Sandra, though."

"How 'bout Lucy?"

I smiled and told him "She'll be okay. I got her interested in guns and taught her how to shoot. She can watch out for herself. Right now, she's packing a nine mil with jacketed hollowpoints."

Muddy just grinned back and answered "You taught her, huh? Yeah, I reckon she can take care!"

A few moments later, he told me "I'm sorry, Boomer, but I really do have to get goin'. You're gonna call me when you get back, right?"

"Yeah. I've been thinking about something, and you'd sure be a help with it."

"Good enough. Ain't nobody gonna be hurtin' my friends and get away with it - least, not if I got any say about it."

"You'll have a say, Muddy."

"Fair enough, Boomer. I'll catch you later."

"Later, Muddy."

Our conversation over, he turned and headed for the car he'd rented.

The day before I was to head back to finish up my job with Amy, the security guy told me that the system was finished. He wanted to walk me through it, and then give Lucy and me both a quick tutorial on controlling it. I raised my eyebrow at the idea of a quick tutorial, but he hastened to assure me that the system was easy enough to use that that was all we'd need - he was leaving us the instruction manuals, but that he was willing to bet we'd never open them.

What he showed me reminded me that I hadn't spent as much time, perhaps, as I should have in keeping up with the hardware side of security.

The wall around our property was topped with pressure sensors - as was the gate across the driveway. Above the pressure sensors, he'd installed infrared AND low-power microwave 'fences'. Buried in the ground at the base of the walls were more pressure sensors, of a different type meant to detect someone jumping from the wall - even from as low as a couple of feet. The driveway had a buried metal detector, and additional sound and pressure detectors. He'd even adjusted all the buried sensors so that our dog Sunshine - who was useless as a guard dog; she loved **everybody** - could run and jump and play without setting anything off.

Under the eaves of the house, he'd put a number of remote-control low-light cameras. Added to that, he'd included supplemental infrared lighting - he assured me that even on the雨iest, foggiest, darkest night, I'd be able to see **anything** in the back yard. The video fed into a control unit that let us look at the video cameras either on any TV in the house, or an LCD display on the master control panel in the master bedroom. The video system was also capable of detecting motion - it was configured so that movement in a relatively small area (tree limbs moving in the wind) or below a certain size (birds) were ignored, but that linear movement (such as a person moving from one place to another) would.

Every window and door (even the one to the attic) was wired to detect opening - with not only an obvious 'distractor' set of contacts, but an additional hidden set, as well. Even if a burglar was able to bypass the visible sensor, the hidden one would still work. Each room with a window also had a glass detector that would trip at the sound of the glass being broken or cut.

Backing up the sensors on the doors were infra-red motion detectors - again, adjusted to allow Sunshine and Wacko free movement, but still catch an intruder. Backing THOSE up were ultrasonic sensors.

Smoke and fire detectors were liberally scattered throughout the house. We had two different alarm sounds: one loud, obnoxious one for fire or smoke, another more discrete one for trespassers.

The regular control panels were tucked away inside the kitchen pantry and the closet by the front door. Every room had a 'panic' button, and he provided all of us with wireless buttons that we could carry with us. Both control panels had options for sending a silent 'duress' signal. The master panel made it easy to program access codes, and even limit the times and days those codes were good for.

The alarm itself was hidden in the attic, and had a both its own hard-wired telephone line, and a multiple frequency radio link with his offices. If anything happened, the system had several different ways of sending the alarm - and would keep sending it until the equipment in his office acknowledged.

The system was as easy to operate as he'd promised. It had just three settings: Off, Home, and Away. In 'home' mode, it was smart enough to realize when an occupant moved from one room to another, and still activate if something happened in a different part of the house. That meant we could be moving back and forth between the kitchen and den while watching a movie, and still have the system let us know if someone got in through a bedroom, or the garage, for example.

When he was done showing us, he told me "Mr. Andrews, after you clear the codes I've been using to set the system up, even I can't get in here once you set the alarm." He was ready to look me in the eye after telling me that, so I figured he was confident about what he'd done.

When Erika saw it, she was impressed.

I was just satisfied.

That evening, before supper, I got Lucy alone and asked her "Would you mind if I spent tonight with Robyn?"

Lucy just smiled and answered "Of course not. You've had time with me and Sandra. I'm your wife, and Sandra really needed you, and Robyn knows that. I know she wouldn't think of it herself, but the two of you alone would be good for her." I kissed Lucy, just to remind her how much I loved her.

After supper, when we all headed into the den to watch TV, I took Robyn's hand and asked "How would you feel about sitting with me, tonight?"

Sandra overheard me, and when Robyn looked at her, just nodded and told Robyn "Go ahead. Erika and Aunt Lucy will keep me company. You need him, too." At hearing herself referred to that way, I could see the mix of pride and pain in Lucy's eyes: pride that Sandra thought enough of her to use it, and sadness at the necessity of it.

Knowing that Sandra would be okay, Robyn happily led the way to the couch and let me sit down, before parking herself next to me and pulling my arm around her. I looked over at her, and could see the smile on her face as she snuggled into my side.

We'd been watching television for a few hours when I felt her squeeze my hand before asking "Dad?"

"What is it, short stuff?"

"Um, can we go? Now, I mean?"

"Sure. Do you want to say good night?"

"No, I don't think so. I'll see Erika again in the morning, won't I?"

Erika and I weren't scheduled to leave until mid-morning, so I knew Robyn would have plenty of time to say her goodbyes to us before we left. "Yeah, you'll have plenty of time, Robyn."

Reassured, Robyn stood up, and waited as I got up, too. Holding hands, we quietly made our way to her bedroom. As we were leaving, I saw Sandra give Robyn a smile of encouragement.

Once Robyn had closed the door to her room, I took her in my arms and gave her a hug before telling her "I didn't forget about you, Robyn."

She looked up at me and answered "I know, Dad. You haven't seen Mom for **weeks**, and Sandra needed you **so** much; I didn't mind waiting. Besides, Erika's fun, too!", she added, with a laugh.

I smiled, and told her "Yes, she is. But now it's just you and me."

She smiled in return before she stepped back out of my arms. Holding her arms straight over her head, she did a slow pirouette and asked "See anything you like?"

I put my finger to my lips and pretended to be thinking about it a few moments before I answered "It looks like maybe. But it's tough to tell through the wrapping what the present is."

She gave me another smile, and moved her hands to the button at the top of her blouse. She paused then, and asked "Unless you want to do it?" - knowing how much I enjoyed undressing her.

I shook my head, and replied "No, you go ahead. I just want to watch, this time."

As I stood there watching her, she proceeded to get undressed for me: slowly unbuttoning her blouse, and revealing the all-but-transparent bra she had underneath, then slipping it off her shoulders before draping it across the back of a chair. Next, she reached behind herself and I heard the zipper on her skirt going down. I watched as she let it slip to the floor, and saw that she had on a pair of panties made of the same material as the bra. I could also see the stockings on her legs, staying in place only through their affection for her soft, smooth skin. She stooped to pick up the skirt, and lay it across her blouse on the chair.

Reaching between her breasts, she unhooked the bra. A small shrug of her shoulders, and it was off, too, to join her other things. When she faced me again, I could see the small, dark peaks of her nipples. Each of her breasts was about the size of half a softball - only a little more conical. They were firm enough that when she moved, they barely swayed - and NEVER sagged, as I saw when she slipped her hands inside the band of her panties

and bent over to slide them down her legs. When her panties had joined her other clothes, she proudly stood in front of me, naked. I knew what she looked like of course - we'd made love plenty of times before - but she knew that it always made me happy to be able to just **look** at her.

Her breasts sat high and firm on her chest. Below them, her flat belly was graced by a trim waist and nicely curved hips. Farther down, she sported a small wedge of black pubic hair. Since the first time I'd been privileged to see it, it had expanded slightly and gotten thicker - but it was still small and sparse enough to make out the shape of the mound beneath. And if the lighting was right - and, thankfully, it was - it was also possible to make out the line of her cleft, as well. Near the bottom of the vee, I could faintly discern the hood of her clitoris; and unless my eyes were deceiving me, some of her clitoris, itself. Between her thighs, there was a slight part in the outline of her pubic hair - the result of her vaginal lips extending in her arousal.

When I looked into her face again, I could see that her arousal had increased - just as she knew I liked looking at her, I knew that she liked *having* me look.

With her naked in front of me, the next move was mine - and I made it. Just as she'd done, slowly and deliberately, I took my own clothes off; laying them on the seat of the chair where she'd put her things.

When we were both naked, she moved into my arms again. My engorged penis was trapped between our bodies, the head tickled by the upper fringes of her soft bush. She tilted her head back, and we shared a deep kiss as we hugged - a kiss that started with chaste affection and ended with passionate love, our tongues dancing in each other's mouths.

As our kiss grew, so did my penis. As our lips parted, I felt her body against mine and knew that she was pleased that she still had that effect on me. She pulled away from me a little - but only far enough to let one hand slip between us so she could wrap her cool hand around my hot member. She felt me respond to her touch, and gave me a few gentle strokes with her hand before saying "I want you, Dad. For as long as I can, tonight."

"Nothing would make me happier", I answered.

She released my semi-erect penis long enough for us to hug each other again before she took my hand and led us to her bed. There, she turned me around so my back was to it, and had me sit on the edge of it and lean back on my elbows.

Kneeling between my legs, she rested her arms on my thighs as she took my penis in her hands, stroking it softly. When I'd grown enough for her, she bent her head forward and took me into her mouth.

The first sensation I felt was of her tongue snaking its way along the underside of my penis, slowly moving from side to side, glans to base. Following that, she simply laid it

along the underside and simply slid it back and forth - stimulating the entire length of me. As she felt me responding (!!) to that, she let all but the head of my erection slip from her lips before starting a soft sucking as she twisted her head back and forth. As I got closer and closer to complete erection, she let her head dip to take more and more of me into her mouth.

I'd learned early in our relationship that she actually **liked** using her mouth on me - and was reminded of that fact again as I watched her lips dance up and down my length as she softly sucked and licked me. I knew that she could have easily gotten the results she was after a lot faster; from the pace she was setting, I also knew that what Robyn wanted was a far less needy version of what Sandra had been after. So I literally leaned back, and enjoyed it.

When I was fully erect, Robyn found other uses for her hands. She used one to lightly drag her fingernails across my lower belly and the insides of my thighs, feeling the tightening of my balls and scrotum where they were cupped in the other as she gently squeezed and rolled them in her hand.

With that kind of stimulation, it wasn't long before I could hear myself groaning as I involuntarily arched my hips, trying to bury myself between her lips - without success. Robyn would only lift her head each time I did, keeping her deliciously warm mouth around the same measure of my penis.

Only when she felt my testicles tighten in her hand did the bobbing of her head increased; and when she felt my erection between her lips as I prepared to unload my semen into her mouth, she surprised me by suddenly taking my entire length in her mouth, my glans firmly wrapped by her throat muscles.

That was the last straw - with a deep groan, I felt spurt after spurt of my hot jism being deposited directly down her throat. As she greedily swallowed each wad of my semen, the flexing of her throat muscles would only trigger me into another spasm - which she would just as quickly swallow.

Not until the most intense part of my climax was over did she lift her head again; even then, she kept me in her mouth, using her tongue and lips to milk me as she drew a deep breath through her nose.

I began to soften in her mouth; she slowed, then stopped, her efforts to draw out as much of my cum as she could. Releasing me from between her lips, I saw her swallow a couple of times before she went about licking my penis clean of any traces of my seed that she might have missed.

As I lay there panting slightly with the intensity of what she'd just done for/to me, I felt her move onto the bed with me. After a little maneuvering, she was curled up next to me. I managed to get an arm around her and pull her a little closer as she put her hand on my

chest and rested her head in the crook of my shoulder. Even after I'd gotten my breath back, we continued to lie there that way - content to simply have each other's company.

I was the first to move when I gave her a brief hug and kissed the top of her head. A moment later, I told her "Thank you, Robyn. That was wonderful."

She giggled, and answered "I enjoyed it, too."

"I'll just bet you did!" I teased.

She giggled again before telling me "I **like** doing that. It makes me feel good, knowing that I can make **YOU** feel good that way. I like the way you taste, so it's fun for me, too."

"And I like the way **you** taste - so now it's **MY** turn."

She pulled away from me a little so she could look down at me with a happy smile on her face before she said "I was hoping you would!"

I pulled her down so we could share a kiss before letting her up again. When I started to get up, she scooted back a little on the bed and asked "Where do you want me?"

"How about if we just trade places?" I asked.

She nodded her head in agreement, and quickly matched my previous position. As she did, I moved to the floor, then between her legs - which she readily parted for me.

Since I was taller than she was and my target was a bit lower, I didn't have to kneel; my ass rested on the soft carpet we had in all the bedrooms. It took only a little adjustment on both our parts before I had Robyn's smooth, firm legs draped across my shoulders.

The sight in front of me was one that would delight almost any man: a young girl, the flower of her womanhood in full bloom, its delicate scent clean and soft.

Behind the dark cloud of her soft, straight pubic hair, I could see that her pea-sized clitoris was contemplating making an appearance. From underneath its hood, her thin vaginal lips flowed straight and smooth around her opening. Between them, the entrance to her vagina was barely visible; the entire area faintly glistening with the liquid arousal that had already escaped her. Beneath, I could see the dark pink rosebud of her anus as it clenched slightly in her eager anticipation of what she knew I was about to do.

I heard her start to moan when I finally extended my tongue, and let it slip between the folds of her labia; that moan continued as I slid it upwards through her vaginal lips, then on to softly stroke across her half-hidden clitoris. When I pulled my tongue away, her pelvis followed as she tried to maintain contact.

When I looked again, the flesh gates to her female garden had grown slightly, and parted even farther. The area between them was visibly wet, and at their peak, her clitoris had decided it wanted more of my attentions.

The taste I'd gotten from my all-too-brief foray across her opening was delicious: sweet, tangy, and faintly musky. As delightful as the view was, I wanted more of the flavor of her. I didn't delay any longer before placing my mouth over the entrance to her vagina, and softly sucking on it to draw out more of the tasty oils of her excitement.

At the feel of my mouth on her, Robyn raised her hips again to welcome my attentions. When she felt the first hint of the gentle suction I was applying, she again moaned deep in her throat. A glance upwards, and I could see the twin peaks of her breasts; each was capped by the flesh monolith of an erect nipple set on the small dark volcano of a tightly puckered areola.

From trying to softly suck the precious nectar from her young blossom, I moved on to simply licking across her opening; each pass of my tongue ended with a brief fluttering across her exposed clitoris. Each such contact brought it out more, until it was fully exposed, then as erect as her nipples. With it exposed and available to me, I took it between my lips to begin 'milking' it. In less than a minute, Robyn was writhing on the bed as her moans of pleasure became more frequent and vocal. I continued my tender ministrations to it; I could tell that she was rapidly moving toward orgasm. Not wanting to bring her too far too fast, I slowed my actions a bit before abandoning them to begin something else: sliding my stiffened tongue into her, as though making love to her with *it*, instead of my penis. Each penetration brought a gasp from her as she lifted her hips and spread her firm thighs to get me as deep inside her as possible.

When the effort of thrusting into her with my tongue became too great, I went back to the glistening nubbin of her clitoris - taking it between my lips to softly suck on it in a gentle rhythm that slowly cycled from soft suction, to medium to soft again. After a couple minutes, her moaning was continuous; I reached up to take her breasts in my hands - and found that hers were already there. She let my hands displace hers, which went on to begin caressing the rest of her body.

As I rested my tongue, I let my hands add to her pleasure: softly squeezing her breasts, tracing my fingertips across their warm surface, and gently pulling and pinching her nipples.

I knew that what I was doing was moving her toward orgasm again; I continued until I sensed that she was close, then simply stopped and moved on to something else: licking her labia and vaginal entrance as though they were an ice cream cone, and hearing her groan slightly in frustration. When she was aroused, Robyn's vagina would get surprisingly wet; it wasn't unusual for her pubic hair to be soaked and her thighs slick with her oils almost down to her knees. I helped keep that from happening by making frequent detours to collect her ample lubrication on my tongue. After just a few swipes of my tongue across her labia, I couldn't help smiling to myself when I had the thought: this

was one flavor that I didn't think Baskin-Robbins was going to be featuring any time soon!

Again, it didn't take long before what I was doing started moving Robyn toward orgasm. This time, I decided, I'd let it happen.

With my tongue rejuvenated, I began to let my licks of Robyn's labia slowly extend again - eventually to include running across her clitoris. Gradually, I shifted the focus of my oral attentions from simply licking her, to caressing her clitoris. Then I went on to put my mouth over it so I could flutter my tongue across it, and gently rub tiny circles around it with just the very tip of my tongue. Between those two actions, it wasn't long before Robyn was again trying to press her pelvis up to increase the pressure I was applying - but I knew that the softer touches I was using would make for a more intense climax for her, and simply lifted my head with each of her thrusts, just as she'd done with me.

Several minutes later, I knew that she was getting close again. I knew that when it happened, there was a very real risk that she'd snap her hips up; rather than risk a broken nose or neck, I carefully shifted my hands down her body, so that they rested across her lower belly. Even as my hands were leaving her breasts, her hands were replacing them so she could again start squeezing her breasts and pulling on her nipples.

I felt her body slowly tensing under my mouth and hands, and knew that she was on the very edge of her orgasm. I deliberately slowed my actions on her clitoris, then paused a few moments, and suddenly gave it a furious (but gentle) tongue-lashing; it all but threw her into the chasm of her orgasm as she nearly screamed in pleasure and release.

I felt her body tense, and managed to hold her pelvis down when she tried to suddenly lift her hips up. Even as I felt the entrance to her vagina clenching as spasm after spasm of her orgasm washed through her, I was applying a rhythmic pressure to her clitoris in time with them.

The pressure I was applying was proportional to the intensity of Robyn's orgasm; I wasn't making her release last that much longer, but I could tell that I **was** making it more intense.

Still, the spasms finally slowed, then stopped. When I didn't feel anything happen to her for several seconds, I lifted her legs from my shoulders and moved to lie on the bed with her, where I held her head on my lap. She was panting from the effects of her orgasm, and as I watched, a couple of small shudders ran through her - aftershocks, I thought.

Her breathing and heart rate (as reflected in a slight tremor of her left breast) were soon back to normal - thanks to the youth and vigor that I envied all too often.

Other than pulling my hand up to hold her breast, Robyn was content to just lay with her head on my lap for several minutes before looking up at me and asking "There's more, isn't there?"

I grinned and answered "If you want."

She giggled, and told me "Oh, I want!"

With that, she managed to sit up again, and turned to take my penis in her hand before saying "First, I think I need to fix this, though."

"Probably would help", I admitted.

She put her hands on my shoulders and gently pushed me onto my back as she told me "You just lie back for a while, and let me take care of things."

I nodded my agreement, and she moved to straddle my hip. Lowering her body, we kissed as I felt her nipples pressing into my skin while the firm cushions of her breasts warmed my chest.

After our lips parted, she graced me with one of her 'I love you' smiles, and started kissing her way down my body - much as I'd done so many times to her. From one shoulder to the other, she blazed a trail of kisses and soft bites across my body before reversing direction. The return path was a trifle lower than the first; the next lower still.

Each horizontal sequence was matched with a slight downward displacement; after several minutes, she'd zigzagged her way down my body far enough that her lips were brushing my pubic hair.

Shortly after that, she was again taking my semi-erect penis in her mouth.

The climax she'd given me before had been phenomenal. But enough time had passed - and she was motivated enough - that her efforts soon had me at full attention again.

Satisfied with her handiwork, she gave me one last, long, slow pass - leaving a fine sheen of her saliva behind - before moving to kneel over my hips. She leaned forward, using one hand to steady herself as she raised herself up. With the other, she reached between her legs to take hold of my glistening penis; sliding the head between her vaginal lips a couple of times, she positioned it at the entrance to her vagina.

Holding me steady, she eased herself down to impale herself on my erect member. I felt it as the head popped through the ring of muscle at her entrance; soon after that, she had nearly half my length inside, and released her hold on me. She paused a few moments, lifted herself up a bit to let a little bit of me slide free, and pressed herself down again until the firm round globes of her ass were securely planted against my thighs. Only then did she make any noise - a whispered "DAMN, I needed that!"

After a few moments to savor my presence in her, Robyn started moving over me - slowly at first, in small movements apparently meant to make sure I was properly lubricated inside her. But it didn't take her much longer to expand her actions; before

long, she was raising and lowering herself far enough that nearly my entire length was slipping in and out of her.

Several minutes later, she leaned forward again, putting her hands next to my shoulders on the bed. That brought her body close enough that I could easily reach her breasts; I happily put my hands over them, feeling the pressure of her nipples against my palms varying as she continued to rock back and forth on my erection. Shifting my hands slightly, I was able to cup her firm mounds. When I started running my thumbs over her nipples, she moaned softly in response as I felt her briefly tighten around my penis with each pass of my fingers.

Looking up at her, I could see that her face and shoulders were dark with her steadily increasing arousal. As I was looking at her, she opened her eyes; seeing that I was watching her, she lowered her head so we could share a kiss that lasted several iterations of her self-impalement. When the kiss ended, she started panting with the effort of her exertions; her eyes focused on a point approximately twelve million miles over my head - her concentration seemed to be entirely on the sensations being created in her body.

The youth and vigor I envied so often wasn't limitless; after a while, I could tell that she was starting to get tired. I moved my hands from her breasts to her hips, gently applying pressure to them to get her to slow down, then stop. When she was motionless over me, I told her "I know you want this - but I know you're getting tired, too. Let me do it for a while."

She gave me a pleased smile, and after a little adjustment, we were situated so that we could reverse positions without having to uncouple. A few moments later, and the deed was done: Robyn lay on her back, her parted legs wrapped around my waist as I held myself over her - my penis still firmly buried inside her.

Before I started moving in her, I took the welcome opportunity to lower my head a bit and kiss her. She eagerly returned it, and it wasn't long before our tongues were dueling in each other's mouths as Robyn ran her hands up and down my back.

Our kiss progressed, and I could feel Robyn's hips start lifting from the bed. With her legs in a different position, she was able to press against my greater bulk to take a little more of me inside. It was only a fraction of an inch, but it was enough - particularly when she discovered that with only a little more effort, she could press her erect clitoris against my pubic bone.

As her upward thrusts became more frequent and more insistent, I realized that it was time to fulfill my part of the bargain. Easing my hips back, I withdrew my entire length from her, only stopping when the head of my erection was between her vaginal lips. She started to release a disappointed groan, only to cut it off when she felt me pressing into her again. When I'd slipped past the ring of her opening, I paused a moment, then slid myself back out again. I repeated my actions several times - sliding the glans of my penis through the snug circle of her entrance only to withdraw it again.

I could hear her breathing change, and knew that my teasing was having the desired effect when she finally groaned "Don't tease, dammit! Fuck me!"

Responding to her first demand was easily accomplished: with a quick, firm thrust, I buried myself balls-deep in her - an action that earned me a loud gasp and moan of pleasure.

Her second demand took a bit longer, but I complied with it, too.

After her vagina clenched around me a few times, she relaxed again and I began to slide my penis out of her again - but only a third of it before I slowly pressed myself back into her. The next stroke was a trifle longer; the one after that longer still.

It was a couple of minutes before my movements in her hot, wet sheath used the full length of my manhood; by that time, she was again softly moaning her pleasure as she arched her pelvis up to welcome my penetrations.

The next several minutes were spent in a mutually joyful joining of our bodies; the only sounds were those of our breathing, and the liquid noises of our union. As my penis slowly pistoned in and out of her tight cavern, Robyn would welcome each filling by lifting her pelvis and softly moaning her pleasure. Every so often, I would feel her tighten around me briefly; as those occasions came more and more often, I gradually increased the pace of my thrusts. When I saw her start tossing her head from side to side in her passion, I started including a little 'bump' against her clitoris at the bottom of my inward thrusts. That added bit of stimulation had the effect I'd desired: it wasn't much longer before Robyn's hips stayed lifted clear of the bed, and I was pressing almost straight into her.

A couple minutes more, and it happened for her: with a loud cry from her, I felt Robyn's entire vagina clamp down around me just as I was pressing against her clitoris. I held myself steady in her, feeling her thrusting her pelvis against mine as a series of spasms ran the length of her vagina. Thankfully, the release she'd given me earlier meant that I wasn't anywhere near my own climax; that left me free to delight in the incredible sensations she was creating around my erection as her orgasm took her over.

After the first wave of her release washed through her, I felt her hips start to lower to the bed; I followed her, keeping myself as deep inside her as I could. Her ass had barely touched the bed when a second series of spasms passed through her - and *around* me. A few moments later, I felt her tense for a third - and decided to intensify it by pressing myself against her clitoris again. It worked, and she managed to get out a loud groan of pleasure before her body responded to the increased stimulation.

The fourth and fifth cycles of her orgasm were each a trifle weaker than the one before - but I could tell that they were still powerful. They were followed by a sixth, then seventh; the last noticeably weaker than its predecessor. Robyn was gasping and shuddering when

an eighth - and much weaker - series of spasms passed through her. After it ended there were several seconds when nothing happened, then I saw Robyn shudder again briefly.

When nothing more happened for several seconds after that, I lowered myself so that my body was covering hers, supporting myself on my elbows. I could hear Robyn breathing heavily as she tried to draw in the oxygen her body had denied her until then.

When her breathing was closer to normal, Robyn suddenly seemed to realize where she was. With an absolutely luminous expression on her face, she threw her arms around me and started kissing my face and shoulders. As she hugged me, I could hear the soft panting of her breath in my ear before she released me enough to simply hold her hands at my sides.

She had an ear-to-ear grin when she looked up and told me "Thanks, Dad! That was **really** great!"

I grinned back, and answered "My pleasure, short stuff."

She started to move, and realized that I was still inside her. She got a slightly distracted look on her face as she wiggled around a little bit, then smiled at me and said "You didn't shoot. Does that mean we can do it some more?"

"Of course it does."

Her smile got wider, and she started to caress my body again. Realizing that I was covered with a fine sheen of perspiration, she looked up at me again to say "I think you're a little tired from last time. How about if we find something a little less tiring for both of us?"

I voiced my agreement, and Robyn thought for a moment before suggesting "Hands and knees?"

I knew she was offering to move to that position so that I could make love to her from behind. I nodded my head and eased myself backwards, not only to extract my penis from her, but to give her room to get up; as I pulled free of her, I saw a brief look of disappointment cross her face. With room to move, Robyn rolled to her belly before getting to her knees. She turned and moved in front of me so the two of us could hug again before sharing a kiss.

After the kiss ended, she dropped to her hands and knees in front of me, taking my penis into her mouth and licking it clean of her juices, replacing them with a film of her saliva.

Satisfied with her handiwork, she turned to face away from me, leaving me with a clear view of the firm, round globes of her ass. Below and between them, I had an equally clear look at the lightly-furred mound of her pudendum, and the open and wet cleft of her sex.

As I moved close behind her, Robyn looked over her shoulder at me. After a moment's hesitation, she told me "Dad? I... I want to feel you... in my butt."

She'd given me her anal virginity not long after her 13th birthday. Since then, we'd had anal sex only a few times - each of them at *her* request. As I had the other times as well, I gave her the chance to change her mind.

"You're sure?" I asked.

She nodded, and told me "There's some baby oil next to the shower."

I patted her on one warm ass cheek and got up to get the oil - and a hand towel.

Back on the bed, I poured a little of the oil into the palm of my hand and let it warm a little before using the other hand to spread her ass cheeks slightly. With the rosette of her anus exposed, I tipped the hand with the oil to let it drip between her cheeks, where it flowed down across her anus. I poured another small puddle of oil in my hand, let it warm, and slipped my hand down to apply the oil directly to her pucker. I slowly and gently worked it around the area; and then added a little more, which I carefully worked into her opening with my finger. As I did that, I heard her soft moans, and knew that she really did want me that way.

With Robyn properly lubricated, the next step was to get myself oiled up - something that didn't take long at all.

I used the towel I'd brought to clean the surplus baby oil from my hand, then set it aside so I could reach down to position the head of my penis against her nether opening. When I was securely pressed against it, I asked her to hold still a moment, which she did. Reaching for the oil again, I let a little bit of it drip down onto the head of my penis, where it flowed down to where Robyn and I were contacting - I wanted to make sure that there was more than enough lubrication for what was to come next.

With the bottle of oil sealed and put aside, I asked Robyn if she was ready; she pressed herself back against me in affirmation. Holding myself steady with one hand, I put the other on her hip and started pressing my hips forward. At the end of my penis, I could feel Robyn deliberately relaxing the ring of her anus; in only a few seconds, we felt the head of my erection pop through her opening.

I immediately stopped, just as I had every time I'd had Robyn that way - both to give her time to let me know if she was having any problems with my presence in her, and to give her time to adjust to it, if she wasn't.

That time was no different: it didn't take as much as a minute before she let me know that it was okay to continue.

With the largest part of me already inside, the ample supply of oil made it easy for me to slide the rest of my member inside her - stopping only when I felt the firm globes of her ass snug against my belly.

Deep inside her, I paused - both to give her time to adjust to my presence in such an intimate place, and to delight at the feeling of her hot, tight bowels wrapped around me.

As before, I waited for Robyn to let me know when she was ready - and she did, by rocking herself forward slightly to let some of my oiled member slip free of her rectal grasp.

With both hands on her hips, I started to make love to her with small movements that slowly slid my penis through her most intimate opening. As I did, I felt her gradually loosen - but that looseness was relative; her bowels were still tight around me, and the ring of her anus still felt a half-dozen sizes too small for what we were doing.

But doing it, we were.

In only a couple of minutes, I was making full strokes in and out of her - slowly, to be sure. A few more minutes, and I was making love to her tight pucker as though it were no different than the opening below it.

I reached down and forward to take her breasts in my hands- cupping them to feel their weight shift slightly in response to each of my thrusts into her.

I wasn't surprised when, a minute or so later, I felt Robyn's hand slip between her thighs as she started playing with her clitoris - rubbing it, circling it with her finger, and even gently pinching it. I responded in kind by doing the same things to her nipples; I heard her gasp in response.

I could feel the wetness of her vaginal opening, and knew that my balls were being soaked by her female fluids; a bit later, I could hear as they smacked wetly against her with each of my thrusts.

Looking down, I watched as the flesh of her anus responded to my penetrations - flexing inward with each thrust, and pulling out with each withdrawal. As I was watching that happen, I felt Robyn slide a finger into her vagina - and felt that same digit along the bottom of my penis, separated by only the thin shells of her bowels and vagina. I knew that the sensation for her was easily twice what I felt: not only did she feel on her finger what I did on my penis, but she had the added stimulation of having both orifices occupied.

I could feel myself getting closer and closer to spilling my seed in her; it was with relief that I realized she was as near her climax as I was to mine - if not more so.

The feeling of Robyn's finger sliding along the underside of my penis as she finger-fucked herself soon had me past the point of no return; from the sensations she was creating around me, and the noises she was making, I knew that Robyn wasn't far off, either.

Even as I felt my balls tighten up as I prepared to unload my semen in her, I heard Robyn cry out her release. The sphincter of her anus clamped down around me as I continued to thrust myself through its tight ring, and a few strokes later, I felt the first hot pulse of my climax erupt from the end of my penis to coat her warm bowels. She could apparently feel it, and cried out again in response before her dark passage clenched around me again - only to be flooded with another jet of my semen as I pressed myself as deep inside her as I could.

Back and forth we went: a spurt of my jism wetting her insides triggering a spasm in her, and the resulting tightness of her around my penis prompting me to unload in her even more.

It was my male limitations that finally let the cycle end: I simply ran out of 'ammunition'. With nothing left to give, I had to be content to enjoy the feelings she was giving me as her own orgasmic waves gradually tapered off.

When I heard her draw a deep, gasping breath, I knew she was all but done. My hands were still on her breasts; I released my hold on her mammarys so I could support her body. If she felt the way I did, she would need my help to lie down again without falling.

In less than a minute, my precaution paid off: the arm Robyn was using to support herself all but gave out. I managed to prop myself up with one of my arms, and held Robyn next to me as I carefully lowered us to the bed - my softening penis still embedded in her ass.

I held myself above her until my penis finally softened enough to pull free of her. When it did, I felt her give a small start. I quickly grabbed the towel I'd used to wipe oil off my hand, and draped it lengthwise on her ass, so that the end of it hung down across her mons. With that accomplished, it was all I could do to manage a controlled collapse onto my back, next to her.

A minute or two later, I watched as she gathered the strength to roll over onto her back, as well - and doing it so the towel stayed under her to catch the inevitable leakage.

With her head turned toward me, I could see the sated smile on her face when she extended her arm far enough to take my hand in hers. I gave her hand a small squeeze in welcome.

The two of us lay there like that for several minutes - not just getting our breath and senses back, but resting from the effort and intensity of our exertions.

It was Robyn's damnable youthful energy that got her moving first: holding the towel in place in the crease of her ass, she managed to roll onto her side so that she was propped up against me. From there, she draped a leg across my hips before laying her arm on my chest. **I** was still trying to decide of any of my parts would be in working condition by the time I had to leave the next day.

After a kiss on my cheek, Robyn nuzzled my neck as she told me "Thanks, Dad - I feel a **lot** better, now!" with a small giggle.

Somehow, I managed to get an arm around her and hug her - instead of strangling her as I was tempted. I loved her dearly, and would do anything in the world for her - but sometimes, she nearly drove me crazy.

A couple more minutes, and I felt her get up and saw her head into her bathroom. Inside, I heard the sound of water running, and realized that she was getting something to drink - as copiously as she produced vaginal fluids, she was always thirsty after making love.

A bit later, I heard the water running again. A few moments after it stopped, she reappeared, minus the towel - apparently haven taken the time to clean some, if not most, of the oil from her nether regions. She quickly moved back to the bed, and resumed her previous positions cuddled into my side.

I think both of us drifted into a nap; I don't know what time it was that I woke up, but Robyn was softly snoring into my shoulder. I started to move, and felt her start slightly as she woke up. She lifted her head from my shoulder, and looked down to say "I think we fell asleep."

I grinned, and admitted that **I** certainly had. She grinned back before saying "Well, whatever time it is, **I** need a shower. You can take one with me, if you want."

"I want", I agreed.

Together, we got up and headed into the bathroom. Our shower wasn't long, but certainly fun as we cleaned any traces of baby oil off each other. The near-scalding water helped us relax again; by the time we'd dried each other off, we were ready for bed again. I lay on my side, and Robyn didn't hesitate to curl up in front of me so we could 'spoon'. I put my arm around her, and didn't have to be told to cup her breast in my hand. She put her hand over mine, and we fell asleep like that.

The next morning, we were awakened by the sound of Robyn's alarm clock. It was to be the first day that she and Sandra went back to school after the loss of Sandra's parents.

I joined her for another shower - this one longer and more happy-making. Dried and dressed, we made our way to the kitchen where the others were just starting breakfast.

They'd left a quantity of scrambled eggs, bacon, hash browns, and toast for us; we loaded our plates and joined them.

When breakfast was over, Robyn and Sandra both left to get the backpacks they used to carry their school supplies. When they returned, all three of us gave them each a hug and kiss before walking them outside - where we found a car waiting with two women in the front seat. When they saw us, both got out and came over to identify themselves as plain-clothes police. They told us that they would be the ones escorting Sandra and Robyn at school, and that at least one of them would be part of any escort. Another round of kisses (these more subdued) and hugs, and the girls piled in to head for school.

Back inside, Lucy, Erika, and I sat around the table for a little longer, sipping coffee as we went over what we thought was likely to happen over the next few weeks.

When it was time for Erika and I to go to the airport, Lucy gave BOTH of us hugs and loving kisses - and got one back from Erika, who didn't even blush when she saw me watching. Lucy watched us get into the back of the FBI car that was to take us to the airport before going back inside - to get ready for her first day back at work.

With our flight back to be a lot less hurried than the one before, there weren't any special arrangements made for us. We both had to show our ID to bypass the security checkpoints, and waited with the other passengers for our flight to be called.

Amy and Abby were waiting for us in the arrival area at the other end. Both of them gave us a hug and kiss, and both whispered their sympathies to me during our hugs.

Amy took us to her place first so we could drop off the minimal luggage we had with us, then we went in to the office. Along the way, Amy told Erika and me "It looks like the leak is on the PD side. Prices have been going up the last few days, just like we'd expect from the story I gave the Deputy Chief and his bunch."

"I'll be they're just gonna LOVE to hear *that* ." I replied, before asking "So how do you - we - tell them?"

"There's nothing to do but invite them in, and tell them. Lay it all out for them, tell them what we did and why, and hope they don't get TOO pissed at us." Amy answered.

A few moments later, I asked "What about the honcho type that we caught?"

Amy answered "He's been kept away from everyone. He isn't saying squat to anybody; I don't even think he's really saying much to his lawyer."

"Think you can make arrangements for me to see him?" I asked.

Amy pulled her eyes from the road long enough to give me a look; when she was watching traffic again, she said "I don't know if that would be a very good idea, Dan."

"I don't want to question him. I just want to *talk* to him. No threats, no intimidation, nothing like that. I just want to say my piece, and see if it motivates him any."

Amy shared a look with Erika, via the rear-view mirror, before Amy answered "I'll see what I can do."

Once inside the office, I found a number of sympathy cards on my desk - including ones from Jules Francone, Mark Sellers, and even old Benny Francone. Abby told me "I think everybody in the building stopped by some time or other to say how sorry they were."

I looked up at her and told her "Thanks, Abby. And thank them for me, would you? The cards they sent to Sandra really helped." She assured me that she had, and would do so again.

I spent the rest of the day just trying to get my head back into what I'd been involved with.

I knew it was time to go home when Erika, Abby, and Amy all three came into my office and went about putting things away so I could leave. Abby secured the documents I'd been working with, Amy pulled me out of my chair and led me out, while Erika turned out lights and locked doors behind us.

Abby had driven her own car in, so Erika rode back to Amy's place with her while Amy drove me. On the way, Amy told me "Let it go, Dan. I know they went after Sandra's folks, but you can't make it a personal fight."

I turned to look at her in surprise, and answered "I'm not making it personal, Amy; and the *fight* is over. Now it's time for payback and body count."

I saw her blanch at the expression on my face, and the tone of voice I used; but she didn't say anything more about it.

Abby and Amy teamed up to make supper for all of us - spaghetti and all the fixings. I remembered the last time I'd had spaghetti with Amy, and it brought a smile to my face. While supper was being prepared, I called home and talked to everyone - and learned that the day had gone about as well as could have been expected. They all thought the next day would be a little easier. Lucy assured me that she was carrying her pistol; Robyn and Sandra were pleased to report that their police escorts were being "pretty cool".

After supper, Erika and I took care of the dishes and leftovers, ignoring Amy's protests.

We were sitting in the living room when Amy told us "I got a call from Tom today. His instructors learned about all the trouble here, and they've been accelerating his training.

He's going to be able to come home by the end of the week. Apparently, the FBI isn't the heartless institution that we all thought it was", grinning at the end.

I replied by saying "Okay. I'll move my stuff into the other bedroom tonight, and tomorrow I'll find someplace else to stay."

Amy got an exasperated look on her face and told me "You don't have to do that, Dan! You know you're welcome to stay here as long as you want, whether Tom's here or not. The same with you, Abby; and you, too, Erika."

"But I don't **want** to stay here!" Abby answered, adding "You're a nice boss, Amy, and a better hostess - but I want to go *home* . Now that Erika's back, is there any good reason I can't go home and take Erika with me? We can watch out for each other as good as you and I have!"

Amy smiled at that, and answered "Of course you can, Abby. I'm sorry if I made it sound like you couldn't." Then she turned to me and said "But that doesn't let YOU off the hook, mister! If Abby leaves, then that means I need somebody to partner up with - and yours is the only loose body around here, so you're not moving out."

"When Tom gets back, you're not going to need me for that - I'm sure he'll do a fine job of watching out for you. And staying with you and Tom is fine when I've got company with me - but you two don't need just me hanging around. I'll only stay until he gets back, but not after."

I saw Erika look thoughtful for a few moments, then lean over to whisper something to Abby. Abby's face lit up, and she asked "Why doesn't Dan come to stay with me and Erika? He's more than welcome, and having him there would have three of us watching out for each other, instead of just two."

Amy laughed, and said "Somehow, I think the idea of having him share your bed is most of why you want him there - but if he's agreeable, I'll go along with it. How about, Dan?" she asked, turning to me.

I looked over to where Abby and Erika were waiting - with considerable interest - to hear my answer. I told them "I don't know how welcome I'll be after a few days of being there all the time, but I agree."

Erika seemed to understand what I meant, but it slipped right past Abby; when I looked back at Amy, she seemed to have some concerns, as well. But the deal had been reached, so both of them let the matter go - at least, for the moment.

Amy spoke up again to tell Abby "If you and Erika want to go home tonight, that's fine. Or, if you want to, you're both welcome to stay here. It's your choice."

Abby started to answer, but was interrupted by Erika saying "I'd just as soon stay here, tonight."

Abby turned to look at her in surprise, and Erika went on to say "If it's okay with you, Amy, Abby can sleep in the other bedroom with Dan."

Abby and Amy both looked considerably surprised at that; it was Abby that asked Erika "So what about you?"

Erika looked directly at Amy and answered "I, uh, learned a few things while I was staying with Dan and Lucy. One of them was that I like girls, too."

Abby gasped, but Erika and Amy continued to look at each other - until Amy said "You're MORE than welcome to share my bed, if you want. Or, the couch turns into a bed, and you can sleep there; it's YOUR choice."

The two of them just looked at each other for a few more moments before I saw Erika give a small nod before their gaze ended. With all of our futures settled for the immediate future, we spend the rest of the evening just watching TV.

After the late news and weather, it was time for bed, by mutual accord. No overt notice was taken of who went where - as I was keeping pace with Abby, Erika and Amy were headed a different direction.

Abby seemed to understand that I really wasn't ready for any 'activity'; the two of us simply undressed to bare skin and crawled under the bedcovers. I didn't want her to think that I'd lost interest in her, though, and didn't hesitate to roll onto my side and snuggle up next to her. She smiled in response, and held my hand on her breast as she wriggled herself even closer. It didn't take long for the two of us to fall asleep.

The next morning, Abby and I were dressed and in the kitchen making breakfast for everyone when Erika and Amy made their appearance - both of them obviously having gotten only a minimal amount of sleep. Abby and I shared a small grin, but didn't let ourselves seem to take any notice, otherwise.

As we got ourselves ready for the morning, Amy told me "Oh, Dan? I got you a chance to talk to the honcho of the bunch that was tailing us. I figured it was better to get you in to see him *before* we had our talk with the Deputy Chief about the leak in their offices."

I thanked her, and with concern in her voice, she asked "There isn't going to be any trouble, is there?"

"Not a bit. I just have a couple things I want to say that might get him talking, so we can get this mess over and done with."

She didn't seem entirely sure about what I was telling her, and I went on to say "I'm not going to try to interrogate him, or pull any scams, or anything like that - no threats at all; I just want a quiet little talk."

I could see that wasn't a lot of comfort to her, but it was enough; she told me when I could see him, and pointedly mentioned that she'd be going with me - just not joining me in the interrogation room with him. I agreed that that was fine, which did more to reassure her than anything else I'd said.

"It's set up so you can talk to him any time after ten this morning; I've got the Deputy Chief coming in for a visit at two this afternoon", she told me.

I nodded my understanding and answered "That'll be fine. I don't expect to be with him for more than fifteen minutes, or so."

I could see that not one of the three of them was very comfortable with the idea of my planned 'chat'. But between what I'd already done for them, and not having any solid reason to refuse me, I was going to get the opportunity I wanted - and that was all that mattered to me.

A little before 11:00, Amy and I were standing outside one of the interrogation rooms at the police station. In the interest of keeping everything low-key, the only other people present were a detective and the uniformed officer that transported the prisoner.

Before going in to where the character was sitting at a table, I asked the detective "Are there any other microphones besides the one on the table?"

"Yeah - a small one hidden under the window, here."

I turned to Amy and said "I'm going in now. If you're still going in with me, I just want to ask you to not say **anything** - just sit there, okay?"

She answered by saying "I changed my mind, and I'm just going to wait out here. Whatever you're going to say to him, it'll probably work better if there aren't any distractions. But I **will** be listening, Dan!"

"That's fine" I answered before starting for the door.

Outside the interrogation room, I paused a few moments to compose myself before going inside. After I closed the door behind me, I turned to the guy - Tom Withers, I'd learned - and said "Hello, asshole. Remember me?"

He got a surprised look on his face, but didn't say anything as I moved to a chair across from him.

Once seated, I reached over to where the microphone on the table was plugged in, and disconnected it before telling him "This conversation didn't happen. There's a couple people watching to make sure that I don't do anything to you - I promised them I wouldn't, but they want to make sure. Otherwise, what I say in here isn't official. This is just between you and me."

He paled slightly at that, but still didn't say anything.

"That's good", I told him. "You don't have to say anything. I'm not here to question you. I'm here to tell your future. Well, futures, actually. Which one actually happens is up to you."

He just looked at me as I continued "Here's the deal. The folks you were working for fucked you over when they sent you out to take care of me. The way they did it was that either they already KNEW I was Army Special Forces, and didn't tell you, or THEY didn't know. If they didn't know, then that means they don't know as much about what me and the cops and the FBI are doing as they want to believe. If they DID know, then they sent you out to do something they knew - or suspected - you wouldn't be able to do. On one hand, you're fucked because they didn't know what they were doing; on the other hand, you're fucked because they DID. Either way, you're fucked."

I could see him starting to think that one over, and went on "To make matters worse, they sent somebody to try and hurt someone close to me, to try and scare me off."

He got another surprised look on his face, and I told him "While that would probably work on most people, it doesn't work on ME. You see, I've **already** been in the shit, and come out of it. I've **already** had to deal with assholes a lot scarier and a lot more hardcore than your candy-assed gangs. Maybe you don't believe me, so I'll tell you a *little* bit of what I've already seen..."

And I did - in patient, loving detail. About the gang whose interrogation technique was to skin the subject alive. About the bunch that had made an object lesson of someone by tying the person to a tree, then putting a cage of rats over his head - forcing the rats to eat their way to freedom. About the 'revolutionaries' that settled their score with an informer by staking him out over a patch of freshly-cut bamboo - bamboo that would grow THROUGH him, its edges cutting through him like a dull knife. About the gang punished a thief by repeatedly getting him hooked on opiates, only to force him through withdrawals by taking the drugs away. And as I talked, I could see him getting more and more frightened; and even sick to his stomach.

I ended it by telling him "That's just **some** of the stuff I've seen - and not even the worst of it. Now, me, I wouldn't WANT to do anything like that. But then again, I didn't **want** your bosses coming after my friends and family. I'm part of the FBI investigation trying to bust your little buddies, so if anything was to happen to you, I'd be one of the first people they'd want to talk to. But there are guys that I used to work with that would be more than happy to deal with you without my having to say a word. Those guys saw the

same stuff I just told you about - and some of them aren't as fussy as I am. They wouldn't think twice about using some of what they've seen. Sure, you're going to jail, probably for a long time - but you're still probably going to get out some day. And the guys I used to work with, they wouldn't mind waiting; it would just give them more time to think up stuff for you."

He visibly blanched at that thought, and I went on "The sad part is, they wouldn't kill you. That would be too easy. They'd probably leave you alive, as an example of what NOT to do. And believe me, there's things worse than dying - just imagine what life would be like if some of the people I just told you about had *lived*."

After I gave him a little time to think THAT one over, I told him "Sure, there's a chance that you might spend the rest of your life in prison. But I think both of us know that prison isn't all that safe and secure, either. You've heard of Benny Francone?"

He nodded, and I continued "Me and Benny, we have an understanding that we're not going to fuck with each other. I'd be willing to bet that if I were to give him your name and mention that your gang had come after my family, old Benny might get it into his head that he'd like to do me a favor - particularly since he doesn't much care for drugs, either. Isn't that an interesting thought?"

From the expression on his face, I knew he thought it was more than 'interesting'.

"So here's where I tell you what your futures are. One future is that you start talking to the cops and FBI, telling them everything you know. If you do that, there's the **chance** your gang might come after you - if the FBI doesn't give you Witness Protection. The other future is that you keep your mouth shut, and face the **probability** that someone else decides they don't like you, and does something about it."

I could see the fear in his eyes before I told him "You might be thinking that you're fucked no matter what you decide. But I can make it easier for you, and help you figure the odds. Here's the one thing that is going to make the difference: the gangs are going down. Not just here, but in a lot of places. I can promise you that that's a stone cold FACT. And when the gangs go down, the chance that they'll try anything against you goes down with them."

I scooted my chair back and stood up before telling him "Those are the two futures I see for you. You've got a choice in which one you want. Sure, both of them suck - but one of them sucks a lot less than the other. Which one you want to take the chance on is YOUR decision. I hope you choose right."

With that, I left the room to return to where Amy and the cops were waiting.

When I got there, Amy and both cops were visibly pale - and all three had expressions that said they'd just had a peek into hell.

When I told them that I was done, both cops looked at me with more than a little fear in their eyes. Amy had a better idea of what I'd done in the Army, but even she was still unsettled.

The uniformed cop took the opportunity to get away from me, leaving us to take the prisoner back to his cell. The detective just said "I didn't hear anything", and left.

Amy just looked at me for a few seconds before asking "Those guys you worked with - you wouldn't happen to have told them to do anything, would you?"

"Nope. Like I told him - I wouldn't have to. We all got the same basic training, and we were all more than capable of dealing with new situations and problems without having to be told what to do."

"If we catch any of them at it, you know what we'll have to do, don't you?" she asked.

"IF you catch them, yeah. But you won't."

She gave me an appraising look, and said "No, I guess we won't. And you won't help us, will you?"

"**I can't**, Amy. You read my file; you already know everything I could tell you. I'm not in communication with them, so I don't have any idea what they'll do, if anything, or when. If I don't know where they are or what they're doing, how can I tell you?"

She sighed before telling me "Okay. I guess we'd better head back."

Shortly before two that afternoon, Amy stopped by my office to remind me that the Deputy Chief would be there shortly. I asked if she wanted me to sit in, and after a few moments thought, she said that she didn't think it was necessary.

While she was in her meeting with the Deputy Chief, I called Muddy and got a reservation for five of us for the following Saturday evening - I figured that Amy's husband Tom wouldn't mind a nice meal after being away for so long.

Afterwards, she came by again to let me know how it had gone - he had taken the news reasonably well, all things considered. As expected, he'd been less than pleased to learn of the leak, but had reluctantly conceded at the necessity of the methods Amy had used. He'd left with the vow that the source of the leak **WOULD** be found and **WOULD** be dealt with - as well as profuse apologies that it even existed.

That evening, it was just Amy and I at her apartment. I knew that she wasn't happy at the possible involvement of 'civilians' in an ongoing investigation, but I also knew that she'd

eventually learn to live with it - particularly since there wasn't anything she could really DO about it.

Thursday morning, Amy stopped by to let us know that the police had found out where the leak was, and arrested someone. They'd discovered a miniature voice-activated tape recorder, decided to leave it where it was and just watch it so they could catch whoever had put it there. They arrested someone on the contract cleaning crew when that person stopped by to change tapes; the person was a close cousin of someone in one of the Cartelita gangs. When informed that they were going to be considered as accessories for all the stuff the Cartelita had been up to - including attempted murder and conspiracy to commit murder - they didn't hesitate to tell the cops everything they knew about what was going on. It wasn't much, but it was *something* .

Amy also told us when Tom's flight would arrive. All of us offered to go with her to pick him up from the airport, but understood when she declined. Instead, we made arrangements for me to transition from Amy's place to Abby's on Friday morning. All I had to do was bring my suitcase in to work with me Friday morning, and move it to Abby's car; when the day was over, I'd just ride home with her and Erika.

While everyone was there, I let them know about making arrangements for dinner at Muddy's restaurant, Café Triomphe. All three of them were delighted, and Amy allowed that even Tom would enjoy it.

Friday went as planned; I had all my stuff in a suitcase that I left in the trunk of Abby's car. When the day was over, I gave Amy a goodbye kiss and left with Abby and Erika.

On the way 'home', Abby told me "Erika and I have been thinking about the sleeping arrangements, and we came up with something that we think will work pretty well."

"What's that?" I asked, interested.

"If it's okay with you, I'll put your stuff in my bedroom and you'll stay there. Then Erika and I will switch off staying with you at night; the other one will stay in the other bedroom. That way, you and whoever will have your own bathroom."

"Why not just put me in the other bedroom? We'd still have our own bathroom."

Both of them blushed slightly before Abby told me "Uh, my neighbors next door said something to me about all the noise the last time. They were nice about it, but I still don't want to, uh, disturb them again."

"It sounds pretty reasonable to me. I don't have any problem with it." I told them.

When we got to her place, Abby led the way to her bedroom while I carried my luggage. She showed me where I could put my things, and I set my shaving gear and toothbrush in the bathroom. When I came out, Abby took me into her arms and gave me a kiss before telling me "That bit about me and Erika taking turns is just a starting point. If it turns out that you and one or the other of us start sparking some night, that's okay too, even if it's 'out of turn'. We had a LONG talk the first night we were back here, and we both realized that we both love you too much to worry about which one of us shares your bed. So just go ahead and do whatever you like, and we'll be fine."

I gave her a hug of my own, followed by a kiss that let her know I still cared for her. When it ended, she just smiled at me and said "I think that's enough, for now. Come on, Erika said she was going to fix supper tonight - but she didn't say what it was going to be, and I'm hungry AND curious!"

Holding hands, we went back downstairs where we joined Erika on the couch - with me taking the center spot and the two of them bracketing me as we watched the evening news on TV.

When it was over, Erika got up, saying "I guess we're all hungry enough for supper now?"

Abby nodded enthusiastically while I said "Hungry enough to eat a horse - alive and kicking optional!"

Erika laughed and said "Good. If I mess this up - and no, I'm not going to tell you what it is! - then I can count on your appetites covering for it."

Abby and I continued to snuggle on the couch, even when some very delightful aromas started emanating from the kitchen. I got up once to get something to drink; I had barely gotten to the door to the kitchen before Erika chased me out, telling me "If you want something to drink, I'll bring it to you - I want this to be a surprise!"

I told her what I was after, and she quickly brought me the iced tea I wanted - as well as another drink for Abby.

It was near the end of some game show after the news that Erika finally called out to let us know that it was ready. We went in to find that between tending to the different dishes, she'd set the table for all of us - and done it up right, with placemats, napkins, a centerpiece, and even a couple of candles.

Abby and I shared a look before Erika came out of the kitchen to tell us "Go ahead and sit down, and I'll bring it out to you."

She disappeared into the kitchen again, and Abby and I barely had time to take our seats before Erika brought out our plates: baked chicken, baby carrots, cubed potatoes, and green beans, with dinner rolls for company. Abby and I looked at each other again, both

of us obviously wondering "what was the big secret?" while Erika got her own plate. When she was seated with us, she told us "I know, it doesn't **look** special, but I think you'll find that it is, once you taste it."

I cut off a bite of the chicken, and found out that she hadn't been kidding. It **WAS** something special: baked, it was still juicy without being greasy, and had a **VERY** interesting - but definitely pleasant! - flavor. Next I tried the carrots, and discovered that they were apparently fresh-picked and had a slight taste of one of the spices on the chicken. Next were the potatoes, then the green beans. Both of those were also fresh, with a hint of whatever was on the chicken while still maintaining their own flavor.

Abby and I both profusely complimented Erika on her cooking; she just smiled and answered "I thought you'd like it. Everything came out just the way it was supposed to."

With that, we didn't waste any more time talking - the first priority was savoring the delicious meal Erika had prepared. Even Erika seemed to enjoy it - which I took to mean that it really **WAS** good, knowing how I usually felt about the meals that **I** had to cook.

When all three plates were clean, Erika collected them - ignoring our offers to help, or even do it for her - and came back in with dessert: chocolate mousse, with a light dusting of shaved dark chocolate on top - and blended in, as we discovered.

The dessert was finished off in short order; and Erika followed it with cups of coffee. Abby started to put sugar in hers when Erika told her "You might want to taste it, first. This isn't your ordinary grocery store coffee."

I took a sip of my cup, and realized what it was. When Abby did the same, she got a surprised look on her face and asked "What kind of coffee **IS** this?!"

I beat Erika to it by answering "Jamaica Blue Mountain."

Abby looked confused, and Erika looked pleased, before I went on to explain "There are only two coffee plantations in Jamaica. By all accounts, it's the best coffee in the world. Because of the limited supply and high demand, it usually runs between twenty and thirty dollars a POUND. Most serious coffee drinkers will tell you it's worth every penny - when you can get it."

Abby thought that over for a moment before answering "I don't know if it's worth that to drink every day; but for special occasions, yeah, I guess it is."

Then she turned to Erika and asked "Okay, so how did you **DO** all this? Unless I miss my guess, those were **FRESH** vegetables; and I don't even know where to start on the chicken, not to mention the coffee."

Erika told her "You know when I asked to borrow your car this afternoon? That's when I went to the Farmer's Market and got the veggies. I went to a health-food store to get the

chicken; it was raised without any additives, so all you tasted was chicken and spices. I was calling coffee stores for almost a week before I found one that had the coffee. And Dan was right - it was selling for the low, low price of twenty-two dollars a pound for whole beans. The rest of the beans are in your freezer; keep them there until you're ready to use them, so they stay fresher. While you two were upstairs, I took the chance to grind enough for a pot of coffee, and kept the grounds in the fridge."

She went on to tell us "I'm not a health food nut, you understand. It's just that I grew up on a farm, and I remember what the food tasted like when it was FRESH and didn't have all those additives. I cooked the veggies in purified water; the tap water here has a little bit of a taste. I made the coffee with bottled water, too, with a little egg shell in with the grounds to tweak the flavor; it's an old Navy trick I heard about. No one thing I did would have made *that* much difference; but all of it together..."

I smiled at her, and answered "Yeah, all of it together...!"

Abby asked "And the spices? Unless my taste buds were lying to me, all of them had a little bit of the same flavor to them."

"They did. That was what brought all the different dishes together. I'm sorry, but I can't tell you what spices I used; it's kind of a family secret" Erika answered, apologetically.

Abby just grinned, and replied "That's okay. Now I've got some motivation to do a little more home cooking, and experimenting!"

After a second cup of coffee - which Erika let Abby retrieve - we decided that as nice as the meal had been, it was time to clean up and do the dishes. Abby and I were adamant that Erika was to park herself in the living room - after that meal, we told her, we would be more than happy to take care of the rest.

When Abby and I found our way into to the living room, Erika had taken station in Abby's recliner, leaving the couch and an upholstered chair available to us. Abby guided me to the couch, and had me stretch out a little on my side before planting herself in front of me and pulling my arm around to hold my hand over her breast. We lay like that for the next couple of hours as we watched TV.

I finally had to get up to drain off the coffee so I could replace part of it with a Coke from the fridge. When I got back into the living room, I found that Erika and Abby had changed places: Abby was holding down the recliner while Erika sat on the couch, waiting for me. I put my Coke on the table at the end of the couch before sitting down and stretching my legs out. When I was settled, Erika moved to sit next to me, tucked into my side. Once she was comfortable, she pulled my arm around her before lifting her blouse enough to slip my hand under it to hold her breast. Somewhere along the line, she'd shed her bra, and I felt the nubbin of her nipple pressing into my palm before she pulled her blouse back down to hold my hand in place. A little while later, I saw Abby look over at us and smile before turning back to watch TV.

After we'd watched one of the late-night talk shows - they'd agreed on David Letterman because one of his guests was Jack Hanna and some animals - it was time for bed. I wasn't surprised when Erika took me by the hand and led the way upstairs, with Abby following. What DID surprise me was when Abby stayed right with us all the way into the bedroom. Seeing the look on my face, Erika told me "We thought that tonight we'd give you a proper welcome", with a mischievous grin on her face.

The two of them quickly teamed up to get me ready for bed - naked, that is - and laying down before they started undressing each other. It was Abby that turned to tell me "After we got back here, Erika helped me find out that I like girls better than I thought I did." That was followed by Erika's statement "Yeah, she likes girls just FINE!", making both of them chuckle.

Watching them taking each other's clothes off - with no small amount of fondling and groping added - had me semi-erect by the time they were both naked. When they turned to get into bed with me, they saw the state I was in, and shared a grin before bracketing my body with theirs.

Erika spoke first, saying "Both of us think girls are lots of fun.", with Abby following her by telling me "But both of us think guys - YOU! - are even better."

With that out of the way, Erika leaned in for a kiss while Abby used one hand to start exploring my body. When Erika and I were done, it was Abby and I while Erika's hand took over.

When our lips parted, Abby told me "Both of us wanted to make love with you tonight, but we knew that it would be easier for you to take care of both of us if you came first. So we tossed a coin to see who got to get you off first. Erika won, so she's going to use her mouth on you; if you want to, you can use your hands or mouth to get ME off."

I just smiled and told her "Oh, I want!"

She smiled back, and lowered her head for another kiss as Erika started kissing her way toward my slowly hardening penis. Along the way, I could feel it as she made a few detours to include select portions of Abby's anatomy, too.

Abby had risen up enough to bring her breasts within reach of my mouth; I'd just taken one of her nipples between my lips (and gotten a soft moan in response) when I felt Erika's mouth envelope my penis.

As Erika's lips and tongue and gentle suction got me more and more erect, I was doing much the same to Abby's breasts, and getting equivalent results from her nipples.

By the time I was erect enough that Erika couldn't easily take all of me into her mouth, Abby was more than ready to respond when I nudged her to move to her knees. From

there, she willingly let me guide her until she was astraddle my head and facing away from where Erika was sliding her lips up and down the length of my erection.

Abby's hands were on her own breasts as I gazed up to the furrow of her sex. Underneath the small, dense growth of her bush, I could see where the glistening tower of her large clitoris was waiting. Below and beneath, her incredibly soft pubic hair was parted, revealing her extended vaginal lips, glistening with the oils that had already escaped her female treasure.

I didn't hesitate to lift my head, and then extend my tongue to draw it along her cleft. As I did, I collected the liquid essence of her, savoring its light texture and faintly musky flavor. At the top of her mons, I circled her clitoris a few times with my tongue; she responded with a deeply passionate moan.

As Erika continued to use her mouth and lips and tongue to move me toward my release, I did my best to bring Abby the same pleasure I was feeling. Gently fluttering my tongue across her clitoris; penetrating her as far as I could with my stiffened tongue; simply licking at her extended labia and dipping my tongue to press against her entrance; taking her clitoris between my lips and softly sucking on it as I ran my tongue across its top surface - all of these actions served to move Abby closer and closer to her orgasm, just as Erika was bringing me closer to my own.

Finally, I felt the first faint stirrings in my balls - and knew that my release wasn't far off. Determined to bring Abby her pleasure before accepting my own, I increased the speed and intensity of what I was doing to her; it was only a couple minutes later when she released a loud cry - slightly muffled by her thighs so close to my ears - as Abby was overtaken by her orgasm. With each series of spasms in her body, her vagina would push out a small wave of her female oils for me to happily consume. It wasn't the fabled female ejaculation, only a natural result of the more than ample supply of lubrication she produced being pushed out by the power of her orgasm.

When most of her release had passed, Abby all but fell off of me to lie on her side. At my groin, Erika was rapidly bringing me closer and closer to my own climax. She had my balls cupped in her hand when she took as much of me into her mouth as she could and started sliding her tongue along the bottom of my erection; I knew she could feel it when my balls tightened up right before I sprayed the back of her throat with the first jet of my semen. She didn't slow down in the slightest; she just swallowed it and continued her stimulations as I emptied myself into her eager mouth. Only when she felt me begin to soften did she tighten her lips to milk the last few drops of my cum as she let me pull free of her lips.

Satisfied with the results she'd gotten, Erika moved to share a kiss with Abby - along with some of my semen, unless my eyes deceived me. Abby welcomed the kiss, as well as the taste, judging from the way the two of them began cleaning each other's tonsils. When their kiss ended, Erika moved to sit near my feet, facing halfway between me and Abby. With a mischievous grin on her face, she leaned back on one arm before spreading her

legs - giving both of us a clear view of her pubic mound and the glistening opening between her thighs.

Using her free hand, Erika began to play with her breasts; drawing her fingernails from base to nipple, gently pinching her nipples and pulling on them, and squeezing her breasts. As she did, we could see her nipples getting longer as her areolas puckered and hardened with her increasing arousal. Below, we could see her clitoris start to make an appearance above where her vaginal lips had gotten a bit longer and darker; the area between them had opened slightly, and we could see brief flashes of her obviously wet entrance.

A couple more minutes, and we watched as her hand slowly slid down to cup her sex before she let a finger dip between her labia. When it reappeared, it was visibly wet with her juices. Erika locked eyes with me as she lifted her hand to her face and delicately extended her tongue to touch it to her glistening digit before slipping it into her mouth to clean it, tasting her own oils in the process.

When she slid her finger from between her lips, she let her hand drop down between her thighs again, where she began circling her fingertip around and across her clitoris - moaning softly as she did.

For the next few minutes, Erika continued to masturbate for us - moving her hand from her clitoris to her vagina to her breasts and back again. It was an incredibly erotic sight; if my own climax hadn't been so recent, it would have easily gotten me hard. As it was, though, it was enough to get Abby moving. With a soft moan of desire, Abby slid herself to where Erika was playing with her breasts - and when she was close enough, turned her head to place her face securely between Erika's thighs. I couldn't see what Abby did, but I could see the results: Erika's hand paused on her breast as her head tilted back and her eyes closed before a groan of pleasure escaped her lips. Her eyes opened again a few moments later, but they were glazed and unfocused. Yeah, Abby had discovered a fondness for girls, all right.

After a couple of minutes, Erika and Abby had wiggled around enough on the bed that I was able to see what was going on: Abby was enthusiastically - but gently - sucking on Erika's clitoris as she repeatedly slid her tongue up through Erika's obviously wet vaginal lips.

As I watched, Erika's nipples got longer and harder at the peaks of her puckered areolas - even as her hips started a small thrusting motion as she tried responded to the rhythm of Abby's ministrations.

Over the next few minutes, I watched as Erika and Abby both got more and more aroused; and I saw when Erika reached out to lay a hand on Abby's leg and gently tug on it, indicating that she wanted Abby to move on top of her in a '69' position. Abby readily did so, and I could see between her thighs well enough to watch as Erika lifted her head enough to slide her stiffened tongue between Abby's parted labia.

The sights and sounds - and even smells - as the two of them made love did wonders for my libido. It wasn't long before I could feel myself starting to respond to the show I was privileged to witness; and it wasn't much longer before I was as hard as I'd ever been before. But I could tell that the two of them were enjoying their activities, and I didn't want to interrupt the pleasures they were giving each other.

With the wriggling and other movements as the two of them went at each other, they had gradually moved around on the bed to the point that I couldn't see what Abby was doing to Erika; rather, it was what Erika's activities that had my attention. From the look on her face, I knew that Erika was getting close to her release; but her somewhat glassy eyes finally noticed my erection waving in the air, and she moved her head enough to look at me before telling me "Come on over here, and put that thing to work in Abby."

"You're sure?"

"Yeah - but save some for me. There's something I want you to do."

Though somewhat curious about what Erika had in mind, I didn't hesitate to do as she bid. In short order, I was on my knees behind Abby, straddling Erika's head. Erika gave me a mischievous grin, then reached up to angle my penis down so she could take it into her mouth again. With the head between her lips, she reached behind me to pull on my ass, indicating that she wanted me to slide myself further into her mouth. I did, and delighted as she used her tongue to caress the underside of my erection while she coated me with her saliva. Satisfied that I was properly lubricated, she softly pushed on my hips so that I slid free of her mouth again before taking me between a couple of her fingers. Her hand pressed against the small of my back as she guided my saliva-slick erection to the wet entrance to Abby's vagina.

When she felt the head of my erection sliding between her labia, Abby released a deep groan - causing Erika's eyes to widen as the vibrations stimulated her clitoris even more - before arching her back and spreading her legs slightly to give me better access to her opening.

With me firmly wedged in place, Erika released her hold on my penis so she could use her fingers to spread Abby's labia - opening Abby to me even more. Looking down, I could see that Erika's eyes were glued to where Abby and I were touching, and I knew that she wanted to watch as my glistening penis disappeared into Abby's sex. The idea had a certain appeal to me, too, and I resolved to make it something Erika would never forget.

My hands firmly on Abby's hips to hold her steady, I started to press myself forward. But I moved slowly and deliberately, wanting to give Erika as much of a show as I could. Abby seemed to know what was happening, and didn't do anything to make my penetration happen any faster - other than to relax herself so that my entry was easier. I had barely gotten the head of my erection past the ring of Abby's opening when I heard a deep, husky moan from Erika before she muttered "Oh, GOD, that is so sexy!"

As I continued to fill Abby with my manhood, I could hear Erika's breathing become more rapid and shallow as she edged closer and closer to her release. Apparently, she was stimulated as much by the sight of my entry into Abby as by what Abby was doing to her.

By the time I felt Abby's ass cheeks touching my lower belly, I could hear Erika moaning softly. Abby clenched herself around me briefly before I started easing myself back out of her - accompanied by a gasp and ragged groan from Erika. When only my glans was still inside Abby, I could see Erika's face again - and her eyes were still locked on where Abby and I were joined. Her entire head and shoulders - all the way down to the tops of her breasts - were flushed with her arousal.

Satisfied that I'd given Erika a proper show, I settled in to begin making love to Abby. Over the next couple of minutes, I slowly increased the pace of my thrusts into her. Erika continued to be mesmerized by the sight of my manhood disappearing into Abby, only to reappear a few moments later. A couple more minutes, and I knew something had changed between them; what it was I couldn't tell. Only when Erika's excited gasping took on the same rhythm as my penetrations into Abby did I understand that Abby was applying her oral skills to Erika in time with what I was doing to her.

The result was that Erika's arousal and pleasure increased much faster than it had before - not only was she privy to watch what I was doing to Abby, but feeling Abby's efforts at the same time. With the double stimulation, it wasn't much longer before I heard Erika's strangled cry of release as she froze underneath us; a quick glance revealed that even with Erika's thighs clamped around her head, Abby was continuing to make Erika's orgasm as long and powerful as she could. I felt Erika's hands on my thighs, then her nails digging into my flesh as wave after wave of obviously powerful contractions ran through her body. Each one was presaged by a near-scream of pleasure that was choked off as each peak of pleasure approached.

By the time it ended, Erika was nothing more than a limp, gasping bundle of quivering nerve endings beneath us. Abby lifted her head from between Erika's legs and turned to look at me. The entire lower half of her face glistening from the mixture of her saliva and Erika's female juices, Abby grinned at me before gesturing with her head that she thought we should move.

It seemed like a good idea to me - not wanting to disturb Erika's recovery - and I backed up enough to let my penis slide free of Abby's intimate grasp. Carefully, the two of us moved from over Erika to an open spot nearer the head of the bed. Once there, Abby moved to lie on her back before spreading her legs in open invitation for me to resume where we'd left off.

In a few moments, I was between her legs and poised to enter her again. I was surprised when she reached down to hold my hips, stopping me from pressing myself forward. When I looked into her face, she looked back at me and said "I want to watch. I want to see what it looks like when you..."

I nodded my understanding, and reached down to put first one, then the other, of my arms under her legs before levering them up. She was left in the position of having her knees nearly touching her breasts, her pelvis tilted up so both of us could clearly see where I was pressing against her. Satisfied with the view, she looked up and nodded that it was okay for me to go on - and I did.

Both of us looked down to watch as I pressed my hips forward, my penis slowly disappearing into the hot, wet opening of her sex. I spared a look into her face, and watched as her eyes grew wide with the combination of the sight before her, and the sensation inside. When we felt my balls resting between the cheeks of her ass, I saw her eyes close as her lips grew into a broad smile of pleasure.

Her eyes flew open when she felt me start to move; again, she watched closely as I pulled out of her - and her vaginal lips extended as the clasped at me, as though to try and hold me inside her. They readily reversed direction when I began to push my way into her again, their disappearance accompanied by a loud groan of pleasure from Abby.

With both of us fully aroused, it didn't take but a minute or two before I was pistonning in and out of her in a steady rhythm as she watched my glistening erection fill and empty her by turns. I knew the sight of it was exciting her from the way her hot, tight sheath steadily became wetter and wetter in her arousal. It wasn't long before the liquid sound of my manhood sliding in and out of her vagina was clearly audible; beneath me, the hard points of her nipples were swaying **ever** so slightly in time with my thrusts. Abby's hands were clenched on my arms, and I could feel her arching herself up slightly in welcome to each penetration.

From her gasping moans, I knew she was getting close to her release. I wasn't surprised when, a few minutes later, I felt her vagina slightly tighten around me a couple of times before she clamped down on me and nearly screamed her pleasure. As tight as she was around me, I couldn't really move very much inside her, so I had to settle for pressing my pubic bone against her clitoris in time with the spasms I felt around me. That seemed to be all she needed, as she released a hoarse grunt in response to each wave of pleasure that washed through her body.

When her climax tapered off enough, Abby all but collapsed underneath me. I knew that Erika wanted me to make love to her again, but I waited until I saw that Abby had started to get her wits back and that her breathing was near normal before I gave her a soft kiss and gently eased myself back so that my penis pulled free of her.

I turned to face Erika again, and saw that she had witnessed enough of what Abby and I had been doing that her vaginal lips were fully extended - as were her nipples.

Erika seemed to be entranced by what she'd just seen; it was a several seconds before she realized that I was patiently waiting for her to tell me what it was that she'd wanted me for. After giving a small start, she looked up at me and asked "Do you remember what I said you could do when we made love on the bed that first time?"

It took me a few moments - I can only plead all the time and excitement since then - before I recalled her offer to let me have her anally.

I looked down at her and asked "The way you've never made love before?"

She nodded, and replied "Yeah, that. The more I've gotten to know you and your family, the more I realize just what kind of guy you are. I want to give myself to you in a way that's as special as you are. It's a virgin part of me that I want YOU to have."

I raised my eyebrows, and she went on to tell me "No, I'm not offering that part of me because I think I owe you anything, or any of that kind of nonsense. I know you'd refuse - and rightly so. I want you to be my first that way because of what you mean to me."

Her eyes met mine, and our gazes locked. I knew that she was serious about what she wanted, and honest about why. I nodded my head and told her "I'm flattered and honored, and I agree. I'll do my best to make it as good for you as I can."

She smiled and answered "I know. That's why I want it to be YOU."

Knowing that I would do as she wanted, she quickly got to her feet and made a dash into the other bedroom. I could hear her rummaging around in a bag for a few moments, and the sound of her footsteps in the other bathroom before she reappeared. In one hand, she had a small hand towel; in the other, what initially appeared to be a tube of toothpaste. Only when she opened her hand to show me what it was did it make sense: a tube of K-Y jelly.

To my surprise, she blushed slightly before telling me "I, uh, got this instead of petroleum jelly; I've heard that this stuff will wash off with water, and after we're done, I didn't want to walk around feeling, um, 'squishy'."

I smiled at her before saying "That's fine. I don't think I'd want to feel 'squishy' any more than you would. That's the down side for us guys when we have to get a prostate check!"

She giggled, and answered "Yeah - now if us women could only get you guys to understand visits to the gynecologist!" Then, with a twinkle in her eye, she set the towel aside and said "I'll just clean that **thing** of yours, and we can get started..." - and proceeded to do just that, using her mouth and tongue to clean any trace of Abby's fluids from my semi-erect penis. And in the process, bringing me back to full erection.

Satisfied that she'd gotten me squeaky clean, Erika uncapped the tube of lubricant and squeezed a generous dollop into her hand. She held it there for a few moments to warm it a bit before she reached out to begin spreading it around on my penis. When she'd gotten me thoroughly coated with it, she gave me a nervous smile and handed the stuff to me, saying "I think you know what to do with this..."

I voiced my agreement, and with only the briefest hesitation, she moved to her hands and knees in front of me. Resting her shoulders on the bed, she reached back and took hold of the cheeks of her delightfully curved ass and pulled them apart - exposing her most intimate opening to me.

Above the dewy lips of her vaginal opening, the dark pink rosette of her anus drew my attention. With each small movement of her body, I could see it tighten and relax again. After I'd been looking at it for several seconds, I heard her slightly nervous query "So, are you gonna do something with that stuff, or what?"

Her voice prodded me out of my reverie, and I quickly moved to prepare her for the loss of her anal virginity. As she'd done, I squeezed a generous amount of the lubricant onto my hand and held it for a few moments to make sure it was warm enough. Then I reached between the globes of her ass and applied the stuff to the skin just above her pucker before pushing it down and across her nether opening. I spread the stuff around carefully, making sure that any area I was likely to come in contact with was properly protected. When I'd finished that part of it, I got another blob of the lube, and carefully worked it farther into her opening, pushing it inside her with one finger to make sure that there wouldn't be any *unpleasant* friction. As I did, I could see her labia getting longer and darker, and felt her gently rocking back against my touch - and was reassured that she really did want it to happen.

With both of us as slippery as we could be, the only thing left to do was the deed itself. I carefully recapped the tube and set it aside before cleaning the surplus from my hand.

Erika kept her position, holding herself 'open' for me as I eased my way forward and positioned the head of my penis against her anus - accompanied by a small gasp from Erika. A moment later, I could see and feel it as she consciously relaxed her sphincter before she told me "I'm as ready as I'm ever going to be, so go ahead. I know you'll stop if I need you to."

Having said that, she relaxed even more, and I knew she was ready for what was next. Holding myself in position, I began pressing myself into her - only to be surprised when the tight ring of her rectum gradually expanded to accept the penetration.

A few seconds later, both of us felt it as the head of my penis finally slipped through her opening. I heard her gasp, and immediately stopped; waiting to see what she wanted me to do.

After she took a couple of deep breaths, I heard her say "Yeah, that's good - just hold still a minute, so I can get used to this."

She was clamped tightly around me at first, but I could feel her trying to let her anus relax to this new sensation. As she did, I used my hands to begin caressing her back and sides, and even her thighs, to try and help.

A bit later, she spoke up again, telling me "Okay, go ahead - but slow, right? Geez, this feels so weird! Good, but **weird**."

"Slow it is", I agreed, before adding "But I think the worst part is over."

She nodded her understanding, and I put my hands on her hips to hold both of us steady as I again pressed myself into her. As I'd expected - from previous experience - the rest of me slid into her with relative ease: the head of my penis was the largest part of it; so once that was through her opening, the rest was relatively easy.

In short order, I was inside her as far as I could go: the firm globes of her ass were firmly pressing against my lower belly, and I could feel her pubic hair tickling my scrotum.

With the realization that I was finally all the way in her, Erika let the cheeks of her ass go, reaching back up with her hands to take a double handful of the bedcovers and clench them in her fists before announcing "Oh, GOD, this is good! It feels like I've got a telephone pole stuck up my ass - but it's such a **nice** telephone pole!"

Reassured that she wasn't feeling any pain or discomfort, I began to slowly back out of her, watching as the tight ring of her anus stretched out slightly as it clasped at my erection. I stopped when only the head of my penis was still inside her, and then paused a few seconds before again filling her bowels with my manhood - and drawing a deep, guttural groan of pleasure and arousal from her.

Behind us, and slightly to the side, we heard Abby's gasp as she realized what we were doing - and more specifically, what part of Erika's anatomy my penis was disappearing into.

After a couple of minutes, Erika raised up to hold her body off the bed with her arms - but was careful to arch her back so that I could continue to enter her as far as possible. With her slight change in position, she was more comfortable with my movement in her, and she began to press herself back against me with each penetration. With that encouragement, I slowly sped up the pace; each long, steady stroke of my slick member through her sphincter drew a soft moan from her.

With my penis firmly planted in her, I moved my hands from her hips - reaching down and forward to take her full breasts in my hands, cupping and squeezing them for a bit before gently pinching and pulling on her erect nipples. When I started doing that, Erika lifted one hand and moved it to between her thighs so she could begin playing with her clitoris, and slipping a finger into her womanhood - and while it was there, both of us could feel the sensations produced from having both of her lower openings occupied. The added stimulation soon had me pistonning in and out of her even more quickly, even though I had to shorten the length of my movements. The increased motion in her nether region seemed to arouse Erika even more, since she started softly grunting in response to each of my thrusts.

The sensation of her incredibly hot bowels being wrapped around my penis, and the deliciously tight ring of her anus sliding up and down its length, soon had me well along the way toward my climax. From the insistent way she was diddling her clitoris and the intermittent clenching of her back passage around me, I knew that Erika was rapidly approaching her own release.

It wasn't much longer before I felt myself getting close to unloading in her. Raising my body up, I moved my hands from her breasts to her hips so I could steady both of us. As I increased the speed, and even force, of my thrusts into her, the sounds Erika was making increased in volume and obvious arousal.

As I felt my balls pull up, Erika suddenly released a loud cry as the rosette of her anus clamped down around my erection. Along the bottom of my penis, I could feel the clenching and spasming of her vagina as her orgasm took over her body. The tightness of her pucker and the sensations she was creating along my penis were all I needed to push me over the edge as well - with a couple of hard thrusts into her, I buried myself in her back passage just as the first wad of my jism erupted from the end of my penis to coat her bowels.

Even as I was getting ready to fire another load of my semen into her, Erika threw her head back and shouted "I can feel it! Oh, GOD, it's like FIRE!" before her breath caught in her throat. The tendons in her neck were stretched like steel cables as her breath left her lungs in a high-pitched whistle; I didn't think it was possible, but her anus tightened around me even more - and her bowels began an incredible clenching around me.

As tight as she was, the feelings she was creating were simply too much, and I continued to unload wad after wad of hot cum into her nether region. Only when the last ineffective spurt of my man-juice had passed did she relax; her head and shoulders all but collapsing onto the bed. My hold on her hips kept that part of her upright; and a good thing, too: as tightly as her anus was clamped around my penis, if her hips had fallen, I feared that she might well have ripped it loose from my body.

But my own release had been incredibly powerful, and I could feel myself quivering slightly as I tried to keep from collapsing on top of Erika. Suddenly, I felt a pair of arms around me - it took me a few moments to remember that Abby had been there with us, and witnessed the entire event. Abby carefully and gently helped support me and Erika as she guided us down onto the bed. Along the way, Erika relaxed enough to let my rapidly-softening penis pull free. When both of us were lying on the bed, Erika was on her stomach with me on my back next to her - both of us panting as we tried to get our breath back.

I was dimly aware of Abby moving around us, but I was still surprised when I saw her appear over me with an obviously damp washcloth in her hand. She looked at me questioningly, and I managed to nod my head in acceptance of what I hoped she was offering. She gave me a gentle smile, and a moment later, I could feel it as she used the

cloth to clean my pelvis of the majority of the lubricant. Several moments later, I heard Erika's breath catch slightly, and figured that Abby was doing a similar cleanup on her.

I heard, rather than saw, Abby leave the bedroom and start down the stairs; with a concentrated and massive effort, I managed to roll onto my side so that I could put an arm across Erika's back. I watched as Erika responded by lifting her head enough to be able to turn it and face me. When I saw the look on her face, I knew that she'd accomplished that simple movement only through sheer force of will.

The two of us lay there looking at each other, each of us shuddering slightly with occasional after-shocks from the intensity of what we'd just been through.

A bit later, I heard Abby come into the bedroom again, and then listened as she set something on the nightstand next to the bed. A moment later, I felt the bed shift as she climbed onto it and moved to where Erika and I were laying next to each other. By this time, Erika and I were both breathing somewhat normally. I felt Abby's hands on me and heard her say "Dan, if you can move, I'll help you sit up so you can have something to drink and eat while you rest."

I considered the offer carefully, decided that the effort would be worth the reward, and nodded my agreement. It wasn't easy, but between the two of us, Abby and I managed to get me propped up against the headboard of the bed. After handing me a can of Coke with the explanation "Here - you need the liquid and sugar", Abby moved to Erika and made the same offer to help her get repositioned. A minute or so later, Erika was sitting next to me, and soon had her own cold Coke.

Satisfied that neither of us was going to fall over, Abby collected a plate from the nightstand and took up a position where she could reach both of us. Looking at the plate, I could see that she'd prepared some sandwiches - but I couldn't tell what kind they were. She saw me looking at them, and with a smile, she broke off a bite-size piece of one and fed it to me. I only had to chew it once to realize what it was - peanut butter and honey. I looked at her and managed to ask "peanut butter and honey?"

She gave me a smile and answered "I discovered them when I was in college, and cramming before exams. The sugar in the honey gives you a quick boost - enough to keep you going until the energy from peanut butter can kick in."

It made sense, and seemed to be working - after only a couple of hand-fed bites from Abby, I felt able to hold the rest of the sandwich myself. Erika watched our exchange, and readily accepted when Abby made her the same offer. It took Erika a few more bites, but it wasn't long before she was holding her own mini-meal, the two of us taking sips of our Cokes between bites.

As we sat there eating, Abby looked from one to the other of us several times before she said "That was the most incredible thing I've ever seen. I've had guys want to do that to me before, but I always thought it would hurt and that it would be kinda gross. But when

I saw how you were acting, Erika, I knew that it couldn't be as bad as I thought it would be. I mean, I could SEE him sliding in and out of you, and the way you kept getting more and more turned on - well, it was amazing."

By this time, Erika had recovered enough to be able to answer her by saying "It **was** amazing." With a small blush, Erika went on to say "For a long time, I've wondered what it would feel like, to have a man inside me like that; but I was always afraid it would hurt. Then I met Dan, and got to know him, and knew that HE wouldn't hurt me. The time we were up here - you know, after he stayed the night - I told him it was okay if he wanted me that way, but he didn't do it then. Then after I met Lucy and got to *really* talk to her and the girls, I knew that if I was ever going to do it, it was going to have to be with him. I was just waiting for the chance, and lucky enough that it came tonight."

Abby waited patiently while Erika took another bite and chewed, before washing it down with a sip of Coke.

Erika went on to tell her "It's strange - it didn't hurt even a little bit. Whether that's because I wanted it so much, or because I knew it was Dan, I don't know. It felt DAMN strange at first, though; and it took me a little time to get used to having him inside me like that. But he was as gentle and patient as I knew he'd be, and once I was ready for him to go on, it started feeling better and better. But I guess you know that!", the last part with a grin.

"Yeah, I do!" Abby agreed, with her own smile. A moment later, Abby said "Still, I don't know if I could do that."

Erika just looked at her for a second before saying "Then don't. If you're not sure, then it's better if you don't even try it. It'll only 'work' if you're a willing and ready participant. If you decide that you want to try it later, then wait until the time and place and guy are all right. For me, it was here and now and Dan; for you, it might happen differently, if you want it to happen at all."

Abby nodded her understanding, and turned to look at me.

"I just wanted to thank you for what you did, just now - cleaning us up, getting us some refreshments, and even getting us mobile again."

Erika echoed my comments before Abby answered "I'm glad to help. Like I said, it was really something to watch the two of you. If you needed a little assistance, I'm happy I was here to provide it."

Erika and I had each gone through a couple of sandwiches, and finished our Cokes. I looked over at her, and said "Abby did a fine job of washing me off, but I think I'd like to grab a shower before I go to bed."

Erika nodded her agreement, and I turned to Abby to say "And of course you're invited to join me or us, if Erika doesn't mind."

"I don't mind at *all*!" Erika volunteered.

Abby got a happy smile on her face and answered "Yeah, I'd like that. You guys go ahead and get started, and I'll be right in", as she took the empty cans and plate from us and set them on the nightstand. As Erika and I got up on one side of the bed, Abby moved to the other, obviously meaning to take the trash and empty plate back downstairs.

Erika and I got the shower started and temperature set, and had just gotten into the spray when Abby joined us. Erika and I were still a little tired and weak, and Abby enthusiastically helped us clean each other up. It was a very pleasant, if not lengthy, wash up for all of us. When it was over, we helped dry each other off, and made our way to the bed, where Abby and Erika took places on opposite sides of me. When we were settled in, each of them was on her side, leaning against me with my arms around them as they held hands on my chest. Sleep came quickly for all of us, I think.

When I woke up the next morning, I was spooning against Abby's back while Erika matched my position behind me. I had the usual morning erection, which was neatly trapped by the warm, firm globes of Abby's ass. It was a wonderful way to wake up, and I really didn't want to move - but no matter how much I tried to fight it, hydraulic pressure finally forced me to get up. As I cleared the space between them, I was amused to watch as Abby tried to scoot back and Erika tried to move forward, each seeking the warmth that had just deserted them. They ended up spooning, Erika's hand finding it's way over Abby's breast, which Abby held in place with her own hand.

Having drained the surplus fluids and brushed my teeth - which seemed to be wearing little fuzzy sweaters - I decided that a little breakfast was called for. A check of the clock showed that it was nearly 9:00 AM, so I figured that the girls wouldn't mind a bite to eat, either.

I was downstairs cooking breakfast when the two of them made their appearance - and both of them started laughing at the sight of me, naked except for one of Abby's aprons.

I just looked at them and said "I learned a LONG time ago about the dangers - particularly for men! - of cooking bacon while naked."

That got both of them laughing again, and I told them "Go ahead and get yourselves some coffee - yes, it's some of the Jamaican, it seemed appropriate this morning - and take a seat. Breakfast will be served shortly."

They did as they were told, taking seats around the small table in the kitchen, watching as I finished cooking the scrambled eggs, bacon, hash browns and toast. Abby got up only once, to get glasses of orange juice for all of us.

None of us felt any need to talk, so breakfast was a comfortable, quiet event. The only reference to the evening before was when Abby asked Erika "Are you okay this morning?"

Erika looked at both of us before answering "Aside from being just a **little** bit sore, everything's fine."

Abby nodded, and went back to eating. Erika saw me looking at her, and just gave me a little smile and shake of her head, letting me know that any discomfort she was feeling really was minor.

When the meal was over, and we were just sitting there sipping our refreshed coffee, Abby asked "So where did you learn to cook, Dan? I have to admit that I'm surprised that it was as good as it was."

I smiled, and told her "I was a bachelor for **way** too long. I had to learn how to cook in self-defense. There's nothing like having to eat your mistakes to motivate you to learn not to make them!"

Both of them laughed at that, and I went on to tell them "Actually, I'm not much of a cook, and I know it. When we get to Muddy's tonight, then you'll find out what a **REAL** cook can do."

Abby, having not had the opportunity to read my file, asked "So how is it you know Mr. Waters?"

I smiled and told both of them "Don't bother calling him 'mister' to his face; he'll just tell you to call him Muddy. I know him because we were in the same outfit in the Army."

"Why is he called 'Muddy'", Abby asked.

Here, Erika jumped in and told her "There's an old blued musician by the name of Muddy Waters. It's actually not uncommon for people with that last name to get that nickname - particularly when they're Black."

I nodded to verify Erika's explanation and went on to say "Muddy and I were on some missions together, along with some other guys, of course. While we were on them, Muddy did most of the cooking - he was better at it than the rest of us."

"What did he do in your outfit?" Erika asked.

"He packed the Hog - he was the one that carried around our M-60 machine gun and damn near all the ammo for it."

Both of them thought that over for a minute before Abby said "An M-60? That's the big one, right? He must be pretty strong to carry that thing around - not to mention the ammo for it!"

I just grinned and answered "Oh, he's fairly strong, all right. You'll see when we get there." Abby and Erika both got expressions that let me know they KNEW I was up to something - but didn't have a clue what it was. I couldn't wait to see the expressions they'd have when they finally saw him! Well over six feet tall and pushing 300 pounds - none of it fat - he was an imposing sight. He'd been able to fire the hog with one hand as well as the rest of us fired our M-16s, and could pack around enough ammo to founder a mule.

After we'd finished our coffee, I shooed the two of them out of the kitchen, despite their protests, and cleaned up. The rest of the day was spent relaxing. Abby and Erika decided to do laundry; when I offered to help, I was thoroughly put in my place. While they were doing that, I took the opportunity to get caught up on some of the technical publications I subscribed to. Afterwards, the three of us lay around the apartment watching movies on cable. Abby and Erika took positions at the ends of the couch, one of them with my head on her lap, the other holding my feet.

When the time came, the three of us got ready for dinner, then piled into Erika's rental car - it was a bit larger than Abby's - and went over to Amy's place. While the women bunched up to discuss each other's outfits, Tom and I had a chance to get caught up - but only after he'd expressed his sympathies for what had happened to Sandra's parents.

We decided to go ahead and take both cars to get to Muddy's restaurant. The valets were quick, and it was only a minute before we were inside the front door. The maitre d' was the same fellow as before, and when he recognized me, he quickly escorted the five of us past the rest of the line - earning us a number of stares, along with some mild indignation - and escorted us to our table. As before, it was the best in the place; Muddy had obviously given the staff very clear instructions on how we were to be treated - we'd barely had time to sit before we were all but overwhelmed with service.

I knew when Muddy made his appearance by the sudden intake of breath from all three of the women. Tom, of course, had seen and met him before, but none of the others had. Over my shoulder, I heard Muddy tell me "Boomer, I don't know how you do it, but you keep bringin' the best-lookin' women into my place. I aught to start payin' you a commission for dressin' up the place so much!"

I stood up, and Muddy and I shook hands before he eased me back into my chair. He pulled another one up near the table, and I introduced him to the ladies. All of them were visibly nervous when he reached a hand out to take theirs, then relaxed when all he did was raise their hands to his lips and kiss them with a "Pleasure to meet you, ma'am."

With the introductions done, he told us "If you folks will forgive me, I've gone ahead and prepared a little something special for your meal tonight."

Amy answered by telling him "I'm sure that we'll be delighted with it, Mr. Waters."

Amy and Erika shared a look before Muddy laughed, and told her "Just call me Muddy, Amy - it's the only thing I know how to answer to. Same for the rest of you folks. Now if you'll excuse me, I'll be leaving for a few minutes, but I'll be right back."

When he'd left, Erika and Abby both gave me a dirty look before Erika said "I wish you'd said a little more about how BIG he is. He liked to have scared me to death when he just *showed up* like that!"

Tom and I both laughed, and I answered "I **told** you he carried our M-60 and the ammo. And it was you, Abby, that pointed out how big and heavy they are. What did you think he was going to look like?"

Abby asked "Why does he call you 'Boomer'?", and Amy answered for me by telling her "What else would you expect them to call their explosives guy?"

I nodded, and added "In military outfits like ours, guys get nicknames for all kinds of reasons. Muddy got his because of the blued musician, like Erika told you. I was Boomer because of my ordnance training. Our communications guy was 'Talker'. Our logistics guy's name was Howard Mouser - but he got the nickname 'Mickey'". They thought that one over for a second, then laughed.

About that time, Muddy showed up again - mildly surprising the rest of them at the way he just **appeared**. When he sat down, Erika looked at him and said "It looks like you've seen a little action, Muddy", nodding at some of the scars that peeked out from under his chef's jacket.

Muddy surprised her by just smiling, and saying "Yeah, that I have.", then a moment later, adding "Only reason I'm here is 'cause of Boomer, there."

I tried to change the subject, but none of the rest of them wanted any part of it - they wanted to hear the story.

When Muddy was done telling it, Abby asked him "Were all the missions you went on like that?"

Muddy laughed and told her "Not hardly. That one was probably the worse. The best one was when there was only one round fired by the whole team."

Abby asked "Can you tell us about it?"

"You bein' FBI and all, I guess it wouldn't hurt", he answered. "The thing was, there was these gangs running around loose in some country or other, and the government there asked Uncle Sam for some help. All these gangs were doing was killing folks, robbing banks and such, and just generally getting up to no good. There was just one person holding the whole mess together; some bandit chief that kept all the individual gangs from trying to kill each other off. Uncle Sam, he sends us in with instructions to take out the head honcho. We get on the ground, and have a look around, and Boomer here has an idea. We work out a path from where we're supposed to be picked up when the mission is over back to where word is this character likes to hang out. Along the way, we start planting claymores and a bunch of different kinds of booby-traps and such. Every so often, Boomer here, he says he thinks maybe it would be a good idea to add a little more stuff to this area or that one. Well, we been together long enough that we all know he's got pretty good instincts on this stuff, so we do what he says. Anyway, we finish up not far from where we're supposed to find El Jefe or whatever the hell his name was. Boomer sets up - he's our sniper, too, remember - and the rest of us fan out to cover him. A few hours later, here comes His Nibs. They set up for some damn party, and we wait a little more. Finally, everybody sits down to dinner. Right in the middle of this asshole - 'scuse me - taking a bite of supper, Boomer caps him. Nails him square between the runnin' lights at damn near a thousand meters; right nice shootin', it was. Anyway, all the rest of 'em, they get some excited and start after us. We got us enough of a lead, they don't get within shooting distance, but they're definitely behind us. We head for our extraction area, and we start hearing some of the little presents we'd set up going off behind us. That slows them down some, and we get a little more distance on them. A bit later, they find more of our goodies, and that slows 'em down some more. By the time we get to the extraction point, they've done give up on us. So there it is, an entire mission, and there's only one bullet fired - one of his."

By the time he finished, all four of them were staring at me, their eyes leaving me only when Muddy added "Later, we found out that they hit **every single one** of the booby traps we'd laid for them. Cut their numbers down considerable - but not enough to stop the individual gangs from getting the idea of taking over where their honcho had left off. By the time it was all said and done, there wasn't more than a handful of them running loose, and about as organized as a can of worms. Our C.O., he was right pleased and impressed the way things turned out. They even had some officers' do a special debrief of Boomer, asking him why he'd had us set the traps up the way we had."

About that time, we saw one of the staff signaling Muddy, and he excused himself to go deal with whatever it was that needed his attention. He'd been gone a few minutes when the headwaiter and crew showed up with our dinner - prime rib, cubed potatoes, salads, green beans, fresh (hot!) dinner rolls, and all the rest. While we were eating, we saw Muddy visiting with some of the other guests, but he left us alone to enjoy (!!) our meal.

We'd finished our lemon sherbet dessert and had our coffee topped off when Muddy reappeared - this time only slightly startling the others. One of the waiters brought him a cup of coffee, and the six of us sat at the table, quietly chatting several minutes before Muddy asked "So, I hear you all are going after the dope dealers we got here in town?"

Amy admitted that was the case, and Muddy asked "How's it going?"

Amy and Abby gave him the general picture, Amy finishing by telling him "The biggest problem has been keeping the DEA's heavy hands out of this - the only way we've been able to manage it is the fact that the Cartelita has been one part of a loose interstate coalition of gangs, and they've been using more technology than the DEA is used to - particularly the encryption that Dan is working on breaking. It's aggravating the hell out of them, but the decision's been made **way** up in the Justice Department that the Bureau is in charge. They still try to get one of their thumbs in on it every so often, when they think they can get away with it."

When she finished, Muddy looked at me and asked "How *you* doin' Boomer?"

"About as well as can be expected, I suppose."

"Lucy and the girls okay? How's Sandra?"

"They're all fine, as of last night. The girls have police escorts when they leave the house, and I told you at the funeral that Lucy's carrying."

Muddy made a disgusted noise and said "Damn shame people gotta live like that."

I agreed, as did the others, before I told him "But we'll get them. It's slow going right now, but it'll happen. The biggest hassle is that while we're trying to take out the honchos, they're still selling that crap, and getting rich in the process. It's too bad we can't really go after them where they **live** - their dope and their money."

I saw a brief flicker in Muddy's eyes - nobody else saw it, since he was facing me - and I knew that he'd gotten the message.

"That is a shame", he conceded, before adding "But I know you'll all take care of business."

Having said all that I needed to, and Muddy knowing what was needed - at least, in general terms, which was enough - the conversation headed back to more casual subjects. Muddy filled them in on what he'd done after he got out, up until the time he'd opened his place, Café Triomphe.

It finally came time for the five of us to leave, and I decided to just take the bull by the horns.

"Where's the check, Muddy?"

He just looked at me and answered "Boomer, you know better than to ask that question."

"Muddy, are you **ever** going to let it go?"

"Not as long as I'm breathin' - thanks to you. You and these folks, you're my guests tonight. What you're doing, trying to bust up those dope gangs - well, this is just my contribution."

Under those conditions - that is, witnesses and all - I knew I wasn't going to get anywhere arguing with him. So I settled for just looking him in the eye and telling him "When this is over, I'm saying it should be even. I can't **make** you agree" - he gave a derisive snort at that - "but I expect things will be even enough. I did you a turn, and you've done me some - let's call it square, okay?"

Grudgingly, he said "I'll think on it some - but I'm not making any promises.

"Fair enough, Muddy."

That out of the way, Muddy told us "There's no hurry for you folks to leave. You're welcome to stay as long as you want, and if there's anything you want, young Ricky over there will see that you get it. I don't mean to be a bad host or anything, but there's still things I've gotta do."

Erika spoke up, telling him "Thanks, Muddy. It was a **wonderful** meal, and I know that all of us appreciated it. You go ahead about your business, and we'll be fine."

With that, Erika stuck her hand out, and when Muddy took it, told him "It's been a real pleasure and treat meeting you."

Abby and Amy both followed Erika's example, then Tom shook with him, too.

I stood up, and Muddy and I shook hands before he headed off to take care of his business.

The rest of us had one more cup of coffee before deciding that we were ready to leave. Tom started to leave a tip for the staff, but Ricky came over and told him "You don't need to do that, sir. All of us know what he did for Mr. Waters; we wouldn't accept it from him, and we won't accept it from you."

Tom - and the others - knew that most of the money the staff made was from tips; having them refuse one told him what they thought of Muddy, and what I'd done so long ago. He nodded his understanding and put his money back in his pocket before the five of us made our way outside. The valets had 'our' vehicles ready for us; Amy invited the three of us back to their place for a drink, but we politely declined - we were still a little tired from our activities of the previous evening.

The rest of the weekend went by quietly; Monday morning found all of us bunched up in my office - Tom had come along with Amy to see if there was anything he could do to help. There wasn't, really, so he soon left to take care of some other things that he needed to deal with.

I went into The Room to check on how things were going, and learned that my computer was a bit over halfway through the possible keys for the encryption system the dealer had been using. At the rate keys were being tested, I figured another month or so would see all the dealers behind bars.

Late that morning, Amy stopped by to tell me that the fellow I'd had my little 'chat' with had apparently made his decision. He was telling the PD anything and everything he knew. His lawyer had tried to convince him not to say anything, but the guy had just told the lawyer "You aren't looking at what I am. Shut the fuck up." The lawyer was pitching a fit about threats and coercion, but his (former) client wasn't going along with it.

Some of the information he'd coughed up was how the gangs had known to find us at the mall. Rather than take the risk of tailing us, they'd put magnetic radio beacons on Amy's, Abby's, and Erika's cars, and simply traced the signals in the wee hours of the morning when they'd be less likely to be noticed. With Abby's and Amy's homes located, it had been easy enough for them to use sensitive directional mikes - available to hunters as game finders - to listen in. The gangs didn't get all the conversations, but certainly enough to keep them alert while they stayed far enough away to blend into the background. They'd seen the four of us leave in two cars, and when the radio signals both settled at a shopping mall, they'd figured that was the opportunity they'd been waiting for. With the revelation of the radio beacons, the FBI tech team had swept not only the vehicles, but Abby's and Amy's homes - as well as giving each of them a portable sweeping unit with instruction on how to run daily checks for any other devices.

Amy still didn't like the way he'd been convinced to start talking, though, and I finally told her "You know I didn't threaten him with **anything**. I simply pointed out some bad things that *might* happen, and the good things that probably **WOULD** happen."

"But he has **rights!**" Amy declared.

"If there was any doubt that he was involved in any kind of criminal activity or had done something wrong, I'd be all in favor of his rights. But he was caught in the act, and was proven - by his own actions! - to be involved in all the stuff that got him where he is. As far as I'm concerned, he forfeited his rights as soon as he broke the law by working for the dealers. I'm not saying its okay to beat confessions out of prisoners or deny crooks legal representation or anything like that. I just think that we should be less concerned about the crooks, and more about the innocent victims."

Amy answered "But we can't protect all the innocents all the time."

"So? Does that mean you have to take such good care of the guilty **AFTER** the fact? Why is it apparently illegal to work a prisoner hard enough to make him pay restitution to his victims? Why do prison convicts have a **right** to cable TV when a lot of honest, hard-working people can't afford it? I challenge you to research the prison system, and compare the ratio of prisoners versus general population over the last hundred years.

Then compare that against the history of prison 'reform', and think about how the two relate - and *why* ."

She looked doubtful, and I told her "Don't have the time? I'll tell you the answer: as prisons got more 'livable', the deterrent factor decreased. As criminals got more and more protections, the actual **penalties** for their crimes got less and less - sure, nobody wants to be locked up for twenty years - less than half that if he manages to either behave himself, or at least not get caught NOT behaving; but if the convict has a color TV, good food, and doesn't have to work all that hard, what is there, really, to convince him NOT to do a crime?"

Amy was just standing there looking at me when I asked her "Do you know what it is about prison that convicts fear most?"

"The other prisoners", Erika answered for her.

"Yup. It's pretty sad when a convicted felon is more worried about the people in there with him than he is about the place itself, isn't it?"

All of them nodded, and on that happy note, Amy left to take care of her other jobs.

The next couple of weeks went by fairly quickly. Erika and some of the other agents got me to go through what had gone through my mind during the mall adventure; that reminded me of some other things from my Army days, so I wound up spending a few afternoons doing nothing but telling them 'war stories' - more specifically, different things that me and the guys had run into, how we'd dealt with them, and what we'd learned along the way. Erika seemed quite pleased at the end of those sessions, and the agents always thanked me profusely for my time.

Most evenings were spent at Abby's place, though we did go out a few times for supper. A couple of times, we went with Amy and Tom; other times, it was just the three of us. Several nights, one or the other of them and I would have a pleasant session of lovemaking; but I managed to beg off sleeping with them several times, so the two of them could have THEIR time together, as well. Both of them were careful to give me privacy during my every-other-night calls to Lucy and the girls.

Our adoption of Sandra was going just fine, according to my lawyer; he also let us know that Sandra's grandparents were agreeable to the idea of my handling the details of her parent's estate - selling the house and furnishings, and so on. They'd told Sandra what few things they wanted, and Lucy had taken care of shipping the stuff to them. Sandra had gone back - with Lucy and Robyn for company - and gotten the rest of the stuff that she wanted to keep. Everything else was to be sold off - in fact, most of the furniture and appliances already had been. Lucy had found a reputable real estate broker after the lawyers had approved the sale of the house before Sandra was legally my dependent.

That Sandra's maternal grandfather had been first cousin to Robyn's paternal grandmother helped. It seemed like a pretty tenuous thread to me, but was apparently enough for the lawyers.

Lucy and the girls had decided what to do about the girl's bedrooms: they'd settled on renovating the two bedrooms so that they shared One Big Bathroom, but leave each girl her own bedroom. Lucy had gotten a small contractor to do the work, and the FBI had been willing to check him and his crew out before letting them start. It was expected that everything would be done by the time I got back, including the redecorating that they were all looking forward to. Lucy told me "This isn't going to be cheap, Dan!", and laughed when I told her "That's fine. I'll just take it out of their allowance for the next hundred years."

It was Lucy that let me know that the police had had the unique experience of having several people come in and confess to an assortment of crimes. When the cops started comparing stories and histories, they quickly realized that all the thugs that had come in had known each other to varying degrees - and that the more recent volunteers had progressively more and more information about the individual that had killed Sandra's parents. With a lot of interrogation, it came out that each of the people that came in had been visited by a couple of people that simply scared the hell out of them. The two strangers hadn't actually hurt anyone, but had made it clear that they weren't reluctant to inflict some seriously unpleasant damage if needed. The cops were looking for the mysterious strangers, but hadn't had any luck, having only vague descriptions and no indication of where the two could be found. With no one actually **hurt**, and the people coming in being less than upstanding members of the community, the cops weren't all that enthusiastic about trying to find them.

Abby, Erika, and I were all over at Amy's place for supper one night when Amy announced "There's been something going on that I thought you might find interesting, Dan."

"What's that?"

"The local PD told me today that several of their patrols have come across some 'unique' situations. It seems that a patrol car will be driving along when they'll spot someone apparently hanging out by a street sign. When they get close, it turns out that the individual is a drug dealer, tied or handcuffed to the sign so he can't go anywhere. Invariably, he's got enough dope on him for a felony arrest; somewhere not far away, they'll find a lot more, only it's been contaminated so thoroughly that it's no good for use - or as evidence, for that matter. To top it off, the dealer is always broke - as in no money AT ALL on him, when you'd expect him to be carrying around a several hundred, at least. They're also finding guns in the vicinity - but the guns have invariably been exposed to a high heat source, destroying the tempering on the barrels - making them all but useless. Normally, finding a dealer like that wouldn't be any good, but in every single case, they've taken ownership of the dope found on them, and confessed to sale and distribution charges."

"Really? That **is** interesting." I replied.

She gave me a Look, and went on "There's more. The last few days, the dealers have been a little higher on the food chain, so there have been more contaminated drugs near them. Every last one of them has been scared spitless of some*thing or some*one - but they won't say what or who. A side note is that several local charities and churches have reported large anonymous cash donations - usually several thousands of dollars - that show up the day after the cops find one of the dealers. It's starting to drive the rest of the dealers bugshit, not knowing if or when it's going to happen to **them**."

I just smiled, and Amy asked "Do you know anything about any of this, Dan?"

"Not me. Abby and Erika can both vouch that I haven't gone anywhere alone at night."

Amy gave a disgusted snort and asked "And you wouldn't happen to have any idea of who **IS** doing this, would you?"

"Just that it's probably a concerned citizen, is all."

"Nobody that you know? Say, one of your Army buddies?"

"If it *was* one of them, they'd be careful not to say anything to ME about it, so I wouldn't know."

"And you wouldn't dare take a guess as to who it might be?"

"I personally know several people that could do something like that. I know OF a lot more - pretty much anybody that was in any one of the military special services: SEALS, Marine Force Recon, LRRPs, Special Forces, like that."

"Lurps?" Erika asked.

"Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols - snoop and scoot behind enemy lines", I explained.

Amy made a disgusted noise, and left for the kitchen. When she'd gone, Tom turned to me and said "You know you're pissing her off, don't you?"

"Yeah. But there's nothing I can do to help her - I don't **know** who's doing it."

"But you've got suspicions."

"Suspicions? Sure - but suspicions aren't *evidence* , are they?"

Tom gave me an appraising look, and I told him "Look, Tom - if it's anyone from any of the groups I mentioned, they're not going to go off and start capping innocent civilians. Even if they're not following the *letter* of the law, they're sure as hell obeying the **spirit**

of it. The cops have some dealers. It sounds like there's a fair amount of drugs off the street, and the drug money being put to GOOD use - charities and churches, right? As long as whoever is doing it is only going after PROVEN dealers, I don't see any reason to worry about it."

Tom thought that one over a few moments before telling me "But that's not how Amy sees it. The law is the law; due process and all that. She's going to go after whoever it is, just like the cops."

"Fine. IF it's someone from one of the special services, they'll play merry hell trying to catch him - or her. As for the law being the law, that's fine - but I think there's something that counts for even more."

"What's that?"

"Justice", I told him.

From the expression on his face, I knew that was something he hadn't considered.

When I checked my computer in The Room a little over a week later, I saw that it had come up with the pass phrase for one of the encryption programs. I quickly let Amy know that we had something to work with, and went about decrypting everything the dealer had stored using that program. It didn't take long to realize that he'd used that particular program to handle all of the 'outside' transactions for the Cartelita - I was seeing names, phone numbers, transactions for varying amounts of different drugs (including the how and when of transports), and suppliers. They had done business with dealers all over the country; using the records on his computer, the FBI was going to be able to put a serious dent in dealers all across the country.

I quickly got my computer started on decrypting all the records, then saving them into clear-text files - AFTER I copied a few of the records to a floppy diskette that I could use to show Amy what we'd been able to recover.

When I left The Room and went back into my office, I found Amy waiting for me - along with Erika and Abby. I delayed long enough to close and lock the outer door, then did the same with the inner before loading the data from the diskette into the computer I'd been issued. Amy was delighted when she realized just how detailed the information she was going to get would be, and became almost giddy when I explained how much of it there was. After she'd seen everything, I told her that what was on the diskette was only a copy, and then made several passes over it with a large fridge magnet and ran it through the more-than-industrial-strength shredder they'd given me. The thing was perfectly willing to eat entire phone books, if need be.

Looking at her, I told Amy "What you just saw is just the start of it. What I saw of the rest of it, this particular batch of data is their dealings with other gangs in other parts of the country. I'd bet that the other program they used will turn out to be pretty much the same information, only for their local operations."

Amy, Abby, and Erika all looked at each other, their joy plain on their faces.

Abby asked "So what happens now, Amy? Where do you go from here?"

"For now, nothing."

"Nothing?" Erika asked, surprised.

"Nope, not a darn thing. We wait until we have the rest of it, then we nail the pukes. All of them, all over the country, all at once. We'll put a hurting on these assholes that'll be worse than their worst nightmare. Effective immediately, this information is code-word access only."

That said, Amy picked up my phone and punched in a few numbers. A moment later, I heard her say "Katherine? Amy here. I need you in Dan Andrews' office immediately, if not sooner. We're assigning a case code-word clearance. Thanks."

As Amy was hanging up the phone, Abby headed for the outer office to wait for Agent Littlejohn's appearance - something that took barely a minute. With the outer door again securely locked, the two of them came back to where the rest of us were waiting, locking the door to my office behind them.

Agent Littlejohn had a different lockbox with her - it was a different color than the one she'd had when she set the combination for The Room for me - and used a corner of my desk to open it up. Amy and the others bunched up at the end of my desk away from her, apparently to make sure she had as much privacy as she needed for whatever was inside the box.

Inside was what appeared to be another ledger; she opened it up and announced "The next available codeword is 'Thresher'. T... H... R... E... S... H... E... R." After Amy repeated it back - including the spelling - she asked "What is the general nature of the case?"

"Multi-state drug ring", Amy answered.

Agent Littlejohn blinked at that before writing it down in her book, and repeating it back to Amy before asking "Authorized personnel?"

"Agents O'Malley, Andrews, and myself."

Littlejohn wrote the names down, and repeated them back. Her next question was "Auxiliaries?"

"Agent Tom Gallery, and Agent Erika Simpson"

Those names, too, were written and read back.

Satisfied that she had all the particulars correct, Agent Littlejohn told Amy "I'll have the notification in to headquarters in no more than five minutes. It'll take them ten to fifteen after that to have the computers set up. When they're ready, they'll get back to me. As soon as I hear anything, I'll let you know."

"That'll be fine, Katherine. Thank you."

Only after Agent Littlejohn had secured the book back in its case - and double-checking that it was locked - did she look up at us and smile, saying "For security reasons, I don't need to know what happened, or when. But I hope that doesn't mean that I can't offer you my congratulations on it, whatever it is."

"You're right - but thanks!" Amy answered, with her own smile.

Agent Littlejohn picked up her lockbox and left us with Abby as an escort. We heard Abby locking the doors behind her as she came back in to where we were all waiting.

When we were all ready, Amy said "Abby, Dan - as soon as Katherine gives you the word, I want you to get that data into secure storage on the Bureau computers. If this joint blows up or burns down tonight, I want to be sure that the information isn't lost. Dan, as of now, you're the most important person in the Bureau - you know what's going on In There, and I'm putting a protective detail on you."

"Amy, everything I've been doing has been logged and recorded. With the utilities I've given your tech people, and the information we've gotten from the software companies, any or all of this can be done again fairly easily. After that first day, I could have been run over by a bus, and somebody could have picked up where I left off."

"That's all well and good - but it's still YOU that's gotten us this far. I'll be damned if I'm going to lose you now!"

"If you put a detail on me, isn't that going to draw some attention? I mean, if all of a sudden I've got protection on me, isn't that going to clue someone in that something special has happened? And considering why I'm here, it wouldn't be any great stretch to figure that the dealers are going to realize WHY the added protection and act accordingly."

That gave her something serious to think about. If the Cartelita suddenly saw me with added protection, it was a pretty safe bet they'd realize that something special had

happened - or was going to happen - and that whatever it was, it wasn't going to be good for them. And with that knowledge, it was an equally safe bet that they'd take whatever steps they could to keep from getting busted.

The four of us considered that for a couple of minutes before I had a thought.

"I may have an idea", I told them, adding "Let me check something In There, first though, okay?"

Amy nodded, and I went back into The Room to verify something. When I got back, I told Amy "From the look of it, it's not going to be more than a few days before we have the other encryption key. Next week starts some break time for Robyn and Sandra; so how about if Lucy and the two of them come here to visit? It would explain the added security."

Amy thought that one over for a little bit, and said "It would work - but I don't like the idea of Lucy and the girls being in the middle of this."

I just looked at Amy for a few seconds before pointing out "Amy, they're **already** in the middle of it. At least here, they'll have better protection than they normally would when this thing breaks; and as long as one of them is with me, the protection **I** get will seem reasonable."

Amy winced at the reminder of the death of Sandra's parents, but nodded at the idea of Lucy and the girls having proper protection when everything went down.

"Okay, I'll go along with it. What about housing? I know that Abby or I neither one has enough room for all of you."

"So? You know that any two of them would be more than happy to stay with you, and the other one stays with me. With a little rotation in the sleeping arrangements, everyone gets some time with everyone else."

Abby seemed a little confused by the cavalier references to sleeping arrangements, but Erika just nodded her understanding.

Amy understood, too, and just grinned at me before saying "Yeah, I think that'll work. I think Tom has missed seeing them, too."

I grinned back and told her "I wouldn't be surprised. Okay, I'll call them tonight and get it set up."

About that time, we heard a PA announcement for Amy to call Agent Littlejohn. Amy used my phone to make the call, and we heard her say "Amy here. Yes, Katherine. Thank you. No, I'll tell them."

When she hung up the phone, Amy told us "As you probably guessed, that was Katherine, letting us know that headquarters has the computer set up for us."

I asked Abby to see if she could get me an external tape drive from the tech department; she said she was sure she could, and left to call them. Amy left right behind her, a big smile on her face at the thought of what she was going to do to the Cartelita. Only Erika stayed behind, and after a few moments, she asked me "Okay, am I imagining things, or did you and Amy just make arrangements for her and Tom to engage in some debauchery with your wife and daughters? And right in front of Abby, who has no idea what's going on?"

"No, you're not imagining things." I answered, with a smile, before adding "Of course, you're certainly welcome to join in, if you're so inclined - as is Abby."

"But Abby doesn't know!" Erika protested.

"Not yet - but I don't expect that to last past the first night they're here." I answered, with a grin.

Erika thought that one over for a moment before giving me a mischievous smile and saying "You are **such** a stinker!"

I just grinned wider, and answered "Yeah - ain't it great?" - making both of us laugh.

We were still chuckling when Abby reappeared - prompting another round of laughter, which confused her terribly. When we'd calmed down again, Abby told me "The techs will be here in a few minutes with your drive and a tape. They said that they had plenty of tapes, so if you needed to destroy it, that's fine."

"Thanks, Abby", I told her.

After giving Erika and I a look that plainly said she thought both of us were crazy - getting us giggling - she left.

Erika and I followed her out, and a couple minutes later one of the techs brought the tape drive. It didn't take long to copy the decrypted data over to it, and move things back to my office. There, it took Abby only a couple of minutes to help me access the secure file area they'd set up for us, and get started transferring the data from the tape to the Bureaus main computers. When it was done, I kept the tape drive in anticipation of needing it again, but took the tape down to the tech department, where they had a shredder that made mine look like a toy. After being bulk-erased, the tape was reduced to a mound of tape particles and plastic scrap.

As promised, I called Lucy that night. I'd never lied to Lucy, and I told her straight out that the presence of her and the girls would be partially to cover the additional protection that Amy wanted to give me. Lucy understood that it wasn't a risk-free proposition, but she also knew how good the FBI was at protecting people. After a little discussion, we settled on a cover story to give the girls: I was almost done, and that I just wanted to have a little time with all of them when it was over.

The girls, of course, were pleased at the idea of doing something special during their school break. It didn't take long for Lucy and I to make arrangements for them to fly out and join me. The only surprise was the couple of requests that Lucy had; but I knew there wouldn't be any problem meeting them.

So early Friday afternoon found me, Abby, Erika, and Amy all waiting just outside the terminal for Lucy and the girls to extract themselves from the airplane. As they got into the terminal area, they spotted us, and the next few minutes were spent in hugs and welcomes.

A little later, we'd rescued their baggage from the carousel, and all of us piled into the van Amy had checked out. Lucy was paying attention enough to notice the lead and chase cars that kept pace with us as we left the airport.

First stop was Amy's place, where we unloaded the girl's luggage. Next was Abby's, where Lucy's stuff joined mine. From there, it was on to the offices.

As we started the last leg of our little journey, Amy turned around in the passenger seat while Abby drove and told Lucy "Dan told me about the favors you wanted, and I don't have **any** problem with **either** of them. I've made the arrangements, so if you and the girls will just come into the office with us Monday morning, we'll get you started."

Lucy nodded, and said "Thanks, Amy. I guess you know how much this means to them - and me, too."

"Damn straight, I do" Amy declared, then adding "I'm damn sorry it came to this, but if there's anything I - or the Bureau - can do to help, you can bet we will."

Abby looked confused, and Amy told her "Lucy asked for a couple of things when Dan asked if she and the girls wanted to come out here. One of them was from the girls, actually: they wanted to know if we could help them learn a little more about protecting themselves - self-defense and even firearms. Lucy wants to learn self-defense, too, along with a couple of other things. We're not going to make agents out of them, of course, but we can damn sure see to it they aren't easy targets, either!"

Here, Erika spoke up, saying "I'm going to be tutoring them for a lot of it, with help from some other agents."

Once we were at the office, Amy and Erika took Lucy and the girls around to meet the people that would be working with them the following week. Abby and I got caught up on paperwork and got ready to shut down for the weekend, and were ready when the others returned to let us know they were ready when we were.

We all piled into the van again, and made our way to Amy's place - where two cars of agents were waiting for us. We spent a couple hours getting the girls settled in and getting caught up before Lucy mentioned she was getting a little tired. Abby seemed a little surprised by the kisses that we all shared before we parted, but didn't say anything.

Once at Abby's apartment, we found another collection of protective agents waiting for us. Abby assured them that they were welcome to come in if they needed anything, but the head of the detail said that he didn't expect it would be necessary, and let us know that they would be maintaining a discreet distance from Abby's apartment.

Inside, Abby quickly headed for the kitchen to get us all something to drink; while she was gone, Lucy turned to me and asked "Dan, you haven't told Abby about all of us yet?"

Erika grinned as I answered "Not about ALL of us. She knows about the rest of us; but not the girls, yet."

Lucy just looked at me for a few seconds before smiling and saying "You are such a **turd!**" - and getting a small laugh from Erika.

About that time, Abby came back into the living room, and distributed the beverages she'd brought. All of us thanked her, and took seats - Lucy on my lap in a chair, Abby and Erika next to each other on the couch.

We spent the next couple of hours just chatting about a variety of subjects. Along the way, each of them left us for a few minutes to 'get more comfortable' - which invariably meant rejoining the rest of us wearing less clothing than they'd left with.

As it got late, we all noticed Lucy starting to yawn; after about the fourth or fifth time, Erika spoke up to tell Lucy "You look like you're pretty tired. Why don't you and Dan go ahead and go to bed, and we'll see you in the morning?"

Lucy smiled and answered "Yeah, I think that's probably a good idea. I'm not particularly tired, just a little sleepy", before climbing off my lap and standing up. I stood up with her, soon followed by Erika and Abby. Erika moved forward and gave me a goodnight kiss. Following that, Abby did the same - not noticing the depth or intensity of the kiss Erika and Lucy shared. Abby hesitated briefly before kissing Lucy; Erika and I grinned at each other when we saw Abby's eyes fly open when Lucy made it more than the passingly-friendly event Abby had anticipated.

When the kiss ended, Abby just stood there stunned for several seconds before Lucy told her "Abby, I just wanted to thank you for taking good care of Dan while he's been here with you. If you want, I'd be delighted to show you just how **much** I appreciate it."

Abby didn't seem any too sure how to respond for a few moments, then answered "Uh, yeah, I, uh, think I'd like that, sometime", before blushing slightly. Lucy just smiled and said "Good - I'd like it, too, I think."

With that, Lucy took my hand and the two of us headed for the stairs; behind us, a dumbfounded Abby and highly amused Erika watched us leave.

Upstairs, with the door of the second bedroom closed behind us, Lucy turned to me with a mischievous grin on her face and asked "So, Dan, has Abby been taking GOOD care of you while you've been here?"

I laughed, and said "You know damn well she has - and so has Erika, for that matter. I think you almost gave Abby a heart attack when you kissed her like that!"

Lucy laughed and said "Well, I figured I had to do **something** to get her moving. While Amy and Erika were showing me and the girls around, Erika told me that Abby had said she thought I was really nice and very pretty, but wasn't sure if I would be interested in her. So I just figured I'd let her know that I was."

I laughed again before saying "No, I don't think there's any doubt in her mind about how you feel about her now!"

Lucy was still grinning when she moved into my arms so the two of us could share a hug and kiss before she told me "I've missed you."

"I've missed you, too - and both of the ragamuffins, too."

Lucy looked up into my face and told me "We'll have you to ourselves soon enough, and we only have a little time here with all of you. Do you mind if I visit Abby tonight?"

I laughed, and said "Assuming you don't give her heart failure when you show up, no. But you'd better get some rest, first - she's right lively, she is."

Lucy grinned, and said "I'm counting on it!", and move out of my embrace to start undressing. I moved to take off my own clothes, and a few minutes later, both of us were snuggling under the bedcovers. Another loving and gentle kiss, and Lucy tucked herself into my side. A couple minutes later, I could hear her soft, gentle breathing as she fell asleep. Some time later, I joined her in the land of Nod.

I woke up to the feeling of somebody - not Lucy, I knew that much - climbing into bed with me. From the size of the breasts that started pressing into my back, I knew it was

Erika - and knew, too, that Lucy was making good on her promise to show Abby how much she appreciated Abby's efforts on her behalf.

As though verifying my thoughts, I heard Erika's voice tell me "Lucy's in the other bedroom, with Abby. She came over and woke me up and said that she wanted to wake Abby up **special**." I could **hear** the smile in Erika's voice, and answered "Yeah, and she will, too."

As if on cue, we heard a soft shriek from Abby's bedroom - and both of us laughed softly as we imagined what Abby must have just gone through. A few moments later, we heard soft laughter, and knew that they were going to be just fine together.

With a gently sigh, Erika snuggled closer and put her arm around me. I held her hand in mine as the two of us drifted back to sleep.

The next morning, Erika and I were preparing breakfast when Abby and Lucy made their appearance, each of them dressed only in panties. To my surprise, Abby looked a bit bashful when Erika and I looked at them, but Lucy just had a big grin on her face. Erika and I shared a look, and then moved to give each of them a good-morning kiss - me to Lucy, Erika to Abby - then trading off, which seemed to put Abby at ease. While Erika guided them to seats at Abby's kitchen table, I went over to pour them each a cup of coffee. Lucy and Abby sat at the table while Erika and I finished preparing breakfast. When I looked at them a couple minutes later, Abby appeared perfectly comfortable to have Lucy holding her hand.

After the breakfast dishes had been put away, the four of us adjourned to the living room. There, Lucy guided Abby to my lap at one end of the couch, while she and Erika sat next to each other at the other.

With all of us a lot more relaxed in each other's presence, we spent the rest of the morning sitting around talking. As the conversations went on, none of us much cared whose hands wound up where on each other's bodies - all of us were comfortable enough that we freely and willingly gave and accepted affectionate touches as the mood and opportunity occurred.

It was mid-afternoon when Abby's phone rang; Erika had to gently remove Abby's arm from around her waist to answer it. The conversation only lasted a minute or two, and when she came back, she told us that it had been Tom that had called.

"He wanted to know if we were ready to trade off yet, and I told him I thought we were." She went on to tell us "While I had him on the phone, I said that if they wanted, we could have a little bit of a cookout here. Nothing fancy, just burgers and chips."

Abby nodded her approval and agreement while Lucy and I said that it sounded pretty good to us, too. A little discussion followed, and it was finally settled that Abby and Erika would be the ones to go out to get the few items that Abby didn't already have in her apartment, Erika telling us "If Abby or I go, then that means all - or at least, most - of the protective detail stays here with you and Lucy, Dan. If one of you goes, it becomes more of an operation. Besides, you two are here to relax and enjoy yourselves."

Abby chipped in by saying "Besides, I don't think you two had any real time together last night. If Erika and I go, you can have some private time."

Lucy smiled at her, and replied "The time I had with you last night was great, Abby; and I know that Dan didn't have any problems with Erika keeping him company. I told him last night that he and I would have plenty of time together when we get back home, so don't feel like you have to do - or not do - anything special about us."

She went on to say "But what you said about the agents outside and me or Dan moving around sounds reasonable. So you two go ahead, and we'll just wait here for you."

Erika and Abby both got up and, after giving me and Lucy a kiss as they went by, went upstairs to get dressed to go to the store. They reappeared a few minutes later, dressed casually - but not so casually that I couldn't see that both of them were wearing their sidearms. They gave each of us another kiss before Abby told us "We'll only be gone more than an hour at the most."

Lucy assured them that we'd be just fine, and they left. When the door had closed behind them, Lucy turned to me and asked "Were both of them armed, like I think they were?"

I answered that they were, and added "Remember, I told you that things are coming to an end here. I didn't want to make any of them uncomfortable by saying anything about it in front of them, but I think you should know just HOW close it is, and what all has happened the last couple of weeks."

Lucy turned on my lap to face me, her legs draped across the arms of the chair I was in. Resting her elbows on her legs, she put her hands on my chest and with a serious expression on her face said "Tell me."

So I did - the 'chat' I'd had with one of the people we'd caught, how Amy suspected I had some involvement with the person going after the dealers drugs and money, finally getting one of the encryption systems broken, and the added security that Amy had put on the case.

When I was done, Lucy looked at me for a few moments before telling me "I think I understand how Amy feels. I'm not real happy about what you said to that dealer-type, either - but I know WHY you said it. And Dan, I **know** you've gotten some of your Army friends to help with some of this. Remember, was there when you got that call from those two guys, and you would only talk to them out in your office. I don't think it's any

coincidence that after you talked to them, two people show up in town and start hunting for the asshole that killed Sandra's parents. And I wouldn't be surprised if it was Muddy that was going after the dealers HERE."

I started to speak, and she put a finger across my lips to silence me before saying "No, don't say anything. I know that you wouldn't **tell** any of them to do anything - but I know you well enough to know that the kind of people you used to serve with, you wouldn't HAVE to *tell* them anything. All you'd have to do would be bring up the subject, maybe toss out an idea or two, and they'd know what to do from there. But like I said, I also know WHY you're doing it. And I trust you, and know that you wouldn't be involved in anything *wrong* . Whether or not these people are doing anything **illegal** is something else; but since you didn't actually tell them to do any of it, I'm not going to say anything about it to anyone - particularly not Amy or Tom. What happened at home turned out okay - the guy that killed Sandra's parents turned himself in the day before yesterday. He's confessed to killing them, and a lot of other crimes, too. Whoever your friends are - Speedy? And Gomer? - they haven't killed anyone, or committed any real crimes - other than apparently scared the bejeezus out of a bunch of crooks. Whatever happens in OUR town is for OUR cops to worry about. If Muddy - or whoever - is just as careful here, then I'm not going to concern myself about what happens to a bunch of drug dealers. Like I said, I'm not happy with how these things are happening; I'm not going to tell on you or them, but I'm not going to cheer you on, either. What's happened has been an extreme situation, and special conditions apply, as far as I'm concerned. But Dan, don't let it happen again, okay?"

Lucy and I had had our disagreements before, of course - but never before had she told me so strongly that she didn't care for the way I was handling something, and it **definitely** got my attention.

I thought over what she'd said, and finally told her "You may be right - maybe I **have** gone further than I really should have."

She smiled, and I could see the love and affection she had for me when she told me "Dan, I love you - more than I thought I could love *anybody* , and I know that you've done what you have because of how much you love ME, and Robyn, and even Sandra. I can't tell you how much it means to me to know how much you care, how important all of us are to you, and what you're willing to do for us - to protect us, and see that no one tries to hurt us. I understand your reasons; and not for a second do I doubt your motives or intentions. I'm only suggesting that the METHODS might have been a little much. Okay?"

I smiled back, and answered "Okay. If - God forbid! - anything even a **little** bit like this ever happens again, I'll be more... 'restrained' in how I deal with it."

"Restraint is good", Lucy agreed, before leaning forward to kiss me.

Having said her piece, Lucy settled herself into my lap a little more, then leaned against me so I could put my arms around her. We were still sitting there like that when Abby and Erika returned from their shopping.

When they came into the living room, I knew Lucy smiled at them when I heard Abby tell Erika "See that? I wish to hell I had someone that could make me smile like that!"

Erika answered "Me, too. Makes you realize just how much difference there is between what he's done for us, and how he feels about HER, doesn't it?", wistfully.

"Sure does. It **almost** makes me jealous!" Abby replied.

At that, Lucy sat up again and told them "Now you know why I said that you were only borrowing him, and why I trust him so much."

"I sure do", Abby answered, regretfully.

Lucy changed the subject by asking "What time did Amy said they would be over here?"

"Around 5:00", Erika replied.

Lucy nodded, and said "Then I guess we'd better get dressed, too."

After getting off my lap, Lucy reached down to take my hand and help me to my feet so the two of us could go upstairs and put on something more than the panties (Lucy) and under shorts (me) that we were wearing.

Erika laughed, and said "Yeah, probably be a good idea - at least, if you have any thoughts about going outside!"

Lucy pulled my arm around her waist - Abby and Erika both clearly wished it was them instead of Lucy - and we headed upstairs to get dressed. Lucy put on a simple cotton dress while I put on cotton slacks and a sport shirt.

When we got back downstairs, the groceries had been put away, and Abby was out on her patio getting her barbecue grill set up while Erika was making the necessary arrangements in the kitchen. Lucy and I went outside and sat down to talk with Abby; no more than a couple minutes later, one of the protective agents came by to make sure everything was okay. Assured that everything was fine, he left. A bit later, Erika came out, carrying cold beers for all of us.

We were still outside when another agent approached long enough to let us know that Amy and the rest were on the way, and expected to arrive in a few minutes. Erika asked him to let them know where we were, and just have them come around to the back when they showed up. He said he would, and disappeared toward the front of Abby's apartment.

As promised, it was just a few minutes later when Amy, Tom, Robyn, and Sandra came around the corner to find us sitting at the table, watching the world go by. As the youngsters came over to greet Lucy and me, I noticed additional people taking up positions some distance away.

Amy saw where I was looking, and told me "I told the girls about the pool here, and they wanted to go for a swim, so some of the detail is taking positions to cover them."

"Pool?" I asked.

Abby blushed, and said "I forgot to tell you. There's a pool down at the other end of this building. It's not very big - you barely get up to speed before you have to turn around - and I remembered the girls telling me how much they liked to swim."

I laughed, and said "That's okay, Abby. If Lucy remembered to pack a suit for me, I'll go down and join them for a bit."

Lucy smiled and nodded, saying "I packed one for EACH of us.", to which Amy added "And Tom and I brought ours along, too."

Abby told us "It'll take a little time for the charcoal to be ready, so how about if I light them now, and we can eat when we're done swimming?"

"Sounds like a plan!" Tom exclaimed.

After a brief discussion, and it was decided that Lucy, Robyn, Sandra, and Amy would change into their suits first; then the rest of us. While they were inside, Abby disappeared to get drinks for all of us - canned beer, with the apology "Sorry, but they don't allow glass by the pool".

Abby had just finished lighting the charcoal when Amy and the others appeared in their suits - drawing a slight gasp from Abby when she saw the minimalist approach to swimwear that Robyn and Sandra had adopted: bikinis whose tops barely covered their nipples, and thong bottoms. Lucy's had more material, but not all **that** much. Amy was sporting a pale green one-piece that revealed more than it hid.

The rest of us ducked inside to change, then rejoin the others. Tom and I each wore 'boxer' type suits; Erika was in a modest - but definitely flattering! - one piece job that definitely emphasized her figure, while Abby's suit was closer to what Robyn and Sandra were (almost) wearing. Tom silently mimed applauding when he saw the two of them, causing both of them to blush before Amy laughed and playfully slapped his arm.

Amy and Lucy took up station on each side of Tom before pulling one of his arms around their waists; Robyn and Sandra mirrored them next to me. That left Abby and Erika to follow us.

The pool was a little larger than Abby had said, but not by a whole lot. Still, we all managed to splash around and have fun for the next hour or so. With all of us in such a public place, and so many people around, there wasn't any of the grab-ass and other mischief I would have expected. But that didn't mean that there wasn't a certain amount of LITERAL grab-ass: I think every one of us had plenty of turns at being on both the sending and receiving end of a number of friendly gropes.

True to form, it was Robyn that finally announced "This is lots of fun and everything, but I'm getting **hungry!**" - and getting a round of laughter from everyone but Abby and Erika, who didn't know, yet. You wouldn't know by looking at her, but Robyn could wrap herself around a surprising amount of food.

Once out of the pool, we all dried off (mostly) and trooped back to Abby's place, where Abby announced the charcoal was just right. She and Erika disappeared inside - refusing all offers to help - and came out a minute later: Abby with the burgers, and Erika with sodas for all of us.

As the food cooked, the rest of us - one or two at a time - went inside to change out of our suits. When it was only Abby left, Erika took over the grill for her, then handing back the spatula when Abby returned.

When supper was over, Robyn and Sandra went about cleaning up, over vehement protests from Abby and Erika. After everything was put away, we stayed outside to talk for a little while before the evening got cool enough - and enough flying bugs showed up - to make indoors more appealing. Inside, we all settled in to watch a movie that Abby and Erika had rented. Tom was in one chair with Lucy on his lap; I'd been 'pushed' into a recliner, where Sandra sat on my lap. On the couch, Amy sat one end with Robyn snuggling next to her, while Erika and Abby mirrored them at the other end.

When the movie ended, I saw Abby look around, mild surprise on her face when she saw that Sandra was lying back against my chest with my arms around her.

As the movie was rewinding, everyone but Sandra and I stood up. Amy looked around at us all before announcing "It's a little late. Who's going back with Tom and me?"

Sandra quietly announced "I'm going wherever Uncle Dan is."

Robyn looked at Amy apologetically, and said "I'd like to stay with Sandra".

Lucy smiled, and said "Well, it looks like I'm one of your guests tonight, Amy." - and a moment later, Erika spoke up, saying "If Abby doesn't mind, I think I'd like to join you."

Abby looked mildly perplexed, but replied "Sure, that's fine, Erika. I guess it's me, Dan, and the girls, then."

The others shared a Look with each other - along with grins - before Amy said "well, I guess that's it, then. Are we off?"

I couldn't resist the temptation, and interjected "Yes, you are - and you're going places, too!" - earning myself a round of laughter and some play-dirty looks.

With that, Sandra and I stood up, and everyone that was leaving shared hugs and kisses with everyone that was staying - except for me and Tom; we just shook hands.

After they'd left, I sat down on the recliner again, and Sandra quickly resumed her previous position while Robyn got the movie into its box and set it aside. Abby was resting on the end of the couch, and she looked surprised when Robyn went over to sit next to her.

When Abby turned to see what I thought of that, she saw that Sandra had nestled into my side and pulled one of my arms around her - and was holding my hand on her breast.

Abby just slowly blinked at that for a few seconds, then hesitantly asked "Uh, I'm going to guess that Lucy already knows about you two?"

Sandra smiled, but it was Robyn that answered "Oh, no - she already knows about us **THREE**."

Abby mulled that over for a few seconds, then turned to face Robyn and asked "You... **three**. As in... both of you? And him?"

"Yup. Both of us and him. And her. And each other."

Abby did a repeat of the slow blinking before turning to where Sandra and I were sitting, and asking "All of you? With each other?"

Sandra sat up slightly, and answered "Yeah, all of us, with each other. You've been with him - don't you understand, yet?"

"**I thought** I did..." Abby answered.

Robyn spoke up next, telling her "You know what Dad's like - what kind of person he is, and how he thinks, and all that. Do you think that someone like him wouldn't have an effect on US, too?"

"But you're both so **young**", Abby replied.

"Sandra isn't that much younger than you - and there's even less difference between me and her!" Robyn exclaimed.

Abby considered that one for a few moments before Sandra told her "Besides, I think you'll find out that both of us are a lot more grown up than our ages."

Abby turned back to Sandra and me, and I told her "Sandra's right, if you'll think about it. Remember what Amy said about what they wanted to do while they're here? That was **their** idea, no one else's. Considering the situation, doesn't that seem pretty mature to you?"

Abby nodded in response, and Sandra told her "Do you really think he'd have anything to do with us like that if we weren't **ready** for it?"

"No, THAT much I'm sure of."

"Then what is it that's **really** bothering you about us?" Robyn asked.

Abby just sat there for a few moments before answering "I'm not sure that anything about it **is** bothering me. I think it's more just me needing to get used to it, is all."

Robyn smiled at her, and said "Close your eyes for a minute."

Abby looked at her doubtfully for a moment, and did as Robyn said; keeping them closed even when Robyn got up and took off the dress she was wearing to reveal she had nothing on under it before sitting down again.

Robyn leaned forward, and softly kissed Abby on the lips before asking "Now, keep your eyes closed and tell me if that was a **bad** feeling."

Abby smiled, and answered "No, of course it wasn't."

Robyn then took Abby's hand, and put it over her breast, which was a trifle larger than Abby's. Abby twitched slightly at the first contact with Robyn, but didn't try to move her hand away. Robyn then asked "Am I wrong to trust you, and let you touch me like this?"

Softly, Abby replied "No, you're not."

"Then have Sandra and I been wrong to trust Dad the way we have?"

With that question, Abby opened her eyes again, and looked into Robyn's face before turning to where Sandra and I sat watching them. Looking first at Sandra, then me, Abby said "No, I don't think you were. Whatever all of you have, it's something **special** - something so much more than most people have. If being around, and *with* , Dan has made you the way you are" - "It has!", Sandra assured her - "then it **can't** be wrong. Different, yes. Unusual, sure. Incredible and amazing, most definitely. But wrong? I don't see how."

Having said that, Abby visibly relaxed - even when Robyn leaned forward a bit to kiss her again. While their lips were pressed together, Robyn's hand moved up to cup Abby's breast - and Abby never flinched or hesitated. As their kiss continued, Sandra turned to me with a questioning look on her face. I nodded, and she quietly got up and took off her own dress - she wasn't wearing any more than Robyn had been - and moved to the couch. When Abby and Robyn felt her sitting down, they let their kiss break. Abby turned to Sandra, and seeing the willingness and acceptance in her eyes, moved in to collect a similar kiss from her as Robyn looked on with a smile.

The only difference with Sandra was that Abby didn't hesitate to reach out to place her hand on Sandra's larger breast - even as Sandra was doing the same to her.

When their lips separated, Abby sat and stared into Sandra's eyes for a few moments before giving a small shake and turning to look at me. Seeing only patient acceptance in me, she smiled, and said "NOW, I really understand all the things you told me that night - about how I can be the kind of person I **want** to be, and the other stuff. I was surprised at how smart and polite and mature they were when you were here before. But now! Now it's almost like they're the grown-ups and **I'm** the child."

"Amazing what love and respect can do, isn't it?" I agreed.

"The love, I understand - but respect?" Abby asked.

"Yeah, respect" Robyn answered, continuing by saying "Of course, all of us know he loves us - and how much. But we also know he **respects** us, too. He shows it in probably a million ways."

"Such as?"

"Such as talking TO us, instead of AT us", Sandra offered, before going on to say "By letting us know what he thinks about things, then letting us decide for ourselves about them. By never lying to us when we ask him something. By being there when we need him, but not hanging on to us when we don't. By letting us make small mistakes, so we can learn not to make big ones. By holding us close, but not holding us tight. By really **listening** to us - not just the words we say, but how we say them, and what we mean by them. By making sure WE respect OURSELVES."

"How did you two get so smart?" Abby asked, wonderingly.

"It wasn't hard" Robyn answered. "All we had to do was pay attention to what was going on around us - once we learned to do that from Dad, the rest of it was easy."

"How so?"

"Any time we went someplace or did something, we'd realize that there was something different about it. We'd start thinking about it, and talking to each other about it, and we'd

finally figure out what it was. Once we knew what was different, it wasn't much more to figure out whether or not we liked it."

"Give me an example", Abby asked.

Robyn thought a moment, and answered "Okay. Sandra and I have both been over to visit some of the other girls at school. While we're there, we see how they're like with their parents, and brothers and sisters. One girl, all she did was pick on her younger sister, who was just a couple years younger than her - then wondered why her sister didn't want to do anything with her. Another one, her and her parents would just argue with each other, almost like they were having a fight: neither one of them would actually **listen** to the other one, even when both of them were saying almost the exact same thing. Before we knew better, we went to visit one girl, and her parents didn't care **what** she and her brother did - she was having sex with any guy that would take her out, and her brother spent all of his time smoking dope and hanging out with a bunch of **losers**. Her brother had been arrested twice for burglary and vandalism, and she'd already had to have an abortion. One of our friends, her mother won't let her do hardly **anything** because she'd afraid our friend will get in some kind of trouble, or make some kind of mistake - so, of course, when our friend finally **does** get to do something, she isn't sure how to do it, and makes a mistake, which just makes her mother that much worse."

When Robyn finished, Sandra said "One of the girls I know at school, she's **planning** on getting pregnant by her boyfriend at the end of the school year. When I asked her why on earth she'd do something like that, she said that she wanted to make sure she got him by **making** him marry her. I asked her how the two of them could be happy together if she had to **MAKE** him marry her; and she just looked at me like she didn't understand the question."

Abby was visibly amazed at the kinds of things Robyn and Sandra had noticed, and thought about. She looked over at me, and I just shrugged and told her "What can I say? Once a person starts really **thinking**, it's hard to stop."

Abby went back to look at them - Sandra first, then Robyn - before saying "You two amaze me. What are your grades in school? Pretty good, I bet."

Sandra answered first by saying "Uh, 3.9 out of four.", followed by Robyn's "3.8 - we go to the same school."

Shaking her head in wonder, Abby told them "I'm impressed. Smart in school, smart in life... and both of you beautiful, to boot."

Robyn and Sandra both smiled at her compliments before Robyn answered "You look pretty good, too, Abby - 'specially when you were in your suit at the pool."

At that, Abby looked down at herself before giving a small start and saying "I didn't even realize - both of you are naked, and here I am still wearing clothes!"

Sandra laughed, and said "its okay, Abby. At home, we all go around wearing all mixed up like this all the time - like Aunt Lucy says, it's like we're closet nudists, if that isn't an oxymoron."

Abby smiled, and said "No, I don't think it is. But it's not very polite for me to be sitting here with this dress on while you two are wearing just skin." - and promptly stood up to take off her dress, then the panties, she was wearing. When she sat down again between them, she was as unconcerned about her nudity as they were about theirs.

With Abby an obviously willing participant, Robyn and Sandra didn't hesitate any longer to let her know what THEY thought of her - and remove any barriers that might be left between them.

While both of them kissed and caressed her, Abby's attention went from one to the other and back again, her hands wandering freely across their bodies. From where I was seated, I could see them clearly; watching as breasts tightened and nipples erected, listening as their breath quickened with each passing moment.

After a few minutes, Abby finally broke the connection between all of them with visible regret before gasping "Dear God! I don't think I can DO this! Not with BOTH of you at the same time - it's just too much."

Robyn and Sandra both just smiled at her before Sandra said "That's okay, Abby. Sometimes Uncle Dan and Aunt Lucy tell us that we're too much for one person when we're together."

Haltingly, Abby told them "Please don't get me wrong; I **like** being with you like this - it's just that I don't think I can be with both of you at the same time."

Sandra and Robyn shared a look before Robyn told her "We understand, Abby. If you want, either one of us would be happy to spend the night with you - or even both of us, just one at a time."

That seemed to both comfort, and excite, Abby at the same time. She finally looked over to where I was still sitting - with no pretense of not watching - and looked at me with a questioning expression on her face. I just shrugged my shoulders and smiled at her, saying "It's the same problem Lucy and I have faced at times. One thing you can be sure of, though - you can believe what they said about it being either or both of them. Whichever one you pick, the other will be fine with it - they don't get jealous or envious of each other."

"Somehow, I'm not surprised" Abby answered before turning to look first at Sandra, then Robyn, before announcing "Uh, I think I'd like to be with both of you, just one at a time. Robyn first?", hesitatingly.

Sandra just smiled and told her "That's fine, Abby. I'll stay with Uncle Dan first, and whenever you're ready, Robyn and I will just swap places."

Reassured by Sandra's calm acceptance of her decision, Abby took her into her arms so the two of them could kiss before Sandra stood up and said "We'll go ahead and go to bed, so you two can be alone."

Sandra came over to where I was sitting - pausing long enough to pick up the dress she'd discarded. I stood up and took her hand; then the two of us headed for the stairs while Robyn and Abby watched.

Up in the second bedroom, we closed the door behind us, and I started to get undressed. Before I could get my hands on the first button of my shirt, Sandra stepped close and moved them away, saying "I want to do it."

And do it, she did. When my shirt was gone, she knelt in front of me and removed my shoes and socks, then my pants. With me standing there in only my underwear, Sandra looked up at me and said "Amy and Tom were fun, but it's **you** that I've been missing so much" before she reached under the material of my shorts and wrapped her hand around my penis. After she'd given it a few gentle squeezes and soft tugs, both of us could feel it as I started to respond to her attentions. Only when I was semi-erect did she seem satisfied that she was getting the results she wanted; she paused long enough to slide my underwear down my legs and off my feet before she put her hand around my penis again - just long enough to lift it up and wrap her lips around it and take my length into her mouth.

In short order, I was fully erect, and she let me slip from between her lips, my penis shiny with her saliva. Standing, she took my hand and led me over to the bed, where she released her hold on me and moved to lie down on the bed. Looking up at me, she said "I've missed you SO much - you don't have to do anything special, or try to make me happy first. Just having you inside me will be all I need."

I nodded my understanding, and moved to lie on the bed next to her. I let my hand drift across her body, letting my fingertips drink in the soft, warm smoothness of her skin, the firmness of her breasts, and the delicacy of her face. I leaned over to give her a gentle, loving kiss on the lips which she returned with her own love for me. When our lips parted, I could see her happiness in her eyes, and the invitation to do with her as I wished on her face.

I slowly kissed my way down her body, pausing to take her erect nipples between my lips and suck on them briefly before continuing my journey. At her bellybutton, I delayed long enough to rim it with my tongue before sucking on it as she writhed beneath my touch. Moving onward, I was soon at the edge of her pale bush - then past it to where the flower of her womanhood was blooming in her arousal. Dipping my tongue between the petals of her sex, I found that she was already thoroughly wet inside. I patiently licked her delicious oils from her entrance, then moved up to where her erect clitoris was waiting.

I circled it slowly with my tongue several times, Sandra's pelvis rising slightly as her arousal and eagerness grew. Back between her thighs, I found that she was even wetter than before, and I happily cleaned up all that I could find before returning to her clitoris.

I was gently sucking on her clitoris as I fluttered my tongue across it when she had a small orgasm that left her panting for air. As the throes of it tapered off, I heard her tell me "Inside. I want you INSIDE me!"

Even knowing how eager and ready she was for it, I regretted leaving my position - but I was still happy to give her what she so plainly wanted.

When I moved between her thighs, she lifted her knees and spread her legs in eager anticipation of what was next. As I moved over her, I tarried long enough to apply my mouth to her breasts - licking and sucking on them, and pulling on her nipples with my lips. I stopped when I felt her hands on my hips, urging me to move them closer to where she **really** wanted my attentions.

When we felt my erect member resting against her mons, she looked up at me, our eyes locking. Reaching one hand between us, she took my erection in her hand and moved it so my glans was resting between her labia, pressed against her opening. She held me there for a moment, then I pressed my hips forward, my penis sliding into her as she spread her legs even more to make it easier for me.

She gasped slightly when the head of my manhood finally slipped through the tight ring of her entrance and slid into her a little ways. As always, she was wonderfully hot and tight inside; and incredibly wet. She released her soft grasp on my penis, and I pushed myself a little farther into her before backing out slightly to make sure I was properly coated with her oils. I eased myself forward again, and she took nearly my entire length before I had to stop and reverse direction again. With a final thrust of my hips, I buried myself in her, accompanied by her soft moan of pleasure and satisfaction.

We lay there like that for several moments; each of us enjoying the other's presence, before Sandra began to slightly hunch her hips upward, trying to get me moving inside her. Taking the hint, I slid myself back out of her until only half my length was inside before moving to fill her with my manhood again.

It was only a couple of minutes before I was moving in Sandra at a steady pace, nearly my entire length sliding between her slick labia. We'd been making love only a few minutes when I felt her tense beneath me as another orgasm - stronger than the first - overtook her. As I continued to thrust into her, she softly cried out her combined pleasure and release.

When it was over, her hips started to again rise up in time with my penetrations as she opened herself to take me as deeply as possible.

The feeling of being inside her like that was great. The sensations she created around me as she climaxed only made it better - better enough that I could feel myself moving well along toward my own release.

I continued to fill and empty her by turns, and several minutes later, she did it again - orgasming a third time. The third was well beyond what I'd seen and felt her experience so far that night: her cries were louder, and the clenching of her vagina around my pistonning penis was much stronger. If her release had lasted even a few seconds longer, I would have emptied myself in her despite myself. But I was lucky, and even as I felt myself approaching the point of no return, I could feel *her* actions begin to taper off. It took everything I had, but I managed to keep going until she was again thrusting herself up in welcome to me.

By that time, my strokes in her weren't nearly as slow and deliberate as when I'd started - close to my own climax, I was pumping in and out of her in rapid, almost hard, thrusts as our bodies met with a wet slapping sound.

As much as my increased pace and forcefulness were doing for me, they were apparently doing even more for Sandra: it couldn't have been more than a couple of minutes when I felt and watched as she tripped over into her fourth orgasm during our brief time together.

I knew this was going to be the end of the line for me - and determined that if I was going to go down 'fighting', as it were. As Sandra's loud cries escaped her lips, and her hot, wet sheath clenched around me, I continued to piston in and out of her as best I could - stopping only when I felt my balls tighten as I prepared to fill her with my hot seed. I managed to give her a couple of slow, hard thrusts before I buried myself as deep inside her as I could manage, my man-juice exploding out the end of my penis to splash across the entrance to her womb.

After I'd released the last of my cum in her, I felt my penis rapidly deflating. Looking down at her, I could see that she was still 'coming down' from her own climax. Pulling my hips back, I felt myself pull free of her, accompanied by a soft, wet popping noise. The sudden inrush of air to the area caused her eyes to widen briefly, even though they remained slightly glazed.

Panting, I knew that neither she, nor Robyn, would want to sleep in a wet spot on the bed that night. Collecting my strength, I managed to get up and go to the common bathroom upstairs - noting, in passing, that the door to Abby's room was closed. It had been open when Sandra and I had come upstairs, so I knew that Abby and Robyn were inside - and undoubtedly pleasuring each other.

After wetting a washcloth, I collected a hand towel, and quickly made my way back into the bedroom, closing the door again behind me. Sandra was a bit more recovered from her series of orgasms, but obviously still had a way to go. Moving to lie next to her, I used the washcloth to wipe up most of the consequence of our lovemaking, then used the towel to dry her off before positioning it so that it would capture any additional 'leakage'.

By the time I finished, she had recovered enough to manage a small smile, and mouth the words 'thank you'. I just smiled back, and snuggled next to her, letting my fingertips trace random patterns in the fine sheen of sweat that covered the front of her. When her breathing had slowed to normal, I let my head drop far enough to give her a soft kiss on the lips. When I lifted my head again, she gave me one of her patented radiant smiles, and said "Thank you, Uncle Dan. That was **just** what I wanted".

"Feel better now?" I teased.

She raised her arms over her head and stretched - I could hear her joints creak - before answering "Oh, **much** better!", and giggling.

About that time, we heard a soft cry through the door; and a few moments later, another in a different 'voice'. Sandra and I looked at each other before Sandra said "Well, I guess we know Abby and Robyn get along okay?", with a mischievous grin.

"I'd say that was a pretty safe assumption, too", I added, grinning back.

We lay together like that for several minutes before Sandra gently pushed my arm away, saying "I think I'd better clean up, so I'm ready when it's time for me and Robyn to change."

I looked at her quizzically, and she told me "You wouldn't want Robyn to come in here smelling like Abby, would you? Oh, wait, you might, you dirty old man. But I think Abby would much rather have me clean, than dripping your stuff - and I **know** I sure want to go to her that way!"

I grinned and asked "Do you really think I'm a dirty old man?"

She grinned back and answered "Of course you are. But you're my Uncle Dan dirty old man, and I love you."

She sat up, giving me a kiss in passing, and held the towel in place as she made her way to the common bathroom. I picked up the washcloth and followed her, asking if she needed any help. She faked giving me The Eye, then laughed, and said that she didn't NEED the help, but would love for me to help her anyway.

Several minutes later, clean and dried, both of us lay down on the bed again, fresher, if not slightly the worse for wear. I lay on my back, and Sandra happily snuggled into my side with my arm around her. Resting her head in the hollow of my shoulder, she was soon asleep; with me not far behind.

When I woke up the next morning, I was on my side, a female body pressing against my back. I'd woken up like that enough times that it took me only a moment to decide that it was Robyn with me.

I managed to get up without waking her, and headed for the bathroom to take care of the morning guy thing. When I got back, though, I saw that she was awake, and obviously waiting for me. As Sandra had predicted, Robyn had taken the time to clean up a bit - when I got closer, there wasn't a whiff of Abby to be found.

I started to lie down on my back, but Robyn nudged me to lie on my back. Once I was stretched out to her satisfaction, she crawled on top of me, her thighs straddling my hips, her torso resting on mine with her head tucked under my chin. I put my arms around her and the two of us just stayed like that for a little while before I told her "I'd ask if you and Abby had fun last night, but I already know you did. Sandra and I heard both of you."

I felt Robyn blush slightly, and she replied "Yeah, we did. She was kind of shy with me at first, though. It surprised me, but I just pretended I didn't notice, and after a while she was okay. She's **really** nice, and I like her a lot."

"Yeah, I think she is, too."

Robyn gave me a brief hug and said "You know that Amy's kind of mad at you, don't you?"

I sighed, and said "Yeah, I know. There are some things happening that she doesn't like, but I think she'll be okay when all this is done."

There was a pause, and Robyn asked "Is everything going to be all right when you're done helping Amy?"

"I think so, short stuff. I think it's going to be a little like what happened last time, only different. We're after a bunch of drug dealers, and they're a bunch of **really** bad people. So we'll have to be careful for a little while after we catch them, but then it'll be okay again, I expect."

"Are they the people that killed Sandra's folks?"

"Not them, personally, but they're the ones that said to do it, yeah."

"But you're going to catch them? And make them pay for what they did?"

"Yeah, we are."

After a longer pause, Robyn told me "Then I think it'll be okay if we have to be careful a while. What they were doing was wrong, but hurting Sandra's parents like that was **way**

worse. I know it's going to be a pain, having to watch out all the time; but if it means that that those assholes get put away, I can live with it."

"Robyn!" I exclaimed, surprised at her use of profanity.

"I'm sorry, Dad. But I don't know of another word that really says what kind of people they are."

I sighed, and said "I understand. But try not to say stuff like that too much, okay?"

She lifted her head and kissed me on the chin - wrinkling her nose at the bristles - before answering "Okay, I won't - not **too** much", with a grin.

I grinned back, and after I kissed her on the forehead, she tucked her head under my chin again.

Having her resting on me like that felt good - not just the smooth warmth of her body against mine, but that we were trusting and comfortable and loving enough that it was even possible. After a bit, I couldn't help but start moving my hands on her - pleased by the soft smoothness of her skin under my hands and the warm firmness of her body. It wasn't long before I could feel Robyn starting to respond to my touch as she made small movements on top of me in response to the pleasure she felt. The feel of her breasts pressing into my body and the tickle of her bush against my lower belly started to get me hard. Robyn felt it when I was hard enough that my penis flopped around to rest against my belly - and brushed against her mons along the way. When that happened, I felt her start moving her hips slightly, using her pubic hair to tease me into even further erection.

With the knowledge that she was willing to make love, I let my hands move down to start caressing her hips, and playing with the firm mounds of her ass. It wasn't more than a minute longer before I caught the first faint scent of her increasing arousal. As my length increased, Robyn was able to make better and better contact between it and her womanhood; eventually, with a slight lift of her hips, my manhood was between us, where she began rubbing her clitoris against its underside. It wasn't long before some of her liquid essence was transferred between us, making her actions both easier and more pleasant for both of us.

The unique aroma of her was thick in the air when she raised herself to sit over me with her hands on my chest to prop herself up. She arched her back and leaned forward; giving me the opportunity to use my lips and tongue to tend to the firm, spongy masses of her breasts and suckle at her nipples. The change in her posture also moved the entrance of her vagina from the underside of my penis to its head - where she wriggled around slightly until I slipped between the slick petals of her inner lips. Only a slight backward movement of her hips, and I felt myself pressing against her hot, wet opening.

Knowing what was next, I slowed my oral attentions to her breasts; a few moments later, I felt her pressing herself back, taking my erect member inside without once touching it with her hands.

To my surprise, she fitted herself around my entire length in a single long, slow movement. When she felt my pubic bone pressing against her mons, she straightened her back and rose up again. Between us, I could see the gap between her thighs, and how my hardness disappeared into the hot cavern of her womanhood. Above, her breasts still glistened slightly with my saliva, her nipples and areolas tight and hard.

She looked down at me, and in her eyes I could see the love and concern she felt for me, and the trust she had **in** me - as well as the desire she had **FOR** me.

With a Mona Lisa smile on her face, she lifted herself off of me a few times, letting more and more of my penis slip free before impaling herself on it again. Once satisfied that I could easily slide in and out of her, she raised herself until only the head of my penis was inside her; I felt her tighten the muscles of her vagina, and she lowered herself back onto me. The sensation she created was exquisite: it was like being inside her for the first time again - only without the difficulty of dealing with her maidenhead. When she'd gotten me fully inside her again, I felt her relax around me for a few moments before she started a rhythmic milking of my manhood with her internal muscles. She did that for several seconds, then let herself relax before she rose up again - whereupon she repeated the entire sequence.

Over the next few minutes, she made slow, leisurely love to me that way. It was slow, deliberate torture on her part - and I loved every moment of it.

It wasn't much longer before I could feel myself getting close. My hands were caressing the outsides of her thighs when I warned her "if you keep that up, you're going to get a surprise..."

She just gave me another Mona Lisa smile and answered "That's **exactly** what I want."

She must have seen a questioning look on my face, because she went on to explain "Dad, I know you've been working hard, and that you've had a lot of things on your mind - particularly me and Sandra and Mom. This is something I want to do for you. You don't have to worry about making me feel good, or helping me have a climax - just enjoy **yourself**, for a change. It's enough for me to know that I helped you feel better."

The distraction of listening to Robyn's explanation let me pull 'back' a little - but not much. And being relieved of the (minor) burden of having to concern myself with making sure Robyn enjoyed our lovemaking left me free to simply enjoy (!! the feelings she was creating. So enjoy them I did - but only for a couple more minutes before I felt myself over from 'want to' to '*got to'. I felt my balls tightening, and Robyn somehow knew or felt or sensed the change in me: she quickly ended the clenching sensations she'd applied to me at the end of her down strokes. For the next dozen strokes or so, she

relaxed around me as she lifted up, and tightened again when she lowered herself, with no pause between the two.

The result was a building of pressure that I hadn't experienced in quite some time - a pressure that was thankfully relieved when I finally a long, hard jet of semen deep inside Robyn's tight sheath. With the first shot of my hot jism, Robyn pressed herself down on me as hard as she could, and began clamping herself around me in time with my releases.

My climax lasted much longer than I'd experienced for a **long** time - and brought me more pleasure than I'd even *hoped* it would. When it finally - regretfully - ended, I was unable to do more than lay there and pant. Looking up, I could see that Robyn was looking down at me affectionately; perfectly content to hold herself tight around me, knowing she'd brought me that much pleasure.

As my breathing slowed, my softened penis finally shrunk enough to pull free of Robyn. When it did, she quickly cupped her hand under her crotch, and climbed off me to head for the bathroom in the hall. She came back a couple minutes later, and lay down next to me before putting an arm and one leg across my body. I put my arm around her, and lifted my head to give her a kiss on the top of her head before telling her "Thanks, short stuff."

She gave me a hug with the arm that was across my body before answering "You're welcome, Dad. I just thought it was time I did something for YOU, for a change."

I hugged her back and told her "Robyn, you do enough for me by just being my daughter."

I could **feel** her smile into my chest, and the two of us laid there for several more minutes before she told me "When I went to the bathroom, I could smell coffee downstairs. Think you're ready for some breakfast?"

I conceded that I could use a bite or two, and Robyn sat up again. Looking down at me, she said "I want to clean up a bit before I go downstairs. Want to wash up with me?"

I put a mock-fearful expression on my face, and giving her The Eye, asked "You're not going to like... **ravish** me or anything in the shower, are you?"

She giggled, and said "No, I'm not going to ravish you in the shower."

I quickly put on a disappointed look, and said "Damn!", making her laugh before I said "Well, I'm not too sure what the *point* is, then, but I **guess** I can take a shower with you."

She laughed again, and said "Come on, Dad. You'll feel better after you get some coffee and food inside."

When I started to sit up, Robyn got off the bed to make room for me, and then took my hand in hers after I stood up. Still holding hands, we made our way into the bathroom and got cleaned up - with a little friendly groping and fondling along the way.

After we'd dried off, each of us opted to just put on some underwear before heading downstairs. There we found Abby and Sandra - no more dressed than we were - just finishing their breakfast; French toast, by the look of it. At our appearance, both got up to give us good-morning hugs and kisses. Abby sat down with us while Sandra got coffee for all of us. We all chatted while Robyn and I downed our coffee; when we were done with it, Abby got up to make us our own ration of French toast. Sandra tried to get up to help, but Abby just shooed her back into a chair, saying "After dealing with you two last night, just making breakfast is a *relief*!" - making all the rest of us grin.

As Robyn and I tucked away a fair amount of breakfast, Abby finally sat down at the table with us so the four of us could talk some more as Robyn and I ate.

When we'd finished our meals - both of us telling Abby how good it was - Robyn and Sandra both got up and started cleaning up. Abby tried to protest, but they simply ignored her. Working together, it didn't take them long to get everything straightened out; as Robyn put the last of the fixings away, Sandra topped off everyone's coffee then asked "Anybody want some more?". All of us declined, and she turned the machine off.

After we'd finished our last cup of coffee, the four of us adjourned to the living room. There, I took a chair while Abby settled onto one end of her couch - only to be displaced when Robyn and Sandra wanted to sit on either side of her. I had a suspicion that they weren't done with her yet, but kept my counsel. I figured that if she was an FBI agent, she had to have learned to recognize danger - or if she hadn't, she needed to.

We'd been watching the Sunday morning news programs for perhaps an hour when I saw Robyn and Sandra give each other a look. Seeing that, I **knew** Abby was in trouble - but didn't figure she'd mind all *that* much. Besides, she had until Monday morning to recover, which was **probably** enough time.

Sure enough, a few minutes later, from the corner of my eye, I saw Robyn 'casually' let her hand rest on Abby's thigh. A bit after that, Sandra just as casually pulled one of Abby's arms around her, and then held Abby's hand on her breast. Over the next fifteen minutes or so, they took turns slowly ratcheting up their stimulation of Abby - who began responding to it without even realizing what they were doing to her.

Finally, the effect got to be too much, and Abby suddenly realized what was happening - but it was too late by then. When Abby started to say something about what they were doing, it was Sandra that silenced her through the simple expedient of kissing her and starting to play with one of Abby's breasts. Robyn reinforced Sandra's assault by sucking on Abby's other breast, and reaching down to start rubbing Abby's mons through her panties.

I don't know if it was because Abby realized how untenable her position was, or she simply didn't want to fight them off that badly, but her struggles didn't last very long - certainly no more than half a minute. It wasn't much longer, and she was a willing - even enthusiastic - participant. Sandra finally stopped kissing her, and moved down to duplicate what Robyn was doing; each of them contributed a hand toward slipping Abby's panties off - something Abby assisted in by lifting her ass off the couch.

With their victim defenseless and exposed (figuratively AND literally), they started in on *seriously* ravishing Abby. It wasn't but a couple of minutes before I heard Abby cry out as an orgasm washed through her. Looking over at them, the only assistance I was prepared to offer Abby was to suggest "You two had better get her on the floor before she falls off the couch."

Robyn looked over at me, and nodded to indicate they'd heard me; a moment later, they eased Abby's limp form to the floor. There, they took turns keeping Abby 'occupied' while the other slipped out of her panties, so that all three of them were naked. I watched for a little bit, and saw that when Abby started to move again, Sandra moved her head between Abby's thighs while Robyn leaned over Abby's head to start sucking on her breasts - and leaving her own bust available to Abby, something Abby quickly took advantage of.

Once satisfied that no one was going to get physically hurt, I turned off the TV and sat back to watch the three of them. I'd been the target of Robyn and Sandra's tag-team tactics, and it was interesting (and something of a relief) to see how they operated without being in the middle of it.

Over the course of the next hour, I watched as Sandra and Robyn and Abby all experienced a number of orgasms - some small, others clearly intense. The living room was filled with the liquid sounds of their activities, and the heady aroma of aroused female was nearly thick enough to cut.

It finally ended when Sandra and Robyn brought each other to orgasm, then fell apart, lying on either side of the quivering bundle of exposed nerve endings that was Abby. My two saw me looking at the three of them, and managed to give me a grin; Abby was so far gone, I doubted she was conscious of anything around her.

When Sandra and Robyn managed to sit up, I told them "Now look what you've gone and done - you **broke** her. I mean, that is so typical of you two: you get a new toy, and you play with it so hard you break it. How is she supposed to be an FBI agent after you two used her up so hard? Do you really think I'm going to get any work out of her tomorrow after this?"

Robyn and Sandra both grinned at me, knowing that I was teasing them. Robyn looked down at Abby, then back up at me and answered "I don't think we *broke* her, exactly."

Sandra chipped in by saying "Yeah, she isn't broken. A little bent, maybe, but I think we can fix her so she'll be all right tomorrow."

I chuckled, and said "I think you two have 'fixed' her enough for one day. Go get cleaned up, and I'll see if I can resuscitate her a little."

Sandra and Robyn got up, picked up their discarded panties, and went upstairs as I moved over to where Abby was puddled on the floor.

I sat down next to her, then leaned over to look in her face. After a moment, her eyes focused on me, and she managed to blink at me owlishly.

I smiled and told her "They've gone upstairs to clean up. Do you want me to help you clean up too?"

She released a weak croak, and I told her "Hold on a second, and I'll get you something to drink. Would you like that?"

Her eyes thanked me, and I did as I promised - after I made a couple of peanut butter and honey sandwiches, which I figured she'd need, I grabbed a couple of Cokes and went back to her.

Propping myself against the couch, I pulled her onto my lap. Over the next several minutes, I got enough Coke and sandwich into her that she was finally able to sit up with only a little support. From there, it didn't take much longer before she was feeding herself, though I continued to hold onto the first can of Coke for her. By the time it was empty, she had regained enough strength to hold the second can herself, sipping from it as she nearly inhaled the second sandwich.

With the influx of quick energy from the food and drink, it was only a few more minutes before she had enough strength to talk to me, asking "What the hell happened to me?"

"Robyn and Sandra", I answered.

She blinked at me, a blank expression on her face, and I reminded her "After breakfast? We all came into the living room to watch TV, and Robyn and Sandra sat down on the couch with you?"

Her eyes got wide as she remembered how it had started. She looked into my face, and asked "Am I going to be okay?"

I grinned at her and answered "Yeah, I think you're going to be okay. You're going to be weak as a kitten the rest of the day, and sleep like a rock tonight, but you'll be okay."

She looked at me as though she wasn't entirely certain I wasn't lying to her, but I just nodded and said "Really, you'll be fine. They've done pretty much the same thing to me, and even Lucy, and it didn't kill US."

From the expression on her face, I could tell that Abby wasn't any too sure that she wasn't going to be an exception.

About that time, Robyn and Sandra came back downstairs, and into the living room. When she saw them, Abby gave a small shudder, and told me "You're not going to let them have me again, are you?"

I smiled, and said "No, I'm not. Do you want to clean up?"

She nodded, and said "But I don't think I could stand up for a shower, and I'm afraid if I got into a tub, I'd drown."

"Do you want me to help?"

She nodded again, and I told her "Let me get you up on your feet, and we'll go upstairs, okay?"

She agreed, and together, we managed to get her to a more-or-less standing position. Robyn and Sandra watched as I picked Abby up, and moved aside when I started for the stairs.

Up in her bedroom, I laid Abby on her bed with the explanation "I'm just setting you here long enough to get the water going, okay?"

"Okay."

I left the bathroom door open so Abby could watch as I started filling the tub, and making sure the water was warm enough. When the water level was high enough, I shut the water off, and went back into the bedroom. There, I removed my shorts, picked Abby up again, and carried her into the bathroom. I carefully set her in the water, and quickly moved to get in behind her. After that, it was relatively quick work for the two of us to get her cleaned off - though every time I touched one of her nipples, or brushed across her mons, she would gasp and quiver in response.

By the time she was cleaned up again, she'd gotten enough strength back to stand on her own while I dried her, then myself. I stayed with her as we left the bathroom, and when we got close to the bed, I asked her "Do you want to lie down and rest for a little while?"

She nodded, and said "For about a week, I think!"

I helped her lie down, and when I started to leave her, she took hold of my hand and asked "Stay with me?"

I smiled, and said "Sure, Abby."

I snuggled next to her, and let my arm rest across her body, careful to avoid any of the erogenous zones that **I** was aware of. We'd only been lying there a few moments when Robyn and Sandra appeared in the door. Abby saw them, and gestured that it was okay for them to come in. They did, and stopped at the edge of the bed. After a brief hesitation, Robyn told her "We're really sorry we, uh, **played** with you so hard."

Sandra followed up by telling her "Yeah, Abby, we're really sorry. We didn't mean to use you up like that."

Abby thought that over for a few moments, then told them "No, you don't have to be sorry - I'm not used to having quite that much fun, or having that many orgasms. I'm just surprised that I lasted as long as I did! Next time, just take it easier on me, okay?"

"You want a next time?" Sandra asked.

Abby smiled at them, and said "Damn right I do. I love you both, dearly, as long as you don't do that to me again - at least, not that much!"

Reassured that Abby wasn't upset with them, they turned and left the bedroom. Abby and I listened as they made their way back downstairs before she turned to me and said "Did you tell them to come up here?"

"Nope. It was their idea; I had no idea they were going to do it."

Abby sighed, and said "That's part of why they're so dear to me - they don't **have** to be told to do things like that. You've got every reason in the world to be proud of them."

"And I am, believe me." I answered.

She smiled at me, and put her hands on my arm, holding it as I watched her drift off to sleep. Some time later, I napped along with her.

When I woke up, she was still asleep, and didn't wake as I carefully got up and went in to get dressed. Downstairs, I found Sandra and Robyn at opposite ends of the couch, watching some movie or other on TV. Something seemed out of place, and when Robyn saw me looking around, told me "While you two were asleep, we went ahead and did the housework for Abby. The only things we didn't do were the laundry and vacuuming - we couldn't find a washing machine, and didn't think we should go outside; and we didn't want to risk waking you up by running the vacuum cleaner."

"You were right on both decisions", I told them, adding "And I think Abby will thank you for cleaning things up."

Sandra answered by saying "Well, we figured we should do **something** for leaving her like that. Really, Uncle Dan, we didn't know she'd be quite that bad!"

"Well, she'll be okay, and she'd not upset with you. But I hope you two will remember that as much fun as either one of you is, together, you're a lot for one person to handle, okay?"

I knew that was all I needed to say, and both of them nodded solemnly. When I moved toward the recliner, Robyn spoke up, asking "Would you sit on the couch with us?"

I quickly changed course, and did as they asked - surprised when they guided me to one end, where Sandra sat on my lap while Robyn took a seat on the floor, where she could rest against my legs.

We hadn't moved very much when Abby made her appearance some time later. It wasn't until she was laid back in the recliner that she looked around a bit before asking "Who cleaned up?"

Sandra told her "I hope you don't mind, but we did, while you and Uncle Dan were sleeping."

Abby laughed, and said "No, I don't mind - in fact, I want to thank you. It looks like you did a better job than I usually do!"

Robyn replied "We didn't run the vacuum, though, cause we didn't want to wake you up."

"No, that's fine. Thank you for your consideration; that nap was just what I needed, though I expect I still won't have any trouble getting to sleep tonight."

Robyn and Sandra both smiled at her before Robyn asked "Uh, would you mind if I sat with you? While we watched TV?"

Abby smiled back, and said "No, I wouldn't mind at all."

Robyn got up and moved over to the recliner, where Abby made room for her. Robyn sat down, and after a hesitant kiss to Abby's cheek, settled back to watch TV.

A couple of hours later, the phone rang, and Sandra got up to answer it. When she came back, she told us "That was Amy. They'll be over here in about an hour" before taking her place back on my lap.

We were all still in place when Amy and the rest showed up. Abby invited them to stay, but Amy and Tom politely begged off. Amy said she wanted to check with our protective detail, and went outside while Lucy, Erika, and the girls hashed out who was going and who was staying. By the time Amy got back, they'd settled on Erika trading places with

Robyn. Before they left, Lucy whispered to me "What happened to Abby? She looks like she just ran a marathon and a triathlon both in the same day."

"Worst - she ran a Sandra and Robyn at the same time. They got a little carried away, but they already know it was too much." I whispered back.

Lucy nodded, grinned, and gave me a kiss before asking "Enjoy yourself last night?"

I grinned back, and answered "And this morning, too. Abby wasn't ready for both of them last night, so they traded off while I was asleep. They ganged up on her this morning."

Lucy smiled her understanding, and gave me another kiss.

After the others had left, Sandra went over to take Robyn's place next to Abby; Erika took position at the end of the couch, where she held my head in her lap.

When it got late enough, I decided that there wasn't any point in anyone having to fuss with cooking and dishes afterward, and offered to spring for pizza. Sandra was all for it, and Abby actually looked a bit relieved. We quickly settled on toppings, and Erika made the call before going outside to let the detail know to expect the delivery person.

While we ate, Abby laughingly told Erika how Sandra and Robyn had positively **ravished** her - telling it in such a way that she had all three of us laughing. I could see that Sandra was relieved that Abby wasn't upset with them about it.

After the pizza carcasses were put away, Erika asked Sandra if she'd like to cuddle - an offer that Sandra quickly accepted, the two of them the recliner.

Abby looked at me, and said "Well, Dan, it looks like it's you and me, then."

In my best disappointed little-boy voice, I answered "Well, if I **gotta...**", making her smile. I sat at the end of the couch, angled out a little bit, and Abby tucked herself into my side and pulled my arm around her.

As it started to get late, I caught Abby yawning, and quietly told her "If you're tired, you should go ahead and go to bed."

She looked up at me and nodded, saying "Yeah, I think I better."

"I'm a little tired, myself, if you want some company - for sleep."

She smiled and said "Yeah, for sleep, that would be nice."

We got up and I told the others "We're a little tired, so we're going to sleep. We'll see you in the morning." Erika and Sandra both wished us good night, and we went upstairs.

Undressed and ready for bed, Abby and I climbed between the sheets. I lay on my side, and Abby did the same before sliding back to spoon with me. I put my arm around her, and she didn't hesitate to pull my hand up to cup her breast before she told me "I saw Lucy looking at me, and the two of you talking, and I can guess what you were talking about. Dan, I'm really not mad or anything about Sandra and Robyn this morning - it's just that I wasn't really prepared for it, and all."

"I know", I told her, adding "Both of them were really sorry about it, after the fact. I don't think they really realize just how **much** there is to them when they team up like that. But I think they know better, now, so if you ever decide to take them on again, they'll go a little easier on you. But I'll warn you, you'll still 'lose' - if what they can do to a person can be called 'losing'."

Abby laughed, and said "I know what you mean - but I think I **would** like to be with them again. It was the most incredible experience of my life; it was just that there was so *much* of it!" wriggling against me.

I couldn't help but start to respond to the feeling of the firm globes of her ass sliding against my penis. When she felt me starting to get hard, Abby just giggled and said "You said you wanted to sleep!"

I laughed, and answered "I do - that's just a salute to a pretty girl."

She giggled again and said "In that case, I thank you, sir" before pressing herself back against me. I raised my head long enough to give her a small kiss on her ear, and hugged her closer. Some time later, we were both asleep.

The following week was a busy one for all of us.

While Abby and I were taking care of business on the Cartelita case, Erika and some of the other agents were giving Lucy and the girls a crash course in Survival.

The three of them spent a couple of days learning self-defense, with Erika helping Al. By the end of it, all of them were considerably more confident about their ability to handle a personal assault - but not *overly* so.

After that, the girls got an introduction to firearms while Lucy got some training on defensive driving - as in automotive escape and evasion. When that was over, she joined the girls for a tutorial on more powerful firearms - rifles and automatic weapons. Following that was a practice session with handguns - Lucy impressing the instructor by meeting the same qualifications that I'd had to, on her first try. So while the girls got indoor target practice, Lucy got some advanced tutoring from Erika, and then made several passes through the combat range. She wasn't in the same class as Amy, Erika, and

myself, of course - but she managed to slightly embarrass the few agents whose scores she beat.

By the time she was done, Sandra and Robyn were doing pretty well on the pistol range. No effort was made to get them to the point of qualifying; it was enough that they were consistently and reliably hitting the silhouette targets they'd graduated to.

The last class they had was taught by Erika, with the help of a number of other agents. What she did was teach them how to watch for surveillance - someone following them in another car, watching for the same person to show up around them, and so on. Lucy caught on quickly, and as Erika told me later, did a lot better than anyone had expected. Robyn and Sandra got the idea easily enough, but weren't as good in applying what they'd learned.

At the end of each day, all of us would gather in Amy's office and settle on who was going to stay where that night. I continued going home with Abby, but Lucy, Erika, and the girls were a different matter.

Evenings with Lucy and the girls were much like they'd been with Abby and Erika - some were quiet while others were considerably more active.

As it turned out, I was wrong in my estimate of how long it would take to get the second password - it didn't actually appear until late Thursday afternoon.

Once I had it, it took only a few minutes to verify that it was the key to the rest of the encrypted data; I was pleased to see that I'd underestimated how much detail had been kept, too - not only were deals and dealers recorded, but there were records for every member of every gang, along with a brief listing of 'trusted' lawyers.

All the information was quickly copied into the FBI computer files; when Amy saw it, she could only sit there speechless for several seconds before quietly announcing "We are going to rip these people a new asshole!" - and then blushing slightly when Abby, Erika, and I laughed at her reaction; even Tom had a smile on his face.

When she'd recovered from the shock at all she was seeing, Amy told us "Okay, **now** we can hit these pukes. I'll get this information out to the other offices, and give them the weekend to get ready. We hit the bastards bright and early Monday morning."

The next morning, per Amy's request, Abby and I got all the data organized so that names and addresses were grouped by FBI offices while Amy made the calls to the appropriate people. By mid-afternoon, everyone had their piece of the pie, and had let Amy know that they would be ready to go. All the different dealers across the country were going to be hit at the same time - earlier in the West, later in the East.

With the rest of the offices ready, her next step was to contact the local Chief of Police. When Amy told him it was about the Cartelita, he put off a meeting with the Mayor in

favor of coming in to the Bureau offices. I wasn't in on the meeting with him, but I saw him leave with a BIG smile on his face.

As it got close to quitting time, Amy made an appearance in my office, where Tom joined us. Looking around at all of us, Amy said "In case I forgot to tell all of you - thanks! I know that isn't anywhere NEAR enough, but it's all I've got to offer, right now. With all the work all of you have done - particularly you, Dan! - we're going to put a **serious** hole in the drug infrastructure in this country. And I don't doubt for a moment that all the local PDs have enough undercover cops out there to let them get their people *way* inside any new gangs that form up. With all these Cartelita players going down, I think it's going to be a pretty safe bet that the survivors are going to be real hesitant about linking up with each other - and that's going to make them that much easier to deal with. We - you! - have put a serious hurting on the drug operations in this country, and you have my word that the right people are going to know the who and how of it. Again, thank you - and congratulations."

Monday morning found me, Lucy, Erika, and the girls relaxing in one of the lounges in the Bureau offices while Amy, Abby, and nearly a hundred agents got ready to make their raids. Before they left, Amy stopped by to tell me "Dan, if anyone has earned the right to be in on this, it's you - but I don't dare take the chance of anything happening to you this close to the end."

I smiled at her, and answered "It's okay, Amy. I understand. And I think Lucy and the two sex bombs would just as soon have me here with them, anyway."

Out of the corner of my eye, I could see Lucy nodding her agreement, which made Amy smile.

It was approaching lunchtime when Erika came into the lounge we were in - watching daytime game shows - and asked me if I could follow her; Amy needed to talk to me. I could see that Lucy and the girls were as curious as I was, but not concerned.

I followed Erika into an office, and picked up the phone while Erika hit the button for the line Amy was on.

"Hello? Amy?"

"Dan, I'm glad you were still there. Something's happened, and I could use your help, after all."

"What is it?"

"We got the bastards - all of them - except for the head of the biggest gang. He's barricaded himself inside an apartment, and he's got hostages. He also claims he's got a

bomb of some kinds, and swears that he'll blow up the entire building if anybody comes after him."

"And?"

"And the SWAT negotiator isn't getting anywhere with him, and he's threatening to start shooting the hostages if we don't back off."

"So what do you need me for?"

"You were a sniper in the Army, right? Well, the closest the SWAT snipers can get is... what was it, Fred?... just over seven hundred yards for anything like a decent shot. None of them is sure they can hit him at that distance if they have to shoot, and we're running out of time. I was wondering if you think you could still shoot that far, and if you can, if you'd help us out down here."

I thought it over for a few moments, and told her "I'm willing to **try**, Amy, but I'd be a lot happier if there was time for me to take a couple practice shots to be sure."

I heard Amy talking to someone else for a minute or so before she came back to tell me "If that's what you need, we'll make the arrangements. Is there anything special you need?"

"Just the best weapon and ammo they can lay their hands on", I answered.

I heard Amy relay that information as well before she told me "You'll have it. The PD will have a car there for you in five minutes. They'll take you to their range where the rifle and everything will be waiting. If you can do it, it would sure help us; but if you can't, don't think you have to do it just for us. We'll find another way, if we have to."

I knew that anything else they could come up with would be a far distant second choice to simply taking out the dealer, but told Amy "You've got it, Amy. I'll see you in a bit."

After hanging up the phone, I went back in to where Lucy and the girls were waiting and told them "Amy has a problem, and it looks like I might be able to help, after all."

Lucy immediately looked worried, and I hastened to assure her "No, I'm not going to be anywhere near where somebody can shoot me or do anything to me. It's just that I might be better at something than the people they have, and I'm going to find out if I can help them, is all."

Lucy looked at me curiously, only slightly mollified, and I asked her "Remember what my other job was in the Army?" She had to think for a few seconds before it came to her. She looked at me with concern on her face, and I told her "Yeah, that's what Amy needs. It's been a while, though, so I'm going to find out if I can still do it well enough to help. But that's also why I won't be in any danger, either."

Lucy thought that one over a moment, and nodded, saying "I don't like it - but I think I understand **why**. Go ahead, then, and do what you have to - we'll be okay here."

I nodded, kissed all of them, and followed Erika to the front door, where a police car showed up just a couple minutes later. It was lights and sirens all the way to the other side of town, where the police range was. The cop drove us right up to their rifle range, where there was a small knot of people standing around. On the ground between them was a rifle case and a small shooting bag.

I got out, with Erika right behind me, and one of the people came over to say "Mr. Andrews? I'm Lieutenant Meyers, head of our SWAT team. Thank you for being willing to help us out."

"I'm willing, Lieutenant, but let's see if I **can**, okay?"

He nodded, and gestured at the rifle case. We squatted down, and he opened it up to show me the rifle it protected: a scoped semi-custom Remington set in form-fitting cushions. As I checked to make sure it was unloaded and safe, he told me what caliber it was, and what the magnification was on the scope. I asked if he had a ballistics chart for the ammo, and he readily pulled one out of the range bag. Looking at it, I could see that they'd done a nice, professional job on it - it not only detailed the caliber, but the weight of the slug, and graphically displayed the ballistics for the round over a nice spread of distances. When I asked, he assured me that the ballistic table had been done with the same weapon I was to shoot with, with the weapon hard-mounted, meaning that what I was looking at was the result of the weapon being fired from a known and fixed position. Any variation from the ballistics chart would be because of the shooter, not the weapon or ammo.

Satisfied that I had the proper tools to work with, the next step was to check them - and me - out. Carrying the range bag, I moved up to the firing line, and got myself situated: laying down on the mat they'd thoughtfully provided, the stock of the rifle resting on a pair of sandbags. Reaching into the bag, I pulled out some hearing protection, then a box of ammo. I got the rifle loaded, then looked up at the Lieutenant. He told me "We've got a target set up at 750 yards - we figured you'd rather check it long, than short." I nodded my agreement, and he went on "It's a standard silhouette target, man-sized, with standard markings. We're ready whenever you are, sir."

I nodded again, and got the hearing protection over my ears. From the corner of my eye, I could see the others do the same. I tucked the butt into my shoulder, and looked downrange at the target. At that distance, and with that target, the white heart outline was just a small white speck.

I fired two rounds, spaced well apart, to make sure that I still remembered how, before I made my first adjustment to the scope after checking the ballistics table for the ammo. The next round was closer to where I'd been aiming; another adjustment, and the fourth

was **almost** on the money. A last tweak and the fifth round was right on target. The two after that were **almost** as good.

I cleared the weapon, then pulled my hearing protectors off before standing up. The Lieutenant stared downrange for a few seconds before looking at me and saying "Yeah, I think you can help", a touch of awe in his voice.

Kneeling down, I put the rifle back in its case, then the box of ammo I'd been using in a small compartment apparently meant for that purpose. I closed the case, latched it, and stood up with it in my hand. The Lieutenant said "The officer that brought you here will get you to your next stop. I'd say 'good luck', but I don't think you'll need it."

I smiled and shook his hand before turning and heading for the car that had brought me. Once inside, and on our way again, Erika turned to look at me before saying "When Muddy told us about that shot you took, I thought maybe he was pulling our leg - at least, a little. But now I believe him!"

I answered her by saying "I'm pushing it, with this weapon and this ammo. The only way I was able to do that was because these folks took the time to do it **right**, and are only using the best equipment they can get. If I had the weapon now that I'd had then, I'd be a lot more sure of what I was doing."

A few minutes later, we pulled up to where a small army of cops and FBI were bunched around a SWAT van. The car we were in had barely stopped before I saw Amy heading for us. When I got out of the car, Amy looked at us expectantly, and it was Erika that told her "He can do it."

Amy nodded, and led me over to where the head of the SWAT team was sitting on the rear bumper of their van. He stood up when we got close, and stuck his hand out saying "Mr. Andrews, I trust."

"Just call me Dan..."

"Lieutenant Hampton, sir. Meyers let me know on the radio that you were on the way - and how you did. I gotta tell you, sir, that was some kinda shooting. If you'll come this way, we've got some gear for you."

Inside the van, they had pants and a shirt waiting for me, as well as a heavier bulletproof vest than the one I was wearing. As I dressed, they let me know that they'd gotten nearly all the hostages out - though he still had a girl in the room with him. They also provided me with a cap, binoculars, radios, and lightweight gloves, explaining "We've found that the gloves protect your hands as you're getting into position, but they're light enough not to interfere with your shooting." It had been a number of years since I'd done anything like this, and was perfectly willing to learn what they had to tell me.

Once they were satisfied that I was properly outfitted, one of their men led the way to where their other sniper had set up. My guide offered to carry the rifle case, but wasn't offended when I declined.

When I was in position and situated, the SWAT sniper told me "Damn glad to see you, sir. I could hit the hell out of him from here, but I don't **know** that I could take him out on the first shot. They said you used to be a sniper? In Army Special Forces?"

"Yeah, but that was a while ago. That's why I was a little late getting to this shindig - I wanted to make sure I still had it before I climbed all the way up here."

"No problem, sir. Sounds like you were doin' what I was, from the other direction."

With that, he handed me a pair of binoculars with a laser ranging system built in to them. As I put them to my eyes, he told me "I made it at seven seventeen yards. If you'll just push the little button under your right forefinger, you'll see the range displayed for wherever the crosshairs are at."

Looking through the binoculars, I could easily see through a window, and into the room where the dealer was pacing around. I followed the SWAT man's instructions, and got the same range distance he'd told me.

Something started niggling at the back of my mind, and a few seconds later, came out where I could look at it. Peering through the binoculars again, I put the crosshairs on the side of the building, and wasn't surprised when I got the same reading of 717 yards. Looking back into the room where the dealer was, I did some guesstimating, and figured he was a good five yards inside the window - for a total distance of seven hundred and TWENTY TWO yards to target. I handed the binoculars back to the SWAT guy, and said "Take a range reading on the side of the building, would you?"

He did, and I heard a muffled "SHIT!".

At that distance, there would be a distinct difference in the bullet trajectory. Something that was easy enough to compensate for, as long as you knew it was there in the first place.

"Now take a look inside again, and tell me how far inside the room you think he is."

He did as I asked, and told me "It looks like fourteen, fifteen feet."

Setting the ranging binoculars aside, I heard him softly ask "How the HELL did I miss that?"

"Take it easy on yourself, pal. We're so close to being straight-on to that place that the window is acting like a mirror to the laser. A few feet to one side or the other, and it wouldn't have mattered. If it's any help, it almost got by me, too."

That seemed to comfort him, a little, and I opened the rifle case and got the weapon out. I loaded it again, then checked the ballistics table for that particular ammo, rifle, and range - that five extra yards meant that I'd have to aim a good four inches higher.

After making the necessary adjustment to the scope, I looked through it and saw that I had a nice, clear view into the room. Inside, he had all the lights on, so I had an easy time making out the details.

Satisfied that I had a shot to make, I radioed down to ask if there was anything special about the glass - was it supposed to be bulletproof, or a special plastic or something? A few seconds later, they let me know that the building maintenance man had told them it was ordinary off-the-shelf glass.

I checked the room through the scope again, a little closer, before radioing down and asking "Okay, I've got a good view inside, and he's not moving around enough to make any trouble. Any luck with your negotiator?"

"Not even a little bit" was the reply.

"Do you want him alive, or not?"

"We'd prefer alive, if we can."

I thought that over for a bit, and asked "You mind if I see if there's anything I can say to him? I'd just as soon not have to shoot him, if I don't have to."

"You might as well - he just told the negotiator to fuck off and hung up on us. Give us a couple seconds, and we'll patch you through."

As promised, it was only a few seconds before I heard someone say "Okay, you're connected. We'll be listening in."

The next thing I heard was the sound of a phone ringing, as though I was on a telephone. Looking through my scope, I saw him move to the phone inside the room.

A second later, I heard/watched as he answered "Yeah, what the fuck you want?"

"Hello, dickhead. You looking to die today?"

"Who the fuck is this?!"

"This is the guy that's been shitting in your cornflakes from the day I got into town."

"YOU?! You that guy the Feebies brought in?"

"That's right, dickhead. And if you didn't already know, you're surrounded by every cop, FBI agent, Boy Scout, Girl Scout, and school crossing guard they could lay hands on. You got no place left to go."

"The fuck I don't! Anybody fucks with me, the bitch in here gets it!"

"Ah, now, you see, that's where you're fucking up."

"Fucking up? How?!"

"It's pretty simple, shithead. You cap the girl, and the whole world falls in on you. As far as I'm concerned, anybody in there with you is just as fucked up as you are, so it doesn't mean shit to me WHO you cap - the first time we hear a gunshot, you're gonna find yourself **so** fucked."

"You ain't scaring me!"

I let him hear me laugh before I told him "I don't give a rat's ass if you're scared, or not. The only thing I care about is getting the fuck out of here. I've already done what they're paying me for, so I'd just as soon go home and suck down a couple beers. But I really can't do that as long as you're in there fucking around. So here's the deal: I'm here to see to it that you leave that room. Whether you leave it vertical or horizontal don't mean shit to me - all I gotta worry about is making you leave. Now, me personally, I'm tired of fucking around with you. But the cops and FBI and such, they want to give you a chance to walk out, so that's what I'm offering you."

"Why should I believe you can do anything? How do I know you're not just bullshitting me?"

"I'm not, but that's okay. You know that suck-ass picture you've got of the dogs playing cards?"

"Yeah?"

"You see the bulldog? And the card he's got under the table?"

"Yeah"

"Watch that card."

"Why?"

My answer was to put a bullet through it. In my ear I could hear a "SHIT!" as I watched him jump. In the background, I could hear the girl scream.

"You there, shithead?"

I could see/hear him shaking when he answered "Yeah, I'm here, motherfucker. What the fuck you doin', man?"

"Just showing you that your ass is mine, any time I want you, with no bullshit. Now, how do you leave that dump? Head up, or feet first?"

Through the scope, I could see him looking at the hole I'd shot, then out the window as he tried to figure out where I was, then back to the picture.

Several seconds went by before I heard him say "Okay, man, I give up."

"That was a VERY good choice, shithead. Now, make sure the door is unlocked, and walk to the middle of the wall where the picture is. When you get there, hold VERY still, so I don't think you're going to do anything stupid - that way, I won't have to shoot your dumb ass, okay?"

"Yeah, I got it."

"And remember, shithead - until they get the cuffs on you, if I shoot you, it's because you were resisting arrest."

"Yeah, I got it, motherfucker", he answered, his voice was still shaking.

"Good. Now put the phone down, and do like you were told."

Through the scope, I watched as he put the phone down and walked over to the door. There, he seemed to hesitate - I could almost **hear** him thinking about making a break for it - before he got his senses back, did something to the doorknob, then unhooked the chain and walked over to face the dog picture. When he was there, I said into the radio "He's waiting for whoever wants him."

After that, I heard a number of commands issued as I continued to keep an eye on him through the rifle scope. Less than a minute later, I watched as the door opened, and several officers moved in to cuff him. When he was secured, one of them turned to the window and gave a little wave to let me know everything was okay.

The SWAT guy next to me sat up, and told me "That was the best shooting I've ever seen in my life. How the hell can you **do** that?"

I just gave him a smile, and said "Put enough rounds through targets, and sooner or later you get the hang of it" as I unloaded the rifle and put it back in its case, followed by the box of ammo. I stood up and waited as the SWAT guy put away his weapon and collected his gear, then followed him back to the SWAT van, where Amy was waiting for me.

I stepped inside the van, and unloaded all the gear they'd fixed me up with while Amy watched. When I was done, I stepped back outside, and managed to flag down Lieutenant Hampton. When he was close enough, I asked what he wanted to do about the rifle I'd used. He grinned, and said "My first reaction is to have it bronzed - that was one HELL of a shot. But Weber would just pitch a fit, so I guess we'll just take it off your hands so we can use again if we have to."

He signaled one of the SWAT team to take it from me, then turned to tell Amy "Amy? Thanks - this turned out a whole shitload better than any of us had any reason to hope it would."

"My pleasure, Frank", Amy answered.

He turned back to me and stuck his hand out; I took it, and we shook before he told me "And a special thanks to you, Mr. Andrews. Amy told us how all this started, so it looks like we owe you a couple of times."

We headed for Amy's car - accompanied by a handful of agents - and Amy told us "That was the last one - and only because of the trouble he caused. Now it's back to see how the other offices did."

As we left, I saw that we had a couple of cars of agents keeping us company. I asked Amy about it, and she said "Don't worry, Dan. I'm just playing it safe. I don't think there's anyone LEFT to give you any trouble!", with a laugh.

Back at the office, with Erika on my heels, I immediately headed for the lounge where I'd left Lucy and the girls. Along the way, an agent stopped me, and let me know that they'd decided to wait in my office. I changed course, and found them there, waiting for me. Lucy looked at me questioningly, and I told her "Everything's fine. The bad guy decided he'd rather give up" - which caused Lucy to sigh in relief.

About that time, Abby showed up, but Erika quickly intercepted her, and the two of them left the four of us alone.

It was perhaps a half hour later when Amy and Tom came in, followed by Erika and Abby, all four of them grinning like Cheshire cats. I looked at Amy quizzically, and she told me "I just got off the phone with the last Bureau office - we got ALL of them, every last one of the bastards! We got drugs, we got money, we got guns, we got computers, we got all KINDS of stuff. I'm going to have paperwork out the ass on this one, and you know what? I don't mind it a *damn bit*!"

All of us laughed at her last statement before she added "And Dan, I wouldn't be the slightest bit surprised if they put a statue of you up at headquarters."

At that, Lucy and the girls bunched up around me to give me a round of hugs and kisses before Amy told us "I need you to stick around for another couple of days, Dan, but after

that, you're more than welcome to go home - with our thanks and our gratitude. You probably know the drill from there - there's going to be lawyer stuff out the wazoo on this case, but all your time and expenses will be covered by the Bureau. You've done a helluva job for us on this, and we're going to do everything we can to make the rest of this as easy as possible for you - depositions and all that crap will be done through the Bureau office at home."

I smiled, and said "Thanks, Amy."

"No, it's the Bureau thanking *you* , Dan - you made all this possible."

Behind her, Abby, Erika, and Tom were all nodding their agreement.

Amy went on to say "I'm going to have to stay for a while to deal with some of the paperwork on this, so I'm going to be getting home late. But tomorrow night, we are going to celebrate!"

There, I spoke up, saying "If anyone's of a mind to, I think I **might** be able to weasel us a table a Muddy's place."

They all laughed again before Abby and Erika said "Deal!", almost in unison.

With that, Amy and Tom left to tend to some errand or other; Abby and Erika teamed up to take care of something else, leaving me with Lucy and the girls.

While the three of them sat there and grinned at me, I got on the phone and put a call in to Muddy. It was only a few seconds before I heard him answer, and told him that Lucy and the girls were with me, and that we and the FBI people he'd met wanted to do a little celebrating the next evening. He assured me that he could find space for us, and asked what the event was. I just told him that I expected he'd hear about it before too long. A couple sends went by, and he asked if it had anything to do with why I was in town, and I couldn't help laughing and telling him "Roger that. Let's just say mission accomplished."

I heard him laugh, and say "Well, Boomer, that **is** something to celebrate. You folks come on out here about 7:00 tomorrow night, and I'll fix you up just *fine* ."

"And Muddy? This one you don't get to cover."

"Like hell."

"Like hell right back at you. If you don't let me take care of it, I'm not coming."

He paused a few seconds and said "All right, we'll talk about it."

"Fine, we can talk till our jaws fall off - as long as I pay."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah. You just get out here, and we'll work it out when you get here."

I knew I'd still have a fight with him about it, but figured if he was willing to at least talk about it, I might have a chance. I told him "Okay, Muddy; we'll see you at seven, then."

With that, the conversation ended.

Lucy, the girls, and I spent the next couple of hours figuring out what all we'd have to do once we got back home. We'd pretty much run out of things when Abby and Erika showed up, letting us know that we could go 'home' - that is, back to Abby's place. When Amy was done in the office, she and Tom would stop by to pick up whoever wanted to stay at their place that night.

We got to Abby's place just in time to catch the network evening news - and none of us was the slightest bit surprised when the Cartelita case turned out to be the major story. All of us let out a soft cheer when we saw Amy being interviewed, and applauded when she was done. Lucy looked over at me, and we shared a smile: Amy had been considerate enough to NOT mention my involvement in the operation.

Next was the local news, and their coverage was a little more extensive, since it included not just the national raid, but the local ones as well. Amy showed up for another interview, and she again chose not to make any mention of me. The only mention I got was when the reporter told the audience "A possible tragedy was averted when one of the dealers surrendered after a warning shot by a SWAT sniper." At that, Abby and Erika turned to applaud ME while Lucy hugged my arm; when Robyn and Sandra looked at me, then her, she nodded to them to confirm that that was what I'd been called away for.

Supper was delivered Chinese food - with notice to our protective detail.

It was closing in on 8:00 before we heard a knock at the door; all of us knew it could only be Amy, since the detail around us had let whoever it was get that close.

When she and Tom came in, we could all see that she was almost exhausted; Abby left us long enough to fix something to drink for both of them - and from the look of them when she brought them out, they were **strong** drinks.

Amy and Tom both thanked her, then again after they'd each taken a sip.

Amy looked at all of us and said "That's the part of my job that I really don't care for - but in this case, I'm damn glad of the reason I have to do it. Sometimes, I think if we could just dump all the *paperwork* on the crooks, we'd have them surrendering to us just to get away from it!" - making all of us laugh.

When she and Tom had both had some time to unwind from the day, we made arrangements for who was sleeping where that night. We finally settled on the girls going

with Amy, so Lucy and I could stay together that night. By the time we got everything settled, Amy and Tom had both finished their drinks, and the four of them left.

The rest of the evening, Lucy and I cuddled in the recliner while Erika and Abby did the same on the couch.

The next day was pretty easy for most of us; the glaring exception, of course, was Amy. But Abby and Erika chipped in to help her whenever and however they could, so it wasn't as bad as it could have been. To the surprise of Lucy and me, the girls expressed an interest in getting some 'practice time' in on self defense and the pistol range; Amy didn't hesitate to okay it. When we asked them about it, Robyn told us "That self-defense stuff seems like a pretty good idea, anyway, for after all this is over". To that, Sandra added that they been a little scared at first, but decided that they actually **liked** shooting - it wasn't something that required a lot of muscle, and wasn't as easy as it looked.

About mid-afternoon, Amy stopped by my office to let me know how much of what had been collected in all the raids across the country. Lucy was with me, and she gasped when Amy announced "So far, we've recovered over fifty tons of marijuana, almost eight tons of cocaine in different forms, several hundred pounds of various kinds of heroin, half a ton of explosives, well over a thousand automatic weapons, easily three times that number of handguns, a couple hundred assorted cars and trucks, three planes, a helicopter, seven houses, an even dozen boats, and exactly ONE armored car."

Seeing the look of utter awe on Lucy's face, she went on to say "On top of all that, we've seized well over a hundred and fifty million dollars. There's so much of it, they're **weighing** it to get a first, rough, estimate."

Looking over at me, Amy said "And we also got a **lot** of computers. Most of them weren't encrypted, but a few were. Headquarters is already walking the local offices through how to break the encryption, so we're expecting to have even more to add to the list. We're kicking some serious dealer butt, here, and we're going to get some more."

I told Amy "I didn't get a chance to tell you before, but thanks for keeping my name out of the news last night."

"Dan, you and Lucy and the girls have had MORE than enough trouble with this case - you've earned way beyond the pittance the Bureau is paying you for this job. I'm not going to add to your troubles by putting the spotlight on you - and there isn't an agent in this office that would; particularly not after what happened to Sandra's parents, and them getting to know what kind of person she is. Some of them have already told me that they've been approached by the media, and every last one of them has told the person to check with our Public Affairs office, or if the newsie got obnoxious, told them to go to hell. None of the other Bureau offices know who you are, and I already sent word to headquarters to remind them that you have a life you'd like to get back to. Clara

enthusiastically seconded it, and I've gotten a promise that no one there will mention you, either."

Amy brightened up a bit, and told us "One good thing came out of this. I'm hearing that all the judges on the case are denying bail. They're saying the fact that the files that led to all the arrests were encrypted tells them that it was all part of a conscious, deliberate conspiracy, and they're not taking any chances that somebody might decide to rabbit on us. The lawyers are pitching a fit, but it's not doing them the slightest bit of good. That's going to be *another* reason for the dopers not to try this again."

Lucy and I both smiled at the news, and Amy excused herself so she could get back to her paperwork.

A bit later, Lucy and I went in search of the girls. One of the agents told us that we could find them on the pistol range. When we got there, we could see the instructor watching as they each went through a magazine of ammo in what sounded like nine millimeter pistols. When they'd finished, and taken off their hearing protection and safety glasses, Lucy and I moved closer to them. The instructor told us "They're both doing pretty good - 'specially for youngsters. They've made a lot of progress since the first time I saw 'em, and both of 'em are paying attention to safety. I wish some of the other folks in this building listened as good as them."

Both of them blushed slightly at the compliments, and looked pleased when they saw Lucy's and my approval.

I asked if the girls were about ready to leave, and they said they were; the instructor told them to go ahead, that he'd take care of cleaning the weapons. All of us were pleased to see that both girls turned back to make sure the pistols they'd been firing had the magazines removed and had the slides locked back before thanking the instructor for his time. He assured them that he'd been happy to help, and gave me and Lucy a pleased smile before we left.

We'd been back in my office for only a few minutes when Abby and Erika showed up, ready to call it a day.

When we got to Muddy's place that evening, we found that he'd set a small room aside for us - and had taken it upon himself to feed our protective detail along the way.

Supper was roast beef, potatoes, salads, fresh green beans and baby carrots, all topped off with chocolate mousse. By the time we'd all finished eating, I doubt there was a one of us that could have fought off a kitten, we were so stuffed. All during the meal, we'd had young Ricky and a small platoon of service people tending to our every need, and frequent visits from Muddy to make sure everything was going properly - that is, perfectly.

We were working on our second cup of after-dinner coffee when Muddy finally stopped in long enough to really talk with us - starting off by offering all of us congratulations on the successful conclusion to the case we'd been working on. All of us sat around for maybe half an hour just chatting when Amy turned to him and said "You know, Muddy, we had an interesting thing happening the last few weeks. It seems somebody was doing a number on the dealers we have - had! - here in town. Taking their cash, trashing their dope, and scaring them so bad, they were **confessing** when the cops found them chained up so they couldn't run away."

Muddy just looked at her levelly, and said "Really? That's right interesting, there, Amy. Sounds like you maybe had a citizen decide he didn't much care or those kind of folks and decided to offer a little direct assistance."

Amy just looked him in the eye and said "Yeah, that's true enough - but what they were doing was against the law. If we catch them, we're going to have to put them away."

Muddy matched her gaze, and answered "Why, I 'spect you would. But with you all catching so many dealers and such, I wouldn't be surprised if that citizen figured you didn't need the help any more. Wouldn't much matter, then, would it, seeing as how it all came out okay."

With that, Amy gave up, and told him "Yeah, I suppose it doesn't matter that much, now. But I'd sure hate to see something like that happen again - taking care of dopers and such is what the cops and FBI and such are for. I'd sure hate to see a good-spirited citizen like that get into trouble for trying to help, even if maybe it was needed - they were just going at it against the law, and that's what us law enforcement types have to go by."

Muddy just answered "Yeah, I can understand your point; and it sounds like you can understand where that citizen must have been comin' from. I guess it's a good thing it's all over, isn't it?"

After that, Muddy looked around and saw how serious everyone had gotten, and asked "Did I ever tell you all about the time me and Boomer here...", and went on to tell them a story from our Army days. By the time he finished, he had all of us laughing - including the staff.

A couple minutes later, I had the chance to speak quietly with Muddy. After more than a little arguing and fussing, finally convinced him to let me start paying for my meals by pointing out "Now, whoever it was that was messing up those drug dealers, he was sure helping make things tough on them. We found out that all the drugs he was destroying was forcing the dealers here in town to make more and bigger buys - which made it that much easier to bust the assholes in the rest of the country. I'd like to think that what he did was as much a favor to me and what I might have done for you; so I'm saying that it's all balanced out, now."

After some thought, Muddy decided that that was acceptable, but insisted "But the meals for those FBI people out there are still on me tonight - it's my way of celebratin' with you!"

I agreed, and that settled the matter. A few minutes later, I was discretely brought the check. I added a tip for the staff, handed over a credit card, and away it went. When it came back, my copy of the receipt showed that they'd scratched out my tip, taking the bill back down to cover just the meal.

After we left Muddy's, Abby and the rest of us staying at her place stopped off to change clothes before going over to Amy's. Once there, Amy had a few announcements to make.

"Abby, I've got some good news for you. You've been doing such a good here that headquarters has decided to approve your request for special training - as soon as the Cartelita trials are over, you're off to Headquarters for training as a Protective Detail agent."

Abby's face went through a half dozen changes before she let out a loud cry of pleasure - she'd told me once that she thought the protective detail was a clear example of what the FBI was all about, and had applied three times to enter the program.

After all of us had hugged and kissed her in congratulations, Amy told us "I was also told today that Tom and I are to be reassigned to Washington, where Tom will be heading Counter Espionage while I take over the Narcotics desk."

Another round of hugs and kisses ensued before Amy finished by saying "And a little bird told me that Erika is going to be asked to write a report on what she's learned from Dan, and being down here during all of this - and make recommendations for what changes need to be made to agent training. The **good** news is that after all that's happened on this case, it is highly probable that her recommendations are going to be accepted - meaning that our agents are going to be a HELL of a lot more ready for what they're likely to run into once they hit the streets."

Erika answered "It's about time! I've been trying to get those muttonheads to listen to me for three years!", making us all laugh before offering her our condolences (for having to write the report) and congratulations (for finally getting to make the changes she wanted).

Amy's last announcement was the best of all: "Finally, I told people at work not to expect us in before noon tomorrow, so we've got plenty of time to celebrate tonight."

All of us cheered, and laughed, and started talking at once. After a bit, Amy and Tom went into the kitchen, reappearing a couple minutes later with a bottle of champagne and glasses. Handing me the bottle, Amy said "Dan, since you made all this possible, you get the honor of opening this."

I thanked her, and after removing the tie and foil, carefully worked the cork out so that it didn't go bouncing around her living room and hurt someone. I poured glasses for everyone - including the girls - and Amy offered the first toast: "To Dan!", embarrassing the hell out of me.

"To Dan!" everyone else cheered, and we were off...

For the rest of the evening, we celebrated. When the champagne was empty (it didn't take long, what with eight of us drinking), we switched over to mixed drinks for the rest of us, and a beer each to Sandra and Robyn.

It was getting toward dawn before we had all managed to blow off the accumulated stress and exorcised our good spirits. We were all sitting around talking about our plans when Amy moved over to where Abby was sitting, and I heard her say "Abby, your immediate future with the Bureau has been settled. In a few months, you'll be leaving us, and I won't be your supervisor any more. That being the case, there's something I'd like to ask you."

"What's that?" Abby asked, curious.

"Would you be interested in spending some, uh, personal time with me and Tom?"

From the expression on Abby's face, I knew the question had not merely come from way out in left field, but from completely out of the ballpark. She sat there for a few seconds before she got her wits back enough to answer "I... I'd be delighted, Amy. And Tom."

Amy smiled, and leaned over to kiss her - with Tom doing the same when they were done. We all saw them leave, of course; but when they turned to wish us a good night, all we did was wish them one, as well.

A while later, the rest of us decided that it was time to call it a night, as well. Erika looked a bit uncertain about what to do, so I settled any questions she might have by saying "Erika, if you want to spend the night with the two ragamuffins here" - earning myself a pair of indignant looks before they realized I was teasing them - "I think Lucy and I can manage. Besides, I think they've got something planned for Abby tomorrow night."

Erika looked at them, and they nodded their willingness. She smiled at all of us, and agreed. Robyn and Sandra each took one of her hands, and led her into Amy's other bedroom. That left me and Lucy, and together, we got the sofa converted into a bed, as Amy had done for the girls the last time we'd all stayed with her.

Late (!! the next morning, I woke up to the smell of fresh coffee - and when I opened my eyes, I discovered a naked Robyn holding a cup of it near my face. I managed to sit up, and saw that and equally nude Sandra was doing the same thing to Lucy - who soon

matched my position. When both of us were ready, we were handed our cups before the girls headed back into the kitchen.

They came out a minute later, Robyn holding two cups of coffee while Sandra had one, and explained to us "We were the first ones up, so we went ahead and made some coffee for everyone. It's **almost** noon, so we thought everyone might want to get up, since Amy said you could all go in late, not stay home and play hooky."

I agreed that was probably a good idea, and they continued on their way, aiming for Amy and Tom's room. I heard them quietly open the door, then close it again a bit later, before softly giggling. As they passed through the living room, Lucy asked "What was so funny?"

They looked at each other and giggled again before Sandra told us "You should **see** them in there - they look like a pile of pretzels!"

Lucy and I just smiled, and the girls continued on their mission of mercy.

It was a bit longer before they came through the living room again, but when I heard the coffee maker start hissing and burbling, I realized they'd started another pot of coffee.

When I was about halfway through my coffee, I finally felt able to move, and got up long enough to at least put on my underwear. A moment later, Lucy followed my example - putting on panties, but not bothering with a bra.

As soon as we finished our coffee, Lucy and I headed into the kitchen for a refill. While we were there, Lucy looked around and found an insulated carafe. We refilled our cups, then poured the rest into the carafe, and started another pot - figuring that if the others felt anything like we did, they'd need as much coffee as we did.

We'd barely gotten back into the living room and converted the bed back into a couch when Erika and the girls came out - having only put on panties, as Lucy had done. Robyn guided Erika to a chair across from Lucy and me, while Sandra carried their cups into the kitchen. A bit later, we heard the coffeemaker kick in again before Sandra came out with their coffee cups. When she sat down, Sandra told us "I filled the carafe the rest of the way, and started another pot."

We were all about halfway through our second cup when Amy, Tom, and Abby finally made their appearance. When they did, Robyn and Sandra got up and told them "You guys go ahead and sit down - we'll bring some more coffee." They all thanked the two of them, and came into the living room. Lucy and I got up and moved to a chair, Lucy on my lap, so the three of them would have room on the couch. They'd barely sat down when Sandra came in with the coffee carafe, and topped everyone's cup before heading back into the kitchen.

"Who made the coffee and left it for us?" Tom asked.

Lucy grinned, and answered "Who else in this place is energetic and awake enough to do it?"

"Damn kids", Amy jokingly complained, making the rest of us laugh.

We all sat there quietly drinking our coffee for a while before Abby hesitantly asked "Do I smell... food?"

The rest of us sniffed the air, and I told her "Smells like it to me. They're in there making breakfast for all of us, is my guess."

Amy started to get up, and Tom put his hand on her arm, saying "Forget it. If you're feeling the way I am, you're in no shape to argue with them and win."

"Damn kids" Amy grumped again, to another round of laughter.

A while later, the girls came out with plates and a tray of food for all of us - scrambled eggs, bacon, fried potatoes, toast, and orange juice. After they'd set everything down, Robyn told us "When that's gone, there's more in the oven, keeping warm." Sandra topped off everyone's coffee, and the two of them sat down to join the rest of us for breakfast.

I'd had my doubts that we were going to be able to eat everything the girls had brought out - but once I got a few bites in me, I realized how hungry I was. The others must have felt the same way, because we managed to clean off the tray they'd brought out - and the rest of it, as well.

The girls had collected all the dishes - careful to leave the cups - and were in the kitchen cleaning up when Abby turned to Lucy and me and asked "Do you ever get, well, frustrated at them?"

Lucy and I looked at each other, and then laughed before Lucy told her "Sometimes - but not often. Usually it's because one or both of them is doing something perfectly normal: being a teenage girl. Wanting to go to the mall or hang out with their friends when they've got homework they don't want to do, letting their rooms get too messy, that kind of stuff. Then they go and do something like this morning, and you realize that they're turning into the kind of people that you'd like them to be, and it's all right again. You love them, always, no matter HOW crazy they make you sometimes."

When Lucy finished, I added "Sure, sometimes they get carried away with something, or go too far - but it's never deliberate, or out of maliciousness; it's just their youth and enthusiasm. Yeah, sometimes that same youth and energy get on my nerves - but I'd rather have them making mistakes than not trying at all, so I live with it. And like Lucy said, I always love them, no matter what."

Lucy finished it by saying "They're good kids, both of them. You can put up with a **lot** of little mistakes when you know they're not making big ones, and staying out of trouble."

At that, all of them nodded their heads in agreement.

We heard Amy's dishwasher start, and Sandra came in with the coffee pot to ask if we needed any more coffee. Amy told her "Yeah, I think I could manage another cup while I get ready to go to - ugh! - work."

The rest of us allowed that that was probably a good idea, and Sandra topped off everyone's cup again before going back into the kitchen. A few moments later, she and Robyn came out and sat down with us again.

Tom said "Since we've only got the one bathroom, it's probably best if Amy and I clean up first, since we're the ones that actually have work to do. If whoever has clothes here wants to go next, we can all go in together."

We all nodded, and Amy added "Abby and Erika, I don't think there's much for you to do, so if you don't want to come in, that's fine. Dan, same thing for you, only double - unless there's something **REALLY SPECIAL** that needs your attention, let it go and take the day off. God knows, you've earned it."

"Thanks, Amy, I think I will" I replied.

"Good. Now, I'll give all of you **FIFTEEN** minutes bathroom privileges before Tom and I have to take a shower!"

We all laughed - but didn't take the risk, each of us getting a turn while the rest got dressed and ready for the day.

After they were dressed, Tom told us "You're all welcome to stay for as long as you want, of course - but we'll understand if you want to go back to Abby's, too." We thanked them, and said goodbye to them as they went out the door.

It was mid afternoon when Abby finally said "I think I'm about ready to go home. Who's going with me?"

We all looked around at each other, and Erika finally said "It looks like we all are!"

Abby got an unhappy look on her face, and said "That part is fine - but there's no way all of us are going to fit in my car! How are we going to get all of us to my place without leaving somebody alone that shouldn't be? Even with the detail around you, Amy would skin me or Erika alive if we did that."

It was Erika that came up with a solution: "You take two of them and somebody from the detail; the person from the detail brings back my car, and I bring the rest. With me or Dan here, I don't think Amy would mind one of them helping us like that..."

Abby thought the suggestion over for a few moments and said "Yeah, that would work. Okay, who wants to ride with me, and who wants to wait?"

I didn't mind either way, so I let Lucy and the girls settle it. They finally settled on Robyn and Sandra going with Abby, leaving me and Lucy to ride with Erika.

With the details worked out, Abby went outside to talk to the head of the protective detail. A few minutes later, we heard a knock at the door, and Erika answered it, then let Abby back in.

"They're fine with the idea, and I've got someone outside waiting. You two young gangbusters ready?"

Both of them laughed, and said they were.

"Then let's get this show on the road!" Abby exclaimed, and they quickly moved to follow her outside.

While we waited, Erika called the office, and let Amy and Tom know what we'd decided to do. While we had the chance, we all thanked them again for their hospitality, and said we'd see them the next day.

A little while later, there was a knock at the door, and Erika answered it with me backing her up. It was one of the protective detail people telling her that her car was there, whenever we were ready to leave. Erika told him it would be just a couple minutes, and he readily agreed. All of us quickly gathered up anything that we thought we might need at Abby's, then followed Erika outside - carefully making sure we locked Amy's place behind us.

The drive was fast and easy enough, though Lucy proved she'd been paying attention to the classes she'd taken by pointing out the three cars of agents keeping us company. Erika just smiled and told her she was doing just fine.

Once at Abby's we spent the rest of the afternoon and evening quietly. Supper was late, and simple

When it came time for bed, none of us had to question where we'd be sleeping. Robyn and Sandra didn't hesitate to take Abby's hands and walk with her to her bedroom; Lucy and I did the same with Erika.

Once in the bedroom, Lucy and I teamed up to undress Erika, who then joined each of us in undressing the other. When we were all naked, we climbed into bed, Lucy and me

bracketing Erika. For the next couple of hours, we all made love to each other, rested, and made love some more. By the time we were done, all of us were thoroughly drained and relaxed. With their greater capacity for multiple climaxes, Erika and Lucy were both nearly exhausted, so I went into the bathroom and got some things, then cleaned them off before doing the same for myself. That accomplished, I climbed back into bed with them, where Lucy spooned against Erika's front, and I covered the back.

I woke up before the others the next morning, and went downstairs to get the coffee started - only to find that Abby was already there, and had beaten me to it. We both sat down at the table to wait for it, and I told her "Well, I'm glad to see that the two sex bombs didn't kill you last night."

Abby grinned, and said "No, they didn't kill me - though I thought I'd died and gone to Heaven a few times! And to think, the first time they were here, I thought they were such sweet **innocent** things!"

I laughed, and said "Now you know better."

Abby laughed, too, and said "Boy, do I know better!"

When the coffee was ready, Abby got out the cups and a couple of trays. We poured enough for all of us, emptying the pot, and she started another.

I followed her upstairs - entranced by the way her ass cheeks clenched as she moved - and went into the bedroom, where I set the coffee where Lucy and Erika could smell it. It didn't take long before the smell of it got to them, and both woke up. One after the other, they turned to me and smiled good morning before reaching for one of the cups. We all sat in bed long enough to finish our coffee, then headed in for a shower. It was a bit crowded, but we didn't mind.

Once we were dressed, we went downstairs, only to find no one there. Lucy and Erika got me seated at the table, and went about making pancakes and sausage for everyone.

A few minutes later, Abby and the girls made their way downstairs - the girls with mischievous grins on their faces, and Abby looking a bit flushed. It didn't take a genius to figure out that they'd teamed up to give her another orgasm - or even two - since the last time I'd seen her.

Over breakfast, we worked out our plans for the day. Erika told us that if they wanted, she'd be happy to stay with Lucy and/or the girls so they didn't have to go into the office if they didn't want to. All three of them agreed, and thanked her.

Abby told me that there were still a few things that we needed to take care of, but that they weren't major or very many, so we weren't going to be very busy.

When breakfast was over, Lucy and the girls shooed me and Abby off to the office.

There, as Abby had said, there was only a little bit of paperwork for us to deal with. The first thing I did was go into The Room and get my laptop disconnected from the dealer's machine, then 'wipe' the drive in it. When I was done, I took it back to my office and had one of the tech people come by to verify that there was **nothing** on it. That out of the way, I collected the rest of my things and took them out to Abby's car.

About mid-morning, Tom stopped by to tell me that Amy had asked him to let us know that everything was taken care of, and that Lucy, the girls, and I could go ahead and go home whenever we were ready.

I thanked him, and he went on to tell me that if I'd let them know when I wanted to leave, they'd see to it that I got a flight. He waited patiently while I called Lucy and gave her the good news, and found out when she and the girls wanted to head back. I wasn't particularly surprised when they said they were ready to go as soon as possible.

When I got off the phone with Lucy, I told Tom what they'd said, and he laughed before telling me "I can understand that. I'll got you tickets for late tomorrow morning, okay?"

I said that would be fine, and he left.

It was shortly before lunch when Abby and I finished up the last of the paperwork. Amy came in and said "Good, I got here in time. If you two are done, you're both free to take the rest of the day off. There's no sense staying here when you could be somewhere else. Dan, Tom told me when your flight is, and said to tell you that the tickets will be waiting for you at the counter." After giving me the details of the flight, she said "And of course, all of us are going to be there to see you off."

"Thanks, Amy", I said.

She looked at me, and said "We got them, Dan. Every last one of them - and yes, I heard about the guy that did Sandra's parents turning himself in. I know you got a call from a couple of your old Army buddies, and that there were two people chasing around the underground back home. Like Muddy said, it's over now, so there's really nothing to fuss about. I just hope nothing like that happens again, okay?"

"I hope not, too, Amy."

"Good. Now go on, and get out of here. You've got a family waiting for you."

I stood up and gave her a kiss before Abby and I headed out the door. We hadn't gotten more than a few feet, though, when Amy called me back. When I got there, she carefully slid my nameplate out of it's holder by 'my' office and handed it to me, saying "You almost forgot this, Agent Andrews!"

I smiled and took it, kissed her again, and went back to where Abby was smiling as she waited. On my way out the door, more than a few agents stopped me to thank me, and wish me well; I did the same in return.

Back at Abby's place, I told Lucy and the girls when we'd be leaving. Since we'd brought all of our clothing and such with us from Amy's, it was just a matter of packing everything except the stuff we'd need the next day.

When we were done, I was sitting outside on Abby's patio, drinking a beer, when Abby and Erika came out and sat down across from me.

I waited patiently, and after a bit, Erika spoke up saying "Dan, both of us wanted to make sure we had a chance to talk to you alone before you left, and this seemed like a good time."

I raised an eyebrow, and she went on "When I came here, I thought that all I was going to be doing was trying to get information from you about how I could train our agents better, and watching out for you. But that hasn't been the way it worked out. I've learned more from you - and those incredible people you call your family! - than I ever could have dreamed. Yes, I'm going back with ideas and knowledge that's going to keep our people safe. But I'm also going back knowing what it's like to **love**, and BE loved. I've learned more about myself, and what kind of person I am and want to be, in the last few weeks than I *ever* have. And I've got you to thank for it - you and Lucy and Robyn and Sandra. With what I've learned about life from you, and them, and Amy and Tom and Abby, I know that I'm ready to let people back into my life. Who knows, maybe I'll even find a guy that's enough like you that I want to keep him? But whatever happens, I'll know that I have **friends**, and that I don't have to bury myself in my work to cover the emptiness in my heart and my life - because now my heart and my life AREN'T empty. As much as you've given of yourself to me, I know how little it is of what's inside you - and God! How I envy Lucy and those girls, and what they have of you! But I'm not **jealous** of them - I love them, and know they love me, too much for such a petty emotion. I came here thinking that you were only one kind of person. But now that I've gotten to know you, and your family, I realize just how much more there is to you - and I'm incredibly happy that you've thought enough of me to share what's inside you with me. Like Amy said the other day: 'Thanks' isn't enough, but it's all I've got."

Abby waited a few seconds, then told me "Like Erika said, I thought your coming here would be a chance for me to learn something. When you were here last time, I saw how much you did to help us with that case, and I wanted to learn as much as I could from you. But I got a whole **lot** more than I ever expected. You've helped me discover stuff that I never even knew existed, and gotten me started toward being a better person - the kind of person I've always wanted to be. And now I know that I *can* be - and you've given me the courage to not settle for anything less. Being with you, and getting to know Lucy and Robyn and Sandra, I know what it means to have real **love** and a real **relationship**. I was proud to be an FBI agent, but you helped me understand WHY I was proud - and that just made me even prouder. I know I still have a lot to learn, but I **want** to learn it, so I

can try to help people the way you do. I always enjoyed sex - but you and Lucy and the girls and even Erika and Amy have shown me what it means to be **loved**, and to love someone back. You've done so much more for me than I've done for you, I can't even begin to repay you."

By the time Abby finished, both of them were quietly crying as they watched me.

I looked from one to the other, and told them "I'm glad to know that my being here has been a good thing for you. I don't know anything about whether or not you think you're better or worse people than you were when I got here" - I had to hold a hand up when both started to say something - "but if you think you're better, then it's only because you were good people to start with. If you think I've given you anything special, something that you don't think you can pay me back for, then I'd ask you to do something else: pass it along. Find people that you think are pretty good to start with, and help them find the best that's inside THEM. If you think I'm someone you want to be like, then turn around and be that person for someone else. You're both right - I, Lucy, and the girls all love you for who you **are**. We're all going to be disappointed if we don't hear from you or get to see you every now and then. I know Lucy would back me up when I say that you're always welcome in our home - whether you're just passing through, or you have a couple days or even weeks to spare. For me, it's been a pleasure not only working with you, but knowing you - and I'm honored that you would think of me and my family as your friends."

When I finished talking, we all got up and met at the end of the table for a group hug, and to share a round of kisses. Both of them were sniffling when we broke apart, and I told them "Oh, come on now - this isn't the end of anything! It's the *beginning* of a new relationship, so don't be sad that we have to leave. Be glad that we can get together again!"

That slightly mollified both of them, and they pulled themselves together before we headed back inside.

The next morning, Lucy, the girls, and I had a plenty of company as we started our trip home. Amy had reduced our protection to a half-dozen agents, and told us that the Bureau office at home would be keeping a couple of agents on us until the trials were all over. We'd also be getting more frequent drive-bys from our local police department. When we got to the airport, one of the agents with us went to the counter to get our tickets while the rest of us waited off to the side, out of the way.

After he handed me our tickets, I thanked him, and he said "Thank YOU, Mr. Andrews."

We made our way to the gate - bypassing the security checkpoints with no problems - and were waiting in the gate area when I remembered something I hadn't done yet. Reaching into my pocket, I pulled out the folder with my FBI ID, and handed it to Amy, saying

"I'm thinking I don't need this any more, and giving it back to you here seems somehow appropriate."

She looked down to what I was giving her, then gave me a big smile and said "Yeah, it does seem appropriate, doesn't it?" before taking it from me.

A little while later, our flight was called, and we all traded hugs and kisses with each other before the four of us made our way to the plane. There were plenty of damp eyes by the time we got to the gate and started down the jet way.

The flight home was both a disappointment and a relief for all of us - disappointing that we were leaving our new friends, and a relief that the reason for those new friends was over.

There were a couple of Bureau agents looking for us when we landed, and they escorted us through collecting our luggage, and out to the car they had waiting for us.

Back inside the house, we were happy to find that Wacko the cat and our dog Sunshine had both done just fine while we were gone. Sunshine was ecstatic to see us, and even Wacko decided that she was glad we were home, weaving between our ankles and meowing her greetings.

When we'd unpacked, I went over to the neighbor that had agreed to check in on Wacko and Sunshine, and retrieve the mail they'd collected for us. They were an older couple, and they'd been horrified by what happened to Sandra's parents. They and we had gotten to know each other fairly well, and the girls had teamed up to help the woman find the miniature Schnauzer she doted on when it escaped their back yard.

True to their word, the Bureau did everything they could to make my participation in the assorted trials as easy as they could - but I still had to go out of town a few times to testify at some of the trials. Whenever that happened they would put a few additional agents on the house and with Lucy and the girls, just as a precaution.

There finally came the day, though, that we got a call from Amy, telling us that the last of them had been sentenced, and the whole thing was over. She said there would probably be appeals by nearly all of them, but the cases had been so airtight and run so cleanly that there wasn't a chance in hell of any of them getting a retrial.

The week after Amy's call, I got another, from Clara Hawkes who told me that the Director would like me to come to Washington so he could thank me personally for my efforts. She said that he knew I had a family, and that if I couldn't, he'd understand - but he was inviting ALL of us, and that the Bureau would pay all our expenses.

I talked it over with Lucy and the girls, and they said that we should go. Clara was delighted when I agreed, and a week later found all of us in Washington - where Amy and Abby were join us in meeting the Director.

The meeting with the Director was surprisingly low-key: he met all of us in his office, sitting with us for nearly half an hour as Amy and Abby told him the story of what had happened. When they were done, he turned to me and said "From the reports I got, I knew that something special had happened there. But until Agents Jones and O'Malley told me the story, I didn't really understand HOW special. Mr. Andrews, even more than before, I want to express my thanks to you - both personally, and for the Bureau. I had planned to do this before, but now, I'm even happier to be able to do it. The **cash** we seized from all these operations totaled up to over a hundred and seventy-five million dollars. I know that you were working for us for Agent's pay; I, and a number of other people, don't think that's anywhere near enough; so we're giving you a reward of ten percent of the money we seized."

I could only blink as the others gasped at what he'd just said. When I got my voice back, I told him "Director, I'm flattered at the offer, but what I did was out of care and concern for my country and my family. I've got more than enough money to last me the rest of my life, with plenty left over for my kids. Agent Jones lost an agent on this case, and another is only now getting back to work. If you don't mind, I'd like to ask that the money be used where it's needed more - some of it to the families of those two agents, and the rest toward helping fund any changes in your agent training that you might find necessary."

With that, it was the Directors turn to sit there and blink. After a bit, he said "I can't believe I just heard someone turn down a seventeen-and-a-half million dollar paycheck. But if you're serious, Mr. Andrews" - "I am", I assured him - "then I would be more than happy to see to it that the money is used as you say. If you remember Agent Simpson?" - I nodded that I did - "She has written a report for us, detailing some changes in agent training that she would like to see. After reading her report, I was inclined to approve her suggestions; when I heard what all had happened on this case, that inclination grew even stronger. But if you're willing to put what should be *your* money toward it, I'm damn well going to see that it happens. Your money won't cover all the changes she wants to make, but when the rest of the staff learns that you're ready to put that much money into it, I don't doubt that we'll be able to find the necessary funding."

He turned to look at Lucy, and told her "This is some kind of man you've got here, Mrs. Andrews."

Lucy smiled and said "Lucy, please - and yes, I know."

He smiled back, and said "Yes, I suppose you do."

He sat and chatted with all of us - including Robyn and Sandra, which shook them up - for a while longer before telling us "One of the reasons that I wanted to meet all of you is so that you could all be together for a little surprise."

We all looked at each other, and he stood up, saying "If you'll all come with me?" Of course, we all did, and followed him into the next room, where a number of people were

gathered. There, he told us "It's not often that they let me do this, so it's a particular pleasure in this case. Agent O'Malley, if you'll step forward?"

Abby did as told, and was as surprised as the rest of us when the Director read out, then awarded her, a citation for courage. When she rejoined us, Amy told her "You earned it, Abby."

I was as surprised as the others when my name was called next, and certificates were awarded to me, both as a Special Agent and as a civilian. When he handed them to me, everyone in the room applauded as he shook my hand.

All of us were stunned when he called Sandra up next. He took her hands in his and told her "I know that you paid a great price for Dan's participation in this case. I'm not going to trivialize that cost by giving you any kind of certificate or award - nothing can replace your parents, or compensate you for your loss. But I want you to know this: you have the deepest sympathies and greatest respect, not only from myself personally, but the entire Federal Bureau of Investigation."

Sandra's eyes started to leak a little bit at that, but she pulled herself together and thanked him. Around us, I could see that hers weren't the only eyes with tears in them.

After that, the rest of the people in the room stopped by to give Abby and me their congratulations, and to tell Sandra that they were sorry for her loss. When it was over, the Director told me "You've probably noticed that there weren't any photos taken, or any media present. After what happened to Sandra's parents, we don't want to add any more complications to your lives."

"Thank you, sir. We greatly appreciate it", I answered.

When he stuck his hand out, I shook it, and he told me "It's been a genuine pleasure to meet you, Mr. Andrews. I'd like to talk with you some more, but I **have** to leave now. Please, stay in town for a while, and see the sights. All your hotel charges will be billed to the Bureau, so don't hesitate to enjoy yourselves."

"It's been a pleasure meeting you, too, sir."

With that, he started making his way toward the door, pausing along the way to say a few things to Lucy and the girls, as well as Abby and Amy.

We did stay in Washington for a few days, seeing all the sights we could - including a **VERY** personal tour of the FBI headquarters. While we were in town, Erika managed to come up to visit us a couple of times before we finally had to head back home.

The lawyers finally found the end of the legal maze, and I was appointed Sandra's legal guardian only a few months after the end of the Cartelita case. The same day we got notification of it, I told my lawyer to start formal adoption proceedings. Sandra's grandparents wholeheartedly supported it, so it went through relatively quickly.

After school let out, Sandra and Robyn both got interested in some of the boys they were meeting; neither one of them wanted anything to do with any boy that wasn't willing to come to our house and meet Lucy and me. When her birthday rolled around, Sandra was delighted to discover that she'd received a car - and, after Lucy let me know that it was Sandra's idea, her own 9mm pistol. She and Robyn would join Lucy and me at the gun range, and it wasn't long before both of them turned into pretty fair shots.

When Abby went to start her training for being on a protective detail, she stopped off and stayed with us for a few days. For the last couple of them, Erika joined us, too.

With the help and support of our friends, new and old, it didn't take long before we were again in the routine of a comfortable - if somewhat unique - suburban family.