

READBEAST

BEASTIALITY STORIES



NOTE: This is the companion (follow on) novella to "[Goddess](#)" a short story that you may wish to read before reading this one.

"Hmmm...Shadow," I sighed with a sleepy smile, stretching in my warm bed and spreading my legs. "I have to get up."

He wasn't listening, my boyfriend of three years, and I was always amazed at how a guy could wake up horny. I didn't mind, except I really did need to get out of bed. I had to pee and take a shower and brush my teeth and...

"Shadow!" I gasped and giggled and surrendered to his long rough tongue. It was wide and flat and licking me from my asshole all the way to my waking clit. "I should have put panties on, huh?"

He didn't answer of course and I was already wet. He'd been licking me for God knows how long before it finally woke me up. Long enough to get some juices flowing and now my clit was starting to thrum and he could taste me. I shivered as he started working his tongue a little deeper, wanting to find the source of that tangy flavor filling his mouth.

"Okay...Okay," I whispered. "We gotta do it fast. No more foreplay, come here."

I rolled over, just because it was quick and easy. I looked over one side of the bed...Nope. It was on the other side, on the floor and I grabbed the pillow Shadow had fucked me on the night before. He licked my thighs and I kicked at the ticklish sensation. I lifted my tummy and hips, and the pillow was still damp, ripe with the smell of our recent sex, too. I'd have to wash it, but not right then. I wedged it underneath my hips and shifted my body into a comfortable position.

A very comfortable position, with my head down and my breasts flattened against the mattress. My ass wiggled invitingly as I spread my legs slightly, knees down and legs straight. I was just a slut for dog cock; twenty-two years old and smart, beautiful, and fun. How many guys had tried to get me in just this position? Too many, but I'd never fucked a man in my life. They'd wine me and dine me, and promised me the moon, but I'd said goodnight every time. All Shadow had to do was give me a little lick and I'd bend over with a giggle and tingle. I wanted it as much as he did, believe me. I just didn't want to admit it.

"Okay, come on, Shad...Fuck me nice," I breathed. He knew what we were doing, just like he knew what 'fuck me' meant. "Ohhh!"

I gasped as he took me all at once, the way dogs do. He'd pushed himself up, dropping his front paws squarely on my back, and lunged into me. Sometimes he missed and that was annoying, once in awhile he'd find my asshole if I wasn't careful, but Shadow was pretty good and I was feeling lazy. This morning he nailed me on the first try and all he had to do was start pumping all that hard dog cock inside me.

Fuck! I love that. He's not huge, maybe seven inches long at the most, but thick? Yeah. Shadow's cock is seriously fat, like getting fucked with a Pepsi bottle. A hot Pepsi bottle with a sharply tapered tip, designed by Mother Nature to spear into a tight cunt like mine. Dogs have the most amazing cocks and it was only slightly uncomfortable at first. Even after all our fucking, Shadow made me feel like a little girl every time.

"Ah fuck me, Shad...Mmpphhh!" I buried my face in my pillow because if I didn't, the nice family downstairs would know exactly what was going on.

The apartment I rented was really two bedrooms and a bathroom that had been renovated to create

a studio. The couple who owned it had two kids, innocent little girls in grade school, and they hadn't been too sure about letting me keep Shadow in the first place. They liked the idea of having a teacher for a tenant though, and so we'd made a little deal. I helped the girls out with their homework once in awhile and they let me keep my dog. I was pretty sure if they knew how much we loved to fuck, Shadow and I would find ourselves looking for a new home.

That was the story of my life. Keeping the secret, the big one. The only secret that counted. I loved fucking dogs, and not only that...I loved dogs. Period. Shadow was my boyfriend, not my pet. My equal in every way that mattered and most of the time I barely noticed he wasn't human. We talked and laughed, danced and kissed. We did everything together, and of course, we made love. Nobody could know about that, it was a serious secret and I resented it, but I couldn't change it either.

Shadow wasn't my first boyfriend. I mean, he wasn't the first dog I'd loved. I'd given my virginity to a dog at fourteen and while I didn't think of myself as a slut or anything, I had to admit I'd had a lot of canine lovers. About a dozen different dogs altogether, while I was growing up mostly, and my first couple years of college. My third year I'd gotten Shadow and pretty much remained faithful to him, with just a couple one night stands, so to speak. I was more mature now, but when I'd been younger, especially like fifteen and sixteen? God! I'd fucked every dog cock I could wrap my horny pussy around. Pkay, maybe I had been a slut back then and thinking back on it, I always got chills.

It wasn't just the memory of fucking so many strange dogs that excites me, but there's a real sense of fear and relief that I hadn't gotten caught. Sometimes I think it's a miracle. I lived in terror of being found out and my life would have been over. My parents would have kicked me out, or taken me to a shrink probably. They wouldn't have understood. My friends at school? The few I had wouldn't have been my friends anymore and the rest of the school would have treated me like a leprous clown.

I remembered all the guys who'd asked me out, the high school jocks and self-proclaimed studs that all the other girls melted for, and how I'd turned them down cold. If they found out I'd drop my panties for a stray dog, but I wouldn't give them the time of day, I'd have taken a real beating. Emotionally, I mean. I don't think anyone would have really hurt me, but who knows? Some of those guys were serious assholes anyway and busting a boy's ego like that...

But I hadn't been caught, not once, and here I was at twenty-two, pressing my face into my pillow while Shadow held my hips with his paws, pulling me against his urgent thrusts. His cock was long and fat and dripping, the precum flowing like water from the tap to ease his violent penetration, and he was fucked me hard. God, I loved that and it was going to make me late for work, I knew, but there was nothing I could do about it. I was Shad's bitch and he wanted me.

My pussy spread wide around him, my clitoris buzzing happily while my swollen labia were pushed and pulled, turned inside out as the growing bulge of Shadow's knot would force itself into my cunt. It wasn't full sized yet, but would be soon enough. He whined above me, his head down and back arched, driving his cock so deep I could feel it hitting the bottom of my pussy. That felt like lightning between my thighs and I shook with my first orgasm, screaming into the pillow because I get way too loud when I cum.

He'd push that deep just to get his knot inside me and then pull back, testing our union and waiting until the ball of muscle was too swollen to come back out. Shadow did it fast too, that's the thing. This wasn't a slow, deliberate fuck like man might give his wife, this was like getting raped by jackhammer, except I wanted it as much as Shadow did. Rape is entirely the wrong word, but in the sense that I was vulnerable and helpless to stop him? Yeah, he raped the hell out of my pussy and I loved him for it.

"Ummm!" I groaned and clenched my jaw and held my breath. His knot was in me suddenly, stuck there I mean, and I felt a pinch of discomfort when Shadow tried to pull it back out and couldn't. It had grown too large for the smallish mouth of my vagina. The muscles inside were stretching around it, holding him just inside my pussy. He wasn't thrusting anymore, just growling with pleasure as he realized he'd finally locked his bitch up tight.

He started cumming then, his potent dog sperm released in a thin flood of bestial semen. It filled the depths of my womb with his cockhead nestled right up against my cervix where it was supposed to be. I could feel his cum bathing my sore and well fucked sex. It was a vague sensation, nothing specific, but a general warmth and increasing wetness to make me shiver and climax again. I was cumming for the second time and it was beautiful. I'd have little orgasms until Shadow pulled out of me, probably, a dozen small ones to drive me crazy. This was the part I loved most of all. Locked up and vulnerable, helpless while my womb soaked in dog sperm.

It was the fear that did it. Not by itself and not entirely, but the conflict made our sex better. As a teenage girl growing up in a conservative family, in a middle class neighborhood, the possibility of being caught fucking a dog terrified me. It still did, and while I had some measure of control during our intercourse, once Shadow's knot was lodged inside my cunt there was nothing I could do but wait. The door was locked, the curtains drawn so nobody could see us, but the possibility always remained.

Ten minutes passed before Shadow's knot had started to shrink and it took another three or four after that before he was able to pull out of me. Like a cork coming out of a bottle, he pulled my cunt inside out and it felt uncomfortable, almost painful like a cramp as I had to stretch for it, but then he came free with a heavy wash of our fuck juices pouring out of my gaping hole. His orgasm and mine, all of his precum as well, it made a real mess and the pillow beneath me was already soaked. Now my mattress had a big stain, another one to go with so many others. We fucked a lot.

"Oh God." I just lay there, smiling and breathing hard and trying to catch my breath. Our fuck had taken twenty minutes, almost twenty five actually, and I had to get ready for school. All I wanted to do was lay there.

Shadow wasn't helping. He brought his nose to my ass and his tongue to my pussy, lapping at our recent fuck with happy eagerness. I knew we tasted good together. I'd used my fingers to scoop our mixed cum from my sex plenty of times, sliding two or three fingers into my pussy and drawing them out wet and slippery. I'd suck them clean, savoring the distinctive taste and easily separating my own oily tang from Shadow's bitter, gamy pluck. It was a flavor not everyone would enjoy, but I loved it and so did he.

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"Car trouble, Miss Sands?" Agnes asked me, and she was the school secretary, a fortyish woman with purple hair. She was sweet enough and her tone more teasing than chiding.

"Sorry." I frowned, hurrying to get my assignment sheets and schedule and various notes and papers from my little box on the wall. All the teachers had one and I'd arrived five minutes late. Classes hadn't started yet, but teachers were expected to be in their classrooms at least ten minutes before the first bell. School policy.

"You're filling in for Mrs. Kahler, right? Math today." Agnes said, not asking me anything really, and I nodded.

I was just a substitute, trying to find a permanent job and get some experience, a good reference.

Being late wasn't going to help. The government would pay my student loans off, provided I found a job in the state and didn't take my degree somewhere else. The governor's office was efficient, too. They'd sent me a list of school districts desperate for teachers and most of them weren't in places where a young, single white woman would want to find herself. Inner-city high schools with gang problems, drugs and guns and all that. I wanted to help, I loved being a teacher, but I knew I'd never last in places like that. I had to be realistic about who I was, you know?

Thankfully there were a few others, schools located out in the countryside, upstate for the most part, in small towns or more often, schools that served a number of rural communities. I could deal with that, being out in the country. Shadow would love it, a lot more than being locked in some tenement building surrounded by concrete and asphalt. I'd applied to a half dozen places and as I walked towards the classroom I saw that I'd already gotten a couple replies. Two envelopes addressed to me in care of the school district and I wanted to open them immediately, but there wasn't enough time for that.

"Good morning Ms. Sands." ... "Hey, Miss Sands." ... "Morning Ms. Sands."

My little fan club was waiting for me to walk by. A group of sixteen and seventeen year old high school boys, three of them in particular, who were just bold enough to give me appreciative smiles and not-so-innocent up and down looks. When they were together, that is. Get any one of those boys by himself and he could barely look me in the eyes, but like with any herd animal, there's safety in numbers.

"Good morning," I replied, smiling back and trying my very best not to give the boys even the slightest encouragement. I knew they'd take some anyway, it couldn't be helped, and they'd be thinking about my smile all day long probably.

I'd grown from a pretty girl into a beautiful woman, all modesty aside, but that was hardly my fault. I blame my parents for more than just my auburn hair, hazel eyes, and very attractive face. I'm tall, like my dad, with long legs and a narrow waist, and breasts that are neither large nor small, but firm and pert all by themselves. Smallish hips maybe, but they gave way to a round, heart-shaped ass that I was rather proud of. Too many teachers had flat asses from sitting behind their desks day after day for too many years. That wasn't going to happen to me and I liked the exercise anyway.

Being a teacher meant I had to dress conservatively and that was fine with me. I wore a dark, knee-length skirt and a yellow blouse with just one button undone. Sorry boys, no cleavage there, but they did like to look anyway. The skirt had a matching blazer and it was comfortable enough in the mornings, but rather warm by midday. Low heels and sheer stockings, with my hair pinned up and out of the way. I wasn't showing off. If anything, I tried to tone my appearance down. The last thing I wanted to do was encourage some teenage boy's infatuation.

I spent my last few minutes before the bell looking over Mrs. Kahler's notes, and math was easy anyway. All I had to do was cover the previous day's homework, go through the text book with the class, and assign some problems due the next day. That would be a lot easier than ignoring those two envelopes I'd put in my purse. I desperately wanted a real, more permanent job.

High school is always a strange place, a community within a community, governed by social rules that are at once familiar and different from those outside it. Most adults try to forget the how cruel adolescents can be in a group, when they have too little supervision and too much pressure from their peers. Teenagers who don't conform to what others expect can have a rough time of it. Teachers, much more than parents, don't have the luxury of turning a blind eye, or forgetting what it was like for us. We sympathize with our kids, believe me.

I'd gotten through high school okay, despite being a rather reclusive and introspective girl. I was pretty enough to get away without having a lot of friends or joining the after school clubs, or even dating some big football player. The powers of physical beauty shouldn't be underestimated and it had helped keep my deepest, darkest secret. If anyone had found out that I was spending my afternoons in my bedroom, having sex with not only my dog, but quite a number of the neighbors' pets as well, I'd have died. I couldn't even imagine what might have happened or how I'd have dealt with it. I didn't want to.

So, I was a little surprised to discover that David was the school's newest whipping boy, for lack of a better term. I didn't know what he'd done, but it soon became obvious that there was a lot of talk about the sixteen year old sophomore. A lot of gasps and giggles, and I wondered what he could have done to deserve so much unwanted attention.

David was a good looking kid, the sort of boy I might have been attracted to back in high school, if I'd been a little more normal than I am. He was tall and healthy, with an average build. A cute face too; David wasn't strikingly handsome, but very easy on the eyes and nice to look at. Speaking of eyes, his eyes were blue and he usually wore a shy smile beneath his blonde hair, unkempt like most boys his age and I liked it. I liked him, so far as I knew him, and that wasn't very much at all, unfortunately.

I was returning from the restroom between classes when I bumped into the boy. Literally. David was in my fourth period trig class, except he seemed intent on leaving before it even started.

"David? What's wrong?" I asked him, and he looked pale and wide-eyed, almost in a panic.

He didn't say anything, just pushed past me, half-running down the hall. I stared after him while some of the other kids laughed and whispered. I asked one of them what was going on, a girl named Cindy Mopler, but she just shrugged. I didn't expect to get any answers and I wasn't going to push it right then.

After the class ended, I went to the faculty lunch room, as it was that time of day. Most of the teachers were already there and already talking about David, as it turned out. I hadn't been the only one to notice the teasing or the boy's discomfort.

"Well, I can't imagine it's true, but..." Mrs. Neumann glanced up as I sat down, perhaps wondering if she should continue or not.

"What?" Mr. Vaughn, the gym teacher, gave me his usual hungry look and prodded the older woman for details. "What are they saying he did?"

Mrs. Neumann shrugged her bony shoulders and sighed, "It's rather...Indelicate." She actually smiled then.

"He didn't get a girl in trouble, did he?" Mr. Jameson wondered.

"David?" Miss Hemshaw smiled and she was just a few years older than me. A rather portly woman with big green glasses. "I don't believe that."

"Oh no! He didn't get a girl in trouble." Mrs. Neumann shook her head and the way she said it made us all wonder if...

"He's gay?" Mr. Vaughn suggested, looking positively offended by the idea.

"Dog fucker," Mr. Stevens suddenly said, and he was the school's janitor, although his official job title was maintenance supervisor. He was the only one though, so I wasn't sure who he supervised.

"Excuse me!" Miss Hemshaw stared at him. We all did.

"Said he fucks his dog." The man shrugged, taking a seat and opening the brown bag he carried his lunch in.

"What?" a half-dozen teachers asked all at once, and I could barely breathe. My heart was pounding and I felt the blood rushing to my face.

"His sister caught him," he explained, unwrapping his sandwich. "Got the whole story while I was unclogging one of the crappers."

"Oh." Miss Hemshaw cleared her throat, glancing at her own half-eaten lunch.

"Said he was nailing the bitch right there in the kitchen." Mr. Steven's chuckled. "Imagine that? Poor boy needs a girlfriend bad!"

I left then, not caring how awkward it might have seemed. I felt dizzy and sick to my stomach suddenly, and perhaps some others in that room did as well, though not for the same reasons, I was sure. All of my adolescent fears had come rushing back, all of my bad dreams and the doubts that I'd had to endure in high school while I'd kept my own secret. The same secret that David had failed to keep.

I wondered if it was true and decided it must be. If what Mr. Stevens had said was accurate, and it probably was, then either David's sister was a seriously evil bitch playing the worst prank imaginable, or David really had fucked his dog. Remembering the look on his face...That hadn't been anger or outrage, it had been terror. The fear that a person feels when they're caught; not unfairly accused, but caught red-handed like David must have been.

For the next half hour I sat alone in my classroom, alone with my thoughts as I tried to imagine what the boy might do. I had a sympathy for him and more than that, I felt a real empathy for what he was going through. I didn't have a solution though. His parents would find out, that seemed plain. The whole town would know about it after a day or two. It wasn't the usual sort of thing people gossip about over coffee, but it would be too strange not to pass along. How many people actually believed it would hardly matter. The boy was only sixteen and he must have felt like his life was over.

What could I do? I was only five years older, a sexual suspect myself, if only because I didn't have a boyfriend. I didn't know David or his parents and I couldn't very well come out and say 'I fuck my dog, too' and give the boy some kind of public support. The world won't end, I told myself. David and his parents would have to deal with it, the town would find something else after a week or two and life would go on. It wasn't that big of a deal, was it?

It would be a big deal to him and that made me sad.

I opened my letters without much enthusiasm, just to try and get my mind off David for a few minutes. I'd been excited earlier, but my job problems seemed rather trivial at the moment. Besides, I opened the first envelope and found a brief form letter thanking me for my application, but they'd filled the position, blah blah blah. They'd keep my resume on file in case another opening came up. Gee, thanks a lot. I tossed it in the garbage can.

The second letter came from a place called Apple Grove and I had to read it twice before I realized

they were offering me a full-time teaching position. I had to sign a contract and the pay would be the state minimum for teachers, but I'd have a real job, guaranteed for one full year and after that, for as long as I wanted it, assuming everyone concerned was still happy by then. The position was open immediately and I could start on Monday. All I had to do was call the superintendent and let her know I was coming.

That made me forget about everything else for a long five minutes. I had to take it, of course! It was exactly what I wanted, a smaller school serving several rural communities. I could rent a house with a real yard for Shadow, settle down finally and actually move into a place. I could even buy a house in a year or two maybe, if I liked it up there. I was sure I would. I started thinking about what I had to do. I needed to pack and let the school district here know I was leaving, and fill up the gas tank in my little car, and call my mom, and oh God! I was going to move!

"Guess what!" I grinned at Agnes and I don't know when she took her lunch. The office was busy with about a dozen kids with a dozen problems, mostly forgotten lunches probably.

"Hmmm?" She glanced at me.

"I got a job!" I held up my letter and that made her smile. "Can I use the phone to call these guys?"

"Good for you," Agnes said, and frowned at the little crowd of students around her desk. "Use the other phone, in Principal Horner's office."

"Is he in?" I wondered, but she was already busy with someone else's emergency.

The principal was not in, as it turned out, probably having lunch with his wife or something, or maybe his girlfriend, which had been the hot rumor until this morning. Gossip had it that Principal Horner had a thing going with one of the waitresses out at the truck stop, but who knows? I didn't pay much attention to that sort of thing.

I went to his desk and picked up the phone. While I waited for someone to answer up in Apple Grove, I noticed the principal's computer. I mean, I'd seen it sitting there, obviously, but now it meant something, I just didn't know what. My brain worked like that sometimes. Like I'd get puzzle pieces before I'd even know I was working on a puzzle, if that makes any kind of sense.

I sat down in the principal's chair, not really thinking about it, and gave the mouse a nudge, turning off the screen saver. A second later I busy introducing myself to the woman on the other end of the phone, telling her how happy I would be to accept their job offer and I'd be up there within a day or two, getting settled and ready to start on Monday. We talked for ten minutes probably, not about anything too serious, and all the while I played with Horner's computer.

I knew what I had to do suddenly.

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"He had sex with his dog?" I heard Melody Sermons gasp. She and two other girls were whispering rather too loudly while I wrote some freshman geometry problems on the whiteboard.

"Yeah, that's what his sister said," Karen Riley agreed. "Guess what her name is?"

"Candy?" Melody offered and that girl wasn't too bright.

"The dog, bonehead!" Karen giggled and I was going to have to put a stop to this. "It's a girl dog.

Her name's Goddess."

"Goddess?" Tricia Hanson giggled too and I turned around.

"Do you ladies have something you'd like to share with the class?" I stared at them.

"No Ms. Sands" and "No ma'am" and "Sorry" they said, and the other twenty-five students sat up a little straighter because they'd been whispering, too.

"Good. Melody..." I held out the marker I'd been using. "Would you come up here and show us how to solve this problem, please."

"Uh..." She wasn't too bright at all and I instantly felt bad for picking on her like that, but I was feeling worse for David.

As soon as class ended, my last of the day, I quit my job, giving Principal Horner official notice. He'd returned from his lunch looking fresh from a shower. I seriously doubted he'd been playing tennis. He wasn't unhappy with the news and I wasn't surprising him. The school knew I'd been applying elsewhere and he wished me good luck, promising to forward my last paycheck to the Apple Grove school district.

Life had always been easy for me, relatively speaking, and that only made me all the more aware of how unlucky David's had turned out to be. We were very much the same, it seemed to me, the only real difference being that he'd gotten caught and I hadn't. Such a small thing too, so unimportant to anyone but David and Goddess, until others made it something else. Something bad and ugly and sick.

I hated people sometimes. Dogs are better.

"Goddess," I said aloud, liking that name. It was probably very much how David viewed her and I wouldn't fault the boy for that. I opened my purse, pulling out some papers and looking at the address on them.

"Uh...Hi," I said, blinking as the front door opened. I'd just been reaching for the doorbell.

"Hi." David answered out of habit more than anything else. He stood wide-eyed with surprise, clearly not expecting to see me on his doorstep.

He'd dressed for traveling, it looked like to me, in jeans and a t-shirt, a jacket and some new hiking boots. He had a backpack over his shoulder and a leash in his left hand. Just beside and slightly behind him was a gorgeous yellow lab, a very beautiful dog, and I could see why David loved her. She tilted her head slightly, but she remained calm and her intelligent eyes regarded me with some curiosity, I thought.

I'd had a plan, sort of, a small one in the back of my mind, but in truth I really didn't know what I was doing. I'd tried to imagine what I might say to the boy, how I could explain that I understood and sympathized. I'd tried to prepare an explanation, practicing it in my head while I drove, but most of that was forgotten now that I was looking at him. We just stared at each other for a long ten seconds or so.

"What are you doing here?" David finally asked me, and his suspicious tone woke me up a bit. "I'm not going back to school."

I frowned at that and the last thing I would have done was tried to talk him into going back there. It was obvious that he was going somewhere though, and I'd guessed right, knowing that I would have done the same thing. He couldn't stay in this town and be happy regardless of how his parents took the news. They couldn't protect him from the other kids, from the cruelty and humiliation he'd face.

"Are you going someplace?" I asked, and then decided that I needed to be the one explaining. "I, um...I heard some talk at school."

"Oh," he sighed, slumping like I'd just kicked him between the legs, closing his blue eyes and turning his face away.

I felt instantly bad, wishing I knew the right things to say and suddenly realized that I did. All I had to do was imagine what I'd want to hear if our positions were reversed.

"This must be Goddess. Is that her name?" I asked gently.

I slowly bent my knees and held out my hand, admiring the dog's almost regal countenance. She stood very erect, very attentive and close by David's side. She sensed his unhappiness as much as my own genuine concern. She gave me a sniff and then a tentative lick with her soft tongue across my fingers.

"She's beautiful," I told him honestly.

"Yeah," he replied, and the look on his face told me everything. If I knew about him and his dog, the whole town probably knew.

"David, um, what I heard..." I started, turning my head slightly and trying to catch his eyes. I wanted him to see me and believe what I was going to tell him.

"I don't care," he said with a hard swallow.

"Um..." I tried to remember what I'd practiced in my car, but that seemed so remote now. "Shoot. I had a little speech prepared, but I forgot it."

"A speech?" David finally looked at me again and I smiled, feeling a little silly because I knew I wasn't making a lot of sense. None of this did.

"I have a dog too," I said, and this was a big step for me. "A black lab named Shadow. He's a really, really great dog."

"Good for you." The boy shrugged. I wasn't sure he'd heard me and I knew I had to explain.

"I love him," I said, fighting with almost ten years of secrecy to get the truth out. "I mean, I love him like...uh, well...I love Shadow the way you love Goddess."

I felt myself burning, but not with embarrassment. I was terrified by the very small possibility that I'd made a mistake. If the stories about David weren't true, if he didn't love Goddess the way everyone thought he did, then I'd just outted myself to someone who would seriously not like me for it. He'd imagine himself taking the blame for me, so that I could get away with doing what he was wrongly accused of. That would be really bad.

"Uh, wow..." I breathed and tried to still my pounding heart. "I've never told anyone about this before...Sorry, um..."

I glanced around us nervously, realizing I'd just confessed my biggest secret in broad daylight, standing on a stranger's front porch in the middle of a small town neighborhood. There was something wrong with that picture and I really wanted to talk about this someplace else, like inside David's house, or in my car, or on the dark side of the moon, because it was that sort of secret.

"So you believe what they're saying about me?" David asked, his tone suggesting that I couldn't be on his side if I did.

"Well..." I swallowed hard and I wasn't going to lie to him. "I'm hoping it's true, yeah."

That didn't sound like what I meant. I didn't want him to be in trouble, only that I wanted to be his friend. I wanted to let him know that a part of me, a large part of me, was excited by the possibility that David was someone I could share my passion with. I hadn't let myself think about it too much, but I couldn't deny it. I'd kept my feelings a secret since seventh grade, if not earlier, alone and isolated and lonely because of it. People aren't supposed to have secrets, not like that, and sharing it with someone else seemed almost intoxicating.

I think David understood, or at least he wanted to believe me.

"Why?" he asked. "Do you know what it feels like?"

It was a real question, not rhetorical. He wanted to know if I'd been caught the way he had.

"No." I shook my head. "But I know what the fear feels like."

"It's worse than that," David said sadly, and it made my heart ache for him. "I have to go."

"Where are you going?" I asked, stepping back as the boy was determined to leave, finally.

"I don't know yet," he said, pulling the door closed behind him and Goddess. "Someplace else."

"I'm going upstate," I said quickly, and this had been in my mind, but I hadn't been able to decide if it was a good idea or not. "Permanently. I was offered a job, a teaching job in a little town up there, and I'm taking it. Do you want to come with me?"

"What?" David stared into my eyes and I was completely open to him. I was serious.

"Yeah, you can come with me. It'll be alright," I said. "You and Goddess, it'll be fine."

"But...I don't even know you," he said. "I mean, you don't even know me."

"So?" I actually laughed and I felt nervous and excited, and I was probably out of my mind, but I didn't care. "We'll find out, right? I have a job there. At least you'll have a place to stay while you sort things out. Right?"

"Why would you do this for me?" David wondered, and I sensed he was afraid I might only be teasing him.

"I don't know." I shrugged and looked down at Goddess. "Because we both love our dogs? Because, uh...I grew up terrified of what's happening to you. I want to help you."

"I don't have much money." He looked down unhappily. "I can't, um...I mean, I don't know if I can help pay for stuff, or..."

"It'll be okay, David," I promised, holding out my hand. "I'm Julie."