



"What will you do now?"

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"What will you do now?"

"Gigi Gigi Gigi Gigi Gigi. That's what frogs sing. What did your mother name you?"

"She gave me her own name."

"Well?"

"Grace."

"Grace. What could be better?"

Nothing. Nothing at all. Mercy and simple good fortune seemed to have fled on a July day six years later. Grace alone might have to do. But from where would it come, she wondered, and how fast? In that holy hollow between sighting and following through could grace slip through at all?

Wednesday 31st May, 1995

It was the I-give woman serving her breasts up like two baked Alaska that took all the kick out of ^{watching} the boy's eyes. Gigi watched him battle his stare and lose every time. He said his name was K.D. and tried hard to enjoy her face as much as her cleavage while he talked. It was a struggle she expected, rose to and took pleasure in-- normally. But the picture she ^{an} woke to ^{an hour ago} spoiled it.

Unwilling to sleep on the floor where a person had died, gigi ~~had~~

chosen the leather sofa in the ^{used to be} game room/office. Windowless,
dependent on ^electricity for light, the room encouraged her to sleep
deeply and long. She missed the morning entirely and woke in the
afternoon in a darkness hardly less than what she'd fallen asleep in.
Hanging on the wall in front of her was the etching she had barely
glanced at when poking around the day before. Now it loomed into
her line of vision in the light that snuck in from the hall. A woman.
~~Down~~ on her knees, ~~with~~ a knocked-down look, cast-up begging eyes,
arms outstretched holding up her present to a lord. Gigi walked over
~~to it~~ and leaned close to see who was the woman with the I-give-up
^{face} look. Saint Elizabeth was engraved on a small plaque. Gigi laughed--
brass dicks hidden in a box; tits exposed on a plate--but in fact it
didn't feel funny. So when the boy she had seen ^{yesterday} ~~in that town~~ pulled
^{in him} up near the kitchen door and blew his horn her interest had an edge
of annoyance. She ate ^{Jam loaded} bread and ~~a jelly~~ while she listened to him and
watched the war waged in his eyes. His smile was lovely and his
voice, "Heard you was out here. Thought you might be still,"
attractive.

"Who told you that?"

"Friend. Well, a friend of a friend."

"You mean that hearse guy?"

"Uh huh. Said you changed your mind about getting to the train station."

"News sure travels fast out here, even if nothing else does."

"We get around. Wanna go for a ride? Go as fast as you want."

Gigi licked jam from her thumb and forefinger. She looked to the left and thought she saw in the distance a glint of metal or maybe a mirror reflecting light. As from a State Trooper's sunglasses.

"Gimme a minute, she said. "Change my clothes."

She packed everything and slung her ^{duffel} ~~backpack~~ on the back seat.

"Hey," said K.D. "we just going for a little ride."

"Yeah," she answered, "but who knows? I might change my mind again."

They drove through mile after mile of skyblue sky. Gigi had not really looked at the scenery from the train windows or the bus. There was nothing out there to see. But speeding along in the Oldsmobile was more like cruising on TWA. Sky. Sky. It was breath and all the eye was meant for.

"That's the shortest skirt I ever saw."

"Mini's," said Gigi. "In the real world they're called mini skirts."

"Don't they make people stare at you?"

"Stare. Drive for miles. Have car wrecks. Talk stupid."

"You must like it. Reckon that's what they for, though."

"You explain your clothes; I'll explain mine. Where'd you get those pants for instance?"

"What's wrong with them?"

"Nothing. Listen, you want to argue, take me back."

tk

When Mavis pulled into the driveway near the kitchen door she slammed the breaks so hard her packages slid from the seat and fell beneath the dashboard. The figure sitting in the garden's red chair was totally naked. She could not see the face under the hat's brim but she knew it wore no sunglasses. A mere month she'd been away and for three weeks of that time couldn't wait to get back. Something must have happened, she thought. To Mother. to Connie. At the squeal of the brakes the sunning figure did not move. Only when she slammed the Cadillac door did the person sit up and push back the hat. Calling out, "Connie! Connie?" Mavis hurried toward