

~ The Virgin and the Princess ~

W A R N I N G: Adult Material. Reader Beware

Three blocks down the street, he saw the white sign suspended over the wide city sidewalk. A short, squat, white-faced man in a red robe sported longish black hair curled over an ermine collar beneath an over-sized crown of gold. Two blocks closer, he was over halfway there. He could make out the facial features. A regal nose protruded over the facial hair of a French chef or Musketeer. Take your pick. He crossed Ferry Street. The words above the crown read *The Little King*. The Little King stared across the empty street towards a derelict building. He stopped beneath the sign to peep in through the glass door. Was she working today? He hoped so.

He peered around the black, bold lettering stenciled on a tall glass door. The lettering told the eatery's hours: M-F 6:30 – 3:00 — Sat. 7:30 – 2. Inside the glass door, a hangar-shaped string above the lettering held a white rectangle that read OPEN. The other one—the skinny one—saw him. He guessed he'd have to go in now. He tugged on the curved, pleated, solid metal handle. A tiny gold bell tinkled overhead, announcing his arrival. To his left, behind the long counter that ran the length of the eatery, the taller, skinny chick stopped wiping down the counter with a wet rag. Standing up, she slung her hips to one side. She looked down to her right at nobody.

“Guess who?” she said.

A short, dark-haired cutie popped up from behind the counter. When the cutie saw him, she sneered, rolling her eyes. The one with the wet rag in her hand glanced up to her left at the round, white-faced clock high up the back wall above the juke box. The clock read ten to three.

“Better late than never,” said Rag-in-Hand, arching a brow.

He looked at the juke trying to be cool. Looking around, he used his peripheral vision to eye the dark-haired beauty with all the curves. He had the place to himself as usual near closing.

“That's two bucks you owe me,” Rag-in-Hand told Beauty with Curves. “Unless you wanna try to get even—bet on his order.”

Mebbe, he oughtta just turn tail and scoot?

Beauty with Curves reached into her bra to extract a pair of bills. That froze him. She handed the bills over to Rag-in-Hand with a smirk, as if she'd smelled something rotten. Rag-in-hand transferred the bills into her bra. He figured she had plenty of room in there to spare. Beauty with Curves was loaded there—but not with bills. No, she didn't have no room in there to spare. No—too crowded for that. He sure would like to steal a peek, just to satisfy his curiosity. She was dark and short but featured full curves in all the right places along with a narrow waist. She drew him like a magnet. He strolled toward the counter with his eyes riveted on her ample bank vault.

Shoving her hips aside, she slouched, smacking loudly on some chewing gum.

“What'll it be, as if I didn't know.”

He shrugged. “Usual, I guess.”

Beauty with Curves rolled her eyes again then peeked at the angular girl with the rag who chuckled. Rag-in Hand went back to wiping down the Formica counter top.

Beauty with Curves told her, “Could have broke even with that one.”

Rag-in-Hand chuckled some more as she slaved over the counter, wiping away from them toward the back wall. Beauty with Curves turned her backside to him. He watched her raise up on the balls of her sullied, white Keds to draw a large Dixie cup from a dispenser. The cup featured large pictures of the regal little king with his crown and ermine collar.

“Not too much ice, please.”

She shook her head without looking at him. “Yeah-yeah.”

He studied her remarkable basketball butt backside as she pushed the cup under the ice dispenser first—for a split second—then filled the cup from the Mountain Dew spigot. She knew what he liked. He liked that. The eyes of the other one were all over him—never left him. But he didn't dare take his eyes off the broad basketball butt before him—a chief reason he came in here. He'd live on that vision until his next visit.

Both girls wore tied-on, little white aprons over snug-fitting, black mini-skirted uniform dresses that featured white mound buttons up the front, with matching white, pointed collars and cuffed, short white sleeves pointing toward the shoulder. Both wore those little white caps in their hair—like the paper princess crowns women wore on New Year's Eve at parties he'd seen on TV. Mentally, he snapped his fingers—*tiaras!* Paper tiaras, that's what they were. But Beauty with Curves had the better build. No gettin' around that. It was one of the three reasons he came in here. The second was the Dew. The third was “Lola,” in that order.

While Beauty with Curves ignored him, he had the full attention of Rag-in-Hand. She stood inside the far end of the counter leaning one shoulder against the back wall, arms crossed beneath her chest staring at him, clutching her rag. She wasn't smiling. She wasn't frowning. It was as if she were sizing him up, studying him as if he were some kind of bug under a microscope. Rag-in-Hand had stared at him that way before. He didn't much care for it. Made him feel funny—funny-strange, not funny-funny or funny-ha-ha. He shot her a harsh look, but she didn't let up. He focused on Beauty with Curves who Curves handed him the large cup of piss-yellow Dew floating a few ice cubes jiggling around inside.

“That'll be fifty-three cents,” she said. She smacked her chewing gum and looked away.

He reached into his pocket to pull out a buck. She snatched it from his hand then sauntered to the cash register to punch up the sale. She brought back his change, shoving her chewing gum against the inside of her cheek with her tongue—what a tongue. She held back his change.

“You cost me two bucks just now cuz you was twenty minutes late today.”

In all his visits, it was the first time she'd said anything to him other than to take his order.

“Oh? You wanna keep the change?”

She arched her brows. “Seems the least you could do.” She smacked her chewing gum.

“All right. Keep it—and here's another dollar.” He dug out another buck from his pocket.

Holding the change, she looked at him, studying him.

“Nah.” She shook her head at the bill.

“Okay. For change then—for the juke.”

He motioned over his right shoulder with his head. He held the dollar out over the counter. Reaching for the bill, she stopped short of his hand.

“On one condition.” She arched a brow.

“What's that?”

“Ya don't play that gaw-damned ‘Lola.’”

He stiffened then lowered the bill to the counter.

“What's wrong with ‘Lola’?”

“You been comin' in here at closin' every Tuesday and Thursday for the last three weeks playin' that same gawdamn song, every gaw-damned time.”

“So. I like it. Don't you?”

“No!”

“Why not? I thought everybody liked that song.”

She leaned on her hand over the counter, clenching her teeth. “Cuz it reminds me of you.” Her face was stone. He swallowed harder.

She pointed over his shoulder. “Ya sit over there against that damn wall, starin’ at me.”

“Oh.” He hung his head, looking down at the counter, mumbling, “I’m-I’m sorry. Guess I ...”

“What?” The icy boredom in her voice pierced him like a lance, but he didn’t speak.

“What!?” She placed her fists akimbo on her round hips. She was ticked.

Without looking up, he whispered, “Well ... Guess I ... I like you, too.”

“Well, the feelin’ ain’t mutual. Here, keep your damn change. And keep your eyes to yourself from now on.” She slammed the coins down on the counter top.

He brought his eyes up to meet hers. Her stare wavered. She looked away.

“Aw, I don’t give a damn what you play,” she said.

Beauty with Curves and the sharp tongue turned on her heel in a huff. She slammed open the double doors to the kitchen, leaving them swinging in her wake. He stood there like an ass, watchin’ the doors swing until they stilled to a close. Soft drink cup in his hand, he stared down at the change thinking of how her broad basketball butt swayed violently as she’d stalked away.

Screw it! She can just stick that change where the sun don’t shine.

The hairs on the back of his neck prickled. Looking down the counter to his right, he noticed Rag-in-Hand hadn’t moved. She watched him as before, slouched against the back wall inside the counter.

“I like ‘Lola.’” She said it sort of cheerfully, matter of fact-like.

“Yeah?”

“Yeah. I like it a lot.”

He tilted his head toward the kitchen. “What does *she* like?”

“Ah,” she smiled, standing up off the wall to face him. “She likes ‘Lola’, too. Jus’ not when you’re here. Boyfriend trouble, see? That’s why she’s got a bug up her ass. Pay no attention.”

“Oh? She like anything else ‘sides ‘Lola’?”

“‘Maggie May’—me, too.” A faint smile crossed her lips.

He shifted the cup to his left hand, reaching into the pocket of his blue cords, feeling for change. He had enough. He walked to the juke standing against the back wall. Stuck in his fifty cents to pick out his two selections. He heard the juke selecting the 45 then walked over to sit down at a table-for-two against the side wall opposite the counter. His usual spot. He took a long sip on the Dew. The sudden, two-beat intro to “Maggie May” sounded out loud and clear over the speaker system. Rag-in-Hand gave him a wink and a smile.

She came out from behind the counter with the rag, totin’ a plastic spray bottle. She sang along as she wiped down the tables. He wanted to get up, walk out, but he took his time. He sipped his Dew. He didn’t want to look chicken, running out with his tail between his legs. Besides, he might as well get his money’s worth from the juke. He sucked up more of his Dew.

“—Ga’night Maggie,” came from behind the stilled, double doors. It was the jerk with curves.

“Ga’night, Donn,” answered Rag-in-Hand turning, lifting her chin as well as her voice toward the same double doors. Seconds later he heard a heavy door slam the other side of the double doors. Rag-in-Hand shrugged then went back to wiping.

“Don’t know what she’s missin’,” she said in a hoarse whisper loud enough for him to hear.

“Maggie May” was all right. It was different. And he had the sense there was some truth in the lyrics for the singer. Must be that mandolin with the singer’s scratchy voice that made for an odd combination—different. Yeah. Like Rag-in-Hand here was different the way she’d stared at him.

She wasn’t really his type—this skinny one. He liked ‘em short, dark and curvy, like the one that gave him the brush. But hell. What did he know? When it came to girls, he didn’t know from jack—or Jill. But lately, he thought mebbe it was time he found out. He was away from home for the first time. Three thousand miles away at college. Been gone near a month. Nobody knew him here. Nobody would rag on him for showing he had an interest in girls, an interest he kept stuffed deep inside ever since he’d been stiffed by that girl in eighth grade who he’d thought was a friend. She’d acted like a very good friend til he found differently—the hard way—when he was laid up in bed for a couple months. Then she ignored him even after, when he was well.

Rag-in-Hand here had kind o’ broad shoulders but modest breasts, though her hips fanned out fine and round below a long flat-bellied waist. But more angular than curvy like the one that give him the brush. Her face wasn’t hard to look at. Though she was no beauty like Miss Priss who’d just stiffed him. But not bad, really. This one had high cheek bones, cleft chin, fine full lips that were thicker than thin and a chin that wasn’t too pointed or too square. Her eyebrows curved a little, giving her a sad puppy look but she had long lashes that looked natural. Though he’d never cared much for freckles or russet hair. She had a nose a bit on the larger side but that was okay. He kind o’ liked it. And she was older than he was. A few years at least. She wore a silver ring on her right hand but none on her left. A porpoise pendant dangled from her neck. The purple fish bounced against freckled skin beneath her clavicle as she slaved over the tables. She wasn’t bad, actually—very nice legs. No, she was okay. Funny—funny-strange, not funny-funny or funny-ha-ha. He just never looked twice at her because of the one with the extra-curvy build.

The song ended, the record changed. Rag-in-Hand came over to wipe down his table.

“I’m off in a few minutes,” she offered, arching a brow. He scratched his whiskerless cheek.

“Oh? Don’t ya have to clean up after?”

She laughed. “Whaddaya think I’m doin’?” She waved the rag at the tables.

“Oh.” He nodded, offering a lame smile. “Yeah.”

The dobro solo intro to “Lola” played. Rag-in-Hand grinned wide.

“It’s a classic.” She winked. She had his attention.

Rag in Hand strode past him toward the front of the shop, swinging her hips more than usual. She flipped the sign on the door, so it read OPEN to him instead of CLOSED. Reaching into a pocket on the hip of her uniform, she pulled out a ring of keys selecting one to lock the door. Then she lowered the venetian blinds over the plate glass door and glass window that comprised almost the entire front wall. She walked to the counter and leaned over it balancing on one leg while raising her right leg high off the floor. She tossed the rag beneath the counter but lifted her leg higher, stretching the skirt tight across her bottom. The hem rose higher and stretched tighter against her thigh—higher and tighter than was needed—revealing pink panties.

Was this show for him? Had to be. There was no one else.

Turning toward him, she strangled the white apron between her hands but let the garment live. She swiped her hands together twice. “That’s that!”

Making an about-face, she offered him her now rag-free hand.

“Dance?”

“Lola” banged on. Her green eyes bored into him. *Was she for real?* Funny-strange for sure.

She sauntered over to take him by the hand, drawing him up and out of the chair. Taking his left hand in her right, she placed her free hand about his waist then shoved her loins into his to dance slow—real slow. Slower than the tempo of “Lola.” Contrary to the tempo, her green eyes burned green for go, searing into his. She wasn’t his type but maybe he should be more broad-minded? Yeah, *broad-minded*—get it? He smiled.

She leaned forward to kiss him softly on the lips. *Damn!* His flag rifled up the pole.

Sagging into him made her sigh, “Umm—yes, I knew it. Know what this song is about?”

He shrugged. “Think I’m learnin’.”

She grinned wider, revealing a set of healthy, white teeth.

“Well, you don’t have to worry about me. I ain’t no Lola—not like that one anyway. I’m Maggie Mae. Like the other one. Here, show ya.”

In time to the music, she stepped to her left placing his right thigh between both of hers. She clamped down over him, sliding her skirt up her thighs. She slipped their clasped hands between their chests. The hem of her black uniform dress rode high up her thighs. Slide-swaying over and against his leg, she rocked and rolled—slow—slower than the tempered strains of “Lola.” Purring behind closed eyes beneath long lashes, she arched her spine letting her head fall back. Her russet hair dipped beneath her shoulders. Giving herself up to him, she let him carry her weight. His right hand strained beneath her arched back. To keep her from falling, he shoved his left knee forward under her bottom to support her with his thigh. The hem of her black uniform mini-skirt retreated to reveal the pink. He stood still, bent over her with his feet balanced permitting her torso and head to sway to the music, carrying all her weight. Her eyes closed. Her right thigh rubbed into him until he was rock hard. She purred before opening an eye to grin.

“See? I’m the real deal. No Lolas here.”

Again, she clamped herself over his thigh squeezing him as tight as Lola did in the song.

Damn. She sure got that right.

Holding his right hand, she placed it over her left breast massaging over top of his hand so that he massaged her. Her tip hardened beneath his touch. She sighed again. There was more there, there, than met the eye—not just dollar bills either. Against his thigh, her apron scrunched—loosed—scrunched—repeating the pattern as she swayed back and forth in his arms. He rose higher. He couldn’t help it. He’d never felt nothin’ like this. He was embarrassed. But she wasn’t—not at all.

As “Lola” faded, the low-purring, green-eyed cat in his arms took the sides of his face in either paw. She bent his head over to her, kissing him deeply without missing a writhing beat below. From deep inside her, a guttural purring welled and flowed into his mouth. Her tongue followed, finding his. He thought he’d lose it right there. She tasted of root beer. They draped their arms around each other while their tongues explored each other’s dental works, nice’n’slow’n’easy—no rush. He liked it. He liked it a lot. He grew hotter than a white-hot poker.

The lights flicked off.

“Lock it up, Maggie. I’m gone.” A man’s voice sounded from the kitchen-counter, service window. “And remember, no foolin’ around in the shop! Got it?”

Maggie? She didn’t respond to the voice but she sure was responding to him. It was mutual.

“Hey!”

They turned their faces cheek-to-cheek to spy a little man in a brown, corduroy jacket with matching cap and long, brown hair protruding beneath the cap. The little man pushed open one of the double doors behind the counter.

“Hear me. Maggie?”

“Jes’ gettin’ a little sugar, Wally. Come on. Geeze.”

“Get it elsewhere. Now.” He pointed. “*You*—come on—right now!” She hesitated.

“Come on Maggie. I gotta pick up my kids. You know that. Say—who’s change is this?”

Wally pointed to the counter.

“Donna’s.”

So Beauty with Curves name was Donna? Who gave a crap?

Wally let the change lay.

Maggie turned back to kiss him gently on the mouth. Then she took hold of both his hands, before leaning back, tugging at him. “Come on Baby,” she purred. “We better go.” She slid off his thigh but rubbed her loins into his as a promise this wasn’t over. Wally rolled his eyes.

“Locked and loaded, just like that,” she whispered, snappin’ her fingers. “Ready to gush, ain’t ya? I knew you’d be somethin’. Just knew it.” She winked, shrugging toward the kitchen door.

“Come on.” She urged him to motion in a husky voice, leaning back, tugging him forward with both hands. He followed her without question. She stopped to face him.

“Just have ta slow ya down a little, is all. I can do it. If not the first time, then—Hey,” she said raising her voice and nodding towards his table. “Don’ wanna leave your Dew there, do ya?”

“Oh!” He reached back to quick-grab the unfinished Dixie cup of pop off the table.

“Don’t spill your dew—not yet anyway.” She chuckled, tugging on his hand.

“—Come on Maggie. Come ON!” Wally held open one of the double kitchen doors.

Maggie hustled him around the counter, back through the double doors that Wally let close behind them. After tossing her apron into a laundry basket, she stopped at a wall locker in the kitchen to pick up a jean jacket and a short purse with a long strap. She slung the strap over her shoulder then led him by the hand out the side door of the kitchen into an alley.

After locking up behind them, Wally stuffed the keys back into his pocket.

“Okay, you better be here ten minutes before opening tomorrow Maggie—not like today.” Frowning, Wally inclined his head toward her. Maggie batted her long lashes but smiled thinly.

Wally walked across the alley to open the door to a blue Chevy Luv pick-up truck parked lengthwise against a brick wall. He climbed into the cab, shut the door and turned on the motor. Behind the driver-side window, his head bobbed to a chuckle. He rolled down the window.

“You forgot the cap.” Wally drove away smirking, shaking his head.

Maggie’s lids opened wide lifting her long lashes as her eyes rolled up in their sockets towards her forehead. She felt for the cap perched in her hair hand then sighed.

He stopped her before she could remove it.

“No, please don’t. Leave it there. Okay?”

“What for?”

He stared at the cap then peered into her eyes. “Because ya look like a princess.”

“*Princess?*” She arched one brow.

But the longer he held her eyes in his, pleading, the more the sarcasm melted from her visage. She eyed him up and down, studying him as she had earlier.

“Princess, hunh?” Glancing about the alley, she thought it over.

“Yeah. The alley princess come from *The Little King’s* castle? Is that it? I like it. You too, cutie. Like ya a lot. Since the first time ya came in.” She pecked his cheek.

He was in a trance. He couldn’t believe what she’d done to him in there. He hadn’t given her a second look in three weeks yet now—funny-strange—now she was everything. All he could think of—his royal princess. Winking, she acted as if she knew exactly what he was feeling.

She took the Dixie cup from his hand, peeked inside to notice it was about finished.

“Want the rest of this?”

Wasn’t she lovely? A princess, sure enough.

“What?” He stared at her. She smiled. “Guess not,” she replied.

She walked over to the trash bin next to the brick alley wall, took a deep swill of what was left of the soft drink then lifted the lid of the bin to toss the cup inside. She let the bin roof drop with a clang. She swiped her hands together twice, saying “That’s that” before sauntering back to him.

“Where do you live?”

“What?” was all he could manage. Funny-strange. The rag was gone from her hands. And she wasn’t skinny no more—she was *slender*.

She giggled. “WHERE-DO-YOU-LIVE?” She snapped her fingers. “Come out of it, Baby.”

“Outta what?” He blinked.

Shaking her head, she chuckled. “You look like a deer caught in Wally’s headlights.”

“Oh.” He scuffed his boot heel against the alley pavement, looking at his feet.

“Well?”

“Well, what?”

Funny-strange. She wasn’t angular no more. She was more like ... modestly curvy with great legs and a flat belly. Broad hips matched broad shoulders that slouched a bit but her smile didn’t.

“Come on Baby, maybe walkin’ will get you talkin’.”

Maggie held his hand tight with her fingers jammed up to the hilt between his. They strolled side by side down the alley toward the street sporting *The Little King* sign. As they reached the sidewalk, she stopped to face him. She took his head in her hands as she had before. Her mouth smiled. Her eyes gleamed. Funny-strange. He couldn’t take his eyes off her. She had more than a bit of an hourglass. Yes she did. Why hadn’t he noticed before? It was just hard to see next to the other one—the jerk with the reat curves. Hell. This one was terrific. Funny-strange—you bet.

“Now, you were gonna tell me where you live, right?”

She nodded to coax him, taking his head in her hands to nod his head for him in time with hers.

“Oh. Yeah—right.” He nodded to the left. “Down at the end of the street.”

“At the college?”

She wasn’t plain no more—no—she had a handsome, feminine face. Yeah. Funny-strange.

“Yeah.” He nodded. “Right there.”

He pointed three blocks down Ferry Street at the fifty-year old, four-story, brick structure that served as the university’s male freshman dormitory.

“Oh.” Her shoulders slumped. Seemed like for the first time since they’d danced, her toothy smile faded registering distress on her face. “Suppose you have roommates.”

“Yeah—two of ‘em.”

She sighed. “Well. That’s that.” She frowned.

“Why? Where do *you* live?”

She pointed back down the alley. “A block over at the ‘Y.’”

His shoulders slumped to match hers. “They don’t allow guys up in there, do they?”

She shook her head. “Nope. ‘Fraid not.”

She reached up to caress his cheek. He couldn’t resist. He leaned in to kiss her soft and easy. She responded by going deep-diving into him again. When his tongue met hers, she shoved herself into the tent yet rising out over his lap.

“Damn,” she whispered. “You’re still ready, aren’t ya, Baby? Never let down. Not for a second, did ya? Yeah. Knew you were somethin’ special all right.” She grinned wide.

He looked down to nod, ashamed at his lack of control.

But she slipped her hand under his chin to raise his head. When their eyes met, she massaged his chin with her thumb. She peered into his eyes.

“Nothin’ to be ashamed of Honey. You should be proud. You’re a virgin, ain’t ya?”

That stunned him. Coming out with it just like that, out o’ nowhere. He swallowed hard.

“Aincha?”

She arched both brows. He looked away. Taking his face in both her hands once more, she turned his gaze to meet hers.

“Hey, it’s okay, Baby. Nothin’ to be ashamed of. Sure ya are. All clean and fresh—no worries there—and ready, aincha? More’n ready, you bet. How old are ya? Eighteen? Nineteen?”

He nodded. “Eighteen, tamorrah.”

“*Really?* Tomorrow?” Her brows shot up. He nodded again.

“Well, eighteen years- worth of ready I’d say, all built up and waitin’ ta explode—Yessir. I think you deserve somethin’ special for your eighteenth birthday now don’t you, Sugar?”

Shrugging, he grunted.

“Yeah—registerin’ for the draft tamorrah,” he said. “Gonna be One-H. That’s special.”

She frowned. “One-H? What’s that?”

“My draft designation. One. And Holdin’.”

“Holdin’, hunh? For what?”

“For the Lottery Pick next week.”

“Oh. But the War shouldn’t last much longer and you’ll get a student deferment. No worries, Baby.” She grinned wider, revealing her pearly whites again.

“Unh-unh.” He shook his head. “No. No more student deferments. It’s the Lottery now.”

“Oh! That’s right.” She arched one brow so she didn’t look so much like a sad puppy but more like a cat. “Well, sounds to me like you’ll need a lot o’ sugar to help *that* medicine go down. Won’cha now? Yes, a lot. And I got just the prescription. How much money ya got on ya?”

“Hunh? Oh. Ten dollars—almost.” She smiled.

“That’s enough. I got nearly fifteen. Just enough for a bite, so we can sandwich a room around a sandwich, okay?”

She grinned wider, showing her fine set of healthy, white dentures. He thought they glistened.

She hooked her arm in his, turning them right heading west on Ferry Street.

“Well yeah, that’s just enough. Come on. Follow the yellow brick road. The wizard knows just what a virgin like you needs. What a princess like me needs too—same damned thang! It’s been a while. Too long a while.” She escorted him down the street.

“What wizard?”

“Why—me!”

“You?”

“Yeah. That’s my name—Whizzered—Maggie Mae Whizzered—with an ‘h’, two ‘z’s and two ‘e’s. And it’s been a while since this Whizzered had any real sugar in her bowl. Especially, a cube as fresh and sweet as yours, cutie. A long while...” She stopped them to turn into him.

“That is, if you don’t mind? You don’t, do ya—mind? I mean.” Her face struggled, hope against doubt. She looked sincere.

He studied her hard. Her brow arched as she smiled again. *His princess.* Those long lashes knocked him out. She was as tall as he was, taller with her crown tiara but he didn’t care. She was his princess and, suddenly, she was downright gorgeous. Funny-strange, wasn’t it?

“Kiss me again, Maggie Mae.”

A pair of pedestrians approached them from either side. She threw her arms about his neck, pressing into him, kissing him slow but deep right there in the middle of the sidewalk. There was much more to her taste now than root beer. And he wasn’t thinkin’ of the tinge of Mountain Dew he tasted in her mouth. He tasted *her*. Smelled *her*. Felt *her*—everywhere—zinging into him, through him, right down to his toes. He held royalty in his arms. Yes he did.

Slipping by on either side of them traveling in opposite directions, two passers-by whistled.

“Get a room,” muttered one of them. She ignored the guy, forcing him to ignore the guy, too.

When they came up for air, Maggie Mae pressed her nose and forehead into his, staring eyeball to eyeball. “Sounds like a good idea Sugar. How about it?”

He dove into her mouth. He couldn’t keep out. They smothered each other. He rose up firm against her. She pressed herself into him. When they surfaced, she panted as strong as he did.

“Take that as a ‘yes,’ cutie—a great, big yes!”

He grinned his reply. She turned them westward again.

Walking their way ahead of them, the guy who’d suggested they get a room glanced over his shoulder. The guy cracked up, pointing back at them at the tent rising from his fly then to Maggie’s head.

“The prick and the princess!” He yelled laughing, pointing back and forth, up and down, from one of them to the other.

“Keep walkin’ asshole,” Maggie yelled back.

The guy chuckled but heeded her by facing about, going on ahead of them.

“Hey. Don’t worry about that Baby. He’s just jealous. Pay no attention.”

Looking down, he couldn’t see his boots. He grimaced with shame, shaking his head.

Maggie gazed into his eyes. “That’s that,” she said smiling, while patting his bulging fly.

Maggie twisted her hips to face him, side-stepping while shoving her loins into his hip as they walked. “And this is this. What we need is a less formal, more private introduction, umm somewhere more intimate, where they can get to know each other better. Her eyes glanced down and up. You just stay like that Baby—how I like ya.” She grinned wide. “And we’ll do all right.”

Dripping sass, she winked then faced him west again. She walked in step with him.

“Is your name really Maggie Mae Whizzered?”

“You wanna see some I.D.?” She stared hard at him but kept her toothy smile.

He shook his head. “Naw. I believe ya. Who could doubt a princess?”

She shook her head in amazement.

“You really go for this crazy cap, don’cha, Baby? Mebbe I should never take it off—jes’ everything else—mebbe?” She tilted her head, peering out of the corner of her eye. “You’d like that, wouldn’t ya Sugar?”

“Whatever you want Maggie Mae. Don’t matter. Cuz you’re my princess. It’s funny. I never really saw ya before, but now ...” He looked her over—up, down, sideways—coming to rest in her bouncing, green eyes beneath the long lashes.

“You really are gone on me, aincha?” She poured green laser beams into his eyes. He nodded.

She stopped him, wrapping her arms and one of her legs about him, kissing him as though she’d never see him again. When their lips slowly parted, he opened his eyes to see hers were still closed beneath her princess tiara. Her eyes fluttered open beneath those long lashes. *Yeah, they were authentic all right, the real deals.* She leaned her head back to gaze into his peepers.

“Oh,” she whispered, shaking her head almost imperceptibly. “I *knew* you’d be special Baby, but I never knew you was *this* special. Afraid I’m startin’ ta believe ya maself.” Her sad puppy brows flattened out as her grey-green eyes glassed over beneath the long lashes. “Ya know. Faith like this can move mountains.” She slid off him, looking serious, peering into him the way she’d eyed him from behind the counter with the rag in her hand. “Sure didn’t mean for *this* to happen though—sure didn’t. You’re just a kid but—”

He reached forward to stroke her hair.

“It’ll be okay. Cuz you’re my princess, the one I been searchin’ for all along and didn’t even know it.” He smiled to reassure her, staring at her tiara then down into her eyes. “How could I been so blind?”

“Ha!” she chuckled. “And you’re *my* prince—my *virgin* prince! Well, that’s a predicament we’re just gonna have ta remedy now, ain’t it Baby?”

“Whatever you say Maggie Mae. Figure it’s my duty to obey my princess.”

Once more, she shook her head in amazement.

“You *are* the special one, all right. What am I lettin’ myself in for?” She asked more of herself than of him. He guessed, maybe it was funny-strange for her too.

She hooked both her hands, clenching them together around the crook of his left elbow to walk him down the street into the western sun.

“And because you’re so special and so cute, and because of your faith in me, and because it’s your birthday—your eighteenth birthday—and because you got exactly what I need, I’m gonna take ya ‘round the world of my private kingdom tonight Sweet One. Make a man outta ya, breaking down all those barriers—eighteen years worth—movin’ all them mountains as we go—Rockies, Himalayas [rubbing both her hands up and down his forearm, walking in step with him, leaning her cheek into his shoulder] Andes, Alps, Ozarks ...”

Walking on air, he wasn’t hearing her though she chattered on happily. She wasn’t the “other one” no more—the skinny one—“Rag-in-Hand,” slaving over the counter. No, not no more she wasn’t. She was his princess. And damned beautiful at that. Yeah. And—she liked *him*.

Funny-strange for both of them.