

REAR VIEW MIRROR

Cindy Callinsky

This book is dedicated to all of you that dance to the beat of
your own drum.

May you never start dancing in rhythm.

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This is based on a true story; however, "my" perception is "my" reality. How I have portrayed my story is how I perceived it after having absorbed things with my senses and then processed them through my way of thinking. Other parties involved may have perceived things differently due to a different thought process.

I have changed many names in the book. The name I go by is my actual maiden name.

Dedications/Acknowledgements

Olivia, don't ever lose your imagination or rose tint. Fairy tales do exist. Don't stop believin'.

Cole, don't ever stop drawin' on you. But, you have got to stop peenin' on the walls because that is soooo not art!

This book is dedicated to all my dear friends that you will read about in the book, as well as my family, and Johnathan (the only man I will now take a bullet for).

I want to thank the following people for listening to my craziness for months:

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Girls, I bet you thought that I forgot you. No such luck. This book is also dedicated to all of you, the ones I have had the pleasure of sitting around this past year. You know who you are... "The Ball Stick Chick's." You all absolutely kill me!

I also have to thank all of the wonderful teachers I have had over the years.

Some of my favorites were:

Mr. Campbell - McKinley
Mr. Coe - Lincoln
Mr. Davis - Lincoln
Mr. Erickson - Lincoln
Mr. Graham - Gault
Mr. Johnson - Gault
Miss. Lunquist - Gault
Mrs. Newhart - Lincoln
Mr. Richardson - McKinley

~All of you played a huge part in the outcome of the person I am today!

Rainna Salvage, I love you girl. You played a huge part in my childhood but you will find I left you out of the book. Your story is not mine to tell.

Disclaimer:

I am not an English Professor. I have had a lot of help editing this book. I appreciate all the help I received from everyone.

I apologize in advanced for any and all mistakes you may come across.

Hey, I'm just a girl trying to tell her story...

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Not only did she make corrections, she gave me suggestions and helped me reword paragraphs to make the story flow better.

She can be contacted at:
breezybird@gmail.com

I can't forget Gene Gregory
<http://www.myspace.com/genegregory>
I look forward to climbing to the top with you!

And the music played – Gene Gregory



*Read the news in the city paper
Said the band is gonna play
Play the songs the way they did
The way they did yesterday
Loud guitars and fast cars
Moving down the boulevard
Heading down the West Coast
Where the water moves away*

Yeah, and the music played

*Playing tricks with pickup sticks
Let the riddler tell his rhyme
Telling stories of lovers lost
Into the shadows of time
Today is tomorrow's past
Don't make the car go fast
Slow down and take a look
I know I've read the book*

Yeah, and the music played

*Saw the news on the TV screen
Said the man had passed away
Can't play the way they did
The way they did yesterday*



Singer/Songwriter Gene Gregory - All around great guy!
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<http://www.myspace.com/genegregory>

REAR VIEW MIRROR

Part One:
TRUE LOVE

CINDY CALLINSKY

Chapter One: Low-Rider

It's a beautiful August evening in Tacoma, Washington. This is where I have lived my whole life, and in the same house at that. It is 1990; my sister, friends, and I have been a part of the music scene that surrounds the Tacoma/Seattle area for a couple of years now. We like underground clubs, and have many friends that own VW Buses because they are in bands and need to be able to pack up all of their equipment and move it at the drop of a hat. They are constantly being forced to move from practice pad to practice pad because no parents can stand the raw sound of their music for extended periods of time.

I guess you could say that we have been part of the grunge scene for the last two years, and the word grunge doesn't even exist yet. It won't exist until the world labels it as such due to the introduction of Nirvana.

I have been working on installing a new audio system in my "new for me" 1970 burgundy metal flake M.G. Midget, and I'm almost done. You wouldn't be able to tell, though, from all of the wiring and old speakers lying around the car. I'm up to my elbows in high tech, high fidelity car electronics and I couldn't be happier.

Now, before we go any further, let me get one thing straight. I'm not your normal chick. I love classic vehicles, electronics, and NFL football. I was a tomboy growing up, but when I hit junior high school, you could say that I really bloomed. I played softball and was a cheerleader my freshman, junior, and senior years. I have always been pretty outgoing and happy-go-lucky. Through high school I was described as Cindy "the bubbly one".

I was friends with everyone and was known for sticking up for the underdogs. I hated when people got picked on. It was times like these that the bubbly one quickly became the angry one.

I stand almost five feet eight inches tall, and have brown hair with too much gray. Not regular gray either; it is twice as thick as my regular hair and Phil Donahue silver. I started noticing it in my ninth grade year. What a year that was, but that's a whole different story. The summer before I went to high school I started lightening it. Over the years, it has

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become lighter and lighter. It is currently really light sandy brown.

I have owned some cool cars in the past. At eighteen I bought a '66 Mustang, three-speed-on-the-floor with a Pony interior. I had also been known to rock Tacoma at nineteen with my '74 Super Beetle. I have installed systems in every vehicle I have ever owned, but none were as nice as this system. Plus, none of my other vehicles were convertible. I'm now twenty and will be twenty-one in a few months so I can't wait until I get this system installed and cruise Ruston Way with the top down, jamming. I only have a few months of Ruston Way hanging out left.

Ruston Way is the hang out place for anyone who is old enough to drive, but is under twenty-one. It is a strip that runs along the bay also known as the "Waterfront". During the day, it is frequented by fishers, skateboarders, roller-bladers, joggers, picnickers, and people just hanging out enjoying a beautiful day. There is lush green grass along the whole strip and multiple park areas with beautiful gardens. Stone accents are scattered along the front. There are a lot of docks for people to fish from. When the sun goes down, it is where everyone that is anyone goes to hang out.

Anyway, as I'm wrapping up the connections to my speakers, I look up and see Candie. She is my resident partner in crime. She has really long naturally sandy brown hair, and currently sports a spiral perm. I could say a lot of things about Candie, but the one thing that sticks out is her smile. She has a really sweet smile. I have known her as far back as I can remember. She is one year younger than I am so she has more Ruston left in her than I do.

She is one of the sweetest people you could ever meet, but she doesn't have a clue when it comes to vehicles. The girl's oil light came on in her Beetle and she ran it without oil. Needless to say, that multi-colored Beetle bug is now in the graveyard. Currently, she owns a Honda Civic and she understands the importance of those little lights on her dashboard. I guess that is why we get along so well; we complement each other almost perfectly.

"What's up?" I ask.

"I know where a party is tonight. Wanna go?"

I shake my head, still bending over to get that damn wire connected, "I don't know. I really want to cruise tonight. I'm

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almost done with this system and I'd like to enjoy it. I can't if we hit a party."

Candie smiles, and unleashes a secret weapon. "But there'll be lots of guys there. Come on."

"I don't want to. Why don't you come with me and we can cruise Ruston?" After working on this car all day, I was really looking forward to some good tunes, a long drive, and some quality time spent between friends.

Resting her hands on her hips, Candie gets into her best pouting pose. "You've gotta go. I just met a really nice guy. He's in the Army. He'll be there. Come on. You owe me."

I don't like to hang around guys in the military. You might end up liking one. That isn't bad, but the fact that they aren't here to stay is. A couple of years ago, I hooked up with a guy that I knew from high school who was on leave from the Army. When he left, it really hurt and I didn't even love him. So, I try to stay away from men in the military.

The problem now is that Candie's right. I do owe her, and she is my sidekick. She has bailed me out of a lot of bad situations. I remember one time we got a hold of some vodka and bought some orange juice. We walked down to Old McKinley Park and sat on a bench and talked all night. She drank the orange juice and I drank the vodka. Needless to say, I was in pretty rough shape that night. I could barely stand up.

Somehow, Candie managed to get me all the way to my block. We were almost home when I started getting sick in every yard. She took me back to her house for the night. In the morning, she went to my house and occupied my mom while I snuck upstairs and changed into my nightgown. I bounced down the stairs like nothing had happened and my mom was never the wiser.

I have also spent many weekends with her at the ocean. Almost every time she and her mom would go to Ocean Shores they would take me with them. Let me tell you, I met a lot of really hot guys there over spring break. Man, there is nothing like hanging out at the sand dunes all day, getting sun, and playing pool until the wee hours of the morning with guys that you can only hope to see again in the summer.

She also helped me get my job with AT&T. She works there, as well. Her mom has worked there for years. It is temporary and it should have already ended, but it has been

a good job, so I suppose I will stay until they don't need me any longer.

I prefer working with people face to face, though. At AT&T, you get to talk to people day in and day out, but there is no real association involved.

Knowing that she will probably go into these things and more, I give in to save the time. "OK Candie. I'll go, but if it sucks, I'm not staying."

"Thanks. I know you'll have a total blast."

"I hope so."

I go back to work installing my subwoofers behind the seats. The amplifier and the Denon receiver have been installed. All of my cassettes are ready to rock 'n' roll. Once I get it all done I head inside, clean up, and get myself pretty. Even though I may be a bit of a tomboy, I still know how to clean up and turn on the charm.

After a quick look in the mirror, we jump into the M.G. and head out to an apartment complex off 72nd and McKinley. Jamming to Gene Loves Jezebel with the top down, the wind blowing through our hair, I feel as if life can't get much better than this. It is getting harder to go to this damn party by the minute.

We finally find the place and bounce in. Even though the apartment is a bit small, there are actually a lot of people here. Some people are dancing and some others are playing quarters at a little fake oak table. This is so not the type of party I would normally hit.

All of the sudden, I feel something deep inside. I feel some sort of energy. I know it sounds loopy, but it's so true. I scan the room again and BAM... I'm locked on a guy that is sitting on a stool. He has black hair, beautiful big brown eyes, and a tan that looks like he just got back from a year's vacation off the coast of Hawaii. He has on a black, long-sleeved Jimmy'z shirt, khaki pants, and black Vans. His jaw line is stronger than Kurt Russell's. On top of all that, he has thick black eyebrows that make his eyes pop.

As I'm checking him out, he catches me. Now I feel stupid.

Where in the hell did this guy come from? He wasn't there a minute ago and they sure don't grow them like this in Washington.

I pull Candie aside and ask her, "Who is he?"

"I don't know, but I'll find out."

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Candie runs off to find this Army guy that has her panties in a bunch. I stand there checking out the place, trying to fit in and look cool. Again, not a party of my typical choice, but I would go anywhere just to have a chance to meet this guy.

Candie comes swooping back with great news. "His name's Jimmy, and he's not taken."

"Thank you, Lord," I mutter under my breath.

I sort of slide towards him and introduce myself.

"Hey, my name's Cindy." I extend my hand out.

"I'm Jimmy," he replies as he shakes my hand and tries hard not to make eye contact. He is fidgeting as if he is uncomfortable. No doubt, this guy is really shy. As I shake his hand, I notice that he is wearing a beautiful gold class ring with a dark blue stone in it.

"Where ya from, Jimmy?" I ask, trying to strike up a little conversation.

"Cali."

That explains a lot. I knew they didn't grow them like this in Washington.

"Man, that's really cool. So do you like surf and stuff?"

Bingo! Jimmy finally makes eye contact. "I love surfin' and skateboarding." A warm smile spreads across his face, and I can tell that he's genuine.

That explains the digs. Vans are skateboarding shoes! Jimmy's represents the surf society. Actually, they sponsored Christian Hosoi, too. That's another story, though. Anyway, this man doesn't just look good in the clothes; he actually represents the lifestyle.

"That must be why you're so tan."

He looks a little embarrassed. "Yeah, my mom's Filipino and Hawaiian and my dad's Indian and German, so that helps."

I'm grinning now, "Yeah, well I'm half Polish and half Heinz 57 and I know every Polish joke there is to know."

Jimmy smiles and we both start laughing.

"So Jimmy, what're ya into?"

"Music."

"Do you have a favorite group?"

"I don't know about a favorite? That'd be hard 'cause I like so many of them."

"What kinds of music do you like the most?"

"My favorite's older alternative, like The Smiths and New Order. I like Tesla, too. Stuff like that."

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Okay, I'm in heaven. This is too good to be true. I don't know any other man that likes this type of music. "Well, I take it you've heard of Depeche Mode and The Cure. How about Echo & The Bunnymen?"

"Oh yeah!"

I'm smiling. "Psychedelic Furs?"

Now we are both grinning from ear to ear as Jimmy nods and replies, "Love 'em, too."

"I can't believe you even know who those groups are. That's so cool."

We just sort of gawk at each other in amazement when it dawns on me that I have to show him my new stereo set up. This is a good chance to connect even more on a music level, show him my cute car, and prove the fact that I'm not afraid to do shit myself. I smack Jimmy softly on the arm, "Hey, you have to come and check out my system. I just got done installing it right before Candie and I headed over here."

Jimmy hops off the stool. "Cool."

I'm excited as Jimmy follows me outside. This guy is pretty cool. I have never met anyone that knew who all of those groups were, and he is really hot on top of that. There is probably something wrong with him and I just don't know what it is yet.

Music has always been very important to me, since the first time I can remember hearing it. It's the only thing in the world that I really feel at one with. I mean, there are certain groups whose lyrics make me feel as if I could have written them. It's like therapy for me.

I'm very eclectic when it comes to music. I listen to all sorts of different styles. Even though alternative is my favorite, there are times when dance, R & B, or heavy rock is more fitting for the occasion.

There is nothing like lying in the middle of the floor listening to really good music and taking it all in. It helps me stay in touch with who I really am.

Jimmy is eyeing my M.G. "This is yours?"

I'm grinning like a proud parent. "Yep, cute huh?"

"Yeah! I bet it's fun, too."

I'm still grinning. "Man, you have no idea."

I turn off the alarm and Jimmy jumps into the passenger side as he is checking out the interior.

I start the car and crank up Gene Loves Jezebel's "Jealous".

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“Man that sounds awesome!” Looking at me impressed, he asks, “You installed it yourself?”

“Absolutely! I have been installing stuff in my vehicles for a while. This is my fourth car. My first one was a Chevy Blazer passed down from my dad. Then I got a ‘66 Mustang, a ‘74 Super Beetle, and now this. I have installed a system into each of them. The Mustang was the hardest. I didn’t want to cut the dash so I had to make a mount for the receiver behind the stick shift.”

Jimmy looks shocked. “Wow, that’s really cool.”

Okay, this is good. I think he is really impressed. I hope he doesn’t see it as tomboyish. Jimmy climbs out of the M.G. and waves for me to follow him, “Now I have to show you my ride.”

I follow him and can’t help but check out his ass. It’s a nice one to say the least.

I follow Jimmy’s nice ass around the corner of the building and an alarm beeps and the lights blink on a baby blue low-rider Nissan. Shit! This thing is awesome. It has a hot pink full body bra, kick-ass rims, and a hot pink tonneau cover.

Jimmy walks around to the passenger side and opens the door for me. I gladly jump in. The inside is immaculate and smells of coconut. I definitely have visions of palm trees swaying in my head.

Jimmy cranks the Nissan, turns on the stereo, and The Smiths “How Soon Is Now” starts pumping through his system. It sounds wonderful. He definitely has more money in his than I do mine, but then you can’t fit very big subwoofers into an M.G.

I’m astounded as we sit there. Man, this guy is too perfect. There has to be something wrong with him. He must be a player or something because I’m just not this lucky.

I turn to him, gleaming. “Jimmy, this sounds awesome! It really does. I’m impressed. I love what you’ve done with the Nissan, too. Usually I don’t like low-riders because they are so half-ass done, but yours is totally cool.”

He grins sweetly. “Thanks.”

We head back inside and talk for hours and hours about everything under the sun. We are up way past the time that everyone else has crashed from too much alcohol.

Finally tired, we sprawl out on the floor and talk some more. We are lying there, looking into each other’s eyes, talking about our families. He tells me about his mom and dad being

divorced and his dad being remarried. I tell him about my dad and his new woman, and that my mom died, although I don't go into details. We have so many things and feelings in common that it is almost freaky.

There is something so sweet and honest in Jimmy's eyes that I feel like I could get lost in them. I feel like I have known him for years. I feel such electricity laying next to him that I badly want to kiss him, but I don't because I know he is shy.

Jimmy must feel something too because he slowly reaches over and grabs my hand as he is still looking in my eyes. I squeeze his hand softly so he knows that it is being well received and we fall asleep with our hands interlocked.

What seemed like a few seconds later, Candie wakes me up from my bliss. She is speaking very quietly. "We have to leave. You have to work."

"Candie, there is no way I'm leaving, besides this job was supposed to have ended last month. It was temporary, remember?" All I can think about is this guy that is sprawled out next to me and the electricity that I can still feel. There is no way I'm going to work at a time like this.

We hang out until Candie has to leave for work. I'm responsible for my demise with AT&T, but I can't cost Candie her job.

When we leave, I write my number on a piece of paper and place it underneath a wiper blade on Jimmy's low-rider. As we ride off, Candie catches me staring in my rear view mirror, watching Jimmy's truck shrinking in the distance. Normally, we would have spent the next few minutes talking about the party and stuff, but this time is different. She looks at me with that sweet smile, and then settles into her seat without another word. I have just had the most memorable night of my life, and for right now I want to keep it private, so we crank up The Smiths and motor on.

Chapter Two: Crazy Bitch

Four days go by without a word from Jimmy. Now, I'm patient, and I know that sometimes guys like to wait to call because they don't want to seem desperate; however, there is an unspoken three-day rule. When it hits the fourth day, it means they aren't calling. I start really freaking out and call Candie.

"Candie, did Jimmy say anything about me to Lee?"

"I don't know. I'll call him and ask. Give me a few minutes and I'll call you back." I hear the phone line click, and I realize I'm holding my breath.

I sit there and wait. My heart is ready to leap from my chest and go running down the street like a madman, with fake heart arms waving wildly while screaming at the same time.

Let me tell you. I'm not a guy chaser. I never have been. I've never had to. This is so outside of my comfort zone.

I just don't get it. I know that we had a connection. It wasn't just any connection. It was a connection that I have never felt before.

I have been in some serious relationships before. In fact, I pretty much dated the same guy from junior high school through high school. There is something different about Jimmy, and it is driving me crazy. Is it his demeanor, shyness, smile, sweetness, or that damn connection? I don't understand it yet, but he really floats my boat.

Finally, the phone rings. I answer it before Candie even hears the ring on her end.

"What'd he say?" I demand.

"Sorry Cindy. He hasn't said anything about you."

My heart sinks down into my stomach. "Well shit! I can't believe it. I just don't get it. I'm not insane. I know that we had something, Candie. I just don't get it."

"I know. Here's the deal. They live in the same barracks. We can drive out there. I'll visit Lee and you can go talk to Jimmy."

"I don't know. If he thought there was something there, he would have called me."

"You don't know that. Maybe he lost your number." Candie has always tried to keep me calm, but now is not the right time.

"If he lost my number, he could have got in touch with me through Lee. He knows that I know you."

"You're right, but maybe it's because he's shy. You don't know what he's thinking, do you? Besides, if he doesn't want to see you, ain't it better if you find out now? If not, you're gonna drive yourself nuts." Candie to the rescue, as usual.

"You're right. I've got nothing to lose. Let's do it. Let me touch up first though."

"OK. I'll call Lee back and let him know that we're going to head over. I'll be down in a few minutes."

"Alright. Hurry up before I lose my nerves and change my mind, though."

I turn the jams up. Today's pick is some classic Foreigner, "Juke Box Hero", baby. I rush off to get myself pretty. My hair still looks good. A little more Aqua Net and I'm set. I reapply my eyeliner and put on some more red lipstick and blush. Maybe I should change. No. I don't want to look too desperate.

Hell, how should I do this? Think, think, think, think. You are making this too difficult. I can say I brought Candie to visit Lee and I thought I would stop by and say hi. Yeah! That is so it.

Lord, I think that'll work. I don't even know how you get on base. I hope Candie does. I know you can't just drive on. They have gates at every entrance. What if he isn't there? That would not be good.

Candie walks in and momentarily snaps me out of my panic attack. "Hey, chick. You about ready?"

"Almost, give me about five more minutes." I turn towards Candie with my hands thrown out. "Should I change or will I look desperate?"

"You look great, Cindy. Stop freaking out. Let's hit the road."

"OK. What do you want to listen to?" At times like these, music can really soothe the savage beast. I, unfortunately, am in no shape to be choosing the tunes right now.

"How about some Dino?"

Good pick. "Summer Girls" is the kind of *music courage* I need right now.

"Cool deal. Let me grab my cassettes and we're ghost."

We race out of the house, into the car, and off we go. It is another really nice day. We had put the top down before we headed out. We hit I-5 and go south towards Fort Lewis. On

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the way we pass the exits to the Tacoma Mall, Mount Tahoma High School, and the tanning salon that I worked at a couple of years ago. That was a cool deal. I got all the free tans I wanted and I worked with one of my party buddies, a girl named Debbie.

“OK Candie. I see the exit coming up.”

“No, that’s not it. You want the next one.”

“OK.” For some reason, I’m a bit glad it is the next exit. I’m doing pretty good right now, and although I’m ready to see Jimmy, I’m not quite ready to dive back into a panic again.

When we exit, we come to a gate, and we have to pull over. I ask the guy at a building what we need to do to get in. We have to fill out some paperwork that tells them who we are visiting and why. I think to myself, *I dare you to put that you are a crazy bitch chasing down a guy that you have only met once*. I decide that probably won’t get us in so we say that Candie is Lee’s girlfriend. I have to show him my license and proof of insurance. He then gives us a “Visitors Pass” that is good for one day.

We start driving through base. It is sort of odd, like a miniature town. I see signs for some type of shopping center. I also see all kinds of old buildings that look like the old brick apartment buildings in downtown Tacoma and I realize that they are barracks. We finally see the sign for the Engineering Battalion. I don’t know exactly where I’m going so I have to cut people off to make the turn. *Great way to start out, you crazy bitch*.

When we pull up to the building and I realize that we are actually here, I start to panic again. *What do I do? What if he isn’t here? What if he has a girl over?* Feeling both scared and sick to my stomach, I muster up the courage to keep going. *Do it now or don’t do it at all*.

Candie and I are greeted at the door by a man sitting at a desk. He asks who we are visiting, then calls Lee on the phone. Soon Lee is coming down the steps to meet us.

“Lee, which room does Jimmy stay in?” I ask nervously, both hoping he will know, and that he won’t know.

“I don’t know, but he’s on my floor.”

I follow them up to the third floor. At that point, I put all of my fears aside. I hear, “Who you lookin’ for? You must be lookin’ for me.”

“Nope. Which room’s Jimmy Koch in?”

“Damn. I don’t know.”

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I look around to find another guy standing there looking dumbfounded. "Where does Jimmy stay?"

"I don't know what room, but he is somewhere towards the end of the hall."

"Thanks."

I see a guy that was at that party. *Okay Cindy... turn on that charm, that brilliant smile, twirl that hair.*

"Hey, I met you the other night at the party. Do you remember me?"

"Of course I do."

"Cool. What room does Jimmy stay in?"

"Ouch, room 325."

Jackpot! No more charm needed!

"Thanks."

Gather yourself woman. This is a long ass hall. Why ain't you there yet? Are you really doing this? Stop thinking about it so much. Just do it, damn it.

Tap, tap, tap.

The door opens. WOW. It's him. The electricity that I felt the other night hits me again, hard. It takes a second before it dawns on me that I'm actually here. *What do I do now?* His face lights up instantly. As soon as he lights up, he looks disappointed. *Am I imagining this? Was he excited at all or was it a mirage? I don't get it.*

He gently grabs my arm and pulls me in and shuts the door. Now I'm really worried. I don't know what I have done wrong. I notice a stereo in the corner of his room and it is a really nice stereo, too. I'm already impressed. *Refocus, chick. This man is not thrilled that you're here. This is a total bomb, you stupid bitch.*

"What are you doing here?" Jimmy asks, in a more serious tone than what I was hoping for.

"Well, Candie wanted to come see Lee, so I thought I'd come by and say hi."

"You shouldn't come to the barracks," Jimmy says shortly.

"I don't understand. Why?"

"Girls that hang out at the barracks are labeled as being easy."

"I didn't come to hang out. I came to see you. Have you ever seen me here, Jim?"

Looking down now, Jimmy mumbles. "No."

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“OK then, I wouldn’t be here if I didn’t feel that we had a... shit... a connection. I thought we did, but obviously I was wrong.” I start to turn away.

He grabs my arm as I’m turning to run like hell. I flip back around ready to knock him out, but his head is leaning down, his dark shiny hair is flipped forward, as he says, “I felt like we had a connection, too.”

Now I can’t help but smile. “Good. I’m glad we’re on the same page.” I turn around and bounce towards his bed and plop down on it. “Turn on your stereo.”

He laughs. “OK, what do you wanna hear?”

“Whatever. I just want to see what it sounds like.” Grinning wickedly I ask, “It looks good, but does it sound good?”

Jimmy is laughing now. “En Vogue?”

“Sure, that sounds good.”

Jimmy obliges me, and it does sound really good. Jimmy sits next to me on the bed. “So what do you think?”

I look at him seriously. “Well, I’ve heard better.”

This causes Jimmy to look disappointed and I start cracking up as I smack him on the arm. “Jimmy, I’m just givin’ you shit. It sounds great, really.”

Now he is smiling and laughing as he asks me, “So what is one of your funniest true stories?”

I look up, thinking really hard. I already told him about when I drank the vodka and Candie drank the orange juice. “Gosh Jimmy, I don’t know.”

He doesn’t give up. “Come on. There’s gotta be something.”

“Well, OK. I had a friend growing up whose name was Larry. He dated my sister off and on and he drove a white Fiero. He also used to work for my dad at the gas station. Well, we decided to go to the movie *Parenthood* one night. Before we went, he talked me into getting high for the first time. We drove down to Old McKinley Park. Old McKinley Park is where everyone from Lincoln and sometimes other schools hooked up for a night of partying. You know, the same McKinley Park that I drank all the vodka and Candie drank the orange juice.” I’m laughing now and Jimmy is nodding to let me know that he has made the connection.

“Anyway, when Larry and I get there, we hit a pipe and I get totally loopy because I’d never been high before. I’m laughing non-stop. I mean I can’t stop cracking up for nothin’, which causes Larry to laugh hysterically.”

Jimmy is laughing at me already.

I'm turned towards Jimmy, looking in his eyes, and moving my whole body as I talk. "Anyway, we get out of the car and somehow I end up with Larry's car keys. I'm still not sure how that happened, but we're out visiting with all of our high school friends and a cop car rolls up. Larry and I walk fast towards the Fiero, but we are both so high we're having trouble functioning. He's looking for his keys and the cop has a spotlight on him. I find the keys in my pocket and holler at Larry, 'Hey Larry, catch.' I toss the keys at Larry. Well, he didn't catch them and they go over the hill and land in a bunch of leaves. The cop's now out of his car and is walking over to us watching us down on all fours digging through the leaves trying to find Larry's keys.

"The cop asks, 'What're you doing out here?'"

"I look up at the cop that is towering over us watching us dig through the leaves. I reply, 'We just swung by to see some friends before we go to see *Parenthood*, sir.'

"Well, do you need a flashlight to find the keys?"

"Looking up at the cop appreciatively I say, 'That'd be very helpful, sir. Thank you.'

"He turns on the beam and Larry and I both see the keys immediately. Larry grabs them and tells the officer, 'Thank you, sir.'

"Not a problem, but I don't want to see you two down here again tonight.'

"Both Larry and I are nodding. 'Oh no, sir, you won't.'

"As the officer turns, 'OK then, have a good night.'

"I reply, 'Thank you, sir.'

"Both Larry and I get in the car and as we pull out, we're instantly high again just cracking up."

I look over at Jimmy, who is hysterical with laughter when all of the sudden it hits me that he never called.

I get a serious look on my face and I look Jimmy straight in the eyes and ask, "What'd I do wrong? Why didn't you call?"

He pauses, fidgeting slightly with his feet. "I didn't call because your friend's hanging around a guy that's married. What should I think?"

Lord. Lee is married. Now I start to panic. I can't believe this is happening.

"Jimmy, I have to go. I swear that Candie has no idea." I look at him dead on. "Will you please call?"

"Yeah, I'll call."

I glare at him. "Do you still got my number?"

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He smiles crookedly. "Yeah, I'll call tomorrow."

That is good; at least he didn't throw it out. He may not have called, but if he knew for sure he would never call, he wouldn't have kept it. I'm starting to feel a little better because I can feel this thing between us again. I give him the best flirty look I've got and say, "Damn straight you will."

Jimmy smiles softly and laughs.

I have a mischievous smile on my face. "OK, tomorrow then. That is a really nice stereo by the way."

I rush off to get Candie. When she opens the door, I loudly inform her, "We've gotta leave now!"

Candie looks at me, stubbornly. "I don't wanna leave."

"Too bad, we're leavin' now!"

Reading my face she knows me well enough to know that she won't win this one so she replies, "Damn it. OK."

She turns towards Lee, "Sorry Lee."

Sarcasm is oozing from me, I hiss, "Sorry Lee... NOT!"

He looks at me like I'm an idiot, but I don't give a shit.

As we hit the hall Candie asks, "What the hell's wrong with you?"

Walking down the hall looking back at her I spit out under my breath, "He's married, Candie." I keep moving down the hall as fast as I can and Candie is nearly sprinting to keep up.

"What? Jimmy's married?"

I instantly stop like I have run into a brick wall; I flip around and look her dead in the eyes. "No Candie. Lee is."

I see a look of disgust on her face. Many emotions run through her immediately following the disgust like confusion, disbelief, hurt, and pure shock. Her reaction is, "Oh my God! I can't believe it. That asshole!"

Luckily, she hadn't done anything that would have caused her to regret the situation.

We make it outside. The sun is starting to go down so it is very serene. There are a few clouds in the sky but none are menacing. They are scattered, small, and fluffy. They're the kind that you look up at and use your imagination to associate with something soothing like a bunny, horse, or a cartoon character that you grew up watching.

I start going through my case of cassettes and finally dig out Babyface. Cruising, it feels like we have no worries. We can do anything, be anyone, and go anywhere.

Candie asks, "Ruston Way?"

"Ruston Way it is, my dear."

Chapter Three: Ruston Way

We jam and enjoy the beautifully warm evening air. We gaze up at the mostly clear sky as we drive up I-5 on the way to the Waterfront.

There is something about a convertible. They give you a feeling of freedom. I think it may be because it is the closest feeling to flying other than being a bird. I feel the warm air pushing against my face and the music notes drifting through the air and into my soul.

We get to the Waterfront and hit a back road that is way up above and runs parallel to Ruston Way. We want to enjoy the view tonight, but need some privacy. We park, top down, music still going.

We start talking about girl stuff. You know the kind. It helps you get centered and feel worthy again. It is the time when you hash over old times, get totally honest with yourselves and others, and admit that you aren't the victim. You are in fact the writer of your own destiny, whatever it may be. Everyone has to take ownership for what their life is at any given moment.

I want to make it clear that you have some leeway. It is common sense that a woman can't get on a scale during her monthly visitor and expect it to display fair compared to when she doesn't have her monthly visitor. So if you have been through something traumatic, give yourself a break.

After a while, Candie is feeling better and we start talking about the old funny times. We talk about the time we went inter-tubing at Old McKinley Park. We didn't get snow much and when we did, it usually wasn't deep and it never lasted long. It was usually gone the next day. When we were in junior high, it had snowed a good amount. We probably had a foot. Old McKinley Park is pretty small. It has a shallow downhill slope that flattens out and is then followed by a very long steep slope. There are benches and stuff on the flat section.

Candie goes first. She hits the second slope and is gone! She is flying. I'm cheering and jumping up and down. It looks so fun. WHACK! She slams head first into an oak tree. It knocks her out cold. I'm flipping out, screaming and hollering. I run down to her the best I can. I start smacking her to get her to come around. I'm looking around frantically

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hoping for some help. What were we thinking? There are big ass trees everywhere. This was so stupid.

She comes to in the midst of my panic. "Oh God, Candie, are you alright?"

She doesn't know where she is. She doesn't remember her name. There is a huge lump emerging from her forehead. I pull her up and throw her arm around my shoulder and support as much of her weight as possible. Her house is nine blocks away. We start walking. I'm feeling a little sick to my stomach. I hope she'll be okay.

I keep badgering her on the way home. By the time we get a block from her house, she starts remembering things. Thank God. I'm starting to feel relieved. We are both cracking up by the time we get to her house.

When she was in eighth grade and I was in ninth there was a mean girl that had a locker next to Candie. She was always picking on Candie and she was such a bitch.

I believe in standing up for yourself, but Candie is timid when it comes to that stuff. I kept telling Candie that if she stood up to this bitch, she would start leaving her alone. Of course, Candie is a peacekeeper, so she refused to do anything.

One day Candie and I are walking down the hall. Bitch is at her locker with her whole body leaned over to the left totally blocking Candie's locker. She sees Candie coming and gives her a nasty grin and doesn't move.

Okay, enough is enough. I whisper to Candie, "What's your combination?" She gives it to me. I reach around Bitch and get the lock open and off. I look at this chick, meanly. "You might want to move."

Bitch looks back at me. "I ain't moving. You'll have to wait."

"Have it your way." I open that locker door as fast and with as much force as I can, knocking Bitch in the ass like she has been hit by a dodge ball. She goes flying headfirst into her locker so hard that she smacks her head on the back of it.

She's pissed. Candie and I are cracking up. Bitch says, "I am going to kick your ass for that."

I'm still laughing, "Anytime, anywhere, Bitch. Just make it after school."

Candie and I walk off with her things in tow, still laughing. Groups of kids have gathered around. Some of them are staring, eyes wide open in amazement and a few of them are laughing.

Needless to say, no one ever bothered Candie again and they sure the hell left me alone.

Jimmy calls me the next day. I figured it would take him three days to call. I'm so relieved that he is on the phone because truth be known, if he had waited three days to call, I probably would have written him off due to three consecutive days of that negative person talking to me inside of my head. I can't speak out of certainty though, because HE DID CALL!

"Cindy?"

"It's me."

"How'd Candie take it?"

"Pretty good, I thought. I was prepared for a whole lot worse. I had some orange juice ready for her to guzzle."

I hear his shy laugh. With that, I imagine his head tilting down, silky black hair swaying, his eyes smiling, and that crooked smile that I could totally eat!

Every woman knows that a good man is a woman's best diet. When a woman has a man that treats her good and is sincere, she will scarcely eat, clean his house, car, and be his Energizer Bunny.

Jimmy then asks, "So, do you wanna go out?"

"Ah, when do you wanna go out?"

"How 'bout tomorrow?"

This is much more than I expected. I was praying that he would call today, but never in a million years did I think he would actually ask me out already. Okay, now comes the payback. Don't just say yes. Make him squirm a little. "What do you wanna do?"

"How 'bout goin' to the movies?"

"What ya wanna see?"

"A comedy?"

"OK, You gonna pick me up?"

"Sure. I'll be there about seven."

"Cool!"

Okay, the payback bit didn't work too well. *Why can't you hold your ground, woman?*

I tell Jimmy where I live and what exit to take off of I-5 to get here.

The next day is painfully slow. I want to see Jimmy bad. I spend hours getting ready. Man, I can't believe he is coming.

Is he coming? Will he change his mind? Will he back out? Maybe he will get lost and by the time he arrives, I will be so

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mad thinking that he didn't want to go that I will demolish the whole thing.

At 6:55 I hear a knock. I have to peek first to see if it is him. To my relief, it is. I see that baby blue low-rider with hot pink all over it parked out front. I don't want to move. I want all of my nosy neighbors to see this handsome man in my doorway. I kick myself for being such a butt, open the door, and ask him to come in while I get my things. I turn on the porch light before I do though. That way, any really nosy neighbors will be sure to at least see us together as we leave.

I can tell that Jimmy is a little nervous. I am too, but I'm trying hard not to show it. I grab my stuff. He looks really hot. He is wearing a black jean jacket and black Levi's. He has on the same black Vans. He looks good in black and he must know it.

I ask, "Shall we go?"

"Yeah, we should try to get there early."

There aren't very many good days in Washington. It rains a lot. That is just part of the scenery, so you get used to it. This is another clear and beautiful night though. As we are headed for his Nissan I ask, "What are we gonna see?"

"Well, we'll head up to 72nd and Hosmer. *Home Alone* is playin'."

I think it will be a funny movie. "Cool, I've been wantin' to see that."

Jimmy goes around to the passenger's side, opens the door for me, and I jump in. He cranks the Nissan up and New Order comes on. This is the group whose music was featured in many of the icon 80's movies.

Man, there is no need for words. We just sit there, listen, and cruise. It is the most comfortable silence between two people I have ever felt.

When we arrive at the theater Jimmy gets out and walks around to open the door for me. As I hop out, he grabs my hand. He is such a gentleman. I'm not used to being treated like this, but I so love it. Jimmy pays; we get sodas and popcorn and go in to sit down.

I have a hard time watching the movie; I keep watching Jimmy giggle furiously. I so want to kiss him right now, but I don't. For one thing there are a lot of kids in the theater. Another thing is that I have this feeling that it is important to wait for him to make the first move. I keep thinking that he

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might not be interested, but the fact that he holds my hand inside of his reassures me.

Finally, I make it through the movie. It was very funny, don't get me wrong, but I'm anxious to see if Jimmy will kiss me goodnight at the door.

As we are driving back to my house, we are enjoying The Cure. I love The Cure, but I can't help but begin to worry because Jimmy hasn't said a thing. I decide to inform Jim that he seems rather serious, and I'm not sure if he has enjoyed himself at all because he is so quiet. He follows my statement by still not saying anything. Instead, he just looks at me really seriously. *Shit. I have pissed him off. I hear a toilet flush somewhere in the distance.*

About two blocks later we come to a stop. *Okay, stupid. How are you going to fix this one? I can't believe that you said that, you moron.* All off the sudden Jim peels out and takes a right turn like he is some kind of racecar driver. *Man, he is really pissed off.* I grab the "Oh Shit Handle", look over at him, eyes full of panic, and see this shit-eating grin slapped across his face.

Man, I totally lose it. I smack him and start laughing so hard that I'm sprawled out half the way across the cab and very close to wetting myself. He so got one over on me big time.

About ten seconds later, as we pass a cop car, Jimmy says, "What's up ocifur?"

I start cracking up again.

We talk about how well he pulled that whole thing off, still cracking up. We are almost to the house and I'm feeling chipper now. All of the sudden I hear a funny sound. It was sort of a thud. Then I hear a flump, flump, flump, flump, flump. It is definitely a flat tire. Man, this is Murphy's Law. Things are going too damn good.

Jimmy and I get out and we push his Nissan down about a block and a half. I'm very worried because he has kick-ass rims and I'm sure we will mess them up.

We leave his baby blue in front of one of my friend's houses because I know it will be safe here. Jim doesn't know the area so he is understandably afraid that it will get broken into or worse yet, stolen. I assure him that we will get it first thing in the morning and that I will make sure that he gets to work on time. He is worried about his baby, like I would have been worried about my Midget if I had to leave it in an area that I wasn't familiar with.

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I find Jimmy's passion for his Nissan endearing. I'm surprised at how many men aren't really into their vehicles or even football for that matter. I'm a freak about both. It is nice to finally meet someone that is interested in so many of the same things that I am. He likes the Raiders and I love the Chargers. That could be a problem, but it could also be fun. I can imagine some really creative bets where even the loser comes out a winner, if you know what I mean! (*Evil grin inserted here*).

Finally, Jimmy calms down and we walk down the 38th street bridge, take a shortcut that lands us on East F street, and walk a block down to arrive at my house. It is a large, white, old two-story home. It has a natural wood porch that extends from one side to the other.

We cuddle on the couch and it feels so wonderful. Jimmy is enveloping me like a blanket and it takes everything I have not to drag him to my room. I really like this one and the attraction is stronger than I have ever felt with any other person. I can't mess this one up.

I wake up the next morning and lay there for a long time. This feels so heavenly. There is no place on earth I would rather be.

I know that Jimmy has to get to work on time so I wake him up by nudging him softly. Jimmy opens his eyes and they look all dreamy, and I immediately want to kiss him.

Speaking softly I say, "Jimmy, we have to call a tow-truck and get you to work."

Sleep and relaxation are oozing from him and his eyes look glossy as he replies, "OK." He sits up and yawns and then asks me, "You have a phone book?"

I head to the kitchen to get it and hand it to him upon my return. "Here you go."

Jimmy calls a tow-truck and we head out to my car. Guess what? The damn thing won't start. I can't freaking believe this. This is just too crazy, but mine isn't the first M.G. to have problems with its common ground wiring.

Jimmy is freaking out. "God, how am I gonna get to work?"

"We can take my dad's work truck. It's around back."

Jimmy looks relieved. "God, you scared me."

I go back inside and get the keys for my dad's work truck. It is a dive and it is so old that I don't even know what year it is. It's a Ford and its beige. The steering wheel is so huge it is hard for me to turn. The freaking stick shift damn near comes

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up to my neck. I'm so embarrassed. I'm waiting for Jim to ask me where my eight-tracks are, but he doesn't say a word because he is grateful to be getting to work.

We head South on I-5 towards Fort Lewis. I notice a shake in the pickup that I've never noticed before. I ask Jimmy, "Do you feel that?"

Jimmy waves his hand. "Yeah, it probably needs the tires balanced or something."

Cool. I keep going. A few minutes later the rear driver's side of the pickup is grinding into the road. I look in the rear view mirror and I see a rooster tail of sparks shooting up like the fourth of July directly behind me. I still haven't fully grasped what's happening. Then I see a tire accompanied by its rim bouncing up I-5. Cars are dodging it and honking.

This is incredible. I can't believe this is happening to me. I coast in a grinding kind of way to the shoulder. Luckily, no one wrecks. It is good that it is so early. There isn't half the traffic on I-5 as there will be in another hour.

Jimmy runs out into the middle of I-5 to get the tire and rim. We walk up the closest exit and get to a pay phone. At this point, we are both hysterical and just cracking up. I keep teasing him about being unlucky.

I call my dad. He is really mad and I'm having a hard time not laughing. He wants to know why I'm almost to Fort Lewis at this hour of the morning, why did a guy stay the night, blah, blah, blah. Finally he is done lecturing me and I have managed to maintain my composure for the entirety of our conversation. I'm very proud of myself.

Jimmy calls a buddy to come and get him. Thank God he showed up before my dad did.

Chapter Four: Hose Yourself Off

I grab a Big Gulp and hang out. Jimmy was worried about leaving me here, but I don't want him here when my dad arrives. My dad is my rock. He is a wonderful, super-funny, sensible, caring, hardworking, and thoughtful person. I'm the seventh out of eight kids. I have two sisters and five brothers. We're Catholic. My mom used to say, "Every time I saw your dad's pants hangin' from the bedpost I knew we were havin' another one."

Most of my siblings had moved out of the house before I was very old. One of my older brothers and my older sister were there for a while, but for the majority of my life, it was just me and my younger sister, Angie. She moved out recently, but I'm still hanging out. I have to for a while based on the fact that I just up and quit my job. Ha! I'm not in a hurry to get one at this point, either. My dad owns a service/gas station in downtown Tacoma. He is now sixty-four years old, healthy as an ox, and doesn't look a day over fifty. He is still working his butt off, though. He has worked his fingers to the bones for years to support the family. I can work for my dad during the day Monday through Friday and be off every weekend. I have worked for him before and I actually really enjoy it. That will work out good because I plan on hanging with Jim as much as humanly possible.

Anyway, Dad doesn't warm up to just any guy that is dating one of his daughters. He can scare any man away from one of his baby girls in a heartbeat. I'm afraid that if he and Jim met at this very moment, Jimmy would never touch me with a ten-foot pole. That is so not my desired outcome.

My dad arrives. I explain the whole thing and he cools off. He swears up and down that someone loosened the lug nuts.

I used to date a guy that lives directly across the street from me and it didn't end well. I bet that when I wanted my nosy neighbors to get a good look at Jim, he was the only one that actually got a look. I bet he loosened them after we left just to be an ass.

Dad puts the rim and tire back on and we finally head back to the house. He drives the old Ford work truck and I drive the new Ford pickup. When we get to the house, Dad messes with my M.G. and gets it started. He offers to get

Jimmy's Nissan towed and fixed so we drive out there to look, but it's already gone.

Jimmy calls later that evening. Everything worked out. He made it to work on time, his Nissan is fixed, and he had picked it up after work.

He is a little concerned about my dad. I assure him that everything is cool.

Jimmy asks, "So you want to do something tomorrow?"

"I would love to, but do you think it is safe?" We are cracking up again.

Jimmy suggests, "Let's just hang out at your house, have a few beers, and watch a movie or something."

"That sounds safe enough. What time?"

"Around 6:30."

"Cool. What kind of movie do you wanna watch?"

"A comedy sounds good."

"OK, I got the movie covered. You get the beer." I'm not old enough to get the beer yet. Jimmy isn't either, but he has a fake I.D.

I spend the following day cleaning. The house is in shape so I take a long bubble bath to relax. I put on some tight Gap jeans and a red Nordstrom's sweater. The red accents my sandy brown hair. The outfit shows off my figure really well. I spend about an hour blow drying and curling my hair. It is naturally curly, so it takes a lot of work to style it. I get my makeup on. I go with the dark gray eye shadow, jet-black eyeliner, and mascara. When it's done just right, it makes my eyes look gray rather than hazel.

Checking myself in the mirror, I'm thrilled with the outcome. I look hot and I'm ready to conquer the world. Watch out Jimmy! Here I come.

I've realized that Jimmy is a lot shyer than anyone I've ever dated before. I love that about him. I love his nervousness and the way he looks a little down and sideways when he gets teased or he's embarrassed. He is very respectful, which is wonderful. I'm just not sure if the man will ever kiss me.

I head out to pick up a movie. I leave the top up because I don't want to mess up my hair.

I want something goofy because I love to hear Jim giggle. I spend a good hour looking through different movies. Finally, I grab *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. I know it is viewed as a child's movie, but it has some really hysterical parts in it.

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I head back to the house to wait. It is almost 6:00 when the phone rings.

"Hello."

"Hey, I'm just now heading out. I've got to swing by the store for the beer. Do you need me to pick up anything?"

"Nope, we're good. Just get your butt over here."

Jimmy laughs. "OK, see ya in about a half hour."

I check myself every five minutes. I'm a nervous wreck.

Finally Jimmy pulls up. My heart speeds up just looking at him.

Opening the door, I give him a hug. "Hey Jimmy." Man, I don't want to let go. He smiles shyly and then leans towards me for our first kiss. It is by far the sweetest kiss I have ever had. It is long and lingering. Neither of us wants to stop. Within moments we are entwined, standing there with the door still open, our bodies pressed as close together as they can get. We are no longer two people, but one. After a few minutes, we disconnect.

A low raspy "Wow," is all that I can get out. I'm literally dizzy and it takes me a few seconds to even focus my eyesight. Still entwined, supporting each other, I put my forehead against his and we look each other in the eyes. We both look like kids that just made out with everything in a candy store. You couldn't rip the grins from our faces.

"OK Jimmy. We have to stop."

Jimmy grins, slightly cockeyed, from ear to ear. "K."

I retreat, grab the beer that is sitting on the floor, and high tail it to the kitchen.

I have to hang here for a minute. I feel like I'm high. My good voice is telling me, "*Oh my gosh. Get yourself together. Keep your cool. This is too soon. Hose yourself off, chick.*" Then I hear a naughty voice that's new. "*But he is so hot. You know that you want to jump his bones right now?*" It's my good voice again and I wish it would go away. "*It is too soon. He will think badly of you. Keep the respect present. What is that saying about the cow and the milk?*"

From the kitchen I holler, "Do you want a beer now?"

"Sure."

I take a few deep breaths, take the caps off of the Coors Light, and bounce back to the living room.

"So what movie did ya get?" Jimmy asks.

"Alright, don't laugh... *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.*"

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He grabs his sides and doubles over as if someone has struck him and starts dying laughing. “No you didn’t. Oh God.”

I’m cracking up now. “Hey, give it a chance. You will like it. I give you the Cindy guarantee.”

Jimmy’s eyes are smiling, he is still giggling as he shakes his finger at me. “If it sucks, I’m so outta here.”

I sock him in the arm. “You’re a goober.”

Jimmy is still laughing, now ignoring his torso. He has moved onto magnifying my shot by rubbing his recently victimized arm. “Ouch that hurt.”

You know, I think I get it. The reason that I’m so head over heels for this man is because we are constantly laughing. It doesn’t matter what happens to us when we are together; it is like we’re always getting each other high. I don’t know what I did to deserve this, but I won’t kick a gift horse in the mouth... or whatever.

I feel better now that we have had our first kiss. I’m not so paranoid anymore. I was so worried that he might not be attracted to me. I so wish I could murder that little negative person in my head that won’t shut up. Not that new naughty one, mind you. Now I know that we got it going on and that’s a straight-out fact.

Jimmy stares at me. “Where ya at?”

“What do you mean?”

“I seen that mischievous smile. It looks like you’re up to something.”

Now I’m really embarrassed. He so read me. *Play it off woman, think fast...* I lean my head down, fidget my feet, look up at him and make eye contact, just like he is doing to me. Here comes a replication of that sly cockeyed grin he hits me with all the time. WHAM! “Who me? I’m not capable of being up to anything; much less something.” I flutter my eyelids like butterfly wings.

He laughs and bumps me intentionally on his way to the old, beat up, ugly, brown, 1970’s couch.

Both Jimmy and I know, based on our greeting at the door, we need to act like we’re twelve. For the time being, idiotic twelve-year-old behavior is safe.

His eyes are so beautiful when he smiles because they smile with him. Hell, who am I kidding? His whole aura smiles.

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Okay chick, it's time for the movie. That naughty voice is starting to express itself again.

Although Jim probably would never have admitted it to anyone else, he really enjoyed the movie. He laughed hysterically pretty much through the whole thing. I think his laughter had a lot to do with seeing huge turtles skateboard around.

I have to ask something. "So Jimmy, why'd you go into the Army?"

"I need money for college."

"Is that the only reason why? I mean, do you like it at all?"

"No, I hate it. As soon as my four years are up, I'm gettin' out."

"How much longer do you have?"

"About a year and a half."

"What're you gonna do when you get out?"

"Go back to Cali, go to college, and take engineering."

Man that sucks. That little negative voice inside of my head is telling me to run like hell. How can this go anywhere if he is going to leave?

You know what, woman? Stop thinking so far ahead. You like this guy a lot, so take it a day at a time and see where it takes you. A lot of things can happen in a year and a half. You never know, maybe he would actually stay here. With that thought, I figure this is a good opportunity to dig out some information. "So, how do you like Washington?"

He smiles softly because he knows what I'm getting at. "I like it OK, but it isn't Cali. My family's there. I can surf and the weather is almost always super nice there. I wouldn't want to stay here."

The only place I have been is to Canada on a band trip. I would have a very difficult time moving because of my family. I love Washington. There are so many things to do just within ten miles of my house. If you are willing to hit the road for a few hours, there are a range of things to do. I'm forty-five minutes from Mount Rainier, two hours from Ocean Shores, four hours from Canada, and twenty minutes from Seattle. I have never even thought about going surfing.

When you grow up in Washington you do things that involve mostly staying indoors because of the near constant rain. You have three or four really good months in late summer and early fall where you can really enjoy the weather. That is when you do all the outdoorsy things. The other months

consist of stuff like underground clubbing, movies, concerts, and hanging out at Heidelberg Brewery where all the new bands have their practice pads, and stuff like that. I would probably kill myself trying to surf, or worse yet, get eaten by a shark. I was an avid skateboarder for about a year. Then, I broke my ankle on one. I was nicknamed "Hop-Along-Callinsky" for a good two years because of those damn crutches. That was the end of that. From that moment on, I concentrated on safer sports such as softball and bicycling.

Jimmy asks, "Would you ever consider moving?"

A look of frustration crosses my face. "Geez Jimmy, I don't know. I mean, I have five brothers and two sisters. It would be really hard for me to leave my family and especially my dad. I love him so much."

We both look each other in the eyes in a sort of hopeless way. At that moment, looking into those big brown eyes, I decide that I'm not going to let this ruin it. A lot of things can happen in even just a few months. I feel like we possibly have something here and if I run, I will never know if it could have become something. I would be an idiot if I didn't hang out and see where this leads. I like this guy a lot. Cali seems like a world away, though.

We hook up the following evening. This is good. The talk about Cali and Washington was rough and is still kind of hanging over us like a big black cloud, but apparently Jim had the same thoughts as I did, because he isn't willing to throw in the towel just yet, either.

We decide to hang out somewhere of my choice, listen to music, and talk. He doesn't know the area very well so I can show him some really neat spots.

We head out to Strawberry Hill in his low-rider. It is a gorgeous spot, but not the prettiest in Tacoma. I want to save those for later. It is a curved, steep, down-sloping road with a gigantic hill on the left and a sloping cleft down the right. You can see most of Tacoma and all the way into parts of Puyallup because it is so high up above the city. It is nicknamed Strawberry Hill because of the strawberries that grow all down the side of the cleft.

When it's dark, it's breathtaking because of all of the lights. It is also secluded because there are no houses on the road. We park and I scoot over close to him. We are listening to Depeche Mode and Jimmy has his arm around me. We are so comfortable together. It just feels so right.

REAR VIEW MIRROR

He is astounded at how beautiful it is. I knew that he would love this and he hasn't seen anything yet.

We sit there, drinking a beer and talking about all kinds of stuff. I ask, "So Jimmy, tell me 'bout your mom."

"I love my mom very much. She's a very strong woman and very independent."

"Yeah? How so?"

"She does it all on her own. She is also a very kind woman, but very free spirited. She drives a Harley, too."

I'm shocked. "She sports a Harley?"

"Oh yeah."

I'm instantly excited. "One of my dreams is to own a Harley. I don't want one of them crotch rockets. I want a meaty hog."

Jimmy starts cracking up, which makes me laugh.

I slap his leg. "I'm serious, Jimmy. I've wanted one since I was old enough to know that they existed."

Jimmy is still laughing. "I know you're serious. It's just that the meaty hog thing cracks me up."

"She sounds like a really cool woman, Jimmy. I hope I get to meet her one day."

"I do, too. She'd really love you."

The fact that he just said that warms me to the bones. I look him in the eyes and he smiles sweetly. I want to kiss him and this time I do. I don't ever want to stop, but I do because the attraction is unbearable and we can't sleep together yet, no matter how much I want to... I am so falling for this man.

This place is so romantic. We have this connection. We talk so easily about everything. I really trust him, too. I don't really understand why I do, but I totally do.

I have learned over the years to trust my gut instincts. Sometimes it is hard to tell them apart from that negative voice in my head. I have to really listen hard, as well as pay attention to my body's reactions. I have not received any bad vibes from Jim. When I get that little negative voice in my head, I know it is fear and it is totally different than my instinct voice.

Chapter Five: Big Kahuna

The next evening we hit the back road that runs way up above and parallel to Ruston Way. This is the big kahuna. I feel that Ruston Way is the most romantic spot I have ever seen. I always knew it would be a great spot for something like this.

This time we talk about more serious things. We get into more detail about what we will do when he is out of the Army. We never come to any conclusion, but the fact that we are openly discussing it tells me that he considers our relationship important and meaningful. We finally agree to just take things as they go. We still have plenty of time to figure it out.

Tonight Jimmy introduces me to Tesla's new album, *The Great Radio Controversy*. I have never heard the album before and it is great. He skips forward and plays "Love Song" as we are sitting there cuddling and that's all she wrote. I can't take it anymore. I know we've only been out a few times, but we are pretty much inseparable at this point. We have spent hours upon hours enjoying each other's company and getting to know each other. I have to ask, "Jimmy, what would you think if we slept together? I mean, I don't want you to think that I'm some easy chick or anything."

Jimmy smiles sweetly. "I wouldn't think that." He looks a little nervous now. "You know that we can wait as long as you want."

I'm excited. "I don't wanna wait."

Now, Jimmy looks serious. "Are you sure?"

I grin like a fox. "Hell yeah, I'm sure. Let's go already!"

Ladies, I don't want you to think I'm easy. This is the same woman that waited for years before sleeping with her boyfriend that she dated through junior high and high school. Jim and I just feel so incredibly right for each other that I don't want to wait.

All of the sudden, it hits me like a brick. My room is a disaster! I mean, it's a pigpen! You can hardly get across the floor because there are clothes everywhere. Jimmy is so immaculate. Shit. I can't believe this. How could I be so stupid?

I have to look scared. "Ah, Jimmy."

He looks at me sweetly. "Yeah?"

REAR VIEW MIRROR

I look like a child in trouble. “My room’s a disaster. I mean, it’s in really bad shape.”

Jimmy starts laughing as he grins his crooked smile. “I don’t care what shape your room’s in, you goober.”

Then I start laughing because, when I put it into perspective, I know that the shape of my room is the last shape that’s on Jimmy’s mind at this moment.