

## Chapter 5

(Wednesday, June 13)

Wednesday the following week found Randy sitting in his office in Faraday Hall, again finding it difficult to concentrate. Five days had gone by since his date with Terri. He liked her, he really did. He wanted to be with her. In fact, he wanted a lot more than he could allow himself. That emotional conflict was still raging inside of him.

Could he be satisfied with casual dates? Could she? Then he remembered how her bubbly excitement on their date had faded away when he explained that he could not pursue both his research and a serious relationship. Was that what she had been hoping to find? Could she have liked him that much so soon? Well, at the very least, she probably wanted to let whatever might happen between them happen.

How wonderful it would be to do just that, he thought. He wanted the companionship, the feeling of togetherness, and the affection that comes from a serious romantic relationship. It was only a supreme act of the will that held him back from pursuing that with Terri. It just was not possible at this point in his career. That was what he told himself--in fact, over and over again, because it was the exact opposite of every emotional desire he felt.

Should he ask her out again? Would she go out with him again? Even if she did, he knew the effect she would have on him. Would he be able to continue resisting the desire for more? Would he be able to do it without hurting her?

His office door was closed. As he was trying to bring some logical order out of this emotional chaos, he was playing a CD in his computer. The current song happened to be a favorite of his, "Up On the Roof."

*On the roof's the only place I know  
Where you just have to wish to make it so.  
Let's go up on the roof  
And let the stars put on a show for free.  
And, darling, you can share it all with me.*

Logic should be able to control the emotions, but that was not always the case. Just maybe that was fortunate. He remembered that disturbing question a philosophy professor had once put to him some years back: What is logic? Is it the way we *do* think, the way we *should* think, or is it something else? Probably something else, he thought.

Music has an incredible power. It can mold and direct the emotions in a way that seems eminently logical. Randy thought about the words of the song. He wanted to find a "roof" where he could wish and make it so...and he wanted to invite Terri to share it with him.

He would ask her out again.

For the next couple of hours, Randy gave considerable thought to the question of where to go on their date, if she even wanted to go out with him. Dinner at a restaurant again? She would probably think he had a deplorable lack of creativity.

A movie? Well, maybe that would do, but it did seem more like a teenager date. His problem was solved, however, when Wes walked into his office.

"Hi, Randy."

"Wes, come on in. I want some advice. I've decided to ask Terri out again but can't come up with any good ideas about what to do or where to go."

"Well, it happens that I have just the solution for you. I am here on a mission. In fact, I'm an envoy. Kathy's been brooding ever since I told her of the lack-luster results achieved on your first date with Terri. She wants to have the two of you over for dinner."

"Let Kathy meet Terri? Oh, now, I don't know about that. You know how much I like your wife, but you have to admit she can be a little forceful in her matchmaking. Why, who knows what..."

Smiling, Wes put up his hand to stop Randy. "I understand completely, but Kathy wanted me to assure you that she would be on her best behavior. Scout's honor!"

Randy looked dubious. However, he had to admit that this invitation would not only solve his problem but also offered an additional benefit. A double date, so to speak, if indeed Kathy behaved herself, could relieve some pressure, make conversation easier between Terri and him.

"All right, I'll ask her."

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It was nearing five o'clock, and Terri was getting ready to close the boutique. Every time she thought about Randy, excitement bubbled up in her...for all the old reasons and for one new reason. She had now convinced herself that she had been right: he was in the grips of an emotional conflict.

At first, all her heady dreams had begun to vaporize when he expressed a determination to keep any relationship that might develop between them "casual." However, all her instincts told her that Randy liked her, in fact, was as strongly attracted to her as she was to him. His emotions wanted much more than just a casual relationship.

Yet she understood the problem he had. Her fascination with the academic world and her close association with it for four years gave her at least a partial understanding of the drive, the commitment, that was necessary to pursue a career in research. The men who had so attracted her attention during those years pursued their research with a singular passion. But not all of them were as shortsighted as the two who had hurt her. Besides, most of these men were also married, and she believed with all her heart that there was a deep emotional need a man had that only a woman could fill: the need to love and be loved. She also believed that only with such love could a man be truly inspired and encouraged to pursue his career in research with the drive necessary to achieve success, especially in the face of the inevitable discouragements and setbacks along the way.

Through her, Dr. Randall Carrington, quantum physicist, would come to see all this, and it would be his emotional conflict that vaporized instead of her dreams. That thought excited her.

As Terri walked toward the door to lock it, she was startled out of her reverie by the very man on whom it had been focused. She just stood there for a moment without breathing.

Randy walked through the door. "Hi, Terri. Looks like I made it just in time. You were about to close?"

Recovering from her shock was difficult, but she managed it with a minimum of stunned silence. "Randy, what a surprise! I was just thinking about you. And, yeah, I was about to close, but no problem--come on in."

"You were thinking about me? Well, that's a good sign." He smiled that devastating smile that made it difficult for Terri to think. "Actually, I came by for two reasons. First, I wanted to apologize for being such a killjoy on our date."

Smiling sweetly, Terri reached out and tenderly touched his arm. "That's okay, Randy. I understand."

"Well, it was inexcusable to end our first date on such a sour note, and that brings me to my second reason for coming by. I'd like to ask you out again. Wes Tanner, one of my colleagues in the physics department, and his wife Kathy asked us over to their home for dinner. Would you like to come? They were thinking of this Friday."

"I'd really like that. What time do you want to go?"

"I'll pick you up around seven, if that's okay."

"Just perfect. I'll be ready."

After Randy left the boutique, Terri walked over to the door and locked it. She was ecstatic. He had asked her out again, she was going to be with him again. Not only that, it would be at the home of another professor in the physics department. She always enjoyed the company of professors, but in this case there was the added benefit that the professor was a good friend of Randy's. That would help him be more at ease and not worry so much about whether the date was "casual" or "serious."

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(Friday, June 15)

On Friday, Terri closed the boutique at precisely five o'clock and hurried home. She showered and then spent more time than usual blow-drying her hair. She even used a curling iron in a few strategic spots. When it was time to pick out the outfit she would wear, she opened the closet door, and stood there for a full ten minutes pushing hangers back and forth. She finally decided.

After dressing, she stood in front of her full-length mirror. Yes, she was happy with the results. She had put on black pantyhose with her straight black skirt and a white, short-sleeve sweater. The skirt came about two inches above the knees. She had worn the combination before and thought it complimented her figure. In fact, she believed it made her look svelte.

She walked out into the living room where her mother was sitting reading a book. Mrs. Lockhart set the book aside and looked at her daughter. "An excellent choice, Terri. Men take notice of an outfit like that, and yet it is quite respectable."

"Mom, I'm a little nervous. I keep thinking about last week, how he suddenly became so reserved. It was such a letdown. I'd hate for that to happen again. But I've been thinking about it quite a bit, and I'm expecting things to go better tonight."

"Just what are your expectations? Before you worry so much about him, search your own feelings. How much do you really like this Dr. Carrington?"

She did not want to share everything about her longtime dream and that she hoped Randy was the man who would fulfill it. That was something she treasured in her heart for herself alone.

"I like him, Mom. I like him a lot. I'm hoping our relationship grows."

Mrs. Lockhart smiled. "It's a wonderful feeling, the beginning a new romance. And I suppose just thinking about him gets you all excited?"

Terri gave her mother shy smile. "I guess you could say that."

"Well, you have all the signs that a man is beginning to steal your heart. Just don't try to rush anything. Remember what I said. Men don't always follow their feelings as easily as we do. But if he has a similar attraction to you, he will--eventually."

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The door bell rang at precisely seven o'clock. When Terri opened the door, she was conscious of that quick male overview he gave her. His eyes also seemed to linger on her as she walked out. Her face grew warm, but she thoroughly enjoyed the sensation.

Randy hoped his eyes had not opened too embarrassingly wide. He was almost overwhelmed by how pretty she looked. He knew she would not be consider stunningly beautiful in the classical sense, especially dressed the way she was. But then he never consider classical beauty to be his style anyway. In his mind, Terri looked adorable, so cute he had difficulty taking his eyes off her.

As he held the car door open for her, he could not help watching her skirt ride up an inch or two as she gracefully entered the car. Those black nylons made her legs look immensely attractive...and sexy.

As they drove, Terri was getting more and excited as she anticipated this

date with Randy and the evening at Dr. and Mrs. Tanner's home.

"What is Dr. Tanner's field in physics?" she asked.

"He works in particle physics, a field closely related to mine. Wes and I often work together."

"Particle physics...you mean like studying electrons, protons, and neutrons?"

"You really do have a good knowledge of science." Terri felt elated at this compliment. "But there's more to it than that. It's the study of elementary particles, particles that have no measurable size or internal structure. Electrons seem to be truly elementary. However, protons and neutrons are composed of quarks."

"Yeah, I've heard of quarks," she said, quite animated now. "Wow, that's just fascinating. How do you find out that a particle like a proton is actually made up of other particles?"

"Huge accelerator laboratories like Fermi Lab in Batavia are used to create collisions between very high-energy particles and suitable target particles. The results of these experiments are analyzed by theorists like Wes and me. We try to come up with a theory to explain what happened in the experiment. Sometimes we use a theory to suggest other experiments to try."

Randy pulled into Wes' driveway. "Well, here we are." He went out and opened the passenger door for her, taking her hand and helping her out. The unexpected physical contact made her heart race. She could not help feeling a little disappointed when he released her hand as they walked up to the front door of the house.

Wes answered the door bell promptly, and they walked in. Introductions were made. "Your timing's perfect," Kathy said. "We're almost ready to eat. Please come into the dining room and have a seat."

As the conversation started around the table, Randy related to Wes the talk they had on the way over about elementary particle physics. Wes was suitably surprised that Terri had taken such a keen interest, but it was Kathy who studied her carefully. This was very encouraging. The way to a physicist's heart was definitely not through his stomach.

Randy had been concerned about what Kathy might say or do in an effort to increase their interest in each other. However, he was pleased to find that she really was on her best behavior. She simply asked Terri innocent questions about her family, how she had liked her four years at CIU, and how she came to be running the boutique. Both Randy and Terri were quite relieved that Kathy did not ask any detailed questions about the merchandise sold at the boutique. Of course, Randy had already found out that Kathy had been in the boutique before. Both men were very glad that she left this fact unmentioned.

Kathy was watching Randy and Terri closely. To her, the attraction between them was patently obvious: she could see it in their eyes whenever they looked at each other.

At one point during dinner, Terri shocked them all when she asked if either Randy or Wes could explain Heisenberg's uncertainty principle to her. Did it really undermine the law of causality in science? She said the topic had come up in one of the philosophy courses she had taken as an elective, but she was not sure a philosophy professor was qualified to explain physics. Kathy was pleased at how quickly Randy took the question and how carefully he tried to explain the answer to her.

After dinner, the four of them retired to the family room. Terri did not find it quite as appealing a room as the den in her house, but she still preferred it to a formal living room and felt very much at ease. She had also liked Wes and Kathy from the start. As far as she could tell, they were very happily married. That started her thinking. Wes was also a physicist. How had he and Kathy solved the problem that was worrying Randy? It would be interesting to get them talking about it. However, she had to be subtle. It certainly would not do to come right out and ask how they were able to get married when Randy was afraid to get into a serious relationship!

"Kathy, that was a delicious dinner. You're so good at it, you must really enjoy cooking."

"Thank you. Yes, I do enjoy cooking."

"How long have you two been married?"

"Five years, this June."

"Did you meet here at the university?"

Kathy's expression brightened. It was obviously an extremely happy memory, and one she thoroughly enjoyed talking about.

"Not at CIU but at Purdue, where Wes and I were both students. We met at the Newman Club."

"Newman Club?" Terri asked.

"Yeah, it's a ministry for Catholic students on college campuses. Wes and I are both Catholics, and we met during one of the Saturday socials. Wes came over and introduced himself. We spent the rest of that afternoon together. A week later, he called me up and asked me out."

"How far along in college were you then?"

"It was the Spring semester of my senior year. Wes was a second-year graduate student. When I graduated, I got an apartment and a job. We dated that whole next year, and then got married the following summer."

"That meant Wes had one more year of graduate school, right? Terri asked.

"Yes, we were already married during his last year."

"Yeah, and that was one awful year," Wes chimed in.

Kathy scowled at him. "Well, thanks a lot!"

Terri and Randy both snickered.

Wes suddenly looked embarrassed as he realized how that had sounded. "I mean that was the year to finish my dissertation and give my defense." He looked at Kathy. "I meant that I did not have nearly as much time as I wanted to spend with my gracious and lovely new bride."

"Yeah, right," Kathy said dubiously.

It was so obvious that they enjoyed each other, Terri thought. The next question would be the critical one. Would anybody suspect what she was up to?

"But after you got your Ph.D., things settled down for you?"

"Oh, sure," Kathy said. "Naturally, he works very hard--and sometimes at home too. But we decided some years ago, that we would set aside at least two nights a week that would be ours, the two of us, and no work. Except when he's off at conferences, of course. But overall, it's worked out fine."

As Kathy made that last statement, she suddenly realized what was going on here. She knew what had been bothering Randy and obviously Terri did too. She had orchestrated this whole discussion for his benefit. Kathy became even more impressed with Terri. A very smart girl.

On the drive home, Terri reached over and touched Randy on his arm. "I had a great time tonight, Randy."

Her touch sent a small electric shock through his system. It was a tender, affectionate touch, and it had a profound effect on him. He took it to mean that she liked him, liked him in a romantic sense, and was showing it.

At Terri's house, he again got out, opened the passenger door for her, and helped her out. But again he released her hand.

Unlike their first date, this time she really did wonder what he would do. Would he kiss her? The suspense over that question always generated a special kind of excitement in her and probably did in every girl, she thought. She had wanted him to kiss her even on their first date.

Randy always had difficulty determining when to kiss a girl for the first time. First date? Well, it was already too late for that. Second date? That was this one. What should he do? Did he want to kiss her? Yes, he was dying to put his arms around her and kiss her. Did she want him to? That was the difficult question, but he remembered how she had touched his arm as they drove home.

They walked up the steps of the front porch, and she turned to face him, her heart starting to beat faster. Her lips became dry, so she quickly moistened them with her tongue.

"I really enjoyed being with you tonight, Terri." He slowly reached out to

put his arms around her. To his great relief, she reached up, and they went into an embrace. Their lips met as she closed her eyes, and he kissed her. It was a sweet, gentle kiss. A feeling of luxurious warmth rushed through her as she sensed his tender affection. They held the kiss, not wishing to part. When they did, it seemed to be in slow motion. She opened her eyes and searched deeply into his. Something very special had passed between them. She still had her arms around him, enjoying the sensation she felt in holding him. She was also very conscious of his touch. As he held her, his one hand was gently caressing her back and melting her heart.

After a few seconds, he slowly pulled away. Her lips had been warm and welcoming. Just like on the dance floor that first night they met, it had been such a thrill to hold her. Her affectionate response as he kissed her awakened a need in him that for some time now he had tried to ignore.

He took her hand in both of his and ran his fingers over her soft skin, sending chills down her spine. He just had to touch her one more time.

"Goodnight, Terri."

Her eyes grew soft and radiated warmth. "Goodnight."

When Terri walked into the house, her mother was in the living room reading a book in her favorite chair. With a very nonchalant air about her, she said, "I saw the car's headlights as Dr. Carrington pulled into the driveway. That was quite some time ago..." She let the sentence hang. "I take it he wasn't so reserved tonight?"

"Mother," Terri said with a cheerful smile, "if you want to know whether he kissed me, why don't you just ask? As a matter of fact, he did kiss me. And as another matter of fact, I liked it."

Mrs. Lockhart had known very well that Randy had kissed her goodnight. Terri's dreamy expression as she walked in left no doubt in her mind. She just wanted to see what her daughter's response would be. Now she knew. They had had that heart-to-heart talk before Terri left, but now she was far too excited for talk and just wanted to savor the sweetness of that kiss. Mrs. Lockhart was not unfamiliar with those feelings, as she thought back many years...

Terri turned and hurried into her bedroom. A half-hour later as she got into bed, the sweet memory of that mind-numbing kiss lingered still.

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(Monday, June 18)

The following Monday night, Randy was sitting in the living room of his apartment. It held most of his library, and was hardly decorated as a formal living room. Even subtracting out the books he kept in his office, his library filled three of walls in the room. He often sat in this room to think. No music, no television. Just surrounded by his books. He loved being surrounded by books. They were often a real source of comfort and encouragement to him.

Earlier that evening he had been over at Wes and Kathy's place for dinner--by

himself. Before he had even gotten there, he knew why he had been invited. Kathy had wanted to work on him, and she did a pretty good job. The conversation they had had was still quite vivid in his memory.

"I think Terri's fantastic," Kathy said, while they were eating.

"Well, I like her," Randy admitted. "I like her quite a bit."

"You jolly well ought to, Randy! You're made for each other! You told us that on the way over here she was asking questions about physics, and then here she asked that question about some principle or other."

"Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, dear," Wes interjected. He turned to Randy. "That was rather amazing--not only that she asked about it, but that she'd even heard of it."

"My point exactly," Kathy said. "I watched her very carefully. She wasn't putting on airs, and she wasn't faking an interest in physics. She was genuinely interested; it fascinates her. You'll never find another girl like her, Randy."

Randy made no response, but he had been thinking much the same thing. These aspects of Terri's personality had not escaped his notice.

"I'll tell you something else: she's absolutely crazy about you. It's written all over her when she looks at you." Kathy shook her finger at Randy, as if scolding him. "And you don't fool me one bit with all your apparent reserve. I can see it in your eyes when you look at her: you're just as crazy about her. The attraction between you two is obvious to anyone who sees you together."

"Even granting all that, for sake of argument," Randy responded, "I'm still wondering whether this is the best time for me to get involved in a romantic relationship."

"I told you what I thought of that point at the provost's: balderdash! Weren't you listening when I explained how Wes and I have worked all that out? It's worked for us; it can work for you. And anyway, you're already involved in a romantic relationship."

Yes, Kathy's observations about the two of them were right on target. He knew the two of them were growing closer. But that nagging question remained: could he afford it? Should he let this go on? What about his research, his career? Maybe he should stop seeing her. But each time he saw her, he could hardly wait to see her again. Every emotion within him cried out to be with her again.

He also thought about Wes and Kathy. Yes, it did seem to work for them. However, despite what Kathy had said, he was still not convinced that this was anytime to be involved in a serious romance. If his NFS grant got approved, who knows how much time he would have to invest in the project? Maybe Wes was smarter than he was and did not need as much time for his research.

Nevertheless, in spite of his doubts, for now he decided to follow his heart--at least to the extent of asking her out again.

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(Tuesday, June 19)

After leaving his office on Thursday, Randy drove over to the boutique. When he walked in and their eyes met, the chemistry between them ignited again. Her warm smile so touched him that he thought of the line in *Sleepless in Seattle*: "It was like coming home."

Terri had a similar feeling. In fact, she felt close enough to him now that she wanted to tease him just a bit.

"Boy, leave the doors open and anything walks in."

Randy laughed. "That's good, really clever! I like that line. I'm sure I'll find an occasion to use it in class."

"Feel free. It's not original with me either. My mother used it one time a number of years ago when my uncle, her brother, came into the boutique."

Several other customers had walked in and started looking around. "It looks like I've attracted some business for you. I just stopped by to ask you something...well, for another date, really." She tried to hold back a smile at his apparent nervousness. "You know the county fair has just started, and I was hoping we could go Saturday evening."

"I'd love to."

"Great! I'll pick you up around seven."

Later that afternoon, Terri was thinking about this upcoming date. She had been so anxious to see him again and was beginning to wonder when that would be. The fair was just perfect! It would be an excellent setting to draw out his feelings. She thought about several of the rides and the possibilities they presented. Would Randy make use of those opportunities? A number of scenarios flashed through her mind, each one making her heart beat change its rhythm.

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(Saturday, June 23)

Randy was again at her house precisely at seven o'clock Saturday evening. He held the car door for her as she climbed in, and they headed for the county fair.

Darkness had pretty much fallen by the time they arrived, and the lights that lit up the fairgrounds and rides were magnificent. The Ferris wheel was the highest of the rides, tall, stately, and impressive. When they pulled into the lot and parked, Randy quickly hopped out and walked around to open the door for Terri. After they entered through the main gate, he took her hand as they walked.

They had not held hands the night of their dinner date with Wes and Kathy, and the feel of her hand in his for the first time made her body tingle with excitement. Odd, she thought, how something so small as holding hands can create so

spectacular a reaction. But then, maybe there was nothing odd about it at all. Walking in public holding hands projected a certain image. So not only did she enjoy the physical contact, but it also sent the message to all who saw them that they were a couple. A couple that liked each other and were affectionate with each other. Yes, a real milestone in their relationship had just been achieved. What might the rest of the evening hold in store for them?

"Hey, Terri," Randy said suddenly, as they walked along the Midway, "I didn't have any dinner tonight. How about a hot dog?"

"Sounds great. I'm hungry too."

Randy bought two hot dogs, French fries, and some pop. They found a small bench and sat down. Terri tried to eat her hot dog in a nonchalant manner and engage in some light conversation. However, it proved to be a difficult challenge, considering the way his eyes were continually drawn to her form-hugging leggings. It made her self conscious, but in a very pleasing way. While dressing for tonight's date, Terri had given considerable thought to what to wear. Yes, she had been quite right in choosing leggings. Seeing that he found her sexy gave her real pleasure.

"How many classes are you teaching this term?" she finally managed to ask.

"Just one. That's quite a lucky break. It'll give me a lot more time for research. I'm just about finished with a grant proposal. If it's approved, I'll be able to hire a post doc, and maybe we can make some real headway. In the meantime, I'll continue working on some promising ideas I've gotten."

"What class are you teaching?" Terri thought she would have a better chance of understanding his answer if she asked this question rather than what some of his theories on quantum gravity were.

"Undergraduate electricity and magnetism. It's really a pretty interesting class to teach."

Terri looked deeply into his eyes and said with complete sincerity, "What a wonderful position you're in, Randy. You enjoy teaching, and you get to teach motivated students a really interesting subject. You love research, and you get to work on theories and concepts that could broaden our understanding of the universe. It must be such a thrill for you."

Her words made Randy focus on her in an entirely new way. Somehow he had not anticipated that she would have such insight into both his work and his attitude toward his work. She also seemed to have a profound understanding of the academic world in which he lived. Not only that, but she seemed to like that world. He watched her eyes as she spoke and saw the depth of feeling she had for it. He felt his attraction to her growing ever stronger. It seemed to be getting more and more difficult to control. He had been attracted to her the first time he saw her, and now she was becoming more and more irresistible. He was attracted to her physically, he was attracted to her bright, outgoing, and kind personality, and he was now attracted to her because of her appreciation of his world.

"You certainly understand what drew me into the academic environment and

physics in particular."

Her heart almost burst for joy. What she just said had profoundly moved him. She believed beyond any doubt that he now knew the depth of her understanding of him, of her appreciation for the work that he did, and of her delight in it. She looked at Randy with radiant eyes.

Their eyes remained locked as each contemplated the new insights just gained. Then suddenly Randy reached out and took her hand, saying, "Come on," he said, "let's get in a few rides."

However, as they got up, Terri spotted a stand selling cotton candy. "Hey, about some of that pink cotton candy over there?"

He looked at her bright, smiling face. "Coming right up."

When he got back and handed one of them to her, she asked, "Do you know how long it's been since I've had gotten candy? I think I might have been twelve."

"You know, I can't even remember when I last had any. All most pure sugar, but boy it's good!"

As they walked along holding hands, Terri pressed her shoulder against him. She felt incredibly happy. "Can we ride the Ferris wheel?" There was childlike enthusiasm in her voice.

"Sure, let's go." The Ferris wheel was not only the highest and biggest ride at the fair, it also seemed to be the most popular. There was a line of people waiting to ride. They continued holding hands as they waited.

Finally it was their turn. Once seated, Randy put his arm around her, and she snuggled up against him, resting her head on his shoulder. The ride started, and the Ferris wheel made several revolutions. When it stopped to take on a new couple, they found themselves at the top of the wheel. They could see for miles around, and suddenly he felt playful.

"How about a little excitement? Say like rocking the boat." He began gently rocking the seat back and forth.

Terri put her hand on his leg and squeezed. "Oh..." She sounded a little frightened. "Please...maybe not. I feel a little squeamish at this height," she said, tightening her grip on his leg.

He turned toward her and smiled. "Sure, I understand. Anyway, it's an old trick guys would use on dates to get the girl to move a little closer and let them act as the big protector."

She looked up at him and give him one of her "I-should-have-known" expressions. However, when the seat stopped swinging, she left her hand resting just above his knee.

The Ferris wheel started up again. As it was making its revolutions, Randy pulled his arm back a little on the seat and gently moved his hand under her hair

and onto her neck. He began making tiny circles with his finger.

For a moment, Terri was stunned. He was really flirting with her! The thought made her stomach do a flip-flop. But as he continued, a warm sensation seemed to engulf her. She wished the ride would never end.

But end it did, and after several more rides and arcade games, so did the evening. They both had had a great time. As they drove back to her house, Terri was bubbling over inside because she really believed that his new insight into her personality, coupled with what Kathy had said on their previous date, had seriously shaken his assumption that he could not pursue a serious relationship with her while at the same time pursuing his research and career. His actions, especially the physical attention he had paid her, seemed to go well beyond what would be expected from a guy wanting only a casual date now and then. She tried not to get her hopes up too high, however. He liked her, she firmly believed that, and emotionally he wanted to be with her, but the conflict within him had certainly not been completely resolved yet. Nevertheless, she was very pleased with the progress that had been made. If she could continue to demonstrate that she loved what he did and that she was no threat to it, perhaps the growing attraction she just knew they both felt for each other would overcome all his doubts.

Randy was also thoughtful on the drive back to Terri's house. There was no doubt about it: he was overwhelmed with the excitement he had felt tonight. He had wanted to hold her hand, and he did it. He had wanted to put his arm around her, and he did it. He had even pushed the envelope of propriety by the rather intimate act of toying with her hair and gently caressing her neck. He had loved it all. What must she think now? He had told her on their first date that he wanted only to keep things casual. Of course, their date at Wes and Kathy's had been anything but casual, especially that amazing kiss with which it ended. Now on this date he gave her every indication that he wanted much more. And of course he did! Was he now admitting this to himself once and for all?

Yes, in fact, he was admitting it: there was nothing casual about his growing attraction for Terri. But he still felt the conflict. Logic told him, or at least seemed to tell him, that now was not the time for this. The next couple of years would be crucial to his research. But that logic was beginning to unravel. Kathy had made everything seem so simple. He also remembered what Terri had just said tonight while they were eating hot dogs--he saw how much she really understood the world he lived in. Maybe...maybe his two desires were not incompatible.

As he pulled into the driveway of the house, he could hardly wait to hold her again. As they walked up to the door, he put his arm around her shoulder, and she responded with her arm around and waist as she leaned close to him. At the door, they simply turned to each other, embraced, and kissed.

Terri had been looking forward to this all night long. His kiss was gentle, almost caressing her lips, but it set her heart on fire. After their lips parted, she laid her head on his shoulder and hugged him for one or two more seconds as he held her tightly in his arms.

To him, her lips felt like moist silk--smooth, inviting, passionate. When they finally stepped apart, he said, "Terri, I...I've been looking forward to that all night."

"So have I," she answered softly.

"Goodnight."

"Goodnight, Randy."

He turned and walked back to his car. At first she thought he might have been going to say something else.