

Let's see how dinner goes. Maybe he won't want to walk me home."

"He will. He's a total sweetie. I wouldn't hook you up with a jerkhead, CiCi." She walked to the sink, sniffed at the peachy-scented foam soap, then beamed a grin at her friend when CiCi joined her. "If it works out, it'll be so much fun. We can double date."

"I really like him. I get a little nervous when I really like a guy."

"He really likes you."

"Are you sure?"

"Abso-poso," Macie assured her, brushing her short curve of sunny blond hair while CiCi added some shine to her lip dye. Jesus, she thought, suddenly annoyed. Did she have to stroke and soothe all damn night?

"You're pretty and smart and fun." *I don't hang with jerkheads*, Macie thought. "Why wouldn't he like you? God, CiCi, loosen up and stop whining. Stop playing the nervous freaking virgin."

"I'm not—"

"You want to get laid or not?" Macie snapped and had CiCi gaping. "I went to a lot of trouble to set this up, now you're going to blow it."

"I just—"

"Shit." Macie rubbed at her temple. "Now I'm getting a headache."

A bad one, CiCi assumed. Macie never said mean things. And, well, maybe she was playing the nervous virgin. A little. "Bren's got the nicest smile." CiCi's eyes, a luminous green against her caramel skin, met Macie's in the narrow mirror. "If he walks me home, I'll ask him up."

"Now you're talking."

They walked back. It seemed louder than it had, Macie thought. All the voices, the clattering dishes, the scraping chairs ground against her headache.

She told herself, with some bitterness, to ease off the next drink.

Someone blocked her path, just for a moment, as they passed the bar.