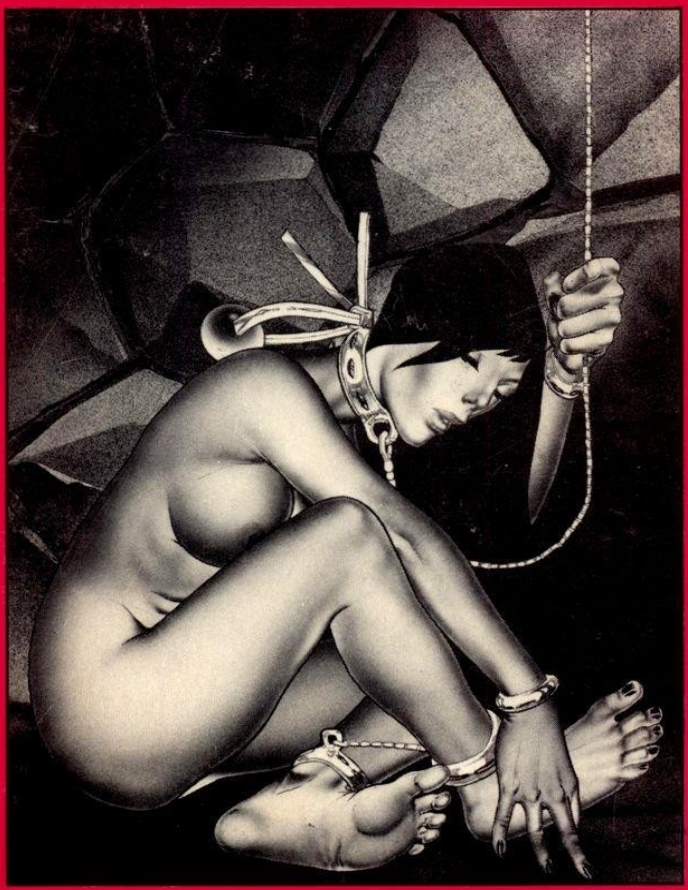
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TRACY TREVOR



F. E. CAMPBELL

HIT 161

Tracy Trevor

by F. E. Campbell

1

Spread-Eagle

IT WAS A MINOR SKIRMISH with few casualties and neither victory nor defeat for either side. They were a daily event, their flexing of muscle, the assertion of a presence. With the final burst of fire, both loyalist and guerrilla would retire to camp or foxhole to consider the profit potential of tomorrow's raid. The world's press was bored with them. There had not been a television crew in the area for a month. These insignificant bloodlettings received neither coverage nor comment. Absolutely nobody mentioned Tracy Trevor.

It was hot inside the big tent. The girl standing before the desk was conscious of her flimsy shirt adhering to damp skin. But she was far more aware of an intermittent scrutiny from the man in the chair who was thumbing through the contents of her wallet. He sat back now to bestow his full attention.

"You silly twit, you could have got yourself killed."

"That's my affair. I knew there were risks." Tracy's breasts thrust against the clinging cloth in their own admission of apprehension. "Your man had no call to arrest me, or tie my hands behind my back, or to bring me here. My papers —"

"Yes, they're in order." The captain flicked the wallet with a

contemptuous finger. “You’re the bane of every mercenary, a freelance journalist who should have stayed home. Your hands were untied immediately after you entered this tent. You’ve got no beef.”

“Then may I have my papers and leave?”

“No.”

They stared, each aware of hostilities to come. “Very well then.” The girl’s tone was stiff. “If I can’t leave, may I sit down?”

“No. I prefer you standing. You’re under interrogation.”

“Oh, for heaven’s sake!” Tracy’s patience was strained. “Cops and robbers! Cloak and dagger! The whole lot of you behave like children. Give me my wallet and I won’t bother you. I know where I left my jeep.”

“It’s not there now; it’s been confiscated.”

“Who on earth by?”

“Me.” His bland assurance loosed the torrent of Tracy’s fury, but it was quickly halted by a soldier placing a slip upon the desk. Reading it, the captain exclaimed a hearty “Damn’t” and got to his feet. “Look, Miss Trevor, I’m sorry. I’ll be gone a few minutes. I’d best make you comfortable.” He opened a drawer.

Tracy Trevor viewed the handcuffs in fascinated distaste.

She placed her hands behind her back in a motion of defense and, with vehemence, suggested several reasons why they should be put back in the drawer. She was never quite sure how it happened, but a minute later her back was against the center pole, her arms drawn back and the steel circlets tight around her wrists. Her protests were useless. She was alone.

For the second time in a single hour Tracy's hands were in limbo. The soldier binding them with a cord out there among the trees had been a potent experience, vivid with a helplessness she had never before known. This was worse: handcuffs! She made experimental struggles and draped a hand within view to observe the tight band of shining steel upon her wrists. She heaved a sigh of frustration. She and the pole were one. She was obliged to stand and await the return of the man who had fastened her with such outrageous ease. Surely she could have fought! But everything was so sudden.

Tracy spent a little time assuring herself of helplessness. If she could leave the tent, she would be gone in a flash, but she was firmly prisoner to the pole and the bite of the steel. She stopped struggling and turned her thoughts to the captain. She could not place his origin. Mercenaries came from everywhere to Santos. Wryly, she supposed herself a mercenary too. She was looking a for scoop in the flesh and blood of others by which to make her fortune. Journalists were never killed in Santos, and they did not disappear; but most were men! She was suddenly aware of buttons

missing from her shirt, the blatant V between her breasts a seductiveness she could have done without. She tried to lift a hand, but that was hopeless. She could have got some sort of a check for a story on this raid. She had been closer to bullets than ever before. She could have imparted the sound and sense of them through her typewriter. If he would let her loose, she still could. But why was she a prisoner at all? She could not be mistaken for a spy; that was too absurd. Or was it? She shuddered away a vision of a wall and a firing squad, with herself bound to a post. What a story! But it would not be she who wrote it.

Tracy could not deny her fear. She had coped right up to the handcuffs and missing buttons, but she was now vulnerable in a manner she had never before known, and the captain had something in store for her. Why else had he made her captive to the pole of his tent? Why?

“Still there, eh? And mad as a wet hen.” The subject of her thoughts was back and laughing at her chagrin. “By the way, my name is Matthew. You can call me Matt, or Mr. Matthew Marsh, if you feel formal. I’m a paid mercenary. I’m English. This is my fifth war.”

He was undeniably attractive. She would have supposed him American, but such men got around. Sure enough, he was admiring the too low V of her cleavage, which she could not hide. She fought the quiver in her voice. “Thanks, I’ll include the statistics in my story. Please unfasten me.”

Marsh laughed at her stiff informality. “Sweetheart, you know damn well I’m not going to turn you loose. Stop kidding yourself.”

Tracy knew. She had known from the beginning. Twisting her wrists within the metal, she demanded with sark realism, “Very well. What will you do with me?”

“Keep you around as a pet.”

“You must be kidding.”

Matthew shrugged. “Tell me why.”

Tracy was about to tell him why, but she realized she had no words. The captain had her for sure. He could keep her. Furious, she demanded, “A pet! What do you mean by a pet?”

“You’ll be handy to screw, and we can have some decent conversation. The local ladies aren’t all that articulate, except over the price of a chicken or a dozen eggs.”

“But you can’t keep me prisoner for such a purpose! You simply can’t!”

“Why not?”

“Don’t keep asking me why not! It’s just unthinkable!”

“Then think about it.”

“I am thinking about it. Haven’t you a scrap of decency or

chivalry? Keeping me chained to this pole while you ogle me and make impossible suggestions? And don't ask me why they're impossible—they just are! I'm sure this situation must be covered by the Geneva Convention."

"Drop them a line sometime."

"Oh, you—you…! Let me loose!"

"You may as well get used to the handcuffs. You'll be wearing them a lot. Handy little gadgets for girls."

"They're not for girls at all. They're for criminals!"

"This Santos war is a lot of isolated pockets. I'm in charge of one of them. The commander is a little tin god. That's why I took the job. You may as well be nice to me."

"Nice! If that means what I think, forget it!"

"You Janes get yourselves into these jackpots. You're not the first, you know. Then, when a guy grabs you, you howl blue murder." Matthew grinned. "Know what I think? I think you've all got a rape fantasy."

"That's a rotten lie! I don't want to be raped. Unlock my hands."

"You're getting a big charge out of me looking at your tits, the way they're half showing."

"That's your fault. You tore—"

“Sure, sure. In fact, just to be English, indubitably. It’s always the man’s fault when a girl gets what she wants.”

“Girls aren’t like that at all! You don’t know a thing about girls. Look, if you want to talk psychology, please free my hands.”

The captain came close and gathered Tracy’s hair into a single fist, shaking her head in stern admonition. “Shut up about your hands. You’ll be chained or tied all the time, so just lay off. Nothing more about letting you loose. Understand?”

“You’re hurting my hair!”

“I’m breaking you in easy, you silly little twit. Come down to earth, why don’t you?”

For answer, Tracy turned and bit her captor’s arm. She bit hard. When he backed away, cursing and clutching the wound, she lashed out with a kick of her heel.

What happened then was beyond all Tracy’s previous comprehension. The male palm impacted her cheek to knock her sideways. She would have fallen had it not been for her fastened hands. Without pause, she was slapped in the opposite direction. Ears ringing, cheeks smarting, hands tugging frantically at relentless steel, she stared wide-eyed in speechless dismay. The words she finally uttered were heavy with outrage. “I’m a girl—a helpless girl—and you struck me!”

Marsh held up a forearm on which there were her own teeth marks and slowly welling blood. He said no word, simply let her stare at what she had done. Shame-faced, she muttered, “I—I’m sorry. I was frightened. You hit me; nobody’s ever hit me.”

Matthew Marsh shook his wound in her face. “First time I’ve been bitten. Let’s say we’re even.”

He returned to his desk and busied himself with papers. Tracy stood against the pole in the deepest shame of her life. She needed to sway things, but the words were not there. Overriding all else was the knowledge of waiting to be raped. The captain was busy at the moment and could not spare the time. He would rape her when he got around to it. She watched him covertly. He was what men would call a good-looking bastard, there was also about him the unmistakable stamp of competence. The girl sensed his competence would extend to his taking of her body.

If he actually took her by force! Tracy could not yet believe he would. There was about him a quality of the fastidious which would scorn the messiness of forced entry. But he had struck her! He had hit her hard. But he was also a mercenary, and mercenaries were not noted for compassion.

Sometimes Marsh looked up from his work and smiled, but it was a preoccupied smile. His thoughts were elsewhere. His disinterest fueled her fury. If he desired her, he might

at least show some sign. This casual handcuffing of her hands behind the pole to make her await his mood was an insult: the final and ultimate assertion of male omnipotence. Grimly, the helpless girl determined that when the awful moment came she would fight him tooth and nail. For the better part of an hour Tracy nursed her grievances.

“Feel less like mayhem, sweetheart?”

So he deigned to notice her! How bit-hearted could he get! Sticking to her guns, the handcuffed girl uttered an emphatic “No!”

“Ah, well!” His tone clearly said it did not matter how she felt about anything; she was only a captive girl, part of the spoils of war and the perquisite of the senior officer. “Tracy, I’m going to free you. I want you to remove all clothing. I want you stark naked.”

She did not answer. She was the classic little girl refusing to play. But Tracy’s heart was thudding painfully and her breasts heaving as she felt the freeing of her hands. When it was done, she stood away from the pole, massaging chafed wrists, tense and alert but making no effort to obey the orders of the man.

“Get with it, girl. Off with those clothes.”

“I’m sorry, but I have to refuse. I know you’ll hurt me, but what you ask is not possible, not for me.”

“Horseshit! Strip!”

“Captain Marsh, you’re wasting your time. You don’t need me; you need a whore. I’m sure the closest town would provi—”

“When you’re naked, you will dispose yourself within those four stakes.” The male directive came as though she had not spoken.

“I’m sure you divine their purpose.”

The stakes would hold her spread-eagled for the act. Within the clutter of the tent, Tracy had not heeded them, but she did so now. Obeying instinct, she leaped for the door. Before she touched it, she was grasped and thrown to the ground. The voice of Matthew Marsh was exasperatingly patient. “I’m giving you a chance to do things yourself. Be sensible.”

“Damn you!” Tracy sprang erect and faced her enemy. “You think sweet reason will prevail with the silly little twit! I know what you’re thinking. Well, it won’t work! I’m not going to meekly let myself be raped.”

“Damn it, girl, I can defeat you with a single blow.”

“If you want me bloodied and bruised, that’s your affair, but I’m not going to be your complacent whore.”

“Whores get paid, sweetheart. This one’s a freebie,” Matt smiled placatingly. “Strip and get yourself down there. I’m

doing this to salve your conscience. If you're tightly tied, you won't feel an ounce of guilt." He cocked an eyebrow and looked at her quizzically. "Or will you?"

"I refuse to lay on my back and be violated. And as for being naked…" Tracy Trevor glared defiantly.

He did not strike a blow. He did not have to. His hands were frighteningly strong. As she was stripped and bound, Tracy had a vision of the ages. Nature wanted children. Nature had made the male strong to cope with female intransigence. The female was proportionately weak as befitted the recipient of the sperm. Everything appeared in good order. She and Matthew Marsh had simply gone back a million years.

In quiet satisfaction, the man looked down at the woman as he slowly removed his clothes. The woman glanced back, shifting against the cords holding her at wrist and ankle, widespread in the most blatant exposure a woman can know. Marsh's scrutiny was critical and specific. "You've got a good body, Tracy. Everything's about right."

"Conqueror!" She scoffed. "Enjoy me."

"Oh, I will! There's a pillow around here somewhere…"

Tracy could not control the blush as the man who had bound her to the four stakes carefully arranged a pillow beneath her bare hips. He was very male and very muscular and far too close. If the skin beneath her pubic bush

could blush too, it would be a fine shade of pink.

“I’m going to gloat for a few minutes in the best traditions of villainy,” Marsh said evenly. “You’re a delectable dish the way I have you fixed. Give you a chance to tell that fantasy of yours: this is it.”

“I don’t have such a fantasy.”

“Then tell about yourself. It’s the chance of a lifetime.”

They both knew she had lied. This was indeed the fantasy Tracy had carried in the back of her mind for years. The stripping, the spreading, the binding—it all ran true to form. She had fought well enough in their struggle to make the tying of her first wrist elusive. But once it was snared, the rest followed so easily Matthew took his time, as though the binding of each female limb was a sacred rite. He even tied number one over again in the interest of neatness and conformity. This was indeed it! Tracy’s open sex, elevated by the pillow, was there for the male to ogle and play with as he played with it now, sending her into quivers and spasms of response beyond control. “You’re going to be very useful to me,” Marsh said thoughtfully. “I’ve got ideas for the two of us. The fucking’s a bonus.”

The male’s casualness and the female’s helplessness robbed the act about to be performed of urgency. Tracy’s explorations into the sexual coupling had been numerous, but left her with diminished interest. When asked, she would freely admit to a maidenhood long since lost. But

now, staked out naked on the ground under the big tent, she asked herself what rape really was. A male, presumably hostile, had rendered her impotent. Decision had been taken from her. Soon they would copulate with a degree of success yet to be determined. The most truly shocking thing about rape appeared to be that had she met this man socially she might easily have found herself in precisely this same posture but without the stakes and the ropes. There had to be something wrong with her reasoning somewhere, but Tracy could not pinpoint the fault. Her girlfriend, Effie, would have coarsely exclaimed, "Why, darling, you're only going to be fucked!"

"These stakes were here already. They weren't just for me," Tracy accused, seeking to make points. "Do you do this often?"

"A perquisite of office," Marsh admitted, "but only with girls on the enemy side. We make it legal by the supposition they have useful information."

"That's beastly!"

"No different than you, Miss Tracy Trevor." Marsh laughed at memories. "Being tied down the way you are really cheeses 'em off. But I've noticed after they've been taken by the fifth or sixth soldier, their inquiry as to how many more are waiting contains a ring of hopefulness."

"Soldiers! You surely don't intend—"

“Calm your hopes, love: You are exclusively for my own personal use. Mind you if I fail to please—”

“You’re making fun of me. If I was as English as you say you are, I’d call you a cad.”

“Got a snappy sound to it. Okay, I’m a cad. Any of the boys tell you you’ve got the most enticing cunt?”

“None had a front row seat the way you have. Look, get on with it, will you? Let’s get it over with.”

“That’s a really shocking attitude. What you need is a drink. I’m having a short one. You may as well join me. I can lift your head and sort of pour it down your throat.”

Tracy knew a ridiculous chagrin. Her rape was taking on some of the elements of farce. Her fantasy had not included a highball as prelude. She voiced the obvious. “If you’d untie one of my hands, I can do it myself.”

“Oh, come now! Honor would compel you to fights and I’d have all the trouble of tying you down again.”

“I’ll give you my word.”

“Fact is, love, I like you the way you are. If I free one hand, the whole picture loses balance.”

“You bastard!”

“See, you’re nicely relaxed. You wouldn’t have dared call me that if we hadn’t established a nice friendly relation-

ship."

"Cad! Bastard! Asshole!"

"I take exception to number three. I find it offensively vulgar." He shook an admonishing finger. "I'm afraid I forgot to mention this."

The naked girl stared in unbelieving dismay. "This" was a whip. It flashed and sang a whining note as it bit her skin from crotch to knee, a girl's most tender flesh. As Tracy went berserk within her bonds, the casual tone still impinged her consciousness.

"Vulgarity is never excusable. Don't use that word to me again."

The colossal gall! The holier than thou! The pain! And to whip her in such an intimate place! Tracy's outrage was about to boil over into injudicious words. But her wrists and ankles were chafing from her brief agonized struggle. They cautioned prudence. She contented herself with: "Couldn't you have said something? You didn't have to hurt me. That was brutal."

"Sure, I could have said something. You'd have paid no attention, though. This way you'll remember."

There he stood, naked, strong, and male, the whip still held in a manner to daunt Tracy's courage. He was deliberately showing her the force beneath his seeming insouciance. The girl bound to the stakes picked up vibrations and knew

herself possessed. She would be to this man exactly what he said: a convenience.

“You’ll be pleased with the mark on your thigh,” Marsh informed chattily. “It’s maturing well. Want one on the other to match?”

He was not fooling; he was actually serious. Tracy saw his eye measure and gauge the cut of the thong to leave her wealed on the tender inside flesh of both her splayed out thighs. Never in her life had she been so cruelly exposed. Pain had excised sarcasm and the bitter rejoinder. Weakly, she pleaded, “Please don’t! It hurts so terribly, You can’t know how it hurts.”

“Just one?”

There was something else. The naked girl sensed he would not make her as a punishment, nor would it be for the sake of cruelty. Matthew Marsh found aesthetic pleasure in scarlet lines on female skin. But that was silly. It had to be silly!

The cut of the thong was swift, precise, and accurate. It had not awaited her tardy reply. The pain was worse. Tracy screamed.

It was a strange tableau. The man was a statue, tense, absorbed, drinking in every sound and motion of the writhing girl. The stakes and his cords held Tracy Trevor without a tremor. Anguish was driving the bound naked-

ness to the only response a prisoner can make, to seek the freedom in which these things could not be done to her. Tracy knew it an involuntary reflex, but her struggles helped. She could not deny their sterile comfort. Tracy watched Marsh turn abruptly and pour the drinks. Her eyes were hurt, her silence sulky as his big hand cupped her hair and lifted her head. She drank avidly. When the glass was empty he strained her head higher and tersely ordered, “Look.”

They had a wicked beauty. The girl who bore them stared in rapt fascination at the vivid line imprinted on the inside of each of her widely spread thighs. Surely pride had no place in what she now saw and felt, but pride submerged all other emotions. The weals of Matthew Marsh’s whip were an accolade. When he allowed her head to fall, he entered and possessed her with an extraordinary skill. The glory Tracy discovered beneath his weight and from his long, shrewd thrusts was a wonder entirely new. But she attributed it to being stretched and tied outspread. No doubt the nerves and muscles and strained tendons were responsible for such an enveloping blaze of sensation!

Shame was merciless. Tracy’s climax left her enervated to the point of going instantly to sleep. Long afterwards, she blushed to think of her nakedness, still tied and spread out to male approval while she slept away the traumas of the day. When she woke, it was to find Matthew dressed and working at his desk. She was stiff and still helpless, the pillow still beneath her hips.

“You had a good sleep. Feel better?”

Was it possible to feel better after being raped? Obviously it was, but Tracy paid lip service to her mores. “I feel terribly ashamed, but, yes, the sleep was good. Can I be untied now?”

“You answered that yourself, love. No, you can’t.”

“Why can’t I?”

“Because I’m going to fuck you again, that’s why!”

She had to be cautious. Marsh could be as vulgar as he pleased, but she could not. Tracy tried a reasonable complaint. “I’ve been tied like this for so long. It’s hurting.”

“You’ll get used to it.”

“If you’ll untie me, I’ll give you my parole.”

“You’ll stay tied because I like you tied. There’s no other reason, so don’t look for one.”

“But I’m hurting!”

“Chalk it off against the pleasure you got from being raped.”

“You son of a bitch!”

Tracy swallowed words, but it was too late for the ones which would now get her punished. She felt ten times bare. Hastily, she blurted out a lame apology.

“I’m sorry! I know I should haven’t said that, but you say the most… oh, shit!” Then she plaintively said, “Please don’t punish me this time. Give me a break.”

“You call me a son of a bitch and then expect clemency?”

“Well… could we try mercy?”

“Ask yourself, Tracy: do you deserve it?”

He was playing with her. But it was a game she too must play, and by his rules. Angrily, she retorted, “Oh, all right, whip me!”

“Sorry, never on request.” Tracy knew he was enjoying every word. “Let’s have rape number two instead, shall we?”

Never had she been so utterly at the disposal of a man. It was infuriating and, as yet, she had no idea where it would eventually lead. Her best hope was for him to have his pleasure and tire of her flesh, then let her go. But what then? It could be a day or a year from now. Meanwhile, she would do as he pleased. In silence, she watched her master strip.

It should have been anticlimactic, but it was not. It should have revolted her, but it did not. The only shame she knew was with her own actions in twisting hurtfully against tied wrists and ankles, not in search of freedom but to add ecstasy. For a long time, Miss Tracy Trevor dwelled in a land of exquisite pain, without wish for surcease or thought of anything except the phallus possessing her

loins. From a distant past, Effie's exultant voice proclaimed, "I told you there had to be something! I told you!"

She was not untied. It was a time when a man and a woman have no need of words. Marsh returned to his clothes and his desk. Tracy was content to close her eyes and dream. Her outrageous exposure now seemed normal. She was uncertain if she still ached or if the ropes hurt. She lay in a delicious limbo, a cheek against a bare bound arm. She no longer had to bother with decision. The loss of it felt good.

Mr. Matthew Marsh raped Miss Tracy Trevor several more times before darkness claimed the tent. He slept the night away beside her on the ground, using her bare arm or bare breast as a pillow. It all became delightfully natural.

Miss Tracy Trevor was not untied. Mr. Matthew Marsh quipped that bound was beautiful.

She did not argue.

2

The Pole

THE FEMALE PRISONER of Captain Marsh of the Army of the Republic of Santos swiftly teamed prudence. It was mostly a prudent choice of exclamations. There was little scope for it in act or motion. Tracy was forever bound or chained or fastened in some way. It had become a fact of life in keeping with his early assertion of keeping her around for his convenience. She supposed it a carnal convenience, since she was never allowed enough freedom to make their coffee. Captain Marsh kept his affairs in good order, and one of his affairs was certainly Tracy Trevor.

Tracy supposed herself in good order with her back against the pole of the tent. Matthew had pulled her arms back and handcuffed her wrists to make her a part of his canvas domicile. She could stand or she could sit. The choice was hers. But her hands would remain behind the pole. Handcuffed wrists mocked her dreams of liberty. Over and over in her mind, she rehashed her loss of it.

“Matt, you don’t have to fasten me the way you’ve been doing. With you and your men, I don’t have a hope of escape.”

“Hmmmm… Maybe, but don’t sell yourself short, love. I prefer you fastened.”

“That word—fastened! It’s only a polite way of saying ‘tied

up' or 'chained'. Matt, I get awfully tired of being attached to things."

"Until you get more attached to me, you'll have to put up with it."

It had rested there. It still did. Each day, when he went about his military affairs, Tracy was fastened in some way to some thing. Mostly it was the pole, but the stakes were still there and were put to use also. There was an iron ring embedded in a cube of concrete buried in the ground, also used to imprison the girl. Humiliatingly, Tracy had spent time with one ankle attached to it by padlocks and an eight-foot length of links. It was the closest to freedom she had come, but it was the most frustrating of all her restraints. Tracy sighed and debated whether to slither to the ground and dispose herself to sleep in a cunning prisoner's expedient she had devised. But she remained as she was, playing with her handcuffs in a prisoner's eternal hope. To sink to the ground always seemed a measure of defeat.

Matthew kept her naked. Risking punishment, she never ceased complaint. "It's not decent, Matt, and there's no need—"

"No need to wear clothes either, love. Nice warm climate."

"But men come in and out, and they all look at me!"

"Can't say I blame 'em. You're something to look at."

"But it's not right. They all want to rape me."

“You’re still using that word! Can’t you call it a good, honest fuck?”

“What! And be punished for vulgarity?”

Punishment had been a part of Tracy’s life in the big tent. So far, it had been only one or a few strokes with a whip or a switch cut from some indigenous bush, but it had always sufficed to make her compliant and to tell her clearly of the awfulness of a sentence of ten or twenty strokes. Marsh had told her of other ways of punishing girls, but she scarcely believed it. It spoke of a world she did not want to know.

Tracy’s punishments were an understood thing between the two of them. She understood his point about the teaching of lessons, respect for whoever owned you, a deterrent against rebellion. The penalties he spoke of in connection with attempts to escape were beyond contemplation. But Tracy knew that if a chance of escape presented itself, she would grasp it, consequences be damned. So far these had been done. Idly, she tugged at her metal wristlets. With those things on her wrists, she could never escape—not ever!

This was an outlying camp. If the captain was transferred to a more urban post, no doubt he would keep her prisoner in a room or a cell. She shuddered at such a prospect. True, she need not then be bound or chained, but this was best. She was sure it was best, even though more uncomfortable

and she be naked. Often she nagged her captor about the duration of her captivity.

“What’s it matter, love? If a girl isn’t serving her man, she’s wasting her time.”

It was grossly unfair, but the whip handicapped all her alignments. If she offended or scored points, it made marks upon her skin. She wondered what a women’s fibber would do or say to Matthew Marsh, and how she would cope with the resultant stripes. Reluctantly, Tracy conceded the whip and the switch as potent factors in her own behavior.

“Butt Matt, doesn’t a girl have any other use to you than to be fucked?”

“None! Well, I suppose she’s decorative, if you keep her naked. You certainly are.”

“Matt, tell me when you’ll let me loose.”

“You mean that absurd condition you call freedom? That silly business of running around and being a nuisance, hoping some rich man with a big cock will marry you?”

“Oh, Matt, you don’t really mean that!”

“Why else would I keep you in durance vile?”

The literary allusions made him English, but they did not endear his captive to the prompts. Tracy tried again, “But,

Matt, if you married a girl, she'd be glad to be near you and to sleep with you, and if you were kind to her, she'd obey you too."

"Is that an offer? I mean, are you proposing?"

For a moment Tracy considered a resounding yes, but it would cheapen her, and it was too absurd. She was constanly finding herself trapped by Matthew's easy familiarity which gave an illusion of being man and woman instead of master and captive. A lot of their time together was spent in normal conversation. She could not be forever pleading for release or complaining about the chafe of rope. The trouble with this casual intimacy was to make her captivity seem a quite normal state. Their repartee ignored the force and compulsion implicit in her condition. "Why would you need a wife when you have a slave?" Tracy retorted in vexation. "I bet if you did marry me, you'd still keep me chained."

"Dramatic word for a pair of handcuffs, love."

Tracy knew herself grateful for their easy conversation. It as a lubricant against the friction of force and punishment. Marsh was rarely cruel, but Tracy remembered his blows and his whip with simple fear. She adjusted more easily to the handcuffs, the chain, and the rope. How else could a man in a jungle camp keep a girl captive? The shocking fact was how easily captivity became a fact of life.

The nude girl, relaxed against the pole, tensed erect as a

soldier entered the tent to lay papers on the captain's desk. This was a far too frequent occurrence for her taste. Each pair of smiling Spanish eyes left her feeling soiled and doubly naked. The men must surely know the reason Marsh kept her prisoner. She was probably the prime conversation piece of the entire camp. Or did these men have their own captive girls? It was not impossible.

This man was not embarrassed as so many were. He did not hastily depart after a single appraisal. Instead, he slowly stepped close to frankly stare. The prisoner refused to cross her legs. It was the only motion of secrecy she could make, but it was one she scorned. She was naked. If this man wished to look, she could not stop him. Her integrity was best kept intact by immobility. Tracy spoke Spanish, but the soldier's English was passable.

"You are most beautiful, pretty lady."

"Thank you. Is there any need for you to stay?"

"I stay and look." His liquid smile disarmed. "Is great shortage of cunts in war. Very bad for men."

"Yes, I suppose so. Look, the captain will be back here any minute—"

"Captain gone for one hour." The smile broadened. "But not to worry, I am corporal. I have much honor."

It was hard not to twist and tug at the bands around her wrists. Tracy fought the urge. It would betray anxiety and

might offend. The words she sought were negated by her visitor's next bland question.

"You would like very much your freedom?"

It might be a trap, but Tracy doubted it. Vehemently, she declared, "Yes, I want that very much! Can you unlock my hands?"

"I have keys." His tone was pompous. "I free you from pole, and you give me good fuck?"

There it was, out in the open—blatant. But why did he bargain? He could easily take her by force, against the pole if he was so disposed. Cautiously, she asked, "If I do that for you, will you give me my clothes and my jeep, then let me go?"

"You ask big price."

"Aren't I worth it?"

"All that for one small fuck? No way!"

They stood, antagonists over the oldest commodity in the world. Tracy realized she had incautiously quoted a price she did not want to pay. She had never bartered her body for anything, but if the price paid for it was freedom, she would pay the price. Was this man's phallus any different from Marsh's? And he used her for free! Feigning indifference, she said, "I'm sorry. It's all I've got, if it's not enough, you may as well go about your business."

The corporal held up a tiny key. “I use this, okay? We fuck, and I cuff you back the way you are now. Nobody knows.”

“I’d know, and I’d tell Captain Marsh.”

Tracy wondered if this man would use force. He easily could. She doubted he would go away unsatisfied, but he valued her goodwill. She belonged to the captain and he was but a corporal. She was unprepared for what was now offered.

“I drive you in jeep to Santos City on the coast. We do much fucking while I keep you in friend’s house. Then you go free. Okay?”

Tracy sensed a trap. “Keep me?” she asked suspiciously. “You mean you’d keep me prisoner?”

“I am not crazy. I know you run like hell first chance.”

“Then don’t bother. Leave me alone, go away.”

“You like captain’s cock? I show you mine!”

The prisoner of the pole wanted to laugh. Had she been interested, the corporal’s exhibit was nothing to sneer at. But she was not interested. Anxiously, she searched for the right tone. “Thank you. Your women are lucky. But I belong to Captain Marsh. It is best for both of us that we don’t play around. I think you should go.”

“We both go. I take you.” His teeth were a flash of white, his

smile was brilliant. “I very sick of war. I no get paid like captain.”

Fear grasped Tracy with a giant hand. Far, far better to be Marsh’s prisoner than the corporal’s. But she tested cautiously. “It’s my jeep we’ll use. Will you let me drive?”

“You no drive. You handcuffed. I do driving.”

It told Tracy everything. The corporal would have to share her with his friends, and she could end up in a brothel. Why had Matt her naked and helpless when this might happen? Tracy poured all the authority she could muster into her reply. “No, I’m sorry. I won’t go with you. Get yourself another girl.”

“Ahhh, but she will not be white American.”

“I don’t want anybody killed. Be sensible. Forget me.”

“You not want Captain Marsh killed? Then I unlock handcuff. We have good fuck, and I lock you back to pole. Is very simple, huh?”

It was borne upon the helpless girl how all things are comparable. The unthinkable had now become the lesser of two evils. In exchange for a few shameful minutes, she could avoid bloodshed, perhaps save a life. Dully, she surrendered. “Very well, let’s do that.”

The corporal’s key freed her easily. It was demeaning to consider such a tiny object governing her life. It seemed

impossible. Tracy stood, massaging chafed wrists, awaiting the pleasure of a Santos soldier. What happened, happened quickly.

“You turn. I lock again.”

“But why? I thought we were going to—”

“Is better you have no hands. I lock.”

It was a small additional cruelty, an emphasis on what she was.

It did not matter. The naked sacrifice shrugged and turned to surrender her hands to the bite of steel on passive wrists. Absurdly, she heard Effie’s voice cautioning, “I wouldn’t do that, darling, if I were you.” But the ratchets clicked snugly to deliver her beyond decision. When cord circled her elbows to draw them together, her exclamation was angry. “You don’t need to do that! I’m not going to fight. What you’re doing hurts horribly, or are you one of those who wants a girl in pain?”

No answer came, only the busy hands drawing Tracy’s forearms close to bind them painfully with some slender thread of stuff designed to bite and cut, probably a leather lace. Tracy weaved pinioned shoulders.

“Please don’t! Don’t tie my elbows. I’ve agreed to be nice.”

“You be very nice. Tied arms make sure.”

A loop circled her neck and was drawn snug. Tracy saw now it was a slender rawhide strip. The corporal tied its other end high on the pole beyond reach of Tracy's teeth. Desolately, she guessed the answer to her own question. "What are you doing? What are you doing with me?"

The corporal grinned. He pinched her nipple hard enough to make her squeal. He went away. Tracy took a step after him, but her neck was snubbed. She was as much a prisoner to the pole as she had ever been. But ownership of her person had changed. She cringed at the sound of her own jeep as it pulled up outside the door. The corporal was elated.

"We go for ride. You behave. See, I bring you serape." He unleashed his prize from the pole and arranged the gaily colored fabric over her shoulders. Tracy doubted it covered all it should, but it made her breasts respectable and hid the bindings on her arms and the handcuffs on her wrists. He lifted her bodily into the jeep and tied the leash from her neck to the armrest at her side. To a casual passerby, there would seem to be nothing unusual. Dully, she complained, "This isn't what we arranged. You're breaking your word."

"A word is nothing, beautiful senorita, but you are much. I set you free when I tire of you."

"Take me to the American Consulate and get money for me now."

“I like you best to fuck. What is money—pooft.”

It was good to be out in the sunshine. There was an absurd normalcy about sitting by the corporal as he steered the jeep along the dirt track he preferred to the asphalt strip. He was in high spirits. “War is waste. Good girl to fuck is only victory.” He bestowed a sideways glance of approval. “You very good girl. We have much good time.”

“My arms are hurting bad. That thin stuff you’ve tied my elbows with—”

“Is best you hurt a little. Keeps you polite.”

“It keeps me ten times as helpless as you need. The handcuffs are enough. I can’t get out of them.”

“Handcuffed girl do much wriggling. You no wriggle.”

It was true. Tracy did not wriggle. The jolting of the jeep kept her elbows hurting enough with voluntary motion. In spite of being in the open air, a mood of hopelessness had descended. She was being driven into slavery, she was sure of it. There would be no hope of rescue. Marsh would suppose the corporal had offered freedom and she had succumbed. Her abduction had been so simple and easy for the corporal that no one was likely to consider it. She would join the legion of vanished girls and be lost to sight. She had no faith in freedom after she had ceased to please this man who was stealing her jeep as well as herself. There would be another man, or perhaps even a brothel.

She would never be able to flee. There would always be rope or chain. A girl could be held so easily in captivity.

“I bring your clothes and shoes, senorita. You may wish to wear them.”

“You’ll allow me to wear clothes?”

“At special times only. You much best without.”

“Do I share your bed, or are you going to lock me up somewhere?”

“In the city I will buy chain and padlock. It be very comfortable for you.”

“Look, I don’t want to be a prisoner all the time. Can’t you think up some way of trusting me?”

“Captain not trust. Why should I?”

Tracy flushed. What the corporal said was true. A man would be foolish to trust her. If her feet were ever free again, she would run. But that might never be. Her gaze followed the rawhide leash to where it made her captive to the jeep. Even if she was left alone, it would take her teeth hours and hours. Quite probably, she could never free herself at all. Tracy sighed unhappily and blinked back tears.

“Prisoners have a right to get free if they can,” she said wearily. “That doesn’t mean you have to hurt them or keep

them in pain the way you've got any arms."

"You behave most well with tied arms. This I like, senorita."

So this was to be her life, a callous painful bondage without hope. Her body used as a convenience. Matthew Marsh's possession of her was a delight by comparison. If she could return to it now, she most certainly would. She thought of the tent pole and most ardently longed for it.

Silence claimed them. The corporal was busy with the rutted track, his captive sulkily preoccupied with pain and desolation. They drove into the guerrilla ambush without warning. The jeep skidded to a halt against the felled tree. Bushes disgorged a motley crew of armed men, one of whom casually shot Tracy's corporal as though testing his rifle. From the way he fell and sprawled upon the dry soil, the bound girl had no doubt that he was dead.

Tracy was grateful for her Spanish. She was treated as foreign merchandise, highly suspect. A discussion as to whether she should be shared among them and raped immediately was ended by the officer in charge. He untied her leash and helped her to the ground. He lifted the separe and viewed her bonds with approval.

"You are American?"

"Yes."

"You are a spy." It was stated as fact, not a question.

“No, I’m not. Please take me to the American Consulate.”

“They are spies too. You are now prisoner of the Revolutionary Force. You will come with us.”

Tracy felt certain her fortunes had gone from bad to worse. It might be better to belong to a single man than to a group of revolutionary visionaries. But at least she would test this man’s compassion.

“I am in pain from the binding of my elbows. Will you please free them? I will still be handcuffed and helpless.”

This time she lost the serape completely. It was tossed aside to reveal her in all her nakedness. Without a word, her captor cut away the corporal’s rawhide stripes and peeled them from her skin. He examined her handcuffed wrists, tightening one of them a notch.

“Thank you. I really am grateful.”

“It is nothing. I am Officer Perez. You will be treated as a spy.” He smiled dourly. “We know of your love affair with Captain Matthews.”

“I am not a spy, and there was no love affair.”

“We know how to deal with such as you. We are sick of Americans. You have vanished. We make you vanish more.” Perez smiled again. “My men behold your body. It is a very beautiful body. But they do not desire you as did this scum upon the ground.”

He was right. His men had examined her and gone about their affairs. There was something about this group of males she did not understand. Surely she was not going to be executed! But that would not prohibit rape. Tracy almost felt slighted. But she did at least have freed elbows. She was still breathing deeply in relief. “What are you going to do with me?” she asked simply.

“Take you to where you will be useful.”

Tracy asked no more. The rawhide was taken from her neck and replaced with rope. It was coarse. It chafed. The coil was handed up the only mounted man the troop boasted. He grinned and jerked it to emphasize what she might now expect. Perez placed his hand upon the steering wheel of her jeep.

“This man will tell you to where you must go. My men and I have business and have no time for you. Perhaps we may meet again.”

“But, Captain Perez, please! I’m not what you think. At least give me a hearing. Don’t send me to prison.” Tracy viewed her new captor in wide-eyed distress.

“Your hearing may come, but for now adios, senorita.” Perez waved his troops away.

The captive girl had taken but a couple of reluctant steps behind the horses when Perez commanded a halt. He searched the dead body, took its wallet, then found the tiny

key. He threaded rawhide through its loop and fastened it around Tracy's neck. "You cannot reach it, senorita, but it is there." For the second time he waved the naked girl and his horseman on their way.

For Tracy it was a march of bitter memories. It was also the bitterest of humiliations. She knew it was a punishment for white skin and the hated Yankee. As she trudged in the dust to she knew not where she denounced her folly in ever coming to Santos. But it had seemed so simple and adventurous. The best she had received at its hands was her captivity by Matthew Marsh, and he had been careless enough to allow her to be stolen. He would never find her now.

From time to time she and horseman exchanged glances. He always smiled, and she tried not to look hostile. She was alone in the semi jungle. Almost certainly he would rape her. But she would not provoke him to inflict pain. The decision showed how far she had gone along a hopeless road, but Tracy did not care. Every particle of her being must be directed toward escape. Compared to freedom, a violating or two would count as nothing. She speeded her steps to bring her close.

"Captain, you can get much money for me from the American Consul."

The guerrilla turned in the saddle and seared his charge with contempt. "I am not a captain. I just a soldier of libera-

tion. I no sell you to Consul. I no sell you to anyone. You belong to people of Santos."

"But I haven't committed any crimes. I'm not anybody's enemy." She took a desperate plunge. "Please use me, then let me go. I promise I'll be very obedient to whatever you want. But please don't take me to prison."

The soldier's motions were deliberate. Tracy could well imagine he welcomed the excuse she had unwittingly provided. He dismounted. His horse fell instantly asleep. He went to a bush and cut and peeled a withe. The watching girl was totally bereft. The card Tracy had played was not a trump at all. It would buy her only pain.

"No! Ohhhh, no! Don't use that on me. I mean no harm. Don't you understand! I'm so damn lost and scared."

He seemed not to hear. He switched Tracy's naked skin with shrewd competence. The tether on her neck constrained flight. He was impartial as to whatever portion of her helpless nudity she turned his way. He cut at it with sharp, cruel blows to make her squeal and plead.

"Don't! Please don't. Ohhhh, stop it! I promise I won't say another thing."

"I give you ten. You will learn lesson."

"Oooohhhh, yes! Yes, of course. Oooohhhhh, please stop!"

Ten exactly, all of them scorching on her flesh. In sobbing

disarray the whipped girl resumed her mortifying march. She would not test her guard's integrity again. Beneath her tears she knew chagrin that her nude body failed to enchant. The fact made her captivity doubly fearful, trebly without hope.

The handcuff key, pendent on her neck, was a torment. Tracy guessed it was intended to be just that. It was a case of "so near but so infinitely far". Her joined hands could not reach it. During those times when her escort was absorbed in thought, she tried and tried to reach the rawhide necklace. Once she managed to crook a finger in its loop, but it accomplished nothing. She would wear it as the costliest of jewels, but by her own efforts it would never set her free. The horse clip-clopped along the path, and the rope leash imposed its authority on Tracy's neck relentlessly. The naked girl stepped forward determinedly to keep pace. To pause, or fall and have the loop tighten around her throat was a threat Tracy dared not face.

The noise reached them upon the still jungle air. Tracy had been led behind the horse for several hours, and if the sound meant rest, she would be grateful. It was a faint rumble, and sometimes she would smell a wad of smoke. Soon the jungle thinned to reveal papas amid a clearing. Then came the big open space and the ugliest building the handcuffed girl had ever seen. It was big and rectangular. It appeared to have been built of corrugated steel, now rusted. An insecure smokestack was the source of the smell. From a narrow door a burly woman stepped for-

ward, arms akimbo, to await their approach.

It was a very strange looking prison.

3

The Wheel

THE WHEEL WAS IMMENSE: twenty feet from rim to rim. Its spokes radiated out from the central hub and the turning metal shaft which motivated the dull rumble of machinery above. The vast subbasement and the slowly turning spokes were an antediluvian monster and its cavern, relics from some dark and distant age, which had somehow survived the vissitudes of the Santos political scene. For those who made the monster creak and moan and the shaft revolve, the place was pure nightmare. It was also a place bereft of hope.

Shackled to each spoke by a foot of chain upon her right wrists was a naked girl. Their concerted strength kept the monster grinding the sugar cane above them where they could not see. Laggards were encouraged by thoughtful cuts from the overseer's whip. Marisa was clever with her whip. It snaked in to weal a girl either fore or aft as pleased her fancy. A rebellious maiden was taken from her spoke, suspended by her wrists, and formally flogged for the edification of those who watched. There was very little rebellion on Marisa's wheel.

To Tracy the sugar mill was man's darkest dream come true. When her wrist had been shackled to the spoke and a smiling Marisa had advised her to "be a good girl and work hard", the whole scene had the semblance of a dreary

cosmic joke. But her captivities had taught her caution. She observed wealed backs and welted thighs, and resolved to earn as few such marks as might be possible. In the very nadir of despair she pushed and heaved along with the other nine girls who made up the requirement of the wheel.

In the eyes of Santos, or whatever faction held the territory, each girl was delinquent. Their crimes ran from the purely imaginary, as was her own, on up to banditry. There was not a single murderess. Perhaps, in Santos, murder was too trivial to attract attention. Each maiden was inbred by a determination to escape. None ever had. Each was inhibited, not only by a shackled wrist but also by leg irons of a weight to make running away a silly dream. The links between their ankles in no way hampered their slow revolving of the wheel, but the almost musical clinking of the fetters added another touch of the macabre to a punishment already sufficiently bizarre.

Four hours on the wheel, four hours off. A sixteen-hour day. The girl's resting place between her stints upon her spoke was a big bare prison room, heavily barred and possessing only the rudiments of plumbing. Marisa controlled them easily, taking one girl from the wheel at a time, their ironed feet rendering them docile. It was an efficient operation in which each girl was forever helpless, her skin marked only according to her behavior. They were allowed to talk. But what Tracy learned only accentuated her despair.

It was a female place. There were men upstairs, but they never entered the cavern of the wheel. It was whispered that should a girl displease their mistress in excess she could be thrown to the mercy of the males above, a metaphorical tossing to the lions. Some chained damsels vowed their intent to provoke penalty as a break in the boredom of perpetual punishment. Tracy could well believe such a wish might easily arise. The twenty girls who were slaves of the wheel lived in an intense sexuality. Sex was all they had. Marisa tacitly condoned it. They ate and nibbled and licked to their hearts' content. Female pungency permeated the entire place. As she thrust against her spoke, each girl was regaled by the sweat and scents of the prisoner in front and the one behind, herself contributing to her neighbor's excitations. Marisa worked and fed them with a stern determination to keep the wheel turning. Her prisoners were remarkably healthy, and none were overweight. She whipped them impartially as they deserved. She was observant of muscles not doing their job when a girl tried to rest by leaning against her spoke and pretending to push. Such laziness was rewarded by more than a single stroke. Tracy had learned this lesson on he first day and had been diligent ever since. It was a well-ordered society in which all was understood.

The girls' prison rooms were not in a dark dungeon. Light and air filtered into them through the bars. The same was true of the cavern of the giant wheel. Both sides of the huge space were open. The girls sweated from their labor, but

not from suffocating heat.

Marisa amused herself by compelling certain girls to offer their hands to be chained during their absence from the wheel. No one knew why. It was supposed these girls had a greater value to whatever power held the mill. Tracy was one of them. The overseer had gleefully possessed herself of the handcuff key from Tracy's neck and now locked the passive wrists during each four-hour period of rest. The other girls were envious of the handcuffs. They were a lot lighter and more attractive than the irons they were forced to bear. Tracy could not have cared less. She had grown used to them. Behind her back they made things difficult, but joining her hands in front, as Marisa did, discommoded her scarcely at all.

The wheel was demanding. It had no momentum of its own. It had to be pushed and heaved every inch of the way. The ten naked girls worked as a team. It was simple self-interest that they fight the inertia of the wheel in unison. None dared shirk. At each start it took the heave of shoulders and the thrust of feet to get under way. After that a girl leaned against her spoke and pushed. Her shackled feet would be no impediment, but it kept them within the rim and told her plainly she was a slave. Tracy could think of no other word for their condition.

Their isolation was frightening. They had been chained to the wheel because of an authority they had never seen. There was no lawyer, no appeal, not even a sentence. They

remained Marisa's captives until a superfluity of delinquent girls enabled their release. But Tracy was soon warned that those whose wrists born chains were never given back their freedom. Several girls had been slave to the wheel for several years.

Tracy was thankful for her Spanish. It made her one with the rest. But on each return to the spoke she watched the shackling of her wrist, she heaved and panted at the start. Then, as she pushed and clattered her dreary, never-ending circuit of the shaft, she was on her own, concerned only with evading Marisa's whip and the isolation of her thoughts. Her thoughts centered on Matthew Marsh. She had no other friend in Santos. She supposed him a friend even though he had been her original captor. There had been something between them. But where would he look? What clues were there for him to follow? Worst of all was the likelihood that he would believe she had run away with the corporal by her own wish. It would be so easy to assume she had bartered her body in return for release from the pole. So far as the Consulate was concerned they had warned her that if she disappeared, she was on her own. It seemed she was sentenced to Marisa's whip and shackle for life.

There came the day when Tracy was punished. It was as illogical as all else in Santos. She had done no wrong, but Marisa summed it up. "Got to whip a girl every so often. I been wanting to whip you ever since you came, but I can't whip you on the wheel; you work too well."

“But I haven’t done anything to deserve—”

“The rest of ’em won’t believe that. Seeing you striped does ’em a heap o’good.”

Tracy had been taken to the spoke to be shackled and begin a shift. But this time was different. Her wrists were carefully bound together with many strands, off to one side a rope dangling from above. Two minutes later she was suspended, her shackled feet finding only air to tread. The naked girl was heartbroken by injustice.

“Please, Marisa, I’ve worked so hard. I’ve tried to please.”

“That’s because I whip your little cunt or ass if you don’t.” Marisa patted the young curves so soon to be wealed. “I think you’re okay, honey, but a girl has to be whipped sometimes. You get yours this shift. Maybe I don’t whip you again for a long, long time.”

It was hopeless. To stop the rhythm of the mill was like trying to stem the tide. If the mill believed she should be striped as an object lesson to the rest, then she would be striped. The suspended girl blinked through a haze of tears to watch another naked maiden shackled to her spoke. At Marisa’s sharp command young female bodies strained to pit their strength against the sugar cane above. The wheel creaked into the motion that was their punishment. The clatter of ironed feet seemed a fitting accompaniment.

The shackled girls looked at Tracy in sympathy as they

pushed their way slowly around and around. Her nakedness was blatantly exposed. If they were so disposed, they could count each mark upon her skin. Half of the girls had, at one time or another, hung as Tracy now hung. They had paid their painful dues to the mill. If they were kept prisoner long enough, they would pay again and again. The rest of the captives gazed at her in awe, wondering what misdeed she had committed to rate such cruelty.

Marisa extracted maximum value from the flogging of a girl. The girl herself mattered little. She would still work her shift that day, shackling her back on the wheel was the best way to flaunt her wounds. What really mattered was the increased respect and more docile obedience the victim's screams would instill in maiden minds. For Marisa it was only one more working day.

Tracy's wrists and shoulders hurt. They would hurt a lot more. There was something demeaning and shameful about being a puppet on a string. Divorced from contact with the floor, her helplessness was total, yet she could writhe and kick and contort. No doubt it was more interesting and edifying to have her able to do this than to be immobilized against a post or frame. In direct apprehension she watched Marisa go about her affairs. She was breathless when the overseer strode towards her with the whip by which she would be punished.

Tracy's acquaintance with Marisa's whip had been limited to the short admonitory lash to remind her to do her duty

to the wheel. The pain was sudden and awful and usually elicited a squeal of shock, but this was different. She was far more vulnerable, both front and back, and there was now a deliberate intent behind the impact of the thong upon her flesh. The suspended girl soon realized that where she received the lash was determined by the portion of herself she presented in her writhing. Marisa stood still and whipped her allegedly delinquent girl on whatever portion of that girl's person was convenient when the lash was due. After the first agonies, Tracy forgot pride. She screamed under the dictates of her pain. Nor could she keep still. It was impossible to remain motionless when she could twist and kick and raise herself against the hurt of wrists implacably bound.

Tracy hung naked in the monster's cavern for the full four hours of her shift. With a keen eye for effect, Marisa spread out the flogging for the whole period. Five strokes here, ten there. Under the crack and scorch of the blows, Tracy lost count. She was far too busy with screams and evasive leaps which were usually disastrous inasmuch as they gave Marisa's whip entry to portions of herself she would prefer to hide. Her loins burned shamefully where the leather snapped within her most secret place. A suspended girl has no secrets.

When her feet were lowered to the ground, Tracy sagged. She stood in pitiful disarray as her burned wrists were freed of rope and comfortingly locked in the handcuffs which had become so very much her own. She was patted

and propelled to the prison room with the rest of the released shift. Her fellow captives proffered sympathy. It was all they had to ease the anguish of whipped girls.

Pain exhausts. Tracy slept through her four-hour rest period. Beyond that there was no respite for a well-whipped girl. As Marisa shackled the captive wrist to the spoke, she whispered, “You put on real good show. Fine screams and kicks. You not be whipped again for long time.”

“Thank you, Marisa.” Then, in an unusual seeking of confidence, she asked, “Marisa, how long will I be kept here to work on the wheel?”

“Maybe not long.” Marisa winked knowingly. “Maybe you get big surprise. Now you work hard like good girl.”

Had it been possible for a shackled maiden to follow the overseer from the spoke, Tracy would have done so. But she surveyed her chained hand in rueful resignation and saved her questions for another time. The wheel had already creaked its protest under female thrusts, so the whipped girl hastily put her shoulder to the spoke to add her young strength to that of the other nine. Marisa cracked her whip across laggard legs. The shift was under way.

It was a couple of hours before the arrival of the officers. They were smartly uniformed and carried authority like a badge. Marisa accorded them great deference. There were volleys of Spanish which the noises of the wheel and the

clatter of the leg irons prevented Tracy from hearing. After several revolutions, the officers' attention centered on her as she pushed her shackled way past their regard. They talked and nodded. Whatever their wish with her might be, she had found approval. Without stopping the wheel, Marisa led another girl from the prison room and shackled her to Tracy's spoke after Tracy's own wrist had been unlocked. The freed maiden was led to Marisa's office.

"Your name is Tracy Trevor?" The tone lacked interest.

"Yes."

"You are an American spy?"

"No, I'm a free-lance journalist."

"You consort with rebels?"

"No. A man named Perez kidnapped me from one of your own camps where Captain Marsh captured me and was holding me prisoner. Could I speak to Captain Marsh, please?"

One man asked the questions, and the other filled out forms. Tracy's questions were ignored. Several forms later, Marisa produced the handcuffs and turned her prisoner around.

"This girl has been recently whipped, Marisa."

"I knew you were coming. This one's too sweet a morsel

not to whip at least once."

Humor passed Tracy by, but her companions laughed at the overseer's deprecating admission. "If she's that good, perhaps we can arrange a more formal whipping for her in the prison before…"

The officer failed to finish his sentence. In total ignorance, the captive shuffled her leg-ironed way out to a waiting car and a prison wardress holding open the back door. As Tracy settled her helplessness into the plush upholstery, the last she saw of Marisa was a beaming smile. Tracy herself was not smiling. She was picking up bad vibrations from all concerned. Release from the wheel should have been joyous, but it was not.

"Are you taking me to a prison?" she anxiously asked in Spanish.

"Yes, at Madrez. You will be tried there. You will not go to the capitol."

"Why should I be tried? What have I done? Should I not be clothed?"

"I do not know the charge, but it is serious. You will be well guarded. As for clothes, what do they matter? You would be naked again soon enough."

Tracy leaned back against her locked arms. The mill appeared to have donated her leg irons; they were still locked on her ankles. Escape was as impossible as ever. Sensing

the girl's need to question, the wardress told her tersely to keep quiet and enjoy the ride. It was better than the cell in which she would soon be locked. The tone was neither kind nor cruel, simply bored with one more female prisoner. Tracy lapsed into silence, gloomily sensing the knell of doom.

Madrez was notable for nothing, least of all its prison. Tracy had driven her jeep through the dusty, rutted streets back in that other world when she was free. There would be nothing good for her in this place. It was an excuse to keep her away from Santos and the US Consulate. Here she could be sentenced to life imprisonment and no one would ever know. Tracy stood in the center of the narrow cell and gazed wanly at the barred door the wardress had just finished locking. She had been given no clothes, nor had she been released from her irons. The only concession to her need to tend herself was that her wrists were now cuffed in front. It was a small concession, but she was grateful.

On the spur of impulse and out of loneliness, Tracy did something she had vowed not to do. She clutched at the bars with chained hands and pressed against the unyielding metal to view what was to be seen. There was a surprising view, a wide space, almost a courtyard, and what was taking place there was obviously for the benefit of those who wanted as she herself did. The big square was surrounded by cells, in each of them a woman, some younger than herself. It would appear that in Santos crime

was the prerogative of the young, or certainly its punishment.

The most bizarre object, catching Tracy's instant attention, was the head of a girl. It was alive. It moved. From floor level it looked around. It looked directly at the new girl but did not smile. It had nothing to smile about. To all intents and purposes it was a female head severed at the neck but endowed with life. The effect was frightening. Presumably, below the surface of the floor was a girl's body and limbs. They could be bound or free, it would make no difference. The girl would stand, sit, or kneel within a pit with shaped and sectioned planks making a cruel collar for her throat. If she was forced to stand thus for long periods, it would be a drastic punishment. It would appear that when Santos felt displeasure with its younger females it went all out in their punishments. Tracy shivered. Tomorrow it might be her own head down there on the floor.

There was the inevitable suspension, but with a difference. A wide belt had been buckled around the narrow waist of a naked girl, her hands tied behind her back, her ankles firmly trussed. In the front center of the belt there was a ring, and within it a hook and a rope by which the delinquent was raised far enough from the floor to enable only fleeting contact by reaching fingers and toes. The punished girl was wickedly bowed back, but when her head fell low enough, she could reach and thrust with bound hands to affect a temporary correct imbalance and give her toes a chance to affect a similar motion. She had

no real hope of easement, only a tantalization. The chained girl in the cell cringed with each ineffectual motion, seeing herself in a similar plight with a belt tight around her own middle. The vision was demoralizing.

It seemed useless to switch focus. There was always one more girl suffering the displeasure of the state of Santos. The next sufferer lay stretched within the clutch of wood. Three planks had been ingeniously carved and drilled. Feminine ankles in one, her tummy in another, her wrists and neck within a third. It was a form of pillory. The top half of each section fitted upon bolts protruding from its mate. Each bolt was secured and tightened down by a washer and a nut to totally immobilize the captive maiden and instill within her breast a fear she could never be released, she and her wooden prison were one. There were others. But the whole shocking scene merged to become what it was, no doubt, intended to be. A grotesque object lesson to girls who had been bad, or who had incurred the wrath of someone possessing the power to put them where they were. Tracy wondered how many of them were guilty of anything except being female. She tried to tear away. But, when she turned from the bars, the beastly little cell was impersonally inhuman enough to turn her around again to seek a knowledge of shared misery with those others she could see in their chains and behind bars of their own. What was being done out there in the big space was fearsome, but it impelled a terrible fascination, a quality of the unreal as when, in a dream, you assure

yourself this is not really happening. A single girl might have held more credence than so many.

Could it be called a torture? Tracy was certain it would not be so described. It would be Santos discipline, and, after all, this was a prison! She and all the rest of them within these walls were lost. Tracy saw herself as on a steady downward path since her first captivity. How gladly she would now return to Matthew Marsh to be handcuffed to the pole of his tent. How much more preferable the cavern of the monster and its creaking wheel! How happily she would offer her hand to be shackled to the turning spoke if, by so doing, it got her free of what she now beheld.

She could swear the man was pure Castilian, an aristocrat, his features finely chiseled and austere. When the wardress gave him entry to the cell, he waved its occupant to be seated on the cot. He radiated an awesome authority. Beneath his penetrating but lustless gaze Tracy placed her cuffed hands on her pubic hair. She could offer him no greater respect.

“I am the Don Enrique Martinez, the presiding judge at your trial tomorrow. It will be I who will sentence you.”

His words were as measured and cool as his features. The seated prisoner felt a child facing a person and a process it did not understand. “What am I guilty of?” she asked wanly.

His brief smile gave him humanity. “You are guilty of

nothing," he told her evenly. "I thought this was understood."

"Then why am I chained in this cell?"

Don Enrique shrugged. "You are a very beautiful girl. Perhaps you have not yet discovered the kinship between feminine punishment and beauty."

"I don't understand, honestly I don't. Surely there must be something more?"

"Indeed there is. You are American."

"But that's—that's… Surely you don't imprison any American girl who comes to Santos. They said my passport was in order. You allowed me entry—"

"You are also a spy for the CIA."

"That's nonsense! Surely you know it is nonsense?"

"Does it matter? You have been chosen." Don Enrique's motions were almost gallic. "You must understand yourself as a victim of political expediency."

"You mean one of those mock trials where I confess to everything and publicly thank Santos for punishing me?"

"Something like that. But we will not ask too much of you. You will be condemned by witnesses."

"All of whom will lie!"

“What else? There is little truth in politics.”

“But why have you come to me in this cell if you cannot help?”

“To assure myself and others of your suitability for the role you are elected to play. I find you an excellent subject.”

“Gosh… thanks!”

“I wish also for you to understand the uselessness of making a demonstration in court. I can understand a certain stress, but nothing you can say can change anything.” Tracy forgot pubic hair in the raising of her hands to emphasize handcuffed wrists. “Will you take me to court like this, and the leg irons on my feet?”

“We would prefer not to. We prefer the image of an attractively attired young American woman. This will be arranged.” Don Enrique repeated his brief smile. “As an inducement to cooperate, I draw your attention to these young women suffering out there beyond the bars.”

“If I don’t do it your way, you’ll torture me afterwards?”

“Please don’t distress yourself with histrionics,” the judge deprecated. “I am sure you will be sensible.”

Tracy saw little hope of benefits in any direction. Santos possessed her and was starting to squeeze. She was flotsam on a tide already channeled. Dispiritedly, she asked, “Since everything is cut and dried with me, could I be relieved of

these chains? I'm so tired of being chained."

"Alas, no. You are no more unkindly chained than the rest. Routine handcuffs and leg irons can hardly be described as placing you in chains, Miss Trevor."

"All right then, so can we dispense with the handcuffs and leg irons I'm wearing?"

"No. You must wear them until your appearance in court." Don Enrique sighed. "You also have a request for an interview with a Captain Marsh, an officer in our militia. This too must be denied. Believe me, Miss Trevor, it is for the best."

"I suppose my trial gets televised and reported in the press?"

"Of course. Publicity is of the essence."

"I'll be made a Roman holiday. Is that it?"

"You will be an admonition to the CIA. It is a pity you are not guilty."

Tracy watched Don Enrique Martinez depart as he had come. Had she met him in happier circumstances he would have been a pleasant, kindly man. But the fact of him being what he was made her plight more desperate. So civilized a man consigning her to what awful punishment! Only then did she realize her failure to inquire what her fate was to be. He had not thought to tell her, and perhaps she

subconsciously did not wish to know. But she would know tomorrow, and tomorrow was close. She kicked angrily at the chain linking her feet and raised handcuffed wrists to gaze upon them in disgust. Tracy debated whether to gaze through the bars again or lay down on the cot. She chose the latter and did not wake until morning.

The woman was as civilized as the judge. She requested Tracy to allow herself to be bathed and dressed and sit still for a hairdo. An armed wardress would stand close by.

The allure of being feminine again was irresistible. To be rid of nakedness and the shame of exposed breasts and pubic hair was excitingly wonderful. If it only lasted through the court proceedings, she would at least get that. Tracy's answer was a fervent yes. For a couple of hours she entered a world only females know. She emerged from it resplendent. Santos had done her proud.

"Your name is close to being called, Miss Trevor. Let us go to the court."

The woman who had prepared Tracy said good-bye. The wardress edged closer, but did not grasp an arm. "It is desired that we seem to be on good terms," she said soberly. "I hope I can trust you."

Tracy did not bother to tell her companion how easy it was to behave herself when surrounded by walls, bars, passages, and hallways. There was nowhere for her to run. As usual, escape was not to be considered. There were no

open doors or windows. Tracy walked to her trial and enjoyed the gorgeously sensuous sensation of clothes, nylons, and shoes, even of a necklace and earrings. In Santos, even before her first arrest, she had never been so expensively bedecked. It flitted through her mind that she might make a more dramatic plea for justice if chained and naked, but she thrust the dream aside as fantasy. Nothing she could do or say would alter anything.

The judge was fearful in his robes. He made no sign. The two advocates, one of them apparently her own, were equally impressive. Cameras were much in evidence. There began then a great deal of Spanish rhetoric and the waving of arms. Witnesses came and went. None bore goodwill to the prisoner. It taxed Tracy's Spanish to its limits to pick up half of what was said. But she followed her progress toward doom with mounting apprehension. After an hour of verbal and manual flourishes the trial of Miss Tracy Trevor came to a close. The jury, without leaving the room, pronounced her guilty. Don Enrique Martinez, her judge, pronounced sentence. As he looked down upon the defenseless girl, she saw a shadow of compassion cross the austerity of his face. Dispassionately, he condemned her to death before a firing squad.

Tracy supposed she should have guessed it from the start. Santos needed drama and a pretty face. There would have been no drama evident in he vanishing within a dungeon. But this was the stuff the public loved, the public of any nation in the world. To them she would be guilty, a naughty

girl getting her just desserts. The State Department would be irritated by her imprudence. They would send Santos a sharp note, making sure it was delivered after her demise. In a couple of days she would be forgotten.

But Santos was not yet done with its pretty girl. Tracy was returned to her cell and relieved her fine raiment to be once more nude, then chained as before. The handcuffs were like old friends. She was also comfortably sedated to a point where she slept away the rest of the day and on through the dark. In the morning the wardress explained what was still desired of her, taking some pains to be sufficiently graphic about the tortures she would earn by failure to comply. It became understood between them that the condemned girl would do her best. There was more sedation.

For the girl about to die, the whole affair took on the semblance of a dream. She was grateful for the drug. It blunted everything. In a purely detached interest, she followed all that was done, revolving over and over her mind the instruction. She most passionately did not want to be tortured indefinitely before eventual execution. Santos offered a decent death. She would do her best to accept it.

They took away her leg irons, but left the handcuffs on her wrists. They had their place in what was to be done. They clothed her guilt in the innocence of pure white. A sheet, a shroud, a slip, she knew not what to call it, and it did not matter. But it had a clip to hold it around her neck. This

was better than clutching it with chained hands. They used a comb to restore her hair to the glory of the day before. Tracy was now ready to die from a soldier's bullet.

Faced with the immensity of the sunlit yard and the wall against which she was to die, the dream sequence took over to dictate her steps. She beheld the cameras to either side. Her execution was to be well recorded. Her friend, Effie, would see it on TV and tell all present, "I told her not to go." To one side were six smart soldiers with their shining rifles and an officer with a silly sword. The cameras would have a field day with them too, before and after they lined up to shoot the bullet by which she was to die.

But the next few moments were Tracy Trevor's alone. She had been told exactly what to do. She fixed her mind upon the instruction, refusing to consider death. With calmly measured steps, the condemned maiden walked out into the sunlight. Without pause, she continued slowly to the wall. There she turned to passively watch the deployment of her execution squad. When the order came for them to take aim, she broke the clip and let her garment slither to the sand. For a moment she stood still and naked, then slowly raised her arms and steel joined hands above her head to expose all of herself, most particularly her breasts, to the gunsights of the squad. It was but a moment until the order came to fire. But it was a moment every male present would remember all his life. The cameras whirred, missing nothing. In her death-defying pose, Miss Tracy Trevor was the most beautiful thing in all the world. Her whip-marked

flesh gathered unto itself all the sunlight, reflecting it as an almost visible aura, a radiance.

“Fire!”

The volley barked.

The nude beauty crumpled to the sand.

Santos was pleased.

4

Love Stripes

TRACY TREVOR WAS PREPARED to concede boredom. It was heavily laced with gratitude and a great thankfulness, but boredom is still boredom. Four days standing nudely with back against and hands behind the tent pole of her dreams was probably a sufficiency of emphasis she should speak to her master about in the evening, simply on the basis that enough or anything is enough.

But Tracy would admit to compensations. Being handcuffed with her hands behind the pole had given her time to think, above all to think in retrospect and the incredulity of being alive. There was also the lovely warm comfort of being where she wished to be in this most wonderful of worlds. Sometimes she spared a thought about freedom. But freedom had become too remote to waste much thought on. The handcuffed girl was willing to believe she would never be free again.

Tracy Trevor's awakening from death had been puzzling. The face of Matthew Marsh, so close and so concerned, seemed unlikely. It would mean he must also be dead, and that was improbable. The other possibility was that she herself was still alive. But how could that be! She had seen the pointing muzzles fire! But she refused to be concerned. Matt was kissing her and being naughty with one of her nipples the way he used to. It was delightful and if this was

what it was like to be dead, she was all for it. But after awhile her master's voice intruded.

"Come on now, you're playing possum. Sit yourself up."

"I can't. I'm dead."

"Sit up anyway."

She was on her cot in her cell. The door was open and there was not a wardress in sight. She was handcuffed and naked, but those inevitabilities were scarcely worthy of note. What mattered was Matthew Marsh. He was seated on the cot and had his arm around her bare shoulders while kissing her here and there in a preoccupied sort of way she did not mind. Tracy kissed back hungrily and demanded. "Why aren't I dead?"

"Blanks in the rifles, that's why. Bit of a swindle, I'm afraid."

"You mean they—"

"Afraid so. You put on a marvelous performance. You'll be world famous."

Suddenly she was against the wall again, arms making their insouciant invitation to death. The rifles crashed. With a moan of fear, the naked girl tried to throw her arms around the man, but as usual her handcuffs were in the way, so she grasped Matt's shirt with linked hands and nestled beneath his arm like a bird beneath a mother's

wing. His arms gathered her overstressed nudity while she wept and sobbed in a terrible relief.

The man allowed her to sob away the tensions and the fear. As her tears diminished but her clutch became more insistent, Matthew Marsh made his sardonic confession.

“My idea, actually. I’m a real bastard. Got a bit of influence with the boys, so when I tracked you down to the sugar mill, I got this bright idea.”

“You mean you saw me shackled to that awful wheel?”

“Well, yes, actually, I did. Took a few peeps when you weren’t looking my way. That Marisa woman’s not a bad sort.”

“That was hateful.”

“You mean me or the wheel?”

“Both.” Tracy burrowed more deeply into his masculinity. “I thought I was chained to that spoke for life.”

“Had to go to Santos for authority for your release into my custody. I propositioned them about the film.”

“If you’re so buddy-buddy with them, couldn’t you have got me the release without the custody bit?”

“Sure. I could have, but I didn’t want to. You don’t imagine I’m letting you go! You belong to me.” His arm flexed into a couple of hugs. “Anyway, I had this idea about the film.”

“I never knew. I thought it was all real. It frightened me to bits.”

“Sorry, loved, but it seemed best—proper way to do it.”

“Nobody worried about me.”

“Only enough to get the US film rights for you. The jackals are clamoring for it.”

“But when they see me, they’ll know it’s fake.”

“They won’t see you, love. I’ll have you safely chained and far away. The rights and releases will be handled by an agent in Santos. The money will go into an account I’ve opened for you with Barclays.”

“What good will it do me if I’m a prisoner?”

“Don’t quibble. If you’re dissatisfied, I can always send you back to Marisa and her wheel. That exercise is good for a girl’s figure.”

So much feminine terror covered by so few words! Tracy was little concerned with anything except the fact of being alive and within the arms of a mercenary soldier who seemed likely to keep her his prisoner the rest of her life. Purely from habit, she asked, “Would you like to take off my handcuffs?”

“No.”

“I didn’t think you would. What are you going to do with

me?"

"Take you back to camp. We'll be there for awhile. I've got plans for you."

"It's nice to be wanted."

"You have the most lovely breasts."

"Only just noticed them?"

"Missed 'em while you were away."

They slipped back into the old repartee and a mutual respect for her captivity. Freedom was a forbidden topic. Tracy could think about it, but Captain Marsh would deny it happening. Happily, she asked, "How do you get me out of this place?"

"You can walk, or I'll carry you. Take you choice. Your jeep is waiting outside. That jeep's had as many adventures as you."

Tracy chose to be carried. It made her less naked and conspicuous. She was sure she was the envy of every girl who watched behind her bars. Before leaving the prison, she was given the white slip in which she had gone to her execution. She clutched it gladly. In Madrez, a naked girl in a jeep would attract attention.

Tracy told herself that she was silly over her sense of home coming. Effie cautioned her from the past with: "What you

need is freedom. Never mind the heart throbs." But she put Effie aside and told herself her joy was a natural reaction from the sugar mill and the sentence of death. She gave herself to Matt with great abandon, earning an amused rebuke for inventiveness in the ways of love. She countered by saying that was all he wanted her for anyway. They were very happy. When her master produced leg irons, Tracy did no more than wrinkle her nose. If he had tied her ankles tight together, she would gladly have hopped. On the following day, when duty called man away, she backed up to the tent pole and, without a word, waited to be attached.

Tracy dreamed. She and Matt would get married and live a pleasantly suburban life back home in the USA. Effie recommended this course: "It's safe, darling, but watch out for babies." There was the other one in which she was a deluxe camp-follower accompanying Matt from war to war. But she had that now, and if they went to enough wars, her master would certainly be killed and where would she be then? The ideal would be to persuade him to abandon his battles and take her back to civilization. He would marry her, of course, and maybe she would not be handcuffed and leg-ironed all the time. She intended to speak to Matt about his methods of keeping her restrained. But she had to admit the only alternative appeared to be a cage in which she could be locked at his convenience, so maybe handcuffs were best. She had spent her new day on the pole debating such pleasant nonsense. Effie told her she

was ridiculous for falling in love with a man who kept her naked and chained like a pet animal.

Tracy could not entirely quench fear when soldiers came to place things on her master's desk. But she affected a carefree manner as she stood captive to the pole. She smiled when they smiled. None spoke. They took a hasty inventory of her nakedness and went their way. She had a feeling they had been lectured, and the failure of the corporal to return after he had stolen her was probably potent. She suspected Matthew subjected her to the ordeal out of some erotic notion he might cherish. Each encounter and the blatant ogling of her exposure generated a sexual thrill within herself. She hated to admit it, but it was true.

Tracy wondered if Matt knew how glad she was to see him every afternoon on his return from doing whatever mercenaries did. He might easily suppose release from the pole her only reason for flinging her arms around him that brief time between being handcuffed in back and in front. Matthew Marsh remained a question mark to his captive. He told her little and trusted her not at all. Except in their lovemaking, she was always ironed. When Tracy complained, he pointed out that it was not safe for her to leave the tent, so what did a few links matter? His captive did not push. She had grown so accustomed to restraint between ankles and wrists that she could almost agree that it did not matter. But, deep inside, she knew it did.

It was the fourth day. Immediately after her master en-

tered the tent, the captive girl knew he was preoccupied. His kiss, the freeing of her hands, their embrace, and the joining of her hands where she could use them was all done by a man who obviously had something on his mind.

“What’s the matter, Matt? Have I done something?”

He laughed at her easy acceptance of guilt. He took endless delight in what she said and in her attitudes. “Go pour us drinks,” he ordered. “I’m bushed, and I’ve got some news.”

Tracy served the drinks, then knelt before Matt in the manner of his teaching. She was excited by more than her usual euphoria when released from the pole. “You’ve been promoted?” she prompted slyly.

“No, nothing to do with Santos.”

“You’ve decided to set me free?”

“Dreamer.” He looked down with affection at her upturned face, her nakedness, her handcuffed wrists, and ironed feet. “I’ll never let you go.” He laughed. “Suppose I did? Suppose I unlocked your hands and feet and gave you your clothes, what would you do?”

“Make your supper.”

“And then?”

“Take the clothes off and make love with you.”

“Yes, you’re doing fine.”

“I guess we’d sleep. You’d best chain my ankle or wrist, though, so you don’t worry.”

“But if I had set you free—”

“I forgot that. Well, chain me anyway, just so I don’t wander off and get into trouble.”

It was sweet talk, delicious probings. A big tease. They sipped and glowed. At the end of his glass, Marsh abruptly said, “Got a letter today.”

“Yes?” Tracy was acutely alert.

“An uncle in England died. Scarcely knew him. Left me his estate.”

“Oh, Matt, I’m—”

“Leave it at that, love. Nothing to be said.” He mused somberly. “It’s a sizable property, and the old boy modernized and lived in a pint-sized castle. Romantic but a trifle gothic. Probably draughty.”

“Ohhh, Matt…!”

“You said that before. We’ll live there, of course.”

“We? Matt, do you really—”

“Like I said, I refuse to part with you.”

Tracy wanted to ask if he would marry her and produce heirs, but it did not seem the appropriate time. Instead, she

listened as he mused.

“Thought I was at the end of the life. England’s no good unless you’ve got money, so I got myself into a few wars. Sure, I know, I’ll buy a bullet if I stay with being a mercenary long enough.” He grinned down confidingly. “I’ve got to admit I’m not too unhappy about this legacy.”

Tracy was a girl and, consequently, thrilled. This was the stuff of romance, but she was also practical. “Matt, how on earth can you take me over there as a prisoner?”

He enjoyed her excitement. “I seem to remember boxes people get strapped into when kidnapped in foreign parts.”

“Tie me up in a box! Oh, Matt, you wouldn’t!”

“Don’t see why not. Maintains the status quo.”

“But if you want me, I’ll go willingly. You don’t need to crate me or put me in a box.” Tracy twinkled mischievously. “Or you could let me dress and simply wear handcuffs. I don’t suppose anybody would mind.”

The man turned upon her his most serious attention. “You’d really do that?”

“Of course. Matt, it’s a lot more comfortable than standing against the tent pole all day while you go off and shoot whoever it is you shoot.”

“You know I get a charge out of keeping you prisoner. I

mean, apart from the obvious. I get a thrill out of those handcuffs you're wearing right now."

"Sure, I'd have to be crazy not to know, and I don't mind. Honest, I don't."

"Haven't you cursed me for leaving you fastened to that pole everyday?"

"Why would I do that? I suppose I must sort of like it myself. I finger the cuffs around my wrists and dream. That pole is wonderful for dreams. Do you think we might have another drink?"

She served his to him in the approved fashion, then made her own and knelt before him as a neophyte seeking wisdom. "We've fallen into a quaint sort of bind," he said slowly. "I don't know where we're going, and I'm not concerned. You and I will make you some way. But your image with me right now is of a captive girl who can't escape her chains. If you don't try very hard, that doesn't change a thing. I get an aesthetic value out of you in bonds. You are immensely enhanced by those handcuffs you're twinkling at me as you sip. It's a thing I refuse to deny myself." He paused. "Are you going to confuse this whole thing by talking about getting married? I can understand you might."

"You have to know I want to marry you. But if you don't want talk about it, I won't." Tracy glinted mischief. "You can always whip me if I do."

“Hmmmm, I’m thinking of the trip we have to make. I want keep this—call it an illusion, if you like—alive. Wouldn’t it shatter the picture if I unlock you at the airport and lock you again at the other end?”

“Not for me.” Tracy wiggled comfortably. She would make him quirm to offset her time on the tent pole. She was being feminine. “But I can see it would for you. I’m willing to try a scarf over my hands, but I’d die under a cape. Please, Matt, no cape and no crate.”

“I didn’t say a crate; I said a box with air holes.”

The merchandise to be transported wrinkled her nose in distaste. “All dark and stuffy. Tied up so tight I couldn’t move. You’d have to gag me. I’m sure the airline would make a fuss about a talking carton.”

“Very funny.”

“Well, I only asked. Would I be clothed or bare?”

“At the rate you’re going, you might also have a tender bottom.”

“Thank you, kind sir. I’m so lucky.”

The man gazed at his ardent captive. He knew himself the luckiest of men. To reach this rapport after the relatively short time since he had first captured Tracy Trevor was phenomenal. He would not tell her, but it was hard not to yank her off to the closest Protestant minister. But he was

half ashamed of falling prey so easily to the first white girl the jungle exposed to him. There was also the question of his ancestral home. To him it would be familiar ground, but to Tracy there would be aspects to shock her to the core. If he kept her captive all the way, there would be little sense in freeing her on arrival or shortly thereafter. There were features about that ancestral domicile to lend themselves specifically to what this girl leant to him. Soberly, he asked, “Ever been chained in a dungeon?”

“Good gosh, no!”

“If you knew you would be on arrival, would you still be a good little girl across the Atlantic?”

Tracy cocked a perky eye. “Sure, if that’s what you want.”

“Stop tossing my questions back at me. If I didn’t want your reaction, I wouldn’t ask. Knowing you were headed for a medieval prison, would you still go?”

“Yes.” Tracy’s tone became as demanding as his. “But we both know you’ve got me. If I wasn’t willing, you could put me in the box.”

“Sharp, aren’t you, love? Okay, I think I know where you’re at. You’re a sweetheart.”

“I need my head examined. May I get drunk to celebrate my dark future?”

“One more only.”

They were extraordinarily comfortable together. Tracy glowed. In a fine feminine abandon she already saw herself as the Chatelaine of Matt's castle and hostess to the local landed gentry. With such a prospect she could easily put up with a dungeon for awhile. In fact, thought of a centrally heated dungeon especially for her own incarceration was generating heat in a place where Mother had taught her it was naughty.

"His name was Angus Marsh, but he wasn't Scottish. He got his name from the castle itself. Castle Angus, or Angus Castle—take your pick. We can look for origins when we're in residence." Matthew grinned down at the kneeling, handcuffed girl. "Have you any idea of the things I can do with you in a real ancient relic?"

"Sort of."

Tracy sipped. The drinks were engendering a potent warmth which, coupled with an overheated sex, was inducing a delightful euphoria in which everything was wonderful, including Angus Castle, and she was certain of being competently dealt with when her master got around to it. Despite some obvious disadvantages the castle loomed in her future as a definite bonus. Resolutely, she ignored Effie's silent warning: "You're not going to like that dungeon or those chains." It was not Effie who was going to be Mrs. Matthew Marsh. With a philosophical air, she asked, "Will you fuck me in the dungeon?"

“Why not! It would likely be a first.”

Tracy giggled. “It would be for me.”

“You used a vulgar word. How come?”

Tracy was suddenly frightened. The last time had hurt a lot, and the awful word had slipped by. “I’m sorry,” she offered lamely. “I expect I’m tipsy. Do you want me to stand and bend over?”

“If you please.”

Tracy was a little girl again, setting aside her drink and getting up on her feet. Her handcuffs prevented embracing some part of he master. Robbed of this feminine resort, she positioned herself and bent to touch her toes, asking wanly, “Is this the way you want me?”

“Excellent! Shall we say a mere five?”

Tracy remembered in time not to say, “If that’s what you want.” Instead, she meekly said, “Thank you. That will do nicely.”

The cane hurt horrifically with a venomous personal hurting, as from Matt to Tracy. The bent nudity knew she could never keep still for all five if she had not been told that was all there was. It was most certainly enough. At the end of them, she fervently said, “Thank you, master.” Mischief fled. She was anxious to please.

“Have to cane you every so often, eh?”

“I expect so.”

“Keeps our relationship intact.”

“If you say so.”

Tracy knew it was wrong the moment she uttered the simple words. They had sounded sulky and thrust his question back at him as though in doubt. She gazed up appealingly. What she beheld told her what to do.

“Only five again, love. I hope you’re learning from this.”

There was nothing she could do, he had her, she was owned. Handcuffed and leg-ironed, there was only one thing to do. Abjectly, she bent over and tightened the skin of her wealed bottom, consoling herself with the thought that these strokes were her own fault. Tracy absorbed their scorch, their sear, their frightening agony with the same fortitude. At the end, she tremulously said, “Thank you, master.”

“You’re welcome. I love the way you Americans say that. I’ve got to hand it to you—you’re quite marvelous, and you should see your bottom.”

Tracy wanted to cry and be comforted. But this Matthew Marsh was the one who had captured her and made her prisoner. She knew his purpose in the ten stripes he had placed upon her flesh was to keep her aware of her status

and of his. She knelt and sipped, then said, “I know I deserved it. Thank you.” Within he female mind she was saying, “Just you wait, just you wait!”

“Feel more like a well-behaved prisoner?”

“Ten strokes more. Apart from the way you punish me, I really am sorry about the way I boob.”

“You’re welcome.”

The laugh they shared was genuine. The cane across her bottom had changed nothing. In a way, Tracy was glad of the stripes. They would keep her from blowing Matt’s fantasizing. With a deep feminine wisdom she knew their importance to him and thus to her.

“If you don’t put me in a box, I’ll have to be clothed before I get on a plane. Or do you know an airline that accepts nudes?”

“The woman who outfitted you in Santos Prison will do it again.”

“You think of everything. What will I wear at Angus Castle?”

“Nothing.”

“So convenient!” Inexplicably, Tracy shivered. A gothic hand had touched her spine. The castle would be as far from home for her as was Santos, and the sun would not

always shine. But, lightheartedly, she added, “Will you bring me out of the dungeon on special occasions? I mean, will you be entertaining?”

“Thinking of yourself as a hostess?”

“Why not? You can pop me back in the dungeon after the last guest has gone.” Tracy made her tone serious. “We shouldn’t make fun of any of this. It sounds wonderful and rich and exciting. You’re terribly lucky.”

“It will rain, and the neighbors will be stuffy and wear tweeds and keep dogs and horses. There’s a lot to be said for Santos, you know, if they weren’t always killing each other.”

“Stay here then. Don’t go and claim your castle. I’ll resign myself to the tent pole.”

“Oh, I’ll go all right, and so will you, love, one way or another. I’m the last of the line. I suppose there’s a duty.”

“I’d be glad to produce you virile sons to carry on the name.”

Affectionately, Matthew Marsh looked down at the girl he had just caned. Her bottom would be tender because of her punishment, but she still wished to give him sons. He wondered how well she would tread the thin line between slave girl and mistress, and how successful he would be in keeping that division clear and plausible in her feminine mind. He suspected the cane would be a constant presence.

Abruptly, he announced, “I’ve some work to do. I want a change from those handcuffs. There’s some rope and cord around somewhere.”

“Don’t you want me to make your supper?”

“Later. I want you tied tight for an hour.”

Tracy was aware of the need to accustom herself to his moods. She would have preferred to stay as they were, but it might be nice to be rid of handcuffs for a little while, and there was something delightfully personal about being bound by the man you intended to marry. The man himself did not have to be aware of her intention, just so long as she herself knew. Brightly, she asked, “How do you want me?”

The handcuffs jangled to the floor. Tracy did a quick wide, warm stretch. When her master smiled in amusement, she did another. They felt good. Her mind was busy with the making over of Angus Castle when Matt ordered, “Turn and cross your wrists.” She obeyed, and stood dreamily as the strands searched and bit and were deftly knotted. She wriggled and splayed out her fingers to show how well she was secured.

“Down on your tummy, love. I’ll help.”

Again, it was not a posture she would have chosen. Breathless, Tracy rested her chin in the sand while her ankles were tightly trussed. When ankles and hands were

drawn together to bow and bend her backwards, she could not check the involuntary exclamation. “Oh, Matt, do you have to!”

“Afraid so, sweetheart.”

“Isn’t this what they call a hog-tie?”

“Right. First time, eh?”

“Everything’s my first time. Oh, Matt, this is terribly uncomfortable.”

“So I’m told.”

“Don’t sound so pleased. Am I being punished or only immobilized?”

“Striving for effect actually, love. You can stay as you are or roll over on your side. Either way, you look enticingly distraught.”

“It hurts and it’s going to hurt worse.”

“But only for an hour or so.”

The captive sniffed and rolled over on her side. She was not sure she had improved her plight, but at least her chin was out of the sand. Tracy wiggled and twisted, the ropes bit back as though in admonition. Bitterly, she complained, “I’ll try not to scream.”

“No screams, poppet. I have to concentrate. Be happy to gag

you, though. You wear a gag charmingly."

"Don't bother. I'll suffer in silence."

It was infuriating to have her master so deeply absorbed at his desk as to be oblivious to her suffering. Tracy supposed suffering as good a word as any. She supposed she could endure the hog-tie for the prescribed time. It would not be pleasant, but just to please Matt… The silence was her real punishment. She effervesced with things to say. The castle, their journey, to be boxed, crated. Or led on a lash…! The tight bound girl had her own ideas about how she would walk upon the plane. But she could not be sure of Matthew Marsh. There were still dark depths in him she had not plumbed. If he wanted her in a box, then undoubtedly she would be boxed. From his voice she shrewdly deduced she had best keep quiet now if she did not want another mark or two upon whatever bit of her skin he thought convenient. For a girl to have her bottom bare and available was not all bad. Other portions of her were far more tender. Tracy settled herself to dream.

"Feeling abused, Tracy love?"

Matt's solicitous tone was a surprise. The single word of Tracy's admission was cautious. "Yes."

"You can buy freedom for ten strokes, love."

"You know what you can do with your ten strokes!"

"Are you being vulgar again?"

“Oops, sorry! I’m not at my best in the way you’ve got me.” She raised her head and gazed up, wide-eyed in apprehension. “No, Matt, please don’t. I’ve said I’m sorry.”

“This will make quite sure you’re sorry.”

The streak of fire was up the length of her exposed bare thigh. The pain was, as usual, outrageous. She wanted to say that now she did indeed feel abused, but she did not dare. She managed a meekly sarcastic, “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

Tracy wanted to scream, to stick out her tongue, to beat at his imperturbability with her fists. But she did nothing. She would not give him the satisfaction of making what small motions his bonds upon her allowed. Her thigh burned with a nagging scald. The weal she would wear would proclaim itself blatantly. Ah well…

5

Rustic Restraint

TRACY HAD FORGOTTEN its author but the quote was apt: “Where every prospect pleases and only man is vile.” From where she stood with arms outstretched and bound to the five barred gate the demesne of Angus was indeed fair to see. Half woodland, half the sloping fields of farms, all tributary to the estate. Castle Angus itself presided benevolently over its possessions, blending into the scene as though it had grown there instead of being built fifteenth or sixteenth century—Tracy was no sufficiently up on such matters to tell. She shifted self-consciously against tied wrists and roped tummy. She knew herself an anomaly in such a scene, and was willing to bet the castle had never seen a naked girl tied to a gate in all its several hundred years. She had expressed herself forcibly to her feudal lord.

“But, Matt, this is England. It’s not the USA or Santos. If someone sees me, they’ll throw a fit and call the police.”

“Nonsense. The sun will do you good.”

“You mean standing naked and tied to a farmer’s gate?”

“This farm is not rented. Not a cow or bull or even a sheep.”

“But the English go for walks. If one comes by, I’ll die!”

“The hazard lends a bit of excitement to your day.”

“Yes, I know, you have work to do. You always have work to do. This is all so lovely, and you haven’t even shown it to me. Please don’t tie me too tight again today.”

Matthew had tied her tight and gone his way. His nude possession stood against the gate, her arms spread wide and her middle tucked in, had enjoyed the rural scene for a couple of hours but was now bored. Tracy went through the squirming loose routine, but she found it useless and slumped as comfortably as possible against the cords on her wrists and the ropes around her middle. There was nothing else to do but dream. There was a lot to dream about.

Tracy Trevor would forever remember the stewardess. After a few hasty glances the young woman had guessed what the carelessly held scarf concealed. Her eyes conveyed her knowledge to the girl with handcuffed hands. Between them flashed a tacit understanding that each knew the other’s awareness. Tracy could not conceal her blush. If Matthew Marsh knew of the feminine exchange, he ignored it with a lordly insouciance. When his charge went to the restroom, the flight attendant cornered her and whispered hastily, “I’m so sorry. Have you been sentenced?”

Tracy was proud of her quick response. “I’m afraid so. Two years for shoplifting.”

“How awful! You don’t look the type.” Wide eyes dripped sympathy. “That man—your escort—is he treating you decently?”

“Oh, yes, he’s terribly nice. I’m supposed to be handcuffed to him, but he let me off. The way he’s got me handcuffed now is much nicer and easier to hide. How did you tell?”

“We get so many. We always give them the back seat. They’re always chained together. I’ve never seen anyone cuffed the way you are.” There was an embarrassed pause. “Would you mind giving me a proper look? I’ve always been curious.”

Girl to girl. It was so easy and rather sweet. Tracy shook away the scarf and held out her ironed wrists for inspection. “I can’t possibly get free of them,” she explained. “And if I don’t try, they don’t hurt.”

“But they’re so shiny and steely and curly, and you’re only a girl!”

“I shouldn’t have taken the fur coat,” Tracy said mendaciously.

“But doesn’t it make you feel all goosey? I mean having them locked on your wrists, and that man having the key?”

Tracy’s reply was killed by the advent of another passenger. The scarf was hastily replaced. Two pairs of girlish eyes smiled in shared knowledge. At the flight’s end there was a whispered “Good-bye” and a whispered “Good luck.”

Repressing a giggle, the handcuffed girl wondered if she might get her sentence reduced for good behavior. Then turned her attention to the motley piles of Orientals asleep in Heathrow's concourse. It had all been fun.

"What did I tell you. Went like a breeze. I can take you handcuffed any place I like." Matt was expansive.

"Thank you for not putting me in a box."

"You're welcome."

They had made a fun thing of the North American expression of goodwill. Tracy pouted back at her master and demanded, "Now show me England."

"You're still a prisoner, pet. Or have you forgotten?"

"All right then, stick me in your miserable old dungeon. You can go off and have a marvelous time all by yourself."

Tracy knew it was true, she had forgotten she was captive and on her way to a quaint imprisonment from which there would be no escape. At this moment she could scream and gain freedom, but she knew she would not do so. Tracy was not a bit sure of her reasons or motives for ignoring the freedom she had desired so recently. She looked at her escort and felt possessively proud. The warm steel around her wrists was comforting. She did not really believe in the dungeon, but if it awaited her, well, so what! She would prefer it to Santos Prison. Tracy, with her own feminine reasoning, felt certain she was going to be very

happy.

Blessing was indeed a blessing. Blessing had been general factotum to Uncle Angus and was prepared to offer the same service to the new lord of the manor. Blessing was of indeterminate age, and appeared to be an outgrowth of the mellow stone of the castle itself. If he suffered shock in the fact his new master arrived complete with a young woman of doubtful status, he gave no sign. At a later date Tracy was to learn he had seen a long procession of what he described as “little popsies” flit in and out from behind the castle walls. Uncle Angus had been a “proper old party, so he was,” and the tribute paid with deep affection.

Tracy sighed. There was so much, and all in so little time. She looked along the length of a bare arm to where Matt’s cords nestled snugly around her wrist and around the top bar of the gate. She debated if it was worthwhile trying again to get loose. Not that she believed she could, but it was something to do and would be one up on Matt if she ever succeeded. But she thought, as she had often done, of what value such a freedom might be. It would be only getting the laugh on her master, and then meekly holding out her hands to be retied. The idea of flight was not in the cards. Where would she go? Who would replace Matt in her life? It was all a bit defeating since it removed a motive. Prisoners were supposed to be deeply concerned about freedom, but she had to admit to not knowing what to do with it. It pleased Matt to keep her prisoner, and she wanted to please Matt, so why chafe her skin? And anyway,

she was too tightly tied.

Tracy was not sure about the dungeon. She had expected to be chained in it for at least thirty minutes just to live up to an old tradition. But Matt had said nothing of doing this to her. There were several dungeons beneath Castle Angus, and another one up in a tower of the ancient building. He had shown her one of the three and Tracy had shivered appropriately at what she beheld. She sensed a mystery. But she did not push. If she never entered another dungeon, it would be far too soon. To be chained and left alone in the one she had seen was a daunting prospect.

Blessing had not absolved her from nudity. There seemed a tacit understanding between the two men, a knowledge of something she did not. Upon first beholding her nakedness, Blessing had complimented her on her figure. It was a quite frank and unashamed appraisal, leaving the captive girl feeling he had appraised a good many. After that he appeared not to see her from her neck down. He was the perfect butler, and Tracy's blushes soon subsided. But she had to say something.

"Matt, this Mr. Blessing… and me all naked and handcuffed?"

"Drop the 'mister', love. Blessing is Blessing. If he notices your breasts and little thingummy, he'll never let on."

"But he said I was the most perfect female form he'd ever seen!"

“What’s wrong with that? Nice tribute, and he’s right.”

“Well, how many female forms has he seen?”

“I gather quite a few.” Matt laughed. “Seems like Uncle Angus was quite an old gentleman. He liked his girls.”

“All you men like the girls.” Tracy sniffed. “You’re a chip off the old block.”

“In more ways that one, sweetheart. Seems like Uncle Angus had the finest collection of handcuffs in Somerset. Had a lot of ’em specially made girl size.”

“How nice for you. I’d rather not hear about it.”

They had explored the castle and the estate. Everything was to hand as though Uncle Angus was still their host. Tracy sat beside her owner in the land rover and kept her handcuffed wrists out of sight. To understand the broader Somerset idioms was learning a new language. But she kept her hands demurely in her lap while the locals treated her with immense respect, only slightly colored by curiosity. Try as she would, Tracy could never rid herself of the conviction they guessed about the steel upon her wrists.

On the second day Matt had excused his need to work and be absent from his captive maiden. It was no more than Tracy expected, and they discussed her disposition as casually as they might have discussed dinner. She had spent one awesome day chained by a single wrist to a ring in the

wall of the Great Hall. There had been suits of armor for company, and much polished and gleaming oak. It was her first introduction to the smell of floor polish in an English home. By the time her master returned she hated hardwood and ancient relics with a passion. On her third day Matt had bound her implacably to a post of his four-poster bed, which so far she had shared. Today he had decided on the five-barred gate. Once more the captive girl looked at her bonds and snorted in disgust.

“Well, well, what have we here!”

Tracy tensed and had an instant vision. He would be tweedy, florid of face, late middle age. She was right. A startled glance back over a bare shoulder confirmed her diagnosis. The burly figure was surveying her bare rear view with obvious approval. He bypassed the gate by climbing over a stile to stand where he could get a full frontal view of Miss Tracy Trevor’s nakedness. Her retort was instant. “Go away. I haven’t any clothes on.”

“So I notice.” The tweedy type nodded approval. “And very nice too if you ask me. Knobby would have approved of you.” He guffawed heartily. “I’m talking about old Angus, rest his bones. One of the best was old Knobby. You’d have done him proud.”

“I don’t want to do anybody proud. Please go away.”

“I’ll be damned! American! Old Knobby never went in much for Americans. A nice little shop girl who dropped

her knickers was his choice. Mind you, she had to have a figure."

"I wish you'd stop leering at mine and go away."

"Leering! Was I leering? Well, I suppose there's a lot to be said for it. Haven't seen anything this good since Knobby got that smashing bit from Marks and Spencer's."

"It's not nice to stare at me the way you're doing. If you don't go away, I'll complain to Mr. Marsh."

"Ah, the whipper snapper, eh. I take it he's the one who tied you to this gate."

"Yes, he did. And he wouldn't want you ogling."

"Ogling? Am I ogling? Thought I was past all that. You revive me faith, me girl." Tracy's visitor raised a knobby stick he walked with and rubbed the end of it between the captive girl's legs. "Damn lovely bush you've got. Haven't seen a bush that thick since Knobby got that Chinese girl from Hong Kong."

"Don't you ever procure any girls of your own?"

"Eh! Well, actually, no. Married and all that. Knobby had more sense."

"If you were a gentleman, you'd untie me, instead of staring."

"Eh! Ah, there you're wrong, m'dear. A gentleman never

interferes. A gentleman tied you to that gate, and very pretty you look too, and no other gentleman is going to set you free. Belong to Knobby's nephew, don't you?"

"Haven't you the least bit of chivalry?"

"Big difference between chivalry and being a busybody."

"Then please be a busybody and untie me. I'm tired of being tied here like this, and stop staring."

"Huh!" The tweedy type viewed Tracy with disapproval. "You American girls! I can see why Knobby never bothered. By the way, my name's Mitchley, Colonel Mitchley, Imperial Army, of course."

"If you've fought for freedom, how about giving me some?"

"Nonsense. You're tied just right. I daresay you're enjoying tugging at the rope and giving your little thingummy an airing."

"It's not a thingummy. It's—"

"I know the other names for it." The colonel chuckled. "Had my hand on a good many in my time. I'll put it on yours if you get saucy."

"It wouldn't hurt you to untie me. I'd just go back to the castle and get some clothes. I don't suppose Matt would mind."

"Matt? Oh, the whipper snapper." The colonel guffawed. "If

you wouldn't run away, what's the sense in tying you to this gate?"

"Matt enjoys—"

"Ah ha! He's not old Knobby's nephew for nothing. Knobby must have tied more girls to more thugs!" He looked at her searchingly. "You letting yourself be tied up because you like it or because you want to marry the boy?"

"It's none of your business. If you're not going to untie me, you may as well stop staring at my pussy and go away."

"Huh, girls call it a fanny in these parts. Suppose I may as well keep up the old tradition."

Colonel Mitchley's breath was redolent of expensive Scotch. His hand was nothing much, as hands go, it lacked sensitivity. But with her tummy roped as tightly as it was to the gate Tracy had no choice but to endure her visitor's digital exploration of her most private part. She admired the view of fields and coppice while the Imperial Army did a spot of reconnoitering. "Nice, very nice." Colonel Mitchely approved. "You're a pretty little handful, and damned responsive. You won't mind if I dry this on your hip?"

"Would it do me any good if I did mind?"

The colonel blandly ignored her petulance. "M'wife and I will be calling, and there's cocktails at our place once a month. Does the boy let you loose for social occasions or pop you in one of Knobby's dungeons?"

“I haven’t the faintest idea what he’ll do with me.”

“Don’t have much to say about anything, oh? Well, that’s carrying on where old Knobby left off. None of his little popsies had much to say about anything either. Not unless they wanted their little rumps caned. D’you enjoy a good scorch on the rear?”

“You’re a rude old man. Go away.”

“Being rude is all a chap can do when he’s my age,” the colonel complained plaintively. “But there was a time when I’d have given you a proper trouncing.” His tone turned confidential “I suppose you’ve seen those dungeons and playrooms old Knobby fixed up?”

“No, and I don’t want to.”

“Ahhhh… I expect the boy is waiting for you to ink your blotter before he shows you.”

“He’s not a boy; he’s a soldier every bit as much as you.”

“Ah ha, that tells the story. You’re in love with him.”

Tracy’s blush was his answer. “I wish you’d mind your own affairs and I still don’t see why you won’t let me loose.”

“You don’t really want to be let loose, that’s why,” Colonel Mitchley reproved testily. “Because you’re a female you think you have to ask. It’s a sort of reflex like that Russian fellow with his dogs.” He chucked her under her chin. “I

hope this boy of yours invites me over some day when he's putting you through your paces."

"You'd be disappointed. Matt doesn't torture me."

"Couldn't say Knobby tortured his little darlings either." The colonel mused thoughtfully. "But some of what he did do certainly got their attention. You're altogether too demanding, the way you keep asking to be untied. No popsie of Knobby's would ever have dared."

Tracy wriggled against her corded wrists. She was really shockingly exposed to this relic of another age. Her middle was too tightly belted to permit motion down below. She could not even deliver a good kick. She wished the colonel had not discovered her. On the other hand, he had been informative. For the sake of something to say, she inquired, "Did you play these silly games with Uncle Angus?"

"Uncle Angus, eh! Yes, m'dear, you've got a wedding ring in mind. Don't ever use that word again. There's nothing silly about it. Nothing silly in the way you're tied right now." The colonel snorted. "The young fellow's done a neat job on you, and you know it. If you weren't tied up, you'd only be running around the shops and spending money."

"I've got a right to do that if I want."

"You don't have any rights. Get such nonsense out of your mind." Colonel Mitchley looked around vaguely. "Your bottom's wrong way around, but if you'd like, I can cut a

switch or two and bring you back on course with a few cuts across your thighs."

"Don't you dare! Knowing Uncle Angus doesn't give you the right to whip me!"

"Hoity-toity. Temper, eh! What you need, young woman, is a sound thrashing."

"Know, I don't! Certainly not from you. If I need a thrashing, Matt will thrash me, and nobody else."

"Hmmmm, I'll have a word with the boy and see if he'll let me have you for an hour or two. A good English cane across your bottom would work wonders."

"He won't lend me to you, and the canes aren't English. They're imported from Singapore."

"Do the trick, though, eh! Smarten you up no end." Colonel Mitchley's complexion turned slightly more florid. "One of these days…!"

"I wish you'd go away and leave me alone."

"Very well." The colonel's voice bristled with affronted dignity. "I know when I'm not wanted. But the day will come—"

"No, it won't! Good-bye!"

The retired military struggled for words but succeeded only in deeping his complexion one more shade of crim-

son. He harrumphed a couple of times like an irritated dinosaur. Pathetically, he muttered to the world at large, “It’s hell to be old.” Then he stomped away.

Tracy felt like a bitch.

It was uncomfortable but exciting to wear clothes. However, a total absence of handcuffs, chain, or rope led Tracy feeling more naked than when actually bare. But, despite this mental hazard, she was thrilled to the core. Matt had made her his acknowledged hostess. If the county cocked a dubious eye, they did so when she was not looking. Miss Tracy Trevor from the USA was undisputed queen of Mr. Matthew Marsh’s first cocktail party. She had been fearful of being a maid who served the drinks and wore a skimpy, revealing costume, but Matt had employed a professional staff for the occasion. For this one evening Matthew Marsh’s feminine prisoner was a lady.

Their prelude of discussion had been brief. “How do you know I won’t run away or ask for help?” Tracy had inquired as her master took the handcuffs from her wrists.

“You won’t.”

So that looked after that! Tracy tried again. “What do I say if that sad old colonel talks about whipping my bottom?”

“He won’t.”

“I bet he’s told everybody about finding me naked and tied to the gate.”

“He hasn’t.”

“Uncle Angus seems to have had himself a time with half the girls in England. When they see me, I bet they snicker to themselves.”

“Who cares! If they do have a quiet chuckle, it will be from sour grapes. Stop beefing.”

Tracy stopped. She was learning when to keep quiet and was willing to admit her teacher had been the cane. Her bottom was nearly always streaked. She sallied forth to do battle with the better element, and after two cocktails and several skirmishes discovered her adversary was not the tweedy type, where the women were motherly and the men yearning, but a young woman with the improbable title of the Honorable Crystal Maitland. Crystal had been often referred to in the London press as a “British beauty” or an “English rose.” She was reputed to have been intimate with the Prince of Wales. At the moment she was giving her full attention to Matthew Marsh, a sure indicator that Uncle Angus had indeed left his nephew a lot of money.

Jealously, Tracy watched. She could concede Crystal’s undoubted charms, but not the fatuous manner in which Matthew Marsh wallowed in this unexpected female attention. The word “wallowed” seemed appropriate to the

slighted slave. It was soon her own turn to be exposed to Crystal's attention.

"I think it's so nice for a man like Captain Marsh to have a girl like you. The name is Tracy, isn't it? How sweet."

"Like me! What sort of a girl am I?"

"Well, we both know that, darling, but we need not go into it, need we?" Crystal was a lethal weapon. "Please don't feel awkward with me. If it's any comfort, I don't mind telling you Uncle Angus once caned my bottom." Crystal simpered. "But just the once. One must not indulge these ancient satyrs beyond a certain point."

Tracy viewed the English rose with fresh interest. "You mean you bent over for him?"

"Well, no dear. I let the old boy strap me down on one of those devices he has downstairs. I was actually rather fond of him, if only he'd kept his cane to himself, but I expect you enjoy being caned?"

"Gosh no!"

"You don't have to tell me, dear—I know. I found the pain tremendously stimulating. I'd have let old Angus have his way with me again if a girl didn't have to watch out for her marriageability. I'm inclined to think I should consider your owner. I could put up with him very well."

"How considerate."

“Don’t be snarky. I’d let him keep you, dear.” Crystal smiled confidingly. “Much better your bottom than mine, y’know.”

“Aren’t you taking a lot for granted?”

For answer, Crystal swiftly reached and captured Tracy’s hand, pulling it forward to where they could both see the fading indentations of rope and its residual pink. “Gives you away, darling,” she said sweetly, letting the hand fall. “That dear little wrist has been bound and chained a good many times, and you can’t tell me it hasn’t.”

“But that’s none of your business!”

“It will be after I’ve married the gallant captain. I’ve taken quite a fancy to him, and I’ll love having a half interest in you.”

“I’ll tell him everything you’ve said! You’re—”

“I’ve just been telling him. dear. You don’t have to bother.” Crystal chuckled. “Bit of a shock for the poor chap. I mean, confronted by the predatory female. But I do believe in calling a spade a spade. I explained about how I’d enjoy having you around, properly secured and frequently whipped, of course.”

“You’re impossible!” Tracy was outraged to a point of being intrigued. “I’m not sure I believe a word you say.”

“Yes, that’s the way it hit him too. But you’ll both come around in time. He’s still digesting what I said. I’ll button-

hole him again in a little while and give him another treatment."

"You can't," Tracy glared. "You simply can't. You're just trying to shock him and me to. I—"

"Yes, dear, I know you want to marry him yourself but men don't marry their slave girls. Why should they?"

"I'm not a slave girl. I… I'm…" Tracy floundered.

"Yes, darling?" Crystal's tone was saccharine. "Then what exactly are you?"

Tracy's feelings were primal. She wanted to scratch and claw. The honorable Crystal Maitland possessed no more physical assets than she herself, but she was skilled in using them and the undoubted influence she held in this society. The two girls glared in confrontation. But on the surface they smiled the deadly smiles of cobras. "All you'll get out of Matt is a well-whipped bottom," Tracy warned. "And the sooner the better. You're a British pain in the ass."

"Temper, temper! Come now, darling, it's so nice we understand each other. How'd you like to bet I whip yours before you whip mine?"

Tracy was breathing hard. She was glad Crystal could not see her breasts. Their rise and fall would be a betrayal. She considered walking away, but that would spell defeat. On the other hand, she knew her status sufficiently understood by this svelte menace to make her threats seem

bombast, a blustering to earn her punishment. Swallowing pride and resolving to speak of this snooty bitch to her master, she said lamely, “You’re taking an unfair advantage, and I think you’re pumping me for information. Try and remember I’m the hostess here and you’re a guest.”

“But hostesses have bottoms, darling, and we both know what bottoms are for, don’t we?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Tracy flounced away in fury, but that night when she sat naked on their bed and held out her hands for the cuffing of her wrists she sought to lay a ghost. “Matt, that absurd Crystal creature…?”

“What about her?”

“She said she intends to marry you.”

“Told me the same thing, love.” Matt carefully tightened a cuff to make it snug. “She’s an amusing piece of fluff.”

“She’s not a piece of fluff; she’s deadly.”

“Take her seriously, eh? And you’re jealous. Well, well!”

“Don’t just say ‘well, well’. You should avoid her like the plague.”

“Are you giving me orders?”

“Oh, all right, I forgot. Do you want me to bend over?”

“Ordinarily, I would, but apart from Crystal, you carried things off with a flair. I was proud of you, so no stripes on your bottom.”

“Thank you. I never want to be caned if I can help it.” Tracy jingled her handcuffs, savoring their familiar steel again upon her wrists. She bestowed a rueful grin. “Matt, I’m scared of that girl. She makes everything sound so innocent, but none of it is.”

“Mmmmmm… well, yes. Goes after what she wants. Asked me if I’d let her strap you down and cane your bottom.”

“Matt! She didn’t?”

“Sure, she did. Bare-faced about it. Said if I let her cane yours, she’d allow me to cane hers. Seems like old Uncle Angus—”

“She told me. Matt, please don’t ever let her—”

Matthew bent and kissed the disturbed nudity so completely his.

“Don’t worry, love. Crystal won’t get at your bottom—or your top. Forget her. Now, suggest something I can do with you tomorrow.”

“Drive me around the country roads. Handcuffed, of course, and behind my back if it would please you.”

“It would please me a lot. How about naked?”

“Sure. Suppose we get arrested for indecency?”

“I’ll take a blanket along for crucial moments.”

The two of them slipped back into their chosen roles with natural ease. Tracy found herself bound to trees, to old wagon wheels, to a kitchen chair. Blessing viewed such antics as he observed with a benign eye. The captive girl knew it would be useless to ask him to untie her ever. Blessing was the master’s man. Tracy even survived and emerged victorious from the ordeal of the honorable Crystal coming to tea. Matthew ensured she was hostess and did the pouring. He remained one jump ahead of this visitor throughout.

“Delightful girl you have, Mr. Marsh. I presume you’ve released her from her chains to preside at tea.”

“You’re right; she is delightful. I’m very fond of her.”

“Ah, well, if you like the type I hope you thrash her frequently. She certainly merits it.”

“At my own discretion, Miss Maitland. I expect you’ll be going to the horse show?”

“No. I will not. I would prefer to borrow Tracy from you for the weekend.”

“She is not available. I’m sorry.”

“You’re not sorry at all. The offer I made for her—mine for

hers—still holds."

"It's an offer I must pass on. But thanks."

"Your Uncle Angus would be ashamed of you."

"But I'm not ashamed of me. Please don't bother with Tracy and myself. We are perfectly happy in our own way."

The conversation had been lengthy. Tracy had glowed throughout. The honorable Crystal had departed, ruffled and emanating hostile vibes. When she was rid of clothes afterwards, but before being handcuffed, Tracy threw her arms around her master and gave him fervid thanks. They had made love, their union secure. Crystal could go fly a kite. But the next day they met again.

It was a new tie. Actually a preparation for whip or crop—or both! It was a smooth young trunk Tracy had to face, and thereto be bound arms extended above her head, wrists tightly tied to the slender hole. When her middle was also tightly bound and cinched to the young tree, she knew herself helpless and terribly vulnerable.

"Just right for whipping you, love."

"But I haven't done anything! Oh, Matt!"

"Keep you wondering, love. You're nicely vulnerable and well out of sight. Maybe old Matchley will happen by and give you a few stripes."

“Ohhh. Matt, please! It’s awful being left tied to a tree so I can scarcely move, and all alone.”

“You love it. So do I. The way you complain I suppose you think you have to.”

“Oh, Matt!”

They had left it at that, each in their own way satisfied. Tracy had become resigned to being bound to trees and other outdoor facilities. Matt assured his prisoner they had to take advantage of the English summer while they had it. This was not Santos. The captive of the tree wriggled and tugged and squirmed in her usual testing of her tie. Tracy had learned not to do this while her master was present. It simply meant more rope or a tighter tie. As usual, she discovered she could free no part of herself. She gazed back over each bare shoulder. Not wanting to view the bark all day, she set her cheek against it and delivered herself to fantasy. Soon her wrists would hurt and her arms start to tire. But until then…!

Crystal had not returned, so that was that. On the other hand, Tracy could not see herself any closer to being Mrs. Matthew Marsh. Her hints fell on deaf ears, and she was as securely kept in bondage as ever. Her master was always around in the brief periods when she was free. If she had wished most ardently to escape, she could not have done so. She wanly wondered if this meant anything. She was a prisoner and could be kept a prisoner for the rest of her

life if Matthew Marsh so desired. There were times when she thought he did.

Tracy was beautifully bound. Her master had taken time and trouble. Her raised wrists were firmly and prettily circled with snug strands, and her waist was cinched tight against the tree. She could reach or touch no single knot. But it was the same every day, and at night there was always a chain. She wondered why she had not been taken to a dungeon, but did not ask. She sensed the dark caverns below and the tower room above as factors in her future. Unless, of course…?

Matt had made it plain he would treat his wife little differently from his treatment of his slave. There would be plenty of rope, and the cane and the whip would always be around. But the anxious candidate for the position glossed over such trivia. It was not likely to be worse than what she endured now and secretly she was enduring her present tribulations remarkably well, even to the point of actual erotic enjoyment, of which she was secretly ashamed. She advanced her feet and adjusted her knees to contrive friction against her pubic hair on the rough surface of the tree. She was tied too tightly for her pussy to make contact, but if she wiggled enough… perhaps—and she was tied there for the day. When boredom got the best of her…!

“I knew I’d find you around somewhere. The weather’s so

lovely." Crystal's voice snapped the captive girl into tense wakefulness. "My, my, what a delightful way he has you tied! I couldn't do better myself."

Tracy took a swift startled glance back across a bare shoulder. Crystal carried a riding crop and was flexing it back and forth in seeming anticipation. Her smiling regard was as sweet as ever. "What a gorgeous body you have, darling. I expect the mixture of mongrels in the USA produces those wonderful breasts and that exquisite bottom you're sticking out at me."

"Go away, you're trespassing."

The naked girl tied to the tree was cringing with every fiber of her being. She knew herself wonderfully bound for Crystal's use of the crop she carried. It was as though Matt had tied her thus on purpose. She angrily dismissed the thought. Crystal dismissed it further.

"Don't suppose your master would have tied you like this if he'd known I was coming by. I'm so lucky."

"Go away. Don't talk about masters and such, it's silly." Crystal's peal of laughter caused a blush to diffuse the tied girl's face and neck. "All right, laugh all you want, but what Matt and I do together is none of your business. If you have any decency, you'll go away and leave me alone."

"What you're really saying, darling, is you don't want me to use this crop on you."

“So, all right, I don’t want you to use that crop on me. Please don’t. It would be a rotten unfair advantage.”

“All’s fair in love and war, sweetness.” Crystal trilled laughter. “And that lovely little curved bottom is so sweet I swear I can see it quivering, and it’s already so nicely striped.”

“Yours would quiver too if things were the other way around. Crystal, I beg you, please don’t use that crop on me.”

“But, darling, you’re so gorgeously helpless!”

“I know I am. That doesn’t mean you have to whip me.”

“But it seems so wrong to do. Matt must have tied you like this for a reason. You can’t move much at all, can you?”

“You know I can’t! Ohhhhh, please!”

Crystal thoughtfully stroked the bare skin of the bound girl with the crop, lingering lovingly on the curve of buttock and waist. Here was hearts desire. The bound maiden would scream delightfully. But she was a prudent young woman. Matthew Marsh might not approve of his slave girl being striped by other than his own hand. A quiet smile irradiated her features as she laid aside the crop and moved closer to the palpitating femininity tied to the tree.

“Crystal, what are you going to do?”

Tracy, casting another apprehensive glance back over a bound shoulder, surveyed the feline approach without faith in good intentions. There was something about Crystal's smile. She cursed her own helplessness. Matt had unwittingly delivered her to the enemy. When Crystal's fingers busied themselves with the knots around her waist, she demanded fearfully, "Why are you untying me? You mustn't. Leave me alone."

"You love being tied, don't you, dear? I know." Crystal's voice might have been the hiss of a deadly snake. "Since you won't invite me to crop your bottom, I do have to do something. You wouldn't want us both to be frustrated."

"Don't you dare untie me! Matt will be angry."

"Try and stop me, darling."

"You know I can't. Crystal, please!"

Flushed and helpless, Tracy endured the peeling away of the bands cinching her middle to the tree. Even when they were gone she would still be helpless and at the mercy of a girl who might show no mercy. But it seemed evident she was not to be marked by the crop. This cynical British beauty had something else in mind, unless Crystal preferred the girls she whipped to be able to dance around under her blows. When the final strand fell away to leave Tracy held only by her raised wrists, she made one more disturbed protest.

“Matt’s going to be so mad! Matt and I are none of your business, Crystal. You’re interfering. Where’s this fine British politeness I’ve heard so much about!”

“I don’t have any, and you are my business. I intend to inherit you when I marry Matt. Just think, darling, I’ll be able to whip you everyday. I’ll make you come to heel. But at this moment…”

The still tightly bound girl gasped. A female British hand was parting a pair of American thighs and inserting itself within the moist heat of transatlantic crotch. It cupped handful of plump sex and pulled back to make her victim edge her feet away from the tree to give access to a portion of herself previously welded to the bark by rope.

“That’s as far away as I can get from the tree,” Tracy complained. “My hands are still tied up above my head, you know.”

“They’re going to stay that way, darling. All I want is your pretty little fanny.” Crystal giggled. “You call it a pussy as though it says meow. Now all you have to do is make the proper sounds while I do the work.”

It was hateful. But Tracy knew herself helpless and in the hands of a mistress of femininity. There could be little doubt of Crystal’s intent. Tracy was going to get an orgasm whether she liked it or not. Her wrists complained against the drag of Crystal’s demanding hands upon the captive maiden loins. There were adjustments, fingers searched.

Mischievous teeth bit hard on a captive ear as the ancient rhythm began its inexorable play.

She longed to fight, to wipe the rapture from her persecutor's face. But Tracy could do nothing. She was held by the rope above and the wicked hands below. Her motions were controlled and reprimanded by the small but vicious teeth nipping her ear. But in a little while nothing mattered and she began to moan as the hands busied themselves with her sex and the teeth and tongue invoked their own demand. If the honorable Crystal Maitland possessed any of the highly advertised British reserve, she was evidently giving it a day off duty. Tracy moaned her way to the inevitable climax.

"I'm pleased with you, darling. You're responsive. I shall certainly insist on keeping you around."

"Don't bother." Tracy felt soiled and shamed and moist and longed for a pair of strong male arms. "That was a mean advantage, using me like that."

"I'll keep you prettily chained up in that tower dungeon where I can easily use you whenever I feel the need," Crystal assured blandly. "This is such fun. The poor man doesn't even know what I have in mind for him. Is he good in bed?"

"You'll never know."

"I'll bite your ear, darling, until you answer me properly.

Biting a girl's ear doesn't leave enough marks to bother with."

"All right, forget my ear. Yes, he's very good in bed."

"I was sure he would be. You have that contented look. I'll bite your ear anyway to teach you a lesson."

There was no escape. Crystal had her. Tracy made appropriate sounds while sharp teeth bit viciously. The pain was worse than a whip stroke. It was a way to discipline a girl peculiarly Crystal's own.

"I'll tie you up again, dear, exactly as I found you. I don't mind whether you tell Matt or not. It won't make a bit of difference. You're only a slave girl, y'know."

Tracy was too well aware of naked vulnerability to speak her mind while the ropes were again looped and tightened to weld her to her tree. Crystal spared no effort.

"Ouch, that's far too tight!"

"Good."

"No! Please. Crystal, I mean it! You're cutting me in two."

"Not so I can notice. You'll have to put up with it. Give you an idea what to expect when I really have you." Pleasurable absorbed, Crystal continued to tug.

The tightly tied nudity maintained a sulky silence. It did no good to complain. The honorable Crystal had her for sure,

and that was the end of it. But she yelped in dismay when a cruel thumb and finger pinched a nipple and a sultry voice inquired. “Ever had these whipped, Tracy?”

“That’s a horrible thing to even think of.”

This time the pinch was worse and the voice more silky. “I asked you a question, dear.”

“Okay, okay! No, nobody’s ever whipped my breasts. It’s an awful—”

“Nobody wants your opinion, dear. Just give polite answers when someone asks a question.”

Clamped hard against her tree, the naked girl, still flushed from orgasm, dared not reply. Crystal might still decide to use her crop on the beautifully available bottom and make excuses later if she must. Tracy realized she should give credit to the other girl for self-control. She knew herself a delectable morsel. Crystal read her thoughts.

“I hope you are properly grateful to me for not cropping that lovely round rump you have.”

“I am. Thank you… really!”

“Some other time perhaps?”

It was the last thing the tied girl wanted to agree to. But her acquiescence was in benefit of prudence. “Yes, of course, some other time.”

Crystal laughed gaily. “I know you don’t mean that, and you don’t think it will happens but we’ll see! In the meantime, your manners have vastly improved since I arrived. Give your master my love.”

The bound nudity glowered after the retreating English rose. Tracy doubted it was chance which prompted Crystal to slash at inoffensive plants and cut them neatly in two with her crop. The damn thing would hurt abominably. Despite the heat she shivered. Off somewhere in the wings, Effie admonished, “You’d better watch out for her!”

Effie’s advice might be the best. But Tracy was increasingly aware of how little she could do about anything. Sure, she and Matt could talk, but he kept her plaints within the limits he desired. If she overstepped, he whipped or caned her ruthlessly, not many strokes but they hurt. Tracy noticed too how little real freedom he allowed. This could well be in keeping with whatever his master plan for her might be. But to be forever handcuffed or chained or bound left her with a vague unease, as though Matt no longer trusted her. She did not want a dungeon, but Matt’s refusal to lock her away in one was also cause for disquiet. Was he saving whatever they held for some truly awful penalty she had to pay? Or was she being silly? Tracy simply did not know.

But she remained certain on one single subject. If someone gave her freedom, she would not run away. She would wait and yield herself to her master on his return. Morosely,

Tracy guessed the cause of all her melancholy.

The cause was Crystal.

6

Roped Rage

“SHE INSISTS she’s going to marry you,” Tracy repeated stubbornly.

“Nonsense.”

“No, really! She’s terribly intent on it. She’s dangerous.”

“You don’t think I can look after myself?”

“Not where females are concerned. Look, you’ll punish me. I can tell from the look on your face.”

“That’s a chance you’ll have to take, love.”

“I don’t want my bottom caned.”

“It was you who brought up the subject, pet, not me.”

“You men are so silly when there’s a certain kind of girl around. You get all gooey and fatuous, and your egos show all over, and you simply fawn—”

“Does this describe me?”

“Well, no, it doesn’t. But you did ask.”

“Very well. No cane.”

“Thank you. I’ve had the feeling you’re mad at me about something. Why did you cuff my hands behind my back?”

“A gentle reprimand. I’m sick of hearing about Crystal Maitland. If it bothers you to have your hands where they are, that’s the reason.”

“Now I can’t fix our drinks.”

“Yes, you can. Take it slow. You’ll surprise yourself.”

“But, Matt, I’m almost certain to spill—”

“In that case you’ll be almost certain to get your bottom caned.”

“Pig!”

Tracy stuck out her tongue and went to the bar. These were understood latitudes, part of the game they played. She happily proceeded to perform miracles with glasses, ice, and bottles. It was slow and tedious, but exhilarating and just barely possible. That was the nice thing about handcuffs she could never get free of them, but they did allow a girl to do a lot of things. Had she been bound with rope, her task would be impossible.

“I enjoyed watching you do that.” Matt accepted the drink so awkwardly proffered from just above the right cheek of Tracy’s bottom. “Make yourself one. Same rules apply.”

“But I won’t be able to drink it. I mean, I can’t raise the glass.”

“I’ll raise it for you. Get busy.”

It was good to be with Matt. He made everything worthwhile. Crystal might be storming the citadel, hut Tracy was safe within its walls. If only Matt would hurry up and marry her. But that topic was forbidden. Tracy knelt and raised her chin. Her master lifted her glass to her grateful lips. It was the most wonderful feeling!

She said, “Matt, I’m so happy with you. Why must you tie me up and leave me alone the way you do?”

“Business. The estate keeps me busy. It will quieten down. I’ll lead you around with me on a leash, if you wish.”

“I wouldn’t mind. But, Matt, like it was today—I came close to being flogged with a riding crop.”

“Crystal’s not that crazy, love.”

“And that old Mitchley. If he’s been younger—”

“I like tying you these different ways outdoors. Gives a touch of spice for us both.”

“It would if I wanted to escape from you, but I don’t.”

“I’m a lucky man, pet. I adore you.”

“Then how about being a bit more prudent with me? If some rotten tramp came along and found me, well, we both know what he’d do.”

“I’m going to do it to you myself before too long.”

“But, Matt, there’s all the difference in the world.”

“Thanks for the compliment, but do you remember our first time? I staked you out on the ground spread-eagle. What did you think of that?”

“You know I loved it. What I’m saying now is I don’t want to be—well, you know—by some smelly tramp.”

“Does you credit, love. Why didn’t you use the word?”

“Because you’d cane my bottom, that’s why. Look, what word d’you want me to use? Please don’t suggest ‘intercourse’ or ‘sexual congress’. I’d sooner get my bottom caned.”

“Okay. There’s no sensible word for it. I’ll make an exception, and you call it a good honest fuck.”

“Thanks a million. So I don’t want a good honest fuck from any rambling passerby.”

“It won’t happen. Remember, you’re tied on private property, and this is England.”

“You mean the English don’t fuck on private property?”

“Watch it, love. You’re pushing your luck.”

The would-be wife found it delicious to thinly skirt the borderline of punishment. It became a contest between them to see if she could be trapped into imprudence. In the meantime, Tracy was tied to more objects than she knew

existed around the estate. One of them was the ancient wagon in the distant field.

“Remember how naughty girls used to be whipped at the cart’s tail all around the town, love?”

“I’ve read something, but I’d rather not know.”

“Very simple. Your hands tied to the tailgate, that’s all.”

“Matt, please, not this far from the house.”

“What’s the difference? It’s only taken us a few minutes to walk here, and the cord’s in my pocket.”

“All day long I’ll be expecting to be whipped. That’s the difference.”

“A few bits of cord around your wrists… ?”

“Oh, allright, I know you’ll tie me no matter what. I suppose I stick my wrists into these slots?”

Tracy watched the tight binding of her hands. It was very simple. All she had to do was raise her bare arms to set her hands a couple of feet apart on top of the cart’s weathered tailgate. The slots were weathered too. That meant the relic had once been used for… She shivered at the thought of standing as others must have once stood to be flogged without mercy through the town. Despite good intentions, she complained, “Matt, I’m getting bad vibes. Must we—”

“I bet you are.” Matt laughed cheerily. “A lot of bad girls

had their wrists tied where I've tied yours. This old thing was once used for that."

"You're not going to have someone come and whip me?"

She was rewardingly kissed, her bare bottom reassuringly patted. "You're being fanciful, love. Can't feel the vibes myself, but I can believe they're there."

"Were the poor things naked, like I am?"

"Mostly. I think it was a point of honor with the bailiff to rise whip to cut away anything they might happen to start out with."

"Ugh! It makes me shiver."

"That will pass," Matt assured blandly. "This is an easy one. All you have to do is stand with your arms stuck out in front. You've had worse."

It was true, she had. The bound and naked girl chided herself for ingratitude. Except for the weariness of standing, this would be easy. Immediately after her owner had departed, she tested the possibility of using her teeth on her bonds. She still hoped to get the last laugh on Man one day. It looked easy, but it was not. Rather than continually hurt herself trying, she abandoned the project with no worse than chafed wrists. She strove for a macabre thrill from picturing her predecessors fastened as she was fastened, and to this very cart. They would have envied her the painlessness of her punishment. As usual, she felt un-

grateful for the simplicity of her travail.

Tracy pondered the anomaly: a girl like herself adjusting to this naked condition, this exposure, this confinement of her limbs. It was all quite incredible. It would once have seemed the direst of nightmares. Yet in her contact with Matt, who was now disappearing towards the castle, there had been nothing but affection and good-natured repartee. She was accepting this new condition as she had endured all else, partly because she had no choice, but also because of an awareness of something new within herself. Her existence upon a fine line between danger and security was understood. The greatest hazard she envisioned at the moment was another visit from the tweedy Colonel Mitchley or from Crystal Maitland. Of the two, she preferred the colonel. His interest in her was purely carnal, whereas Crystal's definitely included the stealing of Matthew Marsh. The most definite way of dealing with Crystal would be to marry Matt or, preferably, to persuade him to marry her. But Tracy had come to realize that before this much to be desired event took place she would be compelled to endure a series of travails and tests such as confronted her now. If only they were being imposed upon her within the confines of Castle Angus she would be less concerned but the British countryside seemed to reject the whole idea of naked girls and damsels in distress. In these quaint situations Matt contrived, she felt herself an affront to the dignity of centuries.

The captive girl sighed. She looked up at the bare expanse

of her arms to where her wrists were so securely attached to the tailgate of the cart. They were an exquisitely neat and tidy job, fully in keeping with Matt's best efforts. She found herself, fully in keeping with amusement, becoming an authority on such matters. She would now be as offended with an untidy job of binding as Matthew himself. She had, in fact, once drawn to his attention a sloppy slackness in a couple of strands and had received from him a wise and knowing smile in recognition of her awareness. Matt had been pleased, and Tracy had realized her suggestion of tightening a knot had indeed been a landmark in her life. There had been plenty of them, and there would be more. She flexed her fingers, she tugged and twisted experimentally, and for several moments savored the extraordinary condition of being compelled to stand exactly where she was by a few straps of rope. She wondered if the heat between her legs would have been as acute had Colonel Mitchley been the one to find her thus instead of Matt. There was something very personal and loving about the ropes with which she was now secured. They were a part of himself which Matt had left upon her. She wore them with an element of pride and would not have denied their erotic effect, but having splayed out her fingers and clenched her fists, she had about exhausted their potential for interest. Tracy turned her attention to the English countryside. Across a distant sward of grass a figure was approaching. In a mixture of disgust and apprehension, Tracy recognized the unmistakable contours of Crystal Maitland. The British beauty carried a riding

crop and was decapitating small growths as she passed them by. The captive of the cart looked longingly at her hands and that of the needless friends which wedded them to the tailgate. There was no help for her; she would have to stand and endure whatever Crystal decided to impose, but she prayed fervently that Crystal was not there by the instigation of Matthew Marsh. If he had sent this cynical beauty to taunt and perhaps torment her, she knew she was going to be close to tears. Tracy awaited her fate, silently cursing Matthew's careless disposal of her nudity in an outdoor setting. She watched the steady approach of the girl with whom she knew herself at war, and noted a dog making forays to either side of the striding figure in the best British tradition. Crystal was simply taking the dog for a walk. If her destination was the maiden tied to the tailgate, well, so what? Crystal was making a bee-line for the helpless captive, so there was no doubt of her intention and of her knowledge of the cart itself. Undoubtedly, the honorable Crystal Maitland was far more aware of the assets and oddities of Matt's estate than he himself. Tracy fervently wished the British beauty was herself secured as she was secured, and that she in turn was free. It would be nice just once to have the upper hand.

"Why, darling, fancy meeting you here!" Crystal's voice as heavily loaded with sarcasm. "Darling Matthew really does think of the most delightful things to do with you. You are getting the most amazingly innovative introduction to the English scene."

Tracy would have given more attention to the cynical greeting, had it not been for the attentions of the collie dog. It was a magnificent creature of some stature, and had abandoned its hunt for rabbits, mice, birds, and whatever else in favor of her person. Its wet muzzle sniffed the air and then made a direct line for what it no doubt saw as its obvious and legitimate target. The bound girl was horrified. It was bad enough to have to deal with Crystal under any circumstances, but with a dog busily employing its snout and tongue in the obvious place at the junction of her thighs was something for which she was not prepared. She kicked out lustily and protested. “Get this blasted thing away from me, Crystal. I don’t want it sniffing at me. Get rid of him!”

“But, darling, you won’t deny MacTavish his innocent small pleasure, would you? If you just stand still, you might both enjoy yourselves.” Crystal laughed. “Don’t tell me you’ve never enjoyed the attentions of a collie dog? They’re really quite skilled, y’know.”

“Don’t be beastly!” Tracy kicked busily and performed as much evasive action as was possible against her tied wrists. It was not much. MacTavish took the fullest advantage of his opportunity, even going so far as to growl menacingly when she landed a particularly effective kick in his ribs. “Crystal, you don’t have to do this. It’s indecent! I’m sure you don’t like me, but there’s no need to be objectionable. Please take the damned dog away!”

The honorable Crystal totally ignored the plea. Instead, she leaned negligently against a sapling and surveyed MacTavish's industry with considerable approval. There could be no denying the collie's interest in this treasure fate had delivered to his tongue. Between kicks and twistings, Tracy caught glimpses of her tormentor's face and realized that this was possibly not the first occasion Crystal had seen MacTavish at work. She gave but scant thought to the origins of the quaint name by which the dog was labeled. MacTavish sounded solidly Scottish and definitely respectable, whereas the collie menace was neither. MacTavish occasionally gazed up at her reproachfully as though wondering what all the fuss was about.

"You do wiggle delightfully, darling. I wish Matt was here to see. You mustn't take on so about MacTavish. If you never have to bear any greater ordeal than the poor darling's wet snout, you won't have too much to complain about. You ought to be grateful that this is all I'm doing for you today." Crystal waved her crop and neatly cut a nettle in two. "I am, y'know, keeping this in reserve for emergencies, and of course, darling, it would be you who would be the emergency."

Tracy fought down irritation and a touch of panic. Her situation was exasperating, but she knew the more she struggled and protested, the better pleased her audience would be. A sharp nip from MacTavish, as a reprimand for her latest kick, had a sobering effect. She was very much at the mercy of this girl and her animal. Hating compliance

with all her heart, she nonetheless stood still and endured in a haughty silence what she must. But it was hard to maintain dignity and composure in the face of what was transpiring with that pan of herself over which Matt had so often… but she did manage to maintain an even tone in addressing the sparkling-eyed beauty with the crop.

“So, all right, you’ve got me!” She glared in thin-lipped loathing at the smiling nobility. “Whatever I do, I lose. So go ahead, what do you want to talk about?”

“Why about us, darling! I can’t help thinking how nice it would be if you simply returned to the USA and left me alone with Matt.”

“We can take that for granted,” Tracy snapped back, trying hard not to kick at the collie’s assiduous attention. “What else is new? I’m certainly not going back there just to please you. In any case, the suggestion is ridiculous. Matt won’t let me go.” She made an ineffectual motion against her tied wrists. “How do you suppose I’m going to go to any airport when I’m fixed like this? I wouldn’t get anywhere before I’m picked up by a policeman for indecency. And anyway, I can’t get loose.”

“Well, Tracy dear, suppose I let you loose, and I provide you with clothes and with a conveyance, and with a plane ticket.” The honorable Crystal’s voice was honey sweet. “What then? That’s a pretty good offer, y’know.”

“Drop dead.”

“Darling, I wish you wouldn’t fight me. Oh, and by the way, stop kicking at MacTavish. He doesn’t like it. He is only doing what any self-respecting dog would do. Don’t be so damn transatlantic. I’m sure you have collie dogs in America too.” Crystal’s voice became a wheedling plea. “Darling, you can’t win here. I’m bound to get the best of you, one way or another. The whole scene is in my favor. Surely you realize this. I belong here; you don’t. You ought to consider this offer I’ve just made. It’s really quite generous. Eventually I won’t have to make you any kind of offer at all. You will be glad to go, if you can. Have you considered the prospect of a permanent residence in one of those dungeons, either at Castle Angus or beneath my own dwelling? I do have you, y’know.”

Tracy was increasingly aware of fighting a battle on two fronts. Her own, with which MacTavish was most enterprisingly engaged, and the honorable Crystal’s. In this argument she saw no hope at all of getting the best of her visitor. Her hope, of course, lay with Matthew, and he was far distant. She would tell him about this in the evening, but his opinion of Crystal would probably cause him to laugh the whole thing off. That she might be a menace to the welfare or the freedom of his own captive girl was something he was unlikely to consider. Admittedly, Tracy herself could see little possibility of Crystal making good any of her threats, but there was about the English girl an assurance that was disquieting. Tracy was forced to listen and could not turn her back and walk away as she would

have longed to do. She was moreover now hotly conscious that the attentions of MacTavish were having their inevitable result. Crystal too was well aware that this was happening. Her gaze became more riveted and more intense and more definitely pleased. Tracy kicked at a furry flank and received sharp nip on her shin in canine admonition.

“You really should be more kind to MacTavish. He is forming the opinion you don’t like him,” Crystal suggested equably. “You are going to have to deal with me as a fact of life, darling. You can’t just brush me off any more than you can brush off MacTavish’s obvious affection for you. The darling dog is doing his best for you, and all you do is kick him in the ribs. Do I detect certain tremors and a slight flush, dear? I’m sure you’re not insensible to such a demonstration of affection.”

“You know exactly what is happening to me.” Tracy retorted angrily. “I think you are a bitch to let it happen.”

“But Tracy dear, surely you’re not suggesting I bring MacTavish’s innocent pleasure to an end!”

“Yes, I am! And for Pete’s sake, hurry up about it!”

“I suppose I could offer you an alternative, darling.” Crystal’s voice was once more sly. “If I did tether MacTavish off to one side, I really do think you should make some sort of amends.” She held up the riding crop for Tracy’s distracted attention. “What do you say to twenty strokes on your cute

little bottom with this instead?"

There it was, the horror she had suspected since the beginning. It was now out in the open. The honorable Crystal did not carry that riding crop to no purpose or for no intent. For a moment the bound girl forgot MacTravish's attention and bestowed a stricken gaze upon the girl who for the moment held her enthralled. "That's a shocker of a punishment," she complained bitterly. "I don't see why you have to be this mean. You are just being unkind to me without any reason. You're just enjoying it, aren't you!"

"Whatever you say, darling. We can just let MacTavish continue as he is doing. I'm sure he is good for another thirty minutes before he will tire. Can you last another thirty minutes?"

Tracy knew she could not. An explosion was eminent, and the last thing she desired was an orgasm in front of Crystal's interested regard. She was by no means certain that she could control either her grasp or her motions into a frigid immobility. Her own potency and MacTavish's industry both worked to her disadvantage. She gazed bitterly at the cords deep within her wrists. If only… if only… if only…! But it was no use wishing. She might as well be an army fighting a battle without weapons, but she still had to fight. Wearily, but with a degree of urgency, she yielded. "Oh, very well. Go ahead, whip me, that's what you wanted to do all the time, isn't it? Go ahead and get it over with, but get this damn dog away. Tether it to a tree or something!"

Life is a succession of the unexpected. It was so now. With her usual careless elegance, the honorable Crystal snapped a leash on MacTavish's collar and led him to a tether. MacTavish quite obviously was both offended and outraged. He cast reproachful looks at both his mistress and his victim as he was led away. His victim herself was busily thrusting back against a rising tide which overflowed and blossomed into the inevitable at the precise moment when the honorable Crystal returned to view the arousal she had wrought. At arm's length she paused while Tracy, uncaring of anything except the crescendo of her own release, retreated into that world in which she would be entirely alone for the brief span of her gasping and choking acknowledgment of defeat. Crystal's eyes glowed.

"Poor darling, you tried so hard, didn't you? You were going to stand still and cheat me, but you couldn't, could you? It's a pity MacTavish can't speak. You could, in fact, thank him, don't you think?"

"Oh, Crystal, please go away. Just go away and leave me alone!"

"But, Tracy dear, haven't you forgotten something?" The tormentor held up the riding crop, then flexed it thoughtfully between her two hands.

"All right, use it on me. Get it over with. Beat me with it. Goodness knows I'm nicely positioned for it. Am I allowed to scream?"

“Well, I suppose we can’t expect any stiff upper lip from a former colonial, can we?” Crystal’s voice was honey sweet. “I’m going to thrash you as hard as I can, so if you wish to scream, you might as well do so. There’s no one to hear you within at least three fields, and I’m sure MacTavish won’t mind.” Crystal drew back her arm. The crop flashed in a backward swing as she balanced on the ball of one foot for maximum effect. Then, without warning, she did the unexpected. She dropped the crop on the grass and laughed gaily at the startled expression on her victim’s face.

“Not this time, darling. I suspect you’re trying to trap me. You and I both know dear Matthew is still sufficiently infatuated with you that if he returned and found your bottom nicely ribbed with scarlet and purple welts, he might well feel some animosity towards my efforts, so I’m going to leave your cute little bottom as cute as I found it, beautifully unmarked except for what it’s got on there already. I shall not leave my calling card today. I shall take MacTavish and discreetly retire, but as you stand here for what I’m sure is going to be a number of hours, I do suggest, dear, that you give some thought to my offer. It was extremely generous. Much worse things could happen to you than to receive a prepaid ticket back to your United States.”

In an agonized mixture of shame, chagrin, and thankfulness, Tracy watched the honorable Miss Crystal Maitland retrieve MacTavish, the disappointed collie dog, and her

unused riding crop. Tracy made no inclination of the head to acknowledge Crystal's insisting wave of farewell. Instead, she stood in her enforced immobility at the cart's tail and watched her adversary saunter back the way she had come. It was not until Crystal was half a mile distant that she loosed the leash from MacTavish's collar. By then the collie's interests were diverted elsewhere. The maiden he had defiled was once more safe.

Alone again, the tied up Tracy now had something to think about. It was not that anything Crystal had done or said was particularly new, but it was closer to a declaration of war than the English girl had previously come. The captive of the cart knew without doubt that she would have to in some way impress upon Matthew the gravity of Crystal's intentions. Her fear was that some drastic injury would have to be done to her own person before he would take the accusations seriously. Crystal had not whipped her today, but there was tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow…! Miss Tracy Trevor sighed once more and leaned back wearily against her corded wrists and resigned herself to meditation, until her master once more loosened her bonds.

"But, Matthew, it was horrible." Tracy was kneeling before her owner in the submission to which she was now fully accustomed, and she gazed up at him imploringly. "Please, darling, take me seriously. She intends to get rid of me, one way or another. All the time she was talking there was this beastly dog absolutely gorging himself upon my—my…

almost eating my pussy alive! I couldn't do a thing except kick him, and then he bit me. She just stood there laughing. Then, when she saw I was about to explode, she made the offer of twenty strokes on my bottom if she took the dog away."

"Well, I suppose we could call it a sporting offer." The master grinned. "You've got me quite excited. What did you choose, sweetheart?"

"You know perfectly well what I chose. There's no marks on my bottom, are there? Or at least not any fresh ones. The damn dog didn't give me any chance to choose. By the time I told her to go ahead and whip me, I had exploded. Matt, I wish you wouldn't put me in these situations where I become a plaything for your neighbors.

Matt tilted the rebellious chin and kissed her lightly on defiant lips. He was still flippant. "But you do have to admit you weren't bored. Wouldn't you much sooner have this little incident to complain about than simply standing there at the cart's tail all day all by yourself?"

"No, I wouldn't! Please, Matt, don't tie me up outdoors any more. Something always happens. Look, you've never taken me into the dungeons yet. I still don't know why you're keeping them in reserve, but I think I'd a lot sooner you did something to me or with me in one of them than be subjected to the honorable Miss Crystal Maitland." Tracy pouted. "You men never understand how girls can hate

each other, be mean to each other, and be jealous of each other. Suppose you came out to get me one day and found me gone. I could easily be kidnapped by someone else, y'know. They don't just have to let me loose so I could come back here. They could take me away with them and do anything they wanted with me. Is that right that Crystal actually has dungeons under where she lives?"

"Afraid so, sweetheart. Her place isn't as ancient as Castle Angus, but it's ancient enough to have a facility or two like that. If I find you missing one of these days, that will be the first place."

"I bet she won't let you in, or she'll hide me in some horrible secret place."

"Gosh, she really has gotten under your skin." Matt gazed down fondly at the kneeling handcuffed girl. Tracy was wearing the simplest of the bonds he imposed. The shining steel was snug around her wrists.

Crystal would never find her here. The door swung open.

If any dungeon can be described as beautiful, this one was. Its walls were mellowed stone, its barred window was of extensive dimensions, giving an excellent view of meadow and coppice. The ray of chains, gyres, fetters, shackles, and even a ball and chain were no more than to be expected in such a place. There was also a center column most

adequately appointed with devices by which a girl's wrists and ankles could be sufficiently held. Matthew Marsh laughed and looked at her inquiringly. "Want to make your own choice, love?"

"Slaves don't make their own choice, master," she reproved severely. "And I'll remind you that at the moment I am not constrained at all. If you don't behave a bit more like a master, I'm going to turn around and run away."

Matt laughed at her insolence. He was taking an increasing delight in his possession. Castle Angus was good for Tracy. She was responding to its atmosphere. No doubt the promise of eventual wedlock played a part in her emotions, but he was taxing her daily and in such ways as would daunt the courage of most maidens. Grumbly and mockingly, he said, "Very well, on your own head be it. Step over here, you lustful little lech." Tracy stood and quivered with every fiber of her being as metal bands sought her flesh. They were cold and implacable, and in the hands of someone other than Matthew Marsh would have frightened her to death, they were also heavy. Quite obviously they were new. Each of them was as though fabricated to her measurements and snapped shut with the most awesome of sounds. First it was her wrists. She held them out passively while Matthew lifted the awaited links and fastened the metal shackles to join her hands. His tone was conversational. "Uncle Angus had these made. They're not my own. I gather his taste in girls was much the same as mine and therefore it's a sort of universal fit. What do

you like of them?"

"Oh, Matt, they're tight—real tight and beautifully snug. Gosh, master, I don't really believe this is happening. Me being chained in a dungeon in an English castle!"

"Not your first time, love?"

"But if is my first time in a dungeon. And it's my first time in this one, for sure. Matt, I don't see why they chained girls in dungeons. I mean, all you have to do keep me safe is lock the door."

"A bit more to it than that, honeybunch." Matt was busy fitting metal upon maiden skin. "Some joker could have had a duplicate key to the door, y'know, or broken it down. But if I have you safely chained to the wall, it wouldn't do him much good, would it?"

"Couldn't he have a duplicate key to the chains too?"

"Well, he hasn't," Matt retorted gruffly. "I've got the only one. You're mine, remember that."

"But couldn't he rape me?" Tracy asked mischievously.

"I can fix that too, if I want. You wouldn't get raped with your ankles tied together." He chuckled. "Didn't you ever read about those aristocratic noble maidens in ancient Egypt and Rome whose ankles were always fettered to ensure their chastity? It actually happened."

“I think that’s a marvelous idea. Fighting off her boyfriends is a girl’s prime occupation these days. If her ankles were chained close together, she’d have the most convincing of arguments. You should suggest it to the social agencies. It would save no end of welfare.”

Matt grunted as he rose from shackling two willing ankles. “I could decorate you like a Christmas tree,” he said dourly. “But enough is enough. I don’t suppose you’re going to enjoy what comes next.”

With heat smoldering hot within her loins, the captive stood with a beating heart as a metal collar circled the slenderness of her head and gentle hands rearranged her hair so that it could be snapped snugly tight around her throat. “It’s tight!” she exclaimed in trepidation. “Oh, Matt, it really is tight, and it’s heavy.”

“It’s supposed to be.”

The ironed girl was taut and trembling as the tightness and the weight increased under the drag of a chain of many links which now attached her collar to the column. There was a ring halfway up the slender stone, and Tracy was leashed to it by ten feet of tethering chain, which dragged upon her heavily as she stood, and caused her to use her chained hands to clutch at it and relieve some of its demanding weight.

“Go over to the window and see if it will run that far. See how it works.”

Tracy obeyed. Links clattered on stone, but she had no trouble in reaching the window and peering through its bars at the expanse of green which was England in the summertime.

Breathlessly, she said, “Oh. Matt, it’s wonderful, but I’m helpless, so terribly helpless.”

“Aren’t you supposed to be?”

“Well, yes, I suppose I am. Are you really going to leave me chained like this?”

“Of course I am, sweetheart. You look delicious. You can’t possibly get into any trouble, and nobody can rescue you.”

The captive girl surveyed her new condition. She wondered how many other maidens had stood thus chained, peering through the bars at lost freedom. If the stories about Uncle Angus were only half true, there had undoubtedly been a great many of them. Fear touched her spine when she realized how easily she could be kept, as she was now, for the rest of her life. No one would rescue her. The days would pass, then the months and years. Perhaps once some maiden had been kept in such captivity. She wondered if Uncle Angus had left records of his pleasures. Desperately, she said, “Matt darling, I think you’d better go and lock me in. If I stay like this and you’re here, I’m going to start to lose my courage and plead.” She grinned mischievously. “But I’d sooner the weight of the chains than Crystal’s company. Darling, thank you so

much."

Tracy had reckoned without the door. After the had been long and soundly kissed, and her bottom patted, and her master had departed through the portal, the massive oak and iron closed with a truly horrendous thud and a crashing of outside bolts which the captive girl suspected was entirely for her benefit. It was like a knell of doom. It she had been prisoner before, she was trebly prisoner now. She turned back to the window and clutched two of its bars with shackled hands. She realized that the view she had vouchsafed to her would have to suffice for her entertainment through the day. There was a hard little cot she could sit on, the chain would allow that, even though it denied her passage as far as the locked door. But the lovely tower gave her nothing else but its own atmosphere. She could well believe, in fantasy, that she was kept company by a myriad of other naked girls who had stood as she now stood and thought the same thoughts that filled her mind. Among the foremost of them was escape.

The nude prisoner thought about escape a great deal as she peered through the bars at the view beyond. She knew that for herself escape would mean something quite different than it probably had meant to Uncle Angus's chained girls. She herself wanted freedom, but a freedom with Matthew Marsh. If her chains were sundered, and the door unlocked, she would flee the tower room, but she would not flee Castle Angus. She would await the return of its master and the honor of herself, and once more yield to

him. But she did most earnestly desire escape as an assertion of her own temperament, her personality, her independence. Ruefully, she wondered if any independence was left to her at all. She was totally engrossed with captivity and Matt. Crystal's offer of the day before was something not to be considered. In this, Tracy Trevor recognized her human need to fill in time. The thought of standing and looking out of the window all day seemed absurd. The tower room really offered nothing more than that single privilege, but her thoughts inevitably went beyond. If only she could once get the best of Matt, and greet him on his return at the end of the afternoon, smiling triumphantly and totally free of bonds. If she could then throw her arms, her free arms without impediment of chains or rope, around his neck, she would feel that she had proven herself and asserted her essential womanhood in a way he would be forced to respect. She told herself chidingly that she was being altogether too subservient, and she could blame this, quite truthfully, upon the heat within her sex, a factor she had never suspected prior to her captivity. But to totally surrender to this erotic stimulant was still a measure of defeat. She knew that she herself, and Matthew Marsh too, would wish her to retain a personality of her own and a feminine witchery and mischievousness by which she would constantly provoke him to punish her. She did not bother to analyze the necessities of the provocation, or to analyze the word punishment itself. It was as though any punishment, no matter how severe, was actually no more than love play or a

penance she must endure before receiving her reward. Tracy suspected she would learn much more about these mixed up complexities, but at the moment was satisfied to see them as she did now. It was Matt's wish, and indeed it had been her own suggestion that had led to her being chained and standing looking through a barred window at an unfamiliar scene. Yet, within her belly, a fire burned hotly in memory. The fire was with her now almost all the time and she had no wish to extinguish it. Today her hands were sufficiently free that she could give herself satisfaction and surcease. She would not seek this relief. She would save all of herself for Matt on his return. Her nights with him were utterly and totally rewarding. To pleasure herself to pass the time within a dungeon would seem pure waste.

Despite erotic thoughts, the hours dragged. The sun made its passage across the sky so that she would follow the progress of its shadows within the stone confine of her prison. No doubt other girls in this place had marked not only the hours, but the days and weeks by just this method of dividing day from night. She knew most certainly she did not wish to remain chained within these walls through the hours of darkness. She would be frightened and there would fall her a despair born of the absence of strong male arms and strong male scents. But, finally, the drag of the chains and a measure of ennui drove her to the solace of the narrow cot. She sat upon it and for awhile played idly with the links by which she was fettered. The collar was

heavy around her throat. Constantly she sought the rearrangements of its chain tether for easement to its imposition upon her flesh. None totally relieved her of its inanimate animosity, but she did the best she could, and quietly dreamed away the hours of her imprisonment. Without volition, she finally slipped sideways and lay upon the hard, unfriendly surface and into slumber.

She knew it was much, much later when she awoke, startled at the sound of the door. She sat up in anxious hope. If she had slept away a portion of the day, then she was lucky indeed. If this was Matthew, then she was luckier still. She gazed expectantly, but it was not Matthew; it was Blessing, the butler.

Tracy's association with Blessing had been fragmentary. He served herself and her master their meals, but his concern was not with the captive girl, but with Matthew Marsh himself, from whom he daily took his orders for the administration of the premises. However, they had seen enough of each other to overcome Tracy's shyness at her nudity before the solemn regard of this dignified factotum. It was easy to presume that Blessing himself had seen a long procession of naked damsels flit through Castle Angus, and was no longer impressed. He was, in fact, quite oblivious, and whatever he might have thought or desired of Uncle Angus's succession of nudity, he kept strictly to himself. He surveyed the naked, chained girl now, without either interest or surprise. Instead, he handed her a letter.

“I wrote it myself, miss. Got it over the phone from the master. I’ll bring you in a couple of pails, one with a cover and one full of water. Later I’ll be bringing you dinner. In the meantime, you’d best read what he has to say.”

She knew the news had to be bad. Anything that took Matt away from her was bad and Matt was now due, but had not returned. Instead, she looked with a pulse-quickening instinctive trepidation at the missive in her ironed hand. She held it, blinking back the effects of sleep while Blessing placed against the wall the items he had mentioned. There was about both of them an intent she could not fail to comprehend. When the door was once more locked and bolted, she carried the piece of paper to the window and used the sunlight to illuminate what she must read. It told simply that Matthew had been detained in London overnight and she must make the best of her circumstances in the tower room. He acknowledged it would not be a pleasant experience, yet with a touch of his usual amusement, suggested it might be an enlightening adventure in imprisonment. He would be back, if not tomorrow, then certainly on the day after.

The news was hardly cataclysmic, but the chained girl read it in mute misery. It fulfilled her fears arising from the implacability of the chains and the bars and the bolts slamming home outside the door. It told her too, in no uncertain way, that she would indeed spend the night as a prisoner in this place in which she had most ardently dreaded that experience. It was not to be hers! She fought

down panic, telling herself that in this new acquisition of the estate and settlement of his uncle's affairs, such an absence was entirely normal. There might be more of them. It would have been preferable to have been chained upon their bed, but since he was not there to perform this function, perhaps the tower room was the next best thing. She shrank from having Blessing fumble with her buns. She was thankful she was not fastened somewhere out in a field where the butler would have been forced to retrieve her and in some way of his own constrain her through the night. Yes, undoubtedly, this was best. Either Matthew had had a suspicion of his own absence or it was pure good fortune she was so satisfactorily looked after while he was gone. She was quite sure he would be congratulating himself on her condition. If it was a satisfaction she did not share, well, that was her own hard luck. When Blessing brought her food, she did not impose upon either the butler or herself the dignity of pleading for her release. Probably, in any case, Blessing did not have the keys. Neither of them mentioned anything so indiscreet as freedom. He fed her, he bid her a polite good night, and then left her alone, and in the gloom the snap of locks seemed to the captive unnecessarily loud.

The same performance repeated itself in the morning. Tracy had slept intermittently, shifting constantly against the drag of chains, or in the act of rolling over against the prod or thrust of heavy links. This was a true imprisonment. This truly was the chained maiden in her dungeon. If

Matthew had wished to give her a taste of such a condition, he was doing so most adequately. Whether he had planned it or not made little difference. For Tracy, there was no escape.

Blessing's food was good. It always was, her new status as a prisoner in no way diminished its quality. Despite dolor, the naked girl ate and drank avidly. Perhaps sometime during the day Matt would return and her travail be over. She was bitterly lonely. Blessing discussed the weather and studiously avoided either mention or glancing at her shackles He was the perfect retainer. The old family friend. If it pleased the young master to keep a slave girl thus fettered, it was not for him to demur. Blessing was pleasantly noncommittal and in clearing up the breakfast things assured her of an adequate lunch to come. Then once more Tracy was alone with her chains. It was not until approximately lunchtime that the honorable Crystal Maitland unlocked the massive door and entered.

Tracy stared in amazement. A cold hand touched her spine, but Crystal was her usual insouciant self. "Thought I'd give Blessing the day off, darling. So I brought your lunch. Isn't that sweet of me? I rather suspect I shall be bringing you quite a lot of lunches, but I'm not sure they will all be of this quality."

Misery engulfed Tracy like a tide, but she kept her features coldly composed while her visitor put down the tray and rearranged its contents for her attention. Her mind flashed

rapidly through possibilities. The first thought was that Crystal could not possibly take her from this room. The chains would defeat the trespasser. But that hope was now defeated as Crystal gaily held up a key ring on which jangled several keys. “Matt hung these on the wall down the passage, darling. You see, I remembered where Angus used to hang them, so I knew where to look. I do hope you’re prepared to be very polite to me.”

“What is it you intend to do me now?” Tracy’s voice was dull and without emotion. She felt a trap closing upon her inexorably. “You’re playing with fire, Crystal. Nothing good can come out of this. Matt still regards you as a friendly neighbor—why spoil it?”

“He still will, darling. He won’t be sure your disappearance has anything to do with me at all. I don’t know what Blessing will choose to tell him, but Blessing is not going to see you and me depart from Castle Angus. Blessing himself is already gone.”

With Crystal any plan was certain to be neat and tidy. There would be no loose ends, no clues. The naked prisoner of the tower room drank coffee gratefully. She nibbled a slice of toast to give herself time to think, but she knew herself in the hands of a mistress indeed. Crystal’s previous association with Uncle Angus, long before the bequest and their coming to England, gave her a tremendous advantage. She would be a jump ahead of Matt all the way. Desolately, Tracy thrust aside the unwanted food. Her de-

mand was wary. “All right, Crystal, what now?”

“I’m going to tie you up nice and tight, darling, and take you for a ride.”

“And if I refuse?”

“Oh, but you won’t refuse for long, Tracy dear. You see, I brought along my badge of office.” Crystal exhibited the riding crop which had been looped on one wrist throughout. It was indeed her badge of office, and the girl who would be marked by it shrank cringingly at the sight of its limber length. Crystal’s voice continued brightly with the scenario. “I’ll simply whip you until you are agreeable to standing still while you are bound and gagged and generally debauched, darling. It shouldn’t take too long. This thing hurts abominably on bare skin, and your skin is indeed very bare. You can stop me at any time by simply saying ‘yes, you will’. In fact, you need not be whipped at all if you’ve got the sense to realize your helplessness. There’s simply nothing you can do.”

Tracy stood up. She looked at her chains, lifted and fingered them, then looked at Crystal. She could think of no way out, and yet she shrunk from the humiliation of standing still while she was rendered into whatever helplessness the other girl intended. She would know only the bitterest shame in what was about to happen.

“How about I give you one lovely stroke across the middle of your back, darling? That way you’ll know it hurts and be

in a position to make a judgment."

It was so bizarre and yet so civilized. No voice was raised. The force of action was clearly defined. To request the wicked stroke just offered would be imbecile. She already knew what a whip felt like. A testing lash with the crop upon her skin would prove nothing. In the urgency of her need to stay where she was, in Castle Angus to be with Matt, she made an offer she both feared and hated.

"Crystal, okay, you've been wanting to whip me since you first saw me. Why not get it over with? I asked you this yesterday. Whip me now, and perhaps you'll feel better. You can go away satisfied. I can't really stop you. I can rattle around a bit in these chains, but you'll have no trouble doing whatever you wish to me." Her voice became charged with emotion. "Please, I beg of you, please forget this nonsense about kidnapping."

"It's not nonsense, darling. You'll soon find that out, and as for whipping you, I certainly intend to do that, but in my own place and in my own time. If you think I'm going to strike you up a bit and simply walk out of here and leave you with a tender pelt, you'd best think again. I have plans for you."

For Crystal it was all so easy, but for Tracy it was one of the hardest ordeals of her life. She simply could not win. Had she been a novice in captivity she might have fought uselessly and endured the agonies of the riding crop, only

to yield when the distress became numb and endurable. All she could do was surrender and hope that Crystal's plan in some way backfired, her real hope was that Matt would deduce the truth and hack his way into whatever recess in which Crystal proposed to imprison her. Passively, she allowed the shackles to be unlocked. They fell to the stone floor with a mocking clang. Almost miraculously, there was cord in Crystal's hand. Still leg-ironed and tethered by her neck to the pillar, Tracy allowed herself to be turned about, and hating her subservience, obeyed Crystal's instruction to put her arms behind her back. A few moments later it was too late to change her mind. Crystal's cords bit deep and brutally, and were knotted with skill. She was made more helpless still, as other cords circled her elbows and drew them close. She yelped in pain at the bite of the hostile strands. Crystal was showing no mercy, but her voice was silk.

"I've got you, darling. Just think of it, one whole beautiful girl all for myself. Think of what I can do to you. Think how sorry you're going to be that you did not take my offer yesterday. You're going to be pleading for that airline ticket after I've thrashed you a few times. It's not just the crop I'll mark you with either. I've got a delightful collection of whips and straps. I even have an old-time Russian knout and a boer sjambok." Crystal patted her captive's bottom reassuringly. "But I'll only use those on you when you've been a really naughty girl, and I don't expect you to ever be that. You're entirely too sensible. I love the way you're

accepting the inevitable right now."

"Do you have to tie my elbows that tight with such thin cord? It hurts like crazy!"

"Don't question anything I do, sweetheart. I won't whip you for the first few mistakes you make. I'll simply correct you, but remember, no complaints. You can plead if you want. That will amuse me. But definitely no beefs. I think that's what you call it in America, isn't it, or was it Texas?"

Next came the collar. It clattered to the floor as had Tracy's wrist shackles. She was free to walk her hobbled steps. Tracy shrewdly guessed that the leg irons would not be taken from her feet. With them clasping her ankles and her arms so brutally bound she would be easy to control. Thoughts of flight would be purely silly, but despite reason and the rationale of avoiding useless pain, she still regretted her failure to fight. Not that there had been a chance, and now most definitely it was impossible. But Tracy felt ashamed by her easy acceptance of this new helplessness which was probably going to deliver her into a new slavery. True, Crystal was an unknown quantity. The traits she had exhibited to this time had about them an air of irresponsibility, but it was an irresponsibility coupled with a purpose. She saw Tracy as an enemy to her desire, and Tracy was in her power!

"I don't need to cover you, dear. I'm sure you're hoping Blessing will be around and rescue you. I can assure you

he's gone. I pulled rank on him, y'know. The lower orders in England are very susceptible to nobility. You are all on your own with dear little me."

With Crystal's firm grip upon her arm Tracy made her clattering descent of the stairway to the regions below. The links of her chain seemed outrageously loud as they traversed the big hall to the front door and those other steps which led to the waiting car.

"I can't lift you into the boot, darling, so you'll have the privilege of sitting beside me. I'll blindfold you so you'll be entirely lost and you won't see any possible opportunities that might occur."

It was simply done. The pinioned girl took one last farewell glance at Castle Angus and its surrounding gardens. All its windows seemed staring at her in reproof. Castle Angus thought she should somewhere have thought and not be led away a helpless and naked captive. But that was fanciful. Well aware of Crystal's riding crop, Tracy stepped into the car and plunked herself on the seat beside the wheel. The bandage compressed her eyes and was made tight at the back of her head. Her pulse was racing in a mixture of fear and anger. Some of the anger was directed against herself. She should have convinced Matt of the menace of Crystal Maitland, but she had failed. Now it was too late. The car started and Crystal's laughter was close beside her.

7

Crystal Cruelty

“I SHOULD HAVE RIDDEN OVER ON A HORSE, Tracy dear, and led you back at the end of a rope. Y’know, the traditional style. You would have been naked and duty and helpless, and you would have had a fine view of the horse’s hind end. But never mind, we have untold delights ahead of us.”

“Crystal, please. I have to ask you, don’t do this. Let me go. Return me the way you found me. I don’t care what you do to me, but don’t kidnap me, please.” Tracy’s plea was vibrant with sincerity. “It is not even kind to Matt. He’s going to be worried stiff over what’s happened to me. All sorts of people are going to be accused of something they did not do. You’re abusing a friendship.”

“Are you quite finished, darling?” Crystal’s voice was deadly.

“Oh, all right, give me the tried and true ritual. If I don’t keep quiet, you’ll whip me. I’m resigned to be whipped. You’ve surrounded me with prohibitions. I trip over them every time I open my mouth.”

Crystal laughed. “The answer’s obvious, isn’t it? Don’t open your mouth, or if you do, let’s talk about something sweet and innocent, like that lovely little patch of pubic hair you have. I really do admire its neat triangle. Or perhaps your

breasts, they really are superlative. They're almost as nice as mine. I'll let you see mine sometime if you're well behaved." Crystal snickered. "But, of course, you are going to see all of me, aren't you, in the course of your duties?"

"What duties?"

"Don't play innocent, Tracy. You know perfectly well what I'm talking about. There will be days when your breakfast, lunch, and dinner will be composed entirely of me."

A dozen denials sped to Tracy's lips. She quenched them all. This so-called duty Crystal was taunting her with was no more than perhaps she should expect. Crystal was sophisticated. She had been around. She would delight in imposing this shame upon any captive. It would be a delightful emphasis of her authority. Tracy refused to play the role of innocence outraged. It would be fuel to Crystal's fire. What would happen was beyond her own control. Best, therefore, to suffer in silence and to fail to respond to feminine mockery. Tartly, she rejoined, "Yes, it certainly is a lovely day."

"Ah, the haughty virgin! Are you a virgin, Tracy?"

"No! Are you?"

"Don't be insolent, dear. I'm going to start chalking things up against you. Should I give you the good old police caution?"

"I'm quite sure anything I say will be used as an excuse to

whip me." Tracy's voice was bitter. "Look, Crystal, can I conceive to think and ask for that ticket you offered yesterday? Goodness knows, this ought to be humble enough for you."

"It's satisfying, dear, I will concede that. I'd have to ask for it on your knees if we weren't in this car. But, no, you had your chance, and I suspect now you are seeing it only as an avenue of escape. If I set you free and placed the ticket in your hand, you'd be back in Castle Angus within thirty minutes. Try another approach."

The captive shrugged mentally. She had expected and received nothing, but this meant that Crystal desired her person for some other reason than to simply delete her from Matthew's life. The British beauty's constant reference to whips and riding crops left little doubt what this purpose might be. The honorable Crystal was going to enjoy herself at the expense of a girl who had no defense.

Leaving the shelter of the car was a quivering suspense. Her captor's fingers resumed their clutch upon a bare arm while Crystal gave directions as to steps and doorways. "The servants have the afternoon off, dear, just as Blessing has. I got rid of them. They'll resume their normal duties, and you, of course, will be nicely out of sight. It will be only me who knows where you are. By the way, this house is not as old as Castle Angus, but it has almost as many facilities, and somewhat more sophisticated facilities. When we reach the door of where I'm going keep you, I'll take off the

blindfold so that you may enjoy all the impressions and the vibrations which are waiting for you."

The captive girl did not blink in sudden sunlight. There was no sunlight. The stone passage in which she stood was shrouded in gloom, although she noted that electric fixtures existed. It evidently pleased her captor not to switch them on. In front of her was a door, and she well understood Crystal's wish for her to absolve its implacability. It made the door to the tower room seem only a flimsy facsimile. Even Crystal's voice sounded awed. "Isn't it simply spine-crinkling, dear?"

"Oh, Crystal, don't lock me in there. I don't know what's on the other side, and I don't want to know, but please don't open that door."

"Don't get panicky, darling. There's no lions or tigers. Just a beautiful security, but there's something else I want to show you. Look!" Crystal turned and pressed a button on the wall. A panel slid noiselessly behind them to close the passage. "You see, Tracy dear, from the other side it seems just like another section of the wall, the end of the passage. There is no hint that this delightful dungeon exists on the other side. A search party, even if they had hammers, would not discover you. You can scream as much as you like." The panel rolled back again, and they turned to the fatal door. Crystal took an immense key from a hook upon the wall and turned the lock. Tracy supposed it could have been worse. The stone chamber was large. It was

illuminated at the moment by several shafts slanting downward from above. The windows were not visible from where they stood, and she was quite sure they would be heavily barred, but they allowed a modicum of light to infiltrate the dismal prison. With obvious enjoyment, Crystal demonstrated lighting effects by the use of a panel, again within the stone. By pressing a button, she could brilliantly illuminate the entire compartment or spotlight any part of them. On the other hand, Tracy was quite certain that if no electricity was used at night, it would be black as pitch. “Do take a look around, darling. I think almost everything is self explanatory.” Tracy obeyed. Her curiosity out-stripped commands. She knew herself in a place dedicated to punishment, but it was not a medieval place. Everything appeared of recent construction, and no doubt it was inspired by Crystal’s own desires. Involuntarily, she exclaimed, “But, Crystal, surely I’m not the first one you’ve had in here!”

“Oh, no, darling. I’m a bit of a sadist, as you no doubt divined. I’ve practiced with quite a few naked girls, some of them hired and paid for their pains, and others have simply filled their roles as old family retainers who yield themselves to the pleasures of the young mistress. By the way, I’m something of an orphan. Y’know I inherited this place just as Matthew inherited Castle Angus. You are in the hands of a totalitarian authority.”

“You mean you’ve actually tortured girls down here?”

“The word is punishment, Tracy dear. A young woman of my social stature does not torture.”

“I don’t see how you can punish a girl if she hasn’t done anything wrong. Me, for instance. I’ve never hurt you. I’ve never done anything to deserve what you’re doing to me.”

“Such sweet naiveté! Darling, you still are terribly innocent in some things. Just being a beautiful girl is enough to earn and to deserve punishment. The world has been punishing beautiful girls for millenniums. A beautiful girl with breasts and a bottom like yours simply invites the sadist. Just looking at you, even with your clothes on, wets my appetite, and seeing you as you are now, so deliciously naked and tastefully bound, is a positive thrill. A girl as beautiful a you can expect nothing but pain.”

Tracy could not shrug away the cynicism. Her knotted elbows hurt too much for such a gesture. “I’m sure you can rationalize anything you choose to do,” she said wearily. “So, all right, when do I get whipped?”

“I have a few phone calls first. I’ll just sort of attach you, if you don’t mind, while I attend to them.”

“Would it make any difference if I did mind?”

“No.”

Tracy was led to the opposite wall and backed against it. Once more a collar encircled her neck. This one was unduly heavy and harsh. Its chain, about the level of her

shoulder, was absurdly short. Just a few links to no more than one foot in length. It compelled her simply to stand. Unexpectedly, Crystal kissed her prisoner's surprised lips. She flitted from the dismal chamber rather like to the departure of the last rays of the sun. The huge door slammed and thudded. The honorable Crystal Maitland's prisoner was alone with her thoughts.

Tracy wanted to cry. She had been snatched away from Matthew too many times, and this last theft of her person was so blatantly outrageous, yet so hopelessly defeating. She could see no hope of succor. Crystal could do what she liked with her, and she no doubt would. As an automatic reflex, she picked at her leg irons, experimented with the brutal iron around her neck, and did the experimental twisting with her wrists and elbows that the presence of Crystal had previously denied. Everything held tight. Her bondage was total and complete. She slumped against the cold stone in abject misery.

The honorable Crystal's telephone calls took a long time. Standing in her naked bondage, Tracy tried to count the minutes, then abandoned them. What was the use? She was not going anywhere, and had nothing to look forward to. In fact, quite probably the longer Crystal took to return, the better off she might be. Unless Crystal was dealing in simply verbiage, the return of the mistress of this gloomy place could only spell pain. Tracy knew her only hope was that Crystal had exaggerated and was not as deadly as she seemed. After awhile, the captive girl became panicky at

the thought of having to stand indefinitely as she now was. It would become wickedly tiring, and she could find no surcease whatsoever. Along with the compulsion of the chain and the collar and its hostile weight upon her throat, there was an ever increasing nag of anguish within her flesh more and more deeply with each passing minute. They were purely punitive. They were in no way essential to her helplessness. The leg irons and tied wrists would have been adequate. A tear of self-pity and despair actually did mark a rivulet down her cheek. Captivity is such that when Tracy heard the thudding of bolts, the turning of the latch, she was almost grateful for the return of the beauty who held her enthralled. “First off, I’m going to whip you, darling. I’ve been talking about it for so long I almost feel guilty in not having done it till now.” Crystal’s voice was ebullient with pleasure and promise. “Whipping you will be a nice way of us getting to understand each other and putting you in the proper frame of mind. You most certainly aren’t in it yet. Sweetheart, I do hope you don’t mind.”

Tracy knew the question rhetorical. “I know you’re going to do it, Crystal, so it doesn’t matter whether I mind or not. Please get it over with. I’m sick of hearing about it.”

“Darling, that’s the wrong approach. And it’s not for you to tell me to get on with anything. What happens to you is by my own choice of time and method. Your function is to simply scream, protest, talk about your rights, and what you’re going to say to Matthew when and if you ever see

him again."

Tracy was given no opportunity to be anything but passive. Her feet remained ironed, her throat remained collared to the wall, only her arms and hands were released. The freeing of the cord from her elbows was an ordeal she bore gratefully. It hurt, but it was a joy to rub the weals within her flesh. Crystal stood and watched appreciatively as her captive solaced her indented skin with soothing fingers.

"You mark beautifully, darling."

"Thank you. I'm glad you like them."

Crystal watched her captive's self-massage with a full understanding of the pain she had inflicted. The weals were deep in the flesh.

Enticingly, she held up a length of the same cord she had recently loosed. "And now, darling, your hands, please. Extend them to be tied."

There is always a final straw, the one thing beyond bearing. Tracy felt it now. Her blind anger at helplessness and submission overflowed. Without thought, her arm swung and connected with Crystal's cheek in a resounding thwack, which knocked the British beauty sideways to where she straightened up and stared in amazement at her rebellious possession. Tracy strove to follow up her brief advantage, but her leg irons snubbed her ankles, and her efforts to step forward and swing again were thwarted by

the heavy metal around her neck. She was suddenly overwhelmed by the enormity of what she had done. She had no doubt that retribution would be swift and brutal. She backed against the stone, her arms and hands splayed helplessly against its surface, as though seeking sanctuary.

“Wasn’t that a mistake, Tracy dear?”

“I couldn’t help it. I simply could not help it.” Tracy stared back. “You simply push too hard. Oh, Crystal, can’t you be a little kind?”

Everything was suddenly in slow motion. Crystal sauntered negligently to where she could obtain a whip. Without warning, her arm rose and fell, and a vivid streak imprinted itself across the maiden’s thighs, which could retreat no more. The scarlet scald drove the victim to turn around and thrust herself against the stone to protect her breasts, her pubes, and any other parts of her most sensitive areas from Crystal’s vengeance. But those parts of her still vulnerable were ample for the retribution Crystal would see as only just. No doubt she delighted in now having an excuse. The thongs sliced and cut in a bitter intent across the maiden back, the maiden bottom, and the maiden thighs until six vivid scarlet streaks bore testimony to a deserved penalty.

Toward the last of the swift succession of strokes, Tracy heard herself scream. Pain had taken her into another world, a world in which she endured only from blow to

blow, hoping each would be the last. The cut, the burn, the scald was unendurable, but what else could she do but endure? When the frightful impacts paused, she fearfully looked back over her bare shoulder to where the honorable Crystal stood, whip in hand, and surveyed her work. Their eyes met. Tracy's in mute questioning, Crystal's in gleeful satisfaction. The voice of the mistress was taunting. "Was it worth slapping my cheek, sweetheart?"

"No."

"Learn a lesson."

"I suppose so. Oh, Crystal, do you have to be so mean?"

"I could have given you a dozen. Perhaps I should. I hope you realize what you just had was payment for the slap. Your whipping has still to come. Do you feel like turning around now and offering your hands?"

"All right." Tracy turned and made the most submissive motion a girl could make. She extended her crossed wrists to be bound. She watched the cord bite, biting her own teeth against the anguish they would utter. Perhaps it was best her hands be immobilized, rather than having them earn her further punishment. Wordlessly, she stood, while the brutal iron was taken from her neck. In docile defeat, she allowed herself to be led to the open space where the true whipping to which the mistress had sentenced her would take place. Moments later she beheld her hands rise up before her eyes, and moments before that she was

teetering upon her toes, tautly and painfully stretched for the bite of the thong to come. She had never felt more naked.

In a mute plea for compassion, she stared fixedly at Crystal's amused regard. The mistress stood back, surveying her apprehensive and awaiting victim with approval. "I'll give them to you slowly," she said equably. "This is not the first time you've had a really truly whipping, is it?"

"No."

"But never from a girl?"

"No."

The two girls stared and drank each other in. There was no great difference in their age. Crystal was blonde; Tracy was brunette. One was clothed; the other was naked. The girl with the whip had an endless curiosity. "Don't you find it delicious, darling? I mean, to be whipped by a girl who, after all, is pretty much like yourself. It's just that I've got the upper hand. I'd say what we are doing right now is just a little bit unique."

"Matt will hate you for this."

"He'll never know about it, darling. Don't you realize what a beautiful position I'm in? You've disappeared, and maybe you'll never reappear again. Darling Matt can draw his own conclusions. He'll suspect me, but he can prove nothing, and little by little his suspicion will die. I shall

carry on with him as I've always intended. Eventually, I'll wear him down, and everyday I will give you a progress report on my success in weaning him away from you. I'll even tell you the things he says. If those things reflect his deep affection for you, they will be that much more painful for you to hear. I'm going to keep you safe in this prison. Here in your chains you'll know that out there, somewhere in the sunlight, Matt and I will be living vivid and exciting experiences. They had a word for it, Tracy. What did they use to say...? Ah, yes, that the prisoner languished behind her bars. Do you feel like languishing?"

Tracy did not answer. Instead, she said, "Crystal, look, this is hurting terribly, and there's no need to keep me up on my toes. Please let my feet down on the floor. It won't stop you from whipping me or anything else."

Crystal's answer was swift and instant. A burning agony sliced across the white shoulders of the tractioned girl. Scarlet followed the impact. Tracy screamed. So great was her anguish and her fury that she raised herself from the floor by her wrists and kicked angrily at nothing in a venting of total frustration. By the time she had lowered her toes back to the floor the second stroke wrapped around her waist. When a third impact lapped her hips, she screamed again and flung her nudity into a paroxysm of anguished emotion, a futile struggle which stopped instantly the moment she caught and comprehended Crystal's enjoyment of the scene. It was not easy to stop, but she stood there stretched and on her toes panting and sweating

with the pain, and with an apprehension of the certainty of more to come.

“Tell me how it hurts, darling. I want to know, I want to hear it from your lips. Be a little bit explicit and a bit colorful, will you? And don’t play sulky. You know what will happen to you if you do.”

The captive girl knew all too well. “It hurts more than I have words to tell. Surely you know, Crystal. It’s awful! I think you’re forgetting you’re whipping my bare skin.”

“No, I’m not, dear. Bare skin is the only sensible way to whip a girl. Wouldn’t we both look silly if you were fully clothed and I was beating away at a skirt and a blouse? Do be reasonable.”

“I can’t stand this. It’s too awful. Crystal, please send me back home—I mean, to America. You can see me on the plane yourself and then you’ll know I’m away. Please, please, please!”

“I stop whipping you for just a couple of minutes, and here you go pleading and demanding and being sulky.” Crystal’s voice was petulant. “Really, Tracy, I’m ashamed of you. You’ve got such lovely stripes, and here you are making all this fuss.”

The lash bit wickedly again at its defenseless victim. There followed then a slow succession of blows which shrewdly cut into Tracy’s most tender and vulnerable flesh. The

mind of the punished girl became chaotic. She was writhing without regard to her wrists, which themselves cried out in anguish. The thong bit and scalded across whatever part of her she exposed by twists and turns, which evaded nothing. She heard herself scream, and the chain joining her ankles clashed and rattled, adding its protest to her own, or was it a cry of triumph that she was thus so securely held? The awful punishment gave no space for reason, leaving the heart suspended nudity in a conglomerate of emotions beyond rationale. Matt and Castle Angus had become a paradise lost which she would never see again. Crystal's mocking description of what lay in store was all too plausible. Crystal had her, and she could keep her forever. Tears started from her eyes. The salt drops found their way to mingle with beads of sweat from whipped armpits. Once more there came a pause.

"You've had fifteen, darling. I hope you're not expecting me to stop?" Tracy moaned. There was nothing coherent she could say. She'd gone beyond pleading and was telling herself doggedly over and over that sometime this ordeal would have to stop. Crystal would tire, or feel some mercy, or simply be prudent enough not to damage the source of so much joy. Tracy supposed a girl could be whipped to death. Crystal would not go that far. Involuntarily, Tracy heard her own lips gasp their own appeal. "Crystal, no, no! Please, Crystal, not any more!"

Unexpectedly, the lash snickered upward between the shackled legs and snapped in triumph across Tracy's

shrinking sex to expend its force upon her belly. In vicious delight, the leather bit around one thigh and then the other. Tracy heard herself making animal sounds, inarticulate responses against an enemy with which she could not cope. Her wrists hurt bitterly.

“Are you hoping I’ll stop at twenty, darling?”

“Oh, yes, yes, yes!”

“That would leave you three to go, dear. If you’d be satisfied with that, I’ll make them as vicious as I possibly can. I’m really being very kind.”

Tracy flooded with relief at even this faint possibility of the termination of the travail. If the three strokes yet to be absolved upon her skin were doubly or trebly powerful, so what? If it meant an end, she felt certain she could bear them gladly. Wearily, she said, “Whatever you say, Crystal. I can’t stop you from doing anything. Whatever you say.”

Crystal dispensed with finesse. She sought no erotic female crevices or feminine curves. She simply flogged the girl. Taking her stance, she swung with all her vigor, twisting and bouncing on the ball of a single foot, to bring the leather, with its own terrible retort, to strike across the maiden back. There was no subtlety, no mockery—simply a deadly intent to inflict the maximum pain her arm could wield. One, two, three! Within her welter of the unbearable, Tracy made her own count. At the end of the three blows, she hung limply gasping and glistening with sweat.

Without mercy, the mistress mocked again. “Thank me, dear. Thank me nicely.”

“Thank you for whipping me, Crystal.” The words were leaden, almost a whisper.

“Can’t you do better than that? Perhaps I should start over.” The suspended girl raised her voice, reiterating her shame, her bitter humiliation, rendering upon this shining girl who owned her the final testament of her defeat. Crystal listened tentatively to the enforced delivery and nodded in satisfaction.

“I suppose that will have to do,” she conceded grudgingly. “I must give you lessons on articulation and deportment. You have so much to learn. Since I’m going to keep you, I may as well train you as a slave. By the time Matt and I get married, you’ll probably be a well-behaved little thrall. Want me to let your feet down on the floor?”

“Yes! Oh, yes, please!”

It actually happened. Almost in disbelief, the prisoner felt the slackening of her tether and her heels touched the floor. She exhaled a tremendous sigh of relief. There came a sudden wave of feminine perfume, and two soft, warm lips imprinted an affectionate kiss upon the hot, dry mouth of the whipped girl. Two sets of girlish fingers gently frictioned two feminine nipples. Crystal was unpredictable. Tracy opened her eyes.

Before she could formulate her thoughts to speak, Tracy saw her captor flit swiftly from the room. The big door thudded closed. She was alone again.

Round one was over. Crystal had won. Crystal would always win. Moving her ironed ankles and twisting against bound wrists, Tracy knew she could never be anything but the loser in this captor and captive condition which promised to be her life from now on. She had no illusions about this British beauty. Crystal would intersperse her cruelties with flashes of affections. This was her nature. The naked girl found it a dreary prospect in which all she could hope for was to survive. She wondered dully what it was like to be a prisoner month after month, then year after year. It seemed probable she would find out.

As the pain of her whipping receded, to be replaced now by weariness and the nag of cut wrists, Tracy's spirit revived. Surely things could not be as bad as they now seemed. By civilized standards, Crystal's concept was absurd and impossible and not to be tolerated.

Its chance of prolonged success would normally be small, but the wicked door and the sliding panel beyond sealed Tracy from the world, sealed her from life itself. And it most certainly divided her from Matthew Marsh. But surely Crystal would make a mistake. Surely an opportunity would come for her to flee beyond the door. Yet, surveying the possibilities, Tracy conceded them small. As long as Crystal kept the leg irons on her feet, she could not

run and could walk only with the short, hobbled, captive steps of the condemned. In their own way, the leg irons were the key to her captivity. Without them restraining her eager feet, there might indeed come an opportunity, but with them locked solidly upon her as they were now...! Tracy Trevor nestled a tired cheek against a bare, weary arm and resigned herself to an inevitable wait. Crystal could be relied on to extract the utmost in tribute from every situation and to leave her now, standing bound and naked, would be far too good a chance to miss.

When Crystal returned, she made a slow circle of her naked prisoner, quietly assessing marked flesh. She was obviously a very happy girl. She uttered a single sardonic query. “Well?”

“What do you want me to say?” Tracy asked wearily. “Do you want me to plead?”

“Yes, please. You do it so well.”

The bound girl shifted hopelessly, knowing herself an endless source of entertainment for her captor. Hesitantly, she said, “Don’t be mean. You’ve got me. I have to do whatever you want. I hate being whipped, so you’ve got an obedient girl on your hands. Can’t you be a little kind?”

The British beauty thoughtfully loosened the rope to allow Tracy’s arms to fall back into their natural position. She untied the chafed cut wrists and stepped back. Her voice remained as mocking as ever. “Want a fight, darling?”

“No.”

“But, darling, you’re free. You can fight. Come on, I’m ready. If there’s any fight left in your system, get rid of it now.”

Tracy was busy massaging her wounds. She spared a moment to glance down at her fettered feet and to kick the links suggestively. “Crystal, you know I can’t fight. You just want me to give you an excuse to whip me again.”

“As you wish, darling. Want to play?”

Tracy had no illusions about the word. The honorable Crystal Maitland was going to extract from her the most abject tribute a girl can pay. Drearily, she said, “I’m an adult. I know what you’re talking about. And I know you can make me do it, but I don’t want to.”

“Kneel.”

So this was it! It would be a beginning and not an end. What she was about to do must inevitably affect her thoughts, her feelings, and what lay ahead. Abjectly, Tracy lowered her knees to the stone. Her eyes were wide in pleading, but she said no word. Instead, she watched the honorable Crystal Maitland shed her clothes. She was indeed a beautiful creature, a bright and feminine illumination in this dark place. As though hypnotized, Tracy stared at the shining pubic patch which now advanced steadily until some of its curly fronds tickled her nose. Two firm

female hands clutched her hair and a female voice sardonically inquired, “Going to be a good girl?”

“Yes.” It was a whisper from within the pungent and perfumed crevice of Crystal’s sex.

“You’re so sensible, darling.” The hands tugged hard on captive hair to thrust a captive face brutally against the soft, wet lips swollen with desire. With a tiny moan of acquiescence, the girl with chained feet began her homage to the naked beauty to whom she was now thralled.

The lips of the kneeling girl worked on past the barriers of shame, into a new world of curiosity—a heated, turgid, scented world in which two wet female orifices explored the depths of an erotic passion. At the end of it, dazed and uncaring, Tracy allowed herself to be led to a low wooden bench, and her back thrust upon the hard surface. Her arms were pulled ruthlessly up, spread out, and strapped to each of the top corners. It was not until her mind comprehended the clatter of metal on the stone that she realized that her feet had been freed of the leg irons, but before she could explore this phenomenon further, Crystal’s avid mouth was hungrily eating its way into the pungent and palpitating crevice Crystal had so recently whipped. The strapped maiden moaned as she entered a strange new world. A world totally and utterly female, such as she had never before known. If Tracy thought of Matt as Crystal’s tongue and Crystal’s lips took her into a tumultuous real of tumescent sensation, it was only to see herself and Matt as

strangers on a strange path, taking a divergent course. Tracy moaned constantly, and sometimes cried out loud. She marveled at the similarity of the sounds she had made in ecstasy to those she had made in agony. In her new world, pain and pleasure were divided by a very fine line. Her mind registered with only the faintest emotion the relocking of her ankles within the irons. She would be given no hope. Crystal would best her at every turn, but the fact that her feet had been freed, even if only briefly, was a small spark she would treasure. Perhaps next time...! Without demur, the chained girl allowed herself to be led through a door at the far end of the huge stone chamber, into a modern bathroom. Her delight in it was tempered by the realization of its emphasis upon the permanence of her condition. Within this facility, the honorable Crystal could keep her down forever.

Crystal obviously enjoyed bathing her possession. Tracy was a toy, a new doll to arrange and control as its mistress pleased. Bathed, perfumed, and her hair tidied into a passable hairdo, Tracy found herself fitted with a leather collar which snapped snugly around her throat and possessed a ring to which a leash could be attached.

“Another ordeal, darling. Quite a different one this time. I’m going to give you a really full first day before I put you to bed.”

It was as though she was mesmerized or possessed by a morbid curiosity. Tracy questioned nothing as she knelt

within the apex of a triangle formed by two stout timbers. When her knees were on the cold stone, the adjoining of the wooden frame was a foot above her head. She noted that Crystal had not resumed her clothes. Perhaps she was trying to prove the point that she was the most lovely of the two. It did not matter. What mattered to Tracy now was pain.

“Up with a little hand and arm, dear. You’re going to have to lean a bit forward.”

It was an understatement. The captive had to bend low to accommodate the raising of her arm at the back. Crystal busily and competently bound the chafed wrist to the staunch wood. When it was tightly tied, Crystal’s next command came as a matter of course. “Now the other one, darling.”

One had been bad. Two was trebly bad. Tracy’s shoulders complained bitterly at the wracking backward tug on her arms. When both her wrists were firmly secured, her head was halfway to the floor. Her view limited to the stone. Only by exerting pressure and pain could she look elsewhere. But Crystal was not yet finished. She buckled a belt around the slender whip marked waist, she tied a cord to the center link of the iron, then tugged belt and shackle together tightly to lift the metal encircled ankles from the floor and raise them high against the small of her victim’s back. This left Tracy teetering on her knees as her only means and pivot of support, apart from what small relief

she could gain from her tied hands.

“Isn’t it ingenious, darling? You look so stressed and pathetic. You’re quite lovely. I’m sure you’ll find this wonderfully painful.”

Tracy’s agreement was instant. “I can’t stand this!” she cried in a voice raising to a wail of pure distress. “Crystal, let my feet back on the floor. Please, please, please!”

“Don’t be silly, darling. You know you’re going to have to put up with it.”

“But I can’t. It’ll do my knees an injury. This whole thing is too awful for words. Ohhhhh, Crystal…!”

“You won’t be injured, dear. You’ll think you’re dying, but you won’t. I’ve proved this with the other girls I’ve tried it on. And let me warn you about putting on an act. All the poor darlings think of it somewhere in the first fifteen minutes. They pretend to faint. I easily cure this with the riding crop. They come alive at the first whack. But, of course, you’re much too sensible for such nonsense, aren’t you!”

“I’m not sensible at all. I’m hurting.”

“And so you should, dear. That’s what it’s all about. This little device you’re attached to is an invention all my own. A girl looks so sweetly pathetic. It’s the bowed head, of course. That gets the effect. And no matter how you try, you can’t avoid a certain amount of teetering within tiny limits.

Can you move much?"

"You know I can't." Tracy demonstrated by rising against her bound arms and moving her head from side to side. "Crystal, this is cruel!"

"These exclamations of yours are the reasons I'm going to gag you, dear. I'll be leaving you alone from time to time like this, and your natural inclination will be to make quite a bit of noise, which will shame you and irritate me. That is, when I'm here to listen to it. I'm sure you won't mind."

"Mind! Gag me! Of course I mind. Crystal, don't. Please don't!"

The smooth leather was exquisitely expensive. Attached to its center was a rubber phallus. While Tracy was still staring in horror, it entered her mouth and was pulled tight. "Best to clench your teeth and lips, dear. It's more comfortable that way, and it makes it more effective. I'll just wait a couple of seconds while you do this."

Tracy obeyed, not because she wished to cooperate but because she found herself agreeing with what Crystal had said. Tight-lipped was best. Strong youthful fingers buckled the silencing device tight behind bowed neck. Crystal went to some trouble to arrange the hair over it so that the imposition of the leather in no way affected the hairdo so studiously devised. Tracy shook her head in a combination of protest and wonder. She had never been gagged like this before. She tried to speak but could make no intelligible

sound. Some small noises at the back of her throat were the best she could manage. She tried to scream, but the gag laughed at her effort. It held her lips tightly closed and filled her mouth with the offensive simile of the male penis. She felt certain no girl had ever been thus silenced and in such misery. At the expense of painful stress, she managed a sideways look up at her tormentor.

"You're absolutely stunning, darling. That gag is the piece de resistance. It will give you the opportunity to quietly reflect without being bothered by your own moans and groans. That's right, dear, don't struggle—just slump in that gorgeous, hopeless helplessness. You'll look your best and be far more comfortable."

The nearly helpless girl was in mild panic. The last thing she wanted was to be left alone in this semi-torture. She had visions of it becoming totally impossible to bear and of herself going into a state of hysterics. She struggled as frantically as she could to impart a knowledge of her stressful fears, but the motions were slight and drew nothing but admiration from her owner. Crystal's voice was brightly cheerful. "I'm going upstairs now, darling. You can stay here and think about the fact that what I am doing now is writing a sweet little note to darling Matthew, inviting him over for cocktails tomorrow. I'm sure he'll accept, and when he does I'm going to give him every opportunity to search the place. I'm going to let him talk to people who know the premises. When it's all over, he'll be firmly convinced that you are not here. He'll catch no

glimpse or hint of you. I'll tell you when the cocktails start, and you'll thus know that he is in the same house and within earshot, if you could go out in the passage and scream. But you can't, can you?"

It was all sweet girly-girl talk, but diabolical nonetheless. Tracy felt tears scream to her eyes. She saw them splash down upon the stone. She heard the thud of the door as her only hope of help or mercy removed itself from the scene. Her knees screamed mutely, as did her wrists and shoulders. It would seem that any guest of the honorable crystal Maitland would spend most of their time in suffering. The laughing taunt about Matthew would be the hardest thing to bear. To know her beloved was in this house, sipping cocktails somewhere above, would be a torment beyond bearing. But she could be forced to bear it, just as she now bore the agony of her bent knees. The punishment was almost fiendish, yet she grudgingly admitted it fell short of actual torture. Tracy knew not what to call it. For her, it was simply the imposition of another girl's will. A tribulation by which she would know shame and suffer pain from which she presumably would gain humility. If punishments like this were a daily occurrence under Crystal's care, she would be very humble indeed.

Tracy was no novice to punishment, both for delinquencies and because of simple caprice on the part of the one who punished her.

The capricious punishments were the hardest to bear. It

was so now. But also she knew pain often defeated itself. The flesh rebelled and became numb. The wailing cry of distress trailed away and died into moans and then silence. The fine wicked agony of the first moments and minutes soon diminished. The unbearable became, if not bearable, at least a condition in which her thoughts might rove. It was all a strange, incredible world, which had begun for her on the floor of Matt's tent when she had been staked, spread-eagle upon the ground. Then would come her time upon the pole and after that the prison in Santos. Madrez Prison had been a terrible introduction to imprisonment itself. Its agonies had been partly psychological. If the honorable Crystal had kept on as she had started, this fresh captivity bid fare to be the worst of all. Tracy sensed her survival would depend upon total subservience to the beautiful body which possessed her utterly. If she could save herself a single agony by being humble, she would do so, conserving her strength for that moment when her feet were freed.

It went on and on. Tracy screamed into the gag and got what comfort she could from the inarticulate effort. She did not struggle any more. It hurt far too much. She relapsed within Crystal's bonds and silently suffered. When, throughout early evening, Crystal reappeared to check the bindings and gently pat the unresisting flesh, Tracy's eyes took over a mode of their own silent petition for mercy. It was never granted. She was there to suffer, and suffer she would! After awhile her shoulders gave up the battle as her

knees had done and relapsed into numb misery. It was the same with her wrists. Tracy wondered how much a girl's wrists could stand, but it appeared they could stand anything. There was no limit to their adaptability. After what seemed many hours, but was probably no more than two or three, her ordeal ended. Her feet found the floor with a thud, and her arms returned to her with no more than weals upon her wrists. Tracy slumped inert upon the stone. All she wanted was surcease from pain. If only she could be left alone, but Crystal was insatiable.

"And now bye-bye, dear."

It was all so simple. There was no bed, and probably there would never be a bed with sheets, mattress, and pillows for Tracy Trevor again. It was the same bench on which she had laid for their lesbian love. This time there were no straps. Shackles encompassed her wrists and ankles in a way in which she could raise her head or shift her weight from side to side, there was no freedom. The leg irons were gone, but they were replaced by others equally implacable. Tracy would spend a night of helplessness. and she would long again and again for a normal bed. But once more what she must cope with could not be called torture. Once more it was a girl thing with which she would cope as best she could. Most certainly there would be no escape. It would be useless to even try. The shackles were very snug and their chains very heavy. She had not noticed them before when she had been strapped down for their lovemaking. They had hung out of sight. Now they came

into their own. They held Miss Tracy Trevor with an intimacy akin to love.

“Matthew would enjoy you like this, darling.” Crystals fingertips lingered lovingly upon the erogenous zones to elicit appropriate sounds and motions from the helpless girl. They lingered lovingly on nipples and moist lips, both those above and below. Crystal was savoring the full glory of the total possession of a girl. No doubt she had savored it before, but this would be different. This one had been stolen from a man.

The light from the unseen windows above the slanted slots was becoming dim. After a few exploratory tugs, the girl, left alone to sleep, abandoned any thought of struggling. Struggling was terribly exhausting and she would do well to conserve her strength. Instead, she indulged in delightful fantasies of having the honorable Crystal in the same position she herself lay in. The same chains upon the honorable limbs, the same imposition of nakedness upon the honorable flesh. True, it was just a dream, but in the dream Tracy found the release of sleep. She was wickedly, terribly exhausted.

Morning brought back both the light and Crystal’s cheerful presence. It also brought the reminder of whipped skin upon a hard bench. The prisoner gazed up in cautious silence.

“I can tell you slept well, darling. I wasn’t too cruel, was I?”

“Yes.”

“What did you say, darling?” Crystal fingered the inevitable crop.

“Oh, all right!” The captive agreed in resignation. “Sure, I love sleeping chained and naked upon a hard bench. But I did sleep, so thank you for that.”

“Ready for another painful day, darling?”

“I suppose so.”

“You’re not exactly bubbling over with enthusiasm. But I suppose I have to make some allowances. You’ll learn. Have you indulged in any thoughts about your slavery?”

“I am not a slave.”

“Hmmm, perhaps not at this moment, dear, but by the time I’ve married dear Matthew, you’ll be facing the facts of your new life, and you’ll conform. You’ll stop being haughty and become a wellbehaved little slave girl.”

“If you say so.”

“Oh, I do!” Crystal bent and bestowed another of her vagrant kisses. There was a strange affection in the joining of their lips. The girl chained to the bench could well see Crystal becoming a habit. She had a way with her and possessed a shining radiance neither girl nor man could entirely ignore. Bitterly, Tracy could well imagine Matt falling

victim to its charm, especially if he was without exposure to any other feminine influence. If Crystal was wise enough to avoid excess cruelty, it was quite possible. Tracy realized, that she herself would fall beneath her spell. This would come about simply by the loneliness of captivity and her need for human communion. In the dismal gloom of a dungeon the honorable Crystal Maitland was a shining light. Sulkily, the captive girl allowed herself to be freed and fed and bathed. That Crystal chatted gaily throughout, in no way lessened an awareness of captivity, but despite her sulks, Tracy found herself responding and wishing her companion was a friend instead of an enemy.

“Well, can’t repeat yesterday, darling. Have to go a bit easier.”

“Thank heavens for that, Crystal. Honest, I really will be grateful if you ease up on me.”

“Well, I don’t suppose you’ll be too grateful, dear. You see, I’m a wicked little sadist who is starved for a bit of sweet cruelty. I need you. Yesterday did me no end of good, and I can’t possibly let you sit around today, can I? I mean, it would be such a waste, and I always say to my girls that it’s far better that one of us be happy rather than both of us be bored. I do hope you agree.”

Tracy kicked her leg iron to remind herself not to do something silly. She was standing nude and otherwise free, facing her mistress. “Well, what’s it going to be?” she asked

dejectedly.

For answer Crystal gathered two captive arms and peremptorily turned their owner around and crossed her wrists. In irritation and sudden anger against a return of such treatment, Tracy turned and leapt bodily upon the girl who was about to punish her. It was an unthinking, instinctive act. The two girls were close enough together that the leg irons did not matter. As they fell to the ground, Tracy wrapped the chain around one of Crystal's ankles to equalize their capacity to fight. In a sudden flush of exultation, she glimpsed a possibility of victory for the first time. If only she could subdue Crystal and extort the key to her shackles…! Tracy fought savagely to turn the other girl about and capture her hands.

They were evenly matched, but Crystal had an advantage. Whereas Tracy was seeking to subdue an able-bodied young woman all the able-bodied young woman had to do was wrest herself free of the entanglement and subdue the shackled girl with a whip. Crystal fought viciously and savagely toward this end. She was, in effect, running away, disentangling herself. She had no actual need to fight. Once she was a few feet distant and had reclaimed her riding crop or whip, her star would once more be in the ascendancy. Eventually, in their writhings, she contrived to disengage her ankle from the clutch of chain, and sinking her teeth cruelly into her adversary's flesh, caused Tracy to scream and draw back sufficiently to enable disengagement. Once upon her feet, Crystal should have

been mistress of the situation, but even as the agony of the bite was still vivid on her flesh, Tracy turned and leaped, not as her adversary but at the riding crop so invitingly close. Grasping it, she swirled around in time to slash Crystal across bare legs and then across bare arms, as the reached to grasp her. But that was the extend of her victory. Stepping back to avoid Crystal's fresh lunge, she tripped upon her chain and fell back to the stone. The crop was snatched from her hand and now used with vicious purpose upon herself. Crystal, laughing in delight at the situation, whipped in anger, but also with a shrewd determination to subdue. It was only moments before Tracy's voice came in a choked, despairing wail.

"All right, all right! Crystal, stop! Please stop! I've had enough. All right. I quit."

When Crystal regained her breath, she asked with her usual insouciant casualness, "Wasn't that a bit silly, darling?"

"Of course it was silly. I don't know what made me do it, except I'm just human, and I suppose there was a last straw in there somewhere. Anyway, something snapped, and I fought you because I had to." Tracy's voice became resigned in defeat. "Go ahead, punish me. I know you will. I suppose by your standards I deserve it. Perhaps if you punish me badly enough, it will teach me a lesson. With these leg irons on my feet I don't have a hope!"

“Well, that’s cleared the air, darling, and I will say these fresh marks you’ve just gathered for yourself are enchantingly lovely. You wear them so well.”

“Am I going to get some more?”

“No, darling. I’ve other things in store for you. I had contemplated a rather bland day for my sweet captive, but you sort of threw a wrench into that, didn’t you? What I want you to do now is come here, turn around, cross your wrists behind your back, and then stand still. Can you do that?”

“Yes. I’ll do that. Like I said, I’ve had enough.”

There came now to Tracy a strange mixture of emotions. She clinked her way to her mistress as ordered, turned, crossed her wrists. and stood erect and silent as cords cut at them to once more make her totally helpless. They would be a prelude to something worse. But she could smell Crystal’s scent, and knew that she herself exuded a female odor of her own. She was impelled by a wish to turn and, had she been able, throw her arms around Crystal in a passionate embrace. She knew it a carnal instinct. She knew too that she might never again be closer to the ultimate beauty in a girl than now. Crystal was quite something. She was also very nicely clad, and her femininity was escaping through the thin stuff over her dress. But it was too late for physical manifestation of any desire of any kind. Tracy chided herself for such nonsensical notions. She was a prisoner and Crystal was an enemy. If they

felt physical attraction for each other, it was simply a fact of life. It was nothing to the glory she would feel if she could once more throw her arms around Matthew Marsh. Tracy clenched her teeth was the cords bit deep into her wrists.

“There, I think that will hold you, you silly little revolutionary.” Crystal laughed. “But it was really my fault. I should have been expecting it. I never labeled you as a pussycat. I suppose it’s remarkable you did not rebel before. Looking forward to paying the penalty?”

“No.”

“That’s what I like about you: such a delightful girlish honesty.” Crystal laughed again, a silvery tinkle of sound. “Darling, I fully expect you and I will fall in love with each other. I suppose I’ve been a little in love with you right from the start, and no doubt that’s the reason I’m so mean to you, or just one of the reasons.” Crystal’s voice became more serious. “You see, darling, you and I could have a lesbian affair and it would in no way affect my feelings for Matthew. I could sleep with him in the night and be serviced by you every day. I’d pleasure you, of course. It would not be entirely a one way street. In fact, it would be interesting to discover if I could not divert your affection for your holy, holy Matthew. Suppose you fell in love with me? It could happen, y’know.”

“All right, Crystal, I know when I’m being teased. Have

your fun."

"Have you guessed what your punishment is going to be? Your hands tied behind your back is a clue."

"No, I'm afraid I'm not well versed in the art of torturing girls."

"Your arms are going to go an inch higher just for that little quip, sweetheart. You really are terribly thoughtless."

Tracy kept silent for the several moments it took Crystal to pull a rope and hook down from above and tether the two crossed tied hands she had just knotted. In a few more moments, Tracy found her arms rising behind her back. When her hands were at the level of her shoulders, which were now bent forward in much the same manner she had endured beneath the wooden arch the previous day, Crystals voice replaced the whir of the motor by which Tracy was now controlled.

"It was called the strappado in old Italy. I think that's where it had its origin." Crystal's voice was sweetly informative. "Of course, it's actually nothing more than tethering your arms as high as I want them behind your back, and there's not a thing you can do about it. Savvy?"

"Yes. I savvy."

"Feeling just a trifle apprehensive, dear?"

"Yes, that too. I hope I'm giving you your money's worth."

The elevation of Tracy's arms was now inch by attesting inch. She glanced hastily and painfully back at Crystal's smiling features, but found no menace in them. It seemed that with each inch her hands went higher, her head became an inch closer to the floor. Surely Crystal was not going to raise her from the ground! Tracy recalled reading that such an act dislocated the victim's shoulder sockets and was agonizing in the extreme.

"I'll stop for a moment, dear, and let you test this out. I want you to struggle. Try to stand up and look at me the way you just did. I found that immensely appealing."

Why disobey? The end result would always be the same. Abjectly, but in a curiosity all her own, Tracy obeyed. She twisted and contorted and straightened up enough to look back at the smiling face of her lovely inquisitor. But every bit of it hurt. It hurt far too much. After each effort she relapsed into the forward bend with her hands held high. Crystal amused herself by raising those hands an inch or two, then lowering them the same amount. She did this testingly, almost with a clinical interest in her victim's reaction. "What I'm trying to do, darling, is exert the maximum affliction with the minimum of danger. You see, darling, I do think of you, and when I'm away and thinking of you down here and suffering, I don't want your suffering to be dangerous. I want it be just enough to make you wish you'd been more sensible." Crystal laughed again. "Want me to raise you all the way, darling? This isn't a silly query on my part. It's on the basis that if you hurt someone

enough initially, then whatever they end up with is going to seem bearable. Want me to do that?"

"No! Oh, no, Crystal! Please…!"

"Just thought I'd ask, Tracy dear. It's what they do in the army, y'know. Being shot at becomes a pleasure after basic training."

"Thank you, but I'd rather not, if you don't mind."

A sly hand slipped between two maiden thighs and clasped two maiden lips below a maiden bush. "How about an orgasm then? Wouldn't you like a nice, lovely climax before I leave?"

"No, I wouldn't. I don't want to be left all hot and untidy in this condition."

"Well, yes, perhaps you have a point. I don't want you hot and untidy either. There's a quality of the immaculate about you I wish to preserve. I do it with myself. A hot and untidy girl is not even erotic."

Two expensively shod feet came within Tracy's limited view.

She conceded it was at least a change from the stone floor and her own pubic bush, which she had been forced to look at as the only attractions. A surprisingly gentle finger lifted a captive chin and two warm lips implanted an unexpected kiss. It lasted longer than it need have done. At its

end, Crystal patted the well-wealed bottom of her slave girl and announced her intention of running a few errands. “You won’t mind waiting for me, will you, darling?”

The question was rhetorical. Tracy knew anything she might take exception to mattered not at all. Tentatively, she asked, “Crystal, I’d be eternally grateful if you’d let my arms down a couple of inches. I think I could bear it then, I’m not sure about now?”

“You knew the answer to that before you asked, dear. It is a resounding no. I’ll remind you again about these pleadings and demands. They are not acceptable. I’ll give you a couple of cuts on the beautifully positioned posterior as a reminder before I leave.”

Bent as Tracy was, the two strokes were cruel. She yelped and shifted uneasily for fear there might be more. Her flesh burned and scorched as she heard the receding feminine footsteps to the door. Then the thud to tell her she was quite alone.

Tracy’s first feeling was of panic. She felt for certain her punishment would get steadily worse, and with Crystal absent she had no hope of help. She shifted her shackled feet and turned about to seek easement of her pinioned shoulders. Nothing helped. She ended up always in the same position. If she sought to change it, it hurt more. The humble head bowed in submission was undoubtedly the least painful tribute she could pay to her tractioned arms.

She settled down to what she supposed was the penalty for talking out of turn. She hoped also the punishment would cover her revolt. She was not sure of this, but could only hope for the best. She realized she had picked up an incidental thrashing during the revolt itself. Maybe Crystal had taken that into consideration. She twisted the captive fingers held high above her head and kicked irritably at the chain between her feet. As usual, it was all hopeless. The best thing she could do was keep still. It was not a bright prospect for her day.

It took only a little while to confirm Tracy's estimate of her plight. It would get steadily worse, and she would long more and more for the return of the girl who had thus fastened her. It was a frightening thought to realize how utterly she was in Crystal's power. If Crystal was to meet with an accident, she might easily die in this ill-lit stone chamber of punishment. She could never free herself from her present predicament. She would simply stand as she was now until she died. An involuntary shudder wracked her nudity. Resolutely, she turned her thoughts elsewhere. At the moment she had no reason to believe she need be morbid. Crystal would return. There would be some bright exchange of chatter. then hopefully a brief release before her punishment was extended into the afternoon. She had no reason to believe Crystal would waste any time in which a girl could be made to feel pain.

The hours were slow. Tracy hoped they were hours and not minutes, she could not tell. Tears came and fell upon the

stone where she could watch them splash. They brought their own brief period of release, but a girl cannot weep forever. The tears dried along with Tracy's hope. She found herself breathing heavily and wanting to scream. If she wanted to, why not? She shrilled out a full-lunged peal of protest against this solitary imposition of another girl's will. The stone absorbed the sound in a manner to discourage a repeat. The stone would deal with her with the same finality as did the chain and rope. Dully, she wondered if Matthew had received the invitation and would attend the cocktail party. If he did, then surely he would sense her presence somewhere in the house. Surely the vibrations she would exude would touch him and be a guide. Tracy allowed herself a beautiful vision of hammer blows upon the implacable door and the triumphant entry of the man she loved. Why not? she asked herself demandingly. Heroic acts were the function of the male, and goodness knows, Matthew was male enough for any maiden's dreams. But she most ardently longed to be back with her hands cuffed behind the tent pole in Santos. She would even have welcomed the four stakes to which her limbs had been spread and bound. Almost anything would be better than the isolation in which Crystal now held her. She knew life was all around, but it had been craftily excluded from this dismal chamber. Tracy wept anew.

8

The Unkind Girl

“YOU’VE BEEN CRYING, DARLING. I can see the wet on the stone. Was it that bad?”

“Yes, it was. It still is. Oohhh, Crystal! If you’ll let me loose, I’ll do anything—simply anything!”

“You’ll do anything anyway, dear girl. That’s one of the drawbacks of your situation. You don’t bargain. You simply have nothing to offer that I don’t already possess. Your most valuable possession is quite simply you, and you most certainly belong to me. Want me to let you loose?”

“Yes, yes, yes, yes! Oh, please, Crystal…”

“Gosh, what sincerity. And all you get out of it, darling, is another hour exactly as you are now. I do have to maintain some status as a mistress. I do hope you understand.”

Tracy understood all too well, but a period had been placed upon her penance, and she saw this as one small victory. One hour! Well, she supposed she would endure it and survive. Feeling a need to say something, she simply said, “Thank you, Crystal.”

The hour passed interminably. The stretched and stressed nudity of Tracy Trevor was certain that Crystal was cheating. No hour could ever be this long. For some time now

the captive's breathing had been labored in distress. Into it now was infused small, heartrending moans with the whimpering exhalations. It was a sad, frightened girl the honorable Crystal Maitland found on her return. "Don't be such a crybaby," she reprimanded severely. "I wish you could have seen what some of my other girls put up with. They would have thought this a picnic."

In the relief of lowered arms, Tracy simply stood in panting thankfulness. As in all such punishments, there remained a lingering fear that all was not yet over, but for the moment she savored her release from pain, caring for nothing else, unheedful of what might come.

"I like the effect of your hands corded the way they are. They can stay as they are for the time being. Besides, they will prevent you from making heroic gestures."

"I don't have any heroic gestures left," Tracy said plaintively. "May I go to the bathroom?"

"I'll go with you, dear, and make you look pretty. You're going to service me when you come out, and I do want you looking nice."

The bound girl shrugged. What did it matter? She was to have neither privacy nor freedom. She had become a Barbie doll, played with by her owner in sadistic curiosity. Crystal's fingers were firm upon her arms.

Tracy's decision to maintain a sulky silence was defeated

by her ebullient owner. Crystal's bright gaiety brooked no denial. In the course of being tended, the disgruntled captive found herself chatting animatedly with her captor. They were, after all, two girls together, strangely sharing the same interests. That one was prisoner to the other changed nothing. Until the next punishment came into view, they might as well have been a pair of young women walking down the village street. The fact that Tracy's mouth would soon be avid upon Crystal's tumid sex was, for the moment, irrelevant. A thought of this act she must perform reminded Tracy of a fire which had smoldered gently within her loins throughout her punishment. She was annoyed now by her fervid desire for Crystal. She longed to plead for Crystal's lips and tongue, but was wise enough to maintain silence. Crystal would do with her exactly as she pleased. It was wisest to remind Crystal of nothing. The girl with tied hands and fettered feet was rapidly learning the tricks of her enslavement.

Crystal had provided a picnic lunch. They shared it seated upon the wooden bench to which Tracy had once been chained. There was nothing in the chamber not intended to either hurt or constrain the captives housed therein. Wherever she looked a girl would be reminded of past punishment or of one still to come. Tracy's prison was cruelly functional. But both girls disregarded the influence of their surroundings. Crystal fed her prisoner daintily and with care. She raised cups and glasses to the captive's lips and wiped them carefully afterwards. When, long after-

wards, they were both replete, not with food but with the scents and secretions of each other, Crystal lazily complained, “Darling, we’ve used up so much time, and it was so gorgeous, but I really do have to do something with you. I mean, I can’t simply leave you sitting around.”

“I don’t see why not. My feet are chained, and I can’t get out of the door anyway. Just lock me in and go about your business.”

“The total optimist!” Crystal laughed. “Well, why not? Let’s say your lips and your tongue earned you a break. I’ll come back before the cocktail party and be unkind to you. But, for the moment, come kiss me. You kiss gorgeously.”

The kiss was long. Halfway through, Tracy disengaged and pleaded fervently, “Give me my hands, Crystal! I want to put them around you.”

“How very sweet! Tracy, I adore you. Never mind your hands. I like them the way they are. You come back into mine.”

The kiss continued to a point of exhaustion until at last Crystal lovingly patted a well-marked bottom cheek, tweaked a pert nipple, and ran to the door. Dazed, the slave girl stood and watched the portal slam shut. She had never felt more lonely than at that moment. The honorable Crystal was a force. During their embrace and in the love play of an hour past, she had become aware of the strange dominion the golden-haired beauty wielded over her. As

from the beginning, Tracy was quite unable to hate Crystal. Crystal might be a sadist, and indeed capricious, but she had touched her slave girl's heart. This in no way affected Tracy's determination to escape should the chance arise, but she was aware of Crystal as a quite different presence in her life than on that day when her hands had been tied to the tailgate of the cart. The girl whose hands were still tied tightly behind her back lay down upon the bench and went to sleep.

"Wakey, wakey, darling. No one told you to go to sleep."

Crystal's cheerful admonition dragged Tracy back from dreams in which she had been held very tightly within Matthew Marsh's embrace. Still hazy from the slumber, she said in a half apology, "I couldn't get loose. Crystal, I tried and tried, but you tie so cleverly. My hands are still behind my back."

"And so they should be, dear. Do you realize my first guest is only minutes away."

"I hope you enjoy your party, Crystal. I hope you enjoy Matthew too." Tracy's voice trailed away and then burst forth afresh. "But please don't give me a running report. Just leave me alone down here. I don't want to hear."

"No demands, darling. Don't you tell me what to do or not to do. I've just thought of the loveliest thing for you."

Tracy was now awake and could not deny curiosity. She

was alert enough not to plead. She could hope for the best and accept whatever it was with as good a grace as she could muster. Without optimism, she watched the honorable Crystal drag something from the shadows.

“It’s a safari cage, darling. Intrepid explorers used them to hold the wild animals they wanted to bring back home with them. In this particular case, it’s going to hold you.”

In her search, Tracy had noticed but dismissed the item as having no application to herself. It was silver colored and composed of unusually heavy wire mesh. She sadly realized it was exactly girl size.

“You’ll look so sweet, Tracy. As soon as I saw the thing, I knew I had to buy it. Don’t worry—you’re by no means the first occupant. Girls fit into it gorgeously, but none of them have been too keen on being inside. I admit it’s a bit cracked.”

“Oh, Crystal, I can’t get into that thing. There’s not enough room.”

“Yes, there is, darling. I’ll help you. You’ll have to wiggle a bit, but you’ll make it, and once inside you’ll look absolutely gorgeous. I know you will.”

If there was one thing Tracy had learned in her captivity, it was never to argue with a mistress or a master except within those limits they themselves imposed. Her bottom was tender enough now; she did not want it caned or

cropped any more. Dismally, she asked, “Now?”

“Yes, dear, come along.”

It appeared the captive of the cage would have to enter it feet first. The mistress would support captive shoulders while captive legs did their first exploration of the new imprisonment. By the time her knees and bottom were well inside, Tracy realized she was lost. The cage was going to claim her. There would be no escaping it. With a final heave, Crystal thrust her slave girl’s bare shoulders within the wire, then the head, and finally closed the sturdy door. With her face almost touching the wire, Tracy had no difficulty in watching and then hearing the click by which she was safely padlocked within her tiny prison. Awkwardly and unhappily, she wiggled around so she could sit. The loss of her hands within the tiny confinement was limiting. About the only possibility was to sit upon her tenderized bottom, hunch up her feet so that her knees connected with her chin, and twist her bound arms in an ineffectual demonstration of helplessness. Crystal’s reaction was predictable.

“Charming, charming. Oh, sweetheart, if only you could see yourself!”

“What I’d see would be a bundle of tied up girl in a tiny cage, crouched up in a ball so she couldn’t move,” Tracy said without cordiality. “Crystal, I hope you realize I can’t move.”

“You’d be surprised, Tracy. Just keep wiggling around a bit and be patient. You’ll manage all sorts of motions. Of course, I do realize your hands tied behind your back the way they are is a bit of a handicap, but you look too, too sweet. I can’t possibly bring myself to untie them.”

“Is there any need for all the padlocks on the door? I can’t even touch the door. You could tie the damn thing up with string and I still couldn’t get out of here.”

“Watch it, darling—no beefs, remember? Your role is the sweetly distressed damsel suffering her impositions with good grace. Think you can handle it?”

“I suppose I have to.”

“Would it help if I took you back out and whipped you? I mean, give you a fresh perspective?”

“No, thank you.”

“You see what I mean, dear? You immediately adjust. The mere thought of having your dear little bottom whipped again has totally reconciled you to whatever trivial discomfort you now suffer.”

Crystal’s tone was kindly patronizing. “Punishments are so good for girls. They cure all their silly notions. I do so look forward to the way you’re going to be in a month’s time.”

The caged girl knew herself on insecure ground. Best not to quibble. She was in a tiny cage, her ankles hobbled, her

wrists tightly bound behind her back. Reluctantly, she conceded things could be much, much worse. She would ache from immobility, but would suffer no pain. Crystal's plan of discomfort for her evening was probably as good as she might expect. Sarcastically, she said "Thank you, Crystal. I'm sure I'll be here when you come back."

She supposed it would always be like this, one punishment after another with perhaps interludes of happiness in between. Idly, Tracy watched her mistress depart and close the door, and knew she would go from one penalty to another without hope of escape. The leg irons would ensure her continuing captivity from one penance to another. None of them severe enough to be honestly described as torture. They came closer to being a manifestation of Crystal's capricious authority. Tracy shifted awkwardly and unhappily. Hands would have helped, but she had no hands. Whimsically, she reflected she had nothing of herself at all. Crystal owned every bit of the animated girl that had once been Tracy Trevor. Now, along with the cage, she would have to bear the knowledge that somewhere above, in the big house, Matthew Marsh would be exchanging small talk with Crystal and the rest of the local gentry. If Crystal was as good as her word, he would undoubtedly be making his own tour of the premises and might quite possibly reach the end of the passage beyond the door and thus be separated from her by only a few feet. But it would be a separation he would never realize. She herself would not know when he was there. It was too

heartbreaking for words. Striving for comfort, Tracy separated her knees and nestled her face within their cleft. She could not sit erect, the heavy mesh was close above her head. Soon her knees would complain of their enforced bend, but she could not straighten them. They were already extended as far as they could go. She settled herself to wait.

“Darling, it’s all working out so wonderfully.” Crystal was radiant and beautiful in the shimmering cocktail dress. She would grace any gathering and be its queen. She tripped lightly around the cage and its sad occupant. “Matt is such a dear. He’s even better than I thought he was. All those adventures in those weird places where he was shooting people right and left have really turned him into an immensely attractive male. I can hardly wait to feel him inside me. D’you mind?”

“Of course I mind. Any girl would mind. Oh, Crystal, I’m so tired of this horrible little cage. Couldn’t you do something else with me?”

“I could hang you up by your wrists, dear.”

“No, never mind. But thanks anyway.”

“I don’t know how often I’ll be able to get down and visit you, darling,” Crystal said thoughtfully. “I get a delicious hotty in my panties seeing you in there and knowing what you’re thinking. I really am being an absolute bitch, but I love it so much. In a way I sort of wish that Matt could be

aware of you down here in your cage, but I can't think of any way to make this practical. Of course, if I was trying to coerce him into something he didn't wish to do, I suppose I could use you as a weapon. You know the sort of thing, Tracy. Every time he says no you get fifty strokes. If he was very obdurate over something I really wanted, I could put you on a bread and water diet." Crystal sighed. "Well, it's a beautiful dream. I can't see it happening, but if I have to do something like that to you in order to drag him to the altar, I will."

Alone again, Tracy wondered if Crystal's own assessment of herself and her ruthless resolution was accurate. Somehow she doubted it. She did not know why. Goodness knows. Crystal's treatment of her had been ruthless enough to date. The questing fingers of her bound hands were constantly exploring whatever weals upon her skin they were able to reach. She supposed she would always be well marked. It would only take one whipping a week to keep her nicely striped. A girl could easily stand a weekly whipping without endangering her health, but she would probably become more submissive with each. It was so cruelly demeaning to be fastened in such ways that she was forced to stand and bear the scald and cut of leather upon bare skin. Tracy shuddered and tried to turn her thoughts elsewhere. It was useless to speculate. Crystal had her and that was the end of it. She looked down at the shackles on her feet. In the cage they were redundant, but they epitomized what she had become. Chains were for

slavery, weren't they? And most certainly, she was Crystal's slave. Forcing herself against pain, she searched with almost helpless hands for the padlock on the door at her back. She was not sure why she did this, other than to emphasize exasperatingly in her mind the trifling bits of metal or rope by which she was held in captivity. Fictional pictures of captive girls usually showed them swathed in rope from head to toe and they were always able to wiggle loose. That is, if the hero did not arrive in time. But that was not for her and Crystal. Crystal did it better.

On her second visit, Crystal was flushed with excitement and success. She strutted jauntily around the cage and its captive while she imparted her glowing report. "He believes you're here, darling. He practically accused me of keeping you around somewhere. It is positively pussy-perking to watch the way he looks and looks, and prowls and prowls. When he bluntly asked me about you, I simply told him to go ahead and search, and that's what he's been doing, getting more frustrated by the minute. He asked if I had a gazebo or a coach house, and I knew what he was thinking. The poor darling must think a lot of you, and I'm sure you're good in bed, and you really could make him an admirable wife if I hadn't decided to get there first. Are you mad at me?"

"Yes."

"Oh, darling, I'm so pleased. My hotties are getting hotter all the time thinking of you down here in your sweet little

cage. I'm going to have to pop you in that cage again from time to time. There's a quality about it—something original—don't you think? There's a simply lovely cage out back of the house. It used to be a kennel for big dogs, but it's empty now, and you would look so sweet inside." Crystal sighed in mock mournfulness. "But, of course, there's the servants. They would be bound to get to talking about the naked girl their young mistress keeps out in the cage, and it would get around the village and then on to Matthew. Oh well, we can't have everything."

Dolefully, Tracy tried to capitalize on Crystal's good humor. "I'm getting tighter and tighter in here, Crystal. How about taking me out and putting me over there in the pillory? My muscles are going to start cramping if you leave me in here."

"Don't spoil things, darling. If you keep complaining like this, I'm going to keep a tally and whip you when you come out. You'll go in that pillory soon enough—don't worry about that." Crystal made a dramatic gesture. "And now back to Matthew. What was it that King Chappie said: 'Once more into the breach, dear friends.' Always like that bit from Shakespeare, and whenever I've been pierced by a man, those lines come to mind. They're so delightfully appropriate. Bye-bye, darling. Bulletin number three to follow."

Tracy listened for the snap of the lock. All she had now were futile hopes that Crystal would make a slip and Matt

would discover her. If her hopes went unrealized, they had cost her nothing. She resumed her study of the metal circlets around her ankles.

Bulletin three was long in coming, or perhaps the longer she remained in the cage the slower was the passage of time. Despite anger at what was taking place upstairs, Tracy's plight was such as to make any diversions welcome, and despite her bubbling report of victory, Crystal was nothing if not devoting. The captive girl turned her thoughts back to her former life before she had first been captured in the wilderness of Santos. It was indeed another life, and it seemed a million years ago now. The lock brought her back to life. Tracy looked and listened fearfully to strange new sounds in the opening of the door. "Let go of me, you son of a bitch!" The honorable Crystal Maitland's voice came loud and clear in anger. "That was a mean trick, following me down here. Let go!"

Tracy's heart leapt in pure ecstasy. She gazed at the slowly opening portal and the extraordinary picture it revealed. It was of a disheveled Crystal Maitland held securely in the strong grip of Matthew Marsh. Crystal was flushed. Her dress was torn, and she was struggling defiantly against a hold she could not break. Inch by inch, she was thrust forward to a point at which Matthew caught sight of the tiny cage and the girl within.

"Good gosh, so this is where you've been keeping her!" For a moment Matthew stood and stared in fascinated relief at

his discovery. “You absolute bitch! You would have kept her here forever, wouldn’t you?”

For answer, Crystal kicked hard against her captor’s shin with her lightly shod party shoe. It did little harm other than to spur Matthew’s inquiring gaze around the stone walls and then to drag his prisoner to where chains hung invitingly. A few moments later Crystal was standing, flushed and panting, with her wrists shackled and a collar around her neck. Having made her secure, Matt wasted no more time. He went instantly to the cage. He examined the padlock, then turned demandingly to Crystal. “Where are the keys?”

“I refuse to tell you.”

“In that case, Crystal, you will stay here for a very long time. Without keys I can’t get either of you loose, not with a lot of tools which I’d have to get from the nearest town. Do you want me to do that?”

“This is an outrage!” Crystal glared in hostile dismay at this sudden reversal of her fortunes “Look, Matthew, if you free me, I’m quite prepared to forget this whole thing.”

“I’m sure you are.” Matt’s voice was bitter. “But I’m not forgetting anything, there’s going to be a bill you’ll have to pay.”

“I won’t tell you where the keys are,” Crystal affirmed with a faint air of triumph. “I refuse to discuss this matter

further until you release me. I can tell you where the keys are to these chains you've got me fastened in. Do you agree?"

"You know damn well I don't agree." Matthew looked searchingly around the huge chamber, then turned a fierce eye upon the loveliness held by her own chains against her own stone wall. "I'm not mincing words, Crystal. You've been playing for keeps, so I'll do the same. If you do not tell me where the keys are in the time it takes for me to count five, I'll begin by stripping you naked. Understand?"

Crystal understood. There was that about this man, a force she could not overcome. The magic of her beauty was nullified by his purpose. Matthew had come to retrieve his slave girl and would let nothing stand in his way. Within her cage, Tracy's heart glowed in pure happiness. Her aches and pains forgotten in the small drama being enacted beyond the heavy mesh, through which she gazed at the honorable Crystal's blush and he frantic exploration of her fettered wrists and collared neck. The British beauty was listening askance as Matthew solemnly intoned, "One, two, three, four..." In his intentional pause after the number four, Crystal conceded. "Oh, very well. You're being absolutely beastly about this and making a terrible mistake. I'd be a lot better for you than this little snippet from Skunkhollow, or wherever she comes from." Crystal paused to sniff disdainfully. "The keys are on a hook just to the left outside the door."

There were several rings and a great many keys. Matthew tried one after another until the cage door came open and he was able to extract his naked beloved from within the wire. It was a slow process and not without pain, but Tracy could have cared less. Her heart was thudding in joy. The feel of male fingers on her flesh was pure ecstasy. When her hands were untied, she threw her arms around her deliverer and clung as though to never let him go. They kissed, quite oblivious to the shamed girl chained against the wall. Crystal watched their passion with a fine disdain, but her fingers were busy wrenching against the metal on her wrists even though none should know better than she herself the impossibility of freedom without a key. After what may well have been the longest embrace on record, she coldly enunciated, “I’m still here, in case you’ve forgotten.”

They paid her no heed. For several minutes, the honorable Crystal simply did not exist for either the man or the girl he held so close. When they finally disengaged, Matthew wasted no time. He dangled keys invitingly, then said, “There’s a small door at the side. I noticed it when we came in, and I can get the car there nicely unobtrusive. I’m taking you with us, Crystal. You can phone your butler from my house and explain you’ll be away for awhile. I’m going to teach you a lesson.”

“Don’t be ridiculous! I absolutely refuse. Anyway, you couldn’t possibly get away with it.” She paused, then lamely added, “In any case, I would most certainly sue you.

I would go straight to the police."

"Want to bet?"

"You're an arrogant, unfeeling brute! I don't want to be taken to Castle Angus for this little snippet to queen it over me. I'd prefer to stay just as I am here now. Just go away and leave me. The servants will discover me after awhile. If you won't give me my own keys, then kindly leave them hanging where you found them."

Matthew Marsh was a soldier. It took him very little time to complete his plan. He picked Tracy up and carried her from what she believed her prison for life, whispering to her, "Silly bitch—I knew she had you somewhere. You okay?"

The girl in his arms was very okay indeed. Tracy was in a daze of happiness. She still wore the leg irons which had apparently become a symbol of all her captivities, but she did not mind. She would gladly have worn a hundred pounds of links if they took her into Matthew Marsh's arms. She clung to him with her own, in an ecstasy of freedom and her ability to use hands lost to her for so long. The passages were bare and the servants were upstairs. Even had they sought to intervene, Matthew would deal with them, his adoring girl had no doubt of it. Her head so close beside his ear, she had no problem whispering, "Oh, Matthew, I love you so much. I thought I'd never see you again." Matthew laughed and kissed her lightly, then de-

posited her in his car and went back to fetch his second, less amiable female burden.

The honorable Crystal was flushed and fuming. She glared at him in unmistakable hostility, but with an equally unmistakable apprehension. The honorable Crystal was frightened. This was a new dimension of experience. She had inflicted captivity upon other girls, but that it should happen to herself was quite unthinkable. Her British nobility was seething in uprage. “Let me loose, Matthew, please. Stop this nonsense. There’s still time before you go too far.”

Matthew paid no heed. He retrieved the cord with which Tracy’s wrists had been bound. He turned his captive about, crossed her wrists, and bound them very, very tight. Crystal’s response was predictable. “Matthew, that hurts. Don’t tie me this tight. In fact, don’t tie me at all.”

“Sorry, love. You let yourself in for this and you are going to get it. You high and mighty bitches need a dressing down. I’ll enjoy whittling you back to size.”

Crystal was not stupid. She sensed in this man a power such as she had never previously met. The binding of her hands set firmly in her mind a realization that there was nothing she could say to get herself out of this predicament. It would run its course. She sniffed in high disdain and stood stiffly while her ankles were bound as tightly as her wrists. She considered screaming, but was well aware

it would do no good, and it was a demeaning act no British beauty would deign to stoop to. The temptation was almost immediately taken from her. A large male hand inserted itself beneath her gown, clutched her panties, and wrenched them from her hips. For a moment she stood, stunned by this fresh outrage. Then she said the obvious, “Matthew, you don’t intend to rape me, do you?”

“With your feet tied, don’t be silly. Open your mouth.”

“Matthew!” Flushed features looked back askance over a pinioned shoulder. “You don’t imagine I’m going to let you stuff my own panties into my mouth, do you! I absolutely refuse.”

“They’d make a nice mouthful, love. C’mon, love. Stop playing Lady Vere deVere. Open up.”

Aristocratic lips clenched tight, aristocratic nostrils flared, a noble head tossed angrily. But, for Crystal, there was no respite. A hard finger and thumb closed her nostrils tight until she gasped for air through opened lips and became the beneficiary of her own panties within her own mouth. She made a fine collection of adenoidal sounds as Matthew bound his bounty hard behind her teeth and added another strip of cloth across rebellious lips. The honorable Crystal was now reduced to a pair of angry flashing eyes. Her anger was doubly heated for the reason that her captor had obtained the material for both the gag in her mouth and the seal across her lips from her own garments.

Her gown was now most sadly torn. Matthew used the last key to cause the heavy metal of her collar to fall to the stone with a derisive clatter. He flung the trussed and helpless figure of the owner of the house across his shoulder, replaced the keys on the hook where he had found them, closed the door, and in the passage carefully slid home the secret panel by which Crystal's dungeon was kept secret from the world. Jauntily, he carried her to the car and grinned at Tracy's thankfulness to see him and his lovely burden. Without pause, he opened what the British call the boot and dumped the lady of the manor harshly upon his spare tire. Crystal writhed and glared, but the lid slammed shut and the nobility of her disfavor was lost in darkness.

"Silly bitch, she was pretty damn obvious. I was damn sure she had you in there somewhere, and when she made some point of suggesting I take the ground tour of the premises, it was easy to figure that wherever she had you was very, very secret. When the party broke up, I simply went to an unused room, watched and waited, and followed her down to where you were. Simple!"

"For you, darling. You're wonderful!"

"Don't be soppy, sweetheart. You get too mushy and I'll whip your ass."

"Oh, Matt, please do—anytime! Darling, don't be too cruel with Crystal. She was only in love with you."

“And I don’t want you defending her. She’s behaved like a bitch, and she deserves the full treatment.” Matthew’s jaw set in brutal determination. “And she’s going to get it!”

Tracy kept quiet. She knew his moods, knew also that her bottom was by no means immune because of their love. Matthew would thrash it unmercifully to conform to his code. With this man her life would be far from dull. She spared a few thoughts commiseration for Crystal, but her sympathy was brief. Matthew was probably right about Crystal, and to interfere would only bring his wrath upon her own head. She nestled close against him and slyly said, “My feet are still chained, darling. Could you slip me the key?”

“Leg irons become you, sweetness. Wear ’em!”

It was what the chained girl had expected, but it was nice to hear her master put it into words. For Tracy, the leg irons fast upon her ankles were symbolic of so much. They were far, far better than any wedding ring could ever be. She knew she was compelled to wear them as an assertion of Matthew’s authority. But she would take her short, hobbled steps in joy, delighting in the rattle of the links. The rest of her was free! Her spirits soared. In the same vain she demurely asked, “When will you marry me, Matthew?”

“When I get around to it, pet. And remember, the subject is closed. Be kind to your bottom and keep quiet about such

things. By the way, that silly bitch whipped you, didn't she?"

"Horribly. You saw the marks?"

"Yes. She'll get two for one."

It was all very wonderful and as it should be. Castle Angus had never looked more grim or more lovable since she had first caught sight of it. Tracy was immensely happy. When she was carried within the ancient stone, along the great hall and up the stairs to their bedroom she was quivering with excitement. Tonight it would be the real thing and none of Crystal's female simulations. Like a caveman, he tossed her on their bed as though he had triumphantly captured her from a rival tribe. Tracy lay, wondering speechless but uncaring, as her master bound her wrists behind her back. If Matthew wanted her tied, she would be content to be tied forever.

"Just to keep you safe, honeybunch, while I attend to that silly bitch in the boot. You'll be more comfortable tonight than she will. I won't be long."

Matthew was as good as his word. Whatever he had done with the honorable Crystal, it certainly had not taken long. His slave girl asked no questions. If Crystal was now in a dungeon in the bowels of Castle Angus, it was perhaps no more than she deserved. "I'm going to fuck you with your hands tied behind your back, love. You can blame Crystal. The way she had you tied when I got into that room gave

me the notion. Men are susceptible that way. You looked very sweet then, and you look very sweet now."

"I could be much nicer for you, Matthew, if I was free."

"That's for later. But for now..."

It was better than it had ever been. Tracy did not know why, nor did she care. She was back where she belonged, and that was everything. Perhaps Matthew, from some deep knowledge of the conquering male, was aware of her reaction to bound hands, as she was most competently ravished. It was not really a stipulation. Matthew was the conqueror, and she his captive maid. It was all as it should be. But with bound hands upon which she was forced to lie, and with fettered feet, their coupling had discovered a new dimension of ecstasy. Soon Miss Tracy Tevor forgot everything except the man who held her close. For the umpteenth time since he had first captured her, Matthew Marsh transported her to glory.

It was a long time before Tracy's hands were untied and the leg irons taken from her feet, but time no longer mattered. The recaptured slave girl was hovering somewhere between time and space, in a roseate ecstasy only girls can know. Then it started all over and went on for ever and ever. But this time Tracy had both hands and feet, and instinctively did for her master everything he did for her. If, in the morning, he awoke to a nail scratched back, that was as it should be too.

The honorable Crystal Maitland shared no one's glory, nor had she any to impart. She was, in fact, more miserable and apprehensive than she had ever been in her entire existence. She was in a dungeon. It was a dungeon in the finest tradition. The honorable Crystal summed it up in a single word: "Horrible!" It had obviously not been used for a long, long time. The chains now tightly upon her wrists, ankles, and neck were old and rusted, and made the most dismal sound every time she moved. In a deference to humanity, her captor had left a light burning dimly in a corner by the vast oak door. It did no more than enable the noble prisoner to survey her plight and enable her to examine her irons. Irons would be expected in a place like this, but Crystal felt that the least her captor could have done was have them polished. She found their rust and grime deeply offensive, and was angrily certain her captor had planned it thus. She sat upon the luxury of a low wooden bench and wept bitterly. If Matthew did no more to her than inflict this single indignity, it was still far too much! Crystal in a dungeon and heavily chained—it was unthinkable! Her tears well in anger, self-pity, and simple apprehension least this be not all she would be subjected to. She tried hard not to think of the thing she had done to Tracy. She could now well envisage they would be inflicted over again on her own noble flesh. Even as she stared ineffectually at her tears, the chains upon her wrists clanked dismally.

9

The Master's Touch

IN THE MORNING Tracy accepted the reironing of her feet with an absent-minded lack of comment. The leg irons had become so much a part of her she would have felt lost and doubly naked had her master failed to lock her ankles. Her thoughts were absorbed by a continuing thankfulness and persistent visions of a sunlit future. Matthew was his usual somewhat dour self. He glowed in pride of possession, his eyes constantly lingering upon his prize. He still saw Tracy as his prize, just as on the day he captured her in the jungle of Santos. She would always be his prize. Perhaps after years he would relieve her of the leg irons, but most certainly not now! At breakfast he was thoughtful. When Blessing had tended their needs and returned to his kitchen, Matthew grinned across the table and remarked, "Hell of a lot more to old Angus's estate than I figured, and there's a hell of a lot more money too. I'm going to be damn good and sick of lawyers before I'm through."

"But, Matthew, your Uncle Angus was so kind—"

"I'm not complaining, love. Just stating a fact—a fact that will take me away from you quite often for awhile. I'm wondering how I can keep you safe."

"But that's easy, Matt dear. Take me with you. I don't mind waiting around, and I won't run away. I promise."

“Hmmmm… no. No, that spoils my fantasy of you, and I’m going to play that out to its end, if it ever has an end. Let’s hope it doesn’t.”

“What would you do with me it did?”

“I could sell you to a brothel, or I could keep you around to help Blessing.”

“Matt, please don’t ever stop loving me!”

“Oh, I won’t. You are the actual embodiment of my fantasy. You are my fantasy come true. That’s why you’re here, and that’s why I’ll keep you here. Your place is in or around Castle Angus.”

“But, Matt darling, I’m not safe alone. Look at the way Crystal just came and picked me up. I couldn’t fight. I couldn’t do anything. She just tied me up and took me away. Matt, it was awful! You better take me with you on your rounds.”

“No. What we’ll have to do is tighten security, pet. By the time I’m through with her, I doubt you’ll have anything further to fear from Crystal, and there’s no one else who has their eye on you as far as I know. I’ll give Blessing a briefing and keep you safely locked up.”

“Honest, Matt, I’ll never try to escape. I just simply won’t!”

“Don’t keep talking of escape, sweetheart. I know you won’t escape, and I know you can’t escape. That’s the way I like it.

I like to think of you here safely chained or locked up while I'm being lectured by those lawyer charmers. Stores up my lust, then when I think of you safe and waiting for our meeting, I generate some more. You are the most potent aphrodisiac. You're really a very lucky girl." Matt chuckled. "I wonder if the average suburban husband has the faintest idea of the glory awaiting him when he goes home at five o'clock if he had kept his wife tied up in the basement all day. I'll have to write a book about it."

"What about today?"

"Today is yours, love. Or, more properly, Crystal's. Today I begin whittling down her disdain for common folks like us."

"Will I be able to watch, or are you going to lock me away somewhere?"

"You'll be involved. Damn right you will! I won't cheat you of a single one of her screams, or would you prefer her gagged?"

"Oh, Matt, it's all—all… I'm always in a dither."

"That's good. I like you in a dither." Matt brooded quietly for several moments. "In fact, I do wonder how I'm going to bear it if we ever truly settle down and allow Castle Angus to take possession of us. I'm not a bit sure I was intended to be a member of the landed gentry."

"But, Matt, don't you simply love this glorious place? I do!"

“Most likely I’ll be a bit of a bore after awhile. Doesn’t affect you. I’ll keep you busily involved in my fantasy. You’re always a step behind and running to catch up, and that’s not going to stop. But I can see myself getting bored—not with you but with this whole English scene. It’s far too bland. It’s pretty picture postcard stuff. I suppose that’s what sent me to Santos and all those other horrible spots. I’ve never quite forgotten what the old German philosopher said: that man was meant to fight, that woman was for his recreation, and that all else is folly. Probably a bit simplistic, but he had something.”

“If you keep on tying me to trees and cart tails, someone’s bound to pick me up sooner or later.”

“Doesn’t that add a touch of spice? Don’t tell me you don’t find it a bit delicious wondering what’s going to happen next.”

“Well, yes. If it was only for one day, I think I might get a giggle out of it, but if we keep it up day after day, then the law of averages—”

“I didn’t have much trouble retrieving you from Crystal,” Matt said affably. “Actually got a bit of a kick out of it. If she hadn’t been such a bitch to you, it might have been fun. Sorry about that, but I’ll take it out of her hide.” He looked at Tracy quizzically and asked, “How would you like her punished?”

“I wouldn’t. Just let her go. Wherever you’ve kept her

overnight, I can just bet she's scared to death. It's probably all the lesson she needs."

"You're too much of a sweetheart," Matt grunted, unconcerned with his slave girl's charity. "If I could put that damn little cage in the car, I would have brought it over here and bunged her in it, and see how she likes it. You didn't look a bit happy."

"I wasn't. Oh, Matt, it was awful. I could scarcely move at all, and I couldn't get out. Everything she did scared me. She's such a contradiction, such a mixture of cruelty and affection."

"Made you nibble her, eh? Don't bother to deny it—I can tell. Probably had a go at you, too, and you liked it? You know what you deserve."

Tracy knew, but she also knew that Matt was glad to have her back, and he was enjoying the best of two worlds—Tracy Trevor's and Crystal Maitland's. She could well imagine the way his mind was working—the visions he beheld. That some of them would concern her did no more than flare Tracy's heat. Matt was going to get his pound of flesh, and she was obviously going to be witness to his manner of collecting the debt. When after the meal was finished Matthew picked her up bodily and carried her from the room, she had resigned herself to the passive role and was, in fact, beginning to enjoy the prospect. After all, Crystal had not behaved at all well. Mischievously, she said,

“If you unlocked my leg irons, I could walk, y’know.”

“Nice try, sweetheart. I love you hobbled, and I love carrying you. You can’t possibly win that one.”

Tracy had no wish to win. She was complacently content. She still had her arms, and she used them to her best possible advantage. On their way downstairs, she playfully nibbled Matthew’s ear and received no reprimand. On her feet once more, she stood trembling in an assortment of emotions as Matt fitted the huge key within the lock of the oaken barrier, behind which was the honorable Crystal Maitland. What she beheld evoked both a gasp and a giggle. She bit back the giggle.

Crystal had been sitting upon the bench, and she had been fed, but it could not be said she enjoyed the meal. Wide-eyed, Tracy beheld half a glass of water and beside it a large dog biscuit. It was the dog biscuit that had sparked the giggle. Matt was being really mean, but there was a touch of humor in his meanness, although it was obvious Crystal had not caught sight of it. Crystal was both glad and thankful. Her night chained in Matt’s dungeon had affected her deeply. She was by no means humble or penitent, but she was distinctly cautious and prepared to remain silent until spoken to. She rose to her feet at her visitors’ entry, the rusty chains clanking on her limbs, a trail of links falling from her wrists. She gazed at them expectantly. “Ready for a flogging, Crystal?”

The noble captive visibly flinched, but her voice remained that of a member of the nobility only slightly distressed. “Very well,” she said icily. “You’ve given me a thoroughly horrible night, and now if you wish to expose me to your absurd humor I suppose there is nothing I can do about it. May I suggest you release me immediately? I’m still prepared to overlook this whole matter.”

“See any ghosts in the dark, Crystal?” Matthew asked imperturbably. “There’s supposed to be a few down here somewhere.”

“Kindly remove these chains.”

“Why would I do that?” Matthew asked innocently. “They look good on you.”

“Because!” Crystal stamped her foot in fury, to receive a metallic response from the shackle which clasped it tight. She was seeking for words forceful enough to make an impression on this granite man. “Do I have to tell you why?” she inquired haughtily. “If you don’t remove them immediately, it will be the police who will tell you why. Really, I’d have thought you had more sense!”

“You haven’t eaten your dog biscuit,” Matthew pointed out with mock concern. “Don’t you like it?”

“I have no intention of eating the horrible thing. No doubt the police will use it as evidence.”

“Crystal, you really are one for the book. You talk like a

Victorian heroine. The Bronte sisters would have adored you." Matthew shed his humor, his voice cold and even. "The first item on your agenda is to be whipped. You really should eat that dog biscuit. It'll stiffen your backbone."

"I refuse to bandy words. You're being absolutely insufferable. You're going to regret this. I'll make sure of it."

Tracy watched, wide eyed. She knew she could influence nothing and had best keep quiet. She found herself strangely identifying with the girl about to be punished. What was about to happen to Crystal had been done to Tracy a number of times. At least she believed it had, although she could not guess what innovation Matthew might have in mind for the British beauty. He evidently did not regard her as of a privileged class, deserving of special favor. Tracy flinched in anticipation of what was about to take place. She stood breathlessly while Matthew relieved his prisoner of her chains, kicking the heavy mass of rustic iron to one side as it fell at captive feet. He grasped Crystal's arm and abruptly said, "Come along."

Crystal probably acted purely from instinct. She wrenched her arm from his grasp and attempted to flee. Matthew seized her party frock, the thin stuff shredding against its owner's frantic determination to evade retribution. Crystal slithered from the slender sheath to emerge clad only in bra and the still damp panties retrieved from her mouth earlier in the morning. Both these trifles fell victim to Matthew's clutching fingers and sharp wrench, as she

continued her struggle for the door. When Crystal was clad in no more than a pair of nylons and high-heeled shoes, he again clasped her arm, shook her savagely, and flung her back into the center of the dungeon. “There’ll be none of that,” he said gruffly. “If you wish to be foolish, I can play rough.”

Crystal was panting, holding one hand across a bare breast and using the other to partially shield both the other breast and her pubic patch. Finding it impossible to do both, she contrived to cover both her nipples with a defensive forearm and used the hand to clutch herself at the apex of her thighs. She held this absurd pose for several moments while she gazed fearfully around the leering stone on the four walls. Then, in desperation, she fled to the farthest corner and nestled her nakedness within its shelter to gaze only at the wall itself in the manner of a schoolgirl suffering the indignity of having to stand in the corner.

“What are you doing over there?’ Matthew asked cheerfully. “Damn poor view.”

“I’m naked. Go away!”

“Your ass is showing.”

Absurdly, the English girl’s hand sought her bottom in an ineffectual attempt to remove it from Matthew’s interested regard. “This is intolerable,” she informed no one in particular. “I see I was mistaken about you. You are no gentleman.”

“You’re right, Crystal, I’m not.”

Tracy could easily see Matt enjoying himself. “Take those nylons off and kick off your shoes. I want you stripped.”

“I refuse.”

“Then I’ll do it for you.”

“No! No, never mind.” The panting girl sought an ally. “Tracy, are you just going to stand there and let him treat me like this?”

“Sure, she is,” Matthew said unfeelingly. “She’s got more sense than to stick her nose into your affairs. If she gets to feeling too sorry for you, she gets to share your whipping.”

“Only a brute—”

“Yes, I am a brute. Glad you noticed. Now off with those nylons.”

Crystal divested herself into total nudity with a grand flourish of disgust. She destined hesitation, cringing, and the mock of purity she would probably have liked to display. She flung the last of her garments from her as an expression of the words she was too nervous to utter. Totally naked, she nestled even deeper into the crevice of the wall.

“Don’t be ridiculous, Crystal—turn around!”

There was a long silence. After seconds had ticked remorselessly away, the denuded nobility cocked a dubious

eye back over a denuded shoulder and enunciated, “Not until you turn and look the other way. I can’t possibly—”

“Do it!”

It was the command of a master. Tracy thrilled to it. It evidently impinged upon the noble consciousness to convince Crystal that she had best no longer demur. With the same air of a triumphant flourish, she swung to face her conqueror. Even to the extent of clutching her hands behind her neck, thrusting out her breasts, making her tummy more than ever concave and said, as though hating every word, “There, I hope you’re satisfied. I might have shown this to you properly and decently if you’d given me a chance. Now you’ve thrown it away. You can make me naked, but you can’t make me like it.”

“Come here. Stop nattering and get off your high horse. Damn it, girl, try and be human.”

Matthew grasped the bare arm once more. This time his grip would not be broken. Crystal winced, but said nothing as she was led from the dungeon. Hobbled, Tracy made less progress and trailed behind to follow the captive girl and her new master to the forbidden door. At last, she would see what was behind its aged oak. It swung open on hinges adequately oiled. Within was one more immense chamber, well lit by daylight, supplemented by comingly placed lamps. Everywhere she looked there were things to make a girl shudder or evoke a chuckle, according to her mood.

Crystal also scanned the abundance of accouterments and fixtures. Her pronouncement was forthright. “This is a torture chamber!”

“Right.” Matthew sounded as if he was giving a schoolgirl marks for observance. “And it’s all yours. This way, love.”

Tracy took in the entire scene with some dubiety. Matthew could say very well that it all belonged, or was waiting for, Crystal. But, originally, it had been waiting for her. No doubt it had all been tried out on those who had come and gone before. There was nothing really grim or hideous. There was not even an old-fashioned rack. Tracy did not even know the application of most of what she saw, but she was certain, at the very least, everything would be, at best, uncomfortable. She did well believe that Crystal must have once seen this room and contrived her own stark chamber as a copy. Supposing Uncle Angus had brought her down here! There might be more to Crystal than she supposed. But, at the moment, the British beauty was standing stiff and stark in the center of the floor while Matthew tied her hands behind her back. When the last knot had been drawn tight upon crossed wrists, she said, as though cheated, “I thought you were going to whip me.”

“I am, girly. But don’t expect any beautiful British ritual. There will be no roll of drums, no triangle, no whipping post. I’m importing this little notion from Santos. I saw it used there once.”

It happened very quickly. One moment Crystal had been standing, twisting her bound arms experimentally, and the next she was on the stone floor and Matthew was raising her bare untrammeled foot to affix it within a leather band and buckle hanging from above on a stout rope. Tracy watched the rope tauten and her rival's foot slowly rise, until Crystal's pert bottom was off the floor and her free leg flailing wide, seeking for support, while she herself lay upon her shoulders and pinioned arms. Her pubic bush proclaimed itself blatantly. Her efforts to hide or shield it were ineffectual. The honorable Crystal Maitland was exquisitely and cruelly exposed.

"Matt, you can't possibly do this to me! It's absolutely obscene! You can see my—my—"

"Your cunt?" Matthew inquired pleasantly. "Yes, an excellent view. Not a bad little cunt, as cunts go. Nowhere near as good as Tracy's of course."

"You're an unfeeling beast. I m in agony."

"No, you're not. You're just uncomfortable and damn good and shamed. You'd like to cover that little item between your legs, but I'm going to make sure you don't. It's on display, and there it stays."

"But you said you're going to whip me. You can't possibly whip me like this. You've got me laying on my back."

"Who said anything about your back, sweetheart? You've

got a lot of other places."

"Don't you dare!"

With a sudden intent precision, Matthew cut the thong squarely within the cleft where Crystal least desired. She contrived a short leap up from her bound arms, kick in fury and shock, but her voice remained stiltedly British. "You mustn't! Don't you dare do that again! If you hit me there again, I'll die! Matthew, stop, stop, stop!"

Matthew did not stop. Instead, he circled the distressed nakedness, watching with intent. When the contortions of the British nobility revealed a target, he struck with swift surety. The response was more shocked outrage.

"Matthew! You didn't have to do that—it was beastly! You didn't have to hit me for emphasis, and when I said you didn't have any idea how it hurt, I'm sure I was right. I don't suppose anybody has ever whipped you." Crystal turned a reproachful eye upon her former slave. "Tell him I never whipped you this hard, Tracy. Make him understand he's going too far."

Tracy miserably said, "I can't. Don't you understand, Crystal? I've been forbidden to speak while you're being punished, and I couldn't possibly say you weren't mean to me."

The disheveled nudity upon the floor sniffed eloquently and came to rest. Crystal was well bedewed with sweat,

and her breasts were rising and falling more rapidly than normal. She never ceased to tug at her bound hands, and while the whip paused, lay upon her one forearm to bring them into view. It was no doubt more comfortable. She stopped her low keening moans long enough to affirm. “Matthew, if you tell me what you want, I’ll do it. I’ll do anything. I can’t possibly bear any more of this.”

“Right you are, sweetheart. The next job’s a letter. You’ll tell your butler you won’t be home for a few days. Tracy and I will run it over and deliver it, give it the ultimate touch of respectability.”

“A few days!” Crystal stared askance. “You mean you’re going to keep me for several days, doing these horrible things like this to me?”

“That’s the idea, Crystal. I’ll untie your hands long enough for you to write the letter. You can stay with your leg up in the air. That will keep you in a reasonable frame of mind.”

“I won’t do it. You can’t make me.”

For answer, Matt cut a sharp snapping blow across one upturned foot, wealing it from toe to heel. Its owner emitted her loudest scream to date. It was followed swiftly by capitulation. “I’ll write it! Oh, oh, oh!” Crystal fell silent except for her panting gasps, then wearily ejaculated, “Damn you, damn you, damn you!”

Matthew had thought of everything: a clipboard, a virgin

sheet of bond, a pen. He turned Crystal unceremoniously to untie her hands. Except for a brief pause in which to massage her wrists, the tethered beauty lost no time in busying herself with the pen. Matt scanned the result, satisfied. “Did a better job than I expected. The sole of your foot must really be tender.”

“Oh, Matthew, that’s an awful place to whip a girl. Don’t ever whip me there again. I’ll do anything.” The tethered beauty watched her master fold the missive and place it away in an envelope. Then, pathetically, she inquired hopefully, “You’re not going to whip me any more, are you? I mean, I’ve done what you’ve asked.”

“We made our bargain, Crystal. You wrote that letter because you did not want me to whip the sole of your foot again. I didn’t say anything about stopping your whipping. It’s really not half as bad as I’m sure you think it is. I may let Tracy talk to you about the punishment of girls. She’s an expert. But not right now. You and I and the whip have a little ways to go.”

The dungeon brooded impartially upon them all: the man who whipped, the girl whose flesh absorbed the cuts of the thong, and the hobbled maiden who stood in a conflict of emotions and watched. To Crystal, it seemed forever. Once more she lost all count of time and immersed herself simply into pain. She had long since cast dignity aside. Her exclamations became more contemporary. The whipping continued, the snap, the impact, the screams, each followed

in an ordered sequence. Crystal believed herself doomed. Tracy felt only a profound sympathy. Girl flesh is tender and may share another's wounds.

Tracy was unsure about the shirt, but it did make the visible portion of herself respectable. She sat with Matthew in the car as he drove to deliver Crystal's fateful note. Her bare and shackled feet were comfortably out of sight. She was still trembling and was not sure if it was in sympathy with Crystal's whipped skin or with the implacability Matthew had exhibited in the infliction of his whip. Tentatively, she asked, "Matthew darling, you won't ever whip me like that, will you?"

"Yes, I would."

"I don't believe you. I think you're just being deliberately difficult. And anyway, I'd never give you cause to do anything so awful."

"You never can tell, love."

"What are you going to do to Crystal next?"

"I've been thinking about that," Matthew said musingly as the little car sped past Honeysuckle and Hawthorne. "The thing that hurts Crystal most is shame. She's suffering it right now, laying on the stone with tied hands and her feet way up in the air. She loathes untidiness, not that she ever did anything to make any place tidy herself, she always had servants. But that's a way to get to her. I'll use it." Matthew

turned to the adoring girl beside him. “That doesn’t mean I’m going to use the same things on you, pet. Gosh, for Pete’s sake, hell, stop identifying with that silly creature! I don’t want you looking threadbare the next several days.”

“Do I have to watch her every punishment?”

“Don’t tell me you don’t want to! After what she did to you…! Damn it, girl, I’ve thought of handing you the whip.”

“I don’t want to punish her, Matt. Please don’t make me. I’d much sooner you do it, if it has to be done. I’ll watch if you want, but I’ll warn you. I’ll feel sorry for Crystal. I just can’t help it.”

“Kind heart and coronets.” Matthew mocked. “But I love you—you’re sweet. I’ll have to think up the most special punishments for you.”

Tracy had to be content. She wished Crystal in some distant place and far away. Even a punished and tied up Crystal was still a menace in her book. She had sampled Crystal’s imprisonment and glimpsed the determination behind the lovely facade. But there was nothing she could do. She knew herself a flotsam on a tide. She supposed that the essence of slavery, that she could influence nothing, certainly nothing in Crystal’s favor. There might come other ways, but not with Matthew’s determination that Crystal should pay a bill. She sighed and said, “Darling, I can’t possibly get out of the car like this.”

“You don’t have to. I’ll run in with the letter and make sure it falls into the right hand. I’ll play the country squire bit, that makes everything right over here.” He chuckled. “I’d love to have her servants see what I’m going to do with her, but since that can’t be managed, I’m going to have to be satisfied with just you.” He glanced at her sharply. “And don’t earn yourself a punishment. It’s Crystal I’m after.”

Tracy nestled close. It felt so good to belong to Matt and to have his possession of her again. She was not sure Crystal deserved all she was going to get, but at least the British deserved something.

If the whipping of the noble skin she had just witnessed failed to satisfy their master, well, there was nothing she could do about it, except to be grateful it was not her own. Being Mrs. Matthew Marsh was going to be exciting. She could very well be whipped or put in the pillory for the morning and then taken to a ballroom after dinner. Tracy surveyed this condition undismayed. She could hardly wait.

“You’re still learning yourself, love. It’s been surprisingly little time since I first set hands on you. I couldn’t be more pleased. I mean, the way you’ve adapted, the way you’ve picked up my thing and made it yours. Do you have one of your own that we could mingle in?”

“Only you, Matt. You’re my fantasy.” Thoughtfully, she added, “How do you feel about a son—an heir for Castle

Angus?"

"Oh, I've thought of it. That's part of what I'm not certain about in this place. It demands so much. It imposes so many obligations. If you and I produce an heir, it's going to be well into the future. I want you for myself for a long, long time."

"If our first try is a girl," Tracy giggled, "I bet she's born well marked or with a little set of leg irons on her ankles. Want to bet?"

Crystal's mansion was formidable, and so were her servants, but the note was delivered and accepted, and they were on their way home before Matthew mused, "Y'know, sweetheart, there's something about this country and these big houses that sets its mark on you. I'm not a bit sure I could go through with this in the United States. There I suspect I would think it silly, or suppose the police might become involved, but here it's the most natural thing in the world to snatch Crystal out of her life, just as she snatched you. Do you realize that in this modern Tuesday afternoon you have witnessed the whipping of a girl? You stood and watched it happen in an old, old dungeon, beneath an old, old castle. It is all very gothic and absolutely right. I blame this atmosphere for my fantasy. You can blame it too. Every time you hurt, you can think of all the other maidens who hurt in the same place, in the same way centuries ago. I suspect the whipping of plebeian bottoms has long been a sported pastime of the British nobility. I suspect many a

British house maid has served the soup upon the sideboard while bearing a burning bottom." Matthew grinned and resumed his musing. "I'm often tried to find some significance in this somewhere. There almost has to be. But I'm damned if I can I've read about it a lot, and for a man to whip a girl's bottom seems to be a universal wish. Most men can't afford it. I'm one of the lucky ones."

"It's just because you want a girl to act the same as when she's having a climax," Tracy said with finality. "There's nothing mysterious about it, Matt. When you whip me or Crystal, you make an orgasm go on and on. Girls don't feel the same way about men. Girls are quite satisfied to have the male do what he does to them. Sure, they often wish he could keep on doing it a lot longer, and I suppose this is what he wishes too. We're simply greedy." Tracy paused a moment to think. "Probably the girl gets it because she's underneath. It's the man who does things to her. Except in cute loveplay. She doesn't do things to the male. She's on the receiving end. I'm sure that's the answer."

They found the honorable Crystal as they had left her. She was pleased to see them. She omitted to mention it, she simply glared. Her unbound leg had fallen limply over her wealed bottom. Its twin was still tautly elevated, the bindings on her wrists were visible and still quite obviously intact. Matt wasted no time, but dragged from obscurity a strange framework shaped from round iron. To Tracy it looked like a cage but was far too open for such a purpose. Both girls watched with interest as he unlocked a padlock

to disclose it as being hinged, one half of it falling away to the floor. He untied the recently whipped girl and, as though she was a doll, sat her within the hinged half with an abrupt admonition. “Keep still if you know what’s good for you.” He then slowly raised the hand he had freed, making certain that Crystal’s ankles, feet, and legs were intruded within circles provided. Then, as he raised it further, she obeyed his nod of command, thrust her hands and arms into similar circlets above. Matt snapped the contrivance shut to make it instantly take form and purpose. Its joining at Crystal’s neck completed a neat circuit which became her collar. The padlock was reinserted and clicked shut to make the nude whipped girl captive without pain. Crystal simply sat erect, her neck held immovable by the metal collar and lock, her arms thrust through appropriate loops of heavy iron, her feet the same. She could withdraw nothing. She could scratch her nose or rub her feet together, but that was all. She glared up at a smiling Matthew and angrily demanded, “You don’t intend to leave me in this thing, do you?”

“Why not? It’s neat, effective, and humane—a perfect restraint for spoiled young bitches like yourself.”

“I am not a spoiled bitch! I am the honorable Miss Crystal Maitland!”

“That’s exactly what I said. A few days in this neat little frame will do you a world of good.”

“A few days! You have to be joking! If I’m not home pretty soon, you’ll have the police around your ears.” Crystal turned her attention to Tracy. “For goodness sake, Tracy, tell this ridiculous man how impossible this is! Try and make him see some sense. Don’t just stand there smirking.”

Tracy would concede a smile, but not a smirk. Not that it mattered. She was finding it difficult not to be amused by Crystal’s predicament. She found it far more to her taste than watching the blonde girl whipped. This was indeed nobility brought low! Confidently, she exclaimed, “I’m sorry, Crystal! I can’t. I belong to Matthew. I can’t give him orders. You belong to him too.”

Crystal snorted and contented herself with a delightful vision of Matthew’s slave girl once more in her possession and being rewarded for her failure to offer aid by a punished pelt. A naked Tracy, pleading and screaming, would be the very least Crystal was prepared to accept in retribution for the indignity she now endured. Matt sounded insufferably bored.

“We’ll be leaving you, Crystal. Give you a nice quiet time for reflections.”

“You can’t possibly leave me like this. It’s an outrage! Let me loose!”

“So long, sweetheart. Be seeing you.”

Crystal watched them go. She had an urgent need of a dra-

matic gesture or word, but the frame defeated both. Irritably, she performed every motion she could discover with both her hands and feet. For a minute she resembled something caught in a spider's web, waving its appendages in a frantic but hopeless search for a lost freedom. When she relapsed into a quiet acceptance of her lot, she let her mind drift into pleasant visions, quite impossible but deeply satisfying, of Matthew Marsh delivered to her bound and naked. She would thrash him again and again until he became sufficiently humble to crawl and kiss her feet. So far she had only practiced such delights with females, but she was certain a male would respond similarly. It might simply take longer, but at this moment Crystal was prepared to devote as much time as need for to such a noble task. She sighed dolefully. It would never happen. It was a delight she would have to forego, but she compensated within her mind by continuance of the dream in which Matthew, by some miraculous strength, freed himself, reversed their roles, thrashed her soundly, then ravished her with such a fierce intensity she came close to climax within the frame. The honorable Crystal always thought of herself only as ravished. Nice girls belonging to the nobility are never raped. The word belonged to the lower classes, and they probably deserved it. From that point, Crystal deified on to consider ways of punishing what she saw as Tracy's disloyalty. She was well aware of the effect on Matthew's slave girl of their lovemaking. Tracy had been passionate, avidly fierce. Crystal had entertained high hopes of a continuing relationship. She

cursed her carelessness in the way she had allowed Matthew to follow her downstairs and reclaim his love. In spite of some obvious benefits, men were simply a nuisance. They interfered and diverted girls from their proper destiny. Crystal sniffed and wondered what it would feel like to be free. She strove to lean forward and ascertain if her pubic patch was as blatantly evident as she feared it was, but the collar held her erect. It was all defeating and demeaning. Someone would surely pay!

Crystal thought much of freedom, but very little of escape. Matthew would have to release her sooner or later, so escape was not vital in her plans. What she was concerned with was what she herself would do with freedom when it came. Probably the most sensible thing would be to obtain another girl from the same sources she had used before and vent her anger upon innocent flesh. But that would not be the same as venting it upon Tracy's guilty skin. She toyed with the idea of employing plug uglies to kidnap Matthew and deliver him to her as she had dreamed, but dismissed the delight as impractical. There would be too many involved, and the police could easily come knocking at her door. No, it was Tracy who would have to pay the bill.

10

Love Me Always

“OFF WITH THAT SHIRT, Tracy. You needn’t think you’re going to keep wearing it. And there’s something else you’ve been getting away with too.”

Tracy unconcernedly divest herself of Matthew’s loaned covering. It had been a pleasant change, and she rather suspected it had been becoming, its dangling tails creating a delectable and tantalizing promise of joys beneath. But, for her, nakedness had become natural. Once more nude, she extended her hands and watched them joined with the gleaming chrome of Matthew’s handcuffs. All was back to normal. “You can’t possibly keep Crystal in a whole week, Matthew. Somebody’s going to come looking.”

“Well, maybe five days. What I ought to do is ship her off to that sugar mill in Santos.”

“Oh, Matt! I wouldn’t wish that on any girl. It was awful.”

“If you’re so damned sorry for her, how ’bout I send you back along with her to keep her company?”

Tracy shuddered. She would never forget the sugar mill and the chain upon her wrists. She had no doubt that a day of hard labor in that dismal place might benefit Crystal immensely, but from the safe security of Castle Angus it was something not to be considered for either of them.

Instead, she asked demurely, “You’ve got Crystal well looked after, what are you going to do with me?”

“Anything in mind, love?”

“You could take me up to London.”

“Could I now! Feeling your oats, eh?”

“Well, what if I am? If I overstep the rules, you’ll whip me to bring me back in line. I can’t go wrong.”

Matthew laughed. She was a delight. It would be amusing to take her to the big stores and the jeweler. They would buy some sparkling gem large enough to fill her navel, though how it could be anchored there he did not know. A gem-studded collar for her neck would be an asset for her loveliness, but that would have to be made, it was unlikely they would find one in a shop window. Casually, he suggested, “How about tomorrow after I get little flossy downstairs nicely fixed for the day?”

“Oh, Matt!” Tracy was ecstatic. “Will you really!”

“If you behave yourself. I’m taking you up to bed now, but not to sleep,” he chuckled lewdly. “See if you can earn yourself a trip. There’s just one snag.”

Tracy wrinkled her nose at her lord and master. “You know perfectly well I’ll give you good value upstairs,” she said acidly. “But now you’ll have to take off the handcuffs and leg irons. You only just locked the handcuffs on. Really, you

men!”

“Thoughtless, eh?” Matt chuckled at her concern. “You can keep the handcuffs. I don’t think we’ve tried it that way. I take off your leg irons while we’re enjoying ourselves, but I’m not sure I’ve fucked a handcuffed girl. Let’s try it. The snag I was speaking of was how do I keep you handcuffed or leg-ironed on a trip to the city?”

Tracy delivered her finest sniff. “That’s your worry, Matt. After all, I’m only your slave girl. It’s not for me to tell you how I should be chained.”

“I’d take you with the cuffs on your wrists,” Matthew mused thoughtfully, “but that would just mean trouble. No use pushing our luck. What we need is something out of sight. How about a wire band around your belly?”

“Wouldn’t it hurt?”

“Hmmmm, well, tight enough so you’d know you had it on —a constant reminder.” Matthew kissed her and bit her left nipple gently. “I rather like the idea, so that’s what it’s going to be. You can think of arguments to dissuade me while we go upstairs. Come along.”

Tracy allowed herself to be picked up and carried. Her loins were on fire and her mind seethed in speculation. But it was not about the wire.

It was Crystal’s second dismal night. If it had not been for the collar around her neck, she would have preferred to

stay in the frame, but she endured release and the rechaining of her limbs without complaint. It was the same rusty, heavy, ugly chains as Matt had locked upon her the night before. She stood erect and angry as metal bit and locks snapped, contenting her only with reproachful glances, sighs, and occasional, “I wish you’d consider. You’re making a terrible mistake.” But, after an uncommunicative, Matt had gone. The honorable Crystal Maitland ate the dog biscuit. For her, it was bitter as gall as she remembered the advertisements boasting of benefits to canine teeth while her own had difficulty in breaking off anything to chew. She could not get the biscuit in the glass, so had to content herself with pouring droplets of water upon its surface on the bench. It was unsatisfactory dining. The covered pail was an affront she determined to remember all her life. Her collar and chain allowed her just enough latitude to reach it. Someone would pay for this! She assured herself in the best Victorian manner that no one could do this to Crystal Maitland and get away with it. Despite these impositions, the fire within her belly turned bright and strong.

Morning brought only fresh apprehension, which was only partly allayed when it was Tracy and no one else who opened the big door. The slave girl was obviously uncomfortable about her errand, but she delivered a cup of coffee and a fresh dog biscuit with such panache as she could contrive. Crystal refused the dog biscuit. She could not possibly eat such an object with someone looking, but

she drank the coffee gratefully. She suspected it was more than she would have got from Matthew. With the last drop gone from a tilted cup, she instantly demanded, “Get me out of here!”

“You know I can’t do that. I’m as much Matthew’s slave as you are.” Tracy smiled placatingly. “But I suppose prisoner is a better word for you. I’m terribly sorry about everything. I don’t think you’re going to like me. Matthew ordered me down here to do something nasty to you. He’s going to inspect whatever I do, and if he doesn’t think it’s severe enough, then I get punished. Crystal, don’t ask me to tie your hands together or something mild and silly, please.”

“The thing for you to do is get these chains off me and you can run away with me. We’ll both be safe.”

“No, we won’t. I don’t have the key to these leg irons, even if I wanted to be a traitor, but I couldn’t run with you. I can’t run at all.”

“If I ever get my hands on you again, Tracy, you’ll be sorry.”

“But it’s not my fault! You seem to think Matt will do anything I ask. Well, he won’t! He’s a real man and won’t take anything from us girls.”

“Well, what’s the bad news? What are you going to do to me?”

“I don’t know!” Tracy wailed “That’s the trouble. I have to

choose something. Why don't you help instead of just beefing all the time?"

"I refuse to help anybody torture me. I'm not that stupid."

"Well, I only asked. You know a lot more about this sort of thing than I do. If I just stuck you in the pillory or something conventional like that, I'm liable to be punished myself. Damn it, Crystal, I'm trying to be innovative without being cruel. Why can't you help? Mention a few things and we'll discuss them."

"This is bizarre. You're asking me to be my own executioner. Go and tell him you can't handle me. He better come down and do it himself."

"He wouldn't believe me. I'd get my bottom caned. Matt gives me five strokes every time he's displeased."

"Well, go and get your five strokes then! But, for Pete's sake, have the man come down here."

Tracy sighed. "How about the pillory?" she asked hopefully. "You only have to stand in it all day."

"All day! Only! You're out of your mind."

"Well, how 'bout those stock things, where you sit on a bench and stick your feet in the holes and they get locked in when the bar comes down?"

Crystal was suddenly aware of possibilities. She suddenly

realized, quite unwittingly, the girl whose duty it was to be mean to her had struck a happy chord. To sit, even though the bench be hard, was better than to stand. Grudgingly, she said, “Oh, all right. Hook me in that. Tracy, don’t you understand how awful this is for me? I don’t know whether I’m on my head or on my heels. I can’t really believe any of it.”

“I couldn’t either, Crystal.”

Tracy was cautious. She made the captive girl sit down and extend her feet for the heavy irons to be unlocked, but she left the captive wrists heavily shackled. No doubt Crystal could use that weight of iron as a weapon, but Tracy was wise enough to watch. She would not be caught napping. Sulkily and with bad grace, Crystal went to the machine in whose grip she would spend the day. She sat down and set her ankles in the slots with the air of someone about to be beheaded. Thankfully, Tracy lowered the upper half section and clicked the padlock shut. She had no key. Matt had the key, so Crystal would have to sit there and await his pleasure. She wondered if she should tell the captive girl the manner in which she and Matt would spend their day, but decided it was too unkind. She said nothing. It was Crystal who popped the question. “What are you two doing today?”

“Matt’s taking me to London.”

Crystal sat as though stunned. “You mean you two twerps

are going up to town for a wonderful day and leaving me like this!"

"Well, yes, but don't take on so. I mean, he will let you loose sometime. This isn't forever."

The captive girl seated on the hard bench, her wrists still chained, her ankles firmly clasped and wide apart within the oaken beams, slowly digested the bad news. Determined to salvage any gain she could, she said petulantly, "Well, you're off to enjoy yourself, the least you can do is give me a little pleasure before you go."

"Matt thought of that. I'm forbidden. If he should come down and catch us doing that, we would both be in a lot of trouble."

"I'll risk it. Come along, don't quibble."

Tracy sadly shook her head. Crystal was a handful, and she was thankful the captive girl was well secured. Crystal acknowledged this fact with a fresh demand. "Well, the least you can do is take this collection of old iron off my wrists. It weighs a ton."

"I'm afraid you have to wear it, Crystal. Matt would not approve." Tracy stood and kissed two angry lips, which soon turned hot and moist and demanding. She tore away and fled, fearful of what she and Crystal might do together. She slammed the door with an eloquent finality.

Crystal stared at the closed portal and the various facets of

her confinement in disgust. But she did not stare long. Within minutes, the door opened and Matthew entered, followed by a visibly upset Tracy. Matthew circled the seated captive, then barked, “Damn it, Tracy, the girl’s having a holiday like this! She can sit and dream, or go to sleep. You call this punishment?”

“I thought it was,” Tracy said lamely. “It’s what they used to do to people when they misbehaved, isn’t it?”

Matthew wasted no words. He took the heavy metal links and hands from Crystal’s wrists and threw them aside with a clatter. Both girls watched his every move with apprehensive eyes. “Hands behind your back, Crystal,” he ordered roughly. “You can cozen Tracy, but not me. I want you uncomfortable, not going to sleep.”

Matthew more savagely tied the noble wrists. Crystal had the good sense to keep silent. Tracy watched in rueful dismay. The wrists crossed and bound were then drawn up by irritated male hands to a tether Matthew drew down from the rear and from above. When this was tightened, Crystal’s hands and arms rose and she was forced not to bend forward as was her natural inclination, but to sit erect. Her bare arms extended back from her shoulders at about that level. With her hands and arms thus pinioned, and with her ankles safely locked within the stocks, she was betwixt and between. The focal point of her new distress was her shoulders and her wrists. “I can’t possibly sit like this all day,” she said with desperate finality. “Matthew,

be reasonable."

It was the only protest Crystal made. Now it was her turn to watch in astonishment as Matthew demanded, "Touch your toes, Tracy! If we're going to town, we've got no time to mess around. You'll just get five quick ones."

It would be bad, but was less than she had expected. Tracy did as she was bid. She touched her toes, stiffened her knees, arched her back, and rose her already wealed bottom invitingly. As the five strokes impacted her flesh, she did no more than sway her hips and sometimes bend her knees, only to instantly resume position. If this was all she had to suffer in return for a trip to London, she would suffer it gladly. The pain was fierce and brutal, but she endured, tight lipped, the entire infliction without protest. The irons had been taken from her feet in preparation for their journey. She was entirely free. Ruefully, she considered the situation as coming close to childhood days in a century now past. The command of "touch your toes" was obviously as real for Matthew as for his grandfather. When her punishment was done, she stood rubbing her scalding cheeks and exchanged glance of commiseration with Crystal. She infinitely preferred the short, savage punishments she had received to what Crystal faced throughout her day. Matthew grasped her arm and led her once more from the room.

Left alone, Crystal was close to tears. They were tears of chagrin, self-pity, and a genuine conviction that Matthew

did not love her the least bit. He was treating her cruelly, she was ill used and her future bleak. The several days in which Matthew might keep her captive loomed as forever. She knew it useless to struggle, even if she defeated the ropes, the oaken stocks would hold her tight, but the ropes laughed at any effort she could make. She would endure her strained punishment for the day. Most haughtily, she wished she had left Castle Angus and its occupants alone.

As usual, there was no track of time for the stressed girl. It could have been one or two hours before the door once more opened. All Crystal knew was by the time she was deeply immersed in pain and longing to be free. It was Blessing. He moved forward with his dignified butler's gait to where he could view to the best advantage the punished nakedness now looking up at him with a faint hope. His tone was gravely concerned. "I'm distressed to discover you in this condition, madam."

"So am I. Let me loose."

"The thought crossed my mind, Miss Maitland. I fear you are in some sort of discomfort."

"Blessing, I'm in agony. Please, let me loose."

"Such is my intention, madam."

Crystal glared in amazement. Hope flared. Blessing was too good to be true. She scarcely believed her ears. Fearfully, she asked, "You really mean you're going to get me out of

this infernal thing and let me go?"

"I do not entirely approve of the young master's activities, madam." Blessing was pompous and was going to take his time. "I fear he has spent too much time abroad. It would appear he is unable to distinguish between the lower orders and the upper classes. He should not have subjected you to this indignity."

"Blessing, I love you. Please hurry."

Blessing had never hurried in his life, and he did not hurry now. Perhaps he took his own carnal pleasure in what he viewed. He had seen many a naked popsie come and go in Castle Angus, but he had never before examined a stripped noble woman. Perhaps he was making comparisons. It was a full minute before he searched for and discovered the means of lowering the tether to relieve Crystal's pain. His fumbling with knots of the cords binding her wrists would once have brought angry admonition from Crystal's lips, but she had learned a lot. She maintained an electric silence while her hands were freed. Moving steadily forward in his task, as might a battleship or aircraft carrier split the waves in firm determination, he then unlocked the stocks and raised the lower bar. He did it with something of a flourish, as though returning Crystal's nude nobility was a moment to remember. "There we are, madam. I must say this incident disturbs me deeply. It may affect a breach in my relations with Mister Marsh, but I know my duty. A young lady of your quality should not be thus

confined. I will escort you to the bedroom where you will discover statable garments. I will then drive you home."

To Crystal, Blessings's loyalty to the landed gentry was no more than was to be expected of him. Old Angus had confined his fun and games to females of the lower classes. Enforcibly placing herself within a dungeon, Matthew erred. No doubt, Blessing was right. Matthew had been too long in foreign parts. The honorable Crystal rearranged all her thinking and herself. It was obviously absurd, at this juncture, to feel ashamed of being naked before a butler. Majestically, she declared, "I shall not forget this, Blessing. I appear to be quite without funds in this condition, but—"

"Quite so, madam. There is no need of a gratuity. I am simply doing my duty. Perhaps you may at a latter date be able to explain to Mister Matthew the distinction of our class system."

"But you don't mind him messing around with young Tracy, eh?"

"Miss Tracy is not of the nobility, madam. I'm sure she is an estimable young woman. I regard her favorably. We must be charitable to those from across the Atlantic."

Crystal had massaged chafed wrists and exercised wrenched shoulders long enough. If she continued these pleasurable motions longer, she might well be accused of providing Blessing with a visual reward for his services. "Lead the way, Blessing," she said briskly "What I need

now is clothes."

For Tracy Trevor, the wire around her tummy was a delightful giggle. She stood in quivering excitement while Matthew solemnly measured and used a pair of pliers. Her bottom was burning in an intensity which would have distressed her had the circumstances been different, but which now simply added to her excitation. As the wire indented her tummy and Matthew slowly tightened, she became a very happy but trembling bundle of feminine anticipation of delights to come. By the time she had ejaculated, "Oh, oh, oh, Matt, that's awful tight," the pliers had been brought into play and the ends of the wire snipped off short. Matt's voice was caustically amused. "Just to keep you aware, sweetheart. I can't have London making you forget who you belong to and what you are."

Tracy said nothing. The wire was tighter than she would have wished. In fact, she would have been happy not to have worn it at all. Looking down at her nudity, she discovered the offending item well imbedded in her middle to a point where unless she stood in front of a mirror she could not see it. She felt it tentatively and reached around to feel the twisted fastening she could never undo herself without help. But, impulsively, she swirled around and implanted a kiss on her master's forehead and brightly asked, "May I dress now, darling?"

Walking with a wired middle was a new experience, a quite unforeseen embarrassment to a maiden whose waist

was thus cinched. By some peculiar magic of its own, it compelled her hips to alternate in a peculiar fluctuation of response which Tracy was certain had the visual effect of a Victorian lady rustling her bussle, or the streetwalker's much publicized swing of hips. It was also the strangest of feelings and intensely sexual. She stopped and looked back doubtfully. "Matt, this is going to—well, it's going to make me go over the brink."

"Excellent, when you feel it coming, I'll look the other way if you're embarrassed. I expect if you climax once, you'll climax twice. Give you something to look forward to."

Tracy knew herself a feminine entity to which things were happening. There was an atmosphere of a pending portents. When Matt produced the handcuffs, she was not surprised, nor did she complain. They were evidently a token only, for he locked them in front to leave her a comfortable freedom. Since she was already dressed, they went instantly to the car. Tracy wiggled herself in comfortably, ignoring the biting wire, and clanked her handcuffs mischievously. "Are you going to have me walk around the city in these, darling?"

"Take 'em off when we park the car, pet. By that time, the wire will have taken over. You don't have to worry about being a good little girl."

Tracy was abundantly happy, but in her happiness as the car rolled through the English countryside, she spared a

thought for her former mistress, now Matthew's prisoner. Tracy felt guilty about her own happiness in comparison to Crystal's travail. She had a vivid mental image of the tractioned maiden with ankles fast locked in the wooden stocks. It would be a bad, bad day for Crystal. Tremulously, she asked Matthew an obvious question. "Matt, what are you going to do about Crystal?"

"Make her damn good and sorry for what she did to you."

"I'm willing to forgive her if you'll forgive her too, Matt. She's in love with you, y'know, and girls do crazy things when they're in love." Tracy giggled. "You see, she doesn't really regard me as a person. I'm just someone from across the ocean who doesn't really count—just a pretty little feminine body to whip."

Matthew grunted. "What you are, sweetheart, is a pretty little feminine something or other with a wire band around her tummy, handcuffed wrists, and prospects of a lifetime of slavery. Forget the honorable Crystal."

"Matt, I wish you'd set her free tomorrow. Will you?"

"If you're willing to serve the rest of her sentence. She's got four more days. They'd be rough."

"Oh, Matt, you always twist things and get me into a situation where I've got to get my bottom whipped or something. I'll spend the rest of her sentence if you really want me to, but I do think it would be wiser for us both if you'd

let her go. If you hurt her too badly, she's going to be enemy for the rest of our lives."

"You two have got a love affair going, eh?" Matt's voice was gruffly male. "What did the damn girl do to you while she had you prisoner?"

"You men always think that," Tracy said sulkily. "Just because I feel sorry for her!"

Matt's silence was as sulky as Tracy's words. With a sideways grin to soften the impact, he enumerated, "Here's what she's scheduled for. Day one, hung up by her wrists plus twenty strokes. Day two, she spends in the little cage and gets another twenty strokes. Day three, she lays on her back with one ankle pulled high enough up to get her bottom off the floor, and she also gets another twenty. Day four, she gets what she's getting now, except that her ankles won't be in the stocks. She'll be standing up straight and her arms will be a lot higher up than today. She'll get awful tired of it by the time the day is done and then at the end of it the usual twenty." Matt laughed at the consternation on Tracy's face. "That ought to teach the young lady a lesson or two."

"All right," Tracy said, "you can do those things to me, but let her go tomorrow morning or even this evening when we get home. Please?"

The car purred on with its occupants silent. Matt was busy with his thoughts, and Tracy was trembling with the fear of

having said too much. Her wire belt burned steadily, cautioning her to watch her words.

The jeweler raised his eyebrow slightly at Matthew's requests. The collar and wristlets were easy, for the waistband and ankles, it was necessary to accept Matt's carefully taken measurements. Blushing throughout, Tracy was allowed to pick the jewels by which her person would be embellished. Delivery was promised at an early date, but for a sum which left the captive maiden shattered. If Matthew thought that much of her…

But their day was not a success. Lunch was a mistake. It increased the tension of the wire around Tracy's tummy. She longed most urgently to plead for release, but there was something about Matthew's mien to deter. He was obviously heavy with thought, and his slave girl had no doubt it concerned both Crystal and herself. She made only one try. "Matt, this wire's hurting really bad, much worse than before. Please cut it off. Please?"

"Sorry, love. Left the pliers back home, and anyway, the pain will do you good. Help balance things up with your dear little Crystal. You'll feel less guilty."

So he was in a snit! Tracy resoled to allow the wire to cut her in two before she would ask again. But when Castle Angus came into view, she was tremendously thankful. But everything, including the burning agony of the wire, was obliterated beneath Blessing's factual account of his breech

of trust. Blessing let them in the huge front door with his usual grave greeting, then lost no time in admitting his sin.

Tracy held her breath, waiting for fireworks, but Matt said little.

He absorbed the news as though half expecting it, dismissing Blessing with a curt, “I’ll see you later.” Then, turning to Tracy, he said, “Seems like there’s two of you. Take your clothes off and bring handcuffs to my office.”

Tracy obeyed, hastening in her need to end this tension before it destroyed something good. When she presented herself, Matt was busy dialing. He motioned her with one hand and said curtly, “Handcuff yourself behind your back, and I want them tight. Remember, tight!”

Tracy obeyed. She knew something was brewing, but could only guess at what it might be. She made the metal circlets tight enough upon her wrists to hurt, and hoped it pleased him to find them thus. Then she listened aghast while Matt quietly explained to the girl at the other end of the line that she, Crystal Maitland, would return to Castle Angus instantly, or a slave girl named Tracy Trevor would be punished constantly until she did. Matthew Marsh hung up the receiver and turned to survey the quaking nakedness with somber gaze. His voice was dull. “She’ll come. She’ll be right over.”

While Matthew peeled the cutting wire from her flesh, to make her squeal with the pain of it, he continued in the

same quiet monotone. “She’ll come and she’ll suffer. There’s only one reason a girl would do that: she’s in love with you. On the other hand, you’re willing to suffer for her. The fact is you’re a couple of lesbians,” Matthew announced as though the words were venom.

“But, Matthew!” Tracy was distraught. “Don’t you see, it isn’t that at all, it’s only common humanity. I don’t want Crystal tortured and she doesn’t want me tortured.” She sought desperately for words to aid her plea. “Can’t you see, you idiot, we’re both in love with you. All you have to do is choose which one of us you want, and the other will have to make the best of it.” She paused unhappily, then added, “I thought you’d chosen me…?”

Crystal’s face when she entered the office was a mixture of emotions. She was flushed and breathing heavily, and looked from one to the other uncertainly. She took instant note of Tracy’s nakedness and her hands so tightly cuffed behind her back. Without preamble, she said, “Matthew, you’re making a terrible mistake.”

“That may be.” His voice remained flat and with little emotion. “In the meantime, strip and put these handcuffs on the same as Tracy has hers.” He tossed the shining metal at the startled girl. “Go on, do it, don’t stand there like an idiot!”

Tracy Trevor watched in amazement as Crystal Maitland removed her clothes. It was as though the authority of

Matthew Marsh had somehow doubled and trebled its impact. Both girls were totally subject to it and diminished accordingly, they were small girls obeying the harsh order of a relentless guardian. While a naked Crystal struggled awkwardly to handcuff her own wrists behind her back, both Tracy and Matthew stood in silent watchfulness. Each knew they were witnessing a moment neither would forget. When Crystal had punished her wrists in the same way Tracy had punished hers, she stood erect and without saying a word, contrived an immense question mark.

“Are you both helpless?” Matthew’s voice was a sharp bark.

“Yessss.” The reluctant admission was hesitant and loaded with expectancy until Tracy exclaimed, “Matthew, you’re being mean. Neither of us have done anything. I don’ see why you have to get Crystal back over here, surely you don’t intend to punish both of us.”

The male authority swept aside her tentative plea. Matthew sneered, he asked quietly of Tracy, “Do you remember the sugar mill in Santos?”

“Of course I remember it, no girl who’d ever been chained there would ever forget!”

“Well, that’s where the two of you are going.”

Tracy stared in disbelief. Already she could hear the grind of the gears, feel the heat of the climate and the sweating bodies of the chained girls, almost she could feel the

shackle on her wrist as she toiled against the spoke. Before she could speak, Matthew continued.

“It’s easily done. I know a fellow with a plane. I know the bunch in Santos. Crystal will make a deposition in my favor, naming me to manage her affairs during her one month absence.” He chuckled with his first genuine amusement in some time. “I’ll arrange for the two of you to be chained to the same spar, so you can work away there and enjoy each other’s company for the full thirty days, to which I am now sentencing you, then there’ll be the evenings, you can enjoy yourself even more as you’re chained in the waiting room to sleep.” He chuckled. “By the time you return here, you will either be confirmed lesbians, or will hate the sight of each other. Either way, I think the experience will be good for you both. If there’s one thing I detest, it’s a lesbian, and I don’t want one in Castle Angus.”

The two girls stared at each other in dismay, their hands busily twisting and tugging in a hopeless tussle with the steel upon their wrists. Quietly, in an effort at rationale, Tracy pleaded. “Do it to me, Matthew, don’t do it to Crystal. That sugar mill is too awful, and she’d done nothing to deserve it. Matthew, please.”

Matthew ignored her words, grasping two bare arms he propelled two naked and distraught young women down to the barred cell, and thrust them within. He clanged shut the door. Through the bars his voice mocked, “I’ll have a

van here in about an hour to transport you to the plane. I'm really being extremely kind to you. You have the freedom of this cell and can nibble each other to your hearts' content, and just think of the fun you'll have in the sugar mill, close together all day long and then at night you can busy yourselves with lips and tongue." His laugh was bitter. "Don't bother to thank me, you can do that when you get back home after the thirty days." He clanged shut the door, ostentatiously locked it, and waved them a careless good-bye. A moment later, they were alone in a new and different captivity.

"The son of a bitch! He's actually going to do it!" Crystal exclaimed distractedly. "What is this damn sugar mill?"

Tracy told her as briefly as she could. It seemed incredible that that black horrific cavern could once again claim her body, and that of this gorgeous creature who was as helpless as she herself. Quietly, she said, "Crystal, we're in deep, deep trouble."

Two naked girls! Chained! Locked in a cell awaiting transport to a fate in which one of them could scarcely believe! They wrenched feverishly at the handcuffs in a purely instinctive fear. They looked at the bars and at the locked door. Then they stared fixedly at each other.

The van would arrive in an hour.