

Terry, the virgin

by Jerry Ratch

Terry had an apartment not far from Lake Michigan, where we could stroll to one of the beaches. It was close to Lincoln Park. This was in the summer of 1966. We had to walk up to the fourth floor, and on those steamy hot Chicago summer nights in August, sometimes she would strip off her top before we even got in the door. She lived with her Siamese cat, whose name was Caesar. Caesar was crazy. He'd get a running start from across her little one-room apartment, take a flying leap half-way up the opposite wall, and climb scratching with his claws the rest of the way to the ceiling, before dropping to the floor. The ceilings in that building must have been at least eleven feet tall. Maybe twelve.

This was one hell of an athletic little monster cat. Caesar became psychotic from never being allowed to go outside, and grew jealous when I moved in. He started behaving like he wanted to kill something. Whenever Terry got into the bathtub with me and drew the shower curtain, Caesar would leap at the other side of the curtain with his claws extended. One time he shred the thing from the top all the way to the bottom, nonstop. He was a completely crazed cat who wouldn't let us go to sleep, and he was driving both of us nuts right along with him.

Ultimately Terry realized if we ever wanted to get any real rest, she would have to get rid of him. She took him down to the beach one day, wound up, and threw Caesar out into Lake Michigan. As he left her hand, his claws ripped all the way along the backside of her arm, opening up a two foot section where blood came running out like she'd been cut with a butcher knife. Caesar swam right back into shore, and Terry took him up in her arms and back home to her apartment, and she loved him even more.

Terry's body had to grow accustomed to the size of me on our first night in bed together. I should say nights — multiple nights — because it took a whole week of nights, getting used to me. All I

could get into her on the very first night, was just the head of my penis. I think I was as startled as she was by the tightness of her. I was maybe even more unprepared than her for the pain my penis could cause to a virgin. I remember vividly her moving all over the place in bed, wriggling around, trying to stifle her groans. She told me it was all right when I stopped for a minute. We were both panting like lizards, but I kept pressing ahead, and she let me.

I was driven to make love to her by then because I was terribly in love with her — and too, because she'd made me wait a whole damn year for it. Until she was legal, was what she'd said — legal tender. I would never let her forget that. I kept telling her how much I was in love with her. My voice was ragged with the need for love, you could hear it, but to my credit I didn't force the issue. Then she reached eighteen and gave me everything. She unwrapped the shiny bright package of her virginity. She accepted me fully and completely. She had always wanted this to be perfect. That is, nothing's perfect, but she'd hoped it would be that way.

Then she loved seeing my body, my whole body. She made me take off my shirt, and wanted to see me entirely naked. She couldn't get enough of me then. I think she would have carried me around inside her, if she could've figured a way.

Every night we had sex until about four a.m. She'd call from her dispatcher job every day, complaining that she couldn't sit down because she was so sore. "I can't even sit down here," she would complain. But she'd be laughing when she said this, she was so happy after all those years of not having a man, and wishing with all her might and soul to have a man, and imagining in her bed at night what it would be like to sleep with him when it happened. And then it did — and you know, she told me she felt the whole world change.

Over the phone I could hear her boss making wisecracks in the background, a roughneck guy with a porker belly, who smoked cigars all the time. He'd been in the taxi business forever. But she didn't care, she was so proud to have a lover. She bragged about me to everyone she knew. She told her girlfriends in her old

neighborhood near my dad's gas station, all about me, told them I was going to college at a big University. I was very smart, she said. She showed me off to her little sister like a prize rooster. I kept saying I was no prize and I wasn't a rooster.

