

A BED OF NEEDLES
By:
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**1 HOME FROM SCHOOL You must be Jake At least, Roy didn't say
she was ugly Call me Janis, comprend-o, Jake-o? Man Found Dead on Fish
Boat Please let me do the wash**

Spring 1957

"They're here," Jake's sister, Karen, hollered as she opened the front door. "Git," she said, trying to block the cats with her foot as they rushed into the house.

The green Ford pickup with the aluminum shell splashed through the puddles in the rutted drive and stopped behind the green '51 Olds parked in front of the garage.

A short scrawny boy crawled out of the shell on the back of the '56 Ford and stood by the rear bumper waiting for his mom and dad to get out of the cab.

Jake gazed as a long, freckled leg stepped over the tailgate and found the bumper. The tall girl bent, gripped the tailgate, and managed to get her other leg out of the packed pickup and onto the bumper. She bumped her head as she ducked under the lid of the shell and splashed to the muddy ground. Jake looked up at the freckle face girl with long blonde hair, parted in the middle, standing before him. She was wearing shorts. When she smiled, her light blue eyes narrowed to little moons and her smile revealed a slight overbite.

The first person she saw was Jake. "Hi, I'm Priscilla," she walked close, arms outstretched, wrapped them around him and squeezed an affectionate hug. "You must be Jake."

"I don't know," he said. "I mean, yeah, I'm Jake." He felt his face warming.

Fall 1962

Penelope, Penny to her friends, a tall junior who just transferred in, reminded Jake of his cousin Priscilla, who, a year after her family arrived, packed into the same green Ford pickup they arrived in and high-tailed it back east. Jake hadn't seen hide nor hair of her since. The last visual he had of Priscilla was of her waving hand stuck from under the camper lid as the Ford pickup bounced out the rutted drive, turned left, shifted through the gears, and vanished over the hill to who knows where.

The final bell of the day rang and Jake literally ran to his locker, dialed the combination, and lifted the handle. "Shit." He dialed the combination again and opened the door. Shoving his books in, he grabbed his jacket and slammed the locker door and headed for the exit. He paused, took a deep breath, and leaned against the metal handrail on the front steps of the school.

“Hey, Jake-o, what ya hangin’ ‘round for?” Roy came up and slapped him on the back.

Jake winced and turned to see Roy. “Hey, Roy, I’m hopin’ I’d run into Janis. I went to a movie with her last week. I might ask her out again. Seems pretty nice. She sure doesn’t take any shit from anybody, that’s for sure. I’m thinkin’ maybe she’ll need a ride home.” Jake had driven his mom’s ’56 Chevy to school. “What are you doing for the weekend?” Jake glanced through the window into the office and noticed Janis leaving her desk, slinging her purse over her shoulder as she waved to the secretary.

“I’m tarring the roof with my dad,” Roy said. “I thought you liked Penny?”

“I do, but Penny won’t go out with me again,” Jake said. “I went out with her once and that was it. I think she needs a little more coaxin’,” giving Roy a quick wink, “if ya get my drift.”

“Oh, I get ya, you hope Penny will see Janis get into your car.” Roy slugged Jake in the shoulder.

“Quick question Roy, do you think Janis is good looking?”

“She’s alright,” Roy said glancing toward the highway.

Not quite the endorsement that Jake was hoping for, but at least Roy didn’t say she was ugly.

“Penny saw me ask Janis out last week and I’m hopin’ if she sees Janis get in my car, it will put her on edge. Right now, I’m addin’ a little fuel to the fire. Maybe I can get Penny to go out with me again. Don’t look, but Penny’s standing by the office door.” Jake refunded Roy’s punch.

“Never know, just might work,” Roy said, kneading his arm. “Better be careful, Janis is likely to sink her fangs into you before you know it.”

“Not bloody likely,” Jake said in an attempt at a British accent.

“Here comes Janis now.” Roy motioned toward the front door of the school.

“Stand back and watch the master in action.”

Janis pushed through the heavy door of the principal’s office where her hundred words-per-minute typing skills got her a job as an intern in the administrative office.

“Hi Jake, hi Roy,” she called out.

As Janis approached with a big smile, Jake gave her a visual once-over.

“Hi Janis,” Roy said and glanced over at his truck.

Perfect-a-mundo, Jake thought. “How ya doin’ Jan?”

“If I’m not mistaken, and please correct me if I’m wrong, Jake, but I think I told you before, do *not* call me Jan.” Her smile disappeared and she turned to face Roy. “I absolutely hate Jan. My dad always calls me Jan.” She turned back to Jake. “My name is Janis ... call me Janis, comprend-o, Jake-o?”

Jake cocked his head at Janis and shot Roy a “she doesn’t take any shit” look. “How you doin’ Jan ... is?”

“TGIF,” she said falling in step with Jake and Roy as they bounced down the steps. “I’m glad to be out of here.” Her smile returned.

“Later, guys, I have a date with a bucket of tar and a roof,” he heard Roy say as he opened the door to his dad’s pick-up.

“Need a ride?” Jake put his hand on Janis’ arm. “Later,” Jake waved to Roy.

“Sure, heck yeah, I’d like a ride. Definitely beats the bus,” she said walking beside Jake and over to the Chevy parked in the student lot.

Jake unlocked the passenger side and opened the door.

“Thanks,” Janis said as slid to the middle and pulled the button up on his door.

“Wanna go for a ride before I take you home?”

“Sure ... I’m in no hurry to get home. My dad was bein’ an ass this morning and I’m in no rush, at least not till Mom’s there.”

They waved at Roy who was talking to a couple of guys as they passed his truck in the parking lot. He purposely drove slowly down the long gravel drive from the small rural school and paused before entering the highway. He wanted to give Penny ample opportunity to observe his plan in action.

“Maybe it isn’t such a good idea for me to give you a ride home; maybe your ol’ man ’ll be pissed.”

“Nah, it’s okay. She adjusted the rear-view mirror so she could see herself and checked her hair and make-up. “Don’t care if he gets mad. We don’t get along,” she said, rattling and smoothing her hair before readjusting the mirror.

Jake gave Janis a quick frown and re-sighted his mirror.

Why the fuck do girls think the rearview mirror is their personal make-up mirror?

“HMMMM, would ya mind using the mirror on the visor? *Please.*” Jake said. He slowly turned from the school drive onto old Hwy 30. A few miles further on, he swung left onto the long winding county road leading to the river. “How do ya like it here on the west coast so far?”

“It’s okay,” she said. “The weather is not as nice as where we lived in California. Since my dad retired from the Air Force, we have been looking for a place to settle. He can’t make up his stupid mind. It seems to be raining here all of the time.” She prattled on.

“Rains a lot but not as much as people think. We tell everyone it rains all the time to keep the Californians out,” Jake said, repeating the tired joke that had been around for as long as he could remember. “We don’t want Oregon to get Californicated.”

“Sometimes my dad gets really mad; he’s horrible,” she said, ignoring his trite joke about the Californians. “I hate him and can’t wait for school to get over so I can get out of there. I’d move away from home if I had a place to go. I’m stuck there until school is out.”

“At least you have a dad.” Jake said.

“You don’t have a dad? I’m sorry. What happened?”

“Not anymore, he died when I was twelve,” Jake said. “I never did really know him, he was away most of the time, but I didn’t hate him. I wish he were still here. He died way too soon. He died, then my little sister died, and my grandmother died, all within a year. Seems like we were always taking rides in that long black limousine from the mortuary to the cemetery.”

“That must have been terrible,” she touched his arm.

“It was ... still is,” he said. “There’s nothing worse than someone dying on you. It was six years ago but I still think about it nearly every day. Sometimes I don’t know what to do and don’t have anyone to ask. Sucks ... sucks donkeys.”

The night his uncle told him, “Your dad’s dead,” rings in Jake’s head every time he has a quiet moment. The thought haunts him especially in the winter when the days get cold. He still has vivid memories of that cold February night ... the dogs barking

Jake’s eyes snapped open, startled awake by the sound of barking. He squinted at his travel alarm and the luminescent hands read two a.m. Shivering, he pulled the flannel sheet high around his ears. There was no more heat coming from the wood stove downstairs in the kitchen; the embers had long grown cold.

“Who’s comin’?” Jake reached over to Karen’s twin bed and shook her.

“Wha ...?” She scrunched deeper into her covers.

“Listen,” Jake whispered. “The dogs. I heard a car drive in. Someone’s at the door.”

First, there were the heavy footsteps on the wooden porch steps, and then a solid rap on the door, then another. The hall light went on and Jake saw his pregnant mom, bundled in her robe, scoot by the bedroom door, and could hear the scratching of her slippers on the linoleum as she walked down the hall and the squeak of the wooden steps when she descended the stairs. He heard her pause at the landing near the window, and then continue down. The room went dark as she clicked the hall light off at the bottom of the stairs.

The dead bolt rattled and the distressed, rain-warped door sprung closed with a bang, as it often did if one didn't grasp the door knob firmly, then screeched open when the frame loosened its grip and the door swung free. Jake recognized his mechanic uncle's voice but could hear only indistinct conversation. Then there was the unambiguous sound of his mom crying.

The hall light clicked on and heavy boots clomped up the wooden stairs and down the short hallway and stopped at their bedroom door.

Jake and his sister were up on their elbows in their beds. The back-lit shadow of a large figure filled the doorway. Their uncle ducked his head and took a step into the room. Their mom stood behind him, still crying.

"Wake up kids," her voice cracked.

"Your dad's dead," their uncle blurted without preamble.

Jake and Karen looked at each other and they both started to cry.

The next afternoon, Jake and Karen had only to see the lead of the front-page article in the evening paper, "Man Found Dead on Fish Boat," to confirm their dad had left for the last time and was never, ever coming home.

A few days later, at the funeral home, everyone lined up to view Jake's daddy laying stiff in the casket, his right hand over his chest.

Jake, his mom, sister, and his grandparents on his mom's side, rode to the cemetery in the big black limousine the funeral home provided. Nobody talked 'till they were entering through the white metal gates of the cemetery.

"That was a nice service," his grandmother said.

"Uh-huh," his mom said. And then it was quiet again.

Four months later, his baby sister, born a month too early, died after two days and they rode in the big black limousine to the same cemetery again.

A few months after that, their grandmother died. A third "nice service."

Jake's mind snapped to the present as the Chevy leapt from the shadows of the leafy alders overhanging the county road into a sunny landscape. They were driving through lowlands of mushy cow pastures where a maze of dikes held sloughs within their banks.

"It's too nice a day to think about people dying. Maybe we could talk about something else," Jake said. "How'd we get on such a depressing subject anyway?"

"I'm so sorry, Jake," Janis said. "Sure, we can talk about something else; fun stuff only."

Jake cracked the window for some air. "Whew, that was a mistake." He rolled the window back up. "You can sure tell we're in dairy country."

Jake took a turn toward the river, drove along the dike, and turned onto a wooden bridge crossing Blind Slough. The Chevy's worn out shocks clattered as the tires shimmied over the loose planks. Jake gripped the wheel a little tighter until they cleared the bridge.

When he got to a driveway, he looked over at the small farmhouse where Alice lived, but kept his short relationship with Alice to himself.

Keep your trap shut, Jake-o, no need to make Jan, correction, Janis jealous by telling tall tales about swapin' spit with some other chick, as tempting as it might seem. Show some class.

He may teach Janis to kiss like Alice. There was no need for her to know where he learned it, especially since he wasn't at all sure how she would handle such intimate information. He was inclined to think her character was such that she could not handle it at all.

Anyway, his objective wasn't to make Janis jealous, it was Penny he wanted to make jealous. And, it was Penny that he ached to kiss. He was dying to show Penny precisely what Alice had taught him.

The road started to rise again and they passed through the last row of hills before the river.

He looked over at Janis and pointed off to one side. "We're getting close" The scent of cow manure was replaced by the fishy smell of the river. They soon spotted the river through a clearing in the alder trees. Jake drove the final mile and turned off the paved road into the parking lot near the dock. Gravel and dust flew as he pulled to a stop near the boat ramp.

"Want to go for a walk? The river looks really neat from here. Sometimes you can see harbor seals from the dock," Jake said.

"Sure," Janis said and waited for Jake to walk around the car to open her door.

They started toward the dock and when Janis' hand touched Jake's, he responded by taking her hand in his. They walked down onto the long wooden dock beside the boat ramp.

"My dad bought a gillnet boat and a float house when he retired from the Coast Guard. He moored the boat here and stayed in the float house during the fishing season. When he wasn't fishing, he'd take us out for a ride on the river. That was sure fun. Would've been more fun if I knew how to swim though. But, we got to fish sometimes."

"You don't know how to –"

"There's one out there," Jake pointed to a harbor seal popping its black, puppy head above the surface.

"Yeah, I see it." Then it was gone. "This is really nice here. Do you come out here very much?" Janis turned and looked up at him.

"It's a nice place to go for a drive, so yeah, guess I do, sometimes. Reminds me of my dad," Jake said.

"What happened to the float house and boat?" Janis asked.

"My mom sold them both after Daddy died. The float house was so dilapidated the last time I saw it, it was half under water, tied to some piling a couple hundred yards up this slough." He pointed toward the bend in the slough. "Probably completely under water by now. I think the fishing boat is still being used by some gillnetter here on the river."

"I'm having a really good time," she said. She reached out and held both of his arms, gently squeezing them. "Wish we could stay longer, but I better be gettin' home, I guess." She loosened the grip on his arms, turned toward the car, and started down the dock.

Jake caught up and took hold of her hand. They walked back to the car and he opened her door.

"Thanks," she said as she slid to the center of the seat. When he settled behind the wheel, she rested her limp hand on his thigh.

Her hand on his thigh felt really good. He scooted around on the seat, trying to adjust his jeans; they were getting snug. Jake purposely took a different, longer route back. They drove out of the low lands and through the wooded hills to the highway and turned toward Janis' house. She had kept him aroused the entire way. Jake wondered if it was intentional; it was a-okay with him, regardless.

When they arrived at her house and he parked, Jake walked around the back of the car and opened the passenger door.

She grabbed her books and Pee-Chee folder, turned, and gave him a hug. “Wanna come in for a while?”

“Probably not a good idea, ‘specially tonight,” Jake said, glancing at the window where he noticed a curtain falling back into place. “I had a nice time,”

She stretched up on her toes and gave him a quick kiss on the cheek. “You’re probably right. I had a really nice time too. Call me,” she said. Hugging her books to her chest, she walked down the gravel drive, stopped half way, turned, and smiled. One final wave and she continued on to the back door.

Jake rolled his windows down as he put it in reverse and backed out of the drive. He looked back at her and waved. As she opened the door, Jake heard a loud voice.

What in the hell is that all about? Sounds like her old man might have rounded the bend. Be careful in there, Jan ... is. Nice to see ya, don’t want to be ya.

He pulled the headlight switch on, tapped the dimmer switch with his foot, and headed up the winding county road, glancing at her house in his rearview mirror.

He felt a little guilty thinking of it, but he hoped Penny had seen Janis getting into his car. If Penny hadn’t seen them leave together, maybe she would get wind of it by the grapevine. The next time he asked her out, she just might accept.

Then again, Janis has got her good points.

“Jan? ... JAN! Get your butt in here.”

How had Jake put it? ... her father was *around the bend*. From the bellowing coming from the living room, that was, beyond doubt, an understatement. Jake had no idea.

“I said, get in here – what is this bullshit?” He stood, a dirty towel in his fist, eyes riveted on clothes heaped in the hamper on the couch. “Did I or did I not I tell you to take care of this before you left for school?” He held the towel in his outstretched hand, then tossed it toward the plastic laundry basket. It missed.

Shit, not again. She walked through the kitchen and stopped in the doorway to the living room. Her mood instantly altered and matched his. “I’ll get to it in a minute.”

She whirled back toward the kitchen to toss her books on the table, knocking over a glass half filled with water, splashing it on the front of her white cotton blouse. In a panic, she grabbed the towel from the refrigerator door and quickly dabbed her blouse and gave the water on the table a quick swipe. Still cradling her books in one arm, she dried her hands on the cloth and tucked it back in the refrigerator door handle.

“Don’t sass missy. When I tell you to do something, I goddamn well mean what I say.”

She heard his footsteps behind her.

She winced as she felt his fingers clamp around her arm. “I’m sick and tired of your goddamned attitude.” He yanked her around. The whack caught her full on the side of her head and her ears instantly started to ring. She shrugged and grabbed an armload of books to protect her face as a glancing blow came again, slamming the books into the side of her neck. Her head whipped back and hit the corner of the doorjamb; she fell. Her knees landed on the slippery schoolbooks and she sprawled on the kitchen floor.

“YOU FUCK!” she cried. “STOP IT.”

“You-don’t-talk-to-your-daddy-that-way,” he lectured; his voice was calm as if talking to a toddler as his fingers pinched painfully tighter on her arm.

“Stop, you’re hurting me. You’re hurting me – it hurts. Please – ,” tears streamed down her cheeks, adding to the damp spot on her blouse.

“I am not going to put up with your shit. You’re just like your fucking mother.” She caught his eye looking at the lace of her bra through the wet cotton. “I’ll teach you just like I have to teach your mother, you shit.”

“Let go – please, Daddy –let me go.” She struggled to pull his fingers from her arm.

He grabbed a fist full of her long, thick, ratted hair and led her like a bucking calf across the room.

“I’m not so sure I am your daddy.” He kicked her to stop her struggling and she fell over the coffee table. She gripped a handful of her own hair, tugging against him.

“Daddy, I’m sorry. Daddy, I’m sorry. Please – let me go. I’ll do the wash. I want to do the wash. Please let me do the wash.” She looked at his purple face glaring down at her. “Why are you hurting me? Please –don’t hurt me.”

His grip on her hair loosened for an instant when he lost his balance tripping over his ottoman and she wrenched herself away. Instantly on her feet, she clawed her way over his flailing legs and was at the kitchen door. Her fingers caught the jamb of the door and she pulled herself forward; she got away. Her body sprang backward as it reacted to the tug on the back of her bra. The strap broke loose and her blouse ripped open.

“No, no, no, no, no – not – going – anywhere,” he sucked in air with each word as he struggled to catch his breath.

She saw a white flash as his fist caught her on the back of the head.

Her arms flailed and pain shot up her arm as she banged her wrist into the door. One of her flailing hands caught his face; her nails ripped the skin across his eye and gouged his ear.

“You fucking –.” His fist wrapped in the shreds of her blouse, her bra hung from her shoulder. With a sharp tug, she was on the floor. He found a handful of hair and dragged her backwards, sliding her on the throw rug through the living room.

She could hear herself screaming as he slid her past the end table. She caught the family picture and swung it. It bounced off his shoulder before its glass shattered against the wall.

“That’s something you’ll be cleaning up.” One hand gripping her hair and the other pulled on what was left of her tattered blouse. She was nearly naked from the waist up. Red welts snaked the white skin on her side and back.

Sweat and blood dripped from his reddened face as he struggled to breathe. She caught him looking at her breasts as she wrestled to get free. “I’m going to show you who’s who.” His fist tightened on her wrist.

She cried and screamed as he dragged her through the living room toward her bedroom. Switching his grip to around her waist, he stood her upright and gave her a violent shove, tumbling her over the footboard of her bed. She clutched the mattress and struggled to roll off the bed. She felt herself thrust to her back and listened to her skirt rip.

A white light flashed in her head again as his backhand caught her on the side of the head – and then again and again in his rage.

She gave up, limp, sniveling, with her eyes squished shut, refusing to witness what was happening.

Except for his gasping, the room became quiet and she heard rustling. She dared to squint. He was beside the bed; his pants were off. She screamed when she felt his stumbling fingers pinch her flesh as he gripped the skinny waistband of her panties. “Please, please, please, please – I want to wash the clothes – I really do, please Daddy,” she said in a little girl voice.

“You will – be washing – clothes,” he said. He sucked in deep breaths. His sweaty unshaven face gave her virgin cheeks stinging whisker burns.

She heard a deafening high-pitch ringing in her ears and she saw only darkness. Her mind registered nothing else.

Sitting on the edge of the mattress, he took several refreshing breaths, “Up – clean that mess in the living room – do it before your mother gets home – wash yourself – that is not very attractive young lady.”

He dressed and sauntered into the living room. “Those clothes you were begging to wash – they’re still on the divan,” his voice normal again.

Her whisker burnt face stung from the tears and blood. “Yes,” her sobbing, hesitant voice convulsed, “Daddy,” she buried her face in one end of the cotton pillow and squeezed her thighs around the other, praying to be little again.

“Be a good girl, Hon, wash the bed linens. I’d soak them in cold water first; I believe it’s your time of the month.”

2 THE DANCE Askin' the bitch out? Please get me the fuck-o away from this lunatic-o She nudged Jesus from between them I danced with Janis

1962-63 School Year

His original purpose in climbing the rope in the barn was for exercise. It was pure, high quality, good fortune that he had stumbled upon the unique method of self indulgence.

The dust, visible in the sunlight shining through the wooden shutters of the glassless windows lining the east side of the barn, irritated his eyes and congested his sinuses. He stopped briefly, and listened. He intentionally left the bare light bulb hanging above the stalls in the dark barn off.

Jake stepped on the planks separating the stalls from the hayloft and climbed over the stanchion onto the hay. He stood motionless, listening for a moment and walked to the wall where a stash of several pieces of cellophane were stuck in a crevice between two boards and selected one.

He yanked on the end of his belt and loosened it, unzipped his jeans, pulled his briefs down and tied the baling twine around the cellophane draped over his dick and snugged it with a slipknot. He pulled up his jeans, zipped up, and buckled his belt. He high-stepped in the loose hay to the rope attached to a roof rafter, twenty feet above him.

Gripping the course anchor rope as high as he could reach, he began an overhand climb to the rafters. He reached up and gave the roof a victory pat, lowered himself to the bottom, and, before catching his breath, began again.

The first climb was to get his entire body fatigued. It was on the second climb when his stomach muscles began to get exhausted. This time, he stopped halfway and hung motionless. His legs dangling, heart hammering, he clung to the rope until his hundred-eighty-nine pounds caused him to nearly lose his grip. His biceps burned, depleted of oxygen.

Now – exhale; do not breathe.

Starved for oxygen, he forced his arms and abdominal muscles to contract again and finally, he could feel the incredible eruption. He hung there until the intense, ejaculating subsided, wrapped his feet around the rope, and slid to the hay. Breathing hard and with his legs wobbling, he leaned against the wall of the barn, undid his jeans, and pulled the twine and sticky cellophane off. Such was Jake's routine when the urge overwhelmed him.

It was when Janis enrolled at his high school in their senior year the lure of sex with her replaced much of the rope climbing.

Going out with Janis for several months educated Jake. Nothing was going to get him out of her clutches. It was her personality. Little by little, she became more domineering. Possessive. Oppressive.

Their relationship started out slowly enough. They were not hitting the sheets straight away. In fact, they did not literally hit the sheets until after they graduated and were married. Until then, their beds consisted of car seats, barns, clearings, hayfields, and bathrooms, even in a bed of pine needles, but never between the sheets of a bed.

Shortly after they had started going steady, Jake began having second thoughts about their relationship and, because of her unpredictable, often cruel behavior, he sometimes craved a healthier relationship and wanted out.

Roy did warn you. One thing about Roy, he's a hell-of-a lot smarter than he sometimes acts. So, if you're looking for someone to blame, you better take a glance in the mirror. Might be too soon to be making rash decisions about this thing with Jan ... Janis. You got a handle on it, right, Jake-o? Right?

It didn't appear to matter what he thought, one way or the other. Janis kept him firmly ensnared in her feminine clutches. If a girl flirted with him, it didn't progress further than the initial smile or brief conversation before Janis interceded. She seemed to sense what was going on or, more accurately, what could transpire, and would either confront him about it or make a comment to the other girl and any actual or perceived flirtation ground to a stop like a car driving into deep pea gravel. Like the time when, during half time at one of the football games, Jake talked to one of the freshman girls from the opposing team's school. Janis appeared beside him and, in an almost inaudible whisper, her lips tickling his ear, whispered, "Askin' the bitch out?" Janis moved beside Jake and stood motionless with two Cokes in her hands, mute; her unblinking eyes glared at the girl before them. The petite girl with long red hair and freckles looked at Janis and without a word, pivoted, and scurried away. Jake knew he would never be looking into the pale blue eyes of that freckle-face cutie again. He could feel his face warming.

"Jeez, Janis, why'd you have to go and do that?" He said, glancing from Janis to the freckle-face girl with the red-hair, and back to Janis. "I was just talking ..."

"I don't give a rat's slimy ass what you were just saying, I will not take that crap from you, or from any of your skanky, slimy ass bitches." She stood in her school principal stance, hands reversed on her hips, her face inches from his; she made no effort to keep her voice down. Scenes did not faze her a bit; she seemed to relish being in center stage. Putting people in their place jacked her up.

Students standing near fell silent and turned to watch the developing scene. Jake could feel his face redden and turned to escape but she grabbed his jacket sleeve and turned him toward her. "Comprend-o ... Jake-o?"

"Yeah, what ever." *Yes Jan ... Jan-o, Javis, Mavis ... Janis, ma'am, bitch, I comprend-o. Please get me the fuck-o away from this lunatic-o. Jake-o, make thyself invisible ... run-o!*

Once, not long before they began having sex, he missed a date to pick her up; she flung an apple pie she had cooked especially for him, glass pie pan included, from her kitchen door into the briars.

"Bet you never had a pie thrown in the woods over you, have you?" she scribbled in a hasty note left, folded once, and taped to his locker the next day.

“Correct me if I’m wrong, Jake-o, but I think I told you before, I will not put up with that crap.” She said when she saw him reading the note on his locker door. “I am not in the habit of repeating myself. Sometimes, I guess it takes a bit longer for you fellas who ride the short bus to catch on.”

On the few occasions when he decided he wanted out, he became too apprehensive when the time came to confront her and let it drop. He could feel zero wiggle room in her hold on him.

Their relationship did not start out with her dominating him. She apparently had a plan and she manipulated him slowly, patiently. They had gone on several dates, to movies, for a drive. They had kissed several times. She pushed him away on several occasions when he got the courage to try to touch her breasts. Apparently, copping a feel was more crap she would not “put up with.”

Janis was generally the more aggressive of them. She talked louder and more often. She dominated their social situations.

During the school year, nearly every month, the school community sponsored dances at the Grange Hall. The dances were a source of entertainment for the high school students; dances kept them off the streets. One of the parents acted as a DJ and provided the sound system, which consisted of a record player. One or two students provided the music with their collections of favorite 45-rpm records.

At one of the Grange dances, their relationship took an unexpected, dramatic turn where she plunged her hook securely into him. He eagerly surrendered; he even gave her a hand with the grappling hook.

It was at the first dance of Jake’s senior year where he had the opportunity to dance with Janis. The first dance song was slow, The Crest’s singing, Sixteen Candles. Jake noticed immediately Janis was determined to control the dancing. She did not exactly lead, but she did not allow him to either. He sensed that he was doing a tolerable job of leading her precisely where she wanted to go.

There was no uncertainty as to her intentions. She was doing things that he had not experienced before and he liked it but at the same time was embarrassed. Jake could feel his neck heating up. He knew his face was turning red.

I think if you place the hook right here, just a little lower, right here, it will have the most effect, Jan ... Janis. Let me give you a hand with the rope?

She kept a watchful eye on the chaperones and she alternated dancing with the requisite “space for Jesus,” as the chaperones stipulated, with pushing every part of her seventeen-year-old body against him. He was immediately aroused as she wrapped her arms around him, one hand caressing the nape of his neck and the other had a handful of his hair, squeezing. He remained aroused while the music played for the shortest three minutes of his life.

“Jeez, Janis, what happened to you?” he said.

She kept hold and continued to sway a bit after the song ended.

“It’s the same ol’ me, honey. I just decided it was time,” she whispered.

She would pull him by the hand to the middle of the crowded dance floor, as far from the chaperones as possible. One minute, when the chaperones perused their section of the floor, she was the prim, innocent teenage girl, dancing with her right hand in his left with her other hand demurely on his shoulder. When the coast was clear, she nudged Jesus from between them, held her soft, warm breasts against his chest, and kept her right thigh pressed against his crotch. When

he gained the courage to push his thigh against her, she seized the opportunity and made like a cowgirl riding bareback.

“Giddy-up,” she whispered softly into his ear as they moved back and forth enveloped in the throng. “I’m going to keep him that way all night.” She said and giggled, administering slight but unmistakable pubic pressure. “Any objections from the peanut gallery?”

“Uh, none from up here,” he said.

It was one thing that she was doing what she was, but quite another to actually discussing it with him. His could feel his face pulse with heat.

She kept a roving eye on the chaperones. Most of their dances were a slow, clockwise, rhythmic humping. With her head heavy on his shoulder, her hair tickling his sweaty face, his dick clawing its way to the surface. They shuffled around the dance floor of the dimly lit Grange Hall.

Occasionally, the DJ slipped in a fast one and they attempted their swing technique.

“Uh-oh, does he feel like he’s been neglected?” she said when a slow song began and she pressed her leg against him. “I am so sorry, sir. Allow me just one brief moment. Let’s see if I can remedy what ails you, sir.”

The songs continued, Tonight, Tonight, Oh What a Night, one slow song after another. Her pussy rubbed his thigh; her soft breasts warmed his chest. She made certain he remained a rock through them all.

She was different from the other girls with whom he had danced. Nobody even came close.

Where in the holy-hell did that come from? Her “Won’t put up with that crap,” rules apparently doesn’t include vertical humping. Number one: No talking to other girls. Number two: No vertical humping. Uh, on second thought, scratch number two; may come in handy down the road. Revised number two: Never, ever, stand me up.

When the last song of the evening ended, Jake led her over to the side of the dance floor. They had danced every dance together.

“My dad is picking me up,” she said. “I’m so sorry, I have to go. I had a super nice time.”

“I had a really nice time too. See you at school,” Jake said.

Her smile disappeared as she caught a glimpse of her father standing near the entrance. Jake watched when she tugged her arm from her father’s guiding grip on her elbow and shrunk away from him as they walked to his pickup. Even from that distance, Jake heard a loud complaint from her. A public scene with her father was evidently not beneath her either.

The lights in the Grange grew brighter and the students quickly began to disburse. Jake bummed a ride home with Roy and his parents. They dropped him off near the mailbox at the end of the long drive. Fog hid the barn. A hundred yards further on, he could see the glow of the porch light.

Instead of going to the house, he detoured to the dark barn. He flipped the light on, stepped into the horse stall, climbed over the stanchion, and jumped into the hayloft. He could make out the dark rope hanging from the rafters in the harsh shadows. Neglecting the cellophane, he walked over the mounds of hay, grabbed the rope, and began to climb. Half way up, he stopped and just hung there pulling himself up and then letting his arms stretch out until he was exhausted. Finally, with thoughts of Janis squashing her pussy against him, he came. He was still pumping when he nearly lost his grip and had to wrap his feet around the rope to keep from falling. Breathless, he lowered himself to the hay mound and sat catching his breath.

When he could breathe normally, he got up, hit the light switch, and walked out of the barn. His legs were wobbly as he sidestepped the mud puddles on the way to the front door. His feeble

kick did not phase the two cats on the porch as they tried to race him through the door. His second attempt succeeded in blocking them with his foot and he squeezed into the hall.

He brushed behind his mom's chair to the sink for a glass of water.

"Yee-Gods," she said, "you smell like a barn."

"I had to turn off the light in the barn," he said over his shoulder.

He rinsed the glass and put it in the dish drainer and on his way toward the stairs; he brushed behind his mom again.

"You need to take a bath," she said, looking up at him.

He abruptly changed directions from the bedroom to the bathroom, clicked the light switch, put the stopper in the tub, and turned the hot water full on.

"G'nite," she said over the noise of the splashing water as she headed for the stairs. "Have a nice time?"

"Yeah, it was okay. I danced with Janis."

3 BABYSITTING We aren't doing anything, just playing, right? I have to say it feels pretty, pretty, pretty, good No, leave it there – get back in there

1962-63 School Year

When Jake drove up the dark driveway to the Johanson home and doused his lights, he noticed the lace-curtain fall and a shadow moving toward the door. He made a quick dash through the rain onto the porch. The door cracked open as he raised his hand to knock.

“Shhhhh – hi,” Janis said, her finger touching her lips. “I just put Sadie down. The little stinker didn't want to go to sleep. It took me an hour of rocking and nearly a full bottle of milk to convince her she was tired enough to go to bed.” Janis shifted her weight from foot to foot as she stood in the entryway. “I've been here for almost three hours. I was afraid she'd be awake when you got here.”

“That would have been okay,” Jake said, looking toward a closed door at the end of the hallway. “I like little kids, I wouldn't have minded.”

“Well, thank God, she's finally asleep,” she said. “I was getting worried you might not come.”

“Why would you think that?” Jake said.

“I don't know, I guess because it is getting' sorta late.”

“I always do what I say I'm going to do.” Jake stood in the yellow glow of the porch light. “Aren't you going to ask me in?”

“Sorry; here I am, anxious to see you and then I leave you standing on the porch, come in.” She reached for Jake's hand and pulled him through the doorway and guided him into the dimly lit hallway.

“What have you been doing all evening?”

“I've just been playing with Sadie; she is just the cutest little sweetie. I wish I had a little girl just like her.”

The table lamp in the living room cast a glow of muted light into the hallway. The only sound was the rain tapping on the windows. Janis put her finger to her lips again. “We can't make any noise.”

He smiled and leaned close to her ear and whispered, “OK, I'll be vewy, vewy, quiet.” Then removed his jacket and tossed it on a stuffed chair just inside the archway to the living room.

“Come here you, I've been waiting all night for this.” She looked up at him and put her hands on his cheeks and guided his lips to hers. Dropping her arms to his shoulders, she pulled him close and leaned her back against the wall. He could feel her soft, squishy breasts against him;

they warmed his chest. Except on the dance floor, he had not been this close to her such a sensual way. Tonight, there wasn't a hundred curious students and a posse of interfering chaperones nosing about.

She hooked her arms low around his back and pulled him closer.

His forearms were against the wall on each side of her head.

She put her hands on his butt and pulled him tight against her. "Oooh, nice, I like the feel of him pressing on me," she said as she scrunched her pelvis upward and pushed herself against the bulge rising in his jeans.

"Should we be doing this here?" He kept the pressure on her and glanced down the hallway toward the front door.

"So, you want to stop?" She pushed his hips away. "Okay, fine."

He pushed back but she had a firm grip on his hips and blocked him. "Do you like this?" Keeping his hips away from her, "Or would you rather have this?" She relaxed her grip and allowed him to press against her while she rose to her toes, swaying her hips against him. "Um-huh, I thought so. It's okay, nobody's home except Sadie. Mr. and Mrs. Johanson won't be home for another hour or so." She nestled closer. Jesus would have had to be the width of sweat if he intended to get between them. "Besides, we aren't doing anything, just playing, right?"

Jake kept a wary eye on the door.

Don't be such a coward, I locked the door; we'll hear them on the steps if they come home." She put her hands on both sides of his head and made him look at her. "Are you chicken?" She dropped down, flat-footed.

"Stop calling me a coward." With his head in her hands, his eyes darted to the front door again and then back to her. "I just don't want to get caught in the middle of something."

"You can trust me, Jake." She gripped his butt and held him close, rose to her toes and pressed herself against him. "He trusts me," she said and giggled. "I just have a feeling about it." She started to make moaning sounds as she rubbed herself against him. He felt himself getting ever stiffer. "That didn't take long to wake him up, did it? I mean, all I have to do is start talking to him and he just responds ... kinda neat." She dropped her hand and put it between them. She gripped him through his jeans and gave him a firm squeeze.

Her unexpected maneuver gave him a start and he jumped.

Fuck-shit, what has gotten into you, woman? A week ago I couldn't catch a feel of a side-boob and now, jeez, you're jerking on me like a calf on a nursing bucket with a blocked nipple. Who are you and what did you do with Janis? On second thought, forget that.

She squeezed him hard again. "This is just what *Her* wants." She gave a steady yank on his bulge. "Do you think it's silly that I have a name for her?" She kept a hold on him and gave him several random squeezes.

"Uhhh ... no, I don't think it's stupid." He gasped with each squeeze. "I think ... uhhh ... *Her* is a damn nice name. A perfect name."

"*Her* wants him to be hard," she said yanking again. "*Her*-especially-likes-him-like-this." She timed her tugs with each word. "Am I hurting him?"

"No. I have to say it feels pretty, pretty, pretty, good."

"I wanted to do this to you at the dance but there were too many chaperones snooping around. I knew you would like to be squeezed ... I just knew it," she said, addressing the front of his jeans.

"Yeah, you're a regular May West." Jake liked the way she was being nasty with him. He became especially aroused when she talked as if his dick had a mind of its own. It responded to

her suggestive, nasty talk. She had an instinctive way of knowing how to make him respond, as if he were two separate personalities – two brains. For whatever reason, it worked and she knew it and was quickly becoming adept at teaching him to grow.

She kept one hand on his butt to keeping him close, and moved the hand gripping his jeans to the top of his waistband and slipped her fingers beneath it, against his skin. She moved slightly away from him and when her fingers pushed further into the front of his jeans, he jumped.

“That tickles,” he said. “Where’d you learn to be so sexy?”

“That’s none of your bees-wax. Your jeans are tight, hold your tummy in.”

The instant he sucked in his stomach, she thrust her hand inside his shorts. He jerked when her fingernails nicked the end of him.

“Sorry big guy,” she whispered. “I’ll be careful. She patted the end of him with her fingertip. I didn’t know you were that big,” she said as she talked directly to his second self.

He held his stomach in as she worked her hand deep into his pants.

“Well, aren’t you just the biggest surprise,” she said as she gripped him. You’re really, *really* big.” She giggled. She seemed to sense her growing power; he pushed himself up into her hand.

Her lips touched his briefly, then, her gaze and concentration focused downward. “I see he likes me to talk to him. Grow some more big guy, fill up my hand.”

The more she talked to him the higher he rose on his toes, pushing himself into her hand.

“Ooooh, I like how he follows me.”

Again, she shifted to his lips and covered his mouth with hers. When she slid her tongue into his mouth, he nursed on it. She plucked her tongue back and breathed heavily, exhaling all of her breath into him and then sucking his breath into her lungs. At the same time, she pushed her first two fingers down both sides of his dick, straddling it and gradually pulled her hand out feeling the length him. “I liiiike you, big guy.” She pulled away and looked down at his jeans as she pulled her hand almost out of his pants and touched the head. She could see his thick head in the gap in his waistband. She let her fingers slide all over it, feeling over the end and slipping her fingers down around the ridge and then back to the top and touched the opening with the tip of her finger. “I’m loving you with my finger,” she whispered down to his dick. “Do you like that, big guy? I think he wants to come out and see me,” she looked into Jake’s eyes then back down at his waist. “He’s getting wet, just like *Her* is. Want me to do that again?” She didn’t wait for a response and caressed his opening with her fingertip again. She looked up again and began kissing his neck; as she sucked his neck, she pushed her hand back inside his pants and straddled his dick with her fingers.

“That really ... good... ummm ...jeez,” he moaned.

She slowly moved her hand up, scrunched her pussy upward as she pushed the length of him against her. She felt him through his jeans and her skirt. “See, we aren’t doing anything, just playing, it’s okay. It sure feels like he’s enjoying it. I didn’t know he could get that big.” She pushed her hand downward and let her thumb and fingers straddle his dick, and then wrapped all of her fingers around him. “You’re such a big guy, I love you,” she said as she squeezed and pulled, letting her hand slide the length of him. She loosened her grip a little, and pushed back down and squeezed again and pulled. “You like that, don’t you big guy?” She squeezed and pulled quickly up and down. “I’m pretty sure he likes that,” she said moving her head up and breathed into his ear. Then she did it again slower. “I’m figuring out what you like, aren’t I, big fellow,” she whispered down to him.

Without taking her hand from inside his jeans, she pushed her hand back down, and held softly and let her hand slide up and then tightened her grip and jerked up and down several times

quickly and then moved it slowly back down and up again before some more quick jerking. Each time she pulled on him, his dick came out of the top of his jeans and she looked at it. "I like what you look like," she said. "He's big and he likes to look at me. I think he is trying to kiss me – maybe I'll let him." She pulled on him exposing him above his belt, bent and softly kissed the end of him. She raised her head and looked into Jake's eyes.

"Do you want to see what *Her* feels like?"

"You gotta' be kiddin'."

"Give me your hand. I took off my panty hose earlier. Put your hand down my panties. Don't worry, I'm not letting go of him," she reassured him and gripped him tighter.

Jake's hand slid inside her panties and she made a startled sound when the back of his fingers touch her bristly hair. He pulled his hand away.

"No, leave it there – get back in there – *Her* likes your hand on her. "I gave her a trim, just for you. Like it?"

"I don't know, I guess so ... sure."

She jumped again as his fingers slid back into her panties and touched the soft, hairy pillow that she had been pushing against him. "Jeez, Janis, *Her* is really slippery ... pretty wet. Are you okay?"

"Of course silly, I'm absolutely fine ... better than fine ... terrific." she whispered. "*Her* has been getting excited all night. She knew he would be coming and has been anxious all night thinking about him. *Her* is just acting like her normal self." She moved to his side. "Turn your hand around so you can hold her." When he turned his palm toward her, she pushed down on his arm so his hand reached further down her crotch; she inched her feet apart to give him some wiggle room. With her hand on the outside of her skirt, she pushed her fingers against his. He was surprised how easily his fingers slipped into her. "Go deeper, it doesn't hurt. Put two fingers in, *Her* likes it. I want you to make *Her* get really excited. Play with her." She pushed on his hand and guided his fingers deeper into her. "See how wet you're making *Her*? Feel here. Softly. Move your fingers around my clit – here – a little higher – there. It's really sensitive there; play with her there and make her ... you know. Push harder right here, it won't hurt." She gripped his hand and guided it to where her excitement was increasingly frantic. "Jake. Oh god, you are making me so horny."

Her hand tightened and her jerking became frenzied. "I'll keep him hard. We can make him do it. I won't let loose. He likes that." Her breaths were shallow and very quick.

"Uh-huh," Jake said between gasps.

"Go in and out of me too. *Her* likes that," she said between her rapid breathing. "Shake *Her* softly right there," she forced his fingers to the precise spot she needed his action. "Play with her and make her do it. That feels really, really nice." She gripped his hand, pushing hard against her, shaking it quicker and quicker. "He feels so good. He's really hard. Do it quicker, don't you dare stop. Make her crazy. She kept her grip on him and yanked furiously.

"Put him in *Her*," she abruptly command. "Get him in me. Do it standing up ... right now."

With her free hand, she pulled on his belt, loosening it, found the tab on his zipper, and struggling, finally slid it down. She let go of him and used both hands to reef his jeans below his knees, then his shorts. He stood stiff, pulsating with the rhythm of his heartbeat.

"Ohh, you're really big and hard," she said, looking at it as she pushed him back a little and lifted her skirt up, tucking it into her waistband. She flipped her panties over her butt and thighs and let them skitter to her ankles. Holding onto Jake's arm, she balanced and stepped one foot out of her white panties. She stood, leaving them tangled around one penny-loafer.

Standing naked from the waist down with her skirt bunched up under her waistband, she put one hand around his neck and the other under his dick and pulled him close. “Ooooh.” She jumped when she felt the head of his dick touch her pussy. With a tight hold on him, she raked it across her hair and slipped it between her lips, lubricating them both. He felt it slide up and down as she rose on her toes to get above her hard friend. When she sank down off her toes, he felt it glide up the front of her, slipping over her mound on the wet hair and up her soft slippery tummy.

She rose high on her toes again and held on to his dick with one hand, holding him in place. “Put him inside of me,” she said. “Push him in.”

“We can’t, they’ll be home.” He glanced at the door.

“He wants to go inside of me. He’s almost in me. Do it now – now, Jake, do me ... do me ... please.” Her legs quivered; she raised high on her toes, one hand gripping him; pulling; one hand beating on his back. “Damn it, get him inside of me, Jake. Please, Jake, do me, please, please, please do me.”

“Shhhhh, you’ll wake the baby,” Jake whispered.

“PUT THAT DAMN COCK INSIDE OF ME.”

There was a pitched wail from the bedroom. Tires crunched on the gravel and in an instant, bright headlights shown through the lace curtains and flooded their white, half-naked bodies in light.

“Fuck ... they’re back. The baby’s awake,” Jake said. “Fuck, fuck, fuck ... shit ... they’re back ... hurry up.” He pushed himself away and bent grabbed his shorts and jeans and pulled them up together. He struggled with getting his zipper closed over himself and buckled his belt, leaving his shirttail out.

“They can’t see anything through the curtains,” she whispered. She stepped her foot from her panties and scrunched them into a ball and stuffed them in her bra and quickly pulled her skirt down from around her waist.

He heard the key in the door. “I have to go ... see ya.”

She grabbed his sticky hand and pulled him into the living room. “Sit.” She pushed him down on the couch and walked to the hallway. “It’s okay, they didn’t see anything.”

“Hi, you guys. Sadie’s been asleep for over an hour, she just now started to cry. I was just on my way to check on her when I saw your lights.”

Mrs. Johanson glanced at Jake, said hi, and scurried down the hall to check on the baby.

“Do you know Jake? Mr. Johanson, this is Jake. Jake, Mr. Johanson.” Janis reached over, put her hand on his arm, and gave it a squeeze. “He came over a little while ago to keep me company. I hope that’s okay.”

“Sure, fine.” Mr. Johanson stuck his hand out and walked over to where Jake was sitting. Jake rubbed his hand hard on his pant leg, rose, and took Mr. Johanson’s hand and shook it. When he pulled his hand away, their skin stuck for an instant as if it had honey on it. Jake could feel his face get warm and he turned and snatched his jacket from the chair. “Well, I gotta go,” he said. “Nice meeting you.”

He gave Janis a hug and she followed him to the door. She glanced over her shoulder and with the coast clear, moved close, and put her hand on Jake’s zipper. “I’ll see you two tomorrow. ‘Nite,” she whispered softly and gave his bulge a tight lingering squeeze, jerking several times as she snaked her tongue between his lips as she kissed him good night.

He parked the Chevy near the garage and noticed the lights on in the house. He got out of the car and instead of going toward the house, made a detour toward the barn. He did not bother to turn the light on but made his way by moonlight. He climbed over the stanchion into the mound of hay. He was so fucking horny, he didn't bother with the cellophane. Taking several whiffs of the pussy aroma on his hands, reached for the rope, and started to climb hand-over-hand. He noticed his sticky hands made gripping the rope easier. It was not long before he exhausted himself and felt the intense gratification of getting off. He could always count on his rope trick. He would worry about his icky shorts later.