she used to be really wild. she's calmed down a lot

by Jerry Ratch

I remember distinctly the first time I saw Lynda. 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 Lynda 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 Lynda.

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

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 Lynda. 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.

Available online at *«http://fictionaut.com/stories/jerry-ratch/she-used-to-be-really-wild-shes-calmed-down-a-lot»*
Copyright © 2010 Jerry Ratch. All rights reserved.

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.

The real truth was that her mother had been a whore, and one day Lynda came home from school and walked in on her mother while she was entertaining a sailor in her bedroom. From there on Lynda 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.