Everybody Was a Virgin Once

by Jerry Ratch

Most women simply don't want damaged goods. That's a fact I've been brought face to face with throughout my life. It's something you can continue crushing your brains against, like an impossibly high hurdle. At first you take the damage without understanding fully why. But sooner or later you have to look directly into the face of the reality, and then you alter your own perception of things. You give in to that reality and go with the flow a little more. That was what I did. And that was when I met Lisa. This was my freshman year at college, when I came home for Christmas vacation from the down state campus of the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana in the winter of 1962.

I remember distinctly the first time I saw her. She was not a stunning-looking girl by any stretch of the imagination. She was short, with naturally blond Swedish hair that she wore in a long ponytail that dropped down her back. It was freezing outside. A bunch of us had arranged over the telephone to meet a girl named Laura and a couple of her girlfriends to go to an outdoor ice-skating rink. I remember Laura asking if I would like to meet this wild girl named Lisa who lived across the street from her.

"Sure," I told her without stopping to think about it. "Why not?" I saw myself as wild. I could match anything that came my way, I figured. That was the image of myself I was trying to project, now that I had gone away to college and was drinking beer all the time down at school. I wanted my old neighborhood buddies to see me as the wild one in the crowd. Really crazy. Willing to do anything. Yeah, sure, why not? I told Laura. And so, into my life walked Lisa.

Actually, the way Laura put it was: "She used to be really wild. She's calmed down a lot."

Available online at *«http://fictionaut.com/stories/jerry-ratch/everybody-was-a-virgin-once»*
Copyright © 2010 Jerry Ratch. All rights reserved.

They lived in Lombard, the next town over. When we got there, Laura called this girl on the phone and she came right across the street. The front door opened, and in stepped Lisa. She wore boots, I remember, because there was snow on the ground, and she had on these thin black tights that made her small ass stand out. She was wearing a big red coat, which she immediately removed, revealing a large chest under a tight red and black sweater. It was her best feature, and she knew it. She thrust out her chest so that no one in the room could possibly miss that she was really well built.

This girl had strange-looking eyes that seemed almost oriental, a feature common to many Scandinavians. She seemed a touch cross-eyed when she stared right at you, just slightly. She stared at me without looking away. She had a low voice and a breathy way of saying: Hello. She didn't talk much. She seemed to be waiting to go. I didn't know what her response meant. I thought maybe she was bored and couldn't wait to get out of there and go back across the street to her house where she lived with her grandparents. Her mother had given her over to her grandparents because she'd apparently been too hard for her mother to handle, or so the story went.

How unprepared I was for love, I did not know or fully comprehend. Internally my emotional growth had been stunted, and I was probably stuck somewhere around the early teens or younger, until I met Lisa. By outward appearances I was damaged goods. This would come to save me in the long run from having to go to Vietnam, when the war started getting bad and everybody else around me was disappearing into that sad mess. But apparently for right now what I would come to attract, in the way of women, was also damaged goods — just damaged in other ways that I had no conceivable way of comprehending.

The real truth was that her mother had been a whore, and one day Lisa came home from school and walked in on her mother while she was entertaining a sailor in her bedroom. From there on Lisa would attempt to become like her mother in every respect. Without knowing it at the time, I was about to receive a real

education in love, and in life. In other words, I was about to grow up. Or as I would come to understand it later — I was about to be reborn, for I had symbolically already died in the suburbs of the imagination.

Lisa, Lisa, Lisa, who became my life, my total absorption, my first love. I fell completely for her. How naive a body can get — and what a sucker I became for her line of bullshit! Of course, that's easy to say from this distance, but not such a simple thing from the perspective of a piece of damaged goods with no real experience in the world of the heart.

When we were leaving to go to the ice rink, she surprised all of us by saying she wanted to come along. She slid all the way over in the front seat to be next to me, while one of my buddies, Stan Rodgers, who had his eye on her himself, slid into the passenger side next to her. Lisa straddled the floor shift with one of her legs, so that I had to rub up against the inside of her thighs every time I went to put the car into second and fourth gears. "I like your car," she said. She looked at me and gave one of her weird smiles. She would smile with her mouth held part way open, as if to say: 'Should I have said that?'

We could barely see out of the windshield with so many bodies crammed into my car, breathing hard. The defroster couldn't keep up with the steam we were generating. But the truth is, I was thrilled to be sitting next to this girl who was letting me feel her legs as I shifted through the gears. I did it secretly even as Stan Rodgers watched me doing it, and she was letting me. And Stan knew it too. I could see him shifting his eyes away every time I looked over toward him. Everybody else bailed out of the car once we got to the little outdoor ice-skating pond. There was an embankment of snow piled up between the parking area and the frozen pond. Big lights were on and people were skating over the pond in one huge crowd going around and around in a circle, sweeping past us in one direction.

Stan Rodgers lagged behind to help Lisa out of the door. "You go ahead," she said, "I'm going to stay in here for a minute and warm up." She pulled the door shut in Stan's face. Lisa looked over

at me and with her breathy voice uttered, "What's with him?" Her mouth remained open in an attempt at innocence.

"Don't you want to go out there with them?" I asked.

"Start up the motor," she said. "It's cold out there." She moved over beside me. "I like your gearshift," she said. Again she stared at me with those faintly crossed blue eyes of hers. I was starting to get a feeling I had never experienced before. It was a feeling of excitement, of a wildness, something that was getting slightly out of control. I'd left my bum hand on the seat with her leg right on top of it. I was wearing a glove, but she had to have noticed that I'd been reaching over with my left hand to shift the gears. Had to, but she never said anything, and I didn't want to bring it up, so I just left it that way — unspoken between us. I said nothing. I lifted my right hand with my left and placed my right arm on the back of the seat behind her. My leather jacket squeaked with all the movement against the car seat. She leaned against me and said, "Should we leave them here?"

"I can't just leave them," I said.

"Where can we go then?" she asked.

"Nobody's home at my house for awhile. We could all go there and party."

"Do you have any booze?" Lisa asked.

"Sure, there's always something to drink there."

"I'll be right back," she said, and practically bounced out of the car. She ran out onto the ice and started pulling each of them back to the car by their jackets, herding them along like a sheep dog. "C'mon," I heard her saying, laughing that deep throaty laugh of hers, "we're going to Jerry's house to have a party. C'mon. There's boo. . .oo. . .ooze!"

Once we got to my house, Lisa had everything drinkable in the house open and in everybody's hands before I knew it. She tossed down a bottle of my father's beer, then started on a bottle of whiskey that was open. She took a straight mouthful and offered the bottle to me with a look of daring in her eyes. "I heard you were a drinker," she said.

I took a swig myself and she took the bottle out of my hand and tilted it upward. Two or three large bubbles went up through the amber whiskey. Next she pulled me by the shirt into my parents' bedroom, throwing herself onto their bed and dragging me down on top of her. Her mouth found mine and she smothered me with her kisses. I had never experienced anything like this. I felt her bumping her pelvis up against my crotch, and I was growing hard. My hand went up underneath her sweater, then slid under her bra and I pulled the bra up over her breasts. I could feel her warm flesh under there. In one motion she yanked the sweater over her head, taking the bra with it, and in the pale light for the first time I saw the whiteness of those huge breasts. Each one was the size of my whole hand. You could feel the weight of these things in your hand.

Suddenly she leaped up and ran with her breasts swinging into the living room where everybody was yelling and dancing. She ran all over the room. I saw Stan Rodgers gawking with his mouth hanging open, as Lisa ran around the living room with her breasts swinging wildly. I managed to grab hold of her and drag her back into the bedroom, got her pinned down to the bed under my weight and started sucking on her breasts. That seemed to calm her down for a while. I sucked on each one of her breasts for some time, then found her mouth, and we kissed heavily while she stuck her tongue nearly down my throat. This girl is wild, was all I could think. She is hot, wild!

Then I heard Stan Rodgers yelling from the living room, "Your parents are home! They're coming up the drive! We've got to get out of here. Now! Now!"

There was a tremendous tumult, and everybody scrambled for the front door because my parents had pulled in behind the house. Lisa threw on her sweater, holding her bra in her hand, and grabbed her jacket. We were the last ones to get out of the front door just as my mother was coming up the back stairs, yelling, "Jerry! What! What's going on here, young man? You wait just a minute, you!"

I shut the front door, and we ran for it. Lisa and I hopped into my car and cranked up the engine. I took off down the street, heading I didn't know where, but I didn't care either. I was exhilarated with the excitement of this girl, this young woman. I was laughing and she was laughing and we headed for the forest preserve near Hinsdale, where we could pull up a trail I knew and park the car.

That night I came as close to getting fucked as I had ever come in my life, without actually getting laid, after two and a half hours of intense petting, begging her to go down in the front seat of my car, with her asking: Why? Why, Jerry? Why? That was all she kept saying, until finally after hours of this, she slipped completely out of her clothes and then looked up at me with the truest look of innocence she could muster. By the time she had relented, my hard on went down just as I attempted to get on top of her, and that was the end of that.

I did not know how to physically do it with her lying on her back in the front seat of the car, her legs all scrunched up, her head against the door handle, with the steering wheel cold and hard against my ass. It seemed like an impossible equation to accomplish this maneuver. I didn't have enough experience in these things. I thought that was the only way sex could be performed. The missionary position. I'd never heard of the sitting position, which is only natural in a car seat.

I came so close, and yet it was a long way off. I felt the strength going out of my penis, which had been completely hard until then. Both of us were panting with the excitement, steam coming out of our mouths, and sweat forming a pool and making suction noises between us. The windows were fogged over. I glanced at the clock ticking away on the dashboard and squinted to see what time it was. I was unable to believe what I was seeing. It was 2:30 a.m. already. We were both going to be in for trouble. We'd been parked there in the forest preserve in a frigid car with our clothes off for well over two hours. And we both had to go home and face the consequences.

When I dropped Lisa off in front of her house, which was in a subdivision surrounded by open fields in Lombard, her hair was still wet and sticking to her wide, high cheeks since we'd been practically swimming with the heat of our attempt at passion. Her eyes looked so strange, but excited and alive with the air of sex about them. She had a haunted look about her. Something seemed to have a hold on her. Her body had control over her mind, I think. It was like a disease. "Will you call me before you go back down to Urbana?" she asked.

She was sitting right beside me with the length of her leg against my leg. I could feel the heat being generated by her, coming right through my Levis. I had driven all the way back from the forest preserve with my right arm around her. She had never even asked me about my arm. She never said a word. It had been obvious what was wrong with me when I'd had my shirt off.

She put her hand on my stomach. "Please, Jerry?" she said.

I liked the way my name sounded on her lips.

"Will you? Huh? Call me on your way out of town. Okay?"

Her eyes were alive with hunger and with sex. "Okay," I said.

And that was what I did.

As I drove back home — it was nearly three in the morning — I remember suddenly out of nowhere whistling a tune that had been popular when I was much younger. The lyrics went something like: "They call me the midnight gambler. // They call me the midnight gambler."