

Lurch

The ride home was a long one. The feel of Jenn's touch lingered on my arm, the scent of her stayed in my nostrils, and the sound of her voice echoed behind the music blaring from the radio in Lill's car. Jenn. Jennifer. Jenn-with-two-n's. Not just another pretty girl. Not just another one of Danny's girlfriends. Danny's fiancée. My future sister-in-law. I wondered how Danny rated, getting a girl like Jenn. I wondered how Jenn rated, getting a man like my brother. But when I thought about it, they made perfect sense together. They were well-suited, so well-suited, to each other. They made almost too much sense. I tried not to imagine Jenn having sex with my brother, and I cursed the persistent image, as envy flared in my gut. I thought about what their kids were going to look like. Of course they would have kids. Right away, probably. But then, there was Jenn's career. What was she going to do now? What would Danny do with a wife who was a professional? What deal would they work out between themselves — that Jenn would practice a little while and make her connections, get a reputation established, then take a little time off to have kids, and wade back into the fray when the children were old enough to be in school? How would that work?

The image of my brother mounting Jenn flashed in front of me, and my stomach lurched. I felt ill. I cursed her and Danny for being a distraction, as I missed one, then two, turn-offs. I couldn't afford to be distracted. I had to work the next day, and I had a doctor's appointment in the afternoon. My hands hurt me, and I wasn't sure what to tell the doctor. I had been doing my exercises, and I'd been trying to keep off the guitar. I'd also been resting regularly between stints of typing at work. Jesus, my hands hurt. Surgery had been discussed, but the last thing I wanted, was for them to cut me. I wasn't going to let them cut me. Even if I had to fight them off or switch specialists, I wouldn't agree to it.

Yes, I had more pressing things to think about, than the woman my brother had for his own, I told myself, forcing myself to concentrate on the road. It seemed to take forever to get the car back to its owner.

"Jesus, you look like shit," Lill said when I handed her the keys to

her battered Honda. “You alright?” She stood shivering on the street in front of her building.

“Family stuff,” I shrugged. “I’ve got to get home and get some sleep.”

Lill’s date for the evening called to her from the window two floors up.

“You need a ride home?” she asked.

“No, thanks,” I shook my head. “I’ll take the bus.”

“No way,” she said, pulling the door of her building shut and hustling me towards her car. She called up to her date that she’d be right back, and drove me home, through the sleepy Sunday night streets of Philadelphia. When she got me back to my place, she stripped me and shoved me into a hot shower. When I got out, I found she’d changed my sheets, put an extra blanket on the bed, and found my painkillers. She poured me a tall glass of water, handed me two little pills, and tucked me in. A simple kiss, and she was gone. Refusing myself any more thoughts of Jenn or my brother — together or alone — I fell away from my day, enveloped in a deep, ten-hour sleep.