Breathless

A Short Story

By Brad Newby

It was 1974. The Vietnam conflict had finally come to an end, as had my nightmares of being drafted. Sex was casual - the HIV/AIDS epidemic wouldn’t happen for six more years. My most immediate concern was the weather. August in Ohio, scorching hot and dripping humidity.

I was a senior at Ohio State University. My mother’s house wasn’t air-conditioned. However, the house four of my friends and I had rented for the school year at least had some window air conditioners. I had one in my room and returned to school two weeks early to escape the heat. In addition, I had a standing position at the University Book Store to pay for my books and build up my cache of spending money.

I had a girlfriend, Denise, whom I had dated exclusively for three years. Early that summer, that relationship came crashing down. I had gone on vacation with her to Cape Cod. I proposed marriage to her on a moonlit beach and got sand kicked in my face. She said I was too different from her friends in Massachusetts. Translated: too much of a hick; a country bumpkin. My proposal was flatly turned down. And if that wasn’t disheartening enough, it was aggravating to know that Denise would change her mind as soon as she got back to school and I didn’t want to be there waiting for her to take me back. What I needed was a new girlfriend to fill the void and strengthen my resolve to show her I had moved on. Maybe I wanted to make Denise a little regretful too. One thing was certain, Denise and I were over.

I became a man with a mission. All those girls I had ogled and who had smiled back over the last three years, were now fair game. I began to build a list in my head, categorized by two columns: the most attractive girls and the girls most likely to accept my proposal. At the top of my list was Jesse Carter. She was not the most attractive but pretty and most likely to accept. I knew Jesse from my junior year when we both worked in the Houston Dormitory dining hall, along with her perennial boyfriend Andy. They were freshmen and had been exclusive since the eighth grade. But she always smiled at me, always blushing, and went out of her way to chat with me. Her blush was a flag. I sensed she was ready for a change, and I was certainly attracted to her.

My friends and I had rented a four-bedroom farmhouse that would have five full-time residents. Bob and his girlfriend Marty, who would prove to be a full-time live-in, had the first-floor bedroom. I had the front bedroom upstairs with one of the three window air conditioners. I had posted a sign on the door that read **Greg Hiatt** in case someone forgot our room assignments as they began moving in. I had the choice bedroom. To the left side was Albert, a high school friend of mine, and his sometimes girlfriend Karen. On the right side, most likely to score, was my brother Tim, a freshman in Engineering and a chick magnet. His roommate Dawg was a tall lanky fuzzy redheaded senior. Tim dropped out of school on the last day to receive a full refund; but continued to live in the house until early spring, when he left on his motorcycle for California.

I had to find a way to contact Jesse. I wanted to take her out as soon as possible before Denise became become a factor. I knew she lived in Warren, a small rural town about forty miles from campus. I went to the student library and searched the Warren white pages for Carter. There were only four listings for Carter, and I felt quite lucky. I started with the first listing.

“Hello, Miss Carter?”

“Yes. . . “

“My name is Greg Hiatt. I know Jesse from OSU and want to get in touch with her.”

“May I ask what for?”

“Well, I’d like to ask her out on a date.”

“Oh, I’m Jesse’s, Aunt Peggy. They live on Howard Street. Do you have that number?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Well, you just call over there. It’s going to take some luck; she’s been dating a boy for a long time.”

“Yeah, I know Andy too.”

“Well, good luck.”

Luck was going my way. I didn’t hesitate and called Jesse’s house immediately.

“Hello, this is Greg Hiatt. I’m calling for Jesse.”

“Greg Hiatt! This is Jesse and I’m really surprised to hear from you. How did you get my number?”

“From your Aunt Peggy.”

“So, you started at the top of the list?”

“That’s right. With only four listings, I thought my odds were pretty good.”

“I hoped you might call for a long time. So, what’s the occasion?”

“Well, I thought we had some moments back in Houston Hall last year. You blushed every time we talked, and I took that as a good sign.”

“Oh, blushing is my curse. It happens when I especially like someone.”

“Well, that’s a good sign. Maybe we could go out on a date?”

“I’d love to.”

“That’s great! When are you going to be back at school?”

“On Saturday, but I could make an excuse and come on Friday instead.”

“Then could we say I’ll pick you up on Friday at seven o’clock? We’ll do a movie and a pizza.”

“That sounds great.”

“What dorm are you in?”

“Canfield.”

“Great, I’ll be in the lobby at seven.”

I continued down my list and came up with Nancy Fuller. I worked with her at the bookstore, but she hadn’t reported in yet. Nancy was at the top of my attractive column, and she was in the middle of my most likely to accept column. She was hardly bigger than a munchkin with dark hair that always had a wave in it to frame her beautiful face. She had lovely doe eyes and a perfect body. Nancy was probably out of my league, but I knew she had a falling out with her boyfriend at the end of last year. We were good enough friends that I knew she wouldn’t laugh if I asked her out. She would be more difficult to contact because she lived in a sorority house. One of the sisters always intercepted the call, and they would never give out a phone number. But I called and told the girl that answered the phone I wanted to ask Nancy Fuller out for the first Friday in the school year and asked that she call her at home. She took the message, called me back in a few hours, and told me my proposal had been accepted. So, in short order, I had two dates lined up for the first two Fridays of the school year, with Saturdays open in case I hit it off with one of my dates. I had always been pretty shy, and the idea that I had two dates with two different girls on my calendar simultaneously was a first in my love life.

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I arrived early at six forty-five and walked up to Canfield Hall. Jesse was already sitting in the lobby, waiting for me. She wore a dark green jumper with a short-sleeved Peter pan blouse. ‘Cute’ for a country girl, but the green looked good with her light complexion, blonde hair, and blue eyes.

“Welcome back to school, Jesse.”

“Hi, Greg.”

“It’s really good to see you, and you’re looking very nice.”

“You are too. I was afraid you’d cut your hair since it’s your senior year, and you have all that job-hunting stuff to do.”

“Oh, you like long hair?”

“On you I do.”

“Well, I get to keep it a little longer. This is only going to be my first senior year. I fell behind on my credit hours and won’t graduate until the first semester next year.”

“Oh, so I’m only a sophomore dating a half-senior.”

“Yeah, something like that.”

“Still, that’s good enough for my ego.”

“And think of it this way, that’s an extra summer and semester that you get to date me.”

We walked to my car, an old 1965 Impala, that still looked good and ran well. My model lacked sportiness but made up for it with a much-beloved bench seat.

“Whoa, nice car,” Jesse said as she slid over next to me and put her hand on my thigh.

“So, I checked out the movies, and they’re showing *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* at the Retro. Have you ever seen it? It was big last year.”

“No, but I heard it’s good.”

“Yeah, me too.” I kind of lied. I had already seen the movie but wanted to pick a sure bet for our first date. My backup was *Love Story,* a strictly chick flick.

After the movie and the after-movie rehash, it seemed that she liked it. Score one for our side.

“So, what’s your favorite pizza place?” I said.

“You know, I’m not hungry after that popcorn. Why don’t we go back to your place? I’d like to see it.”

I quickly ran through my room in my mind. Was there any reason it wasn’t presentable? No. It had never happened that a girl asked herself back to my room on a first date. Oh well, at worst, she’ll find my dirty socks.

We went through the door to our house and passed Bob and Marty’s room on the way to the stairs. They both gave me a thumbs-up and an encouraging smile as I passed by their door. We went into my room; I closed and latched the door and turned around, and saw Jesse starting to undress. I was taken aback. Then she asked me to help with her zipper, and her jumper fell in a pool at her feet. I unbuttoned her blouse from behind and gave her a nuzzle on the neck. She wore a new bra, sparkling white and a little frilly. She wore white hip-hugger underwear with that brand-new look and little yellow roses appliqued around the waistband. I was in shock that she had planned all of this for me. It was clear she had dressed for the occasion. Her body was ample and beautiful. ‘Beautiful’ wasn’t adequate. Peeling back her clothing revealed a truly gorgeous corn-fed country darling. Her breasts were much larger than I expected, her bottom was round, and she was firm all over. By the time she lay down on the bed, I had only started to undress. I hurried up.

She lay in bed with one leg cocked to cover her sex and one arm covering her breasts. I was surprised at this seemingly bashful moment after she had disrobed so nonchalantly. Now that I was fully naked, having caught up with the program, she extended a hand to welcome me into her space. I placed one knee beside her and she immediately spread her legs apart, uncovered her breasts, and took my manhood in her hand. I straddled her hips with my knees, bent forward, and kissed her lips, and they hungrily welcomed me. With my erection hanging against her belly, I gently ran my hands up her sides and cupped her lovely breasts in my hands.

“I’m a virgin,” Jesse interjected.

I wasn’t sure how I was supposed to take that except in my experience; a girl’s loss of virginity was not pleasurable for either party.

“Yeah?” I said.

“Yeah.”

“I’m flattered, but we don’t have to do this. Maybe we should just fool around some.”

“No. I want to, and I want it to be you.”

“Do I need protection?” Most college girls were on the pill, even virgins. I knew I didn’t have any condoms, a serious oversight on my part.

“It’s all right,” Jesse said.

I hesitated, unsure how to proceed; until my more primitive instincts took over and made up my mind for me.

I held her head in my hands. I kissed her neck, ears, and shoulders while my hands caressed her breasts. She had remarkable breasts; they were large yet firm and went beyond filling up my hands. My hands roamed her body, touching and caressing everywhere. As my hands moved, my mouth followed, kissing and nuzzling. When I got to her thighs, she parted her knees, and I began to massage the nub of her sex. Her hips began to gyrate, and she started breathing sharper and deeper.

She stroked my erection quite near the entry to her sex, and it was clear Jesse still wanted to go all the way. She must have sensed my hesitation.

“Do it. I want you to—

She wrapped her legs around my waist and used her hand to position my erection: with her legs, she tried to pull me inside her. When I penetrated her, Jesse smiled ear-to-ear and blushed deeply. Our pelvises touched, and thankfully, I felt no resistance. Her hip motion increased, and she started to moan. She grasped the bars of the iron bed and used them to pump her body up and down while I lay on top of her.

“Oh . . .I . . .never . . .,” gasped Jesse. Her breath hitched between every word.

I breathed in her ear, “Never what?”

“I never thought …. it would be this good.”

She let go of the headboard and fiercely clutched me around the small of my back. I told her to slow down, or I wouldn’t last. I was on the bottom now, and Jesse was still providing all of the motion. Finally, we settled into a steady rhythm, but she clutched at my shoulders and tried to pull me in deeper. She rocked and rocked, her breathing getting fast and shallow. I sensed that she was getting very close. I tried to hold back, waiting on her, but in the end, I couldn’t. Jessie continued to pump me: I sensed a bit of frustration. Her enthusiasm required some tempering, and that was going to come with practice.

We were both soaked in perspiration. Out of breath, we held each other as our heartbeats slowed down to normal, and the air-conditioning had a chance to work. Soon we were wrapped in my blankets and holding each other tightly in our arms while she diddled me down below.

Jesse wasn’t the kind of virgin I was expecting. Some girls lose their virginity to their girlfriends or gymnastics, and I’m willing to accept that over the possibility she had told such a shallow, easily discovered lie. Besides, she acted very inexperienced: like a virgin.

Jesse said, “I should have done this years ago,” then she hesitated.

“I fantasize about you,” Jesse said sheepishly as she ran her hand through my hair.

“When you are with Andy?”

“No, at night when I’m alone.” Jesse grinned and blushed ear to ear.

“And what do you do when you fantasize?”

“I play with myself until I cum.”

“Yeah. But we just met each other, so to speak.”

“Now, I’ll fantasize even more. Boy, you really fished for that compliment.”

My ego meter pinned, and it aroused my imagination. I could see her there in the dark, masturbating and calling my name.

Sated, I was quite sleepy.

I was aroused by the movements of Jesse’s mouth. Immediately, I knew this was an area where she had some experience. I figured, what’s a girl to do when she dates one guy forever and wants to keep her virginity intact? Jesse worked her mouth and her tongue expertly. She grasped me with her hand and gently pumped me while continuing to hold me in her mouth. She circled the tip of my manhood with her tongue, and it started to drive me crazy. As sleepy as I was, my body couldn’t refuse, and my thoughts were quickly being dominated by my erection. Jesse straddled me and carefully guided my manhood into her sheath and began to work me with a rocking motion that was soon getting a bit too enthusiastic. I suggested that she roll back on her heels, and as I expected, that slowed her down some, even though her weight drove me deeper inside her. But again, she was losing control. I turned her over and placed a pillow under her hips, which raised her sex high in the air. I took her from behind where I could better control the speed and rhythm of our love-making. I put my hand under her belly and started massaging her clitoris. I grabbed her by the nape of her hair and pulled, stretching her belly from her neck to her sex. Jesse began to moan so loudly I was certain my nearest roommates could hear, but I was beyond caring. Her breathing was getting shallow, and her breath started to hitch. When her thighs began to quiver, I knew we were getting close. I sped up and pinned her against the bed, and drove myself deeply into her. This time, we erupted simultaneously, with her clutching my shoulders and hanging on for dear life. After I came, and my mind was back to being rational, I realized that this virgin just had her first orgasm and apparently didn’t know.

“Oh,” she said. “That was…even better.”

“I think that you had an orgasm.”

“Oh, I knew that was something special, but nobody ever told me what to expect. Oh, thank you, Greg, that was very special, and I expect one every time from now on.”

“Hey, I hate to tell you this, but it has a lot to do with how you feel emotionally. You can’t count one every time. This is a good thing to talk about with your girlfriends, except most of them, haven’t had one either. They are mostly too inexperienced.”

I said, “See, good things come when you wait for them. You just need to slow down, enjoy it, and be patient. Make it last as long as you can. The best you can do is synchronize with your partner and try to reach the climax at the same time. That’s what we just did.”

I always assumed that girls hate it when the guy immediately falls asleep afterward. I tried to cuddle. I tried to massage her body. But I couldn’t keep it up and almost immediately passed out.

Some unknown amount of time later, I was once again awakened by Jesse and her oral attack on my manhood and all that followed. Later, after a quick nap, it happened again. I was not counting because I was only barely conscience, but this might have happened four or five times in that single night. The last time I looked at the clock, it was 5 a.m.

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We got up around 10 a.m. Saturday.

“If you want me to stay, then you’ll have to find me something to eat,” Jesse said.

“Your wish is my command. I may need some luck.”

I sped downstairs and found two cold pizza boxes on the dining room table. I inspected them and found four slices of sausage with anchovies. I could eat anchovies, but I didn’t dare take a chance Jessie wouldn’t eat them. I picked them off one by one and dumped them in the garbage. I checked the refrigerator and found a six-pack of beer labeled ‘Bobs’. For a good cause, Bob wouldn’t mind if I paid him back, so I took two.

“Here’s a gourmet feast. Cold pizza and beer. I hope you like sausage,” I said.

“That’s great. Only two beers, huh?”

“Well, actually, I stole these from my roommate Bob. I didn’t want to appear greedy. I can go out later and pick up our own supply.”

“Not on your life! You are staying right here. We’ve got unfinished business,” Jesse’s face blushed as she grinned and poked me in the side.

Jesse had proven herself to be insatiable last night. I looked forward to some afternoon delight. I decided that due to the extreme pressure I was under, Bob really would understand if I borrowed a couple more beers. This time I left a five-dollar bill and a note in his stash that read “Bob, sorry, but it was an emergency.”

Eventually, I did make a beer run, replacing Bob’s stash with a full six-pack. And I think that tempered the frequency and urgency of our lovemaking. We cuddled and massaged more. We even shared the newspaper.

About dinner time, I heard Tim and Dawg talking over the Chinese restaurant menu. I intercepted them and placed an order to go: an order of pot sticker dumplings and Moo Su Pork.

“I’ve never had Chinese food before,” Jesse said.

“What? That’s not possible!”

“If you live in Warren, it is.”

I took the opportunity to show off my prowess with chopsticks. I picked up a pot sticker, swashed it in the dipping sauce, and feed it to Jesse.

“Humm, that’s wonderful. Show me how to use the chopsticks.”

Everybody knows that chopsticks take some practice, but dumplings are relatively large and fairly easy to handle. She stumbled her way through the dumplings, and I interceded to handle the first Moo Su pork pancake. I picked up the pancake with the chopsticks and laid it out nicely and flat. I shoveled some Moo Su pork onto the pancake, poured some chili sauce on it, and rolled up the pancake using chopsticks. I was proud of my expertise. I laid it on Jesse’s plate and told her to eat it like a burrito.

“Oh, this is awesome! You have to teach me how to do that. It’s very impressive.”

“Like it?”

“I love it.”

“Good. I’ll make it my duty to teach you about Chinese food.”

So went the first two nights and a day of our budding romance. I felt exhausted, but Jesse never appeared to be. I felt very positive about Jesse, and it wasn’t just the sex; this was a girl I think I could love. Jesse and I had some preparations to do for the start of school on Monday. So, I took her back to her dorm early on Sunday. Before we parted, we made a pact to get together every Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday. For me, this was risky. Not a strong student, these rendezvous could easily distract me from my studies and my sleep.

I called Nancy Fuller’s sorority, and they put Nancy on the phone. I worked with her in the bookstore and had to come clean, she would find out anyway. I told her I had to break our date because I had spent the weekend with a girl, and it looked serious, at least in the near term. She not only accepted my excuse but said I should call if my situation changed. My ego got another boost.

The first Wednesday night, during an interlude from lovemaking, I raised the question about Jesse’s prior boyfriend.

“Jesse, tell me about Andy.”

“Oh, Andy’s a mess. You know we dated steady from the eighth grade. Well, the summer before our senior year of high school, I came to the realization I didn’t want to marry Andy and tried to break up with him. He started crying about going to the football and basketball games together, the Prom, and other senior activities. He couldn’t stand the embarrassment of not going together after all these years of going steady.”

“So, you gave in?”

“Yeah, a big mistake. I had my mind made up and then took pity on him. I wasn’t in love with him.”

“What happened your freshman year?”

“I became a coward. Going someplace where I’d be completely alone, not knowing anyone, scared me. I had a panic attack that lasted all summer, and I leaned on Andy a lot. He was there for me, and I was even more convinced I didn’t want to spend my life with him. So, I led him on, from a distance, for our freshman year. To think I lost a whole year of my college social life makes me ill.”

“That’s tough, but I feel sorry for Andy too. It doesn’t sound like he has much of a backbone to keep dragging you down when he knows you don’t love him.”

“Yeah, no backbone. He believed if he begged me, I would change my mind and love him.”

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As the weeks passed, Jesse’s personal belongings began to collect in my room. First, a bag with a toothbrush and toothpaste, make-up and I don’t know what else. A bathrobe, an OSU sweatshirt, blue jeans, and sneakers followed in short order.

We kept to our schedule well. We missed a couple of Wednesdays due to study demands. We lost a Saturday when I gave up my room to my best friend Joe. He was going to school in Michigan and wanted some quality time with his girlfriend, Debbie, another sorority girl, and one of my very best high school friends. We managed a double date with them for pizza and beer before Debbie had to get home for curfew.

Joe slept on the floor of my room and said, “I don’t think Jesse is the girl for you. You should stay with Denise.”

Joe was never shy about giving me advice and this time it really pissed me off. He had only spent two hours with her, at most, and he was already passing judgment on her. And, he didn’t take Denise’s refusal as any big deal. I told him about the huge difference in my sex life between Denise and Jessie. He felt that was ‘unimportant’. I swept Joe’s advice away as being unimportant.

But back on schedule, Fridays were Chinese dinner night, and a few times we went to a Chinese Restaurant to try out some food that didn’t travel well like Pekin Duck. Saturdays were a movie and pizza night. Religiously, Jesse stayed over on Fridays and Saturdays for marathon lovemaking. I usually took her back to her dorm early on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings. To my surprise, I kept my grades up, if not better than expected. I crammed on our days off in anticipation of our nights together.

One Saturday morning, Bob yelled from downstairs, “I bought chocolate donuts.”

That got us out of bed. Jessie donned her robe with nothing on and I pulled on a pair of cut-off jeans, commando style.

I said, “Don’t you want to put something more on?”

“Nobody will see anything and I don’t care much anyway. You’re just a prude.”

So, we trotted down the stairs for a standard college breakfast of chocolate donuts, beer, and cartoons. Bob and Marty had already claimed a place on the sofa, the only place we had to sit. Oddly, dressed just like us: Bob was wearing shorts and Marty was wearing a robe. We took the other end of the sofa and sat in for Bugs Bunny and breakfast.

Jesse came back from the kitchen with another beer, flipped up the back of her robe, and sat her bare bottom on my lap. Marty watched with a big naughty grin and then pulled the back of her robe up and, I saw her bare bottom, sitting on Bob’s lap. I’m thinking: *oh no, I hope this isn’t going to become a contest*. By the end of the cartoon, there was something rhythmic going on at the other end of the sofa; Bob and Marty got up and announced that they were going back to bed.

Jesse says “See there’s nothing wrong. It’s Saturday morning and everybody eats breakfast in their bedclothes.”

“I don’t think these qualify as bedclothes unless you meant naked.”

Jesse grabbed my shorts and, without unbuttoning them, practically ripped them off me.

I objected “Anyone could walk in here unannounced.”

As Jesse opened her robe and dropped to her knees, she said “They’ll be more embarrassed than I’ll be.”

Here it came, another mouth attack on my manhood, already erect from her bare bottom sitting on it. She was quite good at this and an image of Andy crossed my mind.

Albert and Karen came in the front door. Jesse didn’t stop or hide what she was doing. Karen giggled briefly and they disappeared upstairs.

“See?” said Jessie. “See how dangerous it is? It turns me on!”

Jesse climbed up on my lap, her knees straddling my hips, she put my erection into her sex and pressed my head down between her breasts. Her robe exposed her bare shoulders and breasts. There was no going back. Now, I didn’t care either. Jessie grabbed the back of the sofa and leveraged it to pull herself up and down. She rode me like a cowgirl with her breasts in my face, grinding my back into the coarse material of the sofa.

“Tell me before you cum,” said Jesse.

I was nearly there and said “Now.”

Jesse jumped off me and dove into my erection with her mouth. Her hand, which was gently pumping, became more vigorous now. Her tongue was circling the tip of my penis, driving me crazy, and I was trying to hold the pressure back, making it last, when it happened—

Jesse didn’t stop. She kept working her mouth and tongue until it was done. The pleasure of my erection was almost painful.

As I caught my breath I said, “Do you do that often?”

“No. I was always tempted to but I never went through with it. It wasn’t that big of a deal, but it was very exciting.”

“Well, it was exciting for me too.”

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Back upstairs, I was feeling loved because we had just finished having sex. I thought Jessie was a naughty girl, and maybe that explained that first night and how casually she took her clothes off and crawled into my bed.

In a respite from our physical activities, I found the nerve to probe around for her feelings about me. It was foolish of me; too soon in our relationship. I was feeling a little uncertain about where this relationship was going and needed some positive reinforcement besides the sex. I felt I was falling for her.

“Jesse, what are your long-term plans for your life?”

“I’m going to get my RN, marry John Close, and have three children.”

It shocked me to not get mentioned. If John is whom she wants, what is she doing with me three nights a week?

“John Close, who is John? Are you dating him now?”

“No silly. I’m not dating him now. He’s an Ag student in Canfield that passes through my cafeteria line. So far, he doesn’t know who I am, but I’m working on him.”

“But there are sixteen-thousand men on campus, why him?”

“I can’t explain it. It’s chemistry. What are your plans?”

“Well, I’m disappointed, I thought *you* might figure into them.”

“You don’t know that I won’t. You can’t know what the future may bring. Besides, our sex life couldn’t get any hotter than it already is. That gives you a double plus and he doesn’t have any.”

“Well, I need to explain something to you. I’m going to graduate with a Computer Engineering degree, which pretty much dictates that I’m not going to live close to home. I want to work in a company that supports NASA or the Department of Defense and generally, that means living on the East coast or West coast. Places like Boston, Virginia, Cape Canaveral Florida, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. There are a few places in-between like Colorado, Texas, and Louisiana. But the point I am trying to make is the girl I marry must be prepared to relocate and may only see her family a couple of times a year. I’m worried that a small-town girl like you wouldn’t want that.”

“Well so much for stereotypes. This small-town girl would find it exciting to move to a big city and lead an entirely different life. Now John, on the other hand, is a farmer and always will be. He’ll never move more than fifty miles from home.”

“So, give me another plus, but tell me why John?”

“At this point in my life, the man is much more important than where we live and I am infatuated with him. I can be an RN anywhere. I can make babies anywhere. Maybe once I get to know him, I won’t be so enchanted.”

“That’s good, for a minute there I thought you were enchanted with me.”

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We were about six weeks into the semester. On several occasions, I couldn’t help but notice Denise visiting my brother Tim in the room next door. I ignored her, but my brother wasn’t.

“I’ve been talking with Denise,” Tim said.

“What about?”

“You know, she’s sorry and wants you back.”

“Fat chance of that happening.”

“Greg, I think you should think this over. I think Denise is the right girl for you.”

“How can you say that after what she did to me, Tim? At a minimum, she must have serious doubts about me and our compatibility. How could she say no if she loved me? And how can I take it as sincere now?”

“Do you know how smart she is? She’s as smart as you but with the grades to prove it. She makes straight ‘A’s in a tough curriculum, and she’s probably going to graduate school. She’s going to go a long way, a lot further than a nurse.”

“Tim, *going far* isn’t everything that goes into this equation. What about being happy? How about being the mother of my children? That’s way up on my list. What about my sex life?”

“Greg, are you saying you’re in love with Jesse?”

“I’m still thinking that over, but she’s very tempting. So far, our relationship has been like a whirlwind and I can’t trust what I’m feeling. We’re deep into *like*, she’s incredible in bed, she wants children, and she’s anxious to move to a big city and live a different life. All that’s missing are the bells. I don’t know if she feels that way about me, but it’s still early in our relationship.”

I kept John Close a secret. I didn’t want Denise to find out and Tim couldn’t be trusted. As far as I knew, Tim was involved in a conspiracy to get me back with Denise. And, I still hoped to change how Jesse felt.

“What do you think about me taking her home for Thanksgiving?”

“Man, introducing her to the family? It’s too soon to go that far. That’s like saying this is the girl I want to marry.”

“No, it’s not. It’s saying this is my main squeeze. You know that’s why they invented *engagement*, to announce to the world that this is the one.”

I was still considering this Thanksgiving issue; it was an important thing for me. I know that she’d fit right into my extended family and that I’d get their approval and hers. If not it’s better to know sooner than later.

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Wednesday night, almost two months to the day our intense love affair began, Jesse asked if I had any tests tomorrow. When I said no, she declared she was spending the night and I would never forget it. Based on my prior experience with Jesse that was hard to imagine. All night, she was insatiable and I was breathless. Every time I dozed off, she would wake me with oral sex, followed by straight sex, and maybe more oral sex. All I know is that every time I thought it was over, she’d back off, slow down and make me suffer most memorably. Jesse had learned a lot about pacing and restraint since our first encounter. I lost count, but we had sex more times that night than ever before. The last time I looked at the clock it was 6 AM and I had a 9 AM class.

I woke up to a peck on my cheek: a light peck that wasn’t meant to wake me. I turned over and saw Jesse fully dressed with her book bag over her shoulder. She smiled a big smile and a blush washed over her cheeks. It was a quarter till seven o’clock.

“What gives, sweetheart?”

“Oh, I have a doctor’s appointment.”

“A doctor? Is something wrong?”

“No, it’s lady stuff.”

“Ok, I can take you.”

“No, that’s not necessary. I got a ride so I wouldn’t bother you.”

She bent over, gave me a proper kiss, brushed the hair off my face, and kissed each eyelid. That was unusual, not a typical ritual for her.

I was still half asleep and Jesse left me confused. Why didn’t she tell me about her appointment? Why did she find another ride? The Student Medical Center didn’t open until eight-thirty so whom was she going to see at this hour?

I jumped to my window and saw Jesse get into a metallic red late-model GM car with a tan leather interior. No student could afford that car. I saw an older woman in the driver’s seat and I thought, that must be her mother driving. Why would her mother drive forty miles to take Jesse to a doctor’s appointment? Maybe this was something more serious.

It was Thursday morning. When I returned from my classes, Jesse’s belongings were gone. I ran downstairs to find Bob; his room gave him a good view of who came and went. Bob said she had short dark hair, claimed to be Jesse’s roommate, and had stopped to pick up her stuff. That would be Shelley, Jessie’s roommate. I called Jesse’s room and got intercepted by Shelley. Yes, Jessie had asked her to pick up her belongings. No, she didn’t know why. No, I couldn’t speak to Jessie, she was very ill. I should try back tomorrow.

After class on Friday evening, I called Jesse’s room again, and again Shelley answered the phone. Jesse was still sick but somewhat better. No, she insisted she couldn’t talk to me tonight, but she’d meet me here tomorrow at ten a.m.

How did Jesse get so sick after seeing the doctor? An OBGYN at that? Maybe it was more severe than I had imagined. Maybe she had a DNC that I heard about.

Saturday at ten a.m., I knocked on Jesse’s door. Shelley opened the door carrying her book bag and made a hurried beeline past me. I went in and found Jesse lying in bed with her head propped up by pillows. She looked a little pale, but I don’t think I would notice if I wasn’t looking for something. I sat down on the edge of the bed and bent over to kiss her. Her hands pushed me back with the word “No” on her lips.

At that moment, I knew our relationship was over for some inexplicable reason. I couldn’t resign myself to giving up without an answer. I had been thinking of asking her to my house for Thanksgiving. This was a semi-serious relationship for me. I had the right to know why it was over. I got up and paced the floor.

“So, it’s over? Why?” I asked.

“Don’t make this any more painful than it already is.”

“But why? Did I do something wrong?”

“No. There’s no reason. Don’t look for one.”

“Wasn’t I exciting enough?”

“That’s silly, of course, you were.”

“But what about Wednesday night? Was that just a farewell kiss?”

“You could call it that.”

“Then it must be another man.”

“No, there’s no other man.”

“John then. You finally hooked up with John.”

“John doesn’t know I’m alive.”

“Sure, he does. After flirting with him day after day in the cafeteria line, he’d have to be blind not to notice you and your blush and not know you were interested in him.”

“No, he hasn’t noticed me, and I don’t think he will.”

“So, what’s left? We had a good thing and I can’t imagine why you are calling an end to it. I don’t think our relationship has had enough time to run its course.”

“It’s time for me to move on.”

“But why? Don’t I meet your needs?”

“Of course, you do. I couldn’t ask for more.”

I thought if I could kiss her, maybe I could get something going. Maybe she’d open up and talk to me if I could rekindle that flame. I thought about telling her I loved her but I wasn’t sure I did and I didn’t want to reduce myself to Andy’s level. Besides, I was too early to make that call. Maybe I just loved having sex with her. That possibility would be hard to deny. At this point in our relationship, we hadn’t fought yet, not even a disagreement. How could you judge a relationship without that?

I bent over to kiss her and got the same response as before. Her hands kept me away and she whispered “No”. I noticed there were no tears. No glassy eyes. She hadn’t been crying. She was resolved and showed no emotion.

I left the room without a goodbye and with Jessie still lying-in bed.

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I went out with Nancy Fuller a few times, but we didn’t hit it off. That relationship was over as soon as she realized I wasn’t a Greek. I didn’t think she was that shallow.

At the end of November, Denise called and made a big deal about celebrating my birthday. She brought over a bottle of wine and a cheese board. I surprised myself, I wasn’t amorous but not bitter either. She smiled and it tugged at my heartstrings in the old way. We had a good time, it felt like we’d only taken a vacation from each other. But I was more than hesitant about letting our relationship pick up where she had left it.

I only saw Jesse once more. About two months later, I was working in the bookstore and Jessie walked in with a tall handsome man in a flannel shirt, jeans, and work boots with a long thick mane of hair. He looked like a hippy farmer.

“Greg, this is John, I wanted you to meet him,” Jessie said.

They were holding hands and Jessie was blushing. I recognized that blush. She got her wish and was showing him off.

“John, it’s nice to meet you and see you two together.”

I don’t remember if I was that magnanimous but I hope I was.

The End