

# Finding Each Other



SAMPLE

## Chapter One

I thought Luke would be bothered more by his failure to win the competition for the Seattle mural. He said he knew the value of his work and it was best that he not win if the commission chairman was so set on hiring someone else. It would have been a miserable working relationship. And, he'd had a great experience. For the first time in years he'd put himself out there instead of being overcome with fear of getting hurt. And, I'd gotten Emgee. What could be better?

The flight home from Prague was mostly silent. We had both admitted we were falling for one another. That created a great deal of anxiety in Luke. He didn't want to fall for someone again, because every time he did, he got hurt. No dimples for the entire flight.

In my case, it was just as bad and perhaps worse. I'm straight. I love women. I love everything about women. I would never kiss a man, hold him and cuddle with him, let my tongue and lips explore his chest and my hand get familiar with his dick. But I had done all of that with Luke, and I was afraid I was falling for him. Straight men don't do shit with other men and they certainly don't fall for them. But I was doing and falling.

We changed planes in Atlanta and I called René, Luke's father. Emgee, my puppy, was fine and was playing in the pasture with CC. He was learning to chase the cattle and having a ball. He had given up trying to chase birds after a blue jay knocked him silly and cut his foreleg with its sharp beak.

"Did you take him to a vet?" I was frantic. "Does he need surgery? Is he going to lose the leg?" I asked to talk to Emgee; René just laughed.

"The puppy's ego was hurt more than his leg; he'll be fine. My neighbor's a vet and she brought by some topical antibiotic." Easy for him to say. His puppy wasn't suffering a certain death by blue jay.

We finally landed in New Orleans and took a taxi to the house, arriving just before nine p.m. A tall elegant black man was seated on the sofa. "Who are you?" he asked.

"I'm Luke, I live here," was the answer. "Who are you?"

The man rose and extended his hand. "I'm Leon. I was Marcus's roommate his first semester before he transferred to Harvard. We have a reunion in town from the old college, so I looked up Marcus. I'm here to pick up him and his girlfriend. He said his BMW was in the shop.

“Marcus has really done well for himself, hasn’t he?” Leon added, gesturing at the beautiful surroundings.

“He sure has,” said Luke. “Where is Marcus?”

Just then Marcus emerged from Luke’s bedroom. He was wearing one of Luke’s suits. With him was a tall white girl in a stunning dress: Andrea.

“You’re home too early!” exclaimed Marcus, wondering if Luke was going to spoil his charade. “I left you a note in your bedroom,” he added, gesturing towards my room.

Marcus continued. “I couldn’t get to an ATM, so I borrowed \$200 from your cash jar. I figured I could get it back before you returned. I’ll get to an ATM tomorrow.”

“That’s fine,” said Luke. “We need to talk tomorrow – first thing – about some stuff.”

Marcus nodded his head, thankful that Luke hadn’t blown up his deception. “Have a good time, folks,” offered Luke as they left. “And, Andrea, we hadn’t expected to see you in this house for a *long* time.”

They left and we fell on the couch laughing. Luke went into my bedroom and returned with Marcus’s note. He read it aloud.

*“I had to pull my invention off the market because of a battery problem. I’ve been housesitting since you left, which is a good thing. I’ve been evicted for not paying rent. I borrowed \$200 from your cash jar and I promise I’ll pay you back. I’m trying to convince an old college buddy to invest in one of my inventions. If it comes through I’ll be rich.*

*“And the new grass area in the patio is fine.”*

Luke tossed the note aside and burst out laughing again. “Marcus and his inventions. Rather than do actual work he involves himself in one get-rich-quick scheme after another. So, he went to Harvard and has a BMW. The BMW part is true: his 1987 Plymouth is Broken, Mangled and Worthless.”

I asked Luke if he thought Andrea had gotten the message. “Probably. She’s really stupid, but Marcus is actually smart. He’s not going to let her back in.

“I wonder whatever went wrong with his battery-powered automatic schlong-thong penis massager. That’s his latest invention.” Luke laughed again. “Marcus will need somewhere to stay. I’ll offer him the spare bedroom tomorrow.” Luke had evidently thought this through, but I played along.

“OK,” I replied. “Where will you sleep, say, tonight? Marcus has been staying in your bed and you’ll need to change the sheets. Knowing Marcus you might need to change the mattress. If you take the spare bedroom, you’ll have to make that up yet tonight. Of course,” I stared at the floor, blushing, “my bed’s big enough for both of us.”

Luke just looked at me and grinned. He took me by the hand, raised me from the sofa and led me into my bedroom. “OK if I get a shower tomorrow morning? I’m beat.”

I thought for a few minutes. “Can we talk tomorrow morning about the possibility of showering together? I really don’t think it’s a good idea. I mean, ah, you know, I, uhm, oh shit. Luke, I’m in danger of freaking myself out here.” We were going to be more than roommates, we would be bedmates, at least for tonight. I kissed him, got in bed, and immediately fell asleep.

We woke up at four a.m., which was eleven in the morning in Prague. Luke got in the shower and asked me to join him. I declined. I wanted to do it, but at the same time I didn’t. Things had been developing on the physical side too fast for me. I know I’m straight, but I’m falling for a gay guy. *Follow your heart*. But what happens when your heart wants to go where the rest of you doesn’t?

I wanted Luke so much, wanted to get him aroused and make him feel good, but I just wasn’t going to do the kinds of things I know Luke wants. I know he’s going to dump me as his special friend because I won’t have actual sex with him. I took my shower – alone – and we got back together in the kitchen for coffee. And beer. I mean, it was almost noon in Prague.

I needed to talk. “Luke, I don’t know what this is. I’m straight, but I’m kissing you, sleeping with you and jerking off with you. Why do I do that?”

Luke eventually ran out of glib answers to my questions. I was really confused, and Luke finally accepted that. “Why do you do those things? I don’t know. I’d say you did it because you wanted to. But, that leaves the question of why you want to.”

He thought for a bit more. “Why a straight guy would want to have a physical relationship with another guy is a mystery to me. Some straight guys are curious, but

once the curiosity is satisfied they're gone. Some guys who tell me they're straight, it's just that they just like to have sex with other guys from time to time, aren't straight. They're bi. Or maybe they're gay and in denial."

"Am I in denial?" I wanted an answer, but not if the answer was yes.

"I don't think so." Luke got up and refilled his coffee cup. If I didn't know better I'd suspect he was stalling. But I did know better. I was absolutely *sure* he was stalling.

"Mike, we said we'd do things we enjoy. Well, I enjoy the hell out of getting naked with you and winding up in bed together. I'm wondering if you do it for much the same reason; I love it because you enjoy the hell out of it." I'd have been less astonished if he'd told me I did it because I wanted to be the first French Poodle elected President.

"Why would I do this stuff because *you* enjoy it?" I was really in over my head here. More coffee. I wasn't stalling, of course. Only Luke would do that.

Luke explained to me that he enjoyed the sexual release and he enjoyed giving me the same feeling. He thought I was the same way but with a significant difference. The only real enjoyment I got from giving him physical attention was Luke's pleasure. I didn't necessarily want to kiss him or jerk him off, I wanted him to feel special and have an orgasm to boot.

"Isn't it the same for you?" I was stumped. Luke was probably right, I enjoyed it when he kissed me or licked me or masturbated me. An orgasm is an orgasm. And I enjoyed it when Luke liked what I was doing to him. That was my greatest enjoyment.

"Can we talk about something else for a while now?" I wasn't ready to explore this issue any further at the moment. Or maybe for the next seven or eight decades, depending on how things worked out.

"New topic. Marcus is probably going to live here for a while because I don't think you're going to kick him to the curb." Luke nodded his head. "We need to sort out the living and sleeping arrangements." I paused for a minute

"Fuck it, I do need to talk about it. I'm not gay and I'm not going to do anything gay. Certainly not oral or anal sex with you or anyone else. Right now you're the only guy who turns me on if I look at him. Other guys don't do that. But, if you're present and I'm horny and a guy is working on my arousal, I'm turned on a little and maybe stuff might happen.

“Sometimes I think I like the kissing and the cuddling and the holding just as much as anything else. You make me feel good, Luke. So, I want to make you feel good. So we kiss and cuddle and hold each other, and then we’re making each other feel good.

“We’re not going steady and I have no claim on you or your body. I know you have sex with other guys, and probably some girls. I’m fine with that. I expect to have sex with girls, and I’ve realized that it’s highly unlikely but not impossible that I’ll fool around some with other guys. I learned that if you’re there and I can smell your scent and sort of pretend it’s you and, well, and, uhm, and I don’t know where I’m going with that. What do you think?”

Luke kissed me gently. “I feel the same way. You can stroke or fuck or suck anybody you want and I plan to do the same. At the end of the day I expect I’ll be returning to you. We have other things to discuss.

“Marcus is number one. He’s dead broke again and has nowhere to live. I plan to let him stay here in the guest room and eat with us. I’ll pay him a couple hundred a week. He’ll have to keep the place up and clean, take care of the front yard and the pool, and do the shopping. I think it’s a fair arrangement.

“While I’m paying him, I don’t want either of us to have sex with him. I don’t want the appearance of prostitution. I know you’re not going to have sex with him anyway, I’m talking mostly to myself.

“Number two is Decadence. It starts shortly. Decadence a slightly less sexual version of Drake’s, spread all over the French Quarter. Officially, public nudity and public sex are prohibited, but both are found in abundance on Bourbon Street during the festival. I’ll take you to the locations before it starts. I figure we’ll do the underwear pub crawl, the more popular sponsored events like the big dick contest and amateur strip contest, visit the Ball Rack, go to the City Club and Dorothy, and I’ll introduce you to the Tucson/Hawk.”

“Sounds like a full plate to me,” I replied. “What’s number three?”

“I need you to do a favor for Brett,” Luke said. “He’s got an evening job he needs help with.”

“Of course, anything for your brother,” I told him.

“Don’t be too sure,” said Luke.

Eventually Marcus emerged from Luke’s bedroom. He showed us the addition to the patio. The landscaper had put in a ten by ten foot slightly raised “yard” for Emgee to use as his bathroom. I considered protesting that it was too small, then recalled that Steve’s accountants in Prague had the same amount of room as an office.

Marcus gave Luke the receipt for his credit card payment. “I thought it was supposed to be \$1,400. This is for \$700. What happened?” I doubt Luke minded saving half the money, it just seemed strange. And we had already had the argument about me paying for the work.

The discount wasn’t strange at all in fact. And I learned something about Marcus. “See this edge over here?” Marcus pointed at a spot on the two-inch high retaining wall around the ‘yard.

“Well, it’s not the same shade of brown as the rest of the rocks, so I had him replace it three times. It still wasn’t right. He told me he’d cut two hundred off the price if I’d just let him leave. I told him he had to make it right. He then made up some shit about needing to find more rock to get the right shade and it would be two more weeks.

“I told him to cut the price in half and get out. And I told him I wasn’t going to refer him to anybody else for work. He thanked me for not referring him. I think I understand that. It’s because I’m black, right?”

Luke laughed his ass off. “Yeah, Marcus, it’s because you’re black. Not because you were being an asshole and impossible to please. It’s all about your race.” Marcus was laughing too.

“Luke, I wanted it to be perfect. You trusted me to get this right for you and I didn’t want to let you down. I’ll try to find a replacement rock and see if I can set it myself.” Marcus was dead serious. And I had learned something about just how loyal a friend this immature failed inventor could be.

Luke offered him the job, take it or leave it. He took it. Marcus moved his things into the spare room, stripped Luke’s bed and put the bedding in the washer, then made up his own bed.

While Luke and Marcus were talking, I called Cathy. “We’re back early. You got a few minutes?”

“For you, always.” Cathy and I got along great now that we were divorced. “How was the trip? Did you like Prague? Did Luke like it?”

“The trip was great,” I replied. “There’s a new development, and I don’t understand it. Cathy, I’m falling for Luke. That can’t happen, because he’s a guy and I’m straight. At least I think I am. The room only had one bed, and we had to sleep together every night. When we were alone we were cuddling and making out. Not just kissing, but honest-to-God making out.”

“I told you I thought the kissing was a bigger issue than the dreams. Do you and Luke both enjoy it?” I knew Cathy wanted to help, and I knew I’d have to discuss this with her. I was just really uncomfortable.

“Yeah, we both enjoy it. And there’s more. Just before we left we started masturbating together. Not each other, but masturbating at the same time. While we were in Prague we started getting each other off. Cathy, I’m not supposed to enjoy that, but I do. When Luke is trying to make me feel good, it’s like I’m over the moon. Not specifically because of what he’s doing, but because he’s doing it to make me feel good.

“Then, I want to make him feel good. I want us to feel close to each other, and I kiss him and hug him and jerk him off to get there. I’m scared. Where is it going to end?”

Cathy paused for a few seconds. “I don’t know where it’s going to end. Mike, I’ve never known you to be anything but straight. You never showed the least interest in other men. When we were married, we were both faithful and neither of us had much interest in other people. But your relationship with Luke is different.

“The relationship seems to be mostly emotional. I never met your need for physical affection, and I know sure a shit your parents never did. You need that in your life, and Luke seems to be the first person that satisfies that need. Plus, the two of you have a real bromance.”

“Am I trading orgasms for affection?” This wasn’t the first time that thought had crossed my mind.

“So what if you are?” I’d never thought about that. So what if we were? “You need physical affection and you’ve found it with somebody you like, somebody emotionally close. It happens to be a guy. I don’t understand it any better than you do, but I’m not going to judge you for it. You’ve found something good. Don’t overthink this.”



I needed more time to process this stuff. “Can we talk later? I need to do a lot of thinking.”

“Of course. I’m glad for you that you’ve found a satisfying relationship, no matter who it’s with. And, I love you.” I told her I loved her too, then Luke and Marcus joined me. It was time to go.

We then took a taxi down to Bourbon Street. After I called René, of course. We were home, Emgee had his own yard in the patio, and I wanted my dog back. *My dog.* Yesterday.

René laughed. Son of a bitch.

## Chapter Two

We started near the east end. It was eight in the morning, but most of the bars were open. We had a beer at the Silver Lantern, the starting point for the bar crawl. Luke and Marcus showed me the Whiskey Festival, across the street from Dorothy. Festival, upstairs, was closed, but we had another beer at the Whiskey. We proceeded on to Le Rounddown, where they would have a strip pool tournament.

Marcus challenged me to a game. I've heard a rumor that there's a blind eighty-seven year old woman in Montana who is a worse pool player than I am. Otherwise, I'm probably the lousiest pool player in the country. Marcus agreed it would be a game just for fun. He broke and sank a stripe. "If this were a real game you'd be minus your sandals about now." Yeah, I know it.

He nearly ran the table. By the time it was my turn I would have had nothing on but my cargo shorts and briefs. I missed a solid, of course. Marcus then finished running the table. "Mike, I get to see too much of your naked white ass as it is. Please don't enter the tournament." I promised I wouldn't.

We went by the Ball Rack, a strip bar. Luke asked the bartender if I could practice dancing on the bar. I told Luke I don't dance, and that if I was going to dance for anybody I wanted it just to be him.

His look of disappointment changed my mind. I got on the bar and started gyrating in as sexy a manner as I could muster. For me, dancing is a black box; I don't know what goes on inside it. Luke, Marcus and the bartender put dollar bills in the waistband of my cargo shorts. They were being kind and nothing more. I knew that, but I didn't mind.

A few older guys came in and did the same. The appeal can't possibly be my dancing because it sucked. While I had discarded my shirt, at Luke's urging, I still had my pants on. I think the appeal was probably that I was still more than three decades short of collecting Social Security.

One of the geezers pulled down my zipper and I looked at Luke. He smiled, and I was pretty sure he wanted me to go farther. I let the guy finish taking my pants off. The bartender applauded, and my audience took that as permission.

One of the new patrons took out his cellphone and made a couple of calls. I returned to gyrating, and within minutes another half dozen elderly guys showed up. One of them held up a five dollar bill and put it in my crotch. I was starting to freak out. While there he tried to remove my last bit of clothes. I stopped him, but I was already hard. Luke smiled again, dimples. And I wanted to please him. Would he be pleased if I let other guys fool around with me? I think so, but I'm not comfortable with this.

One patron's hand was on my ass, another was cupping my balls, and a third was jerking my cock. It was arousing, but it wasn't Luke. He saw my face and yelled for everybody to let go. I guess he sounded pretty angry, because they did. I jumped down and put on my pants. As I was stepping into them one guy asked if I would blow him for twenty bucks; I just laughed.

Luke suggested we all return home. We got in a taxi, with Marcus up front. Luke and I were in the back seat. Marcus turned around and told me I had been hot up on the bar.

Luke kissed me chastely on the cheek. "Mike, you've got a job to get ready for tomorrow night with Brett. I think you'll enjoy it. Just keep in mind that chicks can get pregnant."

Once back home I checked emails, got off a few, and pretended to be interested in writing the Private Placement Memorandum. And called René. He'd be there tomorrow with Emgee. No he wouldn't. I was going to him.

My rental car wouldn't be right – too cramped for Wonder Puppy - so I called the company and made a switch. Luke drove with me to the airport where I dropped off the sedan and picked up an SUV. I put Luke on the contract so he could drive home. I wasn't going to try and drive and hold Emgee and tell him about Prague all at the same time.

On the way up I asked Luke about the scene at the Ball Rack. "Did you want me to let other guys fool around with me? And if so, why?"

Luke was ready with a quick answer. "Mike, you're hot. You probably don't think so, but I do. I like watching you, I like watching you move, I really just like everything about you. And when I watch you get aroused I get so hard I think I'm going to explode."

"So, it isn't necessarily me fooling around with other guys, it's me getting aroused. Right?" I was trying to understand this. I wanted to please Luke, but he already knew there was stuff I wouldn't do.

“Yeah, but I think a little of it is watching you fool around with other guys. Then I get to imagine that it’s me you’re fooling around with.” He stopped for a few seconds. “I’m not explaining this well.”

“It’s OK. Some things are just hard to explain. So, would you be aroused if I watched you fooling around with other guys?” I think I could see where this might be going. And why did I feel a stirring in my pants?

“I think it might be hot if we did some flirting and teasing, just not going too far. OK?” I’d never thought of that. No, that isn’t true. Some of us in the fraternity would get with our girlfriends, and the girls would ask to swap guys. They got turned on watching their boyfriends making out with another girl, and sometimes going further. Hell, I used to enjoy watching my girlfriend get some action from time to time. Maybe this wasn’t as hard to understand as I thought it would be.

“OK,” I said. That was it, by the way. Luke asked what OK meant, and I said it meant OK.

The trip took eleven months and four days. Actually, it was about an hour and a half, but it seemed like it took forever. I wanted to see my dog. *My dog.* I smiled like an idiot the whole way there.

The farm was a few miles outside of town. Baton Rouge is the capital of Louisiana, but frankly there’s not a whole lot to write home about. I’ll have to come back for a real visit someday.

René was outdoors. I couldn’t see Emgee and started to panic. I called his name and suddenly there was a black and white rocket headed in my direction. With a coal black freight train close behind. CC had decided they were playing chase. He caught up with Emgee and knocked him over with his nose. Emgee immediately forgot all about me and took up the chase, going after CC. Yeah, right. Seven pounds of short legs and far more desire than ability was chasing after a ninety-five pound speed demon. CC let Emgee catch him and they play-fought.

That ache in my face was my cheeks beginning to split from the grin. Luke ran off to tackle CC and I was right behind. I’m not sure who tackled whom because Luke and CC wound up rolling around on the ground together. Emgee was trying to get into the mix without success. Then I called him and he looked up.

I know he didn't smile at me because dogs don't smile, but I could swear he was ready to laugh. He ran up to me and jumped and jumped until I picked him up. He licked my face and my hair and then he wiggled down to squat over my foot. He peed on me and looked up with a self-satisfied grin. I laughed until I cried.

A late lunch was ready in the kitchen. I hadn't spent any time on farms, so I had no idea what to expect. It was a house, period. Just like any other house. There was a lot of land, but I guess that's relative. Pre-Civil War plantations were gigantic. This was kind of an after-thought. I could see an enormous glass-enclosed building not far from the house, surrounded by a barbed-wire fence. There was a yard (I don't know what else to call it) also surrounded by barbed wire. It contained perhaps two dozen cattle. And in the distance I could see what looked like a vast field of tall grass.

After a few questions to René it all became clear. This was an energy-cane farm. The greenhouse took care of the seedlings and the tall grass was a form of sugar cane. It's far cheaper than almost any other source of biomass for creating biofuels. René had seventy acres of sugarcane. I did a quick check on my phone's internet connection. Holy shit. The guy had to be almost bankrupt.

"René, you've got seventy acres of sugarcane. You get maybe seven thousand pounds of sugar per acre, a total of two hundred forty five tons a year. You might get twenty five bucks a ton for the sugar. That's six thousand bucks a year. And, you're too far north to produce sugar cane here anyway." Why wasn't he in the poorhouse?

"Mike, your numbers are all correct but your conclusion is wrong. Yes, sugarcane isn't supposed to grow well this far north. You know it, I know it, but the plants haven't figured it out yet. They do extraordinarily well. And we're improving the strain every season.

"I'm not in business to grow sugarcane, I'm in business to grow seedlings and improve the crop. I'm a botanist. The acres of sugarcane are experimental and for demonstration as we develop new strains. I sell about seven million dollars' worth of seedlings every year. The sugarcane is studied, and when it's harvested we feed it to the cattle. It costs me about six million a year to run the place, so I make maybe a million before taxes on the seedlings. But, I've got all the milk, cheese, butter and beef I can use."

Thank God René wasn't a client; I would just have embarrassed myself.

After finishing beef tips in gravy (I suspected the Duprees ate a lot of beef) and some sort of vegetable to which I paid no attention, René pulled out three beers. He handed one to me, kept one for himself, and tried to hand one to Luke. I stopped him.

“René, Luke’s driving us back home. If it was just me I wouldn’t mind, but Emgee’s going to be in the car. No alcohol.” Father and son looked at one another and successfully stifled their grins.

“OK.” That was Luke. “I’ll wait until it’s just the two of us to drive drunk.” I’m glad he had seen it my way.

Emgee was trying to crawl up my leg while I sat at the table, at least until CC came over. The bigger dog picked up Emgee in his mouth and took him to the door. CC pushed the door open and shoved Emgee outside. He made it off the porch before he had to go.

“Did I just see a Labrador retriever house breaking another dog?” I was stunned. René nodded his head.

“Damnedest thing I’ve ever seen. I know they’re communicating, I just have no idea how. We’ve had maybe one accident every other day but that’s usually when Emgee is in the house and CC is outdoors. If they’re both in the house CC figures out when Emgee has to go and makes sure he gets outside. It must have been urgent this time because it’s rare for CC to pick the little guy up.”

Can Luke’s dog and my dog be having a bromance? Get fucking real. We just don’t understand how animals communicate, let alone what they’re communicating.

Luke showed me around his boyhood home. The dogs followed us until we got to Luke’s bedroom. CC wouldn’t let Emgee inside. Eventually we’ll figure out what’s going on. Emgee didn’t seem to mind.

On our way back to the truck I asked René if Emgee ever peed on his foot. “Nope. You’re the only one. I suspect he’s marking you as his property.” I supposed that made sense. I mean, I owned Emgee but he owned my heart. Shit, I hope he didn’t start trying to pee on my chest. That could get real messy.

Luke drove and I sat in the back with Emgee. I told Luke not to take it over four miles an hour because I didn’t want Emgee to get frightened. I think we had just passed eighty when Luke lowered one of the back windows. Emgee stuck his head out the window

and let the hurricane-force wind blast his face. Hunh. I have a whole lot to learn about taking care of my dog.

## Chapter Three

When we got home I carried Emgee into the house. I showed him the patio where he was supposed to pee. He seemed confused, so I went and stood on the ten by ten grass inset. That must have triggered something. He marched right over and peed on my foot.

Marcus was holding his sides and roaring. My dog peed on me. Fuck you, Marcus. He's my dog. Go get your own dog to pee on you.

"Emgee, this is where you will come to go to the bathroom. Except I hope my foot isn't in the way every time. Enjoy the house now because we won't be here long." Marcus was looking at me in surprise. Did he think I was moving out?

"Uncle Luke is going to have to sell this house and we'll buy a new one with a lot more room. You need your own bedroom and bathroom and play room, and a living room and dining room, and a guest room, and..." I didn't get anything else out because Marcus was rolling on the ground shrieking.

I tried to ignore Marcus. "Guys, I think for the moment we should pay more attention to our dress in the house. Marcus is living here now, and I suggest that getting fully dressed in the morning become the norm."

I continued. "We occasionally have clients coming here so proper dress is just a reasonable business practice. Also, I'd like to pay Marcus \$200 a week in addition to what you're paying him. First, I hate doing housework and yardwork. Second, I'd like to be able to ask him to do some errands and stuff. I'd feel more comfortable if I were also paying him."

Luke and Marcus both agreed. I checked my e-mail and learned a few pleasant things. I saved the news for later, and we walked out and met Marcus in the kitchen. He was in his boxers, decorated with erect penises. Luke reminded him about the "dress code," and Marcus had no problem with it. He just figured boxers were OK.

"Marcus, we're both paying you \$200 a week so you can do errands for each of us. Mike and I may occasionally share a bed. What we do there is none of your business. As I said, for now we'll wear clothes around the house. I encourage you to do the same. As long as Mike and I are paying you there will be zero sex between either of us and



you. You know you're not a prostitute, and we want everybody else to come to the same conclusion."

Marcus agreed. I gave him \$200 in cash and Luke gave him \$180. "I'm keeping \$20 a week until the \$200 is paid back. OK?" asked Luke.

Marcus thought that was fine. "Where do you want me to start?" he queried.

"It's Saturday. By next Friday night I want you to pick up around the pool, clean it, do what's needed in the front yard, keep the house reasonably clean and buy groceries and shit. I'll give you money for purchases, and I guess you can use my car." Luke had apparently thought this through completely.

"You can use my car," I said. "I almost never drive. I just got an e-mail that my car and my stuff is arriving Monday. I'll add you to my insurance policy. If you drive drunk I'll cut your dick off. And, just to be absolutely explicit, I prefer that Andrea never come here."

Marcus was good with the arrangement, with one exception. "When I clean the pool it will be better to work nude. Is that OK?"

"Sure," said Luke. "And swimming naked is good also."

I shared the other piece of good news. "The New Orleans Police Department contacted me about teaching interviewing and interrogation to the Department. I'll start in September."

The rest of the day passed without incident. Marcus took care of the front yard and assumed the neighbors would be OK with his boxers. That constituted "fully dressed" for Marcus, and I guess it was close enough. I started on the Private Placement Memorandum. And Luke did Luke stuff on his computer.

And Emgee spent most of the day in the back yard. I moved my computer out there to be with him. Until he was fully house-broken, I didn't want him making a mess indoors.

I had a pleasant place to live, I had Emgee and I had Luke. And it looked as though Marcus was going to be a real plus. My new life suited me just fine.

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