

LITTLE SISTER'S CLASSICS #10



# Macho Sluts

PATRICK CALIFIA



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## PRAISE FOR PATRICK CALIFIA & *MACHO SLUTS*

“Califia, a champion of pornography as a key to adequately realized sexuality, is probably the most skilled writer of pornography working today if one measures talent by appeal across genders.”

—Joseph W. Slade, *Pornography and Sexual Representation*

“Califia is in the tradition of philosophers Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse, the gay pioneer Harry Hay, the poet Allen Ginsberg, the journalist Ellen Willis, and the novelist Dorothy Allison, who calls Califia’s essays ‘lucid, intelligent, brave, and true.’ ”

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—*Bay Area Reporter*

“*Macho Sluts* will make you rethink what you thought you knew about lesbian sex.”

—*Windy City Times*

“*Macho Sluts* breaks through the veils of silence that define, limit, and deny women’s erotic possibilities. Califia is more than just an author. She is a political rebel as well.”

—*San Francisco Sentinel*

LITTLE SISTER'S CLASSICS



# **Macho Sluts**

**PATRICK CALIFIA**

ARSENAL PULP PRESS

Vancouver

## MACHO SLUTS

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For Dorothy Allison, who gets the Redneck Trash Encouragement Editorial Award and who may be so completely sick of this book that she may never see this dedication.

One more thing: wait until it's *your* turn.



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## Preface

*Macho Sluts* is not the kind of book that you would have read back in high school English class, but it will blow your mind nonetheless. Among many things, it is first and foremost a wild and sensational piece of pornography. Whatever identity you bring to your first reading—whether you're a woman or a man, straight or gay, femme or butch, vanilla or hardcore, trans, bi, queer, undefined, or who knows what all—there is something in *Macho Sluts* that will transform your ideas about sex and sexuality. The book's audacity is complemented by the author's generosity and fierce determination to be honest.

And if you have the nerve (or stamina?) to return to these stories once you have read them the first time, their complexity will become more apparent. You'll get a better sense of the artistry of the writing, for instance. You'll see the breadth of the author's themes and techniques as an ever more obvious and playful deconstruction of sexual expectations, the way we understand our sexuality, and present ourselves sexually. And you will appreciate that pornography can actually be a work of art, and a work intended to expand the mind, rather than to re-enforce stereotypes and provoke dismissive judgment.

There are few words which can adequately describe the outright, unbridled *glee* that all of the people associated with this new edition feel with its publication. The people who fought that historic legal battle for two decades to defend expression rights in Canada still keep their day jobs at Little Sister's Book & Art Emporium on Davie Street in Vancouver, after all.

From the beginning, the treatment of *Macho Sluts* by the loutish drones of Canada Customs was as comical as it was sinister. The title of the book was like a baited hook for prudish censors. If even a single copy were included in a shipment from its American distributor to Little Sister's, the entire shipment would be detained. From Canada Customs' perspective, by

ordering *Macho Sluts* we at Little Sister's were attempting to import the worst, the filthiest, the most unclean type of literature. We were certainly *treated* like criminals for daring to bring this book into Canada.

Repeatedly, the seized book would be reviewed by one Customs bureaucrat or another up the chain of command. In all of the memoranda that Customs would send out to its regional offices on the subject, its officials would have "guidance" for their judgment of whether the book was or was not obscene—according to Customs' definitions. Over and over the book, given closer examination, could only be treated as having artistic merit, of being thoughtful in its themes rather than coldly exploitative, and then finally released to us. And yet, nearly every time we tried to order it again, the shipment would again be stopped or delayed, and we'd have to start from scratch. Of course, this context was all about potential readership, one supposes, because independent bookstores all across Canada could import the book if they wished, and without a second glance from Customs.

One of the least palatable aspects of having to fight for freedom to read in Canada was that we found amongst our adversaries a camp of radical right-wing feminists for whom pornography and erotica were considered bastions of male power, and its authors and adoring fans were to be treated with disdain. Not satisfied with the absurd notion that their school of thought should be taken seriously by authors, readers, and all who sought liberation, they acted (and succeeded, in the Butler decision) to implement their regressive ideas as law—all in the name of feminism and women's rights. Thanks in part to a new generation of women who feel they can decide for themselves the varying degrees of importance they place on womanhood, liberation, sexuality, independence, personal and community strength, physical boundaries and gender uniqueness, the Dworkins and MacKinnons of twenty-plus years ago will, and should, be seen as historically important gender theorists, but misguided in their views toward pornography. If the seizure of lesbian and gay books prevented crimes against women or produced a Utopia where inequality and subjugation no longer exist, the evidence is elusive and fleeting, to say the least.

Steeped in this murky legal thinking of post-Butler censorship, Canada Customs somehow managed to get *worse* at their job when it came to books. Many books that were being seized were by women, and meant for

an all-woman audience. While these same books were being circulated and discussed in the US, Canadian readers were not so lucky. Ultimately, at the end of the day, and in the minds of every judge who took the time to get off on it, *Macho Sluts* may be the single reason that “artistic merit” came to mean so much under Canadian law.

And yet, during the closing days of the Little Sister’s court case, as we attempted to win compensation for our legal costs, and as testimony by Canada’s top censoring official was taking place, copies of *Macho Sluts* were still being detained at the border.

There is hardly enough room on any page to further rejoice in this new edition of a great book, and fewer places for the book to reside with greater reverence and adoration than the Little Sister’s Classics series. Wendy Chapkis provides an insightful new introduction to this edition, for which we are delighted and grateful. Thanks to Little Sister’s owner, Jim Deva, for his thoughtful afterword, and for his devoted thirty-year marriage to Little Sister’s Bookstore (with co-owner Bruce Smyth), and to the bookstore’s lawyer, Joe Arvay, for further revelations. The cover art, lovingly contributed by the outstanding graphic artist Michael Manning, speaks to the content and delivers the same seductive questions that Califia did in the original edition back in 1989.

Finally, the author himself has written a foreword that is ... well ... the kind of dynamite we expect from him. Patrick, thank you for giving us *Macho Sluts*.

—Mark Macdonald, 2009

## **Foreword**

### **PLEASE DON'T STOP!**

A Sex-Radical Pornographer Looks Over His Shoulder

## **PATRICK CALIFIA**

Why should anybody buy a book of lesbian S/M smut that was originally published in 1988, especially if the author is now using male pronouns and sporting a rather impressive beard, if I do say so myself?

This question isn't simply one about your budget, even though it's a precarious time for international economies. And the Internet has kicked a big hole in the market for actual books printed on paper. These are facts discouraging enough to turn a lot of new talent away from the daunting task of compiling a long manuscript and toward blogging, Twittering, and other ephemera. This situation probably deserves reams and reams of analysis. But it's pretty depressing, and it's also a bit like complaining about the weather. Fruitless. I would rather talk about more juicy topics, issues of gender and sexual orientation and what tickles anybody's fancy, and why.

First, a little history, because this is no ordinary book of X-rated fiction. Its continued existence and popularity alone prove that. It also demonstrates that activism and grassroots community organizing really do work. That seems like a message worth passing on to a whole new generation of radical sex perverts who might otherwise sum up the vast amount of work that remains to be done, and perhaps give up, get burnt-out, go on anti-depressants with icky side effects like a total loss of libido, or at least have an extremely cranky weekend.

I'll yield to my roots in the early 1970s, with its dictum that "The personal is political," and start with some autobiographical stuff that contributes to the uniqueness of *Macho Sluts* and the rest of the dozen or so

books I've published critiquing received notions of what terms like "pain," "pleasure," "man," "woman," and "justice" mean.

The manuscript for *Macho Sluts* was assembled during the last few years of my stay (or should I say exile?) in New York City. I had moved there from San Francisco after my community and a long-term relationship fell apart. All of the gay men I'd befriended were getting sick and many had already died in what was to become the AIDS epidemic. Yes, there was a very sexy woman/boy involved who drew me to the East Coast. But once that insanely passionate affair was over, I never put down roots there. The fast-moving city was fascinating, challenging, and amazing, but I came to realize that the Bay Area was always going to be my sexual and spiritual home.

I had already been through quite a bit of the Feminist Sex Wars. I'd founded a lesbian-feminist S/M support group called Samois, named after the estate of the lesbian dominatrix in the *Story of O*. You had to be persistent and widely-read to find any reference to BDSM between women in the late 1970s. The *Story of O* was one of the few classics that everybody knew about. Samois was a high-maintenance group. My lover and I built close ties to the gay men's leather community and other friends who were bisexual women or straight players. We also had transsexual women friends. This was important to us because we wanted to know about the whole community, not just one corner of it. We saw ourselves as sex radicals who analyzed and opposed all of the ways that the larger society tried to repress Eros. That meant that we wanted more freedom for sex workers, gay men and lesbians, bisexual people, transsexuals, young people, swingers (as they were then called), etc. This broad agenda was not shared by very many feminists then, and I'm not sure it is today.

Many of the women who came to Samois were separatists. The only places we could find to meet were in our own homes. The local Women's Center refused to rent a room to us. The photographs in our hallway that depicted a polymorphously perverse range of S/M techniques and practitioners were very controversial. I was always suspect in the group because I was a sort of spokesperson for lesbian S/M, the face most identified with our cause, and frankly, because I was a leader and did so much work on its behalf. This notoriety sprang mostly from the publication

of *Sapphisty: The Book of Lesbian Sexuality*, a sex manual I'd written and published that caused a shit storm of angry reaction because it had chapters on transsexuality, butch/femme sexuality, and S/M. The bulk of pages that dealt with vanilla sex were largely ignored. By the way, that subtitle was the publisher's idea, not mine. I never thought one book could tell the whole story of lesbian sexuality.

While lesbian magazines and newspapers like *Off Our Backs* tore the book apart, as if it could single-handedly destroy feminism, it sold and sold and sold. Gay women were coming out of the closet in record numbers, and they wanted to know more about how to please themselves and their lovers. That didn't make it any less traumatic for me to read the caustic reviews. I had poured so much of my own heart and soul into that book, largely because coming out had been a miserable business for me, and there had been no resources at all to help me with problems like difficulty having an orgasm or the daunting question of what to do with a woman who expected me to pleasure her. I wanted to break the silence about cunnilingus, sex toys, tribadism, masturbation, penetration, kinky sex, sexual health and prevention of STDs, group sex—anything I could think of that some woman somewhere might want to do, I wrote about. I was sick of the homophobic shame that colored our lives and made it difficult to take any joy in love or erotic abandon. Above all, I was sick of the “truism” that one woman would somehow automatically know how to get another woman off. Why should we have to fumble around in the dark when a little education could provide the lubrication to get past any unpleasant friction?

Samois would never have come together without the community-wide publicity and controversy generated by *Sapphisty*. Before that, many people believed and stated in print that S/M was a “perversion” that only gay men practiced, not lesbians. I'm not sure where all of the straight kinky people went while such bold statements were being made. The East Village, perhaps? Orange County? But I digress. On my lonesome, I braved the antagonism of bar owners and the Women's Center to put up flyers announcing an initial meeting. But I got very little thanks for sticking my neck out. In the 1970s, the only politically correct form for an organization to take was the collective, and all decisions were supposed to be made by consensus. Individuality was seen as patriarchal, and anybody who took

initiative got hammered down. I hated this. I wanted officers for the group—officers who actually did their jobs—and I wanted to be able to have business meetings that ended before two a.m. That couldn't happen unless we took a vote and settled things by a simple majority vote. Otherwise, one person who objected to what we wanted to do could filibuster and prevent us from creating a handout for orientation, selecting a logo, or making T-shirts. You did *not* want to be in the room if I dared suggest that we let bisexual or transsexual women join Samois. Ugly things were said that would have made any right-wing bigot proud. I never ceased to be amazed by the ways that feminism could be twisted to justify a morality that duplicated every prejudice held by fundamentalist Christians—except for the part about lesbians.

Samois eventually exploded in a vicious bout of infighting that left all of us feeling deeply injured and shaken. But before the various rifts and factions tore the group apart, it managed to do some very good things to make it possible for S/M dykes to find one another and get information about how to act out their fantasies in a safe way that still allowed for intensity. First, we published *What Color Is Your Handkerchief*, a pamphlet I typed, laid out with rubber cement, and photocopied, then collated and stapled in my living room. It contained just about every article we could find on the topic of S/M, plus some graphics. Every small printing of the pamphlet sold out very quickly, despite the fact that local women's bookstores either wouldn't carry it at all or sold it from under the counter. That meant you had to ask for it, which was a daunting prospect if you knew the clerk was a hostile, anti-S/M, and anti-pornography devotee. That was the equivalent of coming out as a woman-hating pervert and could cost you your slot on the women's clinic collective or your application for admission to a women's studies department. Women got discriminated against for having leather jackets then. It was a heartbreaking struggle to see our world divided because some of us needed a different kind of sex in order to be satisfied. I never did get a clear description of what "good" feminist sex would look like, by the way, and am still waiting for that information.

The success of this pamphlet led us to believe that there was a market for a book. So we formed an editorial committee, which I was specifically told



I could not be on, and members loaned the group small amounts of money, which eventually amounted to enough for a first printing. By that time, I was exhausted from trying to finish my bachelor's degree while being an activist whose own community objected to virtually everything I did. So I was happy to have somebody else put the book together, but I did contribute one of my own short stories, and was quite surprised when it was accepted, but not at all surprised when large sections of it focusing on a bisexual female character were censored.

Unfortunately, *Samois* fell apart a few months after *Coming to Power* hit the streets and rapidly sold out. Our book was a success, but we couldn't seem to work with one another amicably enough to do a second printing. Being new to the business of publishing, we hadn't even budgeted money for distribution, so there was no surplus cash to do a second printing once we paid back the loans. My eulogy for *Samois* was to make sure the book got a second life with Alyson Publications. I thought it was fittingly ironic that its champion was a gay man, Sasha Alyson, who was incensed about *Coming to Power* being censored by women's and even gay bookstores. He took the project on for that reason alone, not expecting to make a dime, and was pleasantly surprised when the book became one of his bestsellers. Despite the anti-porn movement's censorious rhetoric, women wanted erotica that accurately depicted their sexuality, challenged their imaginations, and made them think. They wanted sexy, sweaty, dirty lesbian fiction written by other lesbians.

I would have been insane to stick around if horizontal hostility and backstabbing were the only things that went on in *Samois*. Anybody who was in a women's group during that time has a similar story about that group's dynamic. This may be hard to understand now, but it was very difficult for women to learn how to work with other women. We had been kept apart for so long, conditioned to compete with one another, to never trust one another, to put men ahead of the women in our lives. No matter how irksome collective process was, I give us credit for believing in equality and searching for just ways to relate to one another. The women's movement made a big dent in those ingrained habits, but I think women are still learning how to bond with, mentor, and really help one another.

The dykes in Samois had other challenges as well. We were literally changing the definition of what it meant to be women. We were experimenting with new social forms—triads, nonmonogamy, sex parties, fetishes, role-playing. There was nobody else to give us advice, tell us how to do that, or patch us up when we got hurt. As pioneers out on the black-leather-and-silver-studs edge, we did some wild things, and I don't regret a single episode of excess or misguided experimentation. For some reason, it's easier to remember the frustrating business meetings than it is to remember all the great sex, but the latter definitely occupied more of my time than the former. You can't expect things to go smoothly when you gather a group of self-professed deviants and outlaws together, can you, now? Our tumultuous process wasn't solely due to the shortcomings of 1970s lesbian morés and culture. I was no great shakes at group participation. I was a self-centered kid, sure that my way was always the grandest and most glorious, and I got stoned way too often to be a reliable witness at a traffic accident. It's just sad to think that we'll never have a reunion where we swap reminiscences or congratulate each other for surviving. When you have only a handful of people who understand your way of life, their support becomes so important that no forgiveness for betrayal is ever possible. Or so it would seem thus far.

It took five years after the publication of *Sapphisty* [in 1980] for me to have the time and the guts to try again with another book. I hoped—prayed—that it would get a slightly less overblown reception. By now, there were groups organizing in several cities to oppose the anti-porn movement's lunatic idea to pass laws that defined pornography as a violation of women's civil rights. Sex-positive feminism was a reality, thanks to the efforts of many courageous women who thought censorship was not the answer to the subjugation of women. I had been writing short stories steadily over the years, sometimes to court a woman I had a crush on, or to examine a conundrum that amused me, or to be shocking. I wanted to be able to write about kinky sex for fun, without constantly stopping the action to talk about whether you could really *do* that. Goddess knows I've made a fetish out of being a sex educator, but enough, already! After the success of *Coming to Power*, Alyson Publications was willing to do another book in

that newly-coined genre, so I typed it all up on my KayPro computer and sent it in on about a dozen eight-inch floppy discs.

The book was enormously popular, and even though there were still some of the same stereotypically hysterical reviews, there were also some good ones. See, I told you. Activism works. Some people were always going to think that S/M was pathological, violent, fascist, racist, anti-feminist, done only by women who'd been brainwashed by the patriarchy, and, oh yes, the Spawn of Satan. But there were other voices now, reviewers who could tell the difference between a sexual fantasy and an assault. The book got at least some of the credit that it deserved for being thought-provoking, well-written (says the person who revised every story till my eyes bled), unique, and arousing. It was especially wonderful to see reviews that recognized the worth of erotic literature as a form of writing that could challenge the status quo and take readers to a place of liberation as well as help them get horny for a little solo sex or an adventure with a partner (or two or three).

But Canada Customs had no sense of humor, no respect for queer sexuality, and above all else, no feminist consciousness. *Macho Sluts* got confiscated at the border, and became one of the key books defended in a major censorship case. I have no idea how the folks at Little Sister's Bookstore in Vancouver fought their federal government for so many years. The Supreme Court of Canada eventually agreed that customs officials had indeed overstepped their bounds and were systematically censoring gay literature. They had confiscated issues of *The Advocate*, gay sex manuals like *The Joy of Gay Sex*, fiction by Edmund White, John Preston, John Rechy, the books of anti-porn stalwart Andrea Dworkin, and a long list of other gay and lesbian authors. Little Sister's is still defending queer literature from the bonfire-happy homophobes at the border. Next time you are having trouble buying gifts, consider giving them a donation on behalf of the Lipstick Lesbian or the Club Kid Who Has Everything.

So there you are. You're holding a bit of queer history in your hands. But does it still strike a raw nerve today and make it vibrate until you think you can't stand it any more, and you just have to come? Why, yes, I think it does. Only you can be the final judge of that, of course, but it's my hope that the twisted plots and carefully drawn characters in these stories can still take readers on a good, hard ride. It has always been important to me to

give my readers stories that flow smoothly, so that they aren't jolted by inconsistencies or bad grammar. I want to create a state of suspended disbelief that allows you to occupy bodies and desires that may be quite foreign to your own. And along the way, I want to sow some interesting seeds of new thoughts about our bodies, why we want the things that we do, what the line is between the permissible and the forbidden, and why the hell we don't all have better sex lives. If *Macho Sluts* motivates you to buy a new toy, look for a new trick, or find more pleasure in the equipment and people you already know how to handle, I am satisfied ... at least for today.

I've kept the tranny controversy for the end of this foreword because I believe that any work of literature should stand on its own merits. This book deserves to be judged for its content rather than the shifts in identity that its author has undergone. All I ask is that you give it a chance, despite any reservations you might have, to see if its varied contents don't spark your libido and make you think. After that, you can read what follows about how Pat Califia became Patrick Califia, and what effect that's had on the work I produced when I identified, first as a lesbian, and then as a bisexual, woman.

Many of my lesbian readers were angry and upset when I decided in my late forties to start taking testosterone and investigate transitioning from female to male. A lot of those women have stopped reading my books, so they may never see this response. Still, I think it's important to reply, partly because I still believe in the transformative power of dialogue. As long as people keep talking to each other, some hope exists of coming to a better understanding of one another and some possibility of coexistence and political alliance. I don't believe that lesbians and FTMs (female-to-male transgendered people, for those of you who have been living under a rock without a copy of Kate Bornstein's *Gender Outlaws*) are automatic enemies or even mutually exclusive communities. At the very least, we are neighbors, and no good comes of having one sexual/gender minority be at another's throats. There are too many people who hate all of us, who would gladly see all of us burned to a crisp—the kind of bigots who give straight people a bad name. Many people know they are different in some important ways and wrestle with the question of who they are and where they belong. If I can do anything to make this a less agonizing process, I should. Self-

understanding and self-expression are much harder to accomplish when so many supposedly progressive people are saying hateful things about each other and demanding that everybody take sides.

I chose to come out as a newly-transitioning FTM in the pages of *Girlfriends* magazine, in an advice column I wrote for most of that magazine's history. I doubt any other topic created as much controversy. We were buried under an onslaught of mail—much of it supportive, and some of it virulently hostile. Granted, my place in the lesbian pantheon of elders was far from secure anyway, because of my earlier work opposing censorship, defending pornography, educating people about butch/femme relationships, and speaking out on behalf of the BDSM community. Being a full-fledged transsexual was the last nail in the coffin that gender-essentialist, right-wing lesbian-feminists had been cobbling together for me for decades.

But there was another element in the letters that demanded the editors of *Girlfriends* fire me immediately. They expressed deeply personal feelings of being abandoned, passed over, and kicked to the curb. There are a lot of reasons why that hurt exists. The hottest-running vein of emotion seems to be the feeling that transmen are betraying feminist principles and selling out the important work that dykes do combating sexism and homophobia. I've supposedly taken the easy way out and decided to bathe in the poisonous, overheated waters of male privilege and heteronormativity. You'd recognize the place in an instant. The hot tub is shaped like a penis.

There's a long-standing tradition among dykes of hating men. And I would be the last person to tell you that hatred doesn't have a valid reason for existing. As the most powerful people in our society, men have been responsible for most of the lesbian-bashing that goes on. Not all of it, however, and that's important to remember. Homophobic women are fully capable of rejecting their lesbian daughters and supporting moral panics that have done things like get lesbian professors fired from women's colleges, kicked lesbians out of the armed forces, and caused other widespread forms of discrimination and misery. But when a man beats you up, fires you, or steals your girlfriend, it feels worse, because the playing field isn't level. Lesbians don't compete with straight women for a sense of sexual prowess or safety on the street and in their own bars and clubs. Men

have attacked, hurt, defamed, violated, and murdered lesbians in the most cowardly and despicable ways it's possible to imagine.

Unfortunately, the most simplistic form of feminism encourages women to believe that sexism (and by extension, homophobia) are all men's fault, and can only be fixed if men are utterly deprived of power. This has led to the dead-end alley of separatism in which fantasies of all-female societies are held out as alternatives where women can be strong, safe, and free. I think Joanna Russ, in her book *The Female Man*, is the only lesbian writer brave enough to spell out that the only way to get there from here is through the cultural catastrophe of a gender holocaust. Do we really want to support a form of feminism that tells us the only way to fix our admittedly broken, binary gender system is to kill all the men? Single-gender societies are not the answer, although they make great escapist fantasies that I continue to write and read and enjoy.

This kind of feminism has another problem. It lets women off the hook. If we can attribute sexism to only one-half of the human race, we never have to answer troubling questions like, Why do some women hate other women? Why do some women hate lesbians? Why do women treat one another so badly? Why is it that a woman who acquires power is every bit as likely to misuse it as a man? How do we create nonexploitative forms of power that are linked to responsibility, so that we can still enjoy individual initiative and creativity without smothering everyone with tyrannical collectivity? As long as feminism is perceived as a politic that is for women only, its transformative and radical potential will be sharply limited. But I do not mean to imply that feminist women should change this. The men who don't see the damage that a lopsided power dynamic does to them, who are not throwing their energy into looking for a better way to live, are culpable.

Any inequitable system inflicts suffering on the haves as well as the have-nots. That pain is not equal, but it's still important to understand. It's not the underclass's job to comfort or educate the overclass, either. But there is a price to be paid for material comfort and social acceptance that's enjoyed while (and because) others suffer. It's an ugly way of life that may look comfortable on the outside, but inside it's stifling and rife with willful ignorance. The things that the haves do to distance themselves from the

have-nots are scarring, even if your peers try to tell you they are beauty marks.

So how do FTMs fit into the War between the Sexes? Or the War between Gays and Straights? Some people would tell you there's no question. We are on the side of the men, and we are on the side of straight people. And some FTMs would agree with you. Unfortunately, I can't claim that every other transman is a feminist, a fan of queer theory, or interested in social equality and justice—although many of us are.

First of all, not every female-to-male transsexual spent a portion of his life identifying as a lesbian. This is one of the biggest myths about FTMs. Many of us tried to live as heterosexual women before we transitioned, and some of us could never get any more mainstream label to fit well enough to shoehorn ourselves into it. And not every FTM is straight. Many of us (like me) are gay or bisexual or queer. You can't even claim that FTMs were once butch women who got tired of always being hassled and abandoned the struggle to make space for masculine women in our culture. Many of us tried our best to adopt a feminine persona. We believed that if we just tried hard enough to look the way we were told women should look and behave, all that gender weirdness would go away. The ability to "pass" as a "normal" woman doesn't cure gender difference, although, sadly, it can make it hard for an FTM with this history to get others to take him seriously once he comes out about his need to live in a male identity.

Of course, most lesbians don't meet FTMs whose early lives were spent outside of their own world. Nor do they usually recognize former femmes who transition. I repeatedly hear the statement, "All the butches are going to turn into men." And the truth is that butch identity *will* be changed by the growing visibility of the FTM community. That process is already in place and cannot be reversed by penalizing those who move from a female to a male identity, or getting paranoid about anybody who displays an interest in crossgender role-playing. Butch identity is, like all labels, much less simple than the term itself would lead you to believe. But my experience is that not all butches are transmen in denial. There are masculine (for lack of a better word) women who are happy to be women—or would be, if other people on the bus would quit calling them names and potential bosses would stop refusing to hire them because they aren't trying to look like prom queens.

Perhaps the changing times will lead to a new sense of pride or clarity among butch women about what makes them unique.

Is the lesbian community any better off if a handful of transmen chicken out and abstain from testosterone shots or full-time male pronouns because they are afraid of losing their friends and hangout spots? I don't think so. I've met some people in this predicament, and their lives are pretty harsh. Their partners feel confused and rebuffed, they feel miserable in their own skins, their lives get stalled in a variety of ways, and they are rarely enthusiastic about contributing to lesbian culture or politics. Butch women *enjoy* being butch. They've got their own lingo, fashion, style, and moves. I won't claim that their relationship to being women is a simple one. It can be damn hard to claim your womanhood if a whole culture is telling you to stop "acting like a man." But there's a difference between the place of self-acceptance and sexiness that a butch woman gets to when she's waded through the homophobic twaddle, and the perpetual, deep-seated sense of wrongness that a transman has in his body. We always want to take it too far. Strapping it on isn't a simple matter of enjoying a sex toy for us. A dildo can be a prosthesis that temporarily makes us feel better, but it's also a reminder of the gap between our physical and mental realities. As a consequence, many transmen can't go near dildos or harnesses. It's just too painful, not a fun sexual fantasy.

People who have never needed to question the sex that appears on their birth certificate display some double standards when they invalidate the gender identity of my people. A similar process takes place when we are expected to justify our sexual orientations far past the standard of proof that cisgendered people (genetic men and women) need to feel self-satisfied and secure. These contradictions are especially clear when "radical dyke feminists" are pitted against "sell-out transmen." Most lesbians and gay men will tell you that they didn't choose to be homosexual. It's an intrinsic part of their nature, something they became aware of at an early age, an inherent quality that cannot be changed by fundamentalist Christian "reparative therapy" or other forms of bullying. And most cisgendered men and women never wonder where their gender identity came from. They just take it for granted, like having ten fingers and toes, or a certain skin color.



So why should lesbianism become a privileged identity that is somehow superior to other sexual orientations? If you can't choose whether to become a lesbian or not, why is it a moral failing for others to be something different? The sexual orientations and gender identities of transgendered people come from the same place that other people's do. The same social and biological processes that shaped you, shape us. If you are the product of genetic predisposition—so are we. It may look as if we choose to be this way simply because we do have a choice about whether we own our self-knowledge, express it, and try to live it in the real world. But that's only because we live in a world where the expectation is that everyone be either a feminine woman or a masculine man, and also heterosexual. If you want to be true to yourself, you have to speak up, and this makes it look like you are choosing to be a troublemaker who's rocking the boat just to make other people uncomfortable. Does this sound familiar? Are you beginning to see that some of the same ironclad rules that oppress gay men and lesbians also oppress transgendered people?

I'm not sure we are well-served by essentialist notions of sexual orientation, anyway. This idea that you go through a one-time process of figuring out who you truly are, then you come out, and then you don't need to do that anymore, sure hasn't worked for me. Since straight people, bisexuals, and gay men and women often are not on speaking terms, we don't get to track the changes that many people really go through. I have come to believe that most of us are born with a wider range of sexual potential than we'll ever exercise in the course of one lifetime. Certain things appeal to us more than others—often a lot more—and we gravitate toward groups of those we perceive to be like ourselves because that makes it easier to find partners and friends and, if necessary, borrow rent money or get bailed out of jail. But if we fall in love with the “wrong” person, read something that unexpectedly excites us, see a piece of porn that has a surprising impact, or listen to the far-out suggestion of a more experienced lover, we may find that we can't take our core assumptions about ourselves for granted. When these changes take place, as long as they are truthful ones, we aren't selling out or betraying our ideals. We're just keeping pace with what life has shown us, how we've changed or grown.

Rather than argue about nature versus nurture, and withhold people's civil rights with the spurious claim that queers could be just like everybody else if they tried, I think we need to have a less judgmental attitude about sex—all kinds of sex, everybody's sex, consenting forms of desire in all their intricacy and subtle shadings. If a lesbian tells her parents, "Why should it make any difference that I'm gay? I am the same person that I was before I told you," perhaps she should take the same attitude toward a woman friend who reveals some bisexual experiences or a growing sense of futility in living as a woman. By using that example, I am not trying to locate the source of sex-negativity within the lesbian community. Lesbians talk about sexual politics more than anybody else! I'm just pointing out that being gay doesn't automatically make you a sexually liberated person. None of us can afford to stop learning and thinking about our society's fear of pleasure and how to change that.

What I *am* saying is that there's nothing morally superior about *any* of the many groups that make up the diverse spectrum of human gender affinity, forms of intimate bonding, or preferences for erotic pleasure. The people who get kicked around, the ones who are treated the worst, are more likely to develop a political consciousness about why they get treated so terribly. But the simple consciousness of being a minority doesn't make you a good person or even an activist. Being morally superior (or let's just say, committed to an ethical way of life) is a wholly separate process that requires clarifying one's values, developing some kind of discipline or commitment to a certain way of treating oneself and other people, and the courage to oppose cruelty, greed, and inequity. Being different, and even being persecuted, is not the same thing as being a better person than anybody else.

Transmen have the same potential to be radical feminists as any dyke. They have the same opportunity to work for a more just society. And they don't necessarily have the protective blanket of heterosexual privilege or male privilege to keep them warm while they are out in the cold, cold world of trying to bring about radical social change. People who claim this have no inside knowledge about how the lives of transpeople really work.

First of all, many of us never fully transition, and couldn't even if we wanted to. There are abundant numbers of transgendered people who do not

identify as male or female. Some of these folks call themselves genderqueer; others employ different terms like androgyne, psychic hermaphrodite, ungendered, gender resister, two-spirited, etc. Many of us who do identify as men or women, and would like to live full-time in those genders, can't. The fact that we have gone through the wrong sort of puberty has given us bodies that can't be altered enough by medical technology to pass. Or the socialization we had in the wrong gender has given us habits, mannerisms, ways of speaking or moving, that set off cisgendered people. Even if an MTF (male-to-female or transwoman) or FTM takes hormones, gets surgery, and legally changes her or his current identity, a paper trail leads back to the past. If you try to go stealth (start a new life in which you hide or deny your transsexual experience), you are vulnerable to being blackmailed or outed. We never know, if we make a friend or take a lover, whether we are letting somebody get too close and trusting the wrong person. Does that sound like any kind of "privilege" to you?

Being out of the closet gives you peace of mind when it comes to being manipulated by a guilty secret, but cisgendered people just love to remind you that they would have known you were trans even if you kept your mouth shut. I don't know why this is so important to y'all. God forbid a tranny get an hour or two to think about something else, like doing the dishes or reading the newspaper. An exlover of mine who worked as a bartender at a popular club for bears bitterly called this his "daily reminder." It may be that trans liberation is motivated by much the same thing that led to the Stonewall Riots—the simple desire to be left the fuck alone.

If I sound a bit raw, it's because I am. I find this whole topic unbearably painful. I came out as a lesbian at age seventeen. By then, I had pushed my little boy so far down that I had almost forgotten the childhood arguments and ridicule that took place every time I told adults that I was not a little girl. Feminism, I thought, would cure me. I believed I only felt that way because a sexist society had taught me to hate being a woman. If I became a very strong and liberated woman, one who could do anything that men took for granted, and in fact beat men at their own game, I wouldn't want to be a man any more. This repression was certainly aided by the fact that when I

looked at the way most men lived, I was repulsed. Until I encountered the men's leather community, I never saw men who might be role models or idols for me.

So how am I, and how are you, to understand the three decades that I spent loving dykes, living in the lesbian community, and writing about the world from a queer woman's point of view? I know that for many people, the political stances that I took were radical only as long as they were taken by a woman. It's commonly believed that there's nothing radical about a man defending pornography, for example. I'm sure Walt Whitman, Allen Ginsberg, John Rechy, John Preston, Edmund White, Alan Dershowitz, and a bunch of ACLU attorneys would agree. Anti-porn feminists are rejoicing that my gender transition invalidates the critique of their movement that I pioneered—even if no cisgendered man would take part in that debate using the language and concepts that I used. Anti-S/M feminists have frequently said that my defense of this sexuality just proves that it's male violence—male violence that polluted the lesbian community at my instigation, as a sort of double agent of the patriarchy. This sets aside hundreds of thousands of women-born-women who make up the modern lesbian leather community. Thank goodness, whether you like what I've done with my life or not, you can still benefit from the work of authors like Carol Queen, Tristan Taormino, and their compatriots. The explosion of well-written, sexually explicit fiction that followed the Feminist Sex Wars is still taking place, and everybody with an open mind and some open pages is better off for it.

I knew that this would happen when I decided to transition. It made the whole process many times harder than it would otherwise have been. I felt as if I were pouring gasoline on a lifetime of work and lighting it on fire. But after spending decades urging others to come out about their sexuality, to be honest about their desires, and to bring their fantasies into reality, how could I live a lie myself, just to preserve that legacy? It was a double-bind that continues to torture me. I wish I could say that I never have second thoughts, but of course I do. Any major life change requires you to pick something you'll gain—and give up other things. I have grieved the loss of my dyke identity more bitterly than any of my readers or friends.

All I can tell you is that I never intended to deceive anybody. I had no hidden agenda around seducing lesbians to accept sexual values that were secretly contaminated with maleness. I think the political debates I've entered and won stand on their own merits, regardless of the gender of the speaker. At every phase of my life, I've been as honest as I could about who I was, what motivated me, and what I intended or wanted for the important people in my life.

But feminism is no cure for transsexuality. In my late forties, I realized that I just couldn't do it any more. Thanks to the gender-fuck ethos of BDSM, I had kept a portion of my maleness alive in sexual role-playing, but I was tired of being male only in the bedroom. I wanted an identity that was a better fit. And the conviction of my childhood about who I was kept haunting me. If anything, it got stronger, the older I became. The thought that I might die without ever knowing what it was like to live as a man broke my heart. For a long time, the limitations of medical technology held me back. I didn't want to be a man with a body that was partly female. I loved women's bodies, and I didn't want to live in one any more. But I realized that if I was a woman, the fact that I couldn't have a penis wouldn't matter that much to me. It only mattered because my psyche was imprinted with the expectation that I have a male body.

Coming out as gay in 1971 was a lot like coming out as trans in the twenty-first century. Being gay then was seen as a shameful mental illness and a loathsome sin. It was disgusting and ridiculous. People both hated you and laughed at you. It took a major effort of self-transformation for gay men and lesbians to see themselves as a politically oppressed minority that deserved better treatment. Gay pride was a long time coming, and we fought hard for every inch of self-esteem we won. I had no idea why I was gay. I was frightened to be gay. But the thought of being straight made me feel nauseous. I don't know that I had a choice about becoming radicalized. It felt like basic self-defense at the time.

Coming out as gay is no longer such a universal walk through fire. It's still very difficult, but we have made a lot of progress. More and more young people have families who support them and are able to join gay/straight alliances in their schools. They take it for granted that their futures can only look brighter. I hope that's true, but if it is, it will only be

through continued vigilance and action. We can't trust the benevolence of the majority or some natural, progressive trend in history to take care of us. Neither of these things exists. I just wish that gay men and lesbians would be more willing to admit that they are now in a privileged position, relative to the trans community, and stop trampling on our heads. Do you really want to be on the same side of this issue as the Republican Party?

So. Even if you buy what I have to say about the politics of this whole mess, do you want to take a chance on a book that may or may not accurately represent lesbian experience? First you probably ought to know that not all of the stories in this book are about woman-to-woman S/M. (And not all of my readers are dykes. Thank you for your letters, email, and easy care instructions.) There's only one way to find out—that's the same way that you had to find out what it would feel like to squeeze your hand between your thighs, or apply a dab of that lubricant, or switch on the vibrator. The same way you had to find out if spanking could really feel good or if being tied up was too scary to enjoy. You have to actually try it.

Not every erotic experiment ends well. Crisco, for example, was a bad idea. Sheets that still smell like fried chicken. Yeast infections. Holes in gloves and condoms. Yuck. But I think most of us suffer from a *lack* of opportunity rather than too many temptations. Even the tricks who shouldn't have spent the entire night in your bed or the dildo that broke were worthwhile attempts to have more fun, be daring, and enjoy your far-from-infinite span of days on this amazing planet. You can't make an omelet without going down a few dead end streets. So you learn, perhaps, to stay home while you are ovulating and never go cruising in the Castro again.

Are you more afraid that you won't have any fun—or that you'll be thrilled to pieces? Which is it? Be bold. Put yourself in my proverbial hands. I promise I won't drop you. I've been a top for nearly three decades, and I still know my way around a bent psyche and a wet pussy. There's no threat to your real life. It's all just fiction, fantasy, flat black ink on a white page. But it could lead to touching—touching yourself, asking someone else to touch you, reaching for someone else's skin and heart and mind. Whether you are a lesbian transgressing enough to listen to a transman with an extensive dyke history, or a gay man enjoying the guilty pleasure of

lesbian lustmaking, or a straight person who doesn't know which end is up, there's something here for you.

And if it is a good time—if you, perhaps, might be a Macho Slut yourself—you might even find yourself begging for more. Don't worry. There is more. There's always more.

## Introduction

### WENDY CHAPKIS

Picking up *Macho Sluts* again has been a little frightening; maybe because I'm still suffering from a bit of post-traumatic stress disorder after the Feminist Sex Wars of the 1980s in which Patrick Califia's work figured so prominently. The last time I had the honor of introducing Califia was almost twenty years ago before a talk s/he gave in California; the next day, I found graffiti scrawled on the bathroom wall of my favorite café that read "Wendy Chapkis promotes violence against women."

But my anxiety isn't entirely about ghosts from the past. It would be daunting in any situation to be asked to write something about Patrick Califia's work. Califia is one of the most important writers on sexual politics of my generation. Over the past thirty years, I have read and re-read his essays, taught a number of them in college seminars, and referenced them in my own writing. Califia has had a profound effect on my identity, too, on what it means to me to be queer and on how I think of myself as a woman (even as he transitioned out of that shared identity). Califia is also an iconic top who knows exactly how to take down those foolish enough to talk back.

But there was an even more basic challenge for me in writing this essay. Despite my constant engagement with his nonfiction work, when I dug out my old copy of *Macho Sluts*, I was surprised to realize that I hadn't picked it up in years. As I began re-reading it, I remembered why: Califia's fiction makes me uncomfortable. It took a couple of stories for me to remember that the discomfort is intentional. In a 1979 essay, "The Secret Side of Lesbian Sexuality," Califia wrote: "If someone wants to know about my sexuality, she can deal with me on my own terms. I don't particularly care to make it easy. S/M is scary. That's at least half its significance ... S/M is a deliberate, premeditated, erotic blasphemy. It is a form of sexual extremism



and sexual dissent.”<sup>1</sup> In the 1980s, when I first read that essay and was introduced to lesbian S/M, Califia’s provocation was nothing less than electrifying. Like many feminists and queer nationals of the time, I was unwilling to see women’s liberation and gay liberation reduced to a polite equal rights campaign—especially if equality was modeled on the lives of those who were straight, male, or conventionally gendered.

Feminism and queer politics were compelling to me precisely because they were dangerous, or at least could be. In my twenties and early thirties, I read Califia in order to be confronted as well as aroused, and never came away disappointed. Even—or perhaps especially—at the height of the AIDS epidemic, and while deeply engaged in struggles against sexual violence in women’s lives, I knew it wasn’t simply sex but, in the words of the ACT UP slogan, silence that equaled death. As fellow porn writer and essayist Carol Queen observed, *Macho Sluts* “blew a hole in the dam of female erotic silence.”<sup>2</sup>

If these stories could be told, what couldn’t?

Now, in my fifties, I find Califia as discomfiting and as important as ever. Sexual extremism and dissent is a necessary tonic in the early twenty-first century, when the right to marry is at the top of the “gay agenda” and when “sex education” still includes little more than appeals to abstinence and monogamy. With teen pregnancy rates among the highest in the industrialized world, HIV rates rising, and priests and public servants alike regularly exposed as sexual hypocrites, we are clearly in need of a more honest and less self-satisfied conversation about sex. Califia’s writing prompts that kind of engagement and honesty.

Not all readers are up to the challenge. Since its publication in 1988, *Macho Sluts* has repeatedly been accused of glorifying and inciting violence against women—hence the bathroom graffiti. But, as Califia has consistently responded, “No erotic act has an intrinsic meaning. A particular sexual activity may symbolize one thing in the majority culture, another thing to members of a sexual subculture.”<sup>3</sup>

The subculture in which these practices derive their erotic meaning—the lesbian S/M community—was almost invisible when these stories were written, even to those who would call it their own. The book, then, had a

particularly generative power, helping to write into collective awareness the community it described. As Califia has said, the stories were intended seduction of an “audience that would appreciate my work (and let me live out some of my fantasies in the real world). That’s the one thing that I believe makes my fiction unique, the fact that it built the very community that it celebrates.”<sup>4</sup> For some critics who believed that no woman could, or should, willingly engage in the practices found in these pages, the power of *Macho Sluts* to “recruit” was an additional reason to condemn the book.

But feminism of the period was hardly united in opposition to pornography and S/M. In fact, from the late 1970s through the early 1990s, there was an explosion of feminist-created sexual culture, much, though not all of it, lesbian. Women-owned and -operated sex stores were available to women for the first time, including Good Vibrations in San Francisco, which opened in 1977. Pornography by and for women appeared in the founding of an astonishing number of new periodicals such as *Yellow Silk: Journal of Erotic Arts* (1981), *The Power Exchange: A Newsletter for Women on the Sexual Fringe* (1984, edited by Pat Califia), *On Our Backs: Entertainment for the Adventurous Lesbian* (1984), *Bad Attitude: A Lesbian Sex Magazine* (1984), *Outrageous Women: A Journal of Woman-to-Woman S/M* (1984), *The Taste of Latex: Entertainment for the Sexually Disenfranchised* (1990), *Frighten the Horses* (1990), and *Black Lace* (1991), to name just a few. Lesbian S/M organizations were founded in several major cities including San Francisco (Samois, founded in 1978, and the Outcasts, in 1984) and New York (the Lesbian Sex Mafia, founded in 1981). And, prior to *Macho Sluts*, Califia produced a ground-breaking book on the diversity of lesbian sexual desire and practice, *Sapphisty: The Book of Lesbian Sexuality* (1980), and also helped to edit the two earliest volumes of lesbian S/M instruction and erotic fiction, *What Color Is Your Handkerchief: A Lesbian S/M Sexuality Reader* (1979) and the second edition of *Coming to Power: Writings and Graphics on Lesbian S/M* (1983), both by Samois.

In other words, while some of the most intense condemnation of *Macho Sluts* originated from within the women’s movement, it is also true that these stories are as much a product of so-called “second wave” feminism as the hostile response they sometimes received. *Macho Sluts* would not have

been possible without feminist demands for control over our own bodies, for a right to express our own desires, and for recognition of the centrality of consent in the very definition of sex (as distinct from assault).

Of course, *Macho Sluts* isn't intended simply to stimulate conversation or thought. Like all pornography, it is meant to produce a more immediate and physical response in the reader. Whether it succeeds at that level depends both on the writer's talents—which are considerable—and on a match between individual kink and Califia's imagination. Califia is extraordinarily good at creating memorable characters and placing them in exquisitely detailed and richly imagined scenes. Not all readers, though, will find the situations as described to their liking.

Erotic tastes are notoriously quirky and diverse and it is a given that any piece of erotic fiction will leave some readers dry and dissatisfied or even disturbed, perhaps S/M fiction more than most. These stories require a willingness to accept the possibility that a whip is not always a weapon, forceful penetration (whether by cock, fist, or object) is not always assault, and words created to injure might also be used to other ends and effects.

If that understanding is in place, even readers who do not think of themselves as S/M enthusiasts may find much to like in this collection. Many of us initially were drawn to S/M less because of an obvious interest in dominance and submission and more because of an undeniable attraction to the wild women who were. As Cindy Patton, the founder of one of the original lesbian sex magazines, *Bad Attitude*, wrote in 1984, “for the lesbian community right now, at the first moments of our journey toward a new understanding of our sexuality, ‘s/m’ and ‘pornography’ function more as categories of relationship to the sexual than they reflect a consistent set of objective practices.”<sup>5</sup> Perverse pleasure and sexually explicit imagery offered a compelling alternative to expectations of womanly purity, chastity, and timidity.

I was not alone in my fascination with these women who appeared to know exactly what they wanted and how to communicate it through the codes of black leather or the particular placement of a handkerchief in the appropriate back pocket. Seeing women signal the specifics of their desires made me realize how little I knew about my own. It also made me eager to

find out. Becoming sexually literate was both an adventure and an obligation when confronted by people like Califia, who said: “Anybody who answers the question, ‘what would you like to do?’ by saying, ‘I don’t know, what would you like to do?’ should be taken out and shot.”<sup>6</sup>

The stories in *Macho Sluts* are populated by women who are shameless in pursuing their own pleasure. The notion that a woman’s reputation could be damaged by having “too much sex” with “too many people” is effectively turned on its head in this book. If for that reason alone, *Macho Sluts* could be a potent weapon in women’s hands.

But these stories do more. They teach us often unexpected things about our own desires. In a culture in which most pornography is still made by men for men (including the industrial porn category of girl-girl sex) and more formal sex education continues to focus on the dangers of sex and not on its pleasures, variations, and techniques, many of us are still essentially sexually illiterate.

About fifteen years ago or so, I sat in a packed university auditorium, watching over two hours of porn clips with Susie (the “sexpert”) Bright as she taught us “how to read a dirty movie.” When the lights went up on a dazed and uncomfortably exposed audience, she said something like, “I bet each of you, especially the women in this room, could give me a list right now of all the things you didn’t like in the films we just watched. Women are really good at critiquing sex. But before you do that, try to identify one or two scenes that really got you off. They might even be some of the same scenes that you found offensive or disturbing. Pay attention to those scenes; they can teach you a lot about yourself, and that information is worth knowing.”

This is excellent advice to follow while reading *Macho Sluts*. It is important to pay attention to what passes the “wet (or hard) test.” What turns out to be especially compelling in this collection will say a great deal more about the reader than it does about the relative quality of the various stories. For example, the fact that “The Vampire” and “The Hustler” both work so well for me, while I can barely get through “The Finishing School,” doesn’t just speak to my preference for sci-fi over Victorian school-girl fantasies, but also about my taste for butch women and rough

trade over highly mannered mistresses. I always find “The Surprise Party” and “The Spoiler” hot in part because they remind me of my enthusiasm for cock (whether flesh or silicone). Readers who have different literary and erotic tastes will have a different set of favorites. For those who have little practice with pornography, it might also be helpful to keep in mind that porn is meant to be read in snatches; the point is not to race through to find out what happens at the end.

The stories in *Macho Sluts* were written in the 1980s and in some ways reflect that period of now-closed lesbian bars like Maud’s and Amelia’s, easy-access pay phones, and ongoing sex wars. But what is just as striking as the historical references is what is historically absent: while condoms and gloves accompany the sex scenes in these pages, and a vampire worries about the possibility of “tainted blood,” the AIDS epidemic that so consumed the gay community in 1988 is otherwise invisible. *Macho Sluts* instead offers an alternative universe in which sex is uncoupled from the ongoing reality of death and dying from AIDS. For example, at a time when the only public sex venues for women were private parties or rented space in heterosexual or gay men’s clubs (and even those limited venues were being closed in an effort to contain the spread of HIV), Califia envisions a sex club so popular that women wind around the block three deep to get in on the weekends. Califia’s Calyx of Isis—which, incredibly, even in the twenty-first century, only exists in the imagination—is a clean place for women to get down and dirty with “rooms and lockers, big piles of clean towels and robes, stacked up boxes of lube and latex gloves.” The club offers not only a bar and a disco, a Jacuzzi and sauna, a masseuse studio, rooms for rent by the hour, a public sex room with a mirrored ceiling, and well-equipped dungeons, but also weekly STD and Pap smear clinics and offsite childcare subsidized by the club for use by patrons.

Not all the stories in this collection, however, offer utopian fantasy. If “The Calyx of Isis” imagines a world in which feminist sex radicalism is flourishing, “The Hustler” offers a world destroyed by war: “men’s wars” of bombs and missiles followed by a “woman’s war” against prostitution, pornography, and perversion. A “grubby perv bar” like the Labrys is the only real, if always threatened, place of refuge for sexual outlaws. “The Vampire,” too, features bars more closely resembling what was, in fact,

available to the leather dykes of the 1980s: not “the Calyx” but instead “Purgatory,” a small club with three times as many men as women, largely heterosexual, with the exception of a “handful of scruffy lesbians dressed like destitute bikers” and a few “slumming, well-dressed leather men.” Califia’s stories do not romanticize the limitations of such venues but do give them their due: “[Y]ou must practice this despised art where you can, and disregard what is tawdry or unclean—or learn to love the dirt, the sleaze, because it represents your membership in the elite.”

What is perhaps most striking about Califia’s fiction, though, and what sets it apart from most pornography, is its attention to the complexities of character and identity. Califia’s characters break through established roles within pornography and shatter even subcultural conventions. The very title of the book, *Macho Sluts*, reflects Califia’s appreciation of trans(gressive) identification. While the author clearly respects the political and erotic power of “top”/“bottom,” “gay”/“straight,” “woman”/“man,” “vanilla”/“S/M,” these concepts are used only as signposts, demarcating territory that then can be deliberately transgressed. In the process, Califia forces us to acknowledge that identities are unstable and that fantasies bear no necessary or direct relationship to them.

For example, acts like performing oral sex, which are ordinarily defined within S/M as strictly the province of bottoms, can be deployed in these stories by demanding tops. In the Calyx, “Roxanne witnessed something incredible and almost blasphemous. Chris went down on her knees ... But this was a mistress, on her knees, and it was not right! It should not be this way! The service offered was too much for her to accept ...” Chris, however, insists: “Don’t interfere. Don’t tell me I can’t have anything I want right now.” Cunnilingus, when performed by a top, becomes a “touch so taboo it was irresistible.” This is classic Califia, queering every encounter. In a 1992 essay on “The Limits of the S/M Relationship,” Califia pointed out that “thanks to the women’s movement, we no longer believe that biology is destiny. But I sometimes wonder if we have not transferred many of our old gender patterns to the top/bottom dynamic ... We still assume that being penetrated is a submissive act and sticking it in is dominant ... I think we should be challenging the very meanings we assign our sexual acts. This is the truly radical potential of S/M.”<sup>2</sup>

In *Macho Sluts*, as with his other fiction, Califia pays homage to “the ironclad roles of more traditional S/M” while recognizing the political and erotic power of deliberately flipping them.<sup>8</sup> No story does this more fully than “The Spoiler.” The spoiler tops even the most accomplished topmen and yet, “since he had no interest in bottoms, he did not even think of himself as a top. He was more like a trusted servant who would think nothing of knocking his drowning and struggling master unconscious so he could be paddled to safety.” Because he does not locate himself fully within the roles and identities of the subculture, he is perceived as a danger to those who do. As the narrator says of the spoiler: “We are raised to think that everything in the world occurs naturally as a set of paired opposites. It is almost impossible for us to know what anything is if we cannot locate and define its counterpart. The spoiler was an anomaly. The same system that created him found that he threatened its premises.”

In other stories, complexities of identity and desire are experienced less as a threat and more as an enhancement. In “The Surprise Party,” for example, gay and lesbian identity does not preclude a hot encounter with the “opposite sex.” Here a dyke gets picked up by three gay cops and silently admits to herself that this is what she wants: “He put his hand on his crotch, fondled it and squeezed it. ‘You don’t like this, either, do you?’ he demanded. ‘No!’ Liar, her sex conscience jeered. You love getting fucked. You fantasize about cock and talk dirty about it all the time. But I’m a lesbian, her public-persona objected. This doesn’t have anything to do with that, the wiser voice replied.”

Identities and roles are further complicated in the story “The Vampire,” in which the two main characters are described against type: Kerry, the vampire, is an olive-skinned dyke with a crew-cut in full leathers. Iduna, ostensibly the “prey,” is an alabaster-pale femme in a red-lined cape. Iduna is a vampire chaser, eager to offer herself up. The vampire has to be seduced into taking her and it is the “victim’s” desire that drives the scene. The roles of hunter and prey are effectively reversed; it is Iduna who muses “after the long hunt, the desperate search ... finally, my treasure, my pet, my lord, I will make you my beloved ...” Iduna is far from a passive recipient of the attentions of a top; indeed she has been “well schooled” in how to make herself “interesting to take.”



Even the concluding story in the collection, ostensibly “a dash of vanilla,” challenges neat distinctions between S/M and “normal” lesbian sex as well as between tops and bottoms. In this story, cunnilingus is revealed to be no less challenging or physically demanding than many other scenes depicted in the book. Nor is it free of power exchange: the narrator who performs cunnilingus on her girlfriend for hours on end might be seen as a classic bottom selflessly servicing her top. Yet at the end of the story, the roles flip as the narrator describes her own pleasure in overcoming her lover’s reluctance to be fucked: “I fuck you yet again, and this time you really protest. It’s too much, you’re too tired, you’re sore. But I’m adamant. I’ve worked so hard to get you to this place, thrown open to me ... It’s almost like a feeding frenzy, this lurch to fuck you again and again while pleasure has made you helpless.”

Nowhere in this collection does anyone sacrifice their own pleasure for another. Tops take what they want, bottoms get what they deserve, in all the best ways. While not every scene is as involved as Roxanne’s in “The Calyx of Isis”—in which she is the willing recipient of the attentions of no less than seven tops who guide her through “a high colonic, being fisted, pissed on, tied hand and foot, turned into a pin cushion, whipped ragged, fucked some more, called a whole lot of bad names, and pierced repeatedly ...”—the sex is unquestionably intense.

So consider yourself forewarned: Califia demands a great deal of his readers; there is no attempt here to present a kinder and gentler S/M. Of course, no one is obliged to continue turning the pages. As Califia offered his readers in a 1984 essay, “Those of you who aren’t ready for this have my permission to leave the room. But don’t slam the door on your way out.”<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, you may just miss encountering yourself in new ways if you leave this room too precipitously.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Pat Califia, *Public Sex: The Culture of Radical Sex* (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1994), 158.

<sup>2</sup> Carol Queen, “What Do Women Want?” in *The Burning Pen*, ed. M. Christian (Los Angeles: Alyson Publications, 2001), 49.

<sup>3</sup> Pat Califia, *Sapphisty: The Book of Lesbian Sexuality* (Tallahassee: Naiad Press, 1980), 107.



- [4.](#) ———, “An Insistent and Indelicate Muse” in *The Burning Pen*, 147.
- [5.](#) Cindy Patton, “Why I Write Porno,” *Bad Attitude* 1 no. 2 (1984), 3.
- [6.](#) Pat Califia, “Non-monogamy,” *On Our Backs* (summer 1987), 24.
- [7.](#) ———, “The Limits of the S/M Relationship,” *Out/Look* 151 (1992), 19–20.
- [8.](#) *Ibid.*, 21.
- [9.](#) ———, “Gay Men, Lesbians and Sex,” in *Public Sex*, 183.

## *Macho Sluts*

## *Introduction to the original edition*

*Liberty is the right not to lie.*  
—Albert Camus

The things that seem beautiful, inspiring, and life-affirming to me seem ugly, hateful, and ludicrous to most other people. This may be the most painful part of being a sadomasochist: this experience of radical difference, separation at the root of perception. Our culture insists on sexual uniformity and does not acknowledge any neutral differences—only crimes, sins, diseases, and mistakes. This smug erotic totalitarianism does hidden violence to dissidents and perverts. It distorts our self-images, ambitions, and dreams. We think we are alone, or crazy, or ridiculous. Our desire learns to curb itself, and we come to depend on the strength of self-repression for our safety. We live in fear of being known, and such fear stifles the nascent erotic wish before the image of what is wished for can be fully formed. We know we are ugly before we have even seen ourselves, and the injustice of this, the falsehood, chokes me.

What then, are my choices, as a writer and a sadomasochist? I could keep my sexuality private, write about other issues, other sorts of people, and tell myself that these are more important themes, more universal characters, more valid as literature. That involves telling a lie of omission—becoming invisible as a pervert, assuming an undeserved mantle of normalcy and legitimacy. Or I could become an apologist and seek to persuade the tyrannical majority that sadomasochism is not violent or self-destructive. But that would require telling many little, white lies—watering down the descriptions of frightening acts, softening the dialogue, emphasizing what S/M has in common with vanilla rather than where they part company, and appending endless, didactic justifications. This kind of fiction makes the non-S/M reader feel condescended to and lied to; it bores the well-disciplined reader and confirms a suspicion that our lives and visions are too trivial and base for explication.

It doesn't feel as if I really have a choice. Writing is hard work. It is boring and lonely. And there are too many long stretches of panic and self-hatred between the moments of inspiration. I have never been able to endure this drudgery and finish a piece that I did not care about passionately. If there isn't enough lustful electricity in the work to keep my batteries charged during the false starts, tedious revisions, and backtracking away from dead ends to come up with a proper finish, I run down like a neglected wind-up toy. These short stories are attempts to tell the truth about my own desire, and they are written for people who understand what I need and value what I see. I would rather be a tribal storyteller than a self-conscious member of the literati or a leather missionary churning out tracts for a bunch of people who will never think of themselves as heathens.

This book will be accused of being pornographic and thus misogynistic, a piece of hate literature. So let me say explicitly, at the risk of sounding foolish, that this is a valentine in its original form, a cunt held open by a woman's trusting fingers. It is a visible act of love, written for any reader who is not a traitor to her own cunt. (It has something to do with hatred, too, but not what you assume.) It was meant to generate some of the hope that leather dykes need as much as they need raw courage to survive in a hostile world. I want more of us to make it to adulthood without being driven mad or driven normal or driving off a cliff. And I want more of us, period. So this book is also a recruitment poster, as flashy and fast and seductively intimidating as I could make it.

You might not like the women in my stories, but all of them—tops and bottoms—are strong women. They are not completely autonomous human beings (even I can't suspend disbelief to that extent), but they chafe under any restrictions. You won't get any charity fucks out of them because they don't feel sorry for you. Nor will they say something that will make you feel bad about yourself under the guise of upgrading your id and your politics. They are selfish bitches, but they know how to have a good time, and if you amuse them, they could show you a good time as well. They don't want to save the whole world, but they know it's essential to be able to save your own ass. These are women who get to be heroes, have adventures, kick up their heels and kick butt.

Under the guise of keeping you entertained, Reader Mine, I wanted to get some social criticism flowing as well as some j/o grease. Why exactly is it that pornography (especially pornography about sexual minorities) is assumed to be either worthless trash or toxic waste? Why has it taken so long for any sex books (whether their jackets are leather or flannel) by and for lesbians to be written? How does this new genre of porn function?

Most people (even the nicest sort of liberal who opposes censorship) assume that porn isn't worth defending because it's thrown-together, hurriedly produced garbage intended to make a quick buck. And people do spend a lot of money on mass-market pornography, despite the fact that most of it is flat and stale. The average porn novel is typed, not written. You have to work at breakneck speed to make a living when you get paid maybe \$200 a book. It's no wonder that the work attracts hacks. Even the porn writers who aren't hacks feel contempt for their audience as well as themselves, and it permeates their material. Illegal businesses are even more tightly controlled than "legitimate" enterprises, and this overpriced, offensive swill is the only graphic sex that's readily available. This won't change unless obscenity is decriminalized, and competition makes it necessary for porn producers to cut into their profits with a little quality control. (In other words, don't hold your breath.) The sad fact that the porn industry makes an obscene profit with its degraded product is just an index of how badly people want to learn about sex and get turned on. It doesn't tell you anything about what people would like to buy if there was really any choice.

But these marketplace conditions do not apply to by-and-for-lesbians porn. Because lesbians hardly constitute a mass market on the scale the Mafia (or the vice squad) is accustomed to, the term "lesbian pornography" used to refer to material that didn't feature lesbians and wasn't intended for a lesbian audience. Now, a few entrepreneurs, artists, filmmakers, writers, and poets are pouring their creative energy into making homegrown lesbian porn. These businesses are under-capitalized and labor-intensive. Most of them don't show a profit. Their product is a welcome relief from the straight-produced stuff which usually misses the point entirely. It is immensely popular among lesbians.

This new kind of pornography has been confiscated by agents of the state (especially in Canada) and banned from significant numbers of feminist bookstores. Many women's publications routinely give sexually explicit work—even non-fiction lesbian sex manuals—savage reviews. Is the crime of obscenity synonymous with bad writing? Or with being a man out to make a quick buck? Apparently not.

As the judge who banned *Coming to Power* in New Zealand said, "Some of the stories are well written but ... The book is in the finding of the Tribunal clearly indecent." The same tribunal had classified *The Joy of Lesbian Sex* to be "indecent in the hands of persons under the age of eighteen" despite the fact that "the book is well written, informative, and well presented. The subject is sensitively handled ... and by comparison with other manuals on lesbianism is of a superior standard." And despite the fact that "lesbianism is not outside the law" in New Zealand!

Well-written, sexually explicit material is sometimes even more threatening to the status quo than pulp. In *The End of Obscenity* (Simon and Schuster, 1968, page 435), Charles Rembar, the attorney who successfully defended *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *The Tropic of Cancer*, and *Fanny Hill* against obscenity charges, comments on problems he faced writing legal briefs that argued that these works should not be banned:

One was "well-written obscenity." The cry had plagued us all through these cases. Good writing, every one of my opponents had declared, is no excuse. If not all of them said—as many of them did—the better the writing the more dangerous the book, they all agreed that literary quality could not make an obscene book non-obscene.

People who wring their hands because obscenity laws have been used to hassle the publishers of D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce are correct to bemoan the chilling effect this has had on including sexuality in "serious" (i.e., non-pornographic) fiction. But they miss another crucial point. Because the censors are even more afraid of well-written porn than they are of expletive-ridden drivel, publishers shy away from pornographic manuscripts that are too literary because in the past, this has incurred the wrath of the authorities. The dearth of good writing in porn is at least as tragic as the dearth of sex in literature. It persists despite the fact that literary quality is now considered to be one sort of social value that may

rescue a work from being declared obscene and vulnerable to being confiscated and destroyed, at least in this country.

The task of creating high-quality pornography is a challenge worthy of any talented writer. It just isn't that easy to get a reader hopelessly and unforgettably aroused. I am not talking about the auto-erotic Pavlovian response that some of us have developed to the repetition of certain key words. I am talking about phrases that stay with the reader, images that come back in the middle of a work day and make her blush, a book that she will want to read again and won't loan to her friends because she knows she'll never get it back—not a disposable paperback she can toss into the garbage without remembering if she ever read it or not.

Sadly, a lot of the new lesbian porn (brave as it is) flunks what Dorothy Allison calls “the wet test.” When you are writing for free, which most of the contributors to the lesbian-owned sex magazines are, it's difficult to take enough time to transform a rough draft into an effective piece of stimulation. But there's another problem that all the money in the world won't solve, and that's the fact that many lesbian pornographers just aren't brave enough. I suspect that many of us aren't writing about what really gets us wet. We're writing about what we think should get us wet. Or we're writing about what we did last weekend, which might have been very nice then, thank you, but doesn't stretch the imagination. Journal entries make lousy fiction.

“Feminist erotica” that presents a simplistic view of lesbian sex as two women in love in a bed who embody all the good things the patriarchy is trying to destroy isn't very sexy. This stuff reads as if it were written by dutiful daughters who are trying to persuade Mom that lesbian sex isn't dirty, and we really are good girls, after all. It isn't challenging or stirring enough. The auto-erotically inclined lesbian reader deserves more bang for her buck. And Mom is never going to believe that nice girls put their hands in other girls' panties, anyway. It's much more inspiring for an aspiring pornographer to dispense with wearing her panties, or wear them on her head. Lesbian writers have got to loosen up, drop our drawers, spread our cheeks, stick out our tongues, get nasty.

Women—especially lesbians—exist under conditions that make us frightened to step out of line, frightened to challenge the status quo, almost

unable to imagine what bold and brassy, peacock creatures we could be if we were free. Lesbian culture is impoverished. And if we are ever going to be free, we must have a vision of that woman of the future, including her ideas about what “sexy” means and looks like, and what “pleasure” is, and what it’s worth.

Sex may seem like a trivial part of a radical, futuristic vision, but if we are not safe to indulge in this playful, vulnerable, and necessary activity, pleasure ourselves and the others who fascinate us, how safe can a society be for women? A world that guaranteed food, shelter, medical care, full employment, literacy, day care, civil rights and democracy, but denied us sexual license, would make us nothing but well-fed domestic animals with suffrage.

It takes a lot of guts for lesbian writers to push beyond our anger about what women aren’t allowed to do. We are prey to the suspicion that it’s our fault and women don’t deserve anything better. We are afraid of more opportunity, because we might fail. This affects our ability to engender new (or at least accurate) sexual images that are genuinely exciting. The power of the censor within is awesome. The only way I could write some of these stories was to pretend I wasn’t going to publish them. Nobody’s an expert on women’s sexuality; most women aren’t even experts on their own libidos. I doubt anyone ever will be qualified to generalize about what all women want or proscribe certain sexualities as being anti-woman. But if enough of us speak out about our dreams and obsessions, a body of genuine knowledge can accumulate, and make all of us feel less crazy and less alone with what we cannot live without. When you are dealing with an area as permeated with ignorance and superstition as sexuality, it is more important to be honest than it is to be correct; to say “I want this now” before rushing to assert, “I will want this when I know and accept what is best for me.”

Lesbians are constantly being told by the rest of the world that we are ugly, boring, and unimportant. This kind of shit takes a toll on our self-esteem. The same cues that alert other lesbians to our availability and sexual prowess seem odd, annoying, and unattractive to straight people. And they don’t have any tact about letting us know it, on the bus, at work, in the grocery store, on the street, in the gym, at the tie rack in the men’s wear department. Lesbian pornography, especially if it has some humor, is a



powerful antidote to this dehumanizing grind. It reassures us that it's worth putting on that white silk shirt and bomber jacket and polishing our boots before we go out, that somebody is going to get the message. It says, there's a woman out there looking for a girl in a magenta satin dress with spaghetti straps, so fluff up your hair, strap on those dancin' shoes, and go someplace where she can *find* you.

Seen in this light, lesbian pornography is "just" dyke entertainment, but I have never understood why anybody would think entertainment was trivial. If you live in a society that wishes you didn't exist, anything you do to make yourself happy disrupts its attempts to wipe you out, or at the very least, make you invisible. Institutions that provide amusement always come under attack by puritans and fascists, partly because these people know they are pompous buffoons and easy targets for ridicule. The Cromwellians shut down the theater in England. The Victorians attacked the novel as a depraved and vicious literary form that was especially dangerous for women. Today, fundamentalist Christians go after MTV, and some women's bookstores try to incise pornography from the lesbian body of literature. There is no easier, faster way to transmit information or a system of values than by presenting it in a format that makes people laugh, dance, get turned on, or just feel good. What is it that they don't want you to hear?

I do not believe that sex has an inherent power to transform the world. I do not believe that pleasure is always an anarchic force for good. I do not believe that we can fuck our way to freedom. But this is not what the discourse of sexual repression tells us. In that discourse unleashed sex has enormous disruptive potential. Minority forms of sex have to be repressed or the social contract will hang in tatters. People will look to their friends and lovers for warmth, affection, love, and support instead of to their biological families. Women and children will have no protection from male violence. Work for the sake of work will cease to be valued. The nine-to-five, five-days-a-week wage labor that is the foundation of commerce will be disrupted by bored and frustrated workers who use any excuse to come in late, get high as often as possible to alleviate their tedium, rip off their employers, and spend their evenings trying to pick somebody up in a bar or going to political meetings organized by antisocial elements. Nobody will go to church. Children will be thoughtlessly conceived and carelessly

reared, and venereal diseases will flourish. This is, of course, in wild opposition to our present system.

I suspect that what is really being protected by censorship, antiabortion, and homophobic campaigns is the self-image of the so-called majority. Consider how narrow the range of acceptable sexual behavior is. Nobody comes out looking normal once you know the whole truth about how they fuck and what they think about when they jerk off. The citizens are terrified of losing their heterosexual privilege, which will happen if the assumption that there is a sexual consensus, a few simple sexual things that are (or should be) enough for any normal person, is challenged.

Sex alone can't liberate us, but in the meantime, it comforts us. Women want and need the freedom to be outrageous, out-of-doors, out-of-bounds, out after dark, without being silenced or punished by stigma, battery, forced reproduction, or murder. We have a right to pleasure ourselves, and access to pornography is a part of that.

There's another reason why some of the new lesbian porn doesn't get me wet. My fantasies (and my library of bedtime storybooks) are not limited to women-only material. Before you throw rocks at me, you might ask your friends how many of them are lesbian separatist masturbators. Many people do not fantasize about the kind of sex that they actually have. Fantasy is a realm in which we can embrace pleasures that we may have very good reasons to deny ourselves in real life (like the fact that something might not be nearly as much fun to do as it is to think about).

Hasn't anybody but me wondered why porn produced for lesbian consumption has to be about women only? If the point is simply to turn lesbians on, why limit our sexy literature to lesbian sex? Straights and gay men take it for granted that they can use material about other groups of people to turn themselves on. Why should lesbians get tied up in knots because we have straight fantasies, faggot fantasies, fantasies about animals, and intense fantasy relationships with shoes and other inanimate objects? A straight man flipping through a "lesbian" photo magazine doesn't worry about his masculinity. Why shouldn't we feel equally free to exploit non-lesbian sex objects?

What we find erotic about gay men or straight sex is probably different from what gay men or straights consider important or arousing about themselves. They might not recognize themselves when they are dressed up for lesbian consumption any more than we recognize ourselves in the lesbian magazines produced for straight men. (Although I certainly have no objection to non-lesbian readers enjoying this book.) If fantasies about men aren't erotic at all for you, you might want to skip these stories ("The Surprise Party" and "The Spoiler") or mentally change the male characters into women wearing strap-ons.

Lesbian writers must have the option to write about men. There ought not to be any subject that we cannot give our attention to. A lesbian perspective on the world is as valid and can be as interesting (or as trite) as anyone else's. Non-lesbians write about us without ever thinking about whether or not they are qualified. There is so little lesbian literature that the temptation to write only about ourselves, our own people, is understandable. And it is certainly possible to create a body of good work that is exclusively lesbian. But writers ought not to be ghettoized. We live in this world, and escapist fantasies about other worlds where we dominate or are the exclusive inhabitants can keep us entertained and in high spirits, but when we open our eyes, reality will still be here, and it cries out for comment, criticism, rearrangement, a mirror.

None of the stories that include men describe the exchange of body fluids because of Alyson Publications' policy against eroticizing high-risk sex. After overcoming my inhibitions about putting the smell and taste of male sexuality on paper, it gave me a bad case of cognitive dissonance to go back and write it out. I hope I managed to retain the highly charged emotional content of these stories without cum touching taste buds or mucous membranes. Porn can be a valuable way to teach people how to have hot and satisfying "safer sex." But I don't believe "unsafe" porn causes AIDS any more than I think "violent" porn causes rape. Nobody ever caught a disease from or got assaulted by a book. Images and descriptions are forever getting confused with live acts. It seems a shame to me if people must relinquish fantasizing about all the aspects of their partners' bodies as well as experiencing them directly. Keeping these stories in this book was so important to me that I was willing to rewrite them, but I also need to say

that it feels like a form of bowdlerization, even censorship, and if it were my choice, I would have left them in their original, sleazy form.

Safe sex porn (or guidelines) written for gay men aren't much use to lesbians. Most of the lesbian stories in *Macho Sluts* were written prior to the AIDS epidemic, and all of them include sexual activities that could transmit disease. I wouldn't want any of my readers to think that lesbians are magically exempt from AIDS. Please read "A note on Lesbians, AIDS, and Safer Sex" which follows.

The title of this book was a piece of graffiti that had been spray-painted by an anonymous street artist above the Broadway tunnel in San Francisco. I don't know the gender or the sexual orientation of the person who coined this phrase, but if the shoe fits, I'll go dancing. In *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (Perigee/G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1981, pp. 199-202), Andrea Dworkin writes:

The word *pornography*, derived from the ancient Greek *porne* and *graphos*, means 'writing about whores.' *Porne* means ... the lowest class of whore, which in ancient Greece was the brothel slut available to all male citizens ... The word *pornography* does not mean 'writing about sex' or 'depictions of the erotic' ... or any other such euphemism. It means the graphic depiction of women as vile whores ... In the male system, women are sex; sex is the whore. Buying her is buying pornography. Having her is having pornography ... Seeing her sex, especially her genitals, is seeing pornography ... Wanting her means wanting pornography. Being her means being pornography.

Never mind that the term "pornography" was coined by Victorians, not by the ancient Greeks. (This was first pointed out to me by Gayle Rubin. More information on the etymology of the term appears in Walter Kendrick's *The Secret Museum*, Viking, 1987.) Never mind that the anti-porn movement has done at least as much as "the male system" to make "whores" seem vile in the popular imagination. This book is available to anyone, male or female, who can pay for it or steal it. It will certainly seem vile to many people. Therefore, this book is a whore. And I wrote it, knowing that meant being a pornographer, being a whore. After all, "Being her [the whore] means being pornography." What's one more stigmatized identity? In my time, I've even been a lesbian housewife.

Feminists who believe there was once a matriarchy say that prostitutes were once also priestesses. In some societies, every woman had to enter the

temple of the goddess and receive payment for her sexual services before she could marry. Some women never left the temple. These priestesses did not simply perform rituals to guarantee the fertility of people, their herds and fields. They taught the receiving and giving of pleasure.

I don't know if I believe this. But I do believe the flesh should not be despised. If the flesh is not sacred, holy, then we are trapped in the muck of the profane, because the body is all we have. All knowledge, reason, truth, beauty, it is all reducible to physical sensation and actions performed by the agency of the flesh. Now that the goddess has no more temples, now that prostitutes are defiled women who represent the epitome of the patriarchy's power instead of sacred women who represent the power of the Triune Goddess, it is surely ironic that it is someone who resembles nothing so much as the Venus of Willendorf in overalls, who rises up to rebuke us.

It's a feminist cliché that women are divided into virgins and whores, and set against each other. There is no mention in anti-porn rhetoric of how much the hatred voiced by "respectable" women puts the slut in danger, how much "nice" women's jealousy and fear of being identified with her isolates the slut and makes it possible for her to be exploited and abused.

Some of us hate this polarization, and would like other choices, something in between virgin and whore. Sexual exploration would be so much easier if this were not such a highly charged arena. But it is, so even if we ask for "just a little freedom," even the lightest bit of sexual agency, experience, desire, or speech, we are going to be branded sluts and whores. And so most women remain identified with the virgin, the woman who looks on and suffers, who refrains from action, who always forgives, who heals wounds and gives birth, but will do nothing to halt violence or murder. It's too frightening to be the brazen hussy, the woman who travels, who wants to go where men go and see what they see, who wears their clothes and appropriates their pleasures and mannerisms, who carries a razor, who has a hustle of her own going, who dresses to attract attention to herself, who will take care of her friends and stab her enemies in the back. She is not free, but she deserves to be.

Ironically, the word "virgin" originally didn't mean sexually inexperienced; it meant a woman who was consecrated to divine service, and therefore unmarried. Some sacred virgins probably had ritual sex with a

representative of the god or with men who visited the temple to make an offering. They were, therefore, prostitutes. Today, a woman's will, her self-image, her integrity mean so little that all it takes is violence to turn her into something that is despised—a slut, albeit a victimized one. There is no safety in virginity, actual or feigned.

Macho sluts are supposedly a contradiction in terms, like virgins and whores. The slut is, in Dworkin's parlance, male property—a victim of male violence—a woman who accepts male definitions of her sexuality. Instead, I believe that she is someone men hate because she is potentially beyond their control. If she has to pleasure many men briefly to escape belonging permanently to one particular man, she will. Whores are always accused of being lesbians because they get men to part with some of their property instead of becoming property themselves, and because they are more interested in how thick a man's wallet is than the length of his dick. The whore does not sell her body. She sells her time. So she has time that is not for sale, that belongs to no one but herself. Domesticated women don't dare put a price on their time. They wind up with no demarcation between business and pleasure, public and private, so they have no time and space of their own. They do everything for love, but nobody gives them the same care they lavish on others. If they are used and despised, they can't protect themselves. They are poor because they give everything away. But it's the john who has to give something away to the whore. He must tell her his secret desire if he is to get his money's worth. The whore in turn gives nothing away, laughs at him while she keeps her secrets and pockets his cash.

In this country, machismo is a survival mechanism by which minority men try to preserve their self-esteem and their culture. In the best sense of the word, it describes a person who is outnumbered, misunderstood, and outlawed who nevertheless strives to preserve a sense of pride and honor. Someone who has machismo insists on his right to dignity, and defends himself and what belongs to him even if it is a hopeless cause, even if he will be punished for making the attempt. Women are not supposed to have machismo, to be macho, but then, we're not supposed to be sluts, either. And without machismo, a slut is just a commodity. In the midst of theoretical discussions, it's important to remember that the state has power

to take action against obscenity, and does not have serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value; appeals to prurient interests; goes substantially beyond customary limits of candor in description or representation of such matters; and depicts or describes in a patently offensive way, explicit sexual conduct of a specifically defined nature—that book is obscene, and it is contraband. Reading this won't make you an outlaw (it's not that easy, sweetheart), but if you enjoy it, you might think about why the law is trying to get in between you and your prurient interests.

I'm afraid that the opprobrium of right-wing, pro-censorship feminists is not the worst thing that will confront this book. We are in the middle of a crackdown on porn, especially S/M porn. For my birthday this year, I took a trip to Times Square to watch some loops in the peep show booths at my favorite porn store. This store used to feature a great diversity of material, and was always friendly to women. But all their S/M stuff was gone from the peep shows and the magazine racks. They had moved all their kinky magazines and videos to just one store, to protect the rest of them if that one got busted. If I wanted to look at an S/M movie now, I would have to buy the whole tape. I checked out several other adult bookstores on Times Square. Most of them were not selling any S/M material.

I was very upset, but not because this meant I would be cut off from a primary source of arousal. The typical commercial S/M flick or magazine does not turn me on. Most of it is made by people who think S/M is weird and sick, and just want to make some easy money off the leather freaks. Many of the actors and actresses perform in S/M movies or pose for bondage photos because they get paid as well as they would if they did hard-core (penetration, cum shots, cock-sucking), but they don't have to do any genital sex. Most S/M porn doesn't even require full frontal nudity. I check out adult bookstores for the occasional gems—the movies that star friends of mine, the magazines that feature professional dommes who really enjoy what they do and do it well, the '50s books put out by Mutrix, magazines illustrated by Stanton and other classic bondage and fetish artists, F. E. Campbell's novels, reprints of John Willie's drawings. Even this comparatively rare, high-quality material doesn't include many of the staple images of my eroticism. The kind of woman I try to be and the kind of woman I cruise just isn't sexy to straight sadomasochists.

What is most upsetting about this sudden disappearance of all the corny magazines full of sloppy bondage and the grainy movies about leather-corseted women who don't know how to aim their whips is the message it sends out that S/M has become even more forbidding, beyond the pale, and dangerous for me to pursue. It's as if it suddenly became even more abnormal. This dearth of images will make it more difficult for novices and beginners to realize there are folks who share their scary fantasies and know how to act them out with care and safety. If you don't know that there's a whole group of people who engage in a particular sexual behavior, it makes it much more difficult to imagine yourself ever being able to do it. And porn is one of the most common ways that people discover there are other folks out there who like to do cunnilingus, anal sex, gay sex, get tied up, have threesomes—in short, that there are others who want more than awkward and guilty sex in the dark, bare skin only, no birth control or safe sex, no dirty talking, no artificial lube, no shifting to another, more comfortable position, no toys, no special requests, and usually no orgasm for the woman and a pretty unsatisfactory one for the man.

S/M fantasies are usually much more lurid and perilous than the games of real-life sadomasochists. Standard Mafia bondage porn doesn't instruct people in the finer points of S/M technique, but it at least shows the reader that this is a sexual deviation, not an elaborate form of suicide, because the models who do these things appear to be enjoying them, and survive to pose for more pictures in another magazine. Before this crackdown, the genre was marginally improving because leather and S/M people were starting to make sexually explicit material for our own consumption. Legal hassles and the risk of public exposure will discourage that. And more people will remain convinced there is something terribly wrong with them because they have these awful fantasies about being restrained, dominated, or punished, and if they ever dare to look for someone who will do any of those wicked things, they will “get what they deserve”—i.e., snuffed.

Two distributors of S/M videos—a small business in Florida that sold wooden bondage devices and a handful of movie titles, and Centurions in Los Angeles—have been busted. The LAPD has reportedly visited gay video companies and warned them to stop distributing S/M movies.



Vice cops in Grand Rapids, Michigan, went on a campaign against kiddie porn early in 1987. When they couldn't find any, they went outside their own city limits into another town to arrest an S/M couple who frequently entertain folks in the scene and market movies they've made of themselves and some of their friends. In the process, Faye Marie ("Marquise Marie") Bond and Gerald Bond reported that their home was trashed, all their business records and personal address books were confiscated, and their bank accounts were frozen. This has made it difficult for them to organize support and impossible for them to continue to make a living. Until the police killed all of her fish by emptying ashtrays into the tanks, Mrs Bond had raised and sold tropical fish. Her husband ran a straight video production company. They are charged with obscenity and running a house of ill-fame. They may succeed in getting acquitted, but the arrest alone has punished them in a way that having their charges dismissed will not repair.

In 1986, local police raided an S/M party held in the home of a heterosexual couple in a small town in Pennsylvania, and arrested nearly thirty people. Marie Morrell and her husband had to endure sensationalistic publicity and high legal costs to fight the resulting prostitution charges. They were acquitted, but many of their belongings have not been returned, and their privacy, happiness, and livelihood (they ran an Italian restaurant) are irreparably damaged.

*Drummer*, a gay male S/M magazine, has run into so many distribution problems, they have decided to remove most bondage photos so they can keep the magazine on newsstands. The venerable S/M contact publication, *SMAds*, has ceased publication, reportedly because the producer feared prosecution for obscenity.

A federal grand jury in Alexandria, Virginia is probing interstate transportation of obscene materials, and has subpoenaed the corporate records of two New York porn distributors, one distributor in Los Angeles, and some local corporations. These businesses handle S/M material along with other types of porn. The subpoenas were handed out after the FBI raided Washington, D.C. area video rental stores and confiscated tapes and "marital aids."

This stepped up activity against sadomasochists and S/M imagery by the feds and local vice squads is a direct response to the Meese Commission's

report on pornography, which claims (in language provided by the feminist anti-porn movement) that “violent pornography” (i.e., S/M material) is itself violence against women and fosters it in the rest of society. After the report was issued, Attorney General Edwin Meese committed the Justice Department to an intensified campaign against pornography, and called for federal prosecutors to go after “child pornography, sadomasochistic scenes, rape scenes, depiction of bestiality or excretory functions and violent and degrading images of explicit sexual conduct, and other similar hardcore material.” He specifically exempted “soft-core pornography” from this vendetta. (He also vowed, “There will be no censorship while I am attorney general.”)

Well, this is one woman who doesn’t feel that these law enforcement officials are making my life safer. It may seem odd for me to include information about specific cases in a book introduction since it will quickly become dated. But this anti-S/M moral panic is not being covered in a systematic, comprehensive way in the gay press or other progressive publications. Gayle Rubin has given a series of lectures about these disturbing events at several S/M and leather conferences, but it appears that nobody outside of the sexual minority that is under attack knows what is going on—or cares. The same anti-censorship forces that mustered to protest the dangerous biases of the Meese Commission have not called any press conferences, written any articles, or issued any public statements to denounce this witch-hunt.

It would please me to be wrong about this, but I get the impression that most anti-censorship feminists are just relieved that it’s “only” S/M material, which they never approved of anyway, which is being threatened. When they attacked the Meese Commission or criticized obscenity legislation authored by anti-porn activists, these women were repeatedly characterized by their opponents as sadomasochists, supporters of child abuse, advocates of rape, pimps, fascists, etc. They resented being associated with what they think of as the sexual lunatic fringe. I don’t think many of them will have the guts to risk getting smeared again by trying to arouse some public indignation over gross violations of S/M people’s First Amendment rights and right to privacy. But somebody needs to say that this is censorship, that it is not okay, that we cannot afford to ignore it. It seems

that the sex debate in the women's movement is right back where it started—the only people who dare criticize anti-porn crusades are perverts, because we are the ones most at risk and we are the ones with nothing to lose. Meanwhile, it's business as usual back in Women's Studies and the ACLU.

The written word—thus far—receives protection under the First Amendment in this country, even if the words are about “violent” sex. But in the rest of the English language market—England, Canada, Australia, New Zealand—no such protection applies. It may be very difficult for a citizen of any Commonwealth country to buy a copy of this book. And we should remember that censorship is not always a matter of state intervention. It can be a matter of which books are ordered by a bookstore, in what quantities, and how they are displayed; which books are reviewed (and how); what your friends' reactions are when they see you own a particular work; how far publishers dare go with their next book.

Which brings us back to the question I asked earlier. If somebody does not want you to read this book, why is that? Because it goes beyond customary limits of candor? In other words, because it is a little too honest? What are they afraid of?

No matter how poetic I am, some people will never be able to see anything beautiful about the authoritarian set of a woman's broad shoulders inside a leather jacket that is well broken in, or the curve of a submissive's back when she dares to kneel and arch her shoulders for the lash. The prospect of a human body being rendered helpless, put under slowly increasing stress, so that the maximum amount of sensation can be run through skin, nerves, and muscles, will always seem horrifying to some readers, not a fascinating attempt to bring out the body's stamina and grace. Do these people hate me, do they want sadomasochists to cease to exist, because of a different notion about what constitutes the good and the beautiful?

Sadomasochists are immensely useful as a metaphor for evil, for violence, for prejudice, for hate—and that metaphor is a big lie; it is nothing but projection.

It is the notion of consent that the rest of the world finds so abhorrent. It is the notion of sexual choice. It is the notion of having an absolute right to set one's own limits. The majority prefers compulsory sexual arrangements, wherein people can be labeled according to race, age, class, and gender, and plugged in and made use of, performing as suburban housewives or street hookers, young work-a-daddies and pimps, street kids and their clients, incest victims and their abusers, mistresses and their keepers, unwed mothers, closeted choice, lesbians and gay men, everybody a guard or a prisoner, with no safe word, no negotiation. This system generates relatively little selfish, individual, direct, genital pleasure. Instead, it generates abstract pleasure, vicarious pleasure, pleasure-of-social-position, the cud-chewing pleasure of belonging, of being fenced into a pasture with other cud-chewers, the resentful pleasures of martyrdom or the intrusive pleasures of overseeing and bullying others (and the attendant anxious pleasure of anticipating their revenge).

Force is not a part of the province of sadism and masochism, not part of the territory of leather and latex, bondage and discipline. It is normal. Coercion is an accepted part of daily life for most people. And most people are unwilling to relinquish the threat of violence, of bodily harm, of stigma, of forced reproduction, of curfew and limited movement, of a vague danger that lies in wait to punish the person who is too sexually different, too adventurous, to enforce their morés.

Until all deviants are no longer hounded, there will not be such a thing as vanilla sex, if by that you mean a sexuality free of compulsion. And the closest you will be able to come to sexual freedom of choice will be in the territories of the erotic minorities, which you must struggle hard to locate and gain admission to, which you must work hard to maintain a membership in, and which takes even more effort if you want to expand the little bit of territory your community has. If you don't believe we choose to do S/M, you aren't using the term "consent" in any meaningful way, but rather as a synonym for "mature," "socially acceptable," and "politically correct." What we choose to do with our freedom may appall you, but it is none of your business. If you are prepared to do anything at all to compel us to make other choices, or even make it more difficult for us to wear our leather in public, buy S/M equipment and literature, and meet one another,

are you really one of the good guys? Or just another vice cop without a badge?

When attempts are made to keep people from reading about S/M or hearing us speak out, or even associating with us, it isn't knowledge about S/M that is being banned or controlled. It is knowledge of itself that the supposedly egalitarian, democratic, vanilla majority fears. If someone believes that there is nothing wrong with the object of their desire, and yet is willing to repeatedly postpone obtaining it, to sacrifice it, to do without it, or trade it for a romance or a better job or a good reputation, they are bound to be angry when we insist on having our deviant desire, without guilt, apologies, or explanations.

Some people cannot be trusted with a helpless body. You know who you are. Some people don't choose to take responsibility for the pain they inflict on others. Some people think it's kinder to ignore a need they don't understand, to starve someone in the name of decency or equality or love. I don't believe in an omnipotent, omniscient God, because that would make the world a truly horrible place, beyond human redemption. But if you'd feel safer spending a night with one of them than you would with me or some other macho slut, I'll remember you in my prayers.

## Jessie

I wandered around the huge loft, dodging elbows and carelessly held cigarettes. Small groups of women sprawled in chairs, doing more laughing than talking, unaware of how raucous they had become. “What was this, a benefit or something?” I heard someone ask behind me. No one answered her.

The party had gone on until the floor was littered and the room was almost empty. It was past midnight. Women who had to work in the morning and the tight, fledgling couples and the militant nonsmokers had picked up their jackets and gone home. The rest of us would probably have to be asked to leave one at a time, and helped out with a hand on the elbow. In the meantime, it was still possible to convince yourself you had a chance to pick somebody up, and there were enough dancers to attract a ring of voyeurs, all of whom seemed to have their arms around each other.

“Fanatics,” I muttered, and edged past an ample hip clothed in denim. Eventually, I successfully threaded my way to the aluminum garbage cans that held the empties and carefully balanced my contribution on top of a precarious mountain of cans. I stepped back and admired our collective alcoholic capacity. The sight gave me a foolish, vicarious pride.

Leaning on a column, I added up my individual score—my rule being that any total is okay and calls for another drink as long as I can get it without counting on my fingers. By that lenient reckoning, I wasn’t really drunk, just loose in the joints. So I drew a bead on the refreshment table and swam toward it, navigating in slow, exaggerated circles around various female obstacles.

“Don’t shake anything loose!” some irreverent dyke yelled at me. I laughed at her and stuck out my tongue. She was not attractive. “What’s your hurry?” she persisted. I kept going, pretending I hadn’t heard her.

The women selling beer were harassed and impatient. “We’re going to close,” one of them told me over an ice chest full of beer and cold water. Her black hair was stringy with perspiration. “That’s nice,” I said. “I want a Bud.” She sighed with exasperation and fished me out a dripping can. “Buck-fifty,” she grunted. I dug up exact change. She tossed my money into a little cardboard box and hustled over to her comrades, who were sharing a joint in a not-too-dark corner. “You’re welcome,” I politely informed her scapula.

“Bad service is politically correct at women’s events,” someone said at my elbow. I checked her out while I was laughing. She was tall and blonde, with the shoulders of a swimmer. I love butch-looking women. They are disconcerted by my admiration, my willingness to be flattered into bed and ordered around. Sometimes they treat me with suspicion, which I blithely ignore, continuing to give them what they like without talking about it. I’m not looking for a husband or a daddy, and I don’t consider myself a femme—I just turn on to aggressive and strong women. I love french kissing and finger fucking, and I could very easily imagine this woman probing my mouth with her tongue, arranging me on her bed to allow her to penetrate me still more deeply, more fully.

“Hey Maxine!” somebody yelled. “Get your ass over here and DANCE with me!”

Her eyebrows, which had begun to frame a question, shot back to home base. “’Scuse me,” she said, and shouldered by. I sighed wistfully, shreds of fantasy trailing uselessly around me. Tomorrow morning, as I salted my scrambled eggs, it would come to me in a sudden burst of inspiration—what I should have said to hook her attention. Alas and damn.

Thinking I was maybe a little drunk after all, I wandered away from the music and noise. There was an open window in the back of the room. I climbed up on a table to get to it and perched on the sill. This was the second story of a warehouse, so I had a good view of the stars and the freeway. I didn’t open my beer, just rolled the cold can on my forehead and cheeks. When the metal got warm, I set it beside me, and ran my fingers through my hair. The slight breeze was ice-cold on my damp scalp. It set my teeth on edge and made me shiver with delight.

Up to now, the evening had been a success. With enough rock 'n' roll and beer under my belt, the universe had begun to make sense; I had no grievances against myself; all the women around me were funny or sexy or at least basically good at heart. Now, I felt an ache in my bones from too much boogeying, and along with it came an edge of creeping misogyny. There went a woman who looked like a monkey—and that one looked too far gone for Maybelline or methadone to fix what was wrong with her. My high, fine feeling was beginning to melt away.

The party was going through an ebb cycle, too. A big, dark woman left her buddies with a parting insult that had them roaring with laughter. She dug her patient, wallflower lover out from under a table where she had fallen asleep, gently shook her awake, and propelled her toward the stairs. The dancing partners in silver lamé jackets and David Bowie haircuts who had been the Disco Queens of the evening finally collapsed in each other's arms and tottered on their glitter-encrusted platform shoes to the EXIT sign. The nice lady who had sold me my beer grabbed her purse and split, a six-pack under each arm.

I popped the top of my beer and took a gulp, trying to recapture my euphoria. My epiglottis had begun to bob when I remembered that my car was in the shop—sideswiped yesterday morning in the parking lot. The buses had stopped running hours ago. Shit, I would have to call a cab. The thought of hunting a pay phone in this neighborhood, at this hour, was bitterly depressing. The beer tasted like shampoo. I turned and spat my mouthful out the window, and poured the rest of the can after it.

I should have struck up an acquaintance with that baby butch who harassed me about my walk. In fact, there were half a dozen women I suddenly realized I could have and should have taken home with me. I was just too damn picky. One was too scrawny, one was a phony, one was not The One, and then there was none. I sorted madly through the available bodies. Not one of the runner-ups was left. I would have to start from scratch—and I couldn't see anybody who stirred even a faint interest in me.

“Come clean,” I told myself sternly. (I am always forcing myself to confess to one sin or another—when I can't find someone else to make me.) “You have cut off your nose rather than iron a handkerchief. You have made your own bed and short-sheeted it. You have counted the bush in your hand



before the bird was hatched. In fact, my dear, you didn't really want any of the ladies who made themselves agreeable to you. You had your sights set on Jessie, and when she walked out with her latest cheap thrill, you just weren't going to settle for second best. Well, you sat on the merry-go-round with a poker up your ass. Now you can twirl on it."

I reminded myself that masturbation is the foundation of female sexuality, a mode of gratification that is every bit as valid as getting it on with a partner. I tried to work up a little enthusiasm for the new forty-dollar vibrator a friend had bought for me in Japan. It was only a week old, and bright orange. I asked myself, what would Betty Dodson think if she could see me standing here, practically in tears because I can't get some woman who doesn't even know my name to seduce me? She would hit me over the head with my own cunt portrait and send me back to Remedial Sexuality with my index finger taped to my clit.

I could make myself laugh, but I couldn't make myself any less horny. I started thinking about Jessie, lovingly enumerating all those things about her that made my toes curl.

One of my more articulate lovers once told me I was a star-fucker. She was as accurate as she was hostile. Oh, my, yes, Jessie was a celebrity. She played bass for a women's band that performed regularly in the city. And she was good. In fact, The Bitch had been playing for the dance tonight—which is why I showed up.

There wasn't a woman in town who didn't want to be held the way Jessie held that bass guitar, and she new it. At every performance, she had this little ritual she went through. The whole crowd knew it by heart, and some of us shook our heads and said, "Oh, Christ!" as we watched it unfold, but we all loved it. She always started off behind the rest of the band, in the shadows where you could hardly see her. The Bitch did their tuning up while restless women milled around, greeting stray friends with the demand, "When are they going to start, for godsake?" While the rest of the band was still trying to find high C, Jessie would slip off her leather jacket and hand it to her current lover, who would worshipfully accept it, carefully fold it, and carry it offstage, to jeers and cheers from the audience. We all thought it was humiliating as hell, but none of us would have refused to do it.

Just when you were ready to bet they wouldn't get started for another half hour, Jessie would hit a chord and they'd be on. They nearly always opened with the Stones' song, "Bitch"—what else? She didn't sing on that one, but if you sat in the first two rows, you could catch her cynical smile at the crucial lines.

She wore tight, ragged T-shirts that clung to her frame. Her lean body an arc of total concentration, she would bend over her instrument, creating a hard, clean rhythm that was the power behind The Bitch. It was irresistible. You couldn't help but respond. The beat she laid down could have taught a fool how to dance.

As the set progressed, she would move closer and closer to the audience until she had assumed front-center stage. By this time, they were playing some of their own music—"Boxcar Bertha," "Snake Goddess," "How to Liberate a Lady"—and Jessie had kicked out all the stops. The music kept getting faster, louder, and more dangerous. Women would be jumping up, dancing on their chairs if there wasn't any room in the aisle, possessed by the music. She would be moving too, taking these incredible leaps and coming down to hammer out another riff, never missing a beat. She rarely looked at the audience, and the occasional wicked grins she flashed at us elicited roars all the way to the back of the crowd.

They closed with "Backdoor Man," Jessie's solo. She didn't bother to introduce it or justify it. She just put every ounce of her bitterness and pride into it, and when she sneered, "The men don't know what the little girls understand," we howled with one voice.

They never did encores. After they disappeared from the stage, a lot of leftover energy would be flying around. One post-concert crowd was treated to a knife fight in the best tradition of *West Side Story*. (Nobody got hurt. The two combatants wound up leaving the woman they had been fighting over to fend for herself, while they went home with each other.) When members of The Bitch were confronted about this in the feminist press and asked to comment, they all disclaimed responsibility and shuffled and apologized—all of them, that is, except Jessie. She scowled and announced that it was time for women to reclaim their violence. "I just wish the stupid cunts would cut up some rapist instead of each other." Then she offered the interviewer a line of coke.

The journalist, Amazon Birdsong, was not mollified. She could afford to buy her own coke (pharmaceutical, an ounce at a time). She had wealthy parents who loved Te Kanawa, had never heard of Chuck Berry, collected first editions of D.H. Lawrence, but never went near an adult bookstore. After the stinging review she published (“Pornographic Attitudes Infiltrate Wimmin’s Music”), The Bitch didn’t get any gigs for six months. They were rescued by a women’s karate school on the brink of bankruptcy. The benefit concert they did there salvaged their foundering reputation and gave the bar owners an excuse to start booking them again.

Incidentally, the school had huge, blown-up photos of Jessie and other band members in the locker room. I wondered how many women took self-defense classes there just so they could shimmy out of their jeans under Jessie’s sardonic smile. I had been considering getting into Tae Kwon Do myself.

There was a stir at the head of the stairs. I looked over crossly, unwilling to interrupt my introspection. Then I saw who was causing the commotion. She had come back. It was Jessie.

I had an immediate physical reaction to her presence: my clit jumped. Then it started throbbing in time with my heartbeat. As I watched her speak to acquaintances here and there, moving on before a greeting could turn into a conversation, I began to shake a little—an erotic attack of fear.

The party picked up. There was a last-minute run on the beer and apple juice. More couples started dancing. Jessie found her spot on the stair railing and leaned there, not moving. I ran my eyes up and down the slim, well-muscled lines of her body, teasing myself with estimates of her strength, wondering what she would feel like pressed down against me, her arms wrapped around me.

She was taller than me by six or seven inches. Her dark hair was clipped short and neat. She was wearing a black velvet jacket that showed off her shoulders and lean build to perfection. A long, white scarf was knotted around her throat. Whenever she moved, the fringes floated behind her. The nerve of the woman, to come on so tailored and dykey, with that trailing length of silk to remind you she was very much a lady.

A roly-poly woman with long, cornsilk hair and a cowboy hat bustled over to offer a beer. Jessie thanked her and then turned three-quarters away. Her helpful fan talked to her shoulder for about five minutes before she got the idea and faded out.

The nerve of the woman!

A crowd began to spiral around her. She stood at its center, blowing smoke into the faces pushed too close to hers, nodding absently at whatever was said, but drawing so hard on her cigarette that it was obvious she took more pleasure from it than from her present company. All her movements were graceful and confident to the point of arrogance. I find arrogance irresistible.

Perched in my window, I wondered about Jessie. A friend of mine told me that her last lover left her because “she was tired of being pushed around.” Pushed around? How? I asked. My friend smiled mysteriously and began to roll another joint. It was the kind of remark that was calculated to set all my fantasy movie machinery in gear, and it had.

My fantasies have a way of turning into challenges. I started to frighten myself with the idea of going up to her. What the hell—she was a woman, like me. Puts her pants on one leg at a time just like the rest of the Lesbian Nation. Wouldn't it be enough just to talk to her for five minutes, introduce myself, even if she snubbed me? If I didn't expect too much, I couldn't really get my feelings hurt.

But I already expected a lot. Too much. I didn't want an autograph—I wanted to stroke that soft skin and feel the resilient muscle running underneath it. Light her cigarette? Bring her a beer? Ha! I wanted to have her under me so I could brush the tops of my breasts against her cheek, graze her half-opened lips with my nipples—shit, even a standard one-night stand would be a disappointment. I wanted something a little more exotic, a little more intense—kinky, to be exact. But maybe she wouldn't care if I was on my feet or on my knees. Maybe she only got off on crowd control. There was a split second when no hand was reaching for her arm; no one was sidling up with a joke to tell. Looking a bit quizzical at being left alone, she took a cigarette and tapped it on one thumbnail.

I found myself transported to her side. She turned her head to stare at me, and all the beer I had drunk ran straight into my bladder. We were too close. If I puffed out my breath, it would disturb the downy hairs along the sides of her neck.

She did not back away, just gave me a cold little once-over. I forced myself to stand my ground, keeping my feet apart and my hands unclenched at my sides, while she took in my tousled gold-brown hair; the tight, black leotard; the studded leather belt; and my faded, button-fly Levis. But I could only bear to look her in the eye for a few seconds before I had to drop my gaze to the toes of her boots. I was in agony. I had no alibi, no catchy opening line, no excuse. I needed a haircut. One of the buttons on my fly had slipped out of the frayed buttonhole. I tried not to pant, knowing that would expand my cleavage, and wound up hyperventilating. When I glanced up, she was, indeed, staring at my breasts ... or was she looking at my throat? Then her eyes flicked to my wrists, and back to my neck, and I knew what had caught her attention.

I was wearing, as I always do, two braided black-leather bracelets and a matching collar. It sounds dramatic, but most people don't notice them unless they know what they mean.

If she read me, it didn't show on her face. "What's your name?" she demanded.

"Liz."

She nodded, and continued to stare at me while she finished her beer. "Dance?" she said finally, and walked toward the music without looking back to see if I would follow.

I was there when she turned around. Her arms accepted me, fit me to her, and we began to duel with one another. I wondered how many women had been settled against her hip. How many eager cunts had pressed just where mine was pressed? More than she could remember, to judge from the practiced, almost automatic rhythm of her dance.

At first, we stared over each other's shoulders, our faces expressionless. This dance is so intimate that some formality must be maintained, even as one of her breasts fits between yours and you feel your own breasts similarly nestled. You must pretend there is no flame between you, no erotic

friction, no liquid silk sliding between your thighs. It wasn't easy for me to feign nonchalance. She was damnably competent. I finally quit wondering whether I was having hot flashes or cold chills and just let waves of excitement flicker up and down me, praying I wouldn't shiver in her arms. Her own smell (the salt of perspiration, the secret hollows and folds of her skin, the musk and wild onion of her sex) was mixed with tobacco and booze, and it aroused me so painfully that I wanted to bury my nose in her hair, her armpits, the folds of her labia.

She started playing with the braided leather band around my throat. "You have interesting taste in jewelry," she said casually. "What is this, a choker or something?"

"It's a collar," I said.

She was looking for a snap or a knot, but all she could find was the silver ring woven into the design. "Doesn't it come off?" she asked, turning it. I smiled. "Well," she shrugged, "I'm impressed."

She let me snuggle up to her, and rested her chin on the top of my head. "You're very sensitive," she drawled, stroking my neck. Goosebumps covered me in a flash. "Just the lightest touch ... and your skin is so pale." She pretended to take a professional interest in my health—"I hope you're not anemic?"

"No, but I bruise easily."

"Ahh." Her nostrils quivered.

My inner lips had continued to swell, unfurling themselves until they were in full bloom. I was slippery with hot vaginal oils. She continued to tease me, shifting suddenly to apply pressure when I least expected it, clinging and grinding against me when I tried to move away. I threw back my head and looked at her, letting her see the flush on my cheeks. Her eyes narrowed, and she began to coax more sensation from me, trying to see how high I could get without breaking away. My breath was coming in fits and starts. But it was she who suddenly uttered a short cry of surprise and ecstasy. I was startled—flattered. She took my chin in her cupped hand and brought me to her mouth. Teeth, clean and sharp, cut my lips. Her tongue rippled against my inner cheeks and palate. I moaned inside her mouth,

safe, where no one could hear me. My vagina was a fountain, little spurts of lubrication welling up out of me.

“I’m kissing you too hard,” she whispered, and released me.

“I can take rougher treatment than that,” I murmured in reply, and laid my cheek on her shoulder.

She twisted her hand in my hair and forced me to look at her. There was something like pity in her eyes, then that was replaced by a predatory joy. “Can you really?” she threatened.

“I can play any game you can come up with.”

“But I’m not playing.”

I considered carefully. “If anyone changes their mind, it will be you,” I promised quietly.

She squeezed my ass. Hard. “Do you know, I have never let a dare go by. Not once in my whole little life.” She danced me into a dark corner, kissing me up and down between my ear lobe and shoulder. Her lips were soft. She took little nibbles of me, like a doe working on a sapling. Now she pressed me against the wall, standing between me and the crowd. We kissed, and she slipped her hand into the spandex bodice of my leotard to fondle my breasts. My nipples responded instantly to her touch, pointed and hard as little pine cones. She used her tongue in my mouth, and I couldn’t stop my hips from responding. She stroked my back, belly, kissed me again and again, pinching my nipples and squeezing my breasts.

“How does that feel?” she whispered in my ear. “Did you know you’re dancing all over the place? Ooh, let me do that again. No—take your hand away—I want to. You want me to. I can tell you like it. You’re so turned on, I think I could make you come right now, in front of everybody.” She began to call me names—slut, bitch, whore, cunt—and they were rich and resonant in my ear, like an incantation. “You’re a very bad girl,” she said. “I think I should take you home with me and teach you a lesson. Only I don’t know if I can wait until I get you home.”

It seemed to me that everyone in the room must be staring. I tried to protest without drawing attention to us, but when Jessie started working on the buttons of my Levis, I shrieked.

She stopped what she was doing, her hand resting on my hip. “Apparently, I’m not the one who’s going to change her mind,” she drawled.

I winced. “Touché. I concede the point.”

“Mmm.” She wound her fingers in my hair. “What else are you willing to concede?”

“Whatever you can make me concede.”

“You won’t go along peacefully, huh? I have to use force?”

“Don’t you want to use force?”

Jessie laughed. “Point for you.” She put her hands up to her throat and untied her scarf. I stood perfectly still while she threaded one end through the ring on my collar. “This should insure your compliance,” she said, trying the knot with loving care.

The stairs were only a few steps away. She led me out, holding onto the other end of the scarf. I may have imagined it, but I thought I heard someone say, “Did you see that?” and someone else say, “Oh, my God!” behind us. It seemed to me that Jessie walked a little more briskly.

I concentrated on the high heels of her boots as she led me out of the building to her sports car. “They know about you,” I said jealously as she unlocked the door.

“And now they know about you, too,” she said harshly. “Get in. I didn’t ask you to worry about my maiden reputation.”

Her car was so little and low, I had to hunch myself and duck, then almost fall into the bucket seat. Jessie was already seated, whistling through her teeth and drumming her fingers on the steering wheel. She leaned across me to lock my door, then retrieved the end of the scarf and tied it around her wrist. “Can’t forget your safety belt, now can we?” We gave each other big smiles that were only twenty percent phony.

“What about your reputation?” she asked me, looking over her shoulder as she backed into the street.

“Shit, I’m no superstar. I don’t give a damn what they think.”

“Yeah, it hurts my feelings, too.”



I laughed ruefully. She drove very fast, hands at home on the steering wheel. My seat was comfortable and deep, tilted back so I could see half the night sky in the windshield's crystal curve. The stars blazed too bright for their pinpoint size, and the moon was a crispy, golden cookie, still waiting for the North Wind to take her first bite. I relaxed into the sensation of being taken somewhere, gliding smoothly through the night to an unknown destination. It was mysterious and soothing at the same time. Whenever she took a turn, there would be a slight tug at my neck, reminding me that she had chosen me and taken steps to "insure my compliance."

"Listen," she confided, "I have to confess, this has never happened to me before." She took a pack of cigarettes out of her jacket pocket and tossed them into my lap. I lit her a cigarette, passed it over, found the ashtray, and pulled it out. "Faggots do this all the time, right? They stick the right color bandana in their back pocket and stroll down the street and take their pick. But dykes ... I'm surprised we ever make it with each other."

"Really," I agreed. "I resent that romantic thing so much. I just can't take it seriously, having someone fall madly in love with you after their forth beer, and changing their mind over breakfast."

"Uh-huh," she nodded. She tapped ashes off her cigarette, then rolled her window down a little to carry out the smoke. "If the only information I had about lesbians was what I got out of women's newspapers, I would never tumble to the fact that we are female queers who actually go to bed with each other. I'd think lesbianism was a political party, like the Republicans and the Democrats, and all these women only got together because of our joint oppression. I mean, I know we all have a common political cause. Nobody knows it better than me, because our group is fucking good, we work so hard, and we can't get a recording contract with a straight company because we're all dykes. But no feminist record company is going to sign us up either, because they think hard-core rock 'n' roll is apolitical, and I have the reputation of a rapist. So we keep on playing for dances and parties and benefits and bars, and we always have a roomful of women dancing their asses off. But I don't even let anybody record our act any more. I'm tired of hearing myself on a scratchy little tape cassette."

I didn't know what to say. If I'd had a million dollars, I would have written her a check on the spot. "Bringing rock 'n' roll to the matriarchy is

a thankless task,” I finally ventured.

She thought that was funny. “I dig what I do,” she said. “I’d play for myself if nobody else would listen. I’d just like to see a little more honesty, that’s all. I’d like to hear somebody admit they come out and dance to us because we turn them on, not to further the feminist revolution.”

“That’ll happen the same day somebody walks up to me in a bar and says, ‘I want to fuck your brains out,’ instead of, ‘I think I’m falling in love with you.’”

She smoked the rest of her cigarette. When she turned to me, she had a crazy little smile on her face. “I want to fuck your brains out,” she told me, and watched me shiver from head to toe. Then she laughed and went back to driving.

There was a hiatus in our conversation, during which I sat peacefully, pretending the ride would never end. It was Jessie who broke the silence. “You know, you almost scared me off back there with your fancy jewelry. I wondered if we were in the same league. I mean, I don’t wear my handcuffs on my belt.”

So I wasn’t the only one who was afraid of being outclassed. That was reassuring. I smiled with satisfaction, and didn’t say anything.

“So where did you get them?” she demanded, a little impatiently.

“It’s a long story.”

“This is a long ride. Tell me.”

I shook my head. “You won’t believe it.”

“I won’t, huh? Come on, quit being coy.”

I rubbed my face, feeling a little sleepy. Where to start ... “Well, let’s see. My first experience with S/M was with Sue. And she had to hound me for months to tie her up and spank her. I insisted that she do it to me first, so I could be sure it was okay. Surprise, surprise, I found out I really like it, so I reciprocated, and we kept fooling around with it, but not doing anything heavy. I started suggesting we move into it a little further. That made her uneasy. When I bought her a leather paddle, she freaked out. For some reason, that was sick. We eventually broke up, ostensibly over class differences, and there was nobody to talk to. I think I tried once to explain it

to this friend of mine, my best friend, in fact. We had known each other since college, when we both came out during the same semester. So I was trying to describe this new component of myself I had begun to unearth, and she freaked out, too. She said something like, ‘After the months I’ve worked at the rape crisis center, I can’t stand to listen to this,’ and ran like a bunny. The next time I called up a few of my other old friends, they treated me with what I thought was distaste. Sue was not telling people about our class differences, it seemed. So I gave up calling anybody I used to know.”

“Sounds familiar,” Jessie said. “Where did you go from there?”

“I spent about a month just going to my shop and coming straight home. Staring at TV. Then I got disgusted with myself and fed myself a couple of drinks and drove myself down to one of the men’s leather bars. I was lucky the first time—it was real crowded, and the bartender didn’t spot me, so I hung out all night, tucked behind the jukebox, taking everything in a mile a minute. The next time I went there, it wasn’t so busy, and they kicked me out. So I went down the block to the next bar. It was real hard. But I kept thinking, there must be other women like me somewhere, I can’t be the only one, and sooner or later they’ll show up here, too. Because there is no place else to go.” I paused to take a deep breath, but Jessie didn’t say a word. She was fascinated. I wondered how much of my story was her story.

“Well, one night I was having a terrible time. I had hit my three favorite places. None of the bartenders I’d managed to make friends with were on duty, and none of the men I had met were there to vouch for me, so I got bounced out. I decided to check out this tiny little place I usually never bothered with. I just wanted to sit down for a few minutes and have a quick drink before I went home. So I walked in, asked for a beer, and the guy behind the bar says, ‘I don’t want to be rude, honey, but this is a men’s bar. I think you’d better leave.’ I didn’t even try to argue. I just slid off the stool and headed for the door.

“‘Can she stay if I buy her a drink?’ somebody asked. I thought I was hearing things. It was a very female voice. I did this slow-motion turn and panned the room. She was standing in the doorway, with the darkness behind her. As she moved toward me, I saw that she was wearing a black satin dress and a diamond choker. Oh, yes, with long, black gloves. And you know those spike-heeled fetish boots that look impossible to walk in?

Well, she wasn't having any trouble walking in hers. There were two men behind her, about six feet tall, in full leather—her honor guard or her bodyguards or something. They never looked at each other, only at her. I don't think they ever spoke. They just kept their hands behind their backs and stayed right at her heels. When she was about five feet from me, she stopped and threw her long, black hair back over one shoulder. She tilted her head and looked at me. It was obvious that she found me very amusing. While she enjoyed her private joke, I stared back at her. Her face was round, with strong features. She almost looked Chinese. And there was flesh around her chin, not quite a double chin, just enough flesh to make her look voluptuous and a little greedy.”

“I don't believe this,” Jessie said. “Are you making this up?”

“I warned you about that. You don't have any right to complain, so shut up.” Jessie continued to grumble, but I ignored her. “She made a little motion with her hand. The two guys froze where they were. I followed her down to the other end of the bar. The dress and her long hair rustled when she walked. Everything became more and more unreal. I felt like I'd walked into a movie. The bartender brought us each a tequila sunrise, without being asked. She took off her gloves—slowly—and tossed them to me. I folded them and laid them in my lap. I couldn't understand why I had caught her eye. I was wearing all the leather I had—a beat-up pair of cowboy boots and a bomber jacket. I looked like I'd gotten lost on my way to see the Ramones. But I looked like I belonged there more than she did.

“I think her first words to me were, ‘Do you come here often?’ Some cornball line like that. Her voice was so rich, it was a little threatening, like holding a conversation with a jaguar. She had my whole story in five minutes or less. From out of nowhere, she produced a little white card. There was an address on it, nothing else. ‘Present yourself, properly attired, tomorrow at one,’ she said, and held out her hand for her gloves. A split second after she stood up, her escort was back in position. When she turned to go, a flash of white thigh was exposed. Her dress was slit up the side. And I saw that she had a riding crop stuck in her boot.”

The grumbling had subsided into silent skepticism. I continued smoothly on.

“I presented myself the next day as requested. But I left my punk duds in a pile on the floor of my closet and dug out a dress I’d worn to my sister’s wedding, a white dress with a high neck and long, tight sleeves. It made me feel repressed and virginal. I didn’t have any fancy femmie underwear, so I didn’t wear any. At first I was embarrassed and thought maybe I was being too theatrical, but then I realized that I was pretty stupid, since I was going to meet someone who was about as subdued and understated as Mata Hari. Dressing up would only help me play my part better. So I hopped in my car and drove to the address on the card. I had to ring the bell and tell her who I was through the intercom. The door opened all by itself, and I had to climb up a winding set of stairs. There was a mirror at the first bend so she could see who was coming. She was wearing a different outfit, but it was the same aesthetic, straight out of Morticia Addams’ wardrobe. She seated herself on a red velveteen couch and told me to bring a tray with coffee and little cakes in from the kitchen. I think some of the coffee slopped over the edge of the cups onto the tray. And that wouldn’t do. That wouldn’t do at all. I didn’t think the punishment was in proportion to the crime, but I wasn’t about to complain.

“When it was finished, as we nibbled on pastries and drank the cold coffee, she made me an offer. She was a dominatrix. She had a separate room in her house—which I had not yet seen—fixed up with a standing rack and whips and dildoes and chains and a cage and a table. Submissive straight men paid her to do scenes with them. Once in a while, she would find someone who wanted to work with her, and train her to take on part of the clientele. When she was doing S/M for love instead of money, she preferred to play submissive to dominant men. She had an agreement with her master that she would not enter into any other ongoing S/M relationships. But she was curious about S/M dynamics between women. She told me that if I would stay with her for about a month, as her slave, she would give me a taste of every technique she knew. At the end of that time, if I had performed satisfactorily, she would reward me with permanent cuffs and a collar. She also told me that when my training was complete, she would put me out, and I would never see her again.”

Jessie had been signaling for another cigarette for five minutes. I finally “noticed” and supplied her with one. I could tell by the tightening of her

jaw that she took due notice of this provocation.

“It was crazy, and I loved it. I agreed at once. Most days, I went to work just the way I always had, but at night I went back to her house and entered this fantasy world where I was her slave and slept at the foot of her bed. I helped her dress and undress, did her makeup, shopped and cooked for her. Occasionally, she would have insomnia, and I would give her backrubs or read to her. She liked Edna St. Vincent Millay. When it struck her fancy, she would find fault with something I had done and teach me another lesson. She only took me into the dungeon a couple of times, when she had a new girl who was going to be working for her. Those were all-day sessions. She had to show her assistant, who usually didn’t know anything about the scene, how to use everything in the room—the three-part bondage table and the horizontal rack, the vibrators and butt-plugs and dildoes, all this elaborate enema equipment, mummy suits, and whips and straps and paddles. She usually concluded the training session with a watersports fantasy that went with the cage. If that didn’t freak the new girl out completely, she had a job in her dungeon.

“But most of the time, my instruction took place in her bedroom or the Victorian living room. She had eyebolts set in all the doorways, so I could be strung up in any room of the house. She had a sterling-silver hairbrush she used on me quite a lot. Let me tell you, once you’ve been fucked with a monogrammed silver hairbrush, rubber marital aids just don’t do it any more. She was very careful, very knowledgeable, and she made sure I always got off. Sometimes she stopped just short of pushing things to the point where she really enjoyed it because I couldn’t handle it. I think she never let herself go with me the way she did with the men she saw, whether they were clients or lovers. Women seemed too fragile or sensitive to her. I always had this sense that she was frustrated, couldn’t get enough from me, no matter how hard I tried.

“One night, she woke me out of a sound sleep and told me to follow her. We went into the specially equipped room. She undressed me, put me in standing bondage, then she braided the cuffs around my wrists and the collar around my throat. She had already packed my suitcase. Without saying a word, she brought it in and put it by the door. I knew this was our last scene. For the first and only time, she was completely selfish. It was all

for her. It was the only time she ever gave me amyl, and she gave me quite a lot of it. Between beatings, she would use my mouth. When I was finally too exhausted to take any more, she left me in chains and sat on the table in front of me and pleased herself—first with her hands, then with a vibrator. I went crazy trying to get to her. And I needed to come so badly myself, I couldn't see straight. As soon as she had her orgasm, she started to laugh. She was still laughing when she lowered my hands, put the key within my reach, and walked out. I could still hear her chuckling as she went down the hallway, shut herself into her bedroom, and locked the door. I undid the padlocks, dressed myself, and left, never to return. The End."

Jessie was hooting and pounding on the steering wheel. "I can't stand it, I can't stand it! Are you bullshitting me? Did that really happen? Hot damn! And I think I'm wicked and perverse."

All I could do was grin and swear that, yes, it really had happened. Now, I thought, I really should ask how she came to be a notorious sadistic womanizer.

"Well," she yawned, reaching for another cigarette, "this is a challenge to my professional reputation. With competition like that, I better bring out the heavy artillery. Never let it be said that a capitalistic, bisexual madam put one over on a socialist, dyke-separatist musician. It just wouldn't do. Woman, I can't wait to get my hands on you. I can still feel those nice, soft tits of yours." She chuckled. "I really thought you were going to wiggle right out of your skin back there in that nice, dark corner. Do you do that for everybody who puts the make on you?"

"No"

"Just for me?"

"Just for you."

"Liar. Unbutton the top button of your jeans." Any ideas about hearing her life story vanished from my mind.

I put my hand to my crotch and complied with her request.

She savored her smoke, exhaling it slowly and tapping her ashes lazily, as if she were on a Sunday drive to no place special.

"You can undo another button now."

I opened my pants another notch. She took another drag, this time exhaling more smoke in my face. We played this game until there were no more buttons. Then she shifted her attention to another part of my body.

“Put your hand inside your leotard. Now touch your breast. The left one. Play with the nipple. How does that feel?”

“Ah—”

“Do the same thing with the other one. Is it hard yet?”

“Yes. Wrinkled like a raisin.”

“Can you lick your own nipples?”

“I don’t know.”

“Try.”

I found that by bending my neck down and turning my nipple up, I could, indeed, get it in my mouth. The sensation of sucking on my own tit was delicious. She waited, already one step ahead of me, lost in her plans.

“Put one hand inside your pants. Can you feel your pubic hair?”

“Yes. It’s crisp and curly.”

“What color is it?”

“Black.”

“You must not be a real blonde then. Cigarette—but don’t move that hand.”

I managed to light the cigarette with my left hand. She watched me, amused by my fumbling.

“Slide your hand down and just cup it over your cunt. I want you to keep playing with your tits with the other hand. But don’t try to beat off. Just leave that hand quiet on your cunt, like a good girl.”

“I can feel the heat—Jessie—”

“I think I’d like to listen to the radio,” she said to no one in particular, and turned it on. She sang along with the music, her harsh, vibrant voice reminding me (if I needed reminding) who I was sitting next to.

I dared complain during a commercial. “Jessie, my nipples are sore.”

“Okay, you want to stop? I don’t care. Button up and put your hands in your lap.”



“Jessie, please, I’m so turned on I hurt. Please—”

“Don’t,” she warned.

“I need to—”

“I don’t care what you need. You’ll wait until I want to hear you come.”

Five more long minutes of music. She switched off the radio in the middle of a song. “You can put your finger between the inner lips, down by your hole. Are you wet?”

“Yes,” I gasped.

“How wet?”

“I’ve been lubricating for over an hour, thinking about how it felt to be pressed up against your hip. Even your eyes looking at me felt like you were stroking my cunt. I’m wet enough to drown someone.”

“Put your finger just barely inside the opening. Move in little, light circles.”

“I’m burning.”

“Burn.”

There was no sound in the car save the purring of the engine and my own labored breathing.

“Can you get two fingers inside your cunt?”

“Easy.”

“Do it. Fuck yourself. I want to hear it.”

I buried my fingers inside myself and pumped. The juices made sucking noises as my hand moved up and down.

“How do you get off? Do you put your fingers on your clit?”

“No, I do it just like this.”

“Do you want to come?”

“Yes, I can’t stand this. I’m so swollen, so sticky.”

“Well, I’m real sorry about that, because if you can’t stand this, there’s no way you’re going to make it through the rest of the evening. Run your finger up and down between your inner and outer lips. Do it on both sides. Spread the wetness up and cover your clit with it.”

“It’s slippery and smooth. Feels like being stroked all over. My nipples are still hard—I can feel them brushing against my leotard.”

“Jostle your clit a little bit.”

“I can’t find it. It’s gone up under the hood.”

Her knuckles on the steering wheel had gone white. She was staring intently at the road, but her breathing had quickened.

“I need to come. Please, let me come. I’ll be good for you later, I promise. I’ll do anything you want. Anything. Just let me. Come. Now, please, please.” I was babbling. I was begging so hard.

God, she was pleased with herself. “You can start,” she told me.

I cupped my hand over my mound and dabbled a finger in the molten hole of my vagina.

“Make more noise.”

I let myself moan. I couldn’t believe the things I was saying, the sounds I was making. My hand moved faster, harder, higher. But my climax hung off, waiting—

“Go on, come. Come now.”

That was all it took. I had waited so long, my orgasm was unbelievably intense. My vagina tightened like a fist, then convulsed and shuddered. I counted contractions as I continued to hold and squeeze my vulva. Waves of pleasure ran down my thighs, melted away, and filled me with a warm, sleepy glow.

Jessie pulled into a driveway and turned off the engine. She reached for me and searched my body with her hands, feeling the film of perspiration that covered me from head to toe. She explored my cunt, running her fingers up and down the inner lips and probing inside of me briefly. “You weren’t kidding,” she said. “You really are wet! Are you going to sing that pretty for me?” She nuzzled my neck. “That was quite a performance.”

I didn’t respond. My eyes were half-closed. I felt limp and languorous. She tapped my cheek lightly. “Wake up. We haven’t even started yet.” The blows began to sting, and I put my hand up to ward them off. She grabbed my wrist. “What happened to all that sweet submission, huh? You promised to do anything for me, remember? I do. You owe me, honey.”

She got out, came around to my door, and dragged me out of the car. Tugging on the scarf, she said, “Heel,” and headed for her door. I almost stumbled, then recovered my footing and followed her.

I couldn’t guess where we were going. All I could see were storefronts. But she stopped in front of an iron grating and took out her keys. “No neighbors,” she told me with a grin. “It took me three months to find this place. I couldn’t afford to soundproof my last apartment, and I got kicked out for making too much noise. The rent is cheap, too.”

Nobody could hear us? I felt a twinge of alarm. I hardly knew her. Anything could happen. How could I trust her? Because she never once showed any sign of doubting herself, something in me responded. There are plenty of people I’ve known for years that I’d never consider allowing to tie me up. Who knows why I trusted her and not them? It was an arbitrary decision, after all, and one perhaps not totally in my control.

She held the grating open behind her. We climbed the stairs, our heels clicking on the stone steps. Her key rattled in the lock. She pushed me in ahead of her, locking the door behind us. It was absolutely dark. I could not tell if I stood in a room or a hallway. She moved closer to me until her breasts kissed my shoulders and stood, not quite touching me, for several seconds. Then she sighed. Her expelled breath contained such weariness and resignation—I was overcome by an irrational desire to hug her knees and weep.

She seized my wrists, brought the scarf back through my crotch, and tied my hands together. The deftness of her movements provoked my lust again. Being tied makes me feel safe and somehow confident and very, very sexy.

She moved away from me, returning with a fat, lit candle.

“We’ll go that way to the bathroom—she said, pointing down the hall. I took a step in that direction. She slapped me, hard. I rocked back on my heels, and she hit me again. My face burning, I stared at the floor and tried to control my tears. “Not so goddamn fast,” she hissed. “Who gives the orders here? You?”

“No, no,” I stuttered.

She struck out again. “Get down on you knees, damn you. Get down.”

I almost fell in my hurry to avoid any more blows. I could not balance with my hands tied behind me. Once on my knees, her hips were inches from my nose. "I'm sorry, I choked."

"Sorry," she sneered. "Do you think that's all it takes to get yourself off the hook? 'I'm sorry,'" she mimicked. "You're not sorry, you're stupid. You don't do anything until I tell you to do it. Have you got that? Or are you too stupid to take orders?"

I couldn't answer. I must have leaned toward her, because she took me by my hair and pulled my head back. "Why are you in such a hurry?" she murmured, stroking my hot cheek. "Did you think I was going to fuck you in the john?" I saw her hand go back—flinched—the grip on my hair tightened, and she held my head while she slapped me.

"You don't realize just how helpless you are," she crooned into my upturned face. "I could leave you tied up all night and never even touch you. I could open the front door and push you downstairs. Where would you be then? Hmm? Or I could go out myself, for a drive. Maybe back to the dance to pick up another piece of ass. There are plenty more where you came from. Don't you think you'd better behave yourself? You better think about someone else's pussy for a change. Keep me happy, or I won't get you off. After all, that's what you came here for, isn't it? A little fancy sex? Someone who would tickle your slit?"

I was blushing furiously. Tears were starting to wet my cheeks.

"Oh, look, she's going to cry. Are you trying to turn me on? Hmm, damsel in distress? Quit looking at the ceiling. Get your head down to where it belongs. Look at me, here."

Her hips were tantalizingly close. There was a niche in the wall, and she put the candle on the recessed shelf. "I was going to let you eat my cunt," she whispered, "but now, I don't know." She unzipped the black velvet slacks. Her pubic hair sprang from the zipper like a handful of soft, dark feathers.

"Please," I moaned.

"Beg me. You don't really deserve it."

I exerted every ounce of my persuasive powers. I started with a simple offer to lick her clit, and went on to describe the incredible and probably

impossible things I wanted to do to her.

“Whimper for it, bitch.”

“Let me kiss your cunt. Let me make you wet, then blow hot air all over you. I want to suck on your lips, run my nose and my chin against your clit. I’ll do it good for you. I’ll lick you so lightly, so carefully, as long as you like. Please, Jessie.”

She teased me, calling me a pussy-kisser, a cunt-lapper. Yes, something inside me said. I am all those things. And right now, that’s all I want to be. I ached to redeem myself. My mouth heated, watered, hurt with the need to service her.

She shucked her pants. I kept my place. “Better,” she said approvingly. “You’re learning.” She moved forward. “Tilt your head back a little,” she told me. She shoved her pussy into my face, enveloping my eyes and nose and mouth in her cunt. “Remember me,” she said, rubbing her perfume into my skin. “That is my smell, the essence of me. Now open your mouth a little and give me your tongue. Suck me. Go ahead. Eat me out. Flick that little pink tongue on my clit. Come on, you want it. Do it.”

I put my face between her thighs and devoured her, whimpering with greed. My mouth was full of her soft folds and thick honey and stray little curly hairs. She moaned when I hit a spot just above her clit, so I lavished every caress my lips and tongue could devise on it. It didn’t take long. She clamped my head to her, shook and bucked, crying my name.

When she pushed me away, my cheeks were smeared with her juices. She cupped my head in both hands and wiped my face with her thumbs. Our eyes met. “Now you have a taste of what I want,” she whispered. “I am going to possess you utterly, for my own pleasure, make you completely and totally mine. Are you willing?”

“I’ve never wanted anything more.”

“That’s the last time I’ll ask for your permission or consent. Follow me.” I struggled to my feet.

She took me into the bathroom and untied me long enough to unsnap the crotch of my leotard and pull it off over my head. She retied my hands so they were crossed in front of my throat. Then she took down my pants. It was humiliating, being exposed like a small child, but comforting, too. She

put me on the toilet. The seat was cold against my bare ass, but when she stood close to me and hugged me to her breasts, I was warm all over. “Go ahead, piss,” she said, a patient teacher encouraging a not-too-bright student to give the right answer to a very simple question.

To my horror, I could not. It was not the right time to get piss-shy. She made a tch-tch noise with her tongue and turned on the bathtub faucets. Keeping her back to me, she tossed two pearls of bath oil into the tub and emptied a packet of bubble bath in after them. I could smell the fragrance, but it was the sound of the falling water that affected me the most powerfully. My bladder began to empty.

She was with me in a split second, and, for a miracle, my urethra did not lock itself back up. Her arms tightened around me, and I knew the sound was arousing her. It was a very intimate moment. I felt closer to her than I’ve felt to some women who had their tongues in my mouth. When I was done, she wiped me neatly, took off my boots and socks, and told me to step out of my jeans. She hung all my clothes up behind the door. The leash (her scarf) was slipped off my throat and hung there as well. “Temporarily,” she reassured me.

She handled and examined me, squeezing my breasts and buttocks, slapping me lightly a couple of times on the ass. When the tub was full, she handed me into the water, then settled back to watch me bathe.

Jessie obviously spent a lot of time in her bathtub. There were several different brushes, washcloths, soaps, scrubbers, and sponges arranged on a bathwheel. There were enough towels around for four people. Enough room in the tub for them, too. I lathered myself thoroughly and slowly, rinsing with equal care. She made me stand up and face her to wash my cunt, smiled, and told me to wash it again.

When I got out, she dried me, using a very soft towel. All she had to do was pat me gently all over, and the moisture vanished from my skin. She would not let me dress (or pee) again, just wrapped me in another towel and ordered me to kneel for the leash. I was so glad she did not forget that small detail. It is easy to forget a promise made to someone who is in your power. But it is by such small things that adoration flourishes or withers away.

Using the silk leash, she guided me across the hall into another room. I was in candlelight again, so I couldn't see clearly, but I picked out the vague shape of a piano in the corner. One wall was plastered with posters—no, they were blown-up photographs. I recognized Patti Smith, Chrissie Hynde, Joan Jett, Girlschool. “Where did all those pictures come from?” I asked.

“I’m a photographer,” she said briefly. “And a groupie.”

“Oh.” What else could I say? I have to admit, if any of those women made her feel the way she made me feel, I didn’t want to know about it. At least, not right now.

It was a long room, and she kept me going, toward the back. There was a balcony—no, a fire escape—on my right. The window let in some light from the street, and I could see potted plants sitting outside. A tape deck and stereo gear sat in front of the window. The floor was covered with several deep, soft Oriental and Navajo rugs, thrown on top of each other. To my left was her bed. It had four posts of even height, hand-carved statuettes of naked women. And there was a large wardrobe sitting against the back wall. It was here that she led me. “Drop the towel,” she said softly, and opened its doors. A light came on inside it.

Mirrors had been hung on the doors and back panel of the wardrobe. I was startled by the picture we made. We were a study in contrasts. I was small in front of her, very naked, my skin rosy from arousal and need. My full curves were juxtaposed with her height and angularity and the black velvet suit. She looked the part of a perfect gentleman-dyke who just happened to have a lady on a leash.

We spent some time looking at ourselves. Our reflections fell behind the whips and restraints she had hung inside the cupboard. She touched each one, setting them all to swaying. There was a Victorian walking cane, a riding whip, a cat, a bullwhip, and some others I didn’t know by name. A few of them looked too menacing to be applied to human flesh. I hoped they were there for effect only.

While my attention was engaged by the instruments of flagellation and various other toys in her closet, she reached for a long rope that dangled from the ceiling. She clipped the snap at the end of it through both bracelet

rings, and removed her scarf from around my neck. I was sorry to see it go, it being the first thing that had bound me to her. She tickled my nose with the fringes, trying to make me laugh. I wouldn't. "Well, if you insist on getting sentimental about it," she shrugged, and tied it around my eyes.

I could hear her moving around, humming, picking things up, opening drawers. She turned on a little electric heater—I could hear its fan. She pushed a tape into the stereo, and dark music throbbed softly in the background, gathering power.

The hairs on my skin stirred slightly, announcing that she had returned and was standing quite close to me. "I'm going to touch you," she said, and left me time to wonder how and when. I anticipated a slap, a whip, a caress, a scratch—but not what actually happened.

She stroked me with oil. Warm oil. Her touch was firm and possessive, and left me feeling both valued and valuable. She rubbed the lubricant into my skin from the neck down, kneeling and placing my feet one by one on her thigh to massage them.

Then I felt cold metal swing against my belly. She passed a chain through the ring of my collar, between my legs, up my back, and padlocked it to itself after running it under and over the back of the collar. "Nice," I heard her murmur. "It gleams against your skin. You make a fetching slave."

I moved a little to feel the pull of the chain against my cunt. It was snug, providing just the right amount of friction. The oil made my thighs slip unexpectedly past each other, giving me a feeling of sensuous insecurity.

"You like?" she asked me, using a sleazy, Tijuana pimp's accent.

I did not respond.

"I like. Too bad you can't see yourself. You'll just have to use your imagination. In fact, that's all you're going to have for the next little while—your imagination. Because I'm leaving."

I was dismayed. I twisted my head, but the blindfold prevented me from catching any glimpse of her. And my ears were not reliable. I could not tell if her voice came from behind me, to my side, or in front of me.

"Think about all those nice playthings you saw hanging in my closet. And imagine how alluring you are in chains, blindfolded, with your arms



above your head.” The palm of her hand barely brushed my nipples. “You have beautiful breasts anyway, but now—well...” I heard footsteps. “Try not to dwell on all the dreadful things I’m going to do to you when I get back,” she called. “If I get back,” she added thoughtfully, as she closed the door.

The minute she left, I lost all track of time. I seemed to be there, alone, for hours. The music was still going, but I wasn’t familiar with how tape decks worked or with the music. Maybe the same tape had played through several times.

My arms were not stretched so tight as to be uncomfortable, and the rug and electric heater kept me from getting chilled. But still, I fidgeted. Where was she? Was she taking a bath? Watching TV? I couldn’t hear anything from the rest of the house. I squirmed impatiently. What if she had decided to leave and go back to the dance? Maybe she was asleep on the couch.

My frustration was invaded by an overwhelming sensory memory. I could hear her say, “Tilt your head back.” And I was overcome by the perfume of her sex, felt her rub her pussy into my face. “Remember me,” she had said. “This is me, my essence.”

I no longer cared how much time had passed. I waited patiently, even blissfully, only shifting position to make myself more comfortable. Someone in bondage may look passive, but you always have to work hard to stay in it.

I did not hear the doorknob turn, or her footsteps falling on the carpet. Once again, it was some imperceptible heating of my skin, an oh-so-slight stirring of the hairs on my forearms and the back of my neck, that warned me I was in her presence.

She removed the chain that bisected my body, lowered my hands, and unclipped the rope that held my wrists together. Hooking her fingers through both my bracelets, she led me—still blindfolded—in the direction of her bed. She positioned me so I could feel the edge of the mattress on the back of my calves.

“On your back and spread your legs,” she ordered. “Get your hands up and out.” She buckled leather cuffs around my ankles, then tied my hands and feet to the corner posts of her bed. “I’m going to take your blindfold

off,” she said, slipping a pillow under my head. “I want you to see how fuckable you look.” The fringes trailed across my face.

She had drawn a folding screen across the foot of the bed. On the back of the screen was a delicate painting of a partially clothed Japanese geisha. She was seated in her bedroom, and between her feet she held a large mirror, tilted to reflect her genitals. Only the mirror was real, so I was the one who was caught in the mirror, not her.

My thighs were soft and round. They looked very white and vulnerable, spread open against the black satin bedspread. And my ass swelled invitingly, a little crease of it showing. My inner lips and clitoris nestled, ruddy and wanton, in a full nest of dark curls.

“Look up,” she said.

There was a mirror on the ceiling as well. I realized that if I was not looking at my own genitals, I would be viewing my whole body, stretched taut and helpless. There was no avoiding these mirrors. They confronted me continuously with my open, exposed sex; my securely restrained limbs.

As I tested my bonds (my breasts quivered every time I moved), a peculiar, flickering light sprang onto the walls. Jessie was lighting more candles. She slipped a new tape into the deck. Cool, meditative flutes played for us.

She appeared at the foot of the bed. My mouth went dry.

The candle she carried put half her face in shadow, giving her a cruel and hooded look. She wore a long kimono about her slim shoulders, belted loosely to show a hint of her breasts. The sheer silk draped well on her angular frame, whispering like a shy woman every time she moved. She stared down at me, one hand trailing cigarette smoke.

My body sang with anticipation.

She found a place for the candle on a table by the bed. Then she drew closer, stood between my legs. “How do you like them?” she asked, gesturing at the mirrors. “Does it excite you? Shame you? It’s meant to do both. I want you to be able to see everything that’s done to you, so you can’t close your eyes and say it never happened.” She drew her fingernail down the inside of my thigh. “Such delicate skin. Even the gentlest lover would leave her mark on you. And now I have my chance.”

She moved again outside the range of my vision, back toward the wardrobe. “Did you see anything over here to tickle your fancy?” She returned with a handful of whips, and made a mock presentation of them to me. “A masochist’s bouquet,” she jeered, bowing. “How about this one?” She held up the most grisly one of the lot. It had several tails that ended in sharp bits of metal.

My courage failed me. “Actually, it’s only good for quickies,” she said, “and making hamburger.” I slumped with relief, then saw she was only teasing me. The monologue continued. “Now, this one was given to me as a name day present by a little old nun who only used it on Sundays—and then only on herself.” That one was made of hemp cords, each one ending in three thick knots. She tossed it away, too. “Actually,” she said, discarding the rest, “I want to use something a little more personal.” She stuck her cigarette in her mouth and talked around it as she shrugged out of the kimono. “Something you can remember me by.”

Under the kimono, she was wearing blue jeans with a broad leather belt and no T-shirt. I stared at her small, brown breasts, seeing something I couldn’t believe. She smiled at me and traced the criss-cross scars with a forefinger, then turned so I could follow them onto her back. “I wanted you to see these,” she said, “so you’ll know that whatever I do to you has been done to me. I know what you feel, laying there bound, awaiting punishment at my hand. I know.”

She unbuckled her belt and drew it slowly through the loops of her Levis. I tried to relax, to stop the tension building in my body, but instead my muscles began to quiver and jerk.

She doubled the belt in her hand and drew her arm back, held it poised above me. I cringed, trying to flatten myself against the bed, as it came singing down—to hit the mattress.

“Ahh—surprised you.”

She trailed it down my body, brought it up again, struck suddenly—and the belt smacked the bed between my legs. I was breathing hard. “Scared?” she asked sympathetically. And did it again.

“Do your nipples always pucker when you’re frightened?” Her fingers brushed the edges of my labia, her touch insulting me. “You little whore,

you're wet already, and I haven't even touched you." She pushed two fingers slowly inside of me, turning her hand from side to side. "Either you're not really scared, or you have your wires crossed, honey." She thrust deeper inside of me and gently moved my cervix. "Little mushroom," she whispered, "hidden away, so spongy-soft and secret. No—don't wiggle away. Hold still." The friction warmed my vagina until I thought I would burst into flame. To lie passive was impossible. I struggled wildly—to escape or to increase my pleasure, I hardly knew which.

"Stop that!" Her fingers were motionless within me. I rested, panting, and she began again. I moaned, and my hips rocked in response to the repeated, slow penetration.

"Lay still."

I tried to clamp my ass to the mattress. For a minute or two, I succeeded. But she was so skillful, fucking me so carefully, I could not restrain myself. A groan erupted from the pit of my stomach, and I writhed on the brink of orgasm.

She slapped the inside of my thigh with her free hand. "You'll make me angry," she warned. "I thought you'd learned your lesson." Her gaze wandered around the room. Without taking her hand out of me, she plucked a candle from the bedside table.

I could see thin trails of wax running down its side. Her pupils reflected two tiny flames. "Oh! No, no, no!" I cried.

"Then—don't—move." And her fingers worked in me again until my juices welled up in rings around her knuckles. She watched me with clinical detachment, knowing I must break sooner or later.

My thighs turned to water. I almost sobbed, and thrust my cunt against her hand. She tilted the candle. Hot wax splattered my thigh. I screamed a little—and came. She quickly pressed the heel of her hand against my clitoris and massaged it lightly until the jolt of pleasure had passed.

"You're a very slow learner," she said when I was through. Her tone was sinister. "You just came without my permission. Spread your legs wider."

I could not. She made adjustments to my bonds, and my legs were held further apart.

She brought the candle close again. “You can scream if you like,” she said generously.

The first rain of fire fell upon my skin. I struggled and cried for mercy. “I can’t stand this,” I wept.

“You have to,” she replied. Again and again, she let the molten liquid sear me. She watched my face carefully, spacing each incident so as to give me time to catch my breath, doling out the pain with absolute precision. She moved from thighs to belly to breasts and back down to thighs. I could no longer tell whether the burning wax hurt or not. I forgot what was producing these intolerable sensations. I gasped, cried out, beat the mattress—and climbed, step by step, up the ladder she made for me.

When the candle had burned down to four inches, she blew it out. “Look at this,” she told me. I swam out of chaos to raise my head and focus on Jessie’s hand. She had long, slender fingers. Blue veins pulsed beneath the brown skin. “Do you know what I’m going to do with it? Can you guess?” Her hand reached for the smaller of my orifices, began to titillate it. Her finger sneaked into my ass, nudging it open. I held my breath—as if that would do me any good. “Relax, or you’ll just make it harder on yourself.” She held the candle against the ring of muscle, twisted it, and pushed it in.

She bent her raven head and took my clitoris between her lips while she tormented my anus with the candle. I no longer thought about the future—coming, hurting, servicing her sweet, furry slit. I did not exist, except as a response to her touch. There was nothing else, no other reality, and no whim of my own will moved me.

She must have left me long enough to take off her pants, because now she was kneeling over my face, encouraging me to suck her off, but snatching her clit out of my mouth when she got too close to coming.

She retreated and busied herself with my restraints. My wrists and then my ankles were released. “I’m not through with you yet,” she panted, removing the candle from my ass. “Get up on your hands and knees. Put your ass in the air.”

This position was more humiliating than any bondage could be. I had no knotted cords to excuse me. I knelt there, offering myself because I could

not live without this, the pain I solicited from her hands. This was more than consent. It was desperation.

“Yes,” she hissed. I felt the doubled-up belt caress my buttocks and the inside of my thighs. I waited, crying inside for her to begin.

“Beat me,” I finally begged. She did not need a second invitation.

The first light blow slapped my buttocks, stinging. Second. Third. I counted, my teeth clenched, my whole body shuddering in response to the belt. Now it did not sting. Each blow was a solid hit, embedding the belt in my ass. Gradually, I became aware that we were breathing in time with each other. She was moaning and gasping as loudly as I, and the blows were increasing in strength. I held myself there for her for as long as I could, taking the weight of her arm on my quivering cheeks, but she finally beat me down onto the bed. I could not have endured that in silence, and she did not ask me to. I grabbed the mattress with my outstretched hands as she marked my shoulders and buttocks and the backs of my legs. There were a few seconds when we hung in perfect balance—she was beating me with every ounce of her strength, and I was at the outermost limits of my tolerance, almost out of my mind.

The blows ceased. She took me by the shoulders and threw me onto my back. The silk wings of her kimono fell on either side of us, a fragile shelter. With one of her hands, she pinioned both of my wrists. She used her other hand to open and fill my cunt, then threw her hips against her hand and my pelvis, creating a burning rhythm of pressure against my urethra and clitoris and cervix until I was beside myself. Then her hands were on my shoulders. She rode hard on my hip bone, rocking sure and swift toward her own pleasure. I gripped her thigh with an immediate, bruising strength. We were slippery as two fish, skidding on the salt in our perspiration, our bellies clinging and making obscene noises when we pulled away from each other. There was a point I passed with my eyes closed, going so fast I didn't realize it was the point of no return.

The bubble of my self, the prison of my mind, exploded, expanded—I was twisting in her arms, and she in mine—I was hurtling forward on deep, sobbing currents of my breath, waves unleashed from the bottom of the sea. The long throbbing seconds of liberation and silence and obliteration.

## Epilogue

I woke the next day to find her hand clasping my wrist. Not wishing to be released, I lay quiet beside her until she also emerged from sleep. Our eyes met and acknowledged each other—yes, I know what we did to each other, but it has passed and become part of us both. Then she yawned.

I laughed and snuggled down between her breasts. She radiated heat like a wood-burning stove. She tousled my hair, gently tweaked my ear lobes, touched a bruise above my collarbone. “Do you have to be somewhere today?” she asked me. I was darting my tongue in and out as fast as it would go, ringing her nipple with tiny wet dots.

“What time is it?”

She squinted at the clock. “One-thirty.”

“Not now, I don’t.”

“Oh, did you miss an appointment?”

“Nothing special.” I had guests coming in from out of town. Oh, well, they were grown men. Maybe the landlady would let them in.

“Then let’s have some breakfast.”

I demurred. “I’m a lousy cook.”

“So go get a Sunday paper and I’ll cook. There’s a mom ‘n’ pop grocery in the next block.”

She gave me her keys and sent me out the door. When I returned, the house smelled like bacon and eggs. We ate in near silence, trading sections of the paper and passing each other the toast and butter. When we finished, I began to stack the dishes, but she stopped me. “No, leave them,” she said. “I have to empty the dishwasher.”

I stood in the middle of the kitchen with a dirty plate in my hand, not sure where to go or what to do. “I feel awkward,” I said, so softly I wasn’t sure she would hear me, and put the dish gently on the edge of the table.

“Dammit, I’m out of cigarettes,” she complained, hunting through a drawer. “I’ll have to go out and get some.”

I tried to picture myself doing these things with her—emptying a dishwasher, walking down to the store for cigarettes—and decided it was easier to pour myself another cup of coffee. When I turned around from the

stove, she was sitting at the table again, so I sat beside her. She took my hand, turned it over, and slipped her finger under the leather bracelet.

“I—uh—yes, I feel a little strained myself. Everything I want to say sounds like the understatement of the year. How shall I put it? I had a great time last night?” Did you? said her eyes.

I paused a little, not wanting to sound too glib. “It was the best,” I shrugged. My voice was high and unconvincing. “It was the best ever,” I repeated firmly. “I guess that’s what makes today so difficult.”

“Yeah. I hardly know you—I don’t know if you play piano, I don’t know what kind of business it is you run, I don’t know your shoe size—but I know you better than anyone else in the world.”

I nodded. “Instant intimacy,” I said flippantly. I was shaking cold inside, getting ready to run scared.

“So what do we do?” she asked me. “I’m tempted to either lock you in my closet or bounce you down the front steps. I hate to let go of something that was so good, but I’m afraid I’ll spoil it if I try to hang on. I’m afraid to try again, for fear it won’t be the same.”

“Shit, Jessie, I don’t know what I want from you.” Anger had crept into my voice. She shouldn’t be asking me what I wanted. It was way out of character. Then I got pissed at myself. I had a lot of nerve, expecting her to play master at the breakfast table. It would be stupid to think she hadn’t asked me what I wanted every step of the way. Okay, so she didn’t tip her hat and say, “Miss Liz, would you keep company with me?” But she was checking me out constantly. I could have said no any time. She was asking me an honest question, and I’d better get my act together. “I know I don’t want a twenty-four-hour-a-day S/M relationship,” I said quietly. “I’m not a social masochist. I enjoy taking care of Number One like any reasonably sane, adult woman.”

She grinned with relief. “Hey, that’s not what I want, either. I can’t top somebody full-time. To borrow a famous quote, kicking ass is hard work.”

I shook my head, smiled, drank coffee.

She picked up my hand again, toying with my wristlet. “I know there’s one thing I want to do,” she said.



“Name it.”

“Come into my bedroom.”

Despite the unmade bed and the toys strewn on the floor, magic still hung in the air. We had enacted a vital ritual here, a ceremony essential to us both. She asked me to kneel. I complied, blinking in the hot sun that streamed through the window.

Jessie stood between me and the glass, shading me. She fished a pocket knife out of her Levis and unfolded its longest blade. I don’t know what I expected. The crazy thought flashed through my head that she was going to carve her initials on me, like a tree. I didn’t dream of protesting.

She ran her thumb along the edge of the blade. “You are wearing the tokens of another woman,” she said. Her words were carefully measured out. “I find that ... distracting. May I?”

She lifted one wrist and cut the band of leather.

“I don’t need anything as crude and obvious as this to set my mark on you. Do I?”

She cut my other wrist free.

She paused before severing my collar, her thumb holding it to the knife, to look into my face. “If I call you, you’ll come to me, won’t you?” she demanded.

“Yes,” I whispered.

A loop of leather fell onto my thighs. When she brought me to my feet, it fell to the floor. I rubbed my wrists. They felt curiously light without my bracelets. And my neck—I was more acutely aware of where my collar had been than I ever was of its actual presence.

I shook my head in amazement. Her boldness was more appealing than iron chains. Her confidence created an intangible bond between us. A determination was kindled in me to justify that confidence she had in her own power.

“You—” I began. And could not finish.

She nodded, well satisfied. “Come on, then. I have to get some cigarettes anyway. I’ll show you where the bus stops.”

## *The Finishing School*

It was dusk, but the heavy drapes had not yet been drawn. Outside, the late afternoon breeze had freshened into a gusty wind which was marching up and down the driveway, interrogating the two rows of young poplars on either side of the drive. The slender, lacy trees betrayed their agitation and bowed in submission again and again.

Inside, the woman, Berenice, was seated on a brown (mocha, actually) velvet sofa. Despite the fire leaping from log to log in the grate, she tucked her feet under an embroidered cushion and drew her red satin dressing gown a little tighter to her breast. She was in her early forties, a tall woman with a fine head of short and curly dark hair. When in motion, she gave an impression of grace and strength. In repose, she seemed remarkably self-possessed and alert. One could not imagine anything that would surprise or offend her. A silver tea service on a small mahogany table emitted steam and the smell of chocolate and spice. Berenice inhaled this friendly odor and smiled at the stirring spectacle the windows presented. The girl, Clarissa, was seated on the floor. Everything was in its place. Her universe was in order, complete.

She put a hand out and stroked the fair head, which had been bowed in misery for the past half-hour. A little, tear-streaked face soon turned up to stare at her. She laid a warning finger on those sweet full lips, a ripe cherry.

“Don’t,” she instructed. The girl bowed her head again, and her shoulders trembled. The woman resumed stroking her hair, lifting handfuls of the champagne tresses and slowly releasing them. Her little beauty was wearing a black velvet corset, cinched just tight enough to set off her small waist and plump up the perfect round cheeks of her behind. It also held her breasts, which were just beginning to bud, up and together. The nipples were so tiny and pink that they were barely visible. A pair of black silk stockings encased her coltish legs, trimmed with lace garters with black rosettes, and disappeared into a pair of black velvet high-heeled shoes. Each

shoe had a tiny silver ring in the back, just above the heel. A fine silver chain ran from ring to ring, constraining the length of steps Clarissa could take and the positions she could arrange her limbs in when at rest. In addition, a silver chain was looped in a figure-eight about each instep and heel, securing the shoes to Clarissa's feet.

Berenice tightened her grip on the little one's hair and drew her head back. Her fingertips traced the course of a single tear down the cheek, the throat, the heaving bosom. "My sweet," she said tenderly, "you will spoil your complexion and give yourself a headache. Wouldn't you like some cocoa now?"

Clarissa's head was firmly held. She stared into wise, brown eyes. They were calm, loving, and quite merciless. She bit her lower lip and managed a timid, "Yes, please."

"I'll pour tonight," the woman said, and slid off the couch. She tipped a small amount of brandy from a crystal decanter into one of the cups, then added cocoa and stirred. For herself she poured a balloon of the same brandy. "This will do you good," she said briskly. Clarissa took the cup with both hands.

Berenice put her brandy on a side table and went over to the window to close the drapes. She added another log to the fire. It caught immediately, so that the room brightened and grew quite warm. Her robe had no sash. As she moved about, it fell open from time to time and displayed the full lines of her figure. Her skin was slightly brown, her hips generous, the whole effect sensuous and maternal. Well aware of Clarissa's attention, she came back to the sofa and curled herself up as before.

They sat in companionable silence, sipping and watching the fire. Some color returned to Clarissa's face. She let go one shuddering sigh and then carefully set her cup and saucer on a low table. Turning, she put her hands beneath the cushion and sought out her mistress's supple feet.

"May I warm you?" she pleaded.

"If it will comfort you."

Clarissa chafed them tenderly between her soft hands, held them to her breast, then gently laid them down and began to kiss the toes and insteps. Suddenly her misery returned in full force, and she wept over those

beautiful feet, kissing the tears away and drying them with her hair. “Oh! I’m sorry,” she hiccupped, “but—but—”

Strong arms gathered her in, the red satin robe opened to receive her, and she was enthroned in her lover’s lap. “I’m not sorry to learn that you will miss me,” Berenice said. That wonderfully husky voice!

Clarissa thought, how much I love her, and sobbed, “Oh, I shall—ever so!”

“... as long as this outburst is no sign that you intend to disobey me.”

“No! No, I’ll do whatever you want. Only let me come back. I know you won’t have me if I’m bad. But if I am good, you will let me come back, won’t you?”

“Of course, silly girl. This is your home. It’s only six months of school, not a lifetime sentence of permanent exile. If you tried to run away, I would seek you with all my powers and bring you back, even from the ends of the earth.”

Clarissa snuggled between her breasts. In their shelter, she was almost reassured. “Six months isn’t such a long time,” she murmured, trying to sound grown up.

“Are you sleepy?”

“No.”

“Fetch my brandy. Elise is doing your packing. We’ll spend your last night home together, in the discipline chamber.”

Clarissa shivered, then slipped off her lap and took up the snifter of brandy. The lamplight shone through the liqueur so that a small amber circle floated, shimmering, below her clavicle. Berenice remained seated, enjoying the sight of the tiny steps permitted by the silver chain (which was thin enough to break) and the high-heeled shoes. She was proud of this fair child, and determined not to spoil her by slacking in correction or stinting in affection. Seeing that Clarissa was prepared to mince after her, she strode out of the room and down the hall. The discipline chamber, that shrine to domestic tranquility, was only a short distance away.

Berenice surveyed the room from the threshold. Everything was in good order. Elise, the maid, was meticulous. She reminded herself that while

Clarissa was away at finishing school, she would have more time to spend with Elise. Her maid was too well trained to complain about neglect, but the performance of any loved one will slacken and become slovenly if they are left unsupervised too long. Clarissa's absence would not be intolerable, she told herself firmly. They must all be separated if Clarissa was to become a grown woman. The school was the next logical step to the development of her sexuality. Elise would be very entertaining, she promised herself. There were certain things one could not demand of a mere child. Perhaps it was time to throw another party for their friends. Elise had been kept so busy at the last one. Quite the belle of the ball.

The chamber was paneled with dark wood. One wall and the ceiling contained large mirrors. A Persian carpet of intricate design, brightly and sensuously colored, covered the floor. In the middle of the room was a device that resembled a large sawhorse. The top bar and legs were well padded and covered with black leather. There were rings at the head and foot and along the legs. One pair of legs had leather stirrups nailed to it about a foot and a half from the floor. In one corner of the room, a complicated arrangement of ropes and pulleys dangled from the ceiling. A set of stocks had been pushed against one wall, next to a huge, lacquered chest. In the corner behind the door, an ivory-and-gold umbrella stand held an assortment of canes, switches, riding crops, dog whips, and bundles of birch twigs. Berenice straightened these as one would a flower arrangement, reminding herself of what was there. Then she went to the carved Chinese chest and removed four silver bracelets, four short pieces of medium-weight silver chain, and several finely crafted silver locks. These she arranged on the lid of the chest, then fished in her robe for the necklace she always wore, and reassured herself that the key to the locks was on her person.

Clarissa arrived with the brandy. She knelt and offered it, head turned to the side, eyes cast down. Her mournful, pouting mouth and red eyes gave the traditional pose a dash of extra delight. Berenice left her in that position while she stoked the fire, then came and took the snifter from her. "Up on the horse," she ordered.

Clarissa swung onto its back with the skill of a gymnast—which, indeed, she was. Berenice removed the jewelry chain that held her feet together, but

left her shoes on. There was a bracelet for each wrist and ankle. These were quickly locked in place. By caresses, she directed Clarissa to stretch out along the length of the beam, belly down, arms over her head, legs spread, feet in the stirrups. Deftly, efficiently, Clarissa was chained to the horse. As soon as the last lock clicked into place, she began to moan and twist on the beam.

“I’m afraid,” she said. “But I want to please you!”

“We will see which frightens you more, the pain or my displeasure.”

Berenice approached her trembling, girlish victim, hiding something in her hand. “Close your eyes,” she ordered. Despite whimpers and some insubordinate squirming, she blindfolded Clarissa with a mink-lined sleeping shade. She had already selected her first instrument of chastisement: a carriage whip with a brand new cracker. It made a good deal more noise than anything else. In her other hand, she took up an ostrich plume. A rabbit’s fur glove and a currycomb were also nearby, ready for her use. By alternating all of these devices, causing both pain and pleasure with each of them, she soon had Clarissa relaxed and completely vulnerable, jumping and moaning, her skin sensitized, her nerves trained to soothe any hurt or discomfort and blend it quickly into her growing sexual arousal. Even when correcting serious misdeeds, Berenice was not brutal. She loved helplessness, she craved the sight of a female body abandoning all decency and self-control. These things are not granted save in loving trust. Dominance is not created without complicity. A well-trained slave is hopelessly in love with her mistress and will weep for days if a fault is not reprimanded. If no punishment is forthcoming, she will ask for it—even administer it herself as proof of her devotion.

Berenice stroked the inside of Clarissa’s thighs with the fur glove and allowed her to feel the first few contractions of an orgasm. Then she withdrew and removed the blindfold. Clarissa protested vociferously. “There’s no pleasing you,” Berenice laughed. “You don’t like it on and you don’t like it off. Perverse little monkey.” She fondled her. “Pretty thing. I’ll do as I like with you. Won’t I? Won’t I?” And she forced eloquent, clarion agreement from her chained virgin slave. Her caresses wandered near the most sensitive areas of the poor child’s body. “Can you guess what I want to do? Hmm? My almost-grown-up girl? Something we don’t do very often,

you and I.” Her fingers trespassed, tempted, retreated. “A little serious flagellation, my pet. A really good, thorough beating. Can you, for me?”

“Oh—please,” panted Clarissa.

Berenice selected a short cat from the umbrella stand and began to lightly switch Clarissa’s shoulders and backside. The lashes flicked her tender thighs as well, leaving red stripes that quickly faded. She alternated the blows with moments of loving praise and encouragement, during which time she would tickle Clarissa between the legs with a whip handle. She soon had her writhing upon the horse, her behind plunging up and down like a lusty mare. The girl gasped for breath and clenched and unclenched her tiny hands.

“You’re blushing,” Berenice said. She ran a cool hand over Clarissa’s hindquarters. She struck again, harder. “Hush. This is nothing. Hush. Nothing.” She walked to the head of the horse and took possession of the bound girl’s mouth. “More? Yes. More.” She resumed her position at the foot of the horse and landed several well-aimed blows. “Now you can go ahead. Sing. I like to hear you. God, I’d love to flog the skin off your dimpled, pink behind.” The cat whished through the air, creating a small breeze that stirred Berenice’s curls.

Clarissa snorted and snuffled. Her hair hung in wet strands, and her body was shimmering with perspiration. A streak of more viscous moisture stained the division of her pubic fleece. “I can take more,” she said as Berenice appeared by her head.

Berenice smiled. “So sweet,” she murmured. “You are so sweet.”

“Kiss?”

“Oh, yes.”

Berenice’s penetrating tongue was so strong! Clarissa forgot herself and began to nip and swallow at it. Berenice laughed at her and withdrew.

“Oh—more!” Clarissa wailed. “I’m on fire from head to toe. Don’t leave me!”

“Naughty girl,” said Berenice. “Salacious little slut. Biting at my mouth like a common streetwalker. We must punish the baggage, or she will go from bad to worse. Isn’t that so, my darling?”

Clarissa fought back her agreement and remained silent.

“Oh? She wants to argue with her betters. Impudence on top of a sensuous disposition. This is a frightful combination. Tell me this, rebellious miss, did you or did you not nip at me? Eh?”

“I—I did,” Clarissa confessed.

“And was it out of pain or fright?”

“Nooo.”

“Then we must conclude that you were overwhelmed by carnal impulses. And you know that cannot be tolerated.”

“Yes,” Clarissa admitted, defeated. “I know.”

“Well, then. Let’s have no more vain attempts to avoid punishment. Ooh, just you wait till I get my hands on you. Baggage! Tart!” While calling the wrath of heaven down upon her disobedient child, Berenice gave her a sip or two of brandy, then she visited the lacquer chest again. She glanced quickly over the tray that perched on top of its other contents, a tray that originally had contained velvet boxes full of strands of pearls, earrings, diamond brooches, and the like. Now it held another sort of jewelry. She selected one of the trinkets, diabolical miniatures that winked at her. Then she took it over to Clarissa, for her inspection. “My grandmother brought these back from the Orient,” she said. “She used them to fasten her opera cape. Aren’t they pretty?” She showed Clarissa a pair of silver clasps, each in the form of a dragon whose jaw moved to grip the edge of a cloak ... or whatever was placed in its rapacious mouth. The clasps were connected by a few inches of chain.

The beam was so narrow that Clarissa’s breasts peeked out of either side of it. Berenice petted them, making the little girl so lascivious that she thought she must go mad if she were not granted some reprieve. A pinch on each nipple only increased her need. “You are so cruel,” she wept.

Berenice twisted the nearest nipple. “Mind your tongue,” she said, and pressed the cold, grinning dragon against her soft skin. “Do you know what I’m going to do with this?” she asked. “Have you already guessed?”

“No,” Clarissa lied.



Berenice opened one of the clamps, pulled slightly on Clarissa's nipple, and left the mythical beast hanging from her breast. In another moment, its twin was swinging from the other breast. The chain was so short that it almost made her nipples touch.

Clarissa sounded as if she were crying, but no tears were coming from her eyes, and she was attempting to rub her female parts against the beam. The stiffness of her corset prevented her from achieving full freedom of movement, and the slight contact she was able to achieve with the leather only titillated her further.

Berenice went to the foot of the beam and petted her again, spreading her love dew from the clitoris up to the perineum, anointing each side of the inner lips, even rubbing it on her tightest, smallest hole. Then she bent down and blew on the moisture, and Clarissa groaned. "I feel as if I'm nothing but wetness, nothing but the thing between my legs. What are you going to do with me?"

"What does it matter to you?"

"It doesn't—only don't leave me—please take me, use me—oh!" she cried as Berenice once again spread the thick juices, smeared them onto her thighs and between the cheeks of her behind, and expelled her hot breath on the inflamed, liquid parts.

When Clarissa was quite incoherent, Berenice selected her third and final weapon: a long, flexible, yellow cane. Before beginning, she administered more brandy and a few sharp tugs on the grinning dragons.

Thus far, she had inflicted moderate pain and reddened the skin until it was warm and slightly swollen to the touch, but she had not bruised it. She was not in the habit of marking Clarissa, preferring her skin smooth and unblemished. Clarissa coveted the welts on Elise's body and often reproached Berenice for withholding them. Tonight, she informed her young charge, she would leave her with visible tokens of the whipping.

"I have to give you enough to last six months. Remember that, if you think you've had enough. Six long, lonely months." Though she seriously doubted Clarissa would go without comfort, company, or chastisement at this particular school. Sternly, she repressed a pang of jealousy. She had kept Clarissa all to herself for years. The love between them was genuine,

but might not survive her adolescence. Even this sweet submission might fade and something hostile, domineering, or indifferent grow up in its place.

Clarissa was waiting patiently for her to resume talking or begin the caning. Berenice collected herself, and returned to the task at hand. She must think of nothing else. No scattered concentration could be allowed to make her hand waver.

“The marks will move up your legs from the back of the knee to the top of your hips. They will be evenly spaced and parallel to each other. You will not move.”

Berenice’s voice was calm and deadly. Clarissa froze. Training exercises performed in previous sessions had convinced her that, when explicitly ordered not to move, she had best not stir even one-eighth of an inch.

A few seconds to allow tension to build, to gather and slow her breathing, to take the most careful aim—then—swick! swick! swick! Each stripe was awful. Berenice alternated sides so that each thigh would match. She paused before marking Clarissa’s behind, to give them both a chance to take courage. Then she struck out like a tigress and left her with a perfect row of weals from the tender roll of baby fat just beneath the buttock to the thin, tightly stretched skin at the tip of her tailbone.

Clarissa babbled pleas for forgiveness and release. Berenice fingered her lightly, evoking a painful moan. She repeated her caress, more insistently, and Clarissa’s whole body begged for more. “Please go into me,” Clarissa cried. “Take my maidenhead. I don’t want to give it to anyone else but you, Mother. Elise says she loves having you inside her, more than anything. I can’t stand it when you won’t give me what you give her. Please! Please!”

Berenice frowned. “You’re jealous,” she said. “I find that very unattractive. Do you think you can coerce me into anything? Hmm?” She tickled her pudenda, applied light pressure over her hymen, but would not enter. Then she returned to Clarissa’s pink pearl and took her to the brink of orgasm. “Apologize,” she said through gritted teeth. “And you’d better make me believe it, or I’ll deny you satisfaction and send you to school in a chastity belt!”

Their voices raised to shouts, a disjointed cacophony of curses and humiliating confessions, they urged each other on. “I’m nothing,” Clarissa

cried in ecstasy. “I deserve nothing but the most brutal and rigorous punishment. I beg your forgiveness, your clemency, your correction. I plead for the opportunity to expunge my guilt, to redress my failing. Oh—I am sorry, sorry, sorry!”

“Ah, yes, that. Will a little more of this do it? It usually does,” spat Berenice. “Yes, my little abused angel. Come to me. You will come to me. Now. Yes, now.”

The chains and the horse protested as Clarissa flung her body from side to side and drenched Berenice’s hand with profuse evidence of her pleasure. Then she was deathly still. Berenice moved to her head and petted her as one would a frightened animal. “There, there,” she said. Clarissa lifted her head. Her eyes were overflowing. “Am I still here?” she whispered. “Oh, thank you, dearest Mother. Please don’t leave me. Don’t ever stop loving me.”

“Hush, darling. I’m going to take you down.” As she plied her key among the tiny locks, Berenice instructed Clarissa on the behavior that would be expected of her at the school. “You must show your headmistress and teachers the same respect and cheerful obedience that you give me. I’ll read your reports every month,” she concluded, working on the chains that locked the spike heels onto Clarissa’s feet. “If they are satisfactory, when you return I will deflower you, if that is your wish and your maidenhead is still intact.”

“It will be,” Clarissa said. “I pro—”

“Hush. Don’t promise me anything. You’re too young to vow constancy. Wait until you’ve met the headmistress of Hightowers, then see if you bring your heart back to me in one piece—let alone your little oyster, my love.”

Clarissa could barely comprehend the woe and distress in that bitter speech. Before she could compose a reassuring reply, Berenice gathered her limp body up in her arms, kicked the door open, and called down the hallway, “Elise! Draw a bath for two. Lay out plenty of towels and birching ointment. I want a tray of cordials and a cold supper laid out in my room. Then you may retire for the night.”

“Yes, madam,” was the civil reply that floated back to her. The sound of running water came faintly from the other side of the house—Elise was

adding boiling water to the tub she had already filled. Berenice took a fresh grip on Clarissa, who was patting her face and murmuring endearments in French, and carried her away from the room. Elise would clean up. Reliable, invaluable Elise!

By the time they arrived, the bath was prepared. Fresh, snowy towels were heaped on a little cart along with an open jar of ointment, two cakes of large fragrant soap, and a saucer on which chilled segments of tangerine had been arranged. Beside the saucer was a crystal pitcher of ice water and two cut glass tumblers. The tub— large, round, deep enough to stand in— was full to the brim and steaming. On the surface of the water floated a single gardenia.

Berenice eased Clarissa down, unlaced and removed the corset, then helped her climb into the tub. The little girl winced when the hot water made contact with her bottom, then an expression of happy pride lit up her face. “You marked me!” she exclaimed. “I won’t be able to sit down on the train tomorrow.”

“You may not,” Berenice said ruefully, hanging her robe on a bronze hook, “but I couldn’t resist your plump little hot cross buns. Let’s relax and refresh ourselves.”

She climbed into the tub beside Clarissa. There were marble benches inside the tub at the right height for them to sit down and still have their shoulders covered by the lovely hot water. While they soaked, they fed each other slices of tangerine and took tiny sips of the cold water. Clarissa recovered quickly, and was the first out of the tub. She dried herself, then held out a thick towel to receive Berenice. She dried her mistress carefully, daring to kiss her shoulders and the place between her breasts. She brushed against the older woman, hugged her tight, and whispered, “Will you take me into your bed tonight?”

Berenice considered this request. She felt a certain lassitude, the cynical melancholy that overcame her when she was exhausted. Then she contemplated Clarissa’s enthusiasm, her fresh face, her hope and affection, and could not bear to disappoint her. Perhaps the maraschino cherry mouth and the dove-like hands could arouse her interest and restore her contentment.

But they could not go like this, like a pair of simple-minded, medieval shepherdesses slipping hand-in-hand into the nearest patch of willows. She seized Clarissa by the hair and dragged her closer, until the tips of her toes barely touched the thick white carpet. “Oh yes,” she threatened. “I’ll take you into my bed tonight. And you won’t get any sleep at all—not a wink.” Forgetting her robe (but not the birching ointment), she hauled Clarissa out of the bathroom and pushed her toward the stairs. “Let’s see what your gratitude is worth,” she sneered.

They got as far as the landing before Clarissa broke away, sank to her knees, and buried her face between Berenice’s thighs. From the bottom of the stairs, Elise (on her way to tidy up the disciplinary chamber) caught a glimpse of the beautiful pose. She smiled wistfully, shook out her feather duster, and went in solitary pursuit of her domestic duties.

Berenice did not quite keep her word. She fell asleep an hour before dawn. Clarissa watched the first light of day suffuse the room, and contemplated this small betrayal of her love. Her eyes seemed to be full of fine sand. Invisible wrinkles in the bedclothes plagued her, and she was afraid her backside would hurt in an ugly way if she thought too much about it. It was odd, how little it took to satisfy Berenice’s lust once the whipping or other punishment was over. She, Clarissa, could not say, “Remember you will be six months without me. Surely you need a little more of me to last those six long months.” She wore two dozen welts, some of which were bleeding, but she had not dared leave a love-bite in the hollow of her lover’s shoulder. Clarissa could not swallow her indignation. It left a dry lump in her throat. She had tried to prolong the sweetness, reaching for Berenice’s breasts with her lips and hands, but Berenice had pushed her down between her thighs, relegating her to genital service, withholding her breasts. Even then, Clarissa had teased and toyed with her, postponing the particular tongue-flickers that would bring her mistress to the peak of pleasure. But Berenice had grown angry with her and threatened to bring herself to climax if Clarissa did not give immediate satisfaction. Now she could only sigh and twist the sheet in her hands and try to fend off the miserable thought of leaving home. She could not even find a trace of Berenice’s musk on her fingertips or beneath her tongue.

“Be still,” Berenice ordered her. Her voice was surprisingly clear for someone who had just been awakened. Clarissa froze, appalled at herself. Berenice drew her closer, put one arm beneath her shoulder, and used her other hand to trap Clarissa’s wrists. It was not long before both of them slumbered, after that.

But it seemed to Clarissa that this deep peace lasted only a few moments before Elise reached under the covers, scooped her up, and took her away from Berenice’s side.

“I’m to get you dressed and ready for the train,” Elise explained in a whisper, putting her down so she could close the bedroom door.

“But Elise—”

“Hush, child. The mistress isn’t coming to see you off. She said so herself. I’m to see you packed and on your way. Your aunt will be motoring up for you shortly. Her niece will be going to school with you.”

Clarissa nodded, dumb with shock. Elise sighed in sympathy. “I’ll make you strawberry waffles,” she said. “There’s even whipped cream. And you can have coffee this morning, since you were up so late.” She took Clarissa by the hand and led her toward the kitchen. “Do you want to wash up and dress first? I’ve already packed your bags.”

“Would you mind if I just ran around this way for a little while? I’ll wash my hands and face at the kitchen tap.”

“Well—it’s a fine, warm day. No harm in it I suppose. Let’s go, then. You and I don’t often have the morning to ourselves.”

Clarissa brightened. “Oh, Elise,” she said, flinging her arms around the maid’s neck, “you are so good to me.”

They embraced. Then Elise drew her down the stairs and into the sunny kitchen. Strings of garlic and peppers hung from the rafters. There was a big, cast-iron, wood-burning stove, the huge white sink with its brass taps, the shelves of glass mixing bowls (each a different color), the racks of herbs and measuring cups and knives—all the magic implements of the chef’s art.

“She did you with quite a heavy hand,” Elise said enviously.

“Ooh!” Clarissa squealed. “Does it show?”

“Look in the mirror by the china closet. Here, climb up on this chair. See?” Elise’s fingers traced the perfectly even stripes. The center of each weal was raised a little.

“How will I ever sit down?” Clarissa gloated, sweeping strands of pale hair over her shoulder so she could get a better look.

“I’ll give you my traveling pillow. People will think you want to raise yourself up enough to see out the window. When Berenice gave it to me, Mamma praised her lavishly for her sisterly concern. She would have fainted if she had lifted my skirt and discovered what I was sitting on. It’s nice to keep something like that in the family. Maybe someday you can pass the pillow on to your little girl.”

Bored with this genealogical sentimentality, Clarissa was smacking her own behind and wincing at the sensations. “Are these fine marks, Elise?” she asked, getting the conversation back into more interesting channels.

“They look as deep and even as any I’ve received from her hands,” Elise said, catering to the youngster’s vanity. “I swear it.” She took her hands off the young, tender bottom with regret. Her own needs, ignored for so many weeks, stirred and made her itch. “You admire yourself for as long as you like. I’ve got to mix up these waffles.”

Clarissa stayed bent over the mirror, one hand parting her buttocks, for only a few more seconds. Then she straightened, tossed the hair out of her eyes, and jumped down. After replacing the chair at the table, she went over to the steaming urn and poured a large mug of coffee for each of them.

“Tell me a story,” she said, bringing the blue-and-white cups to Elise. She cleared away the broken eggshells and disposed of them, then dragged a high stool over to the counter. Elise was mixing batter in a green glass bowl. “I’ll hull the strawberries while you talk to me.”

Elise was charming in her short black uniform, white apron, and lacy cap. Clarissa admired the ruler-straight seams that ran up the backs of her legs, the high spike heels (two inches higher than her own training shoes), and stared at the rings that pierced Elise’s dainty ears and the fine chains that ran from each earlobe to the ring in each side of her nose. She wondered if Berenice would give her rings when she grew up, or let her wear a little

uniform like that. It was darling, so short that it showed off Elise's bottom every time she bent or moved. Really, her black silk panties were very tight.

It never occurred to Clarissa that she might be Berenice's favorite, despite the fact that Berenice regularly caressed her sex and rarely touched Elise at all (except with a bundle of birch twigs or the nasty lithe cane). She was terribly jealous of Elise's rings and uniform and the sophisticated psychological games Berenice would play with her. Also, Elise was allowed to wait on the parties. These occasions excited Clarissa to a fever pitch, but she was always sent up to bed after a brief presentation and demonstration of her latest feat of obedience. Elise got to greet the little groups of elegantly dressed women at the door, take their wraps, serve them drinks, bring out trays of canapés, escort their slaves into the cells in the dungeon, worship their high boots, kiss their knees and hands, perform every menial and intimate service they required. On one occasion, she had been relieved of her serving duties and used solely as an ashtray. Clarissa made a resolution to do very well at this awful school they were sending her to, to make Berenice love her the best of all.

"What do you want a story about?" Elise said briskly. Her cheeks were flaming red. She was a little out of breath, and not from being too tightly corseted or stirring batter too vigorously. The child had such a direct, piercing gaze! Must she look at her that way, at the hem of her skirt and the chains that brushed her cheeks, with such unflinching calm? It was unnerving. Really, that itch was getting worse. She smothered an image of Clarissa slowly lifting her short, black skirt and slowly pulling down her damnably tight silk panties and firmly bending her over the counter for a vigorous spanking. Then Clarissa would take one of the long wooden spoons and ... oh, she had been kept waiting for so long. Would Berenice ever take pity on her, perhaps today?

"Tell me about you and Mother and how she enslaved you and you lost her and found her and laid your fortune at her feet so you could wear a maid's uniform every day and she had me, and you both decided to bring me up without any of the flaws that were present in your early education and—"

"Oh, that's quite a long story!" Elise laughed. "You won't have time to hear all that before you leave for the train."



“I’ll eat two waffles, at least, and we will too have time, if you start now while everything’s cooking. I must have a story, Elise, please, I was so good last night and they probably won’t tell the little girls any stories at this dismal place you’re shipping me off to.”

“You know perfectly well that Hightowers is a fine institution, the very best finishing school we could find for you, and you will hardly suffer any —”

“Elise,” wailed Clarissa, “pleeeeeease!”

“Well! Yes, if you promise not to interrupt.”

“Goody!” Clarissa wielded the silver strawberry huller with enthusiasm, making a small mountain of green tops, and plopped berry after berry into the colander. “Come on, tell me, tell me!”

“I’m pouring. Don’t distract me.” Elise held the bowl over the hot waffle iron. She ladled batter onto the black teeth, then closed the lid and turned over her timer. The timer was a small sculpture: two women, one upside down, bound together by their hair. The sand ran down a crystal column, which they were also bound to by their long, flowing locks.

“Your grandmamma—my mother—was an opera singer,” she began. “We never stopped traveling, and we never knew what the next train stop would bring. Sometimes Mamma was a success, her role would be all the rage, she would be the most fashionable woman in town. Then we were well received. We would stay in expensive hotels and life would be a mad whirl, a series of gala events. Mysterious messengers would deliver letters, flowers, perfume, and even more exotic gifts. We would receive a constant stream of visitors—millionaires, society matrons, opium-eaters, pretty young men who would eye Mamma’s paint-pots and costumes with thinly concealed longing. There were always conspiracies, music, candy, wine, new sights to see, a blooming passion or a plot to crush some enterprising social climber’s hopes. I can’t remember sleeping during any of Mamma’s popular periods. I can’t even remember lying down.”

“But, it wasn’t always that way, was it?” prompted Clarissa.

“No,” Elise said, shaking her head. “Sometimes Mamma was out of voice. Then we would stay in cheap, dirty hotels or arrive uninvited at the homes of old friends. We would scrimp and scheme to save just one fine

outfit apiece, to go calling on Mamma's old backers and composers and fellow singers. We would be cold and hungry, and Berenice would struggle to keep Mamma's spirits up so she would not begin to drink and lose her voice altogether, and all our hopes with it.

"It was an exciting, stormy life, and I could enjoy the ups and downs only because there was an eye in the storm: my older sister, Berenice. She was the one who packed my trunk, found my missing glove, somehow got me dinner if we arrived late and the hotel kitchen was closed, nursed me when I was ill, taught me my alphabet and my embroidery stitches, and petted my little cunny when I could not sleep. Mamma would often talk of hiring a governess, but our circumstances were too irregular to make it practical. We had sporadic lessons from a series of tutors, usually hired and fired by Berenice.

"In the beginning, Berenice would report me to Mamma when I was bad, and Mamma would punish me. Even as a child, I realized that Berenice would sometimes set traps for me and present false evidence of sins I had never committed. She would always arrange to be present when I was corrected. I could not understand why the sister I loved and trusted found pleasure in this sort of injustice. I was further confused because when Mamma heard that I had been misbehaving, her reactions were completely unpredictable. If a suitor were in the room, she might want to get rid of me as quickly as possible, so she would scold me a little, give me an indulgent kiss of forgiveness, and send me back to Berenice, who would be enraged and treat me coldly for days. If she had just read a sarcastic review or had lost a lover to a rival, she might come at me with her fan or a slipper and leave me devastated.

"I finally went to Berenice and implored her to spare me from this round of false accusations, cruel punishments for small faults, and undeserved forgiveness for grave errors. I pleaded that I was dependent upon her love and justice to make my life bearable, and that without her I would sink into despair. Then I burst into tears. She listened to me weep for a very long time before she raised me to my feet, dried my tears, and told me she had a solution to propose. I stammered that I would agree to anything, but she forbade me to agree before I heard her out. She put me on the hassock at her feet while she sat in a big, overstuffed chair, and she offered me the

following terms. I listened raptly, staring at the high black boots she insisted on wearing regardless of the fashions of the moment.”

Elise opened the waffle iron, removed the crisp, brown square, and popped it onto the plate Clarissa held out. The greedy girl smacked her lips. “You start eating now,” Elise said. “I’ll have one myself, then make you another. The whipped cream is in the icebox.”

“More story,” Clarissa insisted, her mouth full.

“Yes, more story. Well, Berenice told me that nothing pleased her more than caring for me, seeing to my education, and setting standards for my behavior. She confessed that she could not help tricking Mamma into punishing me, because it gave her such pleasure to see me wriggle and cry and struggle when I was slapped on the face or spanked with a hairbrush. She said it troubled her conscience somewhat, but not excessively, since I often got off scot-free when I had been a regular little hellion. She asked me if I remembered how quickly she took possession of my body as soon as we were alone. I replied that these passionate moments surprised and flattered me, but I had not realized her excitement was caused by my suffering. She said she regretted the injustice of this treatment, and begged my pardon. I freely forgave her. I added that I did not mind being punished if I had in fact done something wrong, and that until I was properly punished for a misdeed, my conscience gave me no rest. Berenice then said she would cease to bring any complaints at all to Mamma, who was erratic and ineffectual, if I would agree to submit to her discipline. She promised to be fair as well as strict, and to act with my best welfare in mind. By this means, she hoped to make us both happier. She promised to release me from this contract at any point if that was my wish.”

Elise took her own waffle from the iron and spread strawberries and cream on it. She told the next installment of the story between bites. “I agreed at once, even though the idea was a novel one. I adored my mother—we both did—but she treated us more like a permanent audience than a family. Berenice already had all the responsibility for mothering me. It seemed fair that she should have power and authority as well. So Berenice kissed me on the forehead, gave me a bonbon, then put me on the sofa with my sewing box and a glove that needed mending. After she left the room, I fell into a reverie. I was exhausted by my tears and without meaning to, I

fell sound asleep. I was awakened by Berenice calling me to dress for dinner. When she saw I had not completed the sewing, she was not angry, but said calmly that it looked as if I needed a demonstration of the terms of our agreement.

“We went to dinner with Mamma and a railroad magnate who was trying to get her to star in a light musical comedy written by his oldest son. That very evening, Berenice tied me to our bed and spanked me with her own hand, on my bare bottom! I was terribly humiliated. I had never been tied up before, and certainly never been struck on my naked flesh. After she untied me, she insisted on being thanked and ordered me to kiss her all over. Instead of refusing or performing a perfunctory job, I found myself crying out passionately, fondling myself while I knelt and suckled, pleading with her to possess me completely. ‘That is just what I intend to do,’ she told me. ‘I don’t know exactly how yet, but I will learn. I will learn from you how to keep you under my dominance and make you love me, and we will never be parted, dear sister. You will always belong to me.’”

Elise stopped to pour another waffle for Clarissa and refill their mugs with hot coffee. Clarissa jiggled impatiently in her chair until Elise was settled once more at the table and ready to resume her tale. “Hurry,” she urged. “I don’t want Aunt Jennifer to come and spoil the story.”

Elise smiled. “I’ll try to finish. But I told you it was long. Let me see. Where was I? Oh, yes. Well, in the days that followed, I tried to please her in the smallest thing. But when the mood was on her to see me cry out and struggle, she could always detect some fault that required correction. Gradually, we began to play the game of discipline for its own sake. I fell more and more in love with Berenice, and would endure the most ingenious and barbaric tortures for the sake of her kiss and smile. Mamma was very pleased with the change in us. We no longer bothered her with our petty quarrels, and everyone could tell how fond we were of each other.

“The idyll continued until I was eighteen. Mamma came home early from the theater one evening and caught Berenice in the act of whipping me with a handful of long-stemmed roses. This could have been passed off as bizarre but well-intentioned corporal punishment, and Berenice would have received no more than a scolding for being too severe. But she had stuffed a peeled persimmon up me before beginning the flagellation, and I was so

frightened when I saw Mamma that it tumbled out, rolled across the floor, and came to rest at her feet.

“Our mamma, who could pass the most loathsome beggars on the street without distress, was enraged and disgusted by the sight of our love-play. Because I was apparently the victim—tied and bleeding from the thorns—she did not blame me, but she flew at Berenice and tried to claw her eyes out, ignoring my screams for mercy and my shouts that it was all my fault, I could explain, please stop! Berenice seized her wrists and held her, weeping and cursing, at arms’ length.

“Mamma vowed to disinherit her, turn her out with nothing but the clothes on her back. Luckily, it was near dawn, and a group of Mamma’s friends who had been out all night drinking and singing in the cafés burst in on us and insisted we accompany them to breakfast. Mamma, surrounded by her drunk and rowdy friends, found it hard to enforce this harsh sentence immediately. Berenice stood in the doorway of our suite, pale and still. I ran into our room, rifled my jewelry and Mamma’s purse, found a heavy cloak, stuffed extra underthings, a nightgown, and another dress in a small case, and brought these gifts to her. Mamma’s face darkened when she saw me put the bag at Berenice’s feet and slip the cloak around her shoulders, but she was simultaneously fending a hand away from her bodice and being told a really scandalous story about her deadliest enemy.

“‘Don’t worry about me,’ Berenice said, kissing my tear-stained cheeks. ‘Perhaps this should have happened earlier. You and I had gone as far as we could under her roof. I know someone in Paris who can get me started on my own. A woman who knows how to wield a whip won’t have any trouble making her living in Paris. So come to me when you can, my love. I’ll wait for you there.’ And so we were parted.”

“This is so sad,” breathed Clarissa. “Isn’t my waffle ready yet?”

“Oh. Yes, I suppose it must be. Give me your plate. You’ll have to eat this in a hurry, now.”

“I will, I will. Tell me how sad it was!”

“Well, I thought I would die. My whole world had been ruined. But despite my misery, I stayed with Mamma. Often I would chastise myself for not having Berenice’s independent fire. But I had a premonition that my

role was necessary and important, and that I would recover my long-lost love all in good time. Because there was nothing else to do, I waited on Mamma patiently. My devotion was not rewarded by anything like Berenice's fiery and thorough ministrations. Occasionally it became too much for me, and I would whip myself in front of my dressing glass.

"During those unhappy years, I learned to detest the men who followed Mamma about, fickle fools who were attracted by her dynamic personality but always attempted to quench her fire. They never stood by her when she was despondent or out of work. I began to take charge of Mamma's engagements and income, and invested everything I could. I became quite fussy and boring, obsessed with interest rates, real estate, and securities. I also obtained a reputation for being an indomitable virago when negotiating Mamma's contracts and appearances.

"We were in, of all cities, Paris, when Mamma had her greatest triumph. She sang her favorite role in *The Bird of Paradise*, Flavia, the girl who sells tropical birds on the wharf in Florence, who is impregnated by the heir-apparent of the Doge, and kills herself on the eve of his betrothal so she will not be tempted to disrupt his wedding, not knowing that it was not her lover in whom she confided the news of her conception, but his evil twin brother who was thought to be dead, who had returned to the city and trained all her birds to peck out the prince's eyes when they are released in one brilliant flock at his coronation, which is her deathbed request.

"Mamma sang as she had never sung before. But she caught influenza while two counts, one French and one Italian, were making love to her in an open carriage on her way back to our hotel. They were quite piqued because her fever made her delirious before she could tell them which of their countries had won her accolade for amative skill. She died before the week was up, leaving me with her estate.

"Would you believe that with all that money at my disposal, it took me a month to find Berenice? A month of harrowing anxiety and sickening fear. I could hardly see to the funeral. But my search finally bore fruit. I found my sister, your mother, in the grimmest section of the city. She was ill, carrying you, dear child, and in desperate need. She had been a minor light of the Parisian underworld, caning some of the most regal buttocks on the continent, but the police and her competitors combined to betray and undo

her. She did not have the vicious character one needs to survive in such a sordid world; she was not a criminal. She could hardly believe I had come for her, and embraced me until I thought my ribs would crack. I took her away and found this home for us, a simple country estate with excellent drainage, adjoining tenant farms, and a high resale value, where we can practice our love as the fancy takes us and provide a home for you. And we will stay here forever and ever, or as long as it makes us happy.”

Clarissa applauded. “Oh, what a beautiful story,” she said. “I love the way your eyes sparkle when you tell it. Now tell me about the time when Mother gave you away to Aunt Jennifer and—”

“Absolutely not! Up the stairs with you and into your traveling clothes. I’ve already laid the dress and shoes out on your bed. Your aunt will be here any minute now. Wear the peach satin corset that laces up the front. Hurry, while I clean up. And be sure to put on every one of your crinolines, young lady—don’t think you can fool me by stuffing one down the laundry chute! Shoo!”

## *The Calyx of Isis*

During the day, the district south of Market Street in San Francisco housed winos, Hispanic families, punks, and light industry. But at night it seemed to be inhabited solely by leathermen strolling from the Brig, the Ambush, the Boot Camp, the Arena, or the Eagle to the Slot, the Caldron, the Folsom Street Hotel, the Club Baths, the Hothouse, or the Handball Express. Despite the number of these establishments, a particularly popular bar sometimes had such a hold on its clientele that they just overflowed into the street, beer bottles held against their hips at the angle of a hard cock, to converse over one another's motorcycles or slip into side alleys for quick, rough, semi-public sex.

On one block, the typical flow of traffic—the masculine bodies in their silver-studded black skins—was disrupted by a different kind of crowd: women. A mysterious lesbian heiress had used a chunk of her inheritance to purchase one of the big, red-brick warehouses on Folsom Street. After she earthquake-proofed it and brought it into compliance with the rest of the building code, she turned it into a unique establishment, the Calyx of Isis, a women's bathhouse.

The leathermen, amused and fascinated with the depth and intricacy of their own perversity, tolerated this intrusion. Some of them secretly applauded it—not being able to visualize what went on in the Calyx, but sensing they had more in common with it than with Maud's or Amelia's. They weren't sure that what the women did with each other was sex, exactly, but it seemed to be important to them, and they liked the idea of their judgmental big sisters getting out of control. Others were offended and went to great lengths to avoid the Calyx, taking detours around it that increased their resentment. And a few happy clones dropped their lesbian roommates off at the Calyx before proceeding to Ringold Alley or the Trocadero Transfer, maybe stayed to chat a few minutes, and wondered if there would ever be a place where both dykes and faggots could go. There



was, but few of them had ever heard of it, and the story of *that* place, the Catacombs, may never be written.

Every Friday and Saturday night, a line of lesbians in their weekend finery wound around the block three deep. Sidewalk vendors catered to the crowd, and most of the women danced while they waited because the Calyx had loudspeakers pointing out to the street.

Security guards in tuxedos patrolled the block in pairs. Any car that slowed down to hurl an insult or bottle was photographed, and the owner was notified that the police had been informed that his vehicle had been used in the commission of a crime. The guards had enough karate and mace to deal with anybody stupid enough to come looking for a fight without vehicular armor. But the Calyx was so well established that this rarely happened any more. So their real job was to flaunt their muscles, flirt with the crowd and keep it in a party mood. They did this as cheerfully as they busted bigots' kneecaps.

Mixed in with the peacock colors of the other dykes was the more somber attire of a few leatherwomen, who nevertheless were as raucous as any of the other patrons. Everybody claimed to have been there the weekend some B&D girls visiting from Seattle had organized a dirty conga-line. The Calyx had stayed empty for half an hour after opening while hundreds of women wound through the neighborhood, hooting and grunting and doing synchronized kicks. Why shouldn't the women in Muir caps and motorcycle jackets and chaps dance and taunt and flatter one another? They were as horny as the other women, and the Calyx of Isis catered to all persuasions— though not on the same floor. "A place for everyone, and everyone in her place," Tyre, the owner, was fond of saying.

This was a weekday, so when Tyre's periwinkle-blue limousine pulled up to the door of the Calyx, there was no lesbian Mardi Gras to greet her. The Calyx wouldn't open until much later that night, and the crowd would be light.

But it was a very fine day. The morning fog had burned off and the evening fog had not yet rolled in. When her chauffeur (who was wearing the dress-gray uniform of a West Point cadet) opened her door and handed her out, Tyre spared an admiring glance for her enemy, the sun. Then she

covered her sensitive pink eyes with big Italian sunglasses and hurried to the door. Under her conservatively cut Blackglama, she was wearing a hot-pink spandex jumpsuit with more zippers in it than in a full set of luggage. Slung around her hips was a wide, studded belt that came down to a V above her crotch. Her silver pumps had six-inch heels. When you are just over six feet tall and have perfectly white hair that falls to your knees, there is no point in pretending to be inconspicuous.

“Please take Sara home. I won’t need the car until the usual time tonight, Michael,” she said. The driver saluted, her white glove touching the black patent bill of the military cover at precisely the correct angle. The two women, lady and retainer, two different kinds of aristocrats, exchanged a discreet smile of complicity. Michael’s blond mustache twitched.

Sara (fast asleep for the moment) was a juicy piece Tyre had picked up just before closing time the night before. Once they were in the back seat of the limousine, Tyre had put one hand over her mouth and used the other to make love to her while Michael drove them up to Twin Peaks, through Golden Gate Park, across the bridge, and back to her home via Seal Rock and Ocean Beach, with discreet pauses along the way. Whenever Tyre had directed Michael to park the limo, the chauffeur’s gray eyes had not left the rearview mirror. Even when they were in motion, Michael wasn’t able to resist keeping track of Sara, writhing in pleasure she was not allowed to express, as often as the traffic would allow. Tyre knew that her trick was going to get quite a ride on her way home. She approved.

She pressed the buzzer and waited for the security guard to check the video monitor and let her in. Her high heels clicked on the parquet floors. A crew was cleaning up the large waiting area. The place looked strange—skeletal, unreal—with all the house lights up, no music, no milling hordes of women. The cashier’s booth was unoccupied. As Tyre passed, she saw the rows of neatly numbered keys for rooms and lockers, the big piles of clean towels and robes, stacked-up boxes of lube and latex gloves, and smiled. There was no one in the coatroom, either, but the numbered hangers on the carrousel were all exactly the same distance apart, and the impression of order, readiness to serve efficiently, pleased her again.

There was another cleaning crew at work in the video room. She had to order some new X-rated movies and get one of the large screens repaired.

But her secretary, Georgia, who was also neatly put together and always ready to provide efficient service, would already have all this on the list of today's chores.

Tyre walked through the other rooms on the main floor—the disco (which also contained a stage for the strippers and the other sex shows), the refreshment bar, the game room (which held two pool tables, a dozen pinball machines, and twice as many video games)—and back to the elevator that would take her up to her office on the second floor. She didn't bother to check each of the cubicles (plywood-enclosed beds that could be rented by the hour as private rooms) and the maze; that would have to wait until just before the Calyx opened. She also didn't bother to go downstairs and tour the dungeons. They hadn't gotten a lot of use this weekend, and Simba, the Dungeonmaster, was an excellent supervisor, or so Georgia seemed to think. Tyre smirked at herself in the mirrored panels of the elevator walls.

Her office was off to one side of the second floor. The rest of it was taken up with the Jacuzzi and sauna, the showers, a locker room, the masseuses' studio, and a big room lined with mattresses, with a mirrored ceiling, that a patron entered only if she was ready to take on all comers.

The Calyx had another floor as well, but very few of the customers knew about it. This floor was kept available for staging fantasies a little more complex than the scenarios that could be enacted with someone you stumbled on under the black lights that dotted the maze. These fantasies also cost more than mere admission to the club. Tyre handled all these requests personally. It was one of her perks for shouldering the exhausting burden of managing the Calyx.

"Bread and circuses is a lonely business," she often told Georgia. Owning the Calyx made it easy for her to get access to beautiful women. But women who are starstruck, envious, or determined *not* to be impressed make poor friends and impossible lovers. Many of her employees had the same problem, and slept mostly with each other. The network of women who worked for the Calyx was alarmingly incestuous. It was one of the reasons she had subtly encouraged Michael to take Sara. Having another groupie to pass around would ease the sexual pressure her help put on one

another. It would also keep Sara from entertaining any pretentious thoughts about her future.

The indirect lighting and soft carpets of her office were soothing. So was the music—Phillip Glass. Tyre took off her sunglasses and slid them into her coat pocket. As she hung up her mink, the Siamese cat, Nineveh, brought her kittens, Sodom and Gomorrah, over for review. Tyre crouched and held out a finger. Each of the kittens gravely batted at and chewed on it. Then Nineveh took them away to be held down on one of the couches in the reception area and scrubbed.

Georgia was putting a Dresden mug full of hot cappuccino on her desk. “Chocolate croissant or plain?” she asked. She was wearing a wheat-colored linen suit with a gold silk blouse. Her red hair was carefully styled. She walked a little more slowly than other women, as if she had to remind herself that you made your hips sway by putting one foot directly in front of the other.

“Plain, I think,” Tyre said. “Stomach’s a little wonky this a.m. But this looks heavenly. How am I going to manage without you when you go to Denver for your last operation?”

The large and capable hands put a tray with two hot croissants, a pot of marmalade, and a saucer stacked with pats of butter in front of her. “Don’t be silly, boss,” said the well-modulated, smoke-and-whisky voice. “Half the time it’s all I can do to just keep out of your way. Aspirin?”

“Please.”

A paper cup full of cold water and a foil packet of Bayer materialized next to the marmalade.

“Eat something,” Georgia urged her. “If you can make it through the morning, the caterer delivered chicken fajitas for lunch, and I’ll mix you up a special batch of margaritas to go with it.”

Tyre was already gutting the croissant and stuffing her face. After she pushed the tray away, it took her ten minutes to rip through an inch of paperwork on her desk. Georgia took notes. She could barely keep up.

There was a grant from a lesbian mothers’ collective that wanted to establish a childcare center. “Only if they’re open at night and give our patrons a discount,” Tyre said. “But they’d better keep our name out of it or

the fundamentalists will have a field day.” Georgia took it down in Mach 2 shorthand.

There was a request from an anthropology professor who wanted to send a team of students in to do participant observation. “Only if they’ll take their clothes off and stay in the maze,” Tyre said.

The Annie Kenney Coven that consecrated the Calyx at each equinox and solstice was having trouble finding hypo-allergenic incense and didn’t want to oppress women disabled by their sensitivity to fragrance. “I don’t know where the hell I’m going to find sneeze-proof incense,” Tyre said, “but tell them we’ll do some research on it. We haven’t had a lawsuit since they started cleaning up our aura on a quarterly basis, and I want them to keep on doing it. It’s good P.R., it’s a weird party, and it works. What more could you want?”

The Well Woman Body Care Center had agreed to set up a weekly clinic at the Calyx to do Pap smears and STD tests. They had sent a description of the kind of space, fixtures, and supplies they would need. “Do you believe how much cotton swabs cost? For that price they should come with an attachment for clitoral stimulation and vibrate at two speeds. Georgia, should we break their hearts and tell them they aren’t going to need any disposable paper drapes here? And what do they mean, they don’t know why I want them to stock latex dental dams! Jesus Christ on the Old Rugged Butt-Plug!”

WIFE (Women for Images of Female Equality, a group Tyre referred to as “Better Living Through Censorship”) was threatening to picket the Calyx if Tyre didn’t change her advertising, which featured a woman in a trench coat saying, “Psst! Take a Tour of the Feminist Porn District.” Somebody had thrown a brick through the window of the women’s newspaper that reluctantly ran the ad in every issue. (The brick had a sticker on it that said, “This is violence against women.”)

Tyre’s mouth got very grim. “Send somebody around to fix those windows,” she said, “and ask them if they want an alarm system installed. I’ll pay for it. Remember those pictures we took when Ricki Daft came here drunk on her ass and got obnoxious with the masseuse who didn’t want Ricki to pour chocolate syrup all over her? She’s WIFE’s director. Copy all

that shit and just send it to her with a note on my letterhead saying that if any more bricks get thrown at *On the Rag*, they'll get copies of it too. And remind me to double my annual contribution to the ACLU."

The phone rang. Georgia picked it up. "The Calyx of Isis," she said. "Serving the Goddess in You. Yes, she's in." She hit the hold button. "Call for you, boss. I think it's Marlon Brando." Tyre accepted the receiver.

"Am I speaking with the madam herself?" her caller asked.

Tyre chuckled. The woman had a harsh-edged New York accent, and her rich alto sent caterpillar-feet down Tyre's spine. "The very same," she purred. "My name is Tyre, and you are?"

"Alex. I understand that you sometimes handle special cases."

"Would you mind telling me how you came to be aware of that?"

Alex gave her the name of an opera singer who had paid a great deal of money to be abducted by an all-woman crew of hardhats and turned inside-out on the bare beams of the thirty-fifth floor of a partially constructed skyscraper.

"Well," she temporized, "it isn't every day, but yes, we sometimes arrange the extraordinary. Are you one of our regular clients?"

"No. I just moved to the west coast, and I haven't had the opportunity to visit your place yet. But my slave, Roxanne, knows one of your dominatrices, Anne-Marie. Before she met me she saw her fairly frequently."

"Was her experience with that satisfactory?" On a memo pad, Tyre wrote, "Anne-Marie's file—slave named Roxanne. Okay?" Georgia ripped the note off and disappeared into the computer room to call up the record and get a hard copy. Tyre could hear the printer running.

"Well, *I'm* very pleased with the results since my favorite thing to do is thrash someone severely and then fuck them up the ass, and I never met anybody who could take it like Roxanne. I think she might even be able to get fisted."

Tyre clicked her tongue. This crude talk was refreshing. "Ambitious, aren't you? Is that what you're calling to arrange?"

“Not exactly. I want something more complicated than that. It would be nice if we could slip that in somewhere, though.”

“So to speak,” Tyre said. Georgia laid Roxanne’s file on her desk. At the top, Anne-Marie had entered, in bold capital letters, “BOTTOMLESS PIT.” Tyre raised her eyebrows. Anne-Marie’s resources were not easily depleted.

“Perhaps we should discuss your proposal in person,” she murmured. “Are you free for luncheon any time this week?”

“Today, as a matter of fact.”

She wrote, “Company for lunch, make *extra* margaritas,” on her memo pad, underlined it, and showed it to Georgia, who smiled and pantomimed clapping her hands.

Tyre gave Alex the address. “Security will buzz you in, and my private secretary will be downstairs to show you up to my suite. Are you a vegetarian?”

“I am a confirmed carnivore.”

“Excellent.” She put the receiver down very gently. She was excited, and it wouldn’t do to drop it. The fact that the next item on the agenda was going through adult-film catalogs and ordering a new batch of lesbian videos did not ease the tension. She kept thinking that she was going to run off to the bathroom and masturbate, but she put it off so often that Alex arrived (ten minutes early, such a top’s trick) before she had a chance to find out exactly how wet she was. Instead, she was in the lunch room (and out of character) setting the table.

She had expected someone Anne-Marie’s age. But the woman who strode easily, a bit arrogantly, toward her was young—twenty-five at the most. She was tall (although not as tall as Tyre herself) and had the thick neck of a body-builder. She had a broad face with high cheekbones and almond-shaped brown eyes. Her head had been shaved about a month ago, so a short nap of black velvet covered her scalp. She was wearing black-leather pants with a studded crotch-piece, engineer boots, and an old, cracked black-leather jacket. The kidney panel, shoulders, and arms of the jacket were heavily padded.

‘I do so love those zippers that run from wrist to elbow,’ Tyre thought, and bit her napkin when she realized Alex was staring at her zippers, too. It

took her a few seconds to register the fact that her guest was holding out her hand, apparently wanting it to be shaken. This charmed her completely.

“Alex?” she questioned, in a tone of voice that clearly indicated she was pleasantly surprised.

“Yes. And you must be Tyre. I hope I didn’t offend you by calling you the madam.”

“Offended? It is an honorific, after all. Sit down, sit down. Georgia is going to makes us a blender full of killer margaritas. Would you mind hitting the button on the microwave, dear? Do you want to join us for luncheon?”

“Not on your life, boss-woman. I am trotting my tushie downstairs with a hot covered dish for Simba the lion-hearted, who is no doubt exhausted after watching everybody scrub away at the slings and chains and clamps and pulleys until everything twinkles like a little star.”

“And who will no doubt quickly uncover and devour any hot dish within arm’s length,” Tyre returned.

“Hope springs eternal. Salt with those margaritas, ladies?” They both said yes, and Georgia dimpled at them and adjourned to the kitchenette.

“Let me help you,” Alex said, and followed her out. She returned with a big casserole dish full of the hot chicken-in-salsa that was the basis for the fajitas, then went back for the sour cream, refritos, tortillas, chopped tomato and lettuce, and other fixings. She didn’t sit down until Tyre held out her chair and gestured firmly toward it. Once seated, Alex immediately put her napkin in her lap. A working class girl made good, Tyre thought.

Georgia presented them with two cold glasses whose rims had been rolled in salt and a pitcher full of her wicked concoction. After she left, Tyre and Alex proceeded to get a slight buzz on and stuff themselves silly.

As she scooped up salsa and refried beans with a tortilla, Tyre found herself trying to explain her somewhat eccentric family to Alex. “Great Aunt Anastasia, we called her the G.A., was raised by a British suffragette who was the divorced wife of a coal-mining magnate. A man who would divorce a woman, even one crazy enough to want to vote, was thought to be a real cad then, so she got enough money out of it to start her own manufacturing empire. The G.A. never got married herself, and she always



said she would only leave her money to female kin who remained unmarried.

“Mother was leading the chase, but the G.A. just lived too long,” Tyre explained. “At age sixty-two she finally broke down and married my father, who was ailing. So she was disinherited, although it didn’t cause too many hard feelings. The G.A. always referred to Daddy as ‘the Stud.’ Mother once told her she had forgotten that men could be independently wealthy, too. The G.A. never quite approved of me knowing who my father was, although Mother and I traveled so much Daddy was just one of the relatives we visited. At any rate, when she died five years ago in a car crash in Madrid, I was her sole heir. Except for Consuela, of course. When the G.A. retired as C.E.O., she and Consuela had started an exclusive girl’s school in Switzerland for composers and conductors and musicians and singers, and all that property went to her, plus enough capital for upkeep.”

Alex chuckled. “It must take a pile of money to keep this place up.”

“Yes, but I have piles more,” Tyre said frankly. “And most of it is such old and civilized money, it’s very well behaved, it doesn’t want much minding. It takes care of itself and goes on making more. I have told my business managers to keep it out of South Africa and so forth, or course, but in the grand scale of my 1040 Form, this place is only a hobby. Even if it takes fourteen-hour days to keep it running.”

“So why do this? Why not travel, or take up yacht racing, or Paris fashion shows? You could endow a college, or launch a satellite, or breed thoroughbred horses. You could gamble at Monte Carlo or dabble in international politics or invent new recreational drugs or build yourself an island paradise.”

“Mmm, well, some of that I might do in the future, and some of it I do already, actually. But I wanted to do something for other women. After all, I am a feminist, albeit the fun kind. Something, something revolutionary yet decadent, appealed to me. What I started out with was a vague concept of a combination couturière, opium den, pachinko palace, and paramilitary training camp for an army of Amazon lovers, and this is where I wound up. I must say it certainly has upset an awful lot of people.”

“So I hear.”

“Well, casual, anonymous sex has never been available to women on a commercial basis before. It has changed what it means to be a lesbian, and some women don’t like that. Before the Calyx opened, a lot of women did volunteer work for lesbian organizations because it was a way to meet other women. Now they want to be paid. Who wants to do shit-work for free or sit through five-hour marathon meetings when they could be here, checking out the dancers?

“A few of our local sex symbols have been dethroned. It’s difficult to manipulate other women by turning them on and then holding out on them because there isn’t such a sense of sexual scarcity. You have to do more than just hint you might be available to attract a woman who has already slept with hundreds of other women.

“Maybe for the first time in history, lesbians have the choice to be really promiscuous, if that’s what they want to do. There’s no more monogamy-by-default, the assumption that monogamy is the way it has to be. Even women who are monogamous are having more sex because you can’t expect your lover to be faithful if you quit having sex with her any more.

“I wonder if some relationships aren’t lasting a little bit longer, though. Because now instead of falling in love with your next-door neighbor and breaking up over it, you can get nookie someplace that is clearly separate from your relationship. So many women come to the Calyx of Isis that it’s possible to have sex with somebody you won’t ever see again,”

“If you’ve got that large a clientele, they’re not all lesbian feminists.”

“There are busy female execs who jet in for a quickie before they grab their male competitors by the short-and-curlies at a business meeting. Bored housewives come looking for something more entertaining than an afternoon of soap operas and sloe gin. We get couples looking for a threesome, single women looking for Ms Right or Ms Wrong or Ms Right Away, black and white and Hispanic and Asian women who are bisexuals, transsexuals, homosexuals, heterosexuals, and try-sexuals, as in ‘I’ll try anything.’ Witches and bikers and real-estate agents and drug dealers and lobbyists and martial-arts instructors and female bankers and mechanics and dentists and housepainters. I’m sure many of the women who come to the Calyx of Isis don’t consider themselves to be lesbians. But all of them have

lots of hot lesbian sex here. Having that much fun with other women promotes female bonding; it's bound to change a woman's life. We're sort of a lesbian recruitment center."

Alex said, "It seems to me that this is the kind of place that men can take for granted. I always envied the boys in high school because they had circle jerks and they would egg each other on to get more sexual experience, while the girls were always spying on each other and thinking up new ways to be nasty to the school sluts. It used to scare the piss out of me, because I knew the only reason I wasn't one of the sluts was because I was a lesbian. If all the girls I went to school with had been dykes, they would have been onto me, nothing would have saved me."

"We have circle jerks here, in the video lounge. Scenes in the jacuzzi that would make Messalina cream. Noises coming out of the maze that you can't imagine women making. Cluster fucks that make the mat-room look like an anthill. Women get outrageous here because they are safe."

By now the pitcher of margaritas was empty and they were trying to sober up with some coffee and flan. Alex was grinning at Tyre and digging her spoon into the soft custard. "I'm a little confused," she said. "Is this just a bathhouse, or is it a brothel, too? I mean, these women pay you only for the opportunity to enter a space where other women will also be looking for sex. But they don't pay for the sex itself."

"Prostitution," Tyre said primly, "is illegal."

"Yeah, right, and so's cocaine and going sixty-five miles an hour. You going to try and tell me none of your masseuses are turning tricks in those cardboard booths?"

"Tipping is encouraged."

"I see. And who do I have to tip to set up the scene I have in mind?"

"Some fantasy productions involve a considerable outlay of capital to bring off. Travel, sets, costumes, props—basic expenses like these must be reimbursed. And some, shall we call them specialists, will not participate without remuneration. Although some find the opportunity to play a part in a piece of high-quality erotic theater is enough of a reward. I do try very hard not to turn anyone away, although some of their fantasies are rather trite. If you can ask for what you want, you ought to get it. So if someone

has a skill I might be able to use to work out another client's fantasy, I will front the cash for her scenario and take payment out in kind."

"And what if the person who owes you some help doesn't like the scenario you want her to assist with?"

"The contract is quite clear. She has the right of refusal. But that creates an obligation to pay some interest on the original debt."

"What do you mean, interest?"

"She can turn down any offer I make her, but every time somebody says, 'No, I won't do that,' she owes me help with one more fantasy enactment. It adds up fast."

"I'm not sure that's legal."

"Neither are low-riders and MDA."

"You have enough money to give everybody a free ride."

Tyre bristled. "That's true," she said stiffly.

"Doesn't that cause a bit of resentment?"

"Yes, but I'd rather be resented than hated. Somebody who pays me feels that she is in control. She's running the fuck. If I made the women's community a present of the Calyx of Isis, I'd be creating an obligation, a debt that they'd have no idea how to repay. They'd trash the joint and lynch me. But this is academic since I don't know how well off you are or what you have in mind."

"I own the Ronin dealership on Van Ness Avenue. That's a new brand of Japanese motorcycle, y'know. Very chill."

"Oh, yes. I know all about Japanese bikes." Tyre was a Harley-Davidson loyalist and kept her own hog ("Actually I prefer to call it a sow") in perfect running order, but she thought it was not exactly politic to mention that right now. If money was not an issue, perhaps they could proceed to the heart of the matter.

Alex was examining the chandelier, the carpet, the cut-glass salt and pepper shakers, the pattern on the china. Was she a little bit flushed? "Well," she finally said, "I guess I can tell you anything. I mean, nothing should shock you, right?"

Tyre refused to help her out. She busied herself with the last of her flan.

“Before I tell you the details of my fantasy, I have to explain the nature of my sexuality. I don’t find vanilla sex particularly effective. I have nothing against it any more than I have anything against chicken farmers or Halley’s comet, but they don’t get me off, either. There are a lot of rumors about you, and who knows if any of them are true, but I do know you have a reputation for being fair to the leatherwomen who come here. This is just about the only public space where we are welcome. A few of the flakier badgirls don’t like Simba because she’s barred them from the dungeon for being too stoned to hit what they aim at, and if you ask me it’s because they don’t like bein’ bossed around by a black woman, but the other thing she does is keep tourists and bluenoses out of the dungeons, and as long as she does that I don’t care about your rule that no rough stuff goes on any place else in the Calyx of Isis. It can’t be news to you that that isn’t a very popular rule with some of us.

“But I figure your job is getting women laid, so even if you don’t particularly care for S/M you understand that it isn’t easy to find somebody compatible. Just cause your black hanky is on the left and hers is on the right don’t mean you are going to live happily ever after. I’ve had a lot of fun and a very hot relationship or two but none that lasted, and I’m kinda sick of that. Maybe romance and S/M don’t mix, but I want a woman of my own who will stick by my side, somebody who really needs and likes what I do.

“Well, I met a lady who has potential, that’s Roxanne. She works at the Mitchell Brothers theater, dancing. And she is pretty special, I think. But it’s real hard for me to let myself go unless I know that the other person belongs to me. And that she will go the distance with me, she won’t whip-tease me and then chicken out. I know when most people say they want somebody to belong to them they mean they want to keep them all to themselves, but for me the real test of property is, can you give it away? And if you loan it out, can you get it back? So I guess I need to test her, but I also want to surprise her and give her something that is a fantasy for a lot of bottoms.

“I want a gang, a pack, a bunch of tough and experienced top women. I’ll leave the exact number up to you, but I don’t want just a threesome in warm leatherette. I would rather it not be women Roxanne already knows. And no

novices, they would just get in the way. Once you get that group together I want to give them Roxanne, and if she makes me proud I want her to belong to me, wear my rings. If she still wants me. She might decide it's too much, or maybe she'll tumble for one of the other tops. I have to know where she's at before I fall any more in love with her. I want somebody I can perfect with hard, constant training. A living work of art I can take out and show off on Folsom Street as my counterpart. So pretty and so alive and responsive to me it will make all the other tops, boys and girls, gnaw on their arms. It's makin' me crazy, what I want. What do you think?"

Tyre thoughtfully chewed her lower lip. "Well, the only problem is the classic one of determining consent. Since my negotiations are with you and not with Roxanne, I have no way to determine if this really is one of her fantasies."

"Well, what do you want me to do? Give her a safe word?"

"Since the whole thing is being set up as a test, I don't think that would ruin the ambiance. And I also need to check your credentials, and her background. You understand. If I'm going to find tops she doesn't know, I'd have to do that anyway."

"I think my reputation will bear up under scrutiny. You plan to be equally careful when you select the other members of the party?"

Tyre nodded. But she seemed distracted.

"What else is bothering you?" Alex asked.

"I was just wondering if that's what they say about me—that I have no interest in dominance and submission."

Alex shook her head. "You wanna know everything they say about you, we can sit here all day and I still won't be done." Her eyes had gone cold, calculating. "What the fuck does it matter to you? You're not exactly working for commission."

"I just get sick of being the object of so much gossip. It's ostensibly a form of attention, but it actually makes me feel slighted and ignored. Because what people are really paying attention to are their own fantasies, their own needs, their own ideas about who or what I should be in relation to them. They have no idea what the Calyx means to me, why I do this, what keeps me going. And they don't care."

“How could they ever get to know you? You’re a very private lady. You have a huge fan club of adoring little baby dykes, but you keep ’em away with the color of your money and your Snow Queen attitude. The ninjas and cat-ladies you got workin’ for you are a buncha hard-core bodyguards.”

“I have to be very careful to protect my privacy. Because you know what happens when women find out something about me that doesn’t agree with their fantasies, their projections? They get angry. And there’s nothing more dangerous than a disappointed fan. If you have enough of them you’ll never be safe.”

“You’re soundin’ kind of paranoid. Makes me wonder how come you invited me up to lunch like we were just small-town neighbors.”

“I do get lonely. And once you’ve seen a whole warehouse full of women fucking and sucking every night for a year or two, it gets old. The individual acquires a new kind of satisfaction. But you’re right, trust is an issue. That’s why we’re talking about whether or not the Calyx of Isis is going to provide a venue for your fantasy. Because I’m not sure I trust you.”

“Well, I’ll just have to teach you to trust me.”

“How do you plan to do that?”

Tyre stood as Alex came around the table toward her. She was used to butch women assuming she was their natural prey. And equally used to fending off their moves, even while a part of her admired their self-assurance, their deviant and defiant beauty. But Alex wanted something else. Just as she wanted to test Roxanne’s mettle before giving her rings, she was testing Tyre before giving her the task of setting up this gang-bang. She would stop dead in her tracks if Tyre told her to, but she would also take her fantasy out the door. If it ever happened, Tyre wouldn’t be invited.

They circled the table, Alex stalking her, until Tyre suddenly reversed direction and speeded up. Alex jumped away from her and the table, and Tyre backed slowly into the kitchenette.

“Those boots have steel toes?” she asked Alex.

“Sure.”

“So do my high heels,” Tyre said. “Damascus steel. So decorative.” Alex spared a quick look at her feet. It was true. Then Tyre threw a side-kick at her, and she saw that the spike heels were also made out of steel. The skin-tight, hot-pink jumpsuit did not hamper her opponent at all. Alex parried the kick and punched. Her fist was blocked by a hard forearm. They sparred enough to make each other breathe hard, get a sweat to pop up. Somehow they wound up with their hands on each other’s hips, pressed together from the waist down, staring at each other’s mouths and eyes. When Tyre’s hand went for the zipper on her jacket, Alex reached for the neck of her jumpsuit and there were two simultaneous ripping noises as they each exposed the other’s torso.

Alex did not wear anything under the jacket, and Tyre was bare beneath the spandex. Their breasts were nearly the same size. If anything, Alex’s were bigger, and the feel of her hard nipple between Tyre’s slim fingers made her grab for a similar target. She came up with metal as well as flesh. There were small silver rings in Tyre’s nipples.

“You’re sweating,” Tyre grinned. “Brings out the smell of the leather. Or is that cunt? Shall I bring it out a little more? So we can tell?”

She twisted the nipple a quarter-turn, crushed it. Alex grinned at her and judiciously applied exactly the same amount of pressure to the teat she held, then twisted it past that point. “Gonna tell me you don’t sweat, you glow?” she asked Tyre. “Looks like sweat to me. Looks good on you, like maybe you’re working hard for a change.”

“I don’t mind working hard, and I don’t think you mind my being hard on you. You like this,” Tyre accused her, getting a grip on the other nipple and stretching them both out, until Alex saw tiny white stars.

“I like *this*,” Alex affirmed, and returned the hurt worse, until their hips slid past each other and their thighs interlocked, the long bone of the leg and the muscle over it pressed into the other woman’s mound, pushing the sensitive, swollen tissue back down until it flattened against the pubic bone. Hard and soft, hard and soft, their hands played on each other’s bodies, and they rocked in each other’s arms, seeking advantage, grappling. It was a kind of wrestling with no attempt to throw, but a quest for domination nonetheless. They both yelped at the same moment, but not from the pain of



well-manipulated nipples. Their thighs separated momentarily, startled by the intensity of this pleasure, and its brevity.

They groped for each other's crotches. The sound of Tyre's zipper was a long, continuous wail punctuated with a few sharp snaps as Alex's studded crotch-piece was pulled off and dropped on the floor.

"You're wet," Alex said.

"Thirsty?" Tyre spit.

"Empty, too," Alex said, and fixed that. But Tyre had already thrust home between her legs, and they were both wet to the wrist.

"You can't keep that up," Tyre said, fucking her, "you can't keep it up while you—"

"While I make you come? Is that what you were gonna say? Because it's not gonna take me that long to—"

"Lose it, give it up, you can't help it—"

"But I can help you, help you over the edge. Tell me you don't want it."

Tyre's entire free hand fell onto Alex's breast and squeezed it, hard. "Show me how tough you are," she hissed, "big leather stud, such a goddamn big girl, can you take it, can you?"

They could not get away from each other, could barely keep on their feet. As Alex retaliated by flicking Tyre's nipples, their mouths met and they swallowed the noise of a mutual surrender, predatory but also protective.

Then they were on the floor. Tyre climbed on top of Alex, split her legs, and ate her with fast hard strokes, trying to get to her before Alex could thrust her own head between Tyre's legs and bully her into coming again. Her head start only lasted a few seconds. She slapped Alex's thighs, dug her nails in to try and make her stop, and got her own ass smacked in retaliation, her pussy lips pulled so far apart that they ached, which made her actually bite Alex, or did she bite Alex because she was coming or because Alex was coming and had abruptly shoved her hips into Tyre's face?

They rolled apart laughing, embarrassed but also proud of themselves. "Is *that* supposed to make me trust you?" Tyre wondered.

"Might make me follow you home, but *trust* you? Shit."

Alex sat up, rubbed her head. “Aren’t you going to ask me if I came?”

“Uh, no, I never ask them that. Beneath my dignity, don’tcha know.”

“Ah, yes, that’s very top of you. But I’m so top that I don’t even try to make them come.”

“Bull—”

“—shit, yeah, it is. It sure is.”

“But this isn’t,” Tyre said, and had Alex back down on the floor, with the heel of her shoe in the hollow of her throat. Alex’s head was turned to one side, and the sole of the shoe rested on her cheek. “Why do you think I walk around on a pair of knives? This is no fashion statement, darling. Do you know how much it cost me to get my sensei to let me do my katas in these? I had to put a new floor in the dojo. You ever try that shit with me again, and we’ll fight for real.”

Alex’s face was suffused with purple. She was taking a lot of Tyre’s weight directly on her throat, and Tyre was not a small woman. As soon as the foot came off her face, before she even sat up, her hand darted inside her jacket.

“This what you’re looking for?” Tyre said, and threw the knife point-down into the floor by her right hand. “Pretty fancy toy, that CIA plastic that won’t set off a metal detector. Security and I are going to have a little chat. If the guard on duty is somebody you ever fucked, she is about to get royally screwed by me.”

Alex had plucked the knife from the linoleum and slid it home in the sheath under her armpit, without looking, of course. Tyre smiled at that. Weapons are so beautiful in competent women’s hands.

“I don’t go anywhere unarmed,” Alex said bluntly. “And if I had pulled that blade, you wouldn’t have anybody to blame but yourself. You threw the first kick, remember?”

“And what would you have done if I let you pounce on me as soon as you were done with dessert, huh? Have me over the table and next thing I know my stuff is all over town, that you had a piece of my ass, might come back for more if you get in the mood? I don’t think so.”

“Pity,” Alex said softly. “It was only a little tussle, good clean fun between a couple of serious players. Next thing I know it’s time to hand down indictments and interview a jury. Lighten up, for Chrissake. Who had who? Who won? Do you know? I sure the fuck don’t. And I don’t care. Life is too short.”

Neither of them could think of anything else to say. They just glared.

“I want this gig,” Tyre said finally. “I want to run this trip for you.”

“Okay, fine. But before you change the subject lemme just say that you got rings in your tits, Tyre, and if you really thought you had to apologize for bein’ human, maybe you oughta take ’em out.”

“They are *my* rings, and I wear them for my own good reasons. They are not coming out. I have too much scar tissue as it is. And you ought to mind your own damn business.”

“Oh, but I never could mind anybody at all. But I keep looking. That’s how I got most of my own scars. How about you?”

“Stop it.”

“Sure. I’ll stop. Just remember who cried uncle.”

Then Alex was gone. Tyre’s hands were shaking too bad to do anything but break the dishes she tried to stack in the sink, so she broke several on purpose, smashing them against the exposed brick in the kitchen. By the time she had cleaned that mess up, she felt better, but knew the rest of the day was shot to hell. So she used the interoffice phone to buzz Georgia and Simba, and told them to fire the security guard who had not frisked Alex, and got Michael on the car phone to let her know she needed the limo. During the long drive home, she thought about asking Michael to fuck her. Instead, she wound up listening to her driver describe her conquest of Sara. Tyre opened her own door, slammed it, stomped into the house, took off her clothes, laid down on the front hall carpet and masturbated, then went upstairs, changed into her leathers without bothering to take a shower first, and went out to hunt for the wolf-pack of women who would help Alex decide if Roxanne belonged to her or on the streets.

Tyre didn’t hear from Alex for three weeks. Out of spite more than anything else, she instituted a once-a-week festival of gay male porn films and was surprised and disappointed when it filled up the house. “No

accounting for taste,” she told Georgia, who gave her a strange look and said, “What’s good taste got to do with the price of ben-wa balls in Hong Kong, boss? You need a vacation or a new hat or something?”

She thought yeah, I need something, but couldn’t quite figure out what it was until one day the phone rang just as she was about to dump out a mug of cold tea and leave the office.

“Tyre? Alex.” Two words, and the edge on that voice ran up and down her spine. Old butterflies came back to life in Tyre’s stomach.

“Yes?” The word came out in a whoosh. She was suddenly out of breath.

“Things moved along any since I last saw you?”

“Well, as a matter of fact, yes.” Tyre smiled at her reflection in the mirror on the opposite wall. She had done a good job with this, she had a right to be a little proud. “We can run that trip for you any time you like.”

Alex whistled. “That was fast. Can I get a thumbnail sketch of your crew?”

“I know you said you didn’t want anyone there who Roxanne knows. But Anne-Marie has asked for permission to join us. She says she would like to help give Roxanne a going-away party to remember.”

“Mmm. I just thought the presence of strangers would make it much more intense. Isn’t Anne-Marie into all that frilly Victorian stuff? The evening I envisioned was more, uh, heavy metal.”

“Anne-Marie’s specialty is caning. If anything, Roxanne’s prior experience with her will make her more intimidating, not less. She is also a lady, and a real lady is appropriate in any circumstances. I think she will be an asset. And she promised me she would leave her corsets at home.”

“I trust your judgment. You’re the madam.”

There was no hint of irony in Alex’s voice. Were they both going to pretend they had never lost their tempers with one another? Well, maybe that was the best strategy. Tyre took a deep breath and went on. “Then there’s Joyous Day, the photographer. You know her? She had a show at Quotidian Gallery last month.”

“Yeah, we went to see her stuff. So she does more than take pictures of it, huh?”

“Oh, yes.” Tyre rubbed a yellowing bruise high up on her left buttock. “She poses her own models. And there’s Kay and EZ, two women who usually hang out at men’s bars. Bikers.”

“Are they into women?”

“They’re into each other. When they heard about this, they jumped at the chance. They haven’t met many women who dig their scene. They usually pick on cute little faggots. They get these boys totally wasted and then drag them home and make them earn their red hankies. Think Roxanne will look good in red?” There was a long silence. “Alex? You there?”

“Yeah, just counting. So that makes five, with me. I really would like to round up a few more. To make it genuinely scary, you know?”

“Oh, I haven’t given you the whole list yet. Do you know Chris— um, Chris what-is-it, yeah, McPherson? She plays drums for Mutilation.”

“Great. Then all we need is one more top, and we’re set.”

Tyre’s throat was very dry. She took a big swallow of cold tea, gagged, and blurted, “No, we don’t. There’s me.”

The laughter she dreaded did not materialize. “No shit?” Alex finally said. “Does that mean you’re not pissed off at my any more?”

“There’s no reason to be pissed at you, and I think maybe I owe you an apology.”

“Naw. If I let you apologize you’ll be pissed for sure. I’m real glad to hear you’re going to be there. I was planning to keep on saying ‘We need one more top’ until you included yourself in.”

“You cocksucker,” Tyre sputtered, laughing.

“You should be so lucky. So is this why this whole thing pulled itself together so quickly, ’cause the madam wants to see my girlfriend get thrown to the lions?”

“Well, to be truthful, yes. The idea of it excites me tremendously.” And it means I get to see you again, she told herself silently.

“Great, great, fabulous. God, I don’t know how I would have come up with another excuse to see you again.”

Damn the woman and her ingenuous honesty. But Alex was still talking.

“I am so jazzed, I can barely stand still. Best news I’ve had all year. Well, okay, let’s schedule this deal. What about next Saturday? That give you enough time to round everybody up, hey?”

“Well, it would be, but Mama Kali, the Denver bike club, has scheduled a run for that weekend. I don’t think you want to string Roxanne up in the middle of that crew.”

“Maybe for our first anniversary. If we ever have one. So when is the space available?”

Tyre checked her desk calendar. “The first weekend of next month. And after that it isn’t free again until June.”

“Okay. That’s it, then. What time should I bring her by?”

“Why don’t I send my driver, Michael, around for you at nine o’clock? Put Roxanne in a hood and manacles. If you like, I’ve got a mummy bag you can zip her into. Or you can just throw a cloak around her and stuff her into the back seat of the limo. Michael will give you enough lead time to get here on your bike. That way, Roxanne won’t know where she’s going or whether or not you are going with her. When Michael arrives, she can call me on the car phone. There’s a back entrance to the basement so we won’t have to carry her in through the main floor. The disco bunnies would pass out en masse.”

“Aw, c’mon. It would be so good for them.”

“Look, they have a right to their own version of a good time. Leather and vanilla don’t mix real well. I’m not very fond of 69 myself—“

“Yeah?” Alex said dryly.

“Except in the context of dominance and submission, you bitch, and if I was about to come in my girlfriend’s sweet little mouth, I wouldn’t want to be interrupted by a series of harrowing screams or the sound of a belt hitting a bare butt. Look, don’t worry, this is going to be notorious, all right? The rumors are already circulating. We’re going to have to post Simba at the head of the stairs with a cattle prod to keep the voyeurs from using a battering ram on the dungeon door.”

“The first weekend of next month, huh? How am I going to keep myself busy in between now and then?”

“Well, I know what I’m going to be doing. I’m going to be taking each of the dominatrices on a tour of the dungeon we’ll be using, showing them how all the bondage equipment works. It wouldn’t hurt for you to get more familiar with the premises, either.”

Alex’s voice went shy. “Oh. Yeah. Well, I been already. Last weekend. You, uh, you weren’t there I don’t think. So you wouldn’t know. That I was there. You know?”

“Oh, ah, no, I didn’t, shit, um, know you were here. Well, god-dammit, why didn’t you tell me? I would have brought you down some champagne.”

“For some reason the security guards didn’t seem to be too fond of me, and I didn’t think any of them would do me the favor of taking you a personal message.”

“Oh. Of course not. Damn. Well, I guess I’ll see you for sure anyway the first weekend of—”

“Next month. Yeah. Story of my life. But be still my heart, it should be a good one. Get lotsa beauty sleep.”

“I promise.”

Perhaps it was the guided tours of the dungeons, which kept turning into auditions or dress rehearsals for Alex’s scene, which made it easy for Tyre to keep her promise. She slept very well during the interregnum. In fact, she got so used to standing around in the dungeon, wearing full leather, waiting for someone to show up, that she barely registered the fact that this was it, the big night, the main event, until Alex strode in—an immaculate black knight in her racing jacket, codpiece pants, and engineer boots—counted heads, and said, “Who the fuck is missing? What did they do, call in sick?”

Kay and EZ came swaggering in right behind her. They were dressed the same way they had been when Tyre tracked them down on Folsom Street. EZ wore black-leather chaps over 501s that had faded and faded until they were nearly white. Her motorcycle jacket was off the rack, no customization, and she wore a plain white T-shirt underneath it. Her black hair was very short, spiked out, and had platinum stripes bleached into it above and just behind her ears. She was thin and butch enough to look like a young, very cute, boy-punk. This made her a perfect piece of bait for Kay to throw into the shark-bars South of Market.

Kay was a little older and more feminine. The blue jeans under her chaps were a bit newer than EZ's, a pale blue instead of white. She had put a navy-blue rinse over her long, dark hair, and it showed in certain angles of the light. She wore a lot of tooled silver rings, hippie-looking things, which she loved to take off one at a time while a prospective victim stared at her hands in dread and fascination. Her jacket was virtually identical to EZ's, but she had tied a red bandana around her left upper arm, whereas EZ wore a chain dog collar threaded under her left epaulet. Her T-shirt was made out of black ciré, and her boots had high heels instead of a plain cowboy walking heel. She made up for that by wearing Mexican spurs with long rowels.

"Sorry we're late," EZ snickered. "We hadda see a man about a horse."

Alex kicked the door closed behind them. Her countenance was stormy. Of course, the telephone picked that moment to ring. Tyre intercepted Alex, who was headed for Kay and EZ with her hand upraised, and dragged her over to the phone. She kept an arm around her while she talked.

Alex rubbed her face and velvety scalp all over the front of Tyre's jacket, trying to calm down. Finally she pulled away enough to get a good look at her. Tyre was wearing a red-leather leotard with her trademark long crotch zipper under black chaps made of glove leather. Over that she wore a black-leather jacket with long, red fringes that swirled around her whenever she moved. Her high-heeled boots came up to her knees, and the tops turned down to reveal scarlet cuffs.

Tyre moved one of her long, rhinestone earrings out of the way and put the receiver up to her ear. "Drive around for a while," she told Michael. If she remembered correctly, today the chauffeur was wearing Marine Corps dress blues. Too bad Roxanne couldn't get a gander at that. "We need some time to get acquainted. I'll call you when you should deliver the goods." Then she told Alex, "It won't hurt to let Roxanne stew for a little while. Give her a chance to get into the spirit of the thing. Now come and meet your partners in sex crime."

But EZ didn't wait to be introduced. "So you need a little help with an uppity slave?" she yelled at Alex.

Alex frowned. "I wouldn't put it that way," she said carefully.



“How would you put it?”

“Up your ass!” Alex snarled.

“Whoa—now, wait a minute! Where’s all this hostility at? Didn’t mean to, uh, demean your competence—you know? Really, man, let’s change the subject. How’s the weather up there where you hang out? Got a wild hair up your ass or maybe just up your nose?”

“Shit, EZ,” Kay grumbled, “you got a big smart fuckin’ mouth, you know that, girl?”

“Aw, Kay—“

“Just shut up, now, or I swear I’ll handcuff you to this bar and you’ll spend all night gettin’ other people’s beers and lightin’ their Virginia Slims. Alex don’t need any help from us, schmuck. She’s givin’ us a crack at something good, that’s all. Chance to fraternize with the competition. Keep your edge on. Thought we might learn a few new tricks, ain’t that right?”

Alex was relaxing visibly under Kay’s carnival con-artist patter. “Something like that,” she admitted. “Tyre, would you like a drink?”

“Yes,” she said. Alex picked up a shot-glass. “Sherry,” she specified. Alex put the glass down.

“Yo, bro, lemme behind the board. Next round is on me. I need a brewski anyways,” said EZ, and scooted around to play bartender. Kay co-opted the stool at the far end of the bar, pulled a Whitman Sampler box full of sinsemilla buds out of her bag, and began rolling one-handed joints out of the shake.

Tyre tapped her long red fingernails against the bar. Would the group gel the way she had envisioned it? Since Kay and EZ were question marks right now, she decided to focus attention on the other dominatrices. “Ladies and Others,” she said, “I would like to thank all of you for joining us tonight. And I would like to introduce you to Alex, who initiated this delightful evening. The Founder of the Feast, as it were. Why don’t I introduce you to each of them, Alex, and then possibly you’d like to tell us what we can expect from Roxanne and what you expect from us.”

Alex nodded. EZ had shoved a cold beer into her hand, and she rolled it over her forehead. “Thanks,” she said shortly. EZ grabbed her hand and

wrapped her fingers around the wrist to shake it. “We’re gonna be like that, another pair of hands for you,” she promised. “Everybody got something to drink? Tyre, you’re never gonna make no kinda alcoholic. That stuff smells like cough syrup.”

“Yes, I’ve always preferred it to Sterno. I’m afraid I have no palate at all. Kay, can we smoke one of those joints?”

“Yeah, sure. I was tryin’ to roll the perfect doob, but I guess I oughta give up on that project and just get y’all too fucked up to tell if you’re smokin’ sins or horse-shit.”

Alex took the joint and a box of matches off the bar. She lit the match on the sole of her engineer boot and delicately twirled the end of the homemade cigarette in the dancing flame.

“Smoke it fast, now,” Kay warned. “Sins don’t like to stay lit. Too full of resin.”

As smoke traveled from hand to hand, Tyre made her introductions. The first woman was carrying an old-fashioned doctor’s bag and wore a nurse’s uniform. As she stepped forward to give Alex her hand, Alex realized that the entire uniform—including the cap on her short, curly gray hair—was made out of white latex. The woman was at least forty-five, maybe fifty, inclined toward stoutness, but she had perfect posture and an air of invisible authority.

“Anne-Marie, Alex. Alex, Anne-Marie,” sang Tyre. “I promised you there would be no corsets,” she said under her breath.

But Anne-Marie had heard her. “I’m wearing a white-and-pink one under my latex,” she smiled. She had a British accent.

Alex groaned, and Tyre interceded. “What have you got in that doctor’s bag, Anne-Marie?”

“The usual implements necessary for a physical examination—a rectal thermometer, KY jelly, an assortment of enema nozzles, vibrating eggs and ass-plugs, and a catheter or two.”

Alex relented and laughed. “Where are your canes?”

“Ah, you’ve heard about my canes. They’re in a rack over the horse. Study of the classics is the best course for the improvement of young

minds.”

“I couldn’t agree with you more, although I come from a slightly different tradition,” Alex allowed.

“An icon is an icon is an icon,” said Anne-Marie. “Your Roxanne is an archetype in her own right. Please, Tyre, what are the names of our other compatriots?”

”Hello, Alex, I’m Chris,” the next woman drawled. They enjoyed a hearty handshake. Chris didn’t have Alex’s height or bulk, but her rangy body looked hard, strong, and fast. She wore leather pants tucked into her boots. Each boot carried a throwing knife. At first it looked as if she was wearing a chest harness, until you looked closer and realized they were crossed bandoliers full of Chinese throwing stars. Alex couldn’t recall a single type of shuriken that wasn’t displayed there. Every inch of Chris’s torso, except for the traditional thin line down the middle of her chest where a kimono could fall open, was covered with tattoos. Tyre eyed the swirling water, fighting carp, Japanese chrysanthemums, and exotic goddesses with nostalgia, recalling the way the body suit ended at Chris’s buttocks, the two scalloped halves of it framing the crack between her white buns. Alex, unaware of the full extent of Chris’s tattoos, was still impressed by them, by the thirteen fish hooks she wore in her ears, and by her five-inch-long, purple Mohawk. It was enough to make one overlook the eight-foot-long bullwhip coiled in her hand.

“What’s about to happen here is truly tribal, man,” she said, still shaking Alex’s hand. “I’ve been fasting for the success of your ritual. We have to bring the sun dance back into the century, or we’ll suffer spiritual extinction.”

Alex was finally getting behind the sinsemilla and the beer, and started to dig what was happening. So everybody was a little loony-tunes. She herself was a grown woman who had sex in the skins of dead animals. Her intuition was that all of these women were solid. Let it rock and roll.

“And this is Joyous Day,” Tyre said, giving the photographer a big hug. “If she likes you, you can call her Joy. How have you been?”

“I’ve been doin’ fine, Tyre, but I’m doin’ even better now. Alex! You got a dirty mind in a healthy body, that means you’re definitely my kind of

woman.” She had a Jamaican accent, a voice that made you want to keep talking.

Alex grinned and took her hand. “Somebody been talking about me?”

It would be hard to say which of the two, Chris or Joyous Day, was the most outrageous. Joy was an inch or so taller than Chris, and had long dreads. One of the dreads had been bleached. She also had facial cicatrices, like deep scratches from a tiger’s paw, on each cheek. Her back and shoulders were ornamented with spirals formed from raised dots, and she wore long brass gauntlets on each arm. In her nose, she wore a gold ring decorated with an ivory bead. Her leathers—a bikini top, bottom, and leggings—were a mixture of fur and skin. The natural, uneven edges had been left on the hides. Nothing was hemmed or evened up. Her earrings were made out of bells and wooden beads. A white horsehair flywhisk with a scarlet tip hung from her belt.

“Roxanne is going to lose her mind over you,” Alex said.

Joy smiled. “Just give me the flesh and the mind will follow, is what I always say.”

“Kay, EZ, come over here and get properly introduced,” Tyre snapped. EZ was diffident, and Kay apologized again for their lateness. Alex put a stop to that (and finally relieved her feelings) by slapping them both on the back. Hard.

“Fine, fine,” she said heartily. “’s okay. I can’t tell you all how glad I am have you here and how turned on I am. It will probably take Roxanne awhile to realize it, but she is a very lucky girl.”

She gathered Tyre under her arm, and Tyre embraced EZ, who pulled Kay close. Kay and Anne-Marie held hands, Anne-Marie put her arm around Chris, and Chris stood hip-to-hip with Joyous Day, who put her arm around Alex’s waist. They edged in until they were as close as possible. Someone started to hum. The hum got louder. It was like standing inside a beehive. EZ yipped like a coyote, and Joy hissed back like a cougar. The background hum rose and fell, but persisted as each of them found herself making animal noises. Tyre and Joyous Day moved Alex into the middle of the circle, and they all pressed up against her, hugged her, lifted her, and put her down. And the circle gradually separated, fell apart.

“Look where we are,” Chris said. “Isn’t this the most amazing room? Magick with a K is going to be set loose tonight.”

The dungeon was long and high-ceilinged, with thick wooded beams. Where there was no exposed brick, the walls were painted with black enamel. Wooden boards hung between each of the major pieces of bondage equipment. The boards were covered with s-hooks or cup-hooks that held a variety of restraints, clips, straps, and other useful miscellany.

At the far end of the room was a Saint Andrew’s cross, fitted with a leather waist-belt and outlined in eye-hooks. A round stained-glass window surmounted it, and a candle burning behind the window cast colored patterns at the foot of the cross.

To their left was a platform. A set of chains and pulleys dangled from the ceiling, and from the chains hung a thick sheet of leather—the sling.

To their right was a padded, leather-covered horse. On the rack above it gleamed several thin yellow canes. In the middle of the floor was an operating table set up with obstetrical stirrups.

The room was so big that a scene could take place simultaneously at each of these stations without tops bumping elbows. Tyre was a little worried about the energy getting dissipated, but she figured if everybody clustered around the action, Roxanne would not be able to see beyond the grim faces of her once and future mistresses.

Even though they had been here before, most of them more than once, each of the women wandered off to examine the area she was most interested in using. Tyre was congratulating herself for the way everyone had pulled together when she heard EZ say, “Where did you get a weird name like Joyous Day?”

“I guess *my* mama just loved me,” Joy said contemptuously. “Tyre, where is that little cart with the wheels?”

“On the other side of the operating table. Anne-Marie was using it earlier today.”

“Let me get it for you,” Anne-Marie said.

“Will it interfere with your setting up if I take some practice shots?” Chris asked. “My aim is true.”

“Uh-huh, nex’ thing I know you gonna be telling me that Haile Selassie be the Messiah.”

“No, mon, everybody knows Elvis Costello is God.”

Joy shook her head sadly. “I and I know Jah is dead, only Babylon lives,” she said.

“C’mon! If the children of Israel could make the walls of Jericho come tumbling down by clapping their hands and blowing their shofars, I figure anything that makes a lotta noise has got to do some good. I play drums myself.”

“I fool around a little with the keyboards. Just for comfort, t’hear another thing talkin’ back at me. Dat thing you got make a fearsome racket, ain’t it so?”

“Oh, yeah, yeah. Lemme show you how to throw it. You are going to liiiiike this.”

“Jeez, I just can’t handle this serious atmosphere,” EZ whined. “I think somebody put something in the water.”

Kay grabbed her by the back of the neck. “Are you gonna pull this shit all night long? ’Cause Mama doesn’t want any badboys usin’ up all the good air in here. You understand me? Now you make yourself useful or you make yourself scarce. Tyre!”

“Yo.”

“Can we put this pissant in charge of music?”

“Um ... That tape deck behind the bar is real expensive and real complicated.”

“In real life,” said EZ with wounded dignity, “I am a recording engineer. I make the things you play on your itsy-bitsy obsolete tinkertoy tape machine.”

“Go for it, champ.”

“Yo,” EZ said sullenly.

Kay smiled and shoved another can of Crisco under the electric can opener on the bar. She already had a small mountain of cans stacked up and ready for use. “I like that little swirl that’s always left on the top of the can

after they fill it up,” she said, tucking a strand of blue-black hair behind her ear. “It’s the simple things in life, you know?”

Tyre laughed. When she had first invited them to join in Alex’s scene, she had expected EX (who read like a lesbian to her) to jump at the offer. Instead, it was Kay who seemed eager and EZ who grumbled and held back. “Women don’t like the kind of shit we’re into,” EZ had said. “They’re just playing at it.”

“So what?” Kay said. “You’re always tellin’ me I don’t know enough about how to get in your pants. Seems like a perfect opportunity for me to find out if there’s really any difference between the G-spot and a prostate gland.”

“Aw, Kay, I’m gonna feel like a fuckin’ faggot.”

“If you don’t feel like one now your’re dim, girl, just dim. I wanna see this. An all-girl version of the CMC Carnival. And if you don’t come with me I’m gonna leave you home all tied up with the TV turned to an empty channel.”

Since Tyre had approached them and solicited their help with one of the Calyx’s fantasy scenarios, they had come back to the Calyx of Isis more often than any of the other dominatrices Tyre had enlisted. EZ alternated between eagerly helping Kay and getting underfoot until she got slapped down. Kay had acquired a following among the leather dykes, and EZ had acquired a nickname that nobody was going to say to her face unless they were ready to replace her.

Kay flashed Tyre a grin as she went by juggling a stack of clean towels and cans of Crisco. “Never know when you might want some of this life-savin’ equipment right at hand,” she explained, and went around the room leaving trick-towels and grease in several strategic locations, singing, “Urgent, ur-gent, eee-mergency.”

Tyre looked up to see Alex wiggling her eyebrows quizzically. “Shall we get poor Michael off the street before some cop asks her what’s in the body bag on the back seat?” she asked.

“Absolutely.” They walked over to the bar together. While Tyre dialed the number, Alex went after another beer.

“Where the fuck did you find a black refrigerator?” she wondered.

“It was a hell of a lot harder than finding a sling, I can tell you that,” Tyre smiled. “Michael? We are ready. I’m going to send a couple of the thugs here outside to help drag the body in. Thank you. You are indispensable and irreplaceable.”

Chris had followed Joyous Day down to the Saint Andrew’s cross and was uncoiling her bullwhip. She picked a spot to stand about nine feet from the X-shaped beams and began to take practice shots. The crack of the long whip was as loud as a pistol going off. Joy looked up from arranging her equipment on the cart and shot a fist into the air. “Jah love!” she shouted.

“I thought you was an atheist,” Chris shouted back.

“I could mebbe bring myself t’believe in your right arm, Chrissie.” The two of them cackled like the hags in *Macbeth*.

Alex put a hand on Tyre’s shoulder. “They all look like pros, madam.”

“They are,” she said.

Apparently some doubt still lingered. “Yeah, it’s a hot-looking bunch, but how do you know if they’ll follow through?”

EZ, absorbed in the tape deck, was still close enough to hear them. She snorted, then smothered her laugh.

“Because they got the same test every dominant who works at the Calyx gets. I’ve played with all of them,” Tyre said. “They won’t have any performance problems, believe me.” Take that, you supercilious switch-hitter, she thought.

“Well, well. All of them?”

“All of the women here tonight. Except Roxanne. Think she’ll follow through?”

“Damn straight.”

Tyre shrugged. “So don’t sweat the small stuff. Everybody knows it’s really the bottom who runs the scene. EZ, quit dickin’ around with that deck and put on some music. We need something high-energy and mean. Alex, who do you want to bring Roxanne in?”

Alex pointed at EZ, who had just punched in some redneck rock’n’roll, and Joy. “I’ll go along to supervise,” she said, “but I don’t want to say



anything or touch her. I want to make absolutely sure she doesn't know I'm here."

"Better ask Michael to help you, then," Tyre said. "Don't take any risk of dropping her. She's going to be too disorientated by sensory deprivation to walk."

"Aye-aye. Come on, crew. Shanghai time."

Tyre and Kay strolled over to keep Anne-Marie company. They could hear Chris's bullwhip break the sound barrier, even over the shit-kicking music EZ had put on. Anne-Marie tapped her toe sedately to both rhythms and pumped up the bulb on her Bardex enema apparatus. She smiled at them and slowly released the air, then hung it on something that looked like a steel hat-rack (actually made to hold IV bottles) by the operating table. Then she went over to the wall and took down each cane, examining them minutely for cracks, and took a few practice swishes with each one. She handed one, easily a foot longer than any of the others, to Tyre, who cleaned its tip with an alcohol swap. Kay mimed a shudder. "You'll never take one of those things to me," she grimaced.

"Let's just hope I never have to take one to EZ," Tyre chuckled. "It would cut that skinny little boy-rump or hers to ribbons."

"Lemme see one of those things, please," Kay said to Anne-Marie.

"No one ever died of pain alone," Anne-Marie said briskly, handing her a length of rattan with a leather-wrapped handle. "But a good many people have died, or otherwise wasted their lives, because they lacked the discipline that pain alone can inculcate in a stubborn heart. It's all in the wrist, dear."

Kay hit the padded top of the leather horse. "The idea is to aim for the surface beneath the buttocks, rather than the bottom itself," Anne-Marie counseled. "Thighs are better, though. They don't bounce as much, so the cane both crushes and burns. An edifying combination."

"Salutary, even," Tyre confirmed, putting her own cane back on the rack.

"If you mean it hurts like merry hell, I believe you," Kay said, returning the implement to Anne-Marie.

“Yes, but it’s an educational pain. Tidy, controlled, and very directed. The opposite of brutality.”

“Oh, bullshit,” Tyre said. “Tell it to the British navy.”

“But sailors were never caned,” Anne-Marie protested. “Military flogging and keel-hauling are usually excessive for the schooling of young ladies.”

“Keel-hauling?” Kay said. “Now you’re talkin’ something that might bash some sense into EZ’s thick skull. If she survived to remember the lesson.”

They all laughed, then turned as the door of the dungeon creaked and gaped wide. EZ, Joy, and Michael (who was, indeed, in Marine Corps dress blues) came in, staggering a little under the weight of a long, leather bag bound with straps and buckles. Alex brought up the rear. Her eyes never left Roxanne’s mummified form.

Tyre pulled a robe down from a ceiling pulley and opened the panic snap at the end of it. She gestured for them to bring Roxanne to her, and unzipped the bottom of the bag. Two manacled feet in spike-heeled shoes were revealed. Alex unbuckled a strap that went around the outside of the body-bag at mid-calf height, and the three other women put Roxanne on her feet. After unbuckling the thigh strap, they continued unzipping the bag, up both sides. As soon as the chained wrists were revealed, tucked into the small of the girl’s back, Tyre stopped them and fastened the panic snap midpoint between Roxanne’s wrists. Alex unbuckled the strap that went around the upper arms outside the bag, and EZ and Joy finished unzipping and removing it. Michael rolled it up and stowed it behind the bar.

The girl was wearing a black silk slip and stockings of the same material. Anne-Marie knelt behind her and adjusted the seams with minute hitches. Roxanne was hooded. Alex had gathered her long, curly blonde hair into a ponytail and pulled it through a hole in the hood. The only other openings in it were the nose holes. A piece of tubing, ending in an incongruous orange valve and a black rubber bulb, dangled from the mouth of the hood. Tyre cocked Roxanne’s head, made sure she was breathing freely, then drew the rope down hand over hand until the girl was standing bent at the waist,

her chained hands high up in the air behind her back. Tyre secured the rope by winding it in a figure-eight around a cleat on the wall.

Alex put her arm over Michael's shoulder. She was stroking the sky-blue fly of the Marine Corps uniform. "Do you always strap it on before you come to work?" she asked.

Michael grinned. "Well, you know who I work for," she replied. Her hips rocked in response to Alex's touch, straps pulled tight up against her cunt. She wanted Alex to take out her cock and suck it. Anne-Marie was stroking the chained girl in much the same way, but her cunt had no protection other than a pair of crotchless silk panties held together with tiny ribbons tied in bows. The rest of the pack gathered around and watched Anne-Marie pull up the girl's skirt and untie each bow, then plunge her fingers into her cleft from behind. The chains made a pleasant accompaniment, barely discernible over the music. The girl staggered, tossed her shoulders. The rope was not long enough to let her escape. She could not lower her hands to cover her exposed vaginal lips. She was helpless. She tossed her shoulders again as Anne-Marie worked one finger into her ass.

"I think you oughta stick around," Alex growled in Michael's ear. She had moved behind her and was massaging her butt.

"Pleasure's mine."

"It will be," Alex promised.

The girl in the middle of the pack didn't turn her head in response to this dialogue. Apparently the hood completely sealed off hearing as well as sight.

"You put in ear plugs?" Tyre asked Alex.

"Yes. And it already has pads over the ears. The blindfold can be unsnapped. And you can see the gag. There's a rubber insert that fits inside the mouth and gets pumped up."

Kay went over to the girl, took the bulb that dangled from her face, and pumped it once or twice. Roxanne shook her head, and her long hair sprayed across her back.

"I already pumped that up pretty good," Alex warned. "Why don't you turn the valve and let some of the air out, then pump it up again? I like

keeping something big in my mouth.”

Michael reached over her shoulder and touched Alex’s lips. She got her fingers bitten. She gave Alex a lazy smile and put them in her own mouth, sucked the pain away. When she noticed that EZ was watching them, looking bitter and hungry, she ran her tongue around her lips and gave EZ a slack-jawed come-on so ravenous that it made EZ look away, abashed.

The hood was an alien face, insect-like, fish-like, sitting atop the body of a beautiful young woman. It depersonalized her, made her even more sexy, removed any inhibitions the assembled dominatrices might have had about getting their hands on her. Anne-Marie had allowed Joy to take her place. The fly-whisk was in her hand, and she was dangling its scarlet horsehair tips across Roxanne’s up-turned cheeks, then striking full across them. It left very thin red lines, as if it were a big paintbrush. Joy ran her fingertips across them, cooed something in dialect, then ran her tongue over Roxanne’s ass. The next strokes fell on wet skin, and Roxanne’s slender heels made a staccato noise upon the planks of the dungeon floor.

“Can she keep her footing in those shoes?” Tyre asked.

“Can you?” Alex said, glancing down at the madam’s boot-heels.

“Could you?” Tyre asked.

“You’re trying to change the subject.”

“C’mon, answer my question.”

“Tyre, she never wears any other kind of shoes. She dances in them all day, for Chrissake. Even her bedroom slippers got high heels.”

“I see. You like girls in six-inch spikes, huh?”

“You could say that,” Alex said, rubbing Michael’s neck. Michael’s hands were behind her back, and she had a couple of fingers hooked under Alex’s codpiece. The master’s pubic hair was damp.

“She ever fuck you with them?” Michael asked innocently.

Alex gave her a little push and went to join the group clustered closer to Roxanne. Tyre shook her head. “That mouth,” she whispered, putting two long fingers tipped with sharp nails into the orifice of which she spoke, “is going to get you into soooo much trouble some day.”

Michael swallowed her fingers easily, arrogantly. Her eyes said she couldn't hope for a better fate.

By now, Joy had turned Roxanne's entire ass a bright red. Kay was to one side of her with a doubled-over belt, and she used it in overlapping strokes that moved from the buttocks to the thighs. Then she changed sides and repeated the maneuver. The red deepened, the ass seemed to swell. Roxanne's wet thighs, when she moved under the belt, chafed each other. EZ was kneeling in front of her, holding her by her waist, and had somehow managed to get her tongue up between her labia, and was teasing her orally while Kay strapped her.

Alex watched impassively, but inside she was flame, barely contained, so close to what she wanted that her throat and chest ached. When she saw Anne-Marie with one of her canes politely gesturing to Chris that she should use her signal whip first, Alex nudged EZ out of the way with her boot and took her lady's torso in her arms, standing to one side of her, to steady her against these new forms of pain. Chris kept shaking her head, and insisted on holding back, so it was Anne-Marie who stepped forward and gave Roxanne six cuts, close and fast. Each cane stroke left two parallel marks across both buns, and Anne-Marie was so accurate that the top edge of each blow lined up perfectly with the bottom edge of the prior stroke.

It was a good thing Alex was there, because Roxanne threw herself sideways, apparently losing track of up or down when the pain from the caning faded, then returned in shocking force. Chris waited until she was steady on her feet and in Alex's arms before she hurled the leather snake in her hand out and down toward Roxanne's tender flesh. Impact! Impact! Impact! Impact! Just four explosions, each leaving a v-shaped kiss that was already turning purple. Alex passed her hand over the marks and smiled. She crooked her index finger at Michael, who came along as if it were tied to a string around her dick.

"Gonna help me out, my man?" she asked, letting go of Roxanne and reaching for Michael's fly.

The chauffeur put her fists on her hips and stared at her insolently. "Get it up for me and I won't be able to help myself," she replied.

Alex extracted her cock. Kay was already at her elbow with a can of Crisco and a towel. "Oh, yeah, slick it up, stud, get that big fuck-pole ready to do that fine piece a favor. Gonna fuck that slut right offa those high-heeled shoes."

Alex milked Michael, led her to Roxanne by her hard-on, and put the well-greased tip of the instrument up against, just barely inside, Roxanne's wetness. Then she got behind Michael, wiping off her hands, and once they were clean, she clamped them onto Michael's hips and humped her ass as Michael fucked Roxanne, drawing the girl smoothly and relentlessly back and forth on her thick shaft.

The pack shouted obscene encouragement. Alex's lips were drawn back in a snarl, Michael's hands were like claws on Roxanne, and when she finally lost control and threw herself into the girl, no one could tell if Roxanne had come or not because of the gag in her mouth, but it was very clear that Michael had. Alex plucked her off Roxanne, tucked her inside her jacket, and began to kiss her, sloppy butch kisses that made everybody cheer.

Kay gave EZ a towel and sent her over to clean off Michael and put her equipment away. When EZ knelt in front of her and began to swab at her dick, Michael couldn't resist turning her hips just enough to slap the side of it into EZ's face. The look she got was hatred laced with lust and panic. As if knees weren't made to bend! She was going to remember that look and hope she saw it again sometime, when her own knees weren't so weak.

Tyre had pulled a slim blade, Damascus steel with a horn handle, from the sleeve of her jacket. She ran its edge up the back of Roxanne's legs. The girl stopped panting and immediately froze, obviously trained to mind the blade. "I think I'm gonna wet my pants," Kay said to Anne-Marie. "This is too delicious."

"I know just how you feel, dear. It's such a cleansing release. So good for the system."

The knife traveled the inside of Roxanne's thighs. The girl had spread her feet as far apart as her manacles and chain permitted. When the tip of it probed her clit, she jumped a little, then steadied herself. Shoulders, neck, upper arms felt the fine scrape of Tyre's weapon. Then the blade

disappeared between her slip and her skin, and its tip plunged through the thin material. The silk made a grieving sound as it was cut, as if it knew it could not heal itself. Tyre let the elegant rags fall from Roxanne's body, and the girl shivered. Tiny goosebumps came out all over her. She smelled like pure sex. God, she was pretty.

Under the slip she wore a leather corset, cinched so tight that her waist was visibly compressed. Six short garters on each leg kept her stockings taut. Alex motioned everyone close, and all eight women held their hands above Roxanne, then simultaneously lowered them. She jumped when she felt herself handled by so many. The rude hands went everywhere. Obviously, much was going to be demanded from her. She shook beneath their hands, but her nipples got larger and firm as cherries, and her pussy was already producing enough slippery stuff to pave the way for all of them to take her in turn. And, in fact, they did just that—hand after hand plunging as deep as it could go, turning slowly into her, then being withdrawn to give its neighbor a turn. She was being laid open to the pack, made equally the vessel of each of its members.

Alex took her head between her thighs and worked on the hood's laces. She let all the air out of the gag before peeling the thin kid off Roxanne's face and tweaking out the ear plugs. Tyre had unwound the rope from its cleat, and she slowly lowered her hands. Roxanne sank until she knelt in manacles at Alex's boots. Alex took the rubber band out of her hair and spread the long, curly mass out with both hands.

Roxanne had freckles and a turned-up, defiant nose. Her hazel eyes were clear and determined. She refused to look at anyone but Alex. The girl was no coward, but she was obviously relieved to find that her master was there. Tyre loved the look of her. She was the ultimate bar-femme, dressed up to play the whore for her butch. She might be a slave, but she was also tough. Try to separate her from Alex, and she'd go after you with a broken bottle. It wasn't, Tyre realized from the set of that grim little jaw, Roxanne who doubted the nature and the quality of their relationship. It was Alex—who was explaining to Roxanne and all of them that she was giving them her "flashy piece of trash" for the evening, to do with as they liked.

The pack stood in a small circle around the master and her property. Of course, Roxanne had an out. "All you have to do," Alex whispered,

kneeling to plunge her hand between Roxanne's corset and her breasts, "is tell me you don't belong to me, and you can walk." She rubbed her nipples, producing a moan, and then stood, and moved right up to her. Roxanne knelt over her boot and wrapped her arms around Alex's thigh. She stared defiantly at the women behind Alex, and openly rubbed her pussy against the steel toe of Alex's engineer boot.

"Put rings in me now," she said. Her voice was high and clear. "I'm not going to change my mind. I belong to you and walking out wouldn't change that any more than it would make water run uphill. Beat me. Brand me. Let these bitches wear themselves out on me if it will entertain you. But I belong to you, Daddy."

"Well, for now you belong to them," Alex said, and the pack closed in as if on cue. Michael had taken her cock out again, and she finally got the blowjob she had been craving ever since Alex ran her fingers along the inseam. She worked her entire length back and forth in Roxanne's throat until she made tears come, then pulled her off and handed her to Anne-Marie, who shooed the girl under her latex skirts. There, Roxanne's tongue found a pair of salty, wet lips held between cool, smooth, chemical-tasting latex panties, and Anne-Marie kept her there until the taste of both was firmly imprinted in her mind. Kay made her kiss her boots, and only allowed her to rub her face over EZ's denim crotch, although EZ ground her pubic bone into Roxanne's face long enough and hard enough to reach a minor climax. Kay cuffed her shoulder and pushed Roxanne over to Joyous Day, who untied her leather-and-fur bikini and rubbed the inside of it all over Roxanne's face. Then her dark hands closed over the blonde head and pulled it between her thighs to service her. Chris, standing next to Joy, unzipped her leather pants, and Joy pushed her hand inside them. She made Roxanne lick her fingers, and used the wetness to jerk Chris off. Every time Joy got close to coming, she made Roxanne stop going down on her long enough to lick Chris's cream from her fingers. Then Joy rubbed the moisture into Chris's vulva, over and over again until Chris sobbed and came all over her hand. Chris had been hanging onto Joy's full, brown breasts, and now she held them up to her mouth and sucked hard on Joy's nipples while Roxanne held on to her tattooed thighs and licked her quickly and lightly to orgasm.



Tyre didn't feel like coming yet. She had Roxanne spread her legs wide and lean back, bracing herself with her hands flat on the floor. Then she put her foot up on the girl's mound, and carefully tucked the high heel of her boot into Roxanne's pussy. The chained girl was terribly excited after experiencing so many orgasms vicariously, and she tried to tilt her hips and take all of the boot-heel. Tyre knew it was the wrong angle to go in without hurting her, so she kept Roxanne at the edge of danger and climax and surprised herself by masturbating at the spectacle until she came, relishing Roxanne's frustrated and tear-spattered face.

"So you think we're going to wear ourselves out on you?" Alex asked her.

"Yes. I want more!" Roxanne cried.

"Oh, I don't think that will be a problem," Alex said drily. "Next?" She helped Roxanne to her feet, untied and loosened her corset, then put her back on the floor.

Kay and EZ had moved over to the sling. EZ was perched on its edge, swinging. Kay was applying an emery board to her nails. They gave each other a quick, conspiratorial smile.

"How's the old manicure?" Kay asked EZ.

EZ stretched out her hand and examined her fingertips.

"Flawless," she said. "Soft as a baby's bottom. How's yours?"

"Down to the knuckles," Kay averred. "Where do you think they hide the grease in this establishment? It don't look to me like Mama's gonna fry much chicken in this here restaurant."

"Why, you near-sighted fool, there's a whole fucking five-pound can of it hanging from a chain right over here." EZ hit it with her elbow and made it swing.

Kay pretended to start at the sight of the dangling, industrial-sized tub of Crisco. "Think that'll be enough?" she asked.

"Hell, I never bother with the stuff myself," EZ boasted. "I just make 'em spit on my hand. And if that don't get it wet enough I ram it down their throats."

Kay made a little ticking noise of disapproval with her tongue. “You talk like trash, girl. Cruuude.”

EZ grinned. “That’s the way they like it. I’m not responsible for the taste of trash. I’m just the garbage collector. Out of the gutter and into the sling, that’s my motto.”

Kay nodded, staring off into space. She seemed to have forgotten their conversation.

“Slave!” EZ snapped. “Look at me, fuck-face.”

Roxanne reluctantly came to her knees and barely turned her face in the direction of the sling. She did not care to be addressed in that tone of voice by someone who had not been properly introduced. Who did this punked-out boytoy think she was, smoothing the platinum stripes in her dark topknot? Alex yanked her head up. “Look her in the eye,” she hissed. Roxanne complied. She was very pale.

“You ever been fisted in the ass?” EZ demanded.

“No, but I—” A yank on her hair shut her up.

“Wanna bust up a virgin ass?” EZ asked Kay.

Kay shrugged. “Feels the same to me, whether they’ve had it one time or twenty-two. Think she’s been cleaned out?”

“You! Slave! Answer her!” bellowed EZ.

“No,” Roxanne said—almost inaudibly.

“Well, forget it,” Kay said. “I’m not interested in slaves who are literally full of shit.” And she gave EZ a meaningful glare, which was broadly ignored.

Anne-Marie bustled over with a collar in one hand and a leash in the other. “If I might prepare her for your ministrations, ladies?”

“Would you be so kind?” Kay said.

“Certainly. It’s so nice to feel useful,” she beamed. She buckled the collar around Roxanne’s neck, snapped on the leash, and slipped the wrist-strap over her hand. “On your feet, dear,” she said. “Do we remember how we walk on a leash?”

“Small steps, keep the chain taught, do *not* bump into the person leading you,” Roxanne repeated. “Ma’am.”

“Shoulders up and back,” Anne-Marie added. “Proud posture at all times, even the most humiliating.”

“Yes, of course, ma’am. I am forgetful, ma’am.”

Alex had raised one eyebrow. “Never saw this side of her before,” she remarked to Tyre.

“Yeah, I thought you didn’t know much about all that frilly Victorian stuff,” Tyre said. “Live and learn.”

“And the penalty for forgetfulness is?” Anne-Marie prompted gently.

“A dozen of the best,” Roxanne said with resignation. “Ma’am.”

“At least you remember your manners. I am going to miss you. Come along to the operating table, dear.”

The badgirl dancing shoes teetered after the sensible white nurse’s flats, taking tiny steps. Roxanne kept the leash taught. She did not bump into the person leading her. Her shoulders stayed up and back, making her tits jut defiantly at Anne-Marie’s broad shoulders. The *domme* walked her to the foot of the table until her hips touched it, unclipped the leash, then bent her over with a hand between her shoulderblades. Roxanne made an unhappy puppy noise when her bare flesh was plastered over the cold steel surface of the table.

“You’ll stay put on your own, won’t you, dear?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“So much less fuss and muss.” Anne-Marie took the enema bag off the IV stand and opened a hitherto-invisible door in the dungeon wall. A small bathroom lay behind it. The pack sauntered over to watch and comment upon Roxanne’s buttocks, twitching in anticipation as Anne-Marie turned the taps on high, filled the red rubber bag to its gills, and screwed in the stopper. She had already clipped the hose shut, and now she brought the bag back to the table and opened her doctor’s bag, perched at the head of the table. Michael took the bag from her and hung it upside down. Anne-Marie took nozzle after nozzle out of the bag, and rejected each one. Finally she lubricated the bulb of the Bardex, hooked it up to the enema bag, and

pushed the balloon into Roxanne's ass. Then she inflated the latex sphere. Roxanne's asshole was completely sealed. Anne-Marie then emptied the swollen bag with ruthless efficiency, ignoring Roxanne's stifled cries. "It's just nice warm water, dear, those cramps won't last long," she said, patting her fanny. "Now we'll just stir it up inside. A dozen of the best, I believe you said?"

Tyre knew that one of Michael's favorite things was a blowjob from someone who was being worked over. She smiled and shook her head when her chauffeur, who really was an ex-Marine, climbed up on the table and forced Roxanne to lift her head and watch her unzip her fly. Michael and Anne-Marie were also old friends, and the nurse shot Tyre a look of delight. "Don't think you got enough of this Marine Corps meat," Michael said, and shoved it down her throat just as the first stroke of the cane landed in the crack between Roxanne's buttock and upper thigh. Alex winced, but Roxanne held steady, her head bobbing up and down Michael's cock, as the characteristic double-weal came up, livid on her fair skin. Anne-Marie bided her time. Tyre walked over to Michael, unbuttoned the high-necked, dark-blue tunic with narrow red piping and began working on her nipples with her sharp nails. Her cruelty was passed on to Roxanne, who found herself choking on the energetic cock in her throat, and Anne-Marie chose just that moment to strike her again.

"Alex," said Joy, putting a hand on her shoulder, "you are not used to lookin' at this from the outside. So tell me, do you like it?"

"I—"

"You mus' remember how good it make you feel to whip her yourself, I think. How good it feels in the muscles of your arm and here." Joy put a hand between her breasts. "Your heart is poundin' and poundin' like a drumhead that's gonna split. Feel yourself." She took Alex's hand and put it on top of her codpiece. "Come on, girl, half the women here playin' with themselves. Check out your stuff. She gonna hit her soon again I think—yes. You feel your clit jump? Oh, yeah, this is good for you and for her. She like it so much, Alex, see how still she hold herself out of pride for you? That's a beautiful ass she got. I mus' say I want another handful of that girl of yours all t'myself." Joy chuckled and mock-punched Alex on the point of

her chin. “You seriously twisted girl, I like that ver’ much, just don’t try to straighten out now, or you break.”

Kay was hauling EZ, who had gone AWOL to the bar, back into the circle by her ear. “You got eight hours of music set up at the very least,” she said. “We don’t need you providin’ a sound track for the rest of the fucking decade. Now park your butt here and watch this action with me or go play on the freeway.” She smacked her ass, then slid her hand into EZ’s back pocket. “I thought you said girls just played around with this shit. So far I’m in no danger of fallin’ asleep. Whyncha just admit you don’t know what the fuck you were talkin’ about? Or do you maybe like boys better’n girls after all, dipshit?”

“Kiss my ass,” EZ hissed.

“Oh, I will, if I can beat it first,” Kay said lazily. “Ouch! God, that has got to hurt about as much as bein’ hit by a truck.”

Ten of the twelve “best” had been administered. Anne-Marie gestured to Michael to remove herself. “We must let her concentrate,” she said absently, adjusting her cap. Tyre released Michael’s nipples and helped her off the table. They swaggered arm-in-arm over to Kay and her buddy.

“I gotta get stoned,” EZ said, and produced a joint from behind her ear.

“Why do you think they call it dope?” Kay asked, handing over her lighter. EZ gave her a guilty look, Kay gave her an amused one, and they both giggled.

The last two strokes were administered so quickly they elicited a single scream. Roxanne did not raise her torso from the table, but she kicked. Anne-Marie barely jumped out of the way in time. “That was naughty, dear,” she said. “Ponies prance, ladies dance. Tyre?”

Roxanne put her head back down and just listened to Tyre stalk over to the horse and unrack her cane. It was thicker and longer than Anne-Marie’s favorite size, and not as flexible. Alex perked up and watched closely, curious to see how Tyre would handle this piece of equipment.

Tyre stood behind and slightly to one side of Roxanne, tapping the cane on the toe of her boot. “What’s the damage, Anne-Marie?” she asked.

“How vicious do you feel, Tyre?”

The madam considered. “Why don’t we just make it one,” she said, “with one for practice.”

Alex was disappointed. Two strokes (one and a half, really) didn’t sound like much of a show. Maybe Tyre didn’t like administering corporal punishment.

Tyre folded her right arm across her chest. The cane stretched out at a right angle to her body. Then it flew toward its target, impelled by a series of three snaps, from shoulder, elbow, and wrist. It landed with an audible “thunk,” and rebounded out of the channel it had made for itself in Roxanne’s thighs. Roxanne seemed to have crammed a whole fist into her mouth, but she did not scream, jump, or kick. “That gives me the distance,” Tyre said pleasantly. “Now for the home run.”

“Oh, these Yankee metaphors,” Anne-Marie sighed. “Such a jarring anachronism.”

This stroke landed so hard across the middle of Roxanne’s cheeks that Alex could have sworn it shoved the girl and table forward by a good six inches. Of course, they hadn’t moved at all. Only Roxanne’s flesh had been displaced, and when it returned to its original contours, it bore a lovely purple welt that did not quite bleed, except for a few drops at the very end, where the tip of the cane (going faster than the body of the rod) had bitten in.

“Well caned!” Anne-Marie applauded. “Weren’t you, dear?”

“Yes, ma’am. I was, was well caned. For my fault. Jesus. Thank you, Tyre. Ma’am.

Anne-Marie led her victim to the tiny bathroom, unchained her hands, and closed the door. “If we do not respect their privacy,” she said to all assembled, “how can we hope that they will ever respect ours?”

EZ snorted, and Kay elbowed her in the gut.

When Roxanne came out of the bathroom, she had refilled the enema bag and timidly offered it to Anne-Marie. “Please,” she said, “I’m not certain I’m clean yet.”

“Certainly, dear girl. Bend over. This time we’ll use a dilating nozzle.”

The dilating nozzle was the size of Michael's cock. Anne-Marie inserted it into Roxanne's cunt. "What—" Roxanne said, then fell silent. Anne-Marie manipulated the object to little or no purpose. She gave the assembled dominatrices a significant look over her shoulder, then removed the nozzle and threaded the enema tube into it. As soon as the tip of it touched Roxanne's asshole, she sighed. It sank in without a snag, without need for a pause or a retreat, and the girl immediately began to wiggle as if it had pinned her to the table.

EZ nudged Kay. "See that?"

"Oh, yeah. Mmm. I got a tingle in my elbow."

"I got a tingle in both hands."

Tyre took charge of the valve and dispensed the water slowly, while Anne-Marie plunged the large nozzle repeatedly into Roxanne's eager bottom. The girl's hands (still manacled, but no longer trapped behind her back) clawed at the table, and even closed into fists and pounded on it, as she yielded to the hot, fat nozzle and the even hotter water that flowed continuously from it, filling her completely. She came again, and again.

Alex looked around and saw that Joy had been right, just about everybody was beating off. She undid the top three snaps of her codpiece and slid her hand down, cupped her fingers over her clit, and rubbed it from side to side. As the nozzle came out of Roxanne's ass, it drew a little bit of the thin tissue back with it, the pink, almost transparent lip of the asshole clinging to its invader. Then it would dive and tuck everything back in, making Roxanne groan, and Alex groaned, too. She grabbed one of her own nipples and pulled on it, remembering the wrestling match in Tyre's office. Then Michael was behind her, supporting her, taking over the job of twisting her tits, and she could lean back against those muscular thighs and use both her hands to make herself come at the spectacle of Roxanne being spread open and drilled. Michael's strap-on was a hard rod against her left buttock.

They separated as soon as she came. Anne-Marie was helping Roxanne up, taking off her collar, and opening the bathroom door. "You shouldn't pass anything but water now, dear," she said before she closed the door.

The four of them who had toted her in, Alex, Michael, EZ, and Joy, waited outside. They heard the toilet flush and then water running as Roxanne cleaned herself off. "I must be thinking she won't be able to wipe herself dry," Joy said. As soon as the door opened, they pounced on her and carried her to the platform where Kay and EZ were cooling their heels.

The two bikers seized Roxanne by the shoulders and hips and helped hoist her roughly into the sling. Alex went to her head and used padlocks to fasten her manacles to the chains that supported the sling. She threw EZ her keys, and EZ took off Roxanne's ankle restraints. Kay cupped her left foot, pointed her toe and slipped it through the stirrup. Joy had done the same thing to her right foot as soon as EZ took the fetter off that ankle.

EZ got up in Roxanne's face, under Alex's nose. "On your back and spread your legs," she sneered. "That's the seven words you like to hear the most, right? Gets you drippin' in nothing flat. Well, it better. Only it's your asshole that better start juicin' up now, girlchild, gonna show you a new way to be a pussy. We want your ass, bitch, and we're gonna come and get it with both hands. You can either get some sugar or get hurt. If I was you I'd rather be sweet. Understand? Understand!"

Kay was pulling off each of her rings and stashing them in the pockets of her jacket. "EZ, hang this up someplace," she said, shrugging out of it. The arms that emerged from the leather sleeves had rounded biceps and long, bulging forearms. "Takes more than fucking to put on muscle like this," she laughed to Tyre, "but a lot of fucking don't hurt." She hauled on the chained-up, giant can of Crisco and plunged one hand into it, then started greasing up her left hand. Her face went expressionless.

"She looks like some kind of goddess," Chris breathed in Tyre's ear. "A goddess of gates and furrows and wounds and the yoni, plowing and sowing, fucking and fertility, everything human but more than human."

Tyre wasn't sure how long she could listen to this stuff about doorways and seeds and double-headed axes, and she was infinitely relieved when Michael sleazed over, squeezing her dick, and began to lick Chris's tattoos and grope her crotch.

Kay stuck a finger up Roxanne's ass and probed. "Clean to here," she pronounced. "Anne-Marie, you must have had her blowing her guts out."



Anne-Marie chuckled. “No, but a lot of other extraneous matter came out.”

EZ had Roxanne’s face between her hands and was spitting invectives at her, alternating between threats and flattery. Roxanne was fascinated by her scowling face. It looked like a choirboy on speed, and sounded as if her mind was as spiky and messed-up as her hair. “Wiggle your ass down here,” Kay growled. Roxanne slid toward her. She dug into the grease again, came up with a good-sized handful, and plastered it into the crack of Roxanne’s butt.

Chris was entwined in Michael’s arms, and they were trying to suck each other’s tongues out. Joy nudged Alex when she caught her watching them. “Your woman got us all so hot mos’ anything could happen,” she said. “It’s hard to wait my turn.”

“Shit,” Alex said, and took her by the waist, “why wait when you could take a turn with me?” The throat under her mouth was smooth as glass, but soft and warm, so full of life that the very pulse within it seemed to kiss her back. Joy’s hands went around her, inside her jacket, and the nails left trails of pain even through Alex’s T-shirt.

“Shall I claw it off your back?” Joy teased her, putting a finger in her ear and tickling the tiny opening. “Get me started an’ not finish, what else you suppose I should do?”

“Don’t believe in starting what I don’t finish,” Alex said, twisting her hipbone into the fur bikini.

“Ooh-la-la, a mighty woman of principle and purpose,” Joy said, evading her. “You bettah watch that smoke and smolder, or I lose my sense of direction, mebbe follow you into the cornfields an’ we rub ourselves ’til we catch on fire, burn the whole damn thing to the ground.”

On her back, Roxanne could not keep track of the pack unless they wandered right up to the sling. Nevertheless, she felt surrounded by her captors, could sense their dark and predatory presence. She imagined them moving arrogantly, examining her with amused objectivity, sure of their power and her compliance. Occasionally they commented on the scene or uttered delighted words of encouragement to Kay and EZ. But these

conversations were among themselves, intended only for each other's ears, and Roxanne could not always catch what they were saying.

Kay began to pop grease up her ass with her thumb. When she was entered, there was friction and heat. When Kay pulled out, there was a sensation of relief and cold from the gobs of grease. It was humiliating, swinging in mid-air with her limbs strapped down, getting her ass stuffed with Crisco like a turkey getting stuffed with dressing. She struggled, but she could not free her hands. It was easier (and wiser) to let the sling bear her up, and subside into passivity. Kay's face was a mask—cold, withdrawn, unimpressed, maybe even bored. All her passion was in her hands, the fingers switching places in her ass.

Roxanne thought Kay would probably proceed exactly the same way with anybody she threw into a sling, and every molecule of her rebelled against being treated like a category of people to whom something was done, rather than being noticed and pursued as a unique treasure. She felt a willful desire to crack that mask, to warm that face and bring it to life, to make Kay respond and react to her. Instead, she found herself responding, moving frantically, shamelessly, crying out. "Stop it," EZ scolded her. "Quit showing off." Stunned, she complied. Her shame was intensified by the fact that Kay never noted the rebuke or her response.

What looked like indifference was actually concentration. Every bit of Kay's attention was in her fingertips, which combed the sides, the floor and ceiling of Roxanne's ass, looking for the nerves, the joyspots, the loose thread she could pull to unravel Roxanne down to her core. Little messages ran constantly up those busy, delicately searching fingers, through forearm and bicep, to the shoulder, jogging it, keeping up a minute series of rhythmic movements designed to coax the asshole, the mouth of the great snake, to unlock its jaws and swallow its meal, Kay's folded-over, pointed, pared-down and slicked up hand.

Two fingers, then three, sank into Roxanne's ass. She barely noticed. She was humming along a smooth road. This was so easy, there was so little friction that it barely qualified as fucking. Nevertheless, there was pleasure, enough to turn her into a squirmy little girl, so bad and dirty that she wanted people to bend her over, pull down her panties, put things up her ass, move

them in and out, make her tell them how much she liked it and squeal for more.

Then EZ made the mistake of interrupting all the stories she was telling herself about what a naughty, provocative, kinky slut she was and told her how many fingers Kay had in her. She jerked involuntarily. The squirmy feeling went away. Immediately, she tried to correct it—took slow, deep breaths; gathered her resources; willed herself to accept, open, opening, getting back on that seamless streamlined highway to lust.

“She’s tightening up,” Kay said dispassionately. It might have been a weather report.

EZ’s hand—gloved in thin black kid—gripped Roxanne’s face, covered her mouth and nose. She drew in a startled breath, and realized from the potent smell that EZ held an inhaler of poppers in her palm.

The amyl came on slowly, then exploded. She was flying, falling, rushing—rushing! Her mouth fell open, her limbs went slack, and she felt four of Kay’s fingers spread and claim her. Penetration was exquisite pleasure. Under the magical assault of the poppers, she felt no need to lift her littlest finger. Since she could not act, she could yield herself totally, pinned to the sling by her internal sensations. She need not cooperate with or assist the implacable beings manipulating her flesh.

EZ was laughing at her. “Wild, isn’t it?” she said. “What d’you think we could do if we were all too fucking stoned to worry?”

The idea seemed to be a profound insight, and she let the anxious part of her mind play with it like a difficult knot. She wanted desperately not to think, not to fight. She was frantic to succeed.

“Damn!” Kay swore softly. “Just when I was about to get my thumb in.”

Roxanne began to realize that her own sense of what her body was doing ... down there ... was not reliable. “Tell me what to do,” she begged Kay. “I want to help you.”

“Don’t worry, I’m keepin’ track of you. You don’t have to *do* anything, just let me *do you*. Listen to EZ. Let her play with your head, and I’ll take care of your hiney. Gonna take ourselves a long ride together, pretty girl. It takes a while to get where we’re goin’, but I’ve never gotten lost yet.”

EZ's face loomed over her. The gloved hands—leather so thin and soft it clung to her skin—were a vise around her head. She tried to turn her face and kiss the leather. EZ restrained her, laughing. “Ready to fly again?” she said. Roxanne could tell she was excited, painfully, by the way she laughed and the tight grip on her hair. This burst of gaiety frightened her.

“Come on! Shove a popper up her nose!” Kay insisted.

EZ's gaze mesmerized Roxanne. The mad little-boy eyes were compelling, sinister in their power, ringed with kohl. “Come with me,” EZ said, and put the silver bullet between their lips. She closed her gloved hand over Roxanne's nose.

This sultry invitation was almost more than Roxanne could bear. Her body ached, then melted under the drug. EZ breathed the amyl into her lungs, held her down and pumped more of it into her when she wanted to refuse. It was rape and communion. Her lips became incredibly soft and tender. Her mouth melted into EZ's harder, more demanding one. She felt as if EZ were inhaling and exhaling her soul. The awful drug invaded her through the mouth while something that grew relentlessly larger and larger pounded at her ass.

The pressure was a sensation she experienced in her cunt and belly as well as her behind. Kay's hand was in up to the last set of knuckles, and Roxanne felt as if that hand were right up against her cervix and bladder.

“I've got to pee,” she whispered to EZ.

No sympathy came from that gleeful face. “Good,” EZ said. “That's very good. It means you're on the brink of losing every ounce of self-control. Go ahead. Piss. Piss right now.”

Roxanne bit her lip and shook her head. Was Alex watching? Alex was the only person she had ever done watersports with. After being formally introduced to them by Anne-Marie, of course. Well, there had been that wild and crazy bartender in Atlanta ... but they were so drunk, it wasn't like it was on purpose! “Daddy wouldn't like it,” she whispered.

Kay's right hand found her urethra. She altered the angle of her left hand so that it was pressing up and began to fuck her in earnest. Roxanne had a very well-defined, large piss hole, and Kay titillated it with her index finger

until the reclining, swaying girl felt a tiny spurt of urine escape from her bladder.

“It’ll feel so good,” EZ promised her. “Can’t you feel it now, gushing out, running down your legs, the relief, how hot it will feel?” A fiery pain shot through Roxanne’s belly as she clamped down on the rising flood. “Don’t fight it,” EZ advised her. The gloved hand came down on her face, offering the bullet again. “Take a nice big hit and piss yourself.” Kay continued to probe her urethra, and her efforts were intensified by the amyl. “Help her out,” EZ said. “Fuck the piss out of her, Kay.”

Roxanne felt another tiny spurt. She jumped and cried out, scalded. EZ slapped her face, and she pissed like a horse before the feel of the leather had faded from her cheek.

As her bladder shrank, her ass expanded. Kay pushed her cupped hand in as far as it would go, until Roxanne’s bowel rebelled. It spasmed, trying to expel the hand that tormented it. “Go ahead,” Kay said. Her voice jolted Roxanne. She had somehow forgotten that it was Kay who was working in and out of her ass. EZ’s face had been with her so constantly that she had somehow come to believe that EZ was fucking her.

“This part we do without the poppers, baby. Just you and me.” The discomfort was building, rising in a wave from high up in her colon. “Shit it out,” Kay said. “Come on, fucker, if you really don’t want it, hate it, can’t take it, don’t piss and moan at me, *shit it out*. Bet that hungry butt just chews up my hand. You’re gonna climb down on me if you do what I say, *push me out*.”

She pushed. A ripple descended from behind her breast bone, amplified, became a wave of desperate hard contractions. Kay had a grim, fixed smile on her face. She hung on to Roxanne’s thigh with one hand and kept the other one wedged firmly in her asshole. Her rectum opened, closed, opened wider, and Kay slid in. Her querulous asshole flattened out and disappeared. It felt as if her body had swallowed the advancing hand, sucked it in instead of struggling to repel it. Now it was folded up neatly inside her, a miracle, no pain at all, just the gift, the blessing of someone entering and pleasuring this forbidden part of her body. Kay had made this new channel, made it part of her just by touching it. Her lungs hurt. Had she been shouting?

They rested, Kay almost leaning on her. Roxanne shifted her position slightly to ease a cramp that was threatening to develop in her calf. EZ kneaded her hands and arms, restoring the circulation. She gave herself over to the leather gloves, let the long, powerful fingers dig into her shoulders and stroke her face.

Kay said, “You are something so fine. A pretty girl. I never had me such a pretty girl. It’s like wakin’ up and finding out you’re sleepin’ in a pile of money, got your picture on the TV ’cause you’re the Lord’s anointed. You know what anointed means, don’t you, sweetheart? It means you just gonna pour that cream all over me, honey. Cream and honey. Yeah, the tears too. Let ’em run like a river, the bitter with the sweet. It’s life, that’s all, just life. And sex. A lot of it. More’n you ever had but not more than you deserve. Running down your leg, drippin’ off your ass. Run like a river but you can’t run away from me pretty girl. I got—got—got you. Got you good, good girl.”

During the delirious, galloping fuck that followed, Roxanne forgot that Kay could reach up and grab her heart, or turn her inside out. She lost all fear and fucked back hard enough to feel the pull in the small of her back. They moved like a reciprocating engine, sparks in her gut triggering expansion, shoving Kay’s cam-shaft hand back to her shoulder, the piston-rod arm returning smoothly, setting off a new explosion.

“Nearly up to the elbow,” she heard Alex say. “Holy cunt.”

Subtle pain began to play within her nipples. EZ was manipulating them, using her fingers like feathers and then like clamps. A sensation that began sweetly built into agony. She screamed, lost in the pain, and her overwrought body responded by losing control.

“I didn’t tell you to piss on me, did I?” Kay hissed at her.

EZ administered a few stinging slaps. “Think you can let go anytime you feel like it?” she demanded. “What are you, some kind of animal? An animal wouldn’t even do that. Look at yourself. Pissing on the floor.”

Kay ran her free hand along the wet, naked thighs and pressed it into Roxanne’s mouth. “Lick it off,” she said. “Lick up your own piss.”

Roxanne fought her rising sense of injustice and complied. Her reward was another hit of amyl, and one of EZ’s cruelest kisses. She cried aloud

into the savage mouth while Kay opened and closed her hand, rotated her fist, and made her piss again. The kiss left her mouth bleeding a little, and the taste of iron made her queasy.

She suddenly wanted to quit. What was happening? Why was she doing this? It was crazy. She was bleeding. Maybe her ass was bleeding. Where was Alex? She felt utterly lonely.

“I’m going to throw up,” she thought, and must have said it. Strong hands in leather gloves materialized all over her body. They were covering and caressing her face, her ribs, her belly, her arms and legs, her hands and feet. A soft tongue began to lick gently at her tears. It was Tyre, comforting her.

Then another face descended—Alex, coming toward her abraded lips. Afraid, she turned her face away, then saw the tender look in Alex’s eye. “Daddy,” she whispered. “Look what she’s doing to me. I made such a mess. But I like it, I can’t help it. Please don’t spank me, Daddy.” Their lips touched, merged, and Alex’s tongue opened her mouth. Cool water trickled down her throat. She sucked, and Alex fed her a little more water. She swallowed and took more, and clung to her master’s lips as Alex swallowed the last of the sweet fluid.

“Still thirsty?” she said. Roxanne nodded. The leather-clad hands continued to soothe and massage her. Alex gestured. One by one, the women came forward and gave her sips of water from their own lips. She murmured with contentment. Everyone withdrew, leaving her alone with Alex. Kay continued to move her hand within the hot, slick tunnel of Roxanne’s ass, but slowly, gently, creating sensations that bloomed by imperceptible degrees, like flowers.

“There’s just a little more of this,” Alex told Roxanne softly. She stroked her cheeks, smiled encouragingly. Their faces were only inches apart. Roxanne felt hot waves of heat flow out of her crotch and into her trunk and limbs as she stared into Alex’s face. Everything was fine now. There were well-oiled steel ball bearings in the sockets of her hips. She could just spread herself and let them roll, preen under Alex’s gaze, make a porno movie of herself for Alex’s jealousy and pleasure.

“Anything you want, Daddy, ooh,” she said, a hole rocking to meet Kay’s fist. “She just won’t stop that, will she, not until you tell her. Don’t make her stop yet, Daddy, please.”

Alex’s crooked smile promised one hell of a payback for all this teasing. “Kay is going to stay in your ass while EZ puts her hand in your cunt,” Alex said. “Then I bet they make you come. Come while you get double-fucked, both holes at once. And I’m gonna watch it all.”

“Oh God! Daddy, it’ll tear me apart. I’m just a little girl.”

“God has nothing to do with this. Look at me.” Alex slapped her several times. “If you are mine, I’ll give you to whoever I please. If you don’t belong to me, why are we here? Don’t give me any of that shit about getting split open, I know how you make your living, fucking your own little pussy while all those men watch from behind the windows and drop quarters in the slot and jerk themselves off. They ought to come all over your face. You’d like that, wouldn’t you? Almost as much as you like the idea of being filled so full you can’t help but pop. Gotta make sure my little girl gets enough fucking so she can sit still for five minutes, that’s the only problem I got.”

Kay had adopted a more insistent, driving rhythm. Roxanne moaned, shouted, rocked in the sling. Then Kay froze, and she felt EZ slithering into her cunt, her fingers splayed out along Kay’s forearm. When she finally slid home, they were practically holding hands inside her. Only a thin membrane kept them apart. She could feel them flexing their muscles, turning; even an eighth of an inch of motion made her eyes roll back and her nerve endings sing. There was no way to come on this rollercoaster of sensation. It was an experience more like an orgasm than any other part of sex, but it just kept on happening, peaking, cresting, climbing higher and peaking again.

When Roxanne felt a real climax coming, she sneaked a glance at it, and got scared by how big it was. Alex magically knew all about it, grabbed her head and slammed it into the sling. “Bullshit,” she said. “Aren’t you the cunt who was going to wear it all out? Now you’re holding out on us, you little coward. I won’t stand for this shit.” Alex stuffed one of her gloves into Roxanne’s mouth. “Bite down on that if you get scared. Now come!”



A skillfull finger was moving around the head of her clit. That had to be Alex, who was also tweaking her nipples, hurting them and then smoothing the pain away. The feeling was exactly right. It was irresistible. Her eyes opened wide—wide—wide as Alex's terrible grin. Five more seconds of intolerable clitoral bliss, the twin fists and forearms buried in her body, taking turns coming in, going out, her nipples blazing—she screamed one long scream, perfect as the orgasm that engulfed her, and bit through Alex's glove. If the roll of leather had not been there, she probably would have chipped her teeth. There were muted sounds of praise from the pack.

First EZ, then Kay, slid out of her—slowly, so slowly that she felt no tug or pull inside. Oddly enough, it felt as if they were going in, not coming out.

Alex tossed them trick towels. They withdrew to wash up. Alex touched Roxanne's cheek, ducked under the sling, and popped between her legs, wiping the grease from her outspread thighs and ass. Tyre had usurped EZ's programming at the tape deck. Quiet classical music replaced the loud rock. Joy climbed up on the platform and freed Roxanne's wrists. Alex took her feet out of the stirrups. But they left her sitting up in the sling until Kay got back from the john.

Roxanne slid into her arms and clung to her. "You're good, you know that?" Kay told her. "You're only the second woman I've ever done that to. And you're the first one who told me you liked it. I'd pay to watch that. You're a hot fuck, for such a little girl."

Roxanne smiled into her shoulder, and nestled in. "I'm hungry," she said. "I feel all hollow inside."

"I wonder why," Kay said cynically, and half-carried, half-hauled her to one of the mats along the wall and made her sit down. Tyre had opened the refrigerator behind the bar and began to set trays out on the counter. "Anybody want some sushi?" she asked. "There's beer and fresh coffee, and lots of saki."

"Heat some saki up for me," Kay called. She reached for her boot. Something jingled. Roxanne thought to herself, how quickly a bottom learns to listen. Any faint rustle in the background may herald a new twist in the game. It is therefore of no small importance (especially if you are tied

up) to be able to distinguish between snaps, buckles, and padlocks being undone. She herself, in Alex's game room, knew which whip Alex had removed from the wall by the number of steps she took to reach it and the sound it made leaving its hook and traveling through the air in Alex's hand.

Kay collared her. EZ came strolling over, removed a blob of Crisco from Roxanne's nose, and grinned at the look on her face. She unfastened the chain that hung through the left epaulet and armpit of her jacket and handed it to Kay. "It's a wonder anybody ever lets you up off your back," she told the girl in Kay's collar. "It's really obvious how much you dig it." Her voice was wistful. She hunkered down and watched Kay turn the chain into a leash. "Last boy we dressed up this way didn't git home for a long time," she added.

"Oh, he's still there," Kay said, "sleepin' it off under all the dirty laundry."

"Well, now you know why I haven't done the wash yet."

Kay gave her a hard look. "Wouldn't be much point to me diggin' him out and sending him home since you'd just drag in a new one."

"On your orders," EZ snapped.

"Oh? I had no idea I was so important."

"You are very important," EZ said, talking to Kay's spurs. "I couldn't tell you just how much."

"Well." Kay appeared to be chewing on something. "Let's join the party."

The two of them helped Roxanne to her feet. She swayed for a few moments, dizzy, and grabbed for EZ's shoulder. "Hold it," Kay ordered. "Take a few deep breaths, and let the blood climb from your cunt to your brain."

Everyone else was already seated at the bar, sipping saki and plying their chopsticks amid the bamboo trays of sushi and sashimi. Tyre had put a pot of fresh coffee on a hot plate at the bar, and now she was helping herself to the tightly wrapped morsels of fresh octopus, shrimp, salmon, tuna, bass, and red snapper.

There was a brass hitching post behind the tall, black bar stools. Kay looped one end of the chain leash around this railing and padlocked it into

place. Roxanne was free to come and go along the length of the bar, but no further. When Alex got off her stool to check out this new development, Roxanne immediately fell on her knees.

“Assume the first position,” Alex told her, just to show her off, and she went to the end of her chain, knees apart, hands upturned and resting on her thighs. At a look from Alex, she took the chain until it fell more attractively, and adjusted her hands so they were further from her sex. The master caressed her wet fur with the toe of her boot for a few (too few!) seconds, scratched the top of her head, then returned to her stool.

It was just a quick break for protein and caffeine. There wasn’t much talking. From time to time, one of the women would summon Roxanne, and she would go to her on her knees and be fed. The chain made an awful racket when she dragged it along the rail. Tyre noticed soy sauce dripping down her chin, and blotted it off with a napkin. The thimbleful of saki Tyre poured into Roxanne’s mouth was so hot, it made her eyes water.

Roxanne could not help but wonder which of them individually, or in combination, would have her next. She did a brief examination of her conscience and found no resentment in her heart for the way these women passed her around. She felt herself to be Alex’s property. This proved it. But she doubted that the evidence had piled high enough to tilt the scales in her favor, in Alex’s eyes. She wondered if there were enough women here, or if any of them could be cruel enough, to persuade Alex that nothing would drive her away from her side.

Would Alex pick the next dominant, or would someone volunteer? Joy laid a piece of salmon on her tongue, and Roxanne let it melt down her throat. Chris held out a slice of ginger. While she nibbled on it, staring at the swirling tattoos and the throwing stars, she got her answer. Chris took the bullwhip off her belt and wound it around Roxanne’s body, cinching it tight through her crotch. Thank God she had already fed well. All appetite fled. Chris sent her back to the rail, and she assumed position without prompting from Alex.

She was faithless, faithless—already assessing this new *maîtresse*, wondering what her weaknesses and her skills were, endeavoring to please her by twisting within the embrace of the bullwhip, shivering at the thought

of being punished by her. Kay and the ways to pleasure Kay, the things she feared and loved to receive from EZ, were already fading from her mind. The women who, half an hour ago, had her impaled on their arms, were once again mere shadows that circled with the rest of the pack.

Roxanne realized, however, that as each member of the pack worked her over, the pack itself—as an entity—became a more powerful force in her imagination. The women seemed to loom nearer and taller, their voices more forceful and resonant. She knelt, small and helpless, in an amphitheater of cruel feminine presences. There were long moments when it seemed to her that only they existed, and her life force had flowed into them. She was like a vessel being emptied into the sea, or a shadow melting into evening. But she was also a current of energy that held the pack together—the point at which they crossed and focused. She was the medium through which they communicated with one another. Her body was a palpable message, a bond, a live wire strung between eight strong women. As long as they used her, needed her, or displayed even casual interest in her, she was vibrant and vivid and real. Without their attention and close supervision, she feared she would vanish.

She did not want to be whipped. It was the worst thing that could happen to her. She did not love pain. She hated and feared it, and she fiercely resisted being subjected to it. It was a rare occasion when she would beg to be beaten. When Alex bullied her into committing some error that she knew meant a whipping, she would scream with anger each time the whip landed on her thighs or ass or shoulders.

But it was clear, from this token Chris had twined about her body, that she wanted her for a living target. Nothing would obviate the threat of the whip between her legs. She whimpered for herself, just a poor girl, all wet, chained to a rail, so well trained she did not even dare touch herself. The whip bit deeper between the folds of her cunt, and she spread her legs another notch to make it hurt even more.

The other side of the story was that despite her fear and even loathing of the whip, she felt a reluctant sort of love for it. When she was alone in her bed, caressing herself, she would think about being beaten, and long for it, and dwell lovingly on each detail of the ritual. If only it didn't hurt so much. It was one of those ceremonies that she could not initiate and found

extremely difficult to endure. It was, nevertheless, an experience she required. She was always grateful to Alex for having the strength to ignore her pleas and rage and proceed with the beating. After a prolonged session with the whip, she found her center. It made her tranquil for days. As long as the marks lasted, she cherished them as tokens of her own courage and Alex's love.

Chris put her boot against the daydreaming girl's chest and pushed her to the floor. The neck chain was not quite long enough to allow her head to touch the ground. Roxanne rolled over onto all fours. Joyous Day and Chris were standing at either side of her. A barbaric pair of leggings and the cold hilt of a throwing knife pressed against her cheeks. Staring up, she could see the leather (latigo and deerhide) that cupped their genitals, the fur-framed swell of Joy's cleavage, the multicolored pictures and shuriken harness that camouflaged Chris's breasts. She tried to turn her head and lick and kiss boots and feet, but Joy had a fist in her hair and held her head upright.

She forgot that there was such a word as pride ... or fear. She pleaded to be allowed to worship Chris's boots, to kneel and kiss Joy's feet. Chris spit on her. She cried out, then begged again. Joyous Day spit on her. She writhed at their feet, imprisoned between their thighs. "Open your mouth," Chris said. She froze and opened her lips. A gob of spit landed on her lower lip. Then another, on her tongue.

She swallowed and wallowed in every drop of it, and her hips began to lift and sink in a rhythm that could only lead to further arousal and release, especially with the help of the bullwhip sawing into her slit. Before she could come, Joyous Day unfastened the chain from the rail and ordered her to crawl to Chris. She covered the boot with long strokes of her tongue, rubbed her face into the wet leather, and cried out with pleasure when Chris shoved her over to Joyous Day. She lavished ever more love and spit all over those lean brown feet, the slender curling toes. No one here would stop her or misunderstand. Why shouldn't she indulge herself, grovel and crawl? It was safe here—safe to abase herself, give herself away. She worshipped and adored these women who forced her to yield, these women who saw through her lies and evasions and took her captive and brought her to her

knees. Her gratitude could never equal the value of what they had done for her. They made her beautiful because her beauty did not scare them away.

Joy chased her back to Chris's boots. "Take the polish off," Chris growled at her. "Get it down to the bare leather, girl. I want those boots as wet as you are. Work out on 'em, show us what a good little boot-licker you are. Love 'em up. Show me how much you want to belong to me."

Before she could begin to fill that order, Joy took her crawling, with the leash and with a handful of her hair, to the far end of the dungeon. She protested, and Joyous Day lifted her and threw her up against the cross. She was still gaping with amazement at the strength in that slender frame when Joy began to lace her to its arms. "We keep you face out t'face the music, my lovely girl," Joy purred.

Chris was in front of Roxanne, pressing up against her, rubbing her leather pants and the cold shuriken (their edges barely perceptible) into Roxanne's naked flesh. She worked her tits hard, grabbing and twisting them, massaging them, and flicking and pinching the nipples. Each contact with her hands made a little explosion go off between Roxanne's legs. Her thighs were slippery. She glanced down at her arm and caught a glimpse of Joy threading rope through an eye bolt, binding her securely, then Chris took her chin in her hand and shoved a tongue that tasted of saki into her mouth. "Kiss me like you mean it," she whispered. "Kiss me good and maybe I won't whip you."

She tried, but Chris disengaged as Joy brought two long pieces of rope over her shoulders. Chris dragged the bullwhip off of Roxanne's body, coiled it and snapped it onto her belt, then buckled Roxanne's waist to the cross. "Let's leave this corset on her, it'll keep her from getting slivers," she suggested to Joy.

"You don' want to give her the porcupine treatment, it's all the same to me, mon," Joy said. "She gonna look like a porcupine herself soon enough. You and I seen somethin' go in the autoclave over there, look sharper than a serpent's tooth t'me."

It took at least half an hour for Joy to lace the first set of ropes in diamonds around Roxanne's arms, torso, thighs, and calves. She stood, legs apart, on a narrow shelf at the foot of the cross. Chris checked the bindings

and her circulation. She warned Roxanne to keep her knees relaxed and not locked into one position. After getting a thumbs-up from Chris, Joy took four short lengths of rope and vanished behind the cross.

Chris was murmuring words of love and damnation, keeping Roxanne firmly under their spell, playing with her clit and nipples. She gasped as Joyous Day looped more rope around the binding that was already in place, and cinched the web around one arm a little tighter. She could barely move anything except her fingers, toes, and head. Yet she was completely comfortable. Joyous Day cinched up the ropes on her other arm, then each of her legs. Well—almost comfortable. Chris’s fingers on her clit were sheer heaven. Roxanne wished she would hurt her tits a little more. She wished Chris could reach her ass.

But Chris moved away, and Joyous Day took her place. “Say hello to me proper,” she said, and kissed her, growling. The cicatrices on her face looked like lion-whiskers.

“Hello,” Roxanne gasped when she could finally breathe.

Joy laughed, and slapped her hard. She cried out, and found she could not get away. “Are you sufferin’?” Joy asked sympathetically, and hit her again. Once again, she tried to jerk away, and could not escape. “Relax, Goldilocks. I and I ain’t goin’ *anywhere*,” Joy said with grim satisfaction, and turned toward the cart where she had sorted out her equipment.

Roxanne could see the gleam of metal, but no details. Her imagination conjured up scalpels, electrodes, forceps, thumb-screws, retractors—all the instruments of a surgeon or a torturer. But what Joyous Day held up for her too see was nothing so terrible. It was a mundane wooden clothespin, not even painted black. She could not quite stifle a laugh at its appearance.

For a few seconds, Joyous Day joined her in mirth. Then she slapped her again. “You got a thing or three to learn about me, girl. Just wait around. You’ll laugh out of the other side of that smart mouth.”

She began to place the clothespins on Roxanne’s breasts. She worked slowly, methodically, grasping the flesh between her thumb and forefinger and working it for several seconds before closing the clip upon it. She stepped back to view her work several times, and occasionally repositioned a clip. “I wanna be mos’ symmetrical,” she told Roxanne. “Mos’ artistical.”

Before long, both of Roxanne's breasts bristled with clothespins, and she was definitely feeling their cumulative effect.

Joy smiled at her and turned once more to the tray. She returned with a wicked-looking pair of alligator clips, connected by a heavy chain. "Tell me, you want to wear these for me?" she asked her.

Roxanne stared into those black eyes. Was her will strong enough to require this much of her? Joy's gaze never wavered. The answer was not in doubt. She sighed and shivered and gave her consent.

"Let the pain build up," Joyous Day whispered to her. "Let the pain overtake you an' overwhelm you. Don't fight with her, because I want your pain." She grasped Roxanne's left nipple and began to knead and twist it. "Give me your pain. Let it build until you cannot stand it without screamin', then give it back to me. Give it to me out of your open mouth. Sing to me. I will transform it into pleasure and feed it back to you. We will share in your pain, like a bottle of wine, and the more pain you take for me, the closer You and I will become. We will become. One." The steel teeth closed on Roxanne's nipple, and she sobbed in agony. "Yeah, I know," Joy soothed her. "Look at me. You make hurtin' look so pretty. I want your pain. Accept it for me, take it for me, and I will take you someplace you never ever been before. Trust me, Roxie, trust me."

Joy's fingers worked on her other nipple, drew it into a hard wrinkled erection. Roxanne tried to move, to express her pleasure and pain by writhing on the cross, but the ropes silenced her dance. Joy allowed the other clamp to close slowly, hissing her satisfaction as it gripped Roxanne's flesh. She carefully lowered the heavy chain until it swung below Roxanne's breasts.

The pain was turning into a dull ache, the ache into a throb, and the throb in her nipples was timed to the throb in her cunt, so that it all became one pulse of ... pleasure? She tried to explain this to Joy, who nodded and lowered her hands to the clips. She began to play the clothespins like a keyboard. Most of the flesh caught in them had gone numb by now, and at the return of feeling, Roxanne moaned.

"Open your eyes, girl," Joy insisted. "You got to do this wit' your eyes wide open. Look at me." African eyes bored into hers. "Bright bird, sing for



me,” Joy said, plucking at the wooden birds that bit her breasts. “Let me make you come while I set your breasts on fire. Hurt, baby? Yeah, I know it hurts. Hurts so good. Ride it out and feed the pain to me wit’ your mouth wide open. Open it like your thighs. That’s the way. Oh, honey, you’d be shakin’ your sweet ass if you weren’t tied down so good. Uh-huh. More? More? More, baby, always more for you where that come from. Oh, yes! Yes!”

Roxanne bit her lips. The orgasm was a shudder that ran over her skin. Her breasts trembled and the blush of her arousal spread across them, red as shame. Only here there was no shame, only a playful facsimile that was a spice to heighten her excitement. Joy let her rest for a few minutes, then began to work on her again.

‘How many of those goddamn things does she have over there?’ Roxanne wondered. The supply seemed inexhaustible. Joy ran a line of clothespins up her breasts, on either side of her neck, and outlined her ears with them. Then she strung a line of them along her jaw, down the front of her throat under her chin. She ran more along Roxanne’s armpits and down her sides, on the inside of her thighs, and across her belly. Wherever she could find enough loose flesh to give the clothespins purchase, she fastened them on.

Roxanne began to strain against the ropes. Joy had gotten so absorbed in positioning the clamps that she had forgotten to talk to her, keep her involved and excited. Only the force of her training and the look in Joy’s eye kept Roxanne from saying the words that would release her from bondage.

Chris saw that her energy was flagging and moved in on them. She knelt by the foot of the cross and began to massage Roxanne’s clit. Joy stepped back and called for a beer. One of the pack supplied her. She stood in silence, surveying her handiwork and Chris, patiently working Roxanne back up into a state of arousal and need. “Her feet are cold,” Chris said.

Joy moved behind the cross and loosened the secondary ropes that kept Roxanne cinched extra-tight to it. The tightly-trussed girl sighed with gratitude and moved a little, easing blood back into her cramped limbs. Chris’s fingers moved between her lips, around her clit, confident and careful. “Shall I let her come?” Chris asked Joy, acknowledging her

preeminence. Joy thought a minute, carefully assessing Roxanne's mindset and the degree of her fatigue.

"A little, yeah, that would be good," she agreed.

Chris quickened her manipulations, rendered them a little more forceful, a little more demanding. Roxanne was possessed by a wave of indignation. Let her come "a little!" She wanted to come a *lot!* She wanted to have one final gigantic orgasm that would be so dramatic and beautiful that they would stop this whole thing and take her down. But Chris would not give her the strokes she needed to achieve complete release. Instead, she felt a flicker of pleasure run briefly through her body. It was over too soon, and left her wanting more. She told them both so, in no uncertain terms. They laughed at her indignation, and returned to drink beer and consider her future. She spat her frustration at them, and they did not even deign to slap her.

"She looks good," Alex complimented Joy. "I don't see a single bald spot."

Joy grinned. "In another minute, she'll start thinkin' about getting them off. And for her, to think a thing is to say it mos' loudly. She been played with clamps much?"

"Enough to know that they hurt worse when they come off than they do on."

Joyous Day laughed until she coughed. Alex patted her gently on the back, then hugged her tight. "Hey, I think she's getting antsy."

"Too bad," Joy chuckled. "Never hurts to let them simmer. Makes those tough cuts get so tender they just fall apart in dere own gravy. Chrissie, you ready, Snake-Charmin' Woman?"

Chris uncoiled the bullwhip and playfully snapped the end of it at Joyous Day's feet. "Willing and able," she replied. "Just waiting for you to get your jollies so I can get down to some serious sadism."

"White Devil Girl, you think you know serious sadism, you ought to let me do you up in my transcendental clamps sometime. Those clothespins are nothing, honey, they are strictly Ted Mack's Amateur Hour. I got devices that would have you screaming for mercy in no time. Get you talking to the stars and walkin' on the moon."

Chris laughed. "Oh, I'm sure you do. Didn't mean to cast aspersions on your technique. Listen, I'm such a chickenshit, I *have* to be a top."

Joy nodded, laughed, and took a hit of beer. She handed the bottle back to Alex and walked over to Roxanne. "Hello, stranger," she said.

Roxanne raised her head, smiled a little, and softly said, "Hello."

Once more, Joy handled the pins as if they were the keys of some bizarre musical instrument. Roxanne cried out. Her head fell forward. "I can't take much more of this," she warned.

"Oh, I think you can," Joy replied. "I think you got no choice, workin' girl. We got to get a little music out of you now. You are a dancer. Surely you got music in your soul." Roxanne cursed her. Joy hit her across the face. The slaps echoed in the black chamber. Finally she gave her the "music" she wanted. The high-pitched screams brought the pack running to witness her pain.

"No more," Roxanne gasped. "Please. I'm sorry, I won't talk back to you. Please. No more."

"That's a better attitude," Joy said. "Do you much better, considerin' your true situation." She tweaked at one or two of the clips. "So you want these off, I hear?"

Roxanne nodded, eyes closed tightly, her teeth gritted.

Joy put her lips close to her ear. While she talked, she touched the clips around Roxanne's face. They were only gentle taps, punctuating the speech she made.

"Roxie, listen here to me. You already have a lotta knowledge. I'm seein' that you sat in school long enough to know they wasn't going to tell you what you needed to survive. What is in books is ver' precious, but you cannot write down everything that you discover. There is all sorts of knowledge. The whole world speaks to us, constantly, but we mus' listen, not look with the eye that reads, but listen. You and I be not alone, the wise and powerful walk among us, the elder of days, an' if they want you to know their names, they ain't gonna write it down. They whisper it in your ear. An' they say, follow me. Follow me to freedom.

“Walk after me.” The clothespin at the top of Roxanne’s left ear was removed. “The flesh itself cannot hold you. It is like a book, while you readin’ it you think it be the whole wide world, but when you close it and turn aroun’ that world disappear and another one open up all about you.

“Walk after me.” Joy continued to chant, but Roxanne lost the thread of what she was saying. She could see her mouth move and feel the sense of her speech, but it was as if her hearing had been turned off. As each pin was removed, she became lighter, giddy. She felt as if Joy’s hand could pass straight through her. Then her hearing came on again, blaring, as Joy said, “I have placed you at the gate of truth, with pain and bondage. Now I say, shed the flesh and *see yourself*.”

She was looking over Joy’s shoulder. Joy was holding her fingertips half an inch from the temples of a girl who seemed to be asleep. A girl who was herself. Then the girl’s eyes opened, and she spun around three times, like a leaf caught in the wind, and looked back into Joy’s laughing mouth. It was a soundless laugh, a secret between the two of them. “Nex’ time You an’ I gonna walk a little further, Roxie,” Joy nodded. “Now you begin to see what can be done.” Her hands made the remaining clips on Roxanne’s breasts ripple.

“Do you want these off, I hear?”

Roxanne nodded, still in a daze. She had to shut her eyes.

“Chrissie, my love,” Joy called without turning around, “she’s all yours. She is ready t’be charmed by your pythons and cobras.”

When Roxanne lifted her head and opened her eyes, Chris was standing below her in a pool of colored light, waiting to be recognized. Her throwing stars and knives gleamed, and a dull sheen lay upon her leathers as well. She was utterly still, except for one hand, which trailed the whip. It coiled and uncoiled at her feet like the evil tail of a restless jungle cat.

“The light from the stained-glass window is falling on your body,” Chris told her. “It falls in patterns of pure color. You are elevated there for our adoration. The scapegoat, the scared victim. In you we find forgiveness, resurrection.”

Once again, Roxanne felt the pack draw together and summon its energy, its presence both protecting and imprisoning her. Chris stood before her as

their emissary, the lens through which they would observe and ignite her. She began to pray that she would not fail them. Let it not be too much, let her endure ... and above all, let it begin quickly! For under her thin shell of resolve was a raging flood of panic that threatened to crack her self-control and leave her sniveling and disowning them all so that Alex would set her free.

Chris took a step back, scuffed the floor with her toe, squinted at her victim, and centered on herself—her balance, her judgment, her skill. The whip sailed toward Roxanne. The tip of it coiled around a clothespin, plucked it off, and deposited it at Chris's feet. Roxanne was too astonished by her skill to complain about the pain it gave her.

Chris blew the air out of her lungs, shook tension out of her shoulders, and started to swing the bullwhip in a steady rhythm. Roxanne found her voice again, and began to grunt and shriek as the clips came off in rapid succession. The floor at Chris's feet was littered with pins, many of them broken. The room was completely silent except for the crack of the whip and the cries of the victim suspended on the cross. Roxanne *felt* the pack absorb her cries and her aborted attempts to struggle. The assembled dominatrices fed on her pain, her violent disordered breathing, the patches of red that were springing out on her skin, the sweat that dampened her scalp until her hair clung in wet strands to her skull. They were nourished and awed by the sight of her. Her helplessness was so voluptuous that it infuriated them. She trembled for herself, victim-without-end.

Roxanne abruptly became aware that Chris had stopped. There was no reason to scream. Shamefaced, she fell silent. Were they all gone? Was it over?

"Easy," Chris said to her. "Ssh. Relax. Easy, now."

Roxanne felt her muscles flow into relaxation. She had not realized how tense she was.

The whip was too quick to see. Another series of stabbing pains invaded her flesh.

There was another pause. She glared suspiciously at Chris, determined to anticipate the resumption of the game. Chris mimicked her pout. "You trying to scare me?" she demanded. "Maybe make me feel sorry for you?"

Boo-hoo, you poor little thing you. That was nothing. Clothespins come off in a second. But those alligator clips on your nipples ... those are tricky. Sometimes takes me two or three tries.”

Roxanne choked on her own tongue. “You can’t—” she managed.

Chris began to swing the whip.

Roxanne had never screamed so hard in her whole life. It rang and echoed in her ears, like the roar that follows an explosion of a battery of cannon.

“No?” Chris said, pretending mild surprise. The whip was back on her belt. “No? Then make me an offer I can’t refuse.”

Roxanne began to shake her head so hard that saliva flew from her lips and hit the arms of the cross. She was incapable of speech or thought.

“Pull it together, babe,” Chris threatened her. Roxanne heard the muted laughter of the pack. Her silence, her inability to piece one word to another, shamed her and drove her further into panic. She finally fell back on the ineffectual offer of a desperate bottom.

“Anything but that,” she whispered. “Do anything to me but that.” Then she hung her head, insofar as her rigid bonds permitted even that gesture, and absorbed the silence that greeted her as just punishment for her lack of originality, her lack of fire, her admission of failure and fear. She despised herself utterly—first of all because her offer was a bluff. She had not meant it. It was completely insincere. Chris could (she was sure) come up with a dozen other things she would hate and fear just as much.

There was also the inescapable fact that she was in a bondage too complete, too carefully constructed, to allow escape. Therefore, the pack—or Chris, as their delegate—could literally do anything they wished to her. Any mercy they showed her was a gift. She had no position to bargain from. Chris knew this, and had decoyed her into a game that only Chris could win. Either the sentence would be carried out anyway—thus demonstrating Roxanne’s lack of power and complete helplessness—or another, more terrible one would be enforced in its place.

Finally, Roxanne knew that the ropes and clips were there only to save her face, to give her an illusion of dignity that would make her more pliant beneath the pack’s will. Should any of them choose to do so, she could be

loosed from all physical restraints, and still she would not be able to move from the spot without permission.

But Chris appeared to have taken her seriously. Chris seemed to think that she did, indeed, have something left of sufficient value to buy herself a little time. Joyous Day walked over to Chris and offered her “a funny cigarette, mon.” They contemplated their victim together, turning over her offer, finding something in it that terrified Roxanne.

“Since you don’t want me to whip you on top of the clips, I’ll whip you without them,” Chris said. “Joy, take them off.”

Joy did not hurt her. It was the return of her own blood to the nipples that caused the pain. A white-hot needle seemed to pierce the tip of each breast. Her cunt had not troubled her for some time, but it began to ache now, demanding some attention, some reassurance that it still existed. Joy stroked her as if she were a pet that needed soothing. Roxanne moaned in gratitude, and made useless attempts to rotate her pelvis against the knowing hand.

Her thighs were wet, and Joy ran her fingers over the slick surface. Most dominants are fond of confronting their victims with their response to punishment and insult. There is no defense and no denial possible when one tastes the liquid evidence of lust that is flowing unhampered between one’s legs. Roxanne told herself she did not care, it did not matter, and she tried to lure Joy’s hand back up onto that sensitive point. But the more needy she became, the lighter the touch became, and the further it wandered from the place that cried out to be caressed. Finally, Joy withdrew her hand and withdrew herself and left Roxanne alone with Chris and her signal whip.

This one was a third of the length of the bullwhip. Roxanne admired the sleight of hand that had distracted her from this important alteration in the pieces of the game. She would have covered her face, would have turned away, tried to shield herself—but her arms and legs were immobile, pinned, of no use. So she adopted the best defense available—she began to erase herself. She began to give up the idea that she had anything to hide or any right to demand pleasure instead of pain. She began to crumble herself at the edges, fade into the air, render herself will-less and invisible.

But Chris required an exchange of words between them before the whipping could begin. Roxanne made the necessary responses— she acknowledged that it was she who had offered Chris anything, acknowledged that she had no right to appeal the matter to any other court, acknowledged that it would indeed be very hard to endure and that she had no choice but to endure it. And she asked for and was not granted permission to scream. Both of them knew she would scream anyway. This excuse to prolong the punishment was a formality, a ritual that was of value primarily to Chris, for it allowed her to gather her energy, feed her rage, and finally granted provocation to unleash that rage.

I am not here, Roxanne told herself. This will happen, but it will not happen to me. I am not here for anything to happen to.

*Liar*, screamed the first lash of the whip, and she was suddenly unable to be anywhere else but here, bound to this wooden cross, a woman being beaten. The bondage that had seemed excessively confining was now insufficient. She wished there were many more ropes. They would be shelter, protection. It does not matter, she told herself. I am of no consequence, my pain is of no consequence, if I resist it will be the end of me.

The second lash brought a cry of pain from her throat, and the muscles there bore down around the next scream like a woman giving birth and forced the sound into a word. The word was “Yes.” It was the only word that would not stop her heart.

“Jesus,” someone in the pack murmured, “she’s really marking her up.”

Roxanne had never been so heavily abused on the insides of her thighs. Her ass and shoulders were much less sensitive, and could consequently take a greater amount of punishment. Chris was deliberately aiming for the softest, most vulnerable part of her body, raising welts and bruises with each stroke of the whip. “Yes!” she screamed again. I consent to this beating, I give in to this beating, please please how long will it go on?

But Chris was already ahead of her.

“I know you’ve taken more than this, but not a hell of a lot more, was it?” Chris asked. Roxanne groaned assent. “I wish you could see all of this. You’re so soft and ripe that all I’ve got to do is flick you and you turn black



and blue. I want to be able to hit you until my arm is tired, until I can't lift it to hit you any more. Can you do that for me? Can you stay here with me? You've gotten me this far. Don't give up on me now. The rest won't be easy, but I'm so close, so close, so fucking close."

She continued to administer the snapping strokes, but now they had been redefined as something Chris needed that Roxanne could provide. She did not want to deny Chris her climax, and went looking for a second wind. A drowning woman must, she thought, when she knows she is dying, attempt to dive yet deeper into the water, to hide herself, to take in more and more of the alien water that surrounds her. Perhaps she hopes to be able to draw oxygen from the water, if only she takes in enough of it, or become a fish and swim without harm in it. The force that surrounds me is pain, and it is alien to me, and yet I begin to crave more and more of it. I will take more and more of it in until it is part of me and loses its power over me and I cease to exist. But God, it is hard hard so very very hard.

Joy was behind the cross, her hands hooked over its arms, her feet braced on the shelf. "Roxie, you are wastin' time, trying to make it fly away. But you only got this one good life, and it'd be much better if you slowed yourself down. I'm gonna help you now, if you let me, you gonna be able to see that whip come at you like it takes ten minutes to land. And the tip of it is gonna hook you, take you outta your self again, draw you out on the shining path. God walkin' out of your body, Roxie, I mind the silver cord for you. I know who you need right now. That Alex, she is watchin' you with narrow eyes, you circle 'round behind her, girl, and kiss her neck." Joy saw Alex jump and look over her shoulder. With a puzzled look on her face, she rubbed the nape of her neck.

Normally, a crowd would make this dangerous. But the pack was fascinated by the flogging. No one was going to cross the silver cord that would lead Roxanne back to her body. Joy called softly to the girl's spirit, and it retraced its footsteps, re-entering just as Chris let her arm fall to her side. Sweat had soaked through her leather until it was visibly damp—darker, no longer shiny. Her chest heaved. Anne-Marie looked worried, and went to the bar for some water.

Roxanne took gallons of air in with each sob, air that replenished her flagging energy and cleansed her aching flesh. The pain had not stopped

with the fall of the whip. Her flesh had been so marked that it still throbbed, the heartbeat that pushed blood through the tissues causing enough pain to make her gasp and wince. "Please don't go away," she pleaded with Chris. "Don't leave me here alone. Oh, please, don't abandon me."

Chris was suddenly standing so close to her that they almost touched. A goddess, nude to the waist, threw a poisoned star at a demon who charged her with a bloody sword. Roxanne reeled from the image until she realized it was only a tattoo on Chris's shoulder. Her very breath fell on Roxanne's cheek; the hand that had wielded the terrible whip was inches from her tender and mottled thigh. "Oh," Roxanne exhaled wearily, exhausted by the weight of her love, "I wish I could drop down to your feet and rest my head on your boots. You hurt me so much. I love you."

The handle of the whip came up and caressed her cheek. She accepted the touch without flinching away. All her fear of being whipped had been burned away by what she had endured, and there was no ambivalence left in her, only longing. Chris saw the change, let approval show in her eyes, and drew the touch out into a line that ran down between Roxanne's breasts and found her navel. The handle of the whip continued to descend, seeking something even softer, something that would yield, a cavity, an oasis. Chris held the thick roll of braided leather in the palm of her hand and inserted it gently between Roxanne's thighs, held it against the spread wings of her vulva, held it there, and moved it slightly. Roxanne wanted to cry, she was in such need. Chris fed the whip butt-first into her, and then Roxanne witnessed something incredible and almost blasphemous. Chris went down on her knees. Hot breath moved like a vagina around Roxanne's engorged clitoris. It can't be, she thought, and moved to prevent it, but could not, and then Chris took her with her mouth.

She was held within that darkness and liquid and heat by a slight suction. Chris held her in place with the suction, and moved her lips in a semicircle. The whip also rotated within her. Roxanne realized she was being possessed by an expert. But this was a maîtresse, on her knees, and it was not right! It should not be this way! The service offered her was too much for her to accept, a gift too gracious, abundance she was afraid to receive. She tried to persuade Chris to release her and allow her, Roxanne, to suckle on Chris's cunt.

“No,” Chris said firmly in the cold tone that the mistress uses when she will brook no more nonsense and tolerate no more dissent. “I want this, bitch, so hand it over and disappear. Just get lost, give it up. I don’t want anything to do with you, just this, your pussy. Don’t interfere. Don’t tell me I can’t have anything I want right now. You’ve had it. You’ve lost and you’re nothing. Disappear.”

The touch was so taboo it was irresistible. To allow a dominant to kneel and use her mouth upon her—to grin into her mouth and demand further attention, repetition of the most exacting and gratifying and difficult caresses. It was so sweet, so sweet, thrilling and devastating and impossible to halt.

She was only a heartbeat going miles a minute and a cunt being eaten out, whip-fucked, teased, titillated, praised, drawn out and out and out and out ... The orgasm collected at the very tip of her clitoris and gushed from her into Chris’s mouth. She could have sworn she ejaculated, spurted cum; could not believe that the pleasure surging from her body did not leave physical evidence behind. Chris wiped her face on Roxanne’s well-marked thighs and came slowly back up to her feet. Her face was red, her cheeks glistened. “Still here?” she asked Roxanne. “Did you think we were done?”

“It won’t ever be done,” Roxanne sighed. “It won’t ever be done. You go away, you forget me, you get bored with me, I lose you, but you find me again and punish me and hurt me and make me scream. I fall in love and it starts all over again. I could not live without you. I am lost without you. Use me in whatever way you please, do whatever you like with me. I am nothing, I am your toy, a thing, a slave.”

“I love you,” Chris said. “Joy, let’s take her down.”

The black woman shook her head. “You and I better do this than you. Why not sit down before you fall down, and drink some of that seltzer Anne-Marie’s about to pour over your head?”

Suddenly that was a very good idea. Chris sat heavily on one end of the shelf at the foot of the cross while Joy began the laborious task of undoing her human macramé project. After checking Chris’s pulse and patting her on the head, Anne-Marie gave Joy a hand. “This is so much more entertaining than staying home and knitting sweaters,” she said cozily.

Chris had drunk a pint of seltzer and given Roxanne the rest of the bottle before she could be taken down from the cross. Joy and Chris linked arms behind her shoulders and under her knees, and carried her away. The three of them wound up on the same mat that Kay had taken her to. Roxanne sat in Chris's lap, her legs thrown across Joy's thighs. Chris cradled her, hid her face from the light and the future. Some of her welts were bleeding slowly, but her breathing was peaceful and untroubled. "It's a miracle," Joy said, rubbing her feet. "Look. No holes."

"This reminds me more of St Sebastian," Chris said. Roxanne was a satisfying weight. She wanted to hold her until she healed completely and then do it all over again.

Alex stood above them. She was obviously not going to wait that long. Her face was a storm cloud. She squatted and went to pass a hand over Roxanne's flank. Chris tried to deflect her, and Joy hissed. Alex hesitated, then stood and turned her back on them.

Was this the way it was going to end? Tyre and Michael filtered over, their bouncer-instincts warning them that trouble was brewing. There were far too many toys that could become deadly weapons in this room to allow tempers to flare. But it was Anne-Marie who defused the situation, calling from the cross, "Oh, Joyous Day, where shall I stow all this lovely line?" Joy took the hint and slid out from under Roxanne's feet, patted her goodbye, and went to put away her ropes. Her departure seemed to wake Chris up, and she turned Roxanne's face to the light. "We have company," she told Roxanne tenderly.

Alex made her fists unknot and approached them once again, but this time she did not go to her haunches. She wound her fist in Roxanne's hair and yanked her off the mat and onto all fours. "Get that fucking strap off your neck," she told her, quietly furious. Roxanne was forced to let most of her upper-body weight hang from her hair while she used both hands to rip Kay's collar off her throat. Kay saved her from the dilemma of what to do with it by plucking it from her fingers. Everyone was trying to be handy and inconspicuous at the same time. The storm finally broke when Alex's palm connected with Roxanne's rump. It was a thunderclap that heralded a downpour of blows.

Chris went white as a sheet and lunged at Alex. But Tyre and Michael had her by the upper arms and jabbered in her face until she sank back down and let them distract her.

“Daddy, you’re hurting me!” Roxanne screamed. Chris was furious. Anne-Marie walked in front of her, blocking her view of the spanking.

“That’s right. Glad you’re finally back from vacation. Seems like you give your heart away to anybody who blisters your hide. So I thought I’d better remind you that you are not a free agent.”

“I think we ought to play some music that appeals to you for a change, dear,” Anne-Marie said loudly to Joyous Day. She also came to stand between Alex and Chris, and Alex moved away to give them some room.

“I don’t think Brian Eno would contribute t’ the light and frivolous atmosphere of this party outta bounds,” Joy frowned. “EZ, you are slackin’ off on your professional obligations. Go an’ get us some help from the gods of rock ‘n’ roll.”

New music freshened the atmosphere. “She don’t belong to you, man,” Michael told Chris. “It was a loan. Don’t be uncool.”

“Alex is not unreasonable,” Tyre chimed in. “I am sure you will get another chance to whale away on Roxanne if you don’t blow it now.”

“Okay, okay,” Chris told them. Her teeth were chattering. “I think I need a jacket or something.” Kay heard her, and brought a blanket from behind the bar.

“Rather be shipwrecked here than on a desert island,” she said cheerfully. “This place has got everything. You like sugar in your coffee, Chris?”

“No—just milk.”

“Okay, I’m gonna bring you some. No wonder you got the shakes with a belly full of cold seltzer. Some nurse you are, Anne-Marie, putting your patient in shock.”

“Oh, dear, I meant to be helpful.” The kind face became terribly distressed.

Chris forgot her own confusion and grabbed Anne-Marie’s hands. “Listen, if you hadn’t brought me something to drink, I would have keeled over. After a workout like that everybody runs over to the bottom and says,

‘Oh, my God, how did you stand it?’ and they don’t even notice that the top is dying. I’m just, uh, it’s a case of nerves is all. Thanks, Kay. The coffee should fix me up.”

Roxanne was blubbing and turning in circles around Alex, trying to get away from her windmilling arm. Her front had been warmed up and done to a turn, but her backside had long ago forgotten the kiss of Anne-Marie’s hand. Roxanne was not looking where she was going, and bumped head first into the leather horse. Alex heaved her up by the hair over it, slapped four leather cuffs on her limbs, and stepped away. She was comfortably supported by the padded leather beam under her hips, but the thing was so high she was almost on her toes, and for some reason, the fact that Alex had quit spanking her was not very reassuring at all.

“Made a few decisions just now,” Alex said, coming back to her, the heels of her engineer boots treading heavily on the wooden planks of the floor. Roxanne peeked between the legs of the horse. An upside-down vision of Alex, from the knees down, included a cat-o’-nine-tails dangling from her hand. She gulped. “Thought you might like to be kept informed. As of now, your safe word is rescinded, bitch. You can say anything comes into your empty, useless head. I’m not lettin’ you go. Not now. Not ever. I couldn’t have no self-respect at all if I didn’t fight to keep whatever belonged to me, and as of now, you better not cherish any illusions about being treated any other way.”

The lashes of Alex’s cat were tightly braided and very narrow. They could land together on a freckle, but now she was splaying them out, encouraging Roxanne’s bottom to turn tomato-red as quickly as possible. The cheeks were stretched from her position on the horse, and it felt like they were swelling as Alex whipped her, becoming indecently large and heavy. When Alex laid the first fast, cutting stripe across them, Roxanne expected to hear them pop like a balloon. But she had no such luck.

“Daddy, I know I’ve been bad,” she cried. “I’m sorry, don’t hit me any more. Daddy, it’s gonna be so sore when you fuck me, there won’t be any place left for you to hang on to.” But Alex did not stop. “Oh, I hate you, I hate you!”

She was in for it now. Alex was going to continue the whipping until she broke down and cried and confessed that she loved her Daddy best of all. There was no way to feign this catharsis. And at the moment there was nothing in her heart but murder. She screamed and kicked like one of the Furies, and wasn't even grateful that the horse was bolted to the floor.

The hot coffee had put color back into Chris's cheeks, and she had recovered her perspective enough to laugh at Roxanne's dilemma. "God, what a seductive little witch she is," she said, admiring the stripes that were rapidly adorning Roxanne's pert, plump bottom.

"Yeah, it's a nice piece," EZ said, strolling up and leaning back, putting one foot up on the wall. "Too bad it isn't yours, Chris. But you had your shot at it, and the big dog made you give it up. Anyway, I think we all can see you just don't have what it would take to keep that cunt happy." Everyone was so shocked that EZ actually had the time to sneer at Chris before Kay hooked one foot around her buddy's ankle, and her keister hit the floor.

"This time," Kay hissed, "you have gone too far."

"Jah may be dead," Joy murmured, "but this tired world still need a little justice, gotta make it where we can."

"Your not-for-profit corporation just lost its tax-exempt status," Tyre announced.

"Baby, you are about to lose your tailpipe and muffler," was Michael's estimate.

"Keel-hauling is too good for her," Anne-Marie huffed.

Chris didn't know what to say, but it really didn't seem like there was much to be added.

"Aw, fuck all of you!" EZ shouted. "I never wanted to come to this goddamn party anyway. You all think you're such hot shit. And that bitch over there, how does she rate? She's nothing but a whore, and you're all just pussy to me. Tryin' to act tough and important, you're just a bunch of *girls*."

She did not seem to notice that the bunch of girls were surrounding her, and that each of them had something sharp in her hand. Tyre had her

Damascus-steel sleeve dagger, Kay had clicked open a switchblade, Michael had produced a K-Bar from her uniform trouser-leg, Joyous Day had a sliver of obsidian between the fingers of her right hand, and Chris, of course, was twirling her throwing knives, one in each hand. But it was Anne-Marie, whose sense of protocol was deeply offended by EZ's unspeakably bad manners, who put a stop to her tirade by removing her nurse's cap, walking right up, and resting the point of a four-inch-long, pearl-headed hatpin under EZ's left eye.

"Can'tcha all take a joke?" EZ said. "Ha-ha. Ha? Kay?" Sweat popped out on her forehead, and there was a real cold feeling between her shoulderblades.

"Oh, I'm here," Kay said, "right here," and used the point of her switchblade under EZ's chin to bring her up on her toes. Anne-Marie stepped away, replacing her hat and tidying her hair. "Tried to tell you to watch your mouth. Now I don't think I care to listen any more to anything you got to say. Take off that jacket, badboy. You ain't entitled to wear leather in front of this crew."

The insult made the cords on EZ's neck stand out, but she let the jacket slide to the floor.

"Chaps too, bigmouth, dumbshit, troublemakin', good-for-nothin'. What's the matter? Can't bend over? Well, figure it out, 'cause nobody's gonna help you now."

Somehow, EZ got her chaps unsnapped and the zippers undone. They joined the jacket in a pile on the floor. "Wanna save that for a rummage sale, Tyre?" Kay said. "I'd consider it a pleasure to make the first donation. Start a home for wayward girls. I know one that's about to be homeless."

Before EZ could protest the loss of her precious leather, Kay punched a hole in her T-shirt and cut it up the front and down. She put the knife in her teeth, whirled EZ around, pulled the T-shirt slightly off her shoulders, and yanked the cords together in a neat square knot. EZ's elbows nearly touched. Tyre had quietly folded and piled the discarded leathers on one of the bar stools. She came over now, taking her handcuffs off her belt, and handed them to Kay, who snapped them onto EZ's wrists.



“Shall I leave these on?” Kay wondered, unbuttoning the waistband of EZ’s 501s.

“Kay, please—”

“Shut up, I’m just talkin’ out loud to hear myself think. Yeah, I think I better leave them on. After all, you always do. I sometimes wonder if you shower with your pants on, EZ. You got something in here you don’t want me to see?”

She shoved her hand down the front of the faded jeans and rummaged around. EZ bent double, trying to stop her, and Kay removed her hand and kneed her in the crotch. “No, there’s nothing there, just pussy,” she said, her voice made harsh with old grief. “That’s why you look at Michael as if looks could kill, ’cause she went out and bought herself a dick?” She smacked EZ between the legs, and let her go to her knees from the pain. “Michael, come here. Let’s get a good look at that joint of yours. Come on, EZ, you been starin’ at her basket all night long, now it’s right in your face and you *damn well better look good and hard.*”

Michael was not being nice. She ran her tongue around her mouth, pushed down on her cock with two fingers, then wrapped her hand around it and jacked it off.

“See, you don’t want to suck it because you figure that makes you pussy, but welcome to the twentieth century, EZ, where it takes a real man to suck cock. Blow it.”

Five weapons in female hands circled her head, and the sixth went down her throat. “I am glad to see you’re not pretendin’ you don’t know how this is done,” Kay said calmly. “D’you think none of our tricks ever told me what went on every time I stepped out to take a leak or get a beer? You got quite a reputation, girl, for sneakin’ around doin’ something most people think is American as apple pie. Don’t think you’re gonna hide your light under a bushel no more, cocksucker. We just found something socially useful for that nasty mouth of yours to do.”

With her hands behind her back, EZ had very little control over the depth of Michael’s penetration. She tried holding her neck stiff, but the prick of steel against her scalp took the starch right out of her. She gave up and let Michael make full use of her. When they hauled her to her feet, her face

was covered with tears and less attractive substances, and Kay took the red bandana off her jacket to mop her off. EZ permitted this, but when Kay reached into her jeans again, she bolted. Michael and Joy caught her by the belt-loops and dragged her back, and Kay slapped her backhanded, a serious penalty when she was wearing all of her rings. EZ had to let that hand worm its way into her crotch and bring up a handful of female lubrication, which Kay smeared across her face.

“I just gotta make sure you get brought down a notch or two and stay there,” Kay said, “about at the height of my spurs. See, I think you not only believe that the faggots you suck off will forget all about it, I think you also believe that I forgot how we ever got together in the first place. Tyre, go ask Alex if there’s any room on the horse.”

“No!” EZ shouted. “Not ever there. Not by her. I won’t! You can’t make me!”

“Nonsense, dear,” Anne-Marie said, and they dragged her bodily to where Alex stood, beckoning them to join her, and threw her onto the horse by Roxanne.

“This is not consensual!” EZ fumed.

For Anne-Marie, this was the last straw. The ritualistic etiquette of S/M; the titles, forms of salutation, provocation, and response—each varying with one’s level of experience, role, and specialty—were her first love. “That is highly irrelevant, you pipsqueak, you popinjay, you buffoon,” she cried. “Did you ask any of us for our permission before proceeding to insult and harry us? Those unfortunate few who behave as badly as you have given their consent to be taken in hand and punished severely. You are worse than the most loutish male submissive I ever had to put up with before I met Tyre and came to work at the Calyx. For shame, for shame.”

Instead of using wrist and ankle cuffs, Joy threw a couple of half hitches around EZ’s waist and the horse, which made it impossible for her to rear up off of it. By now, Anne-Marie had fetched one of her canes and was rolling up her sleeves. Alex heard Roxanne say, “Oh, shit, she’s in real trouble now.” Kay yanked EZ’s Levis down and slammed her fists once into the exposed buttocks before stepping away, shaking her head in disgust, and gesturing that Anne-Marie could do what she would.

The cane was a yellow blur. Alex had stopped plying her cat and stood watching in open-mouthed astonishment. Roxanne was screaming in sympathy. There was a reason why she treated Anne-Marie with impeccable courtesy. The British are practically the inventors of imperialism, and it doesn't do to forget that beneath the grand style of Victoria's Empire there was brute force and a great appetite for wielding it.

EZ screamed for a long time before she made any coherent sound, which was Kay's name. "Fuck ya," Kay said stubbornly. "Hope she cuts you in half, you dumbshit, badboy bitch, you."

Apparently, EZ felt this was not an impossibility, because her screams trebled in volume and range. But her ordeal continued until the cane broke. Anne-Marie felt it split and lowered her arm at once. The edges would be sharp as razors.

"Let that be a lesson to you," she advised the distraught victim, and stalked to the bar to throw the ruined and bloody implement away.

"Fuck her," Kay told Michael, uncapping one of the cans of Crisco she had stashed by the horse when the evening was still young. "Why don't you just shove that big fat cock of yours up her ass, the same place I got my fist up the night I made the mistake of drag gin' this snot-nosed case of arrested development home to cure a hangover. See, I think she figured that if she told me she liked getting fucked she might have to get her own little paws dirty and do something lez-bian with me. Nothin' more pussy than a dyke, ain't that so, EZ? But nobody could tell you wasn't a boy right now, with Michael plowin' a straight furrow up your dirt road. And as soon as she's done, anybody who feels like it can have a piece of you because I don't want you gettin' any ideas that this is a real cock, as if it made a goddamn bit of difference to whether the fuck was any good or not, or who has to do the fucking, or that you are too good to spread your legs like the rest of us—or get it up for a buddy who would like to be on her back for a change."

Not everybody could even wait to take their turn. With Alex's encouragement, the horse turned into a double gang-fuck. Only Chris hung back, until Alex slapped a handful of grease into her palm, grabbed her hand, and went into Roxanne's cunt still holding on.

By the time they were finished, the two girls were such a mess that Tyre got a spatula from under the bar and scraped the Crisco off them, knocking it off the spatula into an empty can that Kay held out for her. Anne-Marie rolled up a towel and used it the same way, then Alex scrubbed them both down with one she had unfolded. Joy found the invisible bathroom door, got the shower running, and helped the rest of the pack strip their victims down and herd them under the water. Kay kept a sharp eye on EZ, afraid of a resurgence of bad temper, but she and Roxanne just started soaping each other and washing each other's backs. One thing led to another, and eventually Joy said, "I feel like I ought to do the decent thing and turn my back. Or say what the hell and take me some pictures." Roxanne and EZ didn't want to stop even when the hot water ran out.

Kay had somehow scrounged up a beach towel from the trick linen to wrap EZ in. Alex and Chris were performing a similar service with smaller towels for Roxanne, who wore an idiotic smile and somehow still had Crisco in her ears. Tyre went to fetch robes for both of them. When she brought them back to the bathroom, Kay caught at her sleeve and said under her breath, "Look, I really planned to stick around for the finale, but I have to finish this now that it's started. We'll just slip out while everybody takes a break. I got to get this boychick off to myself and talk some sense into her while she's listening to me. Hey, we could have peace in our time."

"Don't be silly," Tyre said. "Do you know what time it is?" She thought, by now the place upstairs is probably almost empty. I could check with Simba and have her give them the key to one of the smaller dungeons. But then I'll have to check on them before I leave, and see if they need a lift home. Or I guess the cleaning crews can let them out tomorrow. What a drag.

"Kay," EZ said. They could barely hear her. "Please, don't make us go. I won't be dis—disruptive no more. Lemme see Roxanne get her rings. I'd never forgive myself if I fucked this up for you. We can talk tomorrow. Or you can talk and I can listen, anyways. Please?"

"Well ... "

"Put a collar on her and see if she means it," Tyre advised. "If she can bounce back this fast after the lesson you taught her, I don't think there's

any hope. All of us would really regret it if you didn't stay."

Out at the bar, Joy was checking the spines of tape-boxes. "You and I think it be time for Brian Eno now," she said. "Well, well. They got Jarre doin' Oxygène. A golden oldie. Outer space is here to stay, children."

The leftover sushi disappeared in minutes. So did two pots of coffee and a fifth of cognac. Kay was up on the stool at the far end of the bar, drumming her spurs against its legs. She plied a little pair of scissors, manicuring the biggest bud sensemilla Tyre had ever seen.

"This one got horny enough to drown itself," she grinned. "Figure this is just what we need to float through the final frontier." EZ sat peacefully at her feet, naked except for a collar and a terry-cloth bathrobe. Kay lit up her pipe, then EZ carried it to everybody who wanted a hit and held a lit match over the dope for them while they toked up. "It takes about two hits of this shit to get real high," Kay said, sucking smoke through her teeth. "That's high as in Tibet."

Once she had gotten everybody on top of the Himalayas, Kay put her paraphernalia away and wrapped her legs around EZ, giving her a big thigh-hug, and played thoughtfully with her parti-colored hair.

"Tyre, are those needles sterile?" Alex fretted.

Tyre glanced at the timer light on the autoclave. "Jesus, yes, 'Daddy,' they've been cooking for hours."

"Well, take 'em out and let 'em cool, will you? I'm afraid to touch that damn machine. You put the rings in there, too?"

"Whatever you had on the tray got sterilized, stud. I wasn't the one who laid it out, remember?"

"Oh, yeah, sorry, Tyre."

Roxanne pressed her face into Alex's knee. Her eyes were shining. "Psst!" she said. Alex gave her a look. "I know you have to be brave for the both of us," she said humbly. "I tell you I can take anything before it actually happens. I'm afraid of pain, so I struggle and call you bad names, and I lie. But I gave tonight everything I had, and I really do want to be your best girl. You're always asking me to trust you, Alex. When I wear your rings, will you finally trust me?"

Alex caressed her head, and took her gently by the hair. “You’re wonderful. And it’s been beautiful to watch you. I thought my heart would be ripped in two when I heard you scream, and knew it was somebody else who was making you suffer. But I’ve watched these women discover abilities that I didn’t know you had.”

Roxanne shivered. “I wonder if I could really love any woman who held my leash and threatened to whip me.”

“Well, at least we know you honestly do love to be abused,” Alex said. “You’re lucky you have somebody who will dish it out with a careful hand. Why do you think I want you pierced? I can’t run the risk of you forgetting me or trying to replace me. I want you wearing something that will prevent that. I meant it when I said I’m never going to let you go, Roxanne. But ownership enforced with a collar and a crop can be broken or mislaid. Even the marks you have now will heal and disappear. But these piercings are permanent.”

“Oh ... ” It was a whimper of sexual excitement. Roxanne’s hand strayed between her legs, and Alex laughed at her. She began to move spasmodically, crying again, begging subvocally for help and reassurance.

“Rings,” Alex teased. “I am going to put my rings in your flesh. To see every time you dress and undress, to feel every time I put my hand on you. My rings.”

Roxanne shuddered as if in the throes of orgasm, then ceased caressing herself. Alex held up a long, thick needle. “The points I’ll actually use are in the sterilizer,” she said. “But this is what they look like.” She gave it to her to play with.

Roxanne examined it carefully, trying to find some acceptance or desire for it in her heart. She wanted the rings, lusted after them, but the needle appalled her. “Where will you pierce me?” she asked, trying to be calm.

“Wherever I like.”

Roxanne gave the needle back and folded up at Alex’s feet again, trying to hide within her own arms. She had a perverse desire to fall asleep. Alex stood up and stepped behind the bar. She and Tyre scrubbed together in the sink there, lathering themselves up past the elbow with antiseptic soap.

“Think we’re sterile?” Alex asked Tyre.

“We’re all girls. I don’t think anybody’s going to get pregnant,” she replied.

Alex gave her a pained look.

“Sorry, I couldn’t resist. It was starting to sound like the *Wedding March* in here.”

Chris and Joyous Day scooped Roxanne up in their arms and bore her to the operating table. Tyre and Alex followed them. They arranged her comfortably and switched on a strong overhead light. Anne-Marie adjusted the head of the table until she was sitting up. Roxanne followed everyone with her eyes, recording everything. When Alex ran her hands over her body, she arched beneath the caress, trying to prolong contact between her skin and Alex’s hands.

“Very nice,” Alex told her. “I’m glad you’re ready for this. I hope you want it as much as I do.”

“I’m real scared,” Roxanne said. “Can I see the rings?” Alex lifted the tray and held it up for her examination. “What do they mean to you?” her slave whispered.

Alex replaced the tray on its stand. She noticed how precise and careful her own hands were. “They are the symbols of our relationship,” Alex said. “Symbols of my responsibility and payment for my attention. They are, in and of themselves, a constant reminder that I care for and possess you. They are reassurance and ornamentation. And they will always belong to me, despite the fact that it is your body they pierce and decorate.”

Roxanne’s eyes were full of alarm and love. “Anybody who sees these rings will know all about me,” she said. “When I go see a doctor—and at the gym. The other dancers at the theater. Daddy, I won’t even be able to pick up a trick unless I want her to see me ... that way.”

Alex nodded. “It’s not a small gift I’m asking you to give me.”

“What if you leave me?” she wailed.

Alex shrugged. “I think you’re the kind of woman who ought to wear slave rings. If you ever leave me, though, I will expect to get them back. If I choose to set you free, I’ll give you the choice of keeping them or having me take them out.”

Roxanne turned her head away. She was contemplating her own inner darkness, taking counsel from the shades that moved there. It took her some moments to speak. “Every time you give me an order, I’m afraid—afraid I won’t be able to do it, or afraid someday I won’t have anything left to give. You’re so hard on me, Daddy. Greedy. And mean. It was nice to make everybody come after me. Did it make you jealous?”

“Yes. It also made me real hot.”

Roxanne laughed softly. “I don’t have any rings in you,” she said. “So I have to have something else I can pull on. I don’t want to go home with anybody here but you, Alex, but I like to keep you guessing. Just so you don’t forget how hard you had to chase me before you finally caught me.”

“You are such a flirt, I keep looking for ways to make sure I’ve finally got you. I don’t think I’ll ever be sure. But I guess it doesn’t matter that much any more. Because I think if I ever knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that I was going to have you forever and ever, maybe I wouldn’t want you any more.”

“Oh, don’t worry, Daddy, you’ll never be able to trust me too much. But I love you enough to let you make me pay for it.”

Alex laughed.

“Be serious for a minute, Daddy. Will you do just one little thing for me? Please don’t tie me up. I promise I won’t spoil the work. I just don’t want any doubt to exist that I wanted you to do this.”

Alex shook her head. “Pride,” she said. “Such pride.”

“Aren’t you proud of me? Look at all these little old ladies stumbling around, yawning their asses off. Told you I’d wear them all out. How many flashy pieces of trash do you know with that much stamina? Only woman I never could wear out is you.”

“Oh?” Alex said, disbelieving. “That’s just ’cause I’m in fear of my life.” She laughed at Roxanne’s pout. “Have to bring you down here and lock you up in a big steel cage if you couldn’t get what you wanted. Hey, quit makin’ that face. I won’t tie you up. I’ll never do anything to you that you don’t really want. You know that.” They stared at each other for a few long seconds. Then Alex said abruptly, “You don’t have to be brave yet. Tyre is going to shave you first.” She stood aside.



For once, Roxanne did not ask questions or protest. She shifted her attention to Tyre and let her body follow her with small pleading gestures. She had learned how to be passed on without resistance or fear. In each new mistress's eye, she was reborn and re-enslaved.

Tyre was a vision, six feet of red and black leather, with her white hair cascading to her knees. Her high heels rang on the floor—such a different sound compared with Alex's heavy tread. Roxanne found herself worshipping Tyre's well-groomed nails, long hair, and feminine movements. She felt herself diminished, lacking in she-ness, clumsy and without grace.

Tyre was carrying a marble soap mug and a straight razor. The razor's handle was mother-of-pearl. Roxanne closed her eyes and let Tyre put her feet in the stirrups and lather her crotch. The soap was warm, and the edge of the razor peeled off her fur without nicking the tender skin beneath.

She expected to be given a mirror and told to look at herself, but instead Tyre began to lather her calves. It startled her, but she closed her eyes again and began to imagine having rings in her labia. Obviously they were going to be placed there, or why would Tyre have shaved her? The sensitive lips were burning a little, and the razor stroking her legs was cold.

Tyre wiped the last traces of soap from her cunt and legs with a hot, wet towel. Then she began to lather up her armpits. Roxanne wondered if Alex would keep her this way. It was like being permanently nude. She would *feel* naked, even under her clothes. By the side of another slave who had been stripped, but retained her body, she would be more completely stripped.

Tyre sharpened the razor. Then she soaped and shaved Roxanne's arms and thighs. She even flipped her over to remove invisible hairs from the small of her back. Then Roxanne was forced to hold the cheeks of her ass apart while Tyre ran the razor's edge between her buttocks.

The experience was unsettling. She felt as if the razor was cutting away all of her facades and her dignity. She began to feel chilled. "Somebody turn the heat up," Tyre said, and a vent in the wall immediately started blowing hot air at them. Roxanne sighed and closed her eyes, trying to let the heat soothe her nausea and appease the adrenaline that provoked it. She

had promised Alex she would not panic. Totally preoccupied with stage fright, she jumped when Tyre used a soft barber's brush to remove all the hair from her body on the table. Tyre swabbed Roxanne's ears with antiseptic and chose a long, straight needle. She smiled her most beatific, madonna-like smile. The steel pricked Roxanne's earlobe and plunged through. It made a crunching noise that put Roxanne's teeth on edge. But she did not move a muscle.

"Did you notice the special earrings she made for you?" Tyre asked. They were little cat-o'-nine-tails, braided out of gold, dangling from a gold ring. Tyre fit one of them to the end of the needle and rotated it through the fresh piercing. The pain was slight, more like heat. "One more to go," Tyre said. "It's a nice idea to give you some piercings you can see without taking off your clothes. They'll remind you that you belong to women. In the outside world, you are a particularly despised breed of female: a cunt who rejects cock, a slave who rejects the masters of currency and armies. But we prize you for what the world despises. You make us wealthy." She smiled at Kay, and EZ (who was kneeling at her side) hid her face against Kay's thigh.

Roxanne stared at the needle. She could not see a trace of blood on it, but her ear had definitely been pierced. It was swelling already. Tyre laid the spike down, took up a new one, and pinched her other lobe. One more stab, and the smooth passage of gold into her flesh. Roxanne found herself holding her breath. Tyre admired her. "There's a little blood around the jewelry," she said, "but nothing extreme. They're centered perfectly. You look stunning. Thanks to me." She doused her with antiseptic. "Alex," she called, "if you don't get over here quick, I'm not going to be able to keep my hands off her tits."

Alex replaced Tyre at the side of the operating table. "I'm going to do your tits first," she said. "One ring in each nipple. Are you ready?"

Roxanne took a few deep breaths. "I'm ready," she said.

"Good. I love you. Are you sure you can hold still?"

Roxanne nodded.

Alex took a surgical marking pen and put a dot on either side of Roxanne's right nipple. She picked up a pair of Pennington forceps, opened

them, and clamped them shut, centered carefully over the marks where the needle should enter and exit. Then she selected a curved needle, steadied the forceps with her other hand, and pushed the point in. The tissue was surprisingly tough, and resisted penetration. Roxanne bit her lips and wrapped her fingers around the edge of the table. Tyre was nearby, her eyes concerned and full of admiration.

“Look at her,” she admonished. “This big, dumb hunk loves you. She’s putting rings in your tits. Look at her if you have trouble remembering why this is being done. She’s the most beautiful woman in the world, and she wants you.”

Alex turned her head and stared into Roxanne’s eyes. “It’s halfway through the nipple,” she said. “I’m being as quick and gentle as I can.” Roxanne dared not look down at the needle. “Look at the needle,” Alex told her. She sobbed and bent her head. It was in her, embedded, but incomplete, unsatisfied. “Can you take this much?” Alex asked her.

“Yes.”

“All you have to do is take that much one more time. Then the ring fits on the end of the needle, just like when Tyre did your ears, and we draw it right through. Now?”

Roxanne shook her head. “No, please, not yet. I’m not ready. I’m too scared.”

Tyre snapped her fingers. “Medic! Who has the poppers?”

The amyl appeared under Roxanne’s nose, and she took the biggest hit she had ever taken in her life. It exploded before she finished inhaling, and Alex shoved the needle all the way through her tit. The grating, tearing noise was louder, and the ring seemed to be much bigger than the needle. Tiny bolts of pain followed its progress through her nipple. Then Alex took a pair of needle-nosed pliers, and squeezed the jewelry shut. It was almost done.

Alex massaged her breast, milking blood out of the piercing, exclaiming as it ran down Roxanne’s chest. Roxanne shivered and cried out, fearfully aroused. For a few crazy seconds, she wished Alex were going to put a hundred rings in her body, then her owner began to tweak the second nipple, and that wish vanished in a riptide of panic.

“No-no-no-no,” she moaned.

“Idiot, you’ll hyperventilate,” Tyre told her, and shoved more poppers under her nose. “Hold still, or she’ll take this one out and all you’ll have is a pair of kinky earrings.”

Alex went to the other side of the table and repeated the process of marking the piercing, positioning the forceps, and forcing the needle through the tough nipple tissue. Roxanne could feel blood cooling on her other breast. The gold felt hot, as if it had gone straight from the forge into her body. The ring was not quite in. “Daddy, hold still, I have to scream,” she said. Alex froze. Roxanne screamed, and all the fear left her with it. “Please put it in,” she begged, and Alex pushed the ring through to the other side and set its end in the bead.

She was bleeding from both breasts now, and her nipples were swelling. They were the size of walnuts, and felt like they were on fire. Tyre was giving instructions about turning and cleansing the rings, and Roxanne hoped Alex was listening, because she could not. She was wearing Alex’s rings now. Permanently. Forever.

“Done,” Alex said. She poured antiseptic onto her breasts, and Roxanne yipped when it hit the piercings. “Just a few more,” Alex said.

“Do it now,” Roxanne told her. “If I come down, I’ll freak out. Do it now, please hurry.”

“Relax, you impatient little bitch. I’m not going to rush myself. You think you want to look at a bad piece of work? You’ll get it soon enough. Put your foot back up in those stirrups. Anne-Marie, can you lower the table? Slide your ass down. That’s right. Dr Feelgood is in town.”

The antiseptic splashed her labia. Alex spread the delicate lips, and wet them thoroughly. Tyre bent over Roxanne’s face. “The rings for your cunt are smaller than the tit rings or the earrings,” she explained. “You probably don’t believe me, but this isn’t going to hurt as much as either of the piercings you just had. The labia are so thin that it takes very little effort to put these in.”

Tyre was right. Roxanne did not believe her. These piercings had to be the worst. Her labia were so sensitive, she knew she was going to die. She simply could not endure this, she told herself, and they were just telling her

it wouldn't be bad so she wouldn't tense up and make it worse. If only Alex would quit pinching her down there. She didn't see how that was going to help.

"All done," Alex said, and handed her a mirror.

Two tiny rings glittered in the inner lips, right below her clitoral glans. "I can lock them together," Alex explained, "and run a leash through them. Lay back, we're going to put three of them on either side of your outer lips. I want to be able to lace your cunt up, and once these have healed, I'll be able to do it. How do you think that will feel? It'll make it real hard for you to get fucked."

"I won't tell you these aren't going to hurt," Tyre said sympathetically. "Why don't you hold my hand? Squeeze me hard, it'll make it easier."

Roxanne moaned. There was blood on her thighs, and the antiseptic prevented the blood from clotting, so thin trickles of red ran across her thighs. These piercings hurt more than her ears had, but it was still not as bad as having the rings put in her nipples. The thought of Alex locking up her cunt was so exciting that she only crushed Tyre's hand a time or two, when rings actually popped through and were closed. "What have you done to me?" she asked when Alex gave her the mirror and had her sit up again.

"I've made something visible that is supposed to be hidden, something that's been driven underground and persecuted and rendered invisible. I've made you my witness and my accomplice and my thing. You can be chained now using your own genitals as the foundation. You are always in bondage, to me. Look at them." Roxanne saw the faces of Tyre, Joyous Day, and Chris. Their eyes were cruel, hungry, envious. "How do you feel?" Alex asked her.

"I don't think I want to walk home."

Alex laughed. "I'm not going to take the mirror away any time soon. Are you proud of them?"

Roxanne was crying. "Yes, yes, everything—I will do everything—be worthy—don't deserve, love you." It was difficult for her to go to her knees, wounded as her cunt was, but she managed, and knelt with her legs wide apart. "I need you more now than ever."

“Well, my expectations have been raised. I intend to be even harder on you. More greedy, more severe, more demanding, less forgiving.” Roxanne sighed. As she leaned forward, Alex put a hand to the back of her neck and rubbed her face over her studded leather crotch-piece. “I want your mouth on me,” she said, unfastening it. “Put your tongue on my clit and describe how your new jewelry makes you feel.”

Tyre, Chris, and Joy quietly cleaned up the operating table while Alex received her first service from the newly pierced slave. It was apparently a most exquisite, patient, and gratifying service. Alex took pleasure from her for a long, long time.

They made their way back to the bar for a final drink and debriefing. Alex finally joined them, followed by Roxanne, who walked bowlegged. They all laughed at her awkward gait, but kindly. “They’ll heal before you know it,” Joyous Day said. “You gonna go a lotta strange places, dancin’ girl, it’s good you always got your vex money with you now.”

Roxanne smiled, leaning against Alex’s shoulder. For the first time, they all noticed how bruised she was. There were dark circles of fatigue under her eyes. “Call us a cab,” Alex told Tyre.

“I’m not calling anybody anything but late for breakfast. What’s the point in having a limousine if you can’t take your orgy home with you? That is, if my driver hasn’t jerked off so much she’s gone blind.”

Michael put both of her hands out in front of her, and felt around until she found Anne-Marie’s latex-encased bosom. Anne-Marie tittered and goosed her. Michael’s eyes popped open. “Thank you, sister,” she gasped, “another miraculous cure performed by this holy sign.”

“Okay. What a nice invitation. Thank you, Tyre. Think you can stay on your feet long enough to let me finish this cigarette?” Alex asked Roxanne.

“What? Oh, sure. Whatever you want. Alex, I feel so good, but I feel really funny.”

They all laughed. “Funny how?” Joyous Day asked her. “Aside from getting a high colonic, being fisted, pissed on, tied hand and foot, turned into a pin cushion, whipped ragged, fucked some more, called a whole lot of bad names, and pierced repeatedly, nothing much has happened to you.

What's the matter with you? Gotta exaggerate every little thing t'make yourself feel important?"

"Fuck all of you," Roxanne smiled. "I think I'm going to pass out."

Only Tyre took this seriously. She made Roxanne squat, then sit on the floor, and put her head down.

"God, I hate for it to be over," Chris said. "I've never been part of anything like this. I don't think it can be repeated, but it will certainly inspire, my, uh, future exploits."

"Really," Joy said reverently. "Tyre, I hope you'll keep me on tap for any carnivals you want to throw in the future."

"Of course. All of you are on the A-list. No question."

Alex slowly ground out her cigarette. "Is everybody coming to your place with us?"

There was a chorus of "I am." Kay and EZ looked at each other. "I don't know about you," Alex said, "but I'm in no shape to drive the bike home. I got mine locked up good, and security will keep an eye on it for me. Think that'll be okay, Tyre?"

"Sure, there's a night watch. If it's chained it'll be fine." She was relieved at Alex's tact. She didn't want Kay and EZ to pull away. Things were going to be weird enough for the two of them without a self-imposed exile back to the boys'-club world of Folsom Street.

"Okay," said Michael, "I'm parked right outside. Only one condition—Roxanne has to go out the same way she came in."

"In the mummy bag?" Roxanne said.

"No, on our shoulders."

Tyre and Alex put their arms around each other and watched

everyone else get a handful of Roxanne and hoist her off the floor. "Good thing she's just a little girl," Tyre said. Alex snorted. The rest of the crew was singing, "She's Got a Jolly Good Asshole" to the tune of "For She's a Jolly Good Fellow."

"You know," Tyre said slowly, as she and Alex followed everybody else out, "we put your lady through some very heavy shit." She turned out the lights and closed the door.

“You could say that, all right.”

“Where can you go from here? Even this has got to run out of steam eventually.”

Alex thought about it for a long time. “Sell her?” she said.

It was only half a joke. Tyre nodded, absorbed it. Would it be a permanent transfer of rights, or would there be a time limit? Would all privileges be sold, or simply a portion of them? Who would be able to afford such an exotic delight? It was a bewildering and exhilarating notion. “The Calyx of Isis wants the movie rights,” she said, and slid her tired, rich, albino ass through the limousine’s back door. All the way home, she stared at Roxanne, sleeping on Alex’s shoulder, and tried to calculate the fair-market value of that much love.



## *The Hustler*

I've been more comfortable in a public toilet. This room is a crucifying closet, stifling hot, and lit with ghoulish, humming fluorescent lights. There are no windows—nothing to look at but this big mahogany box of a desk and the Big Box herself—excuse me, I mean the Big Boss—behind it. Normally, I find women of her size attractive. There's a larger canvas to work on, and more padding. But this woman's bulk is menacing, and the lack of distance between us isn't decent. I can see the wax in her ears. I'm confused, crowded, put off my game. I don't get this close to anybody who isn't manacled to a wall. I can't sit down because the chairs are piled with file folders and fat reports that threaten to escape their staples. The knocked-together bookshelves and battered gray file cabinets look too shaky to lean on. I don't dare lean on anything anyway. The pose might call up sordid reverberations from my checkered past, and we're going to hear enough about that any second now.

The placement of the shrine contributes to my disorientation. The mirror (bigger than usual) is behind and to one side of her desk, right across from me. Above, it says, "Behold the heroine of today!" These damn things are everywhere, so I don't even have to look below it to know that it says, "In her, the revolution lives on!"

I see a woman who has square, but not broad, shoulders, and a body that looks wiry and muscular (I hope). Actually, she is thin and worn out because she's been living on fifteen hundred calories a day and can't sleep at night. She is wearing faded khaki pants (army surplus), a leather jacket, laced-up combat boots, a studded belt, and a crewcut. That's me. The heroine of today, ha-ha.

The heat presses in on me. I can feel it beating against my eardrums, but I refuse to take off my jacket. Its fragile, blood-stained lining is ripping out, but if I replace it, I will lose another piece of Jackie. I can still hear the crazy conviction in the voice of our trick-turned-killer, replying to her cool

suggestion that we talk about where we were going and what we were going to do when we got there. “You’re going to be whatever I want you to be,” she said, putting a gun to Jackie’s head. Well, people had been telling Jackie that her whole life. Why should she believe it now? She curled her lip in disdain and grabbed for the wheel.

These are terrible memories, but if I don’t work hard to keep them fresh, that andro will have won and Jackie will not-be, never will have been her vital, crazed, strung-out self. I am the only one who can keep her alive because I am the only one who knew her and the only one who cared, who cares.

I should have left the jacket on her body, left it to burn up when the gas tank exploded and turned the psychotic jane’s car into shrapnel. I could have remembered her without the jacket, without wearing her blood around my ribs, but I needed it. I knew that now I would be working the streets alone, had to toughen up, get a meaner act. I knew how much some women would pay to watch me stand over them, as long as I was wearing the jacket. Was I staving off grief, keeping myself from mourning her, or was I just being opportunistic, hustling my own poor girl’s dead body for the tools of my trade? Funny how just as soon as you realize someone you love is dead, you can think about everything except the simple, inescapable fact of your loss.

Something trickles down the back of my neck. Does this clinic have an unusually zealous energy conservation plan? Most likely, the air conditioning broke down. Well, that’s what happens when you shoot your technocrats. They can’t seem to get a broken window fixed in my building, let alone the furnace when it blew up last winter. I treasure no hopes for resumption of the space race, either—or genetic engineering. Men everywhere may heave a sigh of relief. The spectacle of a thawing sperm bank leading to the extinction of our species has stayed the just retribution of women.

Even if test-tube babies were possible, I doubt they’d be too popular. During the Two-Hundred-Year War, the End-of-the-World War, the Nine-to-Five War, whatever you want to call it, more than half the babies born were the result of artificial insemination. Now that they’re slowly cleaning up the air and water and the old munitions and chemical-waste dumps, the birth-

defect rate has fallen considerably. There's a widespread horror of any technological tampering that might further damage the gene pool. That's why there's no birth control employing synthetic hormones any more. That's why there's always some legislator agitating for sterilization of the unfit and more maternity incentives.

Myself, I think babies are a necessary evil, and I don't want to get close enough to one to smell it. It's just fine with me that men don't run the world any more, that the war has stopped, and that we're trying to stop contaminating the planet. But I can't help but wonder why so many of us have not profited greatly from the women's revolution, despite the fact that we are women. Perhaps it's because I'm not the right kind of woman.

I try to imagine, sometimes, what it would be like to live then, with a debilitating ground war being fought on another continent that constantly bled resources and lives away while I endured hard, grinding work to keep the war machinery turning. There was intense legal and social pressure to stay pregnant, so you wouldn't have been able to ignore the fact that you were a woman while you were holding everything together, making everything run. It must have been horrible, but in history classes they always say it was a necessary precondition for revolution. Women got radicalized during World War I and World War II, but it evaporated when the men came home. It took one generation to learn how to do the work, another generation to take competence for granted, and a third one to refuse to give up the control. Not that there was anything other than a halfhearted attempt to take it back. When the whole shooting match was over, most of the army didn't want to be repatriated. They had wives, families, whole lives in Europe. So they stayed on the land they had laid to waste with trenches, napalm—everything except atomics. It sounds to me like nuclear weapons might not have been that much worse than what they used in their place. Maybe there *is* such a thing as poetic justice.

I'm not immune to the irresistible forces of social change. When Amanda Kim ran for president, I would have voted for her. When the national elections that defeated her were proven to be fraudulent, I would have gone on strike and rioted to put her in office. I would have thrown rocks at the National Guard when they tried to put down the revolt with tear gas and rubber bullets, and I would have cheered the women who deserted and

came over to our side. When Kim was assassinated, I would have marched in her cortège and mourned for her and vowed that our first female Chief of State would not be the last. Maybe I would have been one of the witnesses who saw miracles in the wake of the funeral procession—people healed, springs cleansed, childbirth without pain. They say Kim's body lay in state for months with no sign of physical deterioration, and an odor of roses still lingers in her tomb. I could have been one of the Hands of the Goddess, the religious order that sprang up to spread the glad word that She had manifested among us.

The day Kim was laid to rest, when a Russian missile removed New Orleans from the map and the South African Aryan Republic retaliated (as they had always promised they would if nuclear weapons were used) by simultaneously melting down Moscow and Washington, D.C., I would have joined my sister-workers on the rooftops to mow down the government troops who had finally been shipped home from Europe to straighten out the womenfolk. I can easily imagine myself lobbing bottles full of burning gasoline and detergent into their jeeps. All things considered, I would have been one of the happiest celebrants in the month-long carnival that followed the signing of peace with Mother Russia.

So why am I here, one of the bad guys, working up a sweat, my tension building, slowly poisoning my muscles? I unlock my knees, rock back and forth a few times, shift my weight onto the other foot, and try to settle my stomach. Am I bored enough to eroticize this situation? I try to pretend that the liquid dripping from my armpits and spilling over my back is blood. It's been too long. I can't really remember what it feels like to be whipped that severely. After all, it's been two years.

Reconstruct, I order myself. You hang from your wrists, the tips of your toes scabble for tenuous contact with the ground, cold air hits your bare skin as your shirt is ripped open. You hear the swish of the whip and scream before you feel the pain. The fear makes you scream, but the pain leaves you dumb. It doesn't stop, it doesn't alter its character, you have no choice but to learn how to accept it and take it and ride it out.

How did I do that? I cannot remember what it is like to abandon my will to the other's careful, deadly hand and the impartial whip that will obtain the same truth from me it obtains from anyone who comes under it: to be

human is to be a prisoner of your suffering flesh, but your physical senses allow you to catch a glimpse of some other possibility, something free and mysterious. I can only remember concrete details and conversation. Jackie's whip, homemade out of unraveled hemp rope, had little nails in the end of it that she had sharpened by hand. She cut me down. She said, "I don't love you." I was crying, broken, liberated, and I said, "I don't care. You've never lied to me. I'd rather have honesty than love."

What a motto! Well, it was our idea of romance. People who said they loved us had done terrible things to us—locked us in cells, sent us away to a penal farm on a rocky piece of ground that couldn't support the inmates, let alone produce a cash crop, starved us, given us nothing but summer clothes to do outdoor work in the middle of winter. But tough-talking Jackie, whose favorite nicknames for me were "asshole" and "dumb-shit," Jackie would lie to me about how much money we had to make sure I would eat.

We were quite a pair, prowling the streets, outlaw aristocracy living on bottles we returned for the deposit in neighborhoods where nobody would recognize us, her in that leather jacket, me in my denim imitation. One of her epaulets was missing a star. I wore it on the flap of my breast pocket. When it got cold, she always tried to give me her jacket, but she wouldn't have worn mine. She would have run around in nothing at all. So I never let her take her leather off.

I say, Jesus bless the janes who like them young, 'cause if it weren't for them we would have starved. There was one time when we could've gotten ourselves set up as housegirls, maybe even adopted daughters, by this rich trick who just loved to be the filling in a chicken-salad sandwich. But we were as incorrigible as feral cats, and not about to accept any more adult supervision. We weren't quite grown up enough to make it on our own, but we were bitter enough to know that if something was supposed to be safe and easy, it wasn't.

My inability to conjure up the sensations of an actual whipping makes me wonder if I have any business telling another woman to get down on all fours and put her ass in the air. But I don't have any business. I've been put out of business. Which is why I'm here.

My application rattles in the Big Bully's meaty hand. It seems to be attempting to escape. Good luck. "Ms Mann," she says, clearing her throat with my name, "how old are you? About twenty-five?"

I am not, but I nod. If they thought I was under the age of consent, I'd really be in trouble, and that unlucky jane would be busting up radioactive sidewalks in the District of Columbia. Ham Hocks, the Wonder Pig, has stopped looking at me. I wait for her to look up, then nod again at her impatient face. I would rejoice if society at large ignored me, but I cannot tolerate it from this petty bureaucrat.

"You've left Item 12 blank. Haven't you completed even one child-rearing term?"

"No."

"At your age, most women—"

"There's no mandatory age for completion of that requirement." I wonder if I can get away with that line when I'm thirty-five. How about when I'm sixty-five? Of course, I could cut through this shit, pretending to look for a job, if I would let the agency put me on a baby farm, but I don't think that's a good idea. I can't imagine telling some little shaver why Mommy sleeps until dark and then goes for long, long walks with a riding crop stuck down her pants leg. Even if I didn't have to raise the rug rat (and, come to think of it, I doubt they'd let me), it makes me nervous to think about bequeathing my genes to some poor kid who might get fucked up by them. I didn't ask to have these exotic sexual preferences or this rebellious streak that's always doing an eagle on society's expectations. I cope with myself as best I can; I won't willingly pass the same problems on to someone else.

"Well, technically, I suppose you're right ... " She finally turned the page over.

I can't believe how long this is taking. Once again, my exasperating need to survive has trapped me in very unpleasant circumstances. In order to qualify for rehabilitation, I must demonstrate that our equal-opportunity economy has no use for skills I presently possess. This is the fourth interview my case worker has sent me to, and if they reject me, I can go on the dole and get assigned to some sort of technical training. This amounts to

a monthly pittance that will barely pay my rent. But, hey, I could wind up back here, fixing the air conditioner.

I try not to think about how I'm going to feed myself now that I've fallen into the clutches of the welfare bureaucracy. That tofu-faced social worker is already talking about how I can't really afford the luxury of an individual cubicle and if I am sincere about rehabilitation I should remove myself from the influence of anti-social elements and live in a dorm. I just play dumb, and she patiently, sweetly explains it all over again. I don't know what I'll do. I'll go on, somehow, I'll find another chink to slip through, another crack in the system just big enough for my escape.

"Is Mann your real surname?"

"Well, it's not my original name. But it's a legal change. I wanted to anticipate questions about my gender." She doesn't get the joke. (My first name is Noh.) She shakes her head, disgusted. I am in bad taste. I have abused a fine feminist law that allowed the daughters of the revolution to sever their identities from the syringe full of soldier's semen that begat them. She resumes reading. It occurred to me that I should be gentle with her. This may be our first time. She's moving her lips. Our literacy rate isn't what it should be.

I think I am completely prepared, but when she gasps, my sweat freezes. I have to force myself to stay in the room with my panic. Well, here we go. Things should speed up now.

"You were arrested on the fifteenth of last month? For pornographic sexual activity?"

"That's why I'm looking for a straight job. I've put the number down there if you want to call and get the official details." Members of a free society should have nothing to hide from one another, so my record must be accessible to all potential employers, lovers, friends, and taxi drivers.

Her face gets a little stiffer at my arrogance. "I would rather not," she says, distaste making a little rosebud of her mouth. "I think I can obtain all the relevant information from you." I'm good at recognizing threats. They're my stock in trade. I decide it's time to give in to my lower instincts and lean on the nearest file cabinet. It creaks in protest, and a book lands on the floor. We both ignore it. "This ordinance covers prostitution and

misogyny, and assorted other counter-revolutionary acts,” she lectures me. As if I didn’t know. “What exactly are you guilty of?”

“Both. That is to say, the woman who was arrested with me got charged with prostitution. They don’t prosecute hustlers, just janes, buyers. They charged me with misogyny since I had hit her. Sexual harassment, too, because of my language. It was a felony since I’ve been busted before. Public assumption of sex roles. That’s a misdemeanor. Some cop didn’t like my haircut. But this time they got me on videotape in an alley, so they didn’t even need a trial. I was—”

“I don’t want to hear any more of this,” she says, throwing out one hand to stop me. She averts her face and talks to the shrine. “It seems to me that your major contribution to our clinic would be an exposition on the anti-sexism code. We don’t have much need for jailhouse lawyers. Those of us who work here, and the women who come to us for treatment, have suffered greatly from the effluvia of the patriarchal mentality. I don’t think you would understand our process or fit into our collective, but I can’t make that decision independently. It will have to be discussed at our next general meeting, if we have time after handling the rest of the agenda. I’ll inform your case worker when we achieve consensus.”

I feel my temper awaken, stretch, and glare at her. I knew I was going to have a bad time when Ms Homespun-and-Wholesome, cheerful as always in the face of other people’s problems, insisted I apply for the janitorial job at a women-only clinic. It had taken me all morning to find someone who knew about the job opening, and it took her another hour to find the application forms and figure out who was supposed to be doing the interviews. They had refused to give me an appointment, promising me that the woman in question would see me as soon as she had a minute (and implying that an unemployed parasite like myself didn’t have anything more important to do than wait on my betters anyway), so I’d waited three hours for this cosy little session of a consciousness-raising.

This comes on top of a week in which I’ve been interrogated, harassed, interviewed, shunted from one desk jockey to another, and stood in a dozen rooms in front of people who despised the way I looked, talked, thought, and got my eggs off. I do not like being told that I am not good enough to empty the garbage, make coffee, and straighten up the literature table. I’m



not some moron. After my six years of basic education, I didn't go to a trade school, I made it into college-prep. The fact that I got expelled in disgrace does not make me forget that I could have been somebody, maybe even a doctor.

I'm a street person, but I'm not a bag lady or a wino. I am royalty out there, even if this party hack is too dumb to recognize the flora and fauna of the urban wilderness. The women who want to polish my boots and eat my pussy pay highly for the privilege (well, they pay me in cash, anyway). I have no desire whatsoever to take their dirty examination drapes to the laundry, wash off the day's used speculums, dust the desks, and mop their floors. I have lied, bowed, scraped, apologized, and held my tongue under more abuse than I can stand. Now this upright, tight-assed committee commando is going to stamp my application "under consideration" and sit on it and delay my claim at rehab until I get evicted and starve to death. I just can't take it any more.

As soon as I make this decision, self-possession returns. I feel cold and deadly and righteous. I even run my finger around my necklace and haul out my little gold cross, dangle it so she will have to notice, and drop it into my T-shirt. So many of the Wiccan devout really get off on thinking you're a secret Christian. Maybe I am. The moon never talked to me, and neither did Jesus, but it sounds like he understood criminals and poor people. "If you're going to take it to the collective," I hiss, "surely you ought to have all the information. Don't you want to know what I told her? After she got down on her knees in the alley and started licking my belt buckle? Huh?" I get my hand near my crotch and make a suggestive, masturbatory motion. Her eyes rivet themselves to my hand. She rearranges her big fanny nervously on the chair. "I called her a queer," I chant, "a cunt-sucking little lezzie, a dyke, a boot-licking slut. And you might also tell your collective that her spit was running down my leg and dripping on the ground until there was a puddle underneath my boots, and she was so excited she pissed herself."

"Stop!" she shrieks.

"Shit, if your process is worth anything, I think I ought to show up and introduce myself and tell the whole story to everybody." I grab my crotch and squeeze it. "When's your next meeting?"

We stare at each other, perfectly matched in our hatred. She drops her eyes to go hunting for a rubber stamp. It says “REJECTED,” and she stomps on my application with it and throws the page at me. I catch it as it slaloms through the air.

“You are scum,” she says, trying to sound calm and dispassionate. Her watermelon tits, the kind that look so nice when they are tied up, are thumping on her stomach, she is so upset. “When the bureau sends me leeches like you, I grieve for the decent and valiant women who laid down their lives for the sake of freedom.”

I have no quick answer to that. I know I will probably spend all night trying to think of one, so I spit on the floor. Then I take my time hitching my pants up and settling my belt on my hips. She is tracking the faded patch of denim over my pussy, her mouth open. She starts to whisper, “You foul-mouthed traitor to your sex, wallowing in the garbage and the misery left in our very souls by ten thousand years of male domination.” One of her hands wanders off and finds a heavy crystal paperweight, the only pretty thing in the whole office. I get my ass out of there double-time, never you mind that it has been rimmed a hundred times by the decent and valiant daughters of the revolution.

I run to the elevator and punch the button. There is no response. I shake my head, disgusted and desperate, locate the stairs, and take them at a run. I have my paper, my precious little grubby piece of paper! I can go back to rehab and find out what other torments they have in store for me! I won’t starve, I won’t be homeless, I won’t be free or happy or comfortable ... but I have it! The paper!

On the landing, I fold it up and make it safe in my secret jacket pocket. I have some rice and half a head of broccoli there. Or I can walk to the Labrys, my favorite grubby perv bar, run by a refugee Dutch-girl, and get a couple of beers. I haven’t eaten since morning. My body hums with deceptive energy, the result of that ugly, but funny, confrontation. I know it won’t last, but I decide I would rather come down to a cold glass of beer in a crowded bar than a bowl full of vegetables and soy in my room.

I take the last flight of stairs more slowly, already wearing down. I don’t want to think, but my mind gets out of control when I’m tired and hungry.

Intricate, inconclusive speculations about the future begin to torture me. I feel much better when I make the street and settle into a transportation walk—long, quick strides, no nonsense and no detours. I’m always jumpy when I’m out in public. I have to keep watching, anticipating, warding off danger by my wit and will. I’ve only been beaten up once, but it was a bad one.

A mixed gang of boys and girls caught me on my way to the Labrys. I had just finished an exceptionally well-paid scene (my trick had actually taken me up to her ritzy hotel room), and the bar was only a few blocks away. I was feeling jaunty and pleased with myself, so I left the handcuffs on my belt and the chain on my jacket. Big mistake. The kids had a good time with me and my stuff. You’d think all the beatings I’ve dished out in a professional capacity would be useful in that kind of situation, but they aren’t. I came to in an emergency room. A medic was putting my face back together, and he kept bumping into my cuffed wrists. They had been set a notch too tight, and my hands were swelling. I tried to tell him to get them off of me, but my lip was split, and he pretended not to understand what I was saying. Then I got very frightened because I couldn’t see my keys on my belt, couldn’t feel them in my pocket, and couldn’t remember where they had gone.

They made me stay overnight at the hospital in case I had a concussion. I was awakened by the public-safety officer who had brought me in. She had remembered my keys. “You still here?” she said loudly, dropped them on the bed, and left. I was doped up and couldn’t string words together quick enough to ask her for help. Besides, the stitches and the swelling in my mouth would have made me unintelligible. I finally did it myself. Luckily, they were English cuffs with a very large, screw-in-key which I could grip between my knees. I would turn the cuffs a notch, get a new grip on the key, and turn again. It took a long time. Once liberated from their grip, I realized it was rather late, and no one had come to check on me or feed me. I got out of bed, dressed, and ransacked the room. The woman on the other side of the curtain was unconscious. She had a whole rack full of medicine. I took it all. Nobody tried to stop me from leaving, even though I staggered down the corridors like a drunk, banging into walls. I even tripped over a mop bucket and overturned it, flooding the floor with grimy water.

When I got home, I sold some of the pills to buy me time off the street so I could heal. I kept a few for a little relief from the pain. A couple of days later, I thought to check my secret pocket. The money from my outcall was still there. It shook me to the bone. They hadn't even wanted to rob me. The rape and the beating were motivated by sheer hatred, not greed.

The streets are nearly empty. Most people are at home, eating dinner with their collectives or their biofamilies. This is a nice part of town. Everybody goes to work while the sun is shining and stays home at night. You'd think they wouldn't be able to resist getting out of doors at some point during the day, but life is apparently too scary outside of four walls. The few people I see are wearing long, loose robes of soft colors, and straw sandals. A group of teenage girls passes, going the other way on the opposite side of the street. "It's a man!" they shout. "Show us your dick, boy!" I force myself to stand up straight and walk past them. They don't throw rocks or turn around and follow me, so I tell myself, ignore it, you're safe. But my mouth tastes like metal.

I wonder what bothers people most—my pants or the leather. The street-fighters of the revolution wore pants, but nobody wants to see it outside the history books. So men used to wear pants, so what? Men used to run the computers and banks and factories, too, but I don't hear the women who control our national economy doing crit-self-crit about that. So the jacket used to be an animal. Everything dies. Would it be better if its hide was just left to rot away? There was a time when practically everybody ate meat.

On the farm, they never fed us enough, so we were scavenging for food constantly. The cute boys and girls wound up trading assorted favors for the guards' scraps. The ugly or uncooperative ones would dig in the woods for edible tubers, pick berries, eat leaves, anything. One boy died from eating poisonous mushrooms. Jackie was the only one who could actually hunt. She had somehow figured out how to set snares. I found her emptying her traps early one morning when I was sneaking out to go fishing. After that, we shared what we caught. We were afraid the guards would see smoke from a fire, so we didn't always cook these furtive meals.

If I fuck up again, they'll probably be sending me back to the land for re-education. If I have any spare time, I'll be back in the woods again, looking

for protein. The guards will probably expect a reforming prossie to be on the lookout for a protector. Little do they know that not all cats are black in the dark. You make one decision early on in the game. You can either get paid to have them climb all over you, or get paid to beat them up. I prefer the feel of a helpless neck in between my hands to being squashed under somebody else's fantasy. I wonder if I'll still like it when they get through with me.

I chose the Labrys over a quiet night at home, but getting harassed by that gang of girls makes me think about my cubicle a little more fondly. Once I get inside my own front door, I know nobody can bother me, and I keep a piece of pipe by my bed just in case I'm wrong.

My room is part of a complex of state-owned buildings located on the fringe of the bombed-out part of town, appropriately nicknamed Europe. The inmates—uh, residents—are supposed to manage it. This clique of born-again, real ones, dreary, pretend to do that, but I've never been to any of their meetings, and I throw away the little green notices they slip under my door without reading them. The whole building is full of crazies and fuckups. There isn't much they can do to us. We don't have a lot to lose. Once they turned off the water because people were trashing the fountain in the courtyard. A riot developed. Everybody started throwing all kinds of shit out their windows—newspapers, dishes, vegetable peels, old shoes. One guy pushed his bed out the window. The courtyard is still impassable. The management can't decide who should pay for hauling the piles of junk away. But it was spontaneous, nothing you could count on. Oh, once a bunch of queens over on 4E got together and moved a guy out onto the street. He was stealing stuff, primarily other people's dope. But another time on the floor just under that, somebody brought the wrong person home and got stabbed to death. Nobody went to check on him until the screaming stopped. When they doubled the rents, everybody paid. There's no other place to go, really. Things are the same all over.

I can cook in my room on a gas jet (uncapped illegally). It also provides all the heat since the furnace went ka-blooie. A tap was put into the water main through a hole in the wall by a former tenant who must have been a plumber. I found a Styrofoam box once that must be fifty years old, and I

carved a lid for it out of plywood. When I can buy ice, that's my refrigerator. I have hooks on one wall for my wok (one of my few treasures), a sharp knife, a spatula, a large spoon, and a cup. I keep my bowls and chopsticks on top of the cooler. I'm a pretty good scavenger, but I don't bring stuff home if I don't need it. There's no room.

The clinic is located in a middle-class residential neighborhood, the better to serve those suffering from patriarchal effluvia. Looks like tomorrow is garbage-collection day. Better keep an eye out for a tea kettle. I really want one. I think that whistle in the morning would cheer me up more than a hot cup of cha. And paper for the potty is always welcome. I try not to bring books home for that because I don't have enough room to keep them, and I hate to tear them up. I had so many books in my room at school that I couldn't hardly move. I don't want to live like that again. Anyway, I know I never will, which is the same thing, isn't it?

In the projects, there's a large bathroom with showers on every floor. That, along with the communal kitchen, is why they call these "luxury individual living quarters" when they put an add in the paper. My floor is pretty good, there's me, a flock of he-shes, a couple of realmen, a painter, a band that practices infrequently (but for hours at a time), and two would-be junkies who spend most of their time looking for this exotic and scarce drug they're supposedly hooked on or getting sick on substitutes. So when I go to the bathroom, the shower head usually hasn't been ripped off and the drain usually hasn't been clogged up with shit, and I don't find broken glass on the floor or somebody else's works in the sink too often. But people come up from other floors or from outside the building and wait in there to rip you off. It's a problem if I get a jane who wants an enema. The chamber pot isn't big enough to handle that. I usually give them the bag in my room, then escort them down the hall to get rid of it. We talk about putting a lock on the bathroom, but somebody would have to go out and get some keys made, and I know I'm not going to go to all that trouble.

The kitchen, however, *is* locked, so you will never find any derelicts asleep under the tables in there. Part of our rent pays for the kitchen's gas and electricity, but nobody can eat down there unless they've got a chit that says they contributed to the food and did a shift of cleanup. Sorry, I can't stomach sermons or housework. The Christers can have it. My room also

has a shallow closet that used to hold a folding bed. I tore that out and sold it. I'll deal with the consequences when I move. I sleep in a homemade mummy bag, stitched together from army blankets and foam rubber that I can roll up and store during the day. Inside the closet there are screw-eyes and ropes, and that's where I do the bondage. But really, most of my tricks don't want to be tied up too much. Maybe a little bit so they can pretend. But they're too scared. A nice jane who panics can do as much damage as an andro. If I was bigger I'd be less worried about being able to handle the ones who flip out, but the really big girls like Black Hawk don't get as much trade. The janets look them over and drool, but they feel safer being alone with me.

My paraphernalia is a problem. Some of it is probably illegal. The law is vague. One hustler I know got raided, and the only kinky thing they could find was a riding crop, so they busted him on an old statute against cruelty to animals. Vibrators are okay if they can't be inserted, but dildoes are "a device which demeans women." So I've got a secret hiding place. It's actually a crate, but it looks like a window seat. It doubles as a whipping bench. I try to keep everything put away in there under a false bottom. But there's no way to really hide what I do and still be able to do it. Besides, if the public safety officers want to get you, all they need to do is drop a nickel bag of junk on your pillow and "discover" it.

My pride and joy is a complete set of leather restraints. I ripped them off when I left a residential drug-rehab program. It was stupid of me to have ever gone there. I am not an addict. I can stop getting high any time I want to. And if I was hooked on something, well, I wouldn't do anything but that, would I? I try to be flexible. If you don't stay flexible the street will eat you up, one big mouthful of crunch and juice.

I also have some acupuncture needles, a hairbrush, some candles, clothespins, a riding crop, and a cat-o'-nine tails I braided myself. I've gussied up an old ping-pong paddle—drilled holes in it and painted it black—and I have a nice handful of willow switches cut from the vacant lot on the corner.

Most of the scene is me, my imagination, and my intuition. Clients give me equipment sometimes, things they get hot for that they don't dare keep, and I'm always looking around for new gimmicks, but this is not exactly a

dungeon. There are some unrealistic M's who can't overlook a few flaws in their surroundings. They may see me once but they don't come back. I don't know where I'm supposed to find the elaborate costumes and torture devices that some of these janes think you need to do "real" S/M.

Sometimes they even bring me pictures of what I'm supposed to look like—and scripts! I prefer the ones who need it to be a little rough and raunchy, who like it impoverished and spontaneous. There must be people doing this who make a lot more money than I do, maybe the people who advertise. I don't dare run one of those ads. I don't see how they can get away with it, why they don't get busted.

Somebody is walking toward me. She sees me coming and crosses the street, swinging a knotted-string bag full of artichokes and something wrapped in white paper. Fish, I'll bet. She looks over her shoulder to make sure I'm not following her. If I told her what my name was, do you think I could clear up her misconceptions about my gender? The only thing I can do for her is just keep on walking. By the time she gets home, she'll have forgotten about going out of her way to avoid me.

I don't eat fish very often. But the janes keep telling me I'm pricing myself out of business. A spanking is more expensive than a blow-job, but anything you negotiate off the curb isn't as pricey as those snotty houses. If you work in a house, you have to pay for a slot there, and you wind up hooked on something so you stay in hock with the madam. She's the one who says who you see and what you do with them and she brings you a clean towel. Thank you, I'll just scuff the lube into the floor, and wipe my hands on your ass.

I am *not* a parasite. I don't roll anybody, and I treat them all like human beings. This may be hard for you to imagine, but some of these folks are not sweet. They feel bad, and they are paying for a chance to make me feel like shit, too—after I've made them feel better. Sometimes I think they're all that way, but really, most of them are not nasty, just freaked out about themselves. Sometimes I think I help some of them get over it by giving them a chance to really do it. I'm not claiming it's healthy, but if they see me they don't have to do it with anybody else. Keeps it under control, like.



Whenever I think about this I think about Jackie, because what we did was none of this sick shit, I mean, we were lovers. She was always telling me, “I have to take care of you and teach you what’s what. If I slap you around a little, it’s to make you listen.” Sometimes I would slap her back. And after we fought we always made love, I couldn’t stand to let her stay mad at me. I had to make her touch me, be sweet to me, after she was mean. Nobody else loved me. If she didn’t, or if I thought she didn’t, I would go nuts and start breaking things. “There’s something wrong with you, you know that?” she would yell. I don’t know what, I don’t know when it went wrong, but I know it’s true.

Maybe it started in group care. As soon as I learned how to read, I started getting chastised for being verbally aggressive. We had one teacher who kept taking me aside for long talks about the stabilizing and calming influences of manual labor. She gave me biographies of union organizers for holiday gifts. But I knew I wasn’t headed for the fucking proletariat. Nobody wants to be sent to the farms, the road crews, the decon teams, or the factories. But we need farmers and ditch-diggers and machinists very badly. It’s okay to grouse about that kind of work if you’re going to end up doing it. If you ain’t, you better pretend nothin’ could make you happier than throwing a shovel full of mud over your shoulder all day.

It was like the future was chasing me. I learned as fast as I could. I used big words like magic spells to keep the other fetuses away from me. (That was what we called each other, and we lost dessert or even got smacked if the teachers heard us.) I couldn’t tolerate the kids who were as smart as me because they were my competition. And the faster I learned, the faster I propelled myself into classes full of older kids who resented the smartass mouth on my pint-sized body. So I learned even faster to stay ahead of them, get away from them— which landed me in a one-year, college-prep program at the ripe old age of fifteen. I wasn’t the youngest one there, but I came close.

For a while I thought I would be a historian. But there aren’t many gigs in esoteric fields like history, unless you have a minor in political education. Then you wind up writing draft propaganda for the Ministry of Self-Defense or some eagle job like that. Doctors, though, they always need more doctors. I wasn’t too sharp in the hard sciences, but I had a hell of a

class consciousness that I hoped would make up for it. See, doctors are part of the elite. They almost never get remanded to rural re-education even if they get caught doing abortions. Sometimes the courts sentence them to learn to take joy in the dignity of labor, but they usually wind up just doctoring the inmates and guards and any farmer within traveling distance. The powers that be (that-aren't-supposed-to-be) get worried about subversion and intellectualism in such a powerful profession. I tried to make it clear that wouldn't be a problem with righteous little jargon-spielung me.

The college-prep program was a privileged slot no matter where you were headed. I had a room of my own. This was supposed to leave me with lots of peace and quiet to concentrate on my studies. But it also gave me freedom to do other things, things I had wanted to do since childhood. Like masturbate.

Sex was problematic in group care. (Not that there's any place where it ain't.) Adults are free to form loving, egalitarian relationships. And since you are free to do that, why would anybody want to do anything squalid like fucking strangers? There's no law against adultery or sodomy, but most people think if you're not saving it for your mate, you are either exploiting someone, being exploited, or (what's worse) wasting time. Children are obviously too young to form relationships, but they do have to be protected from sexual abuse by adults or bigger children. The workers and teachers are too busy cleaning up, giving lessons, and reinforcing good work habits and androgyny to tell you about sex, except for routinely discouraging the boys from paying too much attention to their winkies. They don't touch you because they are all paranoid about being reported for "fondling." I don't remember being left alone long enough to fool around with other little kids.

Nevertheless, I was intensely sexual. I hurt down there. I knew that I wanted to touch the hurt place, and do even worse things. I wanted to pull other people's clothes off and see how they were made. I wanted to stick things up all my holes. I wanted to inflict (here my mind would go blank and mumble) something on myself. I couldn't very well talk about this because nobody else did. Yet we all had a rich vocabulary of insulting sexual slang. I guess we acquired it by osmosis because none of the adults used these words in front of us. Since the toilet was one of the only private

places available, I learned how to make myself come in the amount of time it takes most people to pee. If anybody else did that, they were in another stall or lined up in front of one, so how would I know? I was convinced that nobody else needed to do that. I was a freak. But I could fool people. I really could.

Now that I had my own room, I masturbated every night and during the day too. When I laid down, it didn't feel right to touch the top of the slit, that bump, the way it did when I sat on the toilet. So I tried sticking things in my cunt, my ass, my urethra, my mouth. I tried different positions and rubbing on things. When I thought more about what might work I could only think it had to be something more, so I could feel it. I tied my feet up so I could pull on the ropes. Sometimes I tied the other end of the rope around my neck. I put paper clips on my labia. I hit my thighs with a ruler. I bought a box of candles, and melted two of them together to make something I could get in my ass and my cunt at the same time. When I was very horny, I would try to carry out my tests or rituals all day long. I would put a few pins in my underwear, or I would wear these little clamps on my nipples under a heavy, loose sweatshirt. In summer, this takes true dedication. I wanted to leave my candle-thing in all day, but I was afraid it would melt.

I was studying one afternoon and having a hell of a time concentrating. I kept getting sleepy, to the point where I would have to lie down, and as soon as I did, I would discover I was ferociously horny. I would masturbate. As soon as I came I would be wide awake, and I would go back to studying. I carried on like this for nearly two hours before I realized what I was responding to so strongly. I was preparing for an exam in Human Anatomy 101. I had been studying colored plastic plates that flay the human body layer by layer, taking off skin, then muscle, till you get down to blood vessels, organs, and finally bare bone. I wanted to vomit.

My completed paper for my History of the State class was lying next to the anatomy textbook. It had some grandiose title like "The Technology of Oppression." I had compared the way the Inquisition treated women suspected of witchcraft to the treatments meted out to female leftists in the tiny military dictatorships that defoliated South America in the twentieth century. I flipped it open and started counting pages. Half of it was nothing

but the descriptions of torture. How could anybody read this and not know about me? At that point, I think I did vomit.

Another passerby is cruising me up and down. My feelings are still a little hurt about the woman who crossed the street to get away from me. Sometimes I feel like such a menace to society when I walk down the street, my legs get rubbery and I can't keep track of whether or not my feet are hitting the sidewalk. And I think if one more person even looks at me, I'm going to have hysterics. So I straighten my shoulders and give this one a level look, acknowledging that what she is thinking about me is not nearly outrageous enough. She looks a bit put-off, but a little wistful, too. She sticks her hands in her sleeves and walks on. Her robe is a dark, conservative color, but the cut and fabric is expensive. She does not look back, but I know it will take more than a walk home to make her forget me. It wouldn't surprise me if she turns up as a client some day. Maybe she already has.

This collision with the law has forced me to evaluate my life in a way that is thoroughly unpleasant. I keep going back, trying to find an explanation in my past that might appease the faceless authorities who seem determined to stomp me flat. Or maybe it really is my fault, maybe somewhere in this story I should have made a different choice, and maybe it's not too late to fix it.

Aw, what can you do? I knew way back then I was abnormal. Knew it as clearly as I knew I had two hands and only nine fingers. And what could I do about it? Nothing. (Well, I had a chilly premonition of city streets and crumpled money and dark, smoky bars. Where do we learn these things that everyone is so scrupulously careful not to tell us?) I felt like I needed some therapy, but I didn't want some ego-shrinker getting me in a corner and writing down my answers to her questions. So, for the first time in my life, I joined a group, an ad hoc committee called Students for Solidarity. It was going to be my salvation.

We were just a lot of juvenile troublemakers. And we irritated enough people in high places to make ourselves feel righteous. We were a self-appointed band of ideologies and vigilantes who kept tabs on suspicious professors, administrators, and students. If somebody seemed to have

regressive tendencies, we would call a public meeting and air our grievances. We would also hold sit-ins outside their class, office, or dorm room—or burn them in effigy. Among the things that concerned us most were the ... uh, it takes a minute for the lingo to come back to me ... the holdovers, that was the phrase, the holdovers from exploitative, male-dominated, consumer-capitalist sexualities.

Now, you tell me, is there a better place for a novice pervert to hide than inside a moral crusade? Who would have thought to look for me there, speaking primly into a bullhorn or carrying my crudely lettered sign like an ax that could sunder right from wrong? How I despised myself, and struggled to become what my fellow crusaders thought I already was, and how I scared myself. It was too easy. I couldn't believe how quickly people scuttled back into line when we threatened them with exposure. It was my first taste of intimidation. I got to be well known as a spokesperson for this cosy cadre, and professors would blanch when I wound up on their rosters. I started getting invited to a lot of faculty teas. I also started getting some mild harassment. My records were always being misplaced or some other paper blunder being made that would take me weeks to straighten out. I became such a minor celebrity that I started getting private tips. Students (and others) with their pubes in a knot would come to me and explain that they couldn't do anything about it as an individual but maybe in the strength of community that Students for Solidarity had we could handle it. You see?

I got more than one complaint about somebody in the history department, Professor Gregory. History is a politically suspect field, full of mavericks and oddballs. Whenever there were layoffs we lost part of our history faculty. They were expendable. They also served as banners of liberalism—you know, we have all these crazies and we allow them to keep on publishing their crazy stuff, we must have mondo-macro academic freedom if we tolerate something this dubious.

Anyway, the dish was this guy was into boys—was fucking his male students—and was misogynistic. Being queer is borderline, but hating women is as inexcusable as loving “women's clothes.” I happened to run into Gregory at my next placatory tea. He looked like a realman. He was big, he was muscular, he had a deep voice, he had these enormous hands

and a beard. I decided to register for one of his classes and check him out. My mistake was that I told my little cronies at StudSolid what I was up to. So of course they wanted follow-up reports, and as long as I was in his class I had to feed them more information. I was so deeply ambivalent about this guy that I never really lied. I told them just enough to keep them interested in him and me. It was like telling them dirty bedtime stories. Why would they ever want to roll over and go to sleep?

Professor Gregory became a stock character in my masturbation fantasies. I was horrified and appalled, but I couldn't stop. Sitting in his class, I hated him. I could tell he really did like boys and loathe women. He was treading a very fine line. Most of the boys adored him. They had to be so frightfully clever to get into this program since they also had androgen-fed muscles and sturdy male backs that could have been put to work rebuilding our war-ravaged country. They didn't get shit for being that smart, nothing, no reward, no praise, just grudging acknowledgment that they could have a desk and buy their textbooks and pretend they belonged there while the serious students—women—drew a bead on the future and told old jokes about turkey-basters and Gomer Pyle.

You can't take that much abuse without it twisting you up a little and making you feel guilty. It makes you vulnerable to authority, especially someone who has a lot of power but also holds out a few crumbs of approval. Because you know the system can squash you anytime, would like to squash you if you gave it the slimmest pretext, and you desperately need protection, somewhere, anywhere. My intuition told me that Gregory enjoyed making his boys go through hoops for some of that approval, a totally illusory sense of comradeship—perhaps even male bonding. I couldn't image him fucking a man his own age, or a woman who could tell him whether he was any good or not. I was not his own age and I did not want him to be good to me. But I was female. I was the enemy.

He never spoke to any of the women students unless he had to. He spent all his time in class drawing out, encouraging, and praising the brighter and better-looking boys. I couldn't even get him to argue with me. He would call on me when my nuisance factor reached a certain level, let me talk as long as I wanted to, stare out the window, then take up where he had left off as soon as I shut up.

Coincidentally, Students for Solidarity was running short of targets. Everybody had pulled in and tightened up and battened down so carefully that we were in danger of becoming obsolete. Who needs cops in a law-abiding society? Everyone insisted we had to put this rogue professor up against the wall.

We had been assigned reading from the annotated version of Engels' "The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State." When I walked into the classroom, I noticed that Roger, the only boy who dared sit in the front row, was not there. When the professor stood to begin his lecture, he seemed to have a cold. "I invite," he said, "your predictable comments on this so-called piece of history."

I was astonished, and gleefully stood to object. "It would seem to me that you are calling fundamental truths into question," I said.

He actually, for a change, responded to me. He said, "Young lady, you do not know what you are talking about." The insult was mind-ripping. My single cell of hatred fissioned, and I was hosting a colony of feverishly reproducing and breeding and multiplying rage. He then lambasted what he called the matriarchal "theory." According to him, there was no evidence to support the belief that women had controlled all pre-industrial cultures. Nor was there any reason to believe that these societies, regardless of who ran them, were any more ecologically balanced, less violent, or more evolved than any other "community of homo sapiens."

He was repeatedly interrupted by a chorus of hisses from all the students. Some of the more timid boys were sneaking out the back door. "Cite your sources!" I shouted at him. He had to answer me. I was the only one saying something instead of drumming my feet on the floor and making a noise like a rabid goose.

"If I were allowed to teach any anthropology in this benighted institution, I would!" he shouted back.

Was this man having a nervous breakdown? He could not be that stupid. "The very name of that pseudoscientific cult discredits it," I yelled. "How dare you call yourself a historian?"

Another member of StudSolid, this girl who had ignored my tactful suggestion that one observer would attract less attention than two, was

drowning us both out by shouting, “Boycott! Walk out! Boycott! Walk out!” And people were doing what she said. The small auditorium was emptying out. I was somehow going in the other direction, down to the front. It took forever to get there because of the contrary human traffic. By the time I was face to face with him, everyone else was gone.

“I think I should inform you that you’ve been under investigation,” I said, struggling to be dignified and keep the excitement out of my voice. His eyes looked red, as if he had been crying, but I told myself it was just a cold. He was wearing perfume. This typically male vanity, a stock reference in every cheap romance novel I had ever read, stung my nose and made my lungs ache, the way you feel when you really need to be held and no one knows.

His Adam’s apple bobbed. “Indeed? By that rotten little group of NATO generals you run around with?”

“How dare you equate a grassroots organization of radicals that struggles to perpetuate the revolution with a bunch of collaborators who let the commies and the demmies turn Europe into rubble?”

“How dare you *investigate* me? Do the words ‘academic freedom’ or ‘first amendment’ mean anything to you?”

“There is a difference between the exercise of liberty and its abuse.”

Enraged, he grabbed at me. “You smug little fool,” he snapped. I stepped back, and the hands which had been reaching for my shoulders landed on my breasts. Before coming to class, I had carefully threaded the inside of my bra with straight pins. He yelped and said, “What’s this?” His hands clamped down harder, and he got stuck again. Then he knew. “Oh-ho,” he said, “is this what they’re teaching in self-defense classes these days?” He was reaching under my white student’s gown. It was something I had dreamed about so often, I could not seem to stop him, I was just twisting in his hands. He was hurting me there, even though it must have hurt him, too, pressing up so that all the sharp points penetrated the delicate skin of my vulva. “Is this what you need?” he asked, reaching for the hem of his black professorial robes. I was terrified that he would make me look at his penis. I had never seen one, I didn’t want to, and I was about to scream when



Roger, the missing bright boy, came running into the auditorium via the door by the lectern and skidded to a halt a few feet from us.

“I came as soon as I heard—” he had time to say before he took in the tableau. “Rape!” he started to bellow. “Rape!” He took me by one shoulder, yanked me away from the professor, and started slapping and punching at him, crying hysterically. I had one of those rare moments of clarity that don’t do you a damned bit of good when you can see the truth about anything you gaze upon. I saw that they were lovers, I saw that Roger separated us not to protect me, but because he could not bear to see his lover touch me, I saw that all of us were doomed. Still I could not weep as loudly as Roger, who had to be pulled off Professor Gregory by four campus cops.

The administration shook us off like so many dead fleas. Professor Gregory was prosecuted for rape, on Roger’s testimony, and convicted. It took a lot of trouble for me to avoid finding out what his sentence was. I refused to testify because I did not want to describe, under oath, what happened when he grabbed me. I wasn’t sure, then, exactly what rape was, but I knew this was not it. An assailant and victim have nothing in common. But I had recognized him, and then made use of him. I was culpable. They expelled me when I was charged with being an accessory to violence against women, and I think I sort of deserved it, even though the woman in question was myself. A judge remanded me to the penal farm for re-education, where I stayed until Jackie set a big version of one of her rabbit traps for the bed-check matron and we high-tailed it to the bright lights, city sights, and torrid nights. The indefensible behavior of one of its leaders provided an excuse to investigate other leaders of Students for Solidarity. When dormitory rooms were raided, they found the usual assortment of contraband—proscribed reading material, illicit drugs, and an unsafe birth control device. It was enough to discredit the group. Nobody objected when it was banned.

I’m out of the nice neighborhood now and walking through a sleazier part of town. There are more people on the street, but I feel safer because most of them are crooks and crazies. That says a lot for the flying buttresses of our Democratic Socialist Feminist Way of Life, don’t it? I give a wide berth to a circle of kids, music victims holding a sidewalk autism contest. I

know they can't hurt each other when they wear those helmets, but it creeps me out. Besides, they can't see where they're going, and I'm not wearing a crash-proof topper full of headbanging sounds. One of the helmets is defective, and I can hear snatches of music as I go by.

Now I'm in trouble again. Worse, maybe. Pretty soon I'm going to be walking by the very alley where I got busted. To keep from gnawing on myself, I slip into a little reverie about the poor jane who got busted with me. If I can believe her, it was the first time she'd paid for objectification. I wonder if she'll ever go out looking for it again. Sometimes it's easier to fake orgasms with somebody who loves you than it is to cruise the derelict parks and ripped-up, trash-clogged streets. After all, you don't find real pleasure all that often there, either—just the possibility.

I do not hustle out of bars. You have to pay off the bartenders, and all your janes will be drunk—if they aren't piss, uh, peace officers. Anyway, I don't want to bring any official attention down on the Labrys. They might not know what goes on there yet, and if that bar gets closed down, a lot of my friends are going to go crazy or just leave town. All I wanted was a drink and a night of raunchy storytelling with one of my pals.

I had just settled down with Lefty, this malechick who has only one ball. (Guess which one.) Lefty's specialty is TVs—janes who want to wear “women's clothes” or “men's clothes.” Sometimes (especially if they are beginners, who tend to be shy) they want to watch him dress up instead. I could tell Lefty was ready to party because he-she was wearing a cherry-red corset with a jockstrap underneath it, a black bowler hat, one elbow-length black silk glove, and one biker's leather glove with the fingers cut off. He-she had worn a big trench coat to cover all this finery up on his way to and from the Labrys. Lefty doesn't mix up his drag this way when he-she's on the stroll—it confuses the fish.

We were on our first drink and it hadn't gotten drunk under the table yet, but Lefty had enough money to keep our party going all night long, so I was feeling quite encouraged. Then this woman walked in, white-skinned, medium height, with big tits starting to go a little soft. She had dark hair and a nice-sized ass, the kind you can really work on. Everything she had on was new—a new denim skirt, new T-shirt, a new jacket so shiny it was probably plastic. And she had locked a collar around her neck, but it was

the wrong kind of chain, one of those flimsy things with large links that they use to hide electrical cords. The lock was way too big; it looked clumsy. The whole effect was amateurish and too obvious.

Still, I had to admire her guts, making it so clear what she was looking for. She stared around the room, obviously frightened and on the brink of leaving. A group of executive types had brought in their new secretary to show him what a bunch of losers they all were. They had gotten the poor working boy all tipsy-wipsy and were teaching him how to play pool. When it wasn't his turn to flub a shot, they were handing him from lap to lap, playing with his tits, singing songs that were so bawdy Lefty was trying to jot the lyrics down on a cocktail napkin. One of them started to hint that if he couldn't learn to shoot a decent game of pool, they ought to teach him how to pick up dollar bills with his ass so he'd have another trade.

The newcomer did not like this at all. Then she shook herself like a wet dog and marched up to the bar. You can go a long way on middle-class rectitude and sheer ignorance. She and Annalies, the bartender, had a long conversation which finally resulted in the new kid being given a beer and a push in my direction. "Don't do me any favors, Annalies!" I yelled, and headed for the bathroom.

A bunch of ladies were combing out in the mirror, trying on each other's lipsticks and making catty comments about the runs in each other's stockings. All of them had at least one run. "Is that a boy or a girl?" one of them cried when he-she saw me.

"If I don't know, why should she?" said another.

"Oh—it's Noh! Noh, darlin', take me away from all this and buy me a drink."

"I can't afford to keep *you* in liquor," I said. "Why don't you try the big spenders at the pool table?"

He-she made a moue of disgust and said breathily, "They have such rough, insensitive hands."

"They might tear her bodice!"

"And her falsies would land in her lap!"

"Ooh!" cried the stung queen.

“Don’t mind Stella,” I called from the booth where I was taking a quick pee. “She’s got her period.”

“She’s going through menopause.”

“You always pause for men,” Stella crowed, getting her revenge. But her adversary was not quashed.

“You mean, mean thing, you know I’m a true-blue lesbian,” lisped he-she. “Noh will be my character witness.”

“Look, the only kind of character I want to witness is the loss of a good one. Lily Law just told me the only kind of sex I know how to have is hetero-oppressive, regardless of the gender of the party of the second part.”

“Is a party of the second part anything like a stand-in?”

“Standing makes it too hard to get in.”

When I waved goodbye they didn’t acknowledge me. Stella had confiscated his lipstick, announcing, “That color doesn’t do a thing for you. *Dead* people should wear *black*.” They probably got left too often for them to pay it any mind. They didn’t need anybody else anyway. Their friendship was based on an agreement to be each other’s perpetual floating audience. The bitchiness was partly just their way of trying to be glamorous and vivacious. And no matter how cruel they were to each other, the audience outside their charmed circle was not nearly as nice. I’ve seen (and made) worse arrangements.

When I came back, that devil Lefty had moved over and had the newcomer tucked in at our table. Black Hawk was just getting ready to sit down, and the trespassing jane couldn’t get her eyes full of those six feet of hard black hustle-muscle. Lefty was winking and grinning at me, lit up like a pinball machine. I couldn’t leave. It would have made too good a story.

“Big Bird, good buddy,” I said. “You’re going to hurt yourself tryin’ to carry off something this big. Isn’t that a little lambie-poo over there, glaring at you? Just dying for you to come a little closer so she can claw your eyes out?”

B.H. hovered for a second, but the jane was looking at her fingernails, too dumb to appreciate having a couple of self-employed studs jousting for

her. She did not indicate a preference for either of us. Still, she was seated at *my* table.

“What do you want, Black Hawk?” I said under my breath. “She’s hopeless.”

“Must be your kid sister.” And she took off, actually left the bar in a huff, dragging her septic girlfriend Cookie (guess what kind) with her.

So I sat down, relieved I hadn’t had to dust off my knuckles (or start liking a brand-new profile), sighed heavily, and said, “I’ve never seen you here before.” The old line fell between us, light as a poker, and sank through the table.

“I’ve never been here before,” she said. “I don’t like it. I should leave.” I shrugged. But she didn’t get up.

“This place is filthy,” she said, blaming me.

“Then why don’t you stay home like a productive little worker and buy a clean little newspaper and call a nasty little ad and get some big bruiser to visit you in the privacy of your collective household and commit great bodily harm with you?” She stared at me, then took out some cigarettes and lit one. That surprised me. Smoking tobacco is not well thought of. It’s self-destructive. She offered me one and Lefty, too. He-she drew a long, thin cylinder from the pack and bowed to the match. I shook my head, refusing. It’s a habit I can’t afford.

“What are you talking about?” she said finally. She carefully blew her smoke away from me, thinking it would offend.

I frowned. I had assumed she was just an ill-mannered jane, spying on the private lives of her paid companions. What the fuck was she doing here if she didn’t even know about the sex ads? If it wasn’t for them, who would bother to buy a newspaper—and how could they afford to keep on publishing? “Don’t you keep up on current events?” I asked, all patience and sarcasm. “Didn’t you ever call up one of those numbers that say ‘Help for women troubled by sexual fantasies’ or ‘C-R about oppressive forms of sexuality’? Or is that chain around your neck just bargain-basement jewelry?”

“I didn’t know there were any ads like that,” she said slowly. “I guess I’ve seen them, but I didn’t know what they meant.”

“Huh?” I was really confused now. “Then what are you doing here?”

“I just broke up with my ... lover,” she said. She was obviously reluctant to label their relationship that way. “She told me about the Labrys. She used to come here before—before she had me.”

“And how did she have you?”

“What’s it to you?”

“That depends on how bad you miss it. Maybe twenty, maybe a laugh. Tell me.”

Her “lover” was a closeted sadist, a very well-camouflaged pervert. You can do that if you are gainfully employed. She worked as a carpenter on the lobster shift so she had an allocation for private living space. In this wee cottage, she had built a dog-house and a rack and many other sordid devices. She had plucked Ms Ingénue from an orientation for apprentices, sensing which way her far-from-reedy self could be bent. Our tail-wagging, panting little woofer spent every possible minute with her, and when she did she was always in a wooden set of stocks and had a plug up her butt. Much was made of leashes and spanking bad puppies. She slept in the aforementioned doggie-hut, and did all her drinking and eating out of little dishes on the floor. I shudder to think where she performed her baser functions. I was charmed. Unfortunately, the puppy had become an apprentice in earnest and had to report for a daylight shift, so her pragmatic trainer gave her the gate, and went out and got a mutt that was more available.

“You really are disgusting,” I crooned, kicking her feet apart under the table. “What a lovely little freak you are. Letting her push you around that way. What did we have a revolution for if women are going to wallow in this reactionary masochism? Hmm? It’s decadent, diseased, self-indulgent, immature, impractical.”

“At least I never did it for money,” she said.

Her defiance made my blood run hot. I jerked my gloves out from under my epaulet and smacked her across the face. She didn’t try to put her knees back together. So I loomed up across the table and stuffed the gloves into her mouth. She cried out, so I tamped them in a little further, using four fingers while I held her head.

“I have a problem with the idea that I should spend two years nurturing a snotty-nosed bawling baby until group care will take it away and turn it into a heroine of the future,” I said. “So I can’t be a member in good standing of our beloved republic, Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean. Plus I don’t seem to be able to hide my unconventional sexual proclivities. Like a taste for making twisted cases of arrested development like you toe the line. You like the way those gloves taste? I ought to work you over with my belt, bitch. But if you had to discipline a lost cause like yourself, you’d want to be paid, too.”

Tears were running down her face. She took her hands off the table, made fists inside her jacket pockets, and came back with a ten in each hand. She shoved them at me across the table, little crumpled paper balls, confessions that her need was stronger than shame.

Lefty had disappeared. We don’t like to watch one another do business. I pounced on the money, put it away, and grabbed her by the throat. “You want to walk home with me?” I said. “It’s an hour and a half from here to Europe. No, I didn’t think so.” I dragged her out of the bar. “You can’t wait that long. Here. This will do just fine.” I’d never dropped my pants in that alley before, unless the plumbing in the Labrys was backed up and I needed to piss. But the atmosphere appealed to me that night. There were garbage cans at the entrance that would partially shield us, and the cobblestones were wet but not muddy.

I made her get down on all fours and come after me whining like an animal. Her silly, wrong-looking collar was long enough for me to keep a grip on it, so I backed into the alley, whistling encouragement to her. She was panting, the gloves still wedged in her throat. I got my back up against a damp brick wall and removed them, drew them over my hands, then set her at my crotch. She bit me in her hurry to get the zipper down, and I cuffed her. She came back to my hand and nuzzled against the leather glove and lapped at the sleeve of my jacket.

“Lick it good and I’ll beat you,” I promised, shoving her face down toward my split fur, already wet. She growled, then gave herself up to my service. I got a good hold of her hair so I could modulate the tempo a little, then leaned back and enjoyed myself. When my excitement would hit a plateau, I would think about how my studded belt would sound landing on

that broad-beamed ass of hers, and I would run my gloved hands down my hips and feel her wet cheeks alongside my snatch, her tongue alongside my clit, and my pulses would start to pound again. She ate me the way you eat somebody you love. She had not learned yet that when you pay for a scene, you are paying for your own pleasure, and if you are “allowed” to provide body worship, you are expected to do it because it makes you hot, not to make the hustler come.

She made me come nice and hard, stayed on my clit while I jerked around, made it last as long as possible until I pushed her away. Then I pried her mouth open with one finger and fit it to my cunt, so that her open mouth covered the whole thing. I started with a little jet, to see how she would react. It feels almost as good as coming, after you’ve gotten some good head. She drank it without gagging, just leaned back and swallowed, and I pissed as slow as I could.

“You too,” I ordered. I shoved my boot into her crotch to open her legs, and she whimpered and wet herself, both of her hands working under her skirt, trying to make herself come.

I had taken off my belt and hit her ass a dozen times when a bright light hit both of us, and we were hauled out of the alley. It was two cops, a man and a woman. They looked distressed when they realized they had apprehended two women. Now that equal relationships between the sexes are possible, being queer is effete and sort of ungrateful.

One of them had a little machine slung over her shoulder. I didn’t think anything about it until the jane—I still didn’t know her name—started to protest about invasion of privacy and search warrants. The the lady cop said, “This occurred in a public place,” and hit the switch. Out came a stream of profanity I didn’t even remember using. But it was my voice, saying how bad she must want it if she was willing to pay for it, she had to take everything I wanted to give her, and the misogynistic slurs and all. Also her responses. It was flawless evidence. So they wrote her up a ticket and wrote me up a ticket and took us away in separate vans.

I was in jail for three days, seventy-two hours, before they released me. They held me over, playing games with my court date, because they knew I wouldn’t get any time, and it offends their clear, simple, dead-wrong cop



sense of justice. In the meantime I got interrogated about my sex life and chided for my lack of any real visible means of support. They made it real clear that my number had better not appear in any questionable ads, and I better get my libido re-educated as quick as possible. And, oh yes, I could always do my maternity stint if I needed some time to reassess my life. Or did I want to sign an affidavit of unfitness to reproduce, and then get sterilized? I laughed at them. Who knows what else they might do to you once you're unconscious? Brain surgery? Why not? How would you ever know?

It wasn't too bad. They didn't break my thumbs or anything. They just didn't let me sleep. They sent a trustee with a tin can around to bang on the cell bars every fifteen minutes or so. Three days. Seventy-two hours. On the second day they gave me back my belt and shoelaces. Think they were trying to give me a hint?

Up ahead is a back-to-Africa wagon. A black woman in a white chador is packing it up, getting ready to push it home. They say the Muslim men are raising money to kidnap the women to send them home because they don't really want to go back to Africa, but I figure it's okay to buy from a woman's wagon. Who knows? I'm not sure I would turn down a ticket out of here to any place but the North Pole.

"Hey!" I yell. "You got anything left over? Cheap?" She has cold eggrolls, and I sacrifice the price of my second beer for a little grease and protein. Somebody will be at the Labrys who can front me a drink or two. Lefty, that cheap quick-change artist, he better, the last time I scored I bought him *dinner*.

The bar is only a block away. I skip and run, stuffing my face, singing some crazy song. The sign is dark, so I figure somebody has broken the neon tube again or maybe they didn't pay their bill. But when I get to the door, it's boarded up, and there are all kinds of yellow Health Department notices all over it—quarantine for sexually transmitted diseases, selling alcohol to minors, insufficient insect control, even one for improper drainage. There are also a whole bunch of posters from "a group of residents concerned with the quality of life in this neighborhood" that say they feel this establishment is an eyesore that lowers property values and

encourages woman-hating. I'm surprised this rickety, filthy, beloved firetrap manages to stand up under the weight of its own wickedness.

Something rattles down the street. I jump. There she is—my jane, wearing her ridiculous version of perv fashion, kicking a can down the street. She probably got here just a few minutes before me. Her back is to me. I don't think she's seen me.

This is goddess-sent. I can't make it through a night of carhopping in the red-light district tonight. I have no judgment, no snap. I'll pick up a killer or a cop for sure. I run after her, and she spins around. The puppy has acquired a more defensive attitude. Her black eye makes me wince. It's puffed-out and raw, and so is part of her lip. Her clothes don't look new any more. There's blood and puke on the T-shirt. Her ersatz collar and the plastic jacket are gone. She must have just gotten out of jail.

"I don't have any money," she says, as if she has read my mind and knows that I want her to save me, take me in out of the cold that is deepening as it gets darker. "I lost my job. My collective has put all my stuff on the street. I was hoping maybe Lefty would be here. He seemed to be a nice guy. Maybe he would have helped me save some of my belongings. I'm going to have to find a cheap place to stay."

Well. My name is Noh Mann, but I am a nice guy, too, and her assumption that she won't get any help from me stings. But nothing will come out of my mouth. I hang on the tips of my toes, breathing like a hummingbird, knowing the next move I make will create a whole new chapter in my life, whether I go back to my cubicle alone or bring her with me. Am I afraid she will refuse me? That is papal bull. She doesn't have any place else to go, and she knows it. Somebody is going to have to teach this girl-child how to live, or she's going to jump off a bridge.

Two divergent vistas open up, and all the power I have is in me, the power to make a choice before I know what the consequences will be. I say, "In all of that stuff of yours, do you have a tea kettle?"

"Why, yes," she says, clearly thinking I have gone andro.

"Okay. Let's start walking. Now, listen to me, I'm going to tell you how it is and how it's going to be.

“I don’t love you. But somebody is going to have to take care of you and teach you what’s what. If I slap you around a little, it’s to make sure you listen.”

I talk, she nods, we walk fast. It’s cold. I take off my leather jacket and make her put it on.

## *The Surprise Party*

She had short hair and never wore anything but Levis, boots, a black or white T-shirt, and a leather jacket. Every time she went out the door, she squared her shoulders, straightened her spine, and put purpose in her walk. When the way you look makes it clear that you are a queer sort of queer, each unmolested step down the street is a victory. Live defensively, she told herself as she strained to extend her peripheral vision to shield her sides and back. Sometimes she concentrated so hard on not smiling, not moving her ass from side to side, not giving any sign of vulnerability, that she stopped thinking for several minutes about nights when cars had screamed to a stop, disgorging gangs that chanted insults as they ran, and stopped scanning litter baskets for bottles she could break, just in case.

It was twilight. She was trying to keep her footing, going down a very steep hill. A cop car purred up the street. Everybody who sees a black-and-white feels a tiny spurt of adrenaline hit their system. The anxiety and extra energy don't go away until you know for sure they aren't looking for you. Relax, she admonished herself. They're just on patrol. No sirens, no flashing lights, relax, relax.

Brakes screeched. Doors flew open. Feet hit the pavement. And hands reached out of the dark, took her from behind by both elbows, and propelled her through the soft night air to the cold metal side of the car. Their grip on her was professional—tight enough to express their muscle, but not hard enough to bruise. She caught glimpses of uniforms, truncheons, pistol hilts, shiny visors, hand-cuffs, badges, hairy wrists wearing heavy silver watches.

There were three of them, two city cops and one in a highway patrol uniform. 'What is he doing here with them?' she thought, and then the rage came up and made her skin white-hot and her stomach cold and sick. The pig who was holding her felt the rising threat build in her frame, and he used her arm to twist her up onto her toes, then slapped cuffs on her wrists.

“Go ahead,” he said softly in a good-ole-boy drawl, “resist arrest. I’d love it.” He had blond hair and a slightly red, mean cracker face. His navy blue, wool-covered groin brushed briefly against her hip, then he withdrew, kicked her feet wide apart, and held her against the car with his truncheon pointed into the small of her back.

The whole thing had taken no time at all, and she was helpless and hating them and afraid. Why was this happening? Oh God, God, God, I have the right to remain silent, who will I call, oh, God, this can’t be happening.

“What do we have here?” asked the highway patrolman. He seemed to be in charge of the trio. “You got any identification, sister?” It was a familiar voice, the voice of male authority, a man who would brook no interference.

Her tongue was thick, but she managed to say, “In my back pocket.”

He made a warning noise. “Keep your hands away from there.” Did he think she could reach her wallet with her hands cuffed behind her back? “Officer Mike here will be good enough to remove your identification for me.”

A large hand slid into her tight pocket, felt around just a shade too long, then emerged with her thin leather billfold. “Here you go, Don—sir,” he said.

She heard the highway patrolman flip it open and rifle through the plastic windows that held her driver’s license, social-security card, credit cards, and snapshots of her lover Fran and Fran’s children. He cleared his throat, then said (pronouncing each word carefully, to make sure she understood), “I don’t believe ladies – usually carry one of these things around.”

It actually took her a few minutes to puzzle out his meaning. He meant that women don’t carry wallets! Oh, he was good, he was very good. No screaming “Bulldyke!” or “Queer!” He was subtle, this one. He wanted to make her pay.

“I’m talking to you!” he snapped, and she was lifted and thrown into the side of the car. The breath was knocked out of her, and she said confusedly, “What? What do you want?”

“Pay attention to me when I ask you a question, girl. Answer me. Now!”

“What’s the question?” She could not control her voice. It shook.

He advanced on her, the heels of his boots clicking on the asphalt. When he was close enough for her to smell his jacket, he clamped his leather-gloved hand around her skull and pulled her head back, then waved the wallet under her nose. "Is this what ladies customarily keep their driver's licenses in, bitch?" he spat.

He was so tall. She caught herself admiring him, such a powerful bastard, aristocratic nose, carefully trimmed auburn mustache, still wearing those mirror shades even though it was almost completely dark by now. The streetlight must be shedding enough illumination for him to see by. She realized her mouth had fallen open and finally thought to say, "No!" They hauled her away from the car and threw her back up against it anyway.

The officer walked away from her. He produced a cigar from the inner pocket of his jacket, lit a match on the sole of his high, black boots, and carefully rolled the tip of the cigar in the blue part of the flame. "We've got ourselves an interesting case here, boys," he said. They laughed appreciatively. Mike, the blond Southern boy who had put the cuffs on her, kept a grip on her upper arms, and he was pressed into her body now, keeping her flat up against the cold metal of the car. She felt his cock leap inside the uniform but did her best not to respond to it, not even by moving to avoid it.

"We're going to have to take you in," the patrolman said thoughtfully. The short sentence chilled her blood.

"Why? What have I done?" she asked, knowing the answer but wanting to make him say it.

He snorted. "Oh, we'll think of something. Loitering, probably. Hey, isn't there a school somewhere close, Joe?"

"I believe so, sir," said the third cop. He was dark, hefty, had a beard as well as a mustache, and looked Italian. He had not touched her or said anything until now. He pulled off his hat and scratched his head. "Just a block from here."

"Then we got it," the patrolman said cheerfully. "That's a 537B, loitering for lewd and immoral purposes in the vicinity of a schoolyard. Let's go."

"My ID," she croaked.

He chuckled. "I'll keep it warm for you, honey," he said, and put her wallet away next to his cigars.

Mike slid behind the wheel of the car and Joe got in beside him. The highway cop hustled her into the back seat, shut and locked the door, then came around and slid in beside her. He did not put out his cigar. The car's engine made a low, growling noise, and they began to glide up the hill. "Which precinct?" Mike asked over his shoulder. Joe kept his eyes fixed on the rear-view mirror, which gave him a good view of the back seat.

"Let's drive around," the cop next to her suggested from behind a cloud of cigar smoke. "There's plenty more room back here. We might find some other female pervert that needs to be rounded up. The ladies can sit in each other's laps, put on a little show for us."

The two men in front began to talk aimlessly about small things. She tried to sit forward, but every now and then the car would go over a bump, and she would fall back painfully on her manacled hands. Oddly enough, the handcuffs didn't seem to get any tighter. Had Mike set the stops? That would be out of character for a dyke-hating cop. Her mood swung between panic, anger, frustration, and laughter, and her jeans seemed awfully tight in the crotch. This was a fetishistic nightmare. Could she survive it? How many faggots would give their eye teeth to be where she was right now? As if you're above all that, she sneered at herself. Admit it, you've ogled the cops all your life. The uniforms, the guns, the muscles, the power to force others to obey. Now you're closer to more cops than you ever thought possible. You're scared, but you're also turned on. Or you'd like to be turned on, but you're sure they won't let you enjoy this. This isn't sexy for them.

A plume of pungent smoke interrupted her. She made a face, and he laughed at her. "You don't like that, do you?" he said lazily.

"No," she said recklessly, staring into his eyes (or where his eyes should be, behind those huge insect mirrors).

He put his hand on his crotch, fondled it and squeezed it. "You don't like this, either, do you?"

"No!" Liar, her self-conscience jeered. You love getting fucked. You fantasize about cock and talk dirty about it all the time. But I'm a lesbian,

her public persona objected. This doesn't have anything to do with that, the wiser voice replied. You better listen to me, girl, or you'll never get out of this alive. Where do you think they're taking you anyway? Nobody knows where you are. Nobody can help you. They can do anything to you they damned well please. You better consider whether they'd have more fun fucking you or killing you. Because you can be damn sure they're already wondering.

His hand rested over his cock, applying light pressure. She could see a long bulge down his inner thigh.

"You're going to like it," he said. "I'm going to do you a big favor before we're through."

Why did she find him reassuring, even attractive, despite that brutal note in his voice? He was just so damned strong. Maybe strong enough for both of them, stronger than her fear and outrage?

He was almost masturbating now. His gloved hand returned again and again to the hidden cock, which bulged and lengthened. He smoked his cigar while he worked, and when he took the cigar out of his mouth, he kept it pointed negligently at his crotch. She could not look away from it. Her mouth was dry, then filled with a gush of saliva, then parched again. The leather gloves fit his large hands so tightly, there must not be a wrinkle anywhere on them, they were so thin he must be able to feel—

Her breasts. The cigar smoldered in the ashtray. He had put it down, leaned over, laid his hands on her breasts and his breath across her cheek. He smelled like tobacco, leather, sweat, and men. The hands were surprisingly gentle, squeezing and stroking her breasts until they came down to the nipples, where his fingertips pinched her lightly—then harder. He repeated the caress only a half-dozen times while she wedged herself into the corner between the door and the seat and writhed. "Nice," he said, as if he were surprised, then he grabbed her knees and forced them apart and touched her there, making his hand into a fist and pressing the knuckles against her seam, rocking the fist into her clit and labia and the aching hole. Thank God he was wearing leather gloves. Thank God she had her pants on. He probably couldn't tell how aroused she was—or her body was, despite her self, which stubbornly resisted him. But then he took his hand away and



her hips lifted, just half an inch, to follow, and he smiled a nasty smile at her and said, "Gotcha."

Then he was back on his side of the car and she was breathing hard, bewildered and pissed off. She tried to look away, out the window, but the power that would determine whether her life continued or not was sitting with her inside the car, so she had to look at him again. His hands went to his zipper—competent, practiced—and he undid it slowly (for her benefit,) reached inside, and (with some difficulty) removed his sem-rigid rod.

Nobody was talking in the front seat now. Mike was driving, but he kept stealing long looks in the rear-view mirror, and Joe was frankly staring at their reflection, his mouth hanging open like a dog on a hot day. Maybe I could do this in private and like it, she thought, but to have them watch and know I gave in and know I wanted it—it's too humiliating, I can't stand it!

His cock was beautiful. She felt like a traitor, but it was honestly quite lovely. So many inches of sculpted ivory, with a slight curve to one side and a shapely head. As they passed a street light, she saw that his piss-eye was glistening with a silvery fluid.

He sprawled, legs apart, crowding her, his boot up against hers, slowly stroking himself with his leather fist, eyeing her. She knew what he wanted, but she would not make it easy for him to get it. He would have to make all the moves. If only she could look away!

"See this?" he said seductively. Coaxing. She did not answer. "Come on, quit trying to kid me. You can't take your eyes off it. Want to see it up close?" His long arm reached out and dragged her to him, bent her over his erect flesh. "Aren't I nice to you? Providing all this free entertainment? Without you even saying 'please' or 'thank you' or 'Mother may I.'"

"Let me go," she cried, wrestling with his hand.

"Let me go, *sir*," he corrected, holding her in place. When she realized he was not pushing her down any further, she stopped struggling. He regarded her coldly, displeased by her refusal to use his title. "Sticks in your craw, doesn't it?" he said. "But before I'm done with you, you'll call me 'sugar' if I want you to." He waited, then suddenly insisted, "Suck it!"

"No."

"No, *sir*," he corrected her again.

How clever of him to append that hateful honorific to a refusal. How easy, to begin calling him “sir” while she refused to suck his cock. But I am wise, like all hunted things, she told herself, and I know if I say that word I will descend a step down the ladder into submission.

“Yes, sir?” he suggested. “Yes sir, I’d love to suck your big drooling cock, sir?” The atmosphere in the car was charged. Heavy breathing came from the front seat. Something had to break.

He turned her loose and reached for his gun in one smooth move. The cold steel of the barrel stroked her cheek, and she froze. Nothing in the world was as big as that gun. He came at her again, backing her into the corner, and took her chin with one hand. “You will take it in your mouth, you know.” The trigger clicked.

“Yes, sir,” she said, and slumped. Of course. She was the thing that had to break.

“Good. Now open your mouth—just a little—that’s good.” His kid glove pursed her mouth into a kissing shape. The barrel of the gun, tasting of smoke and steel, was poised between her lips. She struggled to open her mouth wider, to swallow it whole and get it over with, but he would not let her. Carefully, patiently, he dictated just how much of the barrel she could take into her mouth and how slowly or quickly it would slide in and out. It was impossible to think of or remember anything else that had happened to her, other than the pistol ravaging her tender, wet mouth. He pressed deeper, into her throat. Despite the constriction produced by fear, she did not gag on it. Not once. She did not dare.

Finally, he withdrew the weapon and wiped it on her T-shirt, over her breasts. “Thank me,” he said absently.

“Thank you, sir,” she said. The pistol teased her nipples into erection. When he slid it back into its holster, she gave a long, shuddering sigh of relief. Then he took her by the ears and brought her face back to his dick. It was only half hard now, lying in a fat curve on his thigh. The dribbling head had made a small, dark spot on the light gray wool of his trousers.

“Kiss it,” he whispered, stroking the back of her neck. He wrapped one hand around his cockhead. She bent her head and put her mouth on him. She actually did kiss the vein that ran like a vat work along the underside of

his shaft. His cock jumped a little, startling her. "Lick it," he urged her, sliding down in his seat. Her tongue bathed the smooth rod, but he would not let her put the tip of it in her mouth. Instead, he lifted his balls and fed them, one at a time, to her. She took each orb into her mouth and laved it.

Suddenly, without prompting, she engulfed the whole sac and sucked and tugged on it. The twin eggs in their purse of skin and hair stretched out her cheeks and tickled the roof of her mouth. He gut-groaned the peculiar sound of pleasure and fear that men make when their manhood is taken from behind someone's teeth. "You do that real good for somebody who doesn't like it." He nudged her away and she extruded his testicles slowly, careful not to scrape them. He pointed his cock at her. "Want it?" he asked.

She did. And she could not lie. Why bother in the face of death? "Yes, sir." Two words, and the whole world changed. She was now an actor, not a victim. He uncuffed one of her hands, refastened them in front of her body.

"Joe, gimme a safe."

She heard the door of the glove compartment open. Without turning around, Joe held out a foil packet between his first two fingers. "Take it," Don snarled. "You don't think I'm gonna put it on myself, do you? Or don't you know how?"

She tore open the small package (it was surprisingly tough) and took out a flat circle of latex. It had a rolled rim. How was this little bitty thing going to fit over that big piece of cop-meat? Impatiently, he urged her forward, and she took his cock between her hands. His pre-cum was running freely, and he jumped when the tip of her little finger slid into the piss-slit. As she rolled the rubber over his erection, she milked him, keeping the latex sheath snug. He pinched the nipple at the tip of it, squeezing the air out of it, reminding her what was about to rush out of his tool. The prophylactic outlined and exaggerated every wrinkle and vein, and its base fell short of the root of him.

As she stared, fascinated by the strangeness of his body, some of the starch went out of him. The leather-gloved hand fell on the back of her neck, exerting gentle but irresistible pressure. So she turned her head, opened her mouth, and took all of his partially rigid dick in her mouth. She pumped up and down it a few times to get her saliva going, and his

response was immediate. Too bad, she thought. If he wouldn't get completely hard, I could keep all of it in my mouth quite comfortably. Now it's going to be harder to get it all down.

"Teasing bitch," he muttered. "Get down on it, cock-tease. Don't worry, you can take it all. We'll make a good cocksucker out of you. We know how, don't we, Joe?"

Mouth full, she suddenly became aware that the patrol car had stopped moving. It was parked somewhere. A window had been unrolled enough to admit fresh air and the sound of wind in trees. Also, slurping sounds were coming from the front seat. Somebody else was getting a blow job—from his partner!

Were those two cops faggots? It didn't make sense. Her cunt convulsed. Leathermen were sexy enough—dark knights and princes that she loved to look at, even if women weren't supposed to touch. By comparison, cops were kings—fuck, emperors. In the hierarchy of sex objects, she guessed gay cops ranked right up there next to God. But, shit, if Don was supposed to be gay, it didn't reduce the menace level much. He could get good head anywhere, any time. She knew she hadn't had enough practice to be as good as the boys who went to the glory holes, fell on their knees, and stayed there for hours, taking eight inches and more down their throats until dawn. How was she going to please him enough to save herself?

"That's right," he said, as if he could read her mind. "I know a good cocksucker from a lousy one. So tuck your teeth in and take a deep breath, because I want to fuck your throat, honey." He held her head still and bucked his hips, rolling the tip of his hard penis back and forth across the spot in the back of her throat that made her gag. Tears came to her eyes, her nose ran, and her mouth streamed with saliva and coughed-up mucus. Every now and then he let her up for air, but as soon as she had taken a deep breath, he seized her again, and filled her throat and pummeled it. It was deeply and perversely thrilling to be used this way, with just the right amount of cruelty. She found herself wishing she could taste his cock instead of the bland skin of the condom. And she was proud that she had made it hard, not one of the city cops in the front seat. These were dangerous thoughts, but she could not relinquish them.

After a while, he let go of her, but she stayed on his dick, slowing down a little and taking it more shallowly, licking the shaft rather than simply swallowing and sucking. He let her, hissing every now and then with pleasure, until he couldn't stand it anymore, then he grabbed both side of her head and fucked her face again, deeper and deeper until she thought she would strangle. "You're fighting it," he said, his dick invading her, provoking her reflexes, shaming and exciting her. "You ought to open your throat and just let it in. I can tell you love it, I can tell you want to do me real good, so just let it happen. Let me use your throat like a pussy. You don't have to choke like that. You can breathe around it. Of course, if you want to choke—" And he held her extra tight for an especially vicious bout of sword-swallowing.

Finally, they synched with each other in the automatic moves that had to lead to his orgasm. Both of them were pumping without thinking, and he began to talk about her mouth being better than a tight piece of ass, and how much cum he was going to shoot in her mouth. He said, "I love fucking you this way, in your face. Your mouth is you in a way that your cunt isn't. I want to stick it in *you*, not some dark, blind hole without a name on it. I want you to know who is doing this to you and remember forever." He made her ask him to come, plead as well as she could around the gag of his flesh. Her lips, the inside of her cheeks, her tongue and throat were swollen from arousal and friction. When he was beyond being able to stop himself, he held onto her neck and head and forced her to perform the perfect strokes that would provoke and prolong his ejaculation. He went deep to come, all the way to the bottom of her throat, and blood hammered in her ears as all her air was cut off and her gorge rose with bruising force. But he did not allow her to eject him. He held her head down to his groin until he was through spurting.

Then he took off the doused condom, tied a knot in it, and tucked it down the front of her jeans. It was still warm. "You worked hard for it. You wanted it. So take it," he said, as if it were the simplest thing in the world. When she tried to resume nursing on him, he cuffed her away from his big, naked dick, and she sat up, dizzy and wet-faced.

Joe handed back a thermos cup. The tall patrolman drank, then held it for her. It was black coffee. Yuck. She drank it anyway, needing the moisture.

“You’ve had worse things in your mouth,” he said drily. “Recently.”

“Where to now?” Mike asked.

She started. Had she been asleep? The question reminded her that this bad dream was still in progress, and filled her with dread.

“The thirteenth precinct,” he said, putting his cock away and zipping up. “I’ve reserved us a private suite. Just drop me by my bike first.”

“You go it, sir,” Mike said.

Within ten minutes, they double-parked by a big Honda wearing the state highway-patrol decal. He patted her cheek. “Don’t forget me, huh? We’ll get together for more fun and games real soon, because you have potential.” He got out of the car. His boots crunched on gravel. She watched him kick the machine into life, then peel off. The squad car followed him, and this time there was a siren.

Now misery settled in. She cursed herself for a fool. The cop hadn’t exactly raped her, had he? What would they do to her, now that they’d seen her weakness? And had she really been stupid enough to think that bastard would let her go, just because she made him come with her mouth?

She tried to defend herself against this onslaught of condemnation. ‘I’m not stupid, I never thought about getting loose,’ she told the angry voices. ‘I just did it because I wanted to, and I was in a situation where I had nothing to lose.’

That was even worse. To just suck him off without thinking of bargaining sex for freedom—to do it just for the pleasure and degradation of it—was stupid, perverted, sick, stupid ...

They were driving through the Tenderloin when Mike abruptly swung the wheel over and pulled up by a parking meter. The patrolman was backing his cycle into the space behind them. Now she was being hustled over to the side door of a fairly large hotel that had seen much better days. The service elevator was waiting, its doors open.

“What is this?” she demanded, ashamed that she was so scared the question came out in a tremor. “This is no police station!”

“Course not,” Mike scoffed.

Joe smiled. “You might say it’s the annex.”

The elevator hoisted itself clumsily, making a grinding noise, as if it had to dig its own shaft up through old rock. The stop was so abrupt that they didn't so much leave as get thrown out. The hallway smelled terrible, and she did not look around to find out why. They stopped at a door painted smeary white. The fancy woodwork of the door frame was a chipped beige, the design almost obscured by too many layers of paint. The number was painted on with red nail polish. She risked a quick glance down the hall. Shreds of old wallpaper hung here and there. The painted-over pattern had seeped through enough to resemble evenly spaced splotches of grease. Somebody had tried to start a fire at the end of the hallway, under a window. A scrabbling noise that seemed to come from inside the wall made her jump, and she kicked a hypodermic syringe, which rolled away and hit another door.

"This is our room, boys," the tall patrolman said. "We can question our suspect here and take down her statement without annoying interruptions. The Pussy Posse won't be needing it until they have to clear all the ladies of the evening off the streets when the next big convention hits town. And the poker tournament isn't until next week." He unlocked the door, escorted them in, and locked it behind them. The key went on his belt. Unless she could get past all three of them, there was no way she was going to get to those keys.

"Welcome to Precinct 13," somebody said, and the other two snickered. "Home of the city's oldest, unbusted, floating crap game and emergency room for the treatment of blue flu."

"Look around. This is your new home," the highway patrolman said. That was ominous. It implied permanence. "Your arms are probably sore. Not to mention your jaw," he added, and motioned for Joe to unlock the handcuffs. She rubbed her wrists and flexed her arms, then—since she had been told to look around and nobody stopped her—she explored the room.

Its walls and ceiling were painted a glaring white. She felt like she was trapped inside a refrigerator. The overhead light, a bare bulb, was in a wire cage to prevent unruly occupants from breaking it. There were a couple of dusty, overstuffed armchairs and a coffee table. But there was something weird—a small cell in the corner, not big enough to lie down in—a cage, actually. On the other side of the room was a double bed covered with a

white sheet. Hospital restraints hung from the iron head-and-foot boards. The bathroom door was just past the bed. The bright light and sterile, ice-box walls made her jailers seem very colorful, intense, and interesting. She was crushable, disposable, like a little carton of leftovers waiting to be thrown out.

“Luxury accommodations,” sneered the boss-cop. “The fucking Hilton. All for you. Think it’ll do?”

She faced him squarely and said, “You motherfuckers can’t get away with this!”

He smacked her, she fell, and the two uniforms dragged her to her feet. “Nobody talks to me like that,” he raged. “You’re just a goddamn dyke we dragged in of the street. Maybe we’re going to find some coke on you. Maybe you were diddling your girlfriend in a public john. Maybe you’re drunk and disorderly and need to stay here overnight to detox. Maybe I just happen to have a thing about lesbians. Arrogant bitches. No man is good enough for ’em. And you! You!” He was almost choking, pointing at her with his finger and his cock, which strained against the fabric of his uniform trousers. “Walking down that street with your hair all hacked off, above it all, in that fag outfit. Rip that bike jacket off of her.”

The two uniforms began to struggle with her, trying to hold her and remove her jacket at the same time. It wasn’t easy, but they finally got it off—after she had hit one of them in the mouth and kicked the other one to his knees. The patrolman grabbed it, and she expected him to throw it on the floor, but instead he draped it over one of the faded armchairs. Then he walked back to the center of the room and confronted her again.

“What do you mean by running around like that?” he demanded.

“The way I dress is my own damned business.”

He slapped her with the front and then the back of his hand. “Bullshit. You still don’t know what the drill is, do you, sister? I just made it my business. Now answer me. What are you supposed to be?”

She didn’t answer, just stared her hatred into him.

“You got a leather jacket. You got a leather belt with fancy studs on it. You wear those engineer boots with the chain around them. I’ll bet you’ve got some of those leather pants with the front and the ass cut out, don’t you?”



And some whips and chains and all the rest of the gear those sickos collect. What are you, one of those sadomasochists?”

“Yes!” she shouted, because the cops behind her had her up on her toes, and they were pressing their thumbs into her armpits, making it hurt good and strong.

“Well, I never saw a freak of your particular type before. And I thought I’d turned over just about every piece of garbage in every gutter and sewer in this city. I’ve seen butch dykes and their foxy girlfriends, and I’ve seen those women’s libbers with their dirty, long hair and no bras, and I’ve even known a couple of smart-looking call girls who didn’t look like dykes but would cut your balls off if you laid a hand on their roommates. You must be some new kind of female pervert. Or are you just an imitation fag?”

“A lot of people think so,” she said, teeth on edge. She was sweating. The pain was excruciating.

“Well, if you are, you’re going to walk out of here a changed woman. You know that? You can’t be any harder to break than a leatherboy. I know *those* kinda faggots inside and out. I scare them shitless, but they’ll do anything to get next to me. And I don’t care where they wear their keys, they lick my boots and my dick and my asshole and anything else I tell them to put in their mouths for as long as I want them to, that’s just the way I like it. You will, too. And if you don’t jump fast enough, I know how to persuade you. A little pain can make people change their minds awful damn fast. And if you’re working on somebody who gets off on pain, who wants it to hurt, it works even better, because they get so turned on they can’t think straight. Hell, I didn’t even have to hurt you to get you to suck my cock in the squad car. What do you figure you’ll do if I get you in a corner and make it hurt real bad? Huh?”

“You really are something else. You make it with gay men, huh? Leathermen, no less. Then why do you hate lesbians?”

His smile was ugly. “I never said I hated lesbians, honey. I said I have a thing for them.” He patted his crotch. “Right here. I just gotta find a way to persuade them to cooperate. Fags come around quick. They have good sense. They like cock. But I never had a dyke before. I saw you walkin’ down the street and you got me hard, that’s all.”

She began to kick, strike out, and scream. As they wrestled her down to the floor, her T-shirt got ripped. She had embarrassed them before, so this time they were more careful. They hit her hard and fast, and gave her no opportunity to surprise them. In a depressingly short time, her face was being rubbed against the coarse, filthy carpet, and their boots were pressing into her neck and the small of her back.

“So what are they here for?” she raged. “What are they? Pigs in training?”

“Joe and Mike? They’re my good buddies. My protégés, sugartits. And they’ve been working awful hard tonight with damned little to show for it. So you’re going to provide some overtime compensation. Get on your knees.” Bruised and shaking, she complied. “Take your top off. Oh, you do wear a bra. Take that off, too. God, what nice, big tits.”

Joe and Mike were standing hip to hip, their hands on each other’s flies. Light glinted off their nightsticks and the textured plastic grips of their revolvers. The sight of men handling each other was a sure-fire turn-on, despite her abraded face and Don’s bigoted remarks. What a kinky little triad she had stumbled onto! The highway patrolman was behind her, buckling the soft leather hospital restraints around her upper arms. He fastened them very close together, pulling her shoulders back and making her breasts arch out. He stood behind her, holding her head, making her watch the two policemen fondle each other. Finally, they unzipped and began to rub and slap their exposed hard-ons together. When Don snapped his fingers, each of them removed a Trojan from his uniform shirt and rolled it over his buddy’s dick.

“Good boys. This is where you come in,” he said, and shoved her toward them. She inched forward on her knees, and each of them reached out a hand to bring her into their circle. It was a blissful interlude. They competed with each other to slip into her mouth. While she sucked one, hot and deep, the other would rub his cock against her cheeks and neck, or press it into his partner’s hand, or stroke it himself. At one point, she was feasting alternately on their balls. She had to bend her head way back to get to them, and while the furry sacks filled her cheeks, their erections rested along her nose and forehead, leaving wet little saliva marks under her hairline. One of them even rubbed his cock all over her crewcut, gasping at the feel of the

short hair tickling his prick. They tried to make her suck both cocks at the same time, and she briefly succeeded in getting two heads into her mouth, but she could not keep her teeth out of the way, so they alternated, six strokes apiece, moving her from shaft to shaft. She spluttered, drooled, choked, and dived after them.

Joe's dick was shorter and thicker, with a somewhat flat head—a pile-driver. Mike's was proportioned more like a mushroom, the cap much bigger than the long, slender stem.

"I'm gonna come, Don," Joe began to pant. "I mean sir, sir, shall I come in her mouth or what? Tell me quick, please! Huh-huh-huh!"

"Unload," Don told him, smoking his cigar.

This time she didn't have any trouble keeping his whole dick down without choking while he came. The extra-thick shape was no problem without the length that triggered her gag reflex. Joe pulled out, one hand wrapped around the base of his now-flaccid meat to hold the loose rubber on. She didn't see what he did with it because Don spoke suddenly, sardonically, and instantly had her full attention.

"What about you, Mike? Gonna get your rocks off any time soon?"

Mike's erection faltered. She moved to take him deeper, protectively, in her mouth, to hide the evidence of his softened cock from his master. "Not just yet," he said, tickling her ears.

"I know you," the patrolman said. "You can't come without a little extra attention, can you, mister?"

"No, sir, I can't, sir."

The patrolman moved behind him and took him in his arms. The black-gloved hands unbuttoned his shirt and began to play with his flat nipples, barely visible in the mat of chest hair. Suddenly, she had more cock than she could handle. Mike gripped her to him, refusing to let her get away, and pumped into her throat. The harder Don worked on his tits, the harder he got and the deeper he thrust into her soft tissues. She felt like an Accu-jac, a convenient sex toy being used to help these two men get off with each other. Mike had only one hand on her head now, and she could see that the other one was behind him, busily working Don up to full erection.

Now Don's hands were on Mike's cock, and he was jerking him off, slowly and insistently milking his rosy shaft. "I'm going to jerk him off in your mouth," he told her coldly. "Isn't that exciting? Pinch your own tits, Mike. I want you to fill up that scumbag with fresh spunk. You better produce a lot of cream, boy, or it's your ass. You, cocksucker, don't take that rubber off him until I can see the size of his load."

They continued that way—Mike pulling on his own tits, Don pumping his cock, her twirling her tongue around the head of Mike's dick—until he came, copiously, and sagged, weak in the knees. "God, it's hard to come standing up," he complained.

Don let go of him, grabbed the prophylactic and slid it off. "You forgot to say thank you," he grinned. "Now git down on the floor next to her." Mike hesitated, and his face turned red. Don shouted, "I said kneel, you punk!"

Mike obeyed him with bad grace, giving her one furious glance that wiped the smile off her face. Don took Mike's face in his big hands and forced his mouth open. "Swallow it," Don said, squeezing the contents of the used rubber onto his tongue. He did, grimacing. She could only imagine how your own cum would taste, cold. Don's hard-on was in her face, and she transferred her attention to it. Mike mumbled, "Thank you, sir," with obvious lack of sincerity, and got to his own feet while Don reached down for her and helped her up.

He turned her and held her the way he had held Mike. His leather-clad hands felt her breasts, dug briefly into her sore armpits, then reached for her belt buckle and undid it and the top button of her jeans. One hand slid inside her pants, the other hand undoing buttons until he could cup his fingers around her cunt. The heel of his palm rested against her clit, and his long fingers dabbled in her juices, then pierced her hole and filled it. "I'm sorry to see you're all dry and reluctant," he said, biting her ear. "Joe, Mike!" He indicated her boots. The two came over and lifted her feet one at a time, removed her boots and socks, then tugged her jeans down over her hips. All her clothes were piled with the jacket on the dusty armchair.

He was so tall, he had to pull her off her feet to get his hand around her cunt. His jacket creaked, smelling deliciously of leather and armpits. He began to chew her neck and shoulder, his fingers moving just enough to

make her cunt feel good. His hard cock pressed against her buttocks, smearing thick liquid into her crack. Did his cock just leak continually, she wondered, constantly secreting this stream of sex juice?

“You lied to me before,” he said, flicking one of her nipples. “Remember? You told me you didn’t like it. But you do. I’m your worst fear and your best fantasy. You’re just pissed because I haven’t fucked you yet.” He went to work on the other side of her throat. His mustache burned, his mouth sucked and licked her, his teeth left puncture marks and bite marks from her ear down her neck all the way across her shoulder. Her hands were pressed against his pubic hair, and she had just enough mobility in the hospital restraints to be able to fondle his balls. When he felt her touch, he bit her harder and dug his fingers deeper into her vagina. Finally, he lifted his head. “Joe, clean her out, okay?”

Joe approached her, swinging a guard-dog training collar in one hand. Each of its chain links were attached to prongs which would lay flat when the dog’s leash had slack in it. If the dog lunged, the leash would pull the prongs up and make them dig into the dog’s neck. Naked, collared, and with arms bound behind her, she was easy to control. He led her into the bathroom. A douche hose dangled from the shower head, and this familiar sight was so incongruous, she erupted into helpless laughter. Joe grinned, then turned his back on her to hide his expression, twirled the faucets, and tested the temperature of the water flowing through the hose. Mike joined them, sat on the toilet, bent her over his knee and greased her ass, then held her there, keeping the tips of his fingers just barely inside it. She could feel the calluses on his hands.

“How far up should we clean?” Joe asked, spurting hose in hand. He could have been an obscene statue in a garden fountain. She barely repressed a hysterical giggle.

Don was watching them from the doorway. He had retrieved and relit his cigar. “I don’t know. Hey, bitch-dog. You. Dyke. Ever had a fist up your ass?”

“Never!”

“Not yet, anyway. How about a cock?”

There was a long silence.

“Well, well, well. I guess I’m never going to get to fuck me a virgin. How many, fur-pie? *Answer me!*”

“A few.”

“Meaning you don’t remember. Well, Joe, I’d say you ought to clean it up to the second sphincter. Mike’s kind of fastidious, and I wouldn’t want him to get any caca on his pretty long schlong. But I don’t think you have to give her a colonic. We haven’t got all week,”

While this diagnosis was being made, Joe had maneuvered her into the tiled cubicle, and her bowel had been filling with warm water. He removed the hose, and she yipped with alarm as a small trickle of water escaped along with it. She cried out again as Don’s belt swung overhead and landed right on her ass. “No spills,” he warned her. “You don’t get rid of that until I say so. Now crawl over here and lick my big, fascist boots. Come on, put your ass in the air and pray over ’em.” The belt landed again and again, but she somehow maintained her control and kept the dreadful weight of water bottled inside her guts. His boot-leather was smooth and tasted of fine polish. God, it was good to grovel on the floor and savor them. He didn’t let her up until her ass was bright red and both boots were shiny with her spit.

They perched her on the toilet and stood close, cocks out, helping each other into condoms, while torrents of water rushed out of her ass. “God, you stink,” Don growled, and shoved his dick into her mouth. They fucked her face while she shat again and again, and kept fucking her mouth long after the cramps had subsided. Then the process was repeated—more water, a tongue-bath for Joe’s and Mike’s shoes, another session on the throne and choking on their sheathed dicks, one after another, as fast as they could pull her mouth down onto one, off of it, and onto another. Would she ever be able to close her mouth and swallow again?

Finally, when her insides had been pronounced squeaky-clean, they removed the hospital restraints and shoved her under the shower. While two of them guarded her under the water, one would disrobe. Joe and Mike put on jockstraps, police boots, and their gun belts. Don removed his shirt and trousers, then replaced his Sam Browne belt and boots. His jock was made out of studded leather. He kept the belt he had removed earlier from his motorcycle jacket in his hand. Watching this transformation, she shuddered

with lust, turning in the hot water, wishing there were some way to avoid this confrontation with her fantasies, and deeply glad that there was no escape.

Their nearly-naked bodies were alien to her. Their hips were too flat, shoulders too broad, nipples too small and flat, their muscles came in long plates, and they were covered with fur everywhere. Don's auburn fuzz contrasted pleasantly with Mike's blond, almost-invisible hair and Joe's abundant black bear fur. Their asses were square, narrow. They even smelled strange—had a tang about them that women did not.

The water was turned off, Joe and Mike grabbed her, and under Don's orders they carried her over to the bed. She was still dripping wet, so they rolled her back and forth on the sheet, then both of them began to lick her, removing the moisture from her skin with their tongues. Almost shyly, their mouths covered her breasts and sucked up her nipples, their tongues strayed into her armpits and down her sides, penetrated her mouth and caressed her thighs.

"How does she taste?" Don demanded. "You two queer bastards ever done anything like this with a girl before?"

They both denied it.

"Well, dive in, assholes. Lick her everywhere. I'd love to see your queer faces buried in that snatch, but I'm afraid y'all might acquire a taste for it. So you just use your fingers, you hear? And keep 'em on the outside. No finger-banging. Just juice her up. It's a pity, 'cause you boys could really learn how to muff-dive from our friend here. I bet she knows how to suck pussy real good, don't you, sweetheart?"

She admitted it, barely coherent, driven out of her mind by the tongues lapping all over her body and the fingers that spread lubrication up and down, again and again, from her clit to her asshole, but kept her empty, driving her to produce more and more fluid. She could feel the shape of her own internal sex-parts, knew how deep her vagina went and the angle it took, by the way it ached to be pushed open and stroked. But she was not allowed to direct or guide what was happening in any way. Joe continued to tongue and massage her, but Mike let her hands go long enough to remove his jock. When he returned, his balls drooped in her face.

“Swallow his nuts,” Don ordered her. “I see you trying to lick his balls. You—stuff ’em in her mouth. Sit on her face.”

Mike, still angry about having been ordered to the floor beside her, was only too happy to oblige. Disregarding his own comfort, he crammed his entire ballsac into her mouth. She retaliated by sucking hard on his eggs, then clamping her lips tightly around them and running her tongue and her teeth across the taut skin of his scrotum. He must not have minded too much because he pulled away from her enough to stretch his sac even more and began to play with himself, dripping sweat and pre-cum onto her breasts.

Joe was lying on his stomach between her legs, his fingers busy, licking her thighs. She could tell that he really wanted to go ahead and put his tongue there, in that forbidden groove, but was afraid of Don’s wrath. Nevertheless, he was slipping a finger or two into her occasionally, despite the strict prohibition against this misbehavior. Her lips swelled, parted, and became incredibly slippery. When Don spoke, they both jumped.

“You like the way that smells?” Don sneered. Joe didn’t even turn around.

“It smells like sex, sir,” he said softly.

Don ignored that response and ordered his subordinates to jack off enough to keep their dicks hard. “I want to be able to look over there and see you enjoying yourselves,” he said.

Then Joe began to really get the idea of how a clit worked and started to do something that felt like it would make her come, if only it didn’t change or stop. He had the tip of his little finger resting at her ass, the pad of his middle finger resting over the opening of her vagina, and held her clit between his thumb and index finger, barely moving it inside the hood. She lost track of what she was doing with her mouth. Mike lifted his ass to prevent his balls from getting mauled and pinned her hands down hard. God, that made it feel even better! Joe’s fingers worked like some secret passion, and her cunt opened up like a wanton flower. He was resting his face on her thigh, and his beard scraped her delicate skin, inflaming it. She began to cry and toss on the bed.



“Don’t make her come!” Don said sharply. What a completely hateful man. “I don’t want her to come unless she’s got something up one of her holes. You boys ever fucked any snatch?”

Mike drawled, “Oh, yeah, a time or two. I prefer BJs to busting cherries, myself.” Why did she have a feeling that he was lying?

“Once. It wasn’t a hell of a lot of fun,” Joe said. “By the time I got it in I was so hot from carrying on and fighting about it that I came on her leg. She was pretty pissed about that.”

“Well, you’re going to fuck one now. This one. Both of you. I don’t want any excuses, and I don’t want any piss-poor performances. This isn’t the back seat of your daddy’s car, and you ain’t in high school any more. Maybe it will help if you don’t think of her as a girl. After all, she doesn’t want to be a woman. She wants to be a man. She dresses like one, talks like one, walks like one. She’s a queer, like you boys. Queers have sex with other queers, right? So who wants to go first?”

Joe, already kneeling between her legs, said, “Yo, sir. I sure would like to fuck her butt.”

“I don’t give a shit what you want. You can stick it in the hole I give you, or you can beat off in the corner. Mike, hold her down real good.”

Joe hauled her closer to the foot of the bed. He bent her legs until her feet were in the air, then began to rub his hard cock over her wet, crumpled inner lips. For a few minutes, he fucked the outside of her pussy, where the swollen outer lips made a nice, snug channel for him. After awhile, she understood that he was teasing her, and that he wanted her to struggle to get his cock. Well, why not? She had never felt emptier. Her beaten ass was burning, urging her on. “Please,” she moaned, writhing under him. “Please put it in me.”

“You sure?” he teased, taking another condom from Don.

“Yes! Yes! Yes!”

“Come and get it,” he grunted, hunching his hips. His dick head stroked her clit.

Pinned under him, she had almost no mobility, but she made whatever motions with her hips she could, trying to find his cock and impale herself

on it. Meanwhile, Mike was holding down her hands, and she knew from the beads of sex juice that kept falling on her cheeks and forehead that he was enjoying what he saw. Don said, “We better slow you down, mister,” and shoved a skin into his hand. Once again, Mike gave her an evil look of resentment. I wonder if he just hates me because I get to be the bottom, she thought. But there was too much good stuff going on below her waist to worry about the sulky redneck who was getting a fresh (and mumbling) grip on her wrists after taking the pause that protects.

“You want it?” Joe demanded. “Here, feel how big it is.” He thrust the head of his thick cock against her hole, not inserting it, but stretching the membrane taut. “It’s going to fill you right up. Sure you can take it? Huh?”

“Yesssssss!”

An inch at a time, he teased her sheath down over his head and shaft. He was right—she felt stretched wide open. And then he began to move! Her eyes rolled back in her head, Mike started jabbing his cockhead between her lips, and her tongue flickered out to service him. Her head was turned sideways to accommodate him, and even shallow penetration put tremendous strain on her neck and shoulders. She sucked him as long as she could before Joe’s pounding hips became too insistent and she again lost control over her mouth. “I’m afraid I’m going to bite you,” she mumbled, and he hastened to pull out.

Her own experience with straight sex had been as unsatisfying as Mike and Joe’s. But this act of penetration was firmly situated within a context of dominance and submission—the core of her eroticism. She had been brought to a point where there was nothing she craved more. There could be no self-deception, no lies about not really wanting it. And these men were incredibly good at what they did. They liked fucking and being fucked, they knew how to do it, and they wanted her to like it. The element of mutual homosexuality made it seem more perverse, yet safe.

Joe churned inside her, speeding his rhythm. She tried to spread her legs wider, to open her hole a little more, but he kept them clamped down, apparently preferring to fuck her tight, to feel the maximum resistance to his bulk. “Do you want it?” he panted. “Do you want me to come?”

“Yes!” she snarled, and worked with him to make it happen. He pushed especially deep inside her, jabbed her sharp and fast, his hands dug painfully into her ass cheeks, his thigh muscles went rigid. She could swear she actually felt the bulb of his dickhead swell, and knew by his convulsive hip movements that he had come.

“Very nice,” Don said sarcastically. Oh, God. He had seen everything. She flushed and tried to hide her face against Mike’s thigh. He shook her off, refusing to help. Joe had disappeared, probably gone off to take a leak, and Don was probing between her legs. “Did you come?” he asked her, leather-clad fingers moving where Joe had been.

“I don’t think I care about coming any more,” she said, evasively but quite truthfully. “It all feels so good I don’t want to come. I’m just afraid it will stop.”

“Stop?” His head jerked erect. “We’re just getting started. Number two!” He snapped his fingers, and Mike released her hands.

“Sir,” Mike said, “can I tie this bitch up and put some clamps on her tits?”

Don thought about it. “I don’t see why not. It’ll make it more fun to watch. But if you don’t throw a really good fuck into her after that, I’m going to be real disappointed in you.”

Mike froze at his master’s voice. “No, you won’t be disappointed, sir,” he said. “I really want to fuck this cunt until she screams. Something about her just brings it out in me. But I need to have her hurt while I’m doing it. And I need to have her tied up so she can’t get away. You want her to come, don’t you? Well, I suspect that’ll make her come real good.”

“Oh? Yeah, you’re probably right. She’s just a slut, but she’s a masochistic slut. Fix her the way you want her.”

She was too tired to fight. Mike rolled her onto her stomach and slapped leather restraints on each wrist, then manacled her hands to the iron rails at the head of the bed. He also fastened restraints around each ankle, had her draw her legs up until she was kneeling, then fastened them at the sides of the bed. Then he reached under her and clamped her nipples into gleaming silver jaws. If she didn’t keep her ass in the air and her shoulders arched, she would be lying on the clamps.

He knelt behind her and ran his hands over her body once, twice. Then he used his nails. She twisted, but could not get away from him or close her legs. Every time she moved, she brought her slippery, vulnerable folds into contact with his jutting cock. He leaned over her and played with her tits, sending jolts of pain through her nipples, made her tell him how much it hurt and how wet it made her cunt. He slapped her ass with the flat of his hand until it began to glow and burn again. His hand fell with more and more weight. Bottoms, she thought, are so much meaner than tops. They have no sense of pacing. She screamed as much because he was making her angry as because it hurt a lot, but she doubted that he cared as long as he knew he was hurting her.

Unlike Joe, he went into her in one vicious thrust, and she screamed. Tears sprang into her eyes. His long, skinny cock was stretching her in a very different way. It was much easier for her cunt to open wider than it was for it to become deeper. He was not waiting for her to open up, and she would be damned if she would ask him.

She did not want to come with him. Her vagina was a little sore, but his attitude bothered her more. Joe was an earthy little bull who could probably fuck anything that walked, but this southern redneck was in her only because Don told him to do it, and he was determined to make her pay for the humiliation Don had inflicted upon him in front of her. Nevertheless, when he reached underneath her and began to fondle her clitoris while his penis moved in and out of her hole, she almost started to spasm. Her sexual flesh was so congested that what happened to it mattered a great deal more than what went on in her head.

Don, that bastard, noticed, and moved in closer to watch. "You almost got her," he said. "Honey, wouldn't it be humiliating if we got you to like dick so much you just couldn't do without it? Just imagine, hunting for it in dark bars and dirty alleys, looking for a joystick to sit on, looking for some man with a big, hard dick to hold your legs apart and sink it in, being obsessed with cock, needing it and hating it at the same time. Coming around it. Being addicted to it. Needing it there to come around. Like you need it now, to come around, to fuck you and grind you down and make you holler and groan."

He put one foot up on the bed, then gradually insinuated the toe of his boot between her legs, nudging Mike's fingers aside. At the feel of that smooth boot leather against her clit, she couldn't hold back any more. She mashed her pussy down onto it, cried to be fucked, and came each time Mike's long cock slammed past her cervix. 'At least,' she thought, 'I didn't come for this fucker behind me, I came because Don's boot was pressing against me.' It was small consolation. The humiliation lingered, and it lit a fire that made her orgasm dwindle into irritation. She wanted more.

Joe came back with a paper cup of water and held it for her to drink while Mike turned her loose. When he went to remove the nipple clamps, Don said, "Don't. Leave them on. You, cunt. Go squat and piss."

She trotted into the bathroom and left the door open without being told. It was hard to get it started, with her insides rearranged and all of them staring at her. Finally, a hot stream spurted out. Before she got a chance to wipe herself, Don had her in handcuffs and headed toward the cage. He was impatient to get going. That meant he was planning to have a lot of fun. Shit. "You two climb into bed and amuse yourselves," he called over his shoulder.

He opened the cage door and thrust her inside, locked it, then reached through the bars for her tits. He had some chain and padlocks in his hand. In seconds, she was chained to the bars by her tits. Her ass pressed against the bars on the opposite side of the cage. He removed one handcuff, passed it around a bar, and put it back around her wrist. She could not straighten up because of the way her tits were chained, and she could not crouch either. Her ass was held in an inviting position, and with her hands cuffed behind her back, there was nothing she could do about it. Except suffer. Which she did, grudgingly.

She could only see part of the bed. Joe's hands were twined in Mike's hair, and he was urging Mike to suck harder. Sweat ran down his thickly furred chest and made his abs glisten. Mike's hands were busy below his waist, and Joe growled, "If you come in your hand, I'm going to make you eat it off your fingers."

Her jailer examined her through the bars. He prodded her experimentally with the smooth, rounded end of a wooden truncheon. She moved a little,

but the tug on her nipples made her wish immediately that she had not.

“You are my prisoner,” he said softly. “Cop-meat. And I’m going to fuck you. Guess where.” His gloved hand fondly squeezed her buttocks. “This is something I’ve wanted for a long time. But I really do want you to enjoy it. That makes it better for me, and more embarrassing for you. So I’m going to get you ready.” He showed her the well-greased butt plug. She averted her eyes. She always found the bright punk rubber they made sex toys out of garish, even offensive. It made them seem silly. Well, she wouldn’t have to look at it, because he was pushing it into her. True to his word, it didn’t hurt—just discomfited. Once she felt her anus close around the small neck of the plug, he moved her rear end over a little, so that a cold steel bar pressed into the cleft of her buttocks. “If you wiggle up against that,” he said, “you should get yourself warmed up real nice.” He regarded her in silence for a few seconds, then said, “What’s the matter? I’ve got two more, size large and extra-large, if you need any more encouragement.”

It’s odd, she reflected, how you can get into a scene and lose some of your inhibitions and go crazy, and while it’s happening, you think you’ll do anything, but of course you won’t. There’s always a hitch, always another barrier you don’t want to cross, another step that somebody has to push you down. I hate his guts, and I will not squirm around on this horrid thing while he stands there staring at me and jerking off. Fuck him.

“You stubborn, stupid, ungrateful, ill-trained bitch,” he cursed. “I don’t know why I bother. But if you think you’re going to start holding out on me at this stage of the game, shit-head, you better think again.”

A puff of air cooled her backside, and she realized she was dripping with sweat and that both of her shining, wet ass cheeks protruded slightly outside the frame of the cell. Then the source of the cool breeze—the doubled-up belt—landed on her butt, and there was no thinking, only pain. Not only was she crying out with each solid, flat impact of the belt, she was moving her ass provocatively, helplessly.

He didn’t have much of her to work on, so there was no hope that he would alternate blows upon her thighs and shoulders with the blows to her ass. Concentrated in such a small area, the beating hurt worse than it would have otherwise. There was no respite to gather courage and breath. So she

tried to curve her lower back and thrust more of her ass through the bars, adding just another inch of available skin to spread the pain out and make it easier to take. She succeeded (at the cost of drawing her nipples out to maximum tautness in the clamps) in flattening her thighs against the bars, and the belt kissed them for a few seconds, but returned inexorably to her ass.

Oh, yes, he was good. Thorough, hard, unstoppable. She had the feeling he could go on and on until she was deeply bruised, then bleeding, then showing bare bone through her flayed and shredded flesh. The pain was lightning in the marrow of her bones. And the animal noises she was making, the sweat flying into her eyes, hurt her pride just as much as the flying belt hurt her ass.

Under severe and continuous pain, the soul reaches a certain kind of clarity. Confusion and hope cannot be tolerated. Anything that deflects energy from withstanding the pain becomes useless, impossible to hang onto. Such ballast is jettisoned automatically. Pride (which clenches muscles and makes blows bruise instead of merely sting, which stiffens the neck and thickens the tongue until one cannot plead for mercy, which forbids the use of any clever, demeaning slave ploy to cajole the master and stay his anger) is the first thing to be thrown overboard.

After all, what justification is there for pride when you are locked in a cage, your breasts are suffering, your hands are locked behind your back, your ass has been filled by a foreign object, and someone is beating you black and blue? Your bestial need to survive the ordeal in one piece makes pride superfluous. And the seeping fluid of sexual arousal that makes your thighs slip together as he punishes you makes pride seem hypocritical, not to mention pretentious.

No, it is better to scream freely, without restraint, to plead for mercy, to cry, to struggle beautifully, to sweat and strain, to be marked and marked again, to ask him what he wants, to agree to everything he says, to ask for more if that is what he wants, to confess, to grunt like a pig or howl like a dog, to promise anything—anything—if only it will stop.

Once the emotions have been simplified and the illusion of free will destroyed, the body also needs to purge itself. Dancing under agony, scant

attention is left to control any sphincter or restrain excretion until it can be performed in a seemingly, civilized manner.

Now he was using a very thin riding crop. The pain escalated sharply. From the feel of it, it had a whalebone core. It was horrifying. Beyond expressing with a mere scream. She was convinced that the sweat rolling down her legs must be blood, knowing that it most certainly was not. It was too much—too much—too much for decency—

So she pissed. Uncontrollably. From fear and anguish. All over herself, the floor of the cage, and anything else close enough to get splashed.

Then he was enraged, as yellow drops of her urine beaded up on the toes of his mirror-shiny boots, and the strokes he laid on her with that evil, skinny crop made her shimmy as though she were possessed and yell until she lost her voice.

When it stopped, she felt as if she were in the eye of a hurricane. There was respite from pain, but not from drama or tension. The only question was, when would it start again, and how? She hung her head, weeping, in fact blinded by tears, slobbering and sweating, her nose dripping snot, every pore and orifice opened up, wet, and slack. If it were not for her tit clamps and the steel circlets around her wrists, she would have slid to the floor and passed out.

His hands were lifting the swollen masses of her buttocks, moving them to one side of the bar that divided them, his fingertips admiring this or that particularly purple spot. “Say that you love me,” he said, intense and tender.

“I love you,” she sobbed. What broken-hearted prisoner does not love her torturer after a beating stops?

“Say that you’re sorry.”

“I—I’m sorry.” She was blubbering now. God, how disgusting.

His questing fingers removed the butt plug—or rather, received it as it fell out of her. They probed—tentatively—and the by-now familiar feel of his rubber-clad erection against her raw cleft replaced his fingers.

“Say you want me.”

“I want you, sir.”

“To do what?”



Surrender. Quivering. Bowing to the inevitable.

“To fuck my ass, sir.”

“That’s good. That’s very good. I’d really like to.”

The leather-gloved hand was moving up and down his cock. She had never met a man who loved handling himself so much. The back of his moving hand pressed against her, making obscene insinuations. “Persuade me, cunt. Talk me into it. If you make it sound sweet enough, maybe I will ... put this inside of you. But hurry. If you don’t make it fast, I might come in my fist, and all this good hot stuff would go to waste. Talk to me, darlin’.”

Talk to him? And why was this harder (well, just as hard) as squirming on a butt-plug to heat herself up for his cock? It was another barrier—but this time she recognized the danger, refused to postpone her pleasure or invite more punishment, and pushed the words out of her mouth as fast as she could.

It was not a very elegant confession, but it was effective. A few vulgar sentences, interrupted by her last few sobs and soft cries of pain when he pressed his big hands into her bruised hindquarters, persuaded him to push his thumbs, side-by-side, into her ass. Lubrication followed. It was cold and thick. Jesus, it was creepy, having something in there. It gave her goosebumps and made her skin crawl, that awkward feeling of needing to shit, the fear of pain in the most tender of all places, anxiety about being dirty—and despite all that, the fierce hope that his strong cock would follow his fingers and pierce her deeply, take pleasure in her ass.

“You’re nice and snug,” he murmured, smooth leather hands reaching through the bars to stroke her, hands returning to her ass to lift and separate the cheeks, massage the sides of her asshole, position his cock and push a little. She held still, letting him work on her, while her hands gripped the bars and tried to pull them apart. There was a popping sensation as the head of his dick slipped past her sphincter, then the smooth length of the shaft dilating—filling—

And the bastard had one hand around her waist, fiddling with her clit! Damn him! It was distracting. She wanted to feel her ass hugging and milking him, delighting him until he came. The possibility of coming

herself was annoying. He kept it up anyway, holding her firmly against the bars, then began to withdraw from her ass. There was a sensation of relief—oh thank heaven, it's coming out—then dismay as he pushed his cock back in—oh, no, my ass is still full, it can't close up and get comfy, I need to shit, he's going to hurt me—

It seemed to go on forever. Apparently he could fuck her as long as he wanted to without losing control or coming. Damn. She twisted, pushed back when he pushed in, tried to get her hands free to stroke him, tried to twist her head around so she could see him, kiss him—

Impossible. "I can't touch you!" she cried in exasperation. His strokes speeded up. "Damn you, I can't move! My tits hurt—my ass hurts—let me go!" He panted, on the brink of forgetting about her and fucking her only to please himself. She told him in a fierce, insistent voice just how much he was hurting her by fucking her this way, how dirty it made her feel, how much she wanted his cock to hurt her, to use her, to let the cramping, clinging lining of her ass masturbate his cock. He groaned and gave up, then practically flew into her, battering her ass. His hands no longer felt for her clit. Instead, they squeezed her buttocks hard, until she screamed with anger and pain, and he came. Oh, oh, the way he came—the thought of that happening, up inside her ass, where he was so unwelcome and so much needed—made her shake with her own convulsions, a series of contradictions that actually pulled the clips off her tits and left her seeing exploding stars that faded into clouds of red mist.

There was more after that, but she had trouble remembering it later. Joe and Mike got her out of the cage, and the three men took her back to the bed and used her some more. At one point, she had someone's cock in her mouth, another in her cunt, and a third in her ass. When you finally surrender, anything becomes possible. They also made her masturbate, just to show them how she did it, and watch them fuck each other. When Don couldn't get it up any more, he pulled on a surgical glove and fisted her cunt. At some point, she passed out and was allowed to remain unconscious. She had vague memories of furry bodies grunting and fucking while extraneous limbs, even heads, fell on top of her.

She woke up when Don prodded the bottoms of her feet with a nightstick. He was fully dressed, even shaved. "Clean up," he said.

What for? The federal penitentiary? The bathroom floor was icy. She leaned on the wall of the shower, rubbed soap into her body, and could barely lift her arms to rinse it off. Jesus, what a night. She dried herself off with a threadbare towel that left enough moisture on her skin to make it difficult to get back into her jeans. The marks didn't help, either. Don stopped her so he could touch the welts. His fingers, cautious at first, pressed on them enough to make her hiss. "Don't get too sexy," he warned, "or I'll want to put some fresh ones on top of these." He leaned against the door while she finished dressing, an indecipherable expression on his face. She had to turn her back on him, so she went looking for her boots and put them on.

When she turned around, he was swinging a pair of handcuffs. "You'll have to go out in these," he said. So she turned around again, and he manacled her. He had the perfect cop knack of doing it, hitting the wrist with just the right speed and force to make the ratchet fly over and catch, snugging them up automatically till the cold steel rested against her skin, not needing to look when he set the end of the key in the tiny hole that would stop them from getting any tighter. Suddenly, she wanted to cry. They paused at the door. Mike and Joe were sprawled over one another. "I'll wake 'em up on my way back," Don said. "Let them sleep."

He put his shades back on and escorted her from the room. They retraced their route through the hotel to the street. Outside, it was daylight, and the brightness of it hurt her eyes. He led her to his bike, removed the cuffs, got on, and motioned her to join him.

"Hang on," he said gruffly, and made a wide U-turn. She wrapped her arms tightly around his chest, then laid her head against his broad back. The leather was crinkled, dusty, but cool and comforting. It also felt a little dry. That no-good houseboy of his must be neglecting his leather.

He drove right up to her house, told her to hop off, then turned the bike off and put the kickstand down. Without dismounting, he caught her arm. "I got something for you," he said. She waited, wide-eyed. Here, in front of the neighbors? He reached into his jacket and came back with her wallet, opened it, and dropped in a condom. She laughed and put it back in her pocket, then turned to go. But his hand caught her upper arm again. He dragged her back to the bike and took her chin, brought her mouth to his

and kissed her. His tongue was large but quite supple, and his mustache was coarse against her upper lip. One of his hands pressed her hand into his crotch, and she squeezed him one last time.

“Now I know where you’re at,” he said, “I may have to drop by for further questioning.”

“You bastard.”

“Watch your mouth, bitch. Go home and count your lucky stars.”

She ran for the door. She felt more like counting sheep. It was Saturday. Thank God, she could go back to bed.

On the kitchen table was a note: “Honey, I let myself in. Don called last night and said he and a couple of his friends were taking you to a surprise party for your birthday, so I’m not surprised to find you gone. I just climbed into your bed to wait for you. Come join me and tell me about it. I brought some homemade blintzes for breakfast. I love you slavishly. Fran.”

What a lucky dyke I am, she thought. First I get to star in the most scary porn movie in the world, now I come home and find that my best darling girl is waiting for me, so I won’t have to jerk off before I catch up on my beauty sleep. Fran and I are going to have a little talk later on today, though. Don and I are real good buddies, but I don’t think I told him quite *that* much about my sexual fantasies.

I wonder if I can get his birthdate out of his houseboy the next time Fran and I go over there for brunch. Bet I can if I corner him with a bottle of poppers and pinch his tits off. Why should I be the only one to get a surprise party?

## *The Vampire*

Purgatory was fairly crowded that night. About sixty men and a score of women had assembled in the tiny club by one o'clock in the morning. Most of the women (other than one who was naked and being led around on a leash) were clad in the high fashion of the bizarre— leather skirts, spike heels, PVC corsets, thigh-high boots, studded wristbands or belts, black latex evening gowns. A handful of scruffy lesbians, dressed like destitute bikers, kept to themselves around a low set of stairs along one wall, covered with carpet and meant to be sat upon. The men (other than a few slumming, well-built leathermen) were in casual, even sloppy street clothes. The mistresses stood by the bar, under track lights, impassive and unapproachable, each one giving out some ominous signal—perhaps toying with a whip around her waist or keeping time to the music with a riding crop in her gloved hand. No one but Teddy, the bartender, spoke to the few expensively attired tourist couples who walked around clinging to one another, wearing fixed, exaggerated smiles which were belied by the tight grip they kept on each other.

Solitary male submissives prowled around the dance floor and the two large bondage frames in the corner, up the stairs to the bathroom, down the stairs, toward the back and down the hall which opened into half a dozen tiny cubicles with plywood walls, back to the dance floor and up to the bar, to the well-lit women, and then stood humbly, wistfully, heads down, for long minutes until hope ran out and they moved off again to make another restless circuit of the premises. Occasionally a dominatrix would focus her gaze on a particular man and beckon him forward to kneel, get her a drink, light her cigarette, answer some insulting question, and kneel again.

A young man, perhaps more confident because he was better looking than the older, slack-bellied submissives, accosted a dark-haired, dignified mistress and asked if he might give her a foot massage. She acquiesced, and they adjourned to the carpeted stairs, where he sat on the floor, lovingly

removed one of her high heels, and kissed it. He cradled her stockinged foot in his lap and polished the sole with his thumbs. The leather dykes had made room for them, and one leaned over to offer the dominatrix a joint. She shook her head, but held it down for the submissive man to take a toke. He smiled and said, "Thank you, Mistress," and wondered why the act he was performing gave him so much pleasure. Would she, he wondered, let him remove her stockings and actually kiss her feet, lick them? She took the joint away from him and passed it up the stairs, then rested the foot that was still shod upon his crotch. "Do you like my shoes?" she asked. He nearly fainted as the spike pressed between his balls, and the sole threatened to flatten the shaft of his hardening penis. This was a very lucky night.

Back at the bar, someone noticed this spontaneous interaction and felt jealousy gnaw at his heart. He was one of a gaggle of submissives dancing attendance upon a very lovely, very young professional who styled herself The Goddess Domina. For a moment, he stopped competing for her attention and watched the mistress seated on the stairs grind her heel into the boy's crotch while he leaned back, yielding to her, suffering written all over his face. She was older and plainer than Domina, but she was calm and self-assured, handling her young man with such understanding, easily claiming him for her service. Domina, on the other hand, was already drunk, a criminal waste of the small fortune in cocaine she had snorted before coming to Purgatory. Her jealous submissive knew exactly how much coke there had been because that was the price of being brought to this club with her. Why did he always have to pay? He told himself that Domina was the best-looking woman in the club. The other submissives must surely be jealous of him because he belonged to such a gorgeous bitch-goddess. Why, then, did he want to keep watching the foot-slave and his newly found mistress instead of keeping track of Domina's tiresome antics and pretending it was a privilege to light her cigarettes?

His Goddess was uncoiling a short bullwhip, only four feet long, and ordering one of her submissives to crawl away from her. She tried to hit him as he scuttled away and wound up tangling the end of her whip in the taps behind the bar. Before anything could get broken, Teddy plucked it from her hands. "Domina," he said sharply, "you know we don't allow bullwhips in here. The club just isn't large enough." The rebuke was administered in a

way intended to save her face. After all, he had not told her what he really thought, which was that she was an incompetent alcoholic who ought not to be allowed to hit anyone with so much as a feather duster. She gave him an evil look anyway, the ungrateful, spoiled twit. Let her sulk, Teddy told himself.

“Let’s go the Mine Shaft,” one of the leathermen urged his partner, slapping his gloves against one palm. He was wearing a shiny, custom-made leather jacket and chaps that were so new, they creaked. His cover was an American attempt to imitate the Muir motorcycle cap. It was decorated with cheap chain and a badly cast American eagle. He wore his keys on the left, and they jangled as he rocked from one boot to the other.

“Mmm, we will,” said the other man absently. His head (as was fitting) was bare, and he kept his hair short, to make the small bald spot look like a tonsure. He wore his keys on the right, where they had, over time, left an impression, an indent in the chaps that cushioned them, kept them quiet. His leathers were not as fancy or as shiny as his companion’s. The completely broken-in latigo hugged his burly body. “Who just came in?” he said, lifting his head to stare toward the door. “Oh, this is a treat, Howard.”

Howard couldn’t see what the fuss was about. “Huh?” he said. It was just a skinny little boy, wearing *brown* leather, no less, with a Muir, which of course was black. The tight pants were tucked into knee-high boots, the sleeves on the leather shirt were rolled up in concession to the summer night, and the peaked cap was ornamented with a silver skull and crossbones on the front. The leather was the color of dried blood. The boy had short, black hair and an olive complexion. A cat-o’-nine-tails and two flails were threaded through the large key ring on his left hip. There was a dagger stuck in his belt behind his right hip, and another, smaller one, tucked in his right boot. “I didn’t know you were into chicken, Gil.”

Gil sighed. “That’s Kerry,” he explained. “Have you ever seen her work?”

Her? This became even less exciting. Why had they left all the hot men at the Spike to come to this weird hangout?

“We should stick around, Howard.”

Now it was Howard's turn to sigh. There was usually no arguing with Gil when he used that tone of voice. "Get me another beer, boy," he ordered sharply.

"Yes, sir," Gil said courteously, and went at his own pace to obey.

Iduna overheard this interaction (her hearing was very sharp) and chuckled. She was in her usual place at one end of the bar, where she could play dice with Teddy. For most of the night, she stood, but Teddy kept a stool there in case she wanted to sit down. None of the regulars sat there, even if she was not in that night. Teddy would warn away tourists who made the mistake of trying to occupy her spot if he thought they had potential to become members of the scene. If he wanted to get rid of them, he let nature take its course. Helping people to see themselves as others saw them was Iduna's greatest gift.

Tonight, she was wearing a long, black dress with spaghetti straps. It was very low-cut, but a short jacket with long sleeves was worn over the dress, and concealed everything except a white diamond of cleavage. A brilliant red stone carved in the shape of a skull glittered between her breasts. Beneath the jacket, the waist of the dress was reinforced with whalebone stays, giving her a wasp waist and a very straight back. It also shaped her ample ass and made it swell out invitingly, but her imperious manner made it quite clear that you would lose your hand if you touched her. She had long, blonde hair, and she was drinking a glass of red wine.

None of the submissive men approached this lady, but they kept track of her out of the corner of their eyes. So did the leather dykes and the dominatrices. This was easy to do, because her complexion was so pale it was luminous. In the dark, she almost seemed to glow. Anyone who had gotten close enough would have seen that there was something odd about her skin. It seemed to lack pores or wrinkles. The few people who did get that close to her were usually too busy with their own troubles to notice her peculiarities. But they did notice that it was difficult to tell how old she was. No one would have mistaken her for a youngster, but she was not middle-aged, either. It was as if her biological clock was not set to the human year.

"Teddy," Domina said breathily, "here's my riding crop."



“What?” For one glad moment, he thought she was asking to be thrashed with it. Then she deigned to explain.

“Keep it behind the bar,” she snapped, and tried to stalk away.

“Domina!”

She came back, piqued. Teddy held out her crop. “I don’t have room back here for this,” he said brusquely, and began to lift glasses and swab underneath them.

Iduna smiled. Her cane, with its red-and-black leather handle, was neatly racked above Teddy’s bottles, along with a handful of implements that belonged to other mistresses he had honored. Teddy would have been glad to provide a similar service for Kerry, but she never let any of her whips out of her hands.

Then Iduna realized that the show Gil had promised Howard was about to happen. Kerry had ordered a bottle of beer and stood with her back to the rest of the room, one foot up on the bar rail. She drank with intense concentration, like a thirsty animal. It looked as if she were oblivious to everything except the beer gurgling down her throat. But when a largish, clumsy-looking man lumbered toward her, she turned around and snarled at him before he could touch her. The noise was uncanny. There were no words, but you would have to be crazy not to understand that it meant, “Keep away—or pay the price.” No wonder he jumped away from her. But Domina snickered at him, and Iduna thought, oh dear, now he’ll have to get angry and prove something.

“The name’s Bill,” he said heartily, shoving his hand at Kerry. She looked at it as if it were leprous. There was a long silence. She regarded him from behind her mirrored shades. No telling what she thought. Iduna looked lovingly at that full mouth and the two tiny puckers in it over the prominent canine teeth. She was sure no one else could have spotted these minute irregularities, or known why there were two places where Kerry’s lips could not quite meet.

Finally, the leatherwoman spoke. “Can I help you?” she said softly, speaking each word slowly and precisely. It was not a question. Ooh, Iduna squealed to herself, massacre alert, massacre alert!

“Wall, Ah don’t know what a little bitty thang like yew could do fer me,” he drawled. An out-of-towner, Iduna thought. But that was no excuse. She was an out-of-towner herself, and she knew better.

Kerry smiled. On her face, this expression signified the opposite of its usual meaning.

The fool kept on talking. “Why Ah don’t reckon yew could even make a dent in my hide,” he chuckled. “Probably be a waste of time. Ah kin take quite a lot, yew know. Wouldn’t want ta embarrass a lil gal like yew—yew are a gal, ain’tcha?”

Then the fatuous ass pronounced his own sentence: “Ah kin take anythin’ yew kin dish out, sister.”

It took one well-placed kick to take him down. Iduna was the only one who could follow the swiftness of that booted foot. Once down, he stayed down, and Kerry kicked him in the direction she wanted him to go. The pointed toe of her boot made a crunching noise when it hit his buttocks and ribs. She hustled him to the foot of a very large ladder that stood in one corner of the dance floor. Then she put her boot on the back of his neck and pushed him flat. She bent down to speak to him. What she told him made him keep very small, then shudder and hide his head beneath his arms. Eventually, she lifted him up off the floor—literally lifted him, with one hand—and hauled him up to face the whipping ladder.

A revolving ball with mirrored facets spun a dizzy procession of colored lights over the scene. The ball was part of the special effects for the disco music played on other nights of the week. This club had a different name then, and catered to vanilla swingers. But Kerry, a master of her craft, was not distracted. She knew you must practice this despised art where you can, and disregard what is tawdry or unclean—or learn to love the dirt, the sleaze, because it represents your membership in the elite.

Now she had him remove his shirt and grab a rung far above his head. He was stretched on his tiptoes in front of her. She asked him a question only he could hear. “Ah don’t want no bondage,” he said loudly. Iduna and Teddy shared a brief, unpleasant laugh. Planarians can learn.

Howard sat up and took notice when Kerry began to work on Bill’s naked back with a short, suede flail. Hanging from her belt, it looked homemade,

innocuous. In her hand, it was a weapon. She whirled it so quickly that there was no apparent difference between the sound it made swinging through the air and the sound it made striking skin. It was one continuous, ominous tone, a single voice that became a duet when the man began to scream. However, he did not let go. Gil leaned toward Howard and whispered that he had seen some people cut and run at this stage. Howard was still skeptical, but now he was keeping an open mind.

Everyone watched. It was what you did at the club when someone hung by their cold and sweating palms and took a beating. Granted, not all of them approved. By tomorrow night, rumor would have it that Kerry had half-killed someone. Heavy S/M is not popular with most of the adherents of light bondage and discipline. Unless you love pure pain for its own sake, it is difficult to see that deliberately administered, controlled agony retains its own severe sensuality. Iduna rocked on her bar stool, separating her legs enough to let the edge of it press across the middle of her cunt. Teddy spared a glance for her and smiled at her flushed cheeks, then ran a hand along his own erection. It had been a long time since he had played with Kerry. She hadn't been in for a while. Maybe Iduna would take a quick stint behind the bar.

The leatherwoman had switched to a longer flail. It was not suede, and the tails had knots in them. Bill's broad back was now an evenly raised mass of bruises. Kerry danced behind him, side to side, quick as a cat, cruel and exact. He was crying out continuously, twisting from side to side. He seemed to have forgotten he could let go of the ladder. Iduna swallowed a mouthful of wine and thought, how delicious, it would take only one good stroke to split that wide open. And of course this is what Kerry (wielding the braided cat now) did. Nine narrow tails whistled through the air, and the skin divided, rent, bled. She shifted her weight to the other hip and reversed the motion, criss-crossing the previously inflicted lashes.

Bill let go of the ladder and turned around as soon as the first stroke drew blood, but the woman behind him was so fast, she inflicted a dozen times nine crimson and overflowing welts, each bleeding bouquet placed an even distance from its mates, before he could get out of her way. As he turned to face her, she continued to flog him overhand, catching his shoulders, then

changed direction and came down hard across both of his tits. The welts were instantly visible, even in the club twilight.

“Jesus,” Iduna heard Howard say, “this is a bit sick.” Gil sighed again.

“I’m sorry!” Bill screamed, falling to the filthy concrete floor. “Please stop, please stop, please stop!” She jerked her arm back, and the incomplete stroke came back into her own stomach. He was crawling now, reaching for her hand. Despite being an out-of-towner, he must have heard enough of Kerry’s legend to know that she allowed select victims to kiss her ring. But Iduna knew he would never receive that boon, even after taking all that punishment. He had promised her he could take *anything*, and then he had tried to get away. Kerry didn’t like it when they moved, let alone tried to get away.

Indeed, a boot in the face stopped his progress, and its owner removed her silver shades to give him one hard stare that shut his whining mouth. There was something funny about this, since she wasn’t even looking into his face. She was looking at the blood that ran in thin but eager trickles to the floor. In the middle of his renewed and tearful apologies, she spun on her heel and made for the door, tucking the blood-stained cat beside its fellows. “Shit!” Teddy said, and slammed his beer down on the bar. He turned to complain to Iduna, but she was not there.

Kerry was not pleased to be intercepted between the coatcheck and the door by her personal, self-appointed voyeur, wine glass in hand. She made quite a provocative picture, this full-bosomed, very pale woman in her black dress, but she was in the way and a nuisance. Then she became impertinent. She tilted the glass to her lips and let a half-swallow of wine run out of the corner of her mouth. It was just a little too purple to be blood, that tiny rivulet, the few drops clinging to her lips.

Kerry snarled and went sideways to get by, angry, almost pushing the woman who had arranged this strange tableau for her. A man who had behaved that way might have gotten a broken jaw for his bad manners. But she was known for her chivalry. It was part of a code she thought all true leathermen (regardless of gender) should obey. Let women make do with their feminine wiles and plots and foibles. She did not want to become entangled in them. This creed of Kerry’s took a form that dismayed many of

the heavier masochists in the scene: she could rarely be persuaded to treat women like sides of beef. Only men were usually that stupid or lucky. In her lofty unconcern with women's untidy minds and manipulative ways, Kerry had somehow omitted to learn who this impudent blonde (whom she had certainly seen many times before) was. Ignorance is bliss, but we are rarely allowed to remain in that happy state.

There was another club, Roissy, just three blocks away, closer to the docks. That was where Kerry headed now, whips swinging at her hip, the knife scabbard bumping the small of her back, her boot heels making a satisfying tempo on the pavement, a rhythm that confirmed that she was in motion, making progress, getting away from those thin scarlet streams, the smell of life that made her mouth water and her jaws ache.

She knew immediately that she was being followed. She also had no trouble detecting that the person behind her was wearing spike-heeled shoes, and so she knew who was following her. The why of it bothered her, and the notion that anybody in spikes could keep up with (let alone catch or combat) someone in boots amused her.

She cut through an alley, thinking, 'Let's see if the bitch will come into the darkness and teeter around in the trash and rubble for the sake of a closer look at me.' Besides, it was a shortcut to Roissy.

Surprise! There at the mouth of the alley was her pursuer, somehow ahead of her and once again blocking her way. She was wearing a satin cloak with a red lining, and a sudden gust of wind (uncharacteristic for the season) lifted it and spread it out until it fluttered about her like wings. Her breasts gleamed like alabaster, even in the absence of street lights and moonlight.

Kerry had reached for her boot and belt and unhitched her blades the second she realized she was being followed, despite her contempt for the mettle of her opponent. She did not consciously plan to use them on the other woman. She was sure she could take her with her bare hands, if a physical contest was necessary. But that seemed unlikely. No, the blades were for others, stronger and more dangerous, who might come upon them and interrupt their tête-à-tête.

Silence poured into the space between them, filled it up, then spilled over into speech.

“Why are you running away?” purred the woman in the black dress, red flames playing all around her. She was very sure of herself.

Startled, Kerry blurted, “What the hell are you talking about?” then bit her lip and repented not keeping silent. She knew she was about to be laughed at.

She was. The laugh was rich, full of private enjoyment and secret knowledge. It was not mocking, but it was too intimate, and it made her hate the intrusive blonde whose name she wished she could remember, so she could chew her out properly.

“You haven’t fed for months now. You still draw blood, but you don’t allow yourself to taste it.”

This time, Kerry held her tongue, put her hand onto her dagger, and watched to make sure the other did not come any closer. If she had spoken, she wondered if she would be able to hear herself talking over the noise that her blood was making, roaring in her ears. This was starting to feel like her worst-case scenario, hardly a fair price to pay for a little mayhem at a braggart’s expense.

“I think I’m the only one who noticed. It’s so much a part of your legend, this penchant you have for flaying someone with your cat-o’-nine-tails until the walls and innocent bystanders are spattered with blood, or using your knife to release the hot, sticky, salty fuel that feeds the heart, the lungs, and the brain. It appalls everyone so much that they don’t realize you’ve ceased to put your lips to the wound, to swallow what you’ve set free, or clean your blade with your tongue. But I do. I do. And I wonder why. Would you like to tell me why?”

The leatherwoman shook her head so hard that the gesture looked painful. The nerve! What could they possibly have to talk about? She owed no one any explanations. When she spoke, it was not to the point: “Stay right where you are.”

“I’m not here to assault you!” The tone was hurt surprise. “I’m not going to approach you without permission. I just want to have a little chat. I may

want you to come to me, later, when we understand one another better. But I promise I won't move one step from this spot, no matter what happens."

Was this some crazy kind of come-on, then, from a dominant who wanted to bottom for her? Kerry had received many invitations like these. Perhaps she was being paranoid. But if that was the case, her rule was that the other must make an explicit request. It would be insulting to anticipate such needs in a colleague. So they watched each other in renewed silence, taking measurements, making calculations.

Like most women, the blonde did not seem to be able to hold her tongue. Kerry had braced herself when she saw that whorishly lipsticked mouth, with its bee-stung lower lip, open. But the woman only said, "I was in such a hurry to catch up with you that I left my cigarettes at the bar. Would you happen to have one?"

A pack was extracted from a leather shirt pocket and went flying toward Iduna, closely followed by a silver lighter. She caught them both in the same hand, took a cigarette, lit it, and tossed both packet and lighter back. They were caught and returned to the breast pocket. Kerry waited two heartbeats, then relented and fished them out again and lit a cigarette for herself. Iduna smiled. It was a minor triumph, a small victory, to have them share even this much common ground—a quiet smoke together in a dark alley, with rats just out of eyeshot, telling each other their tribal stories about eating garbage and tormenting human babies, fucking their mothers and devouring their own succulent children.

Smoke curled around her fingers as she resumed talking. "I have been an archivist of your legend ever since I came to the city. In fact, your legend is what brought me here." Kerry gave her a brief nod, accepting this as her due. "I've been collecting all the stories about you, verifying what I can, making observations of my own. I'm always interested in legends even if the people who inspire them are not really of mythic proportions. But when I realized just how legendary you truly are, I began to keep very close track of you. As far as I know, James was your last ... shall we say, completely satisfying experience? It's a little less cold than calling him a meal. He says you tied him down, took a scalpel, exposed an artery in his thigh and partially sutured it, slit it between the sutures and drank nearly a pint of his blood before you pulled the stitches tight and closed the incision with

butterflies of surgical tape. All with his permission, of course, and he says it made you quite sick to have that much at once. He was close to passing out, so he may have been hallucinating. But I don't think so. Was his blood bad? Is that what stops you now? A fear of tainted blood? Disease, perhaps? Or did you get enough from him to last you all this while?"

Now they both knew the game, her question and the answer, and Iduna saw the mirrored shades removed for her benefit, saw herself regarded by cold eyes, eyes surrounded by darkness, eyes that already saw her dead in six different positions. "James," said Kerry hoarsely, "talks too much."

"Don't be hasty," Iduna cautioned, smiling and blowing smoke up at the moonless sky. "Surely you haven't lived this long by being rash and impulsive."

Now it was her turn to be laughed at. After all her casual conversation about other people's blood, it was horrid to feel her own turn to cold sludge, stop running through her veins, then freeze solid, liable to break like glass and cut her to pieces inside if she moved.

Well, but ... Iduna had been in some very dangerous places, and she always spoke to the people she met there. Otherwise, life would turn into an ordeal instead of an adventure. Now, she spoke as if to her lover, which of course is the most dangerous audience of all.

"Wouldn't you like to know how I figured it out?" The question was a caress. She made herself wait for the curt, reluctant nod before she continued. "To begin with, there is your name. It means 'son of the dark one'." She paused for that to sink in, then said politely, "You have not asked, but my name is Iduna. In ancient Norse mythology, Iduna guarded the golden apples of immortality." 'But in our case, my love, the apples are the brightest, truest red imaginable,' she thought, but did not say.

Kerry twitched. But Iduna felt like being a little ruthless. It was rude, forcing someone to make their own introduction. "You have trouble remembering your age and birthday. You've told some people you're twenty-two and other people you're thirty-five. There are certain historic periods you are very fond of, and when you speak about them, you occasionally lapse into the first person and the present tense. You speak several languages; however, none of them (with the exception of your



American English) is contemporary. I am enough of a linguist to recognize nineteenth-century French when I hear it, and your German is full of colloquialisms from the 1930s. You say you were born here, but there is no birth certificate on file for you in any of the five boroughs of New York City.” In the process of investigating Kerry, Iduna had figured out how to dummy up this basic I.D. for herself. ‘You need some help,’ she thought. ‘It’s dangerous to fall behind the times.’

“You are photophobic. You don’t even like the brightly lit area of the bar where all the other S&M dominants stand and model. You wait for your prey in shadows. You have an unusual strength, you are preternaturally quick, and you have an ability to see in the dark and hear things no one else can hear. Your sense of smell is also very keen. I’ve traced some of your employment, and much of it is at places where you can handle blood or blood products. All of these jobs have been abruptly terminated for mysterious reasons, and you have not had one for quite some time. You not have sex, ever, with anyone that I’ve been able to locate and, given your reputation, I would imagine that someone who had come close enough to even lie about it would have claimed they had made love to you by now.”

Kerry shuddered delicately. “Sex with a victim,” she said with great distaste, “is out of the question.”

Iduna ignored this aside. “All of this could simply mean you are an adventurer, a liar, a psychopath, a soldier of fortune, or a celibate, amateur hematologist, but I don’t think any of these explanations are logical. So many of the stories about ... your people are idle fantasy or vicious gossip motivated by religious bigotry, but I know enough not to expect you to run away from crosses. Your kind is far older than Christianity. You love garlic, and you have a perfectly good reflection in a mirror. But I don’t need evidence as crude as that to recognize you for what you are. You are a predator, and human beings are your natural prey. Humans like to believe that they are the ultimate predators, at the top of the food chain. They sleep secure in the belief that nobody stalks them. It is only their deep need for this illusion that keeps people from recognizing you, running away from you, and screaming their fool heads off.”

A grin matched the skull on Kerry’s cap. “Ah, but people do run from me, screaming.”

“When you are partially unveiled, yes. During the epiphany, then they scream and escape if they can.”

“But you have not screamed. Or tried to run. You came after me, Iduna.”

Her own name spoken in Kerry’s cold voice made her shiver. “Perhaps it’s because, despite all my circumstantial evidence, I’m still not sure just who or what you are. And there is only one way for me to be sure, isn’t there?” She put her hands to her bodice and touched the ruby skull. “This dress has a built-in corset, a very old-fashioned one, of a seventeenth-century pattern,” she said. “The jacket covers the laces so most people don’t notice. It has a busk in the front. That was the earliest form of stay, you know. Only my busk is rather special.” From between her breasts she pulled a very slim blade. The grinning jewel was its pommel.

Before it was fully exposed, Kerry had a knife in her hand, poised for use. Iduna ignored this, put the thin steel between her teeth, and removed her black jacket. The long sleeves were quite tight, and she had to turn the damn thing inside out to get it off.

“Have you ever noticed my veins? Probably not. You haven’t been watching me the way I’ve been watching you, and anyway, I don’t expose a lot of skin in the clubs. I like to show cleavage and nothing else, not even my forearms or my calves.” Kerry was staring at her décolletage. Iduna knew that her breasts were very prominent and was always amused by men and women who were so attracted to them that they talked to her tits rather than to her face. It was appropriate, in a way, because breasts were symbolic of nurturing. ‘But the nourishment I provide,’ she thought, ‘is not milk, but a different humor.’

She continued her pedantic, distracting speech. “My skin is very pale, almost transparent. It looks fragile, but I heal very quickly. My veins are close to the surface, easy to get to. See how thick and blue they are? I never have any trouble giving blood. The needle just pops right in, and out it spurts. Easy as sin.”

She was picking at her wrist with the point of the blade, then caressing the inside of her elbow. “All it would take is a little more pressure, and we’d have a fountain here. A scarlet fountain, pouring onto the dirty ground, completely wasted, unless ... unless someone had a use for it.

Unless someone caught it in their mouth before it hit the ground. Caught it and drank it, took life from it, rolled it around their tongue and palate and described the vintage to me, swallowed and swallowed as if they would never get enough. Look, my pulse is beating right here.”

The arm was held out steady, not shaking. A glinting edge pressed against old scars along the vein, hard enough to make an indentation but not to break the skin. The sight made Kerry’s leather-clad hips jerk, just once, but Iduna saw it and was immediately excited. How interesting, to see a reflexive response there, in the crotch, instead of just the jaws and hands. What possibilities it opened up ... but the words the leatherwoman spoke next shattered her erotic fantasies.

“You will bleed to death if you cut yourself there, that way,” said she. It might have been a report on the temperature and time of day.

“Don’t you want it? Need it? Wouldn’t you like to smell it, falling through the air? The wind is behind me. It would bring the scent to you at once, fresh and abundant.”

The other shook her head. “No.”

“No?”

“No. Why are you surprised? Even if this mad story you’ve concocted is true, you yourself said I’ve already gone without it for months.”

Iduna made the mistake of arguing. “Then the need must be intense right now. You must be hungry. I don’t think you’ll die without blood, but it must make you feel a little sick to be deprived. A little less powerful than usual, a little less energetic. Distracted. Frustrated. Off.”

Iduna had never had someone pay so much attention to her with such a look of utter indifference on their face. She had not anticipated this much resistance. This was even more difficult than locating her quarry in the first place. Clearly, the offer of her wrist was not enough. Perhaps scars annoyed them. She thought they had a heat-seeking sense, like rattlesnakes. She imagined that scars would be like cold streaks in the hot aura that radiated through the skin, making the marked person less appealing than someone with a smooth body. Perhaps this one was just fastidious about unzipping an old scar, thought of it as drinking from a glass someone else had already used.

She probed again, looking for the weak spot, the turning point, the breaking point. “Do you prefer men, is that it? Is it because women are weaker, smaller, and too quickly drained? But then, I’ve never heard of you leaving anyone bloodless and dead. So why should it matter? I know most of you don’t need as much blood as the stories say you do. Too many of those legends are about stupid and greedy ones, the ones so unrelentingly selfish they got caught. Or the ones who unfortunately can’t live on anything other than human blood. Why are you denying yourself this much pleasure?” She dared to allow compassion to creep into her voice. “You must have had to develop an enormous amount of self-control and get awfully good at living in a constant state of deprivation. Is that why you stopped going after James, to prove that you could do without it if you had to? But it’s not necessary now. I want you to have me.”

The stony face of the other said, “Don’t try to cozen me. In a thousand years, you could never understand what I am, where I have been, what living has done to me.”

Iduna despaired. Her head drooped, and Kerry almost felt sorry for her. Then inspiration struck. “Or could it be that you would rather drink your life from a woman, hold her in your arms, slit her throat with your teeth, then eagerly gulp down what wells up around your mouth—yet you refuse to let yourself have me because you would enjoy it too much and then want it and need it again? Are you afraid you would lose control if you got what you really want?”

There was no change in the other’s fighting stance and icy expression. The air between them simply became busier, hummed like a high-voltage wire, stank of ozone, seemed to turn an even darker shade of midnight blue.

Now or never. It was the moment that would decide the outcome of the hunt. Iduna stared into Kerry’s eyes, covered with the reflecting aviators, and used the tiny portrait in them to guide her hand while she made two slashes at the place where her breasts came together, a little ‘v’ that fit into her cleavage. The blood immediately started to rill, and she cupped her hands under her breasts to help her corset push them close enough together to gather it and keep it in a pool.

She knew that she was as beautiful then as she ever would be— her head tossed back, her mass of curly, blonde hair being rearranged by a breeze, her white throat, shoulders, and breasts exposed, and the red color of the thread of blood just barely distinguishable from the ebony of her dress in the darkness.

She thought for a moment that her adversary had disappeared, because she suddenly was not where she had been. But then muscular hands dug into her back, claws bent and held her. There was a tongue lapping between her breasts, but what was there was quickly consumed, and there were sharp teeth biting, and warm, soft, strong lips pressing around them, sucking. The pain disappeared as soon as her blood mingled with the fluids in the other's mouth. Of course there's no pain while they're feeding, she thought sleepily. It's their adaptive trait, evolutionarily speaking ... The hands moved to her breasts and began to knead them, like nursing kittens, and she writhed from the sudden pleasure it brought her. Apparently she moved too much, because one of the hands left her breast and took her by the hair. Steel fingers kept her bent back in a perfect bow, the bleeding part of her uppermost, taut, an available feast.

She could smell her own blood. It was sickening and yet very satisfying, familiar, comforting. The scent of fresh blood was nicer than menstrual fluid, though it was always pleasant to bleed. The body over her moved convulsively, paying heed only to what it was drawing in from her, taking care only that she would not escape until she had given satisfaction, satiation, quieted all hunger. She was painfully aware of her heart beating in her left bosom, and realized that was the breast that the brutal hand kept milking and bruising, as if to keep the heart pumping, as if to squeeze its contents directly into the waiting mouth full of razors.

Iduna slipped on the gravel, and immediately the hand left her breast and a strong arm was wedged between her legs, the hand clasping the small of the back, holding her the way a mother holds an infant. She realized by the mushy feel of her panties against Kerry's leather sleeve that she was wet down there, as wet as the mouth that fed on her. Her assailant realized it too, because she ripped at her panties, literally clawed them to pieces, and then she was being crammed full, opened terribly, spread far too wide, almost lifted off her feet by the force of the fucking, and it hurt so much for

so long that she came, came even as the canines sank another notch into her cuts and drank fresh blood from the deepened wound. Which penetration made her come? She did not know.

Then she was being picked up, cradled. Adults are usually not lucky enough to re-experience this infantile pleasure. Even she had not guessed just how strong Kerry really was. A face was close to hers, familiar for its wolfish features, unfamiliar for its look of peace. The teeth in that smile were stained, and the tongue was cupped. The mouth came toward hers, and she opened her mouth, and the tongue slid into her and fed her a mouthful of her own blood. They kissed around it, neither one swallowing, keeping the blood between them to taste, play with, and savor for as long as possible, until their mouths were so full of saliva they had to swallow or let it run down their chins. Then Kerry bent down and took more, and offered it to her again, and this time Iduna leaped for it, bit at it, then worried the mouth that spit blood into hers. Now there were words being spoken in between the kisses, words that said, “Be careful. Are you really sure you want some of *my* blood?”

Iduna almost wept with gladness. So there was love here, or at least need—a need to keep her available for another feeding. It is only when they become indifferent or vengeful that the undead make their victims like themselves, immortal predators and thus useless and untouchable. When passion returned, she was careful not to bite the other’s lips or tongue.

“Take me with you,” she whispered, and her bearer did not ask her where or when, just carried her away in a rush of black and silent wind. Oh, how she had missed being transported this way, effortlessly, in the grip of something far more powerful than herself, so powerful that it was pointless to worry about the destination or what would happen once they arrived there. The venom that had prevented her blood from clotting and closing the wound sang now in her veins, making her see colors behind her closed eyelids, making her warm inside and simultaneously relaxed and alert. No other drug could ever duplicate this ecstasy, this calm. She should know, she had had long enough to search for a substitute. Her thighs trembled, needing to be separated, and the arms around her tightened, hurt her and reassured her.

Her arms full, but under no strain, Kerry felt amazed, disgusted with herself, hopeful, but terribly afraid. She had a low tolerance for ambiguity. It slowed her down too much, made her angry. She had not succumbed to temptation, and that was a dangerous weakness. She had not kept her secret, which must mean she had been careless. If one woman could ferret it out, someone else could. Furthermore, she had not slain her discoverer. This was surely stupidity. The code had been violated beyond repair. It was time for another change, another sleep, another decade, another name.

But this blood—whose? Her name was ... Iduna—Iduna's blood had been very good. She had never had it offered this way, seductively, with persistence and determination, or felt it being given up with joy. But should the pleasure of feeding be mutual? It made her uneasy, no matter how many times she had imagined it and craved it. Now, of course, she wanted it again, and how she resented that! Would there be more nourishment, more pleasure from this source? Or would the woman wake up sweating with the fear of death and the devil, sick of what she had done, and repudiate it and try to make her terror public? What did it mean, to be offered blood by a mortal who claimed to know what she was doing? Could anyone who was not like herself really know what it meant? Had any of her kind ever felt this way, asked themselves these questions? Perhaps it would be better to allow her own veins to be opened, briefly become prey, and turn this taking heifer in a hated peer. That image brought too much shame, hostility, and desire (yes, desire) to be tolerated for long. What had she done?

She wrapped Iduna's cloak more snugly about her to shut out the cold, transparent fingers of the wind, hugged her newly opened vessel to her breast, then took her deeper into darkness. The Eyrie was still far away. The slut moaned, twisted, exposed her throat. She wanted it again. It was going to be difficult to avoid draining her completely before dawn. *What had she done?*

Safe, at home in the inhuman arms, Iduna dabbled her fingers in her still-oozing wound and thought, 'After the long hunt, the desperate search, the years of doing without, being alone and bereft, with no wings to shelter me, no sharp teeth in any of the mouths that kissed me, I have you. You are no dream, no fantasy. Finally, my treasure, my pet, my lord, I will make you

my beloved. Your strength, your magic, my death and your immortality—I have it all within my reach.’

This rare and beautiful creature did not know how happy she was going to make her, how much she would change her life. Iduna assumed she would never know how Kerry really felt about her, if only because she was so ignorant about her own emotions. The first one, the almost-forgotten one, so needy and yet powerful, had been that way, and Kerry seemed younger, less experienced than it. But Kerry would always need her because her blood was so sweet. Evolutionarily speaking, it was an adaptive trait. And she knew how to make it interesting to take. She had been well schooled.

How old are you, Iduna wondered, and how old am I? Will you ever bother to ask me the kind of questions I’ve been asking about your kind for these countless lonely, crazy years? Is my blood, precious as it is to me, enough to pay for the wonder and contentment I feel in your presence?

She twined one arm around her captor’s neck and reached with the other hand for the leather seam that accentuated, pulled up, and divided Kerry’s genitals. The curve was like a ripe peach pushed into her hand. It rubbed insistently against her palm. Kerry made the same noise she had made to warn the man in Purgatory to keep his distance, but Iduna only smiled. Abstinence is the mother of shameless lust.

“Sex doesn’t seem to be out of the question after all, does it?” the vampire said.



## *The Spoiler*

He slept in a pile of dirty socks and soiled jockstraps, souvenirs of the men he adored, sometimes acquired without their permission. In winter, for warmth, he pulled a leather hide over this nest and its virile odors. When he woke up, he ran three miles. His spartan breakfast was part of a careful diet supplemented with a bewildering rainbow of vitamins and minerals. Every other afternoon, he lifted weights. His body was well defined and hard, which pleased him, but not because he was narcissistic. It was the value others placed on his physique that gave him pleasure. The rest of each day, Monday through Friday, he worked diligently at his chosen profession. It brought him a comfortable income but placed no demands on his heart—or his evenings and weekends.

It was the rest of his time that was important, the time when he could prowl and sniff for the men who made him hungry, carefully laying the plans that would allow him to pounce and feast. That was when he became the spoiler.

When he went out, he always wore the same set of leathers. These carefully tailored black skins had cost him several times more than some men pay for an entire wardrobe of tanned cowhide. He wore a very tight, short-sleeved, black-leather shirt that laced up the front. This supple, buttery-soft garment clung to him, moved with him as if it were his by birth. He was fair-skinned, but very hirsute, so the black fur on his barrel chest sprang up around the laces, and the thick, curly hair on his biceps and forearms made it hard to tell where the sleeves ended and his bare arm began. He wore pants (not chaps) that fit snug across the ass, but were not tight enough in the crotch to mimic a hard-on if he was not really erect. His belt was a plain strap of leather, innocent of studs, well oiled and as flexible as a whore's tongue, with a massive silver (not chrome, not aluminum) buckle. No keys hung from his belt. He did not wear a cock ring or a wrist

watch. He had no epaulets to hang a chain from since he did not own a leather jacket.

A cute clone in Adidas and a Daddy's Boy T-shirt who saw him leaving the bar one night asked, trying to pick him up, "Did you forget your jacket?" "No. I don't have a jacket." Daddy's Boy thought, 'Thank God, he doesn't take all this leather drag seriously, he's not going to get me home and do something ungodly,' and decided to cruise in earnest. "You should. You'd look hot in one." The spoiler gave his admirer a puzzled frown. "But I don't own a motorcycle," he explained.

Men in full leather are usually conspicuous. But the spoiler's appearance was so neat, his lines so clean, his bearing so modest that he often passed through crowds of the bourgeoisie without changing the topic of their conversation. In the self-consciously masculine bars and rotting piers he frequented, other men relied on flashy, cheap metal to signal their presence in the darkness, or a heavy tread that would make their keys and other accoutrements jangle. He, on the other hand, was rarely noticed unless he chose to be. Nearly every leatherman in the city had been elbow to elbow with him in some club or alley, but few recognized him on sight.

Of the elite handful who acknowledged him with a bare nod, the kind of minimal gesture that was harder to get from them than a knighthood, one man wore only cowboy fringes, conchos, and suede; one man wore no leather at all; and one was not a man. But each of these folks have legends of their own.

Only his boots glittered, and that was a mirror-bright shine, the kind that takes months of work to complete. Even a USMC drill instructor can't force someone to get that kind of sheen on a pair of boots. It takes constant caressing. Your brush has to touch the boots as often and as lightly as you touch someone who has just made you fall in love. He had never been in love, but his boots were perfect. He kept his pants tucked into them. They went up to the knee, glossy as a frozen lake at midnight.

The absence of right/left signals should also have made him conspicuous. Instead, he was often discounted as a tourist or an amateur. Only one youngster, drunk enough to think he was the most attractive boy in the bar

and thus immune to snubs, ever had the nerve to accost him and demand, “What are you?”

The spoiler replied (perhaps amused because of what he was planning to turn himself into for the sake of his latest conquest), “A man.”

“No, I mean what are you into? Which role do you play?”

“I don’t play,” he said. The look in his eye momentarily sobered the curious, intoxicated kid; made him want to ask another, better question. But those eyes were too deep, it was too far to fall—so he chose instead to get drunk enough to fall off his bar stool. Not that the spoiler noticed; taking out the trash was not his job.

Why did he take such care with his dress if he intended to travel incognito? If he did not want to be recognized, groped, and drooled over, why was he a regular in all the grimy Mafia firetraps that pandered to compulsive cocksuckers, gay bikers, fetishists, bondage freaks, masochists, expert handballers, and other sexually bent, homomasculine men the good Catholic mobsters saw only as a horde of spendthrift drunks and perverts? Every scene attracts a certain number of voyeurs, those too timid, alienated, or unattractive to participate. You might call him a voyeur since he spent most of his time looking and listening. But he was a watchdog, not a spectator. He paid attention to the scene. He knew the names and histories of most of the topmen who shared his specialized tastes. He could predict their behavior better than a seasoned bartender. And he selected some of them to be cut out of the herd.

His selection was made for him by a signal that socked directly through his eyes or ears or nose into his gut. His balls would roll as their pouch shrank, pumping blood into his dick so fast that it started leaking even before he got hard. Any number of things could trigger the signal. It could be the inborn authority in a tone of voice, a certain sure grip that revealed a talent for handling objects and men who wanted to be objects, an offhanded way of revealing esoteric abilities and interests. An expression of the mere need to control or dominate was not enough to throw this punch into his guts; too many people try to act like lifeguards because they are drowning themselves.

One night, the stars were in a favorable conjunction for completing a drama the spoiler had been hankering after for months. He found himself being agreeable to a young man who had never been in “this kind of place” before. He was sandy-blond, clean-shaven, with a trim body that looked fit because he was moderately active and under twenty-five. He said his name was Curt, and he had borrowed these chaps from his roommate; did they fit? As soon as the spoiler realized this good-looking kid was a complete novice, he realized he was the perfect lure, and began to turn him into his pawn. He also forgot his name.

The newcomer did not know why he was telling this plain, unsmiling leatherman about his bizarre, secret fantasies, asking him questions and accepting his suggestions. He did not know he was nervous and needed to be patted on the head and pointed in the right direction. It was easy to confess his lack of experience and his longstanding fascination with leather. Like most other raw recruits, he thought leather was synonymous with S/M, and S/M meant being whipped. He did not know how rare this ritual actually is. The grave stranger was knowledgeable and reassuring. He drew verbal thumbnail sketches of the half-dozen tops who were hunting in the bar that night, and told him which one he needed to meet—an older man, graying at the temples, with the build of a boxer and sad eyes. His name was Roger, and he had a protective instinct toward novices; it was almost a reflex for him to take a courteous one home.

Before he could say “whips and chains,” Curt was leaning his head on the master’s chest and whispering, “Sir, may I buy you a beer, sir?” The gesture was too touching, the offer too well-bred to be rejected. When the boy returned with the cold, sweaty bottle, he was ordered to tell his story. It came out easily, since he had rehearsed it in the corner with the sympathetic stranger. He was not surprised when the big man put a hand around his throat and guided him down to the floor until he knelt with his cheek pressed against the warm denim that covered the master’s cock. Curt wrapped his arms around the thighs encased in latigo, smelling of motor oil, and felt that he had come home. But he was surprised when the stranger (he had already forgotten exactly what he looked like) loomed near and inquired if he, “the boy,” had given offense to the master.

Roger scowled and said he had not known the boy was in anyone else's service. Before the pawn could deny this, the stranger said, "Sir, he is not in my service. But I pointed you out to him and suggested he introduce himself. I would hold myself responsible if you were not pleased." Placated, the master relaxed, and the upshot of the matter was that all three of them left the bar together, to game in one of the city's better-equipped arenas.

This master's forte was whipping. In his black room, he had a large collection of English hunting crops, nautical cats, Scottish tawses, monks' flails, and Australian quirts on display under glass. The spoiler gave each one a separate scrutiny and made a quiet comment or two that showed his appreciation of their history and construction. These implements were not for use. But the walls of the master's inner sanctum were hung with enough modern copies to flog the entire mutinous crew of an aircraft carrier.

The room was clean, but somber. These walls could never forget what they had witnessed, and made the visitor feel an obligation to live up to their memories. Wooden beams ran the length of the ceiling, massive enough to support any load hauled into space by the greasy sets of block and tackle that hung here and there. A vertical beam equipped with large, iron rings stood alone in the center of the room. In one corner, there was a waist-high device that a man could be comfortably bent over and bound to by a strap buckled across his back. It looked like a huge, ancient butcher's block and was authentically stained. In another corner was a waist-high Barkley bench, the width of a human torso, minimally padded, with a hole in the center.

To his credit, the young man stayed, something that is not easy for a novice to do the first time he finds what he is looking for. For a fleeting moment, he hoped that he would be bound face to face with the stranger who was (he finally realized) responsible for his presence here. Surely it would be easier to take what was coming if he had a companion, someone more experienced who would encourage him and share the pain. But the stranger had taken care to keep his relationship to the master ambiguous. He had been respectful, but not servile. The master had not laid a hand on him.

Now, the boy found that the first direct order of the evening was addressed to him alone. He had wanted his obligations cut in half; instead,

he imagined they were doubled. After all, there were two pairs of boots to trample and crush him (which he licked), two pairs of hands to bless and terrify him (which he cringed from and kissed), two wills bent against his own (symbolized by the hard flesh he was briefly allowed to expose, cloak in rubber, and worship). He was too green to understand the hierarchy. Only one of these men was the master, taking the ultimate control and responsibility. The other acted only as his tool, his assistant. Roger was, ironically, too experienced (or jaded) to imagine that the power could be distributed any other way in his own dungeon.

Out of compassion, the master bade the novice stretch out on the table, with his cock and balls dangling through a hole. This would save him the embarrassment of buckling knees. Yielding to panic, the prone boy said, "Please, sir, don't tie my hands." "All right," the master rumbled, and used three feet of rawhide to bind his nuts in such a way that he could not take them with him if he wanted to escape.

They began with their hands, one set gloved in thin kid, the other sheathed the old-fashioned way, in tight black silk. The boy was massaged, kneaded, pummeled, then tapped, given a series of slaps that began with light glancing blows and ended with hard smacks that landed deep in his flesh. He was allowed to rest, stroked, made hard until he plunged against the bench trying to fuck empty air, then assaulted by hands that smashed into him, broke him apart, went right through him.

While he cried, the masters broached fresh cans of beer and ordered their thoughts. When the work resumed, the spoiler knelt under the table of his own accord, rolled a prophylactic over the disembodied shaft that pointed at the floor, then captured the pawn's bound and aching parts in his mouth. While he worked the length of the cock (swollen to the bursting point) within his throat, he stretched and prodded the well-restrained nuts, choking in their sac, full of fluids they could not release. The master selected a black-and-red cat-o'-nine-tails from the wall, a standard enough instrument. But this one had been made especially for him by Fred Norman, and the braiding was (or course) superlative. The round tails were tight, thin, and faster than thought.

The pawn thought nothing of it. He had never imagined anything else, other than a belt, perhaps, being used to whip someone. It had never even

occurred to him that some whips are made better than others. The master's collection had seemed a bit gimmicky to him, a butch version of his granny's knick-knacks. His memories of the only corporal punishment he had ever received—a few hand-spankings given to him as a child—were vague. Lucky for him, the spoiler had told him specifically to be very honest with the master about just how much of a beginner he was.

Roger was a laconic man. He spoke freely only to the accompaniment of some object falling on naked flesh. The conversation addressed to his new victim was carried on for the benefit of the whip, to make sure Curt stayed put long enough to let its nine tails drink enough sweat and pain to keep it well fed until he took it from the wall again. Whips that are not used can become as lonely as kept women on Christmas Eve. So he explained to the young man what he was doing and why, urging him to pay attention to it, learn from it, even enjoy it. He paused frequently to allow Curt's body to absorb this new knowledge before his mind could take it away.

Under the table, the spoiler had ceased to suck actively on the pawn's cock, and simply kept his throat open around it. The whip cracks made the boy go up and down like a bridegroom, feeding his unseen comforter the whole length of his manhood at every burning, intolerable, indescribable stroke.

Again, to his credit, the young man persisted. He did not beg to be released (though he did beg for a reprieve). He did not lose his temper or revile his tormenters. He struggled with his pain, willing (though not wise enough) to savor it. But he began to see what transcendence might be possible, what god he might someday be fit to serve.

The spoiler had suddenly pulled away and stood up. His pawn had almost come, and he would not allow that, even if the boy's cock had not been trussed up, and the orgasm would not have damaged it. The master was running his silk-clad hands over the bruised scarlet skin, murmuring like a groom soothing a jumpy horse. He had no more use for the boy, so he was tender. He could tell that Curt couldn't take much more, and he was not interested in continuing at the present level. It would have taken days of this sort of work to make his arm just a little tired, and nowadays, exhaustion was the chief thing he got out of flogging.

Normally, at this point in the scene he would offer the subject's ass to the other master, if one were present. Most bottoms got pissy if there wasn't some kind of sex at the end of a scene, and he personally found it distasteful. There was a limit to pretense, after all, a limit to what you could give someone who was not your heart's desire. But the spoiler had anticipated this and deflected the invitation.

"My turn," he said, drawing a whip from his shirt. It had been wrapped around his waist, hidden until now. He had been lucky to wear it on this night's jaunt.

This occasioned some alarm on one face, some curiosity on the other. "Be my guest," said the master, and went to hold up the wall and commune with a small, brown cigar. This was the man who had pointed the boy in his direction. Perhaps Curt had capabilities the master had not sensed.

The spoiler shook out a dog quirt. It was a single length of light tan leather, plaited in David Morgan's workshop, thirty-nine inches in length. Of that, ten inches were the cracker of braided black cord. Sweat had started to darken its handle and the inside of the wrist strap. It was a signal whip, intended to make a rhythmic noise that would set the pace for a dog team. It could also be used to alert the lead dog to change direction, or break up a fight. It was not used to punish huskies, who had such thick fur and hides that they would have simply grinned the way dogs do when people do something foolish, and continued about their noisy bad-dog business. But a boy's skin is not nearly as thick as a wolfdog's, as Curt was about to learn.

The spoiler told his pawn all of this because he wanted the master to know that they shared a love for the original context out of which the classic whips—working tools—came, the *métier* they occupied before being appropriated for sexual purposes. He did not realize that the boy was also listening, hungry for any sort of clue about why he was here and what it all meant. Tops should guard their tongues around bottoms once a scene has begun. An offhand remark can burn like a brand in a receptive mind for years after it is flippantly uttered, and someone can shape his life to obtain a similar piece of praise again, or prove that a rebuke was undeserved. A top who is not similarly vulnerable will probably remain a mediocrity. An aroused bottom is an oracle.



“You’ll want him standing up, then,” the master said in his gravelly bass, and he undid the cock-and-ball bondage with a single tug on a loose end. He hustled the boy to his feet and slapped his front up against the smooth wood of the pillar. This time, the necessity for bondage was not questioned. The boy had longed for something to pull against while he was on the Barkley bench, some way to express his distress that would not put an end to the scene. He was surprised when the master buckled his discarded chaps around his waist, leaving his ass naked, and zipped up the legs. Curt had not seen the interaction behind his back, when the master had held up a weightlifter’s kidney belt, and the spoiler had indicated he needed his body to be protected more completely by taking the boy’s borrowed leather from the pile of clothing folded in the corner.

“I’m still getting the hang of this,” the spoiler murmured apologetically.

The master inclined his head. He rarely met a top who cared to go to school, and the admission of apprenticeship charmed him. Anybody can pick up a whip and then try to chop wood with it. It’s not a very effective way to keep warm in winter, and it rarely heats anybody else up, either.

The spoiler did not start by cracking the whip. He trailed it over the tense back, stepped away, grasped it by the middle, and whirled the end of it lightly across the surface, warming it. Gradually he let his hand slip closer to the handle, increasing the force of his strokes. Not until the boy’s back was well reddened did he move far enough away to use the entire length of the quirt. It looked like throwing a baseball—he seemed to be hurling something at the boy, but the whip stayed in his hand, and only a fireball of pain flew free and hit like a grenade.

When a whip is cracked, the tip of it is going faster than the speed of sound. So Curt may be excused for feeling that each scream was being torn from his throat and praying that his next breath would be his last.

He could have taken even this if he had not had to take it alone. But the stranger who had been so helpful did not speak to him, and he could not see his face. The pain had no purpose, it was madness, he was being taught things he did not want to know—why men broke under torture, how much you can suffer and still live, the sublime indifference of the sky from blue to

black and to blue again; finally, that he was alone with this knowledge—alone, alone, alone with pain.

The spoiler did not intend to send the young man spinning through the existential void. True, he felt little or nothing for this piece of bait, but that was not his fault. This novice did not have any of the qualities that aroused him—for example, a good-humored willingness to make others suffer if they would not obey. The category of beginner, virgin, or chicken was erotically neutral and empty for the spoiler. That was why he did not speak to the boy or establish empathy with him. They had nothing to say to one another. Whatever agony or ecstasy fired the boy's synapses were immaterial; no electricity would jump the gap between them.

This performance was for the master, whose eyes were glazing over as he watched Curt's fit, young body being painted with red streaks and welts. He did not have to imagine what it felt like. He could remember. More than that, he was experiencing a rare, intense pleasure from watching someone else work. Only at major tribal gatherings like Inferno did he get a chance to see tops whose working style pleased him. Even when he co-topped, he usually found respectful, unobtrusive ways to relegate his partner's activities to his peripheral vision. Not only was he eagerly watching this sober, quiet dude cut the kid to ribbons, he had a roaring hard-on and thought that if it went much longer he was going to come in his pants like a teenager.

Just before the master's excitement built to that point, Curt broke. They untied the sobbing kid, threw a bucket of cold water on him, gave him his clothes and a Valium, and called a cab to take him home. The master was so put off by this display of cowardice and bad manners (and by his own frustrating sensation of coitus interruptus) that he did not notice that the boy said an effusive goodbye to the other man's boots and ignored his own. This whipped-dog devotion saddened the spoiler, but he was relieved that the ex-novice was leaving. He might get what he really wanted now. It could not take place in front of a witness.

Curt was too much of a beginner to realize he was being dismissed in disgrace. He felt giddy with joy, thrilled at his own daring, awed by the men who had taken him to this magical place. He told the cab driver to take him back to the bar. Before he walked in, he took off his shirt, and men bought

him drinks all night long to hear the history of his stripes. Just before the bar closed, he was taken in tow by a black master who had an easy smile and a bullwhip. He was off on the long road that might lead him to become the kind of person the spoiler would take an interest in again.

The master shut and locked the door after the boy, then turned to see the man he thought of as a junior S standing in his hallway with a friendly grin on his face and two beers in one big hand. The guy certainly made himself at home. But the aborted scene had left a bad taste in his mouth, and it was not hard for the spoiler to lure him back into the basement and entice him into lecturing on the merits and limitations of each of his treasures.

“Why do you think,” the spoiler said quietly, “some men can take heavy pain and others cannot?”

“Well, the masochists and submissives are not at all the same thing. There are fundamental differences. In my experience, you can’t get to a masochist by humiliating him or making him chew on your boots, although he might pretend he likes it if that’s the price of a good beating. And a submissive is not going to respond to anything as quickly as a hand around his throat. He understands pain only as punishment; he won’t cream in his jeans at the mere thought of you hurting him unless you do it to prove you own him.”

The spoiler nodded. This was his own observation, though he would have had to extrapolate from the difference between sadists and dominants.

“Why is there such a difference?” he asked to keep Roger talking.

“Damned if I know. Been doing research on this all my life, and it keeps me so busy, the findings will have to be published posthumously. Submission is a deep-seated psychological need. I don’t mean to discount it. But masochism is inbred, almost biological. Somebody can be trained to be submissive, but if you want a masochist, you have to just go out and hope you find one. It’s how some people are wired. Like some people can’t stand the cold and other people never get cold. It’s not just a matter of wanting or liking pain, I believe it literally feels different to the person who can’t do without it.”

“Which do you think is more common?”

“Oh, submissives, definitely. Of course, you do get some overlap. A sadist has to be a bit of a master, a master has to be a bit of a sadist, or he gets no trade.”

They both laughed. The master held up his empty can. “You ready for another round?” he asked. The spoiler nodded, even though he had not finished the beer in his hand. He didn’t want to say no to anything. It would change the mood, set a bad precedent. “Laundry room is off of the dungeon,” Roger said, lumbering over to a door at the end of the room. “Got a fridge back there. Be back in a second.”

As soon as he returned, the spoiler turned the conversation from speculation and theory to something that had actually happened. Evaluating the scene would give him a cue to Roger’s emotional status. “I don’t feel too good about the way the scene ended,” he lied. “Maybe that kid really wanted to be a slave. If he just wanted to be dominated, I should’ve pushed his limits.”

The master waved a dismissive hand. “You were damned good to that kid, better than he deserved. Nothing wrong with what you gave him. He got exactly what he asked for, with bells on.”

“Maybe. I haven’t had this whip for very long. I have a lot to learn about how to use it.”

“Didn’t look that way to me.”

“Well, somebody like you ought to know. But I wonder if I was hitting him too hard. Do you think you could help me figure it out? I really like this quirt a lot. Makes my arm feel so good. I want to use it again, but I’m afraid the same thing will happen.”

The specter of that brutal length of braid never biting flesh again made the master blanch. “Of course. Of course. But what exactly do you need to know? You don’t have much choice about the amount of force it takes to crack it,” he said. “Once you flick your wrist the speed is standard.”

He was leaning on the pillar. The spoiler put his untasted beer down against the wall and came up to him, carrying the quirt coiled in his right hand. He touched his arm deferentially and said, “You could tell me how *you* think it feels.”

Oh, why the hell not? It was the kind of thing you would do for a friend who wasn't sure he wanted to buy something he'd just spotted at The Noose, let him try out a few licks on your thigh, then take it out of his hand and whack his ass with it. "Sure," the master said, turning around, doffing his jacket and the khaki police shirt underneath it. The spoiler took his clothing, hung it up (there was no shortage of hooks), and returned to run his fingertips across the bare, heavy shoulders. He palpated the skin, gauging its thickness, the ratio of fat to muscle beneath it, the placement of shoulder blades and spine. And, since he did not know if he would be allowed to touch this man intimately again, he tried to memorize every pore and freckle.

"If you could watch in the mirror," he suggested, "just to check my form." As soon as the master's face turned toward the reflecting wall, the spoiler cast the quirt once across his shoulders, a tingling and invigorating strike.

"That's fine," the man said, getting a grip on the rings in the pillar. "Do your worst." If he had known how long he would be clinging to those rings, he would have recoiled from them as though they were white-hot.

The work the spoiler did now made his flagellation of the pawn look like a hatchet job. He handled the quirt as if it were a detachable limb of his own body, hooked directly into his own nervous system, guided by his keen eyesight and even keener need to titillate and hurt. Long, single-tailed, braided whips may be the hardest whip to master. And the spoiler proved that all it took was enough skill to get as much modulation out of them, as much variation in their effect, as a razor strop or a cane.

The first blows were like kisses, kisses for a virgin turning into kisses for a whore, passion kisses, rape kisses, kisses becoming bites. Then the strokes were like a mother cat's tongue on a squirming kitten's pelt. It felt like kissing a man whose mustache and beard gradually became rougher and rougher. When the abrasion stopped, the pelting began, like snow, then like rain, then hail. Denting his back. Cosmic rays, flecks of sand, pellets of iron, then whole meteors fell, pocking his skin like the surface of the moon. The weight of the quirt seemed to increase. Roger could have sworn that the knot at the end of the cracker was embedded in his flesh and had to be yanked out before the whip could land again. Then the direction and speed

of the blows changed, and instead of penetrating him, they sliced blade-like across his skin. It was like being slapped by a tiger or seized by an eagle.

It had been so long! The master screwed his eyes shut and pressed his forehead hard against the beam, trying to halt a flood of regret and bitterness. His body shuddered with joy. He prayed that the stranger's arm would not wear out too soon.

How many years ago had he given up? It had been hard to accept the fact that he would never meet a sadist who would greet his masochism with joy, as the stuff of which great art is made. So he had moved to a new city to make it easier to complete his own work of art, creating a living, breathing replica of the man he had always hungered to please, whose hands and eyes he could envision perfectly. Someone (even if it could not be him) should pass under those deft hands, be stripped and dissected by those merciless eyes.

Then he had discovered, to his chagrin, that the true masochist is nearly as rare as the genuine sadist. He was often as alone and disappointed standing behind the whipping post as he had been when he hugged it to his breast and waited for the perfect blow that never came.

But these blows were like balm. Physical pain was so much easier to bear than ennui and self-hatred. When the man behind him stopped, he could not turn around because he was ashamed of his own excitement and did not want anyone else to see it. His cock was up, flushed and eager, the head so sensitive he almost came from feeling it rub against the fly-seam of his jeans. The thought of how obvious his erection was only made it come back against his belly in a full brace, instead of merely standing at rigid attention.

"Stop," he said faintly, dishonestly, as if the whipping had not stopped already.

"But we aren't finished yet," the spoiler said, taking control in his sweetest, softest, most reasonable voice. 'And I never will be,' he thought, as the master kept his broad shoulders level, flexed in front of him, both booted feet flat on the floor. There was no evasion in that body, only attentiveness, receptivity. 'I love what you are, beautiful and frustrated, a stallion in a herd of geldings, a sexual athlete surrounded by men too spoiled and lazy to pull their own puds, the last Roman gladiator in a world

of puling Christians. I will never break you down or damage you. How could I, when this is exactly what you want and need more than food or sleep or your next deep breath?’

He was there for hours. During the night, he changed hands, implements, the position of the subject. But by the time he was done, too tired to lift his hand to wipe the sweat from his face, they both knew that the master’s expertise at administering pain came from a very deep well of need for it. And the master knew he had to go back to that well as often as possible if he wanted to keep his expertise or just his sanity. We usually don’t know how much we need something until it’s possible to get it.

The spoiler helped the master up to his bedroom and applied ice to his welted back. He wanted to stay but did not know if he could sleep there, show his face in the morning, and still be forgiven. He said off-handedly, “I wasn’t about to let that kid come in my mouth, rubber or no rubber. But I don’t feel that way about you.”

No human being is ever too exhausted to feel curiosity. “Why?”

“Because you deserve it,” he said simply.

“Blow jobs bore me limp,” the crusty voice said bluntly. The master was lying on his side. The spoiler slid into bed behind him. He had already located a bottle of lotion on the night table and pumped himself a handful. Now he twirled his hand around the head of his dick, soothed the rest of the cream up the shaft, and eased his hard-on between the master’s lightly furred thighs. The leg muscles tightened, and the hard buttocks thrust back at him. He ran his fingers over the bruised shoulders and the master grabbed his own cock and began to pump it.

“You want me to fuck you?” the spoiler asked. But he ran his hands over the bruises before he could get an answer, and the master bucked. By reflex, he shoved his hips back into him. It felt good to hump the crack of Roger’s ass, the cleft between his thighs, to nose the head of his dick into the loose ball-bag that was being jostled up and down by the master’s frantic hand. This was no time to go looking for a condom, so the spoiler continued to pet and press upon the fresh welts and thrust between the close-held thighs until both of them came.

“That would have felt even hotter if my ass had been marked up,” the master rumbled.

“True.” The spoiler was falling asleep.

“I have some things down there that have never been used.”

“They will be, then. Tomorrow.” He took the other man in his arms, made himself a pillow on his near pectoral, and slept.

It actually took more than one tomorrow.

This was the spoiler’s avocation and the reason he chose to live like a retired spy or prince in exile. It had nothing to do with revenge or competition. The men he pursued had committed no crime that should be punished. In his eyes, they were clearly his betters, or he would not have wanted them. Since he had no interest in bottoms, he did not even think of himself as a top. He was more like a trusted servant who would think nothing of knocking his drowning and struggling master unconscious so he could be paddled to safety. Or he was like a radio telescope, one of those huge dishes so sensitive they can hear the stars frying in the vacuum of deep space. Instead, he heard the unvoiced cries for rescue from the yoke of obligation, the exaggerated expectations of others, of minds too weary to concoct another scene and hands too discouraged to show off their unusual skills.

He had to work hard, very hard, to get away with this and succeed at it. But it was worth it to him because he went after the only men in the city who could tell him whether he was a virtuoso or a hack. He once spent almost six months studying Japanese bondage pornography, which had taken twice that long to obtain, practicing intricate knots, experimenting with different types of rope, until he could take a man he thought of as his model (who never realized he was not the star of the show) to the bar with him, trussed in a harness that was a sphinx’s riddle, a sonnet to restraint. If he could, the spoiler would have apprenticed himself to the Yakuza. All this to fascinate a man he had had his eye on for two years, a man who was an expert with rope, to make it safe for the two of them to speak to one another and create a pretext for getting together sometime later in the week.



Then there was that bike run—two hundred mostly drunk and lust-crazed men rutting with each other. He didn't like drugging people, but that time he had slipped a discreet tab of acid into his idol's beer, then led him through the woods to a clearing (prepared that morning) where a leather sling hung from the strongest branches of an old oak tree.

Each of his heroes required a different form of worship. Over the years, he had learned how to do tattooing. He had pierced his own tits, perineum, and cock-head to teach himself how to run needles through the body. He had spent weeks constructing an apparatus that could hang a man without killing him, and tested it on himself. He collected, piece by piece, a complete and authentic uniform for an officer of a disbanded and disgraced army that was nevertheless the ultimate fetish of a particularly handsome and worn-out man. The trunk of his car was specially altered so a victim could be kept bound securely there for hours without smothering. A friend of his who owned a ranch kept one stall vacant for his use, equipped with a saddle and bridle tailored for a human beast of burden. He had a trunk full of diving gear, pieces of firemen's garb, latex garments imported from England and Denmark. He had learned enough kendo to enter a local contest and lose to the appropriate party. Under his bathroom sink, he kept the largest collection of catheters and enema nozzles to be found outside a medical museum. One pursuit had required him to give up coffee and asparagus for months and subsist for three days on nothing but fresh strawberries. Somewhere, in one of his closets, there was even a suitcase containing a makeup kit, a pair of false eyelashes and another pair of equally false tits, a red Spandex minidress, crotchless fishnet hose, a blonde wig, and seven-inch patent leather spike heels. There was nothing, nothing he would not try to learn or concoct or arrange if it would snare a topman, master, sadist, or dominant for a few precious hours.

It never occurred to him to wonder what impact he had on the lives of the men he ministered to. He assumed that they continued on exactly as they were before they met him. Why shouldn't they? Their reputations were not besmirched or tarnished—he never told anyone about his adventures since he knew no one else would understand them. He was available if they wanted him again, so there was no need for them to submit to someone who was less discreet or kind. Why would they feel reduced or humiliated? If he

had thought about it, he would have assumed they felt flattered, since he himself felt only gratitude and admiration for them.

He was obsessed, and that is not the best frame of mind for tracking one's impact on the world. He paid no attention at all to his backwash. In other words, he wasn't watching his ass.

The fact that he did not gossip did not mean that others held their tongues. When Curt arrived at the leather bar spouting tales of his adventure, there were those who were unkind enough to ask why the two lucky topmen had not come with him, and speculate about what had gone on while they were alone together. When the spoiler stood in the middle of the grove and plunged his gloved arm up to the elbow in distended ass-lips and Crisco, he was so pleased by the idyllic setting that it did not occur to him that other people were sexing in the woods during the run. Some of them heard the groans and curses of the man he was fucking until the sling made the oak tree creak and sway. Two of those who were interrupted by this racket went to see what all the fuss was about, and what they saw made a story that traveled fast and far.

The spoiler was not always kind in the pursuit of his obsession. He often did the emotional equivalent of picking people up and moving them out of his way as if he were passing the ketchup to a stranger in a diner. The erstwhile tops and persistent bottoms he brushed aside were not pleased to be treated like so much flotsam, and some of them had a taste for revenge. He had made enough enemies to acquire his nickname, and not enough friends to hear what it was.

He also did not think that some of his targets might become, in turn, obsessed with him—too obsessed to risk seeing him again. He never knew that the bondage expert began to tie himself up every morning, putting himself in a complex wire harness that he wore under his business suit. This excited him so much that he repeatedly had to leave his desk to masturbate. Lunch hours often led him into the thickest shrubbery of the cruisy part of the park. Sometimes he did not come back to work. The spoiler could not comfort him when he lost his job, because he did not know about it, but the other man could blame him for it, and did.

We are raised to think that everything in the world occurs naturally as a set of paired opposites. It is almost impossible for us to know what anything is if we cannot locate and define its counterpart. The spoiler was an anomaly. The same system that created him found that he threatened its premises. And that system was not known for dealing with irritating matters by making pearls out of it.

There are many reasons why an individual selects one particular role. A man who knows that his need to bottom is much stronger than his need to top, and who persists in presenting himself as a bottom to other people even if he does not get played as often as he would like, may be more stable than a top with a full dance card. A desire that a bottom can take in his stride may horrify a top beyond endurance. The sad truth is that many tops (even good ones) are made out of failed bottoms. To such a man, there is no point in topping if it does not somehow make him a better person than the meat-puppet he is working over. There is a dignity in self-control, there is glory in ruling others, but there is none in being a bottom who simply can't get laid.

A man who sees that there is a shortage of his brand of sex objects in the world and turns himself into something that he would want desperately, if only it were possible to encounter this doppelganger on the wharves, may be doing the best he can with the material available. Performing such a transformation is probably easier (maybe even healthier) than trying to alter the nature of his desire, the face that he sees when he imagines that someone is making him come and watching him do it. But narcissism is a sad kind of love, doomed to be unrequited. We can fall in love with our own legends, but they never love us back.

Tops acquire status not just by doing good work, but by taking down other tops. A fairly mild form of this is the verbal competition over who is the best informed, the safest, the most exotic, the most sadistic. Another mild form of competition is comparing your boy to another man's attendant, making sure the bottom-man who accompanies you is going to outshine all the other masters' possessions. A more efficient, albeit nastier, method is to discreetly allow the word to circulate that someone has moved his keys over for you. It is *de rigueur* to make a disclaimer that this is no disgrace, it is a completely human thing to do ... but still, that other top knew who to come

to when he wanted someone who was his superior. The speaker then buffs his fingernails and prepares for business to boom.

The spoiler did not engage in verbal jockeying for position because he was interested in being better than other tops, only in attracting them. Everyone wants to get the stud at the top of the pyramid. That's why enchanted princesses live on top of glass mountains. Need it be said that the spoiler never bottomed in a sense that most leathermen could recognize? He made a perfect icon of the dominant without peer, the unavailable, unattainable beauty who seems ripe for—well, spoiling.

That is why he was so surprised, when he finally came home from the master's house, to feel a cold cylinder of metal graze his temple and come to rest behind his ear. He froze, his key not quite inside the lock. The man behind him sounded out of breath. His gasps were so wrenching that it made the gun tremble against the spoiler's head.

"What do you want?" he asked gently. He really wanted to ask who it was. It seemed absurd to die ignorant of who had murdered him, but he was afraid the gunman would be infuriated if he realized the spoiler had not recognized him instantly by the sound of his footsteps or the smell of his sweat. And if he could avoid it, he would rather not die. He had not learned how to use his new straight razor. His wrestling coach was due at eleven the next morning. The magneto he had found in an Army-Navy store was still sitting on his workbench, waiting to be repaired. What about the lessons in Vietnamese he had planned to start at the community college next month?

"I want—I want—I want everything back that you stole from me!" This was no doubt supposed to be a bold and irrefutable demand; instead, it was a whine full of self-doubt and self-pity.

"If I have anything that belongs to you, I'll be happy to give it back," the spoiler said carefully.

"Damn right you will!"

A long silence followed. What was he supposed to do, the spoiler wondered, start turning out his pockets? It finally occurred to him to simply say, "Can you explain this a little more? What's happening here?"

"Don't play dumb, you sneaking, lying son of a bitch. What do you think this is, a hold-up? I don't want your money, you asshole. I want my self-

respect back! I want to be a man again.”

“Oh. I see.” He thought that over, his brain working with serene rapidity despite the fact that this was a life-or-death situation. “If I hurt you, I’m sorry,” he said. “But I would never deprive anyone of his manhood. I love men. All I want to do is give them what they really want. How can anything that two men do together make one of them less than a man? If I did that I would defeat my own purpose, can’t you see?”

“Bastard. You planned it. You plotted against me. I trusted you, and you turned on me. Now I’m going to show you what it feels like to lose control when you think you’re in the driver’s seat and everything is coming up roses. How do you like it so far, huh?”

“I wish I understood why you are so angry,” the spoiler said, deeply saddened by his inability to console this man. “Did I do anything to you that you didn’t enjoy?”

There was no answer. The gun shook. Would it go off by accident?

“Did I do anything you didn’t want me to do?”

Silence.

“Did you really want me to stop? Would it make you happy to do the exact same thing to me, whatever it was, right now? Come inside with me. I promise I will let you. You can even take pictures.” He had no idea how haughty this sounded. One of the things he had never done to get next to someone was beg or plead.

Quiet. Quiet busy as the grave.

“Do you want to be sure no one ever does that to you again? I give you my word I won’t ever touch you or notice you. It will be like we never met.”

Still no answer. ‘I’m getting tired of talking to myself,’ the spoiler thought. Was that grating sound pent-up weeping about to burst forth, or was it someone grinding his teeth as he cocked a trigger?

“Can you think about anything else when you come?”

## *A Dash of Vanilla*

You're lucky you're handsome and I'm in love. Otherwise, I wouldn't bother.

It's very difficult to get you off. I'm complaining, but there's also a part of me that likes it. Most women are difficult to get off, and in the past, I've dealt with that by encouraging them to masturbate while I suck on their tits or fuck them or talk dirty to them. I'm glad you resist that, saving masturbation for the times when we're too tired or too sick to come any other way, and need some quick and easy stimulation and release before we can fall asleep. I'm glad you insist that I get you off, insist that I keep trying and work harder to get better at it. When your climax finally does come, it's precious to me because I've put so much sweat and effort into getting you there. I sometimes think it's better than the quick, helpless orgasms I have when you've been fucking me for only five minutes, because I always want more, I always need to come again and again. The one you have leaves you drained. You seem completely satisfied. You're able to stop. I'm not.

Making love to you doesn't start out feeling difficult. The summers here are very hot, so you take off your clothes as soon as you walk into the bedroom, and then you lounge around and read your mail. Your legs just naturally seem to come to rest with your knees bent and far apart. I never know if you are deliberately exposing your cunt to me, how much of your behavior is exhibitionistic or provocative, and how much of it is just an attempt to get comfortable in the heat, or unselfconsciousness about your own nudity. It's probably the latter. You are always surprised when I tell you how powerfully your body attracts me. You do not believe you are beautiful.

No matter what your motives, my eyes are repeatedly drawn to your perfect, small, firm breasts; your abdominal muscles; your sharp and shapely hip bones; the long thighs, scarred during a particularly vicious rape. Your scars are hateful to me because you were hurt there, but so dear

to me because you survived to wear them, and have defeated the shame and anger so you can still offer me your cunt, allow me to penetrate and have you. When I look at the dark, fuzzy curls of your pubic triangle (some of your pubic hair wanders up your belly and down the inside of your thighs), the rose color of your crinkled sex-lips and clit, it seems easy and natural to roll over onto my belly between your legs and start licking you.

You always taste good, even if you go for days without showering. In fact, I love you better when you are pungent. It drives me crazy, licking and licking, because the more I lick, the wetter your cunt gets and the stronger the flavor is. I can't lick it away. I imagine you will produce more and more fluid until I could actually gulp it down, swallow it by the mouthful, like water or semen.

You always respond quickly to the first lick, with a groan that says, "Oh, God, yes, she's doing that, I need it, will she do it more?" This encourages me, and I begin to think about pleasing you, making you come, instead of just pleasing myself by filling my mouth with the texture and musky taste of your cunt.

You like to have your cunt lips pulled back and up, lifting the hood off your clitoris, until the glans rides snug against your pubic bone, the size of a kernel of corn. I put my hands on each side of your cunt and open it—gently at first, because I know I will be holding it apart for a long time, and I don't want you to get numb or sore. You spread your legs further and groan a little, a groan that says, "She's really serious. She's going to keep on doing it. And she wants me to come. Will I be able to? Can she make me come?"

Unlike me, you want to feel my tongue right on the glans of your clitoris. You don't want it too hard, but you like it much harder than I do. So I have to begin carefully and get over my fear of hurting you. This is why I usually go in circles around your clit instead of licking straight up and over the glans or from side to side across it. Once I do something that makes you feel really good, you want me to stay in the spot and keep doing the same thing until you come. You like it when I flick my tongue quickly against the hard bud, hummingbird-quick, but I can't keep this up for very long, so I'm reluctant to start it. Now, in the beginning, before I've committed myself to a clear pattern of stimulation, I feel like I can tease you a little without

frustrating you, so I slip further down to run my tongue around the inside of your vagina, as far in as I can get, and sometimes tip your ass up and your legs back over your head so I can eat your ass, too.

You've told me to stay in one place and do the same thing until you come. You've also told me that you sometimes need to move around to put my tongue in just the right place. So I never know when I should let my mouth follow your hips, or when I should hold my head still and let your hips drift past my face until you settle into a more effective rhythm and location. You never seem to be able to tell me what's going on while it's happening, so I have to guess, and half of the time I'm right and half of the time I'm wrong.

You also confuse me because if you are really turned on, you hold absolutely still, for fear that I'll move off of the right spot. But when you get close to coming, you move a lot, fast enough and hard enough to hurt me if I'm not quick enough to follow you. But in the beginning, if you move, it's usually a sign that you're frustrated and want it to feel better and are starting to worry that it's not going to work. I do the best I can to tell the difference, but there's always a point when I'm eating you where I lose touch with you completely and lose all my self-confidence, too. I think, "I'm so clumsy and inadequate, I'll never be able to make her come. I'll bet I never really made any of my lovers come. They were all faking it."

Your thick, coarse bush makes my nose and cheeks just slightly raw, and the salty wetness of your cunt makes these raw places burn. My hands keep slipping off your lips because they're wet and slippery, and I get so discouraged, I want to scream or cry. Then I have to pump up my ego and get very arrogant to continue, to keep myself from giving up. Which means I have to guard against suddenly licking you too fast and too hard, because I get macho and too full of myself.

This burst of bravado can't last long. Circling your clit with my tongue, my lips, my nose, hoping, hoping, struggling to keep just the right pace and pressure and tension on your clit, I get worn down to my stubborn core, the tough silent part of me that does not question the decision to perform a difficult task, but simply shoulders it like a heavy burden and carries it until I drop. I forget about you tasting good or feeling good to me or turning me on. The idea is to make myself an instrument of your pleasure, as if I were a



sex machine or a slave. So I make my mouth passive, keep my hands still in absolutely the same position, and repeat again and again a motion that I hope you will find erotic enough to eventually succumb to.

By now, you are usually holding still, not making any noise at all, barely breathing, and my neck is starting to hurt and my hands are tingling. Perversely, just as I abandon my ego, I get very turned on to the idea of servicing you, of having you use my mouth for hours, and I start humping the bed and coming, about once every five to eight minutes. I come even if I hold my legs apart and try desperately not to, because it disrupts my rhythm and embarrasses me. Sometimes you catch fire from the noises I make and the groveling motions I'm making with my hips, and you make a little sex music with me, saying, "Oh, yeah, baby, go ahead, come, come now!" or simply moan and thrust yourself against my mouth. But I get progressively more depressed and full of despair anyway, because nothing seems to be happening or changing or getting better with your body and its physical response, and I want to make you come, I don't want this to be for my benefit, you allowing me to suck you off—even though you don't get off on it—simply because I get off on it. I start making questioning noises, asking you with whispers and moans or outright words if you want me to continue.

You usually respond, "God, yes!" But sometimes you tell me, "No, you can stop now," and I'm crushed, even if I know you are just trying to be kind, reluctant to wear me out when there's no hope that it's going to work. And I can understand that, because there are times when I'm not going to come, no matter what somebody does for me or to me. But I know I have failed you, failed to give you bliss and relief, and I will never be good for anything.

I hate this feeling. Remembering it makes me renew my efforts around and around your clitoris (which is bigger and harder now, as big as the whole world to me), and dip my tongue down into your vagina to see how much you are lubricating. I have continually let saliva run out of my mouth to keep your clit wet, because you can't come if it's dry. This parches my mouth, so I start rationing swallows of spit—half a mouthful for your clit, half for me to keep my tongue from getting rough and my throat from tickling until I have to cough. Sometimes I slip lower and lick up and

swallow a mouthful of my old spit and your sex juice, but this means leaving your clit, so I try not to do it too often.

My neck really hurts. I'm having trouble holding my head up. Sweat is running down my forehead and I can't wipe it off, so it runs into my eyes and stings. My hands are completely numb, and so are my forearms, all the way up to the elbow. I can't tell if I am still gripping your labia or not. I can only tell by the shape of the clit in my mouth just how far back I'm still managing to keep them. I am angry with you because you are taking so long, angry because you leave me alone down here, with no idea what is going on with you, if you are enjoying it or not, no indication of how close you are, how much longer it's going to take. I want to shout, "*Are you ever going to come?*" I desperately need some help, and I begin to whisper, "please, please," sometimes loud enough for you to hear me. Any kind of groan or sigh you make is of life-or-death importance to me now and keeps me going for a few more minutes. But I feel as if I am hanging from a cliff face by my skinned and bleeding palms, and I know I cannot hold on to the bare rock for much longer.

I begin to wonder if you are in a good enough space to be able to hold your cunt open for me for a few minutes, maybe take a break long enough for me to get a drink of water and work the blood back into my hands. I am never sure. Sometimes a request like this is enough to make you feel so guilty for "taking too long" that you break things off. I don't want you to stop me now. I badly need to continue, to keep going, to keep you open to me, keep you believing in me and trusting and needing me. The safety of my whole world seems to depend on being granted the privilege of continuing to go down on you.

Patiently, persistently, carefully, in agony and self-doubt, I keep caressing you, trying to duplicate again and again the same exact pattern of motion and pressure, the same degree of wetness and friction, and if you move or make a noise, I stop for a fraction of an instant, record what I was doing when you responded, and then try to make a copy of it between my lips and your sex. There is an erotic pressure between my own legs, a need to be fucked, to come, but I won't let myself build up and cry out, thrashing against the mattress, one more time. I need you now, your orgasm, your climax, to put out the fire that's raging inside of me. My own climax would

bleed energy off from you, energy that you need to come. I don't want to pay any attention to my own body, it's whining pain and thirst, its nagging need to piss or come. It distracts me. I ignore it.

But it clamors louder and louder, and sometimes I am humiliated by yet another orgasm of my own, which takes place in a state of despair and frustration that infuriates and devastates me.

Still I work on and on, mechanically, softly, like the Colorado River carving the Grand Canyon one eon at a time, like a bird flying across the ocean that can't stop no matter how tired she is because there is no place to land. Save me, give it to me, help me, seize my head between your thighs and drown me! Come, come!

Sometimes, not all the time, at a time I am never able to predict and for reasons I still do not understand, you promise me a miracle. You begin to talk to me. After your long silence, it feels very odd, being talked to. I pay close attention to what you have to say. It must be important if you can't keep quiet any more.

"Oh, lover," you say, "I'm going to come. Can you feel it? Lover!"

Now I am moving fast and sloppy, but it doesn't matter, you will come now no matter what I do, and anyway we are finally in sync, finally in this together, your hips pumping into my mouth, my lips slipping up and down your clit and inner lips, my tongue pointed to catch the most sensitive peak of the glans. There is so much sex juice! Slippery mucus slides across my tongue and slips down my throat, oh that welcome, salty taste that proves you are turned on and wanting me, I spread the slipperiness of it across your cunt and smear it all over my face. I wish this happy time could last longer, but I know I am nearly used up, and I am unreasonably terrified that I will still somehow bumble and fail, even now; that what you have promised me will not be delivered through some sin or folly of mine.

But you make sure that does not happen. Your thighs cross, my neck in between them, and you roll to the left, pinning me. You are incredibly strong during orgasm. I cannot pry myself loose or escape from you. And I don't want to. I'm too busy struggling to keep my tongue tucked into the top of your slit, pushing my face up between your convulsing thighs which

keep trying to shut me out, push me away from my food, my possession, my cunt.

You come for a long time, longer if I can keep on licking you or shove my fingers into you, past your locked thighs, just as you begin to come. After the shouting, you lie very still, like someone who has fainted. I am terribly excited. As soon as your thighs relax a little, I push my hand between them, put my fingers up to feel how wet you are, and slide them in. You always say, “No. No, lover, don’t.”

And I say, “Why? Why not? I want it. You can’t stop me. Give it to me.” Then I fuck you. You don’t like it, but it makes you come anyway, you can’t help it, you jerk and throb around my hand and lock me between your thighs once more, and come until you’re screaming obscenities at me, it feels so good to you. If I can, I fuck you yet again, and this time you really protest. It’s too much, you’re too tired, you’re sore. But I am adamant. I’ve worked so hard to get you to this place, thrown open to me, responding with these free and easy, quick and intense orgasms, that I have to use your pussy as often as you will let me take it. It’s what I want myself, for you to pin me down and fuck me, but coming has left you too enervated to struggle with me, so I fuck you instead and like it just as much as coming myself. Besides, this is the only time you can come when I fuck you, right after you’ve been eaten into an orgasm. You love to get fucked and will take literally hours of it, but never give in and come completely around me, come until you are satisfied.

It’s almost like a feeding frenzy, this lurch to fuck you again and again while pleasure has made you helpless. I once scared myself by fucking you until you passed out, and continuing without noticing you were unconscious. I didn’t stop until I simply could not move my arm any more. Since then, I’ve tried to restrict myself to doing it once or twice.

Yes, it’s difficult to make you come. You are difficult in other ways, too. You expect me to do things for you that I think people should do for themselves. I try anyway, and in return you hurt my feelings by complaining that I don’t take good enough care of you. My desire for you is desperate, as if making you respond in bed could make up for all the things that go wrong elsewhere and give me back what I lose when you make a contemptuous remark about something I love or tell a story that is supposed

to prove you will always be better than me at everything I care about doing well. I take it because I love you. But making love to you barely salvages my self-esteem, and keeps me addicted to you. Anybody could do this for you.

I will know I don't love you any more, that the anger has outweighed the lust, when I stop myself from taking that first puppy-lick, ice-cream-cone-lick, you-are-the-most-desirable-woman-in-the-world-lick that leads to two hours of being muzzled by your cunt, my tongue chasing itself around your clit, aching to have your wet and coming cunt plastered across my nose and mouth, my neck in the scissors of your thighs, hurting for those few seconds when I don't need to breathe or think or remember my name or my pride.

It's so difficult to make you come that only three of your lovers have been able to do it. Did any of them have the stamina to eat you twice in one night? How would you like to come again?

## *A Note on Lesbians, AIDS, and Safer Sex*

The lesbian community has a relatively low rate of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), in part because we also have a relatively low number of different sex partners per lesbian. The way that most lesbians have sex may also be a factor. However, any lesbian who deviates from this pattern by having more female partners, male partners, or exposing her bloodstream or mucous membranes to her partners' sexual fluids, piss, shit, or blood, is at higher risk. So are lesbian IV drug users.

Many lesbians believe that diseases are only brought into our community by bisexual women. Sadly, the AIDS epidemic has reinforced an attitude in some quarters that lesbians are somehow inherently cleaner or more healthy than gay men. Most of us don't think of vaginal infections as STDs, and few of us take precautions to prevent the spread of vaginitis or herpes. But women can give each other these diseases as well as chlamydia, hepatitis, intestinal parasites, syphilis, and others. You can try to protect yourself against disease by segregating your sex life so that you have no intimate contact with bisexual women, IV drug users, recently-reformed heterosexual women who are now exclusively lesbian, and any other "high risk" group. This has the potential to polarize us, and make some women scapegoats. The lesbian community is too small to survive excommunicating or quarantining some of its members. And the lesbian leather community is even smaller.

Besides, discriminating against certain groups of women who are potential sex partners is much less effective than simply having safer sex. It is difficult to know for sure if someone is giving you accurate information about their sex history and pattern of recreational drug use. Since sex with men is stigmatized in the lesbian community, and shooting up is stigmatized everywhere, you are likely to get false information about these crucial factors. Anyway, there is no guarantee that a woman who has only had sex

with other women can't get exposed to the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the virus thought to cause AIDS.

From local data collected in New York City and elsewhere, we know that most of the lesbians who have AIDS are also IV drug users. The Center for Disease Control, which is in charge of compiling national statistics on AIDS, has taken an official position that lesbians are not a "risk group," so they don't bother to keep track of the sexual orientation of women who are diagnosed as having this disease. However, there is no way to tell exactly how somebody got AIDS. Contaminated needles, which can put the virus directly into your bloodstream, do appear to transmit the disease more efficiently than lesbian sex. Recently, a purported case of AIDS transmitted sexually from one woman to another appeared in the medical literature (M. Marmor, L.R. Weiss, M. Lyden, S.H. Weiss, W.C. Saxinger, T.J. Spira, D. and P.M. Feorino, "Possible Female-to-Female Transmission of Human Immunodeficiency Virus," *Letters and Corrections*, "Annals of Internal Medicine," vol. 105, page 969). This case is controversial because one of these women also had male sex partners, and the "traumatic sexual activities" which allegedly exposed them on one another's blood are not described. However, the epidemiology of AIDS in Africa makes it clear that women can give men AIDS. HIV has been found to exist in vaginal secretions. It is there in much lower concentration than it is in semen or blood. No one has tested menstrual blood to see if it also contains high levels of HIV, but you should assume it does. There is no reason to believe that women can't give other women AIDS. This is an incurable, fatal disease, and the potential consequences of an erroneous assumption are enormous.

Everybody should know what safer sex is, and most of us should be practicing it. Any lesbian who is sexually active with multiple partners (male or female)—especially if she does not know their histories; who has used semen for alternative conception which may have come from a high-risk donor; who has a history of IV drug use; who has had sex with gay or bisexual men, IV drug users, hemophiliacs, or someone who had a blood transfusion between 1979 and 1985, or who had a blood transfusion herself, ought to observe the following guidelines:

1. If you have cuts or abrasions on your hands, use a rubber or latex glove to keep your partner's blood and vaginal fluids out of your bloodstream. Be aware that the kind of manicure that you should give yourself before fisting or heavy fucking will inevitably create breaks in the skin around your fingernails and cuticles. If you are in doubt, use the gloves. Use only water-based lubricants (like KY Jelly) with them, since oil-based lubricants like Crisco or Vaseline may weaken rubber or latex. When you buy a lubricant, read the label. If it says it is "water-soluble," but the ingredients include petroleum, shortening, vegetable oil, or any kind of grease, this is not a water-based lubricant, and it is not safe to use with latex barriers. Some lubricants (like Foreplay) contain nonoxynol-9, a spermicide that kills HIV. Generally, this is a plus; however, some women have an allergic reaction to this chemical. When you are done having sex, take off the gloves by turning them inside out, and throw them away. Then go wash your hands. From the time that you touch your partner until after washing your hands, keep your fingers out of your mouth.

2. During oral sex (especially during the woman's period) or rimming (putting your mouth on her asshole), use latex dental dams. They can be ordered (whether you are a doctor or not) from dental surgical supply houses. You can increase the sensation by putting a dab of lubricant on the side of the dam that touches your partner's body. If you take a break, throw the dam away. Do not reuse it, since there is a chance that you will lick the wrong side.

3. Sex toys that have been in somebody's ass should not go into the vagina without first being thoroughly cleaned. Ideally, sex toys should not be shared by two or more people. If this is not possible, de-germ them before you play. You can keep your dildoes and assplugs cleaner if you put a condom on them, then remove it and clean the toy after use. Leather dildoes cannot be cleaned; they should always be used with a condom, and never shared. HIV can be killed by several sterilizing solutions. Your options include rubbing alcohol in seventy percent solution, hydrogen peroxide, Betadine, a solution of one part household bleach in ten parts of water, or boiling water. Bedding and trick towels can be laundered in hot water with Hexol, a detergent that kills hepatitis and other viruses, and probably kills HIV as well.



4. Needles that are used for tattooing, piercing, or acupuncture can spread disease as easily as needles used for doing recreational drugs, and should not be shared. If you want to keep a set of works exclusively for your own use, you'd better conceal them to prevent anyone from borrowing them. Always clean your rig with boiling water or a solution of one part household bleach in ten parts water before you use it. Draw the solution into the syringe several times. Take it apart and let it soak for fifteen minutes. If you've used bleach, when you put it back together, rinse it with water you've boiled and allowed to cool. Draw the water into the syringe and squirt it out several times. You don't want to inject bleach!

5. Women who have a high risk of having been exposed to HIV should consider taking a test for the antibody to the virus before becoming pregnant, since AIDS can be passed on to the fetus. Be sure to get the test at a place where you do not have to give your name. A positive test result that is not kept anonymous could cause you to lose health insurance, make it difficult for you to travel abroad, or suffer other kinds of discrimination. Other women should probably not take the test. It was invented to screen donated blood to make sure it is safe to use for transfusions. A positive test does not mean anything other than the fact that you have been exposed to HIV, and your body is making antibodies to it. There is no way to tell if you will eventually develop AIDS or an AIDS-related condition (ARC). However, most people with a positive test have a very hard time dealing with it, and need some counseling to cope. Some people have committed suicide after getting a positive test. Remember that a negative test result could be wrong, or you might have been tested too soon after being exposed to HIV for your immune system to have started making antibodies that the test can detect. You can still be exposed to the virus any time you have unsafe sex or share needles.

6. Women who work in the sex industry or who have male partners for other reasons should always use condoms and either spermicide that is at least ten percent nonoxynol-9, a contraceptive sponge, or a lubricant containing this chemical. If a man cannot see what you are doing with his cock, he often will not be able to tell if a rubber is being used, especially if you put a dab of water-based lubricant in the tip of the condom before rolling it on. Remember to leave room in the condom for ejaculation by

pinching the air out of the tip when you put it on. This leaves an empty flap of rubber. Condoms can be applied with your mouth. If you work with a group of other women, and everyone agrees to make their clients use condoms, you can develop a clientele that will not hassle you about them. A friend of mine who is a sex worker told me that her business dropped off because of fear of AIDS, but many of her clients returned when she publicized the fact that she would only do safer sex.

If you are in a situation (for example, rape) where you cannot make a man use a condom, you should know that Betadine kills HIV, and douching with a Betadine-and-water solution may prevent infection. However, douching will also remove evidence that the police will need to prosecute a rape.

AIDS is a new disease. There is a lot that we don't know about it. It's likely that portions of this brief summary will be rendered inaccurate by further developments. So make sure you supplement this information by keeping up with new medical research and safer sex recommendations.

This book isn't a sex manual. It can't be used as a guideline for how to have safer sex. It can't be used as a manual for how to do safe S/M either. Some of the things that go on in these stories are in fact risky to do. Unfortunately, there isn't much "how-to" information about S/M in print. There are articles about lesbian S/M in my book *Sapphistry* (Naiad Press, revised edition, 1983) and Samois' *Coming to Power* (Alyson Publications, third edition, 1987). And there is a lesbian S/M magazine, *Outrageous Women*, Box 23, Somerville, MA 02143 (\$13 for 4 issues). You can also glean a lot of useful information from *DungeonMaster*, a gay men's S/M newsletter put out by Desmodus Publications, Box 11314, San Francisco, CA 94101-1314 (\$15 for 4 issues, sample \$4).

## *Appendices*

[Review of \*Macho Sluts\* from \*On Our Backs\*, Fall 1988 issue](#)

Maryhope Tobin and Sue O'Sullivan

Power is the main ingredient of *Macho Sluts*, the new collection of stories Pat Califia's fans have been eagerly awaiting. As a founding member of Samois, the first lesbian s/m support group, a columnist for the *Advocate*, and probably the best known sado-masochist in the world, Califia is known for being on the leading edge of lesbian erotica, and this book lives up to her reputation as a sex pioneer.

*Macho Sluts* will undoubtedly shock some and mesmerize others. As Califia says in her introduction, "When you are dealing with an area as permeated with ignorance and superstition as sexuality, it is more important to be honest than it is to be correct."

The eight stories in the book date from "Jessie," 1977, to the newest, "The Spoiler," from 1985. The latter is one of two stories which introduce male sexual actors. Califia argues well that lesbians should be able to write about and use men, gay or straight, in their erotic writing.

"Jessie," the notorious first chapter, has been a dyke j/o favorite since it first appeared in *Coming to Power*. The story is as hot as ever, and only adds to the unpredictability of the book as a whole.

Aficionados of classic, old-fashioned B&D will swoon over "Finishing School," an elegant tale of training, torture, and reward. The ending is a shocker: the first, but not the last, point in *Macho Sluts* where the reader gasps, "Oh my god, I can't get turned on by this!"

"The Calyx of Isis," the book's only major disappointment, is a dense story of tag-team s/m set in a mythical San Francisco women's bathhouse. The story trots the reader through a varied s/m repertoire which leaves one exhausted rather than aroused by the end. Perhaps in smaller doses, divided into chapters, one for each set of the story's dominatrices, "Calyx" would be a little easier to swallow. However, there is something for just about everyone: whipping, fisting, (genital and anal), piercing, heavy bondage, dyke cocksucking, and lots of sensimilla, sushi, and sake.

Throughout *Macho Sluts*, Califia challenges dykes who write pornography, dykes who hate pornography, and everyone in between. “The Hustler” is a profoundly cynical but funny tale of a woman-dominated future in which expressions of sex are piously regulated. The outlawed individual (the Hustler) is oppressed by the “cud-chewing” (boring) majority. This is Califia’s revenge on the Dworkinite forces in the women’s movement. “The Hustler” will definitely piss off a lot of radical feminists, but then, they probably wouldn’t have gotten this far in the book anyhow.

If any radical feminist were to read this far, she’d run screaming for the nearest copy of *Gyn/Ecology* by the time she got two pages into “The Surprise Party.” Califia lets fly with a right-on-target challenge to the idea that lesbian sexual fantasies should only have women characters. This story is not easy to read, and whatever a reader feels at the end, she will not be bored. Disgusted, maybe, turned-on, maybe—or fascinated, horrified, angry, or amused. Read this story. Push yourself. Read all the way to the end and before your mind tells you how you should feel, slip a finger between your labia and let your cunt tell you how you *do* feel.

Finally, “A Dash of Vanilla” underscores Califia’s introductory remarks that power is not exclusive to s/m. The story is vanilla, but Califia makes obvious something we’ve all experienced at some point in our sexual lives. Where there is an orgasm, or the promise of one, or the lack of one, there is power, and it comes from all sides, whether top or bottom or right or left. This story didn’t so much pass a wet test as made my jaws ache, but that’s just as much a part of lesbian sex as getting off.

## “Macho Sluts and Little Sister’s: The Court Case”

Joseph Arvay

The case of *Little Sister’s Book and Art Emporium v. Canada Customs*—otherwise billed as *Little Sister’s v. Big Brother*—might never have come about but for *Macho Sluts* by Pat (now Patrick) Califia.

*Macho Sluts* had historically been treated as “public enemy number one” by Canada Customs, having been detained at the border and prohibited from entering the country a number of times. It represented a genre of books—sado-masochistic or S/M—that Customs, and for that matter the Courts, had determined was per se obscene and beyond any possibility of having any redeeming value.

That said, it is unlikely that anyone at Customs had ever actually read the book. The evidence in the trial revealed that very few, if any, of the prohibited books had been read cover to cover by Customs officials. The normal practice was simply to scan a few pages, and any sentences that appeared to involve sex with bondage (or other taboos such as “sex with pain” or “sex with degradation”) were sufficient to condemn the entire book. I suspect that, with *Macho Sluts*, it was the title alone that doomed it to the burning bin.

But, of course, for Little Sister’s, *Macho Sluts* was an extremely important book and one that had acquired iconic status in the gay and especially the lesbian community. It was also, for Little Sister’s, the last straw. According to Jim Deva (one of the store’s owners), the book was akin, in terms of its importance to their community, to what the Bible was to the religious community. Canada Customs had simply gone too far, and it was time to fight back.

And fight we did.

We decided early on in our preparation for the trial that we would adopt an approach that was singularly different than the standard civil libertarian take, which would amount to a concession of sorts that the material in question was indeed inferior but, “holding our noses,” we would “defend to the death” the right of the author to produce or publish the work in question. Rather, it was our position that the court should be persuaded that the

material that Customs was banning from Canada had real importance and value. In other words, we wanted the Court to conclude that sexual expression and imagery—we didn't shy away from calling it pornography—far from being a base form of expression, was every bit as important as political expression and was therefore entitled to the highest protection in law.

I had decided that one of the best ways to defend *Macho Sluts* was to call its author as a witness to explain to the Court why she had written it. Pat was a wonderful witness. I knew she would be, as I had spent quite a bit of time talking to her before the trial and met her in person for the first time the night before. But I have to admit I was a bit worried about how she would present in court as she did appear as a “macho slut”—butch hairstyle, many tattoos and piercings, and decked out in leather. When I called her as my “next witness,” I couldn't believe my eyes. She was wearing a dress—a long-sleeved one, so there were no tattoos showing—and she had also taken out her piercings and had a completely different hairstyle. When I asked her about it later, she said she went and got the dress especially for the occasion—it may have been the only one she had ever worn—and that she wanted to look like a librarian, which she did. Some may consider this a bit of a cop-out, but Pat understood the rules of the game. She was appearing in a conservative forum before a very conservative judge; the stakes were high, and she knew that presentation mattered.

As it turned out, I don't know how much it mattered, because Pat was one of the most articulate and persuasive witnesses in the trial. Pat the person appeared very differently from Pat the writer. And to some extent, this bore out one of our main arguments in the case, which was that there is a world of difference between our imagination (and the work that is the product of it) and who we are and what actually happens in real life.

And yet that is probably too simplistic a dichotomy, since Pat did tell the judge that while *Macho Sluts* was a work of fiction, it did to a large extent tell the truth about her sexuality and those of other lesbians who practiced S/M.

The following exchange took place during her testimony:

Q. Let's move from your non. fiction to your fiction. Perhaps you can tell, in a general way, first of all, the reason why you write the fiction that you do.

A. I think that a great many of my motives for writing fiction are identical to my motives for writing non. fiction. It's my belief that fiction can sometimes be even more useful as an educational tool than non. fiction. It's easier to absorb. It's more entertaining. It's often more accessible. There are people who will read a work of fiction who wouldn't necessarily pick up something that looks more like a textbook. And I think that fiction is also more effective in addressing issues of lesbian visibility and in correcting misperceptions that people might have about how lesbians and masochism functions within the lives of the real women who are members of that community.

Q. To what extent does sexual arousal play a role in your motivation in writing a book such as *Macho Sluts*?

A. Because the work is sexually explicit, it would be ridiculous for me to claim that arousal is not one of the effects that I intended to have upon some readers, but it is by no means the only response that I expect readers to have to the work. I use sexuality in the fiction partly as a way to intrigue the readers and engage their attention. I also attempt, as a writer, to disturb. There are also parts of the work that I would expect to cause a reaction of anger or grief and, in that process of getting the reader very deeply, emotionally engaged with the fiction, I hope to encourage them to think about some of the ideas that are in those pieces.

Q. Why the emphasis on the sexual explicitness in your work?

A. Well, it's partly because I think that if you cannot find any fiction that describes people who are like you, people who have the kind of relationships you would like to have, people that have the kind of sexuality you would like to have, you begin to feel as if you're crazy. You don't exist. You're marginal, you're not important, and it creates a



great deal of self. hatred and self. doubt. It also creates, I think, a lot of repression and just human misery. So partly the fiction is written in an attempt to make it easier for others, [for] ... women who are sado-masochists, to come to terms with their sexuality and self. acceptance; given ... what ignorance there is about my sexuality, it would be very difficult to write a book of fiction about women who were lesbian and were masochists without including some material about their sexuality.

I took Pat through each of the stories in the book so that the Court would understand the book through the eyes of the author. Here is what transpired:

Q. Let's go to some of the short stories in *Macho Sluts*. What was "The Finishing School" about?

A. "The Finishing School" was intended to be a parody of Victorian pornography and a parody of grand opera. I often have been accused of advocating incest or advocating child abuse. That was not my intention when I wrote the piece. I attempted to make it very clear that all of the characters in it were of legal age, and it was intended to be more than a piece of erotica, a piece of humor.

Q. And what about "The Surprise Party"?

A. "The Surprise Party," like many pieces of fiction I write, has a surprise ending. My intention was to create a fantasy that initially appeared to be nonconsensual and then to make it clear at the end of the piece that all the participants had actually consented to what was happening.

Q. In any of your work, do you advocate non-consensual sex or sex with violence?

A. No.

Q. What about the story called "The Calyx of Isis"?

A. It's a fantasy about what might happen in the women's community if an enormous amount of capital were made available so that women could have access to some of the institutions for public sex or group sex that were available to gay men and to some heterosexuals in the 1970s. It was an attempt to encourage women's sexual image, to think about what the possibility might be in a world like that, where we had access to more economic resources.

Q. There is also a story called "The Vampire" in *Macho Sluts*. What is that about and your purpose in writing it?

A. Well, it's a love story. It's also a bit of a commentary where there's dialectic with the horror genre which I think is usually rather predictable, in that you have a vampire who is a dead monster that preys on human victims. In that story, I wanted the reader not to be very clear about who was the predator and who was the prey. It was meant to encourage readers to think more about S/M roles and not make assumptions that "tops" or more dominant partners are any more powerful than their putative victim permits them to be. To some extent, it's also a comment on femme roles in the larger lesbian community, because the character in the story who is more feminine in fact has at least as much, if not more, power during the course of the narrative than the female character who is more masculine.

Q. Another story in *Macho Sluts* is "The Spoiler." Again, can you tell his lordship what that was about and why you wrote it?

A. I'm not sure that anyone who was outside of the S/M community would necessarily understand "The Spoiler," or what the point of it was ... In community dialogue, it's about a man who is sexually dominant who courts other sexually dominant men, and he is sort of an ultimate sexual controller, manipulator. But it's also not clear in the story if he is, in fact, the ultimate form of submissive who is just very dedicated to providing pleasure for men that he admires or worships. It's also a cautionary tale, I think, about the dangers that you hoard when you fulfill other people's fantasies and what some of the

consequences might be for giving people what they really want. I think that often, surprisingly enough, people are quite angry when they get what they really want.

Q. The next story is called “A Dash of Vanilla.” What is that about?

A. I put that story at the end of the book because I didn’t want the whole thing to be about S/M. I wanted to have at least one story in the book that might hook the interest of other members of the women’s community. It’s a sort of stream-of-consciousness piece about making love to a partner who has a great deal of trouble reaching orgasm. When I have read this piece in public, I find that gay men and heterosexuals, as well as lesbians, usually find it to be enormously funny. It’s a situation that many of us have found ourselves in. The point—one of the points, anyway—was that if so. called vanilla or non. S/M sex could be this much trouble and cause the active partner this much grief, then how different could it be from at least some S/M experience? It was meant to point out commonalities in all sorts of sexualities. So it addresses a common problem in intimate relationships in a way that I hope is compassionate and lighthearted.

Q . The book ends with “A Note on Lesbians, AIDS, and Safer Sex.” Briefly, what was that about?

A. My basic vocation, I feel, is to be a sex educator. At the time when *Macho Sluts* was published, there was almost nothing in print geared toward a lesbian audience about how to take precautions to prevent the transmission of AIDS. And I was aware that some of the pieces of fiction in the book had described acts that were fantasy, that were intended to be for fantasy fulfillment. And, in fact, some probably would not have been safe to do from a medical standpoint if one of the partners were infected with HIV. So I wanted to give the reader a balance to that, give them information they would need to protect their health.

Pat was so good in her testimony that neither counsel for the Government of Canada nor the Government of British Columbia could think of one word to ask her in cross-examination. That in itself says a great deal.

But most importantly, Pat had wowed the trial judge. One has to appreciate that the judge came to the Little Sister's trial with a tabula rasa. I don't pretend to know his background, but I suspect he is very straight and had no experience with gay and lesbian pornography. But the trial was long, which provided us with the opportunity to educate the judge about the importance of gay and lesbian literature, and I believe that for him, like many of us, the trial was a transformative experience.

The following passages from the trial judge's decision were to me quite remarkable, and I credit Pat, perhaps more than anyone else in the trial, for moving Canadian law to the point where depictions or descriptions of S/M sexual practices were simply no longer per se obscene as Canada Customs and the courts had previously held them to be.

The trial judge set the stage as follows:

Considerable evidence and argument was directed to the topic of homosexual sado-masochism. The plaintiffs established that sado-masochism is a theatrical, ritualistic practice in which the consent of the participants is inherent, although they conceded consent is not necessarily always present. Customs officers routinely prohibit depictions and descriptions of sadomasochistic practices on the ground that they involve either explicit sex with violence or sex without violence that subjects persons to degrading or dehumanizing treatment.

He then referred expressly to *Macho Sluts* to support his finding that sado-masochistic works should not be considered per se obscene: "*Macho Sluts* (Boston: Alyson Publications Inc., 1988), by Pat Califia, illustrates this point. The book is concerned with lesbian, sado-masochistic practices ... The author's introduction to the work is informative:

"Liberty is the right not to lie." —Albert Camus

The things that seem beautiful, inspiring, and life-affirming to me seem ugly, hateful, and ludicrous to most other people. This may be the most painful part of being a sado-masochist: this experience of radical difference, separation at the root of perception. Our culture insists on sexual uniformity and does not acknowledge any neutral differences—only crimes, sins, diseases, and mistakes. This smug erotic totalitarianism does hidden violence to dissidents and perverts. It distorts our self-images, ambitions, and dreams. We think we are alone, or crazy, or ridiculous. Our desire learns to curb itself, and we

come to depend on the strength of self-repression for our safety. We live in fear of being known, and such fear stifles the nascent erotic wish before the image of what is wished for can be fully formed. We know we are ugly before we have even seen ourselves, and the injustice of this, the falsehood, chokes me.

What, then, are my choices, as a writer and a sadomasochist? I could keep my sexuality private, write about other issues, other sorts of people, and tell myself that these are more important themes, more universal characters, more valid as literature. That involves telling a lie by omission—becoming invisible as a pervert, assuming an undeserved mantle of normalcy and legitimacy.

“Califia here expresses the importance of homosexual sado-masochist literature,” wrote the trial judge, “in furthering the principles and values that underlie freedom of expression as outlined in *Irwin Toy v. Quebec, supra*. [That is, seeking and attaining truth, participating in social and political decision-making, and cultivating the diversity of forms of individual self-fulfillment and human flourishing in a tolerant or welcoming environment.] She further expresses a dominant theme prevalent in homosexual art and literature, and one that was attested to by many of the plaintiffs’ witnesses, that is, the need for self-affirmation and empowerment through expression.”

The Little Sister’s case went all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. While we were not successful in striking down the Customs legislation that allowed Customs officers to ban books and other expressive material at the border, we were successful in having the Supreme Court of Canada condemn the discriminatory, arbitrary, and irrational decision-making that was so prevalent prior to the Little Sister’s case.

The Supreme Court of Canada said this:

There was ample evidence to support the trial judge’s conclusion that the adverse treatment meted out by Canada Customs to the appellants and through them to Vancouver’s gay and lesbian community violated the appellants’ legitimate sense of self-worth and human dignity. The Customs treatment was high-handed and dismissive of the appellants’ right to receive lawful expressive material which they had every right to import. When Customs officials prohibit and thereby censor lawful gay and lesbian erotica, they are making a statement about gay and lesbian culture, and the statement was reasonably interpreted by the appellants as demeaning gay and lesbian values. The message was that their concerns were less worthy of attention and respect than those of their heterosexual counterparts.

While here it is the interests of the gay and lesbian community that were targeted, other vulnerable groups may similarly be at risk from overzealous censorship. Little Sister’s was targeted because it was considered “different.” On a more general level, it seems to

me fundamentally unacceptable that expression which is free within the country can become stigmatized and harassed by government officials simply because it crosses an international boundary, and is thereby brought within the bailiwick of the Customs department. The appellants' constitutional right to receive perfectly lawful gay and lesbian erotica should not be diminished by the fact their suppliers are, for the most part, located in the United States. Their freedom of expression does not stop at the border.

Whereas prior to the case, virtually every international shipment of books that was ordered by Little Sister's was opened and inspected and many books detained or prohibited entry, I can happily report that today Customs does not even inspect, let alone detain or ban, any book that Little Sister's has imported into Canada.<sup>[1](#)</sup>

That is a triumph for Little Sister's; it is a triumph for the gay and lesbian community; it is a triumph for Canadians who care about freedom of expression and especially of sexual expression.

And it is a triumph that may not have come about but for *Macho Sluts*—that which was so egregiously censored by Customs, and so courageously defended by its author, Pat Califia.

*Joseph Arvey was the chief counsel for Little Sister's Bookstore during its trial against Canada Customs. His practice is based in Vancouver.*

<sup>[1](#)</sup> There is one notable exception. After the Supreme Court of Canada rendered its judgment, Customs detained and prohibited two comic books of the *Meatmen* series. Little Sister's once again launched another constitutional challenge and that too went all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada on a procedural issue not relevant to this comment. However, there was never a detention or prohibition after that and to the present day. Customs obviously knows that if it tries to censor books and other expressive material destined for Little Sister's, it will be challenged. For all intents and purposes, Little Sister's has emasculated Customs and its laws when it comes to banning gay and lesbian expression.

## [“In Appreciation”](#)

Jim Deva, co-owner, Little Sister's Bookstore

The reissue of *Macho Sluts* as part of the Little Sister's Classic series gives me great joy and reinforces the mission of the series: to keep important LGBT books in print. This book became an integral part of our legal battles with Canada Customs—no other book received such intensive scrutiny, was seized and destroyed, seized and released, and then seized again and burned. It became a classic example of the insanity of a government bureaucracy attempting to create a regimen of censorship in a free and democratic society, attempting to protect and save its citizens from transgressive literature.

They say you should not judge a book by its cover, but it was not the cover of Pat Califia's book that garnered the attention of Customs workers. It was the title. When you put the two highly charged words “macho” and “sluts” together on a bill of lading, then pass it by the inquisitive noses of Customs agents, I guarantee you will receive an immediate Pavlovian response. Much the same way a well-trained beagle can sniff out our favorite weekend party drugs, Customs agents seemed to be able to sniff out a shipment of books containing the title *Macho Sluts*. There were times in our many attempts to import the book that I wish the title had been *Submissive Ladies*—that would have been a title that would have raised no eyebrows, would have quietly crossed the border, much in the way that Jane Austen's novels have quietly defined how a young lady should behave. In many ways, Pat Califia's *Macho Sluts* is the antidote to Jane Austen; Califia did not simply push the boundaries with this book, she blew up a transnational border, like a burning cigarette in a fireworks warehouse. Strong women in charge of their lives and their sexuality were not something that Canada Customs had much experience with, and it was time that they learned.

It is one thing to write an important book in the privacy of your home, hunched over a computer keyboard, just you and the words in front of you. It is entirely another to come out into the light of a judgmental society, eager to condemn all that is confrontational and new. Pat Califia not only

talked the talk, Pat walked the walk with the bold and brave defense of the book during our long and important court case. Pioneers who dare to challenge existing codes of conduct often face societal condemnation, and those who truly attempt to change the world in any significant way can expect overwhelming opposition. Pat Califia faced this hostile judgment in a Canadian courtroom and came out the proud victor. Pat Califia will forever remain one of my heroes in our epic fight for the right to choose what we read and view. Now a whole new generation of readers will be able to appreciate the bravery of this important book and author. Please savor and enjoy.





PATRICK CALIFIA'S writing and activism have revolutionized the concept of queer sex. He has written over a dozen books, including *Coming to Power*, *Melting Point*, *No Mercy*, and *Speaking Sex to Power*. His work has been translated into six other languages. Almost ten years ago, Califia transitioned from female to male; he now lives as a bisexual transman in San Francisco.

WENDY CHAPKIS is a Professor of Sociology and Women & Gender Studies at the University of Southern Maine in Portland. She is also the co-author of *Dying to Get High: Marijuana as Medicine* (New York University Press, 2008).



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