

A PROFESSOR'S HOUSE



Anyone watching us would think we were just another student and professor having lunch together. It happened all the time. The school encouraged it. Professors took their advisees and their honor students to lunch, and they invited classes over to their houses for dinner. Hancock is an elite college; individual attention is one of its selling points. So, sitting across the table from Mike, Professor Michael Ambers, in the main campus dining room was no big deal. We could have been discussing my paper on the socio-economic backgrounds of the suffragettes or the lack of primary documents in the college's library. Or, perhaps, my dilemma regarding whether to pursue a doctorate in history or a law degree after graduation. We could have been discussing any or all of those things but, of course, we weren't. After we settled our plates in front of us, I talked softly about accompanying Mike to a conference in New Orleans during spring break. I opened a book comparing the British and American suffragette movements and laid it on the table, pretending to question specific passages as Mike's eyes trailed my fingers over the page.

No one knew about us, thank God, but that was a drawback in some ways. I couldn't talk to my friends about Mike or explain to them why the guys we hung around with suddenly seemed like the sandbox set. I couldn't share with Dee Dee, my roommate, the fabulous panic I felt about being with someone twenty years older than me, a man who had a doctorate from Yale, a man who had published two acclaimed books, a man who had noticed me the minute I took a seat in his Twentieth Century American Social History class. I do stand out in a crowd; I'm not going to pretend I don't know that. But I wasn't the only pretty girl in class. There was Jennifer Selton with her perky personality and nipples to match, but she wasn't much in the brains department. And Susan Lambert, a stunningly beautiful redhead with freckles