

Ry was experiencing the rushing euphoria, which usually followed shortly after she had ingested her “medicine.” Noticing Nick and Paul alone at a table, she forced herself to calm down and take advantage of this unique opportunity to confront her wandering husband. She sauntered over to his table as deliberately as she could even as the stimulant raced through her body. Leisuredly, toting a freshly filled wineglass, she casually asked to join them.

“OK if I sit down here Nicholas?” She stared quizzically at Nick.

To her right, Paul stated grandly, “Why sure, Ry.” Paul stood up to assist her, but she ignored him and zeroed in on Nicky. Feeling her ice, Paul excused himself.

“I, uh, gotta go, gotta go uh ... get some, uh, cigarettes. Yeah, that’s it.” Still focused on Nick, Ry addressed Paul.

“Oh? Gee, Paul, I never knew you to smoke.”

“Well, Ryz’n, I uh—” Nick stood up. Ry ignored her husband and turned to Paul.

“Thanks, Paul, how did you know I needed a pack of Luckys?” Nick pulled several quarters from his pocket and handed them across the table to Paul. “Here, this ought to cover it.” Nick passed his buddy the coins and Paul left quickly. Then Nicky turned his full attention to her.

“*So Nicholas!* Is it OK if I sit down *now*?” Ryz’n acted feebly indignant. She wanted to nail him in the worst way imaginable and her imagination was running a bit wild.

“Sure, I mean, of course it is Ry. You know it is.”

Nick stood up and stepped awkwardly around the end of the table, nearest the dance floor, to pull her chair out for her, but she sat down in Tasha’s seat unassisted, ahead of his aid. He fumbled over himself to sit back down, across the thirty-inch wide table from her. He offered to buy her a drink, but, in rebuttal, she raised her freshly filled wineglass and shook it lightly, as if she were ringing a bell.

“Here’s to you Nicholas. I sure hope you find what you’re looking for, Baby.”

I am charged, Baby! Wooo!

Ryz’n was cognizant that her left eye twitched and she could not keep from shifting in her seat or keep her fingers from drumming the table or the wineglass. She had hoped to see Nick at one of their gigs, but not like this. She wanted him to come alone like a whipped dog with his tail between his legs, begging forgiveness, so she could rub his nose in it, sporting her super sexy costume in her new Naughty Nathan’s act.

“What do you mean by—”

“Ummm. You’re not drinking, Nicholas,” scolded Ryz’n mildly, cutting him off. “They’ll ask you to leave if you don’t drink, ya know.”

Something in Ryz’n’s eyes made Dixie anxious for her health. The orbs were a bright, emerald green unlike anything he had ever seen, a bit glassy yet far brighter than her natural hazel-green. And her eyes darted rapidly, kind of wildly, out of control. The pupils were larger than he remembered. It was as if he saw the Devil sneering at him through her eyes. She seemed more than a bit edgy. He noticed her

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sexy costume but he did not acknowledge it in front of her. He also observed she wore her ever present, gold crucifix high up against her breastbone, but she was not wearing *his* locket. Paul and his ideas! Shooooot! He should have known better. He should have stopped and thought a little more about this one. After all, it's just a little thing to do.

Wanting to avoid a fight, Dixie sucked on his beer and recoiled as the liquor burned going down his throat. It tasted a bit strong for a High Life. However, as he studied Ryz'n over his beer glass, he had to admit to himself, she sure looked awesome!

Then he nervously blurted out. "Ry, did you ever stop to think that *you* might be what I'm looking for?"

Ryz'n sipped on her wineglass nonchalantly. This was what Ryz'n wanted dearly to hear, but between the alcohol and her medicine she didn't pick up on his sincerity. She could focus in on him well enough, but he seemed to be speaking in slow motion. He had hurt her deeply and now was the perfect time for a little payback. She spoke quickly, the words tumbling out without any meter.

"I thought about it once, but I gave up on the idea."

Ryz'n didn't really mean what she said. She was just gaming him, but she understood he did not know that.

"Wha-Wha-Why is that?" Dixie asked sincerely.

She drummed her fingers incessantly with one hand and teased her hair with the other. Then she spoke rapidly but her diction was perfect.

"Well, you have a funny way of showing your concern. Seems you can make it with other women, but not me. Guess I'm not attractive enough for you. I just don't do it for you any more, is that it, Nicholas? Too chubby for you, again, *too large in the waist* for your taste, is that it, hunh? Although others," she nodded and waved her wine glass towards the male customers around her, "don't seem to have any problem with me."

Dixie smirked. "A bunch of drunks? You know what they're after."

"Yeah, I do—maybe the same thing I'm after. It's been a long time between drinks, Baby. *Eleven hundred and seventy-one days and nights to be precise.* But who's counting, right? I'm sure you're not. Why, I doubt you've gone two weeks without getting any, but you want to *date me and live at home with your mother!* PLEASE!"

"Well, Ry. I, I, I na-never th-thought, I ma-may have ba-ba-been mi-mi—"

"Yeah, you never thought! You know some states consider such spousal refusal, grounds for DEE-voice, Baby. Besides, you've got two heads, Nicholas, always have." She had been observing him gently caress his glass of Miller High Life and imagined that he might caress her breast as tenderly. However, he stopped at her last, caustic remark, regained his composure and set the glass down sharply on the tabletop.

"That's all bull and you know it, but OK, I'll b-b-b-bite, Ryzanna. What do-do you m-m-mean by that ta-ta-two heads ba-bologna?"

Ry noticed she had reduced him to stuttering and that sense of power she had sought over him surged through her being, heightened by the effect of the uppers she had taken. Peering into her wineglass, Ry smothered a giggle, as if she were reading tea leaves. She rubbed the glass slowly, seductively up and down, with the first three

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fingers of her left hand, wiping the perspiration off the chilled glass. Then she concentrated and spoke in perfectly measured, overly parsed tones for his benefit.

“Well ... it’s like this, Nich-o-las ... You have always had ... two heads, see? It was all I could do to control your lower head ... when we were married, but now ... since you’ve lost this head ... up here”—she looked up at him and tapped the side of her temple with her middle finger—“you’ve lost all control whatsoever over this head ... down here.” Leaning back in triumph, she gently patted her lap and smiled sweetly.

“Ha-ha-how can you a-cu-c-cues me of that? I’m not b-been with one s-s-s-single—”

“Well, well. I leaf du for yes’ one min-ute and du wit ‘notherrr voman.”

Suddenly, Nick’s date stood hulking over him, waiting for Nick to pull the chair out for her. He did, but to show his disdain, he did not rise. He merely slid the chair back from the table with his booted foot. Ry looked at him accusingly, as if she were the cat that had swallowed the canary, telepathically signaling her husband, “You were saying, Nicholas?” Ry held up two fingers, tapped her temple again and then her lap. Sheena ambled over languidly and sat down in Paul’s seat between him and her sister. Then Sheena pulled the chair around, next to Ry. Ry sensed Nick was reeling from his date’s untimely entrance, but like the gentleman he always was, he introduced everyone.

“Oh, hello Sheena. Umm, Shee-na, this is T-Tonya Slutskaya. T-Tonya, this is m-m-my sister-in-law Sheena M-Mather and THIS is ma-my WIFE! Ryzanna SHEE-BA-BA-BOOM!” Tonya nodded and sat down grumpily.

“You needn’t have bothered Nick,” offered Sheena. “The Slutskaya’s are well known in The Heights.” She shook her head disdainfully.

Nick glared hard at Ry, apologizing to all for his stuttering and assuring them he had not been stuttering much recently. Ryz’n knew she had done this to him. She could see that it hurt Nick’s pride to let her see that she could affect him like this. Bryson ambled over to their table. He jerked his thumb back over his shoulder towards the greaseball and asked, “Hey Ry. What’s goin’ on with ‘The Tux?’” Ryz’n shook her head, indicating it was nothing, but suddenly she felt uncomfortable.

“Vife? Hmmpf. Luk more like hussee to me.” Ryz’n glared at Tonya and then she could not help but laugh derisively.

“That’s a little like the pot calling the kettle black, isn’t it? MRS. *SLUT*-skaya?”

Paul and Natasha returned with Dixie’s smokes. Dixie heaved a sigh of relief. From Dixie’s perspective, Paul had returned *just in the nick of time!* Tempers calmed and Nick introduced Bryson. Bryson pulled a couple free chairs from adjacent tables to couch the extra fannies, crowding the seven of them in around one, four-seat table. Rarely shy, Paul broke the tense atmosphere enveloping the tiny table by complimenting Ryz’n.

“Gee Ryz’n; you’re just full of surprises tonight. I was just tellin’ Nicky, I never seen you do that number before—least not like that.” Ryz’n smiled demurely and played the coquette, speaking in a lilting, fetching tone.

“Well Paul, that’s because ... I never did it before, *like that*,” she confessed.

“Oh, so it was just special for us, then, for Nick, I mean?”

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"Umm, maybe it was just special for ... you, Paul?" She joked flirtatiously, while Natasha bristled beside Paul.

"Oh, calm down Natasha. Ryz'n's just teasing Paul," explained Sheena, soothing Natasha's ruffled feathers. "You know Ry. But she *is* full of surprises tonight. Did you know she created these terrific costumes for us, which we have never worn or at least we never revealed them from under our jackets before?"

Still stewing over his stuttering, Dixie listened as Sheena bragged on her sister's talents as fashion designer and seamstress. She rose willingly to show off her costume, which she explained Ryz'n had made for her, amazingly, out of Lycra and latex, just as Ry had made her own costume. Sheena claimed the costumes were revolutionary. The skirt part of her outfit was hardly longer than Ryz'n's ultra mini mini-skirt and just as tight. Sheena claimed the difference between the two skirts was Sheena's dress sported a frontal kick-opening, which allowed her to walk more easily. When Dixie asked Bryson skeptically if he liked his wife's costume, Bryson responded, "Hell yeah!"

Sheena resumed her seat triumphantly with a Cheshire cat grin on her face when, unexpectedly, two young men in light-colored, wide-collared shirts came up behind Sheena and Ryz'n, respectively. They offered their congratulations on the sisters' performances. Both of the men were obviously a little high. Uninhibited, the pair squatted down behind either girl and pressed their cheeks against those of the two sisters, as Ryz'n and Sheena turned their attractive heads aside to hear what their gentleman admirers had to say. Bryson turned to Nick, shook his hand flatly, palm downward, above the table and noted:

"Not to worry. This sort of thing happens sometimes. It's just P.R., just part of the business, Bro." He winked at Dixie for reassurance.

The rockers' fans whispered their admiration into each girl's ear. Dixie watched with a sinking feeling in his stomach, when each of the guys slipped a hand about the girl next to him. Reaching up under their arms, each one made a pass at the two sisters, cupping the girls' breasts, as though the two jerks had planned the maneuver. Both women jumped up quickly, pushing the chairs out from under them with the backs of their legs, knocking the men backwards. The sisters slapped their over ardent fans, who struggled to maintain their crouching balance by tugging at their busts. "Ouch!" cried Ryz'n. "That hurt!" She pushed the man away with her left hand. Flailing wildly, Ryz'n's admirer pulled desperately at her shoulder, peeling down one of her shoulder straps. With her other hand, she rubbed herself to ease the smart, before she pulled her narrow shoulder strap back to its rightful place. Dixie frantically scanned the scene as leering patrons gathered curiously around the table to view all the action. Ry's over appreciative fan failed to maintain his balance and fell back away from Ryz'n to the floor.

Dix had witnessed the whole incident, but he couldn't believe it had happened. Bryson had come up behind the man who had accosted Sheena, yet he did not realize what had happened at first, either. He had been too busy reassuring Dixie this was all just a piece of cake. Only after Sheena knocked her fan-molester to the floor, had Bryson acted. When Bryson stepped in, Dixie realized this was not P.R., so he jumped

up and followed his brother-in-law's lead. The brothers-in-law, stood back-to-back and cold-cocked their respective rivals. Each delivered thunderous rights as the molesters rose off the deck, knocking each of the intruders roughly to the floor again. Quickly, "Loft" bouncers fell on all four of the male combatants, roughly escorting them back down the aisle past the tables towards the stairwell entrance-exit.

Dix craned his neck to see Ryz'n recover her dignity and run after them. He hoped she would save his butt from a rude ouster. However, when she reached the bouncer-in-charge, only Dix heard her explain that Bryson was the girls' bodyguard. If they took him away, GRT would quit for the night. The guy, who had taken the microphone in GRT's behalf earlier at the band's break, intervened at this juncture and agreed with Ryz'n. Two of the half dozen bouncers, who had materialized from nowhere, let Bryson go. Yet, they hung onto Dixie and the other two troublemakers.

Glad to be unhanded, Bryson straightened his shirt and tie.

"Hey, wait a minute! That guy there"—he pointed to Dixie—"that's Nick Sheeboom. He founded this band. You can't kick him out!"

Ryz'n glared at Bryson for breaking her self-imposed code of silence about her husband. There had been many rumors going around about Nick's return, started by the returning Pocomoke High students and faculty who had witnessed Nick's appearance in the Pocomoke auditorium the last day of school. However, Ryz'n had carefully squelched all of the allegations in her promotional interviews with local radio and TV personalities concerning GRT's current local tour by saying that *her* Nick, the one she recalled, had yet to come back to her. Certainly, that much was true, but it was far from the whole truth. When "Loft" personnel looked to her now for confirmation of Bryson's accusation, Ryz'n vaguely shook her head to one side and looked away, ashamed. She wanted nothing to do with Nick. A stabbing recollection of Peter denying her Lord seared her brain and pierced her heart with recriminating zeal.

Ryz'n turned and strode back to her table as quickly as she could and still maintain her balance on her spiked heels and in her tight skirt. On her way, she turned sideways to scoot between people. As she brushed against the bodies in her stead, a carnal sensation spread like wildfire through her loins and across her thighs. *Mann! Those pills are really doing a number on me now.* Ryz'n felt like she could fly. *Darned stuff worked like a regular Love Potion Number 9.* She wanted her husband so badly right then, that she could taste him. Then she reminded herself with steely resolve.

Tonight, Nicky gets what he deserves and he deserves what he gets.

Dixie had watched Bryson's face fall a mile at Ryz'n's inexplicable betrayal. Apparently, he was more surprised than Dixie by Ry's failure to help her beloved husband out of a jam. Briefly, there was a standoff between the bouncers and the two brothers-in-law, who, once more had positioned themselves back-to-back against the world. The moment was tense, but, even against such odds, Dixie felt confident with Bryson backing him. In this lull, Dixie could not fail to observe the grease ball guy leading Ryz'n away by the hand, out the back corner exit onto a landing where the

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burly Polynesian, waited with his hands full of something. Then one of the bouncers, who had been eying Dixie closely, saved his butt.

“Yeah, he’s right Mr. Hayes. This *is* Nick Sheeboom. I remember him from when GRT first played the club. Of course, he was just a kid then. But this is him, alright. I’m sure of it. Only Nick Sheeboom has eyes like that.”

“All right! Show the other two out, Bronco,” ordered Hayes. “I wanna talk with this one, a minute.” He motioned at Dixie with his head.

Bronco did as he was told. The others at Dixie’s table (save Paul who, curiously, was nowhere to be found) had been standing around in shocked, suspended animation. Hayes asked them to retake their seats and enjoy their drinks. He said their next round was on the house. He beckoned their waitress over to relay his wishes. She nodded and left. Hayes pulled Dixie aside, several feet away from the others, to talk with him. It was then, looking over Hayes’ right shoulder, that Dixie saw the back corner exit door open and Ryz’n stumble back into the club, coughing and sneezing, rubbing her hand under her nose and across her bare, upper chest.

Then, waving her hand in front of her face, as though she had just eaten a red hot chili pepper, Ryz’n stopped a few feet inside the door and leaned back with her head against the wall. The door closed. She eyed the ceiling with her knees bent, and her left hand over her heaving, luscious chest. The girl placed her hands on her knees and rested her round ball butt against the back wall. She shook her head as if she were a wet hound dog after an unwanted bath. Dixie was transfixed as he watched her stare up at the ceiling. She embraced her body with both arms and darned near fell over into the corner as she tried to make love with herself. She caught herself against the far wall and used the corner to support her wilting, jerking body. Dixie wasn’t sure but, with his keen eyesight, she appeared to be sweating heavily, as well. Hayes was speaking to him, but Dixie was not listening. He was too absorbed in Ryz’n’s predicament.

The greaser opened the door and stepped back inside. His bald crown and ridiculous, braided pigtail, bobbed emphatically as he spoke sharply to the Polynesian out on the landing. With one quick, final instruction, the grease ball disdainfully shooed the guy away with both hands. Then he pulled the door shut and turned to Ry. He stepped around in front of her, where Ryz’n seized the creep and kissed him long and slow, as lovingly and sumptuously as she had kissed Dixie that first night. She pulled the jerk closer and wrapped her legs around him like stripes on a barber pole.

With his back to Ryz’n, thus oblivious to her antics, Hayes grabbed Dixie softly by the shoulder, forcing Dix finally to look at him.

“Hey Mann! Looks like you just seen a ghost. Funny thing is, *you are the ghost!* Hey come on let me buy ya a drink at the bar and we can talk. Come on.”

He patted Dixie congenially on the shoulder and tugged at his elbow. As Hayes turned a reluctant Dixie away, Dix caught Bryson’s eye and, with his head, Dix motioned toward Ry back in the corner. Bryson looked in that direction and saw his sister-in-law doing the unthinkable. He smacked himself in the forehead with the heel of his hand in disbelief and shook his head negatively at Dixie. Then Bryson hurriedly clambered after Ryz’n. Dixie notice Paul had returned to the table with the Slutskaya

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sisters. They were talking in a subdued manner, waiting for the band to resume and for their promised free drinks. Dixie yelled at them that he would be back shortly. Paul waved OK. By the time Dix reached the bar with Hayes, he turned to see a shaky but energetic Ryz'n return to the stage along with the rest of the band members.

Ry was higher than a kite now, experiencing a rush unlike anything she had ever felt. She had thought nothing could ever top the adrenaline bursting, nerve tingling, titillating sensation of making love with her husband, especially their first time down at the beaver ponds. However, that deep, vaporous hit she had just taken out on the landing had induced an artificial high that had shattered all records or maybe it had just been too long since she had had Nicky. Her present euphoria aroused her libido to such an ecstasy that she had practically raped that sleazy gumba Tommy "The Tux" Tuccarello right here in the night club. The crazy thing was, she could not stand that creep, except maybe, and that was pushing a point, in his professional role as GRT's road stage manager. She was in a loving mood, but she had to perform. As a professional entertainer, she would have to solve this dilemma. Upon reflection, Ry decided to solve her problem by making love to the audience through Nick, by using him as a prop.

She just had to slow herself down somehow and get her act together. She had to quit fidgeting and focus, just slow down and focus on the job at hand, but she wanted to do something different tonight, something that would *really* show him. She had to do something unique that would show she was not too fat or too prudish, something that would demonstrate that she was desirable beyond belief, and something that would make him so jealous that he would erupt and take her by storm as he never had taken her before. But what? What could she do? She thought for several seconds before she felt the cool air conditioning hardening her nipples beneath the skimpy costume and an idea occurred to her. It was a good idea. It was a *darned good* idea. She informed the band that they would play "Sweet Lovin'."

Sheena cried loudly in disbelief, loud enough for all the band members to hear.

"Now all of a sudden, you're pullin' that thing out of the mothballs? For cryin' out loud Ryzanna! You banned that song. You said it was 'the most raucous, raunchy, bump and grind tune you ever heard.' You said, it was 'banned by the Pope,' for cryin' out loud! You practically castrated Nick for ever writing the thing in the first place and now you want to perform it? Hell! We never even practiced the damned thing once!"

"No," corrected Ryz'n. "You're thinking of 'The Sizzle Shake,' Sheena." But Sheena was not convinced.

The newest band member was really scrambling. Jimmy Jax told Ry that he had only played the number a couple times, fooling around with Mickey Saxon when they had waited for "the sisters" to arrive for a practice session. Jimmy, Mick and Sheena had agreed with Ryz'n—the banned R&B tune could become a classic if Ryz'n would ever let them record the thing. However, this was not the time or the place to try it. *Aw the heck with that!* As Sheena, Jimmy and Mickey scrambled, trying to set the arrangement, Ryz'n walked about the stage in hyperactive mode, preening for their

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loudly applauding audience, even as she tried to calm her cohorts, despite her rapid-fire speech.

“Just go with the flow, here guys. This will be fun. Loosen up a little. Sheesh!”

Normally a control freak on stage, Ryz'n could hardly believe the words she had just uttered. However, when her band mates failed to respond, Ryz'n became hot. Uncharacteristically, she cursed her partners for their lack of preparation, when she knew she had been the very one who had banned the song in the first place. Hearing herself speak in the Anglo-Saxon shocked her, no less so that the mike had picked up her obscenities for *The Loft* audience. Ryz'n was bouncing around, full of energy. She was wired. Remarking on the change in her sister, a concerned Sheena suggested Ryz'n should go back to their motel room, located right across the parking lot, to calm down. Sheen advised that the band could handle the rest of the show without their leader. Sheena also informed Ry that her eyes were emerald green, wild and her pupils were dilated. One scowling glare from Ryz'n shut Sheena up. No words were necessary.

The perceptive Mickey had picked up on the sisters' byplay. He calmly reminded Ry of what had happened under similar circumstances at past concerts, when she had taken her “medicine” during a show. Ryz'n told him to shut up and just try to keep the beat. Undeterred, Mickey also pointed out the song she wanted to perform was not yet copyrighted. He indicated they could lose out on a lot of money if someone else in the crowd heard it and copyrighted it. That comment seemed to stun her for a few seconds. She refocused.

“We'll copyright it tomorrow,” she retorted off handedly. “You take care of the paperwork and I'll sign it, first thing in the morning. You've got the forms right?” She spoke quickly but clearly in an ultra thick voice.

“Well, yeah! But Ry, it's *Nick's* song.”

“*Nick?* There is no *Nick!* He died in Viet Nam. How many times do I have to tell you people that? Now, if you wanna keep this gig, get back there and bang them things like you know how!” Mickey shook his head, wagging his fine, long brown locks and shuffled back to his perch. Meanwhile, Ryz'n noted the crowd was growing antsy and obnoxious, imitating her coarse language with shouts and impatient jeers.

“Then, should I tape it, too?” asked Mick warily, because Ry had them taping their performances for playback and corrective self-study. Ryz'n nodded her concurrence.

Nick had composed the tune's bawdy lyrics about a voluptuously stacked young woman who frequented clubs to strut her considerable stuff, and who was not above using what she had to attract men. Nick had written the tune shortly after Thanksgiving of their junior year, when she had been dating Don. Ryz'n knew the bawdy ditty described the phat female Air Force non-com Little Nick had met during a GRT gig at an NCO club. Ryz'n also knew there was a basis of truth in his lyrics, which hurt her deeply, because, much to Ry's chagrin, Nick had developed a relationship with the black girl and even had escorted the chick to their junior prom. However, now Ryz'n intended the lyrics to represent her condition with him. She realized Nick could not

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absorb the song's history or the psychological message she was delivering. He'd be more interested in watching her perform, which suited her just fine.

Before the band started in on the next set, Ryz'n made sure she had a well grounded live, stand-up mike in front of her and another dead, hand-held mike turned off but with plenty of cord. She needed both for her unique rendition of Nicky's "Sweet Lovin'."

Back along the largely windowed, long front wall that overlooked the parking lot, the club manager Willie Hayes was introducing himself to Dixie. The pair stood next to the corner of the bracket-shaped bar closest to the stage. Hayes leaned against the bar with his back to the band, which was about fifty to sixty feet away onstage. Dixie wedged into the crowded bar to stand along side of it, facing the manager so he could see the stage clearly over the man's shoulder.

"Let me introduce myself. I'm Willie Hayes. I run this place for Mr. Rowdy." The man peered into Dixie's eyes and extended his hand. Dixie took it and shook firmly.

"I kind o' figured you was somethin' like that," replied Dixie coolly.

"So you're Nick Sheeboom. Is that right?" asked Hayes. The bartender leaned over the counter and wiped the bar top next to Nick with a towel.

Before Dixie could reply, the manager asked Dixie if he wanted anything to drink. Dixie did not. He had had plenty already, but he also did not want to offend the guy, who, quite clearly, held the rest of Dixie's evening in his hands, so Dixie said he'd have a High Life. Willie nodded to the barkeep, who disappeared behind Dixie.

"You know that chick you're with has been spiking your Miller's with vodka."

"No, I didn't know that, but now that you mention it"

Dixie was surprised, surprised by Tonya's audacious antics and surprised this guy was a keen enough observer to pick up her little trick. However, his observation did explain why Dixie felt unusually high after just a couple of beers and why those beers had tasted so peculiarly strong.

"Didn't think ya did," mentioned Hayes casually. It's my job to know." The manager looked past Dixie and smiled. "That character behind you has had one too many, too." The clown behind Dixie was loud and kept knocking into Dix with his body, as he regaled his buddy next to him with stories of his sexual prowess.

"Hey, thanks, Joe," said Hayes, as the barkeep slid Dixie back into the High Life. Dixie reached for his wallet, but the manager placed his hand over Dixie's forearm, shook his head and winked.

"On the house, kid. So now, you wanna tell me, what this is all about, OK? I mean how come you ain't up there with the band?" He jerked his head back towards the stage.

Dixie looked down at the Miller's in front of him and pushed it around in small circles on the bar top, trailing condensation from the glass bottom over the shiny counter. He shrugged his shoulders and began sipping on his brew, just as GRT started up. The guy next to him screamed out.

"OOOOH LOOO-KEEE! LOOO-KEEE! HERE COMES NOOO-KEEE!"

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Dixie cracked up, thinking of Paul's claim for lyric rights. He guessed that maybe Paul would have to split his royalties over the lyrics with the drunk next to him. Dixie turned to the guy, who evidently had seen something on the stage, because his gaze was concentrated in that direction.

"NOW *THAT'S* WHAT I'M TALKIN' ABOUT!"

Pointing towards the stage, he yelled as if he were at a ball game. His friend agreed.

"Yeah, buddy. That's gotta be the hottest Mama on two legs!"

"Ain't jes' her legs, Mann! Look at them yella cookies and that caboose! Looks, like somebody blew up a pair of big ol' round balloons and shoved 'em up that min-skirt she's almos' wearin.'" Dix turned his head to the stage.

"Ladies and gentleman," announced Ry, "we thank you for your patience. We're going to do a number for you now that we've never done before (Ha! And may never do again) in honor of my, my, celebrated but wayward spouse, wherever he may be. (She stared right at Dix.) He wrote it, now we'll float it. It's a little thing called "Sweet Lovin' or "Turtle Dovin'—we haven't decided yet. All right guys, now: One-two-three-four! (Finger snap!) One-two-three-Hit it!!"

Dix could not escape his loud, overbearing drunken neighbors. "Yeah, broad, round, ripe and luscious. Just ripe for pickin'! Hey? Stan the Man?"

"Yeah, but that waist ain't so broad. It's more like a fairy's, Stu. It's so thin, it disappears, just melts dead away. Yeah! That's what *I'm* talkin' about!"

"Hey, Stan? But that ain't no fairy's tail. Get it? Fairy's tale? HA!"

"Yeah, she's one bad, phat fox, Stu boy."

"Just about the phattest fox in the woods, Dude. ABSOLUTELY!"

Tossing back his Miller's now, Dixie turned towards the stage again, only to find his wife up in front of everyone doing her unique version of the Rock-N-Roll Hoochie-Koo. And her back-up band wasn't "The Jokers," either. Dixie choked on his beer and had to wipe off the spilled brew from the back of his hand onto his pants. It was bad enough she had been all over the grease ball. Now it looked as though she wanted to lay down for the entire audience, male and female. Hayes, the bartender and the whole club full of people turned to watch Dixie's wife strut her bodacious stuff up on the stage.

Ryz'n was striding back and forth, bouncing herself up and down outrageously in that scandalous outfit she called a costume. Behind the stand-up mike, she swung her shapely hips as she belted out a bawdy ditty. What was unique is that Ry had taken the long cord of a dead, hand-held mike and played with it seductively as she sang. She looked right at Dixie and tapped the dead mike head against her temple twice in time with the music and then she tapped the thing twice against her loins. Ry shook her head disparagingly towards him, before she slipped the cord around the back of her neck. His suddenly sultry seductress of a spouse had morphed into a salaciously, somatic, sumptuous stranger to him. Ry lowered and raised the mike by alternately releasing and pulling on the electric cord with her opposite hand, her left hand. The

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mike head crawled around and down her neck to her comely bust, as though it were a snake with a life of its own. The sensuous singer inched the head of the mike successively lower down her chest. She bounced the mike head rhythmically to the drummer's beat from one quaking breast to the other.

Even from where Dixie stood, he could see each quivering shake of her bosom tremor like a bowl full of lemon yellow jello to the raw, erotic beat of GRT's rhythm and blues. But this couldn't be his Ryz'n, not the saint who everyone had said had waited so faithfully, so long for him to come home? Every so often she glanced at Dixie to see if he were paying attention. Oh yeah! He was. Hell! Everybody was!

The lanky barkeep, standing nearby, threw his bar towel over his shoulder, unconsciously and smacked his chewing gum aloud.

"Nevah seen nothin' like that," he gasped. "Been in the bi'nness nigh on twenty year and nevah seen *nothin' like that!*"

"Looks like jello on springs, don't it?" chimed in Willie Hayes, the manager. "

Jello on springs? Hey that's my line! I stole it from the movies. But these guys are talking about my wife, not some celluloid princess! Dixie didn't much appreciate it, even if he was unable to recall her and even if they were separated now.

Ryz'n slipped the mike lower and lower down her torso. She appeared to flirt with the audience through him, using her large, almond-shaped, green eyes, sultry voice and erogenous body movements as her primary weapons. Her motions seemed to be exaggeratedly slow and reminded him of a belly dancer, making her even more desirable to him. She drew raves, hoots and hollers from the customers when the microphone head fell below her waist. Dancers stopped dancing and pressed forward towards the stage to stare at Ryz'n. Already packed to overflowing, the dance floor took on its own entity, writhing as one with the singer's shapely body and thus in tune with the sultry R&B melody. Dixie's awkward embarrassment forced him to concentrate on the song's lyrics to determine what she was trying to say to him, but that did not help him much, because the words were as bawdy as the tune, itself. This is what he heard.

Playin' a club when I caught his eye
Shakin' what I got, wanna give him a try
I've got the figure all the boys go for
Yeah, I got a lot and I like to show more.

Turn on my engine, Mann. Feel me roar
I shimmy and shake, blast off and soar
With your stick in my hand, I'm uh shiftin' gear
Whoa, have mercy, it's so sweet to be here!

(Bridge)

Just a look from me and they come a runnin'
Just a smile from me and they come a gunnin'
Just a wink from me and they start a funnin'

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Just a trick from me—they're one and donnin'
Show ya, show ya, show ya, sweet lovin' ev-e-ry time!

Ba-da-da-da-dup-boom! Ba-da-da-da-dup-boom!
Show ya, show ya, show ya, turtle-dovin' ev-e-ry time!
Ba-da-da-da-dup-boom! Ba-da-da-da-dup-boom!

Watch me up here, watch me shakin and shovin'
I'm the one, I'm the one, gives ya sweet lovin'
Watch me up here, watch me shakin and shovin'
I'm the one, I'm the one, loves turtle dovin'

(Bridge back)

With the face of a goddess and a body that's blessed
I'm earthy and bawdy, a temptress no less.
Packed so tight in this towel called a dress
I'm absolutely, positively—THE very best!
(Hey! No more, no less!)

In my every move, shakes a bowl full of jello
And my bulgin' bust quakes, soft as a pillow
No, I ain't ashamed to give you full pleasure
Or help and guide you to my sweet treasure

(Bridge)

Just one look from me and they come a runnin'
Just one touch from me and they come a gunnin'
Just one tongue from me and they start a tonguin''
Just one trick from me, they're one and donnin'

Show ya, show ya, show ya, sweet lovin' ev-e-ry time!
Ba-da-da-da-dup-boom! Ba-da-da-da-dup-boom!
Show ya, show ya, show ya, turtle-dovin' ev-e-ry time!
Ba-da-da-da-dup-boom! Ba-da-da-da-dup-boom!

Watch me up here, watch me shakin and shovin'
I'm the one, I'm the one, gives ya sweet lovin'
Watch me up here, watch me shakin and shovin'
I'm the one, I'm the one, loves turtle dovin'

Show ya, show ya, show ya, sweet lovin' ev-e-ry time!
Ba-da-da-da-dup-boom! Ba-da-da-da-dup-boom!
Show ya, show ya, show ya, turtle-dovin' ev-e-ry time!
Ba-da-da-da-dup-boom! Ba-da-da-da-dup-boom!

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The tune was red hot and so was Ryz'n. She was so loose, so much more sensual than she had been in the motel room his first night back. Not only was she more polished, more self-assured, but she was more vibrant. To be honest, she behaved like a professional, burlesque stripper who moved like a Middle Eastern harem girl. When Ry rolled her belly like those harem girls do in the movies, Dixie about flipped out, because she did not have any excess meat on her stomach to roll. It was all muscle and that rolling, sparkling stone in her navel really drew one's attention. Whether it was an authentic gemstone or not, really did not matter. The woman was downright electrically erotic and she was jolting him as well as the rest of her overly receptive audience with her inimitable brand of electric current. The drunk next to and behind Dixie yelled:

"Oh yes! Yeah Buddeeee! Now *that's* what I'm talkin' about, right there!" He pointed close past Dixie's nose towards Ryz'n.

"Yeah right" claimed his drinking buddy facetiously. "You be lucky to drive us home tonight, jerk-off!"

"Oh Mann, how come you gotta be so negative all the time? Always so freaking negative! Look Dude! That chick is loookin' goood, boy. Hey, I'm goin' up there and get me some o' that sweet stuff. Let me outta here." The guy wormed his way from the bar, weaving a drunken path through the standing-room-only crowd. His buddy called after him belatedly.

"You're askin' for trouble, Dude. Her phat behind ain't for grabbin', jes' only for lookin'. Didn't you see what happened a minute ago? Hey? Leave me the car keys, at least! Mann! Aw shee-iitttt!" The guy turned to Dixie and asked rhetorically, "If that a-hole is thinkin' of goin' up there, whaddaya think these other jerk-offs are thinkin'?"

Indeed thought Dixie, but he shrugged in a nonplussed fashion and said, "I don't know, what?" The guy looked at Dixie as if he suddenly smelled something rotten.

"Hey Mann, What are you? A fag or somethin'?" The guy was a few inches shorter than Dix, so Dixie stood up straight, spread his shoulders and leaned over the smaller drunk, glaring down into his eyes.

"Or something, maybe." Dixie growled down at him. "Is that a problem?" The guy crumbled and backed away, in the face of Dix's muscle-flexing.

"Uh, no Mann. That's c-cool. Th-That's cool," he stammered.

"Now *THAT's* what I'm talkin' about," yelled Dixie." He thrust his half empty beer glass out toward the man, who turned tail and quickly slinked away through the crowd.

However, the other drunk was on a mission. Ignoring his drinking partner, he had brushed past Dixie with his drink held high in the air. Now Dixie watched as the guy persistently weaved his way unevenly through the standing crowd towards the stage. As Ryz'n reprised her number, Dixie noticed even formerly seated customers were standing now. The thought occurred to him that the atmosphere was like third and goal at the end of a tight football game. Like the rest of the standing crowd, Dix was enthralled with the lewdly lurching singer, waiting to see what the little on-stage seductress would do next. Although short of stature, Ry appeared larger than life to

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him now. *Maybe she is the super delicious, silhouette girl of my visions?* Mesmerized by her lascivious antics, he couldn't take his eyes off her. Ry's total metamorphosis had rendered the once vivacious, young woman he had known, as scarcely human, a true vixen. Wasn't it only a week earlier that she had presented herself to him as his long-suffering, loyal wife? This was not the prim, sprightly, God-fearing, young lady he had known. No, she appeared to be more of an apparition to him now, an ethereal apparition as she had appeared in the silvery Kafkaesque light when they had first entered the motel room on their first night together. Shoot! Come to think of it, that was the only night they had spent together. Yet, even that had been a lie. For it was painfully obvious to him and all others in the room, she was no ethereal apparition now. She was very much alive and in the flesh. She was downright nympholeptic.

Spurning a third pill earlier to take a hit of the real stuff from Mano's pipe bowl, the speed had kicked in on Ry with a triple whammy now. The meth delivered an awesome, racing, adrenaline rush and a sense of euphoria unparalleled in all of Ry's twenty-two years. For sure, the pills she had taken a while ago were not the yellow ones with the big "D" imprinted on each side, her prescribed medication, which she had taken in the past. These pills had been pink and the sides were smooth. But they had been acting too slowly for her taste, so she had broken the band's golden rule, Nick's golden rule, and persuaded The Tux, along with Mano's assistance, to administer his own brand of prescription medication. Sniffing the vapors from those funny-looking ice cubes had sure done the trick. She was free-flying now. She'd show Nicky, show him she was more desirable than any one he could ever hope to meet. She would show him what he was missing, by hanging out with all those other jezebels.

Ryz'n felt as though the core of the universe passed through the central fibers of her being. As such, all eyes were not only upon her, but they also were under her control. Her hyperactive mind could control not only her eye-pleasing performance and, in turn, hypnotize the audience (if she could bump and grind slowly enough), but also simultaneously compartmentalize her own tawdry thoughts. Ry giggled mentally, hoping to recall her thoughts later as lyrics for a new song.

Everywhere around her, people seemed to move and speak in slow motion. Only *she* was at normal speed, so, by sheer force of will, she slowed down, lest she lose them all. Her focus and powers of concentration were uncanny. She could pick out a pimple on the forehead of her husband at fifty feet. She heard every note played by her compatriots, while also observing every move her husband made. Yet she loved it all, the meth high, the power, the sweat, and most of all Nicky back by the bar eyeing her like a deer caught in her two bright yellow headlights.

With one eye always upon him, she could follow the actions of all others with her other peeper. Her heart rate seemed to quintuple. She thought her heart must burst from her chest, so she willed herself to perform ever more slowly. She had begun to sweat more profusely than she had all night. Experience had taught her in these situations to force herself to slow down and stay with the beat, except that she had never experienced a high like this before. Now it took almost every bit of concentration she

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could muster to force herself to move ever slower. Then too, the slower she danced, the more delightfully fulfilled she felt. The effect of the drug percolating through her system, coupled with her undulating belly dance, recalled her private sessions with Nick at the beaver ponds and on his Easter leave, before he left for the war. Ry hoped she would never come down from this kick. Amazingly, she still possessed her faculties. In fact, she never had felt more in control or alive. Ry scarcely could wait for the number to climax. Often, she had practiced the number secretly during lonely nights of pining for her missing husband, imagining how her sultry, private performance might affect him.

As the dead mike reached her thighs, Ryz'n began to rise up on the ball of one foot, flexing her knee forward and then coming down violently upon her heel, incorporating the sudden, jerking motion of the Makter or Igde, which she had learned from her Gran'ma Jessie. She would drop a spiked heel abruptly in time with the music shoving her thigh forward and causing a ripple effect to reverberate up throughout her slender body. The quivering jello effect animated the ribald audience. Careful to avoid knocking the stand-up mike, Ryz'n dipped alluringly and slid to the side and repeated the move sensuously with the opposite foot and leg, always in time to Mick's soulful, rhythmic beat of Nick's raunchy tune. Ry was well pleased with the showy costume she had designed especially for her performance. Earlier, she had had mixed feelings about wearing it, but now she loved the daring costume, which fit her like a second skin. The crowd loved it, too. They loved her and she loved them.

Now, she let the dead mike head begin to bump out several inches before her over to the opposite leg where she repeated the alternating back and forth rhythmic motion, from one thigh to another. She bumped the dead mike always in time to GRT's rhythm and blues, always in time to Mick's steady beat. Ry threw her head back and exhaled deeply, voluptuously, each time she brought her heel down in time with Mickey's sultry beat. As GRT's front woman, Ry strutted in profile for her appreciative audience, lurching and grinding, back and forth across the stage, leaning and dragging the stand-up mike with her so the audience could hear her sing the bawdy lyrics. The crowd appeared to react so slowly that she thought them stupid. She could not keep from smirking at these mere mortals. She thrust the dangling dead mike out before her with a heavy, hip-whipping force, as she had danced the Rakassee for Gran'ma Jessie. Omnipotent now, Ry held them all in suspense, right in the palm of her little hand. Of course, her quaking bust line, her shimmying shoulders, her long, dripping, sweat-matted, wavy hair, her thunderous thigh blasts, her rolling belly, sparkling navel, and that hand towel of a skirt which revealed so much of her, all may have had something to do with her mesmerizing power. But, hey, why shouldn't they? That is exactly how she wanted it to be—for him!

On top of the world, Ma! Ha!

Somehow, Ryz'n understood the band was winging it, trying hard to follow her lead. The crowd began clapping in time with the simple, earthy tune. The dance floor was packed. Yet, no one was dancing. Ryz'n was in control of the whole place. All eyes were upon her, a voluptuous, short, shapely, sensual singer. She held them all in the

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shake of her back. Ry laughed at her silent joke. Behind her, Ry heard Jimmy Jax yell to Mick that this was just like Naughty Nathan's and suggested they think in those terms and follow him. Ryz'n snickered internally, knowing Jimmy Jax was right on.

Ry strode to the very front of the postage stamp-sized stage. She bent forward just for Nick and shimmied about in a semi-circle so he could appreciate her finer points. Comme une vraie danseuse du ventre, Ryz'n shimmied in a tight, rolling wave that traveled up and down her body, leaving each part of her still in the wake of the wave's passage, the way her Gran'ma Jessie had taught her. She began the quivering wave at her thighs and rode her tight shimmy upward through her body, up through her belly, chest and shoulders and back down again to echo through her broad hips. She rose and bumped and ground her pelvis, while the mike head jerked awkwardly against her thighs, flailing out in Nick's direction. Yes, she was stacked. She was phat! She was sassy. Yeah, she was even erotic. She was the "Sweet Lovin'" girl in the song. And she knew it. And now he knew it. And now they all knew it! And Ryz'n made sure he did, too, as she focused her attentions solely upon him. From out of her past, Ryz'n employed the various forms of belly dances her grandmothers had taught her and Sheena when they were kids. The erotic moves all came back to her as if it was yesterday. She progressed exotically from the Turkish Rakasse to the more vulgar Greek Igdisma or Maktma, when she jerked violently, stomping her heel into the stage, as if she were crushing a serpent's head beneath her foot. Then she added a little bit of East Baltimore Street just because she felt like it. And her father was not present to slap her for enjoying her swaying body, as he had done on her thirteenth birthday.

Between verses, she blew Nick a hot kiss in a posture and manner immortalized by Marilyn Monroe, standing over a subway grate with her skirt in the air. Ry's erotic antics bordered on the lewd and lascivious. She directed all of her erogenous gyrations over the heads of the crowd back towards her reticent husband. This was the kind of carnal performance she knew she should have displayed for him his first night back with her. Well, he was getting it now, better late than never. In a perverse way, she felt she was making it up to him now. She wanted him so badly—and she'd have him right now. Yes, right now. Her hair, matted with sweat, stuck to her back and shoulders. Sweat poured down her cleavage in rivulets, tickling her. The air was so thick with smoke, each time she inhaled, she imagined herself sucking on one of Nicky's strong Lucky Strikes, but the thick smoke did not deter her. On the contrary, it spurred her on. Her senses reached heights she had never known. Never in her life had she felt so pulsatingly alive. She noticed her natural vocal tones were huskier than ever.

He was no more than twenty yards from her. With her grinding movements, Ry felt she could draw him into her. Like a power vacuum, she could suck him up right where she wanted him. Her lithe body throbbed in anticipation. She would satisfy her desires for him now onstage and, simultaneously, show him just what he was missing.

Dancing solely for Nicky now, Ryz'n tantalized him, undulating inside her scant bits of clothing, as if they did not exist. Her costume pieces were separate entities, entirely apart from her frame. By some miracle, they defied gravity, sticking to her quaking body. Her clothes defied the laws of gravity, despite her earthy efforts to

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shake them free from her pulsating body. Yet somehow, they still stuck to her like glue. Happily, she cooed with delight in tune to Little Nick's raunchy tune, knowing how her scanty costume and erotic movements would affect her husband, who stood stock still. He eyed her like a deer caught in her mesmerizing pair of headlights.

While Ryz'n felt she could keep this up all night because of the large level of lurid pleasure she derived from this wild trip, somehow she possessed the good sense to understand the band could not. She had lost track of how many times the band had repeated the last chorus. However, they kept going. They were backing her to the hilt. Facing her audience from behind the live, stand-up mic, Ry received tremendous encouragement from her fans. However, she was not quite ready to end the number. Again, staring straight at her husband, she envisioned him in her hallucinogenic brain now as some sort of mythical Greek god with the god-like body that she remembered from their two nights together in the motel. Ryz'n sang the last couple of verses repeatedly, with each refrain sung slower and more hypnotically than the last. Behind her, she heard Mickey shout, "It's like Nick's "Midnite Rambler, Shee. Bring it down slow and then back up!" Ry knew what he meant as that number had started fast, slowed almost to a halt and then picked up speed to finish furiously.

The band followed along right behind her, rocking ever slower as though they were coming down from a grinding high. With her legs spread wider than her shoulders and bent slightly at her knees, Ry threw her shoulders and head back as she sang huskily, voluptuously, rising on the balls of her feet and falling back jerkily on her heels, yet shimmying to make Gran'ma Jessie proud. With her elbows at her waist, with hands out to her sides, palms upward, her fingers quaking, as if to say "gimme, gimme," Ry tantalized them all. The microphone, which hung down now even with the front of her elasticized lower hem, quivered and bounced against her tightly, stretched skirt.

Customers had long ago given up all pretense of dancing, as they simply stopped and stared, some with their tongues hanging out of their mouths. The air was electric. This moment was special. Even through her speed high, Ryz'n knew it, the band knew it and so did the audience. Everyone was waiting for something climatic but no one knew what it was, except Ry. Not the band, for this was uncharted territory for them, too. Only Ryz'n knew. Tension hung thicker than the blue film of tobacco smoke filtering throughout the dim cabaret. In her drug-induced, hyperactive state, Ryz'n was aware of it, cognizant of everything all at once. Nick had generated this kind of raucous, fun-loving, electric atmosphere every night when he had led the band, though it had gone missing since his absence. Yes, Ry understood, this raw, earthy brand of good times was what the Halo executives had hoped the band would produce when the big record company had bought GRT originally from old "Honest Abe" Saperstein and his Sable label. However, absent Nicky, Halo's misplaced hopes had gone unfulfilled. Ryz'n knew it had been her fault for being such a prude. Sheena and Mick would have gone along, but Ry had held them all back. But not tonight! Tonight, because of Nick's presence, a couple pink pills and a unique brand of dry ice sniffing, all became clear as crystal to Ryz'n. Ryz'n grinned. In a perverse way, Nicky was making it happen all

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over again, the electricity, the excitement, everything. He was the catalyst, the generator for her quaking body and pulsating soul.

These thoughts raced through the back of her brain, yet Ryz'n never lagged in her smoky rendition of "Sweet Lovin.'" However, she did slow the tempo even more, via her blind hand signals to Mick behind her. Facing Nick and staring straight at him, Ry closed her eyes. She was in control. The lusty, mesmerizing power of her peculiar sex welled up within her and oozed out her pores right along with her glistening sweat. She began to bump and grind her hips voluptuously again, but for real now, slowly and tentatively at first, building to a crescendo. In her mind, she was strokin' it with Nick now, right where she wanted him. Her vocals had lost all sense of Nick's intended lyrics, Unashamed, she lapsed into genuine, unintelligible lyrical gasps and groans. "Ummm," she purred through the stand-up mike. The crowd groaned back in response. From the corner of her eye, Ry spied Sheena's jaw drop open, but to her kid sister's credit, Sheena kept hitting her licks. Everyone knew Ry was building to a climax.

She scooted forward, propelled by the successive thrusting of her hips, synching the reception of the mike head bouncing wildly off her taut skirt back out towards the audience with each thrust. Mickey timed his drum beat accordingly and the song took on a burlesque tone. Jimmy Jax fell in with Mick perfectly. They had seen this number before at Naughty Nathan's. Sheena belatedly picked up on the change of pace, too. Then, Ryz'n stopped abruptly. She had the audience in the palm of her hand and she knew it. Stationary now, she shimmied her pulsating, upper body in a manner that would have done Gran'ma Jessie proud, while her pelvis began gyrating like the queen of all Hula dancers, another native dance she and Sheena had studied and mastered as youngsters. Behind her, Mickey started a slow drum roll.

Men, crowding up to the stage, shoved women aside. Some fell or were pushed to the ground. Oblivious to the crowd, from behind closed eyes, Ryz'n saw only Nicky. Her quivering hands, climbed skyward as she inched forward toward the edge of the stage, widening her stance, with her hem creeping ever higher. Mickey's drum roll beat louder and Jax and Sheena plucked a solitary note sporadically to accentuate Ry's more violent quakes. Ryz'n seemed about to explode, she could feel it coming ... Then, abruptly, her hands stopped quivering and she waved a lofty, upraised, index finger in a circular motion, signaling the finish was near.

From his perch about fifty to sixty feet away, Dixie noticed her latest action. "I'll be damned," muttered Dixie to himself, in partial admiration and forgetting her prior admonition against damning himself. "She *is* in control. It's all an act! She knows exactly what she's doing. I never would have thought ..."

Ending the number, Ry gave one final, forward violent erotic thrust of her pelvis, knocking the live, stand-up mike off balance. The live mike stand skittered precariously on its base across and off the stage, into her admiring audience. Ryz'n had given the other, the dead, dangling mike plenty of slack about the nape of her neck, so that her explosive forward pelvic thrust had propelled the dead microphone a couple

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feet out over the audience. However, the crowd was too concerned with trying to rein in the other, live mike, which went off, crackling like a lit roman candle that had fallen into a box of fireworks. The fallen, live mike picked up shouts and screams from the crowd at the base of the small stage, thus intensifying their frenzy by emitting chaotic, static high-pitched tones. The crowd writhed before her as a rattlesnake caught in a sack. Women screamed and a panic took hold. Ry, however, concentrated on the backward swing of the dangling mike head, as she took up the slack.

Mick's drum roll intensified. Ry quickly surveyed the audience and found Nick. She sensed the power, the same power the tiny dancer at Naughty Nathan's must have sensed that night the band had hired Jimmy Jax. Ry spread her knees, opening her broad hips, and pinched her butt forward, so that her skimpy skirt rode ever higher. Her body shimmied snugly like a gyrating wizard. She snagged the electric cord on the returning, downward swing of the dead mike, as the wire caught the taut, elastic hem of her foam green, ultra mini-skirt just a few inches above the mike head. The momentum of the heavy head whipped abruptly upward under the exterior elastic hem, disappearing up under her tightly stretched, Lycra skirt. Ryz'n gasped loudly and abruptly snapped her knees together, catching the mike head between her thighs. With perfect timing, she simultaneously fired both index fingers straight down sumptuously toward the ground, prompting Mick to smash his symbols and the band members to close the number out spontaneously and, amazingly, in unison—even Sheena ended on time. *So much for practice makes perfect.*

Ry's left shoulder strap slipped down her arm. Sweat rolled off her in rivulets, as Ry slumped on her knees to the stage. She leaned her head back with her feet on either side of her rump, as only a spry child can manage. Her sweat-dripping, coarse hair matted haphazardly across her face, neck, shoulders and surging chest. Her supple, highly trained athletic body served her well, enabling her to lean back like a contortionist. She lowered her sweat-drenched hair to the stage floor behind her and began once more to shimmy her upper torso like a true Rakasse dancer. Sweat dripped from her leaving little puddles on the stage. She turned her head sideways looking for Nick, seeking his approval. From the stage floor, the surging crowd blocked her view. Her wide-spread knees stretched her skirt so tightly; she thought she might pop a seam. Yet she managed to hold the mike head tight, snug up between her thighs.

Bouncers ran forward to control the pandemonium erupting on the dance floor. A young man jumped up onto the carpeted stage. Ry raised her head from the floor in time to intercept him with a glare. With the eyes of a vixen, she stared him down, halting the guy in his tracks, controlling him as a snake charmer would command a cobra. With a penetrating look, Ry commanded the patron, to stop dead in his tracks. Keeping her knees spread apart, like a little kid, she leaned back on her downturned insteps. Ry raised her head and shoulders and, with her chin and eyes, motioned her admirer back, off the stage. He complied. Ry returned her attention to her finale. Leaning her dripping head forward, she kept her neck and head erect with her torso yet slouched behind her center of gravity. Partially prostrate, Ry reached her left hand up under her foam green mini-skirt. She seized the dead mike and flipped on the switch,

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before she pulled it out from between her upper thighs. The mike screeched and sparked eerily, jolting her. Then it crackled and popped, burning one hole and then another through her sheer stocking hose, singeing the inside of her right thigh. The pain thrilled her as pain often did. Ry held the sparking mike to her skin, amid the pops and crackles. The scent of her burning flesh drifted to her nostrils, enervating her even more. Turbulent, staccato noises jumped from the mike through the band's powerful amps. Fear spread fear amongst the patrons.

Absorbing the pain as if it were pleasure, Ry extracted the mike slowly from its hiding place under her skirt, hoping for and receiving yet another burn and tearing a hole in her panty hose as well. As she dragged the mike head lazily against her nylon hose, shredding the nylon in the process, the scratchy feedback became more of a rushing noise, as if a freight train roared down the track. Wired for sound, jacked to the max, a shocked Ryz'n grinned devilishly, flicking the switch on and off and squeezed her thighs together more tightly, heightening the white noise to where it seemed as though a train truly was right on top of them running right through *The Loft*.

People panicked, thinking the club was caving or the amplifiers were blowing. The crowd shoved, pushed and cursed itself. Then, just as unexpectedly as it had begun, the rushing sound of the locomotive disappeared into silence when Ryz'n extracted the mike completely, switching the thing off and held it up to halt the panic. Then, devilishly, Ry flipped the switch "on" to a resounding crackle-pop and high-pitched squeal. She slyly raised the live mike to her lips fetchingly and whispered a simple, husky, and a seductively sultry: "Thank you." Ry held her pursed lips together, winking slyly towards her husband and at the two young men, whom she spotted just feet away, who were about to crawl over the edge of the stage.

Satisfied with her scintillating performance, Ryz'n remained, leaning back on her heels with her knees spread on the stage floor before her. She slid her feet further up under her buttocks and spread her knees as far out as her snug skirt would allow. For a few seconds chaos abated. In control of the universe, she would have no trouble controlling the two drooling slobs before her. From her unusually climactic, back-lying position, Ryz'n bowed as deeply as she could from the chest with one arm out to her side and the other folded across her chest, still holding the mic, just under her bosom nearly popping herself out from her skimpy, yellow latex lair.

Ry hunched her back to bow once more from the neck, as she blew the audience a scintillating, electric, white-noise kiss across the top of the microphone. The blown kiss sounded like the great north wind rushing before a winter storm. She spread her knees further and stretched her skirt so tight that it crawled high up her thighs, lighting the fuse. As her two ardent admirers at the edge of the stage filled their eyes with her elevated hemline, Ry made eye contact with the pair and she breathed deeply. Then her coy wink touched off the dynamite. All hell broke loose, starting with those lust-filled two, who jumped on Ryz'n, as if she were the turkey at a Thanksgiving feast. The rest of the audience lost control, too. Fist fights erupted as men positioned themselves to assault the stage and women again fell or were pushed to the floor and trampled.