ing on the edge of humiliation, she's always there to push you in.

"Of course," I managed to say.

Good. Keep going, Daphne. That's one lie down. Just a few more to go. I looked up at the clock on the wall. Five minutes left of lunch period. If only I could stall for five minutes, the girls' minds would go from tawdry sex to geometry. If only I could change the subject...

"Does anyone know if we have a test next hour?" I said.

"Don't change the subject, Daphne," Leslie said.

"Well, it must be something good if she's trying to get out of it," Amanda said.

"Come on, tell us! How was the date?"

The girls were vicious. They were tearing into me like a pack of wolves. They each had an appendage in their jowls and were viciously shaking their heads back and forth with frothy teeth, growling with carnivorous pleasure.

"Don't you guys ever have anything else on your minds?" I said. I was hostile, but it came out sarcastic.

"Ooh, it must be really good!" Marlene said. Her eyes sparkled with delight from underneath her heavily made-up eyes. She looked like a raccoon. A big, fat raccoon. I hated her in that minute. I hated them all. They weren't really my friends, after all. True friends wouldn't pressure me into making up sleazy lies. True friends wouldn't have pressured me into accepting a date with Harry Windsor's lactose-intolerant cousin in the first place. But no other girls in the school would have given me as much status as the six that sat before me. Without them, I wouldn't have been invited to Ben's bar mitzvah, or Kelly's pool party where all the boys took off their swimming trunks. I hated them. At the same time, I would do anything to please them.

But I needed to stick up for myself. I needed to have some self-respect, some dignity. I needed to voice my opinion and be one against six. After all, if they were my true friends, they wouldn't care that I didn't want to date until I was sixteen, like my mother said. True friends wouldn't care that I was nervous even having a boy for a lab partner in biology. I needed to stand up for my beliefs and for eighth grade girls all over the world. I needed girl power!

I was confident now. I was strong. I was invincible. Hell, forget girl power. I was woman, hear me roar! The song began running through my body like an intravenous drug.

"Daphne, are you gonna tell us or what?" Amanda snapped, now irate.

"What happened with you and Stan Windsor last weekend?"

I took a deep breath, and looking back at them, I managed to squeak out the only words that popped into my head. Just three little words:

"We...did...it."

Six pairs of eyes bugged out of six little eighth grade heads then, and just as I tried desperately to pull those three, damning words back into my big, fat mouth, the bell rang.