

The Game

by Kelli Trapnell

Cammie Richard's house was just like all the others in Wilchester. The exterior was vaguely reminiscent of the Dutch style; gray stone with cross beams of dark wood, with two stories and a bay window. Her yard was fertilizer green, with a giant STRATFORD FOOTBALL yard sign out in front at the base of a huge live oak. The night I came over, the grass had just been mowed, and it had rained, so when I walked from my mom's car to the door, the wet grass clumps got stuck in my plastic flip-flops.

I was going to Cammie's because she had pulled me aside during recess that day and suggested that we have a sleepover. It wasn't a school night, so my mom said yes. I was really excited and kind of nervous, because no one ever asked me to do anything, much less something fun like a real sleepover, like the kind in PG-13 movies. I don't really know why I was so surprised though. Cammie was my friend. At least, she always played horses with me during recess while all the other kids played kickball or tag. But we had never slept over at each other's house.

My flip-flops squeaked as my pale toes slipped on the wet green plastic. I made my way up the cobbled sidewalk and took a deep breath before punching the glowing dirty doorbell. I heard a big dog bark from somewhere inside the house, and I readjusted my duffel bag. I wondered what we would do tonight. Maybe we'd play with her Breyer horses. That's what I did in my free time.

A plump woman wearing reading glasses and a giant University of Texas t-shirt answered the door. "You must be Rose! Come in! Where's your mom?"

"She's in the car." And I pointed shyly at the green Suburban that waited on the street behind me. I looked at the car and saw my mom waving to me. I waved back, embarrassed.

"Oh, Kim!" The plump Mrs. Richards yelled, and pushed past me. I watched her waddle quickly over to my mom's window. "How are you?!"

Then, I felt a hand on my shoulder, and turned to see Cammie standing in front of me. "Hey Rose! Come in!"

The house was dark, in an orange way, sort of like the Richards had started a fire and that was the only light in the house. Everything looked incredibly old, like the interior of a castle. Cammie led me upstairs, hugging me around the waist.

"So, Rose, what do you want to do?" she asked me when I had plopped my stuff onto her floor. Her room was much brighter than the rest of the house, and I relaxed a little. "I don't know. What do you do usually?" I asked.

"Well," She ran over to where I was standing and grabbed my hand. "First, you have to meet my brother. He is a football player."

"Okay," I followed her through a connecting yellow bathroom into a navy blue bedroom, where a teenage boy sat in front of a TV, controller in hand. He looked very serious about what he was doing, so I didn't want to interrupt, but Cammie leaned over and punched the power button on the TV anyway. "Hey Jake!"

Jake Richards looked exactly like his sister, but bigger, and a boy. He had the same sandy brown hair and big brown eyes, the same big body, but he was muscular. I had never seen anyone so intimidating. His voice was too low; he spoke more like an ogre than a boy. I wanted out of there, as soon as possible; it just didn't seem safe. The room seemed to get smaller whenever he looked at me, which he did often.

"HEY I'M JAKE." The voice boomed. I felt my nostrils flare and I couldn't make any words come out of my mouth. Cammie murmured something I couldn't hear. I wasn't listening. He was just so huge.

"Okay Rose, lets go," Cammie laughed. I looked at her. How could she be so calm when this troll was living in her house? He didn't look very nice, I thought, but I didn't tell Cammie, because she would have laughed at me probably. Or kicked me out. And my mom would never know, and I would starve to death. So I kept my mouth shut.

“Jake's a senior at Stratford. Isn't he sexy?” she looked at me, eyes amused. She licked her lips. She was awfully close to my face, I realized. I took a step back and answered, “I'm not allowed to say that word. My sister and I say 'goopy.' My mom said it means the same thing.”

She slid her hands over my shoulders and laughed. For a fourth grader, Cammie was very developed. She looked like one of the people in the Menstrual Cycle video, because her boobs were so big. She wore make up, too, which was weird. Why smear dirt all over your face? And anyway, I had heard that she even had to wear a bra. Not just a training bra either, a real one. It was gross, but I tried not to think about it. She was my friend. She hugged me tight, and I could feel her boobs smushed against my flat chest. She put her head on my bony shoulder and heaved a sigh. My neck tingled, and goose bumps raced down my spine. I shivered. Then, without letting me go, she whispered into my ear, “Rose, you are so funny.”

Then she hung onto me for a few seconds in an uncomfortable silence. I looked around the room, trying to distract myself from the weird feeling that bubbled up in my stomach. She kept sighing, and she finally said, “Do you want to see something cool? I took it from my brother's room.”

I would have agreed to anything to get out of that hug. Relieved, I nodded. She jumped onto her bed and patted the covers next to her. I climbed up beside her, my gangly legs swinging easily over the side of her raised bed. When I had settled, she put her hand on my thigh and held a finger up to her lips. “This is a secret, k?”

I nodded. This felt more like a slumber party. Secrets and popcorn and PG-13 movies and crushes. Not that I had any crushes. She leaned over to get something out from under her bed, and I panicked. What if she asked me who my crush was? What would I say? I tried to remember some names of boys and I ended up thinking about my friend David. I would tell her I had a crush on David Frost. She emerged from under the bed, holding a rolled up magazine, and I blurted out, “I have a crush on David Frost!”

She laughed so hard, and I felt the tears pushing against my

eyes. I was messing up this whole sleep over. Finally, she straightened up and put her hand behind my neck, resting her forehead against mine. "Do you want me to show you how to get him to like you forever?"

I wasn't embarrassed anymore, just curious. "Forever?" I whispered, awestruck.

"Mhmm."

"Okay."

She let go of me and unrolled the magazine she was holding. "The secret's in here."

I was shocked. There was a girl with her privates showing on a magazine, standing next to a man with his privates showing. I slapped a hand to my eyes. I knew my mom would never let me look at this.

"No, Rose, look." Cammie uncovered my eyes. "It's not bad, your parents do this all the time."

I took a deep breath. Well, if mom did it—I looked at the magazine. I had never seen something so weird looking. There were girls touching their privates and making ugly faces, and pictures of people sitting on top of each other, screaming. And mostly, the word everywhere. SEX. It was an entire magazine about goop!

Cammie flipped a few pages, where the real pictures changed into drawings of people. They were part of a set of instructions on how to do certain positions. I relaxed a little. Drawings couldn't hurt.

She explained, "Basically, sex is a game that grown-ups play. It's a REALLY fun game, too. But we don't usually play because the grown-ups want to keep all the fun for themselves. Usually, you play with one boy and one girl, but you can always pretend if you don't have a boy." She flipped back to the page where a girl was touching her own privates. "She's pretending, see?"

"It doesn't seem fun. Why is her face all funny?" I asked, confused.

"That's part of the game. See, you act like it is not fun, but really, sex is the best game ever. My brother showed me."

"It just seems kind of scary," I admitted quietly.

"But that is part of the fun. Don't worry, Rose, it's not nearly as scary as haunted houses or scary movies. I even think it's less scary than getting a shot." Cammie said.

"Nothing is as scary as getting a shot!" I laughed, happy the subject had changed. "I hate getting shots!"

"Me too!" Cammie laughed, and put the magazine back under the bed. I sighed, relieved. Then Cammie grabbed my hand.

"Come here, I want to show you something else." She crept from her room, and I followed close behind. She whispered in my ear, "We have to be quiet, because we need my parents to be asleep."

I nodded, excited. I remembered playing Don't Wake Daddy with my sister at home, and thinking it was so funny whenever someone would accidentally make the dad wake up. This was kind of like the real version of the board game, and it was much more fun.

She pulled me into a dark den, where one lamp shone dimly in the corner. I felt the air come in and out of my mouth as I tried to make my breathing as quiet as possible. Then Cammie squeezed my hand and led me into a computer room with two chairs.

"Okay, good. We made it." She smiled at me, shut the sliding door, and typed something on the computer. A website came up that looked like the magazine she had gotten from underneath her bed. "Look, this website shows you how to do it."

I was nervous again. I didn't think what we were looking at was allowed, but I didn't have anywhere else to look, so I stared as girls and boys bounced up and down on each others laps, laid on top of each other, and licked each other's private parts. I was mortified. Who would do something so gross? I didn't want to watch, but I couldn't stop looking. Once, I looked away, and Cammie turned my head back to the screen. I had to keep watching; she said, otherwise I wouldn't understand how to do it.

After about an hour, she closed off the website. But the noises I had heard and the things I saw couldn't get out of my head. She said, "Okay, let's try it now."

I told her I didn't want to, and couldn't we just go to sleep? I was tired. The smile on her face changed, then, into a sneer. "Well, if you are too chicken, why don't you go home?"

"I'm not a chicken, I just don't think I'll be good at it," I lied, trying everything to convince her. I wanted to forget about the website and the magazine forever, but I also wanted Cammie to like me. She was the only friend I had, so I couldn't lose her.

She laughed, and came close to me. "Everyone's good at it. That's the best part about sex. Anyone can do it." And before I could say anything, she slid her hands under my shirt and pulled it over my head, leaving my upper body exposed to the orangey darkness of her house.

