

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

LAWRENCE

BLOCK

WRITING AS ANDREW SHAW



CAMPUS TRAMP



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CHAPTER ONE

THE GIRL HAD SOFT honey-blond hair that she wore in a long pony tail. Her pale green sweat-hugged breasts that were alive with youth and full with a maturity that didn't go with the little-girl face or the virginal innocence in her hazel eyes. The skirt that was tight on rounded hips and muscular thighs was a Black Watch plaid, with dark greens and blues predominating.

The girl was sitting on a train. The seat next to hers was unoccupied, and she was sprawled out so that she managed to take up both of the seats. Her head was close to the window, and if her eyes had been open she would have been able to look out on fields where corn had been recently harvested or fields where a few sheep or cows wandered peacefully. But the girl was deep in thought and her eyes were closed.

The girl's name was Linda Shepard. The train's name was the Ohio State Limited, a New York Central passenger train that went from New York to Cincinnati via Albany, Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo, Cleveland, Columbus, Springfield and Dayton. The girl had boarded the train in Cleveland and she would leave it in Springfield to catch a Greyhound bus to Clifton.

There was, as far as she knew, only one reason in the world for a person to go to Clifton, Ohio. The town was the home of three thousand people who were born, went to school, worked, married, and finally died in Clifton. Some of them managed to get away from the town at some stage in their development, and she was fairly confident that anybody who left Clifton would be careful never to return.

But Clifton was also the site of Clifton College, an institution of learning which managed to attract another 1500 souls to Clifton's meagre population. The college, which seemed to Linda to be the only bright spot in Clifton's favor, was the reason for her presence on the Ohio State Limited.

She was excited. She was quite motionless in her seat and her eyes were closed, but she was excited nevertheless. She was about to enter Clifton College as a freshman, and she knew that she was going to enter a totally different world at the same time. Clifton was only a little over 200 miles from Cleveland, but it was going to be much farther away as far as she was concerned.

Linda was eighteen. Except for summers at camp and the class trip to Washington during Eastern vacation of her senior year, she had spent all of those eighteen years in Cleveland, living with her mother and father in a moderate-sized brick house in Shaker Heights. When she went out on dates she went with boys she knew from school, generally boys she had known for most of her life. When she did things they were the things everybody else did. Her life in Cleveland was by no means dull, but the feeling persisted that it wasn't entirely *her* life—she had no responsibility for herself, no choice as to what she did or what role she played.

But college would be different. Not the academic part of it, not that. To tell the truth, she thought she didn't much care about books or classes. If all she had wanted was an education she could have done much better in her own home town at Western Reserve. No, education in the classroom was important, but there were other things that were a good deal more important.

Growing up.

Thinking.

Maturing.

Learning to be a woman.

She stretched in her seat and glanced out of the window. *Learning to be a woman*. She wondered what it was that would change a girl to a woman. Age? She was eighteen now, and that left her

somewhere in the middle between Girl and Woman. She was old enough to marry but not old enough to vote. ~~Old enough to drink hard liquor in New York but too young to drink anything stronger than 3.2 beer in Ohio.~~

Old enough, under the law, to let a man make love to her.

She closed her eyes again and a smile bloomed on her face, a gentle and secret smile, as if she knew something that nobody else in the entire world knew. *Old enough to make love*, she thought to herself, and she thought about making love and what it was and when it was wrong and when it was right and what a wild, strange, wonderful mystery it was.

Linda Shepard was a virgin.

This was hardly extraordinary. Howard and Norma Shepard would have been quite justifiably surprised and annoyed if their daughter hadn't managed to get through Corry Senior High School with her maidenhead intact, and Linda herself took it for granted that she would graduate from high school with her virginity unimpaired. Nice girls from Shaker Heights simply didn't have sexual intercourse during high school. It was as simple as that, and there had never been an occasion when it seemed either desirable or proper for Linda to change her status.

Well, she reflected, that wasn't altogether true. There was a time when she came much closer to sex than she had expected—a rather pleasant time, all things considered. She had been dating Chuck Connor steadily, going out with him two or three times a week and seeing him in school almost every day. They went to movies and parties and dances, and they spent more and more time parked on a quiet lane in the blue Pontiac that Chuck borrowed from his father.

More time and more time.

They were both seniors. Chuck was taller than she was, a rangy boy with sandy hair and freckles on his face. He was a good athlete—captain of the basketball team that year and a major letter man on track. You couldn't call him handsome, but he was extremely attractive and quite sure of himself socially.

He kissed her goodnight after their first date. Their goodnight kisses took longer as time went by and it wasn't long before they were kissing in the car in front of her house instead of on her front porch. And she enjoyed the kissing, with Chuck's strong arms gentle around her and his mouth pressed to hers.

From the porch to the car. From in front of the house to a lane where no houses had been built and where passing cars were few and far between. From kissing to necking, from necking to heavy petting.

You had to stop somewhere. You were the girl, so you had to call the shots and tell Chuck when to stop, had to insist upon it and make sure he let go of you and put his hands on the wheel and turned the key in the ignition and drove you home. He expected it. He wanted it that way, because that was the way the pattern demanded it. That was the standard routine, with the boy going as far as he could and the girl making sure that he didn't go too far.

The boy couldn't stop of his own accord. If he did he lost face and seemed less a man for it, although Linda would have been willing to bet that there were times Chuck would have preferred to stop before they both got so excited that stopping was an effort and a frustration. But that was the pattern, and when you lived in Shaker Heights and went to Corry Senior High School you played things by the book and stuck close to the pattern.

It was a tough pattern to stick to. The people who figured out the pattern evidently didn't take into consideration the fact that sometimes you didn't want to stop, sometimes you were a girl who felt like a woman and who wanted to be treated like a woman and loved like a woman. But it was easier to keep

the pattern than to break it.

Most of the time.

But one time was different from the others. She remembered it very clearly—it was the night of the senior prom, with exams coming up in a week or so and graduation only a few weeks in the future. They went to the prom together and danced almost every dance, and then she and Chuck went off with Sue Lewis and Jack Morgan and drank rye whiskey from a flask that Jack carried in the glove compartment of his car. She had never had straight liquor before—her drinking had been limited to a very occasional highball before dinner with her parents. The rye burned its way down her throat, but after the second gulp from the flask she didn't mind the hot sensation in her throat any more. It was pleasant—warm and relaxing and buoyant.

She didn't get drunk, just a little bit high. And then Sue and Jack went off in Jack's car and she and Chuck were alone. Chuck's hand found hers and led her to their car and they drove off into the night without saying a word. She sat close to him and rested her head on his shoulder, and he slipped one arm around her and guided the car easily with his left hand.

Their usual parking place was empty, the rest of the lane deserted. Chuck eased the Pontiac off the road and turned off the ignition. Then he doused the lights.

He turned to her.

She remembered it clearly, very clearly, every detail fresh and sharp in her mind. Her eyes were closed now and she went over what followed in her mind, picturing it and feeling it and living it again.

...

His arms went around her and her mouth came up to meet his. His lips were gentle at first, very gentle, and she liked the way the musky odor of his sweat mixed and mingled with his after-shave lotion. His lips bore down upon hers and her mouth opened. His tongue snuck between her lips, running over her lips and teeth, touching her tongue.

The kiss took a long time to end. Then he released her and looked deep into her eyes, his own eyes boring into hers. She knew what was on his mind—there could be only one thing, and it was a thing neither of them wanted to talk about. There was so little time, hardly any time at all before he would be off to work at a Canadian camp for the summer while she remained in the city. Then she would go to Clifton while he went east to M.I.T. Very little time, just a few weeks.

For a year now they had belonged to each other. For a year they had spent all their free time together, getting to know each other, starting to fall in love.

So little time left.

"Linda," he said. That was all, just her name, but there was a huskiness in his voice that said all the things he couldn't say.

He kissed her again. She pulled him close to her so that her breasts were warm and tight against his chest and this time it was her tongue that probed deep into his mouth, her tongue that sought his and sent little shivers of desire through both of them.

And this kiss lasted longer than the one before it. When they forced themselves apart they exchanged another deep, searching look and she could read his thoughts in his eyes. He wanted her, he wanted her very much, wanted more than the kissing and touching and loving-by-inches that she had permitted him so far.

She wanted it, too.

When he kissed her a third time his hand found her breast and held it tenderly like a little bird, holding a baby bird. She was wearing a frilly formal and she wished silently that she was wearing something else because the frills were too much of a barrier between her breast and his hand. She

wished that she was wearing nothing, nothing at all, so that his hands could hold her and stroke her and love her and make her feel like a woman.

“Linda.”

She looked at him.

“Honey, let’s get into the back seat.”

There were beads of sweat standing out on his forehead and she wondered if she was perspiring with desire herself. She looked at him, hungry but frightened.

“Why?”

“It’s roomier back there.”

“There’s enough room up front.”

He took a deep breath. Then he said: “Damn steering wheel keeps getting in my way. Come on honey—let’s get in the back.”

Why not? she thought. She nodded silently and he smiled. He got out of the car and walked around to open the door for her. It made her smile, the way he was such a gentleman even at a time like this opening doors for her when both of them were so hot for each other they could have just as easily hopped over the seat to save time.

She got out of the car and let him open the back door for her. She climbed inside and he followed her and took her in his arms, his mouth clamping down on hers. She felt the blood rushing through her veins and she ached for him to kiss her, to touch her, to take her and possess her completely.

As he went to kiss her again he tried to get his hand into the front of her dress. The dress was cut low enough so that the cleft between her two full breasts was barely visible, but it was tight on her body and he was forced to reach for her breast awkwardly.

She pushed him away, whispering: “I’ll take care of it.” Then her hands reached behind her back and played with first the hook-and-eye attachment and then the zipper. Then she shrugged her shoulders and the dress fell away from her to the waist.

She went into his arms and his hand fastened on her breast. She could feel his fingers through the lacy black bra as he kneaded the firm flesh lovingly. She began to breathe faster and he kissed her again, his fingers still gentle but more insistent.

She pushed him away and he stared at her. Then she flashed him a smile and she could see the tension go out of his face.

“Let me get rid of this,” she said. Her hands went around her back once more and a second later the bra was off, unneeded and abandoned on the floor of the car. She looked up at him and saw the emotion shining in his eyes, equal parts of awe and desire and admiration.

He reached out one hand hesitantly and the tips of his fingers brushed the nipple of her breast. A shiver went through her but she remained motionless, pulse racing, breathing deeply.

He had never seen her like this before, she knew. In the past she had felt the thrill of his hands on her bare breasts but never before had she stripped to the waist for him to look upon and touch her. Before she used to undo her bra so that he could reach up under her sweater and hold her, but this was different, somehow bolder and far more exciting.

“Linda,” he said. His voice was hoarse.

She didn’t say anything. She didn’t have to.

“You’re beautiful,” he said. “I can barely believe how beautiful you are.”

Sitting there so close to him with his eyes warm on her breasts she knew she was beautiful. She felt beautiful, beautiful with her skin smooth and cool and white, beautiful with her breasts bare and firm and pink at the nipples.

She said: "Touch me, Chuck."

~~He pulled her around and forced her down so that she lay on her back across him with her head~~ cradled in the crook of his right arm. He cupped both her breasts with his hands and held them, squeezing them gently, and she felt her nipples growing taut and firm under his touch. His mouth found hers and he kissed her. Then he bent over her and kissed her breasts, first one and then the other, and she thought she would burst from the pure sensual excitement that was coursing through her young body.

When they broke apart this time neither of them was able to breathe easily. This was unlike anything they had ever experienced before. This wasn't kid stuff, high school kissing games in a parked car on a lonely road. They were caught up instead in something new and different, something hot and exciting, and they didn't know what to do about it. Love didn't enter into it at all—it was passion, sheer physical passion, and it was changing them from children to adults.

He kept kissing her, kept touching and kissing and licking her breasts, kept exciting her until she thought she was going to go out of her mind with the need for him. Then she felt his hand on her leg, on first her calf and then her knee. Her breathing became even heavier and she wanted to shout for him to stop. He had to stop, had to stop or in a moment she wouldn't be able to stop him. And it was getting dangerous now. It was getting far too close to something she didn't want to happen.

Or did she want it? Half of her wanted it. Her body wanted him, wanted him so much she could fairly scream for the want. But in her mind she was afraid, afraid and unready for what threatened to take place.

His hand was on her thigh. Her eyes had dropped shut but she opened them for a moment and saw the expression in his eyes. And she wondered if she would be able to stop him even if she wanted to.

His hand moved higher. His fingers were playing desperate little games with the skin on the inside of her thighs and she began to writhe involuntarily on the seat of the car, her body taking up the rhythms and movements of love easily, instinctively, like a baby automatically suckling on the nipple placed between his gums.

He moved away from her, his hands still working their subtle magic on her, and he was pushing her dress up over her thighs to her waist, baring the black panties that matched the bra. He tore his shirt open and flung himself down on top of her so that her breasts pressed into his bare chest. Her head went back and her eyelids were clenched shut. Without even thinking she reached her arms around him and crushed him to her, holding him and loving him, wanting him with a brand-new passion that seemed to grow more intense every second, needing him so much it was killing her.

Then he drew away from her once again. She couldn't even move while his fingers slipped under the elastic band of the flimsy panties and pulled them down over her hips, past her thighs and knees and calves and feet until they joined the matching bra on the floor.

When he touched her where she was itching to be touched a hot spasm of desire shot through her whole body and she moaned once, a whimpering little moan that only served to intensify his desire. His fingers continued to stroke her there and she churned under his touch, a thing of passion and virgin fire, a little girl who had turned into a woman who wanted her man.

She opened her eyes to see him fumbling with his own clothing, loosening his belt and lowering his pants and preparing to take her. She wanted to shout, to scream, and she even managed to open her mouth for a scream. But his fingers reached for her and touched her again where he had never touched her before that night.

The scream died in her throat.

Her brain was shouting. Her brain was shrieking warning after warning to her but she let it

warnings pass unheeded. She turned off her brain and listened only to her body.

He said: "Linda."

If he hadn't said anything, if he had just continued to do what he had started to do she would have been powerless to stop him and her virginity would have become a memory in the back seat of the blue Pontiac. But his voice murmuring her name came like a knife to slash her into awareness. In one motion she pushed him away and rolled over on her side, away from him.

"Linda! You can't stop now!"

But now she could stop. It was easy now for her to stop, very easy, and all his arguments would not change her mind. Finally, at his request, she touched him the way he showed her to touch him and did the things with her hands that he wanted her to do while he lay with his hands on her thighs and his face buried in the gully between her breasts. She held him and touched him and squirmed under his touch until it happened for him and he lay all weak and limp and flaccid in her arms. She wished that his hands on her had brought her the relief that she had given him, but she was still tense and unfulfilled, restless and unsatisfied. She held him in her arms and gradually her own body ceased trembling. They lay in each other's arms for several minutes; then he sat up and they dressed and drove home in silence.

It was never the same again for them. She knew that if he had known more about sex, if he had known what to do, he would have taken her and possessed her without giving her the opportunity of refusing him. And he knew that he had done something wrong, something clumsy, and that her refusal was something which could have been avoided if he had known what he was doing.

They continued to see each other. But when he left to work at the Canadian summer camp they parted with a feeling of mutual ease. They said the things that high school lovers always said—they would meet again at vacation time, she would come up to M.I.T. for a weekend—all the phrases that were said automatically and forgotten just as automatically. Something valuable had existed for them but they were too young to take advantage of it.

And now it was gone.

The memory of that night was enough to set her off. Her hands began to tremble of their own accord and it took her a moment or two to still them. Desire welled up in her, desire not for Chuck Connor but for a man, a real man, a man who would make a woman of her.

Because she had already decided that she was not going to stay a virgin forever. That may have been the best course back in the dark ages, but nowadays a woman had the right to be a woman, the right to seek love and take it where she found it.

And she was going to do just that.

At high school it was wrong. At Corry Senior High School a good girl didn't let a boy make love to her. But at Clifton College things would be different. She would meet a man, a man she wanted and a man who wanted her.

And they would make love.

It was as simple as that. She wasn't going to force herself to wait, not for a wedding ring on her finger or for a declaration of eternal love. She had waited long enough, and now even the law recognized her right to use her body as she saw fit.

The next man. The next man whom she wanted would be the man to whom she would give herself. He would take her and he would love her, and he would know just what to do and how to do it, and he would make her body sing with the joy of being alive.

The next man ...

~~She closed her eyes, thinking of the man, the man who would make love to her. She tried to picture him in her mind, tried to imagine what he would look like. Her mind conjured up pictures and her head swam with the idea of it all.~~

She dozed, half asleep and half awake, half thinking and half dreaming. Then the conductor shouted "Springfield!" and the train pulled into a grimy little city and finally pulled to a jerky stop at the terminal.

She practically jumped out of her seat. Her trunk was being shipped Railway Express, but she had a suitcase with her and she had a tough time hauling it down from the overhead rack. A middle-aged man helped her with it and then she was off, suitcase in hand, waiting at the platform before the train came to a stop. Her heart was beating wildly and she couldn't wait for the train to stop so that she could hurry off to Clifton.

The train stopped. She let the brakeman help her off the train and waved away the porter who offered to carry her suitcase for her. There were half a dozen cabs parked by the side of the terminal and she hopped into the first one in line, saying "Greyhoundterminal" and making it sound like one single word.

"Where yuh headed, Miss?"

She told him she was going to Clifton College.

"Don't take the bus, Miss. Won't be one headed there for another four, five hours. You don't want to wait that long, do you?"

"How else can I get there?"

"Shucks," he said, "it's only nine miles. The rate by cab is only three and a half dollars. Why don't you let me run you out there?"

"Well—"

"Listen," he said, "I'll make it three. The flat rate's three-and-a-half, but this way I can stop off at Husted for a cup of coffee with my wife. I live out there, you see."

"All right," she said, thinking that she would have paid the three-fifty anyway if he had waited a minute more. She settled back into the seat and closed her eyes as the taxi made its way down High Street to Route 68. The driver turned left at 68 and headed out toward Clifton, and she took a deep breath and held it, thinking about the man, the man she was waiting for, the man who would make love to her.

CHAPTER TWO

RUTH HARDY HAD HAIR AS BLACK as midnight, short black hair clipped into an Italian style haircut that bore a remarkable resemblance to the posterior of a duck. Ruth Hardy was five feet five inches tall, an inch or so shorter than Linda. She was slender, with lean but well-formed legs and tight buttocks. Her breasts were small but perfectly formed, little girl's breasts that were rounded and firm and eminently touchable.

Ruth Hardy's face was pretty, with a small red mouth and sharp blue eyes that looked straight at a person. Her gaze never wandered and she rarely blinked. She looked at people as she did everything else—neatly and precisely with no waste motion.

She was Linda's roommate. They shared a little cubicle in Evans Hall, a tiny unprepossessing room with a double-decker bed, two desks, two dressers, a closet that was not quite large enough for two people and a sink that dripped, its bowl stained from the dripping of the hard water. The water, with high iron content typical of the region, managed to do two things—it stained the sink a sickish red-brown and it forced a girl to spend twice as much time as usual washing her hair.

Linda had just finished washing her hair. First she had showered, and in this respect the hard water was good. It left her feeling cleaner, without the slippery feeling of a softwater shower. But her hair, God, she had had to lather it a good half-dozen times before she was done. Now it hung down her back, wet and limp, as she sat in a chair in the room.

Ruth was sprawled on her bed. She had the top bunk, and both the girls were quite satisfied with the arrangement.

"I'm a sound sleeper," Ruth had explained. "This way you can give me a good kick when the alarm goes off."

They became friends quite readily. Linda decided that she liked this girl, this sharp, fast-talking little thing from New York City. And, she reflected, it was good that they had taken to each other as readily as they did. There were no fraternities or sororities at Clifton, since social groups of that nature were hardly needed on a campus of 1500. She and Ruth would be stuck with each other for the semester at least and probably for the year; it would be a lot easier to take if they liked each other.

Their conversation rambled the way conversation does between two persons suddenly thrust into close relationship. Ruth told her that she was from New York and that she had come to Clifton largely to get away from a family with which she didn't get along well at all. She planned to major in either psychology or sociology and possibly to do graduate work after finishing up at Clifton. Linda answered that she would major in English, that she doubted that she would do graduate work in anything, since it was highly doubtful that she would graduate.

"How come?"

"I'll probably be married by then."

"That why you came to college?"

Linda hesitated. "Partly, I guess. Oh, I suppose I want to get an education, whatever that means. But I'm not the scholar type or the career type. I guess I'm looking for a man."

"Well, you shouldn't have much trouble finding a man here, not the way you look. You'll probably have to beat them off with a club."

Linda felt herself blushing.

"I mean it," Ruth went on. "All that blonde hair and a shape like yours—the guys won't let you alone. You know much about this school?"

“Just what it says in the catalogue.”

Ruth laughed. “It doesn’t say much in the catalogue. I know one girl who goes here, a sophomore named Sheila Ashley. She told me they call the catalogue *The Big Lie*. But the one big selling point they left out is that there are three men for every gal at Clifton College, Citadel of High Learning.”

“Oh.”

“Oh is right. It’s a damn nice ratio.”

Linda nodded.

“Of course,” Ruth continued, “there’s a difference between finding a man and finding a husband. Men are nice to have around, but most of them are interested in just one thing. Know what the thing is?”

Linda felt herself beginning to blush again and fought to suppress it. Why did Ruth have that effect on her? Maybe it was the hard, cool stare in the girl’s blue eyes, the casual self-assurance that made Linda feel inexperienced and naive in comparison.

“How much experience have you had, Linda?”

Linda hesitated.

“You’re a virgin, aren’t you?”

She hesitated again for a moment. Then she nodded, feeling almost as though her virginity was something to be embarrassed about.

“Don’t be ashamed of it. For one thing, you probably won’t last that way long, not if what I hear about this place is true. And for another thing it’s nothing to be ashamed of. Sometimes I wish I was a virgin myself.”

“You mean—”

“I mean I’m not, obviously. New York’s a pretty fast-moving town, Linda.”

For a moment Linda didn’t say anything. Then, slowly, she asked: “What’s ... what’s it like?”

Ruth laughed, but her laughter was cool and pleasant and it didn’t make Linda ashamed of her question. “That’s something I can’t tell you,” she said. “Something you’ll have to find out for yourself. I haven’t been around that much to be an authority on the subject, anyhow. But from what I know about it, you don’t have to rush into it. It’s not as great as it’s cracked up to be, anyway. It’s just one of the things that happens.”

They talked some more, grabbed dinner at the school cafeteria and went back to their room to talk on into the night. From time to time other girls in the same hall would drop in to talk, but Linda was too wrapped up in herself to pay much attention to them. She told Ruth about Chuck and about the night of the senior prom when she almost let him make love to her, and she told the girl about her decision to sleep with the next man who wanted her and whom she wanted. They talked and talked and finally it was after midnight and time to get some sleep. They undressed and washed up and climbed into bed, Ruth in the top bunk and Linda in the one below it, and then, of course, they went on talking.

“We better knock it off,” Ruth said finally. “Tomorrow’s registration and it’ll be a rough day.”

“Good-night,” Linda said. She rolled over on her side and closed her eyes, her mind swimming with all the new experience of the day and the immensity of all that lay before her. She decided that she wasn’t really tired. Since she had to get to sleep she tried counting.

She was more tired than she thought. She was sound asleep before the fifth mental man jumped over the mental fence.

The next morning she registered for her courses. Her hall advisers, two upper class students named Paula Greene and Jeanne Randall who lived in the hall and served in an advisory capacity, helped her make out her program. She signed up for the required freshman English course, Spanish I, Western Civilization, Introduction to Sociology and Basic Biology.

The rest of the day was filled up with a hall meeting and more random conversations and bus sessions with Ruth and other members of the hall. Ruth was going to be in her sociology class and was a good deal more enthusiastic about it than she was. As far as Linda was concerned, classes were going to be a bore, a necessary evil like paying tuition. If classes were the important thing she might as well have stayed in Cleveland.

She bought her books at the college store, a batch of heavy textbooks that set her back over twenty dollars. Carting the books back to her room, she wondered how in the world they could be worth that much money to her. In all probability she would hardly so much as open them until the night before exams. That was the way she went through high school, never studying and never working and depending upon her brains to pull her through, brains and common sense. And she never got a mark below ninety in high school.

Of course, college was supposed to be a lot more difficult. You had to study and you had to do your assignments. But a smart gal ought to be able to get through on brains if she had them.

There was a dance that night in the gymnasium, a freshman mixer designed to get all the entering students into the swing of things. A group of freshmen had decorated the gym in a vain attempt to make it look like something other than a gym, but they had failed rather pathetically. A huge weird blue tarpaulin was suspended from the ceiling in an effort to lower the ceiling somewhat, but the basketball backboards and baskets were visible at either end of the room and black and red lines were painted on the hardwood floor.

And, inevitable, the place smelled like a gym. Linda wrinkled her nose when she entered the place marveling at the way all gymnasiums the world over looked and smelled the same. When you stepped into a gym, any gym from the one at Clifton to the one at Corry Senior High School, the same smell hit you between the eyes. That good old locker room smell, but it didn't really smell so bad when you came right down to it. Sort of a man-smell, the way Chuck smelled except with the after-shave lotion left out.

There were chairs lined up on both sides of the gym and she picked one out and sat down in it. She was alone; Ruth hadn't come to the dance and there were no other girls in the hall who interested her enough so that she bothered to seek out their company.

At the far end of the gym a small combo tried to play modern jazz and didn't quite make it. About a dozen couples were dancing in the middle of the dance floor and a few dozen more pairs of boys and girls were sitting on the sidelines talking. Boys and girls in groups were making conversation too, and Linda felt slightly left out and alone in the midst of all that activity.

She looked around the room, automatically watching the men. Right here in this room might be the man who would be her first lover, the man who would change her from girl to woman. The man might be here, but still she sat alone by herself, no one talking to her, no one asking her to dance.

Across the room a tall, dark-haired boy was sitting by himself. He was wearing a pair of dark green flannel slacks and a blue blazer with brass buttons. His tie was a thin red-and-green foulard and his shoes were white bucks in approved college fashion. He was good-looking in a quiet sort of a way but she might not have noticed him at all if she hadn't looked up and caught his eyes. He was looking at her, and when she returned the glance he looked away, as if he was guilty of peeping at her.

She continued to look at him. After a moment or so he looked at her again, and this time he did not

avert his gaze. Instead he stood up and began to walk toward her. She flashed him a smile, a quick, hesitant smile that gleamed on her face for a moment and then vanished.

When he was just a few feet away from her he said: "My name's Joe Gunsway. Mind if I sit down?"

The chairs on either side of her were empty. She rather wanted him to join her and said that she didn't mind at all. He took a seat next to her and they looked at each other, knowing that it was time to get a conversation started but neither of them quite sure where to begin.

"I'm Linda Shepard," she said finally. And then, although it didn't really fit in, she added: "I'm from Cleveland."

"Freshman?"

She nodded.

"I'm a sophomore," he said. "From Champaign."

"Where's that?"

"Illinois."

"What are you majoring in?"

"Biology," he said. "Pre-med. How about you?"

"English."

They made conversation—the useless but necessary conversation of new acquaintances on a college campus, the patter that served to get two people talking to each other when they actually didn't have much of anything to talk about. The stock questions and answers: *What courses are you taking? Which professors do you have? Who are you rooming with? What dorm are you living in?* And, finally, they ran out of the perfunctory questions and answers. The band was playing *Laura* and the tenor saxophonist was working out a slow, languorous melody line that pulsed and throbbed with rhythm and melody, with the drummer using brushes and the pianist laying down soft but solid chords behind the tenor solo.

He asked her to dance.

She stood up and he took her in his arms, holding her comfortably close but not too close. He danced easily but not particularly well, gliding naturally into the familiar foxtrot steps without even showing any particular bursts of imagination.

She relaxed into the rhythm of the dance, thinking that this was the main reason that dancing had been invented, so that two people who didn't know each other at all could be at ease in the performance of a social convention, close to each other and restful with each other, moving in time to the music and not bothering with words or gestures.

He was a good four inches taller than she was and she was glad of that. Her mouth was level with his shoulder, and if she turned her head slightly she could kiss his neck. She didn't, of course, but the idea came into her head and she smiled softly to herself.

The dance ended and they walked back to their chairs. They talked more, and this time the conversation was less automatic and more relaxed and a good deal more meaningful. She told him what it was like to live in Shaker Heights and go to Corry Senior High School. He told her what it was like to come from Champaign and go to Clifton for a year. He told her about his family—his father was a doctor and he planned to go into practice with him after two more years at Clifton and four years at the University of Chicago medical school.

He had two brothers and a sister, all of them younger than he was. He liked to bowl and he played a fair-to-middling game of golf. He played checkers but didn't like it and liked chess but didn't play well.

They sat out a lindy because he couldn't jitterbug well and danced the next dance, another slow one

He held her closer this time and she leaned a little against him, letting her perfume drift up to his nostrils. His hand squeezed hers gently in rhythm to the music and every few steps she would let her head rest up against the shoulder of his blazer.

After an hour or so they decided that neither of them really felt like dancing any more, and it would be much nicer to go down to the tavern for a beer. They walked out of the gym and down the path to the spot where he had parked his car. He held the door open and she hopped in. Then he walked around the car and got in on his side. He turned the key in the ignition and started the motor and drove the car in the direction of the tavern.

The car was a red Ford convertible, a present from his father. It was a warm night and he drove with the top down. He didn't drive fast but there was a strong breeze and the wind felt good in her hair. She breathed deeply and the air was fresh and clean, different from the sooty big-city air she had breathed in Cleveland.

She sat close to him but their bodies didn't touch and he drove with both hands on the wheel. He made conversation and she inserted the appropriate "oh's" and "uh-huh's" from time to time without really listening to what he was saying. She was thinking.

She was thinking about Joe Gunsway, about the tall dark boy sitting next to her. She liked him—that she had decided right at the start before their first dance together. She liked him, and she was busy wondering how much he liked her and how often they would see each other and what they would do together. And, automatically, she wondered whether he would be the man, wondered if he would make love to her. She looked at his hands on the wheel and wondered how they would feel on her body touching her breasts, her thighs. She looked at him almost clinically, like a doctor looking at a patient or a mortician looking at a corpse on a table, and she wondered what he would be like.

The tavern was a college hangout studiously patronized by Clifton students and studiously avoided by Clifton citizenry. It was set up to resemble an old colonial tavern, with wood paneling and antique-looking tables and chairs. Colonial utensils hung suspended from the ceiling—pots, pans, food warmers, candle-molds and other weird cast-iron artifacts that Linda couldn't identify. About seven or eight young men stood drinking beer or hard liquor at the bar. Couples occupied the tables, drinking, laughing, talking and singing.

Joe led her to a booth and they sat down. From where she sat she could see the bar and the doorway. A waiter came and Joe said: "Two labels down."

She looked at him quizzically. The waiter disappeared and he smiled at her.

"What did you say?"

"Two labels down," he repeated. "That means two 3.2 bottles of Carling's Black Label."

"Why down?"

"You're not 21, are you?"

She shook her head.

"Down means 3.2; up means 6-point."

She nodded, understanding. A second or two later the waiter arrived with the beer and she poured herself a glassful. She sipped it and it was cold and good. Joe was saying something and she was answering him but most of the conversation was going over her head. She was too caught up in all this that was new to concentrate on what was being said.

It was only her second day at Clifton, and here she was drinking a beer at the tavern and sitting across from her date. She was enjoying herself, really enjoying herself, and all at once she knew with an overwhelming certainty that she was going to enjoy her stay at Clifton. It was a nice atmosphere, warm and friendly, and she found herself feeling very much at home in it.

She looked up at the line of men at the bar and one of them in particular caught her attention. He was tall, with brown hair clipped close to his scalp in a crew cut and a goatee and mustache that matched his hair. At first glance the combination of crew cut and beard seemed ludicrous, but when she looked a second time they seemed to go together, as if they happened to fit this particular boy.

He was drinking some sort of liquor, drinking it straight with beer for a chaser. He didn't talk to anybody but at the same time he didn't seem to be alone. He drank laconically, tossing the liquor down his throat and following it with a sip of the beer. There was an air of complete self-assurance about him. It said that he didn't give a damn about anybody or anything.

She watched him for awhile and Joe must have noticed because he stopped talking and looked at her.

"Who's that?" she asked.

"Who?"

"The fellow with the beard," she said, pointing.

He looked around for a second and turned back to her. "That's Don Gibbs," he said.

"Who's he?"

"He edits the *Record*. You know—the college paper."

She nodded.

"The first issue comes out Friday."

She nodded again. She knew that there was a school paper called *The Clifton Record*; it was another of those pearls of information which the catalogue supplied to entering freshmen. And, when she looked again at the boy called Don Gibbs, it seemed very logical that he would be the editor. He looked like someone important.

"I don't like him," Joe was saying.

"Why not?"

He shrugged. "I'm not sure. Nothing personal, exactly. Just a feeling. He seems phony, with the beard and all. Like he's trying to prove something."

"How do you mean?"

"Just phony."

She looked at Don Gibbs again, and this time she wanted to tell Joe that he was wrong, that the beard wasn't phony, that nothing about this boy was phony. She didn't know why but she felt that Don Gibbs was somebody very important, somebody who was going to be important to her. And as she thought about it Joe seemed to fade, as if he was just another pre-med student who would wind up going into his father's practice and never being very interesting or particularly exciting.

"Besides," Joe said, "I don't like the way he acts with women."

She looked at him, waiting for him to go on.

"He thinks he's a real hot-shot. He thinks he can ... well, make any girl he looks at."

"Can he?"

"I don't know. I think he just talks a lot."

"Does he talk much?"

"I've never had much to do with him. It's just a feeling I have. Anyway—" he smiled at her "—he's not the sort of guy you want to have anything to do with."

She nodded, thinking how wrong he was. Wrong on several counts. For one thing, she was willing to bet that Don Gibbs *could* have nearly any girl he wanted. And that he didn't talk about it, either.

And he was definitely wrong on the last score. He was precisely the sort of guy she wanted to have something to do with.

They had another beer apiece. Then Joe paid the waiter and they went out into the night, leaving Doc Gibbs drinking his whiskey and sipping his beer. They drove back to her dormitory, and Joe parked the car in front of the dorm and walked around to open the door for her. He was the perfect gentleman just as Chuck had been, and he opened the door for her and took her arm and led her up the path to the door.

He kissed her goodnight, but she decided that it wasn't much of a kiss. His lips found hers and touched them briefly. Then he released her and took a short involuntary step back and grinned at her.

She forced a smile to her lips.

"I like you," he said. "I like you, Linda."

"I like you, too." It struck her as a rather foolish thing to say, but it was true enough.

"Tomorrow night?"

She hesitated. "Yes," she said, after a moment. "Tomorrow night."

CHAPTER THREE

THE DAYS WERE A WHIRL and the nights were a jumble and the first week was gone almost before it had started. Up in the morning and a quick shower and you put on your clothes in a hurry and run over to the caf for breakfast. The scrambled eggs are too soft and the toast is burnt and nothing is quite the way mother made it at home. The coffee is bitter and either too hot or too cold, and you have to practically pour it down your throat because you have to get to that eight o'clock English class.

Classes. English, with a tall, balding, stoop-shouldered professor named Bruce Irvine smiling sadly at you and telling you what books you were supposed to read. *Pride and Prejudice* and *Madame Bovary* and *Crime and Punishment* and *Great Expectations* and *Daisy Miller*. Five novels plus twenty poems and you had to read them all in the one semester and understand them, and each day in class Professor Irvine would talk about the books and poems as if they were old friends, his eyes sad and his voice soft and watery.

Spanish, with Professor Esteban Moreno, who looked very Castilian with high cheekbones and a thin black mustache, and who left Spain when Franco took power in 1937. He chattered at you in rapid-fire Spanish and you had to listen with both ears and your mind because otherwise you were completely lost in no time. And he spoke better English than you did, to top it off.

Western Civ, with Hugo Mills, a stubby little man who never smiled and who was very, very clever and very, very cynical as he lectured at you on the early years of the Roman Empire. You listened to him and he was extremely interesting and extremely amusing and seemed to know everything there was to know, but you couldn't help thinking that the bitterness in his face and in his words came from knowing so much and never having done anything about anything.

Biology, with Martin Jukovsky, a quiet, mild-mannered little man who spoke so softly that you could hardly hear a word he said. But it didn't really matter and after a while you didn't bother to listen any longer, because you had already learned everything he was saying in high school and the class was a waste of time.

And sociology with Lester Birch. *Gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, in-groups and out-groups, roles and patterns, variables and constants, normative norms and existential norms and you never had the slightest idea what in the world the tall, lean, fast-talking man with the piercing eyes was babbling about.

And afternoons reading in the room or at the school library, reading and half the time not even knowing what you were reading, remembering how you used to be able to lose yourself in a paperback novel and wishing you could do that instead of wallowing in all this incomprehensible and totally uninteresting knowledge.

And evenings—evenings that you spent studying sometimes, or maybe sitting around in the room talking to Ruth.

Or going out on dates with Joe.

Linda saw Joe Gunsway three more times the first week. One night they went to a movie in town and had a bite to eat at a local lunch counter. Another night they went for a long walk down one of the back roads, walking and holding hands and looking up at the stars in the sky. They walked slowly, a long way out and a long way back, and several times on their walk they stopped and he kissed her.

That Saturday night his hall had a party and he took her to it. She met other boys and girls and drank several glasses of a punch called Purple Jesus, an innocent-looking concoction of grape juice and grapefruit juice and vodka that was much more potent than it appeared to be. She got a little bit high

and enjoyed herself immensely, taking everything in and noticing with approval how heavy her feet were and how happily light her head was.

After the party Joe drove out into the country, taking the same road they had walked along the night before. He stopped the car on the side of the road in the middle of nowhere and for perhaps five minutes they sat side by side, their bodies touching. Neither of them said anything.

Then he turned to her and kissed her. She felt very passionate from the punch and from the gentleness of the blackness of the night, and when he kissed her she put her arms around him and returned the kiss with an animal hunger she had never displayed to him before. She realized with a start that the way she felt that night she would let him make love to her if he tried, and she hoped that he wouldn't try because she wasn't ready, not entirely, and she didn't want to spoil the closeness that existed between them.

There was no cause for her to worry. He kissed her again and he kissed her all over her face and throat, but after the first few times the passion went out of his kisses and was replaced by tenderness. She knew then that it would be very easy for them to control themselves. The loveplay they were going through was not the intensive frenzy that had driven her and Chuck half out of their minds, but a calm, easy-going sort of petting that never threatened to burst into flames.

When he touched her breast for the first time she felt not excited but restful, very restful. That was as far as he attempted to go that night, never fumbling with her clothing and never trying to do more than touch and feel the swell of her breasts through her dress. They sat together for a long time in the car, but for periods of time they stopped kissing and touching and sat very still together, close in each other's arms and looking out at the night. The top of the convertible was down and the air was clear and the stars bright, and she decided that it was very good to be sitting in Joe's arms and enjoying the night around her. Once when they were sitting like that his lips brushed her yellow hair and a warm, happy feeling ran through her body.

After he had taken her home and kissed her a final time he drove off into the night and she watched him from the doorway until the car turned off on a side street and disappeared from view. Then she turned away and walked very slowly up the two flights of stairs to her hall. The room was empty; Ruth hadn't yet returned from wherever she had gone that evening. She turned on the light and sat down at her desk, her head cupped in the palms of her hands and her eyes staring down at the desk-top.

She sat that way for a few moments, letting her mind wander and not thinking of anything particular. Then the first issue of *The Clifton Record* caught her eye and she opened it once again to Don Gibbs' editorial. It was a standard piece on the surface, about sixty double-column lines welcoming the freshman class to Clifton College. But a second reading revealed another message between the lines. The editorial was a subtle slam at higher education in general and Clifton College in particular.

It was, all in all, an especially mean editorial—but there was nothing you could put your finger on, nothing that would permit anyone to censure the person who had written it. It revealed that the author was a very interesting person, a very clever person.

But she had already guessed that. No, it hadn't been a guess. The minute she saw Don Gibbs at the tavern she knew that he would be worth knowing. Since then she had seen him a half-dozen times so on campus but had still never met him.

She stood up suddenly and began to get ready for bed, undressing and washing her face and brushing her teeth. She brushed her long blonde hair until it glistened. Then she turned out the light and slipped under the covers of the lower bunk.

She decided, sleepily, that she didn't want to think any more about Don Gibbs. She already had a man, and she saw that her relationship with Joe could develop into real love. He was so gentle with

her, so considerate of her.

~~She guessed that Don Gibbs would be neither gentle nor considerate. He might not ever so much notice her to begin with, and if he did he would probably be cruel and sarcastic and demanding. She pictured him in her mind—the crew cut, the beard, the slight wrinkles in his forehead and at the corners of his mouth. Then the picture faded and was replaced by one of Joe.~~

Joe was obviously the better man for her.

But she couldn't stop thinking of Don Gibbs.

She bumped into Don Gibbs Thursday afternoon.

That, quite literally, was what happened. She was hurrying from her sociology class to the library with a pile of unreadable books under her arm and her head down. The position of her head enabled her to see quite clearly the hem of her black skirt, the white socks, the saddle shoes, and the ground she walked on.

Unfortunately, it did not enable her to see where she was going.

Halfway down the path to the library she collided with Donald Gibbs. At first, of course, she didn't know who it was that she collided with. She didn't know, for that matter, that she had collided with anybody at all. For all she knew she had walked into a tree. The shock of the whole thing sent her sprawling, with unreadable books flying off in all directions. When she looked up timidly and saw his face gazing down at her, she turned a deep shade of red and began sputtering unintelligibly.

"My fault," he said. "I should have watched where you were going."

She started to say something but before any words came out he was taking her by one arm and lifting her to her feet. Then he stooped over to pick up her books and handed them to her in a neat stack.

"Oh, yes," she said, stupidly. "My books."

"Probably. They're not mine, and we were the only two cars in the crash."

"I'm sorry. I should have—"

"Forget it."

"I didn't hurt you, did I?"

"Hardly. You all right?"

She nodded uncertainly and hesitated, wanting to turn and hurry off to the library but not knowing quite how to go about it. Before she could do much of anything he smiled at her briefly and asked "Who are you?"

"Linda."

"That's a start. Can you give me any more clues?"

She looked at him, puzzled.

"It may surprise you," he explained, "but there are quite a few Linda's. I thought perhaps you might have some means of identification which would be a little more specific."

"Oh."

"Like a last name, for example."

"Shepard," she said, desperately. "Linda Shepard. From Cleveland."

"That's a little better. What else?"

"Like what?"

"What year are you?"

"Freshman."

He nodded. "Major?"

"English."

"Hall?"

"Evans."

He nodded again and struck a pose with one hand on his hip and the other stroking his beard. "Lin Shepard from Cleveland," he said. "What in the world do you do?"

"Do?"

"Do," he repeated. "Some people play tennis. Others paint murals on lavatory walls. Still others climb mountains. I just wondered what—"

"Oh," she said. "I ... well, I ... I don't do much of anything."

He shook his head as if he was thoroughly ashamed of her but she could tell he was making fun of her. "That's bad," he said. "That's very bad. Like an oyster."

"An oyster?"

"They just sit on the bottom of the ocean. They never do a damned thing."

She waited.

"I'm Don Gibbs," he said. "*Record* editor."

"I know."

"Oh?" He seemed surprised. "You said you majored in English?"

She nodded.

"Why don't you drop up to the *Record* office tonight? I'll find something for you to do and you won't have to wander around bumping into people and feeling like an oyster."

"I—"

"The paper comes out tomorrow," he went on. "There are always too many things to do on Thursday night. I can use some help. Can you spell?"

She nodded, mystified.

"Then you can read copy and proof. Drop up any time after eight."

"I ... I have a date tonight."

"Congratulations," he said. "Everybody should have them. Like parents."

"Parents?"

"Parents. Everybody should have dates and parents and things like that. But what does that have to do with it? The date isn't going to last until morning, is it?"

"No, of course not."

"Well, drop up after the date is over. It's simple enough, really. All you have to do is go on your date until your date isn't any more and then come up to the office. Okay?"

"Sure," she said. "I guess so."

He nodded, smiled another smile as brief as the first, and started walking off briskly. She stood watching him for a few seconds until she realized what she was doing. Then she turned and hurried to the library.

Joe was dull that night.

She realized this, and as she realized it she also realized that she wasn't being entirely fair to Joe. It wasn't his fault—the movie he took her to was a first-rate foreign film, the beer at the tavern was cold, the pizza properly spicy. And Joe's conversation was as pleasant and warm as ever.

It wasn't Joe's fault, but Joe was dull. He hadn't been dull before, and this bothered her. Because

she knew why he seemed dull now. It didn't take a genius to figure out why he seemed dull. He seemed dull because, by comparison to Don Gibbs, Joe Gunsway just didn't sparkle.

She fought against this realization. When Joe parked the car in front of her dorm and kissed her, she forced herself to respond as passionately as possible, pulling him tight against her and probing his mouth with her tongue, sending his pulse racing even if her own remained quite steady.

It was a few minutes after midnight when Joe walked her from the car to the door, gave her a final kiss, and left her. It was another minute or so after midnight when she walked from her dormitory to the Student Union. First she waited until Joe's car was out of sight, because she didn't want him to know where she was going. She didn't think he would mind—she certainly didn't have a date with Don, but was only going to do some work on the newspaper. But she didn't want him asking any questions.

It was dark out, and the streetlights were spaced very far apart along the road to the Student Union. She walked quickly, hoping she looked as good as Joe had assured her she did. She was wearing her black skirt, the one she had been wearing that afternoon, with a white cashmere sweater. The sweater was very tight and not particularly warm, but the last time a girl wore a sweater to keep warm was in 1823. It did what it was supposed to do admirably. Her breasts looked as though they might peep out through the thin white material at any moment, and the lines of the bra were clearly visible when she stood in a good light. And, because the sweater was white, it made her breasts look even larger than they would otherwise.

Tricks, she thought. And they probably wouldn't do much good anyway, because Don was probably interested in her as a piece of slave labor rather than as a piece of something else. But it didn't hurt to try, anyway.

She mounted the steps of the Union building and crossed over the flat concrete stoop to the door. Once inside she realized how incredibly empty the building was. She'd been there three times a day, or more since she arrived at Clifton, since the cafeteria was located in the Union, but she had never before been in it when it was empty. The building was fairly new, built just two or three years ago, and the modernistic architecture of the structure was called *Twentieth-Century Ugly* by the majority of the student body, as well as by a good part of the faculty in the privacy of their homes. The linoleum-covered floor seemed unusually wide when Linda's feet were the only ones walking on it, and her footsteps sounded annoyingly loud.

She walked up a flight of stairs to the second floor. Halfway around the building was the *Record* office; it had been one of the places on the campus tour forced upon all entering freshmen, and she found it now with no difficulty. She would have had little trouble locating it in any case, since it was the only office in the building with the lights on.

At first glance the huge room appeared to be empty. A large desk surrounded by strangely-shaped wooden tables stood at the far side of the office. A long black table lined the wall near her. There was paper in one form or another all over the place—crumpled sheets of white copy paper, folded but unfiled issues of last week's *Record*, paper bags and empty coffee cups and scraps of paper that didn't seem to possess any discernible identity of their own. She wandered into the middle of all this confusion and looked around helplessly.

Then she saw the editor's office, a separate room running off from the main room. The light was on and the door open, and she walked hesitantly to the doorway. Don Gibbs was sitting behind a large desk, staring at a sheet of paper on the desk in front of him. He held a cigarette between the second and third fingers of his right hand and a pencil in his left hand. Another cigarette burned unnoticed in an ashtray that was already filled to overflowing with cigarette butts and burned-out matches.

The room was even messier than the outer office. There was a small brown pool of spilled coffee on the floor surrounded by more thrown-away paper. A sport jacket lay neatly folded in the middle of the floor, and near the door was a naked dress-dummy, formless and ragged, with a brassiere around the bust and a lamp coming out of the top.

Don didn't look up at first. He looked tired, incredibly tired. Everything about him looked tired from the weary lines in his face to the rumpled, wrinkled, once-white shirt that was open at the neck and partially unbuttoned.

He dragged deeply on the cigarette and coughed. Then he turned his full attention to the scrap of paper and made some marks on it with the pencil. He studied the results for a moment, then nodded with bored satisfaction and placed the paper in the upper half of an In-Out box. Without pausing he began to scrutinize another sheet of copy paper in the same manner, marking it up with the thick lead pencil.

Linda looked at him. He was, she decided, a very complex person. She remembered the self-satisfied young man who threw down shots of whiskey with beer chasers at the tavern, the smooth and witty young man who handed her her books after she ran into him and talked her off her feet. This was a new side to Don Gibbs, this tired young man who worked without a break and seemed on the point of collapse.

She coughed nervously, shifting her weight from one foot to the other. She coughed a second time and he looked up.

"I'm here," she said. "What do you want me to do?"

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