

In the Name of Help

by
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Prologue

Evanston, Illinois, early 1970s...

The three of them sat close to the sturdy old brick building around a white metal table, sipping coffee from mugs and bursting into loud, heartfelt laughter from time to time. They were only a few blocks from the beautiful, sprawling campus of Northwestern University at their favorite meeting place. It was an old, long-time established coffee house on the main street of Evanston, Illinois, just north of Chicago.

The sun shone brilliantly, casting deep shadows below the swaying trees, while a pleasant breeze drifted off of Lake Michigan and rustled through the leaves of the branches over their heads. The lucent sky, an intense, bright blue, was dotted with chunky puffs of white, billowing clouds. It was one of those splendid and rare days that the Chicago area boasts of in early summer, just before the inevitable blazing heat and humidity begin. And, it was just after seemingly endless months of bone-chilling winter temperatures and raw, wicked winds tearing furiously off of the twenty-two thousand, four hundred square miles of the huge lake that is the city's entire eastern border.

This particular afternoon, birds sang in the outstretched branches of the old elm trees over their heads, multitudes of budding new leaves sprang forth along the already full limbs, patches of deep emerald green grass glistened between the curb and the sidewalk, and the traffic moved lazily along the streets of the little college town.

Linda Dawson, almost eighteen, was the typical Northwestern coed, a paradigm, the classic coed, if there were such a thing. She had shiny, straight, honey-blond hair, neatly cut to just above her shoulders, dark, liquid brown eyes, a small, straight nose, full soft sensuous lips, and a remarkably bright, warm smile. Linda could have easily posed for college promotional literature standing comfortably in front of the imposing stonework of Alice Barrington Hall, smiling broadly, eyes sparkling, textbooks in hand, bidding welcome to prospective undergraduates, and inviting them to join her at the beautiful, highly respected, affluent and rather WASPish campus community that was Northwestern University in the early seventies.

She was wearing a pale yellow T-shirt, white shorts and tennis shoes. Her complexion, smooth with an olive cast, was unusual for a blond, and, now, in the very beginning of summer, her arms and legs were already very tan. She was

sitting next to her cousin, Cathryn Silberg, a strikingly beautiful young woman with coloring that contrasted sharply with Linda's. Cathryn's hair was a dark, shiny, chestnut color, her skin was very fair and her eyes were deep violet with grayish specks.

Linda's attention was focused wholly on the good looking young man across the table, who at the moment was enthusiastically entertaining them. Completely absorbed, Linda listened intently to the story that he was telling. Her deep brown eyes were involuntarily riveted on Nick Martin's face, while the rest of the scene around her tended to flutter away as he spoke. She was distracted from his face, his eyes, his mouth, only by his gesturing hands, as he told his story, embellishing the original incident, and thoroughly enjoying the attention from both Linda and Cathryn. After a few minutes, they all burst out in uncontrollable laughter, so hard that tears came to their eyes. Nick's own dark green eyes were sparkling with mischievous delight at the effect he had on the two girls.

"You *are* crazy," Linda exclaimed, incredulous. "I can't believe you did that!" Nick was telling them how he had posed as a frantic but innocent law student two days ago, and how he had unmercifully charmed the young, attractive receptionist of an adversarial law firm during lunch time when everyone else was out of the office. He persuaded her to let him look at a document that technically he was not supposed to see, at least not until after he followed the accepted procedure of submitting formal requests and then responses to the responses that would come from those requests.

Nick looked at Cathryn for support, and with the most humble, hurt expression he could conjure up, replied, "Your cousin doesn't trust my words." He touched his right hand, fingers spread, palm to his heart. "I'm an attorney," he pleaded. "How can she even begin to disbelieve me?" Nick grinned. "Anyway, time was of the essence," and he laughed out loud, amused by his own intrepidity.

His obvious enjoyment of his antics caused Linda and Cathryn to roll their eyes heavenward and giggle out loud again. As they leaned towards each other now, their eyes moist with joy and wide with amazement, Nick smiled at them from across the table and crossed his arms over his chest, leaning back in the chair.

"You are such an incredible brat!" Cathryn declared, holding one hand on her abdomen and wiping the corners of her eyes with the back of her other hand.

Nick, still grinning, looked thoughtfully at the two cousins and then slowly shook his head with a half-hearted effort to sound very serious. "Must be the last of a dying breed. Both pretty, both virgins; not too many left on our college campuses these days," he teased in an affected intellectual tone.

"Shut up, Nick," Cathryn flung the words at him. "Just shut up!" Nick laughed again, threw his head back insouciantly, and leaned the chair precariously away from the table onto its back legs.

Linda dipped her chin down, unable to meet Nick's eyes with her own, color rising in her cheeks. No one else could make her feel so shy or so self-conscious. Not that both she and Cathryn hadn't gotten themselves heatedly tangled up with someone more than once, but they still clung to a fast fading, old-fashioned notion that they needed to wait until marriage for real honest-to-God sex.

As for Nicolas Alan Martin? He certainly wasn't a virgin. But Nick, in his own way was one of another apparently diminishing types. He happened to be a genuinely caring, good guy, with some values and ideals that seemed to be disintegrating rapidly in the radically changing society of the seventies. "I really believe in fidelity in a relationship," he had told them. "I believe in family and I feel a lot of respect and love for both my parents. I even believe that there's something more to personal worth than physical belongings," he smiled wryly.

Funny he hooked up with someone like Carrie, Cathryn thought.

"There's such a thing as personal integrity, treating people the way I want to be treated," he continued. No, Nick was definitely not the average, beer drinking, carousing, college jock. He stood out, a little different, almost always smiling, sincere, and extraordinarily full of life and good humor.

Nick leaned even further away from the table. He was handsome in a rugged way, with features that contributed to a sensuous mien that easily attracted women. "He really listens to you when you're saying something," Cathryn had once told Linda, trying to explain what she found wonderful in her friend. *And, Linda thought, his deep green eyes crinkle when he laughs, he has a strong chin with the slightest cleft, a nose that's not too small, not too big, and a very soft mouth.*

When he was serious about something, there was a fierce intensity about him, but at the same time, warmth and a gentleness. When he spoke enthusiastically, gesturing with both hands, his dark brown hair fell forward onto his forehead, and he would shake his head back or distractedly push it out of his way with a firm hand.

Nick Martin is the kind of man women say is hard to find, Linda thought.

He and Cathryn and Linda would never have fit into the sought after Greek fraternity-sorority cliques on campus. They never felt comfortable with that lifestyle. They formed a separate little group, and, within it, they developed a

close and caring feeling for one another. Nick and Linda were both at Northwestern on scholarships. They lived at home and this tended to set them apart from the majority of the more affluent undergraduates.

Cathryn, though financially able to live on campus, never felt as if she belonged there. Cathryn never really felt as if she belonged anywhere. She had her secrets; undisclosed uncertainties and insecurities. Living closely with a group of giggling, social young women, would never work for her. But with her two friends she found some sense of belonging and acceptance that gave her a strength and comfort that she didn't find anywhere else.

Over two years, they fell into a routine of meeting and sounding each other out whenever there was an important decision to be made. They discussed their romances, careers, troubles and dreams with one another. In fact, Nick, Cathryn and Linda shared nearly all of their most intimate feelings in their casual meetings. Nearly all, that is.

But now each of them was on the brink of significant changes, more portentous than they realized.

Nick had just begun practicing law, and he was going to marry Carrie Lindsay Clark, another Northwestern student.

Cathryn had just received her Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in English with a minor in French. "I'm not so sure how useful my choices are going to be," she joked.

Cathryn was planning to get married soon, too, to Edward William Kent. They planned to move across the country to the Napa Valley in northern California, where she was going to be a wife and school teacher, and try to fit in graduate school.

Linda was going to work in the editing department of Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovitch during the summer, and then she would start her third year at Northwestern in the fall. She would be, for the first time in a long while, without her two closest friends.

Linda's changes, though less significant than those facing Cathryn and Nick, were causing her more trepidation, and she felt a tremulous nagging fear that she didn't really understand. She sat with them now, her thumbnail nervously tracing the lines in the textured table top, looking up first at her cousin's lovely profile and then over at Nick, whose smiling eyes had become serious and thoughtful. Linda's heart felt as if it were thumping too quickly, her cheeks were

flushed and her stomach felt taut and uneasy. She pressed one arm against her abdomen.

The thought of day-to-day life without Nick and Cathryn close by made her uncomfortable. She wasn't involved in any relationships and she wasn't engaged or in love with anyone. No one except her friend across the table with his sparkling green eyes. And that couldn't possibly count.

Just by sitting across from him, with his tall, athletic body, his dark green eyes, his warm smile, Linda could hardly think of anything else. His sense of adventure and his ideas made her adore him, it was as simple as that. In fact, it was joyful for Linda just to be near him.

She thought back to a Friday night last September when he had called and talked her and Cathryn into meeting him in the parking lot off of Sheridan Road near the University. It was late and all he would tell them was, "I have a great idea, sort of a picnic!" Linda was easier to persuade than her cousin.

"Are you crazy?" Cathryn demanded. "It's ten o'clock at night."

"Yes, undoubtedly I am crazy. Hurry, okay?" Nick answered.

It was almost eleven o'clock by the time Nick, secretive and grinning, ushered the two of them into his battered little Volkswagen. Carrie was at a country club dinner with her parents. That was not Nick's kind of evening if it could be avoided, and this time he had managed to beg off. Edward had called Cathryn just before dinner and told her that he needed to be at a business meeting, that he would talk to her tomorrow. Cathryn was disappointed and so she was grateful to get Nick's call, glad to be distracted for awhile.

Linda had been curled up in pajamas on the couch with a novel, successfully putting her homework off until Saturday morning when the phone rang. She was elated to hear Nick's voice. Happily she pulled on jeans and a sweatshirt, told her mother that she was going to meet Nick and Cathryn and hurried out of the house. Her mother called out after her, "Linda, not too long, it's already late."

"I won't be, Mom. Don't worry."

Lois stood at the front door shaking her head, a small smile on her lips. *Now what's Nick up to?* she wondered without too much concern. The girls would be okay if they were with Nick.

"Okay, what's going on?" Cathryn asked him, her violet eyes narrowing suspiciously, her head tilted a little to one side.

Nick grinned as he drove north on Sheridan Road with Linda in the front seat and Cathryn leaning towards them from the back seat. He was humming, pleased with his own idea, happy to have them both to share it with him.

"What are you up to this time?" Cathryn demanded again, determined to get some sort of an answer out of him.

"You'll see. You'll love this," was all Nick would tell her.

Linda giggled a little. Nick's enthusiasm and excitement flowed over her, captivating her with his mystery. Her face was radiant as she watched the curving road in front of them, loving the adventure, like a child eager for any happy surprise.

Anyway, she thought to herself, *nothing Nick comes up with can disappoint me.*

He took them along the beautiful, winding, tree-lined North Shore road, driving slowly until they reached the northeast part of the sleepy little town of Wilmette. Finally, they came to a long, narrow driveway that was bordered on both sides by huge, majestic pine trees. Nick turned the wheel and headed the little car up the drive. They couldn't see where the driveway led from the road, but Nick knew exactly where he was going. He was still humming and still grinning.

Although the early fall weather had gotten very cold several times with the temperature dipping down into the thirties as another harsh Chicago winter approached, this night was exquisite. It was a little chilly, but with a clean crispness to the air. Linda looked up at the tall pines. The leaves on the maple and elm trees along the main road were clearly visible in the bright starlight. In the past weeks, they had turned to breath-taking shades of gold, red, yellow, orange and bronze. The moon was full and bright, throwing beams of light that reflected off the splendid old trees and glistened in the drops of moisture that formed in the leaves from the cool, damp air.

Linda was quiet, mesmerized by row upon row of tall pine trees, when she suddenly looked out through the windshield and made a soft, little gasping sound.

"What?" Cathryn whispered, looking through the windshield in the same direction. Then she saw, too, and drew her breath in and held it for a moment. "Wow.." she breathed quietly.

Nick stopped the car. The quiet was sudden and peaceful. They rolled the windows down and sat very still for a moment, listening. There were new sounds of the wind rustling through the trees, and small, crunching noises from some tiny animal that scurried along the ground close by. In the distance, off to the north,

someone was burning logs in a fireplace and the pungent smell of the blazing wood drifted to them on the breeze. Linda breathed deeply as she looked upward, her lips parted and her eyes wide.

Just in front of them, rising in majestic and elegant splendor toward the star-filled sky, stood the nine-sided Bahai Temple, the House of Worship, in magnificent whiteness against the dark sky, with each of its sides decorated spectacularly with symbolic designs that were clearly visible in the brilliant moonlight.

After a few silent minutes, Nick got out of the car, motioned to the girls to do the same and he went around and opened the hood. He took a small cooler out, set it on the ground, handed a blanket to Cathryn and some packages to Linda.

"Follow me, please, ladies," he said.

Linda and Cathryn giggled happily as they followed him up the path, lifting their faces to the awesome sight in front of them. Nick glanced back, saw their expressions and smiled. When he found the spot he wanted, just past the thick expanse of pine trees in a clearing thirty yards or so in front of the magnificent structure, he took the blanket from Cathryn and spread the big, old worn fabric out next to the path leading up to the temple. He motioned to the girls to sit down. The grass and leaves beneath the blanket crunched under them.

Although they had grown up in Chicago, neither Cathryn nor Linda had ever seen the temple before that night. Nick began telling them a little about the background of the Bahai faith and they listened, fascinated, their faces serious and their lips parted a little as they looked beyond him at the beautiful building in the serene night.

"The religion teaches about the oneness of mankind, the harmony of science and religion, a world order that would assure peace, justice and international cooperation," he said, with awe and some sadness in his voice.

"It's too bad none of the religions of the world bring about the peace and harmony they advocate. They have good ideas, but no way of getting us there," Linda remarked.

"Yeah, I agree." Nick said. "I wonder what it would feel like to live in a world that isn't filled with insanity or disease or crime or war. And what exactly would it take to make that happen?"

Cathryn shook her head, frowning at them. "People are the way they are," she said. "Some of them are good and some of them are not so good. Some are purely rotten. No religion is going to change that. It's just the way it is."

Linda and Nick were startled by her cynicism. They glanced at her and then at one another.

She sounds more and more like Edward and less like herself, Linda thought.

Cathryn saw them exchange looks, saw their expressions but she just shrugged. She realized that that was something that Edward had said to her, but she didn't care.

Edward's the most perceptive and intelligent person I've ever known, she thought to herself.

But the beauty of the night and the enchantment cast by the temple, so splendid, bright white outlined against a midnight sky, won out. Nick and Linda were quiet. They passed over Cathryn's comment and when Nick spoke again it was about the indisputable magnificence of the structure architecturally, not spiritually.

They had their picnic. Nick took some wine out of the cooler and they shared it, drinking from the bottle as he hadn't thought about glasses. There were Cokes which they never got around to drinking, a box of crackers, a small salami that Nick sliced for them with his little silver pocket knife, a hunk of cheddar cheese and a bag of cookies. They nibbled intermittently, gazing up at the building, and they discussed the meaning of life, the insanity of war, the struggles of mankind and the importance of friendship. After a little while, silly from the wine, they toasted one another and their futures.

Any feeling of uneasiness about what was to come was still only a tiny seed of disquietude that Linda could feel in her gut whenever they talked about the future, but she could not yet identify it.

The two girls pulled their heavy sweatshirts closely around their bodies and turned on their backs on the blanket. Linda, looking up at the stars, felt very tiny, a little overwhelmed, even frightened. Nick was lying on his back between the two girls and when he felt Linda shiver, he put his arms through theirs. She felt better then, somehow connected and less alone.

Nick was fervently dedicated to learning the legal system. When he finished law school, ranking high in his class, he was pursued by a number of respected Chicago firms.

He finally accepted an offer with Smithson, Ellingsworth and Naples, a legal firm whose reputation was well known and unblemished. That was important to Nick as he entered a field that was beginning to draw quite a lot of criticism for its dwindling ethics, integrity and sense of responsibility.

The principal partners of Smithson were enthusiastic about Nick joining their organization. They were impressed with his academic accomplishments and his intensity, but they also found themselves attracted to his refreshing straightforwardness and his lack of pretentiousness.

Nick Martin has the makings of a brilliant young attorney with a bright and lucrative future as part of the firm, one told another, as they smiled and puffed on pipes after a lunch in their private dining room.

It was a spectacular beginning of a promising career for the boy who had grown up in a small farming community near St. Catharines, not far from Toronto. He had come to the States with his parents, in the middle of high school, feeling more than a bit lost for a while. His father was desperate for opportunity south of the Canadian border, hoping to be able to better support his small family.

Nick had made some firm decisions as a Canadian living amongst Americans. He was determined to be successful in school and to make things go right in life. Having lived through the uncertainty and upheaval that his parents experienced when they lost their small property, Nick became determined to find a profession that would never allow for the fear he had seen in his father's eyes.

With exceptionally high SAT scores, he won a full scholarship to Northwestern, a prestigious university that his parents never could have afforded. While remaining dedicated to having as much fun as he could cram into a day, Nick managed to achieve the excellent grades he needed throughout his undergraduate studies. He had the advantage of being genuinely inquisitive, of really wanting to know, of enjoying the pleasure that comes from learning something that one can use and apply in one's life. When Nick began law school, he was driven by an intense desire to really understand the law. He wanted to know how mankind had developed its systems of codes and penalties. Nick sensed that they were supposed to promote a civilized and peaceful society which would flourish and prosper.

But he wondered, *Why does it seem as though society is going in the opposite direction?*

Nick believed that he would find the answers to his questions in the laws and the dramatic history of their development. When he passed the bar, he could have

accepted positions with successful law firms across the country, but he chose to stay in the Midwest near his friends and family.

Nick's compelling good looks and warm personality attracted women from the time he was a young teenager, and his residual bit of a Canadian accent added to the interesting package that was Nicolas Martin.

Cathryn once told him bluntly, "Your only saving grace is that you aren't a jerk about girls falling all over you!" And Nick just grinned, with the tiniest, intriguing bit of embarrassed flush on his cheeks.

Nick was committed to his relationship with Carrie. They had been together for over two years and they planned to be married the following year. This pleased Carrie's parents, especially now that Nick was practicing law and earning an excellent income. These were vital considerations to Carrie and her North Shore parents.

Carrie Lindsay Clark, a pretty girl with long, thick, blond hair and blue eyes, had drawers and closets filled with cashmere sweaters and matching skirts, and few ambitions other than to follow in her mother's footsteps.

"The things that are important, Carrie," her mother told her many times, "are correctly managing a beautiful home, doing charitable works well, and raising well-behaved children who will eventually go to Ivy League schools." It was understood that if they were boys, they would one day earn huge sums of money in businesses similar to those of their fathers. If they were girls, they would have terrific fashion sense, and if truly fortunate, they would attract special men like Nick and live happily ever after. Life was not at all a complicated affair to Carrie Lindsay Clark who had never lived one moment that was difficult, challenging or uninfluenced by great wealth.

Now, the three friends were meeting once again. It was Nick who had left work early to meet with Cathryn and Linda for coffee this particular afternoon. It was ostensibly to catch up on news but it was really one last opportunity to grab some precious minutes together before Cathryn and Edward left town.

Linda looked at them now, her stomach tightening at the thought of the long distance calls and letters that would have to replace warm hugs and supportive communication. Simple caring gestures that were part of every one of her days.

Though no one put it into words, Nick sensed that the real reason they were together now was an anxious attempt to hang on to some of the innocence and joy of the lives they had been living as students.

Students, with very limited responsibilities, he thought, rubbing his brow. They're supposed to be learning how to handle the circumstances of life and they'll never really learn how until they just have to do it. Sometimes I feel as if I'm looking at them - laughing, arguing, defending, performing for each other - all from a distance.

Cathryn reached for her coffee cup and Nick reached across the small table and gently put his hand over her wrist. They looked at one another, but no one said anything for a long moment.

On this sunny and bright afternoon they were each feeling a vague uneasiness, some premonition about the future. It was a distant, unreal piece of time that loomed before them with so many possibilities, but also with uncertainties. It was intangible and vague in comparison to their structured, insulated and protected pasts.

Linda saw something serious in Nick's expression that was not there before. The time for them to begin to take responsibility for their own lives, to confront the real world, was getting closer. Even now, sipping their coffee and joking as they usually did, there was a heavy overtone to their conversation. There were long silent pauses as they looked from one to the other, staring, trying to capture and hold the moments. They were hanging onto one another hard, one last time.

Cathryn sat back in her chair and looked from one to the other of her two friends.

Linda's like a younger sister and a best friend at the same time. And Nick's a rare man we both found we could trust with our lofty aspirations and dreams as well as our silliest problems. Nick's never judgmental or harsh and no one could be a better listener, Cathryn thought.

Linda's bright smile faded, but her attention was still focused across the table on Nick. She respected his relationship with Carrie completely, but no matter how hard she tried or how much she berated herself for her foolish feelings about him, she couldn't do anything about the quickening of her heartbeat or the flush in her cheeks whenever she was around him.

One day, she told herself, I'll meet someone like him, my own Nick only that someone will look at me the way I'm always trying not to look at Nick.

Cathryn saw Linda's reactions to Nick, she knew Linda's feelings about him. They teased each other unmercifully, but both of the girls adored and respected Nick. From the beginning, Nick had treated Linda as if she were his little sister. He would do anything to help or protect either of them, but his affection was brotherly. Linda accepted this intellectually, but on some emotional, involuntary level, she remained infatuated, glowing in his presence, as she did with no one else.

The girls liked Carrie well enough, but away from Nick, to one another, they questioned the match of their personalities. Nick was usually vibrant and enthusiastic in his approach to every aspect of his life. But he always seemed to become somewhat subdued when he was with Carrie, who could best be depicted as merely content. Nick could raise the emotional tone level in a room just by stepping into it and smiling. Carrie was affable but complacent. Nick wholeheartedly believed that a person could change things and improve conditions; Carrie truly believed that everything was fine just as it was.

Now, Linda watched Nick and listened to his story-telling with gentle affection in her eyes, an uneasiness in her chest and a knot in her stomach. Her uncomplicated and secure world felt as if it were beginning to erupt volcanically, and she struggled to hide those feelings from both Cathryn and Nick.

Nick is one of the most special men I've ever met and Carrie is one of the luckiest women, she thought to herself with a small sigh. Linda turned in the chair to look at her cousin. Cathryn turned towards her and her clear violet eyes met Linda's eyes for a moment and they both smiled.

Linda winced a little, thinking, *Cathryn understands me better than anyone else on earth. My God, what's going to happen now, without everyone I've been depending on?*

Cathryn watched the others, and she, too, was wondering about the directions that the three of them were about to follow.

She was going to marry Edward. She had made her decision about him and that was all there was to that. In a few weeks she would be Mrs. Edward Kent and they would move to Napa, California, not far from Edward's parents. Her eyes glowed with excitement at the prospect of living in the beautiful, rolling, vineyard country she had seen glorious pictures of, but then they began to cloud over with a quiet anxiousness as she considered leaving everyone and everything that was familiar to her. Edward, on the other hand, could not wait. He couldn't have been

happier about what he called their *fresh start*. He was more than a little eager to have Cathryn to himself, entirely to himself.

The lukewarm, hesitant, questioning reaction of her family and friends to her decision to marry him had not been what Cathryn had hoped for. She stubbornly pushed aside what she believed to be their doubts and not her own.

I have none, she told herself more than once.

Edward clearly had her entranced, as he had since the first day she saw him.

When Edward first saw Cathryn Margaret Silberg on the campus of Northwestern, the beautiful, young woman unexpectedly and abruptly grabbed his attention. He was immediately captivated, though no one would have been able to tell from his reactions. His expression remained impassive, his features immobile like chiseled stone.

Cathryn wore a soft powder blue cashmere sweater and a matching skirt that day. Her thick, shining, chestnut hair was pulled back away from her face into a low, wavy ponytail that accentuated her high cheekbones and lovely eyes. She looked as if she had just stepped off the cover of a fashion magazine. Even in an atmosphere where she was surrounded by dozens of fresh, young, pretty coeds, Cathryn's unusual, exotic beauty turned heads.

She was having lunch with some girlfriends between classes. Edward sat alone in a booth near the window in the little restaurant, sipping coffee from a mug, while his eyes discreetly took in everything about her as she talked and laughed with two other girls at the counter.

After a minute or two, Cathryn felt his eyes on her, and as she turned on the stool, she came face to face with a handsome man, but his expression was very cold. He didn't smile at all and she felt a chill along her arms, but at the same time, her cheeks grew warm and flushed. The man was smoking a pipe and he looked down as he tapped the ashes out in the ashtray alongside a handsome leather briefcase that lay on the table.

He looked up again and this time it was Cathryn who was staring. She smiled shyly, just a little, but the man continued gazing directly into her eyes. It was clear that whatever he was going to allow between the two of them just then, would be done without talking, without even a change of expression.

Cathryn, embarrassed, turned back towards her friends.

"Who is that?" Sandy whispered.

"I've never seen him before," Barbara, the other girl replied.

"God, he's good-looking, but those serious dark eyes! He hasn't taken them off Cathryn for a second," she muttered, shielding her mouth and words with her hand.

"Do you know him, Cathryn?" Sandy whispered.

"I've never seen him or anyone like him before," murmured Cathryn, still feeling the chill over her arms and the heat in her cheeks. "Let's get out of here. I've got another class and a ton of reading to do tonight."

"Me, too," Sandy groaned, as they gathered their notebooks and briefcases together and walked towards the door.

Edward sat there for a long time after they left. He watched through the window as Cathryn nervously rushed away with the other girls.

Now there's something worth looking at, he thought. What a magnificent looking woman, like a young, unbroken thoroughbred, he mused.

Normally Edward had little time for women. He found them too silly, too time-consuming. Having finished college a year ago, he now had very great ambitions.

I'm going to have money and power. More important than anything else, I will be the one in control, he promised himself.

Edward Kent had no time to be making the rounds with airy-headed little things that fell into his arms and bed too easily. There was too much work to do to get what he wanted and he found that there was no challenge in the usual games with women. Ordinarily when he saw someone he wanted, he simply told her what to do: *Sit down. Come here. Wear blue, I like it.* Edward had no doubts or reservations that his wishes would be followed. After all, that's how his entire life had been.

Why should anything be different now when I'm more determined than ever? His mouth curved into a small smile, but his eyes were without emotion.

Edward had been raised by two rather arrogant and self-satisfying people, parents who were older than most of his friends' mothers and fathers. Maxwell and Helen Kent had come to the U.S. during the forties, and though they had been poor refugees from Germany, they did well financially in their new country. They never found it necessary to be terribly concerned about who they needed to

shove about in order to secure their small successes. Nor had either his mother or father felt compelled to explain or justify either their deeds or the repercussions. They carefully taught their only son to follow in their footsteps and this suited Edward. He was fascinated with the concept of power and the ability to control others. It was what he wanted more than anything else in the world.

Edward William Kent, tall and dark complected, was unquestionably handsome, but in an almost sinister way. He was emotionally cold and he always had been. As a small boy he watched his father carefully, and he learned that an arrogant, almost disdainful attitude would protect him from potential attacks from others. He didn't value or cultivate friendships, only connections, and the acquaintances that he did have were quickly made aware of how Edward operated. If they crossed him in any way, if they failed to live up to his expectations, they did not remain in his small circle or benefit from the few political and financial associations his family had established in their community.

Edward was ruthless in school, in business and in his personal relations. He expected a great deal and gave very little in return. What kept some people associating with him regardless, was an always present, if unspoken promise of future benefits, the kind that come from being connected to someone who is entirely determined to attain and wield power and influence.

Now this unusually attractive young woman had seized his attention. He enjoyed the look of strength, vibrancy, and vulnerability that there was about Cathryn.

But, he thought, how interesting it would be to teach her about real strength.

His dark eyes narrowed as he watched her walk away. Edward drew on his pipe and leaned back against the booth.

Edward knew the campus well and he found ways to be in places where Cathryn would go, locations where she felt comfortable and safe, where they could accidentally walk past one another. He didn't speak to her for a long time, but more than once she knew that he was there and that he was looking at her. And each time she felt inexplicably excited and nervous, her cheeks flushed and the palms of her hands moist.

Late one afternoon, Cathryn was in the drug store at the corner of Church Street and Main. She nervously dropped a magazine just as she was walking up to the cashier, fully aware that Edward was in the store somewhere behind her. She leaned down to pick it up and his hand brushed against hers.

"I've got it," he said firmly, his gaze enveloping her, taking her breath away. He slowly put the magazine and a five dollar bill on the counter, took his change,

turned and handed the magazine to her. Then, without smiling, his eyes staring directly into hers, he said softly, "Come and have a cup of coffee with me. It's time I introduced myself. I'm Edward Kent," and he gently took her hand in his.

"I'm Cathr.." she murmured softly.

"Yes, I know who you are," he said quietly.

That was the beginning.

Weeks later, when they were finally alone together, Edward manipulated and orchestrated their romance specifically for the effect that he wanted to have on her. At first he didn't touch her at all, except to place a strong hand on her shoulder as he guided her into a room, or later when they sat next to one another on his couch, a dim lamp glowing on the low coffee table before them, he brushed her cheek very softly back and forth with his fingers.

He gazed intently into her eyes and told her, "I knew, from the first time I saw you, that you belonged to me and that we would be together forever." She looked back at him with wonder in her eyes. This man wasn't in awe of her like some of the others had been. He was so self-assured, so confident. He sounded and looked absolutely serious and Cathryn felt caught up in his strength, and carried along by his plans.

When he gently held her chin with his hand and leaned towards her, she was aching to feel his lips on hers.

"Not yet, beautiful," he said softly, "not just yet."

Cathryn felt as if she could hardly breathe. The longing that he was awakening in her was something that she did not expect. She didn't know quite how to deal with the flood of emotion she felt towards this unusual and strange man. But she was fascinated and one thing was certain. She wanted more.

One Saturday afternoon he took her out for lunch and a drive. When they went back to his apartment, Edward turned on the stereo and very nearly drove Cathryn crazy, very slowly caressing her back, her arms, the curve of her hips, the firm swell of her breasts and then he was kissing her, softly at first, then more deeply and passionately. But he didn't try to take any of her clothes off as his large hands kept moving over her body and she trembled involuntarily.

When her breath was coming so hard and fast that she thought she would burst and her body was leaning towards him, yearning for his touch, he reached under her skirt and moving her underpants aside, he pressed his fingers searchingly inside of her. She could feel him touching her hot wetness. Her back arched towards him and she was filled with a longing that she had never known before.

"Please, Edward, please, yes," she breathed.

Then, abruptly, he stopped, and while he was watching her face, he straightened her clothes and then his own. Cathryn was still trembling, her face a picture of passion and confusion. Edward smiled knowingly at her and gently stroked her hair as he pulled her back into his arms, calmly pressing his lips against her cheek.

"Not yet," he whispered, "not yet."

Perhaps Cathryn would have reacted differently, if not for Dr. Krauss. At the same time that Edward was arousing, frustrating and confusing her, Dr. Aaron Krauss was instructing, comforting, touching and scaring the hell out of Cathryn. Just a little bit more and he would push her completely into Edward's eager, controlling and dangerous arms.

"Hey, don't you guys ever let anyone else have that table?" Cathryn was startled back to the present by two blond girls with two tall, muscular boys in football sweaters, walking past the little cafe. They waved, but went on with their conversation, still intent on one another.

A half hour later, though, Cathryn looked at her watch and a frown crossed her face and she caught her lower lip between her teeth. "Jesus, it's already . . .," she said. "I've got to get downtown and meet Edward and my mom and dad." She got up from the table and then leaned down and hugged Linda. Linda's arm went around her cousin's shoulders. She could smell Cathryn's familiar perfume.

Why do I keep feeling so sad? Linda asked herself, keeping her arm tightly around her friend for another moment.

"Gotta go. You two behave. I'll see you soon, hmm?" Cathryn looked down warmly at Linda, grabbed her books, went around the table and pressed her cheek against Nick's and said, "God, I don't know what I'll do without you two. Can't you come and live in my house in California?" she smiled weakly.

Cathryn started to walk away down the sidewalk, but then she stopped and turned towards them. They were both quietly watching her. Cathryn felt a weird, anxious feeling in her abdomen that she couldn't shake off, as if there were something that she should know or do or say, but she couldn't figure out what it was. She lifted her fingers to her lips and blew a kiss back to her friends at the table and then she quickly walked away, west on Church Street away from the campus, with the sunlight gleaming in her wavy hair.

Cathryn had tears in her eyes. She realized that she wasn't at all sure when she would see the two of them again. Edward wanted to leave for California as soon as possible and he wanted to be married by a justice of the peace, somewhere along the way, with just the two of them at their wedding. At first Cathryn was startled by his idea and she protested feebly, but Edward was adamant. He flatly refused to consider the kind of wedding that Cathryn's mother and father wanted so much to give their only daughter. After a while, as she had from the beginning, Cathryn acquiesced to Edward's wishes and then she began to hear herself sounding like him in her explanations to her parents.

"It just doesn't make sense to put so much time, energy and money into a few hours, for a party for people we hardly know and who we probably won't see again for years, if ever," she declared to her mother, as Anna stood in the kitchen making a pot of coffee.

The attractive, pleasant older woman turned, and looking at her daughter with gentle caring in her eyes, she paused, considering what Cathryn had said. For a moment they were both quiet, looking at one another. During that moment, they each had their own mental picture of Cathryn, resplendent in a magnificent white gown, her dazzling smile, the quintessential bride, and then, a bit grudgingly, they allowed the images to fade away.

Anna sighed, resignedly, and hugged her daughter to her for a long time before the two women made their way dilatorily into the living room with the fresh coffee.

Edward and Cathryn's father Joseph sat stiffly facing one another on two couches, separated not only by a long, low glass coffee table, but also by totally opposing points of view on just about everything, except the importance of Cathryn in their lives.

At the cafe, Linda felt a burning sensation in her chest and the smile faded from her face again.

She thought, *My days will be different without Cathryn, without Nick's teasing, without our meetings, our phone calls.*

Her lovely, young face clouded over and her smooth forehead creased with lines of concern as she tried to hold back tears.

Nick felt it, too. He came around the table, sat in the chair that Cathryn had just left empty, put his arm around Linda's shoulders and pulled her close to him. "Hey, kid, it's gonna be fine. She's going to be a very, very happy lady and we're going to go and visit her and drink terrific wine, okay?"

Linda looked up at him, still trying not to cry, hating how easily tears came to her dark eyes. She leaned towards Nick, wanting his reassurance and wanting to get comfort from the picture of the future that he described. But they knew Edward and they didn't feel very hopeful. They didn't like him, and they both loved Cathryn very much.

Just at that moment Carrie came hurrying across the street, carrying packages from Carson's, the department store at the corner, her blond hair blowing around her face in the breeze. Nick stood up and pulled a chair out for her, leaning over as Carrie touched her cheek to his.

"Hi, guys," she said, breathlessly. "Can't sit. Nick, we're supposed to be at Mom's in an hour and I need to make a couple more stops. Can you put these in your car and meet me there?" She paused, finally seeing the looks on their faces. "Where's Cathryn? What's wrong?"

There was a pause before Nick answered, "She went to meet Edward and her parents."

"So, what's wrong?" Carrie repeated.

Nick and Linda looked at each other and back at Carrie. Nick shrugged. Linda didn't say anything.

Linda thought, *There's no point in talking about it, it's some thing that's just going to happen. Anyway, I really don't know exactly what's wrong; just some weird feeling, a not very good feeling.* Linda sighed deeply.

Carrie looked at her and shrugged, turning towards Nick again. Nick took her packages from her. She really didn't want any more explanation. Carrie clearly had more shopping on her mind. "I've gotta go. I'll see you there?" Nick nodded yes, and Carrie was off across the street. "Bye, Linda," she threw back over her shoulder not waiting for an answer, and she disappeared into one of the little shops that lined Church Street. Nick sat down again.

Linda pushed her hair back away from her face, looked over at Nick, and trying to sound happier than she felt, said, "I've still got an English Lit report to do. I'm going to the Library. Some of us aren't through with this stuff yet, Mr. Lawyer." She stood up and gave Nick a quick hug, letting herself feel the warm, smoothness of his cheek for just a second, and then Linda started to walk away from the table. He caught her hand and stopped her for a moment. Without saying anything he smiled up at her, but his eyes were sad.

Something's changing too fast and I don't like it, Linda thought.

"Okay little girl," Nick said, softly, loosening his grip on her hand. "See you."

Then Linda, with her books in her arms, walked a few steps away down the sidewalk, east on Church Street towards the campus and the huge, ivy-covered building that was the Deering Library. As Cathryn had done a short time ago, she turned back towards Nick and waved, forcing herself to smile. The uncomfortable feeling that burned in her chest was getting worse and now she felt it spreading through her stomach as if her intestines were knotting and twisting.

I have to get out of here, get busy, shake off all this, this not right feeling, Linda told herself.

Nick watched her walk away down the street for a minute, and then he got up from their table feeling strangely alone and terribly sad. He picked up Carrie's packages and walked across the tree-lined street towards his car. He went south, crossing Church Street.

As he put the key in the car door, he thought, *The three of us just went off in three completely different directions, on the same street, exactly what we're about to do with our lives.*

Nick, too, was feeling an uncomfortable sensation in his chest and stomach, some uneasiness about something he didn't know or something he should be doing.

What, though? he asked himself.