The Subjugation of Thomas Tallis

An Erotic Female-Led Tribute to the Uncanny Tales of Algernon Blackwood

By
Sandrine Bessancort

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Introduction

I am sure many of you about to read this will be unfamiliar with the ghostly, uncanny and, at times, outright horrific tales of the writer Algernon Blackwood.

Allow me to introduce him.

As well as being a huge favourite of my youth and the instigator of many a female-led fantasy - via stories that, necessarily, had to undergo certain changes in my adolescent imagination that were both structural and involved the swapping of genders between victim and tormentor - Algernon Henry Blackwood, CBE (14 March 1869, 10 December 1951) was also one of the most prolific writers of *"disturbing"* stories – be they ghostly, eerie, or simply terrifying - in the history of the genre.

He was also a journalist and a broadcasting narrator and it was written of him that: *"his work is more consistently meritorious than any weird writer's"*, and, as a consensus of general opinion, his short story collection *"Incredible Adventures"* (1914), was considered by many to be: *"the premier weird collection of this or any other century".*

It was with these above works in mind, and a sexual imagination formed as a young woman growing up in a tiny village in the Provence foothills leading to the inspiration for Cezanne that was the Mont St Victoire, that I decided to utilise the darkness forged in me back then to provide my present with a vibrant fantasy life. A literary inspired darkness responsible for my fashioning this tale based on Mr Blackwood's work and a tale, I must warn you, which is based upon his considerable ability to fashion a narrative suggestive of sexual cruelty and dominance while keeping that tale within the bounds of the mainstream expectations of the epoch and the censorial strictures governing writers of fiction at the time.

Writers, of course, and with an understandable desire to actually eat, who would sooner be read in the six figures. This rather than the treble (if fortunate) a more accepting but less accessible underground press provided to the creator of… *unsuitable*... material during the period. If it was published at all, that is.

Of course, your writer – *me* – and her readers – *you* – live in a world that is a degree more liberal than the England of Mr Blackwood's heyday and, consequently, the relaxation of what is and what isn't considered permissible in such a tale allows me to use both dialogue and descriptive narrative in

ways Mr Blackwood's censors of the early-to-mid-twentieth-century must surely have found… *"Offensive"*.

Such is progress – if such a word may be used to describe the way we live today. For when *anything* is permissible it is sometimes the imagination that is the victim. Why bother with insinuation and hidden meaning, after all, whether by metaphor and other literary and filmic subtleties, when the knife can be shown entering a victim's rib-cage before a gory disembowelment, or a close-up of the penis as it…

I am sure you take my point.

Do not be misled, however, as the see all approach is not for me; even if there are times when it is necessary – crucial even – that the text be brutally truthful. For all that though, and as I have stated in the introductions to my other re-imaginings of tales from the past, this homage is not intended as pornography but eroticism. Without being in any way judgmental, I can state truthfully that the former is of little or no interest to me.

No.

It is the suggestion to the imagination that appeals to me most and, again as mentioned in my previous introductions, it is the work of writers such as De

Maupassant, Rachilde, and Louys, amongst others, who fire my sexual imagination for stories with a strong and commanding – dominant and cruel even - heroine.

I urge you to raise a glass of whatever takes your particular fancy and, along with your writer, give salute to the joy and consolation that is the imagination.

Sandrine Bessancort
Honfleur
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My work is to be found under "Sandrine Bessancort" and is produced by ePublishers from Amazon to Femdom Cave

Prologue

He was in a place that was all too familiar to him of late, snuggled up warmly beneath the comfort of a queen-size duvet, the heaviness of its prodigious tog supplying a sense of security that lasted only for as long as it took him to drift into a sleep that was, strictly speaking, not sleep at all.

Of course, a part of him was actually comatose, but his problem was that despite this his conscious mind seemed to know it was part awake and yet was utterly unable to exert either a termination or some benign influence upon the disturbing images playing out against the backdrop of his eyelids.

Leaving him with no escape from the harangue of the young and somewhat plump Indian woman who seemed to have focused all of her ills and those of her country upon his person and informed him of the fact via a seemingly inexhaustible flow of spite and bile she heaped upon his head. Bile that was spoken in the Hindi of her native Uttar Pradesh that incredibly, his dream persona knowing only one or two words of her tongue, he was able to understand as if she were a debutante recently matriculated from one of the Home Counties finest finishing school's for young ladies.

But this was not the English Home-Counties and the young woman – the same young woman who seemed to have focused the perceived crimes of the country to whom he belonged upon his head in their entirety; this while revealing her full brown breasts with wide aureoles of an even darker shade to him - was about as far as one of her sex could get from being a society *"Deb"*.

And of desire for the creature taunting his dream persona, there appeared to be none.

In neither the part-comatose or part-conscious forms by which he was represented.

As ever with this recurring dream, the detached part of him that retained semi-consciousness took in the picture from the viewpoint of a detached observer who could hear all and see all.

The *"God's eye view"*.

A view that showed he was wearing the standard British uniform of an army corporal circa the mid-nineteenth century. A uniform he now knew, having retained enough of it to check its origins when awake and with the power to act rather than observe returned to him, which belonged to the 43rd Oxfordshire Light Infantry during their detachment to the troubled Indian subcontinent.

But why was *he* wearing it and why were these dreams so exact *and* repetitive?

Given he had neither record nor recall of ever having been such a person and at such a time?

Neither did the dream at any time make plain to him why he, of all the other infantrymen picking at the dirt poor village to the north of Lucknow for booty that was either material or physical, should have been singled out for the increasingly lewd young woman's venom and wrath – especially when it was against his own moral code to steal either food, goods or, and far worse to his sense of decency, sex.

Nor did that same dream explain how a woman of her age and from such a deprived background could be in possession of the education required for possession of such a varied and articulate, if foul and abusive command, of a native tongue.

Even if the native tongue in question did happen to be her own.

Despite his unfamiliarity with her language - certainly the dialect in which it was being spoken - he appeared to understand every word she uttered and, in truth, had he not been able to do so then the venom with which she spewed it would have at least hinted at its general thrust.

The malign set of features he, unlike the rest of the dream he could recall upon waking in its entirety, was totally unable to bring to mind when fully conscious, would surely have enabled him to form a calculated guess also.

A guess, as already mentioned, that was made unnecessary by his strange familiarity with the words spewing from her lips, Words that were all too transparent and sincere to him as she continued to flaunt her breasts at him. Urged on by the villagers gathered behind her as she displayed a courage towards the invader that had proved beyond them to this point.

“By this blood oath,” she hissed, “I promise that all the ills your people have brought upon mine will fall upon your head and I will be the one to see you are punished in the most fitting of ways.”

The dark eyes in her young but somehow cruel and avian features paralysed him to immobility as she ran a suggestive hand down the front of a body that had managed to denude itself without him being aware as to the how and stroked the inside of the smooth thighs supporting a shockingly hairless cunny.

And now both participant and dreamer *did* feel sexual desire, despite the mocking look on the young

Indian woman's face that seemed to supply an iron assurance that such a desire on his part would *never* find its fulfilment by her hand.

"As your country has humiliated mine," she hissed again, equally as unjustly as the first time she had singled him out for the satisfaction of her anger, confident her words had at least a part of his full attention, "so shall I humiliate you.

"As your people have subjugated and enslaved mine, I will subjugate and enslave you.

"As your soldiers in the name of commerce and personal gain have forced their filthy bodies upon my sisters that they may no longer come before a husband intact upon a wedding night that is no longer in their future, I shall force your body to serve mine in ways that will ensure no woman of your race will ever again look upon you without contempt and revulsion."

All too familiar with this particular point of the dream, he recalled the nature of the look she threw him, if not the exact look itself, as she completed the vicious rant he knew would bring the revision to a close.

A look that was resolute and utterly serious that intent would prove to be a promise delivered.

“Though it take me centuries and you occupy a quite different body and life-force,” she promised, wild and vivid dark eyes beaming into his with an intensity he wished to turn from but could not find the will, “I will seek you out and make you pay for the rape and massacre of my country and my people.

“No matter that we are separated by the distance of land and great oceans, you will come to know the misery and humiliation of being forced to serve a Master you consider inferior to you in all ways.”

Her voice was growing fainter and he knew with relief that the dream was ending as she continued, the face he could never remember when conscious seeming to dissolve in tandem with the sound-level: “The abject nature of the service I intend to have from you will not absolve your debt,” she railed on, the glow of unnatural excitement transfusing her dissolving cheeks assuring him, once again, that she was much taken with such a prospect.

As always, and as expected, her diatribe ended with the same words:

“But your shame will bring me… *pleasure*. And will be all the greater for your knowing it is a young Indian woman who is your new *Master* and dishonours you for all the world to see.”

As the great gob of saliva she seemed to have hawked up from toes to throat landed between his booted feet, the rifle butt resting on the parched and dusty earth by his side as useless as it had been in all the dreams before this, and as her fellow villagers raised a fading cheer, he felt himself shiver violently and begin the return to wakefulness that had always followed on the heels of this last act of complete disrespect and contempt towards him.

And again, and as always, the cover enclosing the duvet with the prodigious tog was saturated with the sweat evidencing the extent of his very *real* fear.

I

As it should be all too obvious, adventures come to those who are actually adventurous, and mysterious and sometimes wondrous events befall those who, with wonder and imagination, are on the watch for them.

But what of those in possession of souls that are neither adventurous nor wondrous?

We are all aware of just who it is I speak.

They are, good reader, the majority of people populating our decaying planet; those same uninquiring and timid souls who go past the doors that are half ajar without a second thought as to what might happen were they summon up the courage and curiosity necessary to push it open and capture a glimpse of the world waiting beyond, a world, perhaps, containing just that adventure and mystery of which we speak.

And yet, even as they complain of their mundane lives and the grinding monotony of the workplace and the tedium of the nightly ritual to be found awaiting them upon their return home, it is so very rare that one of their sheep-like number find the impulse to shove at that strange door or wrench aside the concealing curtain.

Why else would there be so few whose inner senses have been quickened, perchance by some strange suffering in the depths, or by a natural temperament inherited by them from a remote and atavistic past? Those who can boast of having contact, no matter how fleeting, with this greater world that can be found at our elbow. A world that can provide a blessed release from the tedium of days given over to the demands of the homogeneity that is ever on the increase in our modern world.

And yet, as the man our story concerns would, I feel, be sure to tell you, it is an unknown world that is as likely to provide wretched sexual humiliation and a sense of loss as it is the higher and most sought after levels of elation and achievement.

The man in question, and the subject of our story, was christened “Thomas Tallis”.

A man who, having reached his forty-second year upon the planet, would no doubt have received much ribbing about his name, had that aforementioned *homogeny* not reduced terms of reference and cultural curiosity so far his sixteenth-century namesake and composer of choral masterpieces was all but unknown by the vast majority.

I speak of that large section of the public with senses all but deadened by the constant and lucrative drivel

fed to them via reality television and game shows featuring Novocain performers not strictly performers at all.

Those whose televised or recorded efforts must necessarily drive up demand for the painkiller described with that viewer whose need to be challenged makes him or her a growing rarity in these days of loud and proud mediocrity.

Thomas Tallis, however, and in common with his sixteenth-century namesake, was *not* of the former herd's number.

Also in common with the compositions of his namesake, even if he himself was utterly unmusical, Thomas, truly believed that at any moment a chance combination of moods and forces may invite a soul to either create a masterpiece or to cross the shifting frontier where fate cannot even be part domesticated and where the granting of good or bad fortune cannot be altered by either articulate persuasion or some other means.

Means normally involving money.

To this select company Tallis undoubtedly belonged.

Spiritual, if not entirely mystic.

Good looking and desirable to the opposite sex – sometimes even to his own – but with definite tastes that rendered him for all intents and purposes *asocial*.

All his life he had realised that his senses brought to him merely a more or less interesting set of sham appearances in a life that was utterly misleading and that time, as the clock ticked it off, was arbitrary nonsense. He believed, in fact, that all his sensory perceptions were but a clumsy representation of the true reality lying in wait for him behind the ever-drawn curtain. A reality he was for ever trying to get at and, sometimes, actually experienced mild success in the attempt.

He had, you see, always been tremblingly aware that he stood on the borderland of another region. A region where time and space were merely forms of thought, where ancient memories lay open to the sight, and where the forces behind each human life stood plainly revealed. That he or she could see the hidden springs at the very heart of the world.

The fact that he was a claims-adjuster in an insurance office for one of the larger players in the field, and did his work with strict attention, made no impression upon his *other worldly* beliefs.

Not for one moment did he forget that, just beyond the spirit deflating and dehumanising open-plan offices where he and his fellow time-servers tapped at computers and cooed into phones as they attempted to placate angry home-owners or motorists unhappy with the awards made to them for their loss, there existed this glorious region where the important part of himself dwelt and moved and had its being.

For in this region he pictured himself playing the part of a spectator to his ordinary workaday life, watching, like a king, the stream of events, but untouched in his own soul by the dirt, the noise, and the vulgar commotion of the outer world.

This was no interlude with wish-fulfilment either – though Tallis was as capable of a sexual fantasy as the rest of his fellow men; most of those fantasies being of his own unquestioned and manly control over a gorgeous and adoring woman for whom the sun rose when he smiled upon her and vanished to leave arctic cold whenever he was displeased.

You see, and issues of sexual control excepted, Tallis was not playing prettily with idealism to amuse himself.

It was a living, working belief.

Albeit a belief he confided to no other living soul.

In fact, so convinced was he that the external world was the result of a vast deception practised upon him by the dark humour of his own senses that, when he stared at a great building such as London's "Gherkin" he felt it would not greatly surprise him to see the solid structures of which it was comprised suddenly quiver like a jelly released from its mould before melting away in its entirety to leave an anomalous space of mass and colour.

A mass of colour that was a spiritual and supernatural representation of the physical edifice the everyday and prosaic world had chosen to place there by way of… *consistency*.

In short, an exact replica of the everyday life he experienced, but something far more amorphous and liable to mutate than the rigidly organised conspiracy that was what he and everyone else around him had been assured was the only truth and actuality.

Other, of course, than the version awaiting the spirit when soul migrated body.

Religiose rather than religious, he understood the comfort to be had from belief; for as much as he welcomed the solace and quiet of churches

themselves, he preferred to believe, and did, that the spirituality – be it stratospheric or subterranean - said to be awaiting human-kind at journey's end was present throughout our passage and needed but a kick-start, accidentally or on purpose, to elevate the life lived into something entirely more wondrous.

Or, as was to be his fate, something entirely more…

Hellish!

And yet, despite these most unprofessional beliefs and a sober appearance, Tallis was normal and unenterprising and felt nothing but contempt for the popularity of psychics and those who allowed themselves to be duped by them – even if it could sometimes mean the gaining of solace of some kind; albeit an emotional consolation based upon another's mendacity and a desire to make money.

Neither had he ever felt the least desire to join the Theosophical Society or some such and to speculate in theories of Astral-plane life, or elementals.

He also attended no meetings of the Psychical Research Society, and knew no anxiety as to whether his "aura" was black, blue, or fuchsia with a dash of violet.

Nor was he conscious of the slightest wish to mix in with the cheap occultism that was forever popular with weak minds burdened by personal needs and unleashed imaginations.

Yes, there was clearly a very strong presence of common sense in Tallis despite beliefs most would consider weird and supernatural.

In a word, the outward manifestation of the man the world and the office knew as Tallis was exactly that.

"Tallis."

He was certainly *not* a man to be addressed by a familiar first-name; even if a select few dared and became the subjects of his instant irritation.

Among those things that he *knew*, and therefore never cared to speak or speculate about, one was that he saw himself quite distinctly as the inheritor of a long series of past lives that were the net result of an educational evolution.

Always as himself, of course, but in numerous different bodies each determined by the behaviour of the preceding one.

Of these previous incarnations, sensed or as yet un-sensed, he was about as certain as a man of his

spirituality and semi-mystic nature could be about anything.

The present Thomas Tallis was the last result to date of all the previous thinking, feeling, and doing that had taken place in earlier Tallis bodies and in other centuries.

There could be no rhyme or reason for him if he did not *absolutely* believe that.

Of course, given the pragmatic nature that kept unlikely step with his beliefs, he did not delude himself he knew details. Nor did he claim distinguished ancestry. Sensing as he did that his past must have been utterly commonplace and insignificant to have produced such a mundane present – no matter that he was utterly convinced he had been at this sensed but unknown game for all the ages he had breathed.

Though his recent and most disturbing dreams seemed to contradict his feelings regarding a commonplace past.

It never occurred to him to argue, to doubt, or to ask questions. But one result of this belief was that his thoughts dwelt upon the past rather than upon the future. Hence, he read much history, and felt specially drawn to certain periods whose spirit he

seemed to understand instinctively as though he had lived in them. Consequently, he found all religions uninteresting because, almost without exception, they started from the present and speculated ahead as to what men shall become - instead of looking back and speculating why men arrived at their current press and in such a particular form.

In the Tower Hill HQ housing the claims-office where he earned a living he went about his work diligently and with great care, sure always to heed the customer-care edicts that came his way from time to increasingly frequent and irritating time without ever losing sight of the fact that this smoke-screen of corporate accessibility was meant in no way to impact upon either profit or the warped morality required to maintain it at a requisite level.

Thomas Tallis could smell a bogus claim from another continent and, thus, was exceedingly well thought of by superiors who had no desire for him to rise or be promoted knowing that his absence from their department would put a dent in their yearly figures.

In short, Thomas Tallis was a man in career and life stasis.

An entity without forward motion and, consequently, going nowhere.

Until *she* came.

At which time and arrival he made the involuntary move towards a place which, without equivocation, he had no desire whatsoever to visit.

And, in his current earthly form, would be unlikely to *ever* leave…

II

Her name was Bahugandha Jayashankar.

Other than the fact she was recently arrived from the Indian subcontinent and was apparently adequate in the performance of her duties - as well as disturbing to Thomas Tallis in a way he had not yet managed to reconcile with what had already happened to him during his nocturnal travels - he knew nothing more of her background.

And, the *other* world of whose existence he was so convinced being of a mind not to enlighten him as to her present circumstances and how she came by them, *never* would.

The above despite the fact he had actually committed the unheard of familiarity, for him, of actually seeking out gossip about the young Hindu woman in the office.

An out of character deviation from predictable behaviour that had not gone unnoticed even before hr arrival:

"What's going on with old Tallis?" had rung the refrain when he had been discovered for the third or fourth time napping in the recreation-room during his lunch-break in order to claw back the small

amount of sleep he had managed in the small-hours – and that, courtesy of his recurring and troubling dream, fitful.

"Probably got some hot young piece on the line that's wearing him out."...

"Yeah, right. Like he'd no a hot-piece if it took a branding-iron to his arse"...

Predictable and puerile comments from the laddy element that had changed in nature after the arrival of *"Ms"* Jayashankar:

"Silly old sod has got the hots for the new Indian bird"...

"So that's the kind of totty he likes. Prefers them dark"...

"And plump!"...

"Don't forget unfriendly with a face like a bird of prey"...

Your writer need bore you no further with similar remarks along the same infantile lines, save to say it was a new experience for a private man such as Thomas Tallis to be at the butt end of them.

Listening to office gossip for the first time, he realised with some distaste, had actually made him the centre of that gossip.

It irked him but he knew he had nobody to blame but himself and the sense of… *impending doom*… that came over him whenever he caught sight of the new woman or when, more frequently, her strange and powerful… *scent*… assured him she was nearby.

This despite the fact none of his fellow workers appeared to detect any out of the ordinary perfume, smell or, as was not unheard of in an office environment, body odours.

He felt her eyes upon him at *all* times now, whether she was in the Tallis vicinity or employed somewhere else in the building. And when they did happen to make eye-contact it was always Tallis who blinked first and averted his gaze, thus missing the look of triumph and assured victory inspired by his visual submission. This, together with the increasing dominion over his senses being gained by the ever-present *"stench"*, as he described it to himself, of her scent in his nostrils, gave her a prime position in his thoughts of such dominance that even the fantasies created by his imagination to satisfy what the reality refused to donate freely were becoming less easy to conjure.

Even her name, after he had finally ascertained what it was and Googled its meaning, brought with it a strange thrill of dark foreboding.

"Bahugandha" it turned out, and not at all surprisingly to him, meant *"heavy scent"*, while her Hindu family name was said to denote the victorious.

He could certainly vouch for the former.

To add to the list of things he found unsettling he realised he was no longer having the disturbed dream, night after night, after night.

In fact, not only was he not having it at all but had only the vaguest recollection of its content and what it was about it that had filled him with such foreboding and fear.

Even if the latter two reactions were now with him in his *conscious* thoughts on a constant basis.

He was, however - her heavy scent seemingly a constant in his nostrils be he at home or at the office - unable to prevent himself from satisfying the needs both she and that scent inspired in him.

Needs, and as already mentioned above, he could no longer satisfy by picturing himself in all kinds of

positions in which his mastery over her was unassailable as well as unmistakable and fantasies in which they were becoming more… *equal*.

Those earlier satisfactions having already been shown for the illusions they were when he came anywhere near the young Indian woman and her scent and the warning senses proclaiming unease and foreboding threatened the equilibrium of his stomach.

"Senses" assuring him his unease and foreboding was about to be made… *physical*.

And there were other factors ready to play a crucial part in his coming downfall.

In common with others who lead a strictly impersonal life and, in contradiction to outward demeanour, he possessed the quality of utter bravery that ensured he was always ready to face any combination of circumstances, no matter how much he would have preferred to shy away from both them and their consequences.

This had always been a constant in his psychological make-up though it was, of course, his fear that made him brave. How is it possible to be brave in the face of something which presents us with no fear, after all? His was a courage made possible in part because

he saw in those acts requiring an address the simple working-out of past causes he had himself set in motion.

Causes which could be neither dodged nor modified.

As it was with this uniquely private man's attitude to such things, so it went with people also, and whereas the majority of his fellow travellers had little meaning for him, either by way of attraction or repulsion, the moment he made contact with someone for whom he felt a past connection his whole inner being leapt up instantly and shouted the fact in his face so loudly he it took every ounce of his willpower not to scream the excitement of his discovery to the world.

But not upon first contact with Bahugandha Jayashankar.

Excitement was simply not a factor.

Unless, and nocturnal and wishful exercises in male dominance and control to one side, one stretches a point to include *terror* within its Concise Oxford definition.

Thus, while the great majority of men and women left him unmoved - since he regarded them as so many souls merely passing with him along the great

stream of evolution; in complete ignorance in their case - there were, here and there, individuals with whom he recognised that his smallest intercourse was of the gravest importance.

Bahugandha Jayashankar was very much *here*.

A person with whom, without having spoken to her as yet or even heard her voice except as an accented murmuring from a distant part of the office as she conversed with a customer, he sensed in every fibre of his being he either owed her a debt requiring collection or a past behaviour in need of repayment.

We have already ascertained, I believe, the nature of that obligation – be it undeniably random and unjust on the plaintiff's account. But then, unjust or otherwise, and in keeping with the Tallis philosophy, what was perceived as reality in what was erroneously described as the *"real world"* made not a jot of difference to the mechanisms of that other unseen dimension working alongside it. And fate, be it advantageous or onerous, was not of a mind to be deflected on *any* world.

And, just as he believed, so it came to pass:

He had been pouring himself a drink from the cooler outside the lifts when that familiar and disturbing scent only he seemed able to detect fill his nostrils

and set his heart to racing. For some reason, the smell of her on this occasion was even more… *pungent*… and he sensed she was directly behind him. There was a distinctly alien element to the body odour assailing him that, while strangely familiar, was not of the Western Hemisphere and seemed to mix the exotic with something base and repugnant, as if white jasmine had just joined battle with a patch of soiled and damp earth.

And lost!

“You are afraid of me,” said a voice in his ear, a voice that, in common with her scent, was somehow familiar and sent thrills of terror the length of his spine while relaying a message of another kind simultaneously.

The erection tenting the front of his suit trousers was, for him, no less than monstrous and, while accepting he was of average endowment, he worried through his terror that anyone passing or in need of water must surely notice its presence.

“You would like to deny it but, despite your weakness and the dishonour of your past, you retain at least a mite of honesty and can hardly believe a disavowal of your interest in me would be believed. Especially as my own eyes have seen how yours drink in my presence from across a room or the way

your nostrils twitch whenever I am within passing distance."

The fact she had read him correctly, and described his actions in her strangely old-fashioned and somewhat stilted English; English that was all the more strange for being spoken in the accent of its owner's first-tongue; did not make him any the less uneasy at what he described to himself as up there with the very strangest of first conversations.

At least it would be a first conversation if he could manage to make the words forming on his own tongue to escape his lips.

Had she been in need of emboldening, and he suspected the negative held sway, his silence would have been all the encouragement required.

And so it went:

"You are both afraid of me and becoming addicted yo the scent of my superior young Indian body," she told him with complete confidence.

Adding with a smile warped by what could only be contempt, even if it seemed to suggest a deep need of her own:

"Addicted *and* terrified by it."

Thomas Tallis continued in his struggled to find his tongue, knowing that even if he were to rediscover his felicity with the language in which he communicated he would be quite unable to refute the truth of her words. With his recent and recurring dream forgotten and at a complete loss to place why he should find her so terrifying. And so familiar.

“Right at this moment you are picturing yourself with your tongue against my smooth brown armpit as you clean the day’s sweat and perspiration with devotion and gratitude. Is this not so?”

Her flawless if heavily accented English mocked him and, as he took in the sleeveless dress she had worn to the office and the slightly raised elbow that made her *“smooth brown armpit”* visible, he realised with a thrill of self-revulsion that he wanted to do just what she had described.

And badly.

He tried to mouth some kind of denial but no sound exited his mouth and the thought struck him that he must look to her the way a stricken goldfish looks when fished from water to air.

“But you do not have my permission to do so, do you?” she asked unnecessarily, both of them knowing that no such latitude had been granted.

For the second time she smiled, plump yet curiously alien features not softened any by the facial contortion, and at the back of his terror and need Tallis somehow found a corner of logical thought able to translate impression to words.

Even if he was unable to lend them sound at this point.

She was, he thought, somewhere around nineteen or twenty years of age, but could as well been either younger or older given the look of youthful insouciance counterbalanced by what he could only describe to himself as an *"unseemly knowingness"*.

Upon further scrutiny, he decided that the avian face was indeed plump and she was already showing traces of the dread second-chin that, without careful monitoring, could equally as readily turn in to a devastating third.

She was not, in the parlance of his younger colleagues, *"A looker"*.

That plumpness did not end below the neck and the hourglass shape that led to surprisingly shapely and matron like legs would have been better suited – and more in keeping – on a woman over twice her years.

All of which served only to make the erection threatening to starve the Tallis brain of blood all the more inexplicable to him.

Almost as if his senses had been re-programmed to cut out the middle-man of perceived desire and respond to the girl in such an unlikely, out of character, and seemingly pre-ordained way.

“You do not recall me… yet,” her voice recaptured his full attention, close examination of face and body having done nothing to contradict such a view, “but you will. I promise.”

Her final words before she turned from him to head back to the open-plan office from where, thankfully, nobody had stirred to assuage a sudden thirst stunned him.

“Throughout the rest of today and tonight, as you lay upon your solitary bed in your companionless apartment, I give you permission to think of me.”

“Preposterous” thought Tallis through his relief none of his colleagues or superiors were present to witness his humiliation, amazed despite all his *“other worldly”* belief and philosophy and in the face of his reaction to her until now. *“She really appears to believe she can tell me what to think!”*

His amazement not lessening any as she continued:

“But you may neither cum nor touch yourself until you have my expressed leave to do so.”

The fact that he could not recall her from his dream, and was thus unable to connect her to those *“past lives”* of whose existence he was so convinced, only served to heighten his shock and outrage that one of her age and race felt able to speak to him in such a way.

And why was he, a man of advanced years whose sexual tastes ran in direct contradiction to the control being exerted over him at that moment, reacting in such a physically positive way to her… *domination*… of him?

He felt rather than saw her press something into one of the hands that dangled, ineffectual and useless at his side.

“That is my home address and telephone number,” she told him, eyes holding his own with utter confidence in their ability to… *master*… him. “You will need only the number this evening but you may be assured I will be demanding your presence at my home in the very near future.”

“You have my permission to recall the scent of my body in your unworthy nostrils and the sound of my voice as it compels you to do exactly as I wish,” he heard her continue.

“Unworthy nostrils?”

“Then, at precisely the moment the clock strikes nine – not a moment before or a moment after – you will call my number and beg to be allowed to manipulate your pitiful manhood until I order you to release all your pitiful white semen into the hand that is not pumping it.”

He felt his mouth drop to his chest, but she was not finished yet:

“Then, when you have for the moment voided yourself of the desire you have for your young Indian owner, you will thank her for showing you such largesse then respect her superiority by licking clean the evidence of your desire for her from your hand.”

Without waiting for a response he was clearly incapable of supplying her, she had turned upon low and spiky heels to return to her work-station and the normality of the office, leaving the stunned and still speechless Tallis in receipt of her retreating back

and a surprisingly fetching arse above those matronly legs.

Still in receipt also of an erection that showed no sign of abating.

Nor would until later.

III

Thomas Tallis lay upon his bed and gazed at the mobile phone on the bedside cabinet before allowing his trusty Rotary timepiece another enquiring look.

The whole day after his ominous first meeting with Bahugandha Jayashankar had been one of growing torment for him and, so acute had his unease made him, he all but declared himself ill that he might leave the office early for the first time in his long tenure there.

Only old habits that are the hardest to kill saved him; even if he suspected they would not do so for much longer.

“You okay, Tom?” Jerry Burnside had inquired, his direct line-manager and a decent if resolutely company man, going on to describe the pallor of his cheeks and the absence of the untroubled if unapproachable expression normally to be found upon them.

“I’m fine, Jerry,” he had answered, the sub-continent elephant in the far corner of the room responsible for his lack of colour too large for him to take the usual irritation from his boss’s shortening of his forename. “Must have been something I ate.”

“Yeah, well,” began the younger married man with a prematurely hairless scalp and an envy of what covered his older subordinate’s, “the cure for a queasy stomach is a few drinks with the guys after work, but knowing you I’m sure…”

“Where are you going?”

Burnside’s double-take was almost comedic, so over-egged did it look despite being one-hundred-percent genuine.

“Say again?”

“I was asking where you – we – were going.”

“Seriously?”

“Why wouldn’t I be?”

The younger man’s expression was disbelieving, “Are you kidding me? The man who’s *never* attended one office get-together or xmas-party in all the years he’s worked here suddenly wants to have a drink with us mere mortals. And you’re surprised I think you’re not serious?”

“Well I am,” Tallis told him, confessing to himself as he did so that his just withdrawn reluctance to socialise with his colleagues could only be seen as

yet more evidence of the Indian girl's success in getting under his skin.

"So where are we going?" he asked, already and most uncharacteristically looking forward to taking a drink or two in company that it may banish the unease his incident with Bahugandha Jayashankar had caused.

"Wow! You actually mean it. The guys won't believe this," said Burnside, obviously pleased to be the one to break down the Tallis reserve and anxious to relay the fact to those others who had tried and failed. "We're meeting across the road at Davy's Wine Bar straight after work."

Tallis nodded and Burnside turned for the glass sided cubicle that served as an office in the open-plan environment.

Before turning back suspiciously:

"You are serious?"

Despite his very real concerns regarding the Indian girl and her ludicrous demands, Tallis could hardly help but be amused at his superior's disbelief that stemmed from the pleasure of having his invitation accepted.

“I promise I’ll see you there,” he told the waiting man. Then, his own smile genuine and adopting a sound-bite popular in the office, “You can take it to the bank.

That had been four hours ago and, to his own surprise, not only had Tallis turned up and actually enjoyed a couple of drinks, but he had even enjoyed the company of the long-term colleagues he had only now seen fit to socialise with; the good-humour and lack of rancor between them improving his own mood and lending his *“other worldly”* concerns a less pressing perspective as the alcohol and bonhomie kicked in.

Or at least it had until the clock above the Davy’s bar told Tallis it was approaching 8.30 and, of a sudden, the warming effects of both bonhomie and alcohol were as nothing.

She had commanded him – no other word would suffice to his suddenly beleaguered thoughts – to call him on the chime of nine.

While reclining upon his *own* bed.

And even rushing his Stamford Street flat was some twenty-five minutes distant!

It was a group of bemused colleagues who watched as Thomas Tallis swept up his briefcase and exited the bar as if debt-collectors commissioned by Cerberus were upon his tail; bemusement turning to amusement when one of their number reminded them that poor old *"Tom"* wasn't known as a drinker.

It was a frantic and perspiring Tallis who entered his flat after taking an unheard of Black Cab and virtually browbeating the driver to put his toe-down and explained the look of disgust thrown his way when the driver inspected a less than breathtaking tip. Within a few seconds of entering, and with barely any recall of ordering his limbs to do so, he was face up upon his bed with trousers and underpants down around his ankles, cell-phone to one side, and a vigilant eye upon his Rotary. An erection that seemed even more urgent than the one he had experienced earlier at the water-cooler was at once both inexplicable to him and explained everything in regard of his obedience to the Indian girl's wishes.

"It… It's me," he said into the mouthpiece when she answered.

It was *precisely* nine in the evening and there was mockery in her accented English:

“How polite of you to be so punctual.”

The mockery was even more evident in the snort of disgust that carried over the airwaves:

“Or, rather than courtesy, is it simply your desperation that makes you so… *eager*… to obey your new Master.”

A jolt of electricity galvanised his body at this description of herself in his regard and a part of him was certain he had heard her describe their relationship to each other in such a way before.

It struck Tallis suddenly that his beliefs were coming home to roost. He had always assured himself that he believed implicitly in this *“other world”* and the laws he saw as governing it and would, if the time came, abide by those laws. He believed the main purpose, if not quite the entire, purpose, of his present incarnation lay in those laws, be he on the side of punishment or redress, and that if he sought to evade the least detail of such a settling, no matter how unpleasant, he would have lived in vain, and would return to his next incarnation with this added duty to perform.

For according to beliefs he freely admitted – at least to himself – to be self-evolved there could be no ultimate shirking, and to avoid a problem was

merely to waste time in this life and be required to atone for it in the next.

Clearly, his reasoning went – or as clearly as a man in a state of such rut can reason, Bahugandha Jayashankar was one individual to whom he owed a debt of honour from some time as yet unclear to him.

And that she should seek to have him honour it in such a… *degrading*… way only served to assure him, erroneously as he would later find, that his sin against the woman had been a most serious and egregious transgression.

It was at this point, on his back upon the bed, wanting nothing more than to touch a cock throbbing with more intensity than in even his wildest fantasy of male control and female submission, and finding himself unable to allow his hands contact despite his overwhelming need, that a memory of some terrible pain suddenly laid its icy hand upon his heart and touched the scar of a great horror he knew instantly was hers rather than his.

It was a moment of genuine terror beyond even that of when their eyes had met for the first time by the water-cooler after he had sensed her scent and she had first whispered in his ear. A terror that seemed to churn his insides with a promise that nothing in is present existence would ever be the same again and

would, without doubt, be a whole lot worse. And maybe for more than this existence alone!

For now though, his thoughts and actions were necessarily mitigated by the inescapable demands of a desire he had yet to experience – much less *gratify*.

“Do you wish to touch your filthy white cock?” he heard tones and accent he was, despite the urgency of his need, already coming to despise ask, a part of him questioning why his cock, skin-tone or otherwise, was any more *‘filthy’* than another.

“If I do not hear a suitably sincere and abject reply in the next few seconds,” the young yet incredibly self-assured voice told him, “not only will I deny you the right to touch yourself this evening but will continue to refuse my permission until you have demonstrated to me you realise it is within my power to ensure that you *never* touch your penis in a way likely to supply you with pleasure again.”

It was one thing, Thomas Tallis told himself as he anguished over her threat, to be a man of belief. But quite another to have those beliefs verified. Especially when verification itself was so… *emasculating*.

That she had appeared in his life to collect upon some past injustice, placed upon her by an

incarnation of himself from another period, was not in question. Why would he, given his beliefs, even attempt to refute such a truism? But surely, for her own personal vindication, was it not imperative he at least know the cause of his punishment in the present day, rather than have the vaguest idea, via a dream he strove to recall, that he knew from which of his actions it had stemmed?

For, now that his beliefs were well and truly upon him, he felt nowhere near as convinced as to their… *rightness*. Not now he was being asked – *ordered* - to submit to the demands of a young Indian woman he had only met in person for the first time that day; a young woman who, while having spoken to him, had at no time allowed him to engage her in conversation other than to splutter out his presence at the end of a cell-phone. A young woman with a scent that alarmed as much as it captivated his senses and one who was now waiting for him to ask *"sincere and abject"* for her to grant him permission to masturbate to her image and the memory of that… *scent*.

It struck him that clichés only reached such a destination for being almost entirely composed of truth.

"Beware what you wish for!"

Not, of course, that he had wished for this, but he had devised a world of his own making with concrete beliefs and consequences; and, in keeping with most fantasists, he had not for one moment imagined those two constants rearing their head to place him at the wrong end of their certainties.

Now, as the evidence of his desire strained ever upward towards ceiling plaster as white and pristine as was the day to day minutiae of the life he had known until the advent of Bahugandha Jayashankar into its uneventful if untroubled progress, and despite his previous belief that the wrongs of a previous existence must be redressed, no matter the cost, Thomas Tallis tried to fight the unaccountable sexual need he felt for this young Indian woman whose scent, even miles away on the other end of a cell-phone, seemed to envelop him.

His struggles, as he had correctly assessed they would be, were futile.

“Please!” he pleaded into the phone.

“Please, what?” came the harsh reply, that of a great lady to a flunky requiring attention.

“Please… Please let me…Let me…”

“You wish to touch yourself?”

“Yes, yes!” Tallis heard his once controlled and measured voice scream, the need in him for her all the more unaccountable for having no terms of reference by which he could explain and, perhaps, mitigate his abject and all too easily won capitulation to her immoral authority.

“Then you must beg your master with a servility that is at least the equal of your sincerity,” she told him, the awful truth behind a statement he would once have found ludicrous sounding a note of certainty in a besieged willpower struggling to avoid its intended fate.

“Please,” he began with a sudden return to coherent thought he suspected would prove only temporary. “At least tell me of the transgression that compels you to treat a stranger in such a way.”

Her refusal echoed in his ears as a death-knell from some as yet unnamed century:

“NO!”

“But…”

“First of all, you are no stranger. You are as familiar and as hateful to me as you were on that terrible morning when you arrived with the rest of your shit-spawned comrades in search of those Indian

mutineers who had finally tired of serving your perfidious masters."

A flash of red tunic burst briefly across the Tallis vision to be accompanied by a feeling of dread.

But not for the missing presence of his heard but unseen tormentor.

It was for an act or acts for which he, though not involved or responsible, had been present.

An innocent he knew, even if the specific atrocities escaped him at the moment, whose innocence was not likely to prove either his salvation or his release.

"But why me?" the question echoed around his head without translating into sound.

"The very first face I saw," the instrument of his punishment was saying, "after the animals of your regiment beat my parents before having their way with me; there in the morning sunlight, was yours. As unmoved and untroubled by my sufferings as the metal of the rifle you kept so well-polished was indifferent to the corrosive effects of that same sun and the dust attempting to dull it. The physical embodiment of *everything* that had reduced our once happy land to servitude and misery."

As if a curtain had suddenly been drawn away from a glass door, Tallis saw the dream that had so troubled him with full consciousness.

And all but dropped the phone pressed to his ear as the full picture of not only the past injustice to both her and her own people but that which he suffered under in the present presented itself to him once again.

This time in its entirety.

And now, armed with the knowledge of his own blamelessness, his earlier refrain was lent a voice:

“But why me? I did nothing! Am I to be punished simply because I was present? Would you discipline the same oxygen your tormentors took in along with you by refusing to breathe it, just because it happened to be there? I repeat: I did nothing. Nothing! Like the oxygen. My only crime was to be there as you and your people were… *used*.”

His outburst changed nothing.

Neither the erection which threatened to detach itself from the scrotum keeping it moored to his body, nor the intent of the avenger from the past determined to avenge both her people and herself upon him.

Regardless of the complete absence of culpability.

“You may call it *‘collective guilt’*, to coin a modern phrase,” began the accented English, “if it serves you some small consolation for your punishment. Such things are meaningless to me and I live for but one thing. To see you grovel before me in a way that will cause you enough shame for a thousand lifetimes. To have those who know and respect you witness your utter physical enslavement to a young Indian woman both they and you - do not even think to deny it – believe their racial and intellectual subordinate.”

Even as he asked himself if she was correct, at least in his regard, she was continuing:

“Yours is the face I have pictured over the intervening fifteen-score years or so that I have endured while waiting for the fates that govern such things to decide the time was meet for your… *comeuppance*.”

Her tone poked fun at him now in a way that was far from playful:

“And, as it is impossible for me to punish the *‘oxygen’* my tormentors *‘took in’* along with me, without punishing myself by not breathing it, the vehicle for my redress and that of my parents and

fellow villagers, will be the one I *always* intended it should be."

Tallis, erection raging and quite beyond his ability to either touch or soothe, now knew with certainty that he had deluded himself down the years.

What he had believed would be a natural acceptance of the laws governing his *unseen* world and surety it would find him ready and willing to accept either payment due to him or make good on a debt owed, had vanished as quickly as morning dew on a desert rock.

And at exactly that moment it transpired the debt would be his.

Especially after she had hinted at just what would be required of him by way of repayment.

Now, as he felt the true horror of his beliefs ensnare him, Tallis realised that far from wishing to make on his *"commitment of ages"* he actually hated and loathed the young Indian woman to whom it was owed.

He also realised that she had spoken truthfully on another subject.

Never before a man to judge by the geography of a skin-tone or the vagaries of class, despite a *very* minor English public-school upbringing, his sense of righteous indignation at the horror befalling him was made all the more unpalatable for coming at the behest of such an…

Inferior!

And so it was that, at the very moment his own unjust and uncharacteristic dismissal of the young Indian woman's race and character occurred, so did the scent of her seem to coalesce about him as if in a cloud; the faint whiff of jasmine before it was debased by the more soiled and earthy odours he knew characterised his tormentor best attacking his weakening defences and becoming, he realised with utter horror, a miasma of submissive sexual attraction and foul orgasmic promise.

Should such a release *ever* be granted.

Though a part of him shrank from her presence, thankful at least that it was only her voice rather than her physical manifestation he was forced to deal with at this point, he realised the scent of her replicated by his memory was having the effect of breaking down the barriers of his moral and physical distaste for her and he was beginning to slip into

what his beleaguered consciousness could only describe as a kind of degenerate… *obsession*.

The question that beleaguered consciousness asked of him, however, was when would this unjust and undeserved penance end? And, *if and* when it did, would what remained of the man formerly known as Thomas Tallis be recognisable in a form that would allow him at least a little… *dignity*?

“Enough prevarication,” rang the tones he was growing to hate as much as he feared from the cell-phone still attached to his ear. “You have something you need to ask your master.”

He was beaten and knew it, yet could not bring himself to concede to the unholy need her scent and her voice instilled in him, the desire to take his rampant manhood in his hand and pump away to a vision of her *lowly* person prevented only by his complete inability to bring himself to do so.

“One more hesitation and our conversation is at an end and it will be a *very* long time before your puny white stick is allowed to spurt again,” he heard.

Desperation overcoming distaste, he worked a tongue over suddenly parched lips and tried to form the words that, he knew, would sentence him to an existence as her… *thing*.

“Very well,” he heard when no such words formed. “This conversation is at an end and I will…”

“*No!*” he screamed. Please… M-Master, I… I need to… to…”

“Say it, slave,” she ordered, using the term for the very first time and setting off a destructive detonation in the Tallis breast as it still battled with the knowledge of the craven capitulation it had only just made.

“I… I need to… to stroke my… my cock.”

“Not good enough,” she barked. “Beg me again. And this time your master wishes to hear you describe what it is she now owns.”

Tallis thought furiously as he tried to form the words she wanted from him, torn between utter shame and the rage he felt for a gutless surrender he now knew with certainty would lead to his own emasculation.

Then, finally:

“P-Please, allow me to… to manipulate my… my pathetic manhood.”

There was a pause at the end of the line and, just as he thought the craven surrender of his own manhood had been for nought:

“Very well. We have made a start and you will soon learn to be more… *abject* … when addressing me. Soon you will know no other smell than that of my most intimate places. The dominant taste upon your tongue will be that of either my superior armpits, cunny, or Indian arse.”

She paused again and Tallis realised he had stopped breathing as he considered her words and already knew them to be half-true as all he could smell at that point was the earthy and somehow soiled aroma of the armpits she made sure to keep uncovered at the office and the fragrance of which, it appeared, only he detected.

The air around him seemed supercharged with menace and, shamefully, *anticipation*, until:

“Very well. You may place your hand around your little cock and stroke it until…”

Barely had the words left her mouth than the hand in question wrapped itself around the painful ramrod that was Tallis’ manhood to begin pumping as if the very life of its owner was in question.

“…you are ready to spurt your useless white cream. At which point you will say please and I will give you permission to…”

There was no time for the sentence to be finished before Tallis cried:

“Pleeeeeeeeeeeeeeeease!”

IV

When Jerry Burnside called him into the glass-sided cubicle that served as a most un-private office some two weeks after Bahugandha Jayashankar's arrival at HQ, it was a very different Thomas Tallis who took a seat opposite him.

Gone was the immaculate if soberly presented forty-something with the serious and diffident manner to whom his colleagues had grown used and, in his place, was a still soberly dressed man who was more frayed at the edges than immaculate and whose diffidence had been joined by an impression of despair.

A man, Jerry Burnside had opined to underlings, equals and superiors alike, who seemed to have experienced some kind of seismic shock in his life and had come out from under it a quite different and *beaten* being than he had before it struck.

A decent man who not even his dear ones would have described as having either prescience or insight, Burnside, had he known it, could not have described his work subordinate's frame of mind with greater clarity had he been in possession of all the facts. The man was but a shell of his former self and seemed of his own shadow these days let alone that

of others. And now, into the bargain, the task had fallen to his immediate superior to add to his basket of woe.

Jerry Burnside, to his credit, took no pleasure whatsoever from being the one charged with delivering the less than life enhancing news.

“Take a seat please, Tom,” he began, fiddling nervously with a pen as the former top-performing and faultless credit-assessor in his department seemed to drop lifelessly into an even more inanimate and style-free chair made of metal tubing and two strips of faux leather that served as a cushion for arse and middle-back respectively.

Not a hint of curiosity, far less interest, was visible in either the older man’s expression or body-language and Burnside marvelled at the speed with which the man before him had started to come apart. None of the usual explanations offered by office gossip – most concerning some nefarious secret identity that had finally caught up with him or the imminent discovery of his ongoing company embezzlement over the years – held his interest. What he was certain of, however, was that something momentous had occurred in this man’s life over recent weeks and, though why Burnside suspected this he could not say, but he was near certain his problem had commenced on that

momentous day when he had accepted the invitation to join his colleagues for a drink. Before, that is, he had taken a look at the clock above the bar and left in such a blind panic.

Whatever it was that held him in such a condition, Burnside decided, his work and the fear of losing it came nowhere close to matching.

“I’m not going to sugar-coat it, Tom,” he began, “and I’m certainly not about to poke my nose in your private business to try and find out what’s happening with you.”

The look on the face of Tallis could not be called a smile exactly, but Burnside swore he detected gratitude aimed his way.

He took a deep breath and plunged in:

“You’re being let go, Tom.”

As he had expected, there were no histrionics and certainly no attempt to plead his case; almost in fact as if it was no more than he had expected – even if Burnside himself thought the two-weeks of under-performance the company had allowed him after years of stellar performance was both a smack in the face to the man for his diligence and loyalty and a

warning shot across the bows to all those who thought they were indispensable.

To whose number he, Burnside, had certainly belonged until now.

“I’m just a messenger and I hate having to do it,” he went on in the face of Tallis’ silence. “You deserve a lot better from them even if…”

He hesitated and, to his surprise, it was Tallis himself who came to the rescue of his indecision.

“You have no need to apologise,” he assured him and Burnside realised that even his voice had undergone a change and the crisp and confident if less than intimate delivery had been replaced by an uncertainty and fragility he, Burnside, found deeply moving somehow. The man was in pain and the company he had served so well was, rather than trying to alleviate his suffering, doing its best to add to it. Even if he had to admit that what he was tasked to put to Tallis was a lot less final than it could have been.

“I… I realise I haven’t been myself recently and that my work has suffered as a result,” Tallis continued in the same deadened tones. “This is in no way any responsibility of yours and I hold no grudges against you for being the one asked to let me go.”

“But Tom,” Burnside corrected him. “I’m not… When I said the *company* is letting you go I didn’t mean from the company itself but from this department.”

Now a flicker of curiosity did appear on the Tallis visage.

“You’re being demoted, Tom. With a chance to return to your old position here if your performance levels return to par.”

Tallis nodded and through the glass partitions at his back Burnside could see interested colleagues sneaking glances their way to see how he would take what they already appeared to know.

“Demoted to where?”

The voice was only slightly louder than a whisper and was accompanied, unless Burnside was mistaken, by the kind of look a person adopted when awaiting a *fait accompli*.

Hell, he would have adopted the same kind of look himself had he been about to be told he was being demoted in such a way – even if not two weeks before he would have thought such a position would have sweetened the pill of ejection from the department.

A little, anyway.

“Well, you know the Indian bi…”

He caught himself.

“I don’t suppose you know this, no reason why you should, but *Ms* Jayashankar was promoted upstairs yesterday?”

Another nod greeted the titbit, Burnside’s heavy and dismissive emphasis on the young Indian woman’s preferred *“Ms”* not going unnoticed even if it was not commented upon.

The uncomfortable line-manager attempted to plough on:

“Well, it seems…”

He sighed and lowered his voice, PC and company protocol be damned.

“Look, Tom, I don’t like it any better than you. The buzzard featured ice-sculpture’s not been here five minutes – and lord knows her work’s not exactly the stuff of legend. So either she has a well-connected or *actively* interested patron at executive level, if you take my drift, or the powers-that-be want the world to see the company as some multi-cultural,

ethnically friendly employer and decided she fit the bill – despite the numbers of her better performing colleagues who deserve the elevation more.

He paused as another aspect of the affair struck him

An aspect he found none too pleasant.

“Fuck! She’s my superior too now you know?”

The outrage stemming from his own observation sent his arms wide:

“But what do we do?”

Tallis said nothing and Burnside knew he was waiting to see how the elevation of an Indian bitch, as inexplicable as it was, affected him; even if he got the distinct impression he had just informed him of something he already knew.

“The thing is – and I hate to be the one telling you the bad news – is that her promotion means she has a need for a…” His expression grew distasteful – make that: *more* distasteful. “She needs a personal assistant.”

Burnside averted his eyes, unable to look upon the humiliation he knew he must read upon the Tallis features at hearing he was expected to take on such

a… *demeaning*… position with a boss so many years his junior and so very obviously his…

Hating the extent to which political correctness had gone as he did despite its many beneficial social effects, he nonetheless quelled his unspoken description of the Indian girl as her PA in waiting's… *inferior*… and grudgingly returned his gaze to view the Tallis reaction. Both knew as well as the other that, despite all the equal opportunity corporate bullshit, there was not one man in a position of personal-assistant to one of the executives. Be they men or one of the few women so exalted. There was not, in fact, one male PA or secretary throughout the *whole* company workforce, local or regional, home or abroad.

"And I suppose she wants me?" Tallis asked in a tone of voice implying he wasn't asking at all, making Burnside's nodded assent quite superfluous.

"It's a take or leave offer, I'm afraid, Tom. Bite the bullet and go upstairs with the bi… with *Ms* Jayashankar, or box up your effects and go down and out on your own."

He let out a snort of disgust:

“Though how they could think a man like you would say yes to such an insulting offer’s beyond my pay-scale.

Burnside immediately bit his lip at his unintentional but no less insensitive soundbite but was reassured that his colleague had either not been listening or simply had bigger issues with which to concern himself.

But there was something he wished to ask.

Something personal.

“Tell me to mind my own business if you like, Tom,” he began, “but what’s going on with you and this… *girl?*”

Fully expecting his previously private – and fiercely so – colleague to tell him to do just what he had advised him to do, the younger man was surprised when, instead, Tallis gave him a fatalistic shrug betokening a willingness to… *confide*.

Or, as it would turn out, at least as much as was permitted.

“It… It’s not something I can tell you, Jerry. Not anything that you’d believe, anyway.”

Jerry Burnside found himself as mildly affronted as he was entirely surprised that Tallis had confided even this much to him:

“I’m not exactly an ingénue, Tom,” he reminded his colleague. “Certainly, I’ve had my share of off-the-wall sexual encounters.”

His expression became semi-rueful as he added the proviso:

“Before I married Chloe, that is.”

His gaze alighted upon a picture of the aforementioned lady with their two sons, standing to the side of his laptop, and a tender smile banished his disappointment at no longer being a man-about-town.

Becoming serious again when his eyes turned back to Tallis:

“Believe me, Tom, anything you say to me here will go absolutely no further. If you’re worried about becoming grist for the gossip mill then don’t.”

His soft laugh was intended to be disarming:

“You’ve been that for quite a while now anyway.”

A weak smile greeted his attempt to lighten the atmosphere.

“Such things are of no interest to me, Jerry. People will gossip whether they’re given sound reasons or not. And I know anything I tell you will stay between the two of us. It’s not that.”

“Then what is it, Tom? Come on man! I’m worried for you. And not just as your line-manager.”

“Believe me, Jerry, it would be a relief to confide in you – to someone, *anybody* – but I just…”

His voice tailed of defeatedly and Burnside realised it was as much emotion he had seen for the man in all the years they had worked together.”

“Listen, Tom, I can’t think for a second just what it is about this girl that has you in such a condition, but it was obvious from almost the first minute she set foot here that something changed with you. For god’s sakes man! I can’t begin to imagine what it could possibly be, but is she holding something over your head? Something to do with the company? Your personal life? From the past?”

“I told you, Tom,” said a Tallis who looked as if all energy had drained from his body and left only a husk to provide a breathing and speaking facsimile

of the man he had once been, “it’s not something either you or anybody else would understand. All I can say is that what we have between us is from the far distant past. Please just leave it at that and let’s move on.”

Shocked that there could ever have been any past dealings between two such completely different people, in terms of age, looks, intelligence and race, Burnside saw no alternative but to do as his colleague advised.

“So, Tom, any ideas where you’ll go? A man like you shouldn’t have any problem landing another position with your CV. And I’ll be downright insulted if you don’t them to me for a reference.”

“Thank you, Jerry, that’s good to hear. But what makes you think I’m leaving?”

“Well… I…” Burnside spluttered before the full implication of what he had just heard kicked in.

“You…? You mean…?” You’re going to become the Indian bi… You’re going to accept the position as her… assistant?”

V

It was the habit of Tallis these days, since he was compelled to work under conditions that were utterly distasteful, to withdraw his mind as far from the reality of his day-to-day as he possibly could without effecting the smooth running of *Her* office.

That Bahugandha Jayashankar was wholly unfit for the position allocated her was obvious from the first moment of day-one when she called him in from his admin area outside her executive office and insisted he kneel before her as she sat at her new desk then kissed her hosed feet in acceptance of a new relationship she intended to be as personal as it was professional.

Even if she was a long way from ever having him describe her as the latter.

Burnside's suspicion that his nemesis from the distant past – not that he had given his former line-manager reason to recognise her in such a form – was favoured by someone higher up with an *active* interest in keeping her happy appeared more and more likely; though Tallis was at a loss to guess just who it could be with a weakness for a… *girl*… of her kind.

What else could explain how she was allowed to coast along while keeping a firm grip upon the coat-tails of the underling doing her work for her?

Even attending meetings and conducting interviews in her stead, so unconcerned was she by appearances and upper-level reaction.

An *"underling"*, moreover, who was to all intents and purposes held in place by a modern-day indenture with unbreakable roots cemented in a once unimagined past.

The *"humiliation"* both dream persona and living breathing demoness had promised him before his own people had started in subtle ways:

Making him walk behind her with her briefcase to those meetings where her attendance *was* actually required…

Have him perform the most mundane errands that had no connection with the work he was supposed to be doing for her; collecting her dry-cleaning, brushing her long and dungeon black hair and, on one excruciating occasion, actually polishing her shoes in his own admin space as a succession of his colleagues waited to be interviewed for an internal promotion by the new head of human resources.

He had become at once a laughing stock and a figure of some contempt.

Even Burnside had taken him aside and pleaded with him to leave the company before every last remnant of what had made him the man he was vanished into the ether along with the last of his self-respect.

His former line-manager's look one of deep regret and profound… *pity*… when Tallis informed him such an escape was impossible and was unwilling/unable to tell or even hint at the why.

All of which made the despair and futility with which he eked out his new existence all the more exasperating.

How could anyone guess, let alone know, just what vile and supernatural chains held him in bondage to the foul creature whose behaviour towards him became more despicable by the day.

Chains that seared his skin with their metaphysical heat should he attempt to disobey his Indian *"Master"* - that same "*foul creature"*, the *other world* had finally seen fit to remind him fo why he was being punished in such a way. Doing so by jogging his memory in respect of the events during that ill-fated and brutally punished mutiny and rebellion of which a past version of himself had been

present. A presence that had led not only to her hatred of his whole race but to an unjust and sexually perverse fixation upon him as the embodiment of the whole rapacious and all-devouring Anglo-Saxon world.

Knowing beyond a doubt now that the *other world* in which he had believed for so long had been no wishful thinking on his part did not alter the fact that it was no more merciful and just than the supposedly *real* version in which he suffered at Bahugandha Jayashankar's feet.

Less so, in fact.

And by some huge and demeaning margin.

And now, just as she had promised, the relatively subtle humiliations to which she had subjected him during the early days of his… *indenture*… were becoming more sexual.

Or, as his demoralised thoughts corrected, *"Even"* more sexual.

"Sexual for her," those same thoughts added sourly, the ever present coolness and constriction of the symbolic and quite unnecessary metal cage encasing the Tallis penis and scrotum a constant reminder of the control she had even over his own release.

Unnecessary because both of them knew he was incapable of even touching his own manhood without her express permission, let alone satisfying the warped desires her domination of him seemed to inspire; desires which only served to exacerbate his already considerable sense of self-loathing.

Now, and despite his earlier and most profound belief that debts remaining due from a past existence were to be met – instantly and without prevarication - in the present, the knowledge of what his own so-called and completely unjust obligations consisted freed him in his own mind to refuse the girl's calling of them.

Much good it did him.

His first refusal to demean himself for his perceived debt and her gratification served only to reveal to him that his *other world* had rules of its own on the subject of repayment.

And trivialities such as justice and morality had no impact when it came to what the one holding that debt could demand of the one unfortunate enough to have incurred it.

The past beliefs of Thomas Tallis had borne their fruit and were in the process of slowly hanging him

by the neck from one of the branches alongside which they dangled.

He was in debtor's hell and it was to a young Indian girl he hated with every fibre of his being that his diabolical fealty was due.

Yet he sensed that even this most intolerable level of damnation was about to undergo an alteration.

And not for the better.

"A change is required," she told him one day as she gazed absently through the window at a panorama of London beyond; to the right the ramparts of the Tower rising above the Thames that had once ferried the kings and queens of the country she so hated to either long-term imprisonment, torture, or death and a reminder of a past that no longer existed; to the left the rise of Canary Wharf and its sister structures proclaiming a progress that had been unable to resist the immutable laws of a past of which she herself had no understanding and still less interest in the gaining of such.

The smile of pure satisfaction etched into her avian features as she looked down upon the handsome Englishman intent upon massaging her dainty brown feet with vermilion nails he himself had painted would have been all an interested bystander need

know to realise why she would regard the attainment of such knowledge so dismissively.

She was the physical embodiment of Santayana's *"Barbarian"*; an entity who regarded the existence of her own passions as reason enough for existing at all and whose only thoughts in their regard were how best they could be satisfied.

"I have decided," began the girl with a queen-like delivery belied only by her accent and his knowledge of her low-caste origins, a girl his dream recalled in a dirt poor village dressed in clothing barely a level above rags, and reduced to just that condition as she went about revealing her young body to him with contempt, "that there is little reason to remain at this…" her eyes scanned the office dismissively "…place… any longer."

The Tallis heart thumped in its breast; not with fear and trepidation this time but with optimism.

"It has served its purpose and no longer has either interest or value for me."

Optimism rising with her every word, Tallis concentrated on the massaging of the feet whose well-being he had been entrusted, not wanting to do anything to deflect her attention from a course he prayed would see him a free-man once again.

It was, as you dear reader will have divined already, not to be.

Brown fingers cupped his chin and raised his eyes to hers, the dark eyes that sparkled with the joy of ownership finding space also to dance with amusement.

“Do not worry, my poor white peon. I know how much you have come to worship your powerful Indian Malkin and how you long to have her release your caged little cockle that you may rub yourself off against the soles of the feet of which you take such good and… *servile*… *c*are.”

The Tallis heart raced and his *“little cockle”* swelled against metal constraint necessarily made more painful by such an attempt. Though he had served both her pussy and her… *anus*… with his tongue on a regular basis and was seldom without the taste of her upon his lips and the scent of her in his nose, it had been weeks since she had last known a release. Weeks that seemed like years as his desire grew and she had finally seen fit to release him from his confinement and allow him to beg to take his release against the side of one smooth brown calf muscle. The merest of hints that he may be allowed to repeat his behaviour – no matter how much further it lowered him in his own self-esteem – was enough to

focus his thoughts narrowly enough to marginalise all other concerns.

So much so that he almost missed her next words:

“And you must not worry yourself that because your Malkin is in need of a change her… *attention*… to you will be a casualty of her desire. That is not my purpose at all.

Having prayed that she had grown bored with her torment of him and that even the *other world* placed a time limit upon the repayment of debts, fallacious or otherwise, a full-stop fetched the Tallis optimism to a halt.

And just *what* kind of a change did she have in mind?

He did not have long to wait as she removed her foot from his grasp and offered its big-toe to lips that were at once unwilling and needy.

Then, satisfied he was sucking at his Master with the requisite… *devotion*… she told him what she had in mind…

VI

As he patrolled the front-room filled with his *"Master's"* guests, either to fill empty glasses with wine or champagne he had purchased and had delivered that day or to offer the same courtesy to empty stomachs via the snacks he himself had cooked and prepared earlier, Thomas Tallis could not but help over hear the snatches of conversation that drifted to him from the lips of those men and women who had once been his colleagues.

Colleagues who were now guests of a young Indian woman for whom he was now known to be – ridiculous at such a time and in such a place – a live-in manservant.

"I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes. Old Tallis, waiting-on like a flunky!"...

"And look what the Indian bitch has kitted him out in. He looks like some kind of a Victorian valet!"...

"What's happened to the man? She orders him around as if he's some kind of a slave or something. Do you think he's one of those perverts who gets off on having a woman treat like a piece of you-know-what?"...

"Why else would a man give up a perfectly good job and his own home to become a servant? And he's not fussy either, if you ask me. I mean, not what you'd call a looker, is she?"…

And so it had gone, the former colleagues who had, most of them, only accepted Bahugandha Jayashankar's invitation out of prurient curiosity and a fear of being a marginalised presence on the food chain accepting the Indian girl's hospitality with seeming gratitude to her face while badmouthing her the moment they were out of earshot and speculating on the relationship she shared with her… *"Manservant"*… when not doing so.

That the girl's apartment on the Greenwich riverside was not only spacious and trendy but, they knew, extremely expensive was yet another area of whispered discussion and, had they known, something that was a mystery to her new manservant also.

From whence came her money? And how had a girl of her… *kind*… tapped into it? Surely the supernatural world that was serving *him* so poorly in terms of natural justice did not go so far in the present as to provide a source of financial support for those seeking redress for a perceived injustice from the past?

It was, along with is inability to fight the girl's growing power over him, totally beyond his deductive and imaginative powers.

As well as to his former colleagues if the snippets of whispered conversation that made his way spoke true.

None of which overheard discussions or looks either sympathetic or, frankly, disgusted aimed his way served to deflect from the sense of sheer stomach churning humiliation with which Thomas Tallis did battle as he displayed the servile and totally devoted face of his Indian Master's chattel to people who had once respected him - even if they had not numbered him a friend.

The only saving grace for the wretched man, as yet more nails forged in the blast furnace of his shame pierced the remnants of his beleaguered and all but diminished manhood, was that they were not to know of the disgusting and inhuman acts his *"Master"* forced him to perform in private.

There was, it seemed, no act so foul and dehumanising he could not be forced to perform it for his Indian owner, who was now talking of how proud he would make her when she relocated them to Lucknow and displayed him before those

countrymen and women who were of a likemind when it came to those of his race.

There was barely, he often mused to himself, an autonomous decision left to him to make - even the times at which he ate, drank and slept, were decided upon by her – and he was completely unable to defy her will on even the smallest and most insignificant of issues.

And certainly not when it came to any attempt to put himself from his own misery.

A simple proscription from the bitch, this as he ate her inexhaustible pussy for the third time in one day, had ensured he would *never* make such an attempt again.

Which proscription, of course, could not stop him thinking of such attempts, just as he thought about cutting the cage from his imprisoned cock and balls that he may know release at a time of his choosing or wrapping his hands around her hateful neck and squeezing until such a time as her dark and evil eyes popped from…

Thoughts of such a kind that made his return to the *real* world the *other world* had fashioned for him, and the unspeakable physical acts of worship and

obeisance demanded of him there, all the harder to bear.

Those *"Acts"*, he often told himself, of a kind which would have seen her before the court of human rights at The Hague should natural as well as legal justice ever to show its long overdue face.

And as for the cage locked about his manhood itself…?

Well, that was a mercy, albeit small, in that she had not decided to display this evidence of her total control to either his colleagues or anyone ls.

Yet.

"What on earth possessed him to sell his flat and live with her as his flunky?"…

"Simple economics," had answered one wag for whom his thoughts had always expressed distaste and were not improved any by the mocking observation that followed. *"Probably saves a fortune paying prostitutes with a dungeon to whip his lily-white behind"…*

"But he was always so correct and serious," offered a young woman from accounts who had often featured in his fantasies of male control and female

submission – the very reverse of what *he* was experiencing now.

"Superior, you mean?" replied the same mocking voice that had preceded her as Tallis sheltered behind the half-open kitchen door to hear his shame and perfidy described – no matter how erroneously.

"There the worst, let me tell you," added the same voice. *"Always look out for the quiet ones!"*

Tallis was still shaking his head with contempt and rage for the man's puerile and off-the-mark generalisations and kitchen-sink philosophies when Bahugandha Jayashankar herself entered the kitchen and gave him a smile that contained even more malice than usual.

Enlightening, is it not, my old white peon?" she asked, tone assuring him no response was required. "You at last begin to see just what your fellow colleagues and countrymen truly think of you. Are they not every bit as worthless as you?"

She laughed to herself, warmth and humour as ever absent.

"In fact, I would say they have even less value. You at least are learning to provide your Malkin with

pleasure with that English tongue she has trained so… *diligently.*"

The door was still half-open and, as beaten and demoralised as she had him, Tallis prayed none might have heard her words the way he had heard theirs."

Again she laughed:

"Oh, is my poor English manservant worried that the former friends who so looked up to him at one time may hear his young Indian owner speak to him in such a way"

A look of devilment danced across the plump yet avian features he so longed to obliterate.

"Let us make it more interesting for you, shall we?" she offered as he waited with horrified anticipation, knowing that she was set on inflicting yet another indignity upon him and that he would have no choice but to allow it to happen.

She placed a finger upon her lips as if mulling over a number of options.

"Perhaps I could invite them to watch you soothe my superior brown skin with that worthless tongue that finds at least some purpose in my service," she

began, raising an arm to reveal a smooth and brown armpit above the backless black dress that, as expensive as Tallis knew it to be, did nothing to elevate her in his thoughts of her as the worst, most unforgiving and pig-ignorant forms of human-life.

“Or perhaps I could ask them to follow us to the bathroom to witness how my white manservant makes himself useful to his Malkin as she makes water?

“Would that not be even more of an eye-opener for them than witnessing the so-so self-respecting Mr Tallis serving food and drinks in his new position as the chattel of young Bahugandha Jayashankar from the Uttar Pradesh? Just imagine their silly English faces as they watch the handsome Mr Tallis lick a young Indian girl’s cunny clean of her wastes that he may show her his remorse and his respect.”

Not for the first time, Tallis wished for madness to take him, longing for the embrace of irrationality and incoherence that it may banish the pure and undiluted misery of his reality. That she was only too capable of showing him to his people in such a way could not be doubted. What had gone before and was happening now was living proof of it.

But what if she did?

What then?

The law of diminishing returns, he consoled himself, must surely kick in sometime soon and, when that occurred, to what extremes would she then go in order to retain what she had told him was the *"exquisite pleasure she took from his humbling"*?

For a second, as she remained before him, finger to lips still and paused in thought, the Tallis legs went to water as he made sure she was about to act on her own suggestion and make use of him in such a way before her invited guests.

On this score, at least, he was mistaken – though his legs regained no firmness from her stated intention:

"But then," she began, "I have no desire to display myself before such worthless people and would be punishing myself just as much as I punish you.

In one movement, she turned and flipped up the back of her dress to reveal naked and panty-free buttocks resting atop her prematurely matronly but still shapely brown legs.

"I shall content myself by having you press your useless white lips to my glorious Indian arse to display your servile… *fealty*… to me. Knowing that

your former colleagues are beyond the door and that at any time one or other of them may wander in."

It was, though humiliating enough, nowhere near as terrifying as the prospect she had described prior to it and Tallis, though acknowledging the depths to which he had fallen to consider it in such a light, considered her change of heart a… *let-off*.

And, as he knelt as directed and fixed his eyes upon the plump yet contradictingly firm buttocks he was intended to worship, he felt something else.

As the pain of his cock thrusting against metal served yet again to remind him of his utter inability to satisfy for himself his own lusts, he heard the hated voice calling him to service.

"Hurry, Tallis. Do not keep your Malkin waiting lest she change her mind. And do remember to keep your kisses soft and respectful the way a true servant should."

He did exactly as asked and formerly instructed.

"That is my good obedient boy," she cooed from above him. Nice and servile the way I like it. We cannot have you behaving like a man now, can we?"

Despite having heard the jibe before it still cut him to the core of all he held manly.

But worse, far worse was to come.

“On that subject, and before I ever consider taking you to my country in your new role as my manservant,” she told him as his lips caressed her arse, “we need to do something about that useless thing between your legs.”

A metaphysical but no less startling alarm bell all but deafened him and it was as much as he could do to concentrate upon his degrading task as she finished:

“We will finish what we have started here, then you can tell my boring guests to leave.”

He felt a small relief that was *extremely* short lived, as she added:

“Then I will ensure that little cockle and the balls that go with it are no longer a problem to me or anyone else…”

VII

He was on his back upon the bathroom floor, the cool of tile making barely an impact upon flesh already goose-bumped and shivering violently as the young woman who owned his very life stood above him, the columns of her smooth brown legs bestriding his hips as she gazed down into his eyes and the naked fear that could not be missed.

But then why would he feel otherwise, he asked himself, totally incapable of moving a muscle in his own defence after having received no more than few simple words proscribing any such action from the lips of his tormentor.

The former colleagues who had witnessed him in his new environment and lowly position had left over an hour before and it was only now, after he had returned her apartment to its pristine order while she relaxed before a view of the Thames as it wound its way downstream towards London on her left and towards the Millennium Dome, now the O_2 Arena, and the flood barrier protecting the city from surges of sea-water was already considered ill-equipped to deal.

Much as Tallis was utterly underpowered to cope with the other world forces of nature and the supernatural that had seen fit to present him,

shackled and in chains, to the demoness from his past now gazing down upon him as if he were nothing more than a prized and most obedient pet.

An obedient pet she could punish and torment as much or as little as her spectacularly sadistic and vengeful nature required.

And seldom was it little.

The torment this time – for he had done nothing to merit a punishment, and nor had he ever – was, he sensed, going to be terrible and more irrevocable than ever. Which, given what he had endured at her hands to this point, would have been enough to reduce far stronger and courageous men than him to their knees. And something she had said earlier in the kitchen, prior to having him unceremoniously shoo her guests from the apartment, and with his lips firmly affixed to her arse cheeks in the most unmanly of ways, was not doing anything to ease his growing sense of foreboding for what was about to transpire.

Sure enough, after initially raising his hopes by releasing his cock and balls from their restraint and forcing him to the bathroom tile, it was to those earlier words that she returned:

"I have decided," she began in her strangely and resolutely period language, language made all the

more stilted and old fashioned sounding by the accent in which it was spoken, "now that you are truly my housebroken and domesticated servitor, to return to the old country that I may show them just how well an older Englishman responds to the firm hand and guidance of superior young Indian woman."

Unmanly tears whetted his cheeks at the prospect of his shame being taken overseas, though a part of him did acknowledge that it could hardly be worse to have strangers of a different race and culture witness his emasculation at her hands than those of his own.

This would have been a consolation – a very mild consolation admittedly, but something to cling to just the same. Or at least it would have been. Had that is he not been certain her intent upon this occasion was for something far more… lasting.

"However," she began, about to make his base fear stone-cold reality, "I cannot have my people thinking that the Englishman I keep as a manservant is truly a man."

Tallis though he must surely vomit the meagre contents of his stomach to the floor at his side as she produced from behind her the most wicked looking of knives with a short curved blade.

“Do not be too alarmed, my English servant,” she chuckled. “Your Malkin does not intend taking your manhood in its entirety.”

Tallis attempted to suck air into lungs suddenly starved of the life-giver.

“You will be surprised to learn that it pleases your young Malkin to know your cock can still become hard when she is of a mind to release it. I have no intention of foregoing the pleasure I receive to hear you beg so pitifully to rub your once fancy-free penis against my leg as a reward for your obedience to me.”

“And then to watch the big proud Englishman tongue his own omissions from the leg of a young Indian girl who owns him and…”

Her eyes gazed into the distance and he prayed the knife was just a prop to frighten him further and that her true intention was to reward him in just the humiliating, if much desired, way she had mentioned.

It was not to be.

“I have no intention of depriving myself of such a pleasure.”

Air finally entered the Tallis lungs by way of a sigh.

Exhaling would take a little longer.

“But I will not have in my possession an English servant with balls. It is… It is simply too unfair to you to allow such an affront to both nature and your true situation with me to permit you to be looked upon as a… person… capable of procreation.”

Tallis tried to find words to beg but knew, even if his lungs could fill with air enough to allow him a voice, that he would be unable to utter them or persuade her from her intent if he could.

“You will remain very still because I have ordered you to do so,” she told him with complete confidence. “Also, I will not lie and say it will not be painful, because I am assured the physical discomfort is at least an equal match for the mental anguish. But I will take great care afterward to ensure that you do not bleed out.”

As he watched through eyes incapable of blinking, she eased his legs apart and knelt between them to take his scrotum in her hand, weighing his balls as if buying meat from a local merchant.

“My how full they are of all your virile English sperm. How could I in all conscious take you to my country tormented by such… blue… balls?”

Eyes dancing with merriment suddenly became deathly serious and Tallis watched as she brought the knife close to the pump-house that had fed the power-station of his sex for all his forty-something years.

“N-No!” he croaked, sheer and horrific terror overriding his inability to form words.

“Shush, my good boy,” she cooed down, actually trying to calm him. “It will soon be done and then you can be my very own tamed and obedient eunuch. Then I can take you back to the old country and you can show all my sisters the advantages to be had from owning one’s very own Englishman.”

“P-Please! Malkin!” he begged as he felt his scrotum tugged away from his body and the evil looking knife raised to strike.

The last picture he had of his life before he became a eunuch slave to an Indian girl who looked young enough to be his daughter and old enough to be the focus of his unmitigated fear and loathing was her smile of pure sadistic satisfaction as she brought the blade flashing down and he screamed…

“Nooooooooooooooooooooo!”

*****

Thomas Tallis himself begin to thresh from side-to-side in a vain attempt to dislodge the hand upon his right shoulder.

“No, no, no…!” he heard himself scream until one hand was joined by another on his left side and he felt himself flung violently from one side to the other.

“It’s a dream, Tom,” shouted a familiar male voice. “You dropped off after your sandwich again and had a nightmare.”

Forehead drenched with a perspiration he knew was matched by the body beneath saturated clothing, Tallis stared at the concerned face of Jerry Burnside that filled his vision.

“You’re okay. You took a nap here in the rec and had a bad dream. That’s all.”

Unable to believe what he had just experienced had not been real, Tallis looked to either side of Burnside to see the familiar comfy chairs, tables, and accompanying detritus of the recreation room he had

taken to using when catching up on his sleep during the hour allowed for lunch.

A sense of relief, so great he almost pulled Burnside to him in a most embarrassing and uncharacteristic man-hug, made the Tallis eyes moist with gratitude for his deliverance. He recalled the shame of his treatment before his former colleagues and evil eyes of his tormentor as the blade in her hand slashed at…

“Sorry, Jerry,” he began, finally finding his voice together with an unspoken intent to seek professional help. Cynicism and the *other world* be damned, ran his thoughts. If this was where his own beliefs led him then he would take steps to ensure they were eradicated from his mind-set – or at least treated in a professional setting.

“Don’t worry about it, Tom,” Jerry Burnside told him, looking sincere in his concern as, for the first time that was *not* in a dream, Tallis regarded his boss without irritation and began to feel there was, perhaps, a man of substance behind the company-man, hail-fellow-well-met, persona. “Bound to happen. I mean, when’s the last occasion you spent some time away from this place? Small wonder you’re a bit stir-crazy.”

Tallis thought of all the annual leave he had stacked up and all the times he had foregone a break and taken the money for working instead.

Could something as simple as overwork and limited leisure-time be responsible for his problems of the last month or so?

“You know,” he offered with a feeling of optimism and lightness he hadn’t experienced before the onset of his dreams let alone during them, “I think you’re right.”

“Of course I’m right,” Burnside told him, still in a semi-crouched position before him that blocked the room behind Tallis from his view. “Consider yourself on a fortnight’s leave as of now.”

Tallis didn’t argue and, again uncharacteristically, was already thinking of likely locations for his break when his line-manager spoke again:

“Before you go though, I want you to meet the latest recruit to the team.”

A familiar and terrible scent was already filling the Tallis nostrils with a pungency both mildly flowery and dominatingly earthy, when Burnside rose to his full height and stood aside to reveal the company’s latest recruit.

“Good afternoon, Thomas Tallis,” uttered the all-too familiar and only too terrifying accented tones of Bahugandha Jayashankar as she was revealed to him in exactly the same clothing and posture in which he had last viewed her.

Aware that his cognizance was about to leave him, the last conscious thought of Thomas Tallis before he fainted was a most fervent prayer to *any* benevolent power who happened to be listening that he may *never* regain his senses again.

THE END