

Dream Date



JENNIFER JO LAVOIE, PLAYBOY'S 22-YEAR-OLD MISS AUGUST.

When a boy's fantasy becomes a man's job, the man discovers that it's just a job.

BY JOHN SEDGWICK

FEW EXPERIENCES ARE QUITE as profound for a boy as discovering *Playboy*. I saw my first copy on the magazine rack at Miller's, the general store in the Cape Cod town of Barnstable, where I spent my summers as a child. Fat, slick, and chock-full of juicy photographs, it seemed to represent the ultimate in evil. The rack afforded an unusual degree of privacy, and I used to spend long minutes with each month's *Playboy* sideways in my trembling hands, the famous centerfold dangling in the air, my lips dry.

That sin soon led to another, as I'd sneak out the back door of the store with the magazine stuffed under my shirt. I did that not so much to possess those voluptuous nymphets without paying for them as to impress my group of friends, all of them older than I, with a rare bit of daredevilry on my part. I would spirit this booty back to a friend's house, and together we would open it out on his bed to gape at the pictures, our eyes almost as big as the Playmates' bosoms.

As I look back on it, summer and *Playboy* seem one to me, as though those naked girls—all sun-drenched as I recall them—have come to embody the breezy freedom and illicit possibilities of the hot, languid months of the vacation season.

My mind is filled with such recollections because, in what I expect to be the crowning moment of my journalistic career, I was recently called by an editor at *Playboy*, who invited me to meet Miss August and write an introduction to her photo spread. If I hadn't known the editor in question, I would have thought this a belated April Fools' joke. Since I did know him, I wondered what qualified me for the task. My taste in adverbs?

It turned out that this year's Miss August, 22-year-old Jennifer Jo Lavoie, grew up in the tiny town of Charlton and now lives in Nashua, New Hampshire. That makes her the very first Playmate to hail from New England, and the magazine simply needed a writer who lived close by to write her up.

Social Relations

There must be a lot of boy in me still, for I said yes almost immediately.

To prepare me for our interview, the editors thoughtfully sent along the layout of Jennifer's magazine pictorial. And as I looked it over, my heart did thump a little. The shots were the same kinds I remembered from my childhood: Jennifer fly-fishing in her panties, Jennifer lying back in the grass with her shirt pulled up to her neck, Jennifer riding a Ferris wheel with her dress open. They just seemed sillier now—more kooky than erotic.

It seems a pity that we should go through life eliminating excitements when there are so few to begin with. But the photos were worth a look nonetheless, if only for their novelty value. I wanted to show them to someone, but I couldn't quite think who. Not my wife, surely, and not my daughters. And everyone else I

that Monday morning. I kept trying to square the rather businesslike young woman in front of me with the sexpot in the pictures, but I just couldn't make the Playmate image fit.

In the course of two cups of coffee, I learned how she came to do the pictures. In the fullest psychological sense, the story may go back to her parents' divorce, when she was eight. She chose to live with her father, a car mechanic, when she was a junior and senior in high school.

"I always put Dad on a pedestal," she said. Quite likely, it seemed, Jennifer's *Playboy* appearance was her attempt to put herself on one for Daddy. More straightforwardly, the photos stemmed from some modeling her mother had encouraged her to do ever since grade school. Recently, it had led to some beauty pageants, winnings from which nicely supplemented her in-

ment. "But that was a job."

And it was hard work. Jennifer posed for the photos over a two-week period in Texas, and it was a trying experience, although she had remained cheerful about it. Lying bare-assed on the rough grass, she got covered with cuts, bruises, welts, bug bites, and sores. "It was really painful," she said. "Ouch!" Posing for her centerfold, she got a three-inch bruise down one arm from leaning against the bedpost for hours on end.

Even her prominent breasts, a major source of her appeal for *Playboy*, have not always been a source of unadulterated pleasure for her. They blossomed practically overnight when she was 18. "In 30 days I went from a size B to a size D," she recalled. "I had to carry my breasts around in wheelbarrows. I had to wear three bras to bed or I couldn't sleep. I was in real

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knew seemed a little too grown-up for this. So in the end I kept them to myself.

As I drove to our interview at her mother's home in Charlton, I suppose I was hoping to find a vixen who would prove to be more than the photographs, more, even, than the photographs sprung to life—in short, those photographs made real, without the corny fifties *Playboy* overlay. A true Playmate, that is, one so overpoweringly sexy that I would be unable to resist her.

WHEN I PULLED UP AT THE LITTLE clapboard-sided house, I was instead greeted by a nice young woman dressed in virginal white, her outfit topped off by what I took to be a Shirley Temple-style sailor's cap but which, she informed me, was a beret. She wore fairly heavy makeup, which gave her features a slightly doll-like cast. And she was small, smaller than life—five feet four inches tall, with a waist I imagined I could encircle with my hands. As we sat together eating muffins in her mother's spotless kitchen, I was able to contain myself quite nicely.

Maybe it messes up the natural order of romantic attraction to see someone naked first and meet them clothed later. However much one might harbor the belief that naked is the way we all really are, it provides no useful insight into a person's essential character. At least, that's what I decided when I finally met Jennifer Jo Lavoie

come as the manager for the clothing store 5-7-9. It had also led to her photograph being seen by a New York photographer named Mishka, who persuaded her to do some nude shots for *Playboy*.

"At first I said, 'No, not me,' but then I saw how artsy his work was, so I did a few," Jennifer said. "They were topless and, yeah, bottomless, and some fanny poses, but nothing bad." The magazine flew her to Chicago to try a centerfold shot, and, after Hugh Hefner himself approved the pictures, she was named Miss August.

At Jennifer's house, I had hoped to enter the temple of sex itself, but instead I found out that I was merely in its marketing department. For Jennifer, sex was simply something else to sell along with 5-7-9 clothes and the tapestry handbags her mother sews in the basement of her home. It wasn't Jennifer's idea to take off her clothes for America, but if somebody would pay her \$20,000 to do it, she was in no financial position to decline. (I should add that I, too, was perfectly happy to take my little fee to help the process along.)

Jennifer was under no illusions that posing for *Playboy* was anything but work. When we went out to get a bite to eat at a local restaurant, I teasingly asked if she'd like to stand up on the table and take her clothes off for everyone. She said no, of course not. I pointed out that she had stripped for millions of *Playboy* readers. "Yeah," she said, and thought for a mo-

ment. The pain has eased since, but she has had to endure the often shameless behavior her figure provokes in my male brethren, one of whom actually dropped down to the floor in a general store to peek up her dress. "That really grossed me out," Jennifer said.

AFTER WE PARTED, I REALIZED THAT I had reached Hefnerian nirvana: I had been alone with a Playmate. And I had pumped her with the embarrassingly personal *Playboy*-type questions I had to ask to fill out my miniprofile, like how she defined great sex ("spiritual") and how it felt to be naked in the woods ("free").

But I still hadn't had one indecent thought. Perhaps the most revealing moment came when her mother arrived and wanted to see the photo layout, which I'd brought along with me. Together, mother and daughter went through those cheese shots, eyeing each one the way one examines selections in a favorite mail-order catalog. "This one's cute," her mother said about one picture of Jennifer sprawled nude and wet on the grass.

"That doesn't do your legs justice," she said about Jennifer propped up naked against a bicycle. At the time, I thought that was surreal. Her own mother?

But afterward, I realized that hers was in fact the only sensible reaction. It was just a job, after all, and they were just pictures. □