

What I See in You

A cool breeze rustled through the pine trees of Forest Lawn Cemetery, just outside Los Angeles's Griffith Park. Retired Hollywood starlet Frankie Robinson strolled along the path in quiet contemplation. She knew no one buried here, but found the cemetery to be the most peaceful place in the city. It was here that she was able to reunite with her past.

Frankie mourned the loss of so many people from her life—family, friends, and lovers. Despite being a very attractive woman in her late fifties, she oftentimes found herself mourning her former youth. She hated herself for her vanity, but there was a time when she was considered to be one of the most beautiful women in America—the buxom, blonde beauty of the 1960's who made all the red-blooded boys sweat.

Throughout the decades Frankie saw other starlets come and go, and she couldn't help comparing herself to each and every one of them. She witnessed the way fashions changed through the generations and altered the definition of beauty—especially today with all the surgically enhanced girls. She was thankful that she had never felt compelled to alter her appearance merely to fit an image; but she had to admit, she did diet to dangerous levels during the latter years of her career.

She felt sorry for the young girls of today, seeing their lives and affairs displayed in the tabloids—none of them will ever last. Talent would always be overshadowed by the next up-and-coming star, beauty would always fade, and celebrity love affairs would only last until the public grew bored and moved on to the next fresh face.

Frankie had had her own share of flings and affairs. Each seemed to last in concordance with the public's approval. Ironically, the one relationship that lasted the longest was the one that hardly anyone knew about. It was a dark secret she still kept close to heart. Looking back,

although others would regard her love life as tragic, Frankie would not have changed a thing. The pain and the torment, not to mention the drama, actually strengthened her relationships. Frankie Robinson was known to the younger generations as a Hollywood survivor; but she was much more than that. She was also a survivor when it came to love.

Strolling mindlessly along the path, she stopped at a headstone that had endured the elements for generations. Frankie read the name, “Our Dearly Beloved Daughter, Abigail Benet 1930–1935.” She knelt before the gravestone, lamenting the little girl who never got to experience life past the age of five. Frankie couldn’t help remembering when she was a five-year-old girl. It was such a defining moment for her, and she remembered it perfectly.

In 1949 the Baldwin Dance Academy and Theatre proudly stood between two sturdy oak trees on the corner of an affluent suburb in Queens, New York. A svelte woman with starched, curled red hair and dressed in a tight pencil skirt was searching backstage—under tables and behind curtains. She stood upright with her hands on her hips. “All right, Frankie! This is not funny anymore. We are all waiting for you.” A muffled giggle was heard from inside a nearby box of feather boas.

The woman gracefully stepped toward the box in her stiletto heels and peered inside. “Frankie,” she said, pulling out the boas and finding five-year-old Frankie Robinson at the bottom, grinning. Despite her childhood mischief, the woman could not resist Frankie’s charm; she was as cute as a button—big blue eyes with long dark lashes, a perky little nose, and a big toothy smile. “Get out of the box. The recital is starting. All the other girls are waiting.”

Frankie climbed out, dressed in her wrinkled pink leotard and ruffled tutu, draping a black feather boa around her neck as she headed toward the stage. Her thick blonde hair was frayed from the tightly spun bun on her head. The woman tried to fix Frankie on the way to the stage, but it was no use—nothing could straighten that little girl out.

“Honey,” said the woman, tugging at the black feather boa Frankie had wrapped around her neck, “there are no feather boas in *Swan Lake*.”

Frankie resisted and held a firm grip on the boa. “Swans have feathers. I saw them at the Twin Lakes.”

The woman sighed impatiently, but tried to appease the smart five-year-old with reason. “None of the other girls have feather boas. Do you want to look out of place?” she asked, still trying to pry the feather boa from Frankie’s fingers.

“I don’t care,” said Frankie. “I am a swan. I want feathers.”

“Okay, have it your way,” said the woman, signaling for the stagehand to start the *Swan Lake* music on the record player. She patted Frankie on the tutu for her to go on stage with the other little girls.

The audience, made up entirely of parents, laughed as they watched chubby little Frankie plié on the stage with the feather boa wrapped around her neck. While other little girls danced, Frankie made up for her apparent lack of grace with vigor, shaking her chubby body. Her

energetic ballet moves caused the audience to smile—especially her father, Marcus. Frankie was his pride and joy. Frankie’s mother, Geraldine, lowered her head into her palm.

After the recital, Frankie’s parents took their spirited little dancer out to an upscale Rockville Steak House for hot cocoa and chocolate mousse cake. The restaurant was a relatively quiet place, disrupted only by the gentle clinking of silverware on porcelain or the occasional audible chatter of New York City’s intellectually elite.

Frankie knelt on the tapestry upholstered chair, dressed in her ruffled tutu, white mink coat, and black feather boa draped around her neck. She leaned over the table, exposing her pink leotard-clad derriere to the table alongside the Robinsons. She then lowered her face into her cup of hot chocolate, lapping up the cream on top with her tongue. She looked up; her face covered with whipped cream, and said, “Look, Mommy, I’m a kitten.”

Geraldine sighed and set her daughter down properly in the chair. She wiped the white cream from her face and fixed her hair, fraying from the bun. “Francesca Marie Robinson,” she said, “behave yourself.”

Frankie blew a raspberry at her mother and then started laughing.

Geraldine took a sip of her Sambuca, lit a cigarette, and then stared at her husband. “I blame you for this,” she said, “You dote on her way too much.”

Marcus stared at Frankie with adoration in his eyes and then pinched her cheek. “She’s my little angel. She’s not hurting anyone; she’s just being a little girl.”

Frankie beamed a big smile at her father. Geraldine shook her head. She was at a loss with them both.

Several years later in 1954, nine-year-old Frankie stood outside Marcus’s study door, pounding feverishly and calling for him.

“Francesca, leave your father alone!” called Geraldine from the living room.

“No! Why won’t he come out?” asked Frankie.

“Come here,” said her mother.

Frankie walked into the living room to find Geraldine stretched out on a newly purchased Danish red leather couch. Her mother, a former stage actress, liked to keep up with fashionable city trends—designer furniture, matching porcelain vases on various shelves and tables, and a Hoffman hanging above the stone fireplace. The dichotomy between this room and her father’s study was obvious. His space was decorated with bookcases full of leather-bound books, plush chairs, and pictures of Frankie. On most occasions Frankie would spend her time there reading or drawing while Marcus attended to his business.

“What’s wrong with Dad?” asked Frankie.

“Francesca, why don’t you make yourself useful, and go outside to rake leaves?” Geraldine replied, not lifting her eyes from the book she was reading.

Frankie crossed her arms and stood firm. “Not until you tell me what’s wrong with Dad.”

“You have a very smart mouth, for a nine-year-old,” scolded Geraldine. “Now go outside and rake leaves.”

Frankie clomped her way to the hallway closet, and grabbed her wool coat, scarf, and yellow rubber galoshes “None of my friends’ parents make them rake leaves. They hire people!” shouted Frankie. “They don’t have to do chores; they have maids.”

“And your friends will grow up ill-mannered and spoiled!” Geraldine called after her.

Ill-mannered and spoiled. Frankie silently mouthed the words, mocking her mother. She stomped loudly in her galoshes as she walked out the door, heading to the garage to get the rake. It was a cold, blustery day, and every time she raked a bunch of leaves, the wind blew them all over the lawn again. The chore became futile, and as soon as Frankie had a pile of leaves big enough, she collapsed onto it and rolled around.

She looked up at the cloudy sky and then covered her face with leaves, wanting to hide from the world. *Mom can be so mean*, she thought. *Why won’t she let me see Dad?* There were times she felt so lonely. All her school friends had time to play, while she routinely had to attend some class or perform some chore. It wasn’t fair, and now her mom wasn’t her letting her see her dad.

With a somber expression, Marcus opened the front door and stepped onto the concrete stoop, wrapping a wool scarf around his neck. In the middle of his sprawling front yard, marked by a white picket fence and rose bushes, he saw a pile of leaves with a small pair of yellow galoshes sticking out of the side. It was a sight that put a smile on his face.

He walked toward the pile, picked up the rake, and started raking more leaves over Frankie. Frankie came alive under the heap of leaves, kicking her legs and thrashing her arms. “I’m under here!” she cried.

“Who’s under there?” teased Marcus.

Frankie poked her head out from the pile with leaves sticking to her hair. “Me. Your daughter. Remember!”

Marcus knelt down and wrestled Frankie in the leaves. “I know who you are,” he said. “You are my little angel.”

Frankie hugged her father tightly. “Why did you lock yourself in your study?” asked Frankie.

“Business,” said Marcus.

“What kind of business?”

Marcus dusted leaves from his little girl. “Business I don’t like, but must attend to.”

“Like what?” pressed Frankie.

He sat down in the grass alongside Frankie and sighed. “Sometimes people will say things about you that are untrue, and those things might affect your job and your family. Sometimes there are things you need to do to protect yourself and the people you love.”

“I don’t understand,” said Frankie.

Marcus kissed on her the nose. “I don’t either.”

Geraldine appeared in the doorway, hands on her hips. “Are you two going to keep messing around, or are you going to rake the leaves?”

“Mom is so mean,” said Frankie, starting to rake again. “I don’t know why you like her.”

Marcus chuckled as he got to his feet. “It’s not an easy job being the boss of people you love. Try to give her a break.” He lifted Frankie by her arms and swung her around and yelled out to Geraldine “We’re raking leaves!” He set Frankie down and grabbed hold of the handle of the rake. “Go get trash bags. We can finish this job in a jiffy.”

The spotlights shined harshly on the set of the television studio. There were several men armed with large cameras on tripods. Backstage, fifteen-year-old Frankie was nervously wringing her hands together. She had never shied from the stage, but this would be her first time on national television. Marcus, a radio and television personality, had friends who were willing to give his daughter this opportunity He didn’t have to twist too many arms to get it; Frankie had already grown into a beautiful teenager. By now agents and producers were clamoring to give her a chance.

On cue, Frankie energetically bounced on to the set alongside the television show’s host, a distinguished middle-aged man with graying hair. Together they performed a comedy skit, followed by a duet. After the performance, Frankie curtsied, then bounded off the stage to where a dozen red roses awaited her—a gift from her biggest fan, Marcus.

Marcus wasn’t the only one whose admiration Frankie was attracting; men of all ages had begun to fawn over her. Fortunately for Marcus, Frankie was uncomfortable with the attention. She was perfectly happy in the company of one particular suitor—Tim, the neighborhood boy down the street. Tim had been one of her best friends ever since she was thirteen. Apart from her father, Tim was the only man she truly trusted. It was her relationship with Tim that led to her first sexual experience when she turned seventeen. It was okay. Afterward, she didn’t know what all the fuss was about.

It was during her tender years that Marcus and Geraldine were working hard to maintain Frankie’s reputation and image. There were many young men who continually called on Frankie, but the Robinsons would not approve of just any fellow who came courting. They had their own standards to determine who was fit for their daughter. Frankie, however, never judged a potential suitor, or anyone she met, solely on an image. Growing up in the entertainment world, she had witnessed firsthand a myriad range of relationships consisting of every caliber and quality. Many entertainers used these marriages and other affiliations to sell records, market a movie, or maintain the public’s interest in them. Frankie, having a passionate heart, desired love more than anything else.

One night when alone in her bed, Frankie lay awake pondering her understanding of love. She thought about the examples of love she had seen throughout her life. There never seemed to be much passion in her parents’ marriage, and the relationships of certain friends and colleagues appeared superficial at best. Frankie became worried that perhaps love was only a fantasy written about in fairy tales and portrayed in movies to sell tickets. And to top it off, she could never remember experiencing the “mysterious kiss” that was supposed to make a woman’s knees weaken and butterflies flutter in her stomach. As much as she valued Tim’s company and friendship, there was no real desire to maintain an intimate relationship with him. *No wonder*

people are so complacent and bitter about love, she thought. They have such high hopes and become disappointed in the end.

Her television debut however was an enormous success and soon the movie producers in were making calls to her agent. For all it became obvious, Frankie's destiny was Hollywood. Although she was a fan of Marilyn Monroe, it was Bette Davis who truly inspired her. Frankie had a natural gift for comedy, but it was drama that she was most attracted to. Growing up in a sheltered, affluent life, dramatic roles gave her the opportunity to experience the hardships of life—even if it was only on stage.

A week before a scheduled to fly to Los Angeles, Frankie felt she needed some time to herself. She decided to go horseback riding within the neighborhood of Fresh Meadows. She climbed onto the back of her favorite mare, Libby, and galloped off into the park. A cool misty breeze filled the spring air, and the grass was vivid green from yesterday's rain. White and pink blossoms fluttered down from the trees, landing on the damp ground as Frankie and her horse trotted by.

Under the blossom-filled trees, Frankie daydreamed of a knight in shining armor. *If love does eventually come to everyone, when will mine?* she thought. As she listened to the rhythmic sound of Libby's hooves on the macadam, Frankie's mind entered an almost meditative state. She began to imagine what her future beau would be like and where she might meet him. *Will he ride up to me today? Will he help me if I fall off my horse? Will he be tall, dark, and handsome?* There was so much hope and promise ahead of her.

When Frankie was set free into the world at age eighteen, she was ready to let go of the structures founded by her parents. She wanted to live and experience life, date boys, and hang around with her girlfriends. She found friendship with a young, rising starlet, Katie Todd, a sultry blonde with a pageboy hairdo. Katie was the oldest daughter of a military family and had seen much of the world by the time she turned eighteen. She had lived on military bases in Japan and Germany, but spent most of her life growing up outside San Diego.

Frankie had befriended Katie a year ago when their two families met on a cruise. Their parents seemed to hit it off, especially Frankie and Katie's mothers. It was a clue to both girls that they were to be lifelong friends; and sometimes it felt as though they had been sisters in a past life. Actually, Frankie and Katie acted more like brothers, jokingly berating each other with insults.

For Katie's eighteenth birthday, her father (or "the General," as Frankie liked to call him) bought her a 1963 blue and silver corvette convertible. It was a slick car for a sensuous young star. Katie and Frankie used it to their full advantage, cruising all around Los Angeles, teasing young men of all ages and statures. There was no real reason to succumb to sexual seductions when you had men eating out of your hand. In 1963, Katie Todd and Frankie Robinson had the City of Angels at their feet.

Frankie despised photo shoots, but they were necessary for a rising star; besides, it was hard to turn down the money that modeling agents were offering. Southern California was known for its year-round sunny weather. This November day, however, it was especially cold in the studio while posing in a polka-dot bikini. “Can someone turn up the heat?” she asked. “It is freezing in here!”

“We’ll be done in a few minutes,” said the photographer, looking through the lens. “Just hold still.”

Frankie smirked and then smiled for the camera, when the photographer’s pretty assistant suddenly burst in. Her face was pasty, and there was a haunted look in her eyes. “This better be important,” said the photographer.

“It is,” the assistant stammered. “President Kennedy has just been assassinated.”

The photographer lifted his head from the camera and stared at his assistant with a look of disbelief. “What?” he gasped.

Frankie covered herself in a robe and stepped toward the assistant. “What? How did it happen?”

“In a parade—in Dallas—it’s all over the news,” she muttered. “It’s on television.”

Frankie ran back to the dressing room and quickly changed into her clothes. When she returned she found the photographer, the assistant, and several others gathered around the television in the studio office, watching Walter Cronkite broadcast the news of the President’s death.

Dead silence filled the room, except for a few whimpers. Frankie, unable to control herself, wiped the tears that fell from her eyes. Frankie had never been one to involve herself in politics, but Kennedy’s death touched most Americans on a much more personal level. Suddenly, it seemed, one could no longer take anything for granted.

Later that evening, in the small Spanish-Colonial apartment she shared with Katie, Frankie’s eyes were glued to the television as the assassination footage was rebroadcast over and over. Every time it played, every time Kennedy’s car pulled closer to the crowd, Frankie silently hoped for a different outcome—somehow the bullet would magically miss him. But it was always the same.

The apartment door swung open and Katie entered, tossing her tailored jacket over the back of a chair. She kicked off her shoes and plopped down on the couch next to Frankie.

Frankie glanced sideways at her. “I can’t believe you went on your date with all that’s happened.”

Katie peeled off her white gloves. “L.A. is as dead as Kennedy tonight.”

“I can’t believe you can be so callous,” said Frankie, wiping a tear from her eye.

Sorry. I just don’t know what to think or how to feel. It’s all just so surreal. It really kind of sticks to you, you know? One day you’re alive, the next day dead,” said Katie. “I don’t know what to feel.”

“I can only imagine what Jackie is going through,” Frankie said with a teary sniff. “Imagine having your husband die in your arms and you are helpless to do anything for him.”

Katie wrapped her arm around Frankie's shoulder. "You can't spend all your time worrying about death, Frankie. You have to concern yourself with living."

Frankie knew it was the truth, but in the days that followed, it was hard for anyone to contemplate living. The road to Kennedy's funeral was a sobering experience for many Americans. Frankie and Katie sat on their couch, watching the televised procession with a box of tissues between them. They witnessed the band play "Hail to the Chief," after which ushers carried the president's casket, draped with the American flag, up the steps of the Capitol. Life in America at that moment seemed to stand still. If there was any denial in any American that day, there was none now—Kennedy's death was certain.

Tears streamed down Frankie's face, seeing Jackie and her two small children—Caroline and John Jr.—parade behind the procession, but what pained Frankie more was seeing Robert Kennedy, standing tall and strong, yet his face was tight with mourning. She couldn't help it; she burst out sobbing. Katie pulled out a tissue and handed it to Frankie. "Thank you," Frankie choked, wiping her face.

Katie was rather cool and calm throughout it all, until the moment came when little John Jr. saluted the procession passing before him. She started balling, and it was now Frankie's turn to hand her a tissue. It was so very tragic to everyone in the country who cried tears of grief—the sight of this little boy standing and saluting his father's passing, without any clue to the significance his simple gesture would have on millions over the world.

During the weeks that followed, Americans had no choice but to move forward; the United States watched as Lyndon B. Johnson was sworn into the office of president. It was only a short two months later, however, when the mood of the nation was transformed by the Ed Sullivan Show as it introduced a rock-and-roll band from England called the Beatles.

That evening Frankie and Kate had forgone dates for the sake of a girl's night in with a big bowl of popcorn and a six-pack of soda pop. There was so much anticipation for this band from England that the crowds they drew and the traffic they caused were almost rivaled those of Kenney's funeral. How quickly American's attention was diverted from sobriety, thought Frankie.

Frankie was curious, but could not understand the sensation these young men were causing. Sure, the Beatles were cute enough, but what caught Frankie's attention was the reaction of the crowds. *How could girls let themselves get so carried away?* she thought. *They're just boys like any others.* It was almost laughable.

Katie tossed a few pieces of popcorn into her mouth. "Those girls need to get laid—badly."

Frankie grabbed a huge handful of popcorn and shoved it in her mouth and spoke while she chewed, "Why, they're having orgasms right there in audience!" "Why waste a perfectly good orgasm without a dick?" Katie sipped her soda pop through a straw.

Frankie laughed. “Maybe there’s something to it; orgasm and still get to keep their virginity.

“Seriously, Frankie, do you really believe that?” questioned Katie. “Have you even had an orgasm?”

Frankie hit Katie with a cushion. “Shut up. I must have. I’ve had sex before.”

“Uh-huh. If you don’t know if you did, then you didn’t,” said Katie.

“See, there’s my point,” explained Frankie. “You don’t have an orgasm with every guy you have sex with, right? Sometimes sex can be really lame. So, if orgasm can be induced without having to bear through a boring date full of wet, icky kisses, and feeling guilty the next day, then why not?”

Katie slid down in her seat. “It would save a lot of wasted time.” She pointed at the television. “Oh my God, check out the chick in the dark glasses. She just wet her seat.”

“And the girl beside her—holy shit!” commented Frankie. “See? We girls have better things to do than put up with bad dates and lame sex.”

“Yeah, we can watch the Beatles,” roared Katie.

Frankie giggled and took another big mouthful of popcorn. “You know what, Katie? I think we’re dating men from the wrong hemisphere.”

During the months that followed the Beatles’ 1964 introduction to mainstream America, a tremendous wind of change was blowing westward across the Atlantic Ocean, causing a global uproar. The winds of this storm helped carry away the stinging effects of the Kennedy assassination and the lingering sobriety that it had caused.

The playful, lighthearted beats of foreigners were just what the younger generation needed. The overall effect created a psychological condition for people worldwide that blew the lid off “traditional values” and American conservatism. For those whose minds, hearts, and bodies were still stifled by such traditions and values, suddenly there was a bright light of opportunity—a new way of living, of loving, and of being. This new clarity of vision inflicted many of the young who were more than ready to recreate a new world. It was fresh and absolutely brilliant.

The clean-cut family values of the 1950’s were already under duress from the likes of Elvis Presley, Eddie Cochran, Little Richard, Chuck Berry, and others; but the bands invading from across the Atlantic were able to make Elvis Presley’s swaying hips seem like the bunny hop at a church luncheon. Young women of the world were ready and waiting for what seemed like centuries to be set free from their sexual boundaries and to let go completely.

The bands of the British Invasion did more than just rise to the top of the American pop charts; they invaded the hearts of American women—daughters, girlfriends, and even wives. They did this so very subtly, dressed in pressed suits, singing seemingly harmless songs of love, while at the same time pulling the proverbial wool over the eyes of Americans in the form of hot, steamy sheets.

It wasn't just the boy bands with their often raw voices, heavy beats, and gyrating rhythms; young female performers were also stepping out, expressing their own needs for freedom. Songs declaring liberty from centuries-old traditions that had kept them in the kitchen, and love songs dedicated to rebellious young men of whom Daddy surely wouldn't approve were among the top hits for the girls. Many young women were in search of their very own "Johnny Rebel" with whom they wished to experience passion.

On a clear August night screams could be heard echoing through the hot, dry air, creating a vacuum of sound throughout the Hollywood Bowl until nothing was audible except for a high-pitched shrill. Girls danced orgiastically to the music while young men watched, far more interested in the young ladies' performances than that of the British band, The Dark Knights onstage, performing their top hits, *Insatiable Lady*, *Street Beat and Girl*, *What I See in You*. By any standard, a good time was had by all, and the passion felt at the concert would no doubt continue afterwards into the night.

Frankie was among those present in the audience at the Hollywood Bowl that night. She shook her body so hard until sweat streamed from her fair-skinned pores. There was nothing demure about her as she moved to the blood-pumping rhythms.

It was still too early in the women's revolution for men to accept the assertiveness of a young woman, especially one so beautiful. So Frankie learned to play the game, to give men a little of her sexuality—a flirt here and there, a tease or suggestion—letting them think they could rule her, while she actually had them in the palm of her hand. This game worked very well for her; men were dishing out all kinds of opportunities.

This particular night the favor granted to Frankie and her friends was access to a party being held by the band The Dark Knights after the concert. While most girls could only go home and dream, Frankie had the opportunity of a real-life meeting. Being a celebrity herself, she did have a much cooler and calmer attitude toward meeting famous musicians. She, of course, was excited, but she had developed the poise to not appear beside herself in the presence of an attractive, famous young man.

While crowds were being hoarded through lanes marked by police barricades, talent agent Les Brown, a clean-cut man, worked his girls—Frankie; Katie; Gillian Leary, a long-haired, naturally blonde beauty; and Emily LeMore, a short, curvaceous brunette—through the crowd to a waiting red Ford convertible. It was Les's job as chaperone to be responsible for the young starlets' reputations.

As the convertible wound through the Hollywood Hills, the wind blew Katie's hair around her face while she applied of lipstick over her perfect full lips. She had to keep pulling her hair off her lipstick holder and reapply it.

"You're going to waste that entire tube before you even get to make your mark," teased Frankie as the wind blew her own hair, turning it into a big blonde mop. Frankie was rather careless about her appearance. She rarely wore makeup outside of performances, appearances, or photo shoots. Even without makeup, she was still far more glamorous than most women who

spent hours getting ready. This disregard for enhancing her own beauty was also part of her rebellion.

“I just want to make sure these guys won’t know what hit them,” said Katie, pursing her lips together.

“That’s the idea, strike first before they take their first shot,” said Frankie with a gruff, playful voice and displaying a tight fist. “We want to show those boys who’s boss!”

Katie serenaded Frankie with a Dark Knight hit loud and way off key:

*Girl, what I see in you
Is more than you will know
Is more than I can ever show
I want you to be mine
Every second of time
I want you to be mine
It’s all I need to feel fine.*

“Katie, the was horrid. I’d stick to acting if I were you,” said Frankie casually.

Emily turned and leaned over the vinyl seat to address the girls in the back. “They say the Dark Knights are now bigger than the Beatles.”

“I thought the Dave Clark Five were bigger than the Beatles,” retorted Katie, checking her puckered lips reflection in her compact mirror.

“I heard it was the Beach Boys,” replied Gillian, trying to keep the wind from ruining her hairstyle.

“And I thought it was Gerry and the Pacemakers,” said Frankie with a chuckle, and started swooning over Katie, singing the song “How Do You Do It?” All the girls laughed.

“Okay, whatever! Ladies, we’re going in with a plan. Let’s call it out here before we get there. That being said, I call Nick.”

“He’s married,” Katie responded.

“That’s my choice, Miss Prissy. Gillian, Frankie, Katie: make your call,” said Emily.

“Well, it’s not going to be Robbie, he’s way too pretty—that curly blond hair, those big red lips—and all those sexy moves are kind of creepy,” said Katie.

Emily asked, “What’s the problem, are you jealous?”

“You bet! I don’t need to have a guy who is prettier than me. He’d be competition with all the other guys,” said Katie with a loud laugh.

“Yeah, I heard he goes both ways,” said Frankie. “That would be a serious concern.”

“It could have its advantages,” said Emily. “You could get two guys for the price of one.”

All the girls laughed as Les held firmly to the leather steering wheel and glanced in the rearview mirror at the girls. “There’s going to be no calls to make,” he said, “none at all. There will not be one or two guys. Hear me! I have agents, PR people, and parents to answer to.”

“Les, you’re a big square,” said Frankie, kicking the back of his seat.

“Aw, isn’t that sweet?” said Katie. “Les is going to protect our honor.”

“Little does he know, it’s already lost,” said Emily. All the girls laughed.

“Hear that, Les? We have no more honor!” shouted Frankie.

“I don’t want to hear anymore,” said Les. “What you girls do behind closed doors is none of my business; just make sure the press doesn’t find out.” He continued along the windy road with mansions on either side, hidden behind large brass gates, while the girls settled impatiently in their seats.

Frankie leaned over the seat behind Les and said, “Girls, we don’t know what we’re walking into. Yeah, these guys are hot topic, but who knows what they’re *really* like . . . you know, like, in person. All we know about these guys is what we’ve seen on television. They wear make-up. Their noses might be bigger than their heads! They might have unsightly moles, or small dicks, or worse—they could be boring!”

Les shook his head as he turned up a sharp hill toward a mansion on the right. “Frankie, if your father could hear how you talk,” he said.

“Aw, shoot, Les. You’re a big fat bore!” exclaimed Frankie.

“Frankie, you can be a real drag at times,” said Gillian. “Don’t take away our dreams of big dicks.”

Frankie laughed as she fell back onto the leather seat of the convertible. “I’m not going to get sucked into an image; I’m a realist.”

Ahead in the near distance was the mansion where the Dark Knights were staying while in town. Despite all the big talk and big ideas, the girls grew nervous. Behind that front door was the wind that was blowing change across the globe. Somehow they all knew, in one way or another, each of them would be changed forever after tonight.