

## *The Beginning*

“I’m not a child no more,” Lainey boasted out loud, grinning and admiring her youthful curves in the bedroom mirror. Just the thought of being sixteen and almost seventeen had made her forget about pulling her hair up in ponytails anymore and wearing the blue jeans she’d purchased at the Old Navy store in the mall. Now only a designer label would do for Lainey and her best friend April, whom she shared her evenings, chatting on the telephone about their classmates, asking questions like, “who are you hanging out with this weekend; and is he going to be there.” Being sixteen was a big deal, and the only images dancing through their heads were boys, boys, and more boys.

Each morning Lainey spent an extra thirty minutes curling her shoulder-length hair, trying on her skinny designer jeans from Neiman Marcus and darting her caramel cheeks with matte makeup,

which did nothing for her already flawless skin. She was beyond pretty, her classmates whispered, she was gorgeous, and all the boys' hormones bounced speedily around whenever she walked down the hallway. April was equally as attractive, except she was not petite, more the model—statuette type who may have enjoyed a game of basketball with the boys before succumbing to the pressures of her peers and high school. Each of them enjoyed the company of the opposite sex and mostly flirting with guys neither of them wanted to go out with. It also included Mr. Pilla, their science teacher.

Chemistry was held every morning at 10:00. And because Mr. Pilla was so tall, dark, and handsome, some of the girls took his class just to stare at him.

Lainey admired Mr. Pilla and often was caught gazing at him without flinching while twiddling with her shoulder-length tresses.

Lainey raised her hand. "Mr. Pilla, I need some help with this problem." She turned and elbowed April, grinning. April, who was often lost daydreaming out the window at the school flag swaying with the wind, jumped. "What is it?"

All of the girls' eyes were fixed on Mr. Pilla as he confidently walked to the back of the classroom where Lainey, April, and two other girls sat. Each step he made clicked on the cement tile. And as the sound grew louder, their eyes grew wider and each of them stared without blinking as if they were in a trance. Lainey grabbed April's arm and squeezed it. The rest of them snickered out loud and their eyes rolled from his head to his toes.

Lainey adjusted herself in the chair. "What can I help you with, Lainey?" he said and bent down and gazed her into her big brown eyes. She twirled her curls and her cheeks blushed at the sound of his deep, baritone voice. One of her male classmates grunted and

shook his head.

He turned toward her. “You squeezer,” he said. “All y’all back there are stupid.”

“Shut up,” she shot back at him.

“Yeah, mind your own business,” another girl said, smacking her lips.

“Calm down now,” said Mr. Pilla. “What is the problem?”

April slid closer to Lainey and studied Mr. Pilla as he looked down at the two young girls.

Lainey pointed her finger at the chemistry problem and continued to stare into his gray eyes. His cheeks flushed pink and eyes danced at the attention of the young girl.

Mr. Pilla cleared his throat and adjusted his necktie.

“Is this it?” he said and paused. “You need to spend some time with the periodic table, learn the qualities of the elements,” he reminded her in his stern, authoritative tone.

“But I’m having a hard time with this. I can’t seem to get this mess,” she said in a high-pitched teenage voice, aggravated. Then she tossed her pencil on the desk.

“Why don’t you stay after school this evening? I will go over it with you.” And he winked as he turned to walk away.

April and two other girls nudged each other and giggled.

“He is so fine,” April whispered.

“He is still the teacher, though,” one of the girls replied.

Lainey grinned. “He’s tight.” And she ignored the girl’s comment.

“That is so true,” one of them replied and gave April a high five.

“She’s stupid,” Brandon said.

“Oh, you’re just jealous, ‘cause nobody looks at you,” Lainey

said.

He fanned her away and turned back around.

That same evening as Mr. Pilla reviewed her homework, he asked her, “Do you have a boyfriend?”

“No, not really” she said, twirling her shoulder-length hair in nervous circles.

“Are you staying away from them?”

“No, the guys around here are just so immature. They don’t know how to treat a girl,” she said, cunningly.

“They are, are they?” he commented. And as he spoke she could feel his eyes exploring her petite, yet shapely figure. Lainey weighed no more than 115 pounds, soaking wet. And she felt jittery when his gaze traveled from her big brown eyes to her thighs and back again. She sank back in her seat and smiled suggestively at him.

Just a short time after flirting with him on a day when the rain wouldn’t stop, pouring down hard, its melody thunderous and potent, Lainey lay quietly and listened from between another woman’s bedsheets. His wife was closer to the age of her mother than herself. When he turned his back to her, just as she began to caress him, she wept. Tears rushed like the rain sliding down the windowpane in streams down her cheeks as she faced his broad, hairy back. He was nonresponsive, tight-lipped, and rude.

She reached over and lightly tapped his shoulder. “What’s wrong, Sal?”

“You know what’s wrong,” he snapped, and turned to face her, veins protruding from his neck.

“I figured you cared about me,” she said regretfully, and then massaged her forehead. She was depressed about her ways and how a man twice her age and her teacher had managed to become a part of her life.

He sat up in the bed. “Are you that childish? I thought you knew how to take care of yourself, thought you knew as much as any grown woman. Girl.”

She sniffed and snorted her tears back, reflecting on how mean he’d been, since neither of them should have been together anyway. “I’m sorry.”

“You’re sorry—what about me? My reputation is tarnished. How does this look?”

And what about me? she thought. And regretfully her thoughts flashed back to the first day in class and how she admired his muscular frame, olive skin, and the way he strutted across the classroom, and they all admired him.

When he’d finished showing her how to start to solve the basic chemistry problem, he said, “Do you want a ride home?”

She didn’t hesitate to answer him. “Yes, it is getting kind of late.” She glanced at the clock on the wall; it was 4:25.

In his truck, he reached over, grabbed her tiny fingers, and squeezed them. She didn’t flinch, just smiled. Then he rested his hand on her thigh. He kept it there the entire ride home. And many times afterward, as they rode through the city on his way to his house, he would reach over and squeeze her thigh and rest his hand there the twenty-five minutes it took to get from the city to his suburban home.

“Duck your head down,” he demanded when they turned down the street with moderately priced homes shadowed by tall oak trees and well-kept shrubbery. He drove straight into the garage of the brick home and let the garage door down.

“Where’s your wife?” Lainey asked, looking around for a visible sign of life. And her eyes took her to a neatly decorated family room with little flair and color.

“She works at night in the city,” he answered, and his deep voice seemed to echo off the walls of the sparsely furnished house.

“What time will she be home?”

“You don’t have to worry your pretty little head. The cat is the only other occupant in this house. And besides, my wife loves her job so much she rarely ever takes off. She enjoys giving orders. She usually gets home around twelve- thirty,” he said, smiling, and put his hand around her tiny waist.

Lainey’s big brown eyes panned the room. The house felt empty, a bit cold. It was decorated with contemporary furniture and on the walls were pictures of places she’d never been before. On the couch sat the Persian cat with deep-set blue eyes, watching her like the stranger she was. She rubbed her tiny hands together and took baby steps toward the wall.

“Where’s that?” Lainey asked, admiring the pictures of different places around the world hanging on the wall.

“That’s Italy, and this is the villa we stayed in,” Mr. Pilla said, pointing at this house on a hill.

“It’s beautiful there,” she said admiring the hilly terrain and crystal-clear blue sky, and wondered if she’d ever visit the place where they made the shoes she greatly admired.

He grabbed her hand and led her into his bedroom.

“Is she your wife?”

“Yeah.”

Lainey picked up the picture frame off the dresser and examined it closely.

“She looks like a nurse.” And she put the frame back down and turned it toward the wall. Sal’s wife was chunky; however, she had a pure beauty and flawless skin.

“Come on,” Sal said and led her to the bed where they undressed

and he put in a CD for them to listen to.

“I can’t be here long. My parents think I’m at the game.” With each word, her voice quivered.

“I’ll have you back in time,” he said as he reached over and pulled her close to him.

It took several visits before Lainey was comfortable in his home, but soon got used to it being one of their places to rendezvous. And most Fridays as soon as the sun started to slide beneath the clouds, this naughty ritual began.

“Mom, can you or Dad give me a ride to the school?” Lainey diligently asked. Moments before she’d text-messaged Sal, telling him she’d be there.

“Sure, what time is the game?”

“Everything starts around seven o’clock. You know we are the state champions. And right now the Madison Bears are undefeated, so can you hurry up? Everybody is going to be there.”

Her parents believed she enjoyed sports. And after they dropped her off in front of the school to cheer the star team on, she’d wait patiently until their car turned the corner and dug deep in her purse for her cell phone and dial the numbers she’d programmed to memory.

“I’ll be right there; give me ten minutes. I’m just around the block,” he said.

“Okay, please hurry, I don’t want no one to see me.” Then she would wait, her head standing at attention whenever a car drove by, and at times darting behind telephone poles and buildings when friends almost caught her.

He’d opened the door from the inside. “Get in.” As soon as she hopped in, he’d spin off, scraping his tires against the pavement, making sure that no one saw him pick her up.

Just two nights before, they'd shared an evening of intimacy at her teacher's house.

And tonight, there was more on her young mind than to freshen up as she normally did. She slid from between his muscular arms as he dozed off to sleep.

She dressed. Then she woke him.

Sal rubbed his eyes and swung his legs across the bed and sat there. The frowns on his face were still indented in his forehead.

"I can't believe this shit is happening," he said, running his hands through his thick, dark hair.

Lainey's eyes welled up and she fought back the urge to scream.

"I'm seventeen and with a man twice my age," she mumbled under her breath and shook her head. "I'm in a lot of trouble."

Nine months had passed since she had first really noticed his superior looks-- authoritative, he demanded attention. He was fine and had the confidence the young boys lacked.

"I love you," he said one night as they lay cuddled up in one of the local motels. Lainey smiled at the thought.

"I love you too," she replied without hesitation.

Impressed by the interest of a grown man, Lainey would do anything to please her teacher and pass his chemistry class. And after a month of flirting, she succumbed to the rashness of his passion and her own desires. And for Lainey, she felt like a grown woman and it was the beginning of her newfound womanhood.

Many nights, he'd softly whisper in her ear, "I love your body." Then he'd lick her breasts and suckle on them like a baby does its mother, and soon after she'd tuck herself contentedly close to his body, unleashing her nature, feeling warmth. His breath, short and sharp, pierced through her ears as he licked her neck and back.



With each stroke, she lost herself. She wasn't a teen anymore. She was his woman and he was her man. When the moments of passion subsided, she would lay her head on his hairy chest and stroke him tenderly.

“You're my little princess,” he said.

“I know,” she mumbled and crawled from under the forbidden sheets; washed, dressed, and he would drive her back to the high school. She would hop out, walk around the corner and wait for her parents, thinking about the night.