

Paul walked across the street to the Sherry Club and sat at a table in the back along the wall. The club was busy, and he wondered again why The Sherry Club, crowded because of the of the air-conditioning, didn't have more good-looking girls. They had at least four popular girls, but he couldn't imagine listening to their band all evening. It wasn't terrible, but to him they didn't have *interpretation*, only imitation. In the New Life Club, both bands put real soul into their music, he thought. Maybe it was because they smoked weed.

Paul ordered a beer and wondered how much time Frank would need with Linda.

It was just then that *she* walked by.

Paul did not think, he could only react. React to the short black skirt, the long dark legs, the white gypsy blouse, the obvious push-up bra, the long shining black hair, the pride with which she carried her head. As she checked in at the bar Paul began frantically signaling a nearby waiter, but just then Don Frank arrived. When the waiter came to the table, Paul hesitated.

"Bring a beer for my friend here," he said.

Frank looked surprised. "You buying me a beer? Man, what service!"

"I'll be right back," said Paul, and finding courage he rose and went quickly to the bar.

She was arranging something in her purse. There was a look of pure concentration on her face. The music started, very loud, making Paul tense up. He tried to relax. He touched her lightly on the shoulder with one finger. She turned to look at him, tilting her head as she did so. Then she smiled. Her teeth were blue and white in the black-light glow of the bar, her eyes dark and playful.

"Hello," said Paul. He couldn't hear himself think.

She turned towards him slightly, moving closer. Paul felt one of her breasts lightly rub his arm. She moved her head close to his, the delicate ear suddenly offered shocking him. The music was very loud.

"What is your name?" said Paul, his mouth dry.

She spoke in a low tone which seemed both hesitant, and confident. Directly into his ear, along with her sweet warm breath, came her first words to him:

"My name is Rosie. I am new here. I saw you today, I remember. I do not have, what you call it, a badge. Not yet."

"No number?"

"No, tonight is my first night."

"Jesus Christ," said Paul.

"What?"

"I said, will you come and sit with me?"

"Where do you sit?"

Paul pointed to his table. Frank grinned and waved back across the dance floor.

"Your friend?"

"Yeah."

"Okay," she said nodding. "I be there soon."

She turned and walked towards the office, looking in her purse.

"Who's that chick?" asked Don Frank.

"I saw her first!"

"Okay, okay. She's new here?"

"Yeah." Paul lit a cigarette, feeling anything but calm.

"She's hot, man!"

Paul nodded. He drank his beer deeply and took a drag on his smoke. He didn't look at Don Frank.

"Where'd you find her?"

"Yeah. What?"

Frank shook his head, grinning. He said something Paul couldn't hear.

"Well, so how'd it go with Linda?" he finally asked.

Frank gave Paul his familiar satisfied look and told him he'd be staying in town tonight.

"Don't be late to work," Paul told him.