

# Alexandra

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# Chapter 1

One of the major problems in my life is an irresistible impulse to fall head-over-heels in love with complete strangers. This may not seem much of a problem, but when you combine it with a deep seated insecurity that makes me sure that they'll never be interested in loving me back, it produces quite a few problems.

The first is an unwillingness, or rather an inability, to express my feelings. The first time I fell in love was when I was fourteen. It was with a girl who used to go to the school across the road from mine. But I couldn't even bring myself to talk to her let alone ask her out.

We used to get the same bus home from school and I'd stand there at the bus stop trying not to stare at her. For a whole school year we stood there, not talking to each other. And to this day I have absolutely no idea if she had any similar feelings for me, or if she even noticed me.

The second problem is that I always pick a girl who under no stretch of the imagination would be the least bit interested in me. In my late teens I fell in love with a girl five years older than me. Today this would not cause me any problems, but the gap between a shy, immature eighteen year old boy and a somewhat more sophisticated, mature twenty three year old woman is quite large. She treated me kindly, I'm sure she was fond of me, but she had absolutely no romantic interest in me.

The third problem is that once I've overcome my shyness and I've struck up a friendship with the girl I immediately jump to the conclusion that she's fallen in love with me, despite the fact that we might be having a very casual relationship from her point of view.

In the normal course of events I can take it or leave it if somebody takes a dislike to me. But once I've fallen "in love" there can be no alternative but that she loves me back. And if she doesn't seem to, well, I've got a vivid imagination and I can make no end of excuses to explain her behaviour. I can think of everything, but that she isn't interested in me.

In between falling "in love", which happens about every three years, I have had more normal relationships with women. Indeed I have many friends who are women, a few of them ex-girlfriends. When I'm not "in love" I can communicate quite well. We can go out on a date, have a great time and end the night with a kiss and a cuddle. Sex was never a problem, because we wouldn't get that serious in that way.

And therein lies the problem. The girlfriends I could talk to, and have an honest and open relationship with, were the girls I was most likely to have sex with, but I had no interest in having sex with them. The girls I wanted were the ones I was "in love" with, and they were the ones I had no hope of making it with.

So at the beginning of this story I started out as a twenty four year old virgin waiting for someone to come along and sweep me off my feet on a whirlwind of passion and romance. Someone I could "make a commitment" to and "share my life" with, someone with whom I could have sex with every night.

I met and fell "in love" with a girl who, for reasons of her own that I cannot tell you, had exactly the opposite problems with her relationships with men as I had with women. We complemented each other perfectly and produced one of the worst relationships ever.

It started on a nice bright June evening at a meeting of the City Camera Club. A member of the Club, who was also a member of the Historical Society, was to give a guided tour detailing the history of the area surrounding the club's new premises. I was standing talking to another member of the club, while we were waiting for enough people to turn up for the tour to start, when I noticed a rather attractive woman come into the room.

Something snapped in the back of my mind and I was "in love" again. I was began to make my way over to her, but just then our guide for the evening decided that there was enough people to start the tour. He clapped his hands together to get our attention, asked us all to gather around and gave a short introductory talk about what we were going to see tonight.

Then he asked us all to move outside. As I turned around I noticed that the woman who was to be the new "love of my life" had been standing behind me, talking to a friend of mine called Paul. I don't remember what he said nor what her answer was. But my heart jumped when I heard her voice.

The only way I can describe it is as the cutest accent I have ever heard, but that doesn't convey the impact it had on me. For me one of the most important things about a woman is her voice. I love accents and the way a woman uses words and the textures of her speech, all add to my attraction for her. And here was a woman able to sent shivers down my spine, even when she wasn't talking to me.

Paul asked her what her name was and I heard her reply "Alexandra", before I got separated from them as the crowd squeezed its way through the door. Outside we turned right and followed the guide down the street. I watched Alexandra as she walked along ahead of me. She was wearing an orange track-suit type jacket, with faded blue jeans. And I thought that she had one of the nicest bottoms I'd ever seen.

We followed the guide around the corner and down a little alleyway. He stopped outside the gates of an old Jewish cemetery that I hadn't known was there. Unfortunately the gates were locked so we couldn't get in to explore. But our guide gave us a brief history of it standing on the pavement outside.

I noticed Alexandra sneak a camera out of her pocket and point it through the bars of the cemetery's railings. I walked over to her and reached her just as she was putting the camera away again.

"Nice shot?" I asked.

"Umm, yes," she gave me a petite smile and I almost kissed her.

There was silence for a moment. Our guide had started to walk on and the group was following him. She turned to follow and I walked beside her.

"So what's your name?" I asked, even though I'd heard her tell it to Paul a minute ago.

"Alexandra," the word danced off her tongue.

My heart was beating so loud and she spoke so softly that I had trouble hearing her. "Alex?" I asked.

"I prefer Alexandra," she replied.

"Alexandra," I savored her name.

We walked in silence for a few moments. Then I asked, "So is this your first time down at the Camera Club?"

"Oh, no. I've been to several meetings," she smiled.

"Really," I was surprised. "I must have been asleep not to have noticed you before."

She laughed softly. "Well, I've seen you around."

"Yeah?" I smiled at her. "Well I go to most meetings." I laughed, "Guess I must be addicted to them."

She was a few inches shorter than me and as I looked down at her, she smiled up at me. Our eyes met and I was lost. There and then she stole my heart with the sparkle in her hazel eyes.

The rest of the tour is like a dream to me. I have a hazy impression of the group following our guide around the streets and alleyways, stopping here and there to be told about the historical significance of this or that building. But I judge the highlights of the tour not on the historical pedigree of the buildings, but how close I managed to get to Alexandra as we stood and listened to the stories of our guide. I remember talking to her, but I don't remember what we said.

To my now jaded memory it seems as if I spent the whole tour running about the group trying to be as close as possible to her for as long as possible. The reason I had to keep running to catch up with her was because she kept moving away from me. It wasn't that she didn't like me, or so I thought, it was just that she wanted me to chase after her. A thought to which I should have paid more attention.

But at the time all I thought about was being near her, to be close enough to touch, to talk and listen to her. She had an irresistible attraction for me, like a moth to a candle flame. And I circled closer and closer to the burning passion.

After the tour a group of us retired to the pub as usual. Alexandra joined us, but sat at the opposite end of the group from me. During the night I switched from conversation to conversation, gradually working my way along the group towards her. But unfortunately I didn't get to her before closing time.

For the next week I could think of nothing but her. When I went to bed my last thought was of her and when I woke she was in my first. The physiologists say that men think of sex once every five minutes, well I seemed to have changed that thought to Alexandra. At that time I

knew that I was going to have sex with her. Now I know I wanted much more than just sex from her.

It was a sensation of almost physical hunger. I wanted to touch her and see her and be with. To smell her even! I've never paid much attention to smell with a woman before. Except on the odd occasion when I meet a woman who seemingly uses a perfume designed to fumigate the whole room. But with Alexandra it was as if I wanted to devour her with all my senses.

I can't remember what the lecture at next week's meeting of the Club was about. But I do remember the disappointment I felt that she didn't show up before the meeting started. However after the announcements were read and the meeting was concluded I turned to find her sitting in the back row.

I smiled at her and she smiled back. So I made my way over to speak to her.

"Did you enjoy the meeting?" I asked as I stood beside her chair.

"Yes," she stood up. "But I missed the beginning."

There was an electrical tension between us. I wanted to grab her and hug her, but I couldn't.

"Oh, you didn't miss much," I smiled, while the smell of her perfume sent my heart racing.

"Good," she smiled back.

I couldn't think of anything to say. Or rather the only things I could think of were along the lines of, "Let's go back to your place and have mad, passionate sex," which didn't seem appropriate to either the location or the stage our relationship was at.

"I think I'll go up stairs for some coffee," she started for the exit.

"Err, yes," I replied and watched her make her way through the crowd.

Paul tapped me on the shoulder and asked, "Are you coming for a pint?"

Normally I would but today I wanted to follow Alexandra up to the coffee dock. "I'll be down later, Paul," I said. "Tonight I feel like a cup of coffee first."

"You, coffee?" he faked amazement. "Are you feeling all right?"

"I do drink coffee on the odd occasion," I replied.

A few other people headed for the street exit. "See you later," he said and joined them.

I made my way upstairs and got myself a cup of coffee. I saw Alexandra browsing through the couple of cupboards that the club stored its small library in. I went over and stood beside her.

"Anything interesting?" I asked.

"Oh," she looked up. "Yeah, it's all about nineteen twenties fashion photographs." She turned the book to show me its pages.

"Oh yes," I half turned and looked at the book. "They had style then, didn't they?"

"Yes," she slowly flicked through the pages and we looked at the old style glamour photos.

I was leaning back against the wall, but close enough to her to feel the heat from her body. As she flipped the pages she leant back and towards me, pressing her shoulder against my arm. I wanted to put my arm around her shoulders and hug her close.

Instead I cleared my throat and asked, "Do you want to come out to the movies with me on Friday?"

She looked up at me, "This Friday?"

"Well yes," I smiled.

"Well..." she hesitated. And my heart stopped beating. "I think that would be very nice." And I sighed with relief.

"Meet you at half seven outside Eason's newsagents on O'Connell Street," I said.

"OK" she smiled back.

I almost left then, but Alexandra turned the page of the book and held it out so that I could see. So we stayed there for the next hour, flicking through photography books.

Then Brian, another member of the club, offered me a lift home, as he lives out in my direction.

I hesitated, not wanting ever to be parted from Alexandra.

"Oh," gushed Alexandra, "Do take your lift."

So I said "OK." And "Goodbye" to Alexandra, and took Brian's lift. And spend the next few days thinking only of Alexandra.

## Chapter 2

On Friday I arrived about fifteen minutes early and stood on the street anxiously looking up and down, unsure as to which direction she'd come from. Under the clock outside Easons bookshop on O'Connell Street is a popular place to arrange to meet. Firstly it is a well known landmark. Secondly it is in a fairly busy and public place. And thirdly from the point of view of anyone waiting there are a number of buses that stop there, so you can pretend that people are not looking at you wondering if you have been stood up, and instead convince yourself that they think that you are just waiting for a bus.

Then just as the clock above me began to chime the half hour I saw her walking up from the direction of Abbey St. My heart stopped.

She was wearing a blue cardigan with a matching cotton top and long, flowing skirt, with sandals on her feet. Her long black hair and skirt were blowing in the breeze and she smiled as she saw me. I fell in love with her again. She was just so beautiful it took my breath away. And my heart started pounding in my chest.

"Hi," I said, restraining myself from grabbing her and hugging her off her feet. "How are you?"

"Hi," she smiled. "I'm fine." She shrugged, "A bit tired from work, but you don't want me to go into that."

I wanted her to go into everything. I wanted to know how she spent every minute of every day of her life. But I couldn't tell her that. So instead I just nodded and smiled.

"So," I gestured with my arm and started to walk towards O'Connell Bridge. She walked beside me. "There's a French film on in the Screen cinema that I thought you might like to see." I probably knew the name of it at the time, but I can't remember what it was now.

She nodded, "That sounds nice."

"Do you mind," I slipped my hand into hers.

"No," she smiled and squeezed it gently.

My heart leapt and my grin became ten feet wide.

"So you had a bad day in work then," I said.

"Yes," she sighed. "My boss gave me this load of stuff the other day, that he said he didn't want until next week. Then this afternoon he comes around looking for it and got really annoyed when I didn't have it done." She stopped herself and smiled at me, "But then this is our first date, you don't want me bitching about work."

I just wanted to hear her speak. I didn't care what she talked about. "Not really," I agreed.

It was a bit early for the film so we went into a pub for a drink first. I had a vodka, as drinking a pint of beer before going to a film usually spoils the second half as by that time I'm usually dying to go to the toilet. She had a rum and coke. We sat by a window and were bathed with late evening light filtered through the frosted glass. The sounds of the city traffic could be faintly heard from the outside.

We talked about this and that for a few minutes. I was half turned towards her with my arm on the back of the seat. She sat close to me with her legs crossed and her hands hooked over her knee. As we talked I took hold of her left hand. She smiled at me and squeezed it down into her lap. We slowly finished our drinks as she caressed my hand in her lap and I toyed with her hair, rubbing it across her neck and shoulder.

We stayed a little too long in the pub and when we arrived in the cinema it was quite full. But we managed to find two seats together in the middle of a row that was not too near the screen.

"So have you done much writing recently?" she asked as we sat down.

I sat beside her. "No I seem to have a terminal case of writer's block," I sighed.

"Well I'm sure it'll pass," she looked around the cinema.

"Yeah. But I keep getting itchy fingers, and thinking that I should be at home doing some work instead of being out enjoying myself," I explained.

"Well you might get some inspiration tonight," she looked back at me.

I laughed. "Inspiration! That's the last thing I need. I've got inspiration coming out my ears. What I need is to get some writing done. Not an idea for yet another story."

"Surely you need inspiration before you know what story to write," she said.

"I've got ideas for five novels and about fifteen short stories that I've haven't written. And probably never will," I replied. "I don't need any more."

"Oh," she said softly.

"Anyway," I smiled. "Inspiration is supposed to come from inside me, or from my own observations, not from copying other people's work. You wouldn't want me to plagiarize now, would you?"

"Of course not," she smiled back.

Yes I used to be that touchy about my writing.

Then the lights dimmed and the audience hushed as the projector sprang into action.

"Do you mind if I'm assertive," I whispered as I slipped my arm around her shoulders.

"Please do," she relaxed against me.

Normally when I put my arm around a girl I rest my hand on the outside of her shoulder, because if you put your arm over her shoulder your hand almost inevitably comes to rest on her breast, which is usually a bit too forward for a first date. But with Alexandra I found my elbow came to comfortably rest just past her neck and my hand brushed against her breast before I knew it. I pulled it away and didn't know what to do with it for a moment. But Alexandra came to my rescue. She solved my dilemma by taking my hand in her's, so we were actually holding hands and being intimate without me groping her. Then she did something which I shall always remember. All through the film she ran her other hand up and down my forearm. Stroking the hairs on my arm and producing a sensation which made me shake with anticipation.

The film was a French romantic comedy about the director of a yoghurt company who falls in love with the cleaning lady at his office. She discovers a plot by one of the managers, who is also having an affair with the director's wife, to unseat him and take over the company. There was lots of intrigue, good one liners and even some social commentary, all wrapped up in a fast moving plot, before we got the happy ending.

All in all it was quite a good film, but it was turned into a masterpiece because I saw it with my arm around Alexandra.

As we were coming out of the cinema I asked, "So where to now, Alexandra?"

"I know a nice pub up towards where I live," She waved in more or less the correct direction. "But I can't remember its name."

"That's OK," I said as I took her hand in mine. "Let's go." And we walked over to the pedestrian crossing to cross the busy traffic coming down Pearse Street.

We talked about the movie as we walked towards the pub, but by the time we reached the gates of Trinity College in College Green we'd both said how much we'd liked it a good few times and had told each other what the best bits had been and there was a lull in the conversation.

As we walked up Grafton Street I looked at a clock and realized that it was five to eleven. The pubs closed at eleven. I pointed this out to Alexandra.

"Don't worry we'll make it," she started to walk faster.

As we reached the top of Grafton St. and crossed into Stephen's Green I became more and more anxious. I don't know why, I mean it wouldn't have been the end of the world if we didn't get a drink.

"So where's this pub then?" I asked knowing that the nearest pubs were in Wexford St. or Camden St., both of which seemed a long way with only a few minutes to closing time.

"At the top of Camden St," she replied.

"Hold on," I stopped, and because we were holding hands pulled her to a stop. "Is it anywhere near Cassidy's?"

"Cassidy's," she smiled. "Yeah, that's the place."

"We'll never make it," I said.

"Well where else can we go?"

"There's got to be somewhere down Grafton St." I searched my memory. "I know," I turned around and we headed back down towards Davey Byrne's.

We rushed down and managed to get there before the doors closed. I asked her what she wanted and fought my way to the bar through the last-orders rush.

I got the drinks and fought my way back out to find Alexandra had found the one remaining free barstool. As I handed her drink I realized that with her sitting on the stool I could look her straight in the eye.

I smiled at her.

She smiled back. "Cheers," she raised her drink and took a sip.

I took a sip from mine.

"This is nice," she look around at the décor. "Have you been here before?"

"Once or twice," I said. "I don't often drink in this part of town."

"Oh," she smiled. "And what part of town do you normally drink in."

"Well," I confessed. "It's usually Camden St. after Camera Club meetings."

We laughed. And as I leant forward I put my hand on her shoulder.

"So when's your last bus?" She sipped her drink.

"Oh don't worry about that," I wondered if that was a gentle hint that I wouldn't be going back to her place.

I sipped my drink.

"I'll walk you home if you like," I suggested causally.

"OK," she smiled back. "That'd be nice."

And I thought, Hey shit! She really likes me, then.

I put my foot on the bottom rung of her stool and stroked her hair. As I turned to take another drink and she ran her fingers across my head.

"Hey, it's soft," she continued to rub my spiky hair.

"Well of course it is," I said, wondering why she would think that my hair wouldn't be soft.

"I thought that you had gelled it or something," she continued, stroking my hair.

"No," I smiled. "It's all natural. That's just the way it grows."

"And the way you brush it," she moved her hand down onto my face. "Hmm, you didn't shave tonight."

"Yes I did," the sensation of her hand on my cheek was sending shivers through my body and they all seemed to be gathering in my balls. "I shaved before coming out tonight."

"Oh," she said. "It seems so rough."

"I'm just such a 'macho' man," I smiled.

She smiled back. Then realizing that we were in a public place she snatched her hand away and took a sip from her drink.

We talked for another ten or fifteen minutes, but I can't really remember what we said. All I remember is the irresistible desire she held for me. There was a huge passion for her building up inside me.

We finished our drinks and left. We were among the first to go after they stopped serving. I took her hand as we walked back up Grafton St.

"So where do you live?" I asked, wondering if we were going to have to get a taxi.

"I live in Synge St.," she replied.

"Oh," I said, "just around the corner from the Camera Club."

"Yes," she smiled. "And my office is in Harcourt St."

"What?" I smiled back. "You only have a five minute walk to work every day."

"Yes, it's dead convenient," she looked at me.

"It's not some grotty little bedsit, is it?" I asked.

"No it's quite nice," she assured. "I've a very good landlord in this place."

"You mean you haven't always?" I teased.

"No," she replied. "I've lived in my fair share of grotty bedsits."

"And now you've found a nice place, that's convenient for both work and the Camera Club, you're going to settle down for a while?" I asked.

"Well yes," she sounded doubtful. "But you do get fed up looking at the same four walls all the time."

"Oh," I asked. "Are you planning on moving soon?"

"Well, usually I do," she said. "But where I am now is so good I'd have problems finding another like it for the same price."

We continued talking about the poor quality of affordable accommodation in Dublin as we walked. I told her about my own experiences and pointed out that I had found it just as bad when I had lived in London. Then we reached her house. I thought that she might turn to kiss me good night and not invite me in. But without a word she opened the door and walked in. I followed, closing the door behind me. She led the way to the back of the house to the entrance of her flat.

As you walked in there was a tiny entrance hall, where we hung our coats. With a door directly ahead that led into the bathroom and a door to the right that led to the main room. In the main room her bed was against the right hand wall, a small table and two chairs on the left, with the kitchen set in an alcove "behind" the bathroom. There was also a couple of armchairs, some bookcases and a wardrobe crammed in.

"I'll make us some coffee," she headed towards the sink.

I sat on one of the armchairs and asked, "Do you mind if I make myself more comfortable, by taking off my shoes."

"No," she smiled. "Feel free."

So I did.

She called over. "I won't need to put on a gas mask, will I?"

"No," I laughed. "I spend most of my day with my shoes off so there isn't time for the smell to build up."

We laughed and there was comfortable silence for a couple of minutes as the kettle came to a boil.

I looked at her as she moved in the small galley kitchen, drinking her natural grace: the arch of her arm as she reached up to take two cups from a shelf, the swing of her hips as she turned to take a jar of coffee from a press, the tilt of her head as she spooned coffee into two mugs, her tongue caressing her upper lip as she was careful not to spill anything.

The kettle clicked off and she poured the water into the mugs, giving each a quick stir. I watched her hair fall across her shoulders as she stirred.

She looked up and I quickly looked away.

She came over with two steaming mugs. "Here you go," she handed one to me.

"Thank you," I took my mug.

"You're welcome," she put her mug down on the floor.

She sat on the floor with her back against the other armchair and kicked off her sandals. We sipped coffee and chatted about the films we'd seen and about photography for a while. She sat back and looked up at me. I leaned forward with my elbows on my knees and looked down at her. Then I figured enough polite social interaction had passed.

I put my half finished coffee down beside the leg of my chair where it wouldn't be in the way. Then I slid onto the floor beside her. I gently took her cup from her and put it beside mine. Then I slipped my left arm around her shoulders once more. She leaned into me and turned to kiss. Her lips opened and I pushed my tongue into her mouth. She put her arms around me and I put my right hand to the back of her head.

We kissed for a while, then I slowly moved my hand down to touch her left breast. She didn't object, so I gently massaged as we continued to kiss. A few minutes later we came up for air and I started to unbutton her cardigan. She smiled as I worked my way down the buttons, then pushed it open and put my hand back onto her breast.

I could feel the heat of her body through the thin cotton and her nipple pushing through her bra. She hugged me closer and we started to kiss again. I could feel her soft breast under my hand, with its nipple rubbing against my palm. I could taste her as we kissed. Feel my arm around her, her arms around me, our bodies close. I was in heaven for the next few minutes.

Then she sat up and moved a couple of feet away from me to take off her cardigan. I knelt on the floor beside her and put my arms around her waist. She reached up to my chest and started to unbutton my shirt. She slipped her hands inside and ran them around my body. I leaned forward and we kissed. A few minutes later she was nuzzling my right shoulder and I was licking and kissing her ear. I was feeling decidedly heated and had developed a serious erection.

Moving back slightly I pulled my shirt out of my jeans and slipped it off. She sat up, her hands still on me. We smiled at each other. I started to take off my shirt and she took her hands away. When I'd pulled it off and tossed it away I noticed that she was looking at me with a strange expression on her face. I'm not exactly Rambo, I know, but there was enough hormones flowing that it didn't make much difference.

Putting my arms around her, I leaned close to start kissing again. She froze for a moment, then her lips opened and her tongue slid out. Her arms roamed up and down my back and we held each other close. I could feel the heat of her body as I held her. I could feel her breasts pressing against me as I hugged her. I could feel her arms on my naked body.

I pulled back. "So," I whispered. "Does this come off," I ran my hand along the neck of her top.

She smiled and shook her head, "No."

OK, I thought this is as far as it goes. I was disappointed, but not overly so. I'd never had sex on a first date before and hadn't really expected to have it now.

I don't know if she was feeling adventurous, or if she just took pity at the look of disappointment that must have come across my face, but she added softly, "But it does pull up."

I looked at her and she smiled.

I said, "Yes?" and smiled back.

"Yes," she replied and pulled it out of the waist band of her skirt and up to reveal her breasts cupped in their white cotton bra.

I was mesmerized. Slowly I put my finger tips to each breast. They were so sweet. The skin so soft, yet the flesh firm underneath. I spread my fingers across them and pressed my palms against her nipples. Then I pressed down under and gently pushed them up within her bra. I glanced up at her face. She was beaming at me. So I lent forward and kissed the soft exposed flesh. I ran my lips and tongue back and across them, then moved down to the cotton of her bra and kissed the nipples hidden below.

She shivered in my arms. I hooked my arms around under her top and moved my mouth up to kiss her. As I opened my mouth her tongue slid past my lips. Her warm body was pressed against mine. Our tongues worked in sync. Her hands raced up and down my back. My arms wrapped around and pulled her close.

Her fingers dug into my back and my face was buried in her hair. With my lips I could feel the heat of her naked skin neck and shoulder underneath the tangle of her hair. Her breath was hot and moist on my ear. We hugged each other as close as we could. Then we pulled back to look at each other.

"So," I ran my hands across her cotton covered breasts. "Does this pull up as well?" I looked up at her.

She smiled and nodded yes.

"Yes?" I smiled back, gesturing with my hand.

She reached around and unhooked her bra. I ran my finger tips up from her waist and under her loosened bra to touch her soft, warm breasts. My fingers circled underneath the firm muscle. I ran my thumbs over her erect nipples and she sighed. So I pushed her bra up, bent down and kissed her left nipple. I ran my tongue across it, next my lips, then I opened my mouth wide and sucked as much as I could inside.

Her hands gripped my head and shoulder and she clenched and unclenched her fingers as I worked away. I switched from left to right breast and back again, using my fingers, and tongue, and lips in all sorts of combinations. Then she put her hands onto the front of my shoulders and pushed me back. I looked up. She smiled at me. Then she pulled down her top and moved away to sit with her back against the bed.

"So, how far do you want to go?" I asked as I moved beside her and put my left arm around her shoulders.

"I think you better go now," she whispered.

I kissed her and she responded.

I thought; now don't do anything foolish to spoil it, Kevin. Just take it slow and gentle. Don't push beyond where she wants to go. I had this fear that my desire would get the better of me and I'd end up raping her.

I put my hand up under her top and ran my fingers around her nipple. She lapped her tongue inside my mouth. Moving my hand down her body I found her belly button just under the waist of her skirt. I rubbed my fingers in and around it, but she wasn't very sensitive there.

Our mouths and tongues still intertwined I pulled my hand out from under her waistband and moved it down to her leg. I felt her thigh under the thin material of her skirt. And as I ran my hand up and down I slowly moved from the top to the inside of her thigh. She let her legs open wider. I brushed my fingers lightly across her crotch and found that she was very hot.

We were still kissing so I ran my hand back down the inside of her thigh and started to pull up her skirt. I pulled it up to reveal her knee and pressing my fingers against her skin pushed it right up to totally expose her leg and discovered that she was wearing white cotton panties.

All my attention was focused on her vagina now. I was looking down, so I know I wasn't kissing her. But I don't know if she was still kissing me, or if her arms were around me, or what she was doing. I think she was probably not doing anything.

I put my finger tips onto her warm, damp panties and felt her open lips beneath. I pressed my finger against them and traced her slit. She gasped. Taking hold of the edge of her panties I pulled at them, but there was no give. So I took hold of the top and pulled them down slightly to loosen them. Then I slipped my fingers into the leg of her panties and ran them back down and under to touch her directly.

Her lips parted and my finger was inside her. I pushed my finger down and then back up to find her clitoris. Her mouth was on mine and our tongues found each other again. I pressed harder. She tilted her head back I gently chewed her throat. She sat up and turned to face me. My hand lost its place, so I ran both hands up along her sides to push up her top and reveal her breasts again.

She leaned forward to kiss me and I cupped both her breasts. Her head moved in rhythm with my tongue, her body with my hands. Then I slipped my left hand around to hold her close and bent down so I could work both hand and mouth on her left breast. She leant forward and I pressed my hand between her legs again.

I had my back against the bed now, so I just lay back against it as she started to rub herself against my fingers. I was in a sensual haze. All my attention was centered on the movement of her clitoris against my fingers. The smell, the dim lighting, the heat and weight of her leaning over me was the background against which I rubbed her.

Her rhythm stopped and she tensed and pressed down, her arm across my throat, as she tilted her head back and moaned.

Then she sat down on her knees in front of me and smiled. I let my hand drop and relaxed against the bed. I had the strangest feeling. It was a pleasant sort of contentment, as if I'd come myself, though I hadn't.

She slipped her bra straps off her arms, pulled it from under her top and tossed onto the bed. "That was the perfect end to a perfect night," she glowed. "Thanks, Kevin."

One word stuck in my mind, "End?" What did she mean end? Surely this was just the beginning? But she was so happy and contented. And it was such a buzz to have made her so, that I thought, let's not spoil it by disagreeing. After all I didn't want to appear like I was one of those guys who were only interested in their own pleasure. Which, by some strange altruistic twist of logic, I figured I'd be if I asked for it, even though she'd clearly come first and was showing no intention of returning the compliment.

It was enough for me to have made her come. It was the first time I'd made love to a woman and I didn't want to spoil such the event by ending the night on a sour note. It would have been nice to have continued and even spent the night with her, but I hadn't even expected to get that far on the first date and I was more than satisfied. Having to ask for it would have ruined it.

I wasn't really thinking straight the fact of having made another person orgasm just blew my mind.

"So you don't want me to spend the night then?" was the most subtle and diplomatic thing I could think of saying.

"No," she giggled, "of course not."

But even though I was thrilled by having made her come I was still keyed up and aroused. And having the expectation of coming myself frustrated was hard to take.

"Come on get up," she pulled my arm roughly. "Up and out, Kevin."

So I had these two conflicting repercussions swimming around in my mind. On the one hand I was over the moon that I'd made her come. On the other I was feeling dejected, and even rejected, by her not wanting to return the compliment.

Slowly I got to my feet and picked up my T-shirt. I pulled it on and she handed me my shirt. I buttoned it up and opened my jeans to tuck it inside and readjust my underpants, by this time my erection had subsided. I could feel her looking at me, but I didn't look back. I didn't want to leave, but it was preferable to overstaying my welcome.

I wanted to ask her if she loved me. But I didn't speak. I wanted to ask her why she didn't want to do more. But I didn't want to appear to be asking for it. I wanted to ask her why I couldn't stay. But it was enough that she didn't want to sleep with me.

So I pulled on my socks and tied up my shoes.

She was standing against the table as I looked up. I smiled at her and she smiled back. I walked cross to her and put my arms around her. She hugged me back and we kissed again. I

ran my hands down to her bottom, gathered up her skirt and slipped my hand inside her panties. We hugged tightly. Then she pushed back a bit.

I looked at her and she dropped her hand to my crotch and smiled. I mirrored the gesture.

"Do you want to go again?" my voice was hoarse.

"Oh, no," she took her hand away and stepped back.

"Oh," I replied and could think of nothing else to do but to pick up my coat from the end of the bed. As I put it on I asked, "Do you want to go out again? Like tomorrow or Sunday?"

"Emm," she looked down. "I don't know Kevin."

"If you give me your number I'll phone you," I smiled. The thought of having to ask for her phone number after we'd had sex appealed to my sense of irony.

She hesitated, "Tell you what, why don't you give me yours and I'll phone you."

"477217," I replied.

She turned to the table and scribbled on a pad. "OK," she straightened up. "I'll give you a call tomorrow."

"Do I get yours?" I asked.

"Well it's very difficult to reach me," she said. "Especially at work." She paused. "I'm in and out all day long," she added.

"Oh, OK," there wasn't much else I could say.

She unlocked the door to her flat.

I walked past and half way out the door I stopped to kiss her.

As we kissed goodnight I squeezed her left breast with my right hand. It was a gesture to remind her of what I'd just done, and to say I'd be back. It was also a mark of ownership. It was meant to show that I was close enough to her not to have to ask permission now.

I didn't consciously think that at the time. Then all I knew was that I was head-over-heels in love with her and that she seemed to love me back.

As I walked home those two conflicting feelings of elation and rejection worked their way through my mind. I reasoned that she didn't want to make love to me because she was shy; she was probably as inexperienced as I was, but hadn't read as many books nor seen as much pornography as I had. Anyway the thought of having made her come just blew my mind. I knew that she must really like me, if not actually love me, to have gotten so intimate with me.

I got home and climbed straight into bed. The smell and taste and feel of Alexandra was still with me. And recalling the events of the evening was as pleasurable as acting them had been,

with one important addition. As I remembered the feel of Alexandra in my arms, my hands worked my erection. I savored every little detail of my night with her. All my passion came back renewed. And when at last I came it seemed to go on forever. It was the best masturbation I have ever done.

Afterwards I fell into a contented and exhausted sleep secure in the knowledge that the night had been a great start to my relationship with Alexandra. It was only much later that I realized what a disaster it really had been.

## Chapter 3

The next day I woke up happy. So I've finally done it, I hummed, better late than never. I could smell her on my finger tips, even after I'd washed my hands. I was sure by then that she must really love me. And I thought that she must be as impatient to see me again and get intimate once more as I was

So I waited for her to call with a certain amount of anticipation. Wanting to hold her and touch her again. And, most of all, wanting to make love to her again. To feel her come under my fingers again would be such bliss. I'm afraid I let my imagination run wild. But she didn't phone.

Then I had lunch and waited for her to call, thinking that she must be a late riser. Especially on a Saturday, when you've been working hard all week, you deserve a little lay in. My dreams began to go a little stale when she didn't phone in the afternoon either.

Then I had dinner and thought well if we are to go out to night she must surely call soon.

At around about half eight or a quarter to nine that evening I finally admitted to myself that she wasn't going to call. But I knew she would have a very good reason for not doing so, though I couldn't think of any at the time. The thought that she didn't phone because she wasn't interested in me began to occur to me. But I dismissed it on every occasion.

On Sunday I again got out of bed early and waited for her to phone. She didn't. She didn't phone in the morning, to perhaps arrange to do something in the afternoon. She didn't phone in the afternoon to arrange something for the evening. She didn't phone in the evening to apologize for not phoning earlier and to explain that she'd been rushed off her feet all weekend by an unexpected visitation of family members. She simply didn't phone.

By Monday I was calling her "That Bitch!" and vowing if I ever saw her again I'd give her a piece of my mind and tell her what she could go do with herself as well. But I couldn't understand it. Why did she have sex with me if she didn't like me? And if she did like me why didn't she phone? The thought that she might view our relationship in a more casual light didn't enter my head. It was all black or white to me. Either it was on or it was off. All or nothing. It just shows you what strong emotion can do for your tolerant, liberal ideas.

On Tuesday I got the shock of my life when she came up to me at the Camera Club and before I could say anything asked, "Don't you ever answer your phone, Kevin?"

I felt my jaw open in shock. "What?" I said.

"I was phoning you all weekend," she explained. "And you never answered."

"Never answered?" my mind had still failed to comprehend what she was saying. "What do you mean, never answered?"

She was getting annoyed, "I mean the phone rang and nobody picked it up."

"But I was home most of the weekend," I didn't say I'd barely strayed more than three feet from the phone. "And you never called."

"Your number's 477217, isn't it," she stated.

"No it's 477210," I replied, a glimmer of light appearing in the gloom. "Have you been phoning 477217?"

"Yes," she said. "That's the number you gave me."

"No it's not," I could see she was about to argue that it was. "But that's not important. I thought that you didn't phone because you didn't want to see me again."

She smiled, "No, don't be silly." She glanced down, "I enjoyed my date with you."

And I was on cloud nine again. Nothing could mar my happiness. She'd enjoyed herself. She liked me!

"Yeah?" I smiled back. "Do you want to repeat it again, say next Friday?"

"OK," she looked up into my eyes.

I looked down into her's and had a deep urge to put my arms around her. But I managed to suppress the impulse.

Then Mary and John came over to us. Mary glanced at Alexandra and gave me a knowing look.

"We're going down the pub," John said. "Are you coming along?"

"Sure," I said and looked at Alexandra.

"Yeah," she agreed.

So we went down to the pub and had a drink. Over the next ten minutes more members of the club drifted in and joined us for the usual after meeting socializing. I sat beside Alexandra and ran my hand up and down her thigh. She put her hand on top of mine and left it there. This physical intimacy with her sent my hormones racing. As I neared the end of my pint I whispered in her ear.

"So are you going to invite me back to your place for a cup of coffee?" I asked, half jokingly.

"All right," she smiled back.

My heart skipped a beat. I was caught completely off guard. But I tried to keep my composure.

She laughed, "So do you want to come back to my place for coffee, Kevin?"

"That would be nice," I smiled back and quickly finished my drink. We stood up, said goodbye and left.

As we walked around to her flat I wondered what the others were saying about us. What juicy rumors would be circulating around the club?

The first thing I did when we got to her flat was use the toilet. When I came out she had made instant coffee for us both.

"How do you like yours," she asked.

"Oh, black, no sugar," I replied and took one of the mugs from the counter.

She put a drop of milk into the other and sat in one of the armchairs. I sat in the chair beside her. We talked for the next few minutes about this and that. Mostly about the lecture we'd just seen at the camera club. It was some guy who'd been scuba diving in the tropics with an underwater camera. He'd had some really stunning photographs to show. Then I decided to make a move on her.

Kneeling on the floor in front of her, I put my elbows on her knees and smiled up at her. She leaned forward, put her hands to my head and we kissed. I ran my hands up her legs and hooked them around her waist. I pushed up against her kiss and she slumped back in the chair. So I ended up leaning forward over her, with her legs to either side of me, resting on my elbows. I put a hand on each of her breasts. Her nipples pressed into the palms of my hands.

I started to unbutton her blouse. She started to breathe heavily as I worked my way down and pulled her blouse out of her jeans. I pulled it open to reveal her body. She had a light fuzz of dark hair around her belly button, but my attention was focused on her breasts. Her nipples were clearly visible through the cotton of her bra.

Leaning forward again I put my lips to each nipple in turn and sucked them, leaving two little damp patches behind. I ran my hands under her and she lifted herself up as I unhooked her bra. I brought my hands around again and ran them up and across her breasts to push her bra clear.

Now I could lick and suck her nipples directly, which I did for what seemed like ages. I rubbed and caressed one breast with my hand as I licked and sucked the other. Then I'd switch and rub my warm saliva into her soft skin with my fingers as I licked and sucked the other breast.

Then my knees and back began to complain so I straightened up and sat back on my heels, smiling up at Alexandra. She smiled back and slid off the chair to sit on my lap, her legs pressing against my hips. I reached up to her shoulder and started to push her blouse down.

"No," she said. "I don't want to take it off."

"How about your bra?" I asked.

"OK," she smiled and pushed the strap down her sleeve and hooked it under her arm. Then repeated it with the other strap and arm and threw the bra onto the bed. I was mesmerized by the movement of her breasts as she breathed in and out. Slowly I bent down to lick and kiss and suck them again. She started to lick and suck my ears and after ten minutes of that I was very hot and very hard.

I sat back and pulled my shirt off. Then I reached down and undid her jeans. She brought her legs up and started to take off her shoes. As she took off her right shoe and stocking I took off her left.

Then I reached inside her jeans and ran my hands around to her bottom. She put her elbows onto the chair and lifted herself a few inches. So I pulled her jeans down around her thighs. I put her leg across my lap and pulled it out of her jeans. Then did the same with the other, and tossed the jeans away.

Her hands were around my neck again and we kissed again, while my hands ran all over her body.

I put my hand to her crotch and felt the damp heat there. "So do you want to have sex, then?" I whispered as she nuzzled my shoulder.

She froze. "What?" she asked.

"Sex," I repeated smiling, thinking that her answer must surely be yes.

"No, I do not," she pushed me away and stood up.

"What?" I was stunned.

"I'm not going to have sex with you, Kevin," she walked over to her wardrobe and took out a silk robe.

I didn't know what to say. There wasn't much I could say. It'd seemed pretty obvious to me that we were going to have sex. Suddenly when I mentioned it she stopped being interested.

I didn't understand why she'd do it last time but not now. But I couldn't think of a way of asking her without it turning into an argument were she would think I was trying to persuade her. And I didn't want that. So I started to get dressed.

Alexandra picked up the coffee mugs. "You didn't even finish your coffee," she said.

"Well it must be cold now," I replied. "You can't expect me to finish it."

"No. Of course not," she walked to the sink and poured it away.

I sat up on one of the armchairs and pulled my shoes out from under it.

"So do you want to go out on Friday," I asked.

"Yeah OK," she replied. "I'll be staying up this weekend for a tennis match I have on Sunday anyway."

The thought that she was implying that she wouldn't be interested in staying up for the weekend in order to see me flared in my mind, but I quickly suppressed it.

"Same time same place?" I smiled.

"Err, no, Kevin," she said. "I think we'd better make it a bit later. I don't know how I managed to make it last time."

"Eight O'clock?" I suggested.

"Make it a quarter past," she said.

"A quarter past eight's fine with me," I replied. I was overjoyed that she wanted to go out with me at all.

She stood across the room from me and watched me pull on my shoes. I liked the feeling of her eyes on me.

"I still haven't got over the way you tie your laces," she said.

I looked up and shrugged, "I didn't know that it was so unusual."

She walked across and stood in front of me. "It's weird," she said. "I don't see how they don't open."

"Well they don't," I bent down to demonstrate. "Unless you pull the lose end." I pulled the laces open.

She laughed.

"And then I'd tie them again," I said.

She said nothing as I re-tied them.

I looked up at her and smiled, "So you really don't want to have sex with me then."

She shook her head. "I can see than I'm going to have to play it very cool with you," she giggled.

I felt a momentary unease that she should use a phrase like "play it cool". But I reached around her and hugged her, pressing my cheek against her stomach. "Not too cool I hope," I whispered.

She laughed and ran her fingers through my hair.

I didn't want to move I just wanted to hug her and feel her hands on me.

"Come on," she stepped away, "time for you to go." She walked to the door to open it for me.

I followed and as I walked passed I stopped to hug her again. She hugged back and we kissed. I stepped back smiling as I put my hand to her breast and squeezed it through the silk of her robe.

"See you Friday at quarter past eight," I smiled.

She smiled back and ran her hand across the back of mine. "See you Friday," she repeated.

I turned and walked out, confused and frustrated. Frustrated, because I'd wanted to make love to her and she hadn't. Confused, because I felt she'd rejected me by not having sex with me again, but then she'd kissed and hugged me, so she clearly hadn't rejected me. It gave me much food for thought as I mulled over the contradictions over the next few days.

So once again I found myself standing outside Eason's on a Friday night waiting for Alexandra to show. I couldn't help wondering if this was going to become routine. If I was going to spend months, if not years, standing around on O'Connell Street anxiously looking up and down for Alexandra to appear. And if I was going to spend months, if not years, wondering how she felt about me.

Then she arrived. She looked gorgeous in the late evening sunlight, even though she was dressed casually in jeans and a red T-shirt, with a light jacket that matched. It occurred to me that she'd probably dressed up for our first date, but I as usual had just worn jeans and a T-shirt. So this time she'd decided to dress more casual. I don't tend to dress up and forget that people dress to impress each other. I believe that a beautiful girl looks beautiful regardless of what she wears. If I think that a girl only looks good because of her clothes and make-up I tend to be put off.

I wanted very much to hug Alexandra as she came up and smiled at me. But she stopped just short, so all I did was smile back and say "Hi."

"Hi," she responded and shivers ran up my spine.

"I thought we might go to another film," I suggested.

"Yeah," she nodded. "There's a good one on up in the lighthouse."

"Do you mean 'September Bride'?" I asked.

"Yes," she smiled. "That's the one." She looked slightly worried, "You haven't seen it already, have you?"

"No. That's the one I was thinking of suggesting, as well," I smiled back.

"So what time does it start at?" she asked.

I checked the time, "In about two minutes."

"So let's go then," she turned and started walking.

I quickly caught up with her and slipped my hand into hers. She smiled and squeezed it tightly.

The film was set in Northern Ireland and was about this headstrong young woman who has an illegitimate baby and ends up living with two brothers. All three, needless to say, get ostracized by the local community. It was a moving insight into the life and times of the period. It left a lasting impression that a lot of the prejudices still exist to this day.

We went for a drink afterwards and had a very heated discussion about the rights and wrongs portrayed in the film. It being a good film there was a lot to discuss. Even though we started out in what could be considered very tricky ground, where our differences in views could easily have mortally wounded our relationship, we ended up discussing such esoteric generalities that neither of us got in the least bit offended.

When we left the pub we didn't say anything about where we were going, we just started walking back to her place. The night was lovely. I was walking hand in hand with a beautiful girl, on my way back to her place, having been entertained and stimulated, and with a few drinks inside me. It was a near perfect night, with more to come.

She led me into her flat without saying a word. As I hung up my coat on the back of the door she asked, "Do you want some coffee?"

"Sure," I said.

"Black no sugar," she stepped into the kitchen alcove, "right?"

"Right," I agreed and sat in one of her armchairs. There was a tube of tennis balls and a racket on the other. "So have you played much tennis this week?" I picked up the racket and tested the tension against my finger tips.

"Yes," she smiled. "I beat the number ten ranked player on Wednesday." She put two mugs on the counter, "But it was only a friendly, so it doesn't count for the rankings."

"Yeah," I said. "But now you know you can beat her."

"But now she knows to," she smiled back as she spooned some coffee into the mugs.

I put the racket down and bent to my shoes. "Do you mind if I make myself comfortable

"No, be my guest," she screwed the coffee jar closed and put it back in the cupboard.

"I am your guest," I smiled back as I took off my shoes and stockings, tucking them under the chair, out of the way.

"I'll be back in a moment," she walked towards the door. "Make the coffee when the water boils, will you," she flicked on the light and closed the bathroom door behind her.

I heard her moving around inside, but couldn't quite figure out what she was doing. The kettle boiled just as she flushed the toilet. I got up and poured the water into the mugs as she washed her hands. A few moments later she came back out.

"I didn't know if you took milk and sugar," I nodded towards the coffee. "So I didn't put any in."

"That's OK, Kevin," she poured a drop of milk into her coffee. "I don't take sugar."

I took a sip from my mug. She'd refreshed her perfume in the bathroom and she smelt gorgeous. I brushed my fingers across the side of her face and lightly caressed her ear. She smiled back and sipped her coffee. I continued to caress.

"Why are we standing," she looked around at the armchairs. "Let's sit." She walked over, dumped the tennis balls and racket on to the floor and sat down.

I walked over and sat beside her.

"So how often do you play tennis then?" I asked.

"As often as I can," she replied. "Usually about three or four times a week."

"You really do like it then," I sipped my coffee.

"Oh, yes," she said. "I couldn't live without it."

Her hand was resting on the arm of her chair so I reached over and started to stroke her fingers. She wiggled them and stroked my hand back.

I can't remember what we talked about for the next ten or fifteen minutes as we sipped our coffee and stroked each other's hands. But I was very aroused by the time we finished.

She took the empty mug from my hand. "At least you finished the coffee this time," she smiled.

"I feel I might need the caffeine tonight," I replied.

She walked across and put the cups in the sink. I stood and followed her, stopping behind her and putting my arms around her waist. She leant back against me as I hugged her and buried my face in her sweet smelling hair.

Then I ran my hands up to squeeze her breasts. She turned smiling and we kissed, my hands running across her back, her hands through my hair.

Stepping back I opened my mouth to say something, but she put her finger to my lips. "Don't talk, Kevin," she whispered and kissed me again.

I pulled her T-shirt out of her jeans, pushed my hands underneath and ran them up her back. She leaned forward against me and sighed. I hugged her as she nuzzled my shoulder. Then I unhooked her bra. She tensed and leaned away. I smiled at her and ran my hands around to lift her bra clear of her breasts. As soon as my hands were on her breasts she sighed and relaxed again.

We kissed lightly. She brought her hands down and put them around my waist. I lifted her T-shirt and looked down at her breasts. She kissed my cheek and ear as I caressed her breasts. Then I cupped one in my hand and bent down to kiss her nipple. Her hands came up to rub my hair again.

I pinched her nipple between my lips, released it and I lightly licked it. I ran my tongue around and across it, pressing my lips to her breast. Then I opened my mouth as wide as I could and sucked inside as much of her breast as would fit. She gasped her breath hot and moist on my ear.

I slowly closed my mouth and pushed her breast back out again, circling my head as I did so, tightening my lips across her skin, until just her nipple was caught between them. I ran my tongue back and forth across it, pressing it first against my top lip, then against my lower.

Her left hand was massaging the back of my neck, her other had a handful of my hair. She was looking down at me and I could feel her breath, fast and ragged, against the side of my face.

I looked up at her and smiled, then knelt in front of her and rubbed my nose against her belly button, brushing it through the light fuzz of hair that surrounded it, smiling at the tickles. Both her hands rested on my head, but she made no attempt to guide me.

Then I opened her belt and unbuttoned her jeans. I pulled them open and ran my nose down through the thickening hair until I reached her panties. I could smell she was aroused. I pushed my hands inside her jeans and felt her warm soft skin, with her firm muscles underneath. Leaving my head pressed against her abdomen I ran my hands down her legs pushing her jeans down and pulled them away as she stepped out of them.

Sitting back on my ankles I looked up at her again. At the T-shirt bunched up to expose her breasts and at her hair falling down around her face as she looked down at me. I reached up to pull her panties down, but she pushed my hands aside and knelt beside me with her legs together. I leaned forward, put my arms around and kissed her. She responded and we hugged each other close.

I was quite heated by this stage, so I sat back and unbuttoned my shirt. She ran her hands across my body as I slipped my arms out of the sleeves and tossed the shirt to one side. I was wearing a T-shirt underneath and I quickly pulled that off and tossed it aside as well. Her fingers plucked at the hairs on my chest.

I reached over to pull her T-shirt off, but she shook her head and whispered "No." So I put my arms around her again and we kissed.

Our tongues rolled around each other's and she leaned into me, one hand on my back, the other caressing one of my nipples. My right arm was around her, holding her close. And I brought my left hand down onto her breast again and massaged it in time to the thrusts of my tongue.

Then I slowly slid it down her body and slipped it between her legs. I ran my finger along her damp panties and felt her open lips underneath. I brought my hand back up and slipped my fingers under her panties and into her thick pubic hair.

She shifted against me and I moved around a fraction to support her with my right arm and get a slightly better angle for my left. Our tongues and lips still worked with each other, but my attention was focused on the finger tips of my left hand as they slipped through her hair and across her other lips.

Her legs opened wider and I ran my finger along the length of her slit and around the opening of her vagina. Our mouths separated and she rested her head against my shoulder. I could feel her warm skin against mine and her breath against my ear. I slipped the tip of my finger inside and began to rub my hand up and down.

She gasped and her breath began to come faster as I established a rhythm and then began to slowly increase it. She began to rock against me in time with my strokes and moaned as I pushed my finger further inside her. All my attention was focused on my fingers as they rubbed against her and on my ear as her hot breath poured over it. I could feel the weight of her against my arm and her rocking against me as only minor background events.

Then she tensed against me. Her body arching, her arms hugging me close and the muscles of her vagina squeezing closed around my finger. She let out one long last breath against my ear.

We stayed that way for a timeless moment. Then she relaxed again and reached down to pull my hand out of her panties.

She nuzzled my shoulder. I lay back and rested my shoulders against one of the armchairs. She settled on top of me, rubbing her cheek against my chest. I felt elated. I felt as if I glowed. This was almost better than coming myself. My orgasm is a known pleasure, sometimes great, sometimes not so great, yet always something within the normal range of my experiences. But I'd never felt this pleasure before. To hold Alexandra in my arms while she climaxed; to know that I'd made her come; to have had such an intimate exchange with her. It just blew my mind.

In fact, I suddenly realized, I wanted to do it again. I reached down and ran my fingers under her breast, rubbing her nipple with my thumb. She looked up lazily and slowly smiled. I leaned forward and she sat up so we could kiss.

Maybe I was still keyed up because I'd not come, but I rushed into it. I wanted to make her come again. I wanted to relive that thrill of excitement when she came. I pushed my hand back down into her panties. She froze her lips cold on mine. I leant back to ask her what the matter was. But before I could speak she took hold of my hand and pulled it away. I didn't know why, but I knew that I'd offended her.

She stood up and my hands were empty again.

"I think you'd better go now," she said.

I almost asked "Why?", but caught myself in time.

She sat on the end of the bed and pulled her jeans on, not looking at me.

I didn't understand why, but she'd asked me to leave so I thought I'd better go. I dressed quickly. We didn't say anything. We didn't look at each other.

She kissed my cheek as she handed me my coat. I put my arm around her waist and kissed her lips. She responded. And I thought, At least she's not angry with me.

"So do you want to do anything over the weekend?" I whispered.

She looked down. "I'm not sure I'll have time, Kevin." Then she stepped away from me. "I've got tennis coaching on Saturday, and I'm going stock car racing on Saturday night with my brother." She shrugged, "And then on Sunday I've got a tennis match against the girl who's ranked second in the club." She looked up at me, "So I really don't have the time."

"That's OK," I smiled at her as I put on my coat.

She smiled back for a moment, then turned to open the door for me.

At the door I put my arm around her and we kissed again. I hugged her and she snuggled into my embrace. I reached down and pressed my hand against her bottom, remembering the feel of her skin under my fingers. She brought her arms down between us. I stepped back my hands going to her hips.

"See you next Tuesday," she whispered.

"All right," I brought my hand up to her left breast and gave it one final squeeze and kissed her lightly. "See you then," I turned and walked out.

As I walked home I had a underlining dread that this was going to become routine. That somehow making love to Alexandra wasn't bringing us closer to each other as it should. That I'd end up walking home alone for the rest of my life. But then maybe this is just hindsight. At the time I was just ecstatic that she'd come in my arms again.

## Chapter 4

Over the next month we saw each other twice a week; at meetings of the Camera club, after which we'd go back to her flat and talk and I would make love to her. And we went out on dates on the first two Fridays and then on the Saturday of the following week. I was head-over-heels in love with her, or lusted after her, or was compulsively obsessed by her. My feelings were so intense that I can't really say what it was. But I do know that I thought of virtually nothing else but her and the taste of her kiss. The way her eyes sparkled when she laughed. How it felt to hold her in my arms, or even just to walk down the road holding her hand.

I lived to share my life with her, to spend every waking moment in her presence. I wanted to tell her everything about myself and learn everything about her. I wanted to totally possess her, and more important to be totally possessed by her. I wanted to live in the warmth of her love.

But yet, despite my best endeavors, every time I tried to realize my desires I ended up being frustrated. Every time I tried to talk to her about how I felt for her I became more confused. Every time I tried to get closer to her, I ended up feeling further away from her than ever. I was taking two steps back for every step I took forward.

I didn't understand, nor could I control, my feelings for her. Neither did I understand what her feelings for me were. She seemed to be saying one thing and doing the complete opposite. I was hopelessly lost in a sea of conflicting desires and incomprehensible reactions, both from her and from myself.

I wanted to totally possess her, yet I wanted her to be free. I wanted to be totally possessed by her, yet I wanted to remain free. I wanted to crush her in my arms with all my strength, yet I was afraid that even the lightest touch would mar the perfection of her skin. I wanted to make her love me, yet I didn't want to coerce or trick her into loving me.

I was a mess. And I don't think I made a very good impression on her. Yet every time I saw her I was hooked worse than before. And she continued to see me. She continued to kiss and hug me. She let me make love to her. She gave me enough encouragement to let me pretend that she could love me. To let me fool myself into thinking that she did.

Maybe she did. Maybe her love for me was more genuine than mine for her. Maybe we were both totally confused.

All three dates followed a similar pattern. I'd phone her place on the Wednesday or Thursday, but she'd not be in when I called. I'd leave a message and she'd phone me from work the next day, because by the time she got in she felt it was too late to call me back. We'd arrange to meet in O'Connell St. outside Easons at about a quarter past eight. I'd arrive about ten or fifteen minutes early. She'd arrive about ten or fifteen minutes late. I'd spent half hour fretting about whether or not she'd turn up, impatient to see her again. She'd arrive all bright and breezy and once again take my breath away with her beauty and grace.

We'd have a quick drink and go to a movie. Two light hearted Hollywood blockbusters and another French comedy. I'd have my arm around her during the film, smelling her perfume and feeling the heat of her body, while the hormones raced through my blood stream. Afterwards we'd go for a cup of coffee and then back to her place. Where we'd kiss and cuddle and I'd masturbate her. Then she'd ask me to leave and I'd end up even more frustrated and confused.

And in between all that we talked, about all sorts of things.

We talked about the movies we'd seen and discovered that we liked the same things, though for completely different reasons. We talked about the best movies we'd ever seen and what we liked most about them. We liked the same movies. Though in one I'd particularly like the plot twist at the end, but she'd think it was the character development made it. And in another I'd think it was the stunning photography that made it, but she'd think it was the in-depth plot. We talked about the worst movies we'd seen and complained about the direction, or the inane script, or the pathetic jokes.

I told her all about my writing. How I was planning on being an international best-selling author. How I had given up a good job, with an inflated salary, in a city of London merchant bank to write a SF novel. She didn't believe me, but she was not alone. Most people can't believe that I gave up a job earning the amount of money that I did in order to become what society calls unemployed.

I explained to her my passion for science fiction and computer games and how I had to avoid games and book shops so I didn't blow my life savings all in one go, rather than trying to use it to eke out a life until I got my big break. (I failed!)

She told me about her passion for tennis. And how she planned to work her way up the rankings of the club she'd just joined. That she loved the thrill of competition and was really quite a competitive person in all aspects of her life.

She described her work and told stories about the people she worked with. She loved making fun of her boss. Some of the things she told me made me glad that I no longer worked in an office. I had had my fill of politics and back biting.

We talked about photography. Since we'd met in a camera club it was obviously something we had in common. She had just taken it up as a hobby and her enthusiasm reminded me of how I used to feel when I first caught the bug in my early teens. I tried to explain something of what I'd learnt over the years, but I felt as if I was patronizing her so I stopped.

And all the while I was trying to persuade her that I really loved her. I was holding back my passion, trying not to push her too hard, trying to build up her trust in me. Yet the taste and smell and feel of her in my arms marked the highlights of my relationship with her. I made love to her because I loved her. And I wanted nothing back, but what she could give me.

And yet I did. I wanted her to make love to me. It was natural enough that I should want to come as well. But more than my own sexual pleasure what I wanted was for her to love me. I wanted her to worship me the way I worshipped her. I wanted her to desire me the way I desired her. I wanted her to make me whole.

So I resolved to prove to her that I wanted more than carnal pleasure from her, that I wanted to share my life with her. I wanted to go to sleep with her in my arms and wake up beside her. I wanted to eat with her. I wanted to live with her. I wanted to get to know everything there was to know about her. And I wanted her to know everything there was to know about me.

So I didn't insist that she return the complement every time I made love to her. So I didn't demand to know why she left me frustrated and alone at the end of every date. Firstly because I didn't want to appear as if I was begging for it. Because I felt that if we were engaged in some sort of fucked up power struggle that she would have won a victory over me.

Secondly I didn't want to acknowledge that it was that important to me. I didn't want her to think I was ruled by my balls. And I didn't want to admit to myself that I was just lusting after her. In some weird way I was proving to myself that I really loved her by not forcing her to do anything that she didn't want to do.

And thirdly I didn't want to appear as if I was blackmailing her, a sort of I'm not going to make love to you until you agree to make love to me, because she might have called my bluff. And I wanted to make love to her so badly that I couldn't risk not being able to.

So every night I made love to her and every night she sent me home frustrated. I didn't even unzip my jeans to remind her that I was getting aroused and would have liked something done about it. Until on the fourth date when I finally managed to ask her to return the complement.

I was lying on my back. She lay across my stomach. Her arm across my chest her head resting on top, with her legs curled up under my left arm, as she relaxed in the afterglow of her orgasm.

My right hand was under my head and with my left I was caressing her thigh. "So are you going to give me a blow job, then?" I asked softly.

She looked up at me and smiled. "No," she giggled, "of course not."

And that was it. I didn't want to make her do it, I wanted her to want to do it. And I didn't want to argue with her. I didn't ask her why. It made no difference why. Oh I'd like to have known. But I didn't think I could ask her to explain without her thinking that I was trying to argue her into doing it. The fact she didn't want to do it was enough for me.

I wanted her to want to love me the way that I wanted to love her. But she didn't and even then I think some part of me realized that she would never let me love her the way I really wanted to. So I told myself that I would make her love me.

And yet the problem of sex still bothered me. I thought I was head over heels in love with her. And I thought I was expressing the depth of my love by making love to her, by trying to please her, by giving her pleasure. Oh I enjoyed it as well, I wouldn't have done it if I hadn't. But I was getting no feedback from her. When I told her that I loved her she would just smile, or kiss me or some such. And when I made love to her she wouldn't respond. I mean she'd respond to my love making, but she wouldn't actively make love back to me.

So how was I expected to know how she felt about me. If she didn't love me would she let me make love to her? Yet if she did love me why wouldn't she make love to me? I didn't know if it was because she really didn't know how or she just wasn't bothered. And yet I got a real kick out of making love to her. Was it just that the excitement of the physical acts made it that much easier to pretend about the emotions behind it?

Maybe she really loved me and she was just too shy and inexperienced and repressed by her Catholic upbringing to be able to admit it, to either herself or to me. And then again maybe she really was just using me. Maybe I was just being the gullible fool that I normally am. The truth was that I didn't know. I couldn't figure out how she felt. And I couldn't get her to tell me. And to be completely honest I really didn't know how I felt myself. I was knocked totally off balance by the ferocity of my desire for her.

I was in a right mess. I loved making love to Alexandra. I loved making her come. It didn't bother me in the least that we weren't having what might be called "normal" sexual intercourse, That is, the penetration of her vagina with my penis. Using my fingers was enough for me.

Yet it did bother me that she didn't make me come. That she didn't seem to want to make me come. And it bothered me that she wouldn't sleep with me. I mean that in the literal sense, that is to curl up and go to sleep in the same bed. Or even let me sleep on her floor. To have to get and leave after having sex seemed like rejection to me.

It all boiled down to this. If we were just going to have a casual relationship, then surely I should be entitled to get some enjoyment out of it. But yet if we were going to have a serious deeply committed relationship then why wouldn't she talk to me about it. Either way I was beginning to feel used and abused by the current situation.

It shows the measure of my confusion that it was over a month before I thought of contraception. One Wednesday afternoon it suddenly dawned on me. Obviously she didn't want to have straight sex with me because she didn't want to get pregnant. So buy some condoms and then we can ride all night long. It further shows the measure of my confusion that fear of pregnancy didn't explain why she wouldn't give me head or masturbate me. Perhaps I thought she didn't want to cause a mess on her carpet.

It was only much later that I thought of Aids. I recently discovered that some teachers use fear to discourage teenagers from having sex. Fear of pregnancy, fear that some future husband won't respect you because you aren't a virgin, fear that you'll catch some deadly diseases. And now the deadliest of them all, Aids. (With no known cure at time of writing.)

Anyway, going to the chemist and buying the condoms proved a lot less embarrassing than I'd thought it would. It was my first time and like all things the first time can be a bit nerve racking. But it was quite simple. I just walked into the shop and asked the assistant if they sold condoms. She smiled and said "Yes. There they are." and pointed to the display I was standing in front of. I looked down and found myself confronted by an array of half familiar names. I did a quick scan and selected, almost at random, a packet. I handed over my money and she put the packet into a paper bag before handing it to me, along with my change. And that was that.

Now all I had to do was talk to Alexandra about using them.

I decided to ask her after the next time I made love to her. It was after our next date. We were lying half naked on the floor of her flat. She was lying across me wearing just a T-shirt and panties. I had on just my jeans and underpants. I could feel her breath on my skin as I caressed the back of her head with my right hand. The fingers of my left were still damp from being inside her.

"So would you let me use my penis if I had a condom on?" I asked.

"What?" she looked up.

"Would it be OK if I used a condom?" I repeated.

She sat up. "Why would you want to use a condom?" she didn't look at me.

I thought for a second, unsure what she meant then decided to interpret her question literally. "So you won't get pregnant and so we'll not pass any diseases to each other."

She stood up, "I think you'd better go now." She walked to her closet and put on her robe.

I watched her move and thought how beautiful she was. One part of me wanted to call her a fucked up little bitch, but the other couldn't get over how beautiful she was. So I got up and got dressed, after once again being fucked.

At the door I stopped and kissed her. I'd meant to walk out without doing so, but she was still irresistible. Once my lips were on her's, my arms went around her automatically and I ended up hugging her tightly, ever so tightly. She hugged me back and I was in heaven for those few minutes. Then she stepped back.

My hand went to her breast again. I could feel her nipple through the silk of her robe and the cotton of her T-shirt. "See you next week at the club?" I asked.

"Yes," she said and kissed my cheek.

I turned and walked out and didn't see her for another month.

# Chapter 5

It wasn't that I didn't want to see her, or that I avoided her, it was just that she was out every time I phoned and didn't show up at the camera club. I even called around to her flat a couple of times, but there was no answer.

At first it didn't cause me any concern. She didn't come to the camera club the following Tuesday, but while I was disappointed it was nothing unusual. I mean it isn't compulsory to attend every meeting. And when I phoned on the Thursday and she wasn't in, again that was quite normal. She didn't phone me from work on the Friday as she usually did and then I started to worry, but not very much. I phoned her back on Friday night, but she was out. It was no great surprise, Alexandra was not the type of girl you'd expect to be in on a Friday night.

But when she didn't phone me back on Saturday and was out both times I phoned her, I realized that the bitch had gone away for the weekend without bothering to tell me. Great! I thought, here was I hanging around all Friday and Saturday not doing anything because I was waiting to arrange to do something with her and she'd disappeared without a second thought. I was livid. I couldn't wait to get to the club on Tuesday to tell her what I thought of that.

But, of course, she didn't show up. Neither did she bother to return my calls the next day. Or the day after. Or the day after that. So Saturday afternoon I went around to her flat to really give her a piece of my mind. But there was no answer. She wasn't home. Had she gone away two weekends in a row? Without bothering tell me either time. Just to be sure I called back later, and again on Sunday. But there was still no answer.

By this stage my anger had evaporated and a state of shock had set in. I was exceedingly nervous about showing up at the club on Tuesday. I didn't know what to make of her behavior, nor how I should react. I was even more frightened by how I might react if my anger resurfaced. But I decided that staying away would not be any better.

As it turned out all my anxiety and worry was for nothing, because she didn't show. I must have walked around in a daze for the next day or so. I didn't know how to react. She'd obviously dumped me. And because she hadn't had the decency to tell me to my face I didn't quite know why, though I strongly suspected that it had something to do with our last date. But neither did I have a chance to vent my anger at her. She'd just disappeared from my life. I couldn't say or do anything about it. It was just one more frustration to end our relationship with.

Then I realized that tomorrow was Friday and I developed this irrational fear that she'd phone me up. I walked around in dread for the rest of the day. Half the time telling myself that as she'd dumped me she wasn't likely to phone me ever again, the other half thinking that as she hadn't "officially" dumped me, that is told me to my face, maybe she'd change her mind and decide to go out with me again. I was scared shitless! What was I going to do?

Then I came to my senses. She was avoiding me, not me her, I had nothing to fear from meeting her again, she was the one with all the explaining to do, not me! She was the one

who'd walked out on me. If I ever met her again I was just going to play it cool, as if nothing had ever happened between us.

I told myself this repeatedly over the next few weeks, slowly adjusting to the fact that Alexandra really didn't love me. That I'd have to find someone else to share my life and raise a family with. But it was still pretty depressing.

Then she showed up in the club one Tuesday night. I'd arrived late for the meeting and found a seat at the back. The lecturer was showing slides so it was dark and all I could make out of the people around me were vague shadows. But a few minutes after I'd arrived I recognized the shape of the head in front of me. I thought, that's Alexandra. Then I thought, no it can't be. But my heart was already beating faster.

I couldn't concentrate on the lecture. Which was a pity, because it was by a guy who'd taken photos while pot-holing. He'd used all sorts of intricate combinations of lights and flash guns to illuminate some fantastic rock formations he'd discovered underground. But I couldn't focus on what he was saying. All I could think of was that Alexandra was sitting in front of me. I could smell her perfume and the memories of our love making came flooding back to me.

When the lecture was over she turned around in her seat and noticed me. "Hi," she smiled. "Long time no see, stranger."

I opened my mouth to respond, but my mind went blank. I'd fallen in love with her, she'd treated me with contempt, then dumped me without a word of explanation, and now she was acting as if we were casual acquaintances who'd not seen each other for a few days.

"So what have you been up to while I was away?" she asked.

"You where away?" I didn't know what to say.

"Yeah," she smiled again. "Don't tell me you didn't notice."

"Oh, I noticed all right," I replied. "I just wish you'd bothered to tell me about it before hand."

"Sorry?" she stopped smiling.

"I missed you," I said. I thought, if I make a fuss about her disappearing will she get offended and walk out on me for good? I couldn't risk it. I'd have to show the true strength of my love for her by accepting her back and loving her even more.

She smiled back, and then looked down. "I missed you, as well," she whispered.

My heart jumped. I reached up and stroked her cheek. She looked up and I went weak at the knees as our eyes met. I cleared my throat to say something, but lent forward to kiss her instead.

Once again we ended up in her place. And once again I caressed and stroked her. Once again she kissed and hugged me back. Once again I kissed and licked and sucked her, ran my hands all over her body, gloried in our physical intimacy. Once again I was sure of my love for her.

And once again, when I'd made her come, she asked me to leave without returning the compliment. Once again we could have sex, but I couldn't sleep with her. Once again I'd told her that I loved her and once again I felt rejected even though she'd not rejected me.

So there I was left wondering what she felt for me. Could I love someone who didn't love me? Could she love me and treat me with what I was increasingly calling contempt? Was I just an easy lay to her or did she have stronger feelings for me? Would this uncertainty ever end? Could I ever love her properly and know that she loved me back?

And then it was Friday night and once again I was standing outside Easons wondering if Alexandra would turn up. A month before I had been wondering if I was going to spend the rest of my Friday nights standing here waiting for her and just the week before I'd thought I'd never have to do it again. But there I was once more, waiting for her to pop out of the crowd.

I was saying to myself, I don't know why I agreed to see her again. She obviously doesn't love me. I'm just going to be hurt again. She's just going to fuck me about again. I should be old enough to know better by now. I should just go home now and forget about her.

But I didn't. Looking back I suppose I was trying to be noble, to take the moral high ground, to prove myself better than her by treating her decently, even while she used and abused me. But more importantly I couldn't forget the feel of her in my arms. The taste of her when I made love to her, the thrill of making her come, the smell from my fingers that would linger for days.

And then she was there, walking towards me through the crowd, a smile on her face as she saw me. She was wearing a long black skirt, and black leather boots. On top of which she had a chunky wool cardigan, black with green flecks through it. Her long black hair was tied back in a pony tail with a red ribbon. And her green eyes shone out at me.

"Hi," she said as she stopped beside me.

My mouth was dry, but I managed to respond. "Hi," I smiled back, my heart beating faster, my balls tightening at the thought of making love to her.

Once again we had a nice pleasant evening out. We had a drink, saw a movie and went to Bewley's for coffee afterwards. All the time we chatted about this and that, about photography and movies, about work and shopping, about her tennis and my writing. About almost everything, but what I most wanted to talk about, what I felt for her, and what she felt for me.

It wasn't until we were on our way back to her place that I managed to get around to bringing up the subject. But once again my frustration worked its way to the fore.

"So what does us having sex mean to you?" I asked.

"Sex?" she almost laughed. "Where was I when we had sex?"

"What do you mean," I was astonished. "We had sex on our first date." I added quickly, "And most dates since."

"What?" she seemed surprised.

"When we made love," I explained.

"Oh, that," she smiled. "That wasn't sex."

"OK" I took a breath to control my anger. "So if it wasn't sex what was it?"

"It was..." she searched for words. "... just foreplay."

It was damn well just foreplay for me, Bitch! I glared at her as the thought burned through my mind. You made dam sure it was nothing more.

She smiled, and I wanted to smash her face in.

"What made you think it was sex?" she asked.

I fought to keep myself under control. "I made love to you and you fucking came, that's what made it sex."

"No, Kevin," she smiled as she gently shook her head.

I was humiliated, to have made love to her, to have worshipped her, to have given her the greatest pleasure I could. The greatest pleasure she'd let me anyway and to have her dismiss it as something totally trivial. Something she'd almost overlooked. I was shaken to the core. To have put her in such a central position in my life and to have her regard me as something so inconsequential was devastating.

One part of me knew that this was just what she wanted me to feel. That this was all part of some perverted scheme she had. And another part of me knew that she really loved me. That I couldn't make love to somebody, and have her react to me the way she did, and not have her fall in love with me. That surely nobody could open themselves' physically without exposing themselves' emotionally as well. That sex couldn't be meaningless to her.

The two thoughts combined to make me believe that she was rebelling against her love for me. That she couldn't accept that she loved me, or that I loved her. That somehow she couldn't trust her own emotions. So that on the one hand she was drawn to me and let me make love to her. But on the other she couldn't accept that our feelings for each other were valid. She couldn't respond to me in the way that I wanted, simply because I'd told her that was how I wanted her to respond.

Then the notion of sin came to me. She'd told me that she was a Catholic and that she went to mass every Sunday. And I thought that she probably couldn't admit that she was having sex with me, because having sex was a sin. That she had reasoned that if I didn't penetrate her vagina with my penis, that if I didn't come, that it mustn't be sex. And the safest way to ensure that was to ignore my penis altogether, to make sure that I didn't come. A sort of homemade version of "Safe Sex" for repressed Catholics.

We continued back to her place, but when we got to the door she stopped and turned to me.

"I not going to invite you in tonight, Kevin," she looked down.

"Oh," I said, wanting to ask why, but knowing it would only start an argument if I did. "OK," I shrugged.

She put her arms around my neck and we kissed. I put my arms around her and hugged. She stepped back and turned to unlock the door. I started back down the garden.

"See you next week at the club," she said.

"Yeah," I replied. "See you then." Wondering if I would or not. I made my lonely way home.

Looking back on my relationship with her I realize that one of my biggest mistakes might have been that I'd usually asked her those "tricky" questions after she'd come, when for all intents and purposes she seemed to have no further interest in me. Maybe if I'd asked her beforehand she'd have been more interested in talking to me about them. But then I'd have run the risk of having an argument with her and not getting a chance to make love to her. And I'd wanted to make love to her so badly. Maybe I had only been interested in "having my evil way" with her after all.

But yet we'd not really argued this time and still she hadn't invited me inside.

So maybe I should have pushed her into arguments more often. Maybe then she'd have believed how important those things had been to me. But then I had told her how I'd felt and she'd just not believed me. And I feel now as I felt then that if the only way I could make her accept what I told her I felt was what I truly did feel was by having an argument with her, then she wasn't worth the bother needed to convince her. I guess it was the sin of pride that made me unable to plead and beg for understanding.

But the next time we made love I was going to make dam sure she didn't ignore my penis.

She didn't actually turn up at the next meeting of the Camera Club, which didn't surprise me. By this stage I knew that if she said she'd see me at the Club than she'd not turn up. But what did surprise me was that she was in when I phoned her the next Thursday. So I arranged to meet her the following day, at the same time and place.

Once again she took my breath away when she arrived, so I didn't mind having stood there for twenty minutes waiting for her. We went to see some Hollywood blockbuster. I can't remember which one it was, but the smell of her perfume and the feel of her snuggling against my shoulder for over an hour gave me a pleasant hormonal buzz. And when we came out of the cinema we headed straight back to her place.

By this stage we'd made love often enough for the thrill of discovery to be somewhat abated. It was still exciting to make love, but we had started to develop regular habits and favorite positions. One of my favorite to this day is me lying on my back with her on top, one breast in my mouth, a hand on the other, with my other hand stretched down to caress her to orgasm.

But this time I tried to encourage her to take a more active interest in my. I wanted her hands to caress me to orgasm as well. So when we started to make love I deliberately put her hand

to my crotch so she could feel the bulge of my erection through my jeans. I encouraged her to stroke and caress me. I got completely naked, even though she only stripped to T-shirt and panties.

And when she took her hand from my genitals I took mine from her's, though we continued to kiss and rub each other. She put her hand back on my penis and I slipped my fingers back into her vagina. We had a long slow delicious session, slowly building up to a climax.

We started off fully clothed leaning against one of the arm chairs. Then we where half naked lying on the floor, first her on top of me, then me on top of her, then her on top again. It must have taken us over half an hour just to strip. All the time we were kissing and cuddling and caressing each other.

By the time I was completely naked we were both more than ready to come. We were on the floor. I was sitting between her legs leaning forward to kiss her. She was resting back on one arm, her other hand on my penis. Her T-shirt was pulled up and her breast was in my mouth, nipple hard against my tongue. Her hand rubbed gently across the tip of my erection, much too gently to make me come, but more than enough to stimulate me.

My fingers once again found their way to her vagina. She was wide open and hot. And I just couldn't help myself. I couldn't deny her orgasm. It was one thing if I'd tried and failed, but I was much too experienced for that. I knew what to do, and I really couldn't help myself. My fingers found their own way across and around and inside. I pumped her for a few timeless moments, until she shuddered and gasped and came.

When she'd relaxed and I'd taken my fingers out I realized that her hand was no longer on my penis. I leant back on my elbow, expecting her to resume her caresses. But instead she stood up and walked out into the bathroom. I was left reclined on the floor, with an erection, wondering what the hell I was supposed to do now.

This was worst then being ignored completely, to have been aroused. To have her acknowledge my arousal, even stimulate and encourage it. And then for her to just walk away from it was... well unbelievable. Yet she'd done it. I was living through it. I didn't want to believe it. Yet it had happened. I couldn't ignore it. I was in a state of complete and utter shock.

What was I supposed to do? Rush into the bathroom and rape her! I tell you I nearly did. Much as I hate to admit it, I nearly fucking raped her. And I'm sure there's not a court in the land that would have convicted me of the crime either.

But I am not an animal. I am not ruled by my hormones. I was not so frustrated and degraded that I'd lost control of my actions. I was devastated, yes. But I was not going to exact any revenge on her. I was not going to stoop to her level. I wasn't going to start playing her fucked up little games. So I started to get dressed.

As I was tucking my T-shirt into my jeans she came out of the bathroom. "Oh, are you leaving," she seemed genuinely surprised.

I said nothing. Just sat on the end of her bed and pulled on my shoes. She sat beside me. I put my hand on her knee. Then moved it up and squeezed her thigh. I looked at her. I wanted to

say so many things: that I loved her, that I wanted her, that I needed her, that I worshipped her, that I wanted so much to understand her, wanted so much to reach her. I wanted just once to believe that we'd really understood each other. But I couldn't.

So instead I slid off the bed onto the floor in front of her. She brought her knees together, so I kissed and licked them, working my way up her thighs. I wanted to grab her and make mad passionate love to her. For her to respond and embrace me, open her legs and let me come inside her, to forget everything else and unite us in an act of total surrender to each other.

But she pulled my head away and smiled down at me. "You're lively tonight," she whispered, kissing my forehead. "But I think you've really had enough."

I looked up at her, my hands on her thighs, her hands pressing against my ears as she held my head away. I opened my mouth, but I couldn't say anything. I swallowed, but still couldn't speak. So I looked down and nodded.

"Come on," she stood up and got my coat from the back of the door.

I stood up and put it on. She opened the door to let me out. I stood in front of her for a moment. Then she was in my arms. My face was buried in her hair, pressing against the side of her neck and her shoulder. My hands caressed her hips and back through the cotton of her T-shirt. Then my left hand was underneath, pressing her panties into the crack between her buttocks, my fingers reaching down and around to caress her.

She stepped back and pushed me away. "My, you're spunky tonight," she smiled and kissed my cheek. "See you next week."

"Yeah," I replied, my hand gently cupping her breast. "See you next week."

Then I was outside, walking away, with the door closing behind me.

On the next date I decided to try another tack. Instead of going straight to the cinema I suggested we go for a drink first. Once we were settled at a table with our drinks I tried to talk to her about how I felt for her, how she felt for me and what type of relationship she wanted us to have. But instead I found myself talking to her about sex. Why couldn't I talk to her about love without mentioning sex? It was as if my desire for her was so strong and I was so frustrated, after having my hopes raised and dashed so often, that all my energies seemed to be channeled into lustful thoughts.

But she had no qualms about talking about sex, just as long as the conversation didn't get too personal. And I didn't say anything that she could interpret as either asking to have sex with her or implying that we were having sex.

I can't remember what strange twists and turns our conversation must have taken during our first drink, but half way through our second we ended up talking about masturbation.

"So what would you tell your twelve year old son if you found him masturbating?" I took a sip of my drink.

"Well..." I felt she was going to just shrug it off, but she didn't. "I'd tell him what it was all about. What it was for."

Visions of her inaptness at doing anything for me came to mind and I wondered how she was going to tell her son how to masturbate properly. I doubted if she knew that there was more than one technique. So I asked, "What do you mean?"

"You know," she smiled, "about the birds and the bees."

I wanted to explain to her that I meant if she had discovered him masturbating after he'd been told about the birds and the bees. I wanted to know if she would tell him that it was a sin and that he shouldn't do it. But I felt that the guy sitting at the end of the next table was beginning to take an interest in our conversation and I didn't want to discuss this in front of an audience.

I decided to change the conversation again. Most people in Ireland, regardless of religious or political persuasion, believe that the sex education in Irish schools is inadequate. Though when it comes to the question of what should be done to improve it opinions differ widely. Which is probably why so little has been done about improving the situation.

"Well I'm glad you'd tell him," I smiled, "because if you left it up to the schools he'd not find out about anything."

She seemed surprised. "Oh, I don't know," she said. "We had very good sex education classes in our school."

"I thought you went to a nun's school," I said.

"I did," she nodded.

"And they had sex education classes?" I didn't believe it.

"Of course," she smiled. "Didn't you have them?"

"All the priests told us was that it was immoral to masturbate. And that you shouldn't get your passions inflamed as it might be difficult to control them and you'd end up getting a girl into trouble," I smiled then at how silly it had seemed. But when I think now of the stupidity of it makes me so angry.

She laughed with me. "Really?" she asked.

"Really," I stopped laughing.

"We were taught all about sex," she said.

"By the nuns?" The thought of a nun being explicit about sex was incredible.

"Well it was a lay teacher that gave the classes," she conceded. "But the nuns must have known what she was teaching us."

"What?" I asked. "All about contraception and how to make love, or even masturbate."

"Don't be disgusting, Kevin," She looked away.

"Disgusting?" I smiled. "Which one of those was disgusting?" I thought, you sure find the thought of making love to me disgusting.

"They don't teach you that sort of thing in school," she said.

"I know," I replied. "I went to school as well."

There was silence for a moment. "So where are you supposed to learn about that sort of thing if they don't teach you in school?" I asked.

"Well," she replied. "Where did you learn about it?"

"From books and magazines," I said, "and late night television programs." I smiled, "Particularly channel Four."

We laughed. And I noticed she'd finished her drink.

"Do you want another?" I asked.

"No, Kevin," she shook her head. "I have to make an early start in the morning, so I think it's time I headed home."

"OK" I knocked back the remains of my pint while she put on her coat. I think she was going to leave without me, but when she saw me putting on my coat she waited for me.

We walked back down towards O'Connell St. I thought that we'd be going back to her place as usual. But she stopped and took hold of my arm.

"Listen," she said. "There's just enough time for you to catch your last bus home. Isn't there?"

I shrugged, "Yeah. The stop is just down the road. The last bus isn't due to leave for another half hour."

"Well," she hesitated. "It's just that I have to get up early in the morning to catch a bus home," she looked down. "So I don't think that you'd better come back with me tonight."

I felt a familiar disappointment. "OK," I said. What else could I say? "So you're going away for the rest of the weekend, then."

"Yes," she looked up, but offered no other explanation.

I put my arms around her and leaned forward to kiss her. She kissed me quickly and stepped away.

"I'll see you then," she said. Then she looked down again. "You know it was a very interesting conversation we had tonight," she turned and hurried away.

Leaving me with a lot to think about. I'd certainly achieved my goal of finding more about what she thought of sex. But I'd failed miserably in finding out just what she felt about me. I had this unshakeable believe that she didn't know how she felt about me. That she was unwilling to look at our relationship and decide what she felt about me. Because if she knew she'd surely tell me.

But at least I now knew some more about her attitude to sex. It was no wonder she knew fuck all about sex. If she thought what the nuns were likely to have told her was all there is to know she must have been in a bad state. I don't mean that they wouldn't have taught her anything. I'm sure that she knew a lot more about menstrual cycles, gestation periods and even genetics than I did. But I'm equally sure that she knew little about contraception. And she definitely knew nothing about making love.

And she didn't seem to have come to terms with the guilt of wanting sex yet. I know that guilt. I was raised as a Catholic. And even now I'm not sure that I've come to terms with the guilt that was instilled in me at having normal feelings and emotions.

So I spent the next few weeks thinking, the poor little kid, feeling all these desires that she was not supposed to have. Not knowing what to do with them and so repressing them. No wonder she couldn't make up her mind if she wanted to have sex or not. Or rather, that she wanted to have sex, but she couldn't admit it, least of all to herself.

And all the time I ignored all the trouble I was having with my own uncontrollable desires. Ironic justice perhaps?

## Chapter 6

The next week I phoned her as usual on the Thursday night. But she wasn't in. So I left a message and waited once again for her to phone me back. About five on Friday I phoned her again and left a message, thinking that she would get it when she came in from work. Saturday morning I phoned and left another message, but my hopes were low. I figured that she'd gone away for the weekend again. She didn't phone me back that weekend and she didn't turn up at the Camera Club on Tuesday either.

So next Thursday I phoned again, after ten thirty so there was plenty of time for her to have gotten home from her classes. But once again she wasn't in and I left a message for her. On Friday I phoned and left another message. And another on Saturday. When she didn't turn up at the Camera Club that week or the next, I realized that she'd really disappeared for good. I was sorry that she hadn't had the decency to tell me to my face. But that was probably just because I wanted to scream and shout at her to relieve my anger and frustration. But I still found myself dreaming about her every night.

Then a month later she turned up at the Camera Club again. After an unexplained absence of six weeks she walked back into my life.

The club meeting was the judging of the summer competition. The judge had just held up the first of my prints and had started to comment about it when she walked in. I didn't hear a word he said. All my being was focused on the fact that Alexandra was once again in the same room as me.

I'd half thought, really hopped, that she wouldn't attend the Camera Club, that if she hadn't the courage to face me when she'd dumped me that she wouldn't want to face me ever again. Yet the fact that I knew where she lived burned in the back of my mind. And I knew that someday I'd have gone to her flat to face her again.

Now she'd come to me, but in a place where I'd not want to make a scene. Perhaps it was better that way. It'd only hurt to say the things that I'd have ended up saying in private.

The next hour is a haze. As the judge made comment after comment about all the photos entered in the competition I found my eyes constantly straying to look at Alexandra. I'd snap them back and refocus on the print the judge was discussing, but I'd not be able to concentrate on what he was saying. I would try to listen to his words and find my eyes once again on Alexandra.

As soon as the meeting was over I left the main room. I was sweating and my knees were trembling. I went straight upstairs to get some coffee and steady my nerves before Alexandra could engage me in conversation. There was all the normal chit-chat going on among my fellow members of the club, but it all went straight past me. I knew that she was going to follow me up and I knew that she'd talk to me.

The top floor of the club's building had a little room at the rear fitted out as a kitchen and a larger room at the front with a mismatched assortment of tables and chairs donated by

members. I was on autopilot as I got my coffee and walked into the front room to sit at a table alone. I had just sat down and taken my first sip of coffee when she walked in. She hadn't gone into the back room to get some coffee first, she'd walked straight in to see me.

"Hi," she said in that soft whisper of a voice that even the memory of can still send shivers down my spine.

"Hi," my voice nearly broke.

"Did we have a fight or something?" she stood beside me.

"What?" there was a strange ringing in my ears.

"You haven't phoned and didn't come to talk to me downstairs," she seemed somewhat puzzled.

My heart was pounding, "No, we didn't have a fight." I swallowed, "I did phone, but you never answered any of my messages."

"Oh," she smiled and sat down. "That was because I was on holiday in Spain."

My heart skipped a beat as two thoughts flared simultaneously in my brain. "She hadn't dumped me after all!" and "She'd gone on holiday without telling me she was going." "She loves me", followed by, "She thinks so little of me that she didn't even bother to tell me she was going on holiday."

I looked down. "Where did you go to?" was all I could think of saying.

"To Madrid and Santander and Avila," she smiled her excitement of the fantastic things she'd seen. "The cathedrals and castles were magnificent."

"I'm glad that you enjoyed it," I cut into her excitement. "Only sorry that you didn't bother to tell me you were going."

She stopped. "Of course I told you," she looked at me.

"The last time I saw you was six weeks ago," I stated. "And the last thing you said to me then was 'see you next Tuesday at the Club'." I shrugged, "I didn't see you till tonight."

She seemed sorry. "Oh that's right," she explained. "I went away for the few weekends before going to Spain. I guess I didn't get to see you then."

Derek and Paul came in with their coffee. Paul split a knowing look between me and Alexandra, but didn't say anything.

"Congratulations, Kevin," Derek beamed. "So you finally beat me."

"Well that's because we finally got a judge that wasn't satisfied by 'Pretty pictures'," I replied smiling, happy to have something else to think about beside Alexandra.

"Pretty pictures' my foot," Derek put his cup down on the table and sat beside me. "It was because you finally took one that was in focus," he smiled.

"After all those soft-focus, 'Candy box' shots of flowers you did last year!" I replied. "You've got some nerve."

"So, where have you been for the last while, Alexandra?" Paul asked. "I haven't seen you at the Club for weeks."

"Oh," she beamed. "I've been on holiday in Spain."

"Really," he smiled back. "Where did you go?"

Smiling she launched into a graphic description of her holiday. Paul encouraged her by saying that he'd been there a few years ago and they compared a couple of places that they both been to. Then somebody else said that his sister had married a Spaniard and that he'd stayed with her for two weeks at the beginning of the year. And he detailed all the famous places he'd been. Then the conversation turned to holidays in general. And, it being a photographic club, to the trials and tribulations of taking photos on holiday.

And all the time I sat there, while the conversation lapped around me, wanting to take Alexandra by the scruff of the neck and demand an explanation of why she'd just disappeared from my life, why she'd gone on holiday and not even sent me a post card? To beat out of her what she felt for me. To demand an explanation of why she treated me the way she did!

But I couldn't say anything here. I couldn't make a scene in front of everyone. I didn't want to make a scene, because I didn't think an argument would solve anything. I just wanted to talk to her.

As the conversation faded and people started to leave I turned to her and asked softly, "Do you fancy a drink?"

"OK" she shrugged.

I stood and said "See you later," to the guys.

"Cheers."

"Goodbye."

"G'luck."

Alexandra nodded her goodbyes and followed me out.

As we walked out of the club she started to turn left towards the pub we normally go to after meetings. But I didn't want to be with her in the middle of a crowd again. I needed somewhere we could talk. Somewhere I could tell her what I felt about her.

I put my hand on her arm. "Let's go to Ryan's," I suggested. "It's just up the road and we can talk there."

"Sure," she turned to follow me.

When we got to the pub I discovered that instead of being a quiet, sleepy little place, as it had been on the previous occasions I'd been there, it was jammed full of people. We made our way to the bar and I noticed a couple of free stools at a table in the corner.

"See if those are free," I nodded towards them. "And I'll get you a drink."

"Great," she replied over the noise of the crowd. "I'll have a glass of Guinness," and turned to make her way across to the stools.

I got the drinks and followed her over.

As I sat beside her most of the people broke out into a rousing chorus of "Happy Birthday" to Linda, making conversation impossible.

"Linda sure has a lot of friends," I smiled at Alexandra as soon as they'd finished.

"Yes," she smiled back. "It's great, isn't it?"

"Yes," I smiled back. Really great! I thought, I come here for a heart to heart with you and end up in the middle of a birthday party.

We didn't say much to each other for the next fifteen minutes. Just sat and drank and chatted about photography. All the time I was putting off raising the matter that most bothered me. But eventually I spit it out.

"So why did you disappear on me for six weeks?" I asked.

"Sorry?" she seemed somewhat stunned at the sudden in my tone of voice.

I calmed down a little, "So why did you disappear on me for six weeks." I looked at her, "As far as I knew you'd just dumped me and hadn't the decency to tell me to my face."

"Oh," she said. "Is that why you didn't want to talk to me in the club?"

"No," I got angry at the suggestion that it was ever me that didn't want to talk, when it was her that refused to tell me anything of her feelings, either positive or negative, for me. "That's why I wanted to talk to you somewhere that we could have a private," I gestured at the crowd around us. "Or at least semi-private conversation, away from all my friends and acquaintances at the Club."

"Oh," she repeated.

I waited for to say something more, but after a few moments she looked down and took a sip from her drink.

"Is that all you have to say?" I asked.

"Well I don't know what you want me to say," she replied.

"What I want you to say?" I didn't want her to say anything. I wanted her to talk to me. I wanted to understand her. I wanted to know what she felt for me. I wanted her to understand what I felt for her. This wasn't just some game with set phrases we were supposed to say to each other. This was supposed to be a conversation. Preferably an open and honest conversation where we'd both learn something of and develop a better appreciation of each other.

I took a deep breath and tried a different tack.

"What's the most important thing in your life at the moment?" I asked.

She paused for a moment, then smiled and said, "Improving my ranking at my Tennis club."

"And after that," I didn't smile back.

"Well," she shrugged. "Going out with my friends. And having a good time at the weekends."

"And where do I fit in?" I looked down.

"I don't understand," she said.

"As far as I can see," I explained. "I'm ranked lowest on your list of priorities. You'd rather play tennis or go to the pictures with your friends, or even stay at home and read a book, before you'd want to socialize with me." I didn't mention work or her classes because I could understand her needing to do them. "And then you only want to see me at weekends and if you're going away, to wherever it is that you disappear to, you have no time to see me at all!" I snorted, "Not even enough time to phone me and tell me that you're going away. You're not even bothered enough to pretend that you'll miss me."

"Oh," she looked down into her glass. Then swallowed half her drink. "I see."

"Do you?" I asked. "That's good, because I don't. I don't understand what I mean to you. And no matter how often I tell you that I love you, you never tell me how you feel." I looked down again, "You never tell me anything."

We were silent for a moment. I sipped my drink and looked up at her. But she was still staring into her Guinness.

I tried to explain again. "I don't expect to be the center of your universe," though I'd have loved it if I had been. "But I do expect to be up there somewhere." I shrugged, half attempting to make a joke, "I mean, who gets to walk home alone all the time and who gets all the orgasms?"

She looked at me and raised her almost empty glass, "If that were fuller you'd have it all over you."

"Why?" I asked. "You do!"

She looked away.

"I'll buy you another if you want to throw it over me," I said.

There was silence for a moment. Then she laughed softly. "You know," she looked back to me. "I really think you mean that."

"Of course I do," I spread my hands. "Why would I say it if I didn't?"

She shook her head and smiled. "I'm not sure I'm ready for this," she sipped her drink. "I'm not sure I want it."

I didn't know how to reply, so I sipped my drink.

"This is just going a bit too fast for me," she said. "I just need time to adjust to it." She looked at me again, "Just give me time to adjust to it. OK?"

"OK," I replied and looked down, not knowing quite what she'd meant.

We finished our drinks in silence.

Outside the pub I turned to walk home with her. But she put a hand to my shoulder and stopped me.

"I don't think you should come back with me tonight," she looked down.

"OK," I looked down as well. Once again I didn't have any choice.

She put her hand to the side of my head and stretched up to kiss my cheek. "Goodnight," she whispered.

I reached out to put my arms around and hug her and kiss her a proper goodnight, but she'd stepped away before I could react.

"I'll phone you," she turned and walked away.

I watched her go, knowing that she'd often said she'd phone me and that she never had, thinking that she was walking away from me forever, hoping against hope that she really would, this time, just this once, actually phone me.

But she had told me that she would phone me! How could I doubt her? Why would she tell me she would if she had no intention of doing so? Forget that she done so in the past. She'd told me that she'd phone me and I believed her. She would phone. I would have faith in her above all else.

So that night, as I walked home along, I occupied my mind by trying to figure out what my feelings for her were. By that time I'd given up any attempt at trying to work out what she was feeling.

Was I really in love with her? I thought about her all the time. It ached when she wasn't there. I wanted to hold her, to touch her, even just to be in the same room as her. I wanted most of

all to talk to her. I wanted to tell her what I felt. Or rather I wanted her to believe me when I told her that I loved her. I knew, deep down inside me, that she couldn't accept that I did.

Every time I met her I couldn't stop myself from touching her. Did she think I was some sort of pervert feeling her up all the time? Did she think that all I wanted was to have sex with her? Did she not know that every time I got her alone I just couldn't help myself?

And yet I never lost total control. I never got carried away so much that I ended up raping her. I never did anything she didn't want. And she wasn't just passively lying there letting me do it to her either. She took an active interest in me making love to her. She'd just draw the line at doing anything that'd make me come.

Was it some sort of test? Was she trying to see if I was just some low-life that simply wanted to 'have my evil way' with her and then dump her. I can sympathize with her not wanting to be just another conquest on my hit list. The only thing is, I was beginning to feel that I was one on her's.

But was I "having my evil way" with her even if I didn't get to come? I think now that she wouldn't let me come because she thought that I wasn't. As long as I didn't come, she wasn't conquered. But I never wanted to conquer her. I wanted to share myself with her. I mean making her come was the highlight of... well my whole life at that time. I lived and breathed just to make love to her. Oh it mattered that I didn't come. It mattered a hell of a lot! But as long as I was making love to her I could live in the hope that one day she'd respond. And wouldn't it be a glorious day when she shared herself with me, when she finally admitted her love for me!

It was only much later that it occurred to me that she didn't know how to respond to me. Yet even at the time I saw that she didn't seem to know how to make love to me. I don't just mean the physical acts, but the whole emotional attitude she needed to take to love someone. But for some reason I never connected this to the fact that she wouldn't let me come. I'd always assumed that she didn't make love to me because she wouldn't accept the fact that she loved me. Of course I never directly asked her if she did love me, because she might have said no. And then where would I have been.

So once again I'd tried to get closer to her and had ended up further away. Maybe I was just feeling sorry myself, because I wouldn't be making love to her. Or maybe it was because I couldn't pretend that she loved me when she left me standing alone in the cold street. Either way I didn't have the momentary illusion of being close to her. I didn't have those few precious moments after I'd made love to her that I could pretend that she did really love me. A feeling of rejection hummed in the back of my head.

But now, looking back at our relationship, I realized that night was one of the few times that we really communicated. The closest we'd ever come to each other. I'd finally told her that I was serious about her. She'd told me that she didn't want to be rushed into anything. The thought that maybe we would end up sharing our lives with each other was out in the open.

But all the frustration and bitterness that was building up inside me had to go somewhere. A combination of writer's block, being unemployed for over a year, having no money, having to live with my parents, a total lack of success in any aspect of my life, was surrounding me in a fog of depression and uncertainty. All my insecurities were being aggravated.

I needed somebody who'd give me a steadying hand through to the other side. But Alexandra had her own insecurities to deal with. I didn't know what they were. But I could see that they were there. Would the stresses we were both suffering under forge us together or tear us apart?

# End of Free Sample

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Thank you,  
Declan Stanley  
11<sup>th</sup> April 2011