

Paulie in Albuquerque

by Nonnie Augustine

Savvy as a nine-year-old playing poker with high rollers in Las Vegas, that was Paulie. She'd finally thrown Dick Weasel out the night before, but that morning Diana'd shot down their plan of sharing the house in a "man-free" zone. She'd shamelessly announced that her new boyfriend and his three roommates were moving in. "There's enough room if they double up and our rent will be nothing, *nothing*, divided by six," she'd enthused. Money wasn't the point for Paulie. She wanted to roar, blow-up, hurl Shakespearean insults, but Diana and yes, Dick Weasel, were her co-directors in a fledgling dance company and she'd be working with both of them at the studio the next day so needs must and all that. She did stomp off to pack, determined that she would not spend one single solitary night in the same house with those guys.

In quiet disgust she drove away from the hacienda in her Volkswagen (also untrustworthy) to search Albuquerque for any old kind of place that she could afford by herself. She did indeed find an any old kind of place. By seven she was moved into a furnished apartment. The bedroom and kitchen were tiny, bright, and okay enough, but the living room was a dark, dismal, musty tunnel between the other rooms. If she sat on the drabby couch and stretched her leg she could touch the opposite wall. Paulie still, unbloodybelievably, loved DW, she'd moved from a sprawling, superb, astonishingly affordable— if the rent was split by at least, *at least*, two—hacienda in Old Town to the worst apartment she'd seen anybody living in during the 8 months she'd lived in Albuquerque, and sadly, sadly, sadly she'd had to leave her two kittens to their fate with snake-in-the-grass, well, not grass, snake-in-the-texasweed, traitorous, skinflint Diana, her lover, and his loud, horny, repulsive friends.

Paulie poured herself a Scotch and sat on the one-step stoop outside the back door to her kitchen. Took stock. The night air held spring, this laid-back part of town felt peaceful, and the studio was in walking distance. Dick Weasel had chosen the younger woman, a long-legged nineteen-year-old blond (Paulie was twenty-four) with big boobs, sloppy technique, and perfect feet. He was with her now doing something wonderful somewhere in the university ghetto. Diana and her boys had the hacienda, her kittens, and as much pot and beer as they could scrounge for, but she had her own place, a fight-free zone, which would do as long as she never, ever sat in the living-room. She'd have to live on even less money than when Dick Weasel was still Sam and she thought they'd always be together. Wrong, wrong, wrong. Quite a day. In a minute she'd make herself a peanut butter sandwich for supper. (She'd spent her grocery money on the bottle of Johnny Walker Red.) Tomorrow she'd work on the Stravinsky. She had some ideas about what the dancers would do in the next section and she thought they were pretty good.

