THE PARASITE REVISITED

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Classic Tale of Possession
Told From a Female Dominant Perspective

By
Sandrine Bessancort

An SFPG Publication

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Introduction

Looking back to my time as a little girl, growing up in a tiny village in the foothills leading to the Mont St Victoire, I realise that the darkness keeping me such imaginative company in the present was no less vibrant in my unformed past; a *darkness*, I firmly believe, brought about by the advanced reading age that led me (when I could access them at such an age) to those titles of a more adult nature.

Not pornographic, I hasten to add as, without being judgmental, such material is of little or no interest to me.

No, my adolescent interest was piqued by titles from writers as diverse as Dumas and Hugo to Rachilde and Pierre Louys; each of whom could be guaranteed – if only in miniature in the case of the former duo – to populate their tales with a strong female character – characters such as "Milady" in the case of Dumas Pere and his Three Musketeers, together with La Marquise de Sade from the pen of the precocious Rachilde.

Thus was my interest in reading stories with a strong commanding heroine born and, those stories being few and far between, my re-imagining of many such tales from a female-led, so to speak, perspective. A tinkering for my own pleasure that has led to the pleasure of friends (yes, I do have them and this darkness I give air to is but a necessary correlative to the decency I find imperative in my day-to-day life) and, now, and hopefully, to the pleasure of a wider range of readers with a passion for stories of strong, commanding and dominating, women who enjoy nothing more than to rule the lives of those men who fall into their toils.

Hence my revisiting of these classic tales from the masters of antiquity.

When we domesticate the imagination we lose the joy of life.

But, sometimes, our more private thoughts should *not* be acted upon and should remain either written or perceived.

But *always* as *imagination.*

Sandrine Bessancort
Honfleur
2012

3.30 P.M. - March 24

The spring is fairly with us now.

Outside my laboratory window the great chestnut-tree is all covered with the big, glutinous, gummy buds, some of which have already begun to break into little green shuttlecocks. As you walk down the lanes you are conscious of the rich, silent forces of nature working all around you. The wet earth smells fruitful and luscious. Green shoots are peeping out everywhere. The twigs are stiff with their sap; and the moist, heavy English air is laden with a faintly resinous perfume. Buds in the hedges, lambs beneath them—everywhere the work of reproduction going forward!

I can see it without, and I can feel it within. If the heightened pleasure I take in gazing upon the ladies in their finery during my daily constitutional is to be added to nature's mix then it is not the sap of the twigs alone that is on the rise.

For we also have our spring when the little arterioles dilate, the lymph flows in a brisker stream and the glands work harder as they winnow and strain. Every year nature readjusts the whole machine. I can feel the ferment in my blood at this very moment, and as the cool sunshine pours through my window I could dance about in it like a gnat.

And so I should, only that Charles Sadler would rush upstairs to know what was the matter. Besides, I must remember that I am Professor Gilroy. An old professor may afford to be natural, but when fortune has given one of the first chairs in the university to a man of two-and-forty he must try and act the part consistently.

What a fellow Wilson is! If I could only throw the same enthusiasm into physiology that he does into psychology, I should become a Claude Bernard at the least. His whole life and soul and energy work to one end. He drops to sleep collating his results of the past day, and he wakes to plan his researches for the coming one.

And yet…

Outside the narrow circle who follow his proceedings, he gets so little credit for it. Physiology is a recognized science. If I add even a brick to the edifice, everyone sees and applauds it. But Wilson is trying to dig the foundations for a science of the future. His work is underground and does not show. Yet he goes on uncomplainingly, corresponding with a hundred semi-maniacs in the hope of finding one reliable witness and sifting a hundred lies on the chance of gaining one little speck of truth.

I admire his tenacity, yet, when he asks me to associate myself with his researches, I am compelled to be somewhat short with him.

Too short.

No doubt I am a materialist. Agatha says that I am a rank one and only what I see, hear and touch will I believe, while I tell her that is an excellent reason for shortening our engagement, since I am in such urgent need of her spirituality.

This she accepts for the compliment it is, not comprehending that my true need is for the beautifully formed contours and exquisitely smooth skin of the youthful body that is, nonetheless, attracted to a man some sixteen years her senior but refuses to yield itself to his masculine urgency until the amenities of matrimony have been observed.

Thus the sap rises and all is as it has always been – these are my private thoughts so, if they seem… *indecorous*... to you, whoever *you* turn out to be, remember that I am not the intruder here and, if you read on, judgement must be made upon yourself as well as your diarist.

And yet, to return to my theme, and despite my withholding of credulity for the less tangible disciplines, I am by nature, unless I deceive myself, a highly psychic man.

I was a nervous, sensitive boy, a dreamer, a somnambulist, full of impressions and intuitions. My black hair, my dark eyes, my thin, olive face, my tapering fingers, are all characteristic of my real temperament, and cause experts like Wilson to claim me as their own. Add to this a certain private… *sensuousness…* that same love of the female form I mention above forever adding images of a well-turned ankle or a pair of firm and well-shaped breasts below hour-glass hips and, but for my own self-discipline, I could just as easily have turned out a roué and user of our fairer sex.

The above a distinct likelihood, given my tastes in women run to the more submissive and biddable amongst them, rather than those of their number – becoming I note, with as much alarm as distaste, more prevalent with each passing year – of a more wilful and confrontational mindset.

As nature placed the Lion above the Lioness so she placed man above woman and, though we admire them as perfectly delightful diversions and receptacles for our desires, both lustful and procreational, their inclination is toward the frivolous and the quarrelsome and it is a foolish man indeed who raises them to equality with him.

For as by natural law they furnish and maintain a home for the father and provider of their offspring, so nature insists it be man’s responsibility to offer leadership and the means necessary to make such domesticity possible.

I would have you know, however, that, sensuousness and love of the female form I speak of aside, my brain itself is soaked with exact knowledge. I have trained it to deal only with fact and with proof. Surmise and fancy have no place in my scheme of thought. Show me what I can see with my microscope, cut with my scalpel, weigh in my balance, and I will devote a lifetime to its investigation. Ask me to study feelings and impressions and you ask me to do what is distasteful and even demoralizing.

A departure from pure reason affects me like an evil smell or a musical discord.

Which is a very sufficient reason why I am a little loath to go to Professor Wilson's tonight.

And yet I feel that I could hardly get out of the invitation without positive rudeness; and, now that Mrs. Marden and Agatha are going, I would not withdraw if I could. Time spent within the sexual aura of the wonderful if, perhaps, too trusting Agatha, who appears quite unaware of the effect of her presence upon her brute, fiancé, is time any man possessing but a single ounce of taste and discernment would be quite insane to pass up.

I count the time down to our nuptials and the evening that will follow our respective pledges with the most intense impatience.

Such is my lust for this young woman who, by the vagaries of good fortune, I also happen to love.

But I had rather meet her anywhere else as I know the evening is an attempt by Wilson to draw me into this nebulous semi-science of his. In his enthusiasm he is perfectly impervious to hints or remonstrances, Nothing short, in fact, of a positive quarrel will make him realize my aversion to the whole business.

I have no doubt that he has some new mesmerist or clairvoyant or medium or trickster of some sort whom he is going to exhibit to us, for even his entertainments bear upon his hobby.

Well, it will be a treat for Agatha, at any rate. She is interested in it. As, I am sure you will agree, a woman usually is in whatever is vague and mystical and indefinite.

10.50 P.M. - March 24

This diary-keeping of mine is, I fancy, the outcome of that scientific habit of mind about which I wrote this morning.

I like to register impressions while they are fresh and, once a day at least, endeavour to define my own mental position.

It is a useful piece of self-analysis, and has, I fancy, a steadying effect upon the character.

Frankly, I must confess that my own needs what stiffening I can give it. I fear that, after all, much of the neurotic temperament I wrote of in my last entry survives and I am far from that cool, calm precision which characterizes Murdoch or Pratt-Haldane.

Why else should the tomfoolery which I have witnessed this evening have set my nerves thrilling so that even now I am all unstrung?

My only comfort is that neither Wilson nor Miss Pencelosa nor even Agatha could have possibly known my weakness.

And what in the world was there to excite me after all?

Nothing.

Or so little it will seem ludicrous when I set it down.

You, my unknown reader, of a date in the future equally mysterious to me, must be the judge.

The Mardens got to Wilson's before me. In fact, I was one of the last to arrive and found the room crowded. I had hardly time to say a word to Mrs. Marden and to Agatha, who was looking charming enough, in white and pink, with glittering wheat-ears in her hair, to set my libidinous intentions in her regard racing once again. I confess, I can do no less, that when Wilson came twitching at my sleeve I was lost to the latest of my lewd conjectures as to just how my intended will look when I eventually see her as our maker intended.

With yet more veracity, I further confess that the interruption came just as my fevered imagination pictured Agatha’s soft pink-lips about to descend upon my…

"You want something positive, Gilroy," said he, drawing me apart into a corner, thoroughly oblivious to my irritation at his intrusion upon my perfectly delightful, if less than gentlemanly, thoughts.

Under the circumstances, the recovery of my wits that at least permitted him to receive a half-hearted smile of curiosity was, though I say so myself, laudable.

"My dear fellow, I have a phenomenon—a *phenomenon!*"

I should have been more impressed by the tone of his high excitement had I not seen and heard the same before and long since become used to the sanguine spirit that turns every fire-fly into a star and every lighted lamp, no matter how pallid, into fresh morning sunshine.

"No possible question about the bona fides this time," said he in answer, perhaps, to some little gleam of long suffering amusement in my eyes. "My wife has known her family for many years in the capacity of domestic servants."

My thoughts were mocking:

"What further verification could those applying the strictures of scientific research possibly want, than the off-duty results of conjecture upon the paranormal made by those who skivvy in the employ of others?"

"They both come from Trinidad, you know?" added. "My wife and Miss Pencelosa."

He remained excited, as if such news would remedy any lack of recognised academic bona fides, though his voice did lower at this point:

"*If*, I might add, from somewhat different social circumstances, if you take my meaning?"

Not being a complete dunderhead it was hard not to and I nodded to assure him of my cognizance. Wilson, it must be said, despite his ecumenical inclusiveness when it came to matters intellectual, was, and along with me I suppose, more than a little careful to maintain his social position. The respect it accorded him from those of a rank made lower by the lottery of birth and intellectual capacity was *not*, I knew with certainty, something with which he was likely to gamble.

In this, at least, we were of a likemind.

Miss Pencelosa, you understand, being exactly the type and race of woman he would scarce employ as a skivvy under normal circumstances but, given what he described as her: *"phenomenal gifts"*, was more than happy to devote an entire evening in her honour that he may make some small, quasi-scientific, point to those friends and acquaintances of a more credulous quality of mind. Friends and acquaintances gathered about us as we spoke and of whom you will be aware by now I am certainly *not* one.

The woman, he told me:

"…has only been in England a week or two, and knows no one outside the university circle. She will return to her native isle soon, but I assure you that the things she has told us whilst here suffice in themselves to establish clairvoyance upon an absolutely scientific basis. There is nothing like her, amateur or professional."

The rising sap of spring I had felt earlier was already somewhere around the toecaps of my carefully polished brogues as I listened to protestations I had heard many times before from my friend's lips.

"Come and be introduced!" he said with a hearty slap upon my back.

Unwillingly, but led, as always, by the social amenities that simply had to be observed, I allowed him to guide me to the lady in question.

You see, I like none of these mystery-mongers, but the *amateur* least of all. With the paid performer you may at least have the satisfaction of pouncing upon him and exposing him the instant that you have seen through his trick. He is there to deceive you, and you are there to find him out.

But what are you to do with the acquaintance of your host's wife – no matter her lowly birth and intellectual standing?

Are you to turn on a light suddenly and expose her slapping a surreptitious banjo?

Or are you to hurl cochineal over her evening frock when she steals round with her phosphorus bottle and her supernatural platitude?

There would, naturally, follow a scene and you would be looked upon as a brute.

So, for the sake of social propriety, you have but one choice:

To be no more than a dupe.

You may be assured that I was in no very good humor as I followed Wilson to the lady herself.

My first impression being that *anyone* more like my idea of a West Indian could not be imagined.

She was a buxom, sturdily built creature of somewhere between middle twenty and thirty years, age made more difficult to assess by the hair which was – after some atavistic trait, no doubt – cut short in the way of some African tribeswomen I had seen in the sepia photographs at the lectures of returning anthropologists. The features I could see waiting to greet me, features with flared nostrils and large, overripe lips, were contained beneath a skin so brown it was near black.

The overall impression being, I told myself: *"Simian"*.

I could tell immediately that she was of low origins – even by Trinidadian social standards – and looked out of place and uncomfortable in the Bond Street costume consisting of short jacket and long skirt that had, no doubt, been loaned or given her by Wilson's wife.

She also appeared constricted by the presence on her feet of a pair of the lace-up ankle-boots with pointed toe and short and sharp dagger heel that were so fashionable at present – again, no doubt, loaned by Mrs Wilson – and scuffed at the drawing room rug as if she would drag them from her feet that she may have the illusion of sinking her naked toes into the soft sand of the beach at Pigeon Point or one of the other meeting points of land and sea surrounding her island of birth.

And yet, for all the above, and despite my dismissal of her, she held herself with a certain… *defiance*.

Yes!

The exact word I require to describe my impression of her.

Other than this *"defiance"* and the unique, not to mention puerile, circumstances of her presence as a black Trinidadian at a respectable English soiree - and *not* as a domestic with serving-tray to hand – I should have said that in any group of ten women she would have been the last whom one would have picked out.

The above observation made with the proviso that it would only have been made *before* my own eyes met the piercing and, I confess, disconcerting stare of her own.

They were, I can do no less than confess, remarkable!

And, to your diarist, *utterly* repugnant.

They were gray in color—gray with a shade of green—and their expression struck me as being, together with being undeniably compelling, decidedly furtive.

Yet now, given the perspective lent by no longer being in her presence, I wonder if furtive is the word.

Perhaps, on second thought, I should have said fierce?

On third thoughts, *feline* would have expressed it better; though this was a female sharing nothing in common with those prompting the spring sap to rising in my loins with such urgency during the day that had passed thus far.

Such thoughts in *her* regard were frankly…

No matter; it is not my habit to labour such vulgar points.

Anyhow, I was introduced to Miss Pencelosa, and it did not escape me that as my name was mentioned she glanced across at Agatha.

A small, and not exactly out-of-the-ordinary, action on her part that, nonetheless, heightened suspicions on my own in regard of the evening to come.

Wilson had evidently been talking and presently, thought I, his performing Trinidadian will inform me by occult means that I am engaged to a young lady with wheat-ears in her hair.

I wondered how much more our host had been telling her about me.

"Professor Gilroy is a terrible sceptic," said he; "I hope, Miss Pencelosa, that you will be able to convert him."

She looked keenly up at me.

"He be right to be sceptical if he not see anything he believe," said she in a kind of semi-pidgin I found intolerable to the ear.

The import of her next words more intolerable still:

"I see already dat he himself make me a good subject."

The intensity of those repellent eyes as she said *"subject"* sent, and do not imagine I use hyperbole here, ice cold chills the length of my spine.

Chills, I realise, that were nothing more than pure distaste on my part as I reminded myself *never* to accept another of Wilson's invitations unless absolutely certain of the kind of evening he had planned.

You may be assured that evenings of the kind I experienced tonight and describe here would *not* be amongst those invitations likely to find favour with me.

"For what, may I ask?" said I in response to her statement, maintaining my sang froid despite what I took to be amusement for my discomfort in the expression of the negress.

"To be put under, Mon," she said, eyes boring into mine while I maintained eye-contact only with the greatest difficulty, for it was obvious, even in so short a space of time, that the young negress had seen something to her liking in my person and the irritation and distaste I was experiencing, for not only her the woman herself but her words and the inarticulate way in which she framed them, were joined by outrage that one such as she could dare intimate such an interest to me; unspoken or otherwise.

And this in the presence of the beautiful and wholesome girl to whom I was shortly to be joined.

My fury was quieted somewhat only by the fact I could tell nobody else was aware of the blatant message being conveyed to me by Miss Pencelosa's cold gray eyes and the lack allowed me to converse with her in at least a semi-normal way:

"My experience," I told her somewhat haughtily, "has been that mesmerists go for their subjects to those who are mentally unsound or of a diminished cerebral capacity. All their results are vitiated, as it seems to me, by the fact that they are dealing with abnormal organisms."

I had deliberately used language of a kind that was hardly challenging but would, I knew, be of a type she would find impenetrable and obtuse; waiting for her incomprehension to surface that, I freely admit, I might take pleasure from the adoption towards her of a patronising attitude.

A wait that proved futile.

Until; finally:

"Which o' dese ladies you say possess a *normal* organism?" she asked, to my dismay and an equal measure of surprise. "

"Well…" I hesitated, not having expected her to comprehend my words let alone throw them back at me with a question of her own.

"I wants you to choose de one you feels be most normal," she told me.

"Why not the lovely Miss Agatha Marden, herself?" Wilson offered when I could offer no suggestion, feeling unaccountably ill-at-ease in the presence of the young negress and berating myself for such stupidity on my part.

"Yes," I answered in a somewhat preoccupied and distant voice, wanting the evening over as swiftly as possible and willing to go along with anything if it would bring the festivities to cessation with more haste. "I should attach weight to any results from her."

Those cold and startling gray eyes surveyed my fiancé and lust object with what passed, given Miss Pencelosa's untrained mind, for analytical inspection and I found myself bristling at the intimate way in which she performed the inspection of an example of English womanhood as far removed from her own as the Dog Star Sirius was removed from the Wilson's drawing-room in which we currently stood.

"De lady be perfect," she agreed finally. "She be almost as impressionable as her fiancé I thinks."

I choked back a most ungentlemanly rebuke.

Insulting me – for it was an insult, make no mistake - in her illiterate and childlike semi-pidgin was one thing.

Extending the exercise to my Agatha was an exercise in lese majeste I could not allow to go unchallenged.

Fortunately, however, she went on and prevented the temptation to unburden myself of my distaste for her rudeness to surface further.

"Some people dey respond more quick dan others," she offered.

My expression as I grappled with temptation said no more than: *'perhaps'*.

"I takes it you admit to de mesmeric sleep and de power of suggestion?"

"I admit nothing, Miss Pencelosa."

"Den I give you a show."

She scanned the room and, as she did so, I noticed the presence behind her of a large negress of around my age.

A large negress whose eyes drank in my presence with as much frank appreciation as those of the girl she appeared to be accompanying.

I was frankly horrified.

Appalled you may take as granted.

"See de girl in red," Miss Pencelosa pointed. "Dere, by de Japanese jar."

I acknowledged that I did indeed see the lady in question.

"Wi' no words I make her come across to us."

Before the last sentence had left somewhat oversized lips, she bent forward and dropped her fan upon the floor.

And, surprise of ages…

The girl whisked round and came straight toward us with an enquiring look upon her face, just as if someone had in fact called her.

Wilson was in ecstasy:

"What do you think of that, Gilroy?" he cried Wilson, delighted with the puerile scene just contrived; so delighted, in fact, it made me almost wish to slap his cheeks that he might be returned to a semblance of sense befitting a man of his rank and learning.

I did not *dare* to tell him what I thought of it.

To me it was the most barefaced, shameless piece of imposture that I had ever witnessed and the collusion and the signal had really been too obvious.

"Mister Gilroy not satisfied," observed Miss Pencelosa, intentionally omitting the *'Professor'* with which Wilson had introduced us and glancing up at me with her strange, slate gray, eyes. "My fan get de credit fo' dis one. He be needin' more proof I thinks."

Her eyes left mine to rest upon Agatha who was looking on with much delight in the charade playing out, almost as if she, like Wilson, believed an ancient and previously undiscovered truth were finally being laid bare for all of modernity to see.

"How 'bout you, Miz Marden, d'you have de objection to me putting you off?"

"Oh, I should love it!" cried Agatha, with such excitement I was almost angry with her.

Almost, that is – for I could never be truly angry with my wonderful Agatha for very long.

By this time all the company had gathered round us in a circle. The shirt-fronted men, and the white-throated women. Some, like Agatha herself, awed, some critical, as though it were something between a religious ceremony and a conjurer's entertainment. A red velvet arm-chair had been pushed into the centre, and Agatha lay back in it, a little flushed and trembling slightly from excitement. I could see it from the vibration of the wheat-ears.

Miss Pencelosa stood over her and leaned her face with its simian features in close and, suddenly, though I berated myself for the impression, she was no longer an insignificant and unlearned young black woman from the colonies but a commanding and important presence who had returned to an element where *she* was a master.

With an expression I resented from the bottom of my soul - the expression with which a Roman empress might have looked at her kneeling slave – she stared into my trusting Agatha's eyes and then, before my tolerance finally reached breaking point and I intervened, straightened with a quick and commanding gesture before tossing up her arms and sweeping them slowly down in front of her.

Despite my resentment, the scientific part of my brain and the discipline to which I had trained it ensured I watched Agatha narrowly.

I observed that, for three passes, she seemed to be simply amused.

At the fourth I observed a slight glazing of her eyes, accompanied by some dilation of her pupils.

At the sixth there was a momentary rigor.

At the seventh her lids began to droop.

At the tenth her eyes were closed, and her breathing was slower and fuller than usual.

I tried as I watched to preserve my scientific calm but, and despite my cynicism, a foolish and causeless agitation convulsed me. Agitation I trust I managed to hide. For, despite the training of my temperament and the disciplining of my reason I have already described, I felt as a child feels when alone in the dark and could not have believed that I was still open to such weakness.

"She be in the trance," said Miss Pencelosa.

"She is sleeping!" I cried.

"Wake her, den!"

Needing no further urging, I pulled Agatha by the arm and shouted in her ear.

She might have been dead for all the impression that I could make.

Her body was there on the velvet chair and a quick observation told me her organs were functioning—heart and lungs in perfect order.

But her soul!

It had slipped from beyond our ken.

Whither had it gone?

What power had dispossessed it?

I was, I frankly confess, puzzled and disconcerted.

"So much for de sleep," said Miss Pencelosa. "Now I proves to you de suggestion. Anything I say, Miz Marden will want to do, be it now or after she wake from her trance."

Those disturbing eyes made contact with mine once again.

“You want de proof?"

"Certainly," said I.

I saw a smile pass over her face, as though an amusing thought had struck her. She stooped and whispered earnestly into her subject's ear for what seemed an inordinate amount of time.

This while Agatha, who had been so deaf to me, nodded her head as she listened.

Satisfied she had said all she needed to say, the young negress straightened up and stared down upon my still unconscious beloved.

"Wake up now, Miz Marden!" cried Miss Pencelosa, with a sharp clap of her hands.

The eyes opened, the glazing cleared slowly away, and the soul looked out once more after its strange eclipse.

The whole episode was, I freely confess, puzzling.

Not long after the incident, though I would have left sooner had I my way, we went away. Agatha was none the worse for her strange excursion, but I was nervous and unstrung. I found myself unable to listen to or answer the stream of comments which Wilson was pouring out for my benefit and they only served to hasten our departure.

As, like the gentleman my breeding prevents me from *not* being, I bade her good-night, Miss Pencelosa nodded to the older negress standing behind her chair and, out of sight of Agatha, this friend, companion or servant, or what have you, slipped a piece of paper into my hand.

"Open de note at ten tomorrow morning.”

Her words sounded uncomfortably close to a command and I was about to make a suitably caustic reply when she added:

“It be a little test dat de Mistress make so you not be cynical anymore."

And here I am, at home, the note before me, still unread as I pen these thoughts.

“A little test?” I paraphrase aloud.

“Mistress?”

No woman less like a mistress than Miss Pencelosa, in either of the descriptions two senses, springs to mind and I cannot imagine what she means to achieve with whatever is contained in the note.

Just the same, the scientist in me strong and not wishing to compromise the conditions of her *"test",* it shall be opened in the morning as she directs.

My head is aching, and I have written enough for to-night.

To-morrow I dare say that what seems so inexplicable will take quite another complexion.

Though I shall not surrender my convictions without a struggle.

10.45 A.M. - March 25

I am amazed.

Confounded.

It is clear that I must reconsider my opinion upon this matter.

But first let me place on record what has occurred.

I had finished breakfast, and was looking over some diagrams with which my lecture is to be illustrated, when my housekeeper entered to tell me that Agatha was in my study and wished to see me immediately. I glanced at the clock and saw with sun rise that it was only half-past nine.

When I entered the room, she was standing on the hearth-rug facing me. Something in her pose chilled me and checked the words which were rising to my lips. Her veil was half down, but I could see that she was pale and that her expression was constrained.
"Austin," she said, "I have come to tell you that our engagement is at an end."

I staggered. I believe that I literally did stagger. I know that I found myself leaning against the bookcase for support.

"But—but——" I stammered. "This is very sudden, Agatha."

"The timing is of no importance, Austin. I have come here to tell you that our engagement is at an end," she repeated.

"But surely," I cried, "you will give me some reason! This is unlike you, Agatha. Tell me how I have been unfortunate enough to offend you."

"It is all over, Austin."

"But why? You must be under some delusion, Agatha. Perhaps you have been told some falsehood about me. Or you may have misunderstood something that I have said to you. Only let me know what it is, and a word may set it all right."

"We must consider it all at an end."

"But you left me last night without a hint at any disagreement. What could have occurred in the interval to change you so?"

She appeared to consider this and I rushed on:

"It must have been something that happened last night."

She simply stared at me as if I were a rather large lab experiment.

“You have been thinking it over and you have disapproved of my conduct. Was it the mesmerism? Did you blame me for letting that woman exercise her power over you? You know that at the least sign I should have interfered."

"It is useless, Austin. All is over. And the fault lies with you and your unseemly thoughts."

“My unseemly…?”

“Not just in my regard but in respect of other women also. They are not the thoughts of a gentleman and the acts you desire a woman to perform upon you are, frankly, repugnant to me and have no place in the physical relation of a normal man toward his woman.”

If I had staggered before then my reaction to her words now, had I ceded to them, would have seen me insensible upon my living-room rug. Her words sounded rehearsed and a part of me recognised the fact. But it made no difference.

Somehow my lips formed words and, in the attempt to pronounce myself innocent, only succeeded in confirming my guilt:

“You make no sense, Agatha. How could you possibly know my innermost thoughts?”

My repugnance for the telling of an outright lie had led me into a response guaranteed to confirm her accusation as correct. Unwilling to tell her she was wrong I had, instead, been left with only a reminder to her of the impossibility of divining the thoughts of another as a defence.

I had undermined my own case before the hearing had even had a chance to get fully under way.

Agatha’s voice when she answered was cold and measured Her manner strangely formal and hard and *entirely* out of keeping with her character. It seemed to me that she was absolutely resolved not to be drawn into any argument or explanation but simply to say what she wished and have done with it.

“I notice you do not deny your vile… imaginings, Austin. But do not delude yourself for a second that the seclusion provided by the skull housing them makes your desires any less discernible or depraved. I cannot be associated with one whose… *needs* are so… so… base.”

Unable to meet her stare, I turned my face aside, so ashamed was I that she might possibly have divined my sexual fantasies somehow even as I told myself such prescience was impossible.

But then – no matter the impossibility of such a process - the male urges that manifested themselves so basely in the privacy of my skull; urges I knew I would never have either the volition or, indeed, desire to have fulfilled in the more tangible confines of the physical world, made innocence a condition quite beyond me.

I resorted, instead, face still averted, to entreaty:

"You must know what this means to me!" I cried. "It is the blasting of all my hopes and the ruin of my life! You surely will not inflict such a punishment upon me simply for a suspicion as to the nature of my thoughts. Consider how impossible it would be for me, under any circumstances, to treat you so."

Even as I uttered this last I realised I was confirming her accusation. To say I would not treat her in a certain way was no less than an admission I had actually visualised the doing of just that.

I rushed on:

"Have I ever been anything less than utterly considerate of you and your feelings?"

She walked past me without a word to open the door and I had followed her into the hallway when she said:

"It is quite useless, Austin," said she. "You must consider our engagement at an end."

An instant later she was gone, and, before I could recover myself sufficiently to follow, I heard the hall-door close behind her.

I rushed into my room to change my coat, with the idea of hurrying after her to force a fuller explanation and, hopefully, change her mind concerning her resolve.

Within a few seconds my world had been reduced to fragments and, so shaken was I, it required a superhuman effort simply to lace my boots.

Never shall I forget those horrible ten minutes.

I had just pulled on my overcoat when the clock upon the mantel-piece struck.

Ten!

My mind raced.

Was there not something I…

Yes!

Immediately, and despite understandable preoccupation given the events that had just passed, I associated the idea with Miss Pencelosa's note.

It was lying before me on the table, and I tore it open, certain for some reason I should find evidence explaining Agatha's outrageous behaviour.

I was correct.

It was scribbled in pencil in a peculiarly angular handwriting; spelling I noticed, if nothing else, this despite my aforementioned preoccupation, a sight better than her pronunciation- even if her punctuation was not.

"Mister Gilroy

you do as I say and be opening my note at the right time my maid Haydee tell you, your fiancé who no longer your fiancé will have left by now and told you she finish with you."

If Agatha's behaviour had astounded me the import of the Pencelosa woman's opening lines gripped my senses so securely the cold chills I had experienced in her presence the evening before no longer seemed fanciful. Having sensed she was behind Agatha's behaviour was one thing. Its confirmation quite another.

this the test my Haydee talk about when she give you this note last night. Said. Now even you be in doubt about my power. now I tell Miss Agatha about your thoughts she not be changing her mind and marrying you less I tell her to, so there no point you going after her and trying.

Fear and astonishment were giving way to pure anger now as I read what remained of her short missive.

"no need for any more now. you be coming to see me soon anyway.

"tenika pencelosa."

As I lay the note down, relief mingled with my anger.

Yes, you heard me correctly.

I knew now that Agatha had not deserted me of her own accord and was labouring under some kind of subliminal command given her by the odious young negress.

"Tenika!"

Even her name sounded barbarous and pagan.

Unholy name or not, though, I knew now that all was not lost!

The process could surely be reversed and my lovely Agatha returned to me.

Relief was present also for the realisation that, far from knowing the extent and nature of my private thoughts, Agatha had only been repeating words she had been compelled to say.

My relief, however, was diluted somewhat by the twin realisation that those *thoughts* could be known to the one who had brought them to my fiancé's attention in the first place when it occurred to me shortly after.

It also struck me that the question of my cynicism had not only been asked but, it seemed at first perusal, answered.

I had challenged Miss Pencelosa by my scepticism and she had risen to my unspoken baiting of her to devise a test I could not fail to find satisfying.

And equally horrific.

There could be no question at all upon the point now. For me hypnotic suggestion was finally established. It took its place from now onward as one of the facts of life. That Agatha, who of all women of my acquaintance has the best balanced mind, had been reduced to a condition of automatism appeared to be certain. A person at a distance had worked her as an engineer on the shore might guide a Brennan torpedo. A second soul had stepped in, as it were, had pushed her own aside, and had seized her nervous mechanism.

Agatha must have been unconscious as she came and as she returned.

"And what of her condition now?" I asked myself aloud and with some alarm.

Could she have made her way in safety through the streets in such a state?

Concluding these hastily written notes I must now put on my hat and hurry off to see if all is well with her.

11.35 P.M. - March 25

Has ever a man been treated so?

My world has turned.

And *not* in a way beneficial to me.

I shall explain.

Upon reaching the Mardens' the maid, who had always been somewhat flirtatious in my presence, told me with curtness impossible to miss that her lady was indeed at home and well, but that she had been instructed to tell Mr Gilroy if he called that she had no desire to see him.

Grateful to be informed Agatha was safe and sound but beating a somewhat hangdog retreat, I was not so dejected I could not confess myself immensely impressed by the prowess of the young negress.

My horizon of scientific possibilities has suddenly been enormously extended and I no longer wonder at Wilson's demonic energy and enthusiasm. Who would not work hard who had a vast virgin field ready to his hand? Why, I have known the novel shape of a nucleolus, or a trifling peculiarity of striped muscular fibre seen under a 300-diameter lens, fill me with exultation yet how petty do such researches seem when compared with this one which strikes at the very roots of life and the nature of the soul!

I had always looked upon spirit as a product of matter. The brain, I thought, secreted the mind, as the liver does the bile. But how can this be when I see mind working from a distance and playing upon matter as a musician might upon a violin?

The body does not give rise to the soul, then, but is rather the rough instrument by which the spirit manifests itself.

The windmill does not give rise to the wind, but only indicates it.

It was opposed to my whole habit of thought, and yet it was undeniably possible and worthy of investigation.

Such was my intention upon arriving at the Wilson's.

Relieved, at least, that Agatha was safe, my feet beat a path to the Wilson residence where I was greeted and shown inside by the negress Miss Pencelosa, in her note, had referred to as "Haydee".

The interest in me she had shown on the evening of the soiree remained in place and, if anything, seemed even more marked.

The frank way with which this low-grade Trinidad serving woman – for I had made up my mind on that score before Miss Pencelosa's note in which she

described *"Haydee"* as her maid – took in my person, as if I was some waiting delicacy she were awaiting permission to devour, outraged me.

Outrage I knew the situation I insisted be kept to myself for the moment if I wished to gain the trust of her most unlikely *"Mistress"*.

Stilling the rebuke about to depart my lips, I was content to follow Haydee into the room where I had last seen Miss Pencelosa and in which she had gained her dominion over my Agatha.

My mission now was two-fold:

Firstly, it was to investigate, with the assistance of Tenika Pencelosa, the paranormal phenomena by which she projected her will onto others.

Secondly, and perhaps even more importantly, it was to ask her to be so good as to reverse whatever had been the mesmeric suggestion she had implanted in Agatha and allow our relationship to return to its former course.

It turned out that the Wilson's had taken off for a visit to relatives in Cornwall only that morning with their servants and given their home over to Miss Pencelosa and Haydee, a fact I would only discover later and one that explained their absence as I entered my friend's drawing-room for the second time in a matter of days.

Though *nothing* on this or any other yet to be discovered planet could have prepared me for the vision awaiting my entrance.

There, at her leisure, ensconced in a London town-house upon the Parisian chaise-longue Mrs Wilson was so proud of owning, was the negress I had come to visit.

And ensconced in such a manner as if to suggest she were some all-powerful queen of ancient and southern climes for whom appearances were of no concern.

My forward progress into the room came to an abrupt halt and I was aware of my jaw travelling towards my chest as if, for all the world, I were a half-wit in the presence of a phenomenon his reduced mental capacity could scarce contemplate, let alone understand.

Ay my side I thought I caught a chuckle but could not be certain, given my attention was almost solely concentrated on the sight at the forefront of my vision.

The sight of Miss Tenika Pencelosa sprawled at her leisure across Mrs Wilson's much cherished piece.

Naked!

At this point I was not capable of discerning anything other than the shocking sight of the negress as she lounged at her ease before me bereft of all clothing, so I cannot describe with any accuracy the look of pure satisfaction that must have plastered itself across those simian features as they took in my discomfort.

I am as certain as the fact my name remains Professor Austin Gilroy, however, that such a look of malicious enjoyment was present.

"Good afternoon, Mister Gilroy," the negress greeted me, her nakedness of no account and completely unfazed to have another – a stranger, to all intents and purposes – gaze upon it.

"I… I…"

Miss Pencelosa laughed.

"De big important white man be nervous, Haydee," I heard her tell the second negress, the resultant chuckle leaving the throat of the flunkey to my side exacerbating the already advanced levels of disquietude to which the situation had taken me.

"Dat cos he not use to seeing real wimmin," Haydee observed.

As I sit at my desk and write these notes, I can only say that I could barely contradict the statement of Miss Pencelosa's maid and that, truly, I had *never* seen a woman of such a kind before – though, if Miss Pencelosa's subsequent *"suggestions"* prove true, then I will be seeing a *lot* more of her in the future.

'Simian' her features undoubtedly were but, and despite the understandable feelings of disquiet you would expect from a civilised gentleman of my background, the body arrayed before me on the chaise-longue as if to invite manly inspection was not lacking in the attributes of Venus herself.

Skin so brown it appeared almost black or not.

Despite the less than petite dimensions of her, those Miss Pencelosa possessed were in complete proportion and it would have taken an act of supreme self-delusion on my part to acknowledge otherwise.

Neither having suspected myself of some latent attraction to women of colour nor believing such a thing possible, given my penchant for the pale skinned English rose I had always set my cap at and of whom Agatha was, hopefully, but the latest and the last, the power of my reaction to the massive breasts I could not help but miss pointing in my direction was yet another shock to a system already undergoing serious re-evaluation.

So large and full were they I found it impossible to believe they could stand so proud without the aid of some external support and the bullet-like nipples that pointed in my direction gave me, for some reason, an impression of accusation, as if she were some savage and pagan deity demanding either tribute or sacrifice for my having entered her sacred lair without her express permission."

I found I could not remove my eyes from them – no matter how hard I tried.

"Look at de front of his trouser, Haydee," Miss Pencelosa said, thick and puffy lips curled with derision.

My cheeks reddened as I realised what it was Haydee was being asked to observe.

And still, utterly humiliated or not, I continued to drink in the twin orbs at her chest as if my very life depended upon it.

"De white man like de look of you Mistress Haydee," said the maid, looking herself as if she would not be much less… *powerful*… when denuded. "he not able to stop looking at you."

Let me state, that at this point I was aware of everything that was happening and being said.

Which made my instant acquiescence when Miss Pencelosa asked me to kneel before her seem all the more shameful.

3.20 P.M - March 27

I have not slept.

But then, how could I?

Having spent the evening from ten onwards tossing and turning upon my solitary mattress I gave the attempt up as useless and repaired to my living-room to boil some milk for drinking and to make an entry for the day's events in the diary I had, uncharacteristically, neglected all the day until now.

A day no man anywhere of intelligence and sensitivity would ever be likely to forget.

Upon returning from Miss Pencelosa's, my only recollection was of her nakedness and the incontrovertible fact I had knelt at her feet beside Mrs Wilson's chaise-longue when the negress had suggested I should do so.

After that?

Nothing.

It is as if my mind and the thoughts that define such a description of it has been wiped clean.

I recall nothing after bending to her wishes and placing myself on the rug beside her as she reposed at her leisure, though I do – with a shame that makes the writing of these words an effort that forces the sweat through the skin of my forehead to drip from my brow so profusely I mop at it continuously with a handkerchief in order to prevent it smudging the ink of the words being wrung from me – recall every aspect of a female physique the likes of which I had not believed possible outside the fevered imaginings of the more wayward of antiquities artists.

But it was not the look of her alone compelling both my revulsion and subsequent acquiescence.

The smell of her was as nothing I had experienced up to then either and, under normal circumstances, would have found utterly repugnant. An earthy, pungent and animal, odor that reacted upon me for some reason in a way I have heard the more powerful narcotics react upon the senses of those addicted to their sensations.

Yet, I stress, this was not the perfume of the great unwashed.

Rather, it was a raw and animal extrusion that exited the skin in the way a fragrance exits the petals of a flower; an intimate scent that seemed to escape each pore of her barbarous and incredible body, from the surprisingly hairless underarms to…

Allow me to content myself with the phrase: *"her more intimate womanly areas."*

Anyhow, from the little I remember before my senses were stripped from me, I recall thinking that I was *not* captivated.

Even as I accepted that this savage negress held me in some kind of, temporary I hoped, bondage.

It was at this point, nipples jutting towards me as if intent upon piercing my heart, that she leaned in close and held my eyes with her own and then…

My next conscious thought was of being back in my rooms and the door opening to reveal Agatha.

A remorseful and entirely repentant Agatha.

Though it would turn out she had no idea quite what it was she should feel repentant about.

"I have offended you somehow, Austin," she dived straight in without the usual niceties, "and you punish me by the withholding of your person."

I could only stare back at her.

Dumbfounded.

Did she truly not recall her last visit here and the nature of the words spoken to me that prevented my attempting to see her? Even though I had tried and been prevented from doing so by her once flirtatious lady's maid to whom she had made plain that under no circumstances should I be admitted into her presence.

Evidently not.

"Well?" she demanded, edging closer towards those womanly tears we men have no defence against and cave before as if we were so much bunting in a wind-storm. "Are you going to tell me what sin I have committed against you or am I to assume it is simply that you have fallen out of love with me?"

It was incredible, the scientific side of me affirmed; the gap in the stream of my own conscious thought forgotten. She truly had no recollection of either her anger for my perceived thoughts in regard of her person and that of other women - or the angry words they had compelled her to use against me.

Simply as a means of defence, I made to remind her of what had passed.

And found the so doing impossible.

The words leaving my mouth and the coldness of their uttering were not of my choosing and, left to my own devices, would *never* find themselves to be so.

A stone-cold fact which did not prevent their exit.

“I must tell you Miss Marden,” I began, noticing how my formality cut her and feeling anguish for her pain even as I continued, outwardly unmoved, “that your observations are correct and, of this precise moment, our relationship and prospective betrothal are terminated.”

Agatha could do no more than stare at me. Having, I am sure, believed that a little womanly persuasion would be all that was necessary to put right whatever had come between us, this coldness on my part and the inflexibility of my words came as a shock. Her eyes, as you may expect, were tearful with, to my eternal shame, no visible outward effect upon me.

Within my breast, where the heart still retaining the most fond of feelings towards her resided, there dwelt nothing but the most acute and intense emotional pain.

“You are…?” she half sobbed, “…you are serious on this, Austin?”

Hating myself violently, even as I did it, I opened the door by which she had, not a minute before, entered through and invited her to leave.

“It is over, Miss Marden and I suggest you run along and begin what remains of the rest of your life.”

The unmanly tears I myself felt ready to shed refused to come and, instead, my eyes held hers with all the warmth of a Manchurian basilisk on a particularly chilly morning.

With one last look of regret and… I die to think of it… *love…* she rushed past me into the hallway and the next sound I heard was the front-door crashing behind her as she made exit.

An exit that freed the tears I myself had been withholding as I threw myself to the floor and cried for the first time since being left by my parents for the first day of many I would spend at a new boarding-school.

Tomorrow, I will visit the negress once again and see if I cannot prevail upon her to end whatever spell she has cast upon me.

To hell with science!

9.30 P.M – March 28

“You not be so cock-sure now, Mon, heh?” the temporary chatelaine of the Wilson household asked.

A temporary chatelaine who was, this time, and thankfully, dressed.

Opposite her, in one of the Wilson's wing-back chairs now and *not* on my knees, I nodded agreement to both words and statement that would, not days before, have made me bristle with self-righteous indignation.

"An' now you wants to say you learn de lesson an' say sorry for not believin' Miss Pencelosa?"

Though from these words I commit to my diary you may get the impression I was being mocked by this… *indecent*… example of Agatha's sex – and I was, I assure you – there remained another, perhaps more troubling even, aspect to our conversations.

For, heathen, creature that she is, she takes a singular interest in me and her eyes fair drink in my presence as if I were some exotic possession that gave her life meaning and from which she would *not* be parted.

The thought of being in the thrall of one so morally repugnant unmans me as much as the thought of *anything* ever has.

With the equally as barbarous Haydee absent on some errand or other, it had been Miss Pencelosa who had shown me into the house and seated me opposite her, almost as if she were enjoying her temporary possession of the Wilson's home and had decided to act in accordance with the etiquette required of an attentive hostess.

Though I was sure the responsibility would soon prove too much of a burden to one of her background and she would revert to a response more in keeping with both her roots and intelligence.

For the moment, though, I was making the most of her willingness to speak relatively normally and was hoping to utilise the opening to prevail upon her to lift the blight she had, and effortlessly, placed upon my life with such swiftness.

"But how do you do it?" I asked, genuinely curious despite motives of an, understandably, ulterior kind.

"You knows de answer to dat yo' self, mon," she informed me.

"I know you *can* do it," I assured her. "What interests me more is *how*."

"It be simple if de man or woman weaker in de head dan me an' most are. When I comes across de man like you it easy to bend 'im."

The smile that revealed her large and amazingly white teeth, made even more dazzling, no doubt, by the contrast with her deep brown colouring, was of as pure an evil as I had ever thought to experience as a civilised and learned English gentleman.

Into the bargain, the assertion of my being weaker *"in de head"* than her that would have once incensed me was ignored.

All my energies were concentrated on trying to get her to open up that I may find a path to the sunlight from the abyss in which she had cast me.

"Would he have lost his own will power, then?" I asked. "This man whose will is found weaker than you own?"

"It be mastered by my stronger one. Same way I master yours," she answered without hesitation.

"Is your own will so strong, then?"

"Yo' forget where yo' put your tongue yesterday when yo' 'ere," she reminded me. "That should be answer enough."

"My tongue?" I paraphrased, not comprehending.

She laughed and shook her head, as if to remind herself of something that had slipped her memory.

"Dat right, I tell you to forget doin' it. Den I can humiliates you again."

She fixed those disturbing gray eyes on me and suddenly a whole flood of memories from the day before I had somehow been denied washed over me in a saturation of shame.

The worst of them being the way my tongue had lapped at the toes of her dusky brown foot before being applied to the dimple running along the outside of a muscled calf and upwards to smooth and immense thighs before inserting itself in…

"You has no idea o' what de right person capable," she assured me when I had digested the actions I had indulged in at her command.

In this at least, she was wrong.

The images assailing me at that point made the extent of such a capacity all too easy to visualise.

"I makes you do for me no more dan you dream o' wimmin doing to you," she reminded me, proving in the process that she had indeed read the more private thoughts in my head as well as taking complete control of me.

I refrained from the impulse to tell her that she had not, nor ever would, figure in my dreams as one of the women of my fantasies and, instead, tried a more… *humble*… approach.

“I realise that only too well now, Miss Pencelosa,” I agreed in an ingratiating tone previously unheard of from me, still sickened by the image of me upon my knees as my servile tongue lathed at her monstrous sex. “You have opened my eyes to human possibility and I can only apologise for having doubted you in the first place.”

Her eyes drank me in and I sensed, uneducated and low-born or not, that she was ahead of me and was perfectly aware of my intentions.

The next words to force their way past those gigantic lips confirming me in my suspicions:

“Dat most polite, Ostin,” she told me, the mispronunciation of my forename as she used it for the first time making me sound like a Scandinavian tree-feller. “But you not be telling Tenika yo’ real feelings. Yo’ frightened of me but you not… *believe*.”

She was, of course, spot on and her next words were ominous:

“But yo’ will.”

She smiled.

“Den yo’ be all mine.”

My eyes narrowed, hoping her words did not mean what I thought they meant:

“I, hmm, don’t understand you, Tenika,” I told her.

Shamed as I am to confess it, the look the young negress aimed in my direction chilled me to the marrow.

She was savage and sadistic and had me, Austin Gilroy, in her toils.

“Yo’ never to call me by my family name,” she warned. “Do it again an’ I tan yo’ behind so bad you not walk upright for a year after.”

As was becoming more common in her presence, my jaw descended to my chest.

“Tan your…?”

My incredulity somehow found words to express themselves:

“You… You are not serious, madam,” I told her, rising to my feet with outrage once the surprise of her statement had given way to a more manly response and forgetting the perilous nature of my position in relation to her. “I am a respected man many years your senior. A professor! Do you truly believe you can take me over your…”

“Yo’ knows full well I can ‘ave you on yo’ knees grovellin’ at my feet wid a snap o’ my fingers,” she cut me off, her next assertion even more disturbing than the first.

“I make you kill a mon if it please me. An’ you do it an’ not be able to tell a soul.”

Then, as if to emphasise the point, she did snap her fingers.

One second I was up on my hind legs in the middle of an outburst of indignation, the next I had dropped to my knees at her feet in a pose of supplication.

Even as my thoughts remained my own and I had no recollection of commanding my limbs to make the descent I was, nonetheless, kneeling before her once more as if I were a lowly Helot and she Hera herself.

A *black* Hera.

“I knew yo’ be mine from de first time I lay eyes on you,” she continued, gazing down upon me with contempt and pride for having me at her feet and being able to keep me there. “Yo’ mine do with as I please. My very own white slave boy.”

My head was shaking from side to with revulsion at her description of me, as if a simple denial would be enough to make the fact of my submission disappear.

“Yo’ be de perfect example o’ my power to show de people back home. No longer dey think de white man so strong.”

"But… But…," I spluttered. “This is a terrible power!"

I was critical and imploring at one and the same time, despair growing as I confessed to myself she spoke no more than the simple truth and I had not the strength to fight her.

"Yes, mon," she agreed. “It a terrible power like yo’ say. But you only say dat cos you be on de wrong end of it."

I lowered my head and shook it at the rug below, knowing in this, at least, that she was wrong. No person, I told myself should be given such sway over another human being. Were I to somehow come into possession of it, I would do my best to discard the ability or take a solemn oath *never* to use it.

When I next raised my eyes a simian face was smiling into mine.

Gleefully.

“It get worse for you, mon," she chuckled, enjoying my misery and discomfort. “De more you know o’ my power de more terrible it seem to you."

Never have I experienced such feelings of utter helplessness and I ask of you who might judge from a distance the terror I endured at close quarters to make allowance for the craven behaviour that followed her words to me.

"Please, Miss Pencelosa," I began, "release me from whatever spell it is you have over me. I acknowledge your powers and my own ignorance and beg pardon."

She pretended to think about it, happy with the condition to which she had reduced me so far but wishing to go further.

Then:

"Kiss de foot of Miss Pencelosa like de good boy you wants to be for her from now on and she think about it."

The horror of such an act of obeisance to one so young and so… *low…* etched itself across my features and fetched amusement to her own.

I tried again:

"Please, Miss Pencelosa, by all that you hold holy, release me from this curse and allow me to return to my life. I promise never to see or bother you again."

"But I wants to see you, mon," she protested with a half-smirk that made her seem even more monstrous to me. "Yo' my white boy now an' yo'going to work hard fo' me back in Trinidad."

It was right at this point that I fainted.

7.00 A.M. – March 30

Well, I read this entry of two nights before at my leisure, and I marvel at myself!

Is this Austin Gilroy, the man who has won his way to the front by his hard reasoning power and by his devotion to fact?

Would those students of mine who hang on my observations and the nuggets of worldly advice I supply when asked recognise the fawning cur of yesterday who today finds himself terrified to leave his own house that he may exit it only to be compelled to the side of the negress who now asserts that she owns him?

Could they really believe that the man – one of the youngest to rise to such a high faculty position and earmarked as a future Dean – they so looked up to could tender his resignation to the university on the grounds of failing mental health not days after he had delivered a lecture to the faculty and attended by the alumni of decades past regarded as a triumph of its kind?

How utterly beyond the realms of the fantastic would they consider it were they to be told that their revered professor had thrown away the woman he loved along with his career and his prospects. All discarded and for no better reason than a simple command from an uneducated and low-born negress from an island in the South Caribbean who insisted he should do so before accompanying her back to Trinidad to serve as her manservant and personal whipping boy.

I am full of fear and anger and cannot form the words that would reveal my predicament to a living soul.

I wish to pack a case and run but my feet refuse to take me beyond the confines of my own room.

I have tried to take my own life, but my throat refused to swallow the rat-poison I poured into my mouth and burned like fire until I was compelled to project it out into the wash-basin.

Likewise, my hand refused to make the stroke across the Adam's Apple that would have severed it with my razor and put an end to my misery.

Is there any man in Christendom more abject in his complete and utter powerlessness?

My tears flow as I write and…

I must break off.

There is a knocking at the door and, though I have no desire to answer it, I know that I must...

11.30 A.M. – March 31

That it should have come to this.

My case is packed and I am ready to go.

But it is not a case or contents of my own choosing and neither is the destination to which I am headed a destination I have, or have ever had, any inclination to visit.

But visit it I shall, and in a way as demeaning to the pride of respectable English gentleman as it is possible to imagine outside of some opium induced hallucination.

That I am no longer an English gentleman – I will come to this in a moment – is of no importance. What I am to be from henceforth will be of *her* choosing and is a decision *she* has already made on my behalf.

I am to be her flunkey, her manservant, her… *slave*.

As she has willed so it shall be and the destiny I convinced myself was held in my own hands has been stripped from me with a finality beyond the rescue of both optimism and pure blind hope.

Even the consolation of my lovely Agatha sensing my fall from grace is brought about by coercion rather than any warped desire for ignominy or mental ill-health on my part, and that my feelings for her burn as true and genuine as they ever did, has been stripped from me and I shall make my abject journey to a strange land in the company of the negress who now considers herself – and is – my master with nothing but this hollow shell of a body Miss Tenika Pencelosa, nonetheless assures me, will provide her with much pleasure of both a sensual and utilitarian kind in the years to come.

Not days ago, it seemed, I was a successful man with a glittering career in academe ahead of him and the promise of a woman soon to be mine guaranteed to make me the envy of my fellows. Now, in the blink of an eyelid and thanks to the infernal enthusiasm of that wretch Wilson, the man who, unwittingly I grudgingly admit, though it makes my situation not one whit more bearable, introduced me to my fate in the person of his *"phenomenal negress"*, my life is in tatters and I am a laughing stock and object of ridicule who will never know the embrace of the polite society he once took for granted again. I am, as of that fateful knocking upon my door of two days previously, and as I wrote up my diary, utterly beyond the pale with no possibility of redemption this side of the grave my negress master had denied me.

Upon opening finding myself compelled to open the door to the knocking that had interrupted my dispirited daily upkeep of my diary, I did so to find the monstrous features of my black *"master"* waiting to greet me.

And there was worse.

Behind her stood my Agatha.

Miss Pencelosa walked past me into my rooms as if they belonged to her and Agatha followed, expression, I thought, a mixture of contempt and, yes, curiosity.

Upon reaching the middle of the room, both stopped and turned to face me.

They looked expectant and I could not think through my mortification of having Agatha witness my submissiveness to the black fiend what it could possibly be that they were waiting for from me.

Until, that is, Miss Pencelosa, dressed head-to-foot in black and looking even more menacing than usual, held up the forefinger of her right hand and, slowly, pointed it to the floor and the pointed toes of her black leather lace-ups.

With a thrill of horror that was definitely terrifying but in no way resembling any *thrill"* I had experienced previously, I knew what was required of me an made to frame the words that convince my master to excuse me, just this once, of the respect, and the way she expected me to show it, she insisted upon.

More soul destroying than having to perform the obeisance she demanded was having to do so in the presence of the woman for whom I had once been a rock of masculine dependability whose children she wished to bear and with whom she fully intended to spend the rest of her life.

My most abject misery compounded when I detected my former fiancé appeared in no way discomfited by my coming debasement but, to the contrary, was displaying all the signs of excited anticipation."

I fought the growing urge to throw myself at the feet of the negress she-devil with every sinew of my being and, for a few moments, and despite the toll it took of my depleted will-power and strength, succeeded in not moving.

Agatha threw Miss Pencelosa a look I took to be both questioning and recriminatory, the kind of look one gives to a person whose claims have proved to be no more than the most frivolous of boasts, and received a reassuring look from the negress with whom she suddenly seemed *very* friendly.

A reassuring look becoming ice-cold as those slate grey eyes were turned upon her victim to burn as much as the heat of any fire.

Which was when she said it.

One simple word.

"Heel!"

With her uttering of it all volition and power seemed to drain from my body until I felt incapable of standing but, more than this, my intention put up a resistance for the benefit of my former fiancé vanished instantly to be replaced by a need,

yes, a *need*, to show my respect and prove to my new master I was indeed the beaten and abject cur she insisted, and had no doubt described me to Agatha in the same way, that I was.

As I fell prone to the floor and reached out clasp the boots of my owner in hands that were suddenly trembling and clammy I heard a gasp from above me and realised it had come from Agatha.

Yet, though I was aware of the sight I must have made to her and felt as if I must vomit, so great was the shame I felt, my lips went instead to the toe of one of Miss Pencelosa's boots and pressed themselves against it.

Reverently!

"I would not have believed it had I not seen the evidence for myself," Agatha's voice carried to me from above.

"Yo' 'ave de narrow escape, my dear," offered Miss Pencelosa. "He not be de mon you thought he be."

"I see that now," confirmed Agatha, shredding what pride remained to the Austin Gilroy she had once know.

"Better fo' you dat he come wi' me an' learn how to be useful. Yo' be too han'some a woman to be wasting a life on de likes of him. Do' I hopes you takes de boat and sails out to stay wi' me once I get 'im all trained an' settled in."

"You really think you can make a manservant out of him, then, Tenika?" I heard Agatha ask, the fact I was unable to take my lips from the toecap of my black master's boot, one would have thought, an answer in itself.

"He be perfect," Miss Pencelosa assured her. "I have him tame an' obedient before you knows it. De Ostin Gilroy you knew be gone now, and he not comin' back.

"I wonder what happened to him?" Agatha asked and, to my utter chagrin and amazement, there was amusement in her voice.

"He die," said the negress. "But do' you worry. I make sure he gets reborn real soon.

The laughter they shared was that of old friends.

And now here I sit, waiting for the arrival of the transport that will take me to the train station and then the ship that will, in less than a fortnight, see me in a strange country as the manservant and plaything of a young negress young enough to be my daughter.

And what is it that preoccupies me the most as I wait?

As I am beyond either help or the efficacy of sympathy I shall tell you.

It is the perfume of my black master as I await the command to place my lips upon her shrine and seal my indenture to her with the help of my devoted tongue.

END