

Dixie remained fatigued when he woke that afternoon. Though he was probably not as tired as he had a right to be. He hoped the adrenaline, pumping through his veins at the prospect of finding out who he really was, would pump him up enough to travel. He left Texarkana and the 40 Winks behind. His goal for the night was the Great Smoky Mountains in Eastern Tennessee.

In Little Rock, I-30 joined I-40. Dixie stopped off the interstate there to take batting practice (BP) in some cages that he had spied from the highway. He had not taken any BP for over a week and was losing his timing. He was grateful for this opportunity to practice his swing. It felt good to jump in the cage and belt out a few. Dixie enjoyed this particular venue because he hit into an open field, enabling him to gauge better how well he had stroked the ball. The place had been about to close on a dead Sunday night when Dixie had arrived. He didn't have to deal with other customers gawking at him and asking questions. Because when he took BP, Dix could put on an awesome display of batting prowess.

He was a little rusty. It had been eight days since he had swung a bat in earnest. It took him a token's worth of balls to catch up to the "very fast" machine. Then he cranked one after another until there were no more balls left. Afterwards, he turned around to the left side of the plate where he put on a similarly impressive display. He swatted several practice balls over the four hundred-foot marker.

The owner of the batting cages, a bald Chicano in his mid-forties with a heavy, black moustache handed Dixie his professional card. The man said he was a scout for the St. Louis Cardinals. When Dixie explained who he was and that he planned on finishing college before giving professional baseball a shot, the scout backed off. He still asked Dix to keep him and the Cardinals in mind.

As he left the scout and the batting cage, Dixie did not know what he might find back East and whether he could catch on with a ball team. Already, too many disappointments in his brief two-year existence had taught him to hope for the best, but to expect the worst. Maybe all this Rock'N'Roll girl wanted was to find him so she could divorce him, as Donna had suggested. If so, maybe she could at least point him to his family, his parents, brothers, sisters, if he had any that is. Maybe, he was not really the guy she was looking for after all? Who knew? Maybe, just maybe, he would discover some little thing that would spur his recall, despite all the experts' opinions to the contrary. However, no matter what happened, Dixie was going to find an adult amateur baseball team and play baseball somewhere. At least, that's what he hoped to do, if he weren't too late.

After BP, the night rider jumped back on I-40, which he followed through Arkansas, across the mighty Mississippi and over the lush Tennessee farmland clear to the foothills of Knoxville. The weather had turned muggy. The bike was

holding up well and, despite the length of his trip, he was getting a big kick out of riding his Honda. He never got over the thrill of the ride, the hair standing up on his forearms and the back of his neck, as he felt the power of the bike beneath him, humming rhythmically and quietly over the smooth concrete at sixty-five mph. Traffic was heavier east of the Mississippi, but it was not overwhelming.

For some reason this early morn, Dixie had a strange, unfounded desire to spend the day among the Great Smokys. So he left the interstate and drove fifty miles out of his way south to enter the famous mountain range at a place called Clift Creek. Early morning smoky fog blanketed the mountains. Visibility had virtually vanished. Dixie rode his bike gingerly through the park, trying to rise above the blue haze with little success. He followed the creek, up the mountain, spurning a campground in search of daylight upon higher terrain. Finally, he wearied of the effort and turned off onto a hiking trail to hunt for a campsite.

He found such a spot, covered with soft moss on the north side of an oak, near a babbling tributary of the creek that began up near the Appalachian Trail, on the north slope of Mt. Guyot, near Clift Knob. Dense evergreen and deciduous trees, shaded mountain rock. The sparkling stream babbled eagerly down the mountainside. The abundance of green, shade trees provided a coziness that had been lacking in his previous, largely barren campsite at the water tank.

Dixie could make out what looked like a couple of five-foot waterfalls within a few hundred feet of each other. Just as he set up camp, the fog began to burn off, forcing him to move to a shadier place up stream. He was exhausted. The heavier traffic east of the Big Muddy had strained him mentally more than he had realized. Strangely, his entire body seemed to have born the burden as well. Again, he slept like a dead man.

When he awoke early in the evening, Dixie was stiff as a board, primarily through his lower back and hips. His forearms and shoulders suffered the strain, as well. In fact, Dix felt as though he were still riding on the back of the Honda. To loosen up, he stretched, as if he were beginning spring training. Then, he practiced his swing with the rebar. Once he had loosened up, he decided to take a dip in the mountain stream. From the angle of the sun in the sky, it must have been after five p. m. There was no trace of fog now, but it was hot and muggy.

The sounds of the rushing waterfalls and gurgling stream beckoned to him, inviting Dixie to refresh himself. This part of the mountain appeared to be isolated. With no one else around, Dixie thought he could safely strip and dip in the mountain creek. He removed his fake ear and took it along in a towel with his canteen down to the stream. He drank the cool stream water, which was incredibly cold. After filling his canteen, he submerged it beneath the stream's surface, wedging it between two rocks to anchor it, as well as keep it cool.

Dixie stripped and laid his clothes on a smooth stone of the rocky bank. The mystical spot was almost equidistant between two short waterfalls linked by the murmuring stream. *Beautiful!* Green hemlocks bordered one side of the brisk, bubbly mountain brook. Craggy grey rocks on the other bank boomeranged

brilliant rays of late afternoon sunlight which sliced majestically between the lush, green trees. The stark, rugged beauty of the rocky gorge and heavy tree cover emboldened him.

He tip-toed out gingerly on some exposed rock tops, until he reached a place where he could easily dip half his right foot in the water without losing his balance. *Mann! That water was some kind of cold!* Dixie couldn't believe water could be that cold without being frozen. *Not like the seven pools in Hawaii.* "Ooooooh!" he shuddered. He withdrew his foot and warmed it on the hot rock. *What a big sissy!* Then he hotfooted it over the rocks downstream until he reached a pool at the base of one of a series of small steeping stone waterfalls. He guessed the pool was about fifteen feet square and six to eight feet deep, depending on the size of the submerged rocks. Despite the whirling eddies, Dixie could see rocks at the bottom of the pool as clearly as he could see the rocks upon which he stood. The water was crystalline. It was like looking through glass.

Dixie steeled himself for the icy plunge. He spied a fair sized fish not fifteen feet from his perch. Unsure of the true depth of the pool, he submerged himself feet first up to the neck. *Whoa!* He thought his body had gone into shock. Then he felt as though something from within was kicking him hard in the chest. Thump! Thump! Thump! His heart pounded as the cold water took his breath away. Dixie realized the kicking in his chest was actually the pounding of his heart. The muscle sought to pump the blood in a valiant attempt to keep his body warm against the shock of the ice cold mountain stream. *What a rush!* "Wheeeeww!" he shouted loudly to no one. His shout echoed, bouncing downstream from rock to rock. He had never sensed anything quite like it. What was left of his manhood had shriveled down to nothing. He was burning calories fast. Dixie reckoned heavy people could lose pounds here easily, without dieting. He looked up to the treetop-lined blue sky, wondering if all this was real.

Then he looked down through the clear, pristine waters at the lower half of his body to watch his legs bicycling to keep him afloat. He could see them pedaling, but he had trouble feeling them. Could be the first person to ever swim here? *Could be, ya never know.* Could be he was the only one ever stupid enough to brave such wet cold. Dixie swam around the pool vigorously to warm himself.

For kicks, he stuck his head in and out, under the waterfall. When he emerged, much to his chagrin, he spotted some kids, hippie, college kids, from the looks of them. They sure had arrived on the scene unexpectedly. *Hippies! the last of a dying breed!* "Hmmpf!" Dixie liked to think of himself as liberal minded. But he had never cared much for draft card-burning hippies. Of course, due to his loss of memory, hippies were really just a history lesson for him in this present age of disco. Still, after what he had been through and what hippies represented, well ...

There were six of them, three girls and three guys, all wearing cut-off jeans and sporting long hair. The girls wore bikini or bra-like two-piece bathing suit tops and from what Dixie could see with his sharp eyes, they did not believe in

shaving. The boys were shirtless, but bearded. All wore long, long hair. They had come to wade and climb and sun themselves on rocks like the snakes they were.

Now hold on there, Dix. They caught you with your pants down, don't forget.

The teens spotted Dixie. One of the boys called out a warning to him.

“Hey Mann! Aren't you cold? You're lips are turnin' blue. Better not stay in there too long, Mann.”

Dixie nodded and offered a weak, “Thanks.” If they had not come along, he would be out right now, drying off on a hot rock. But now he could not get out until they left. Terribly self-conscious, he did not want them to see his wounds. He had taken a lot of ragging from his teammates, dorm mates and barracks mates about his lack of anatomy. Funny thing was, the couple of women who had seen him, had not minded at all. In fact, truth be told, his deformities seemed to attract them all the more, as if his wounds challenged their womanhood. Yes, his scars had challenged them to draw the love from him in the most amorous of ways. Nevertheless, that was not the case here, so Dixie swam around the pool heartily, in a vain effort to keep warm while he was freezing his butt off, or what was left of it. One good thing about the cold reasoned Dixie, he no longer felt the stiff soreness of his cross country bike ride. That's because the wet cold had numbed him so, he could feel hardly anything at all.

As he started to lose the feeling in his upper legs and extremities as well as his feet, Dixie knew he would have to crawl out of the cold creek. The kids were still there on the bank laughing and skylarking, not minding him. Half were climbing on the rocks. Half were sitting on the rocks or the creek bank sunning themselves with some late afternoon-early evening rays that filtered between the pines and hemlocks. Dixie thought he could retrace his steps quickly, get his clothes and get his pants on, while shielding his deformities from them. He thought wrongly.

Carefully, climbing out from the water onto the grey rocks with his teeth chattering, Dixie attempted to cover himself with shivering, crossed hands. Because he was wetter than a fish and slipperier too, now, his numb feet failed him when he stepped onto a dry rock. He slipped, falling roughly to one knee, cutting himself slightly. This occurred a couple of times. It was a nightmare. Suddenly, the great natural beauty of his private mountain stream playground, had transformed into a den of horrors filled with public shame. The loss of feeling in his feet sabotaged his sincere efforts, making him appear ludicrous.

Dixie had to sit on a rock, surrounded by the gurgling stream, to rub some life back into his feet and calves. He turned his back to the hippies whom he knew were watching. To get out of the stream and get to his clothes, he had to pick his way slowly and carefully across the rocks. He spread his hands out far from his sides, like a tightrope walker in a circus to keep from falling, but exposed himself fully to the curious onlookers. Even worse, he had to lean forward like a monkey using all four of his limbs to balance himself, showing his bare end and its shortcomings. It was pure torture. Dixie's embarrassments became plainly evident for all to see. To compound his shame, Dix was all shriveled up. He

shivered and shook like a frightened fawn. As he expected, as it always had, the heckling began from the boys. One sat on the near bank, the other on a rock.

“Well, looky there Greg. Believe that fella musta left something BEE-HIND in the creek.” They chuckled. Dixie shivered and plodded shakily toward his goal.

“Yeah, froze a chunk right off’n his ass end. Must be colder than we thought. Ha! Hey fella, what’s your name?” Again, Dixie ignored them, persevering, trying to maintain his balance. Their ridicule helped him take his mind off the cold a little. He did not look at any of them, though he could feel all six pairs of eyes on him or, more specifically, on the lack of him.

“Hey Buddy, didn’t you hear me? Just cause you’re missin’ an ass and an ear, don’t mean you’re missin’ your hearin’, too. Does it?” Controlled laughter arose from the boys. Acting as if he were alone, Dixie crawled out from the shade into the sun, slipping here and there. Oooh, did he wallow in the heat from those rays!

“Hey Ace, I recognize this jive turkey.”

“Yeah?”

“Oh yeah, sure. Never forget a face like that.” They laughed again.

“Well, what’s his name, Greg?”

“Why, don’t you know who that is? Why, that’s Silly Willy’s brother.”

“Oh yeah? How can you tell?”

“Well, you heard Silly Willy cut his toilet seat in half?”

“No, I didn’t. Why did he do that?”

“Cause his half-assed brother there was coming to town.”

That remark drew some loud chuckles. Dixie had reached his towel by now and was drying off. So far, he had heard nothing new. That sun felt good, as did the heat bouncing up off the rocks. They were partial compensation for his travails.

“No! That’s not Silly Willy’s brother. His brother might be half-assed, but at least, he’s a full man, not like this turkey. Look at ‘im! No, he’s a Gook spy.”

Though not fully dried, Dixie hurried to step into the cords he had left by the stream. Then he dried off his upper body some more, still pretending to ignore the jokes directed at his expense. He refused even to look in the hippies’ direction. His cords were hot from lying in the sun. They provided a welcome, warm relief to his lower extremities and a much needed covering for his shame.

“No kiddin’ Ace, the hell you say!”

“Yeah, it’s true and I know his code name.”

“Yeah? Really? Tell us, Ace, what’s his code name?”

“This is secret stuff now, so you gotta keep it under your hat, but ... his code name is ... Won ... Hung ... Lo.”

Well, they all cracked up over this one with loud, belly busting guffaws all around. Dixie guessed these hippies must have pretty good eyesight. Given the shriveling effect of the cold water upon his person, he wondered that they could see what he had, let alone what he had not. Nevertheless, Dixie chuckled to himself at the originality of their joke, while he pulled his silver and purple

baseball three-quarters sleeve, inner shirt on over his tousled, dripping, wet head. Still, he refused even to acknowledge his new “friends.”

Dix re-attached his rubber ear as quickly as possible and that act drew some jibes from his unwanted audience, as well. They jeered, that now, they knew why he hadn't replied to them. He hadn't had his ear—“the better to hear us with.” Dixie rubbed his limbs vigorously with his hands in order to warm himself. He stood with his back to his detractors as he began to feel his lower body parts again. Things were looking up, despite his hecklers. As he dried and combed his long, black mane straight back, pure, cold, mountain creek water dripped down his back. A warm, tender, female voice, from very close behind, startled him.

“Hey, now! Don't pay any attention to them jerks! They don't mean nothin' by it. Sometimes, they just act like ASSHOLES!” She had raised her pitch to emphasize the last word for their benefit, but then her natural alto softened once more. “But we all do sometimes, don't we?” Her sympathetic tone moved him.

Dixie turned around to look at the person behind the voice. She was smiling—a real cutie: barefoot, about five-foot five or six inches with an attractive figure. Her hips and shoulders were of equal breadth and her waist was slim. *Damn slim!* Without doubt, the girl had some curves. Raven black hair fell to her waist. She featured bright blue eyes with broad, long, arched dark brows and scarlet red lips. Faded blue, cut-off jeans revealed tanned but hairy, chorus girl legs. A bra-like bathing suit top colored in a red, orange, yellow and pink floral motif warmed Dixie up even more, because of how well she filled it. Her nose and ears were a little on the large side, but her lips were enticing and her eyebrows and eyelashes, long, broad and black. She looked to be between eighteen to twenty. Deeply tanned, the girl's complexion was clear. In some ways, she reminded Dixie of the picture of his Rock'N'Roll girl, or maybe that other girl on the last album cover, the one with the pitch black locks, or maybe even the silhouette girl. Except, curiously enough he found both underarms like the legs of this cutie were unshaven. Rather than deter him, he found her natural body hair intriguing.

Evidently, he interested her as well. She peered intently at first one eye, then the other. His apparently close set, two-toned peepers seemed to intrigue her. In his brief two years of existence, Dixie found this phenomenon to be true with most females. Rose and Donna had both told him that the contrast in his eye color made the dark eye appear to be set lower in his head and closer to his nose than the blue eye. They claimed both eyes appeared to be set too close together, kind of like an optical illusion. Evidently, his eyes attributed to him a perplexed, child-like look, which the two woman had found to be at once both vulnerable and enticing. Both said the contrast had served to mesmerize them. The closer they had looked to discern the illusion, the more engrossed in him they had become. The attraction was not only the sharp contradiction of the electric blue and jet black hue of the irises. But it was also his thick, long black eyelashes and brows, which they had claimed were more like a girl's. Or, so they had said.

“Yeah, I guesso,” he replied casually. She smiled pertly in return.

“Look, um, have you eaten dinner yet?” Dixie shook his head. “Well, we’ve got some hot dogs and hamburger meat, back at our camper.” She smiled invitingly and nodded in a backwards direction. “Would you like to eat with us?”

One of the long-hairs behind her over on the rocky bank called out, “Come on Moons, whaddaya doin’? We just can’t feed everybody you feel sorry for, like that stray cat you brought back to the dorm.” The girl called “Moons” rotated her trunk in the hippie’s direction. Dixie bent over to pick up his wet towel.

“Aw shut up, Greg! You’ve said enough already.”

The girls’ angry tone melted into sweetness and light as she turned back to Dixie. She apologized for her traveling partner. “Wish I could think of an excuse for such rudeness,” she remarked tenderly, “but I can’t. Sometimes I, I’m ashamed to say he’s my step-brother.” She glanced angrily in the step-brother’s direction before asking Dixie: “So how ‘bout it, are ya hungry?” She smiled and raised her already naturally arched eyebrows to underscore her question.

As if on cue, Dix’s stomach growled. Both looked at his stomach and laughed.

“Guess that’s a ‘Yes’. My name is Molly Malloy, but they call me ‘Moons’ or ‘Two Moons’, if you like.” Though curious about her nickname, he said nothing.

She held out her hand for him. Dixie shifted the towel to his left hand to shake hands. She couldn’t help but notice his missing finger joints. Dixie’s hand was cold but he felt a noticeably warm semi-electric tingle in her grasp. Surprise registered across her face, but she said nothing. Was it because of his missing joints or had she felt the tingle as well?

“And what’s your name? I’m sure it’s not Silly Willy,” grinned Moons.

Dixie laughed. “No, no. It’s not Won Hung Lo, either.” They both chuckled.

“Actually, I’m not sure what my name really is. To be honest . . .” He looked off up the hill for a minute. “But I intend to find out, soon. In the meantime,” he returned his gaze to her. “I go by Dixie.” Dixie couldn’t believe how well he was speaking after the embarrassment he had undergone and the ribbing he had just taken. There was something about this strange girl’s magically free and easy manner that warmed his heart and put him at ease. Grinning, she winked at him.

“Well, Mr. Dixie, let’s go grab some grub.” Dixie responded confidently again.

“Uh, I, uh, gotta get my stuff first. Don’t wanna leave it out here, ya know?”

“Sure. What stuff?”

Dixie folded his towel lengthwise in half and slung it over his left shoulder. He led her by the hand around a rock and tree where she could see his bike and gear.

“Cool, so you’re a biker?” Her eyes widened with approval as she held onto his hand, warming it up. Dixie nodded as he felt it tingle. “What a turn on! That’s far out, Mann!” The attractive hippie spoke in the vernacular of a day gone by. Was she referring to or his bike or the tingle? She didn’t say. They walked over to his camp hand-in-hand, where he quickly put on some socks as well as his ankle-holstered pistol on his left leg and his ankle-sheathed stiletto on the right. He didn’t look up to notice her expression. Then he pulled on his boots, rolled up his

sleeping bag and tied all his gear on the bike. The girl watched with interest, but, if the weapons frightened her, she did not say so.

“Ah, nuts!” exclaimed Dixie only mildly perturbed.

“What’s a mattah?”

“My canteen! Left it back there, in the stream.”

Dixie threw his thumb back in the direction from which he had come. He quickly stuffed the towel in his athletic bag. Then he bounded back to the stream with an athletic grace that belied the bumbling awkwardness he had displayed moments earlier, when he had trod, wet-footed and ape-like over the slippery, smooth rocks. As he bent down to pick up his canteen, he dipped his hand in the cold, babbling brook. He slurped the sweet water. Dixie picked the wet canteen out of the stream and swiped it down a couple times to knock the water from its outer USMC cloth cover. Then he bounded back to her like a gazelle, holding the dripping wet canteen at arm’s length. She remarked with some surprise.

“You’re really quite graceful, aren’t you?” Dixie replied by asking gently.

“Would you like a swig of cool sweetness?” He offered her the canteen.

“Is that water OK to drink?” asked Moons suspiciously.

“It should be. We’re pretty high up here. The source of that stream can’t be too far away. Don’t believe, there’s been much to pollute it between here and there.”

“What about acid rain?” she replied quickly.

“Acid rain? Nevah hoid of it,” joked Dixie, laughing. The girl grinned.

“Sure, I’ll chance a swig of SWEETNESS.”

Dix handed her the opened canteen. She shook out her shiny, long, black hair, throwing it out of the way, in a most naïve but alluring manner. The girl eyed Dixie as she drank with a smile in her bright blue eyes. Dixie felt playful.

Suddenly, his eyes rolled back in his head. He became apoplectic, grabbing his throat. The girl choked on her water. “What’s wrong, what’s wrong Dixie?”

“Ah-ah-acid r-rain!”

“Oh NO!”

“Ah-ah-ah-CHOO!” Dixie sneezed ceremoniously, dropping his pretense as easily as he had begun it. “Guess, it was just a rough sneeze.” He grinned slyly.

The girl’s expression turned from white fright to red bewilderment and then to dark anger, but only briefly before she got hold of herself. Then she unceremoniously dumped some of the canteen’s contents over his head, laughing heartily. “Oh, you! You are something else, aren’t you?” she teased. She brushed his wet hair back upon his head, still chuckling, and touched his cheek.

“Gee, you’re still cold, Baby!”

“Well, you get cold when you’re like me, so ‘far out’ ... in space, right?”

Dixie was really feeling his oats. The girl shot him a mock, dirty look and then curled a devilish grin. *She’s a real vixen.* He grinned back. He didn’t know where this thing was headed, but he didn’t mind taking the time to find out. As far as he was concerned, he was still a free man out on his own, traveling alone.

“So, where’s your camper?” Dixie shivered involuntarily as he shook the water off his head. He took the canteen from her and screwed the top on again.

“What? Oh, ‘bout a mile or so down the trail, over in the campground parking lot. Hey, don’t you know you aren’t allowed to ride your cycle on this hiking trail?” She scolded him, mockingly crossing her arms under her healthy chest and squinted those electric blue peepers at him.

“You caught me red-handed, Moons!” What can I say?”

Dixie put his fists together out in front of him and offered himself up to her for a citizen’s arrest. She slapped down sharply at his hands, knocking them apart.

“Let you off with a warning this time,” she grinned.

“Well thanks. I guessed as much, but ... Well, here, come on, hop on up behind me. I’ll give you a lift.”

“Love to, anytime.” Now she winked slyly.

Dixie released the kickstand, pulled his dark shades from off their resting place on top of the sleeping bag and put on the glasses.

The girl smiled broadly, climbing on behind him with his help, as it was no easy chore for her to squeeze in between him and his bulky baggage. Evidently, the weapons she had seen him carrying did not bother her at all. Dixie believed he detected a faint scent of honeysuckle upon her. She noticed his license plate.

“Say? You rode all the way from California on this thing?”

“Yep, guilty again.”

“Now, that’s far out! Really far out, Mann!”

“Yeah, sure feels far.” Dixie reached behind him to rub his derriere, which she patted playfully. The biker spoke to her over his shoulder. “OK, hold on tight now and lean with me. These paths are kind of rough. Put your feet on those footrests on each side. If you need to stop, just squeeze me twice.”

“My pleasure.”

She held him as tight as Miss Riordan had and Dixie did not think that was possible. In fact, Dixie did not think this whole scene was possible, rather kind of *deja vu*. So much like what happened outside El Paso, it was surreal. *Life on the road!* Of course, this girl would have no choice but to hold on to him tightly, as they would bump over this rough mountain terrain. When he had ridden Miss Riordan, Dixie had removed his duffle and garment bags from the sissy bar, so she, and the kids, before her, could sit on the back seat comfortably.

However, here he was carrying all his belongings, with this cutie wedged in between him and them, forcing Dixie to slide up partially onto the gas tank. He could feel the entire front of the girl’s warm, shapely body smushed into his backside, as well as her upper legs, which snugly encircled his rear and thighs. And he did not mind at all, not one bit. She warmed him all over. He faced forward to start, but Moons squeezed him twice. Dixie turned his head.

“What? We haven’t even started yet,” remarked Dixie, bewildered.

“Yeah, I know. Just couldn’t resist.”

He spun his head around to look at her. Grinning, she winked coquettishly.

“OK, Dix. You’re the man now. Let’s go get some meat!” She ordered in a lower, manly voice and a serio-comic frown.

Smiling, Dixie shook his head, put on his dark glasses, started the engine and they were off up the trail like a pack mule.

“Wheweee! Go for it, Dix!” This Moons behaved as if she were riding a roller coaster, when he was going no faster than a bicycle. *It ain’t even out of second gear, for cryin’ out loud! If she’s so enthusiastic over this kiddie, scooter ride, how will she react to a real ride?* He grinned to himself as he pictured that one. Moons directed him over the bumpy footpath, up the mountain to her camper parking lot. Besides her camper and van, there was only one other camper and a trailer on the other side of the lot. Dixie helped Moons dismount. She shouted.

“That was frigid mann, really cool! Maybe we can go for a ride after dinner?”

“Well, maybe we can,” smirked Dixie. *Frigid?* He had never heard that before.

“Hey Dixie! Come on into our humble abode.”

She ushered him up the camper’s back steps. The camper was actually a brown and white Winnebago Chieftain and looked fairly new. The vehicle bore Michigan license plates. It was the only recreational vehicle (RV) parked on this end of the mostly level but deserted, grey-blue gravel, cinder lot. Next to the camper was a beat up old VolksWagen (VW) van, covered with painted multicolored flowers and rainbows. The van also bore Michigan plates. The mobile home rested near some tall pines and yellow birch in a corner of the lot. The RV backed up next to the rocky, carved out mountainside. Overhanging large, green ferns and leafy trees provided shade. Farther up the mountain, a couple trees grew sideways out of some crevices to offer extended shade over the lot. Cookout grills and dark red picnic benches lay within a hundred feet of the camper. A couple of tall beech shaded the picnic area as well. An orange tent stood in a glade near the parking lot. Chipmunks and squirrels hopped around freely, while birds whistled their evening songs.

Again, Moons winked and waved him toward the RV. Dixie followed her into the back of the camper. She sure was big on winking, mused Dixie, approvingly. Inside, the Winnebago was like a little house, with all the comforts of home, including a bathroom, a little freezer-refrigerator, an oven and a television. The mobile home made Donna’s bandbox look like a castle. Though he was just a hair shy of six feet, Dixie felt like he had to bend over inside the camper, though he really did not need to do so. “You all sleep in here?” Dixie asked curiously.

“Well, no but we could. The sofa here slides and opens up and the bed can sleep all us girls easily. But the boys sleep out in the tent. Works out better for everyone that way, see?” She grinned. “Cozy, don’t ya think?” Without waiting, she showed him around the place.

More like claustrophobic. Dixie smiled politely but said nothing.

The girl spurned all the camper’s amenities by choosing to cook some hamburger meat outside on one of the park grills. He helped her prepare the meal. She gave him the charcoal, lighter fluid and a can of beer and asked him to

heat the coals on one of the grills outside in the picnic area. The attractive hippie hustled around there pretty quickly. The girl seemed to know her way around a kitchen and, after they had moved outside, around a cookout grill, as well.

Dixie sneaked some peaks at her from behind his shades, while they cooked and drank their beers. Her lashes were incredibly long. He wondered if they were for real. Her dentures were white as snow and her eyes as brightly blue as his single blue eye. Her nose was a little long, but straight and nicely shaped. There was a bump that crossed up near the bridge as if her nose had been broken once, maybe at birth thought Dixie, as had happened with Lori Lei. Dixie believed her nose gave Moons true character and may have been her best feature, though some may have deemed it less than beautiful.

The meat was nearly cooked when the rest of her group arrived after the long hike up the winding trail. The girls huffed and puffed. The Greg guy spoke up.

“Hey, it smells good, Baby,” He reached for a roll. Moons held a long skewer fork, which she jabbed lightly into his forearm. “Ouch! Dammit Moons!”

“You fix your own. These are for me and Dixie.” She brandished the skewer and flashed her eyes, which revealed a boiling meanness that took Dixie aback. Greg hesitated, but he smirked slyly.

“Sure, Honey. No problem. But ya don’t gotta be so touchy about it, Baby.” He licked his fingertip and shot her a disparaging look. Then he backed off.

“And don’t call me that no more, Greg. You got no right, not any more!” She glared towards him still waving the long fork like a weapon. He slinked away wearing a wide, sarcastic grin. Dixie kept quiet.

Greg was supposed to be her step-brother, right? That’s what she said, right?

Moons and Dixie ate while the others bustled about preparing their meals. He scarfed down two cheeseburgers, a couple hot dogs, a dish of applesauce and another of potato salad, in record time. He had long since drained the last, golden drops of his beer. Moons didn’t eat half that much, yet he finished before she did.

“Ya know”, she admitted, “it warms a woman’s heart good when she sees a man enjoy her cookin’ like that.”

“Yeah, well your heart ought to be burnin’ up, ‘cause that was excellent. Really hit the spot.” Dix grinned as he showily smacked his hard, flat belly, producing a long, loud burp. They both laughed and Dixie excused himself.

Moons answered softly, after she had swallowed a mouthful, and eyed him soberly. Her voice lowered an octave, taking on a sultry tone.

“Oh trust me, Baby. My heart surely is burin’ up, all right. Believe me, it is.” She stared hard into his eyes.

Dix eyed her solemnly for a minute. Then he belched loudly and excused himself again, hoping to defuse the heavy atmosphere. She beamed.

“Yep. Must have been REAL goooood.” The cutie returned her attention to her meal, toasting him silently with her beer can. This girl was all right thought Dix, not getting all huffy after a simple, natural burp, as many females he knew would. And she took his cue to drop the heavy stuff and move on, and without

being told twice, either. As she ate, Dix noticed Moons' long fingernails were painted scarlet. This, he also liked. They matched her full, bright red lips.

The girl perked up when a squirrel hopped up onto the table. She rewarded the bold animal with some crumbs from her hotdog roll. The rodent took the bread between its claws and bobbed its head politely twice, as if to say "Thank you, thank you very much." Then it turned tail and hopped away with its treasure, drawing chuckles from both Dixie and Moons.

As she finished off her food, the lively girl introduced Dixie to all of her crew. They had come back out from the camper after retrieving their food to cook on the grill, also. First up was Michael, her full brother, with whom she shared her dark features and blue eyes. Next was the one called Ace with the wild, wiry, sandy brown Afro. Then there was the brash one, the step-brother, the lean, pony-tailed, brown-haired, brown-eyed, swarthy Greg, whom Dixie had already met, sort of. One of the other two girls was nondescript and a cousin of Moons, kind of mousey looking but not wholly unattractive. The other girl, a tall, slender, handsome blonde, had been Moons' college roommate at Michigan State. Like Moons, the girls wore their hair long, down to their butts and were unshaven. Hmm, reflected Dixie, in this age of Disco, this group must be the last of the hippies. But if so, that Moons is the most attractive hippie he had ever met.

During the course of their conversation, Dixie let slip that he was an amnesic, who was searching for his identity. Uncommonly talkative, he mentioned that he might be somebody by the name of Nick Sheeboom. Well, the kids dropped their utensils as well as their jaws, because they knew the name. The hippies hailed from Michigan. A couple of them, including Moons, had seen *GRT* and Nick Sheeboom, live, in a weekend concert in the fall of '71, at the Michigan State field house in East Lansing. They all attended MSU now, but at the time of the *GRT* concert, Moons was still in high school in Lansing. Moons gushed when she proclaimed that was the first and the best rock concert she had ever attended. She said she had had a big crush on Nick Sheeboom ever since.

"Crush? Mann, that was a nuclear meltdown!" laughed Mike. Moons blushed.

"That was until I came along, right Baby?" interposed Greg, grinning from ear to ear. Moons responded by rolling her eyes and screwing up her face as if she just caught a whiff of something putrid. Laura, the blonde roommate, prevented a fight by intervening to ask Dixie to sing a *GRT* tune, to see if he sounded like the famous Rock'N'Roller. The others echoed her request. Now Dixie felt his ears get hot. Embarrassed, he looked toward the ground and shook his head.

"Aw, I could never sing in front of pee-people, pe-people I da-d-didn't know."

Greg suggested triumphantly, "Then you ain't Nick Sheeboom, then. He didn't mind singin' in front of thousands of people." Dixie shrugged, nonplussed..

"Maybe n-not, but I'm g-gonna find out."

So far, they hadn't said anything about his stuttering. He told himself to relax. He told himself he would never see these people again. *So don't sweat it, Mann.* He didn't really feel much like talking with them now anyway. *With Moons,*

yeah, hell yeah! But not with the others. Then the mousey one, ran inside and returned shortly with the *Lest We Forget* album. She asked Dixie to remove his ever present sunglasses, which he did. Then she opened the album cover, exclaiming, “Oh magosh! I don’t believe it. He is Nick Sheeboom. Look!”

One by one, they inspected the inside of the album cover, as Laura placed the thin end of a black ballpoint pen over Nick’s upper lip in the picture, simulating Dixie’s moustache. Moons placed her hand over her open mouth, looking first at the album cover, then back at Dixie, then back to the cover. A respectful hush fell over all of the hippies. Suddenly, instinctively, Dixie sensed these hippies revered him, when they had all, except Moons, derided and suspected him just a short while ago. Dixie noticed the change in their demeanors, but could not figure it, because he could not relate to being a big Rock’N’Roll star. Whether he liked it or not, he was now the sole topic of conversation.

“FAR OUT!” chided Mike. “Like OUTER SPACE, FAR OUT, MANN. Yeah! Dig it! The famous Nick Sheeboom has been missing for two years and we find him up here in the middle of nowhere? Dude! That is some kind of hea-VEEE!”

In a sober tone Ace asked, “You know, I bet you’ve had a dozen top ten hits?”

“Aw BULL! GRT don’t have no dozen top ten hits!” interrupted Greg rudely.

“Well, a half dozen at least!” replied Ace assertively.

“No way, Mann!”

“Yeah Greg, they do,” added Laura. “I can count at least eight off the top of my head right now.

“And how would you know? What are you? Their accountant or somethin’?”

“Yeah Greg, or something! I’ve been following GRT for four years. They useta be my favorite group! And why the hell are you so interested, Greg?”

“What could you possibly care?” Moons inquired derisively. “You just said Dix here couldn’t possibly be Nick Sheeboom anyway. I’ve had about enough of your attitude around here. Think it’s time for you to pack up your gear and split.”

Greg glared at her and simmered, but he didn’t open his mouth. What power Moons could hold over the kid, Dixie could only guess. Dixie decided to veer the conversation casually back in the direction from which it had spawned.

“No, really, I, I didn’t know that about the hits and stuff,” replied Dixie trying hopefully to match Ace’s earlier sincerity and redirect the conversation. Dixie was talking like a champ and told himself to keep it up. All the kids had turned their attention back to him now. “However, in the last couple of days, comin’ across country, I, uh, I’ve heard all of ‘em on my tape player and some of ‘em have pretty catchy tunes, a good beat. You know? Yeah, I gotta admit, they do.”

“Some of ‘em?” The Ace shook his head, bewildered. “Mann, you gotta be a millionaire, at least!” The others concurred, shaking their heads solemnly, almost in unison, all except Greg who still simmered from Moons’ caustic chiding.

“Millionaire, hunh? Ha! Almost my entire estate is sitting right over there,” observed Dixie dryly, pointing towards his Honda. “Yassir! Practically everything I own is on that bike.”

“Gee, Dix.” observed Moons admiringly. “You talk like you like it that way.”

“Well, that’s ‘cause I do. I don’t really need much. Guess I got all I need.”

“Everything?” Moons’ tone was playfully sexy. Dixie backpedaled.

“Well, financially speaking, that is.” She grinned at him and he smiled back.

“Cool! Dig it! Baby, can you dig it?” Mike sang the old rock tune, laughing and slapping the top of the picnic table with his open hand. His jovial good nature amused Dixie. Then Moons explained that her brother Mike was feeling the effects of doing a little grass down by the stream along with the other guys. Mike opened his glassy eyes wide and grinned like a devil.

“Who? Me?” He shook his head playfully, obviously, guilty as charged.

Laura asked, dumbfounded. “And you don’t remember anything, nothing at all? You can’t play the harmonica, nothin’?”

“Well, I learned how to bugle some in the Corps,” conceded Dixie now that the climate had changed in his favor. Dixie extracted the bugle mouthpiece that he humped in his pocket. “I can blow reveille, taps, recall, etc., some of them Big Band tunes, like ‘Boogie-Woogie Bugle Boy of Company B,’ which was my company, by the way.” He smiled proudly. “I was in the Third Marines.”

No one else smiled, except Greg, who merely smirked. Apparently, mention of his amnesia distressed them or they could care less about the Third Marines.

Ace remarked, “You mean, you made all them hit songs and all you can do now is blow a couple crummy bugle calls?”

Dixie stared blankly back at him. The others seemed embarrassed for him. They avoided Dixie’s innocent gaze. He didn’t mention the few songs he had written the last couple of years. He didn’t want anyone to know about them. Slightly cowed, Dixie hid by replacing his shades over his nose.

Moons changed the subject.

“Hey, Dixie?” she asked brightly. “How ‘bout takin’ a walk with me, up the hill there? Walk off this fine meal? Know a place with a great view?” She raised her eyebrows in a beckoning fashion.

Her perky smile was genuine. Dixie considered her offer. He was about 550 miles from his destination. Even if traffic were bad, he could make Maryland probably in ten, maybe eleven, hours at worst. The sun would not set for another hour or two. He had some time to kill. And this girl was something else, a real winner. He returned the raven-haired beauty’s smile.

“Sure. Love to,” he replied. She beamed broadly his way.

“Just a minute,” she said raising a forefinger in the air and jumping down off the picnic table upon which she had been perched.

“Yeah, just a minute is right, Moons,” countered Greg.

Greg had toned down his emotions, but he was resolute nonetheless.

“You ain’t goin’ nowhere with him, not without me, you ain’t. And that’s for damned sure.”

“The hell you say. Just who do you think you are? Mister Pain-in-the-Ass!”

“You know. I’m the guy that’s, uh,” Greg smiled cynically, “related to you, kinda personal-like related, you might say. I’m the one you like to—”

“No, not no more you ain’t! Not after what you did!” Moons glared at him defiantly and started towards the camper. She ignored the others who listened with downcast eyes. She turned to Dixie and smiled, as if nothing had occurred.

“Be right with ya, Dix.”

She started to walk away but Greg moved to block her. Moons stepped around him. Again, the angry Greg cut off her path. When she began to step around him a third time, he raised his open palm as if to strike her.

“You bitch—” but before he could act or speak further, Moons’ brother Mike stepped swiftly between the two of them. Despite his weed-induced high, Mike’s jovial demeanor had been replaced with sober resolve.

“She said, ‘no more,’ Mann. That means NO MORE, unless she changes her mind, understand?” The two brothers were about Dixie’s height. Mike was a bit thicker and he had right on his side, as far as Dixie could see. Standing face to face, they stared hard at each other. There was no brotherly love here.

Moons leaned around Mike to see both his and Greg’s face.

“I don’t want him to, not no more, not ever!”

There was a Mexican standoff for the space of a minute, with each man eyeing the other distrustfully. Like bulls squaring off, they snorted heavily. Yet neither of the long hairs moved. Moons tugged on Mike’s elbow from behind.

“Thanks Mike, but I can take of myself, you know that. Come on now. We don’t need no trouble here.” Dixie stood up and spoke.

“Look! I gotta be goin’ anyway, really. I don’ wanna cause no trouble, either. That’s for sure. Honest.” He was apologetic in tone as well as in manner. Moons turned towards him with all trace of anger replaced with an inviting, sweet smile.

“Oh no. Now you Baby, YOU are an entirely different matter all together. And I definitely wanna take a hike with you, Big Boy. No, you’re not going nowhere ‘cept up the hill with me, see?” She cooed and smiled brightly. Her bright blue eyes and scarlet lips mesmerized him. He hesitated, then she spoke again.

“Just a sec Baby, I be right back.” She gave Dixie a flirtatious wink and jogged excitedly toward the camper steps. Dixie watched her go with interest as her long hair swished from side to side across her shapely butt.

“You always get what you want?” he called after her, amused.

As she mounted the steps, the coquette turned around, peeking from behind her swaying, long, raven hair. “Not always, but ... MOST always.” She threw her head back, laughing, then turned and entered the camper, swishing her fetching fanny a little more than Dixie recalled was natural to her walk. And what had been merely natural for her had been more than pleasing to him.

With long, purposeful strides, Greg followed Moons across the picnic grounds into the camper. Dixie and the others heard loud, angry voices coming from inside the RV. They looked around at each other, ashamed, trying to avoid one

another's gaze. Mike strolled over to the camper, just in case he were needed, but he did not enter.

To make conversation, Dixie asked how Molly came by the nickname of "Two Moons." The others looked at one another and giggled. Dixie chuckled involuntarily but he did not know why.

"So what's the big joke?" He asked. The girls and Ace shook their heads.

"It's her boobs, Mann," observed Ace. 'Becca the cousin, chided him.

"You don't gotta say it like that Ace! Sheesh." The mousey girl turned to Dixie. "Molly has a unique, uh, chest set, you know? She, she's got, well, like a pair of perfectly round, perfectly symmetrical full moons, you know?"

"And she always suns herself with her top on," added Laura. So she's very white like the moon. Dixie nodded.

"Oh, yes, I see. Sure, I get the picture."

"No, but if you're lucky tonight, you might," cackled the Ace. The girls shook their heads in disgust.

The RV door slammed open. Moons burst forth and the door slammed shut behind her. Undaunted, Moons descended the camper steps saucily, with her long raven hair swinging to and fro behind her back, wrapping about her slim waist as she came. The soles of her brown sandals slapped smartly against the soles of her heels. The bare-chested Greg leaned against the inner camper door frame, drinking from a can, and staring out through the camper screen door at the girl.

Now, reeking of honeysuckle scent, the black-haired cutie returned with a six-pack of Hamm's beer. A Nikon camera dangled from her wrist. She handed two of the cans to her compatriots and kept the remaining four. Then she used her camera to take a picture of Dixie as he held a can of beer in either hand.

"A two-fisted drinkin' man! That's the kind I like!" she proclaimed. The vivacious girl grinned widely, with all hint of her trouble with Greg, apparently an evaporated memory. She took a picture of "the two-fisted drinkin' man," with his hands outstretched, each wrapped a round a can of Hamm's. Then she motioned with her head and her hand, "Come on. It's this way, Baby."

Greg loomed upon the threshold of the open camper door, still scowling after her. The others watched as Dixie followed his comely, Smoky Mountain guide. They assailed a footpath behind the picnic area, heading west. Dixie was right on her tail, enjoying immensely the alluring swing of her gait. Soon, the pair picked up a hiking and horse trail headed west towards Clift Knob Ridge. After they crossed the west prong of the creek, Moons led him off the marked trail south and ascended a rocky spur for nearly twenty minutes, before she stopped. They had come upon the Appalachian Trail. Moons popped open a can of beer and drink thirstily. Dixie followed suit. Breathing heavily, she took his picture again.

Moons threw her long hair back, slurped on her beer again and asked philosophically, "Ever notice how those first few gulps of beer taste so good when you're thirsty and, after that, they don't?" Dixie swallowed his beer and

nodded. He set his beer down on the rock and did his Wolf Man Jack imitation, grabbing his throat both hands and croaked.

“You mean, ‘When you’re two-fisted, wrapped around the tonsils, squeezin’ ‘em dry, kinda thirsty?’”

She laughed heartily. She had never heard that commercial before. Dixie was having no trouble speaking around her and the other kids, whom he would probably never see again. Maybe that was why. He felt loosey-goosey. He felt fine. The beer probably didn’t hurt any either. And this girl’s pleasantly flirtatious manner sure helped a lot, as well.

“Yeah, that’s EXACTLY what I mean,” she giggled.

They sipped some more beer and finished off their respective cans. Moons set her empty down on the waist-high, rock outcropping that intruded upon the path. She suggested he do the same.

“We’ll pick ‘em up on the way back down, Baby, if we remember. Come on.”

The energetic teen jumped away and jogged up the broader, public trail, as their squirrely guest had done earlier on the picnic table. Dixie was right on her tail. The heavy hiking sent the beer right to his head. *I feel loose. I feel fine.* Up, they hiked, sometimes using their hands to help. Dixie could hear a stream running through a ravine to the east, down to his left.

The dappled evening sunlight, filtered through the treetop canopy of, beech oaks and evergreens. The light diminished as clouds began to cover the forest like a blanket over a bed. The freshly met couple climbed higher and higher up to the spine of a rocky ridge. They turned right off the Trail onto an unofficial path. As they hiked, the path narrowed and undergrowth gave way to rocks and boulders and shade trees gave way more and more to firs and straight evergreens. Fortunately, Moons had remarked that poison ivy was scarce. She stopped, as if to take her bearings. Dixie no longer heard the rushing sound of the brook. His guide turned south to crawl upward along the ridge’s spine. The unkempt path beneath their feet was fraught with criss-crossing tree roots, tiny rain-carved gullies, and lichen-covered rocks. Clouds blotted out some of the sun’s rays. They wound up the spine of the mountain, careful to ride the crest of the ridge. Dixie could hear the gurgle of the creek’s west prong again, down to his left, in a ravine, far below him. Onward and upward, he thought. But one look at the swish of her hair, swinging across her swaying, round caboose, energized him for more.

“This way.” She pointed decisively to her left.

His guide turned and climbed higher. Her fragrant honeysuckle perfume was so strong, Dixie could have followed her blindfolded.

Moons pointed to a split in the brush between a couple of trees, where they stepped through some ferns. The pair doubled back to their left and then right, always upward, seemingly forging their own path among the evergreens and ferns. They had lost the official trail some time ago. The sound of the brook faded. Suddenly, they emerged upon the top of a sheer cliff. The sun, setting below the clouds, struck them strongly in the face, forcing them to squint. The

girl scrambled up the face of a craggy, rocky outcropping about fifteen feet high, topped by a lone fir. The shapely little mountain climber laughed loudly with an unopened can of beer in one hand and her camera dangling from the other. She leaped down off the rock, out of Dixie's sight. Her laughter echoed out across the Smokies. Dix was frightened, momentarily. *Did she jump off the face of the cliff?*

Dixie followed Moons anxiously by climbing up over the last rock only to find her lying on a rock flat out on her back, snapping his photo. She was merely a few feet beneath him, giggling like a schoolgirl. Her giggles bounced up the side of the mountain. Moons was sprawled out below him about five feet, on a rock that protruded like a broad, flat, lower lip from the mountain's face. The stony lip protruded at almost a right angle to the mountain wall and was about ten feet by eight feet in size, with the shorter side projecting out away from the mountain. Beaming broadly, she winked at him. She bid him to jump down and follow her. Then she led him close to the edge of the stony lip. Dixie followed cautiously, carrying his beer.

"Holy Mackerel!" exclaimed Dixie, losing his breath when he reached the lip's rocky edge. The treetops were so far beneath him, perhaps thousands of feet. Dixie lifted his arms as if they were wings. His stomach floated away and he felt like flying after it. The open air drew him on like a magnet.

Standing on the edge of the world and about to fall off, Dixie was almost compelled against his will to fly. Instinctively, he stepped back a couple feet from the edge, when he became dizzy. Beside him, Moons grinned again.

"I felt the same way, at first, Dix. But once you get used to it, you can stand closer. Mann, it really gives you a rush. Better than sex—Well, so they say ... " She hesitated with an embarrassed 'just picked off base' look on her face and chuckled nervously. With her tongue tied, she looked down rather sheepishly then up again with a quizzical expression. "Well, that depends on your partner, I guess, doesn't it?" she asked softly. Moons hesitated again looking up from under her downcast eyelids and doe-like lashes. The girl searched Dixie's features to ascertain if he believed her. "Course, I, I wouldn't know, really," she muttered. Moons flailed her arms innocently out and then down to her sides. The camera danced in the air as the girl gesticulated in defense of her innocence. "S just what I hear, is all." Skeptical, the cute coed looked up at him. Then she blushed sweetly and smiled.

Dix nodded coolly. He wondered about this girl's sanity, considering her seeming lack of concern for the certain death that waited one step behind her.

Moons chuckled nervously. "No, I'm not crazy," she admitted.

How could she have known what he was thinking, wondered Dixie.

They stood at arm's length from one another. She pivoted backwards on the rock half a foot to take a picture of his profile. Dixie started to reach for her but stopped when she did.

"Here." Paying no attention to the drop off into oblivion a foot behind her, the adventuresome girl extended her feminine right hand toward him. He reached out

to accept it. Moons caressed his left hand tenderly, while she pulled him gently towards her and the edge of the cliff, steadily gazing into his eyes. As he slowly stepped forward, Dixie took his eyes off her raven-haired beauty to look at the miniature rocks and treetops so far beneath him. They resembled fake pieces of scenery on a Lionel train set. Both he and Moons faced toward the edge. Again, he felt that rush. The hair stood up on his arms and the back of his neck, as though he were riding fast on his Honda. His fingers and toes tingled. Once more, he felt pulled into nothingness as though he were taking flight.

Holding his hand, Moons must have felt the electrical stimulation passing between their fingertips, too, because she fairly purred. He watched as her lips parted and reddened beneath her lipstick. Her eyes widened and breathing became labored. However, Dixie purposefully tried not to pay her any overt attention, as he alternately studied the awesome scenery beneath him and next to him as well. Even so, the stimulating sensation emanating from her fingertips excited him, even against his will. It was as if she used the setting to will her electric passion into him. It was darned strange, darned strange, indeed!

Dixie attempted to concentrate on the view and on how close he was to the edge. Beneath the clouds on the western horizon, the partly cloudy sky began to assume a kaleidoscope of colors. Little more than a foot from oblivion, he still felt like flying. He and Moons must have been over three thousand feet in elevation. Amazingly, there was no fog this evening in the northwestern Smoky's and they could see for miles. Mountains cupped around them both to their north and south. But to the west, the rocky terrain dropped precipitously perhaps a thousand feet or more, enabling them to see over forest covered hills to the flat land out towards the horizon. They could see green and gold cookie cutter farm tracts in an irregular checkerboard setting. In the distance, rays from the setting sun glinted off metal objects like cars, silos and such.

Dixie felt as if he were king of all he surveyed. As he swallowed his heart back down into his chest, he became increasingly aware of his arousal and the steady current of electricity passing between their fingertips. He turned to the girl beside him who took that as a signal to embrace him. With a can of beer still in one hand, and without warning, she kissed him ardently. One false movement and they would have descended into the abyss. However, Dixie's fear of falling only heightened his sense of arousal in her arms, in the heat of her wet kiss. That kiss lasted long, exciting both of them with neither one willing to break it off. When they did, it was spontaneous and mutual.

She led him back a few feet towards the mountain wall, which formed a headboard with the bed that was the flat lip of the protruding rock upon which they stood. They set their beers down against the wall. Dixie's heart pounded within his chest, now as much from his flirtation with Moons as from their mutual flirtation with oblivion, perhaps more. After his earlier, icy cold dip, he figured now there was more than one way to get a heart pounding rush in the Smokies. The young rock climbers sat down with their backs up against the

mountainside to watch the sunset. They held hands but did not speak. The sun slipped below the cloud cover in the western sky, low enough to bother their vision. Moons used her left hand to shield her eyes from the sun's direct rays. Dixie offered her his special wraparound prescription sunglasses. She declined.

Dixie was trying to figure out why he was getting involved with this girl, when his new wife, his new life, supposedly, was just a few hours bike ride away. Was it really or was it just another illusion, like the silhouette girl? Like Rose Rosario? Like Donna and the boys? Did he really have a wife waiting to love him? Although he had never had any trouble attracting members of the opposite sex, he also did not go out on women he was seeing, whether it was Rose Rosario, Lori Lei or Donna. And he had had plenty of chances to do so. What was he doing here now? Of course, he did not know this alleged wife of his or whether she truly wanted him. And sure, this girl beside him was attractive, warm and outgoing, and really knew how to get his blood up. And sure, he felt so comfortable just being around her, but ... Could she be the silhouette girl?

When the red-orange sun hung just above the horizon, the two new friends rose up to walk back to the edge of the rock's lip. Again, the bold Moons led the way. She was brave enough to sit on the rock and dangle her feet over the brim, kicking them to and fro languidly, over a three thousand foot precipice. Moons placed her hands behind her and leaned back on her open palms. She was downright blasé about her rocky perch high above the Smokies. Dixie admired her. Sans sunglasses, she squinted and alternately used one hand or the other to shield her eyes from the sun's glare, supporting herself against the rock with her free hand. Neither spoke. They let nature speak for them and it was shouting glorious volumes, in full, natural color.

Again Dixie offered his shades to her, but, again, she politely declined them. Stubborn, he thought, but he admired her for it. Dixie sat to the side and a little behind the adventurous girl. Shortly, the sun had sunk low enough just above the horizon that the ozone provided a natural shield for their eyes. Dixie swiveled around on his rear end and then lowered himself down onto his belly. He crawled up to the rocky lip's edge, where he stuck his head out over the rock and into the twilight mountain air. Now, like a turtle, Dixie poked his head carefully out of his shell, hanging it over the precipice. She laughed at him, but, all the same, the Michigan Moll pushed herself back from the edge and swung her legs back around, to lay beside him in like manner. They folded their arms with their forearms flat against the stony surface, elbows at right angles to their chins and one hand over the back of the other, resting their chins between their knuckles. The pair lay like that, side by side, touching elbows, as they watched the sun melt away before them, leaving in its wake a glorious, colorful panorama.

When that naturally awesome display had ended, Dixie scooted back on the flat rock a little. Thus, he could roll over onto his back and rest his head upon the stone, without having his head dangle a few thousand feet up in the air. Moons turned and snapped another candid shot of him with her ever present camera, this

time with the flash on. Dixie admired her as she resumed her appreciative stare out into what was left of the afterglow of the glorious sunset.

“What are you gonna do with them pictures, Moons?”

“Put ‘em in a album” she replied pertly, as she turned her head back to him. Call it ‘My Summer Adventure – 1975!’” She pretended to block the title out on an imaginary theatre marquee. Dixie grunted, grinned and looked up at the sky.

“Yeah, women are good at that, creating photograph albums, I guess.” He was thinking of Donna and the pictures she had given to him. Moons scooted back alongside of the prone Dixie.

“We’re really very lucky, no fog right now. Blue fog—that’s why they call ‘em the Great Smokies, ya know? Sure was a beautiful sight though. Ya know, it’s gonna be tough gettin’ back now, Dix, without the sunlight, I mean.” Her speech slowed, assuming a somber tone as she eyed him suspiciously out of the corners of her bright eyes. “We, uh, we won’t be able to see where we’re going, now. Guess we’ll have to spend the night, uh, right here on this rock,” she remarked slyly, arching one eyebrow. Dixie glanced casually over his shoulder at her and shrugged. Then he returned his attention skyward.

“Wouldn’t worry about that,” replied Dixie cavalierly. “I can see in the dark.”

“Bull!” she snorted. “Nobody can see in the dark!” She turned in mock anger into him, resting upon her left forearm and elbow with her long, black hair tumbling down onto the rock beside him.

Dixie remembered what Big Jim had told him, so he thought he would pull the joke on her. He extended his hand to her and said, “Well, in that case, I’m glad to meet ya ‘cause my name is Nobody.”

She looked at him skeptically, but rolled over to him, taking his hand firmly in her own. Dixie felt an electric current tickle within in their grasp. Moons must have felt it as well. Suddenly, she scrambled upon him, removing his sunglasses and, in one continuous, swift motion, kissed him wildly this time. Eventually, the amorous girl enticed him to hug her tightly, just so he could get a break by pulling her head down next to his cheek and catch a breath of air. Their hearts were pounding out of their chests. Her heartbeat hammered as vigorously as his own. Dixie could also feel that he was strongly aroused. This girl kissed passionately, hotly. She did not hold back that was for sure. Dixie thought he should redirect things or he might not be able to control himself. This little co-ed was truly something else!

“Hey, you know what?”

“No, what?” Moons was ready to play.

“I can see those two beers we humped up here settin’ back there by the wall. Don’t know about you, but I’m kinda thirsty.”

“Yeah, that’s a good idea, Dix. I’ll get ‘em. Say wait a minute. I can see them cans, too. If that’s what you mean by night vision, we better stay right here.”

“HA! No that’s not what I mean. Besides, I didn’t say my vision was great at night, no, not at all like during the day. It’s just better than most people’s that’s

all. And my eyes get use to the dark faster than most, like in five minutes. Also, these dark glasses I got are special-made. They actually help me see in the dark.”

“Oh, Bull spit!” she exclaimed in frank disbelief. “Who do ya think you’re talkin’ to here? You think I was born yesterday?”

Dixie grinned like a devil. “Well, if you were, you sure been takin’ some kinda vitamins!” He shook his head in feigned wonderment, as he whistled at her. She chuckled, accepting his compliment gracefully.

“Same kind of vitamins that are in your glasses there, I’ll bet.” Grinning, Moons nodded towards his shades.

“Maybe. I dunno what’s in these glasses. But they make ya produce something called rhodopsin in your eye, gives ya “vision purple.” Ya see better in the dark.”

“Rhododendrons? Shoot! My mom’s got them growin’ in the side yard and we passed some on the way up. Suppose if I sniff ‘em enough, I can see at night, too, hunh? See purple, like you. Ya think?”“ Her speech dripped with sarcasm.

“Ha! Ha! Yeah, well maybe. I dunno about that. One thing I do know, Moons. Still am hankering after one of them brews over there.” Dixie rolled his eyes towards the mountain wall.

She rose off him and quickly retrieved the beers. The cute co-ed handed him one of the beer cans, as he sat up to receive it. He thanked her and she sat down next to his left hip, facing him. Flinging her head to one side, her long, shiny straight, raven hair flipped back over her shoulder out of her face. When she popped the top on her beer can, the contents fizzed up, spilling over her red and orange swimsuit top. The girl raised the can over her head, then tilted back her black tresses. Moons eyed him while she caught the foamy overflow that drained down the side of the can into her open mouth. She half joked, he was welcome to lap up the brew that had spilled onto her chest. He shook his head in jest.

Dixie held his beer off to his right as he opened it away from her, to avoid the overflow, allowing it to splatter on the rock beside him.

“Got plenty right here, but thanks jes’ the same. Here’s lookin’ at you, kid!” Dixie faced the girl and hoisted his can towards her.

“And the same to you, Dixie!” The girl smiled broadly and drank as he did. “Umm. This one’s a little warm, but it still tastes pretty dammed good, too. Once you get past the foam to the real stuff. Ain’t that always the way?”

“Yeah! Sure does taste good,” he agreed smacking his lips.

They drank some more. Moons became serious.

“Dixie, you sure you don’t remember anything at all? I mean NOTHIN’?” Cocking her brows and dropping her chin, Moons acted out her astonishment.

Dix took another long swig from the can and lay back down placing his right hand under his head to cushion it from the stony surface. He nestled a little closer to her to avoid laying in the spilt beer to his right. Moons sat sidesaddle upon the rock on her left side, leaning against his left side, facing him and the edge of the rocky lip. The girl leaned across his body propping herself on her left hand, resting her weight upon the flat rock next to the right side of his chest, waiting on

his response. They both held their beer cans on their exposed hips. Moons waited patiently for his response. The cool of the evening was beginning to descend upon them as the dying embers of the colorful sunset faded out. Dixie felt great!

The girl's request was sincere. He probably would never see her again and he liked her. She was genuine, fresh, unaffected. He would respond in like manner.

"Well ... there is one thing, but I don't know if it's a memory or something I made up. Least, that's what the shrinks think." He grew silently pensive.

Gently, she asked, "Well, would you mind telling me?" She peeked plaintively into his eyes.

Dixie looked at her in the dusk of the day. Her perfectly oval face was lined by straight, coarse black hair. Her longish, lovely visage was sculpted ideally with high cheekbones, fleshy, tanned cheeks, and a narrow, oval, cleft chin. Her scarlet lips, which he had already tasted, were lusciously inviting. The symmetrical lines of her eyes and mouth triggered a memory. He was thinking of the silhouette girl of whom Moons reminded him so closely. Dixie did not see any harm in telling her, though he had told no one else besides the doctors, not even Donna. And this girl was easy to talk to. He didn't think that he would ever see her again. He raised his head to sip on his beer, before lowering it back down. He checked her out again. Her question was guileless.

"OK, I guess", but once more he hesitated.

The girl gulped her beer. Then she leaned over him, smiling and nudging her half empty beer can into his arm.

"Well, go ahead, silly. I'm listenin'." She grinned quiet encouragement towards him. Her gentleness induced him to continue.

"Well, the thing of it is." Sighing deeply, Dixie hesitated before he looked her way, where he observed tender patience fill her face. "OK. OK. Well, there's this picture, see? This image of a silhouette ... of a girl, actually. She's a beautiful, nude girl, profiled darkly against the moonlight. Yeah, silhouetted against the moon, but shrouded in mist, she is." Dixie warmed to his subject. He found a relief in the telling of his secret. He felt himself glow.

"Yeah, her hair is long, dark and thick, like yours, but dripping wet, like she just came out of a pool, ya know?" Dixie paused and received the encouraging nod he expected. "Well, she's beautiful, just awesome, like the first woman Eve must have looked. Or maybe, maybe even like a goddess, with long, straight dark hair. And the mist is settling in all around her, see?" He felt both his eyes and smile widen as he recalled the romantic vision. Moons smiled, too.

Dixie paused to let the recollection soak in. Moons drank her beer as he spoke. Her eyes lit up with his. He could see that she was tracking right with him.

"What color are her eyes? Blue?" Moons asked hopefully.

"No. Well, I dunno. I can't see her eyes 'cause of the mist, ya know? The mist is like a mask over her eyes."

"Oh, so they could be blue?" asserted Moons cheerily.

Smoky Mountain Moons Surprise

He admitted sheepishly, "Could be, I suppose. Actually, she does look a lot like you, Moons, a lot like you. But there's no moon out tonight, is there?"

"Well, there may be," she admitted. "I don't know, but if there is, it's coming up on the other side of the mountain. Won't know for sure until later, provided there ain't no fog."

Dixie nodded, "I guess."

She grinned. The girl drained her beer. Then she set the can down on the rock, looking directly into his eyes, totally absorbed in him. "Maybe, I am that silhouette girl. Ya think?" Once more, she grinned hopefully in Dixie's direction.

"Nah, I don't think so, Moons," declaimed Dixie with an embarrassed, negative shake of his head. "Like I said, and you agreed, there's no moon out tonight."

"Yeah? Suppose I could produce a moon for you, maybe even two of 'em?"

Dixie became wary. "Well now, then there! Guess it don't take much beer to get you goin'. Nobody can produce a moon, let alone two."

She chuckled. "Oh, really? Well, I'm enjoyin' the beer all right, Honey, but hey! Glad to meet ya, 'cause my name is 'Nobody.'" She giggled and extended her hand to shake his, just as he had done earlier to her, but he feigned taking it and chuckled.

"Whaddaya talkin' about?"

"Well, catch this! Ya know, they don't call me 'Two Moons' for nothin'."

"Whaddaya mean?"

Dixie sat up a bit to rest upon his elbow. She had his interest.

Moons sat back a little to balance herself while she reached behind her with both hands.

"Whoa! Hold it right there woman!"

"What?" She looked up bewildered.

"I believe ya."

"You believe what?"

"That you got two moons. I believe ya."

"How do you know that?"

"They told me, down below."

"Well, Sugar, you know seeing is believing." The coquette grinned like a vixen, reached behind her and leaned forward with her long, raven black hair falling down around both him and her. Dixie scooted over and pinned her arms to her sides, spilling some beer, while the straps to her colorful swim top tumbled down her arms and upon him, as well. He set down his beer and took hold of her bra straps and fastened them together again. Then he picked up his beer and scooted back to his spot. Moons sat up, seductively raising herself erect. She brushed her long dark locks behind her shoulders, out of the way of his view.

"That was very gallant of you Dixie, but why did you do it?" Her voice lowered an octave from disappointment. Her countenance had fallen. She folded her arms across her chest beneath her two moons, clutching herself tightly in a defensive posture.

“Well Molly, because I don’t know you well enough, for one thing. And because I have faith, Baby, and faith is believing without seeing, see?”

“Hmm. I wouldn’t know about that. Do know I was *tryin’* to let you know me.”

“Umm, too much too soon. But why’d you say that about faith? Like to hear.”

“You would hunh? Well, let’s just say I don’t know ya well enough.” She smirked. “Shouldn’t bother ya any, though. Cuz you got belief without hearing, don’t ya?” She turned her head slightly and arched her eyebrow.

Dixie let out a deep sigh. She was pissed because he had turned her down.

“Looook, Molly. I think you are great. I mean really GEAT, GREAT! But ...”

She lowered her arms down around her knees and leaned forward. “Yes?”

“Well, I don’t know exactly, but its not you. It’s me. But I feel certain you have the most beautifully round pair of moons in existence, but I, I ...”

The bewildered look on her face told Dixie he wasn’t reaching her. Then, for some reason he did something he failed to understand himself. He set down his beer and beckoned her to him. She smiled with joy. Suddenly aggressive, the girl seized the moment of his weakness to fall upon him. The pair of lovers romanced a bit with Dixie, feeling temporarily like “the man in the moons.”

The girl gasped. Her honeysuckle scent overwhelmed him, just as the rapidly cooling Smoky Mountain night air invigorated both of them, raising goose bumps on each. Dixie’s baseball inner shirt was worn thin, as were his favorite pair of cords. Moons took advantage by slowly but vigorously stroking him repeatedly from shoulder to knee cap. She seemed to have more hands than an octopus. And her scarlet lips never stopped sampling his own. Although Dixie did not permit himself to be carried away completely by her moonlit charms, his breathing became labored, as did her’s. The Voice from within had not sounded and he did not want to recall it to mind right now. Things got downright steamy.

Dixie abruptly caught hold of himself when, for some unknown reason, he recalled the purpose of his journey. He retarded his lovemaking and his heavy breathing subsided. Moons followed his lead and backed off a bit herself. She peered at him with a look of pleased, starry-eyed astonishment. Eventually, the devilish light in her eye warned him that his prudish behavior would not deter her long.

During this break in the action, Dixie drew out a Lucky Strike from the pack in his pants pocket and lit up. He thought perhaps the smoke break would cool those full moons off a little. *Not likely.*

“You really know how to kiss a girl, Dix, but that don’t entitle you to be rude.”

“Rude, how was I rude? I thought I was pretty darned polite. After all, I was just followin’ your lead.” Right when he thought that he had resolved their little difference, she had resorted to scolding him.

“Oh Baby, you done fine with the turtledovin’. Really all riiight!” She smiled beneficently, calming his fears and reached over and down to stroke his cheek gently, as the last afterglow of the sunset dissolved into the dark of night. “Super fine, as a matter of fact, Honey.” She grinned flirtatiously at him. “But I’m

talkin' about the cigarette, there. You know, that's not very polite of you at all, Nick, er, Dixie. It's kind of a turn off, really. Aren't you gonna offer me one?" She acted hurt. Dixie caught on to her play and he followed suit.

"No, I'm not. I figure it was most polite of me." Dixie affected an air of mock superiority by turning his nose up away from her. She played along.

"Oh, is that so? Just how do you figure that?"

"Well, these things are bad for ya Moons, especially, these unfiltered Luckies. Seems to me I was doin' ya a big, big favor. Ain't there some kinda connection between smokin' and breast cancer? You wouldn't like for the light of them two lovely, full moons of yours to go dark, now would ya?"

She shook her head in feigned disgust, but he persisted.

"Yeah, I'm just lookin' out for your breast, I mean, uh, your best, interests, kinda like. See?" He giggled at his honest slip of the tongue. The sun's afterglow had disappeared completely now. Cool mountain air again raised goose bumps.

Moons answered by seductively smiling and reaching across him to wrap two slender fingers tenderly around the nail. Then she slowly withdrew the smoking butt from between his fingers, charming him with her bright blue eyes. The girl dragged deeply on the cigarette. She held the powerful Lucky Strike smoke in her lungs until Dixie thought she would pop. Belatedly, the young seductress exhaled through her long nostrils, never once taking her eyes off him. Moons studied him acutely for his response. Something about her actions was darned enticing. He had seen Donna do that with the same effect, but she had smoked those mild, filtered Virginia Slims. Dixie felt like a hypocrite. Embarrassed, he looked down away from the girl, before he spoke.

"Smokin' is a bad habit. I guess. I, I got started on it in the service," he explained without any prompting from her. "The only work breaks the platoon sergeant gave us was 'smoke' breaks. So ... " Dixie nodded, shrugged, and smirked acquiescently. Embarrassed, he turned his face from her. "But I ain't proud of it, now. Not for a minute, I ain't!"

"Hey! That's all right, Su-gar!" Her soft, casual alto was that of a long time lover's and brought his gaze right back around to hers. "You don't need to explain to me, Dix. I'm on your side, Baby." She winked and reached over to stroke his cheek again with her free hand. "But just for your information, the link is to lung cancer Honey, not breast cancer. And men get lung cancer same as women." She lowered her chin to her chest and looked up at him through bright blue, I-told-ya-so eyes that were veiled by her long, black lashes.

"Oh well, yeah, yeah, guess you're right about that," responded Dixie lacking his usual cool. She nodded and he nodded back. "Say though? Kinda looks like you might have done that before, hey?"

"No! Ya think?" She sucked on the nail again, with similar results, proving to him the first was no fluke. "Those first couple drags are kind of like," she paused to blow the smoke out through her nostrils again, "like those first couple sips of

beer, real good. Ya know? I mean, umm, they just hit the spot, just right.” Again, her seductive actions had the same enticing effect upon him.

“Yeah, I know ... Look ... Moons, I, I’m sorry. I mean, believe it or not, I was genuinely looking out for your best interests.”

She dragged once more, as before, on the cigarette, only this time she blew a large smoke ring at him and grinned. She slid the Lucky back between his parted lips as the smoke ring broke against his cheek. Now Dix dragged deeply, in turn.

“I know, Baby. I was just playin’ with ya,” answered Moons coyly. Again, she grinned like a vixen. “Kind of turns me on when a man is ‘genuinely looking out for [my] breast, I mean [cough, cough] best, interests—both of ’em.” She smiled playfully at him, reached one hand behind her back and leaned toward him.

“Gee Molly, don’t ya think you’re awful young for ... for all of this, this stuff, hunh?” Dix motioned his hand rolling it over and over in the air away from him.

Then, boom! As if by magic, even before he could exhale fully, her hot mouth was upon his lips.

Damn! That’s one persuasive rebuttal.

Molly Two Moons fell across Dixie’s body into his right arm. She pushed him down onto his back against the uncomfortably hard rock. Then, sitting astride him, she raised up almost erect, to tower over him with her back slightly arched. The vivacious, blue-eyed teen hovered above him for a few brief seconds. From the lusty look of mastery in her eye, Dixie could tell she seemed to enjoy having him at her apparent mercy. The precocious, teen ogled her prey with manifest pleasure. Her long, dense tresses permitted Dixie only sporadic glimpses of the crescent moons offered by her gaudy top. Placing her weight on her knees and toes, Moons began to roll over him backwards, gently but fluidly. Sliding heavily over his stomach, the girl inched her way down to his lap. There, resting upon her forelegs and the tops of her feet, she hovered, fluttering over him, like a helicopter over a landing zone. Her honeysuckle scent assaulted his senses anew.

The young temptress eyeballed Dixie hard, sucking him right into her will. She stared hungrily at him. She appeared to be a dark-haired Lady Godiva, which made him what? A Peeping Tom? He blinked twice and shuddered at that revelation. Besides, this Moons was no lady. She behaved more like a saucy tavern wench, dancing languorously over his lap. Meanwhile, her hands rested innocently upon her thighs. Dixie responded involuntarily to her fluid motions.

Obviously, Miss Molly Two Moons was performing for his pleasure, proving that she was old enough “for, for all of this stuff,” just as she had proven her point with her smoking exhibition. The girl was trying to seduce him and she was succeeding—*Big Time*. Her scarlet lips parted seductively, yet, she never looked anywhere but into his eyes. Dixie tried but failed to hold her stare, as his leering gaze drifted uncontrollably southward.

The girl watched with glee as Dixie’s mouth fell open. Her eyes widened with excitement.

“What is it, Baby?” she asked coyly.

“Well, I, I guess, I never quite understood before how the moon causes the tide to rise. But, uh, I think, I’ve just gained some new perspective on the matter.” He chuckled shyly. Moons laughed.

“Yeah, they do seem to have that effect, now don’t they? Ha! Now Big Boy, it’s time to get down to some serious foolin’ around.”

No sooner had she spoken than the girl again threw her long raven hair back over her tanned shoulders and dived down into him again. Miss Molly Two Moons located her target with the precision of a dive bomber, kissing her lover’s lips even more passionately than before. Dixie had not thought that to be possible. He hugged Moons’ behind with his left hand and crushed out his cigarette butt on the rock with his right. He flicked the cigarette away by remote control, while she poured out her passion upon him.

Dixie had wondered earlier if she really could be the silhouette girl. Her name, her looks, her hair, maybe, just maybe ... But no, there was something that was not right. Where was the water in the background? Moreover, he was sure the full moon he saw in his image was truly a moon, not some kind of symbolic reference to her name or her namesakes, as lunar-lovely as they were. However, the way she romanced him, he wasn’t so sure. He thought that perhaps he should proceed with his investigation. Dixie gasped for air so that he wouldn’t drown in this amorous co-ed’s sweet-tasting mouth.

“You sure are easy to be with, Moons,” he marveled.

Moons beamed down at him, obviously basking in his approval.

He added. “Like fine brandy, you go down smooth ... real smooth.” The girl’s beam broadened ever wider.

“So do you, Nick—I mean, uh, Dixie, so do you, Honey. And I really like that black ‘stache. It’s uh, most becoming, yes, most becoming. A real turn on, too!” She smiled cutely and came to him again.

Nearly a quarter of an hour passed that proved to be pleasantly frustrating for both of them. Then, as Moons shifted her weight out over him, Dixie noticed her electric blue eyes enlarge with illumination. Moons caught her breath. He studied her kissably fine lips. He scanned her becoming, longish nose with the shallow bump across the upper bridge. Dixie found her to be irresistibly attractive. The girl raised her head up slightly and gasped. Their hormones must have matched.

“Gee Honey, guess you can work other magic in the dark besides that night vision stuff.”

“Why? What do you mean?”

“Well, HA! You seem to have been taking some kinda vitamins yourself, uh, since you stumbled out of that creek a while ago, I mean. You just turn me out!”

Moons redoubled her amorous efforts with renewed zest, beating down Dixie’s resolve. The girl’s eager hands fumbled with the button to his beltless cords. She accomplished her objective, before Dixie seized her forearms so that the crooks of his thumbs encircled the outsides of her wrists. He overpowered her, forcing

their arms out and away from them. Their eyes locked. They froze in a moment of truth. Fire crackled through his grips on her.

What the hell! He caved.

But just then, at the most inopportune time, that small but quiet Voice from within calmly posed those evenly spaced words that stopped him cold—AGAIN:

“What ... about ... your wife?”

That singular question rocked him like the recoil from a big gun firing within his heart. Dixie’s internal bugle sounded retreat. He obeyed the call. But it sure was going to spoil his fun.

Dammit! But that’s right, I do have a wife ... don’t I? I clean forgot. Shoot!

Dixie stalled and murmured “My wife!” Moons halted her loving briefly.

“What? What was that Honey?”

“Well, now, then, there Miss Molly Two Moons! Well ... You sure can kiss! That’s for darned sure. And your namesakes do you proud. Yessirree! They most certainly do.” Dixie pushed her off him a bit to gain some space, some air, and some respite from blowing his stack. He fumbled for his pants button and attempted to reseal it. He noticed he had begun to sweat. His face felt beet red hot. “But you know, Sweetie, I’ve stayed much longer than I had in mind Baby, so I, I’m afraid ... I better be, I better be goin’ now.” He choked on his own words and looked up to her rather ashamed, while he pushed her hand away to button up his pants.

Astonished, Moons sat back, which afforded him the opportunity to sit up fully. He laid her aside gently, as though she were a helpless, baby doll. The sudden relief he felt on his backside was overwhelming. That rock was a pain!

“You’ve got to be kiddin’!” Moons sat up completely shocked in perfect posture, with her two round moons heaving seductively before his face, showering their unique brand of moonbeams upon him. “You can’t be serious!” Moons was unrelenting. She turned into him, throwing her right leg over his left. Dixie turned away a bit, in a vain attempt to ignore her.

“No Baby, ‘fraid I am, but I wish, I wish I weren’t, really I do. Ya know this rock ain’t getting’ any easier on my backside and—” Moons turned him toward her. A look of genuine concern suddenly overcame her lovely, surprised face.

“Oh Babeee, my poor Babeee! Oh, I’m so sorry, Honey. Why didn’t you say something before? Here, let me fix it for ya. Here ya go, Honey.” Gladly, she rolled away from him to lay with her back to the rock. “Here Baby, let’s switch. I like it this way just as much, maybe better.” Once more, she grinned impishly with her arms outstretched toward him. Dixie raised both hands in protest.

“No, no, Moons, you don’t understand. It’s OK, really, it is. But I really do have to get going now.”

“Now? But it’s dark and foggy. And them rocks are slippery. You can’t go. NOT NOW!” She leaned up on her elbows and forearms, half reclined, pleading. “Besides, we haven’t ... why, we haven’t finished what we started,” she cried,

indignantly. She was right on both counts. The night fog had begun to creep in over them and they hadn't finished what they had started.

"How's that?" asked Dixie, playing dumb.

"You know darn well we haven't ... haven't ... well, you know, consummated our love, Honey." She spoke the last words softly, in a plaintive tone. Dixie looked hard at her to verify she wasn't kidding. She wasn't.

Love? Was this love?

"Dammit, Dixie. I feel, I dunno ... sort of ... well, INCOMPLETE!"

She sat up in frustration and smacked her hands down, flat against the rock. Her eyes flared. Her tone was peevish. Clearly baffled and deeply frustrated, she bellowed "CRAP!" in disgust and the mountainside echoed her frustration.

He looked sideways at her, as he was half turned around towards her. Hadn't she guilelessly mentioned something earlier, about being innocent in such matters? Dixie assumed a knowing manner.

"Well, that's OK Honey, because consummation is all in the mind anyway."

Dixie's meager attempt to placate the jilted girl failed abjectly.

"The HELL it is!" Her eyes flashed angrily. She sat up abruptly and threw her arms about her knees. Moons grasped each elbow with the opposite hand, inadvertently concealing her two moons in the process. Chagrined, Dixie replied in a mollified tone.

"Well, some of it is anyway, Baby, as much as you let it be, I guess—Say! I thought you said you were a virgin?"

"A what? Ha! Don't think that word ever crossed my lips!"

"Well, maybe not, but you sure implied—" Moons ignored this line of talk, cutting him off.

"You know the problem with you Honey, is: You THINK TOO DAMNED MUCH! You gotta FEEL MORE DIXIE and THINK LESS! And it seemed like you was feelin' real good a minute ago, when you was feelin' me and I, uh, I was feelin' you. And you know, Baby, you know I was feelin' the same as you were. You know I was!" She shot the last words at his eyes, daringly.

"Well, maybe so, maybe so. But all I know is I ... I, I just can't do it now."

He lied. "Come on Moons, you're a big girl. You can put two and two together. You know, you saw how I was all shot up down at the creek ... Yeah, just can't make it, I guess. I'm sorry, Baby." Dixie shrugged his shoulders and turned away as if he were embarrassed. "That's all there is to it, I, I guess. Nothin' personal, Baby. Trust me." He lied a lie that had bailed him out in similar, past situations. He was afraid to tell her the real reason. Besides, what was a little lie when he knew he was unlikely ever to see her again?

But the lie brought the astute girl quickly off her butt, up onto her knees, right next to him. She shook her hair behind her shoulders. With her arms akimbo, her two moons appeared to shower sparks brilliantly upon him from, shooting out from all around round her red and yellow bra top. Her frowning facial expression, as well as her defiant body language, revealed that she was both

incensed as well as insulted now. The night chill drew her ample bust taut, giving rise again to goose pimples. Dixie tried not to stare, but that was easier said than done, so he looked past her.

“Oh that’s a crock of BULL, Dixie. And you know it!” She clapped her hands together sharply, next to his ear, producing a sharp cracking echo off the mountainside, which demanded that he turn around to look directly at her. She did not pause to appreciate the echo. “Don’t ever try to tell me that you CAN’T. I KNOW BETTER! Hell! Right now, you’re no different than this damned stone!” She leaned forward on her knees, her pitch black, long hair falling about her, and, with the open palms of both hands, sharply slapped the granite rock surface beneath her. Again, an echo reverberated off the mountain walls. “SHEEESH! S’pose next you’ll be tellin’ me the damn rock’s been takin’ the same vitamins as you.”

Dixie felt his cheeks flush hotly and he dropped his head in shame. She had him pegged right. This naive girl was not so innocent and not such a girl either.

Looking like a dark Lady Godiva again with her dense, raven locks concealing her lunar orbs and unconscious of her black underarm hair, she raised her arms, stretching her feminine limbs out to him, hoping to lure him back into her web of romance. Dixie turned to her, balancing on one knee. *Damn!* She was some kinda tempting. Taking hold of her smaller, feminine hands in his maimed, calloused paws, he pushed himself off the rock with his right foot and left knee to stand erect, pulling her up with him, in one fluid motion. The girl seemed to recognize she was losing him, so she dropped her defiant front as quickly as she had assumed it. Then, Dixie confessed tenderly and stroked her cheek softly.

“Really Baby, I gotta go.”

“Gotta go?” she repeated, incredulous. “Well, DAMMIT DIXIE! I GOTTA GO, TOO!” She stomped her foot and simultaneously slapped the sides of her curvy hips hard, causing her two moons to jiggle in their orbits, beneath their dark cloud covering. “But at least I can hold it for a while longer, FOR CRYIN’ OUT LOUD!” She hinted at a smile and Dixie chuckled.

“No, I mean I gotta leave, gotta go find that wife of mine, remember?”

“But Dixie, what she don’t know—hey! You know that old song, “Love the One You’re With?” Moons rose up on the balls of her feet, with her countenance hopefully expectant.

The anthem of a generation? How could I not know that? But he played dumb for her anyway. “Gee, I can’t quite remember it. I got amnesia, ya know? Can ya hum it for me?” Dixie looked suspiciously at her to see if she believed him.

Moons realized he was joking and pushed him lightly.

“That ain’t funny, Dix.”

“No, I suppose not. Well, let me put it this way.” Dixie suddenly became serious. “Suppose you were to switch places with her, right now, this minute? Switch places with this so called wife of mine? You know, this Ryzanna

Sheeboom? How would you feel about it, then?” Her mouth dropped open with delightful surprise.

“Are you crazy? You mean, if I could trade places with her? Right now? I’d probably just be the happiest woman on the face of the earth, that’s all. And we wouldn’t be arguin’ like this. We’d be down there bangin’ a hole in this rock the size of a tunnel.” Dixie saw that she was dead serious.

“And it would be OK by you then, if YOU were in Maryland and if she and I, you know, were here on this rock together, and we—and you wouldn’t know of course because what you wouldn’t know wouldn’t hurt ya? And ...” He peered hard into her lovely electric, blue eyes. It appeared as though the electricity was fading out slowly somewhere behind them. It was enough.

The girl sighed and looked down, pouting, defeated and embarrassed now. “I, I suppose you’re right,” she mumbled. She rocked back upon her heels. Her head sagged. Her two firm moons however did not.

Dixie crooked his right forefinger, cupping it under her chin and lifted her face up towards him, but her gaze remained downcast.

“Looooook, Molly.” No response. “Mol-leeeee?” Dixie pleaded in a high pitch. “Look at me, Baby.” Slowly, she raised her pouting, suddenly not so bright blue, eyes to meet his.

“Molly, you know lovely one, if things were different, there’s absolutely nothing else in this world I’d rather do more, than to stay right here and romance you ‘til the sun comes up, in spite of that darned, hard rock. Absolutely nothing! And you’re right. I am capable of it. I lied. But believe me, Honey. There’s nothing else I’d rather ...” Dixie eyed her wistfully, but now she wouldn’t meet his gaze. “You do believe me, don’t ya, Molly?”

An innocently sincere look of begrudging acceptance stole over her face, assuring him that she did. He felt his soft, equally sincere but tender tone had pierced her to the marrow of her being. Yes, he knew she believed him. Dixie thought he detected a joyful sorrow in her eyes as Moons rose up on her toes. She slid her arms under his armpits, wrapping them around his back and shoulders. Claspng her fingers together up, against the base of his neck, Moons buried her head into his chest with her ear next to his heart and her two moons squashed between their two bodies. Dixie’s poised external demeanor, could not conceal the frenetic locomotion of his heartbeat. He felt her heart, too, like his, pounding as it had earlier in the cold mountain stream, as though it would have burst through his chest. They stood together like that for a good five minutes without speaking, just rocking back an forth. Dixie embraced her tightly. Her two moons squished into him. Her back bore the night chill and was cold to his touch. He rubbed her back firmly, with both hands in unison in long pogo-jumping-like strokes. Through his thin, baseball inner shirt, he felt her taught nipples relax against his lower ribs. Moons purred and burrowed her face into him as if to burrow herself into his racing heart. The pounding of his heart and the warmth

afforded her from his strong embrace must have assuaged her flagging resolve, because finally, she spoke softly, very softly.

“I, I suppose you’re right, Honey.”

He had pegged her right. There was more to her than beauty and personality. She had character, true character which was reflected in that unusual nose of hers. She wasn’t just some bimbo. The strength of character and charity she had displayed to him down at the creek was confirmed now in the denial of her desire for him, despite the ripe circumstances. He understood she wanted him as much as he wanted her, maybe more. They held each other a while longer in silence. Dixie massaged her back to warm her and Moons purred once more. The fog thickened. The rocks would be dangerously slippery now. She repeated her earlier suggestion to wait until daybreak, for safety’s sake, if for nothing else. Dixie assured her, it was neither too dark, nor too dangerous, nor too soon.

On the contrary, he knew he was leaving just in the nick of time. And he reminded her that consummation was all in the mind. All she had to do was follow his lead in all departments and all would be fine. Obviously disappointed, but resigned to his will, Moons followed him. Dixie picked up his special prescription sunglasses, put them on and smashed the empty beer cans to carry them in his pockets. They had a responsibility to keep the park clean.

She asked him to take a couple flash pictures of each other up against the rock. Dixie thought it was the least he could do. Dixie joked that her unique brand of moonbeams shooting out of her top were penetrating his special glasses and blinding him. She stopped dead, lowering her head to shoot him a galling, condescending look through her long black lashes.

She replied wearily, “Oh Honey, you’re so naïve, but I like it. I do like it a lot.” She laughed and provided him extra flash cubes from her jean pockets. Moons pouted and stuck her tongue out at him and Dixie caught it on film. They both laughed.

Moons posed and Dixie snapped the photos. Her favorite pose seemed to be with her back to the camera, a fist on either hip, arms akimbo, butt up, legs locked and feet spread just outside her shoulders. Her long, dark hair streamed down, just free of her back, as her shoulders and head torqued around toward the camera. That stance emphasized her long, up and outward sloping, tan back, round rear, slender, inward-sloping waist as well as the fullness of her namesakes. She topped the shot off with a devilish smile and a sly wink. Turning in the opposite direction, she mirrored the pose. Then Moons faced left and lifted her head up slightly, as though she were searching earnestly for something. Bent down on one knee to take the pictures, she flabbergasted Dixie when the flashes hit her full right profile and bounced back off the rock face behind her. He froze dumbstruck. His heart caught in his throat. There for certain was his silhouette girl, just as he had always pictured her, and she was enticing him once more.

Dixie could not believe how close Moons came to matching the image in his brain. But there were too many other details that did not fit his vision. Though a

mist was fast descending upon them, it was not sufficiently thick to block any part of her from view. There was no water, no moonlight and little fog in the background. Neither were her long locks dripping wet. Moreover, there was no fully nude profile here, though he reckoned he could have one for the asking. Dixie's new found arousal raised up a little guilt within him. *Would a wife want me taking these pictures?* Before he could answer himself, Moons began to unfasten her cutoffs.

"Hey! What are ya doin' there, Moons?" The girl stopped and sprouted a pleasant, unassuming smile.

"Droppin' my clothes, whaddaya think? Then you can get that full profile shot. See if I really am the one." Dixie thought she must be reading his mind.

"One, what?"

"Why, the one you're lookin for, Silly. The girl in your dream, the one you just told me about."

Damn! She is reading my mind!

Still feeling guilty, Dixie replied "No, no! Don't do that Honey, please. Uh ..."
YOU match her all right, Moons. Honest! You do. It's the setting that's wrong. There's not enough mist to cover all your, uh, your treasures." Then she zipped up her shorts and patted the button twice with the flat of her hand.

"Voila! OK?" She asked pertly.

Dixie grinned and nodded.

"So, you think I'm the one, hunh, really?" Her face was animated, hopeful.

"Well, I didn't say that Molly, just that you match close enough to be the one."

"Gee, Baby. Jes' how many girls are out there walkin' around that could match her as good as me, hunh?"

"Honestly? I dunno Moons. I just don't know." Perplexed, Dixie shook his head.

"Well shoot! I can strip in a sec and we can tell for sure." She smirked slyly.

"No, no Moons, please don't. I, I—don't do that. I've seen enough— too much. Your moonbeams have blinded me enough for one night."

"You sure? It's no problem ya know? Not for YOU, Baby."

"No-no, I mean. Yes, I'm sure. You're the closest I've ever seen, Molly. Honest!" The girl beamed. *Closest? Hell, she fits my vision to a "T."*

"Ya know Shua-gah? Never thought Nick Sheeboom'd be such a prude. A lotta guys'd give their eye teeth for the show I'm offerin' you right now, Baby.

Dixie chuckled nervously. "But I ain't Nick Sheeboom—YET!" *Eye teeth?* An idea to throw her off track occurred to him. "Besides, maybe these teeth'll do." Dixie reached into his mouth with his thumb and popped out his dental plate, which he offered to her in earnest.

Aghast, the girl stood dumbstruck. He took her left hand and placed his two upper, front teeth into her fist, hoping the dentures might cool off her passions. Moons studied the teeth and then, still stunned, she dropped her mouth wide open when she inspected his smiling, gaping top row of teeth. Then, cracking up, she

bent over backwards holding her sides with her arms, unable to contain her mirth. When Moons finally regained her poise, she came to him, chuckling, stumbling and still clutching his teeth. She shot a picture of him grinning minus his teeth.

Though he grinned like a clown for her, revealing his wide upper tooth gap. Her smile evaporated suddenly, as she became serious. Taking his head between her hands, she kissed him, kissed him sumptuously. She reached through his gap and beyond, sensually exploring uncharted territory. Dixie became aroused, but he let her finish. When she did, she groaned from deep within and murmured, “Baby, you jes’ never, ever cease to amaze me! That was simply incredible. SO SMOOTH, so sweet. Um. Um. Um.” Dixie grinned and winked.

“And a little lumpy, too,” he added.

She laughed.

He had met with similar reactions in past similar situations with all his previous lovers. Moons replaced his plate for him, but he had to realign it. For effect, Dixie chomped down loudly on it twice, like an old codger testing his dentures before dinner.

She watched him and her expression seemed to melt, but she rallied and came to him again, kissing him sumptuously, once more. Then she asked him to pose for a couple pictures for her, using some extra flash cubes she carried in her pockets.

When she had shot her fill, Dixie reminded her that he had urgent business about five hundred miles to the northeast. Dixie put on his specially made wraparound shades. Then he carefully led her out of there, back down, retracing the steps by which they had come. He held her hand and made sure she stepped where he had stepped. He kept the sound of the babbling brook down to his right and didn’t stray off the spiny ridge until they intersected the big trail. It took a while, but he thoroughly enjoyed holding her hand in his, as he led her down the mountain. Dixie picked up the first two beer cans they had left on the way up.

“How did you see them?” she asked totally amazed. “I had no idea we were even near that place.”

“Hey, I’m ‘Nobody,’ remember me?” He laughed.

Moons became serious. She raised up on her tippy-toes, reached for him, took his square chin in her hand and kissed him passionately, once more.

“YOU SURE AS HELL ARE SOMEBODY TO ME, BABY. AND DON’T YOU EVER FORGET IT!” The saucy coquette winked at him, again.

Why couldn’t I have met her a year ago, when I first came to the mainland?

He was sorely tempted to forget about this alleged wife of his and remain by the light of the Two Moons. But he didn’t. Instead, he returned the conversation back to its beginning by pointing out the peculiarly shaped rock outcropping that he had remembered was where they had left the empty cans.

“What rock?” was her response.

Dixie just laughed. His night vision had astonished her. But you weren’t even looking in that direction. You were looking off to the side of that rock, down the path. Dixie laughed again.

“I don’t see as well right in front of me, but off to the sides kinda, it’s clearer.” When she remarked admiringly upon his excellent eyesight, he joked that it was easy to see when he had the light of “Two Moons” shining behind him, lighting the pathway home. Again, he induced her to chuckle at his wit.

Then she warned him. “We better get going. Coming up, I was sure we avoided the poison ivy. But now, wouldn’t be surprised if we didn’t brush some of that nasty stuff somewhere along the line. The sooner we rinse off with some cool water, the better off we’ll be. Come on. There’s a water pump back at the campground.” Dixie sang the old Coasters tune “Poison Ivy” that he had heard on the *Wolf Man Jack Show*, as he led her down the mountainside. She had never heard the song, but she laughed as he adlibbed it when he reached back to tickle her. “... when poison ivy comes a creepin’ all aroun-oun-oun-ound.”

Back at the camper, they both washed off at the water pump, based on Moons’ suggestion. They took turns. One pumped while the other one rinsed off. The water was cold but they washed wherever skin was exposed. For Moons that meant she practically took a shower. She said she did not know if they had brushed any poison ivy or not, but she was not taking any chances. After they had finished washing, Dixie asked Moons if she would be OK.

“I hope so. Usually, if you wash off with cool water right away, you’re OK.”

“No, that’s not what I meant.”

“Well, what did you mean, Baby?”

“Well, that guy, that Greg!” Dixie motioned toward the camper with his head. “He didn’t seem too pleased we went rock climbin’ together.”

“Anh, that’s nothin’. Forget it. It’s a long story. I can tell ya all about it next time I see ya, if you’re still interested.” She made it sound, as though she would be seeing him for sure in a short while, as if they were old friends.

Then he thanked her, as well as the others, who, having heard the returning hikers, had gathered round the pump, all except Greg that is. Now, unlike before, some of them were sporting long jackets and full dungarees in the cool of the misty, evening, mountain air. They had come to see Nick Sheeboom off. Dixie thanked them all for their generosity and mounted his cycle to leave.

Moons shivered, as she tried to dry herself with her hands and her hair.

“Wait a minute, Honey. I want to give ya something.”

His caring female companion, now in wet cut-offs and swimsuit top, darted into the camper. She returned in a few minutes with her ever present Nikon, a pen, a piece of paper and a small wallet-sized picture of herself—an official high school graduation photograph, no less. Yet, she stubbornly had refused to cover her obviously, chilled, goose-pimpled body or change her wet clothes.

Meanwhile, Dixie had broken out his brown leather jacket for the cool, mountain, night ride ahead. He wore it now as he waited in the saddle for her. Moons came running breathlessly out of the fog. Her buddies ambled after her.

“Can you give me the address and phone number where you’ll be at, in Maryland?” She asked, as she reached him, smiling broadly and breathing

heavily. Her two full moons heaved markedly up and down, in unison. “We’re gonna be passing through D.C. around the Fourth of July to see the national fireworks display in the Nation’s Capitol.” Dixie forced himself to concentrate on her question rather than on her natural beauty.

“Well gee, Moons. Ya know I, I don’t have a phone number, just an address.”

“Well, would you mind giving it to me, Baby?” Dixie hesitated. “Please?” She pleaded. Moons looked a little like a puppy dog begging for a bone. He thought about how he had built her up, only to let her down back on the rock. Against his better judgment, Dixie acquiesced.

“OK, guess it wouldn’t hurt, I guess. It’s 2221 21st Avenue, Crest Hill Heights, Maryland.”

She took down the information he volunteered and handed Dixie her picture.

“I wrote my address and phone numbers on the back, around the edges, so it don’t bleed through on the picture. You know, in case you aren’t who we think you are, or, in case, in case she don’t want ya no more ... ‘cause, damn it Baby, I sure as hell do.” She smiled cheerfully. Dixie turned the picture over to verify her statement. Then he flipped the photo back over again.

Moons beamed broadly, confidently, as she had back upon the rock when she had revealed her namesakes to him. When Dixie merely smiled weakly in return, shaking his head in disbelief, her confidence seemed to dissolve before his eyes. Once again, she stared into his peepers like a puppy begging for a bone. While he had met many co-eds in the last couple of years, Dixie had never, ever, met a girl like this Molly “Two Moons” Malloy. She seemed to sense what he was feeling and thinking and knew just what to do and say in return. The girl was so direct, so unpretentious and yet so discerning, so sympathetic, in spite of, her natural good looks. Even her longish, broken nose, the feature which many might consider to be unattractive, Dixie found to be damned enticing. That broken nose reflected her true character, while the symmetry of her eyes and mouth blasted her beauty.

Dixie returned her easy, shy smile, as he pulled out his billfold, which contained pictures of Donna and her two boys. He added Moons’ picture into one of the empty plastic photo holders. He closed the wallet and planted a kiss on the folded billfold. Then he placed the wallet in the left inside breast pocket of his leather, riding jacket. Dixie placed both hands together up in front of his face, as if he were praying. He leaned over and kissed the near edge of his meshed forefingers and winked at Moons to seal the deal. (He had seen James Dean do that for Natalie Wood in a similar situation in the movie *Rebel Without a Cause*.)

Moons called for her cousin ‘Becca to come over. She handed ‘Becca the Nikon, and whispered in her ear. Dixie released the kickstands, before he started up the bike. He was about to leave, when Moons leaned over the bike in front of him, her long black hair falling down around him as before. She zipped up his brown, leather jacket completely for him, patting the wallet in the jacket’s inside pocket. Her picture was close to his heart. She liked that and told him so. Then,

slowly, she removed his shades and leaned into him, kissing him, slowly, sensually, despite their audience, as if it might be her last kiss ever.

'Becca had stepped around in front of the bike and caught the pair of lovebirds in the act with a candid, camera flash shot. When Moons had finished, she remained nose to nose with him, looking him squarely in the eye and whispered in a sober, sultry manner.

"I really do." She was dead serious.

"Do? Do what?" asked Dixie, stumped.

"Want you." She stared deeply into his eyes, darting from one iris to the other.

She just knocked him out with her direct sincerity. Dixie replied seriously, "You know something, Moons?"

A sultry Moons mewed, "No, I can't imagine. What, Baby?" The handsome girl's upbeat, unpretentious manner both wowed and attracted him. Her free and easy appeal was undeniable. *Damn!* But he had to leave. He had to find out what awaited him in Maryland, so Dixie hid his feelings, as he almost always did, behind his typical, casual cool.

"Ha! I believe ya." Dixie nodded and smiled slightly, winking his dark brown eye at her.

She laughed easily and warned. "You better! And don't forget, Dix. That girl in your vision has black hair, like me. But she don't."

"Who don't?"

"That wife you're so hot to see. She's a smoky brunette." His face blanked.

Then Moons replaced his shades over his nose and pecked him on the lips once more. 'Becca captured the moment on film again, before Moons stepped back from the bike. Dixie kicked down into first gear, awakening the seventy horses beneath him. He raised his chin in an informal salute. Then, in neutral he rotated the gas throttle backward and moved out with the Honda's four-in-one cycle shattering the peaceful calm of the Smoky Mountain night air. 'Becca stepped back out of the way. Dixie kicked down to first, popped a mini wheelie just for show and drove off into the patchy, foggy night without looking back.

What a crazy kid that Moons was, he thought as he rode off into the dark grey-blue Smokies' fog. Dixie hoped he had not made a mistake in giving her that address. Ah, he'd never see her again. But what Moons had said about the little rocker's hair color troubled him. He sure hoped he wasn't leaving his true silhouette girl behind in the Smoky Mountains. *Anh, maybe the rich bitch's hair is dyed?* Well, he could not dwell upon that now. Dixie was embarking on the last leg of his journey. He was anxious to see if there truly was a pot of gold at the end of his rainbow or, even better, a silhouette girl. After all, he was almost there.