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MIRANDA



WEALED BY THE STRANGEST SLAVERY OF ALL, MIRANDA FLAUNTS HER BONDS!

HOM 5D

ADULTS ONLY

HIT 109

Miranda

Volume 1

by F. E. Campbell

Note: All the characters and events are fictitious. No resemblance to real persons is intended or should be inferred.

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“The naked nymphs upon the lawn were looked at by a startled fawn. But followed by a satyr…”
“Well, go on,” said Miranda helpfully.
“That’s as far as I got.” Persis admitted. “Poetry always sticks me at the second verse. Anyway, it’s quite apt. Don’t you think?”
Miranda let her gaze rove over the wide acres of grassland and the Lake to where the woods raised an enveloping wall against a prying world. Then turned her attention to her companion whose nudity was enhanced by her pose of kneeling on the grass whilst she pensively provoked her nipples with delicate fingertips. “Were naked enough, and there was a fawn at the end of the lake. Do you really want a satyr?”
“Of course! Places like this ought to abound in them.”
“Wouldn’t a virile young man do?”
Persis considered. “Not much difference really, is there? I wish he’d hurry up. I’ve got these things sticking out all ready.” Persis changed her mood and let her hands drop to her naked thighs. “I say, Miranda, wasn’t that old girl at the Lodge priceless: ‘Welcome to the ’aughty ’ome of Hingland, ducks…’ I nearly burst.”
“Just a displaced cockney. But anyway she let us in. Must say I’m a bit puzzled.”

“You gave her a quid, didn’t you!”
“Yes. But after all, if the Park’s closed it’s closed. I don’t see why we’d be privileged. I didn’t give her the money until after she’d said yes.”
Persis shrugged. “It’s beautiful. I don’t think I’ve ever seen anything more perfect. It’s right out of William Morris. There just has to be a satyr or two around somewhere. Can’t you feel leering eyes scorching your naked flesh?”
“William Morris would never have said a thing like that.”
“’Spose not. But it’s almost unreal. There’s so much of it. Whoever planned it created a sort of kingdom within that ring of trees. You could get lost. And there’s an atmosphere… It’s as though a bit fell off Mount Olympus. Or we found a doorway to Camelot. Or a path to Lyonesse… I believe the old crone—our Cockney Crone, that is—was telling the truth. We are absolutely alone.”
“Just as well! Considering we haven’t got a stitch on.”
“Don’t pretend it wasn’t a delectable idea! You know you’re loving it.”
Miranda wrinkled her nose in an amused grimace. “I’ll admit it. I do love it. I even wish there was a satyr to watch. Seems a pity that a couple of such toothsome nymphs as us should flit upon the greensward unappreciated. It was a wonderful idea that we should disport ourselves round the Lake sans clothes. But now we are round the other side those two little piles of garments begin to seem a long way off.”
“That’s the whole idea, silly! This way we are really truly naked. We become a part of the scene. If we could reach

out and pick up a bra it just wouldn't be authentic."
"Suppose a man walked out of those trees?"
Persis giggled. "Wishful thinking, darling? Anyway, I bet we could run faster than he could—if we wanted to of course…" She ran her hands caressingly up and down her flanks. "I feel delicious. Come on, I'll race you to the big rock."
As with most things between them the race was a tie. "It's a glorious feeling." Miranda acknowledged, panting, as they continued their walk. "I've never been naked in quite this way before. It does something… or perhaps it's this place. I think if I stayed here too long I'd do something outrageous."
"Like what?"
"I don't know. Probably I wouldn't do it at all. But the outrageous thing would just happen. It's a magic place. I'm so glad we came."
"You mean there'd be dragons. And knights on white stallions?"
"Sort of. But other things too. As though we go back in time. Can't you feel it? A sort of brooding. As though the whole place had been waiting a long, long time for this moment…"
Persis was not a thinker. She feigned a shudder. "Scary, scary! See, I told you: Just take our clothes off and walk round the Lake, I said. And already you've walked yourself into another age. Being naked really does things to you. How about a couple of Druids?"
"They'd sacrifice us."

“But under the mistletoe, darling!”
“Oh, I’m quite sure you’d manage to walk off into the bushes with one of them.” Said Miranda tartly, “Leaving me stretched out on the stone slab with a knife hovering.”
“You make yourself sound like a codfish in a fishmonger’s.” Persis ran on ahead. Then pirouetted gracefully and struck a pose. “I’m beautiful, arn’t I? Tell me I am.”
“Of course you’re beautiful! You are so beautiful you belong here.” Miranda assured her. Then, struck by some unaccountable dolor: “I wish girls never grew old…”
"This place has really got to you.” Persis said as she gaily continued her gambols. Then, shrewdly: “You’d like to stay here to make it come true, wouldn’t you? You know what would be really super! To do this by moonlight. I think I’d be a little afraid. But, you know, a nice afraid. I’d want you close.” Then, as though struck by a sudden thought: “Miranda! That old Cockney woman. She never mentioned closing time or when we should be out of here.”
“You’re thinking we may do our Moonlight Gavotte tonight whether we want to or not?” Miranda laughed.
“Well, not really. But doesn’t it strike you as a bit odd? I mean, that type love their bit of authority. They are usually full of admonitions. But she sort of gave us the key to the place—as though she was expecting us.”
“What you mean is she’s a wicked Witch, and we’re going to come to a sticky end.” Miranda uttered the words tauntingly. But was aware of a chill that owed nothing to her nudity. It was indeed strange. They had been made free of this vast and beautiful place in which the old woman had

assured them they would be utterly alone. It had come naturally to them to shed their clothes and run naked in the sun. Such an act was in tune with the place. It had been good to be alone. But now, under the spur of their own imaginings she knew loneliness. For the first time nudity felt cold… “I’ll race you to our clothes.” She challenged, and leapt forward.

They reached the tree where they had left their things. It had been a long run. They were panting, their eyes bright. They stood transfixed. Their clothes were gone.

“It’s the wrong tree!” Said Persis. “It has to be.”

They both knew it was not the wrong tree. But circling the adjacent trunks gave them time to confront the unthinkable. At the end of their fruitless search they stood together feeling more naked than they had ever done in their lives.

“Now I know how Adam and Eve felt after that Do with the serpent.” Persis ventured.

“Look! Don’t let’s make jokes just to prove we’re heroic.” Miranda ordered firmly. “I think we’re in trouble.”

“Couldn’t it have been kids?”

“Have you seen or heard any?” Miranda asked caustically.

Persis considered. “Our car’s outside the Gate. We can get back to the Lodge without being seen. Surely the old girl will lend us a blanket so we can cross the road. It’s not so bad.”

“Not seen?” Miranda queried. “Whoever took our clothes saw us.”

“Alright then. If that’s so they are probably watching us now. We can’t hide because we don’t know what we are

hiding from. I vote we walk back to the Lodge just as though nothing has happened. We've got nothing to lose." She giggled nervously, "Not even a stitch." Then with a small quaver in her voice, "Miranda, I'm scared!"

"So am I. But we won't get panicky. There's just a chance that there's nothing sinister, about this someone's idea of a joke. Our stuff may even be waiting at the Lodge for us. So come on then, let's step out."

Miranda was angry with herself. She cherished a protective instinct toward the more volatile Persis. She should have had more sense than to allow this predicament to come about. True, it had been Persis's idea, but she had found it enchanting. It was the atmosphere of this place. An atmosphere in which there was now menace.

Viewed from a rational standpoint their situation was alarming. Naked in a strange place. An undefined presence somewhere in the bushes or the trees, perhaps stalking them. Holding their stolen possessions. Fearfully she thrust the thoughts away. If she dwelt on them she might start to run. She did quicken their pace but kept it short of evident flight.

"I say, Miranda! Do you notice something?" Persis's voice was uncertain.

"What?" Miranda regretted the sharpness of the single word.

"That old shed over there. We saw it on the way up. It's probably a toolshed. The door's open…"

The door had been shut previously. Miranda remembered. They had assumed the place locked and disused.

Was there significance in an open door! Perhaps the wind… But there was no wind! An obvious thought presented itself. “Let’s go and look.” She suggested. “There might be something we could use. Even an old sack…”

“Soften the blow a bit when we get to the Lodge.” Persis agreed. “Come on, I’ll race you.”

The interior was gloomy. A couple of small high windows were too dirty to provide much light. Rusty tools and a wheelbarrow were the only furnishings. But, set with obvious intent in the center of the dirt floor was a sight that evoked a squeal of delight from Persis and sent Miranda’s heart into a flutter of thankfulness. Someone had spread a piece of sacking and neatly placed upon it their clothes and handbags.

In unison the two girls pounced. Miranda could recall no moment in her life when she had been so happy at the prospect of donning clothes. Her fears of a few moments past now seemed absurd. Someone had played a joke that was all. But this reassurance was short lived. In the act of reaching for their first garment both girls were stricken tense by an authoritative voice behind them. “Just a moment, young ladies.” Turning, startled and horrified, they saw that escape was blocked. The doorway was filled by the bulky figure of a uniformed constable.

Even Persis found nothing to say. The best that Miranda could manage after a moment’s confusion was: “We are just going to dress, Officer.”

“Oh no you’re not! Stand just as you are. Don’t move.”

So startling was the apparition and its stern admonition

that both girls stood as though petrified. They failed to make even those feminine gestures of concealment natural to their condition. Thinking of it afterwards Miranda cursed the reverence for the uniform and the law it represented which inhibited flight or resistance. Instead, she watched as though hypnotized, as the policeman stepped within the building, closed the door behind him, locked it and pocketed the key. Then advanced toward them in the dim light, carrying something in his hands that she could not identify. Numbed by the impact of too much happening too fast, she felt her wrist lifted. There was a snap followed by another. It happened so swiftly and was done with such dexterity that she stared stupidly for several moments before the full realization sunk in her right wrist was chained to Persis' left by the tight grip of a pair of handcuffs.

"I say! You can't do that!" Exclaimed Persis indignantly.

"I done it, Miss." Said the minion of the Law complacently.

Returning to the door he opened it letting in much needed light. Miranda observed that he was truly a large man. A bit on the heavy side. They might have outrun him had they been given the chance. But they had walked into a neat trap. Linked as they were resistance would be ineffectual.

Persis shook her locked hand angrily. "Take this absurd thing off!" She demanded imperiously.

"Can't do that, Miss. If I did then one of you could run in one direction and the other the opposite, and where 'ud I be." The constable pointed out reasonably.

“At least let us put our clothes on.”
“Can’t do that neither. Them’s evidence, them clothes is.” As if to prove his point the policeman bent and gathered the sacking together and tied the four corners. His two prisoners wanly watched their much desired coverings disappear into this unsightly bundle.
“You surely don’t intend to take us into the village naked like this?” Miranda protested.
“Ain’t a takin’ ’ee into the Village, Miss. Leastwise, not right off I ain’t. Fust off we be a going to see Miss Hillary.”
“Who’s Miss Hillary?”
“Just as I suspected! Trespassing, you was. Don’t even know the owner’s name. Miss Hillary may want to press charges. So first off we goes up to the big house. Nice lady she is, Miss Hillary. But don’t stand no nonsense. She may say to me: ‘Hackett, we’ll let the young ladies go with a caution.’ If that’s what she says then I’ll let ’ee go I will. Indecent exposure and all! Terrible down on such goin’ on, our magistrate is. Cost ’ee a pretty penny, or maybe thirty days.”
“You mean you are going to parade us into somebody’s house just as we are?” Miranda asked incredulously.
“That I be, Miss. And lucky you are it’s no worse.”
“But this is nonsense! What are you charging us with?”
“You should know this, Miss. Indecent exposure to begin with. Never seen such going’s on I haven’t. Then there’s trespassing. I expect we could add loitering with intent. You young people are a proper caution—think you can do anything you like. Not here, you can’t.”

“We arn’t trespassing. The woman at the Lodge let us in. She said it would be alright. I gave her money.”
“Ah!” Said the constable ominously. “That’s your story! Money, you say. Don’t like the sound of it!”
“I should think we could get you in a bit of trouble keeping us naked like this! Surely no magistrate would approve of such a thing.” Persis affirmed hotly.
“It was you what took them clothes off, not me. Right brazen you was about it too.” The constable pointed out equably.
“Please take these handcuffs off.” Miranda tried hard to keep her voice quietly reasonable. “We’re not criminals. I promise we won’t run away. We’ll go up to the House with you if that’s what you want.”
“I’d look a right Charlie if you did run though, wouldn’t I! No. It’s best this way. Wearing them cuffs won’t hurt you none if you don’t struggle. Best for both of us.”
“But it’s so shameful…!”
“Didn’t feel no shame, did you—running around the Park starkers! You ain’t the first to wear a cuff. I’d advise you to stop complaining. Think you’re Lady Muck, don’t you. Come along now. Let’s get this over with.”
Hackett hoisted their pathetic bundle under one arm and led the way from the tool shed. The two girls followed miserably. Coming into the sunlight once more they felt now doubly naked. A mantle of shame had indeed fallen upon them. Gone was that joyous freedom of their gambol around the Lake. The woodland nymphs had disappeared. Their place had been taken by two very bare and appre-

hensive young women. But even their soiled nudity seemed easier to endure than the hateful metal that clasped their wrist so tightly and joined them with its single link that clinked constantly with every move they made so that they would never be unaware of being chained.

The rapid transition from carefree gaiety to their present humiliating, almost criminal, condition left Miranda's mind in a turmoil. Meeting Persis' stricken eyes she knew her companion to be in no better state. Persis looked down at the bond that held them together. She shook her wrist as though to dislodge some distasteful visitation. Her face wrinkled in disgust. Ineffectually she grimaced at the constable's stolid back. But there was no humor in what she did. Miranda knew her fellow captive was scared.

The constable marched at a steady gait. He rarely glanced back at them. No doubt the metallic sound of their tether satisfied him that they were meekly following. Miranda considered flight. They could turn and run. But where! Would the woman at the Lodge open the gate for them when she saw the handcuffs. Even though they might outrun him the constable would not be far behind. There would be no time for explanations or importunities. If they sought escape in another direction they would be trapped by the great wall that surrounded the Park. Given time they might surmount it. But naked, chained together, with Hackett in hot pursuit... It could only end in ignominy. She abandoned the thought. Knowing that Persis must be examining the same possibility she shook her head in negation as their questioning eyes met.

Yet Miranda's consciousness was nagged by unease. Not from their predicament as such—that was bad enough! But there was something wrong. She felt again as she had done when they found their clothes gone. There was a strangeness about this whole vast beautiful place and all that had happened to them since they first approached its main gate. Hackett was part of this strangeness. True he was a very ordinary type. He was duplicated endlessly across England. He was polite. But why his insistence on keeping them naked. Such an insistence was not in character. One might suppose it sprung from some streak of sadism or salaciousness were it not for the fact that he rarely glanced at them. Even when face to face he had not ogled them in the way that most men would have found hard to avoid. She found within herself no compelling urge to cover whatever she could of herself with her hands. Even with the use of both hands there is little a girl could do in this regard. Robbed of one, as they were, any effort at concealment could only be ludicrous. But, even so, the constable's total lack of curiosity largely negated this normal instinct. But she shrank from the ordeal of entering a strange house. She could envisage no way of carrying off such an ordeal with nonchalance.

And who was Miss Hillary! Why must they be paraded naked before her! Perhaps she was the local magistrate. Or sat on the Bench with others of the local Gentry. But even this was odd. If indeed they were guilty of some delinquency—and Miranda began to feel uncomfortably certain that 'Indecent Exposure' probably did have some

criminal connotation—surely Hackett should have taken them to the local police Station. She was uncertain just how County machinery worked in such matters. There was, of course, the hope that the woman they were being taken to would make light of the matter and see it in its proper perspective. But if she was a type sufficiently sophisticated to take a liberal view why would this local policeman bother. Perhaps he received some small reward for keeping an eye on the property and wished to justify it.

Even as she considered these various possibilities Miranda conceded that one could rationalize almost anything. But the stark reality remained: she was naked, she was chained, she was following a uniformed policeman to some quite uncertain destination where her fate could vary from the hilarious to the tragic. Her only comfort were the small tugs that Persis kept giving to the chain that joined them. She reached for and found her fellow prisoner's hand. It was good to know that she was not alone.

The House came into view quite suddenly. Rounding a small copse they were confronted by a stretch of immaculate lawn, numerous foot paths, a graveled Drive. At the end there stood a quite substantial mansion. Not one of the Stately Homes of England, Miranda recognized, but still impressive. Old stone. Ivy on the walls, mellowed with time. But in perfect repair. It spoke of money.

They crossed the considerable area of close cropped grass in what seemed to the shrinking girls but a few moments. They had no relish for what awaited them at the end of it. Reaching the broad steps, Hackett motioned for them to

precede him. He was taking no chances of them making a sudden last ditch dash for freedom. Obviously he could correctly gauge their state of mind at that moment. He rang the bell.

Miranda's worst fears were realized. The door was opened by a butler whose attire and grooming was as immaculate as had been the lawn and the flower beds. The confrontation caused her one free hand to instinctively seek to cover her most obvious femininity. By an effort of will she drew it back and let it hang by her side. She would not cower or be coy. With satisfaction she sensed that Persis had followed exactly the same motions.

For one brief moment the manservant's impassive features surveyed them in what, in other less controlled faces, might have been astonishment. His gaze then took on that same impersonal quality that Hackett's had done. With the same strangeness that clung to everything about the place it now appeared that neither the policeman or the butler had any need for words. With a polite inclination of the head the major-domo opened the great door wide whilst Hackett briskly shepherded his charges inside. They were led, still in silence, through spacious hallways to where their guide knocked firmly at a door, threw it open, and announced in a voice that Miranda felt sure contained some small hint of sarcasm: "Constable Hackett and friends, Madam."

Nothing is ever as you expect. Miranda knew this. She had pictured Miss Hillary as a hawk faced spinster of seventy. But she was unprepared for the girl who faced them

brightly from across a desk on the far side of the room. A girl little older than themselves. She might be twenty-five. A girl who rose smiling, nodded to the butler who soundlessly withdrew. A girl who, like the others, seemed oblivious to their nudity and greeted them in a warm and friendly voice: “My dears, how good to see you. What a pleasant surprise.” She turned to the policeman. “Really, Hackett, you’re remarkable. I don’t know how you manage it. I think you can feel quite sure that we will be very pleased indeed.” She advanced, holding out her hand. Hackett placed in it a small object that Miranda intuitively knew was the key to their handcuffs. Beaming with satisfaction he placed the ugly bundle of their clothes on a chair and said cheerfully: “It’s been a real pleasure, Miss, I’m sure.” Then, smiling broadly, he too left the room and closed the door.

There was no pause, no awkwardness. The smiling Miss Hillary examined them with frank appraisal and even gave a small nod of approval. Placing two chairs before her desk, she motioned them to sit down and, herself, resumed her seat. “That man is a treasure.” She exclaimed warmly. “He handles things so well I don’t know what we’d do without him.”

Miranda had a feeling of being managed. This misadventure was becoming more and more strange. “Perhaps you’d be good enough to remove these handcuffs?” She suggested firmly.

It was as though she had not spoken. Miss Hillary ignored birthdays request as though it had not been made. With

smiling curiosity she insisted: “You really must tell me how you come to be here, and why your clothes are wrapped up in that awful bit of sacking. I don’t mind a bit, you know. In fact it saves trouble. But I’m curious? Care to smoke?”

Miranda shook her head. There seemed nothing for it but to sit as directed. She and Persis arranged the chairs in a proximity to allow for their chained wrists. Miss Hillary lit a cigarette and blew a quite perfect smoke ring.

“I suppose we were trespassing.” Said Persis doubtfully.

“That’s understood, isn’t it.” Miss Hillary agreed brightly. “It’s amazing how many Hackett picks up for trespassing. It’s the Park, you know. It attracts the best types. The others go to Woburn Abbey. But I’m curious about the nudity? Delightful, of course! And I can assure you quite original! But why…?”

“It was that sort of a day, and it was that sort of a Place, and we thought we were all alone, and it seemed a really super idea—at the time…” Persis tumbled the words out as though feeling responsibility.

The girl at the desk laughed with genuine pleasure. “I know just what you mean. The Park does have that effect on certain days. I’ve felt it. So have others. We don’t all respond by shedding our clothes. But probably if I’d been with you I might have done the same.”

She looked at them speculatively, “You do have lovely bodies, you know! It makes a difference.”

“Is that man really a policeman?” Miranda suddenly felt doubt.

“Oh absolutely! He’s stationed in the village. But, tell me,

how did he catch you?"
"He stole our clothes." Stated Miranda indignantly. "Then when we looked for them in the tool shed he closed the door on us."
Miss Hillary's laughter was genuine. "That's priceless! There's more to Hackett than meets the eye."
"Then he put these handcuffs on us, and refused to let us dress."
"Don't be too hard on him. Saved a lot of trouble, actually."
Again Miranda was aware of something wrong. It was hard to put a finger on it. But it was there. She determined to end the suspense. She looked Miss Hillary squarely in the eye and demanded: "I want these things taken off our wrists at once, and I want us to be allowed to dress: In fact I demand it!"
The girl across the desk made no response. But idly blew another smoke ring and watched it fade so that Miranda's angry glare was lost.
"Are we under arrest?" Persis was angry too.
"I suppose we could say that. Yes, it's as good a word as any."
"Let's get it over with then!" Miranda insisted. "I'll agree we have been foolish. I suppose we'll be fined. Probably have to spend the night in the lock-up since we haven't money with us for bail. So, please, take this horrible thing off our wrists, let us dress, make whatever charges you feel you must. Then let Hackett take us to the village in a civilized fashion. Surely we have been humiliated enough?"

“Hackett’s already gone. He won’t be back.”
Miranda felt her first pang of real fear. “What are we doing here?” She demanded. “Are you just amusing yourself, making us pay for our trespass? It’s the woman at the Lodge you should blame. She let us in and said it would be O.K. We even gave her money.”
“A whole pound, wasn’t it? Very generous.” Miss Hillary sounded amused.
“How did you know?” Asked Persis, startled.
“No magic. Just the phone.”
“But why would she tell you?” Miranda knew, now, they were being played with. She found herself hoping desperately that they were the victims of nothing more than cruel humor. But she was afraid. She knew that Persis was afraid. “This is some sort of trap, isn’t it! But why?”
Miss Hillary was quite charming and quite lovely. She gave the two girls her full attention and the full force of her personality. She smiled apologetically and her hands gave a small gesture of distress. She sighed as though genuinely weary. “Please bear with me,” she pleaded. “I am going to try to explain…” She touched a button on her desk. “I am going to order Tea. I am going to have to do a great deal of talking, and you are going to have to do a great deal of listening. I think a cup of tea and a cucumber sandwich will help.”
Miranda found it hard to assess the woman who responded to the bell. In her thirties perhaps. An athletic type. Dressed simply, almost severely. Her features as impassive as the butler’s. It was a strong face that might have been beautiful

had its owner wished.
Miss Hillary gestured to the sacking. “Their clothes are in that bundle, Rhoda. Make sure they are on their way immediately. And, please, send Rosalie up with Tea something nice for the three of us. I’m sure our guests are hungry.”
With no more than a brief nod Rhoda picked up the bundle and departed. Miranda watched the disappearance of their possessions with dismay. “Those are our clothes.” She protested. “What do you mean, send them on their way?”
“You won’t need them any more.” Miss Hillary said calmly.
Both girls tensed. But a raised hand halted their verbal outburst. “I asked you to bear with me. Do so. You must let me deal with this in my own way. In fact, you have no choice. Or do you think you have a choice…?” Her eyes examined them alertly.
Did they have a choice! Miranda considered the question. They could make a good deal of fuss and commotion. But they could not effectually either fight or run. Being naked disarmed you and made you vulnerable. The handcuffs robbed them of real freedom of action. Perhaps it might be best and wisest to simply sit and listen.
“Alright!” Persis said vehemently. “You’ve got us! There has to be something offbeat about this whole business. What is it?”
Any answer that might have been forthcoming died with the opening of the door. A girl propelled a Tea Trolley across the carpet. Persis and Miranda gasped in amazement. The newcomer was almost as naked as themselves. She wore the barest parody of a Maid’s uniform. An ab-

surdly brief frilled apron failed to cover her loins but was fastened by an exaggerated bow at the small of her back. Her black hair was crowned by an equally brief bit of white lace. Black nylons were held above her knees by rosetted garters. Shining black shoes completed the total of her habiliment. But it wasn't this provocative costume, or lack of it, on which the girl's fascinated gaze finally rested. The eye catching piece de resistance of the ensemble was a silver chain that linked her ankles and which made a pleasant clinking as she went briskly about her task. It was cunningly held at each ankle by a metal band that served the dual purpose of a buckle for the shoe and an anklet for the hobble.

The chain was long enough to allow movement, but short enough to inhibit flight. The Maid was evidently used to it. She took the restricted steps easily and even gracefully, as from long practice. Like all others in this house she had no need of speech, but performed her task quietly, efficiently and with dispatch. She placed the trolley, moved chairs and, without being asked, provided small tables at the free hand of each of the guests, as though it was to be expected that young ladies visiting of an afternoon would be naked and handcuffed together. Throughout these activities she kept her head bowed or averted so that neither Persis or Miranda could catch her eye or examine her quite lovely features. When she turned and left the room the girls were subjected to another vivid shock that caused Persis to burst into indignant protest:

"That girl's been whipped! There's marks all over her!"

“Rosalie has been most difficult at times.” Admitted Miss Hillary as though apologizing for the weather. “Milk and sugar…?” Her voice made it clear that the unmentionable should not be mentioned further.

Having set her stage Miss Hillary, in effect, made her entrance. A sandwich, a few sips of tea, then her full attention directed to her guests. “I’m going to suggest we use Christian names.” She said brightly. “Mine is Patricia. You will call me Pat. You are Miranda and you are Persis.” She nodded to each correctly. “Delightful names.”

“How did you know them?” asked Miranda, puzzled.

“Rhoda searched your handbags. She sent a note on the tea tray.”

“Of all the bloody cheek!” Persis exclaimed. “Where do you get the idea—”

Again the raised hand. It stopped the verbal flood. “You really must let me explain in my own way.” It was almost a command even though the face was smiling. “I know this has been very, very trying for you. I am sure you have sensed that something is—what word shall we choose? Wrong… Odd? Perhaps a bit fishy…! Certainly suspect.”

“We could talk so much better and enjoy our Tea more if only you’d let us dress.” Miranda pleaded.

“You do keep returning to the heart of the matter, don’t you! I suppose I might as well tell you now that it is quite possible you will never wear clothes again. They are quite superfluous in the condition you are about to enter.”

The bland statement sent Miranda’s mind into turmoil. Surely it must be too absurd to give full credence to the

implication! There had to be some sort of bad joke mixed in this somewhere. Suddenly her recollection centered on the maid. The possibility was so shocking that her question was almost involuntary.

"You surely don't think we are going to be pretty little maids in silly little costumes with our feet chained together, do you?"

"Are you white slavers, or something?" Persis demanded.

Patricia grinned placatingly. Looking at her, the inconsequential thought struck Miranda that she was the type that her mother would have described as "A nice girl". Not the sort to associate with kidnapping, and worse!

"I've always been amused about white slavery." Patricia conceded. "So quaintly Victorian! But, honestly, I have considered lately that it probably fits us much more neatly than those types the term was coined for."

"What you're trying to say is that we have been kidnapped?" Persis sounded belligerent.

Pat turned all her charm toward the younger girl. "Just to render them outbursts of your's unnecessary, love, I'll give you the last news first. You have probably pretty well guessed it anyway. Yes, you have been kidnapped." She chuckled amusedly. "I could almost say you kidnapped yourselves, you know. But that's beside the point. I keep trying to explain... But now I'll tell you bluntly. You are slaves, you are owned. You have lost your freedom."

In a flash Persis was on her feet. "That's enough of this nonsense!" She declared. "I'm off! What do you take us for...?"

Impelled by their tether, Miranda followed. She felt little hope. But action was stimulating. If only they could reach the outdoors! Persis tugged and twisted at the door handle. Then turned a stricken face. “It won’t open.” Miranda tried. But there was no escape there. They turned to the windows. They were French panels leading to a balcony. They were locked. Open transoms above were too high and too small. The captives looked at each other hopelessly. Pathetically they returned to their chairs.

“Just as well to get that over.” Patricia assured them cheerfully. “I know just how you feel. Have another sandwich and some more tea.”

Feeling supremely foolish, Miranda accepted the offering. Even Tea was difficult with only one hand. Escape receded into the distance. Turning to her panting companion she suggested: “Keep quiet, Persis. Let’s hear whatever bad news we have to. Then take it from there.

“Sensible girl!” Patricia approved. “You’re probably hungry. So eat while I dive in. Making you understand what I have to make you understand is not that easy a job.” Leaning back in her chair she lit another cigarette and smiled so winningly as to make her words almost seem out of context.

“Yes. You have been kidnapped. Yes. You are slaves even though you don’t understand or accept this yet. Yes, you have lost your freedom. No, you do not have even the faintest hope of escape. Now or ever.”

She paused for a moment to gauge their reaction. Finding only mute hostility, she continued.

“My biggest problem in explaining what has happened to you is to get you to believe me and to persuade you to accept reality. In your present state of mind all I say will seem too unreal; quite improbable, even impossible. Somewhere in your minds there will cling the hope that it is all a bad joke. That in a little while there will be laughing apologies and we will all part good friends.”

“You seem to be forgetting the police.” Said Miranda with secure conviction.

“Actually I’m not. Hackett works for us. Yes, yes, he is a bona fide police constable. Quite a good one, I believe. But we have an arrangement with him that works well for both of us. Policemen are not highly paid.”

“You mean he’s a crook?” Persis sounded incredulous.

“Yes. Dishonest people are easy to deal with. You know where you stand with them. So one of the first things you must do is forget about Hackett as a possible source of rescue. Let us call it step one.”

“But two people like us can’t just disappear.” Miranda pointed out. “There is bound to be a hue and cry.”

“You won’t disappear, duckies. At least not in the way you are thinking of. At this moment your car is being driven to a distant place. Later today it will be found nearly submerged in a river. One of your handbags will be scattered on the bank, the other inside the vehicle. Bits of your clothing will wash up on the bank downstream. Your bodies won’t be found. But the river runs into an estuary so the tragedy will be accepted at face value. I’ll show you the newspapers when there’s an account of it. You see, it’s very

necessary to us, and in a way it's necessary to you too, that you realize as soon as possible that your old identities are gone, and you should face your new ones. To this end I want you to ask questions now about your disappearance so that I can kill any hopes you may cherish."

It was preposterous! Miranda looked at the girl across the desk and could not believe a word of it. But that was what Patricia had said—the difficulty of making them understand. Questions! She surveyed the premise that had been laid before them but could find no weaknesses. Was it really that easy...!

"Someone will have seen our car at the Lodge." Persis said.

"Both Hackett and the Lodgekeeper will testify that you stopped, inquired about the Park. But finding it shut continued on your way. You will have made reference to a Resort close to where your car will be found."

A silence fell. Each girl looked at the other questioningly.

"Shocks you a bit, doesn't it." Patricia said sympathetically. Miranda felt positive the sympathy was real. Not feigned. How strange!

"I mean the very simplicity of it." Patricia continued. "We never have any trouble. There's always some quite ordinary thing we can do—always far from here, of course. And, presto, the girl had gone as though she had never existed. Take Rosalie, for instance, she died in a collision at sea."

"You mean quite a lot of girls get lured into your Park, take their clothes off, and end up like this?" Miranda shook her cuffed wrist. Her voice still incredulous.

The older girl laughed. “Not quite like you two. They always end up naked. But always after this interview. Never before. You two delivered yourselves in prime condition. But it was just coincidence. We usually get them on the trespassing charge. It’s quite real and plausible. Hackett does it very well. He always handcuffs them right away before they have a chance to think. Handcuffs seem to demoralize a girl. After the first shock she may start to think that something’s a bit odd—I expect you did. But then it’s too late. They won’t risk the indignity of a struggle they know they can’t win. They walk in here hoping for the best. Sometimes it’s only a single. Other days we are lucky—like today. But naturally we have other sources. I won’t bore you with details.”

“I don’t suppose we have ever been less bored than now.” Miranda’s voice was icy. “I’m not sure whether to believe a word of it. But haven’t we about come to the sixty-four dollar question. What do you want us girls for? I can think of the obvious. But hadn’t you better tell us?”

Patricia nodded understandingly. “Of course. I was just trying to bring you to it in an ordered sequence. You have become merchandise. You will be sold.”

“To an African brothel, no doubt.” Miranda hoped she sounded contemptuously crushing.

Pat laughed and waved her hands in a gesture of helplessness. “You just won’t believe it, will you! Would it help you to grasp the idea if I tell you that we will certainly net at least twenty-five thousand pounds on each of you. You are well above the African brothel class.”

Miranda was afraid. She still found it hard to believe a word of what they had been told. But there began to appear a terrible plausibility. The metal round her wrist was a constant reminder of something her spirit refused to succumb to. “Please go on.” She said miserably. “We may as well hear it all.”

Patricia nodded approvingly. “Good! Have either of you ever heard of a Submissive?”

Miranda and Persis exchanged a puzzled look that was itself a question. Their interrogator grinned understandingly.

“No, I don’t suppose you have heard the term in quite the context in which we deal. A Submissive is a girl whose will is always subject to the will of others. She is not a moron. But is happy when her actions and thoughts are decided for her. She drifts until she finds direction. She is easily used. She obeys—”

“You’ve jolly well got another think coming if—”

Persis’s interjection was cut short by a raised hand. “Don’t jump to conclusions.” Patricia said placatingly. “No one would mistake you for a Submissive. There is an anomaly here that you have to understand. The stock in trade of this house is submissive girls. But we prefer not to recruit them. They are not the ideal material.”

“We are?” Miranda’s voice was bitter.

“I believe so. Let me explain. When you are trained you will be purchased by some wealthy man whose greatest desire is to totally possess as his personal property a female slave who will obey his every whim without question

and who will do this with every evidence of joy and adoration. You may be surprised to learn there are great numbers of such men all over the world. In fact I suspect it a wish inherent in most men." Pat smiled as at some recollection. "The poor little clerk has his dreams, too, as he goes back and forth on the Underground. But it is only the very rich who can make this dream come true. For them, money does not matter, I have told you that we should get at least twenty-five thousand each for you. But it could just as easily be fifty. If we train you successfully—and we will! And if the man has a feeling for you there is no limit. We have sold a girl for as high as one hundred thousand. I want you to consider that, with such sums at stake, no resistance you may choose to make is likely to prevail."

"If you bring a man near me I'll kick him where it hurts." Persis affirmed vehemently.

"The whole thing's too absurd. You must be joking." Miranda added her support. But felt it ineffectual.

Again Patricia nodded in understanding, as though following their reactions step by step. Her next words were like an icy hand: "Have you forgotten Rosalie?"

Miranda quailed inwardly. The maid! The marks of the whip! Was that what lay in store!

"You mean you—you… You brutalize us?" She asked.

"I don't like the word." Patricia said evenly. "There are a great many things we can do to you, some of them unbearably painful. We simply do as many of them as the case calls for. We have found surprising variations."

"Why don't you use your—so called Submissives. Why

bother with us?" Persis demanded.
"Because to be the perfect end product of our training a girl requires intelligence and spirit. Our training will break her will. But those qualities remain. Our clients value them."
The girl behind the desk paused, watching them as though considering her next words. Then continued:
"I want you to consider something. Except for the handcuffs you have been treated with courtesy. I might even say kindness. I have talked to you for some time but have not said a harsh word, made a demand or given you an order. Because of this rational approach you are still not sure whether to believe me or not. We could have taken a more direct course that by now would have reduced you to groveling on the rug abjectly promising anything we asked, but your minds filled with deceit. We have made a psychological study with our earlier merchandise. It showed us that time is the biggest factor in molding a slave. Mr. Benson insists on using the slower step by step method —"
"And who is Mr. Benson when he's at home?" Persis asked resentfully.
"Mr. Benson is our Director. A most likeable man. You may or may not meet him while you are with us—he has many interests. He perfected the technique we use. It is slow but efficacious. With you, for instance, we'll ensure that you always understand what is happening to you and why it is happening. You will never be allowed to lose sight of the ultimate goal. I know you cannot believe this now, but you

will eventually be sold to someone for whom you will be the ultimate in a pleasure slave: submissive, obedient, adoring, exotic. Skilled in the arts of pleasing a man… or a woman—"

"A woman!" The exclamation burst out of Miranda like a bullet.

"I'm afraid I overlooked that." Pat said demurely. "Yes, our clients are not all rich men. Some are rich women. You will be trained to please both."

"What if we don't want to!" Persis was still bellicose.

Patricia smiled at her. "Ducky, this is the hardest thing of all that I must ask you to believe. But when the time comes you will approach your slavery and your Master or your Mistress, as the case may be, with a pleasurable excitement."

"Some pot bellied old man, or a fat old cow!"

"They may treat you with great kindness if we have managed to train you properly. There have been cases where a slave has been resold and the girl been quite bereft by her change of owners."

"You mean that when you get through with us we may be bought and sold like cattle?" Miranda asked, horrified.

"Of course, dear. But such changes are not necessarily for the worse. Remember, you are a very valuable possession. You are not likely to be tossed into a damp dungeon to catch pneumonia."

"Just how is a slave housed?" Miranda felt annoyed with herself. But could not stifle curiosity.

Patricia chuckled. "I see you are thinking in terms of slave

pens and iron bars. I can't promise that you won't have either. But it's unlikely. You will probably enjoy great luxury —as long as you behave! But you are never going to be free. I think that's obvious, isn't it? In your stay with us there will always be a chain or a thong on you somewhere. It will be the same in your life as a slave. Having paid that much for you, and considering the confrontation with the law that would result if you escaped and went to the police, your owner would be foolish to take chances."

"The whole thing's too barbaric to be possible!"

Miranda affirmed flatly. "You can't possibly get away with it—if you ever have. Unlock these handcuffs and let us go home."

For answer Patricia pressed the button on her desk. "As I explained," She said gently. "We take you step by step. It is best, now, that you understand I am not joking. I suggest you quietly accept what is about to happen. Fight if you wish. But it would be pointless—especially since you are not going to be hurt."

Rhoda entered. Miranda and Persis fixed their eyes incredulously on the chains she carried. Receiving a nod of affirmation from her Mistress, Rhoda knelt and lifted Persis' ankle.

As though touched by a snake the younger girl swirled to her feet and, forgetting the handcuff, leaped back pulling Miranda and her chair tumbling to the floor. In an undignified scramble Miranda managed to get to her feet so that she could stand with Persis at bay, glowering at the woman and her fetters.

Rhoda and Patricia said no word. Both smiled quietly as though tolerant of childish tantrums.
“You don’t think I’m going to let you lock those things on my ankles, do you?” Persis was outraged.
“Yes,” Patricia said.
The handcuffed girls looked at each other in bewilderment. They could not leave the room. Each had only one hand to use.
“Come near me and I’ll kick you,” Persis warned.
“Would you like me to ring for help? Male help, of course…?” Patricia’s voice was bland and unruffled.
Again, the captives sought an answer in each other’s eyes. There was none. No one moved. Persis was panting with anger and fear. Rhoda stood carelessly watching them as though prepared to wait all night. Possibilities flashed through Miranda’s mind: none of them practical. She had never felt so helpless or so abandoned. Passionately she longed to protect Persis. But how! Miserably she found herself understanding some things Patricia had said. What could two naked girls chained wrist to wrist accomplish. Even if nothing more was done to them they could not leave this room. Or the House. Or the Park. Obviously their captors would not long accept this stalemate. She did not relish being manhandled by that butler or some, even less savory, male. It was as though Rhoda’s entry with the beastly things she carried had been the clanging of the Prison door. It marked the first knowledge of a point of no return.
“Damn you!” Miranda said savagely. Then held out her

foot.

Every eye was on Rhoda. She did not hurry. But knelt negligently and fitted the metal anklet. Miranda winced inwardly as it was clasped snugly shut. There was a click that sounded wickedly final. Miranda placed the foot back on the floor and proffered the other one and watched as it was served in similar fashion. Standing, she felt her tendons stiffen against the metal bands. They were tight. The heavy chain that linked them was not long. She would be able to walk. But it would be a hobbled step. She knew that this fresh confinement rendered her even more helpless than did the handcuff on one wrist. She could neither fight or run with her ankles so closely joined. Yet Patricia had been right. The metal bands held her firmly but they did not hurt.

She turned. Persis looked at her beseechingly. Then, with a shrug of resignation, offered herself as Miranda had done and watched with miserable fascination as her feet were chained together. Patricia, grinning widely, tossed a key to Rhoda who then unlocked the hated handcuff. Thankfully each girl rubbed their chafed wrist. Rhoda left as quietly as she had come.

“That’s what you wanted,” said Pat cheerfully. “Fair exchange.”

Miranda knew it was not a fair exchange. She took a tentative step. The chain joining her ankles told her very clearly that she was more impotent than before.

“Walk around,” Patricia suggested. “Get used to them. You’ll wear something like them most of the rest of your lives.

You'll find you can walk quite passably once you get the hang of it. They are an excellent compromise. We use them a lot on you girls. The beauty of them is that they leave the rest of you completely free."

Feeling angry at being so much under the control of this self possessed young woman Miranda, nonetheless, did as she was bid. A single stumbling turn around the room convinced her that freedom was gone. Regardless of the truth of what they had been told it was quite certain they could move only as Patricia directed. A threshold had been crossed.

"The beauty of Mr. Benson's treatment is that it leaves you intact as a person." Patricia continued equably. "He believes this essential. So do I. Delivered intact to your eventual owner you will fetch a far higher price than some abject broken creature trembling in fear because she does not understand what has happened to her or appreciate the possibilities of her situation. Our clients are satiated with drabs. But they find a fresh excitement in the glorious creatures we will make of you."

Patricia lit another cigarette. Once more Miranda and Persis refused the proffered pack. They sat down again. There seemed nothing else to do. Their interlocutor resumed:

"I have had your ankles chained as an example. You could have fought. We could have used force. But reason dictated your act of submission. It was your first acknowledgement of slavery.

"I would like to be able to tell you that we could shepherd you through all of your training to the ultimate day of your

sale by such painless sweet reason. I am quite sure that there flits through your minds at this moment expediencies by which you hope to assure us of your co-operation, whilst at the same time reserving within your minds the determination to re-assert your wills and to escape or to betray us at the first opportunity. It is this reservation deep within you that we must eradicate. We must mutate your egos so that they flourish under different stimuli. Regrettably the only exorcist is pain. We use it.

"Mr. Benson is firm in his aversion to the short cut. What you call brutalizing. I will admit that with some girls it is insidiously tempting. One tires of heroics. After a while one has heard all the noble protestations. You weary of them. But our job is patience. Mr. Benson does not limit us to time. There has never been a girl on whom perseverance has failed. You saw Rosalie. She is in her second month. She progresses. But in some ways remains intractable. Hence the marks you noticed."

Patricia rose and stood before Persis, a yard distant. Casually she extended a nylon clad leg. "Kneel and kiss my shoe." She ordered without emphasis.

Both girls flinched. Persis's anger was instant. "You know what you can do with that shoe, don't you!" she retorted hotly.

Patricia sighed. "Would you do it if I said please?"

For answer Persis slapped the older girl resoundingly on the cheek.

For moments the three girls stood motionless. Then, as though genuinely weary, Patricia resumed her seat behind

the desk and pressed the button. “A very conventional response,” she said without emotion.
Persis struggled ineffectually. Rhoda handled her with ease.
“Use your own judgement.” Patricia directed. “But a minimum of ten.”
There was silence. Miranda angrily wanted to protest but was conscious of demeaning heroics.
“You engineered her into doing that!” she accused.
“Of course. It is desirable that we make some sort of start today. I want you to have an experience to debate and gain some perspective from. Persis exercises the least control over her temper so I have started with her.”
“What are you doing with her?”
Patricia shrugged and waved a hand airily. “She is receiving not less than ten hard strokes with a cane on that pert little naked bottom of hers. It will hurt her atrociously. It will also be quite a shock to the whole structure of her attitudes. I expect she will return to us in tears.”
It was about what Miranda had feared. Miserably she made an effort to which she was compelled.
“Persis is younger than I am, and I don’t think she is quite as tough as she thinks she is. I think I’m stronger. Please do what you have to do to me instead of to her.” She looked at Patricia pleadingly.
“You had to say that,” Pat agreed. “I’m quite sure you glimpse the possibility that we could achieve our purpose with you both by alternately threatening to punish one or the other of you. Each of you could respond nobly by a promise of obedience and submission if the other was for-

given. If all we wanted was some sort of promise from you it would work. But it's quite useless when what we have to do is mould you into a new entity. That can't be done by proxy. Sorry!"

Miranda tried to sort it all out, but too much had happened, too rapidly. She did not want to meekly accept all that Patricia had said. But there was enough of it that began to seem plausible to make her desperately afraid. Patricia herself remained an unanswered enigma.

"But I don't understand you—I mean you as a person!" she said bewildered. "You seem — well… nice. Yet here you are managing a business that's just too awful for words. If you were caught you'd all go to prison for life."

"You do manage to put your finger on the nub, don't you, ducky." Patricia acknowledged. "All business is for money. This is. I want money. I have become mentally adjusted to what we do here for a living. It becomes rational. There is a demand for a commodity. We supply it. Efficiently. You cannot believe me now, but I can assure you that after you have been with us for some time you will begin to understand and to rationalize your situation. As for going to prison…" Patricia shrugged indifferently. "I never think of it. Actually it's most improbable. It could only come about by one of you escaping. Both ourselves and your eventual owner will make sure this does not happen. It is important to you and to me that you keep this knowledge in the forefront of your mind. We dare not let you escape! So you never will! Once this fact has seeped into your full awareness you will be much happier in your future than you

now deem possible."

Miranda turned at the opening of the door. Rhoda closed it and stood with her back to it. A sobbing Persis looked at them, stricken. She was dabbing with trembling fingers at tear stained cheeks. With a small choking sound she stumbled forward with chained feet and fell kneeling so that her head rested on Miranda's lap, her hands reaching and clutching in search of refuge.

As though by mutual consent no word was said. Except for Persis's choked hysterical sobbing there was silence, Miranda stroked the bowed head and shoulders and longed for a handkerchief. How totally defenseless nudity made you! You had nothing. As though reading her thoughts Patricia tossed a square of cambric which she deftly caught and pressed into one of Persis's reaching hands. The tableau held until the kneeling girl managed to bring her sobbing under control. The spasms widened until she managed to say in a small weak muffled voice:

"Sorry... darling. I wasn't as brave as I thought." She subsided into sniffs and the use of the handkerchief. Then added: "It's awful! It's just unbelievably awful! You ca...n...t stand it."

Miranda looked down, knowing what to expect. But it was worse than her imagining. The latticed cheeks were striated by ridged weals already purple. Anguished, she turned to Patricia: "Did you have to do that? So cruelly..."

"Yes! Don't panic, ducky. In all things there must be a beginning."

Miranda thought of angry expostulations. But what was the

use! It had happened. She had been told why. Persis's condition was shocking. Spasmodic tremblings reached her hands from her companion's tortured loveliness. Nostalgically she remembered the laughing dancing girl at the Lake. Now this! Was it true that humans could be conditioned so easily and by such means! Perhaps it was. She had no exalted faith in her own capacity to endure pain. Did courage sustain you! She almost doubted that courage was a factor. It was your nerves and flesh that would betray you.

The two captives held each other until Persis straightened up and, giving a final dab to her cheeks, looked up at Miranda and managed a wry grin of reassurance. Then, tentatively, she stood. Her hands instinctively exploring her wounds so that an indrawn breath hissed through her teeth at what she found. Cautiously and awkwardly she lowered herself upon a chair, sustaining part of her weight by the use of her hands. She said nothing and looked at no one.

Patricia seemed satisfied that the decencies had been observed. Once again she advanced. This time she stood before Miranda. Thrusting forward a challenging foot she said sweetly: "Do I have to tell you what to do?"

Miranda knew what to do. She had made up her mind not to be heroic. Rising, she looked her captor levelly in the eye. Her features were drawn in distaste. Anger smoldered in her gaze. But she uttered no word or gesture of revolt. Sinking to the carpet she did what must be done. She thought she did it well, allowing her lips to linger on the

shining leather and her hands to caress it. Shamed she raised herself upright after the obeisance.
Patricia nodded, satisfied. Then beckoned. Rhoda matter of factly crossed the room and wound Miranda's hair into a firm grip that pulled her head back, but did not stop her cry of protest:
"I did what you said. I did it properly…!"
"You did the motions properly." Patricia conceded. There was still amusement in her voice. "But you should have seen your face. I'm lucky I didn't shrivel up. Go and have your first lesson… You haven't been cheated."
It was pure nightmare! As they left the room Miranda heard a jumble of voices. Persis outraged! The door cut off the sound as though by a knife. Alone with Rhoda she did the only thing she could conceive. Thrusting viciously with her elbow she aimed the fingers of her other hand at her captor's eyes. The result was disastrous. Her head was jerked back and down. Her arm was gripped, twisted and raised behind her. She found herself bowed backward ready to fall. Pain wracked and killed resistance. Rhoda had mastered her as she might have done a child.
"Don't worry, dear. You all have to have your little try sometime. I'd be disappointed if you didn't." She shook Miranda's head savagely.
"Oh please! Please don't do that… I'll behave."
"That's a sensible girl. It's along this way, ducks. I'll keep hold of your hair—just in case. We'll walk slow so you can get used to the chain." Rhoda sounded as unruffled as though they were going shopping.

On that day Miranda managed only a jumbled impression of the room. Her interest and attention was focused for her by being dragged by the hair to a grim set of head Stocks with its small waiting apertures and its upper segment raised to receive its tenant. It was low, so that she was forced to bend well down as Rhoda pulled her head over the bar and down so that her neck fitted snugly into the half circle designed for it. A moment later the upper half was lowered confining her neck completely. Rhoda loosed her grip upon her hair. It fell beside one cheek.

"Won't bother with your hands today, ducky. They won't get in the way unless you put them there." She chucked. "You won't do that more than once, let me tell you."

Miranda found herself well bent over. She guessed why. Her head was on one side of the device, the rest of her on the other. She could neither kneel or stand. She placed the palms of their hands against the confining planks. There would be nothing but discomfort. But it was the best position she could manage. She shivered as she realized how vulnerable she was. Her view was limited to the floor and to each side of her bowed head. Rhoda entered her field of vision. She was flexing a wicked length of rattan cane.

"I won't drag this on too long, dear. I don't suppose you have been whipped before, so I'm going to suggest that you scream all you like—it really helps. I don't mind a bit."

"But what good can whipping me possibly do?" Miranda's question was not rhetorical.

Rhoda considered. "We want you to ask questions like that, and we will try and answer them. I think the best answer I

can give you in this case is to suggest that you take stock of your thoughts during the past minute. Then, when I am done with you, do it again. The difference between your two assessments will be your answer."

"Well, anyway, I'm not doing that screaming bit just to please you."

"You will, dear." Said Rhoda firmly. "I'll make sure of it."

When the woman retired from sight Miranda tensed. She could see nothing that was taking place. She could only guess. She would have no warning of the cane seeking her. As she clenched her teeth determined not to scream her whole world exploded in a cutting slash of agony. It was pain in a dimension beyond her previous imagining. Without volition her hands sought her wounded flesh. They were just in time to receive the next stroke so that, despite herself, Miranda emitted a whimper of distress and despair and hugged her numbed and scorching fingers under her arms.

"Don't suppose you'll do that again, ducky."

Miranda's only possible defense was her voice. So frail a barrier between her violated flesh and the cane. To scream… to plead… to beg. The next demoralizing stroke seemed to form the words for her.

"Oh please! No more. Please stop…"

Rhoda did not stop. Instead her rattan found an even more sensitive cushion into which to bed itself. Miranda moaned hopelessly. She was wet with perspiration.

"If I scream, will you stop then?" she pleaded.

Her answer was another scalding stripe.

She gave a choked cry and, almost incoherently, protested: "Please help me. Do it slower. Give me time…!"
Inflexibly the cane found her once more. Her whole being surged against the prisoning yoke. She was panting wildly. With thankfulness she saw Rhoda enter her field of vision. Choking back the pleas and protests she deemed untimely Miranda managed to ask meekly between gasps: "How… how… many… must I… have?"
"Well, I will say you are doing very well." Rhoda assured her. "Follows pretty much the same pattern with most girls, of course. But you're not disgracing yourself."
"Is it over?" Miranda quavered.
"Silly girl! You know it isn't. I'd make a guess that you'd never even dreamed of anything like this? Each time you think you can't bear the next one? Am I right?"
"Yes." Miranda agreed. Then ventured: "Will you do it slower, please. So I can try and cope…"
Rhoda vanished. Five appalling blows fell in rapid succession. The last two drew screams over which the victim had no control. Miranda's torso plunged and writhed wildly. Her legs were kicking in an ineffectual struggle, the chain that joined them clashing. Each gasping breath ended in a moan.
"Sort of forgetting yourself, weren't you." Nothing ever seemed to affect the even placidity of Rhoda's voice.
It was a little while before Miranda could manage coherent speech. "You mean… someone… someone like—like me, mustn't ask for… things?"
"Right! You'll do very nicely. I knew you would directly I

saw you. Now what do you say I finish you off with five more, fast ones?"
The words struck Miranda like a blow. Fearful of words she emitted an uncontrolled moan and surrendered to sobbing and tears. She despised herself. But could not help it.
Suddenly the yoke was raised from her neck. She could stand. Rhoda said consolingly: "It will give you an idea… It's enough for the first day. Go ahead and rub your bottom. You want to, don't you?"
Miranda obeyed. She did not care if she looked like a punished child. "I feel so shamed." She said in a small broken voice. Then, fearfully: "Is that the reason? I… I mean, is that the result you want when you whipped me?"
"Remember what I told you about before and after?"
The chained girl nodded. Then between sniffs and subsiding sobs she confided: "I think that afterwards… now, I… I can believe what Patricia told us." Struck by a sudden realization, a fresh torrent of tears bespoke her anguish: "I am a slave! That's all I am! I'll never, never get free…!"
"Well! We have made progress, haven't we!" Rhoda approved dryly. "And you're the one who asked what good it would do."

* * *

It was a delightful bedroom. If it had not been for the bars on the windows and the lack of a handle on the door it would have been totally normal. Miranda and Persis had been unsure whether sarcasm had been used when Rhoda

had told them: “No dungeon tonight, girls. We want you to get your proper sleep.” Persis’ first act when they were alone had been to examine her injured bottom in the mirror and to gasp at what she saw. Miranda had been equally appalled by her own. There had been some minutes of relative cheerfulness at first in this room where their nudity was appropriate and where they had privacy. Their feet were still chained. But, already, they had become accustomed to this handicap.

But, in spite of the seeming normalcy, cheerfulness was hard to maintain. They were prisoners. Every sound of their ankle chains was a reminder. Rhoda had warned, too: “Stay naked. The bedclothes are for the bed. Leave them there.” They guessed what would probably happen if they disobeyed. Their thoughts were chaotic. Persis voiced that which was uppermost.

“I’d like to see the whole jolly lot of them in the Dock! When we get out of this I’m going to make sure they get there.” Then, overwhelmed by reality, she threw her arms round her fellow prisoner and sobbed: “We’ll never get out of here, will we! We’re caught. They’ve got us. How can we ever get these chains off. We’ll never, never be free again for the rest of our lives. Oh darling, I’m so scared…”

Miranda hugged the girl she loved. Feverishly she sought a word of reassurance. There was none. No possibility of hope or error presented itself. Persis was adult. There was no kindness in treating her as a child. “I think we have to consider that.” She conceded. “But after all, we’ve only been here a few hours. It’s too early to give up hope.”

“You’ve given up hope.” Persis sobbed. “I can tell.”
Miranda was too exhausted to deny the truth. What hope was there! The simulation of their accidental death was perfect. No one would suspect or search for them. They were officially dead. After only a few hours here they were naked, chained, whipped. Likely to be whipped again. On and on into some vague and ominous future.
“We’re slaves.” Sniffed Persis somberly, as though facing this realization for the first time. “I’m a slave girl. You’re a slave girl. You know we are, Miranda, don’t you?”
Tenderly Miranda gathered the younger girl into her arms and held her close. She kissed her forehead gently. “Yes darling,” she admitted hopelessly. “I suppose we might as well face it. We’re slaves.”
They slept better than they expected. When the insistent hand prodded her awake Miranda found it full daylight. Dazedly she looked up at the concerned face of Rosalie and the finger held to the lips enjoining silence. Astounded she lay motionless as the other girl threw back the covers and unlocked her ankle chains.
“I found the keys. Yours, not mine. Try and get away. Keep the other girl quiet while I unlock her.” Rosalie’s whisper and movements were fearful and swift. Miranda observed new livid excoriations. The slave girl was as naked as they were. Her ankles were chained.
Bemused, but feeling the exaltation of hope, they followed their guide to the end of a corridor. Glass doors opened on to a balcony.
“You can drop off this balcony on to the Terrace. Then into

the Park. Remember this now: Go to the end of the Lake. Then head for the trees. There is a big copper beech. Follow the path there. It takes you to a small wooden door in the big wall. The key is on the crosspiece of the frame above. I'll hide your chains and lock your door again. It will puzzle them."

"But aren't you coming?" Persis was trembling with excitement.

"I can't find the key to my chains. They were careless and left your's hanging outside your door. It's hopeless with my feet chained. I'd only spoil it for you. Oh hurry! Please hurry! They are all involved with breakfast. You stand a good chance of making it."

How good the dew drenched turf felt as it sped beneath their racing feet. Sparkling eyes met in ecstasy as they hurtled forward side by side. Hearts pounded with more than exertion. Had they indeed a chance of running so far before they were missed or observed! The Park was huge. The distances considerable. How far beyond the designated tree would they have to go!

The end of the Lake must have been nearly a mile. There remained, still, a goodly stretch of grass on which they could be clearly seen. For the first time, Miranda looked back. Then groaned at what she saw. Far back and just leaving the house a horseman was cantering toward the Lake. It was safe to assume his appearance would not be coincidence. He would be in pursuit.

Both girls were panting. But spurred by fear and by determination to escape this nightmare at all costs they leaped

forward toward the copper beech which beckoned like a beacon among the other trees. Reaching it after what seemed an eternity of effort an agonized glance over the shoulder told them their pursuer had covered more than half the distance and was now galloping hard.

"Separate," Miranda ordered. "You go to the right of the path. I'll go to the left. One of us should reach the gate. He can't chase both of us at once."

The sound of hoofs was ominously close as they flitted in among the trees. Miranda had hope for tangled undergrowth in which to hide. But there was none. A horseman could maneuver without impediment. She spared a fractional moment for a survey and noted with satisfaction that Persis seemed well away. The horseman had quite evidently chosen she herself as his quarry. He was frighteningly close. Startled, she noticed that his appearance was bizarre enough to be in keeping with the whole phantasmagoria. He was dressed in the full regalia of the Western Cowboy as depicted by Hollywood. A cringing fear grasped her as she saw the lariat with its swinging loop in what seemed likely to be a practiced hand.

She used the trees as best she could and drove her flagging feet to fresh effort. She was desperately tired. She had run far and fast. Miserably she realized that, for her, there would be no escape. Even if the wall and the door suddenly loomed ahead she would be unable to find the key and use it before she was pounced on. She veered off to one side. Best to divert him from Persis. Persis was now their only hope of succor. She dodged and stumbled over rough

ground for longer than she had dared hope. But the moment came when the dreaded loop circled her. Hoping to evade it she jumped and beat it down with one arm, only to have it snap tight around her ankles arresting her in full flight and bringing her to a thumping fall among the leaves.

Her strength almost exhausted she turned and saw the pseudo cowboy leap from his horse. Feverishly she bent and strove to free her ankles. But they were firmly noosed by the lariat that reached back taut to the saddle. The horse was amazingly trained. It maintained dainty sideways steps that kept the rope tight no matter how Miranda struggled or strove to gather slack. She was still engaged in this endeavor when a hand roughly grasped her arm and turned her face down. A moment later a brutal knee supported by a massive weight drove into the small of her back. It elicited a feminine cry of pain and despair. She could fight no more. But lay, passive and panting, as her wrists were thonged deftly and painfully together behind her. Despite a determined effort; despite heaving lungs; the strain and the disappointment was too great to bear. With a wail of desolation she burst into tears.

She lay face down jerkily sobbing as her lungs slowly returned to normal exhalations. She refused to show her face to her captor. She had no wish to see who or what he was. The cords about her wrists told her all she needed to know of him. He, in his turn, felt no need for speech. Removing his weight and his prisoning knee from his victim he rose and busied himself with the lariat and the horse. His

captive guessed his motions from the sounds that came to her after he had removed the noose from her ankles. She lay quietly awaiting whatever he chose to do with her. She was not surprised when he tightly bound her ankles, bent her legs back at the knee, then fastened wrists and ankles together so that she was quite helpless, her body bent in a bow. She recalled some cowboy jargon by which her condition as described as 'Hog tied'! She knew it would become painful. She knew with certainty that she could never free herself. She heard him mount, then the muffled thud of hoofs on the soft ground. Whoever he was he had gone in search of Persis. He had left her alone secure in the knowledge she would still be there when he returned.

She lacked the conviction and the will to struggle. Even in the painful posture in which she had been bound she was thankful to lay still and give her pounding heart a chance to return to normal. Her flight was over. She was captive. Soon, no doubt, she would be ignominiously led back to the house and whatever retribution her captors might consider she had earned. She thought unhappily of Rosalie. Would the poor girl be blamed! No doubt there would be awkward questions. What answers could she give that would absolve their benefactor from punishment. Rosalie had risked so much. It would be too cruel to involve the slave girl in her own unhappy plight. Miserably she saw little hope of concocting a convincing story. Their only hope was Persis. If Persis had got through the door and found help the Police might reach the House before the whip began its work.

Miranda allowed her breath to return to normal. Then strained her head up to listen. Even that small a motion was difficult. There was sound. The stillness of the wood carried it. But it was hard to identify. It was distant. Thudding hoofs was no longer a part of it. She held the position for a minute. But it was strained. She let her cheek fall back on the leaves. She longed for her hands to deal with her tear wet cheeks. After resting she tried once more. A sound was definite now. She believed it to be the slow motion of a horse walking. Joyfully she pictured a fruitless chase and the defeated rider morosely allowing his horse to recover its breath by a slow return. Once again she let her head fall.

The sound soon became too loud to ignore. This time her straining eyes beheld the rider. Sure enough he sat, bent, on a tired steed moving at a slow walk. But, heaving up for another inch of elevation, Miranda saw that which shattered her world. Behind the horse at the end of the lariat, which was tied about her neck, Persis walked naked with hands tied behind her back. She looked exhausted, and followed docile where she was led.

They made a strange group there under the trees. Their Stetson hatted captor lost no time in freeing Miranda's feet and helping her to stand. He was almost solicitous in his concern that she suffer no longer than necessary bent backwards on the ground. As though divining her wish he used his handkerchief to dry her face and rid it of leaf particles. Having done this he fastened her neck with a loop from the lariat so that she and Persis were both teth-

ered to his saddle and would perforce follow where he led. They stood and took stock of each other. Persis looked wanly at her companion on the rope. She shook her head dolefully and shrugged—there was no need for words. The rider surveyed the nude girls with warm approval and satisfaction. They examined him with incredulity.

He might have been forty. Even before he spoke they tagged him as from the U.S.A. His garb, absurd in this English setting, was authentic and showed evidence of considerable wear. He was heavy, but lithe in his movements. His eyes, bright and hard, belied the smoothness of his cheeks.

"You gals give me a mighty fine run." He conceded cheerfully. "Never no doubt I'd get you. But you made me work at it."

"You do this often?" Miranda's voice was cutting. His reply shocked her.

"As often as convenient, little Lady. What say the three of us do it again. Give you a bit more head start next time."

"'You surely don't suppose we'd repeat today's performance just for your entertainment, do you?" Miranda's voice was outraged.

"Aw shucks! We'll let Miss Hillary worry about that. Thing to do now is take you home, I guess."

"Dragged at the end of a rope." Persis contributed with disgust.

"If you'll take this thing off our necks I promise you we'll go along without giving you any trouble." Miranda pleaded. "With our hands tied like this we can't do anything."

"Well, to tell you the truth," said their captor awkwardly,

“I’d like to oblige you two gals. But I get a lot of pleasure out of walking you back at the end of a rope. Seems sorts’ the proper ending. See what I mean?”
“Far be it from us to spoil your innocent enjoyment.” Said Miranda with heavy sarcasm.
“I wouldn’t let Miss Hillary hear you talk like that if I was you.” The cowboy nodded sagely. “Them marks on your little rumps oughta’ mean something to you. Pretty easy to collect them, I hear tell…”
He was a strange man. He didn’t belong. On the spur of the moment Miranda took a wild gamble.
“Please help us.” She asked appealingly. “The people in the House have made us prisoners.” Quickly she told him their plight. He listened gravely without comment. “Tell the police.” She pleaded. “Or contact our parents or friends. Please do something or we’ll be in chains the rest of our lives. You seem… kind. I can’t think you are really one of… of them.”
He pushed his hat back on his head and studied them with poker faced amusement. “Well now. Right nice of you to say so.” He produced a notebook and a stub of pencil and jotted down names and phone numbers as the girls poured them at him in a sudden desperate excitement. “Won’t promise nothin’.” He said gruffly at the end. “Have to think on it some.”
Abruptly he mounted, sitting sideways so that he could watch them. The horse resumed its plodding walk back toward the Lake and the House. The captives followed obediently. Two slave girls on a leash.

Nothing followed an expected pattern. Having delivered them to a waiting Rhoda their cowboy offered a polite salute and galloped off in the direction of the stables. Instead of harsh words, threats or blows, Rhoda patted each of them on the cheek, smiling quietly as at some small private joke. She had met them with chains in her hands. Miranda felt sure they were the same ones they had worn previously. When these were safely locked on their ankles Rhoda loosed their wrists. They were back where they had started. They rubbed their chafed skin ruefully and eyed their wardress dubiously.

"Don't worry." Rhoda smiled at their apprehension. "First a bath. Then Miss Hillary wants you. Got quite grubby, didn't you!"

Miranda found it hard to believe that it was less than twenty-four hours since they had first entered Patricia's Study. They were greeted with the same bright warmth that made their chained feet incongruous. But there were no chairs before the desk. Instead, this girl who held them so completely in thrall moved hers out in front of the French window and motioned to the middle of the room.

"I want you both to kneel there and face me." Seeing rebellion spring to Persis' face she added: "Don't be silly about it. From now on you will either stand or kneel as directed. Heroics will only get you more decorations... Or is that what you want?" She smiled reminiscently. "We had a girl once who actually did want it. Puzzled us at first. She was always jockeying herself into situations that she knew led to punishment. Then we caught on—it did something

for her. Won't say she actually enjoyed being whipped. But for her there was something erotic about it; some compelling fascination. Her training period was quite short and we got a tremendous price for her. He was a nice old chap. Ended up by marrying her into the nobility. She even visits us. Rare case, of course. But maybe there's a moral in it for you. Come on now! Kneel."

They knelt. Angry but not knowing what else to do. Miranda reflected that from now on their lives would be a succession of such humiliations.

"You can sit back on your heels." Pat conceded. "There are more things to tell you. May as well be comfortable. First of all: How did you enjoy your run?"

"It was beastly!" Persis dismissed the subject.

"Were you hurt or injured?"

Persis squirmed. "I suppose not."

"I am going to put before you the thought that if you did that every morning you should soon be in superb physical condition."

"Dragged back at the end of a rope?" Miranda asked resentfully.

"Who set you free?"

It was the question Miranda most dreaded. She kept silent.

"We can make you tell us."

Miserably Miranda believed her. The whip was still vivid in her consciousness.

"It was Rosalie, wasn't it?"

Both girls remained mute and looked steadily at the carpet before them.

Patricia laughed, “You are a pair of idiots. Don’t you realize how easy it is to make you talk. I’m going to send Persis away to be whipped. She will be whipped steadily until you, Miranda, tell me who the culprit was.”

“Don’t say a word!” Persis turned to her fellow captive piteously. “I’ll bear it somehow…” But her voice was close to breaking.

Nodding resignedly, Patricia pressed the fatal button. Miranda found herself torn in two. Whatever she did was wrong. Looking up hopelessly at the older girl she pleaded: “Not Persis! Take me.” Patricia did not even deign to reply.

With the opening of the door the House presented its next surprise. Instead of a grim and efficient Rhoda the naked figure of Rosalie appeared. With complete self possession she crossed the room, her ankle chains swirling. Demurely and without haste she knelt before her Mistress.

“Tell them.”

With practiced grace the slave girl rose and stood erect where she could command her audience of three. Her voice was normal and untroubled.

“I set you free under instructions from my owners.” She addressed the two kneeling girls. “I was told what to do. Being a slave girl I did it as best I could. Please do not be angry with me. A slave must do what she is told.” Her voice was as casual as though describing a visit to the Post Office.

“Thank you, Rosalie. You may go.”

“What a rotten thing to do to us! Did you have to?” Miranda demanded angrily. Then, remembering, she flushed and added lamely: “I suppose I shouldn’t have said that.”

“No.”
“If you hadn’t, I would!” Persis affirmed.
“You shouldn’t have said it either.” Patricia said evenly. “Now try and forget your indignation. Slave girls arn’t allowed to be indignant. How did you enjoy Wilbur Herman?”
“That your pet cowboy?”
“Watch the sarcasm, dear! Yes, Wilbur’s the cowboy. He’s rather a pet.”
“But why…?” The question died on Miranda’s lips. It was too absurd.
“He’s just a displaced Texan, ducky. Though actually I think he comes from Omaha. We have the same oddities here. You know: the frightfully military. Or the Country squire. Or the Company Director. Give these chaps a bit of money and they can’t help it.”
“You mean he likes to dress up, get on a horse and chase girls?”
“He even pays for the privilege.” Patricia grinned at them confidingly. “He’s one of our best customers.”
“He has already purchased one.” Patricia seemed amused. “I have a feeling he has his eye on you two. He lives close by. We have a working arrangement with him to exercise our girls in the way you have just been exercised. It’s a sort of mutually beneficial affair that works well because Mr. Herman is also a close associate of Mr. Benson’s. I may as well tell you that you’re going on another run tomorrow.”
Miranda was puzzled: “But you can’t dupe us like that again?”

“But we don’t have to dupe you, dear. It’s for your physical wellbeing and Wilbur Herman’s amusement. We want you in good physical shape. It shows. If we keep you chained all the time you’ll get flabby and dull. So you may as well accustom yourselves to the idea. You’ll run nearly every day. Even when it rains—or snows, for that matter. It’s a very warming sport.”

“But we’ll have nothing to run for—no motive, I mean.” Persis pointed out reasonably.

“You’ll have a motive, ducky! Let’s say fifty with the cane…!”

Both girls started as though struck. How very obvious it was. Run—or else…!

Patricia laughed. “Don’t look so woebegone. You need a motive. We provide it. We’ve been doing this a long time and we find that half an hour is about the deadline. Given a good start—and we’ll be sporting about that—a girl who’s really trying stands a better than even chance of evading Herman’s rope for that long. If she doesn’t, then she’ll always try harder the next time.”

“I’ll just stand still and refuse to even start.” Persis said flatly.

“Don’t be silly! You have enough sense to know we can deal with that too.” Patricia frowned impatiently. “If you’ve an atom of sense it will surely occur to you that this is for your own good. You’d jump for joy at the chance if you’d just spent a week chained in a dungeon.”

Patricia made a pre-emptory gesture with her hand. Each kneeling girl suddenly felt the weight of the metal on their

ankles and an awareness of their true condition.
“That’s enough chit chat. I’m spoiling you. You are kneeling there for a purpose. You will receive instruction from me and from others. This is your first. Shall we call it the first lesson.”
The older girl went to a cupboard, then returned to her chair holding a flexible rattan that looked the twin of the one Rhoda had used on them.
“It’s no use looking resentful.” She said, eyeing Persis.
“Or shocked.” She turned to Miranda. “Much of your training will be toward the acceptance of what, in everyday life, might be called humiliation. For a slave it is simply a part of total obedience. From now on when you feel you just have to express these little flashes of resentment and the delightful bits of sarcasm you’ve been tossing around so freely I will simply ask you to stand and hold out your hand just the way you did at school. But this should certainly be a lot more humiliating for you and I assure you it will be a great deal more painful.”
Patricia settled hack comfortably in her chair. Her smile had returned. She toyed suggestively with the cane.
“In less than twenty-four hours,” She pointed out, “You have come to accept what I told you yesterday. You see how rapid progress can be. But you are still seething with those mental reservations I spoke of. You can’t help It. Only time and pain eradicate them. You had a little pain yesterday. Probably you have noticed: it has had surprisingly little effect on you. Of this I am glad. We want to break your spirit, but not to crush it.”

She paused and eyed them curiously. “You both have really super bods, y’know. With figures like yours plus what we are going to do to you I can see you fetching a quite record price. I tell you this so that you can understand you’d better take this training seriously. You are really going to be taught. You are worth an investment. So let’s get on with it. Here’s a partial agenda:” She used her fingers to enumerate. “Obedience. Obliteration of self. Sex. Posture. Speech. Deportment. Personality.”

Patricia frowned. Then spread her hands in a gesture of resignation. “Between us girls,” She admitted, “There’s a part of this training I wish we didn’t have to deal in. I mean Sex. As female slaves you are sex objects. Don’t let’s kid ourselves otherwise. You will reek of sex. Every thought and act will be geared to it. You must know more of sex play and sexual arousal than any clinical study. Above all you yourselves must become steeped in sex so that it is never far from your thoughts. You must be easily roused and delicately responsive to any sexual stimuli—”

“A couple of sex-pots,” Persis broke in gloomily.

Patricia sighed. “These little interjections would be amusing if we were just gossiping. But you’ll have to learn to contain them. Stand and hold out your hand.”

Persis flushed scarlet. She gave a quick glance of appeal at Miranda. Then looked stonily ahead and put her hands behind her back.

“I can ring for the butler if you wish. His name is Blessing, by the way. Remember it. He’s a very muscular man and you will be seeing quite a bit of him. Do you wish me to

ring?"
Persis writhed inwardly. How shaming! But that was the intention. To stand naked and hold out your hand to be caned. She longed to voice her resentment. But knew fear. To be brattish was to invite being manhandled. She wished now that she had kept quiet. Pursing her lips unhappily and shockingly aware of an immense blush she stood upright and held out her right hand.
Patricia performed her task with an amused detachment. First, positioning the quivering arm with her cane to the desired position. Then, tapping the fingers to ensure they were taut and the small palm flat. Lastly, to bring the cruel rattan down in a swinging slash to bed itself in that which had been prepared to receive it.
A small cry of pure agony escaped the punished girl. As with all children she bent in suffering and hugged the injured hand beneath her arm. She kept her eyes lowered. There was too much hurt and too much shame in them for anyone to see.
She was allowed only a brief respite. Then the implacable cane was tapping her left elbow. Hopelessly she nodded acceptance and straightened. Gulping back her tears she extended the left arm and opened the hand taut. Again the slash. Again the same motions. Patricia returned to her seat. "I will be merciful this time. Two should be bearable. Six isn't," she stated positively. "Resume your kneeling. Stop hugging your hands. Allow each hand to rest naturally on the top of your thigh. They hurt. Think about that hurt."
Miranda had flinched with each blow. She longed to com-

fort the younger girl and to smooth away the tears now trickling unhindered down the flushed cheeks. Yet she found herself understanding what had happened. She felt ashamed of the knowledge. Perhaps she was already half a slave. But Persis provoked such correction. Patricia was bound to step hard on resentment. In the role she held what else could she do? Miranda herself fully expected punishments for involuntary acts of words. But she would not provoke it.

"I had been about to question your exposure to sex. But I think your interruption pretty well clues me on that," Pat continued. "Most of you girls are the same. A silly sort of mixture of furtive excitement, damp briefs and anxiety. You are not always quite sure whether you adore men or despise them. You two love each other. I can tell. That's good. It saves you one hurdle that comes hard to some." She laughed gaily at Miranda's discomfort. "You think it doesn't show, silly? Cheer up. It sticks out a mile. I'll try and sell both of you to one owner. It's something that might appeal."

The captives looked at each other in agony. Separation was something they had not thought of. But Patricia gave them little time to reflect.

"I loathe four-letter words. But you must learn them all and use them as though they were poetry. The men will enjoy that tuition. I must deal now with the most common one. It begins with F. Instead I am going to use the word 'ravish.' Probably at the beginning it will be the most appropriate. Starting tomorrow you will each be ravished at least once

daily. The men who will perform this service for you will vary. It is a privilege we accord certain guests. Wilbur Hermann, for instance. But our staff have been picked for their virility and physical attributes. There is, of course, Blessing, the stable boy, Fred Bates, and a couple of gardeners…"

"You mean if I get pregnant I can say, 'The butler did it!'" The words were out of Persis' mouth before her raised hand could cut them off. She knelt, stricken. Looking from one to the other of her companions. Her features acknowledging her fault.

"Funny, funny!" Patricia flexed the cane. "Actually, ducky, I enjoy you. We don't want to beat humor out of your system. But somehow you have to learn. What do you say to two more strokes?"

Persis nodded and miserably got to her feet. But was set back on her haunches by Patricia's command: "Sit down. I didn't tell you to get up. I asked if one on each hand would fit the crime."

Persis nodded manfully and said, "Yes," in as firm a voice as she could manage.

"Excellent! I will give one on each hand to Miranda."

The chained girls gasped and looked at each other wonderingly. "But it was me. It was me!" Persis insisted.

"It was, wasn't it, ducky. And you're prepared to be a real little heroine about it, aren't you. You know we'll both feel sorry for you—and we would too! So I'm going to punish you worse than if you got the strokes on your own hot little hands. I'll give them to Miranda. Innocent Miranda! She

loves you and she will accept them gladly. But you won't like it a bit, will you!"

Persis burst into more, tears. "Oh, darling, I didn't mean… I never thought…!"

"That's right. You did not think," Patricia agreed. "Stand up, Miranda."

Miranda obeyed. She was confused. Unsure whether to be pleased or angry at this unexpected twist. But one point was abundantly clear. Patricia was a force to be reckoned with. Young and attractive she might be. But she was shrewd and possessed a frightening insight into the feminine mind. A knowledge achieved, no doubt, from much experience with girls like themselves. It was evident that, in her work, she sought a balance between kindness and ruthlessness. She did it well. Miranda eyed her apprehensively, but held out her hand with what she hoped would be an acceptable nonchalance. Her inward tremors were accentuated by the same light touches with the cane that had been employed with Persis. They were demoralizing in their insistence on a posture that would ensure maximum pain. But that, naturally, was why they were employed. The eyes of the victim and her mistress remained locked as though each sought some hidden knowledge from the other.

Miranda had expected shocking pain. But the ugly slash was infinitely worse than she was prepared for. It drew a gasp of agony which she bit off with a determination not to inflict greater spiritual distress on Persis than need be. She closed her eyes to be alone with an awfulness that could

not be shared. It took every ounce of control to allow her arm to fall back by her side and for the braised hand to hang limp. The instinctive need to hug the injured member was as great with her as it had been with Persis. But she would not give way to it. Shame forbid. She prayed she could endure the other hand's punishment without breaking. To show as little suffering as possible was her only means of shielding the girl she loved, and at the same time keep her pride intact with Patricia. But she would not overemphasize the latter. Should the mistress decide to double the punishment Miranda knew she could not keep control of herself through the second infliction. Obeying the directive of the cane she held out her other hand.

When she opened her eyes after the second agony she found Patricia's searching hers deeply. She guessed she was being probed for signs of bravado—of a test of wills. Hastily she dropped her gaze and bent her head submissively. Responding to a brief order from an appeased Patricia she sank back kneeling. Her hands limply resting as were Persis'. Each of them a throbbing misery that did not ease. She kept her eyes focused on the carpet, looking at neither her fellow sufferer or the girl who held the cane.

"Getting back to where we were before the interruption," Pat continued pleasantly, "I want you to understand the purpose of these ravishments that will be so much a part of your daily lives from now on. It is not done to debase you. It is not done to break you. It will be done by a variety of men in a variety of ways that will enable you to see this simple act in its proper perspective. You will follow a path

through rebellion, resentment, resignation, tentative enjoyment, full enjoyment, ecstasy; and then on to an understanding of an art that knows no boundaries."

The older girl made a deprecatory gesture. "Sound like a bloody lecturer, don't I! Sorry, ducks. There's more to come, too. I suppose you have caught a glimpse—maybe even experimented with the things a girl can do quite apart from that silly slit in its tangle of hair. There's your mouth and your tongue. There's your fingers—and I suppose you will know about that quite usable facility that comes into prominence when you bend down. All very shocking and unmentionable. But you're bloody well going to have to acquire skills in all these things. And what's more you are going to jolly like them. You don't have to believe this today. But you will!"

Patricia returned her chair behind the desk. "That'll do for now, duckies. Enough's enough. Besides, you have a full afternoon ahead of you. I'll ring for Rhoda."

Rhoda laughed at the twin gasps of apprehension as both girls recognized the huge room and the grim stocks in which they had suffered the day before. There were other things they noticed now. None of them reassuring. "Not to worry." She told them. "No cane today. And don't ask questions. Miss Hillary may drop by later. Ask her."

They watched. Unhappy but fascinated as the older woman fastened their hands together with joined cuffs that she buckled very tight. The leather cuffs were broad and padded. They did not hurt. But held the victim's hands in front of them, palm to palm. Each had a ring that Rhoda

slipped over a hook suspended from the ceiling above each girl's head. A dull way to spend the afternoon, Miranda reflected. Then gasped in consternation as Rhoda pressed a button and each victim found herself hanging taut from her wrists. Her toes a good foot above the floor.

Rhoda watched and listened as they struggled and protested. Then, satisfied, she bid them a cheery farewell and left them hanging there. The firm closing of the door after her about it a note of finality.

"Oh darling! What on Earth did we do to deserve this?!" Persis wailed.

"I expect it's because we were a bit cocky, we were, y'know. Even after yesterday—and before she brought out that damn cane." Miranda gasped. "I'm scared, Sweetheart, that we are going to have to toe the line in everything."

"Miranda darling…?"

"Yes?"

"I'm sorry about that… What she did to you! I didn't have any idea…"

"Not to worry! It's all a part of what we are going to have to get used to. Pat's clever. We'll never beat her. We keep trying—and look what it got us."

"They won't leave us hanging like this all afternoon, will they? Surely…"

"Yes. I think they will." Miranda acknowledged unhappily. "Remember? She said we had a full afternoon ahead of us."

"But I can't stand it! It's awful!"

Miranda examined Persis's strained nudity. The younger girl had ceased to struggle and now hung limp just as she

herself found best. To move hurt! How totally without hope it was for a girl to be suspended thus. To kick produced no more than a wild clashing of their ankle chains. Even in talking their voices were as strained as were their limbs and sinews.

“I think we are always going to believe we can’t stand these things they will do to us.” Miranda counseled. “But I expect we will survive them. They will make sure of that. Don’t forget, we are valuable merchandise.”

“My hands hurt something awful! That bloody cane…”

“So do mine. I didn’t know anything could hurt that bad.” Miranda considered for a moment, then plunged: “Darling, I think we are going to have to take a good hard look at pain and at that absurd ravishment business. They are both real. I believe they will both happen. All we can do is offend as little as possible. I think we will get hurt enough without struggling.”

“Well, I’m damned if I’m going to lay on my back and spread my legs!” Persis asserted. Then lamented: “This is too awful! Oh, why can’t we get free!”

“I think you said it all right there.” Miranda commented somberly. “We can’t get free—”

Her words were broken off by Patricia’s entrance. The older girl sauntered round her helpless charges examining their pained nakedness with an amused smile. “There are worse ways of spending an afternoon.” She assured them. “You can’t believe that right now. But there are. I suppose you are suffering outrage and resentment at the injustice of your condition?”

“I suppose we did something wrong?” Miranda ventured cautiously, anxious to head off any angry retort Persis might spill.

“And you know what it was too, don’t you! Sarcasms, assertiveness: your egos working overtime. Hanging like this all afternoon will whittle the delightful egos down a bit and give you lots of time to ponder the subject of behavior.” Patricia looked them up and down approvingly. “I say, y’know. You really look super. Hanging a girl like that stretches out some of her curves. But it adds one or two here and there. I’ve always admired the effect. I’ll do it to you again sometime. Anyway, just to press the lesson home I have brought you these. I’ll put them on for you.”

‘These’ were two cardboard signs complete with ties. Miranda watched dubiously as one was fastened round Persis’s waist. Hanging it covered her sex. Heavy black print read: “I will be submissive”. She flushed in shame as the second one was tied about her own loins. They were more humiliating that a dunce’s cap in school. But it was a shame they would be compelled to wear. They were helpless to remove or even to touch the hateful reminder.

“Mild stuff actually.” Patricia observed. “But it’s part of the Benson principle. The old time Crib would have had you beaten into a female receptacle for lust yesterday. Today you would have been bringing in the cash. Not as much as we are going to get for you, it’s true. But they valued a quick return. In between feeling sorry for yourselves this afternoon you can give a bit of thought to these methods I’m using on you. I’ll explain each step just as I’m doing

now. But it takes sessions like this to help you take me seriously."
"It's hateful." Persis declared.
"It's intended to be, ducky. You won't like tomorrow either. But you will be introduced into your new condition as kindly as your own characters and ability to rationalize permit. I told you. We don't expect miracles." Pat settled herself comfortably against the stocks. "Now here's a few other things you'd better give a little thought to..."

* * *

It was a delightful tracery of green against the Summer sky that seemed to speak of a freedom that, for Miranda, no longer existed. She tugged resentfully and experimentally at her bound wrists. But they were tight behind her back. She had burrowed them into the soft mulch beneath the trees so that she might more comfortably rest on her back while Wilbur Herman disposed of Persis.
It had been what, she satirically reflected, could be referred to as "A good Run". She had been furious with herself throughout. Not because of the ordeal, but because of her recognizably grudging determination to make it last beyond the deadline. Up to that last moment before starting to run both girls had cherished a vague picture of refusing to move from the starting line. Of bravely accepting whatever might have resulted from a firm refusal of the humiliating role of quarry. But when the moment had come the fast stretch of grassland and verdant Park has

beckoned with a false hope. It had seemed, suddenly, that surely in such space and beauty there must lie some hidden hope of freedom for a naked girl. That their leg irons had been removed was a factor. How good it felt to take a full pace. What visions of fleeting speed it evoked. Then, having run beyond a point of no return, she had become increasingly aware that each leap was motivated not only to evade Wilbur Herman and his rope but to preserve her flesh secure against the promise of the cane.

Without knowledge of time there had been nothing else but hold out as long as possible. Herman had caught up with them with frightening speed. Their salvation had been to dodge and to divert and to hide. When the rope had finally encircled her and her captor was binding her wrists he had assured her good naturedly that her "Tight little ass" was safe that day. She lay now awaiting his pleasure. One of her ankles was bound to an exposed root, "So you won't stray none, Honey." She stopped struggling. It only hurt.

She watched as the pseudo cowboy backed Persis against the tree and secured her with swift sure knots. When he was done the younger girl was hidden from view by the trunk. He came, then, and stood above Miranda. Suddenly she felt more naked than she had done previously in his presence. More aware of her nakedness! Always before there had been tussles and motion. Now she lay still beneath two wisely appraising eyes. Without a word being spoken she knew instinctively what was about to happen. Carelessly and without haste Wilbur Herman stripped. He

emerged from his regalia as a big well muscled male. He gave his bound victim a reassuring smile. His movements were still slow and casual. His voice amused: “How does that bit go, Honey: To the victor belong the spoils! Luck of the draw, I guess. Today you’re the spoil…” Gently he lowered himself upon her.

He dressed as unhurriedly as he had stripped. His gaze rarely left her face. She knew she flushed under his scrutiny. “I’m not about to ask you, Honey.” He told her sardonically. “Don’t have to. I know…”

Angrily Miranda was aware that indeed Wilbur Herman did know. She had striven to yield nothing, to lie like a log. But it had soon become evident that his skills were not confined to horses and ropes and making money. Her flesh had betrayed her. For a little while with him she had become very much a woman, she had even longed to free her hands so that she might use them. She lay now wanting to meet his eyes, but too proud to make that surrender. Her mind was a jumble of emotions as she watched him retrieve Persis and fasten her close by. She managed a negative shake of the head in hope of forestalling any outburst her fellow captive might unthinkingly indulge in. It would do no good. She had been ravished, and that was that! She was sure Persis could tell or would guess. It was no more than they had been promised. Directed at Wilbur Herman virtuous upbraidings would sound absurd. In an effort toward such normalcy as their situation would allow she directed a quiet smile at her bound companion and managed to sit upright and shake the twigs from her hair.

If she appeared unconcerned Persis might keep quiet.
Miranda had supposed the next step to be the loops around their necks and the degrading trudge back to the house at the end of the lariat. But Herman had just finished tying Persis to a tree. The task done he sat on a log and surveyed his captives.
“I suppose, by your look, I’m a double brass bound bastard, eh?” He suggested.
The two girls exchanged glances. “It’s you that said it, not us.” Said Persis with commendable caution. “I suppose it’s a case of: ‘If the cap fits…!’”
“Oh it fits! And I’ll wear it.” He said in what sounded like a puzzled voice. He looked at them belligerently. “You see, I don’t give a damn any more. You two want I should tell you a story?”
“Aren’t we what would be described as a captive audience?” Miranda asked icily.
“I’m sure you’ll be more entertaining than what awaits us back at the house.” Persis offered with equal frigidity.
Herman looked at them with pursed lips and shook his head. Without a word he went to his horse and removed from the saddle a wicked looking Mexican quirt. His feminine audience focused on the two heavy leather thongs, hanging from the braided stock, with shocked apprehension.
“You want I should lay this a few times across them pretty backs of your’n?” His voice was clipped.
Here was an unsuspected Herman. Miranda felt genuinely afraid. She made her voice humble: “No! Please don’t.” She

pleaded.
“Well then lay off them smartass British cracks of your’n.” He demanded. “Hoity-toity, duchess of kiss-my-ass. That haughty cold contempt bit! It won’t go here! Get wise to yourselves.”
“It’s my fault. I’m the worst.” Persis quavered.
“You telling me! I ought to give you a good lacing just on general principles. You’re an aggravating brat.” But good humor had returned to his voice. He resumed his seat on the log, shook the quirt at them in an unmistakable threat. Then laid it beside him. Hugging one knee he surveyed the naked girls with evident enjoyment. “You listen now.” He admonished. “Some of this is because I like to talk. Just beating my guns, maybe. But some of it ought’a make a bit of sense for you…”
Miranda stared fascinated. She had no great wish to bear a Yankee lecture. But she was still trying to sort out her emotions, and certainly it was pleasanter out here under the trees than it might be in the house. She debated asking that her hands be freed from the tight thongs. But decided against it. She was ashamed of her reaction to the quirt. Her experiences thus far with such things had instilled a deep fear of them. She composed her features to display an intelligent attention. She noted with thankfulness that Persis was doing the same.
“Might surprise you to know I was married once.” It was more a statement than a question. Expecting no answer, he continued. “I’d say a pretty average sort of affair. That’s what makes it worth talking about—to me anyway. By the

time a man gets where I am girls all look pretty much alike. Just a rare one now and then—like you!" He nodded at Miranda and laughed at her blush. "So there's no need to describe her looks. I can tell you the rest about her in one word: Bitch! Nothing special, understand. Just an ordinary run of the mill bitch. Slut stuck around long enough to give me two kids and then got fifteen thousand a year alimony. Got herself a little place in Santa Barbara and carefully peddles her pussy around wherever she figures it will do her a bit of good. A real All American Gal'."

He grinned at them sympathetically. "Funny thing about marriage and women is we have to go through so damn much pure Hell before we see it the way it is. Reminds me, in a way, of the spot you two are in. You could save yourselves one Hell of a lot of misery if only you could take one big step to where you're headed instead of taking a lot of painful little hops that just go on and on until you think there's no end to them. Anyway, we did it the hard way—the normal way, that is. Wasn't too long a stretch between the orange blossoms and the hate."

Herman picked up the quirt, chuckled at their tense reaction, then laid it down again. "It was sex, of course. Good honest sex. Myra was brought up as a nice American girl. So she knew the cash value of the slit between her legs. Mother taught her if you can find a guy with a hundred million dollars then that thing she pees through is worth a hundred million. Makes a high priced piece of tail for the ordinary Joe. I was an ordinary Joe. Oh sure, she let me use it on our wedding night. Nice girls don't go to the altar in

the church. Their's is a sacrificial altar called the marriage bed. I'm telling you, it's a real sacrifice, giving away all that tail for free."

He mused silently remembering. "The Hell of it is you have to feel sorry for the silly bitches. Sex isn't any fun for them. It's a messy chore. They lay there thinking of the box of treasure this oaf they married is stealing from them. Then they think of the vows they made in church about providing him with unlimited tail—it just burns them up. You can play with their tits all you like but the message never gets down below. So it isn't long before all the old standard jokes begin to crop up: The headache, that time of the month, tired, the flu, you had it last Tuesday... Some of the excuses they come up with are quite ingenious. In the end it all adds up to: Keep your filthy hands off me. Actually their only hope for satisfaction from sex is to be either paid or raped. Pretty rough competition for a husband..."

Wilbur Herman made a wry gesture of dismissal. "It passed. Everything passes. All of a sudden you are a free man again. It's a wonderful feeling—except for the alimony. And good old sex is still there! In a way I'd simply gone back to square one. I still wanted that damn slit. Oh, I could got it alright! A man can always get it. But the price you have to pay or the things you have to do—holy cow...!"

He paused and eyed them intently. "D'you realize what the average man like me feels towards females..." He pounded his knee. His voice, for the first time, hard and bitter: "We are sick to death of you! We hate your guts!"

Miranda was shocked at his vehemence. Was the quirt really to be used on them to assuage this depth of feeling to which he was giving vent. Was that why they were so tightly bound! Yet her heart was touched by his distress. "Do you think… Are we—are we like that?" She asked uncertainly. "I mean… Me and Persis?"

He waved her question aside. "How do I know?" He asked morosely. "I'm talking in generalities." He eyed Miranda keenly. "I like you. I'm even tempted to buy you right now just as you are. You know the term: 'As is where is'. I won't, of course. But it shows what suckers men are. If I believed you could really accept and understand what I'm going to unload on you I'd do it anyway. But that's just dreaming…" He shook his head. "You girls are beat before you start—just like us poor bastards."

"If you buy her will you buy me too?" Persis sounded a small voice from the Wilderness.

Miranda smiled. Wilbur Herman laughed aloud at the pathetic plea. "Sort'a figured it was that way with you two." He said good-humoredly. "Don't bother me none. Make you easier to handle. I'll think on it. But no promises. Actually either one or both of you would be a pain in the ass right now. I'm too good natured and you'd never give me a moment's rest. You won't believe this but it's a Helluva' lot easier and pleasanter for a guy like me to buy you after they have you properly trained. Them prices they charge is steep. But when you consider the finished product they deliver they ain't entirely out'a line."

"You prefer us broken and cowed?" Miranda tried to sound

simply interested. Not caustic.

"Benson's really going to have to give you the full treatment." Herman shook his head regretfully. "You two don't even know which end is up. Look, I'm going to give you a bit of indoctrinating right now. Well start with a simple question. What's that slit between your legs for?"

Both captives visibly squirmed. Miranda wished he had not asked such a question. Persis answered it with an unexpected competence:

"We use it to urinate and for insemination." She stated flatly.

The cowboy on the log emitted a bellow of pure enjoyment. "Well Honey, if I wouldn't buy you before I'd sure do it now! Any gal' that can make a piece of ass sound like a cross between a veterinarian and the Ladies John just has to have something on the ball!" He slapped his leg gleefully. "I'll have to remember that one for Benson probably put your price up…"

He leaned forward, suddenly sober, and poked a determined finger at them. "I'll tell you what that slit is for." The bitterness and emphasis had returned to his voice. "It's to use! That's what it's for! And I'm a'going to tell you why."

He looked at them challengingly. Then his eyes drifted off into some distance of his own. His voice lowered to normal. "I have something that matches your slit. They fit together. Nature made 'em that way. We didn't. Since the beginning half the world has been trying to put 'em together. The other half tries to stop 'em doing It. A few thousand years of this battle has made most of us half and half. We want

to. But we ain't sure we ought. This damn thing a man walks around with ain't as easy to keep in line as your neat little slit. It's got ideas of its own. Just birds and the bees stuff, of course. But every time some neat little rump or a good pair of tits walks by it wants to make that connection, and ain't nothing a man can say or think or do about it. You little bitches flounce on by knowing damn well the effect you have on us—in fact you dress, or undress, purposely to have that effect. But you won't do anything about it—will you! Hell no! You're a lady. You ain't feeling no pain. It does something for you to know what you done."

Miranda watched him apprehensively. She was very naked and tied very tight. He was a man with a grievance. He had a whip. Was she and Persis going to pay for all the shortcomings of their sex. But his voice when he continued was still reasonable, almost puzzled.

"Have you ever figured how many times a day a man sees some gal who rings a bell for him so he wants to walk up and say: 'Honey, let's go make love.' You don't know, do you. Or care. But I know—it's plenty! But you do know what she'd say—and so do I. What would it be: 'Drop dead'. Or maybe 'Beat it Buster'. Or, 'You must be joking'. Or 'Scram, or I'll call a cop'. It all adds up to a great big No. They got something that didn't cost 'em a dime, and they ain't about to let you even have a look at it.

Herman made a gesture almost of despair. "A gal' could be screwed fifty times a day and the way she's made she'd never know the difference. That little slit is made to be screwed. It's even got a built in pleasure device. But to lis-

ten to a female that's just had it shoved at her without getting paid or married you'd think the sky had fallen. Not many years ago they thought they had to kill themselves if they got six or eight inches shoved well in. Silly bitches—might have been a damn good idea.

"Don't suppose you girls know much about Hookers. I've known a few in my time. They come in two types. The ones who get a bang out of it—the good natured kind. You can't always tell they are Hookers. It don't show. Then there's the ones who feel guilty every time they make their twenty-five bucks. With them it shows. Ravaged faces, hard and resentful. They don't get any joy out of it because they ain't got it in 'em to give any. Remember: Loving is giving! It's true about tail same as the other kind of love.

"Looking at us men walking around I bet there ain't a gal' anywhere guesses the almighty bellyache of anger and hatred inside. Hell of it is, most men don't even know it's there. It shows in the divorce statistics and the call girl trade. Everything gets blamed except the little girl's determination that her little slit won't get used any more than she can help. She opens up them lips in the bush just enough to get married. Then she sews 'em up tight. After awhile the Law makes the poor bastard pay her an income for life because he found a slit somewhere else that didn't have a lock on it.

"Figure it this way: If you found a starving man and you had a loaf of bread you'd give him half of it. You'd know it was the right thing to do. You'd want to do it. But take that same man and find him bedeviled, lonely, frustrated, with

a hard on he can't get rid of. Would you help him then? Hell no! It wouldn't cost you anything not as much as the loaf of bread. But you'd be damned before you'd give him even one of the wiry hairs that grow round it. You'd probably wiggle your ass and flaunt your tits just for the feeling of power over him it gave you."

Wilber Herman examined his prisoners. An amused smile came to his lips. "You two will have been mentally rejecting everything I've said. Don't kid yourselves I don't know that. But the real proof of what I'm trying to tell you is in the fact that you're sitting there naked and hog-tied. If you girls —and I'm talking about your sex, not you, wern't the way I'm telling you, no man would be paying a hundred grand to whip your round little bottoms or stick his tool into you whenever he felt like it. You gals who get into Benson's school are unlucky. You have to take it rough to pay for the rest of you that's running around holding on to their twats. You ain't going to be holding on to yours, I'll tell you."

Miranda suddenly glimpsed an awful possibility. From their captor's words a chasm hitherto unseen now gaped before them.

"You mean…" She flushed awkwardly. Gasping for the right words. "That the men—those who will buy us, only want us to vent their spite on because of some fancied wrong…"

"Fancied!" His voice held menace.

"Well, frustrated, then." She amended quickly. "Probably they do think we've been unkind to them… But is that what Persis and I must look forward to all the rest of our lives…? To be whipped and violated because of what, what you

have just told us?"
"Don't you think you have ever been unkind?"
"I don't know! Honestly I don't. I've never even thought about it." Her voice rose in a wail of bafflement. "I can't think like this. Look at me here on the grass. Bound like some captured animal. Kept naked… There's been too much happen. I just can't sort it all out…" She looked up at him piteously.
Wilber Herman was neither insensitive or cruel. He responded to Miranda's appeal. But it was obvious that he chose his words carefully.
"Sorry honey! Didn't mean to scare the daylights out of you. But I don't believe either of you have got wise to what is going to happen—of what you're in for, I mean. But look: I don't want to make it any tougher for you than it is. When you hit the auction block it's a lottery. You may draw a winner or you may not. You can get some comfort from the fact that Benson and Patricia won't knowingly sell you to some nut who just wants to whip the hide off you. But, like I say, you can't be sure. World's full of decent sort of guys who don't know how much built in animosity they have inside 'em until you hand 'em a whip and a girl. But there's only been a coupla' cases where they were sorry they made a sale. Mostly it turns out pretty good for everybody. You won't buy this, I know. But there's worse things for a girl than being a pleasure slave to a rich man. Y'see the training you are going to get removes most of what you might call the occupational hazards. He don't have to whip the ass off you every day just to keep you in line. You'll be in line

because you want to be. Though I never did hear tell of a gal' that didn't get a licking once in awhile. Comes a time when the little bitches invite it. Seems like they prod and wheedle to see how far they can push a fella'. Then when they get a damn good hiding they're satisfied—they've found out. For that time anyway."

Wilbur Herman paused as though debating something in his mind. His voice returned to its normally cheerful tone. "So don't you gals go worrying none. Ain't going to be no picnic. But it might end up not too bad. Guess Pat told you I bought a gal' off 'em myself." He smiled amusedly at their quickened attention. "Probably shouldn't tell you this, but it's all part of the scene. Bought her one day when I was real mad at wimmin' in general. Don't know whether Pat guessed it or not, but I had in mind to really work off the way I felt on all them pretty curves she's got. She's a cute little trick. Pretty as a picture. They sure had her well trained. They made her so damn good at being a woman that for quite some time I'll be darned if I didn't forget what I'd really bought her for. Then along come one of them days we all get sometimes. Suddenly I felt a bit of a fool at having some unfinished business I hadn't been man enough to get round to. So I took her to a room I'd prepared, and told her what was going to happen and why."

He paused and grinned ruefully at a memory. "Nothing ever turns out the way you figure. That damn girl was so well trained she just stood there and listened. Then told me, in the nicest way possible, that she quite understood

how I felt and that she'd try and not make too much noise while I whipped her. Then she shucked off the bit of stuff she was wearing—it wasn't much, and stood there naked with her hands held out for me to tie." He shook his head hopelessly. "It's times like these when you gals' really get a man horsed up. I just couldn't be sure whether I ought to be as good a sport as she was and call the whole thing off, or whether she wasn't just being damn clever and female. So, on the basis that you can't trust a woman, I tied her tight and strung her up with her toes just off the floor. Then, just to be mean, I placed the whip on a stool where she had a good view of it, and went away and left her hanging with plenty of time to think. Went into the village and did a bit of shopping. Killed a half hour. By the time I got back I wasn't sure whether I was mad at her or at myself. When I walked in she showed a bit of strain—I think you two know all about it! But she managed a damn cute smile and asked, real cheerful, if I didn't think her feet should be tied together so she couldn't kick too much."

Herman looked from Miranda to Persis. Once more he shook his head in deprecation. "You know what happened, of course. I let her down and untied her. I didn't say a thing. What the Hell could I say! But here's something for you both to consider. She was so beautifully trained that she never blinked an eye or said a wrong word. It had pleased me to do what I had done. She was not about to question it. From that day to this she has never referred to the lickin' she never got, or has she used it to seek an advantage. She knew damn well I'd chickened out. But

she's a slave. She knows she's a slave… I tell you straight. This training deal is purely astonishing. Don't you ever underrate it."

Silence fell on the three. Herman seemed lost in thought. Both girls felt there was something to say, but were groping for words. Finally Miranda ventured: "You still have her, don't you?"

Wilber Herman chuckled. "Yes. I've still got her." He looked at them musingly. "Bet you can't guess where she is right now!"

Miranda felt a need to respond. Wilber's good nature had returned. She wished to foster it. She was also curious. "I suppose you have her chained in some sort of cage." She was hesitant.

Her guess obviously amused him. "About what I expected." He admitted, chuckling. "Sensible enough guess, I suppose, all things considered. No. She ain't in no cap. She ain't in no dungeon, and she ain't hanging up by her thumbs neither. Matter of fact she's doing some shopping in London for the day."

He enjoyed their incredulity. Miranda felt certain he was joking. "But—Patricia said…," She gasped.

"Patricia said you'd never be free. Right?" He broke in. "But my gal' gets a bit now and then—freedom, that is! She's an exception."

"You mean you set her free and she comes back again!" Persis's voice held disbelief.

Herman nodded gleefully. "Knew that 'ud set you on your ear. But it ain't hard to figure. Benson got her from one

damn awful factory town where she'd started work in the mill at sixteen. If we hadn't grabbed her she'd have married some laboring goon, had three kids, and lived with his folks—if you can call that living. She wouldn't go back if you paid her."

"But to be whipped… and chained—"

"There's worse things, baby. Believe me there are! Besides, I told you—I got a soft heart. She only gets whipped when she has it coming—and she knows she has it coming! And any chains she wears don't bother her that much. She has a damn good life, and she knows it." He guffawed. "Honest, I believe if I kicked her ass out the front door she'd find some way back in and chain herself up."

"Why won't you buy us?" Persis asked hopefully.

"If I thought it was a good idea I'd be tempted." Herman said reasonably. "But if I did I'd have to do to you all the things they are going to do, and I ain't that good at it. Susan twists me enough. Holy cow! With three of you…" He shook his head regretfully. "Sorry." Then, seeing the bleakness descend on the young faces, he added, "But I won't forget. I'll probably be hunting you often. So well see each other. But by the time I drag you back at the end of a rope a dozen more times you'll probably be damn glad to be sold to someone else."

* * *

It was a functional room. Without foreknowledge it would be hard to guess its purpose. But immediately the door had

closed behind her Miranda had known. Bare! A carpeted floor. A high barred window letting in abundant light. No handle on the inside of the door. A prisoner's room! The only furnishing a bed. Or was it a bed! More like a wide bench covered by a thin hard mattress. Buckled straps at the four extremities told clearly of spread-eagle helplessness. Miranda wondered why she was not already strapped down. But she was free. Even the ankle chains had not been replaced. After the dusty trudge behind Herman's horse and the bath that followed she and Persis had been separated. Rhoda had thrust her into this room with a sardonic, "Happy days!!" Then locked the door.

She was given little time to ponder. The man who entered and again locked the door was a very fine specimen indeed. Despite herself Miranda felt a thrill. He was so right! So right in everything except that he was as naked as herself and was eyeing her with unconcealed amusement.

"Good afternoon, Miranda." He said cheerfully. "Which do you prefer; standing up or laying down?"

Miranda was both scared and furious. Nothing in this house was predictable. Always she was left ineffectual and incredulous.

"You propose to rape me?" She asked icily.

"Yes."

The single assured word and the smile that accompanied it were more than the prisoner could endure. She stamped her foot, beat her hands in the air, and exclaimed furiously: "Oh, you're impossible! All of you! What am I supposed to do now?"

“Why not lie on the bed—on your back, of course!”
“If I refuse, I suppose you tie me down?”
He laughed at her. “It’s funny with you girls. The sight of those straps horrify you. But most of you make such a to-do about me sticking my dink in you that you end up being strapped down. Easy to analyze, of course. When you are helpless I become a brute venting his lust instead of a rather decent sort of chap you might enjoy a bit of fun with. Your sweet virgin conscience remains spotlessly white because it’s the straps that spread your legs wide apart instead of your own wish. I’m quite impartial. Will you let me strap you down now or must we have a fight first?”
“I have no intention of doing anything at all.”
“Of course! You’re the haughty one—they told me. I bet you used to freeze the poor blokes in the pub when they tried to make a pass. It’ll just get you a sore bottom here.” He lifted the mattress and extracted a long whippy cane. “Want me to use this?”
Tears stung Miranda’s eyes. It would always be the same: the whip would arbitrate. If she was whipped enough she would consent to anything. Stonily she marched across the room and arranged herself on the unyielding couch. “Alright!” She exclaimed resentfully, “You’re so damn clever! Fasten me. I’m like the rest of them. I don’t want to give it to you either.”
“I could easily make you,” he said. “But not this time.” He busied himself with the straps. She lay with closed eyes as he stretched her wide and taut. When he entered her she

clenched her teeth and strove with all her will to control her breath…

When it was over he did not free her but sat beside her stretched nudity. “I’m Fred Bates.” He said. Then laughed. “I’m sure a gentleman would have introduced himself before the act. But seems a bit more chummy afterwards. Fills that awkward gap where the girl is making up her mind not to admit she enjoyed it. Now… now!” He admonished as Miranda raised her head in protest. “I know perfectly well what results I get with the treatment. I got some with you. I don’t have to ask. You don’t have to say. We both know.”

“Do you do this for a living?” Miranda was genuinely curious, but hoped her words stung.

“What you wanted to say was that I seem too decent a type and aren’t I ashamed of myself. The answer is, no. Types have nothing to do with it and I enjoy it immensely.” He leaned down and delicately bit her left nipple, then her right.

She struggled impotently. Then demanded frigidly: “Do you have to do that?”

He sighed. “They told me about you. Not that you’re much worse than most. The middle class British are impossible. Even a nipped tit puts you on your dignity.” Once more he reached under the mattress. This time producing a small whip with several slender leather thongs that he trailed across her stomach so that her muscles contracted and she surged against her bonds. “But we have something for every reaction of outraged virtue. This little beauty is for

little girls who complain when their tits get the attention they were designed for."

Negligently he rose and measured distance. Miranda's eyes followed him in disbelief. It couldn't happen—not to these most tender of a woman's possessions. Yet it did happen with a swiftness that left her no time for the agonized protest that had risen to her lips. The strips of leather bit and curled about her breast with frightening pain that made her know her nakedness and vulnerability. Gasping, and tugging at the straps she watched him circle the couch. Saw his raised arm. She heaved desperately but could not move. The thongs bedded themselves in the soft flesh around her other nipple. She cried out in agony:

"Please! No—not there! Please don't whip me there… I'm sorry. I am… I am, I'm sorry…"

"What are you sorry about?"

"For being snooty." She said humbly. "I do it without thinking."

"No." Fred Bates told her seriously. "You're sorry because you're being hurt. You love being snooty. It's that middle class bit I told you of. We have to get it out of your system. But we'll never eradicate it if we stop punishing you when you say you are sorry or let out a couple heartbreaking yelps. The thing you are going to know is that when you overstep the line the punishment follows and you get all of it no matter how sorry you feel. Two more on each will fill the bill this time."

Miranda struggled. She pleaded. She raged. By the time the sixth stroke had cut across her unprotected breast she was

sobbing bitterly with the knowledge that there was no part of her inviolate and that always she must monitor her tongue. It was a bitter pill to swallow.

"An interesting facet of this part of your training is that the time will come when every time you have received the privilege of male attention you will thank the donor—and do it prettily too! You'll mean it! Every word. You will also tell him of any special thrill his prowess has bestowed. You will share with him and make him aware of all your body's responses. And then you will ask for his further favors as it may please him." Bates looked down at his captive amusedly. "Think you can do that?"

They surveyed each other speculatively. He grinned and waved his hand as though in dismissal of the subject. "O.K. You are just about to earn several more with this." He waved the whip. "It's natural. You feel you have to. But think about what I have said. You will do these things. You will do them gladly. Consider how long a road you wish to travel to reach that point. You'd be surprised how it varies from girl to girl—"

He broke off suddenly. A brief knock heralded the opening of the door. Blessing appeared. A quite naked, but still calm and composed, Blessing. The two men nodded in understanding. Bates left. Scarlet with shame Miranda realized her afternoon might be far from over.

Blessing wasted no words. But did what he had come to do with vigor and competence. But without finesse. Miranda felt she was being attacked so resolute was his approach to consummation. Strangely she felt grateful for the straps

that held her. With Blessing there was nothing shared. The straps divorced her from his single mindedness. Fred Bates assessment of their use had been shrewd. She felt almost grateful to him.

It was a brief period of respite after Blessing's departure. Then Fred appeared again. He hummed a cheerful tune as he released her. Then reached under the seemingly magic mattress and produced cord. Turning her round he crossed her wrists and tied them tightly behind her back. Pushing her down on the couch he then bound her ankles together so that the cords cut and hurt. That done he picked her up as though she weighed but a few pounds and deposited her in a kneeling position at the center of the carpet. "Kneel upright." He commanded, "You know why, don't you?"

Miranda knew why. His sex was almost touching her lips. She had read about it. And there had been a girl at the office…

"There's no general rule about this one." Fred Bates assured her conversationally. "Some girls have done it. Some love it. Some hate it. Some feel quite sure they would rather die. We deal with each one on its merits. I use that cane you saw. It's still there on the couch. The record is twenty six strokes before she decided she wouldn't rather die after all. We make it difficult for you right from the start—get your awful realization over and done with. You notice mine's limp. Know where it's just been… inside Persis. I haven't washed it. You will. You know how. You will wash it carefully and lovingly and thoroughly. You don't need your hands. Your tongue and your lips do the

job better than any other thing ever devised. When you have completed that task, swallowing as you proceed, you will then use those same feminine gifts to arouse me once more and will also swallow the result without pausing in your attentions to little Willie here. Finally you will again clean him off and thank me nicely for all you have received."

Miranda sat back on her heels and looked up at her captor beseechingly. She knew not what to say. He gathered her thoughts for her with a frightening accuracy.

"You know that in the end you will do it. You'll probably do it well—you're that sort. But you can't bring yourself to start without some demonstration of your good middle class rectitude. So I'm willing to bet that you're wondering just what you can say to me that will provoke the minimum number of strokes commensurate with your conscience. Awkward contretemps, isn't it!"

He gazed down smiling at her upturned face. The biting cords held her motionless. She was subject to his slightest whim. She had never felt so captive. An unspoken message passed between them. He nodded, as though in understanding. Then picked up the length of cane. She eyed it with fascinated attention. "Bend over," He directed. "Let your forehead rest on the floor. Stick your bottom up. It's the best that way. If you want to flop over and wriggle—you can. But more of you will get hurt…"

She obeyed wordlessly. Achieving the desired position she realized with apprehension how stretched and jutting her bottom had become. The pain would be awful.

“I will give you five. You have earned that.” He explained quietly. “At that time you may wish to do what you must. If not, then the next infliction will be ten. And after that, twenty. There will be no remissions. You will endure what you will have chosen!”

The first stroke gave her no time even to nod. Her voice rose in a gasping crescendo as the other four followed in rapid sequence. At the end she shrieked and fell sideways on the carpet. Even then the cords allowed her little movement. She lay there panting.

He gave her a minute, then asked soberly: “Well?”

She could not meet his eyes. But said in a clear determined voice: “Please help me to kneel upright.” He did so. Then, in the same tones, she requested: “Please stand as… the way you were.” Obligingly he stood so close that she did not have to lean forward at all.

Miranda did what she had been told to do. Afterwards he told her that she had done it very well.

After Fred Bates had gone she lay on the carpet, hands and feet still bound, awaiting her next visitor. It was Patricia who entered briskly with a cheerful: “Quite a day for you, Ducky. Feel any different?”

“I hurt.” Said Miranda non-commitally.

“I’ll untie your feet. I brought these along.” Patricia rattled the familiar leg irons. Miranda, feeling absurd at the thought, actually welcomed the cold clutch of the metal bands on her ankles. The cords had bitten cruelly, besides the chain linking her feet must surely herald the end of male attention for the day.

“Not thinking of suicide or diving off the battlements into the moat or anything resigned and heroic?” Patricia queried.
“No.” Miranda would have liked to ignore the question but did not dare.
“In other words what happened to you today wasn’t the end of the world?”
“I never said it was.” Miranda rejoined hopelessly. Then bit her lip and eyed her Mistress. Had her lips transgressed again!
“Yes.” Said Patricia, interpreting the look. “That’s good for five. If your hands weren’t tied I’d have you hold them out for me. But it was sort of borderline. So watch it! Up on your feet.”
“Aren’t you going to untie my hands?” Miranda asked as she struggled upright: a task made difficult by her strictures.
“No. We are going to pay a short visit. The way you are may save you doing or saying something silly.” Patricia laughed at the sudden consternation on her captive’s face. “Oh, don’t worry. No more men—not for the moment anyway. We are going to visit Persis.”
Instinctively Miranda guessed. “She’s done something?” She ventured miserably.
“Right! She bit poor Blessing.”
A sudden realization of just how and why Persis may have done such a thing mantled Miranda in a flush of scarlet. Her mouth opened in a question to which she already knew the answer.

“Oh, don’t worry, ducks.” Patricia giggled. “She didn’t bite the knob off the end. But she did draw blood. I’m sure she’s repentant now.”

“What have you done to her?” Miranda pictured her loved one’s nakedness striated by whip marks.

“We’ll go down to the playroom so you can see.”

A naked Persis was sitting astride a bar raised far above the floor by a tripod at each end, her feet spread wide and fastened to the floor by straps pulled tight so that she would sway to neither side on her perch. Her hands were tied behind her back. A gag was strapped in her mouth by a broad band buckled at the back of her neck. Above her head a glass jar was suspended. From it a tube curved down into the gag and through it into the victim’s mouth. The jar was full of a murky liquid that Miranda could not identify. The girl’s body was glistening with sweat. She was breathing gaspingly through flared nostrils. Her eyes sought theirs in an agonized plea.

“It hurts far worse than you’d suppose.” Patricia stated pleasantly. “You can’t move at all, and that bar cuts deeper and deeper into you until you’re sure it’s going to divide you right down the middle. Even the first five minutes is unbearable, and it gets steadily worse. The gag effect is just an ingenious little idea to make the punishment fit the crime. There’s a phallus effect inside her mouth—quite large actually. A trickle of the fluid comes down through it so that she has to swallow constantly. Not too much, but enough that the taste is always there as a reminder how much nicer it would have been just to accept what Blessing

had to offer."
"What is it?" Outrage put an edge to Miranda's voice.
"Steady, ducks! Never mind what it is. Persis knows. We made her watch while we mixed it. She can tell you herself if she wants to. I wouldn't want to drink it. I'm sure she doesn't. But we know from experience it's an effective lesson."
"How long…?" Miranda quavered. Her heart was torn by Persis' obvious suffering.
"You mean how long will she stay like that. Oh, until we think she's had enough. Or until the bottle's empty. Or until she's got used to having one of those things in her mouth. Maybe she'll be there all night…" Said Patricia airily. "Come on now. Visit's over. No use your agonizing over your little turtle dove. She's probably a lot tougher than you think. You'd like another bath I expect. I'll even give you your hands back since you were such a good girl…"

* * *

Each day began with the Hunt. Wilbur Herman seemed to have an unending zest for the Chase and their ignominious return to captivity. Both girls were chagrined to realize that Patricia's prophecy was correct: they had come to enjoy their brief freedom. It was so good to be free of chains and cords whilst they sped across the Park. They ran in a different direction each day. But never found a break in the wall or any other avenue of escape. Usually it was fatigue from the long run that slowed them to where Wilbur's

snaky rope brought them tripping to the ground. But whilst this morning exercise followed a fairly predictable course, the return to the House and what might follow was always a frightening enigma.

On this occasion their feet had been chained and their hands tied behind their back. Patricia had looked at them dubiously and said: “Probably I ought to gag you. But I’m going to suppose you have enough sense to keep quiet. You’d better!”

It was a pleasant room. A sort of lounge. The end wall was half taken up by a huge mirror. “It’s a one way.” Patricia informed them. “When I press a switch we can see into another room. They can’t see us. They can’t hear us. What you are going to see is as much a part of your training as anything else that’s happened to you. Sit down and watch.”

Suddenly the room darkened. The mirror disappeared. They were looking into a brilliantly illuminated compartment. A man stood at a small bar shaking a cocktail mixer and experimentally sampling its contents. He looked up expectantly as a door opened and a girl entered.

It was a girl who commanded attention. She received it in full, both from the man in the room and from the two girls watching. She was naked. Her ankles were chained with a bright silver shackle. She was exquisitely groomed. She was quite beautiful. She moved with a grace and assurance as though her fetters did not exist. There was a radiance from her—a sort of gladness. With calm serenity she approached the man at the bar, knelt before him with head bowed in total submission. Then, with the same unhurried

purpose, lifted her gaze to his and deftly unfastened his trousers to reveal his sex. She clasped it reverently in both hands and bestowed upon it a long and lingering kiss so that her lips enveloped it. Then she quietly replaced it and, rising to her feet, accepted the glass her companion held ready. Silently they made a toast to each other, eyes bright, their gaze locked in total communion. He was not a prepossessing type. But as they sipped the girl, from time to time, raised her lips and kissed him. She chatted gaily, obviously deeply attracted.

The next move was quite incredible. From a drawer the girl produced a wicked looking cane, the sight of which was all too familiar. Kneeling, she kissed it lovingly and offered it to her companion. Then, taking a position in the center of the floor, she crouched and contrived to thrust her bottom into the most amazingly exposed invitation that made no move to shrink, quiver, or lose position as it received six cruelly slashing strokes that imprinted the ridged purple bars that the fascinated watchers knew only too well. When it was done she rose smiling: no trace of tears or reproach. Held out her arms enticingly and warmly embraced the man who had just whipped her.

There began then a play that held the watchers spellbound. Some of it they might rather not have seen. But the almost incredible grace and beauty of the girl as she performed acts that once would have thrust them into nausea was obviously the manifestation of an art. From the moment she gently stripped her lord to that final time when it seemed that every conceivable sexual act or perversion

had been joyfully performed her slightest motion was an obeisance to his maleness. By some subtle female alchemy of her own she fulfilled him, and in so doing glorified herself.

A click of the switch returned them to light and the blankness of the mirror. Patricia smiled in amusement. “I know your question.” She acknowledged understandingly. “Yes! She is one of you. Her time here is nearly over. The man you saw is considering buying her.”

“But… but how…?” Miranda groped for words.

“You know how, ducky. I’ve told you often enough. The two of you are off to a good start on the journey already.”

“She was never like us.” Persis affirmed with certainty. “She just couldn’t have been.”

Patricia mused silently for a moment, then said: “Her name is Daphne Morris. Her parents keep a pub in Winchester. She was an only child so they indulged her. When she came into our possession seven months ago she was a spoiled brat. What you saw just now is the culmination of seven months of the Benson theory.”

“Then she must have been a… a…” Persis did not like the word.

“You think she was a whore. Or a little bitch. Or perhaps a nice easy bit of crumpet.” Patricia nodded. “It’s an easy assumption. Actually she fought far more than you two have. She was firmly convinced her little pussy was strictly for her own use. It took two months, well over a thousand strokes and the concerted attention of our entire male staff to persuade her that it might be shared. At one point her

body was so covered with whip marks that we had to resort to sundry other punishments to persuade her to examine the fact that her life had indeed changed. Once the realization sunk home she made excellent progress."

"But to be caned like that on her bare skin! No ordinary girl could look so happy about it." Miranda said, puzzled.

"Yes, you can." Patricia said firmly. "By constant repetition the punishments and the sex acts all fall within total comprehension. It would be partly true to say that you become accustomed to the whip. It is not that it hurts less. But a known enemy. So you do not fear it as you did the first times. But," she added hastily, "don't let me give the impression that you reach immunity. What you saw today was control by will—the result of training. The product of a wish planted within the girl herself. Had he continued to whip her he could have broken her composure. But six strokes are within Daphne's tolerance to bear smiling. You saw her bear them."

"You think we will become as she is?" Miranda's voice held dubiety.

"You will! Actually you already know you will. But you have not yet reached a point where you will admit it even to yourselves."

"Is that all they buy us for. To whip us and those other things…?" Persis asked dolorously.

"Mainly. But cheer up. History is full of the influence slave women have had upon their masters."

"Does Daphne get any more freedom now that she is ready to be sold?"

“Goodness, no! She is still a slave. You saw her chains. They are just as secure on her as yours are on you. Come on now. Now more chit-chat. You have some waiting to attend to you.”

“They are always waiting to attend to us.” Said Persis without humor.

Alone in their room that evening they discussed what they had seen. “I hate to admit it,” Persis pointed out. “But I’m half way to where they want me to go. That night straddling that bar with their filthy stuff trickling down my throat made me scared to say boo to a goose. Don’t ever do anything to make them give you that punishment, darling. It’s so awful I can’t think about it. I’m ashamed how obedient it’s made me. Then we get raped or ravished four or five times a day to a point where I have to admit it—I like it. I’d miss it if they stopped. They are all so damn good at it. And we’ve only been here three weeks…”

Miranda found it hard not to smile. Persis was a constant delight. Yet she was always fearful for the younger girl. Persis’ tongue had earned so many whippings. She longed to shield her. A new ordeal had loomed on their horizon that day. Fred Bates had cheerfully intimated that quite soon she would be expected to, as he described it, “Turn the other cheek.” He had then been explicit, leaving no doubt as to what was implied. She wondered unhappily if Persis would invite more punishment by her reaction to this new distress.

“I bet they told you too!” Persis divined her thoughts. “We are going to get it up the back, aren’t we!” She clung to Mi-

randa and sobbed quietly against her breast. “Will this be the last… the last new thing they’ll want of us? There aren’t any other ways, are there?”

Miranda clasped her. “I think it’s the last bad hurdle we have to take.” She said thoughtfully. “I think we saw it all this afternoon. They seem to have taught Daphne everything I ever heard of or read about. Don’t fight them over it, Sweetheart. They will only break you with some awful punishment if you do. I wish I could tell you something about it. But I don’t know…”

“I haven’t always been the best little girl in the world.” Persis admitted, sniffing. “But I never got around to that. I thought people just talked about it for fun. I never really believed anyone had ever done it or ever could. Darling, will it hurt?”

“I’m as innocent as you are. I just don’t know! The only consolation we have it that we are valuable merchandise. I don’t think they will injure us. Good Heavens!” She exclaimed. “Here we are talking about this almost rationally. Making up our minds not to protest or struggle. We sure have gone a long way down the road. Patricia’s so damn right about everything! I’m beginning to feel I want to complete this course, or training, or whatever other bloody fool name they want to give it. I just hope and pray it’s someone like Wilbur Herman who buys us. Dry your eyes. We have a visitor.”

“Well, don’t look so thunderstruck.” Rhoda admonished as she tossed the two objects on a bed. “You have a few hints today, surely! I don’t have to go into detailed explanations,

do I? And don't give me any trouble—the boys would love to help. I don't suppose you want to sit on the bar all night wearing these things."

She picked up one of 'These things'. It came as close to being a Chastity belt as the girls could imagine. From the back of the downward loop a sizeable rubber penis protruded menacingly. Rhoda anointed it liberally with Vaseline and turned to Miranda: "Bend over and spread your legs. I'm not going to bother to unchain you. We can manage."

Rhoda "managed" competently. She demanded of Miranda only that she use her hands to pull her bottom cheeks as widely apart as she could contrive. The victim obeyed miserably quivering with shame and apprehension as the immense weapon was thrust against her and manipulated this way and that, slowly but with increasing pressure, until its head had penetrated the last defense of her sphincter muscle. Carefully but firmly Rhoda thrust its full length into the naked girl. To Miranda the intrusion within her felt as huge as a tree stump. Cautiously she obeyed Rhoda's command to stand up. A leather belt circled her waist snugly. Another passed down between her legs and up to join the belt at the small of her back. A padlock clicked shut. She stood, fingering her new harness. Her loins were firmly prisoned. She could never remove the tight bands or the probing prong of rubber that explored her rectum distending it enough to make movement painful. She watched curiously as Persis was similarly penetrated and confined.

"You'll soon stretch." Rhoda assured them briskly. "Move

about as much as you can. It helps. You'll have to wear these every night for awhile. There will be bigger ones too. Enlarging you like this saves injury when the boys go to work on you. When they get into you regularly we can dispense with these. In the meantime you'll wear them and you'll walk. If you think you can't walk, or think you have to refuse, we'll make you. Be easy on yourselves and speed the process up. The bigger you get those little holes of yours the sooner you stop wearing these."

When she was gone the two enslaved girls looked at each other, lips quivering. "If it wasn't so damn awful I could almost burst out laughing." Persis admitted. "It's just too preposterous! I can think of the most awfully vulgar things to say. I hurt a bit. Do you?"

"Yes. But I suppose no more than I can bear. Let's try the walking bit, shall we."

They actually laughed at their first essay. "I suppose it's mental." Miranda suggested. "You feel you can't possibly close your legs with that thing inside you. But you can: see! We don't have to waddle like a couple of ducks."

They experimented until bedtime. Crawling cautiously between the sheets young Persis observed resignedly "I've got a great big rubber dink up inside me now. I'll just have to try and believe that it won't be any different or much worse when Blessing impales me on that enormous thing he's always sticking up my front. Goodnight darling."

* * *

There were always interludes. All presumably relevant to the “Benson theory”. The girls had been ushered, one by one, into the room they all dreaded, ankles chained, hands tied behind their backs. Rosalie and Daphne were there: Daphne as much a captive as the rest of them. There were also two others whose existence in the House had been unsuspected. But there was a seventh girl on whom all eyes were focused. She stood alone, naked, closely tethered by her neck to the wall. Her face showed defiance. But it was easy to see she was afraid.

Patricia marshaled her six captives in line. Then took the stage. Motioning to the tethered girl she said: “Her name is Julia. Some of you already know her. Today Julia celebrates her three hundred and sixty-fifth day in training as a pleasure slave. A full year. She has totally failed to conform. We seem to have failed to persuade her. She is one of a very small minority on whom our methods fail to produce the desired result with a twelve month period. You will note that she is well striped with whip marks. But, as with yourselves, we have not resorted to ultimate brutalities. But we are no longer prepared to indulge her. She has been sentenced to a condition which has never yet failed to induce reason in stubborn or resentful personalities. Watching will give you all food for thought.”

The captives watched fascinated and horrified as Rhoda and Blessing fastened Julia on a bench, raised and spread her legs and then shaved every trace of the pubic triangle and underarms. Then they strapped her upright in a chair. She had borne the first indignity with indifference. But

now she fought. But they handled her easily. As one final constraint a band circled her neck so that she could not move even her head. When Rhoda approached with the scissors Julia broke and began to plead and to promise.

“A sentence once given is always carried out.” Patricia reminded her audience. “It is always easy to promise on the eve of punishment when it is too late. The time for co-operation is the day before.” She turned to Blessing. “Better gag her. Use tape so as not to cover any of her hair. I want her bald.”

And bald Julia became. First the shears then the lather and the razor. Rhoda left her nothing. It was a frightening transformation that left the watching girls shocked and subdued. Each pictured herself thus, and quailed at the thought.

But Julia’s penance was not yet done. Lather was daubed on her eyebrows. She strained against her bonds, eyes imploring. Tears fell as the blade did its work. When Rhoda finally used the towel the delinquent bore little resemblance to the girl who had stood before them such a little while before.

No time was lost. Julia’s legs were unstrapped. Blessing placed a small anvil on the floor and lifted her foot upon it. Heavy ugly iron chains were dragged in place and a massive shackle fitted snugly round the slender ankle. Blessing beat it snug and tight with a hammer, then inserted through the metal two iron rivets and flattened them securely with well placed blows. Her other ankle was then similarly welded into its iron fetter. The chain that

linked them was longer than commonly used. But its links were so heavy as to make walking even more difficult.

“The significance of the riveted leg irons is that she is going to wear them for a very long time.” Patricia explained. “Always she will know that there is no key for her chains. That no one can free her except with blacksmith’s tools. Come along now. I want you to see Julia’s new home.”

It was a real dungeon. Miranda cringed at the sight of its dark interior. A very small barred window was its only light. It was well underground. But the quality of the air told them it was artificially heated. They were crowded in a corner. Blessing deposited Julia on the stone floor. He had carried her rather than await her shambling dragging of her chains down stairs and along the passages. Rhoda then crossed the punished girls wrists behind her back and bound them firmly and carefully so as to completely deny her the use of her hands.

“You will notice the care taken in tying her wrists.” Patricia pointed out. “Julia will wear that thong for as long as she wears the chain. She is being punished. So it is only sensible that she be deprived of the pleasure and comfort of playing with herself with her fingers. A thong is so much more intimate and tantalizing than a chain. She will come to hate it. Since she is helpless someone will feed and care for her. But she will never be freed until her sentence is completed. The duration of her imprisonment like this is whatever space of time it may take for her hair to grow again.”

Rhoda ripped the tape from across Julia’s lips. Immediately

this was done the helpless girl sank awkwardly to her knees on the stone and, looking imploringly at Patricia, said humbly: “I’ll do anything—anything at all that you tell me to. Please don’t leave me here. I will obey you… I will!”
She was still kneeling piteously when they left her and Blessing slammed shut the heavy door and thrust home the bolts.
The incident provoked a sequel. It was hard for the girls to forget that somewhere below them in this house a chained and naked girl was crouched miserably on a stone floor in semi darkness. They often spoke of it to each other, always with a feeling of guilt at their inability to aid her. They spoke to Rhoda. But she refused to discuss the subject. So did Patricia. Their silence provoked Miranda to an impassioned outburst:
“It’s a beastly, cruel way to keep a girl imprisoned for so long!” Directly she had delivered the vehement complaint she knew she had once more overstepped tolerance. There was a moment’s silence. Then, at a nod from Patricia, Rhoda grasped Miranda’s hair and said quietly and purposefully: “Come along.”
It was an identical prison. There was nothing you could call it but a dungeon. Miranda guessed it to be very close to the one in which Julia was locked. She surveyed the bareness of the rough stone miserably as Rhoda thonged her wrists crossed at the small of her back. No word was spoken. Neither seemed to feel there was anything to say. Miranda knew it would be useless to plead or to ask questions. She stood forlorn, and cringed at the thud of the bolts as Rhoda

left. She had never felt so alone.

Fear fell upon her like an invisible blanket. Would she receive the same sentence as Julia! Would she be dragged out —perhaps tomorrow, and shaved into a total and devastating nudity! Desperately she marshaled reason to hold panic at bay. Her feet were still chained by the fetters she always wore. There had been no mention of the heavy riveted irons that had been fastened on Julia. Her sin surely had been only intemperance—not disobedience or revolt. True, her hands had been tied behind her back. But they were often tied. It might not be significant. But the dungeon defeated optimism. It was a dread and awful place. A girl locked within could have little hope. If her punishment was to fit her crime she wondered why she had not been thrust in with the girl she had defended. But, of course, that would have made the ordeal easier for each to bear. She took a few aimless steps this way and that, her ankle chain rattling angrily on the bare stone. Testing her wrists she knew she could never free them. She reflected wryly that it mattered little. There was nothing on which to use her hands if she had them. True, she might have used them to find some comfort within herself. But she had learned to distrust this temporary pleasure in such circumstances. It was hard on the shoulders to have them behind her all the time and it would be extra uncomfortable trying to sleep on the unyielding stone at night. She supposed that was why they were tied: as part of her punishment and to match Julia's condition. Resignedly she sought a dark corner and lowered herself to the floor. It was cold. Quietly

she began to cry.

The tears passed. They dried on her cheeks. There was no part of herself she could use to wipe them away. She tossed her head ineffectually a few times. Then leant back against the wall determined that her warm flesh should have its way against the rock so that the one small spot might provide a pathetic comfort. Tears had worked their usual magic. She considered her plight. Looking beyond her immediate distress she realized how little time she had had for self examination since her capture. She had been with Persis, or those who dealt with her, or enduring pain or indignity little conducive to thought. Her mind roved across the spectrum of her enslavement. The whip, the cords, the chains, the unrelenting sexual use of her body and her mouth. She looked beyond these things to the end. There had to be an End!

Miserably she realized that the end was within herself. It would come when she was conditioned. She hated the word trained. Yet it was apt. The point of any speculation she might make was to assess the time it might take to bring her to total subservience. She felt despair that she could not take a leap forward to the finale. She wished to reach it—that in itself must indicate that she had traveled well down the road. But the dungeon and the cords biting at her wrists told her how far she had yet to go. Why! She knew how willing she now was to say: “Yes, I will do this!” Or “Yes, I will do that! Ask what you will of me and I will do it!” But it was not enough. There was a part of her they did not yet own. They would! But not yet. It was infuriating

that only the whip and the chains could free her from herself.

She thought of Daphne Morris, and of Wilbur's Susan. Could she reach that felicity with slavery. That total abnegation of all she had been. Did it come when some last dream of freedom died. Was time the only solvent that would erase suburban inhibitions so that she might freely embrace the utter giving of herself. How strange to glimpse a new freedom in enslavement. Yet it was there: to give her body and her mind with joy. How comforting to reach so carefree a state. It was the only freedom she could ever know. As the days had passed they had taken with them her plans and hopes of escape. She tugged at her bound wrists and kicked the chain holding her ankles: thoughts of escape had become ludicrous. She rarely considered them any more. Perhaps from now on she could purge them resolutely from her mind. It would be better so. She would be happier.

It was the worst night of her life. No vestige of comfort was possible. Awake she trembled with cold and apprehension. Asleep she was plagued by nightmares. When Patricia entered the following morning she found a tear stained and distraught Miranda crouching uncomfortably on the stone and looking up at her with a pathetic hope.

"Not much fun, Ducky, was it!"

Almost without volition the captive struggled across the floor and laid her head against her Mistress's nylon clad thigh. The words burst from her: "I'm sorry, Pat. I really am. Please don't leave me here." Her voice broke into sobs,

“I can’t stand it. Whip me or put me on the bar or do whatever you like. But don’t leave me like this. I’ll obey. Anything, anything at all… just tell me…”
Patricia caressed the bowed head. Then bent and kissed the quivering lips. “Hush now! You know it’s not that easy.”
Miranda looked up piteously. “I’ll promise anything.”
“You are all mixed up, Love.” Pat assured her. “You arn’t in this dungeon because we want to extract a promise from you. You are here to be punished. This particular punishment isn’t over yet. In any case you inked your blotter. You should have met me submissively on your knees and with bent head. Slaveowners don’t want to be used as a handkerchief… Here, let me dry your eyes. My, you have had a bad night. Now you know what a dungeon’s like. There’s something about it that breaks a girl. I was never very heroic about it.”
Miranda started. Had she understood alright! Sitting back on her heels she looked up and faltered: “You mean… youv’e been put in a dungeon? Like this…?”
Patricia grinned. “Never you mind, Ducky. We are concerned with you at the moment. Just wanted to see how you’d weathered the night. You’ll last out. It’s the night that gets to you. There will be a few diversions for you during the day.” She chuckled. “You may even enjoy some of them. They’re habit forming. Remember that ‘on your knees’ bit. Might help you get out of here. And stop pleading. You’ll stay just as you are. Rhoda will attend to you.
The attention was almost clinical. Anywhere but in a dungeon it would have had an almost hospital like quality.

First Rhoda. Then the men. Each performing his daily violation of her body without regard for the pain and awkwardness of her arms bound behind her back. None made a move to free them. She did not ask. Remembering Pat's admonition she hastily struggled to a kneeling position each time she heard the bolts of the big door thrust back. Thus each of these who entered found a naked girl submissively awaiting their pleasure. Each sexual act was consummated in unsmiling silence. When she spoke she was not answered. She supposed it part of the dungeon punishment. But she knew within herself that if she was prisoned many days in this awful place she would eagerly welcome the attentions she had once loathed. All reaction was comparative: a matter of degree.

When Rhoda came the second time her mission was dual. Miranda unhappily contemplated the hated harness whilst she was being cleaned and tidied. She could do nothing for herself at all. With commiseration she thought of Julia with her ankles riveted into the massive irons, sitting alone, shorn of all hair, waiting endlessly for release. The thought of a companion in distress made her next imposition more bearable. She stood passive with widely stretched legs as Rhoda buckled the straps then, little by little with much care, thrust home into the captive's anus a much larger plug than any previously employed. She gasped uncertainly as it entered deep within her. It seemed impossible that she could accommodate so huge and unyielding a phallus. It hurt. But it had been well lubricated. She could not feel it tear. But she was shockingly

distended. Rhoda threaded the controlling strap and cinched it cruelly tight. With the final snap of the padlock her impalement became irrevocable. Gingerly she straightened up and edged her feet closer together. Once again she knew amazement at the flexibility of her sex.

"I suppose you know it hurts horribly. It's too big…!" She complained.

Rhoda wasted no words. Grinning, she unlocked the padlocked and, using her knee as leverage, drew both straps a notch tighter so that they now were cutting with real cruelty into both waist and crotch. She turned and left without a word or response to her victim's pleas.

In the next hour Miranda again and again reproached her uncurbed tongue. Would she never learn! The harness and that which it thrust within her had hurt enough. But tightened now as Rhoda had cinched it as a rebuke to her petulance it was a thing of torture cutting and confining her so that any motion at all brought pain. She essayed to resume her seat against the wall but abandoned the idea. It was less painful to stand. Pathetically she managed a hobbled walk around her prison in the hope the ugly thing the must bear might ease itself into her flesh. She could not tell if the motion helped or not. Her pain was constant.

It was a subdued and tearful young woman who knelt with bowed head when Patricia returned later in the day. Every instinct urged Miranda to plead. But she kept submissively silent.

"At ease, Ducky." The visitor said lightly. "Any position that's comfortable."

“There isn’t any.” Said Miranda dolefully.
“Suppose not, Love. But that thing will do wonders inside you. And since you are not going to enjoy being in here anyway it sort of kills two birds with one stone. Here, I’ll let it out a notch. Rhoda must have been mad at you. No sense having you in agony while I talk. That’s what I came for. A nice visit between us girls. See, I even brought a chair.”
Wonderingly the captive knew an immense relief at the easing of her bonds. She said a humble but heartfelt thank you and managed now to sit against the wall and watch curiously as Patricia set up the folding chair.
“Want your hands untied, Ducky?” Patricia laughed at the sudden rise of her captive’s head. “Nothing doing! You’ve been a bad girl. So the way you are is the best you can hope for. I’ll even cinch you up again when I go. But I am going to give you a bit of diversion. Something to think about when the cords bite and the harness cuts at you through the dark hours. I like you, so you are going to get the story of my life. There’s nothing exclusive about it, but it will while away a half hour for you sitting there in your chains and wondering how long this awfulness will last.”
Patricia grinned cheerfully and made herself as comfortable as the folding chair would allow. “My life really begins with Mr. Benson. There had been twenty years of it before I met him. But it was suburban stuff that doesn’t seem to matter much now. Pretty much like your’s, I expect. But Mr. Benson says that the suburbs put a stamp on a girl that makes her doubly provocative to anyone with erotic intent. He has a little private joke in which he calls me his

“suburban Sue” and tells me that if it wasn’t for him I’d be a housewife in Wimbledon with two bilious children and a husband with a receding chin. It shocks me to realize how right he is. It’s not that girls like us don’t have any sense or any breadth of view. But we are scared to reach out and touch the basics. We don’t like to lift things too high or look too deeply underneath. Suburbia reared us to know that we might see things that wern’t nice. Think about that word nice. I bet your mama used it often enough. You and I knew we were marketable merchandise. But we had to go to the marriage bed in a “Nicer” way. So, remembering your own “niceness” you can understand the profound effect it had on me when I was raped.”

Patricia mused quietly, evidently enjoying her audience’s quickened interest.

“I think in the U.S.A. they have a name for it: “A Gang bang.” Even there it’s considered pretty bad. No one expects a girl to be quite the same afterwards. At the time I was going with a fellow named Cedric. Mr. Benson roared with laughter when I told him. He says the same is vintage Suburbia. Anyway, Cedric and I had spent a day in the country. It was getting dark when we started back. To avoid traffic Cedric decided to thread through a lot of narrow side roads. We hadn’t gone far before we saw the road block. There were several motorcycles piled on top of each other. We thought it was an accident. We stopped.

“It happened just the way it does in the movies. Suddenly our little car was surrounded by a group of husky louts—real yobs. They affected an exaggerated politeness, inviting

us out to “Join the party”. When we refused they opened the doors and dragged us out. There were eight of them, so we never had a chance. I had good cause to remember their number… Poor Cedric did his best, his best being to expostulate and threaten in an absurd make believe Eton accent—you know the one. Suburbia keeps it for special emergencies. They loved it and brutalized him horribly while two of them held me. They ended up by knocking him unconscious. Then I became the focus of attention.

“They were artists in their way. They got a tremendous charge out of continuing their affectation of courtly manners. I remember their leader bowing and dusting the air with an imaginary handkerchief and asking in a shocking cockney voice if I would be so kind as to stand in the center of the little clearing beside the road, round which they had formed a circle, and strip.

“I was too terrified to even speak. I just stood there with my arms tightly gripped staring at him in wide eyed loathing. My mouth was probably wide open too. What happened then was an absurd parody of that song about Claude Duval the Highwayman. My arms were freed and the chief Yob took my right hand, raised it to his lips, and then with more bows and sweeping motions of a plumed hat he didn’t have led me to the center spot as though we were indeed to dance that saraband in the moonlight. Instead, I was invited to “Doff them togs, Lidy, and let’s ’ave a dekker at what yer’ got!”

“I ran. It would have been pitiful to watch. Whichever way I went one of them caught me and threw me back. Finally I

just stood there panting, cringingly aware of the leering faces. You could say I was surrounded by a ring of lust. Once more I was invited to strip naked.

"Well, you know what suburbia thinks of stripping naked. I think even now it's considered a fate worse than death. All very well for chorus girls and some African tribes, but definitely not for Laburnam Grove or Wordsworth Crescent. On the other hand, right then, I couldn't bear the thought of the filthy hands tearing at me—and tearing the clothes too! I was still enough within the world to consider that I might need them in some sort of afterwards. Surely there would be an afterwards… Perhaps that was all they really wanted: just to see me naked. After all eight of them could hardly… Or could they!

"So I started to strip. Looking back on it now I realize I put on a marvelous show for them. I had to will every button and every clip. Whenever I found even that slow motion faltering I had only to look up and see the intensity of their eyes to enable me to drop one more flimsy bit of nothing on the grass. When I was quite naked I had to battle that compulsion that I have watched in you: should you, with only two hands, try and cover your tits and your triangle, or just admit defeat and let them have a damn good look. I chose the latter. Cringing seemed so ineffectual and would only provoke coarse humor or cruelty. So I clasped my hands behind my neck, stuck my breasts out as far as they would go, tucked in my tummy and slowly rotated so that each of the circle could get a good look. I was still hoping that was all they wanted.

“It was my only victory with them. They clapped—I think quite spontaneously. For a moment I knew elation. Then things happened fast. My sorry little heap of clothing was supplemented by a heavy leather jacket. I was grabbed and laid on my back with the heap of garments raising my loins into an inviting prominence. When my ankles were grabbed, pulled and stretched and held my suburban psyche shrank from the certainly that the lips within my pubic hair were open for all to see. I was then very competently and very thoroughly raped by each of the eight of them.

“Oh I wasn’t a virgin! Suburbia always closes one eye at that little concession to what they would probably describe as “Mother nature”. My captors explored this possibility right at the start by probing with a finger. They didn’t seem to hold this lapse from grace against me. In fact, by the standards that I suppose govern such situations, they were quite kind. Their Leader had first go at me, of course. But instead of just jumping on and plunging his weapon right into something that was bone dry from fear he started to manipulate it with his hand whilst two other members of his gang helped by each busily working on one of my nipples with their mouth. I couldn’t move. I was held tight. Spread-eagled. They made everything last. They were expert. After awhile—I think it was the third of them working on me at the time, I had an orgasm. After that, every time I moaned and heaved they cheered and clapped. I couldn’t control myself… I don’t have to tell you…

“After number eight that should have been the end. But it

wasn't. I just lay there with my eyes closed not knowing or much caring any more. After all I had suffered the ultimate! Suburbia could be soiled no further. That's what I thought until I was hauled to my feet and dragged over to a tree. There was a good deal of chuckling and some suggestions and references that I did not understand. Then the yobs holding my arms backed me against the trunk, ropes were knotted round my wrists, I was lifted, my arms raised at the back and fastened so that when the hands were withdrawn I hung there by my wrists with my arms painfully wrenched, separated and held high. They then completed their piece de resistance by knotting a rope from ankle to ankle behind the tree and pulling it as tight as they could get it in order to stretch my legs as widely apart as possible and place the maximum stress on that portion of a girl that always is the center of interest at times like these. I found myself spread-eagled once again. But this time upright suspended against a tree. I hurt all over. They did not care.

"Then it started all over again. They referred to this new technique as "A knee trembler". I was certainly beautifully available. No doubt my pinioned nudity appealed to something sadistic in them, anyway they all provided implements fully as rigid and rampant as the time before. So potent were they that when the eight had taken their turn I had little hope that they would not start on me all over again. The ropes and the strain were hurting wickedly, but there was nothing to stop them going on and on…

"But their Leader gave a brief order: "O.K. you blokes,

time." They gathered their motorbikes, then one of them noticed Cedric had disappeared. It didn't seem to bother them. But it gave me hope. He had evidently crept away unseen while the rest of us were too occupied to notice. They started to leave. None gave me any further attention. I suddenly realized I was going to be left hanging helpless against that tree. I called out: "Please..." But the only response was from the Chief Yob who turned and grinned at me and said: "You bitches have it too good. Won't 'urt yer ter see as 'ow other 'alf lives." They roared off down the road. Soon there was just silence and me. In its way that silence scared me more than anything else that had happened that night.

"You know what it's like, don't you. You're naked, you hurt, you can't move, you can't get free. You wonder when and if anyone is ever going to come and help you. Well, with me spread-eagled against my tree, it was a damn sight worse than anything we do to you here. At least you know we will let you loose sometime. You can take comfort in knowing that you are merchandise that won't be damaged beyond a point. But I didn't have any of those assurances. I could hang there until I died. Care could go by and never see me. I was well off the road. I was crying brokenly and quite panic stricken when Mr. Benson walked over and stood surveying me.

"I hadn't even heard the car. Being Benson you could be sure it was the kind that wouldn't make much noise. Once more I must have put on that act of the wide eyes and open mouth. In that place he just didn't seem real.

“Mr. Benson is a business man. He is immaculate. He is polished. In some small areas he almost shines. In a sense he is almost anonymous because there are thousands like him in the City. But the fact that, even after all this time and after all we have done together, I still call him Mister probably describes him better than anything else I could tell you.

“He stood there looking at me, carefully considering the situation. But betraying no hint that he found it unusual. Then, in the clipped considered voice he mostly uses, said: “You are a remarkably beautiful young woman.” He made no move to free me.

“This should have been my cue to exclaim: ‘Oh, please let me loose!’ But I didn’t. I suppose that’s another clue about Mr. Benson: you wait for him to initiate. My mind was pretty much a blank. Too much had happened too quickly. So I just hung there, as naked as a girl can get, and waited while he gave me a thorough looking over from my toes to my hair. But there was nothing concupiscent. He might as well have been viewing a picture in a showing at the Tate. Although I did not know it at the time that was exactly how he was seeing me. He then asked, quite casually: “Why are you in this position?”

“Had it been anyone else I might have spat at them and demanded: Let me loose you dummy, don’t just stand there! But not with Mr. Benson. I told him carefully just how I had got in that position. He nodded, looked around as though checking the probability of what I had told him. Then, thoughtfully he left my range of vision behind my

tree. A few moments later my ankles fell free. He was most careful with my hands, allowing the rope to loosen little by little until my feet touched the ground. I tried to stand. But couldn't manage. He knelt and placed my head on his knee. Then, with a silk handkerchief that probably cost five guineas, proceeded to wipe the tears and dirt from my cheeks. Then placed it in my hand and told me to do the rest before dressing. I suddenly sensed a tremendously good feeling between us.

"I became his secretary. A few days after I got the office key I also became his Mistress. I could tell you a lot about poor Cedric, and the police, and the gang that nobody tracked down, and about persuading my family that it was time for me to have my own flat. But none of it's important. Mr. Benson looked after everything, and thought of everything. When I had hung before him naked on my tree I had sensed that he was not just ordinary. He certainly was not!" Patricia paused and smiled down at her captive audience. "Bored, Ducky?"

"Good Heaven's, no!" Miranda gasped. "I'd never have dreamed… You…"

Patricia chuckled. "Yes, even me! Doesn't show, does it. It won't unless you go around feeling guilty. It's one of the lessons we have to teach you girls. But you know all about that…! Want me to continue?"

"Oh yes please! But isn't that the end?"

"Actually just the beginning, Ducky. Never underrate our Mr. Benson. I thought it was the end myself. A wonderful, beautiful, fairytale end. He was so good to me, and so good

for me. He showed me the world of money and what you could do with it. We did everything you can think of together—and I don't mean just in bed. He taught me a hundred things that suburbia has never even heard of. I fell in love with him. I suppose, in our own particular unique way I'm still in love with him, came to know a lot about his affairs. He was in to everything. But most of it is still a mystery to me. I'm content that it should be. But I learned enough that was strange and incredible so that when he told me what he wanted me to do I was neither shocked, hurt or repelled. Anything emanating from Mr. Benson held a magic fascination. At first I saw only the superficial, the adumbration of something quite grotesque when voiced in a business office: and that's where he chose to tell me. And I realized it was the proper place; for the uncharted ocean on which I was about to embark was a very businesslike concept indeed. It would deal in costly merchandise to be sold at a great profit. Mr. Benson wanted me to become the prototype. The first really perfect slave girl."

Pat paused and surveyed her captive with a wry twist of the lips. "This is your cue to exclaim 'What a bastard!' or something of the sort. It's funny, it never occurred to me then or now. Again, it's the Benson magic."

"But after you'd been lovers!" Miranda was outraged.

"Well, you have to understand the exact situation between us. I was in love with him. He had some special kind of feeling for me. He still has. But it's not love in the romantic sense. I think Mr. Benson would feel that romantic love

was altogether too untrustworthy. You must understand, too, he was telling me of a business concept that was entirely voluntary. I don't think he had any idea that I might refuse—nor did I have. None! In fact, as I first glimpsed it I thought it a piece of cake. Maybe even fun. But as he explained more and more I began to see that little Patricia might have to grit her teeth a bit here and there.

"Benson knew the market was there for the kind of exotic product he envisaged. There remained an experiment: Me. As he put it: Could Suburban Sue become a Mohammedan Houri! Could one personality be erased and another transplanted. He and his customers wanted nothing of a broken and scarred remnant of femininity. That would be easy to obtain. What they wanted was the Male dream. Could she be conditioned without being destroyed!

"Right there Benson found himself up against the human factor. The same factor that has put you where you sit chained in this dungeon. The same impediment that prevents you being ready for sale tomorrow. A girl can't change overnight. Certainly not the kind of girl desired. I had supposed that all I had to do was leap gladly into the role—and prove how good an actress I was and show others how easy it was to be a slave. But as he explained, and as I examined myself and what was required of me I began to wonder. In the first place I hadn't been kidnapped. In the second place I was only too willing to do anything he asked of me. I asked him how, with me as the subject, the experiment could be valid.

"He countered by asking me to name what was in my mind

a very large sum of money. Unthinkingly I said twenty thousand pounds. Such a figure had always seemed to me an ultimate beyond my wildest dreams. Without flickering an eyelash he nodded and told me what I faced.

"He made an equation out of it. I would be sent here. Rhoda and Blessing would train me. They would be unrelenting and merciless within their terms of reference. I would be here six months. Then I would return and we would resume our existing relationship. If I could stand the gaff, and if, at the end of it, Rhoda and Blessing, and others, were convinced that I had indeed become the perfect slave girl, the Pleasure Slave of every man's dream, I would receive the twenty thousand pounds. Rhoda and Blessing might consider me trained before the six months was the most that would be imposed on me. Whether I won or lost it was believed that I would return to Mr. Benson with ideas, reactions and knowledge that none of us possessed. Thus, awful as it might be for me, the Project as a whole would pin from what I could tell them. During my imprisonment I would see no familiar face. I would be at the mercy of people who, then, were total strangers. That twenty thousand pounds was a stroke of genius. In the equation it equaled your hope of freedom. It would be the thing I would long for all the time I was being punished into being something quite different from Suburban Sue. If I never did pass the tests it would be because Suburban Sue was the strongest of the lot of us. Stronger than me…"

Patricia yawned and stretched. Then, with a pixie grin, demanded. "Make a guess. Who won?"

Miranda did not have to guess. She knew. “You,” she said with conviction.

“You and I are alike.” Pat conceded. “I’ve had a feeling for you ever since you came. You’ll win too. Right now you are battling good Old Sue just as I had to do.” She mused in retrospect. “I’d no idea that girl Susan had as much staffing in her as she had.” She looked at the chained girl compassionately. “Puzzling and frustrating, isn’t it!”

For a little while there was silence. Each girl busy with her own thoughts. When Pat resumed her story Miranda could detect in her voice that she was feeling her way into a description of emotions not easy to catalogue. She did so with a mixture of humor and sadness. Perhaps the sadness was for suburban Sue.

“We decided the nicest way for me to enter my “Training” would be for me to take a couple of extra strong sleeping pills. I did. When I woke up I was here in a cell naked and with my feet and hands chained and a metal collar locked round my neck.”

Patricia smiled reminiscently. “It was absurd: and you will understand this because it’s happened to you. It should have been different with me. I’d entered the adventure fully aware. But my instant reaction was shock, anger and fear. Without fully realizing it at the time I was coming face to face with that suburban female who had never allowed anyone to see her naked. Nakedness is basic. It has no defense. It does something to a girl.

“I decided to see if the cell door was locked. Maybe I could explore. But half way there my ankle was snubbed by a

chain to the wall. My other chains hung on me like a ton weight. I was seared. By the time Rhoda showed up I had worked myself into a fine old state of indignation.

"Throughout my discussions with Mr. Benson I had sort of worked out a script as to how I would behave when I woke up after the pills. I was going to give them a demonstration of what a Pleasure slave could and should be. But when I came face to face with Rhoda that script just disintegrated. I didn't like her and she didn't like me. After unlocking the cell door she came in and stood and smirked. I fumed. But I remembered I was a slave girl. I said nothing. Then, suddenly without warning, she slapped my face. Without any conscious volition, the act was instinctive, I tried to slap her back. But got all tangled up in my chains so that all I accomplished was to look and feel ridiculous. But I still had my voice and some small remnants of suburban dignity. "Take these damn things off me!" I demanded in about the same tone of voice Catherine the Great would have used on one of the lesser housemaids.

"Rhoda wasted no time. My struggles were quite ineffectual. I soon found myself strapped over a trestle with my naked bottom well stuck up in the air. I couldn't move. You know what a demeaning position it is. And you know, too, how much more a cane or whip hurts when you are stretched like that. I didn't know anything about such things right then. But I soon found out. I kept very busy assuring her that she'd be in big trouble when Mr. Benson found out how she was treating me. She just gave a rotten sneering laugh and said: "You silly little Bitch. I was going

to whip you anyway. Just so we can get to know each other. But the first thing you do is give me a good reason. So it'll be double. You'll learn!"

Patricia looked at Miranda's strained and uncomfortable nudity with sympathy. "I don't really have to tell you about what happened then, do I?" She gave a rueful shake of her head. "But I still think she was pretty rough on a novice. She used a whippy cane. Even the first stroke disorganized me completely. I knew she was going to kill me. Each successive slash took me further and further away from the security of Mr. Benson and all my good intentions about being a slave girl. By about the sixth I had bid farewell to that twenty thousand pounds and was viewing my six month time limit as not much different from six years or six centuries. All I believed in was atrocious pain and panic.

"It's the not knowing, isn't it! If only they'd tell you the number you were to get you can call on some sort of defenses and grit your teeth. But as that damn thing cut into me and the pain spread and spread and then the next and the next so that it built up and there was never time to catch your breath and then a particularly awful stroke would bed itself on top of another so that I would surge against the straps and scream and scream until you were quite sure that bloody cane would bite at your flesh for ever and ever without end. Whenever Rhoda contrived to make the tip curl down between the crease I was quite sure I was in the hands of a madwoman and that something had gone wrong with Mr. Benson's plan.

“She gave me twenty. The last one across the thighs. I suppose to let me know I did have other places to offer besides my bottom. Even before I had stopped moaning and making a fuss she thrust her slit against my mouth and told me I knew what to do with it. I knew some and guessed the rest. I did it the best I knew how. I’d have done anything rather than get one more stroke. I had never in my life felt more degraded, or more helpless, or more resentful. If only I could somehow get to Mr. Benson.

“Well, Ducky, I suppose you are wondering about Rhoda and me now. No animosity? It’s quite simple. After my training was over we all laughed about it—even me! Rhoda had been briefed by Mr. Benson on his Suburban Sue theory. He wanted to make my training as valid as it could be with a willing victim. So it was Rhoda’s job to never allow me the initiative and, at every opportunity, to provoke in me those suburban responses which you, for instance, are trying to cope with. She was clever at it. Within a week I had lost touch with reality. The twenty thousand, the six months, they had all vanished. Even Mr. Benson had vanished into some limbo of the past. All I wanted was to escape. Surely there had to be some way...! Sound familiar to you, Ducky?”

“As a budding Pleasure Slave it took me a long time to get back on my feet. For the first days and weeks I was just fighting to survive, and thinking desperately of ways and means of getting free. I could do nothing to please Rhoda or Blessing. Whatever I did or said earned me a whipping. Even when I tried to be obedient I never managed it to

their satisfaction. They outraged my sensibilities with that same harness you are wearing round your middle now. Oh yes," Patricia grinned at Miranda's look of incredulity, "The plugs got bigger and bigger, and I always knew for sure that this time I could never take it. But I always did—or, at least, my rectum took it. They had a cute little idea, too. I had to kiss the blasted thing before and after. I suppose, now, I'm as well stretched in that department as any girl alive." She laughed, "Look at it like having your ears pierced. You never know when some nice man may give you diamond earrings…"

For some time Patricia mused quietly about the feat. Then laughed ruefully. "Poor Suburban Sue. She just couldn't adjust. Every time I managed to sit on her Rhoda would spring something on us that would make her come up fighting. So I spent a lot of time sitting on the bar, hanging by my wrists, standing in the stocks, and being whipped and caned in every conceivable position. I had more stripes on me than a tiger. The worst was when they dragged me back after my escape.

"It was rigged, of course. Just as we rigged it on you and Persis for Old Wilbur Herman's benefit. They let me get across the Park and all the way to the wall before they caught me and dragged me here at the end of a rope. To make me tractable on the way home Rhoda tied my elbows together behind my back with a piece of wire. It was a burning agony. To get rid of it I would have ran back to my prison if they had wanted me to. I had to be punished, of course! They hung me up by the thumbs. I won't have it

done to you! It's awful! It's not just the pain, but as you swing there suspended with your toes well off the floor you become quite sure that you'll never have any thumbs again. They had a small finesse that helped circulation every hour; but was bloody awful in itself. They shoved a table under me. This relieved the weight on my thumbs—though I still couldn't lower them because they strapped my ankles wide apart on the table. I had to sit there with my hands up and my feet stretched so wide it hurt while they carefully whipped the insides of my thighs. That position is ideal for the purpose. I say carefully because they used a light cane and measured each stroke so that it cut into my flesh all the way from my knee to my crotch. They did this every hour all the rest of that day. Each time they asked me gravely if I intended to escape again. I still hate myself for the humble way in which I assured them, in between screaming, that I would never dream of such a thing.

"As the weeks went by I lost all track of time and identity. Suburban Sue began to get a bit hazy. But the other Me was still only struggling to get born. I began to have a sincere wish to please. I wanted the pain to stop and there was no other way. I was disoriented. I had lost direction. An awful thought was always present: had I been forgotten! Had something gone awry! Was I still under Benson's wing, or had I been kidnapped by someone else. There was a fear of the unknown. Oddly enough it was modified by good old Sex.

"Oh yes; I got the sex training! A hooded man would come

in to wherever I was chained and I had to learn and demonstrate the finer points of pleasing him. They started me out ministering to that huge rigid thing they always arrived with and finally I graduated to bending over and at last being thankful for that damn plug I'd hated so much. But through it all there was a part of me inviolate. They never made me lay down and open my legs. No one of them ever violated me there or even touched it. Mr. Benson had assured me this would be so. That part of me was wholly his. No man would touch it. No man ever did! Rhoda played little games. But that was all. I never really knew who or what the hooded men were. I suspected hat half the time it was simply Blessing. They doubly confused me in this by sometimes blindfolding me so that I had to be guided and did what I must do in the dark. Not that it mattered. But I did get comfort from the fact that my bushy triangle was never penetrated. It revived my hope that Mr. Benson was still out there watching over me.

"One day I was given to a woman. I never did discover who she was. Or who the others were who followed at other times. She had personality, a good figure. She may have been forty, but didn't look it. She spent a day with me. A day of intense instruction and demonstration. I learned surprising things. I'd given up resisting anything by then. But I wouldn't have resisted her anyway. I liked her. I had been given a lot of freedom with her. Just my ankles chained with a long linkage that didn't impede anything she wanted me to do. She stripped as naked as I was. At the end of a few hours of feminine affection I adored her. She

was so wonderful after all I had been through! As she was dressing to leave I committed the unforgivable: I asked her to take a message to Mr. Benson telling of my striated skin, and imploring release.

"The mistake was mine. She had never pretended to be other than one of them. I had allowed a day's sympathy to get the better of me. Rhoda came to me later and repeated, word for word, the message I had sent. Then quite without the usual sarcasms or sneers, asked me what sort of punishment I thought would fit my stupidity.

"The tone of voice she used didn't make the question sound too rhetorical. I realized that she was wanting me to share her problem of laying Suburban Sue to rest in a grave from which she would not be constantly re-emerging. I found myself suddenly wanting very much to bring this about myself." Patricia gave her bound companion a sympathetic grin, "I know you are at this point, Ducky. The dream of escape gets frayed around the edges and dissipates. You glimpse a new life in another direction. But I was expected to ask for a punishment, and I knew it must be severe. It's a H... of a spot for a girl to find herself in. I squirmed inside and out.

"Sounds quite absurd. But Rhoda and I then had our first real girl to girl discussion. She almost made it cozy and intimate. But it was never allowed to stray from the subject of the manner in which a silly girl like Pat would be punished for being a silly girl. I don't suppose I contributed much of value about ways and means. But I did show a wish to do better and manage to be sincerely contrite. It

was decided that I had quite enough whip marks on me already, so I was to be incarcerated in the double stocks for a period of which I would not be informed. I remember that I followed her in quite a sprightly fashion as she led the way to one of the most miserable punishments I have ever known. Think about it, Ducky, it could happen to you.

"First she sat me on the bench. Or, more correctly, on a seat size hole in the bench under which there was a can. It startled me and gave me a clue on what I was in for. But I was very co-operative and sat quiet as she unlocked the shackles from my ankles, then dutifully thrust my feet into the circles provided when she raised the bar and watched as she lowered it so that my ankles were, once more, tightly confined. This time in wood. My prisoned feet were widely placed in their circlets. This enabled the stocks to be quite close so that I was able to bend forward and obediently fit my wrists into the upper set that were about at the same height as were my bowed shoulders. The bar fell. The padlock clicked. And there poor Pat sat unable to do much of anything. Rhoda inspected all of me and nodded in satisfaction. Then made the only motion of affection she had ever shown me. She patted me on the cheek, gathered my hair and threw it over one raised arm beside my bowed head. Then left. The awful bolts thudded home—you've heard them often enough. But it's an awful sound! I was alone on my bench. I could not move.

"You have sat in the ordinary stocks. You know how bad even they can be if your hands are tied behind your back. Well, the real punishment of the double stocks is immobil-

ity. If only you could move! Even just a little. But you can't! First of all your legs are so widely separated, with your little hairy bush well displayed, that you can't get any purchase or leverage out of them. Then, in order to prison your hands, you have to bend well forward to reach the bar. When they are locked in the bar you can't move yourself either forward or back. You can't change position on the bench where your bottom is fitted neatly into the aperture. All you can move is your head. After you have raised that a few times to look around and to examine your plight your hair begins to fall back down and cover your eyes so you start tossing. You make a full time job of tossing your hair until you tire and just let it fall where it wants to. But, of course, the real killer is the bent back and the hands and arms that try and give you relief but can't. After a couple of hours it was agony. Rhoda paid no attention to my pleas when she gave me water. It was all I got. When night came I just sat on and on in the darkness. For a few moments I would fall asleep. But the pain always woke me and I'd go through it all again. I cried a lot. In the morning Rhoda changed the pail, washed my face and gave me more water. My punishment turned out to be twenty-four hours. I sat through every agonizing moment of it. When she released me I flopped over on the floor, but managed to clasp one of her feet and promise I'd do anything, anything, anything…"

"Actually I kept that promise. I did what I was told. I acquired charm and poise, even under punishment. I got a good feeling when I could tell that Rhoda and Blessing

were pleased with me. I got so I could tell. A big part of being a slave girl is to be able to sense your Master or Mistress's reactions. I still didn't know what time had passed or where I was in the six months. But I did know I was getting good at all the things I was supposed to be getting good at. I knew that I now had a profound effect on the hooded men, even before I touched them. I had given up worrying about where I was emotionally. I was going to be a pleasure slave and I didn't want anything to come between me and that. I even scorned an offer from one of the men to aid me in an escape. I promptly reported the incident to Rhoda and told her I didn't want to escape. I have learned since that his intent was genuine. It had not been a trap. But it didn't matter then or now. The next man I was given to got a really super duper show. I gave my Art and my talents everything I had. I was curious to see if he'd make me an offer too. He didn't. He didn't need to. He took his hood off. It was Mr. Benson.

"To show you how well trained I was, I didn't bat an eye. After the flash of recognition and the surge of gladness that rose up within me I just continued on with the things I had been taught to do. But I must have exuded a radiance, for in a few moments he laughed and raised me to my feet. I let myself go. I don't think any two people ever loved each other more than we did then. He told me I had passed the test a month early and that he was very proud of me. He also gave me a check for twenty thousand pounds. I remember how we laughed because I was naked and didn't have anywhere to put it."

Miranda sighed. “A happy ending,” she said. “You’re lucky. I wish I could be half as lucky. What happened then?”

“Mr. Benson, Rhoda, Blessing and I all made scads of notes and memos. From them we perfected, if that’s the word, what you have heard me refer to as Mr. Benson’s system, or theory. Some changes were made within this house to accommodate the ‘Trainees’. I was given a partnership in the enterprise and made Directress. Since Rhoda and Blessing understand the situation it is actually an easy job. They know that I am Mr. Benson’s number one girl. The first graduate of this house. His first totally possessed female. I also remain his Mistress in the accepted sense of the word. We are deeply attached to each other. We have discussed marriage. But it really doesn’t matter. He has made me very secure.”

Patricia rose and folded the chair. “So there you are Ducky. End of story. End of visit. Dungeon for you. Some bookwork for me.”

“How long will it take me?” Miranda asked pathetically.

“Not terribly long, Sweetheart.”

Miranda looked up doubtfully. “And now…?”

“Yes! Now I cinch those buckles and leave you to your punishment. On your feet now! You knew I wouldn’t counter any infliction Rhoda saw fit to make.”

Awkwardly Miranda struggled upright. She did not plead. It would do no good. She didn’t even want to. She stood passive in the most helpful position for her harness to be tightened. Patricia heaved and tugged. The bands cut into the captive loins. The prong thrust deep within her relent-

lessly. Then she was turned round by tender hands and a warm kiss lingered on her lips. As Patricia opened the door she turned and as a seeming afterthought, said: “You are going to lose Persis. You act as a crutch to each other. It is better that you be trained separately.”
Suddenly she was gone. There was the thud of bolts.

* * *

It had become a familiar situation, Miranda reflected wryly. The lariat expertly felling her to the ground. The competent possession of her body by Wilbur Herman. The half amused smile on his face and his oddly half apologetic quip: ‘To the victor the spoils.’ The crossing of her wrists behind her back and the biting thongs that held them there. Then this period of meditation. Herman, satisfied, gazing at some far horizon of his own. Her own mind, today, chaotic.
Her time in the dungeon had been limited to two nights. The following day had been normal and had given her rest. But she missed Persis. Unhappily she acknowledged the validity of their separation. Each had enabled the other to cling to a past now best forgotten. She sensed a new determination in all who dealt with her. An unspoken inference that it was best to look forward instead of back. Crouched through the dismal dungeon night she had thought much of all Patricia had told. A clear message was there: surely, by accepting the realities of her condition, she could acquit herself as well and as rapidly.

That morning there had been an air of purpose when Rhoda came to ready her for what was now laughingly referred to as 'The Herman Hunt'. Her question if Persis would join them met with silence. But the absence was replaced by dismay when Rhoda had produced the hated harness and ordered her abruptly to bend over so that the huge implement could be thrust deep within her. She fought back expostulation as the straps were tightened. But with the final snap of the padlock her courage had failed.

"I can't possibly run with this thing locked on me." She faltered.

"You can!" Rhoda assured her grimly, "And you will! You best get this job speeded up. The run will do it."

Miranda most urgently wished to be obedient. As she was led to the starting point she was amazed that the brisk pace did not discommode her more than it did. The sensation was odd and not pleasant. Walking was possible. But to run a race…!

"Herman will catch me before I get round the Lake." She pointed out reasonably.

Rhoda shrugged. "It's up to you, Dearie. But remember, the same rules apply. If he brings you down before thirty minutes you get fifty strokes when he brings you back."

"But that's not fair!"

Rhoda had turned and placed a hand, almost a friendly hand on the captive's shoulder. "You are a big girl now." She said quietly. "The fifty strokes will be with a whip and they will be hard strokes that will leave you marked. Now run!"

The harness had hurt cruelly with each leap. The thing within her being never left her unaware of its penetration. But she had fought and tried, by every expedient she could devise, to evade capture. But her prisoned loins could not achieve her usual speed. Even in dodging around bushes she had not been as agile. The run had been relatively short. She was positive she had survived nowhere near the deadline. At Herman's pleasure she would be led back naked and helpless to the Whipping Post.

"Do you know what's in store for me?" She asked him abjectly.

He did not turn. But simply said "Yes" in a tone she could not interpret.

"You think I deserve to be whipped so terribly?" She could not keep the anger from her voice.

He turned to her now and said somberly: "It's the rule of the game, Honey."

"But surely not with this punishment locked inside me!"

"Is it that bad?"

"When you used the key they gave you and loosened the strap so we could…" Miranda flushed scarlet and groped for words. "So we could… do what we did. And when you tightened it and locked it again you must have seen the chafe marks. Some of them are almost bleeding."

"Well, Honey, don't blame me. I ain't the management. Maybe you think I should lie about the time. But they know." He chuckled. "I think there's a couple of bets going back there. They were watching through a glass."

"Yes, but they will listen to anything you say… Anything

you wish to say."
"Well, what do you want me to say?" Herman's voice held irritation.
Miranda felt cruelly alone and close to tears. Yet Wilbur Herman was her only weapon. Her only hope! Fifty lashes was more than her courage could contemplate. The post and the cords were so close… She could almost feel the scalding lashes curling round her nudity.
"You like me, don't you?" she asked tentatively.
"Look, Honey, I've just had that from you. And I can have it again if I choose." He grinned suddenly. "Might even say it ain't your'n to offer."
Again the flash of scarlet. "You know I didn't mean that!"
"Alright then! So I like you! Where does that leave us?"
"You could tell them I never had a chance. That today wasn't fair!"
"What you want is for me to tell 'em not to whip you?"
"Yes." Miranda looked at him piteously: "Am I asking that much…?"
Wilbur swiveled and gave her his full attention. "What you are really asking is that I interfere with Benson's and Pat's business. You've had a bad day, and I can imagine that losing young Persis hurts like H… But, don't you see, the hazard of losing this race and getting whipped has always existed! Any day you or Persis might have trod on somethin' with them bare feet and got a limp that slowed you down. What's the difference?"
"This harness is the difference."
Herman sighed. "O.K." He conceded. "I'll allow that if I'd set

the handicap you'd have got more of a break. But maybe they have a reason. They don't usually go off half cocked. Maybe they want to smarten you up. Can't tell but what they think you got a whipping coming?"

"But why such a terrible punishment. I'm scared!"

"Look, Honey, I'm not that fussy about talking of whipping a girl 'bout like we was discussing curry-combing a horse. But I've always known what Benson's doin' here, and about him and Pat. I've always figured that, while it ain't much fun while it lasts, at least half you gals will end up a damn sight better off than if you'd never got brought here. Way it looks to me with you right now I think you are just plumb seared 'bout somethin' that's a'goin' to hurt real bad. But in a week you'll have forgotten all about it and be well on your way."

Miranda felt defeated. She was so terribly alone. Her time in the dungeon and the loss of her beloved Persis had taken their toll. The brutal object locked into her innermost recess had nagged at her for days. The strap cutting beneath her loins inflicted constant pain. Why must they thrust so much at her! She wanted so desperately to reach the perfection they, too, desired. Now she was to be whipped. Experience told her she could never stoically endure fifty lashes. She would break under it. She would say or do things that would take her back, not forward. She felt the tears start down her cheeks, but paid them no heed. She had long ago learned the futility of striving to deal with tears when her hands were tied behind her back.

Looking up through the salty mist she met Wilbur Her-

man's eyes intent upon her own. Then heard her voice, quite spontaneously, ask: "Please, won't you buy me?"

For moments a silence fell upon them, their eyes locked. Then Herman grinned and shook his head deprecatingly. "Knew you was goin' to come up with that. And don't think I ain't flattered. But I suspect you remember what I told you 'bout young Susan… She's got it good, so why not you. Right?"

Miranda's shoulders fluttered hopelessly. "Yes, I suppose that's part of it."

"What's the other part?"

"I think you are kind. You pretend you're not. But you are."

"Honey, supposin' I do like you say. What do I do with young Susan?"

Miranda sniffed. "Wouldn't you like to own two of us?"

Wilbur guffawed with genuine amusement. "I'd have a fine old time, wouldn't I, with two of you twistin' me round your fingers. Bad enough with one."

"You know you enjoy it." Miranda took a shot in the dark.

"Well, maybe I do. But I wouldn't have you a week before you'd be nagging at me to buy Persis as well. I'd have a Harem."

"You can always whip us if we don't behave." Miranda suggested. She hoped it sounded like a sensibly reasoned remark.

"If I buy you and whip you, then you might as well endure what's ahead of you today. What's the difference?"

"I just don't believe you'd ever whip a girl, any girl, the way I'm going to be whipped when you take me back to the

house."
"Would it surprise you to know that young Susan got ten across her bottom yesterday?"
"Well, I expect she deserved it."
Wilbur laughed and slapped his knee with genuine enjoyment. "You're right. I like you. But you girls are really somethin'. Fact is a man can't cope with any of you unless he whips you 'bout once a week."
"I wouldn't complain!" Then, feeling the conversation was in danger of becoming flippant, hastened to affirm: "Honestly: I mean, I know what I am. I'm a slave. I know what I can expect of life. I know this place has changed me. I want to be a good slave and be bought by a good Master. I even understand, now, that we girls do respond to the whip and respect it. Maybe we are even happier for being whipped sometimes…" Her voice broke and she sobbed, "I just can't bear fifty strokes… and all the other things before they think I'm good enough to sell… Please help me."
Herman allowed the sobbing and the tears to run their course. Then, gently, he raised the bound girl to her feet and dried her face. "Let's not get into this any deeper or say anything more… anything you might actually later regret." He said kindly. "I know it's not easy—any of it. Enough for now. I'm going to take you back to the house."
Listlessly she stood as he looped the lariat round her neck so that their ritual of leading her captive behind his horse might follow its accustomed pattern. As he fastened her their eyes met. Miranda knew a sudden terrible hunger for affection. She curbed an involuntary impulse to raise her

lips and kiss this strange man. She wanted to. But he would assume it a female ruse to use her flesh to pin her wish, just as he had done previously. Ruefully she lowered her eyes. But not before she had glimpsed that he had seen and understood.

Wilbur Herman lifted his captive's chin so that her face was raised to his. He kissed the eager lips lingeringly. "I like you," he said, "I always have liked you."

He swung up on his horse. He did not look back. Miranda began the humiliating trudge back to her martyrdom.

* * *

Rhoda betrayed neither feeling or intent. She looked up at Wilbur Herman and asked, almost casually: "Eighteen minutes, wasn't it?"

"'Bout that." He acknowledged gruffly. Then spurred his horse to a canter and was gone.

Miranda followed despondently where she was led. She had cherished a small hope that Wilbur would intervene: perhaps even that he might actually consider purchasing her. She knew she had touched his sympathy. But she knew, too, that she had put him in an awkward position. Benson and Patricia had been his friends and associates long before she herself had been thrust into his life. Dolefully she bathed and prepared herself. The hated harness was taken from her. She doubted that the loss of it boded any good. No doubt the straps would impede the whip. She longed to ask questions. But her companion seemed

disinclined to speech. Only once—when Rhoda helped her dry after the bath—she had looked up at her captive and said with what seemed genuine concern: "You're trembling…"

"I'm afraid." Miranda said simply. "I'm sorry. But I can't help it."

Rhoda shrugged. Then nodded and said quite sincerely, "Why not. It's natural enough…"

Miranda quailed at the sight of the Post. It held a stark and terrible beauty upright in the center of the room. The neat straps, one on each side at shoulder height, told more eloquently than a worded sentence of what awaited her. She fought down protests and an impulse to turn back. Almost mechanically, as though under some unseen compulsion, she took her stance, raised her arms and thrust her hands through the loops awaiting them. Then watched, flinching slightly, as Rhoda drew the bands snug and tight about each wrist and buckled them firmly. These, Miranda knew, would be her only bonds. They would force her to stand at arm's length from the Post, all of her nudity totally exposed. She might writhe and kick. But she would not escape one single flicker of the lash.

Rhoda betrayed a flicker of amusement as she teased the two nipples under the raised arms. When they were pointed and firm under her persistent fingers she fastened on each a small rubber disc that would give protection to a pitifully small area of each breast. Miranda's nipples would be safe. But little else. The suction bite of the little rubber cones robbed the prisoner of any last hope that some

portion of her might be inviolate.

"There'll be the usual wait, Dearie." Rhoda said with a sudden cheerfulness. "Can't tell you how long. But here's something to help pass the time." She hung the wicked black slenderness of the short whip on the Post before Miranda's eyes, patted the helpless girl tenderly on the cheek, then left the room. She did not bother to close the door.

Miranda had held back her tears thus far, but now she let them flood. She knew, now, that there was no hope of reprieve. Her sentence would be carried out. It was hard to take her eyes away from the leather thong that would soon curl around her nakedness and into and upon her most intimate possessions. The soles of her feet were the only parts of her it could not reach. But perhaps they would compel her to raise her foot to be whipped even there. Perhaps that was why her ankles were free of metal or cord! In her present condition she was willing to believe in any awfulness…

There was a faint comfort in the discovery that she could rub her cheeks and eyes against her pinioned arms. She was striving awkwardly, in that way, to dry the wet saltiness of her despair when Pat walked in and leaned herself negligently against the Post.

"Well, Ducky! A fine old mess you've got us all into." She observed brightly.

"Me!" Miranda could not stifle indignation. Everything was unfair.

"Who else, you little goose. First you get yourself into the dungeon. Then you go and fall short on your run. Then you

implore poor Old Wilbur to get you let off your whipping. Then, just to cap it all off, you ask him to buy you right now so that you don't have to be whipped. You've got the poor chap all upset."

Miranda cringed inwardly. The way Patricia outlined her requests they could be construed as an offence. She had made them without thinking. But she should not have made them. Would her punishment now be a hundred strokes instead of fifty! More than she could bear…

"I didn't ask him to buy me just to get off being whipped." She protested.

"But it influenced you, Ducky."

The captive girl twisted unhappily. "Well, I suppose it did. I'm scared. There has been so much! That damn harness and what you shove inside me…! I just couldn't run. I tried. In fact I think I did pretty well. But look at me now! Not only have I got to get this awful punishment, but I'm not even behaving well—and I wanted to so much. I want, more than anything, to get my training over."

"Today was bad for you." Pat conceded. "But the unfairness of making you run in your harness was deliberate, a test of your determination to obey. Much of what must always happen to a slave girl will be unfair. Up to now you and Persis, and in fact all the girls, think your condition of captivity is itself unfair. No girl can consider herself trained if she still resents such impositions. Your resentment may have defeated you in the run. You started out smarting and convinced of failure. So you failed. Then, instead of taking the opportunity to prove to us bow obedient

and submissive you can be, you upset Herman and do enough protesting for a labor Union. See what I mean?"

"Yes." Miranda said the word reluctantly. But she did see, very well, what Patricia meant. She added, diffidently: "If I asked you now, very, very nicely to give me my punishment, and then thanked you for giving it to me, would it help?"

Patricia laughed. "Oh Sweetheart, you really are a problem. I'm not sure you arn't making a virtue out of necessity. But I'd like to see how genuine you sound. It won't get you a single stroke less. But humility is always a good mark for a slave girl. Now watch that tongue in cheek weakness…"

Miranda gathered what small store of courage she could command and met the other girl's eyes clearly. "Dear Mistress," she began in what she hoped was a vibrant voice, "I have been foolish in feeling resentment. I admit the necessity of the fifty stroke penalty in order that Persis and I have an incentive to run. I lost today's race. The fault was mine. So please have me whipped with fifty hard strokes on those parts of my nakedness where it will hurt me the most. Please forgive me if I cry out and struggle under the whip. Thank you for punishing me in this way and explaining why it is so vital a part of my training."

"Jolly good!" Patricia stepped forward and kissed her captive tenderly, "I think you meant some of that."

"I did!" Miranda affirmed vehemently. The warmth of the kiss had revived her spirits and her wish to acquit herself well.

"So now let's get down to business, Ducky."

Miranda tensed, startled. “Are you…?”
“No. I’m not going to start whipping you. You are a’quiver, arn’t you. But it may help to buoy you up under the whip to know that you have just been sold.”
The captive’s whole being became rigid. She was a living question mark. Her eyes wide.
“Alright! No suspense. It’s Herman: who else.”
Miranda was flooded with thankfulness. She glowed.
The words slipped out imprudently before she could control them. “Then why…?”
“Why are you now going to be whipped?” Pat mocked. “You should be able to figure that out.” Her eyes glinted mischief. “You have just asked, in the very nicest way, to be given the most severe whipping. You gave reasons that are excellent and valid. I could not refuse. But the best reason is my belief that when your whipping is over and done with you will not wish to be sold. I would respect such a wish. I do not think you are sufficiently trained.”
“Oh no!” Miranda breathed ecstatically. “I will wish it. I know.”
Patricia examined her shrewdly. “Think a bit.” She warned. “There’s more to it than this first joy at escape from this house. An emotion that, itself, shows how little ready you really are.”
“But Herman’s kind. If I behave, he’ll give me a good life.” Miranda was not about to relinquish this new found wonder.
“He and I have just talked about you.” Pat said seriously. “I have said frankly that selling you to him now is against my

better judgement. We discussed ways and means. You would do well to consider them too. First, you are not being set free. He is buying a slave. That is what you will be. You will be delivered to him bound. He will keep you chained and captive. He has to. What else can he do! You think he will give you the same freedom as Susan. He won't! He can't. You may never in your whole life be ready for it. Because you are not trained you will constantly prey upon his good nature. Thus you will constantly irritate him or be constantly punished. Probably both."

"If I want to be a good slave to him I can be. I will be!"

"But don't you understand what an impossible start you are getting off to! You are my slave now. You are going to be his slave. Yet it is you who is calling the shots. You are getting your way all along the line. You made a demand on him for sympathy and affection. He feels these things for you. If he was going to marry you it might work. But to buy you as a slave…"

"I'm not getting my own way standing here like this." Miranda pointed out.

"Don't be pert! Anyway, I have persuaded Herman to a compromise. You will be delivered not to him but to Susan. She can carry on where we leave off. It is not impossible that she may make you as clever a pleasure slave as she is herself. Knowing her I'd say she would be an exacting mistress. You may wish yourself back here before she is through with you."

Miranda was unhappy again. It was impossible to ignore the logic of Pat's summation. So woebegone did she look

that, once more, her Mistress caressed the trembling lips. Their embrace was terminated by Rhoda's entry. "I'm off now." Patricia stated firmly. "I don't want to stay and see you whipped. Rhoda is going to make a very thorough job of it."
This time when she was gone the door was very firmly closed.

* * *

"Well, I suppose we may as well get started." Rhoda said in about the tone of voice she would have used when starting to vacuum the carpets. She took down the hated whip from before Miranda's anguished eyes and ran its supple length through her fingers. "You have been whipped before. So this is nothing new. It's simply worse and different. It's different because I have been told to whip you everywhere. To make it hurt and to make it shame. I also have authority to add as many strokes as your behavior may warrant. I don't want protests! If I tell you to do something, do it. You can howl. But hold it down. If I think you are doing it to impress me, it will cost you. Understand?"
"Yes."
"Don't feel good behavior and self control will be wasted because you are being sold." Rhoda chuckled sardonically. "Young Susan isn't going to be happy about you. She'll be a harder taskmistress than Pat or I. Probably a bit vicious. Can't expect her to be pleased about the competition… Stick out your right leg."

The command caught Miranda unaware. “What? How?” She asked, puzzled.
“Go on. Lift it up in front of you as high as you can. Rest it on the post if you want.”
Miranda obeyed. Her youth was supple. Her leg rested high on the post that held her wrists. She gasped in shock and agony as fire licked upwards from her crotch wealing her belly. Her foot fell to the floor as she writhed. Her teeth clenched against the sounds she longed to make.
“Now the other one.”
It was harder this time, knowing what would happen. The thong bedded itself deeply in her most secret place. She tugged and tugged at her pinioned wrists. The hopeless exercise was an expression of her pain that she would not allow her lips to utter. She knew desperately that she wanted no extra strokes such as these.
“The right one again.”
It seemed impossible that the pouting lips within her triangle could not be penetrated. They scalded wickedly. Her loins were on fire. The stroke drove a scream which she bit off so that it ended in a strange groan such as she had never heard.
“Now stand up straight and stick your belly out.”
Her concave tummy could not be protruded. But she obediently stood very straight indeed. Her reward was a stroke that slashed across her stomach and curled around her hips. Rhoda was ambidextrous. The next was a duplicate. But from the other side. She longed to double over and hug the wounds. All she could achieve was to undulate her

loins in a way she knew would appear suggestively salacious. She did not care.

Tightening her stomach muscles she stood erect for the next blow. She would try hard to please, even though her mind was blurred by pain and shock. But this time the searching thong bedded itself across her back, curled under one raised arm, and spent the full force of its tapered tip across her breast. The moan came from deep within her being and continued on in gasping anguish as her other breast, too, received its cruel caress.

"Spread your legs as wide as you can."

Miranda was hampered by the manner in which she was fastened. She could not bend. But she did her best. The whip bit into the inside of one thigh and curled to weal a full circle. Up and down. Then the other. Ten strokes were allotted to this torment. It was almost impossible to obey the admonition "Stand still." Sometimes she would kick as though to shake off the biting torture. She screamed outright when finally the lash flew upward from between her wounded legs and crossed the path it had previously cut in her loins.

"Now stick your bottom out."

"But I can't! Not properly…" Miranda quavered.

"I know. But do the best you can."

Miranda closed her legs, curved her spine as much as her bondage would allow, and found that she could actually manage to make her bottom somewhat more prominent.

"Wonderful, Dearie! You look sweet. I'm going to give you ten across those dear little rounds. If you move at all it will

be fifteen."

Miranda closed her eyes and fought tooth and nail to obey. It was almost a relief to have her bottom whipped. It was, after all, the proper place. It would have been less painful than those other feminine sanctuaries that the thong had invaded had it not been for the curling tip that found her belly and her loins and crossed her hips from side to side as Rhoda changed hands. It was an additional refinement of humiliation to have to protrude herself to receive the lash. To stand still with stretched skin so that the pain of each cut was intensified. But she held her pose for the full ten strokes. Then writhed and twisted as best she could. She kicked her legs this way and that. Any motion at all seemed less awful than immobility.

"You did that very well." Rhoda commended. "From now on it's here, there and everywhere. Kick all you want."

The straps round Miranda's wrists held tight against any stress she could place on them. From time to time she looked up at them agonizedly. They seemed so small a tether to hold her so utterly at Rhoda's mercy. In spite of being so seemingly free of bonds she could move remarkably little and escape the whip not at all. To kick was her greatest freedom. But this was hazardous for Rhoda seized each separation of the threshing legs as an opportunity to slash upward at the place where her victim wished to be whipped least of all. She could not move her shoulders effectively. Thus Rhoda was able to place strokes across her back and breasts with exact accuracy. Her waist could be twisted, but it could not evade. It was circled again and

again from both sides so that it was a ring of bitter pain. Surveying what she could see of herself during those brief pauses when the whip slackened she was both startled and fascinated by the livid weals, the ridged flesh and the drops of blood which resulted here and there from crossed wounds. There were few strokes she could bear with stoic silence. She was surprised that there actually were some. The threat of extra lashes gave her the strength to confine herself to small involuntary cries that ended in gasping moans. Sometimes she would press her cheek against one prisoned arm and strive to keep it there. Sometimes she would even bite the soft flesh of that arm. But mostly her head would toss as her body jerked under the impact for which she was never prepared.

When the whipping stopped Miranda did not know it was over. But stood, tensed, for the next blow.

“That was fifty, Dearie.” Rhoda announced. “You didn’t really want more, did you?”

The naked girl relaxed in her bonds. A flood of thankfulness welled within her. She turned and smiled wanly at the woman who had whipped her. Then said, with a sincerity that surprised herself: “Thank you. Oh, thank you… thank you… thank you!”

* * *

She was left standing fastened to the post. It was the custom to leave the victim alone with her pain and her thoughts. This would be no exception. Before she went

Rhoda had hung the whip once more upon the post where the captive must see it. For a long time Miranda stood limp. She tried to hang some of her weight from her strapped wrists, but it hurt. So she relaxed with bent knee and bowed head. She was still panting, still enveloped in pain.

She stood a long time. When composure gradually returned she considered her new condition and the decision which Patricia had thrust upon her. Her punishment was over save for the pain that would gradually subside and the weals she would wear. The panic with which she viewed it was past. Did she still wish to be Wilbur Herman's slave girl! The admonitions of both Pat and Rhoda held logic she could not ignore. But she was glimpsing that within herself lay a choice between Wilbur Herman and Pat. It was a choice unexpectedly hard to make.

The choice was made for her. At the end of the afternoon Patricia sauntered in. She examined the striated loveliness of her charge. But made no comment on the livid evidences of punishment.

"Been a long day, Ducky?"

Miranda nodded. It was good to have Patricia close again. It was as though she had made a journey and come home. Impetuously she exclaimed: "I want to stay with you."

The older girl looked at her somberly. "It's too late, my Love. Herman has been talking to me. He foresaw the emotional tangles I discussed with you. He says, forget 'em. He wants you." She fell silent for a moment. Then said quietly, "I wish it hadn't happened."

Miranda burst into tears. Ducking under and between the

bound arms Patricia held the captive close and kissed her hungrily, wiping away the tears with her lips. “You silly goose. You have mucked things up for us!” Then, brightly: “But there’s a bright spot in the picture for you. You must really have made an impression. He’s already trying to please you.”

They disengaged. Miranda was still too choked to talk. Her question was in her eyes.

“He bought Persis too.”

It was too much! Miranda would have wept again; this time with joy. But she had no more tears. She abandoned all effort to sort out her emotions. But listened, bright eyed, to what Patricia had to tell.

“He was quite adamant about it. Mr. Benson was agreeable, so there was nothing I could do. You have been fastened to the Post for over five hours so there’s been time for things to happen. I already delivered Persis into Susan’s loving care.” She giggled, “I don’t think they like each other.”

“But why Susan?”

“Well, you have to admit the situation is a bit absurd. The poor man now has a Harem. He is shrewd enough to realize what a handful you’ll be since you are only half trained. I know he’d enjoy whipping you under circumstances he considered desirably by his own standards. But he does not want to train you, so he has given the job to young Susan. You won’t see too much of him for the first month or two. He has told her to really work on you to bring you up to form. I almost had to laugh. The first thing Susan did was whip Persis for being impertinent.”

“But how can a slave girl do that?” Miranda asked wonderingly.
“He told you of the freedom he gives her. But it’s by no means total. He keeps her ankles chained. But the chain is long and not heavy. It holds her and she can’t get it off.
But it’s as much a token as anything. It won’t impede anything she wants to do with you. But you two will be fully restrained, just as here. She will keep you complete prisoners. She knows the tricks. She will be aware the two of you may plan to jump her if the chance comes. So she won’t give you the chance. But because she is a damn clever Pleasure Slave herself she might help you get where she now is. Wilbur believes she will. Her having to wear chains too makes a piquant situation. In fact I’m going to visit sometimes and watch. It should be amusing.”
“When do I get… delivered?” Miranda asked meekly.
“This evening. Rhoda will free and care for you right away. There will be time for you to get an hour’s sleep. I’d think you were a bit played out after that’s happened. Then you’ll have a short uncomfortable ride and be re-united with your beloved Persis. That is if Susan lets you see each other: she’s a contrary wench.”
That evening Miranda stood passive and curious while she was bound. “Still naked?” she asked coyly.
“Naked, bound hand and foot and gagged, Ducky,” Pat assured her, busy with adhesive tape. “Not being melodramatic. But this is the first time you have left this house. Don’t suppose either you or I can tell just what your reaction might be if you saw a chance to run. No sense taking

chances. There! Ankles and wrists tight and snug. Open your mouth."

Miranda accepted the gag. She had worn it often enough. She still hated the click of the padlock at the back of her neck. With sudden dismay she realized that she could not again speak to Patricia.

It was Blessing who carried the naked girl and placed her carefully on the blankets in the back of the big Mercedes. A blanket was also used to cover her. Then the lid of the trunk was slammed shut. It was not a good feeling to be so helpless in the dark. But Pat had said it would not be for long. Miranda settled herself as comfortably as she could.

Miranda could not compute time. But she knew they could not have gone far when the car stopped. A door opened and shut. There was a blur of voices. Then the car jerked into motion. The ride to her new home—or would it be her new prison—continued. She wished she was sitting with Pat. She felt lost in the dark. The bands of adhesive tape held her like a vise. The gag did not matter so much since there was no one to talk to. But she wished it was not locked on her. She had never considered claustrophobia. But if she was to be left in this plight for long she would understand it.

The realization of something wrong was gradual. From all she had been told she knew that Wilbur Herman's home was close by. Pat had said their ride would be short. Had she not, that afternoon, delivered Persis, presumably by the same route. Yet the steady hum of the motor and the wheels went on and on. There was a lengthy period during

which she felt sure they were in the noise and the traffic of an arterial road. Little by little panic began its work. After what seemed a couple of hours she could not control an instinctive need to be free. She fought her bonds, first frantically, then with a methodical determination to free herself. But it was useless. She sank back exhausted. The exertion had worked off some of her fear. After all, the ride had to end sometime. Pat would know what she was doing.

When the motion stopped there came the sound of doors. Miranda guessed they were driving into a garage. Doors slammed, voices droned, then there was silence. A silence that went on and on just as had the wheels during the ride. The bound girl felt wickedly alone. She knew, too, that she had become desperately afraid.

Her whole being surged with thankfulness when she heard the key. But she was totally unprepared for the rest: a strange face and a strange voice.

"Cor lummy, Bill. Look what we got 'ere!"

A second face joined the first. Both uninspiring of confidence. A hand jerked away the blanket. There was a hissing of indrawn breath. "Nice! Very nice indeed, 'Arry. But not fer the likes of you and me."

"A luvverly bit o' crumpet, that is. 'Ere, toss yer ter see who carries 'er in."

There was the clink of a coin. Then an oath. Hands turned and lifted her. Hands that sought and found parts of her nakedness that made her fight the gag. The arms were strong. They carried her too rapidly for coherent impressions. A door opened into a brightly lighted room.

She was deposited in an arm chair. The cockney voice said: "All in good order, Sir." Then withdrew. She was aware of a warm and luxurious room. A fire flourished in a stone fireplace. There were faces. Well groomed faces and cultured voices. Miranda did not look at them. She saw but one figure in the room. Patricia sat opposite, her face anguished and concerned, her arms held awkwardly. Hands resting in her lap. Her wrists were handcuffed together.

It was shock upon shock. Miranda would always remember this day. Patricia gave a small negative shake of her head that conveyed little more than distress and bafflement. The captive girl turned her gaze elsewhere and immediately became excruciatingly aware of being naked. The armchair on the other side of the fireplace held the bulky shape of a florid military type whose insignias and high polish bespoke rank. He was examining her with impersonal interest. So, too, were the man and woman at the table. Both in their thirties, handsome, as immaculate as the soldier. Though in civilian garb it seemed likely that they, too, belonged in uniform. The woman, particularly, had an air of purpose about her. Her companion surveyed the scene with a faint amusement.

The colonel made one of those pre-emptory sounds that are generally inscribed as "Hrump!" It got him instant attention. He turned to Patricia. "Go and sit beside her, gel. Can't talk to you both unless I can see you."

The younger man obligingly produced a chair. Pat crossed to it. Raising her hands so that Miranda could clearly see

the metal that joined them. She made a small moue of helplessness.

“Damned handsome pair of fillies.” The Colonel said gruffly. “Now here’s the D.R.O. Daily Routine Orders, I should say. There’s a job for you to do—”

“Colonel, don’t you understand we have been kidnapped?” Patricia protested in a level voice.

“Yes! You have, haven’t you.” The Colonel said as though confirming the obvious. “Jolly good show! Chaps actually knew what they were doing. I say, would you care for a drink?” He motioned to the woman, “Do the honors, Cynthie, will you.”

Cynthia competently tore the adhesive from Miranda’s wrists and neatly handcuffed them as were Patricia’s. Both girls were now able to accept the tall glasses handed to them. Her first sip told Miranda how badly she had needed it. The Colonel reached for his as a matter of course and continued comfortably.

“Bit of a shock, of course. That’s understood. Make allowances. But it’s all for Queen and Country y’know.”

“You mean I’m sitting here like this for my Queen and my Country?” Miranda demanded indignantly.

“My dear young lady. I neither removed your clothes or placed those delightful decorations on your charming person. But I do assure you that you are commencing a great and noble task.” He turned irritably, “I say, Major, take over, will you. Not really my cup of tea at all. Leave it with you. Keep me posted.” The Colonel hastily finished his drink and made for the door. With his hand on the knob he

was stopped by Patricia's voice.

"Colonel! You wear a uniform. You must be responsible. You can't keep us like this. Please let us go."

He turned and surveyed them benignly. "Sorry m'dear. We can keep you. Fact is it's surprising what we can do. Surprises me myself sometimes…" The Colonel made a half salute. The door closed behind him.

There was no awkward pause. Nonchalantly the major moved to the chair vacated by his superior. He lamed forward, a half smile on his face. "My name is Ballard: Major Ballard. This is Mrs. Cynthia Crosbie. The Colonel and ourselves are members of a Government department that is almost completely anonymous. It has a name. I will not tell you it. You have heard of M.5 and of the C.I.Z. and the C.I.D. Let it go at that. We have almost unlimited power to do what we believe must be done. We want you as Instruments, as weapons to serve us. We let our requirements be known in… well, in appropriate quarters. Two nameless men undertook to fill that requirement in return for a sum of money. You are the result. They kidnapped you and brought you here. We understand that you are trained—or should I say talented… in certain arts. That is correct?"

The two girls looked at each other. Both were blushing. Patricia looked at him and shrugged. "I suppose so." She admitted. "But don't you understand…"

The Major held up his hand. "We have been briefed on your background. We understand all, we have any intention of understanding. Your work with us will be to give pleasure to certain men—and perhaps women, who we

wish to please because they are useful to us. You may even be a reward for services rendered. Whether you like us or not you will actually, as the Colonel has stated, be doing a valuable service to your country—"

"But there are girls you can hire for that sort of thing!" Patricia exclaimed angrily.

"Not girls of your quality." Major Ballard rejoined with a broad smile. "Nor girls who we can so totally control as we can you. The two of you are a unique addition to our strength."

"Suppose we won't play?" Patricia's voice held an in finite distaste.

"That's a rhetorical question, I hope. You're not going to be silly, are you?" Major Ballard looked concerned.

"I'm going to stand on my rights." Pat affirmed coldly. "This is the Army, or some part of it. Do you want to invite a scandal by carrying on with this farce?"

The major sighed. "We make allowances, of course. But I can see it's time I handed you over to Mrs. Crosbie. Perhaps I shall have the pleasure another time." He left abruptly.

* * *

"This just can't be real!" Patricia affirmed vehemently as they tidied and made the bunk beds in the small narrow cell the following morning. There had been a strict admonition that military perfection would be demanded in such matters. "The Army! Of all things! Good gosh, Miranda, I'm sorry I got you into this."

“You’re in it too.” Miranda pointed out. She gazed at her companion with affection and admiration. “You are lovely, Pat. I’m used to being naked: didn’t it bother you when she made you strip and hand your things to her through the bars?”

“Not really. It’s just a demotion. What does bother me are these damn handcuffs. Has it occurred to you that if they keep us naked it will be quite practical for them to keep us handcuffed. We can probably do whatever it is they want with our hands locked together. We just made these beds up. It was awkward. But we did it.”

“How did they get us?” Miranda asked thinking of Persis and Herman who now seemed whole light years away.

“Tree across the road. When I stopped they were right there, one at each door. They had guns. I couldn’t do a damn thing! They had me gagged and handcuffed in a jiffy. They knew you were in the back. Someone had to be wise about our operation. I just don’t know…”

“And don’t worry your pretty head about it.” Mrs. Crosbie pushed trays beneath the barred door. “Here’s your breakfast. I’ll be back later to take you to the gym—”

“Can’t we have these things off our wrists?” Patricia asked petulantly.

“You’ll wear them. I’ll hear no more about it.” She strode away.

“Bitch!” Patricia exclaimed. “I hate handcuffs! Being chained is one thing. But handcuffs are simply foul. They nag! But let’s look at these Army rations…”

It was a real Gym. Patricia was angry. But Miranda simply

felt shockingly exposed as the two of them stood on center stage where a severe and authoritative Mrs. Crosbie had marshaled them. The two girls were still naked. They were still handcuffed. It seemed likely to be a permanent condition.

Mrs. Crosbie carried a cane. So far it had served as a pointer. Obviously it might have other uses. “We intend to keep you fit.” She explained in what was evidently intended to be patient guidance. “Well try and get two or three hours a day in here. You will obey me or I will use this cane on you. Should I have cause to do so you will take any position I direct to receive your punishment. You will accept it in complete silence and say a pleasant thank-you when it is done. You will be totally obedient. Orders will be obeyed ‘At the double!’. Consider yourselves as under military discipline. You will wear the handcuffs without complaint. They will keep you aware of your status. You will not be required to perform any act they would too badly inhibit. Understood?”

“Yes. I suppose so.” Pat spoke for both. Her acknowledgement was grudging.

“What do you mean, you suppose so! You’ll do better than that! Stand up straight. Get those hands at the back of your neck, you can do it! Stick your tits out!” Mrs. Crosbie paced back and forth watching them fumble their chained hands into the desired position. If, when they stood taut as directed, she thought them a beautiful Picture she did not say so.

“We are aware that you are familiar with punishment. So

don't be coy." Mrs. Crosbie pointed her cane at Miranda. "Those are fresh whip marks. You really must have inked your blotter."

"I did." Miranda acknowledged. She hoped she would not be asked to elaborate. It might be as well that these people should not know of the Mistress, slave status between herself and Pat. Though surely Patricia's unmarked skin might give cause for speculation.

"Never mind the details. I want to minimize the whip and the cane. The guests you entertain will mark you enough with both. I am very familiar with this male recreation." Mrs. Crosbie's voice was sardonic. "But as the occasion arises, as I expect it will, I will prove to you that there are a multitude of ways to give you exquisite pain without putting a single blemish on your delightful pelts." She paused and surveyed her charges amusedly. "There is a thought revolving around your busy little brains this minute. Let me dispose of it. You are thinking: Surely we can both jump her at the same time, and even with handcuffs…" She smiled broadly now. "See this!" She held up a whistle suspended from a cord round her neck. "Watch!" She blew a shrill blast. Almost instantly a man attired in gym clothes appeared on the run. He came to a sharp attention and saluted. Everything about him shouted Drill Sergeant. The fact that his attention was directed entirely on Mrs. Crosbie and that he had spared no glance for the naked girls bespoke volumes. He was a very large size. He snapped out a smart: "Madam?"

When he had gone Mrs. Crosbie continued. "With two

blasts I can summon two of them. They will subdue you. Your punishment will be doubled. You will do well to always obey me. You will address me formally as Miss. No names. Now we commence. Hands high. Then down to touch the toes. Knees straight. On the double."

Feeling supremely silly Miranda did as bid. No doubt there would be worse to come. After the sixth bend Patricia straightened up and expostulated. "Please! Must we do this? I know we have to do… that other thing! But can't you spare us this military nonsense? We'll obey you for what you want us for."

"Step forward four paces. Turn. Touch your toes. Knees tight. Hold that position." Mrs. Crosbie's face was a thundercloud. "Military nonsense indeed!" The cane pointed squarely at Pat.

"But please, can't we be friends. You've told us why you want us and what we must do. If we obey you do we have to be treated like convicts?"

"Forward!"

Pat took a dragging step, then raised her head defiantly. "I wish to speak to Major Ballard."

Miranda winced as the whistle shrilled its message. Patricia made a helpless gesture with her cuffed hands. "Never mind the men." She said hastily. "I don't want to be mauled too." She stepped the remaining paces, turned and bent. She was beautifully curved. Miranda wondered how anyone could be so gross as to mar anything so perfect.

Needless to say, it was 'six of the best'. In that place it would be! Miranda cringed each time the cane viciously

slashed the inviting curves. Patricia managed to hold the pose and to remain silent. She managed also a level voiced thank-you when it was over. But her face was drawn with pain as she rejoined her companion in distress. When their eyes met she gave an admonitory shake of the head to quench the exclamations trembling on Miranda's lips.

Their healthful drill continued without interruption.

Evening brought their first assignment. "His name is Bhuratta." Mrs. Crosbie informed Miranda as she superintended their quite elaborate toilette. "Haven't got the gen' on Patricia's yet. Bhuratta is a Hindu or a Moslem or something of the sort, so stay away from politics. Seems amiable. But get this clear: whatever he wants, do it! Please him. Make him feel privileged. Put his back up about anything at all and you'll wish you'd never been born."

Mr. Bhuratta seemed best described as one large beaming smile. Probably he had been born with it. In all likelihood it would still be on his face when he would be finally laid to rest on the breast of Mother Ganges. He bestowed it approvingly on Miranda.

"Is so nice to see naked English girl." He said cordially. "Please, I kiss your hand."

Doing her best to play her role and to resist an unexpected impulse to giggle, Miranda said how honored she was to greet so distinguished a visitor.

"That is so." Mr. Bhuratta agreed warmly. "You will much enjoy when I fuck you."

Miranda made appropriate sounds and smiled brightly.

"In my country it is most sad." Mr. Bhuratta continued.

“The English girls are never naked when I call. They find the excuse. Even when I offer to fuck them they find the excuse. It is most unsporting, I think. Here in London is much better. You may undress me please. No doubt you wish to see my cock?”

Miranda assured him that indeed she did.

“It is a very fine cock.” Mr. Bhuratta affirmed modestly. “While you are doing the clothes I will tell you of the many good places I have put him.”

He went into a boastful and detailed account of conquests which Miranda suspected might exist only in his mind. They aroused in her a faint nausea in no way helped by the fact that Mr. Bhuratta’s feet smelt very strongly of smelly feet. The rest of him emanated a musty pungency of curry. Tentatively she mentioned the delights of being bathed by a naked English girl.

“I am already having a bath.” Her guest explained in a manner clearly indicating one up on the British. “I am having it in Madras before I fly the plane.” He glanced down complacently. “Ah, there he is! You are observing my cock, are you ever having seen so fine a fellow?”

In the course of her training Miranda had dealt with weapons that would have put Mr. Bhuratta’s to shame. But she deemed it prudent not to say so. Instead she managed a profuse admiration together with some small manual attentions and said how humble she felt over her impending impalement.

“So lucky a girl.” Mr. Bhuratta agreed. “I fuck you so you make much squealing noise. That is good.”

Miranda wished she could whinny like a horse. But throughout the feverish activity she did contrive a number of ecstatic and anguished sounds and moans which appeared to sustain her guest's conviction that he was a great lover. The heat generated by his ardor caused her to be enveloped in a flavor of curry so strong as to prohibit any arousal that his piston like prowess might otherwise have engendered. After his climax and withdrawal she lay with eyes closed making small gasps appropriate to the occasion and hoping the expedient would gain her a short rest.

She actually did manage a couple of minutes. No doubt Mr. Bhuratta, also, was rebuilding his capacity. Then, cautiously opening one eye, she was immediately confronted with The Smile. "I now stick him up your arsehole." Said Mr. Bhuratta winningly.

Coming to her knees it became obvious to Miranda that her companion's pride and joy was by no means ready for so ambitious a project. She was saved the embarrassment of drawing this fact to his attention by Mr. Bhuratta himself, who seemed in no way disconcerted by this momentary betrayal by his limp member. "Now you take him in your mouth. In a small time he becomes very large. You will see."

It was the thing Miranda hated most of all. She had been whipped again and again during her training because of a show of reluctance, a protest, or even a grimace of distaste. Ruefully she conceded the only good point at that moment —was that the object which her lips must embrace had just

been withdrawn from herself and not someone else. Not that it made much difference! Absurdly she remembered the Colonel and, his "Queen and Country." It was a curious speculation as to what Her Majesty might say if she could observe her loyal subject at work. "Let us make Him very, very big and hard." She enthused. Making her mind a blank she proceeded with her task.

The guest's confidence was not misplaced. The ministrations of Miranda's lips and tongue conjured an amazing rejuvenation. "We do it horsy, horsy." He said happily. "You are bending over and stretching legs very wide. Please to reach back and pull bum apart so arse-hole is plain to see."

Obediently Miranda assumed the shameful pose. When she felt the rigid implement nuzzling her anus she removed her hands and rested them on her knees. From this point on she would just endure as a useful facility to this man.

"So fine an arse-hole!" Mr. Bhuratta praised. Clasping her hips he thrust his total length into her warm sheath. "See! It is never like this before. Many, many large pricks must have entered here to make so welcome."

"Wooden ones." Miranda rejoined tersely.

"You are making a joke." Said Mr. Bhuratta. "Or is it that the doctors now make a—what is it you call it? A joining… a graft! Ah that is the word. Is possible perhaps. For some no doubt a help." His voice was condescending. "But not for me! I have no need. You feel. You agree?"

Miranda agreed. She had got past the giggling stage.

"I am making this last for long time." Mr. Bhuratta explained. "Is most nice for me to have naked English girl

bent over with my fine cock pushed far up inside. My poor father would be most proud to see me now. Proud English ladies treat him like dirt. He ask to fuck one he would be flogged. But much different now." Mr. Bhuratta's voice held genuine pride. Miranda almost expected him to thump his chest in a gorilla-like paean of victory. "Now it is English lady who strips and takes my cock in her mouth. You are proud, are you not?"

"Yes," Said Miranda, fervently mourning the British Raj.

Mr. Bhuratta was not without skill. It seemed probable to a bent and shamed Miranda that this part of the social evening might indeed go on and on. His hands found her everywhere, always evoking naive approval of her physical attributes. Inevitably his curiosity touched upon the thing his victim had no wish to discuss.

"I am thinking you have been a very bad girl."

"Yes." Miranda hoped the matter could be left at that. But no!

"You have been much whipped. I have never seen a girl so much whipped." A hand lingered; tracing the welts and wounds across her back and breasts. "What bad thing did you do?"

"I was disobedient." Sadly she thought of Herman and the race and the penalty she had paid. It all seemed so far away. Pointless to try and explain anything to this strange man.

"Ah yes, girls are so." Agreed Mr. Bhuratta with infinite wisdom. "They must be whipped often. Is also much good feeling to whip a girl. Is always making my cock very hard

indeed! You are understand?"
"Yes. I do indeed!" Said Miranda with deep feeling,
"Good! So when I have finished this so much fun inside you, we have drink and rest and then I whip you."
"You are too kind." Miranda prayed he would not detect the sarcasm.
But Mr. Bhuratta was impervious to the more subtle nuances of feminine expression. "Where would you like me to whip you?" He asked kindly.
It was too much! Miranda controlled her impulse to straighten up and slap this idiot's face. But she was held in check by her fear of Mrs. Crosbie. There had been a quality about the woman, a quality of ruthlessness and dedication. Foolish to cross her unnecessarily.
"My bottom's always a nice place." She hoped her reply sounded feminine and coy.
Miranda was grateful for the rest when it came. She served his drink on bended knee and remained kneeling before him as she sipped her own. She wondered why anyone had ever supposed she was not yet trained. So far she had done quite as well as had Daphne Morris that day of the demonstration. She felt a great urgency to excel. Proficiency might be her only weapon in whatever lay ahead. Mr. Bhuratta seemed good enough subject on whom to practice. She listened in rapt wonder as he told of his conquests.
It was two drinks instead of one. But, still, the respite ended. "Please to bend down so that I may have good look at so nice round bottom." Mr. Bhuratta requested.

Again his finger caressed her wounds, still sore from yesterday. She winced when he discovered a tender spot. “Ah yes, it is much bad.” He sighed. “It think it hurt. Someone has—what you say… stolen a marching on me. Please to stand with hands in air and turning slowly round so that I may make searching for best place to whip.”

Miranda did as bid. Ardently she wished she might never see or hear of a whip again. But she managed a pleased smile and tried to look interested.

“Is no place left except legs.” Said Mr. Bhuratta regrets fully. “It is something most funny to whip a girl’s legs. They cannot stand still, and jump and kick and dance. Is most pretty to see. They do not like. So always ask please to stop. Then you do not stop, and they dance more and more. Sometimes they cry. Are you much crying?”

“I try not to.” Miranda assured him helpfully.

“I think you brave girl. I think, too, I not whip the pretty legs. On the legs it leaves such bad marks. You would not like, and I think maybe the good Major would not like. You have enough marks for so beautiful a girl.”

Miranda’s sudden hope was quickly dashed. Mr. Bhuratta asked blandly: “You have, perhaps, a much nice cane?”

She went to the cupboard and returned with the cruelly beautiful weapon so thoughtfully provided by the management. Humbly she knelt, kissed the hated object, then proffered it to him. She remained kneeling.

“When I was small boy and went to school with other small boys and small girls.” Mr. Bhuratta mused reminiscently, “Our teacher was much English. Every time, we do

something bad, and sometimes when we do only good.
He say in very harsh voice to step in front of class and hold out hand. He then hit the small hand very hard with cane. It hurt so bad we always cry. If we do not cry he keeps hitting until we start. We must hold out one hand, then the other. Sometimes we get one on each. Often more. Once I get six on each hand. This was very bad. My father was much angry. But nothing can be done. Little girls get caned too. But is bad with them because they much fear and pull in hand when they see cane coming. Always when this is done the punishment becomes double. Often it takes much time and much tears. Often little girl so afraid she piss on floor. Then she must bend over and bare her bum and get caned there as well. Was a very good school. We learn much."
Miranda knew what was coming. But continued to look bright and expectant.
"Because I am kind man." Mr. Bhuratta continued benignly, "We use your so nice hands that are not marked at all. You hold them out like in school, then no more marks on other places. You are much pleased?"
"Oh yes!" Miranda breathed. She remembered the awful agony of her previous caning on the hands. But resolutely closed her mind to it. "You are so very good to me. Please… if I pull my hand back from the cane will I, too, be punished double?"
"Indeed I do this for you!" Mr. Bhuratta's voice was rich with generosity. "As I tell you, I am most kind man."
His choice of the word kind made a synonym for her

thought. Was he kind! Perhaps in his own way. Certainly he was vain. Impulsively she took a risk. “You are such a nice man. So very kind to me. Would you be really sweet and phone Wilbur Herman and tell him where I am? He lives close to a little village called Spaulding. Then he won’t worry about me.”

Did the broad smile flicker! Did the eyes narrow! His voice certainly slowed and became cautious. “Is this a good thing you are asking?”

“It’s a kind thing. He’ll worry if he doesn’t know.”

“Perhaps I tell the good Major?”

Miranda shrugged in what she hoped appeared an offhand nonchalance. “I hope you don’t. He might be jealous… And I like him!”

“Ah! Is much romantic, is it not.” He placed a finger against his nose and winked so that, for a change, Miranda’s laugh was genuine.

“But this Mr. Herman. I am knowing him. He is—what you say… in Oil. I, too, am in Oil. Thus we have met. He is very big and very rich.”

Miranda was aghast. What had she done! “You men!” She breathed admiringly. “You know so much.”

“Yes.” Mr. Bhuratta conceded. “But this Mr. Herman… I am not liking him much. He does, I think, make much fun of me. He is American.” He made it sound the ultimate indiscretion.

“Just do what you think best, dear Mr. Bhuratta.” Miranda cast her bread upon the waters and hoped for the best. “And now perhaps you would like to cane me?”

Her guest brightened visibly. “Of course!” He agreed expansively. “You are most good girl. I make it hurt very much.”

Miranda rose, and taking a pose in the center of the room held out her hand. “Please correct me, Sir, if I am not doing this properly.” She said demurely.

“Is most fine.” Mr. Bhuratta assured her. “Is just as little girls stood in school long ago. Perhaps even I make you cry.”

There came the usual agonizing tapping with the cane on the taut palm. The adjustment up and down of the outstretched arm. The trial swish that cut the air like a knife and caused the victim to wilt inwardly. Then the careful measurement and the slashing blow itself.

While the suspenseful prologue was enacted Miranda supposed it must be a ritual engaged in the world over ever since some remote ancestor had invented the punishment. But when the vicious cane bedded itself in her hand she could not believe such pain had ever existed before. With an indrawn breath she closed her eyes and fought the nausea and the instinctive compulsion to cry out in protest or to run. Run blindly anywhere away from the cane.

“You see,” Said Mr. Bhuratta conversationally, “it is as I promise. It much hurts. Now please to hold out the other hand.”

Determined to test herself and to do the best she could Miranda said softly: “Oh, thank you! That hurt wonderfully. You are so clever.” There was just the chance he might be content to strike her once on each hand. If so she might be

able to acquit herself with reasonable composure and control. But to be struck more than once on the same hand would be beyond her ability to bear. She wished he had promised a number of strokes. If there is an end in sight one may reach it. Resolutely she held out her arm and flattened the hand.

It was a repeat. Clenching her teeth and her spirit she managed a repeat of her own reaction. Then stood with arms hanging loosely at her sides and awaited her next instruction. She prayed: Oh make him stop now. Make him stop. Make him stop… She felt certain both her hands were useless now. Both were utterly numb and were sending out wave after wave of pain. Opening her eyes she found his gaze fixed intently upon her. She smiled wanly at him and said simply: “No one has ever hurt me that much before.”

“I am very proud. And you are very brave girl. Please now to hold out the first hand again.”

Miranda threw pretence to the winds. “I can’t take any more.” She told him frankly, meeting him eye to eye. “It hurts more than I believed possible. I feel sure you don’t know how much it hurts. I want to please you. But I don’t think I have the will power to hold my hand out for another stroke. Even if I try I’ll pull it in without meaning to. How many strokes do you intend to give me?”

“Three on each hand.” Mr. Bhuratta said equably. “Like in the school.”

Good Heavens! The man had a hang-up from childhood that he was going to work out on her now. “But you were not hit as hard as this when you were small.” Miranda fal-

tered.
“No. Most true. But you are big girl so have big pain.”
“We are trained to behave well when we are punished.” Miranda tried to explain. “We want to please you and make you happy. But if the pain is too great to bear or begins to injure us we lose control just like anyone else. You don’t want me screaming and unable to stand still.”
“Like little girls in school.” Mr. Bhuratta said.
She had pined a brief respite and learned the number of strokes. She would try again. Without hope she, once more, held out her hand.
But the stroke broke her resolve. She abandoned courage. Bending double she clasped her injured hands beneath her arms and flung herself moaning into an arm chair. The tears came without restraint.
“Just like little girls.” Said Mr. Bhuratta approvingly.
He allowed her to sob and writhe. Little by little she was able to consider her plight. By his own standards Mr. Bhuratta probably was not cruel. He seemed content to allow her a normal uncontrolled reaction. To give her time to compose herself between strokes. He seemed pleased by her tears. Perhaps that was what he wanted—not a poised control at all.
She had received half the infliction he desired to give her. She knew she would have little use from her hands for days, they would be so bruised and cut. But what else could she do! Perhaps later she could show her wounded hands to Mrs. Crosbie and make the woman understand that there were limits to what a girl’s flesh would bear. Using

the backs of her hands she dried the tears from her cheeks and eyes. Wearily she got to her feet and stood where she had stood before. Mr. Bhuratta nodded approvingly. Thrusting herself erect she stretched her arm and hand as far as they would go. She smiled appealingly at the man who held the cane. Then closed her eyes.

* * *

Patricia wryly acknowledged a retributive justice. She who had enslaved so many was herself enslaved. It was a state she had never previously known. Her training had been a form of slavery. But it had ended abruptly with her return to Benson and elevation to Directress. Though teaching others, she herself had not employed the crafts and skills and submission instilled in her by Rhoda and Blessing long ago. Now she must do so. She was naked. She was slave. She knew fear. The six welts received touching her toes in the Gym had done more than mark her flesh. They had revived the abject desolation she had known in training. Had Mrs. Crosbie given her an additional six, she knew she would have broken and succumbed to the humiliation of tears and pleading. Her pride passionately denied that she break before her protege, the lovely Miranda: almost her sibling, yet for whom she felt a deeper than sibling love.

The agony of the caning had made Mrs. Crosbie a Force. Having possessed authority Patricia recognized it. The woman would demand total obedience. For the time being Patricia would bow and yield rather than be whipped. Es-

cape would be something for which to be forever vigilant. But the woman must never know of it. She was capable of punishing even the thought. Thus Patricia steeled herself for her first assignment. Hateful as it might be she would acquit herself well. She felt oddly grateful for her skills.

The handcuffs joining her wrists with an unrelenting bite had much the same demoralizing effect as the six weals across her bottom. She had to wear them because Mrs. Crosbie willed it. They made thoughts of escape seem futile. No doubt that was the intent. She hated them. Even to have them unlocked would never, in this place, be a prelude to anything good. Thus, when the wardress ordered her to: "Hold out your hands", she watched the key turn and the metal bands fall away without enthusiasm. Her evening had commenced.

His name was Gibson. The type that has no age, no Nationality: whose mobile features enhanced the superficial yet betrayed nothing of what might lurk more deeply beneath the surface. He stood behind the small Bar casually mixing a drink, and eyed the naked Patricia without surprise. A small twist of the lips that could have meant anything was his only concession to her entry. But he watched intently as the lovely girl walked gracefully erect to the center of the room then sank to her knees and submissively bowed her head. He nodded, as though confirming some prior knowledge.

"You do that damn well." He commended. Then, as though giving a considered opinion: "You are a very beautiful girl."

It was not what Patricia had expected. But her role must be

flawless. She intoned demurely: “Thank you, Master. I am your slave. Please instruct me. I will obey.”

Again the unexpected. Mr. Gibson chuckled. “Look, Sweetheart, I’ve had a hard day. I’m bushed. So don’t expect a ball of fire—leastwise not until after the second drink. Tell you what: I’m going to sit and sip. You can hold that pose in front of me. I like it. You can sit back on your heels; you won’t tire so bad. I’m mixing you a drink and you’ll damn well down it. Here! I’ve mixed it strong. It ought to help.”

Patricia was grateful. She sipped daintily and eyed her temporary possessor over the glass. He had positioned her carefully about six feet in front of her armchair in which he now lounged comfortably. Again he gave a reminiscent chuckle of amusement.

“They mean well, y’know. But it’s typical of the British. When they get around to something it’s no longer any big deal.” He eyed the kneeling girl approvingly. “I don’t mean you. I’d say you were about as desirable a female as I’ve ever seen. But the main scenario, it’s become a bit old hat. A sort of International ploy like Scotch and soda or a share warrant certificate under the table. By the way, you can talk, y’know. I want you to.”

“You’re American, arn’t you?” Patricia asked.

“Oh, sort of, I suppose. Bit of everything really. I get around. I’m supposed to whip you later, arn’t I?”

“If it pleases you, Master.”

“Let’s drop the Master bit for now, shall we. Finish that drink. Gulp it. Mine’s gone. I’ll mix a couple more.” As he handed her the second glass his eyes sought hers know-

ingly. “No, it’s not an anaesthetic for the pain you are about to receive.” He laughed at her evident relief. Then settled himself comfortably once more. “I was in Cairo last week. This is a regular thing there. When I walked in the room she was hanging by the thumbs, her toes about three inches off the floor. Not a day over sixteen, probably less. A man’s not expected to work there so they even provided another girl and a whip. She was most expert. A picture of grace actually, the way she swung the thing and slashed the poor kid wherever it hurt most. The victim, in between screaming and yelping, kept imploring me to forgive her and have the whipping stop. Hell of it is I know a bit of the lingo.” He looked down at Patricia amusedly. “O.K. I can see it in your eyes: Why didn’t I have it stop?

Not really because I’m a right bastard. But the girl in a facility. They use her. If she wasn’t striped for my delectation then it would be for someone else’s. They keep a stable of these little tricks. They heal up in three or four weeks and are then ready for another evening with a V.I.P. In the meantime they do domestic chores and serving girls and take their turns at whipping each other. I noticed that night the girl with the whip had some really beautiful marks all over. I thought it an interesting query as to whether this taking turns at each other had an end result of sympathy or resentment: A sort of ‘You wait ’till I get you next time’.”

Mr. Gibson sighed gently and examined the naked girl. “Not many whip marks on you, are there?”

“I’m sitting on some real brutes.” Patricia offered helpfully.

“Let’s see ’em.” The inspection of her wounds was brief but

thorough. She managed not to wince as his fingers probed the ridges of swollen flesh raised by Mrs. Crosbie's cane. When she resumed her pose he observed: "A competent job. I'd guess they were for punishment. Not for fun. Leaves me supposing they have only just got you into this. What's the deal? They pay you, or keep you prisoner?"

"Prisoner." Patricia sought his eyes. "Please help me."

"How?"

She gave him Benson's name and phone number.

He nodded affirmatively. "They told me you would try. If you are new I suppose you feel you have to. I can understand that."

"You won't tell them… please!"

"What else can I do! It's a sort of business ethic. After all, they are laying on something special for me as their guest."

"But she'll punish me terribly."

"The good Mrs. Crosbie? Yes I can imagine she might. Look, kid, I won't tell 'em if they don't ask. Let's leave it at that, eh?"

Patricia looked as appealing as she could contrive and gave him her best smile. "Thank you."

"It happened once in Amsterdam." Gibson continued conversationally. "Girl did what you have just done. I got invited back a week later and they gave her to me again. They'd given me a hint, of course. But even so I wasn't quite ready… First off she knelt and apologized for having embarrassed me. Then she stood erect and another girl who had come with her tied her hands behind her back. This second girl then placed on the rug a triangular chunk

of wood about two feet long. Then retired and stood to one side. In the pleasantest and most matter of fact tone the offender explained to me that she must be punished. In fact wished to be punished. I can take a guess at how they persuade you girls to behave this way! And would I forgive her for this intrusion on my enjoyment. She then very carefully knelt with her knees bearing her whole weight upon the sharp edge of the block. She gasped and shook her bent head with the agony of it but made no move to rest back on her heels as you are doing now, but kept absolutely upright to that the sharp edge of that triangle bit steadily into where very ounce of her rested.

After her first gaspings were over she managed to look at me with tear filled eyes and ask if I would be kind enough to have a drink or two while she knelt like that and then her friend would give her a hundred strokes with the whip."

Mr. Gibson took a long swallow. "I suppose it's simple enough. If you don't obey they just hurt you so damn bad you change your mind. I guess the average John you service hurts you some. But nothing compared with what you get in the back room. Is that the way it is?"

"Yes." Patricia admitted.

"Well, these boys must have had a pretty good back room. I couldn't have knelt on that damn thing even if I'd tried. But she did! At the end of fifteen minutes her girlfriend produced a whip, sure I've seen wickeder ones. But it must have hurt damn bad, and proceeded to give her the hundred strokes. She knelt there with her hands tied and

took it. Sure she made a bit of noise. But she couldn't wriggle much without hurting herself more. All she could have done would have been to throw herself sideways on the floor. But she wouldn't do it. Just knelt there and took it. Because her bound hands shielded some portion of her back she got about half the lashes on her front." Gibson mused silent for a few moments. "Won't pretend I didn't get a thrill out of the performance. I did. The visitor's conscience is always salved by the assumption that if he stops it now the girl will get it twice as bad after he has gone. I suppose this is one of the virtues of this particular fringe benefit." He looked keenly at the nude figure before him. "You girls ever wonder why a man gets a kick out of whipping you?"

"I've thought about it a lot." Patricia acknowledged.

"Don't think I haven't! Come to some rummy conclusions when you delve into it. Admitting that there is the odd chap who's a bit round the bend on the subject, I'd say that most men when they whip a girl would much prefer that she was loving them. I don't mean the bang, bang bit. But affection! We are a lonely lot. Can you understand that for most men whipping you is loving you."

Patricia's incredulity must have shown. Gibson gave a conciliative laugh. "Well, look at it like this. A boy's mother is a woman. She loves him. No matter what he is or what he does she loves him. He grows up surrounded by her love. Then when he goes out into the world he discovers other women don't. Mostly they are indifferent to him. It hurts. It hurts particularly because the poor gimp by now

has come victim to even more urgent needs of the sex than he had with good old mother. He had to beg, to buy, even to borrow what he has to have from them. Mostly they hand it out like gold bricks: and the price is about the same. Most of it's unconscious, of course, but when a man whips you he is not only getting a bit of his own back, working off this unconscious resentment, but he is also extracting from you far more satisfying gasps and groans than he usually manages to evoke from you in bed. I suppose the Freudian boys would see the whip as a lovely long thin phallus that can go on and on forever and would never have a premature ejaculation on the sheet." He paused for a moment. "Make any sense, Sweetheart?"

Patricia squirmed. She felt on dangerous ground. "Well yes it does, the way you put it. But what about the woman's side. Is she supposed to enjoy being used?"

"Look, Honey. I know you are under duress. If I tell you to lay on the carpet and stretch your legs you'll obey me. When the act is over do you want to tell me you are really and truly defiled, ravaged, shattered, soiled and all the other horseshit?"

"It depends on the girl." Patricia tried to explain. "On just where she is in life. On what has happened to her. Or what has not happened to her. I'll admit that if you do that to me now I will get up afterwards ready for whatever you may wish to do to me then and I won't feel any different from what I do now. But I don't know if that proves anything…" Desperately she sought to divert him from argument that seemed pointless and certain to lead to bad temper.

Producing her sweetest smile she asked: “Do you want me to lay down and stretch my legs?”
“Seared of argument?” He grinned, “Perhaps you are right. Waste of time. No! I don’t want you to lay down and stretch your legs. Get me a cane or a riding crop. A long thin one.”
Patricia smiled brightly. But groaned inwardly. She had played her hand badly. Bowing on one knee she handed him the wicked length of viciousness she had produced from the cupboard. Resolutely she closed her mind to how she might behave when it was used upon her.
“Use that phone and ask whoever answers to send up a hot banana. When it comes bring it to me.”
Patricia obeyed, wondering. But when she took the object from the hand that offered it at the door she guessed.
“Seen one before, Sweetheart?”
“No.”
“You have guessed what happens, eh?”
Patricia supposed it appropriate to return to her role. “Yes Master. I will try and bear the pain.”
“Humble your pride a bit, I thought. You still have some. Besides I’m tired of the whip, and you are almost too beautiful to mark up. I asked for this.” He waved the cane negligently, “Just in case you want to argue or fail to hold the pose. In a minute you will stand in front of me, erect and at attention with your hands clasped behind your neck. You will not move. Not even when you find yourself subject to… shall we say—unusual sensations.” He peeled the silver foil from the suppository. “Bend far over. Legs wide apart.”

Patricia was thankful there were no witnesses. It was a hateful and demeaning thing to have to do. But she obeyed and made no demur. Then, at a word from Gibson, she took her pose as directed and stood before him, a nude statue of total perfection.

"Needs a minute or so to take hold." He assured her cheerfully. "Then it gets steadily worse. Ever had one?"

"No Master."

"I'm surprised. Be quite an experience for you. I'd have thought it a useful method of getting you to see the light without marking you up. I'm supposing your unblemished skin area an important asset as afresh field for your visitors to work on."

Patricia had never felt more exposed or more suspenseful. She had no idea what degree of pain the small object melting inside her would produce. She was sure it would be bad. Carefully she voiced the fear uppermost in her mind:

"Master, if the pain becomes too bad I may not be able to stand still."

"Don't worry about it: I'll encourage you with this." He raised the cane.

So he was cruel! Patricia had begun to hope that her evening might be bearable. The hope slid away slowly as she felt the first stirrings of discomfort from the foreign presence within.

It was a strange tableau. The lounging man with the cane and the erect naked girl. Both motionless, waiting, silent. There was a third presence invisible and unseen. But its aura hung heavy in the room.

Patricia would have found it difficult to pinpoint the exact moment at which the itch became a burn and when the burn merged to pain and the pain became agony. But, once started, the procession rapidly progressed to the unbearable. She never knew what resources of strength she called upon to hold her pose unmoving. Only by flaring nostrils, closed eyes and the quickening of her breath could the watching man gauge her distress. Once, impelled by a courage she did not know she possessed she opened her eyes, sought and held his, and said in an even controlled voice: “Thank you, Master.”

She knew it useless to compute time under torment. It may have been five or fifteen minutes with the agony piling wave on wave within her when Gibson said: “Go to the phone and order another.”

The movement was good. But she wondered now in what degree he intended to break her. To have another of the cruel things inserted when the other might have run its course was something she dared not think of. But he was a strange man. He might be testing. In any case she was helpless. She obeyed.

She stood before him awaiting his pleasure, watching miserably as he removed the foil. Unexpectedly he handed her the small symmetrical object. “Stick it in yourself, Sweetheart. It will be less shaming for you. I’m sure I don’t have to tell you where.”

Patricia did not need telling, she had guessed. With her free hand half way to her triangle she paused and looked at him piteously.

“It’s alright, girl.” He had interpreted her hesitation instantly. “They may be hard to take, but they won’t injure. Put it in your little treasure box and tuck it well in. Tomorrow it will work just as well as ever.”

It was indeed a shaming thing to do in front of him. But she knew she must not turn away. Having him watch was as much a part of the punishment as the thing itself. It was better than having his insensitive finger jabbing inside her. Quickly she parted her labia, made the insertion, and pushed her fingers so far within herself that he must surely be satisfied. She managed one more “Thank you, Master”. Then resumed her place and her pose.

But now there was no victory. How could there be! Her flesh was flesh and would endure only so much. Without a tremor she absorbed the early stages of this new infliction. But when the full crescendo of agony joined the total of what she was already suffering her defenses began to crumble. First spasmodic jerkings of her taut legs, then a shuddering of her hips. Through tears she took a quick glance. But her tormentor’s face showed only an intent curiosity. His grip on the cane was still negligent.

For moments she managed to hold straight and still. But they were brief moments fraught with agony. An agony that took sudden surges of intensity that drove her nakedness into ever increasing writhings and contortions until, at last, she relapsed upon the rug a twisting, squirming jumble of arms and legs, breasts and buttocks.

Her breath competing with the moans she no longer sought to control. For a brief moment she turned to the man in the

chair and gasped brokenly: “I’m sorry. I can’t bear it. You’ll have to whip me,” before she, once more, relapsed into her sanctuary of endless motion which, though it did not stop the pain, enabled her to keep from screaming and to hold to sanity. Agony had brought her to the point of not caring. For Patricia then nothing existed outside the pain and the two things burning inside her.

Gibson seemed immobilized. Fascinated he watched the tortured girl thrust and turn against her enemy. Watched the sweating limbs fight against a thing they could not touch. Watched the tossing head and the eyes clenched shut in pain or wide and staring in disbelief at such suffering. Even to him the time seemed long. To Patricia it must have been an eternity before the stricken beauty began to find a relief mirrored in the slackening of her writhing until, after a very long time, she lay sweating and panting with only spasmodic jerks of an arm or a leg by which to measure the retreat of that which had defeated her. Finally she lay still. Her breathing slowly returning to normal. Then, with an infinite weariness and dejection, she thrust herself into the kneeling position she had formerly held, smiled at Gibson wanly, and abjectly pleaded: “Master, I am sorry. I failed. Please whip me.”

Silently her companion went to the bar, mixed two more drinks, handed her one, and relaxed with the other in his chair. “What the Hell would I whip you for?” He asked good humoredly.

Patricia looked at him blankly. “I disobeyed you. I could not stand still. You said that if I did not hold position you

would…" Her voice faltered and trailed away. "I know I have to be whipped, Master. I won't plead, and I will try and keep quiet while you… while you do it." She drained her glass in several thirsty gulps. It would help me, Master, if you chained me."

Gibson surveyed the kneeling girl wonderingly. "Well I'll be damned!" He exclaimed. "You are really something special. They ought to be proud of you! You really thought I meant it about the whip, didn't you! Damn! You make me feel like a bastard."

"You mean you arn't going to whip me?" Patricia was incredulous.

"Hell no! I told you most of this stuff was old hat to me. I have watched that hot banana deal once or twice. But it's never taken effect like it did with you. Thought you were play acting at first—until we put the second one in. Honestly, I didn't think it would hit you that bad."

Patricia sniffed. "Thank you," She said inadequately.

Rising, he helped her to her feet. Patting her on the bottom reassuringly he then tilted her chin and kissed her firmly and warmly on the mouth. Looking at her raised eyes intently he said with force: "I wish you belonged to me. I'd value you." Then, returning to normal, suggested: "You know where the bathroom is. I expect you'd like to use it. Run along." Thankfully she did as he bid.

When she returned he was gone.

* * *

It is to be supposed that the essence of slavery is that it had no end. That, being punished, the slave will know it only as a single event in a continuing stream. Thus, too, the loss of hope must leave its mark upon them. Their chains are taken only that they may be the more firmly held by cords. The cell gives way to the cage and the cage to the dungeon. Their pains are without logic in that they are inflicted as retribution for their natural instincts of rebellion and escape. They are governed by caprice: not of themselves, but of others. The final slavery is the awareness of being only an object. For them survival is in loving each other.

Miranda and Patricia would have embraced had their wrists not, once more, been locked in the hated handcuffs. Mrs. Crosbie surveyed her captives with amusement as she closed the cell door. “You can do it if you really try.” She assured them.

Patricia turned. “You have locked them too tight.” She complained. “They hurt. Please loosen them a notch.”

“Let me see.”

Both girls offered their chained wrists for inspection. Mrs. Crosbie fingered the metal bands. “Fiddlesticks!”

She said testily. “They should be tight. I want you to know you have them on. Serve you right if I tightened them more! And as for you,” she looked at Miranda, “I don’t want to hear any more about your caned hands. You won’t be using them. So it does not matter.” She turned to leave. Then, almost as an afterthought, said diffidently: “Both of you asked your guest’s help to escape. You knew it was forbidden. Tomorrow you will be bitterly sorry!”

She left them to their love and to their tears.
The bitterness came after their morning drill in the Gym. “I would much prefer to whip you.” Mrs. Crosbie told them matter of factly. “It’s simple. You hate it. About fifty strokes would be my judgement for such stupidity. But I am compelled to conserve as much unblemished skin on your pretty hides as possible. I must not encroach on the privilege our guests value so highly.” She smiled at them sardonically. “So I have been forced to devise a small repertoire of discomforts that leave your female flesh unmarred. Since this is a first offence you will, today, enjoy one of the milder disciplines. Come!”
Miranda was first. She was glad to get rid of the bite of the handcuffs. But her wrists were almost instantly tied behind her back. Palm to palm. Not crossed as she had been accustomed to. Expertly Mrs. Crosbie circled the girl’s elbows with a broad strap. Buckled it and pulled it tight. Miranda gasped. Her shoulders were wrenched back forcing her breasts into an arrogant thrust. She bit hard on a cry of protest. Mrs. Crosbie was not satisfied. Loosening the strap she re-adjusted it on her victim’s arms and, carefully and remorselessly, pulled and tightened until Miranda’s elbows were squeezed together. Her wrists and forearms rightly joined as a single unit. It hurt.
Next she was invited to sit. She watched unhappily as ornate high heeled shoes were fitted to her feet and fastened by a locked band tight around each ankle. The fit was snug. They held her feet with authority. She could never free herself of them, even if she had her hands. But the feature

within them that caused her to quail was an inch long sharp point rising up from each heel to thrust against her flesh.

“Stand up.” Mrs. Crosbie ordered.

It was not easy. Miranda was amazed by the awkwardness imposed by her strictured arms and shoulders. It would be easy to fall. To do so would hurt and perhaps injure; she could do nothing to help herself. Fearfully and gingerly she managed to stand. The absurdly high heels were a punishment in themselves. But with the spike pressing against her heel she was compelled to carry her weight entirely by her toes. She stood, tottering and uncertain.

“You look exquisite.” Mrs. Crosbie said cheerfully. “Perhaps I should deliver you like this to your next guest. He could scarcely fail to appreciate the accentuation of your femininity. Girls should always be on their toes and should always have their breasts thrust out. And now for one other small refinement.”

It was a gag. Seeing it Miranda’s cry was involuntary: “Oh please don’t put that thing on me!”

Wasting no words Mrs. Crosbie picked up the cane and slashed savagely round Miranda’s hips. Then stood interrogatively.

The blow and the agony taxed the punished girl’s equilibrium to the limit. Gasping with pain she managed with difficulty to stay erect. “I’m sorry,” she said humbly. “I’ll open my mouth.”

Miranda hated being gagged. It imposed a terrible impotence. The beastliness invading her mouth and being

locked fast held something degrading for a girl. Miserably she parted her lips and accepted the rubber pad on her tongue and filling her cheeks. She wished Mrs. Crosbie had wet the thing before inserting it. Now she had to try and salivate sufficiently to lubricate and minimize the discomfort. Harsh fingers drew the band tight so that she could never separate her lips. She must cherish the thing within her mouth. It was now a part of her. Behind her neck the padlock snapped shut.

Painfully she stood and watched as Patricia was similarly dealt with. Their eyes met without hope. Mrs. Crosbie opened a narrow barred door. “Get in there.” She ordered abruptly. “Sideways.”

It had to be sideways. The compartment must have been intended for a broom closet or for the narrow confinement of a single person. Patricia tip-toed inside, then had to press hard back against her bound arms and the wall as Miranda edged into position so that they were face to face. The door clanged shut.

“It gets steadily worse.” Mrs. Crosbie assured them. “You’ll be in there a long, long time. You can contemplate the error of exploiting your guests.” She laughed acidly. “I’ll look in from time to time. But don’t think tears will soften me. You’ll shed a few. Anyway, you should be a big comfort to each other, you’re close enough.” She nodded approvingly and left.

Alone, the two prisoners eyed each other in desolation. It was agony not to be able to speak. Despite their pain each was aware that their wracked nakedness made their

breasts stand so that their nipples were in contact. Patricia wriggled enough to provide a small friction between the four sensitive buds. Miranda gasped and glowed. There would be a small solace in their day. She responded with twin motions of her own.

But nothing could combat the inexorable misery Mrs. Crosbie had devised. It took but a few minutes for the bands about their elbows to bite and burn so that shoulders fluttered and breast twisted across breast. Their eyes shared distress. How long would it last. How bad would it get! Miranda could find no relief. The spiked shoes and her pinioned arms competed for her attention. She kicked the shoes this way and that against the wall but budged them not at all. The sharp points still pressed against her heel with their pitiless threat. To stand upon her toes as she was forced to do was already taking a toll of fatigue and strained tendons. How long could a girl stand like that! To sit or to slouch or to lean was not possible. They were breast to breast, belly to belly, knee to knee. They were compelled to stand and will themselves against the spike.

It was the strap confining their elbows that brought the tears and the flaring nostrils. It was without mercy. It had begun by burning and progressed to a searing agony. Soon the shoulders joined their protest against so rigid a bond. There was an implacable quality about the tight leather. They fluttered their shoulders as best they could seeking relief. But there was none. It held them with their breasts taut in an infliction that intensified minute by minute and hour by hour. Miranda was sure that had she not been

gagged she would have screamed.

In its own subtle way the gag was the cruelest of all. Mrs. Crosbie had shrewdly guessed the frustration and despair of the two girls so tightly enjoined yet unable to utter a word. They had a great need of communion, but could find it only in hurt eyes and the brushing together of their cheeks. Thus each was terribly alone with her pain and her fear. Sometimes, in desperation, one or the other would toss and fling her head from side to side. But it was a gesture of protest. No more. When they were still again the gag remained as much a part of them as their tongue or the tantalizing shoes that encased their aching feet.

As the day wore on Mrs. Crosbie peered at them from time to time through the bars. She showed only amusement at the frantic efforts they made with rolling eyes and shaking heads to convey to her the unbearable awfulness of their condition. But realizing she had no intention of giving them hope or comfort they finally lapsed into a lethargic acceptance of their misery and evaded her eyes until she went away. Hating themselves for the resolution each vowed never again to speak of escape to a guest. Better lifelong slavery than day after day like this!

They stood on their toes and endured.

When the unbelievable time came that they were returned to their cell Miranda held out her wounded hands almost with thankfulness. The metal cuffs bit viciously tight into her wrists as Mrs. Crosbie's last infliction of the awful day. But she no longer cared. She had become used to the handcuffs. She expected nothing else. Her whole being was

pervaded by a great thankfulness that the day was done. That the strap was gone, and the shoes, and the gag! She longed to talk. But was too tired. For moments the girls kissed and loved each other. Then threw themselves upon their bunks and into sleep.

There is a nightmare quality in being wrenched suddenly from deep slumber. The hand upon her shoulder invoked instantly in Miranda's mind a vision of Mrs. Crosbie, the strap, and the gag. Suddenly she sat up, certain of disaster, and found herself confronted by the smiling visage of Major Ballard. He had a finger to his lips enjoying silence. Patricia was awake and staring at him as though fascinated by a vision.

"Take it easy now." He said quietly. "This may be hard for you to believe, but I'm taking you home."

The girls exchanged glances of disbelief, and echoed in unison, "Home?"

"Yes," He assured them easily. "That house from which you were taken. That's home, isn't it?"

"It's a trick. Mrs. Crosbie set you up to it." Said Patricia with certainty.

He grinned and shrugged. "Have it your way. But stop nattering and do as I tell you. I want this done quietly. The less the staff know of it the better. You wouldn't want me to wake dear Cynthie to have her instruct you, would you?"

"Damn dear Cynthie!" Said Patricia with deep feeling.

He smiled broadly. "You are beginning to believe me. You wouldn't have dared say that otherwise. I hear she gave you a bad day."

“Are you kidnapping us too?” Miranda asked tentatively.
“For a fate worse than death or the white slave trade? Not really. I’m going to take you home. Those two clunks who picked you up made the most frightful bloomer. But if you don’t believe me and want to make a fuss I’ll go and get help and deliver you back to your loved ones bound and gagged.”
“I’ll believe you.” Said Miranda happily. Then looked beseechingly at Pat for moral support.
“Damn and blast!” The Major exclaimed. “The silly bitch has got you handcuffed!”
“We are always handcuffed.” Patricia assured him plaintively. Then, suddenly, “Mean to tell us you haven’t got the keys!”
“No. I haven’t! Cynthie uses a special make. Gives her exclusive control. Only she has the keys.” Major Ballard considered thoughtfully. He picked up Miranda’s hand and examined the metal cuff without enthusiasm. Then, seeing the swollen fingers and palm, “Did one of those silly bastards do that to you?”
“It was Mr. Bhuratta.” Miranda told him. She made no motion to withdraw, and the Major seemed to feel no urgency in parting with her injured member. Miranda realized it was a long while since anyone had held her hand like that. It felt good.
“Well, it won’t hurt you to wear ’em a little longer.” Major Ballard said cheerfully. “You seem to have doubts about my good intentions so perhaps it’s just as well. If you stay handcuffed you’ll be less inclined to argue. Come along.”

“Do we get any clothes?” Miranda asked.
“Sorry! No clothes. Can’t lay my hands on any at this hour. You must be used to being without them by now. You came sans garments. That’s the way we return you… By the way, don’t think too badly of Bhuratta. It was him who told me about Herman. Good Lord! What a Bollocks the Department made of you two. Poor old colonel’s damned upset.”
The car was large and sleek and expensive. “Want to sit in the back and draw the blinds in maiden modesty?” The Major inquired, “Or will you take a chance with me in front? I can offer a blanket.”
“We’ll sit with you in front.” Miranda said happily. “Never mind the blanket.” Nimbly she took the center place next the driver.
Patricia followed dubiously. “Ever hear the name Benson?” She asked frostily.
“Did we ever!” The Major’s voice was heavy with sarcasm. “When I first saw you I thought you looked like money. Should have known. Lucky bastard, isn’t he! Fancy owning you! Benson made a few red faces higher up. I’m told the Department is going to have to do him some heavy favors in return for those six stripes Cynthie put on that pretty bottom of yours.”
The drive seemed to Miranda much shorter than the one she had taken when bound in the trunk. Major Ballard talked happily of nothing in particular and, quite unashamedly, took every opportunity to turn and examine the naked girl beside him. Miranda was surprised to find

that she did not mind at all. A phrase flitted through her mind: 'Nudity becomes her'. She felt sure it did. That, too, was a good feeling.

How good it was to see Blessing and Rhoda! Miranda was aware of the incongruity of the emotion. But could not help it. They, in turn, were obviously overjoyed to see their Mistress and their erstwhile slave. The two girls wore their nudity with unconcern. In Patricia's study there were drinks all round and many intent glances. Patricia graciously said that, for once, she didn't mind the handcuffs since it would be the last time… Blessing had assured her that their removal would be simple when he fetched his tools. Major Ballard kissed the hands of both his charges and, again, held Miranda's longer than he need have done. It was not until long after he had gone that she realized she should have asked him to return her to her parents or to the Police…

The thought had never entered her head.

* * *

For Miranda it was a strange time. An escape. A Home-coming. A new beginning. Yet, basically, nothing had changed. She was still a slave. It was different for Patricia. For her the kidnapping had been a distress from which she returned to assume her waiting mantle of authority. An authority which she immediately asserted by ruling that Miranda should continue to wear the handcuffs that had no key. She lost no time in having Blessing remove the

metal about her own wrists. But found a humorous satisfaction in re-asserting her dominance over her companion in distress. Miranda suspected a touch of pique over the Major's marked attention. But cared little. Chains had become natural for her. If leaving her wrists locked pleased Patricia she was content.

But they shared Patricia's bed for the balance of the night and most of the morning. They slept off the fatigue of Mrs. Crosbie's punishment. Then made love as an affirmation of the warm bond suffering had woven about them. As Miranda watched her lovely companion dress the minds of both centered on the next move. A move which, now, held little attraction for either.

"Sort of brought it on herself, didn't you, Ducky?"

"I suppose you mean Herman?" Miranda assented doubtfully.

"Good old Wilbur!" Pat agreed cheerfully. "Pretty decent of him, y'know. He went all out for you. Damn shame neither of us want you to go now. Not that I ever did think it a good idea."

"Must I go?"

"He's bought and paid for you. He even bought Persis just to keep you happy. I have no choice but to deliver you." She chuckled. "Someone over there will have to find a key to those handcuffs. You'll still be wearing them when you go. But look at it this way: If you go back into training here, and you could still stand some! You'll only worry about who you'll get sold to. It won't be long before good solid Herman will look good again rather than some evil you

know not of. I could try, and I've been thinking a lot about this, to get them to call off the deal and let me have you. But honestly, Ducky, I'm not a bit sure Mr. Benson would think much of the idea of you as my personal slave, or even as assistant Directress. Bit of an infringement on his rights and privileges—see what I mean?"

"In a way, then, you are a slave too." Miranda said dolefully.

"And it's something I must never forget, Ducky! Bird in a gilded cage, if you like! The fact that I love the cage and the man who put me in it doesn't change my knowledge that I belong to Benson. He owns me just as Herman now owns you. I'd never dare cross him… But cheer up. Arn't you glad you'll be seeing Persis again?"

"Of course I am! You were right. We do prop each other up. I love her. Has anyone heard how she is?"

Patricia made a gesture of helplessness. "Not really. The fact is Wilbur has gone away on business. It's young Susan who has charge of Persis and it's young Susan I have to deliver you to." She giggled as though at some mental picture. "I suspect poor old Wilbur got cold feet over this business of training you and simply walked out for a couple of weeks leaving the job to Susan. He puts a lot of trust in that girl. He expects her to do in two weeks what I intended to take a couple of months over."

"So that means we get whipped three times a day!"

Patricia sobered. "Sweetheart, I just don't know. Actually Susan's not a bad kid. I liked her. She's practical, damned good looking and quite sexy, and she's intelligent. But what

a spot he's put her in! She's been number one. She's privileged. Now number two and three show up and she has the job of training them until they are as good as she is herself. She has to ask herself what happens then… I suppose it's a case of whether you like each other and how well her sense of humor stands the strain."

"All of a sudden I'm scared." Miranda admitted. "Can't you manage to be in the background somewhere?"

Patricia came and, holding the troubled girl tightly, kissed her long and warmly with a great tenderness. "I wish things were different." She said seriously. "But, yes. I will contrive to visit. I'd have more standing if Wilbur was in residence. But I'll try." Then, her mood changing quickly, she said cheerfully. "Come along, Darling. Maybe we see ghosts that arn't there. Lees get it over with." She laughed. "Just think! It's your big day. You are about to be delivered…"

Nothing is quite as we expect. Miranda's entry into Wilbur Herman's home left her with the same feeling of being adrift that had fallen upon her with the kidnapping. The new faces of unobtrusive servants made her, for the first time in months, feel her nakedness. Made her aware of the handcuffs and the old familiar ankle chains once more joining her feet. But then came the warmth of the small Tea party with a quite charming and quite stunning Susan playing the gracious hostess. Now, with Patricia departed, she sat nervously with her new Mistress.

In an English drawing room Susan was exotic. Such small covering as she wore was becoming, expensive and, as

Pam had intimated, beautifully chased metal circlets snug around her neck and her ankles. Each had as its integral part the ring to which a chain might be locked. Susan intercepted her curiosity.

"Lovely, arn't they! Wilbur has the key, of course!" She laughed understandingly. "You're lost! I can see it in your face. Whole damn situation's weird! First thing you're wondering is why don't I just pack up and run?"

"Why don't you?" Miranda ventured.

Susan gave a wry grin. "Maybe I'm not sure myself. But figure it out: I run to the police. They contact Herman and Benson who deny everything. My word against theirs. You know who'd win. So I run, but not to the coppers." She fingered the metal round her neck and ankles. "I have to get rid of these. They are some hard metal that takes an expert with a lot of tools to remove. So I go home…" She shrugged. "I don't want to. I like it here. Wilbur's damn good to me…"

"But with… those things! You are still a slave?"

"Sure I'm a slave. I'm a good one! And yes, I do get whipped sometimes. And yes, I do get punished and chained and… lots of things. But, fact is, I'm fond of Wilbur and he's fond of me." She shrugged and made a move almost of embarrassment, "I suppose you wonder why I stay around if I get whipped and… all the rest. Well, I'll make no bones about it. It's a sort of erotic game I play. If I feel randy or mischievous I prod poor Wilbur to see how far I can get away with things until he gets angry. This way I know about how far I can twist him. I also get whipped… or something. But, y'know—" She looked at Miranda

appraisingly, “I hate it while I’m being whipped, but afterwards it’s sort of nice. It makes me horny. Same with you?”

“Good Heavens, no!” Exclaimed Miranda, startled.

“Well, give it time! If you are whipped by someone who is fond of you it makes an astounding difference. I hated it in training. But if Wilbur does it or orders one of the staff to do it, then it’s different.”

“One of the staff?”

“Oh, yes. We have males and females who do the job very competently. Mostly Wilbur sends me to them to be punished. He’s really an old softie in spite of all his tirades about females in general. Incidentally this staff is only a bell push away anytime you want to give me trouble. Please don’t ever make me call ’em. I’ll enjoy punishing you, and you’ll like it better from me. You know… two girls together!”

Miranda found herself wishing to respond to such frankness. She said simply: “Thank you.” and hoped it sounded as sincere as she wished it to be. “I do want to try. I’ll obey you—honest I will!” She stumbled now in what she had to ask, uncertain of how far she might presume: “Where is Persis?”

“Been dying to ask that, haven’t you!” Susan grinned knowingly. Then became serious. “Look! You have to understand this. I must be quite merciless with you both. It’s an order, the sort of order I just won’t go against. Anyway, you may as well know it. Persis has been a bad girlie, fact she’s hardly ever anything else. I don’t understand why

Wilbur bought her! So right now she's in no position to receive visitors. I'll take you to her if you wish. But she might sooner you didn't see her the way she is, and maybe you'd be happier too… What do you think?"

"Oh but I must!" Miranda was aghast at the thought of what her beloved Persis might have got herself into. "You see," she continued lamely, "I'm afraid Persis sort of depends on me. We've always been together."

The room was a replica of that other in which she and Persis had suffered. Her beloved sat astride the cruel bar, her feet tethered tautly far apart, her hands bound at her back. She was drooping with fatigue and pain, her cheeks tear stained. She raised her bowed head without hope. But, seeing Miranda, her whole being tensed against its confinement and her face came alive. "Oh, Darling…!" In the small exclamation she laid bare her heart.

Miranda ran to her. But her joined hands were inadequate to the embrace she longed to give. The punished girl sat too high for their lips to meet. Wildly and protectively she turned to Susan, "But this is cruel! Must you…?"

Miranda realized her error instantly. She sought to redress it by sinking humbly to her knees before her new Mistress. "Forgive me." She pleaded. "I forgot I am a slave." She looked into Susan's enigmatic eyes and knew this a moment in which to do her best. "Please whip me." She requested. Rising, she bent and touched her toes.

"Pat said you had a long way to go." Susan's voice was almost regretful. "You sure have! You absolutely shouldn't accuse. You should address me as 'Mistress'. And a slave

does not set her own punishment. Three faults inside one minute. Ordinarily I expect I would whip you. But you are still covered in marks from that last disaster you got into. So there's an obvious thing I should do with you. You know what it is, don't you, Darling."

Miranda knew. Quaking inwardly, but with a great wish to please, she found the stool and climbed astride the bar facing her fellow captive. She used her cuffed hands to support her weight while she unhappily watched her ankles pinioned and spread. She took the precaution of one strained glance at Persis and an admonitory shake of the head against the protest visibly quivering on her loved ones lips. Then, obeying Susan's command, she reluctantly raised her arms over and behind her head. A chain snapped drawing her hands back and down leashing them behind her to the bar so that now she must sit erect, arms and shoulders wrenched back, feet wide apart so that her entire weight rested on that small but vulnerable part of her in contact with the punishing thing on which she sat. She gasped at the unexpected agony that engulfed her being.

Without a word Susan left them alone.

Words flooded between them. But it was a gasping and agonized speech. Their weight was their torture. The slightest move provoked fresh waves of agony.

"How long have you been…?"

"I don't know." Persis gasped. "Oh, Darling! It seems just hours and hours… And now you! It's all my fault."

"Has she been cruel?"

Persis groaned in perplexity. “I suppose it’s half my fault. Maybe it’s all my fault. When they brought me here I cheeked her. Then after I’d been punished for that I slapped her face. I just hate being bossed by a sexy little snippet like that. So I’ve spent about half the time like this and the other half getting whipped—see the lovely marks! Oh, Darling! Make me behave! I can’t go on and on like this.”

Miranda could feel the sweat trickling down her flanks. She had never known such insidious pain. It had an unrelting quality of its own. She saw Persis’s breasts heaving with the strain and realized that her own were doing the same. To ask herself how long she could bear it was purely rhetorical. She would have to bear it. She could not move even an inch either way on the bar. If she fainted her body would slump but there would be no release from the pressure that held her firmly on the painful perch. She was frightened to think that Persis had endured many hours of this torment both here and in their training. If it was possible to endure perhaps she would be compelled to endure…

That pain can mould and bend is a thought hateful to the free spirit. But it is so. Upon their release neither girl would have denied an intensified determination to obey. Miranda had long possessed a great yearning to reach whatever haven might wait at the end of this seemingly interminable training. At all costs she must carry Persis with her. The rebellious child must not be allowed to spend her life in a succession of punishments.

Miranda voiced this sentiment to Susan. “I did so well when I had to on my own.” She said puzzled. “I wouldn’t have said ‘Boo’ to that Crosbie bitch or those absurd men we had to please. I took a pride in doing damn well what I had been trained to do. I suppose because it was the only outlet I had by which I could sort of beat the system. Then when I get back with you or Pat I mess things up. Why?”

“Darling, don’t you understand!” Susan grinned in commiseration. “It’s plain enough. The Benson theory never contemplated the Mistress and the trainee falling in love.”

Miranda flushed and sought for words.

Susan laughed. “For an accomplished lesbian you’re an awful prude y’know.”

Miranda shifted uncomfortably. “Alright! So I love Persis.”

“You also desire Pat and you desire me. I know you do. Think I can’t feel it? So you forget you are a slave. Then you get punished for forgetting. Sort of hard luck, I’ll admit.”

Miranda burst into tears. “It’s all impossible! Oh, Susan, what must I do?”

“Simple, Darling! I’ve developed a shocking appetite for you! And, of course, dear little Persis who will follow you anywhere is a delectable little morsel no sensible girl is going to overlook. So let’s enjoy ourselves. I’ll even ask Pat if she wants to get in on the fun.”

“You mean…?”

“Of course! We’ll love each other to bits! Good Old Wilbur has provided me with almost everything. But this is the first time he ever produced a girl—and I don’t mind telling you I’ve sometimes been damn starved for one. We have a

couple of weeks all to ourselves before he comes back. Poor little Susan may get whipped half to death and sit on the bar for three days when he finds out. But it will be worth it."

"But what about…"

"Your training? Well what about it! You'll get it! You'll get it good. I'll probably have to tie you down with your feet a mile apart so I can love you properly the first time and get you over the hump of this fatal embarrassment you suffer from. After that I'll whip you hard every time you wrinkle your nose or fail to call me Mistress. Between eating you and whipping you I'll make you hop better than Pat ever did. O.K.?"

"O.K." Miranda agreed, bemused. Susan was a shattering experience. She held up her locked hands. "Can I have these handcuffs off, please?" She asked prettily.

"No you can't. For two reasons: I don't have a key, and I like to see you wearing them. They become you. They won't interfere with anything I want you to do. And now, for asking, you can bend down and touch your toes. Remember? I promised…"

Quite incredibly Miranda felt gratitude. She had blundered. Susan would punish. Under the tutelage of this vivid creature perfection might come rapidly. Or was it true that a girl might come to love the whip! Demurely and without complaint she positioned herself, grasping her ankles, thrusting her bottom into taut prominence she offered herself, almost with happiness. The lightning like agony that sliced and bit at her then almost made her forget her

time upon the bar.

To some it would be inconceivable that a girl might know happiness whilst being as cruelly punished as was Miranda in the days that followed. Yet Miranda was happy. Even the cruelties had purpose. She bore them with a strange pride. Between her and Susan there had grown a rapport that brought a new unity of purpose to their mutual conviction that Miranda should become the perfect slave. They planned and executed every subtlety of feeling, every shade of eroticism, every enhancement of femininity and adoring submission their female instincts could devise. Susan punished her pupil with the utmost cruelty for every slip. It became an unspoken knowledge and assent between them that this should be so. Having faulted Miranda would freeze still awaiting her sentence which was never less than she had earned and never more than she was happy to endure. Between love and pain she made amazing progress. So much so that in a giggling enjoyment of their joke Susan commanded the services of a bashful gardener's helper on whom Miranda practiced her considerable repertoire of arts and sent away staggering in some seventh heaven of satiety and rapture that he was never likely to forget. Or to repeat!

With Miranda present Persis was transformed. She followed in docile adoration, an emotion that soon included Susan, did as she was told and earned remarkably few inflictions. Whenever both were to be punished at the same time Susan always put them on the bar together. "Saves a bit of skin for next time, darlings." She cooed. "And it

doesn't seem to damage your delightful quims. And I know you hate it."

Their Mistress was inventive. They did not always sit with hands bound at the small of their backs. Often she attached a cord and hoisted their arms high. So that even less movement was possible. She also produced a small refinement in the form of small lightweight clips after she had played with round mouths and serrated teeth which she clipped on their nipples after she had played with them sufficiently to make them stand erect. To add insult to injury each clip was hidden in a small ribboned bow that they were forced to wear as an adornment hiding the sharp and bitter pain of the biting jaws.

There is something very feminine and very personal in the girl's feeling for her nipples. Knowing this Susan took an elfin delight in using the small clips both as punishment and test. It became a mark of obedience that the condemned girl should make a good showing by inviting her own discomfort. Both were minutely briefed. Persis earned herself the honor of being the first supplicant.

"Darling." She said to Miranda, giving her brightest pixie smile. "Please tie my hands behind my back."

This was not easy for the handcuffed Miranda to do. But she managed it.

"And now, darling, play with my tits until they stick out real hard."

Miranda obliged. Between lips and fingers it was a task easily accomplished. Persis was always quiveringly responsive.

“And now, dear Miranda, please clip a bow on each of my nipples. Please clip them on me so that they will hurt the very worst.” Persis thrust her right breast forward invitingly.

It was not an easy thing for Miranda to do to the girl she loved. But she did it with much care and certainty that the small cruel teeth should bite into the tender bud of flesh where they would inflict the greatest pain and hold their petite bow to its best advantage. The first one affixed Persis must mask her pain, she must not flinch, but must now thrust out her other breast so that the small play might be repeated. Wearing both her punishing decorations she could now take her part in whatever they were engaged in. But must never show by word or deed that her nipples were a burning torment. To fail meant she would wear them a long, long time.

Not content, Susan evolved an even more difficult test. Everything was as before. But this time the victim’s hands would be left unbound. She would be quite able to remove her clips at will. But, wearing them, she must go about her tasks or her punishments as though they did not exist. It was understood that if she yielded to temptation her punishment would be dire. All three girls took it as a sign of progress that the unnamed punishment was never invoked.

Susan compelled them to share a tribulation of her own. Her name was Sarah. She filled an uncertain but dominating position in the domestic life of the House. She was young to be a Housekeeper. But that was as close as Susan

could come in describing her. She offered her suspicion that Sarah had shared her bed with Herman prior to his purchase of Susan herself. Sarah was a cheerful local product. Young, strong, industrious and demanding. She had whipped Susan with the same industry and care to detail that ensured the immaculate spotlessness of her kitchen. There was an understanding between them in which each kept her place, deferring to the other only as Herman's wishes might dictate. It was to Sarah that Susan was sent from time to time by her Master to ask for and to receive the whip. She admitted to never having come to enjoy the humiliation.

It was natural enough, then, that having earned the whip the two new girls should be sent by Susan to receive it at the hands of this domestic jewel. Miranda found it one of her most difficult tests. Walking naked through the big house to where she might find her executioner she discovered that her uppermost concern was that she might be laughed at. Thought of pain came second.

Sarah was a good looking girl. Her smile was friendly and held a wealth of understanding. "Well, look at this now! I bet you haven't come to ask Sarah for a cup of tea!"

"Well no." Miranda admitted, feeling utterly foolish and slightly more than naked. "Susan has sent me to ask you to give me twelve very hard strokes across my bottom with the cane."

"Has she now!" Sarah agreed cordially. "No doubt you've earned it. I'll be right kind to 'ee lass and give 'ee a round dozen of the finest cuts that little bottom of yours has ever

felt." She examined her quaking delinquent speculatively. "A dozen's a lot, the way I use the cane. Think you can stand it?"

"No." Miranda said. firmly, feeling she had nothing to lose by honesty.

"Sensible answer, that!" Sarah approved. "I'll help 'ee out and fix yer so you can't move. Mind 'ee, if yer sooner just bend over I'll give 'em to yer like that. But if you move, see, that stroke don't count. Young Susan come down here her first time to get ten and went away with eighteen. Lordy, the way that girl jumped and yelped. Thought we'd never get the job done."

"I think I'd like to be tied, please." An easy choice. Sarah's bare arms had an athletic quality that promised severity.

"I like you." Sarah enthused. "You know what you want. Not that it will make it any less, you understand. Get up on this table here."

"You do it in the kitchen!" Miranda's distaste was obvious. "Don't we got to the punishment room?"

"Oh, not for a little thing like a caned bottom!" Sarah admonished heartily. "When you earn yourself something really worth while, then we'll go up there. Come on now! Up you get. Lay on your back."

"On my back!" Miranda was horrified. "It's supposed to be my bottom!"

"None knows it better than me, luv. Just leave everything to Sarah."

The table was low, a platform with foot high legs. It had straps… Miranda positioned herself gingerly in the center.

Divining their use she stretched her hands over her head and back. They were secured. Next a band was tightly cinched around her waist. The eyes of the two girls met. One puzzled, the other amused.

“Do you enjoying whipping girls?” Miranda asked without volition.

Sarah laughed delightedly. “You are a one, arn’t you! Of course I enjoy whipping you. Don’t you enjoy it too?”

“You mean being whipped!”

Sarah shrugged. “Well, that too if you like. But what I meant was do you enjoy whipping that other girl who came with you, or maybe Susan?”

“I’ve never tried!” Miranda disclaimed indignantly.

“Well, I expect you will.” Sarah encouraged in the sort of voice used in prompting small children to grow up. “Susan will probably let you. She loves it. Though she doesn’t like it a bit the way I’m going to do it to you now. Though, of course, that’s the way she always gets it whenever Mr. Herman sends her down.”

Miranda soon understood Susan’s antipathy. A ringed strap was buckled tight about each of her ankles. A rope was attached. It led to the widely separated corners of the table behind her head. Pulling both ropes at once Sarah must have threaded them through a ring or pulley at each extremity. They tugged and guided Miranda’s feet with an inexorable compulsion. She watched fearfully as first her legs bent at the knees, then rose in the air as the pull drew them back and back. Soon her feet were above her startled eyes and still continuing their backward course. It was not

until the band around her middle seemed cutting her in two that their rearward progression ended and the ropes were snubbed. She found herself in one of the most bizarre postures of her slavery. On her back. The waist band prevented movement up or down. Her handcuffed wrists were pulled far back over her head so tightly that she could not move her arms or shoulders. But it was the disposition of her feet that was the piece de resistance of Sarah's preparation. They were fastened so far behind her and so far apart that she was obscenely spread open. Absurdly, she found herself looking up at her own black triangle of hair and saw with shame that the tug had even separated the lips of her quim. From that point she leapt to the sudden shivering recognition that never in her life had her bottom, and all the intimate parts of her associated with it, been more wantonly displayed. Nor had it been bent more tautly or thrust more invitingly into prominence to receive punishment. The cane could search her out in a diversity of ways. She looked up appealingly at Sarah.

"It's alright, luv. No one ever comes near while I'm looking after a girl."

"But I was only supposed to be caned on the bottom." Miranda quavered. "This is just awful…"

"And caned on the bottom you shall be!" Sarah said in the tone of voice used to reassure a child fearful of the loss of some valued privilege. "And what a lovely round bottom it is!" She enthused running her hands caressingly and exploringly over the tight globes. "Just think, Luv. You can't move."

“I know I can’t.” Miranda agreed. “But must I be spread so wide and so… so…”
“Open, yer mean, don’t yer, Luv. I know! Be honest now. Have you ever been fixed with yer bottom this well stuck out to be caned?”
“No.” Admitted Miranda with conviction. She was beginning to wish she had taken her chances with touching her toes.
“Once of the nice things about this position is that you see all that’s going on.” Sarah explained helpfully as though opening some fresh vista of delight. “You can see me take the swing, watch it coming, and even see some of it land —’specially if the tip curls in and gets a go in your hair there—”
“But it will hurt wickedly!”
“I promised you I’d do my best. It will give you something to watch for to see if the tip is coming down in between or not. And you must look. I always insist on that. None of this closing the eyes business. You lose half the fun. I’ll be watching, and if you close those little peepers you get the stroke over again, and I’ll make quite sure it does come down in between the second time.”
Miranda felt lost and without hope. It was frightening to be tied like this. She knew herself in the hands of someone who had made an art of punishing a girl. Sarah’s frank avowal of her enjoyment of her task no longer seemed amusing.
Suddenly she was transported. A pair of warm and very human lips found her own. Sarah’s tongue was in her

mouth. Her own responded avidly. Sarah's fingers found her nipples so cunningly that her plight was forgotten. But when the love play had brought her to the brink of orgasm it stopped and Sarah asked solicitously: "Would you like to be gagged, Love? I don't mind you screaming if you want to. No one can hear, so it's alright. But Susan's ashamed of screaming. Maybe you are…?"

"Please, please, don't stop!" Miranda had been in Heaven. "Oh please! Go on…!"

Sarah kissed her with genuine sympathy. "I know how it is. But no! If I do that and make you come it will seem to hurt all the worse. Believe me. I know. I'm glad I could give you pleasure. But now, what about the gag?"

Miranda hated screaming too. "Please gag me." She asked in an uncertain voice. It seemed so awful to lose this last small freedom.

She recognized the gag. Sarah obligingly wet it first. Miranda took the ugly lump of rubber into her mouth and helpfully raised her head as best she could to aid the deft fingers buckling the straps at the back of her neck. That job done Sarah wasted no more time.

The first two imprinted themselves, one on each pink sphere. They were wicked. The bound girl surged against her bonds. But did not move. Miranda supposed she had felt pain this bad before. But was not sure. She knew for sure that watching each stroke was not the least of her penance. It was agony. She longed to close her eyes but did not dare. Sarah smiled down knowingly.

The next cut was deliberate. The supple withe sought her

almost vertically and curled squarely across the separated lips in their nest of wiry hair. So great was her agony that the table stirred under her impotent heaving. Before she could seek her tormentor's eyes the cut was duplicated from the other side. She could plainly see the perfect criss-cross bisecting her vulva and wealing her stomach below the strap that held her to the table.

Sarah nodded cheerfully as though flaring nostrils and staring eyes were to be expected. Then delivered four more blows in quick succession from side to side and at various angles made possible by the female flesh normally expected to receive them. But the next slash fell squarely and vertically in the crease with such force that the cane moulded itself to Miranda's contours and marked her in such a way and in such a place as she had never been marked before. "Only three more to go, Love." Sarah consoled cheerfully.

Miranda panted. Distraught with pain she watched the girl with the cane resting. She was thankful for the respite. Then her anguished eyes followed the trajectory of the enemy as it twice fell with a solid thwack all the way across both rounds to spend itself first on one hip and then the other. One stroke to go. She dared not think of it.

Once more the lips found hers. For the moment they were no longer culprit and tormentor. They were two girls sharing that bliss that only they know. Sarah was as wickedly adept with her tongue and her fingers as with her cane. All too soon the naked girl's head was wildly tossing, her breath searing her nostrils, her ecstatic tremors

thrusting her feverishly against her confinement. The orgasm left her limp, eyes closed, not caring. She rested.

"Open your eyes, Love. I want you to see this one. It's the last." Sarah commanded. "See if I'm not right now. I made you come. So this will hurt the worst of the lot."

Miranda knew it would hurt worst of all as she watched the lithe arm and heard the whir of the bending rod as it flew toward her open and unprotected rear. It struck with the cruel force upon the division so that it wealed her from anus, over the vulva and upon her stomach. Had it been a knife it would have divided her neatly in two. Her world exploded into pain. She fainted.

Coming back into the world she sensed the movement of Sarah unhurriedly untying her. The girl took her time. Then carefully replaced the chains joining the captives ankles that she had removed to enable her grotesque bondage. The gag was last. When it was gone Miranda lay panting and wondering at her pain. A hand raised her head. A bottle found her lips. She gulped. It was brandy. She gulped again and opened her eyes.

Sarah was sitting on the table beside her. Her face was concerned. But only with pity. She placed the bottle in Miranda's cuffed hands. "Drink it all if you want, Luv'. You earned it."

"But… why…?" Miranda could not put her hurt into words.

"Why did I hurt you like that?" Sarah shook her head as though puzzled by the question. "Being whipped is supposed to hurt. The more it hurts the better this is afterwards…" Again her lips descended on their prey. Miranda

hated and was ashamed of her avid response. There was something utterly female about this girl. No subtleties. Just fresh hunger. A need to possess a girl's body then yield her own. It was only moments before Miranda had forgotten her pain and was busy with mouth and tongue and hands. Sarah was like some strange new blossom never before savored. The agony of her loins became bliss for Miranda. Almost she wished to be whipped again if it would rekindle such ecstasy. Was this what Susan had spoken of! Had Susan lain bound as she had been and felt this awfulness and this wonder. In time she would know. For the moment she was totally absorbed.

Wilbur Herman's absence gave time for an activity such as Miranda had never known. Under Susan's guidance the two captives worked as they had never dreamed possible. Theirs was an almost feverish determination to succeed. Each fresh perfection of the Love Slave's technique brought a fresh exaltation. Each punishment earned was embraced almost with joy that they should get it over with. Suffer and return to their task. Constantly threaded through the days was their insatiable enjoyment of each other's flesh. Susan laughed at their hesitant acceptance of her knowledge of the whip and its affinity with love. She admitted that she herself had learned much upon Sarah's table. She never sought Sarah voluntarily. Only when her Master sent her. Yet when she went on those dreaded journeys to the kitchen she was palpitating with an emotion that was not fear. For her the table was an altar on which, when she must, she became a willing sacrifice.

Susan's sense of humor, when it spilled over into the punishments she meted out, could be trying. The two girls found one such incident particularly so.

Ordered to the punishment room Persis was bound tightly to one of the posts. Susan pronounced sentence: Twenty strokes with the light multi-lashed whip, ten on each breast. Miranda would deliver them.

It was a supreme test for both to neither protest or to plead. They knew it for a test. Yet neither relished it. Persis had been tied so as to throw into jutting prominence those twin parts of her which were to be lashed. She was held immovably so there would be no unseemly struggle or evasion. Miranda shrank from what she must do. To whip the lovely things which she daily caressed with fingers and tongue seemed a thing impossible to do until Susan explained that each stroke missed or refused or lightly placed would earn a double infliction from herself. She pointed out that twenty was bad enough. Forty would mark and mar the treasured objects badly.

Each girl had been whipped thus a number of times. They hated it. It was hard to bear for you watched your own breasts shudder and indent beneath the stroke. You saw the weal spring up on the so tender flesh. You wore the ugly marks in shame for a week for all to see.

Miranda took the hated whip. It would not injure. But, oh, how it hurt! She knew, too, that under Susan's watchful eye she dared strike no less than her hardest. Persis tried bravely to help.

"Darling, please whip my breasts twenty times. Quite hard

please." She made her voice bright and expectant as though asking for a drink. Miranda loved her desperately.
"Ten on each, Darling. Do it properly. One at a time." Susan encouraged.
Determined that no part of any experience should now be wasted Miranda knelt before her Mistress and kissed the wicked thing she held. Then going to the bound girl raised it to the adored lips so that she who was to feel its bite might kiss it also. Persis gave her a firm vivid smile that spoke a thousand encouragements. At that moment she was the strongest of the two. Miranda stepped back, looked at Susan for approval to commence, then swung the flying thongs with bitter accuracy.
It was a nice piece of psychology. Susan watched it unfold. On each girl she had placed a burden to be something she was not. Neither could renege without hurt to the one they loved. But it was really Persis who emerged as star of the script. Persis knew all too well the conflict raging within Miranda's being. She guessed shrewdly that if she screamed or pleaded under the silken thongs that would striate her breasts Miranda would throw down the whip and they would both suffer. The only way she could help then would be to bear the twenty strokes in silence, or better still with an air of casual indifference. Shrinking inwardly with the pain as the cords wrapped around her breast with the first two blows she knew with certainty that the role she must play was vital to something within her. Perhaps to show Susan! Perhaps to prove that their training must surely be nearly done. She was thankful for

two things: that she was bound tightly enough to preclude flinching, and that her nipples were inverted. Unless roused they remained hidden. She prayed that under the whip they would not come erect.

Persis glanced interestedly down at her right breast as it absorbed the impact of the third lash that left its red and purple striations on her tenderest skin. “That’s beautiful.” She said conversationally, looking up to meet Susan’s eyes. “It’s like wearing medals, pinned on my breast.” Then, turning wide innocent eyes on Miranda, suggested: “Perhaps just a little harder, Darling. Make my breast really bounce.” Breathing hard she watched the next three work their will with her. Stifling her need to scream and twist she said chidingly to the girl with the whip: “But, Darling, I think you are missing the under part below where my nipple is. Don’t be afraid of hurting. I want them nicely marked all over.”

When the tenth stroke had fallen so close beneath her eyes she prayed there might be a pause in which she might gather up her ebbing store of courage. To fill the gap she said with gratitude: “Oh, thank you both! You’re darlings! It’s sweet of you. My breast looks gorgeous, and I love the pain. Please whip my other one now. I can hardly wait.”

Even when the twentieth stroke had seared its final kiss she did not surrender to agony. But smiling gaily asked: “Please untie me now and let’s get back to work. Sorry I caused this silly interruption. I won’t offend again. It was darling of you to punish me so well.” As the last rope fell away she sank to her knees before Susan and kissed her

hand. Then flung her arms around Miranda and found her mouth. Only then did she allow the tears to flood.

Through all the incident of that time the thought of Wilbur Herman was never far from the minds of the three girls. As the time of his return approached Susan summed up the big question with a clarity Miranda could not dispute.

"Say what you like about us, Darlings: We are a Harem! What else can you call us." Susan threw her arms wide in a gesture of bafflement. "I bet Wilbur hasn't any notion of what he's done or what he is going to do with us. Will there be a number one girl! You two are trained now as well as you can ever be. You are damned good! So that job's done. Does he choose one of us each night. Or do we all sleep on the carpet round his bed!" Susan chuckled wickedly: "You might say he's got three girls. But each of us has been made into a dual… what a professional would call a two way girl! Poor Old Wilbur's going to be a busy man!"

Persis had given in to a fit of giggling at this point. The other two found it hard not to join her. "We'd better not laugh too soon," Susan had warned soberly. "There's an awful thought that I hope won't happen. But wouldn't it be logical for Wilbur to decide to make all three of us answerable to Sarah. That way he'd play no favorites."

"What I'm scared of is that when he realizes what a handful he's taken on he'll sell Persis and me." Miranda said soberly. "If he was ever angry he might sell us to different owners."

"Forget it." Susan advised. "If a slave girl worries about everything that might happen to her, she's lost. We've got

things good here. Enjoy! I think that's the easiest way to keep Wilbur happy. In a way we are like pets. He likes to watch us gambolling. As long as he's happy we're safe."

She drifted into some private thought of her own until her features took on a gamin expression of amusement and she asked: "Feel like something different?"

Their expectant faces were an affirmative.

"We're in a sort of a vacuum." Susan said slowly. "No use getting stale. We deserve a bit of diversion. We might have gone out in the car if my ankles weren't chained. I'd thought of asking Fred Bates to be a sport and hunt us down in their Park. I'd have to run too. We need exercise. But I can't do that either with my feet chained. Cute, isn't it! I can chain and unchain you. But I can't get my own off. Anyway, I've just had a silly wicked little notion."

"I bet I get whipped." Said Persis with conviction.

"It's a good idea." Susan assured her tartly. "But mine's better. Let's get Sidney in here."

"Who's Sidney?"

"The delivery boy from the Village. He's due here about now. He's a perfect experiment for women's wiles. He's about seventeen, he's thin and gangling, he's so shy it hurts. If you look at him he blushes. What say we give him the full treatment?"

"It's cruel." Said Miranda.

"It's delicious." Said Persis.

Sidney Billings had never kissed a girl. He had never seen one naked and never expected to. He did not have a girl friend, but secretly cherished dreams that perhaps before

he was thirty... There are many Sidneys scattered around rural England. They are nice young men who collect butterflies and stamps and attend evening classes at the polytechnic in the County Seat. Visitors from other lands ascribe their purity to the coldness of the houses in which they live. Amour does not flourish on cold feet. When Sidney Billings was told, by a grinning Sarah, that 'the missus' would like to see him upstairs, he doffed his cap and walked unwittingly into another world.

Sidney had seen one of them before, the one with clothes. The two naked girls were total strangers. The three of them knelt, widely spaced around the lounge. Three pairs of feminine eyes focused on him in adoration.

Sidney turned to flee. He had been directed to the wrong door. Delivery boys do not enter Paradise on a Tuesday afternoon! He would have made good his escape had the lilting feminine chorus not stopped him in his tracks. "Good afternoon, Sidney."

One cannot escape one's name. He had never heard his so euphoniously rendered. He turned back and was lost.

"Isn't he lovely!" Cooed Persis.

"We are so glad you could come." Said Miranda. If Persis wanted to play, so did she.

"You will stay to Tea, won't you?" Trilled Susan.

"Cor blimey!" Sidney gasped. It was his ultimate expression.

"Do sit down, Sidney." Persis invited. She rose and pushed forward a chair. In so doing she exhibited a good deal more of her person than had been evident kneeling.

“You ain’t got no clothes on, miss.” Sidney drew the matter to her attention as though convinced she had simply forgotten to dress.
“Lovely, isn’t it.” Persis agreed ambiguously. She retired to the rug.
No gentleman can refuse a chair that has been dragged forth for his comfort by a lady, even though she be sans clothes. Sidney Billings sat down as though doubting the craftsmanship of Mr. Chippendale.
“Cigarette?” Miranda rose and proffered the box along with a close look at her more private parts.
“They give you lung cancer.” Sidney explained, recoiling from the open case as though it contained the fatal Asp. Then, eyes popping, “Did you know you’ve got handcuffs on?” He asked helpfully.
Miranda put down the cigarettes and raised her joined hands. “Why, so I have!” She exclaimed delightedly. She rattled the joining link. “Aren’t they lovely!”
“And what do you think of these?” Susan walked gracefully across the floor to the bell rope to summon Tea. Her ankle chain swirling musically.
“You got your feet chained together.” Sidney informed her. It was evident he considered himself in the presence of three very absent minded young women.
A grinning Sarah pushed in the Tea Trolley. She had been briefed. “Don’t be shy, Sidney love. Lovely young ladies, they are. Probably let you fuck them if you was to ask nicely, like.” She exited with a broad wink.
Sidney blushed. Shock had rendered him white before. He

was now red.
“He’s blushing.” Said Persis.
“Milk and sugar, Mr. Billings?” Susan enquired.
“You don’t have to have intercourse with us until after.” Miranda assured him comfortingly as she handed round the sandwiches.
Sidney Billings now found himself victim to a contretemps that has afflicted the British upper classes since the institution of afternoon Tea first came into being—how to balance a cup and saucer on your knee whilst dealing with a sandwich and a plate. Clergymen and members of parliament become adept in their later years after long practice. Few others master the art. Sidney possessed no gift. When he lifted the cup to his lips, the saucer fell to the carpet.
“How very clumsy of me.” Miranda wailed. Going to center floor she bent over and touched her toes.
Susan thoughtfully selected a cane from among several such items carelessly scattered about the rug. With the utmost casualness she sliced it across the taut bottom.
“That serves me right.” Miranda told Sidney as she retrieved his lost saucer. “I’ll be more careful next time. Isn’t it a lovely mark?” She turned and gave him every opportunity to view the scarlet stripe.
The sandwich slithered from Sidney’s plate on to the floor.
“Oh I’m terrible!” Miranda confessed.
“No! Let me… please.” Sidney bumped heads with her in their anxiety to rescue the lost tid-bit. Determined to remove the most obvious hazard of all, their guest gulped down the tea and scalded his throat. In so doing the saucer

once more found its way to the carpet.
“Give her a proper lesson, Mr. Billings.” Susan advised.
Sidney found himself confronted by a penitent young woman offering a cane. “I think about three hard ones should be about right, Sidney.” Miranda suggested submissively. In the middle of the room she once more touched her toes and looked up expectantly.
“It’s not for her to say how many. Give her four.” Susan judged.
Sidney gulped the sandwich as a turkey gulps a stone. With only crockery to cope with, he faced crisis. He looked owlishly from the cane at his feet to the naked loveliness bent for a punishment he was obviously expected to deliver.
“I’ll be ever so good and keep still.” Miranda assured him encouragingly.
“I can’t do that, miss. Wouldn’t be right.”
“Well, someone has to.” Persis pointed out reasonably.
“I must be punished, Sidney.” Miranda looked sideways at him with deep reproach.
“It wasn’t your fault, Miss. It just happened, like.”
“Perhaps we should cane his bottom then.” Persis suggested.
Miranda straightened up. “Would you prefer that, Sidney? I’m terribly disappointed.”
“I’d better be going.” Sidney said with emphasis.
“Oh but you haven’t finished your Tea!” Three female voices and hands ministered to his unwilling needs so that once more he was encumbered with fluid in the cup and

no less than three cucumber sandwiches on his plate. They held him to his seat more firmly than chains. He munched a cucumber sandwich and arrived at an obvious conclusion.

“You two young ladies ought to be wearing something.”

“You mean clothes?” Persis asked, puzzled. “Why, Sidney, if I put on clothes you wouldn’t be able to see my Pussy.”

From the bemused expression on his face it seemed obvious that Sidney did not know what a pussy was. Persis helpfully stood before him, feet well apart, and gave a brief instruction. “This is it, Sidney.” Her index ringer probed her pubic hair.

“Very nice.” Sidney observed, looking at the ceiling and chewing vigorously.

“Don’t you want to put your hand on it? Most men do.”

“What for?” Sidney was genuinely puzzled.

It was not an easy question. Persis did her best. “It feels nice and it keeps your fingers warm.”

“My hands arn’t cold. But thank you very much.”

Persis sighed. But seeing he had gulped both tea and sandwiches, no doubt as a safety measure, she bent forward and relieved him of cup, saucer and plate. In so doing she managed to get one breast almost into his eye. “Perhaps you like these?” She asked hopefully.

“What are they?” He asked blankly, his mind baffled by female curves.

“You can suck them.” Persis offered without much hope.

“Really!” He came to life and tried to focus.

Persis thoughtfully teased her nipple with a mischievous

finger. He watched its transformation, fascinated. “You’re a tit man, arn’t you?” She accused.
He moved his chair back a foot out of temptation or out of range. “It won’t squirt at you, y’know.” Persis reassured.
“You arn’t all pulling my leg, like?”
“Of course not, you’re our guest.” Susan placated. “We’re terribly sorry you didn’t enjoy your Tea. It’s Miranda’s fault. I do insist she be punished. Please cane her. It would be a kindness.”
Once again the naked handcuffed Miranda took the stage. She stood before him and stretched. “Do please cane my bottom, Sidney.” She pleaded. “I’m afraid if you don’t I’ll get much worse after you’ve gone.” She picked up the discarded cane and offered it to him. “Please.”
He took it. What else could he do! He was human. This abundance of female flesh displayed so wantonly was beginning to sort itself out into recognizable names that were bandied about in the playground. None of them looked exactly as he had supposed they did. But they now had shape and form within his consciousness,
“He’s getting a hard on.” Said Persis helpfully.
Sidney was irritated. This younger one was a brat. “It’s you that ought to be caned, miss… saying all these rude things.”
Miranda retired. Persis instantly took her place. It was like a rehearsed drill. He watched agape. Persis touched her toes prettily, arched her back down, and contrived a prominence for her bottom curves that was mouth watering.
Sidney looked at Miranda for confirmation. “You don’t de-

serve 'em, miss. She does. Is that right?"
"You are our guest, Sidney. We are so glad you are going to help. Of course that's right. She's a sweet girl, so I suggest just medium hard."
"I wouldn't be doing this if you hadn't said all them things." Sidney looked down at the penitently positioned girl. He was flexing the cane in his hands as though suddenly realizing its potential. Suddenly he hit her.
All three girls longed to snicker. Sidney was decidedly a novice. Persis found it very easy to say her "Thank you, Sidney." He himself viewed his faint handiwork with awe. The girl's discerning eyes noted the bulge beneath his flies.
Sidney Billings produced no drama, but each of his four strokes was successively stronger. For the last of them Persis did not have to simulate a gasp.
He stood with the cane in his hand as though dazed. Perhaps the word should be intoxicated. Certainly a degree of euphoria. Thus it was that an impish Persis found it easy to complete her task. Her punishment over, she knelt before the boy with the cane, submissive and exquisite. Until too late, he did not notice her next move. It took the small nimble fingers but a moment to unzip the fly and engulf his maleness with her skilled lips.
If Sidney had been transfixed before, he was doubly so now. True, the whisperings in the toilet had spoken of such things, but neither he or his friends had really believed in them. Now he looked down at the silken hair, the intent face, the small hands that held him captive, and wondered. It was happening. It was true. There was a world over

beyond the mountain.

The room slipped away from him. He had briefly seen the startled watching eyes. But he closed his own and shut them away with all the things he had previously known or believed. It is unlikely that any of the girls could realize what they had done. From a strange sterile innocence they had brought this boy into a turgid land of tumescent senses, primitive and alluring scents, the luminescence and compulsions of female flesh, the curve of breast and buttock and the sheen of pubic hair. He was drenched in erotic beauty.

Persis used him totally.

When he had stumbled from the room, seeing nothing but some vision of his own, Sidney left the three girls kneeling as he had found them, save that Persis was now where she had knelt to serve him. She stayed there. A small lovely creature of innocence and infinite knowledge. Slowly she began to cry. Miranda and Susan watched. There was an air of anti-climax. Miranda, too, felt the burn of tears. It was as though they had unwittingly turned a page that had best been left sealed.

“We were cruel to him.” Persis sniffled. “Whip me. I need to be whipped.”

“Silly child.” Susan admonished. “It was my idea. Which of you will whip me?”

“We should all be whipped.” Miranda added dolefully. “Poor boy. We’ve messed things up for him. He won’t be able to be happy now.” She surveyed her companions almost angrily. “We know too much. We’ve been taught too

many things."
"The tired roué's rejuvenator. That's us." Susan observed gloomily. "No more little boys. I feel a bitch. I am a bitch! Tell you what!" She eyed them with a fresh animation. "While we are wallowing in this lovely penitential mood, let's go down to Sarah and throw ourselves on her mercy."
"She hasn't any." Persis declaimed.
"Can we stand the pain?" Miranda asked doubtfully.
"I'm going along too, y'know." Susan said firmly. "Lees make a sort of confessional with good old Sarah the judge and executioner."
"Are you really that bored?" Miranda wanted to know.
"I suppose I am. Wilbur's gone. I miss him. I always end up with Sarah every few days when he's here. I suppose I'm just running true to form."
"I can whip you." Persis offered helpfully. "If you're horny I'll fix that too."
"If you tell us we have to get to go to Sarah, we'll go, darling." Miranda said soberly.
"It's an order then!" Susan said with a return to gaiety. "Come on. Let's see what she can think up."
Three doubtful maidens trooped downstairs.

"This was your idea." Persis grimaced at Susan. "I hope you're pleased with it."
"I always felt sorry for the animals." Miranda admitted.
"I forgot about this damn dog kennel." Susan admitted. "I'm sorry kids. From the look on Sarah's face I'm afraid we've walked into something."

“We are certainly not going to walk out of it.” Miranda said gloomily. “Look at those padlocks! Two of ’em.”
“Must have been bloody big dogs.” Persis speculated. “This cage would hold a couple of tigers.”
“Just right for three cats, love.” The cheerful Sarah came into view. She was carrying a small bowl.
“What have you got there?” Persis asked hopefully.
“Peanuts, love. I feed ’em to you through the mesh. Here…” She proffered a small item everyone ignored. “Better take it, children, or there’ll be no supper.”
“That’s just to humiliate us.” Susan said.
“Right love. You are in a cage that you can’t get out of, and I’m feeding you peanuts. I can give you one or two or none at all. It’s a lovely feeling. After you’ve been in there a week or so you’ll be willing to sit up and beg.”
“Who said anything about a week?” Persis demanded.
“Me, love. Don’t recall time being mentioned.”
“Alright. You’ve made your point. You can let us out now.” Susan said it with a confidence she did not feel.
“You know I’m not going to do that, love. Why? You girls do get yourselves into the most shocking states, don’t you! Have a nut.”
“You know what you can do with your nut, don’t you!” Susan told her sulkily.
For answer, Sarah disappeared and returned dragging a hose. It had a formidable nozzle. “Good thing I took your clothes, Miss Susan. Now you’re all ready for this. What’ll it be: nuts or water… Cold water! And don’t forget: no towels.”

“What I could do to you!” Susan was angry, fists clenched. The nozzle raised.

“May I have a peanut please, Sarah?” Persis asked hastily.

Sarah fed them the nuts through the heavy mesh. She enjoyed every grimace they made and every cringe as she raised the hose. To be soaked in cold water, to have their miserable little cage saturated without hope of drying themselves or it, was too awful a prospect to risk. All three girls became amenable. They asked for nuts and ate them, even placing their lips against the wire so that the small humiliation could be thrust within their mouths.

“Don’t know why I never thought of this before.” Sarah mused. “Look a real treat in there, you do.” She threw the last nut so that it fell through the mesh on to the concrete. “You can fight over that one.”

Obediently they scrambled, knowing what was expected.

“It’s going to get awfully chilly in here after awhile.” Susan said humbly.

“That’s what the dogs said.” Sarah cackled. “Do what they did. Pile up inside.”

“In that little box! Why, we have to crawl to get in! There’s only a bit of straw on the floor.”

“Arn’t you lucky! Go on. Crawl in. I want to see.” She raised the hose.

Susan, distastefully, lay down flat and wormed her way through the small aperture. Those watching saw the structure tremble as feet were thrust here and there. Soon, Susan’s face appeared. “It’s awful.” She complained. “Please Sarah, don’t make us.”

Sarah walked away laughing.

The three naked girls explored every avenue of escape, but found none. Every wire and every mesh was sound, the framework of their cage solid. Considering that it now held three girls, the cage was small. They had no freedom and no privacy. With Sarah out of sight they giggled themselves into cheerfulness until twilight came. Then, tearful and disconsolate, they crept within their frail shelter to find their only joy and warmth in each other.

No lock was turned for their breakfast. Sarah was taking no chances. Food, such as it was, got thrust through the mesh. They accepted it demeaningly. “Arn’t you going to empty the pail?” Susan demanded.

“It’ll keep. Can’t tell me you’ve filled it yet. By the way, you might have visitors.”

The visitors later turned out to be Fred Bates and Blessing.

“Sarah’s selling tickets.” Fred said cheerfully.

“Get us out of here, Fred.” Susan was vehement.

“Dreamer.” He mocked. “I think Sarah’s going to keep you there a long time. Don’t blame her really. You look damn cute.”

“A charming effect.” Said Blessing in measured tones.

“If you want a piece of tail, I suppose we might persuade her.” Fred said thoughtfully.

“Keep it.” Susan said shortly. “We’re not in need in here. That’s the only thing we have to do.”

“Ought to put you in gags and mittens.” Fred suggested. “Soon bring you round.”

“Please, boys,” Miranda begged, putting her heart into the

pleas. “Get us out of here. It’s rotten. We’re not dogs.”
“Sorry, darling, no key. Sarah promised us tea after we’d tormented you a bit. Ta, ta.” The two of them walked away.
Miranda beat her fists upon the wire in frustration.
The prisoners got only water at noon. When she brought it to them in a can with a long spout that could be thrust through the mesh, Sarah was bombarded.
“Sarah.” Susan said firmly and seriously. “Whip us. Whip us terribly. But let us out of this damn cage.”
No answer.
“Please Sarah! We’ll beg. We’ll do anything. Punish us. Put us on that awful bar. But please let us out of here.” Miranda’s voice was tearful.
Persis simply wept. Even that did not touch their jailer. Sarah walked away chuckling.
“What’s wrong with us!” Miranda mourned. “We’re getting panicky. We asked for something. She’s done it to us. Now we are half crazy to got out of this rotten cage. But we arn’t in any pain. We could be worse off.”
“It’s the humiliation, I suppose.” Susan mused. “Three bitches in a cage. That’s what she’s made us. And to think I let us in for this!” She stamped her foot in bitterness so that her ankle chain rattled. “If Wilbur comes home and finds us in here he’ll laugh his head off, and I’ll never have any authority in this house again. Maybe I haven’t any now. Serves me right! Bored… Good Gosh! Could any girl get more bored than we are going to be in this lousy little trap.”
That night they had to comfort an anguished Persis. She

who was normally the brightest of the three of them was defeated by the cage and by the little box in which they spent their night curled up within a crowd that did not allow them to stretch their legs.

“It’s not fair.” She moaned into their protecting arms. “We’re slaves. We’ll always be slaves. We can’t escape, ever. We’ll always be in something like this. What’s it matter! If it isn’t one thing it’s another!” Her slender loveliness shook with sobs.

They comforted her with love. She nestled against them as though she found escape within their flesh. Perhaps she did. Her sobbing slowly died. She slept. But Miranda and Susan did not. The desolation of the younger girl had infected them too. They each in their own mind looked bleakly into their future. Miranda remembered a line of verse from “Scots who has with Wallace Bled.” When Edward’s power promised only chains and slavery. That was now her life: chains and slavery. Its boredom brightened only by occasional awful pain or some humiliation such as afflicted them now.

Susan, too, was bereft. This escapade, started in fun, was bringing misery to two girls she had come to love. It told clearly the chimerical nature of her small authority. She, the Mistress of the house, prisoned in a cage! She wept in mortification. When Wilbur returned, she would complain. But he would do nothing. Sarah was a jewel. True, Sarah didn’t realize the depth of the distress in the cage. She was a pragmatic unimaginative soul who would keep them thus for as long as it pleased her or until Wilbur himself came

home. She would see no possibility of trauma for Persis.
But Susan, too, looked beyond the cage. Looked as slave girls have looked through the ages. How glorious to be his favorite for a little while! How total the Queenship! But after it, what then! See herself displaced by younger flesh that was as confident as she had been in the immutability of youth. A girl was a nothing! Any man could have them by the dozen or hundred if he had the price! Already she was locked in a dog kennel with two who had the youth and the curves to supersede her. For Susan, too, that night there were tears. Tears are never far from a slave girl's eyes.
In the morning Susan was adamant. She faced Sarah determinedly. "Take me out of here and punish me as Mr. Herman would wish."
"Tossing your friends to the dogs, love?"
"I can't ask for them the pain I expect to get."
"Serious little soul, arn't you! Well, alright. Back up against the door. When I open it you get your hands cuffed behind. Agreed?"
"Agreed." The single word was pitiful.
It was done. Persis and Miranda watched their Mistress being led away a slave. It made their own plight seem even more hopeless. "She'll be terribly whipped." Persis said with certainty.
Miranda's mind was agog. One down, two to go! "Do we want to be whipped like that?" She asked dully.
"I suppose not," Persis admitted. "What is it about this cage…?"

“We’ve reached bottom. I think that’s it. A place for dogs, and we are in it. And we can’t get out. We can look through the wire, that’s all. And what can we see! A brick wall. If we could even stand up in the bloody pen! But we can’t. We must squat.” She made a direct appeal: “Would you prefer the whip, darling?”

Persis considered. “No. I’m scared. The way Sarah does it is too awful. Let’s just be puppy dogs.”

It was decided for them. Persis had to do what Susan had done. Miranda was already handcuffed. “Not much good without an audience,” Sarah told them. “Good for all of you.” They followed her with pathetic obedience. To be out of the cage was Nirvana. Persis did not care about her hands linked behind her back. Miranda had worn her handcuffs so long she was not conscious of them, even though aware of the limitations they imposed. Now, for instance, she would not dare fight. Sarah could handle a handcuffed girl with ease.

Susan was on the table in the bent backward fixture they knew too well. Her eyes sought theirs in misery. Her escape from boredom had boomeranged.

“Make yourselves at home.” Susan invited. “Have a cup of tea, we will, after I’ve dealt with the young Mistress here.” She turned her attention to the bound Susan: “You do want to be dealt with, don’t you?”

“I asked for it.” Susan admitted. “Serves me right. I’ll howl.”

“Don’t do it to her!” Persis protested. “She only meant it in fun. It’s not fair.” She looked at Sarah imploringly. “Please, Sarah, don’t hurt her. She’s sweet.”

“Want to take her place, love?”
The eternal trap! It was always there.
“Yes. I’ll take her place.” To Persis then was no other answer.
“O.K. love. You can take her place on the table after she’s had her little lot.” She turned to Miranda: “You too, love?”
“No thank you.” Miranda said politely.
“If I let Persis off the hook, would you take her place?”
“Yes, oh yes!” The exclamation popped out of Miranda like a bullet.
Sarah laughed. “Out of this world you three are, and that’s a fact. Talk about nobility!” She slashed brutally with the cane. Susan screamed in a most satisfying way. Miranda stood and watched while her loved ones were sliced and cruelly cut.
The tea was incongruous. Yet it worked its eternal magic. The world came back into perspective. Each, now, had their hands cuffed in front. “Mr. Herman sent a little surprise for you.” Sarah told them with great panache. “You’ll love it.” She chuckled at some inward knowledge.
None of the three believed it could be good. Such faith had gone. “Want to tell us?” Susan asked without interest.
“Only way you’ll find out is if you let me cuff you behind and blindfold you. I’ll fix Miranda special since we ain’t got no key. Agreed?”
They agreed. What else could they do! Miranda’s linked hands were confined by a band of chain around her waist so that she was helpless. Tea done with, she was blindfolded and led away.

She kept no track of turns and twists. What did they matter! She was slave! When she was thrust into some small confinement and there came the click of a lock and a chuckle she did not care. She sat with legs hunched, hands chained, blindfolded. What did anything matter! She was a naked girl owned. It was very quiet and dark…

She recognized the sounds. First Susan, then Persis. They were together in a room. But they would not be able to touch. She was sure of that. When the blindfold was whisked from her eyes she saw the true enormity of their condition. Each girl sat hunched inside a small silver cage in which she could scarcely move. It was a large birdcage, that was all. Each hung suspended from the ceiling by a chain. They were in Wilbur Herman's bedroom.

"Birds in a gilded cage…" Sang Sarah as she went out and shut the door.

Three pairs of female eyes sought each other. Three sets of female limbs and torsos struggled within limits smaller than they had even know.

"Is this what we got whipped for!" Persis wailed.

"We were better off in the dog cage." Susan complained. "Why the Devil did she have to leave the handcuffs on."

Miranda, alone, had not been whipped. She grinned ruefully, and offered what comfort she could. "At least our Lord and Master must be thinking of us." She consoled.

Three slave girls settled in their cages to await the arrival of the male to whom they belonged.

* * *

Ride on the wings of Bondage and torture with Persis and Miranda in Volume Two of this erotic saga of an incredible captivity. Share with them the bite of rope and the implacability of chain. Watch for Part Two at your local news stand or order it from The House of Milan.