

Excerpt from...
KNOWING HER
by Kitt Lavoie

John C'mon. In here.

Karen I can't see.

John It's okay. Alright, Karen, we're in my room now.

Kissing and fumbling can be heard.

John Here, let me help you with... Hold on. The bed's right over...

The lights snap up. John, at sixteen, has just flipped them on with a wall switch. KAREN, a girl of sixteen, has her shirt halfway over her head. She pulls it back down to cover herself.

Karen John. Could you please turn the lights off?

John Why?

Karen I'd just rather.

John Okay.

John flips the switch. The lights go to black.

Karen Thanks.

John Sure. But, I mean, It's not like I've never seen you--

Karen I know. But this is different. I'm being silly.

John No, no, it's okay. Here you are.

Karen Hey. Here *you* are.

Belt buckles and zippers can be heard being undone. John and Karen can be heard kissing, mixed with an occasional gasp.

John Are you ready?

Karen I think so.

John Are you sure?

Karen Yes, I'm sure.

John Alright.



Karen Do you have it on?

John Yeah, I've almost. Hold on, give me a second... there we go. Ready?

Karen When are you're parents coming home?

John They went to a movie. At least not for another forty-five minutes, an hour.

Karen Alright.

John Ready?

Karen Ready.

John Okay. Here we go.

Karen OW! Ow, ow, ow!

John Are you okay?

Karen Yes. It just...

John Do you want me to stop?

Karen No, no. Keep going.

John Okay. Ready?

Karen Mmm-hmm.

John Okay.

Karen Ow! Ow! Ow! It hurts! Stop!

John Okay.

A beat.

Karen I'm sorry.

John It's okay. I was, uh, pretty much done, anyway.

A moment. John and Karen can be heard breathing.

Karen John?

John Yeah?

Karen Did that really count?

A howl of laughter can be heard from the darkness. The lights rise on John, at twenty, and JESSICA, an attractive young woman of nineteen. The two of them are sitting together painting a sawhorse. Jessica is laughing hysterically. Karen has taken a seat upstage.

John (in between gasps in Jessica's laughs) So, that was my first time.

Jessica trying to contain herself) "Did that really count?"

Jessica loses it again.

John Yes. Thank you. Thank you for laughing at my pain.

Jessica (coming back into focus) No, I... I... (she snickers) "Did it really count?"

John You know, sometimes I'd like to go back and show her. You know, show her how much better I've gotten. You know.

Jessica Well, you should. I mean, I don't know how much better you've gotten, but--

John Would you like me to show you?

Jessica No, but thank you. I appreciate the offer.

John Suit yourself.

Jessica Oh, I would. But what about Abby?

John She wouldn't mind. It's for science.

Jessica Right.

John Anyway. I don't think I could get another shot with Karen, anyway.

Jessica Why? Just tell'er you want a chance to make it count.

Jessica laughs at herself.

John Mmm, I don't think she'd be interested.

Jessica No? Rough break-up?

John Well, no. Not that so much as... well, that she's a lesbian.

Jessica What?

John Yeah. Yup. Last Thanksgiving I was back home with Abby and



John (cont'd) saw her at a party. So I decide, you know, let her see that the one who got away was doing alright, right?

Jessica Not real mature, but, yeah, go on.

John Anyway, so we walk over to her and I'm like, "Karen, I'd like you to meet my girlfriend, Abby," and so she goes, "Oh, hey, well I'd like you to meet *my* girlfriend, Julie."

Jessica (laughing) No.

John Yeah. Seems I broke her.

Jessica begins to snicker.

John Again, thank you for laughing at my pain.

Jessica Oh, come on.

John You think it's funny?

Jessica Sure.

John Yeah, me, too. (he gets mischievous, and leans in to the bemused Jessica) Would you do that?

Jessica What?

John You know, they say, like, forty-two percent of college women, or something like that, *experiment*, you know? Would you try it.

Jessica Sure.

John (taken a little aback) You would?

Jessica Sure. I've thought about it. If the opportunity presented itself, yeah, I'd try it.

John Okay. (intrigued by her candor) Well, do you... masturbate?

Jessica Sure

John Often?

Jessica Often enough. I think it's bullshit how all these girls pretend they don't. I've never had a roommate who I didn't know did it, but they'd all deny it. I mean, it's natural, right. I mean, you do it...

John (the tables have been turned and he doesn't really like it) Yeah. I mean, I *have*.

Both are a little surprised by how frank things have gotten. They just look at each other for a moment.

John What was your first time like?

Jessica Ah, I don't know. It kind of sucked.

John How old were you?

Jessica Fifteen. Maybe I'd just turned sixteen.

John What, did it hurt?

Jessica Yeah, sure. I mean, not as much as I expected it to, with the things you hear. But that wasn't it, so much.

John Then what?

Jessica I don't know. The guy was kind of a dick about it. I mean, I was a sophomore and he was a senior and... I guess I just let it happen too fast. I mean, I guess I just wasn't ready. But he was older, and I didn't want him to leave me for someone else, right?

John Did he pressure you?

Jessica No, no, nothing like that. I mean, looking back on it, I think I just expected him to expect it, you know? Like, I didn't want to give him the chance to pressure me. Do you know what I mean?

John Yeah. I guess so.

Jessica And he broke up with me a week later.

John Because he'd gotten what he wanted.

Jessica I, I don't think so. I mean, I think he would have broken up with me whether I'd slept with him or not. I just don't think he really liked me that way. Not too much. I was just a girl he was dating. I thought maybe I could make him want to be more. I...

John Who was next? I mean, was there a next?

Jessica Yeah. I slept with Roger that once. Then I went like a year and a half-- almost two years before my second. Aaron. That was good. I really loved him. We waited like seven months before we did it. We were going to do it on our six month anniversary, but I told him, like *that night*, that I wasn't ready. Right there, naked on the couch in his rec room. And he says "Okay," *and he gives me a back rub...* and takes me out for ice cream. And when he kissed me goodnight that night-- and meant it, even after...-- that's when I knew I was ready, that it was right. And two weeks later, we did it. And it was good. And we, like, didn't stop for the rest of the summer. It was, like, constant.

John Yeah, I know about that.

They both smile and sit in silence a moment.

John So, what happened?

Jessica We went off to school. He went to Penn. I came here. We kept it up for about four months, but the distance was just too much. Neither of us could handle being so far away, you know?

John Yeah, I know about that, too.

There is another moment of silence. Jessica goes back to painting the sawhorse that has begun to be neglected.

John You know, I think about it sometimes. What it was like when I was sixteen, and you saw things on TV-- Oprah, Sally Jesse, you know-- about teens and sex and I thought, you know, "Hey, I'm old enough to decide what I can and can't do," you know? And... and I just... I mean, I didn't. I mean, Karen, Laura-- I was careful. But what would have happened? I mean, I look at my younger brother and his friends-- and they're older than I was-- and it's like, I mean, they're not old enough to have sex. Not and to be responsible. Responsible *enough*. To have a baby at sixteen. Or AIDS. Or, hell, just to deal with having sex at sixteen. It's too much.

Jessica I don't know. I mean--

John C'mon. I mean, how many people do I know *our age* who shouldn't be having sex.

Jessica Well--

John Aren't grown up enough.

Jessica Hmm.

John Roger. Roger, right?

Jessica Yeah.

John Would you sleep with Roger the way you did if it happened now? You know, same circumstances.

Jessica I... well, probably not. But I don't know.

John I don't know either. I don't. I mean, do I think I was altogether ready my first time. No. Do I wish I'd waited? I don't know. Part of me does, anyway. Part of me... I guess when you've found something that makes you happy, I guess you second-guess the other things you tried. Like they'd kept you from this thing, you know.



Jessica Abby?

John Yeah. Abby.

Jessica You're happy.

John Very.

Jessica Well, maybe those things lead up to this. Maybe they... I mean, If you'd had whatever this is with someone else, maybe you wouldn't have found it with Abby. Right? I mean, worth the wait.

John Yeah.

A pause.

Jessica Do you think you two will... you know. Are we talking long-term here?

John For a while, anyway.

Jessica I mean for good.

John I don't know. Has it come up? Sure. In two years it's bound to. But... How do you know, Jess? I mean, I wake up every morning-- every morning-- and look at her, wanting to know that that is the face I want to wake up to... when I'm eighty. And I look... and I know that that's the face I want to wake up to tomorrow. And, for now, that will have to do. (pause) I asked my mother once how she knew my father was "it." She said she just knew. And she said when I meet "the one," well, if she's the girl, I'd wake up one day and know it. So, I'm waiting.

Jessica You talk to your mother about stuff like that?

John Sure.

Jessica That's cool.

John Yeah. 'Course, when she said I'd wake up one day and know, I bet she didn't picture me waking up *next to* "the one."

Jessica Or maybe she did.

John (chuckles) Maybe.

Jessica Do you two ever fight?

John Me and my mom?

Jessica No. Abby.



John No, hardly ever.

Jessica That's cool.

John I think so.

Jessica (returning to work) I really like you two together.

John (joining her at work) Yeah, I like us together, too.