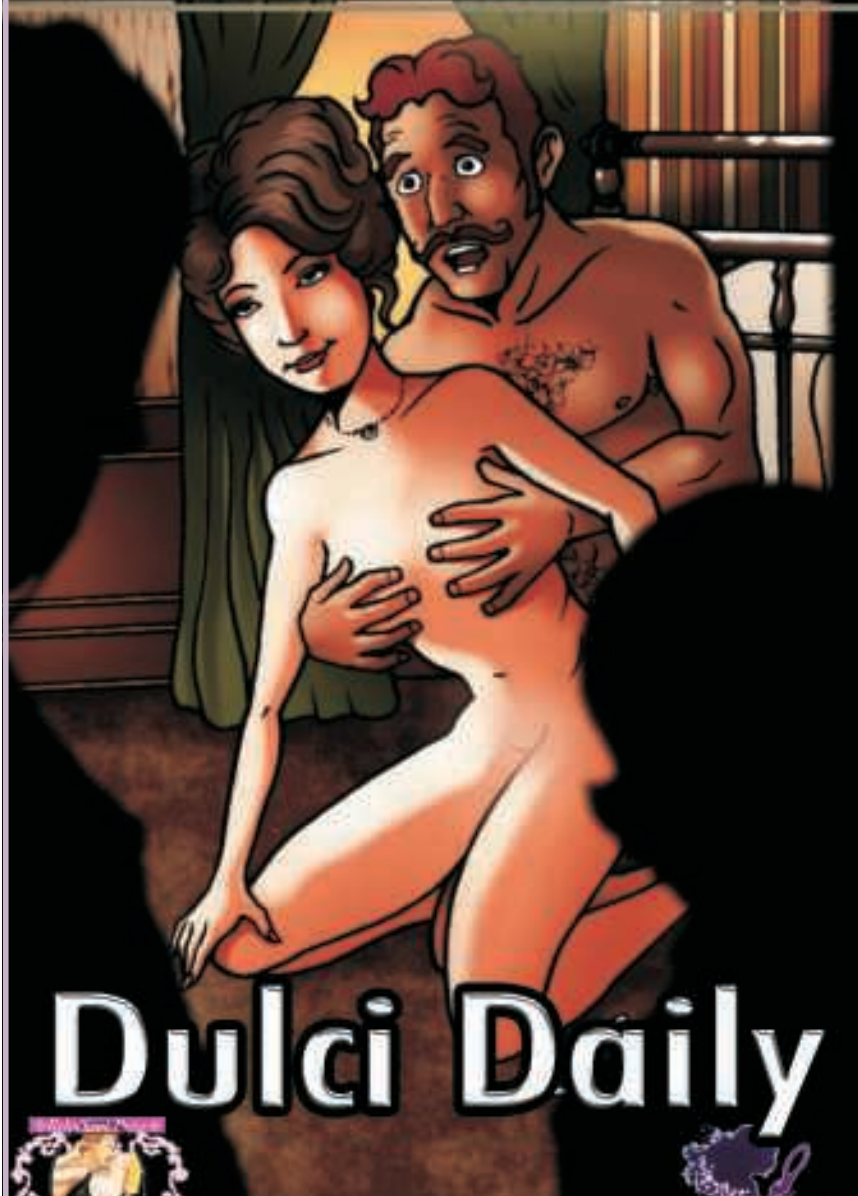


Pauline's Far-Western Adventure



Dulci Daily



An "Adult Tv" Novel



Reluctant Press TV/TS Publishers

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by Dulci Daily

Chapter 1

“You made my breasts too big,” Pauline Spurtridge remarked, casting a loving but critical eye upon Eliot Randwick’s large nude portrait of her in his Beacon Hill studio, for which she had just been posing.

“My dear Pauline,” Eliot replied, “in such matters, it is necessary to strike a delicate balance between realism, on the one hand, and the presumed desires and expectations of the public, on the other. This picture is to be offered to the public for sale. It would never do to portray your breasts, such as they are, with photographic accuracy—as small, deep pink, twin volcanoes rising out of ultra-petite twin milk-white hills. The work of the true artist, as I al-

ways say, must be kept perfectly distinct from that of the mere photographer.”

“And from that of the mere producer of pornography, as well,” Pauline retorted. “You have well captured the *volcanic* aspect, I must say, but at the expense of decency, modesty, and restraint in portraying my breasts as a whole. There is a fine line, which I fear you have crossed, between the proper portrayal of the nude in fine art and a wholly improper appeal to men’s lower natures, in which the police may well take an undesirable interest.”

“Oh, I think not,” said Eliot, putting down his brush. “After all, I haven’t portrayed you receiving such treatment as *this*.” He approached Pauline, lowered his head, and kissed her volcano-like nipple. She gasped with pleasure and clasped his head in her arms, keeping his lips and tongue pressed firmly to her hot little mound.

“Nor,” Eliot went on when he could speak, “have I revealed such conduct as *this* for the delectation of the police.” He slipped his hand between Pauline’s long, tightly crossed thighs, reaching deep in to touch her slender seven-inch member hidden between them. “Oh, Eliot, you mustn’t!” Pauline feebly protested—but she grasped his shoulders only to clutch him to herself, not to push him away.

“You’re right, I mustn’t reveal it for the delectation of the police,” Eliot said. “It is our secret, and ours alone.” Now Pauline’s hand was on his own as he stroked her member.

“Oh, Pauline, you’re not really going to leave me, are you?” Eliot asked. He kissed her fervently on the mouth, and her lips and tongue responded just as if her answer must be “No, never!” When the kiss had ended, though, her words were these: “Yes, Eliot. My mind is made up. I will return to you, but only after my excellent aesthetic adventure in the Far West.”

“How could it ever compare with our astoundingly excellent erotic adventures right here?” Eliot demanded to know.

"I trust it will be of greater interest to the discerning public, when I write my account of it," Pauline said. "Trustworthy booksellers who know well how to keep such things from the eyes of the police, and connoisseurs of fine literature who appreciate the delicate portrayal of the erotic aspects of life, will greatly appreciate the story of a tall, dignified lady from among the better classes of Bostonians, who plays the prim and proper schoolmarm in a burgeoning Far Western city by day, while by night her conduct in that city's finest gentlemen's club distinctly deviates from primness and propriety. It will only increase the interest of the story when it becomes evident that *this* lady has a rather unladylike secret that she keeps securely concealed between her thighs."

Eliot's face showed his anguish, but his words acknowledged his defeat. "Then this will be our final rendezvous before your departure."

"Yes, Eliot. You may wish to see me off at the station tomorrow morning, but only with the utmost public propriety. This will be our last private time together."

Eliot sighed deeply. "Then let us use it to the fullest," he said, "for all it is worth." Eliot stripped off his clothing, embraced Pauline, and kissed her on the mouth again. The tip of his stout, extended member was pressing hard against the base of Pauline's slim concealed one, at the junction of her thighs. He pressed harder, and Pauline admitted him while standing up with her back against the studio wall. His member forged its way through her junction, into the tight, hot gap between her hidden member and her thigh, while Pauline clutched him hard and kissed him fervently on the mouth. When his member was inserted to the fullest into her womanly entryway, Eliot began to thrust, slowly at first, then faster, while Pauline's slender hips began to move in union with his own.

"Oh, Pauline!" Eliot cried when the climactic moment was approaching. "My love! Stay with me! Stay with me forever!" Pauline did not speak, but only moaned in delight, as Eliot's thrusts brought her to the pinnacle of erotic ecstasy, and her sperm

emerged in great spurts from her quivering member behind her close-clenched thighs, beneath her lean, taut, quaking buttocks.

Pauline bathed first after their encounter, and dressed while Eliot bathed. When dressed, in a stylish cream-colored blouse and a long, deep maroon-colored skirt, she sat in the studio and again cast a critical but loving eye on Eliot's portrait of her. Except for the overly large breasts, she thought, it was rather good. Eliot had almost exactly caught the likeness of Pauline's long, slender, pretty face, with her high arched eyebrows, her bright blue eyes, her small snub nose, and her wide, full-lipped mouth. Above her noble-looking forehead, her dark, carefully arranged pompadour gave a distinct impression of dignity, making it clear that she was no cheap harlot who would reveal her nudity to the vulgar masses, but a true lady who would reserve such display for the most discerning connoisseurs of fine art. Even her unrealistically portrayed breasts, Pauline had to admit upon reflection, were not such as to arouse the prurient interests of men of the baser sort, mere gluttons for pornography; they were quite small for a natural-born woman's breasts, and perfectly formed, true aristocrats among breasts. Below them, her waist was shown only slightly narrower, and her hips only slightly wider, than they really were. The junction of her thighs, with her legs demurely crossed, was perfect, looking as if it could really be that of a natural-born woman. Even the most sharp-eyed connoisseur, surely, could never guess what lay concealed beyond that womanly junction.

"Is it not worthy of a place in the finest gallery?" Eliot asked from behind Pauline as he entered the room.

"It is," Pauline agreed. "You may go far in the world of art, Eliot."

"And why may I not go so far with *you* in my life, at my side every step of the way?" Eliot put his arm around Pauline and returned to the attack. "Pauline,

I beg you, reconsider this ill-conceived plan. In the cold light of reality, think what you are proposing to do: to flee to a rough frontier town thousands of miles from civilization, where unimaginable hardships may await you, merely for the sake of aesthetic adventure, and for the sake of the production of a book that must be carefully concealed from the police! I ask you, can you confidently proclaim that to be a rational course of action?"

"My dear Eliot," said Pauline, not directly answering the question, "you are ten years out of date! The 1890 census officially proclaimed that the frontier no longer existed. This is 1900, and I am going to no mere rough frontier town, but to a young and bustling metropolis that will someday equal or surpass Boston itself in grandeur."

"Yes, perhaps in 1976, when our country will be 200 years old and you will be 106—old enough to settle down at last, but too old to enjoy life, if you should live so long."

"Do not tease me, Eliot. I am still young at heart and adventuresome, but no doubt I shall not be so forever. I propose to have suitable adventures that simply cannot be had, without great danger of discovery and disaster, in the prim and stuffy domain of the Boston Brahmins. I imagine that, by 1906, when our country will be 130 years old and I will be 36, I will be in a mood to settle down—with *you*, if you will have me."

"Pauline, you know I will! But *six years!* To ask me to wait six years—an eternity without *you*—Pauline, that would be cruel! It would be vicious! It would be wholly unlike the sweet, kind Pauline I know so well!"

"Well, my adventures and my book may be completed in less than six years. If so, I shall be sure to let you know."

“Eliot!” Pauline cried at the new South Station, the following morning. “How kind of you to come and see me off!”

“My dear Miss Spurtridge,” Eliot said gravely, “it was the least I could do. As for the *most* I could have done, you have already considered and rejected my proposal of *that*.”

“Oh, Eliot, for my sake if not for yours, be gay, not gloomy!” Pauline exclaimed. “Look at me: do you think I shall be able to pass for a Gibson Girl among the fashion-hungry maidens of Pacificum?” She was wearing a big sky-blue hat with flowers, a high-necked cream-colored blouse with subdued puffed sleeves over a swan-bill corset, and a dark blue ankle-length skirt, with black traveling shoes.

“No,” Eliot said. “Your breasts are too small, and so are your hips. The hourglass figure of the true Gibson Girl is distinctly different from yours.”

“My dear Mr. Randwick! As you were so recently saying, it is necessary to strike a delicate balance between realism, on the one hand, and the presumed desires and expectations of the public, on the other. I have always worn the smallest-busted corset that will fit me, in keeping with my slender profile. It would be absurd for me to try to approximate an hourglass figure too closely.”

“Well, you haven’t done *that* absurd thing, at least,” Eliot said, with an objectionable emphasis on “that.” “Perhaps that will be a comfort to you when you recognize the absurdity of your position in the Far West, and you long with all your heart to return to the comforts of Boston, which you have enjoyed in my company.”

“If that happens, I shall be sure to let you know.” Pauline smiled. Eliot did not.

“All aboard for Albany, Buffalo, Cleveland, Chicago, and points west!” the conductor called. Pauline’s baggage was already loaded into the baggage

car. "Good-bye, Eliot," Pauline said, offering her hand. Eliot seemed unsure whether to shake it or to refuse, but at last he politely shook it. Pauline mounted the steps to enter the train. She took a deep breath and stood still for a moment, but then resolutely stepped forward into her new life.

Nothing worthy of note happened as Pauline traversed the hills and valleys of Massachusetts in silence among her fellow passengers, and arrived at Albany where she would change trains. Some time after leaving Albany, while passing through a nondescript portion of upstate New York, Pauline entered the dining car for dinner. On seeing her eating alone, a sharp-eyed gentleman with a handsome mustache stood near her until he caught her eye. She looked away at once, as a proper lady should, but he seized the opportunity to speak.

"I beg your pardon, Miss," he said, "but is it not amazing how different our times are from those of our grandparents, or even our parents? There was a time, not many decades ago, when it would have been deemed unthinkable for a young lady to travel a long distance alone. Today, it seems, it is taken quite in stride."

"Young ladies today, I believe," Pauline said, "are quite capable of taking care of themselves."

"No doubt they are," said the man, "and yet I cannot imagine that the day has yet come when young ladies would disdain the company of refined and gallant gentlemen."

Pauline looked him in the eye, and could see that he was a tomcat on the prowl. She wondered what would be his reaction if he were to find out what lay beneath her skirt and her drawers. She was going to find out, she knew. He excited her, her hidden member was growing longer, and she would not repel him. Her excellent aesthetic adventure was beginning already.

“Some young ladies,” she said with a coy smile, “would disdain the *flirtations* of gentlemen previously unknown to them, no matter how gallant or refined.”

The man drew very close and spoke softly, almost whispering in Pauline’s ear: “Dare I hope that you are not among them?”

Pauline pursed her lips to control her smile. Her heart was beating hard, and her member was fully erect. “Sir,” she said, looking him straight in the eye, “it is more than obvious that you *do dare*.”

“May I—may I dine with you?” the man asked, breathing hard. He started to sit down at Pauline’s table even before she answered: “Certainly, if you wish.”

“May I ask your name, Miss, and your origin and destination?” said the man after ordering his dinner.

“I am Pauline Spurtridge. I come from Boston. My destination is Pacific Heights.”

“The ends of the earth!” the man exclaimed. “May I ask what brings a lovely, and presumably cultured, Bostonian such as yourself on such a remarkable journey?”

“Oh, I am of an adventuresome disposition,” said Pauline, “and they are in need of school-teachers. I shall be instructing high-school students in the rudiments, and perhaps also the finer points, of English grammar and composition.” She smiled and said nothing of what was to be her second occupation, that of a lady companion at the Victoria and Albert Club. “And may I, in turn, ask *your* name, origin, and destination?”

“I am Mark Ruckaby, a manager in the organization of this excellent railroad. I have come from our offices in New York City and Albany, and now I am pressing on to Chicago. You must be aware that, as New York is the capital of finance, Washington of government, and Boston of culture, so Chicago has become the capital of railroads.”

"I have heard as much, though I know little of railroads. This is my first transcontinental journey."

"I would be more than pleased to accompany you as far as Chicago, if you will permit me."

"Certainly, sir. It would be a pleasure." Pauline gave Mr. Ruckaby her biggest, sweetest smile, sure that he would wish to accompany her to the sleeping car that very night.

He did indeed accompany her there, after conversing with her about seemingly almost all things in heaven and on earth. One subject, however, he did not touch upon until he and Pauline were safely in her sleeping compartment with the door locked. They were sitting upon the bed, still clothed, but Pauline was clutching her excited member between her thighs.

"I have heard," he said, "some very remarkable things about the Far West. It is said, you know, that many—er—female impersonators have fled there, where men abound but women are still scarce, in hope of gaining greater acceptance than in the more prudish sectors of the East."

"Is that so indeed?" Pauline's heart thundered in excitement, and yet in fear. Had this man detected her secret, upon so little acquaintance with her? She had trained her voice, she knew, to sound perfectly feminine, and her face had been indiscernible from that of a pretty girl since childhood. Was it her figure? Her shoulders were narrow for a man, yet broad for a woman, and her hips lacked the delectable swelling of a natural-born woman's hips. And if this man had seen through her costume, what might happen when she was teaching school, when it was of the utmost importance that her secret should not be known?

"I believe it is so," said Mr. Ruckaby. "And I have it upon personal knowledge that some female impersonators are quite indistinguishable from the loveli-

est of women—except in regard to a certain something discreetly concealed beneath their skirts.”

“Er—how remarkable!” said Pauline. “I take it, then, that you have been—shall I say—intimately acquainted with some such female impersonators?”

“I have,” he said, “most intimately indeed.” He gazed straight into Pauline’s eyes at close range. “And I dare say I would not be completely surprised to learn, if I *were* to learn, that I have just made the acquaintance of one more.”

“Oh, dear!” Pauline cried out. “Sir, is my secret really so flimsily concealed as all that?”

“It is not,” he assured her. “Only a true connoisseur such as myself, I am confident, could discern it—at least without an exploration such as this.”

Mr. Ruckaby put one arm around Pauline. With the other, he pushed her skirt up. She did not resist him. Soon his hand was between her thighs, stroking her member through her drawers.

“Ah, yes,” he said. “Oh, this is of the finest! No, from your looks I do not think I could have discerned your secret. It was only from your flirtatiousness, upon first meeting me, that I guessed. Few natural-born women, I believe—except for those of the baser sort, which you quite obviously were *not*—I mean that very few, if any, few decent and dignified natural-born women would have been so obviously eager for male companionship at first sight.”

“I have been so from an early age,” Pauline admitted. She brought her hand up to join his own at the junction of her thighs. “My first full encounter with a man occurred when I was 18 years of age, but I dreamed of feminine loveliness and intimacy with a man for years before that. When I was as young as 13—or perhaps even 12, if I recall correctly—I was secretly pretending to have intimate encounters with a boy, pretending to be his lady love in strictest solitude.”

“How delightful!” said Mr. Ruckaby. “Dare I ask if you have ever kissed a man’s virile member?”

"I have," said Pauline. Eliot had permitted her to kiss his member upon occasion, and had ejected sperm into her mouth, but he had never returned the favor. Before that, she had knelt before several men and kissed their members until they ejected sperm, with her own member clutched between her thighs and ejecting sperm in hiding.

"If you will kiss mine," Mr. Ruckaby said, "I will then explore beneath your skirt and return the favor. Will you?"

"I will, and gladly." Pauline knelt before him as he unbuttoned his trousers to expose his member. It was at least as long as her own and much stouter, with a plum-like bulb. Pauline kissed it, delicately at first, and then with increasing fervor, opening her wide mouth to receive his bulb in its entirety. Her fingers caressed his shaft as he began to thrust, making her head bob back and forth as she kissed and licked his bulb all around. Soon he was gasping with delight, and his sperm was emerging into Pauline's welcoming mouth.

"Oh, my dear Pauline, that was most delightful!" Mr. Ruckaby said, as Pauline discreetly spit out his sperm into a kerchief. "Please, quickly, before the excitement of the moment has left me, bend over on the bed, and let me return the favor!"

Pauline complied at once, turning her back on Mr. Ruckaby and supporting herself on the bed with her arms, while her buttocks were raised and her legs extended almost straight to the floor. He dived beneath her skirt, pulled down her drawers, and knelt behind her. Her member, extending below her buttocks behind her thighs, was soon engulfed in his mouth. He pulled it upward, forcing her to lie face flat on the bed, and kissed it vigorously, moving his head back and forth in rapid rhythm. "Oh, sir, you are exciting me beyond belief!" Pauline cried out. Her hips were vibrating in a most unladylike manner, and her sperm emerged into Mr. Ruckaby's mouth in fast, frantic spurts as she reached the apex of ecstasy.

“Oh, my dear Pauline!” he said when he could speak. “This was an act of unbelievable beauty! May I now sleep with you in the nude?”

“You may,” Pauline said.

They entered the nude and lay down together, Mr. Ruckaby behind Pauline, with his hands on her breasts. He was not yet exhausted, and his member was soon erect again. Pauline’s member, too, was soon rigid between her legs. She reached between her member and her thigh to pull his member through, pressing it into the tight gap that served as her womanly entryway, which Eliot had entered so often. Their second climax was less dramatic than the first, but Mr. Ruckaby still had sperm to spend, and before long it was spurting into Pauline’s hand in front of her junction. Pauline herself had little sperm remaining, but every bit of it drained out onto Mr. Ruckaby’s thighs behind her own, while her buttocks moved in waves like the ocean deep.

They slept soundly together and awoke in the morning. Pauline was refreshed, but still felt the effect of the past evening’s exhaustion. They dressed and ate a pleasant breakfast together in the dining car, still conversing on everything that came to mind. When they reached Chicago, Mr. Ruckaby gave Pauline his business card, and implored her to see him again when she was in that city. Then he was gone, and Pauline was left alone to change trains again.

Not until the connecting train had left Chicago, and the immensity of Pauline’s endeavor stared her straight in the face, did the black reaction set in—as it always did, sooner or later, after she had indulged to excess in erotic delights. Now the very thought of such indulgence seemed worthless, or far worse. She had no erotic feelings at all, and she wished she might never have them again, if possible—but she knew it to be impossible. Sooner or later those feelings would creep up on her again; her nipples would rise, her member would lengthen, her heart would beat harder—and all for what?

She did not know. She feared it was all for nothing. This was the worst of it, and this time the black reaction did not soon recede. Darkness came, and Pauline re-entered the sleeping car; she looked out the window of the train and saw nothing, absolutely nothing. Was this all that lay ahead of her in life—and, after that, in death? The pursuit of erotic satisfaction had practically been Pauline's whole purpose in life since she was 13, if not 12; all matters of education and employment had been secondary to that. When she was old, and erotic delights meant nothing to her any more, would she go mad for lack of any purpose in life? Even before that, would she slump almost lifeless into the slough of despond, for want of purpose beyond brief, evanescent ecstasy?

She must not think so. She must get a grip on herself, her *whole* self, not merely her nipples and her member. Alas, an appalling thought was gripping her, and would not let her go: if her whole self must be gripped, how could anything remain of her to grip it? Could she be at once both gripped and gripper? Even if she could, what if she lost her grip?

Thoughts as absurd as this, and worse, plagued Pauline through the sparsely populated immensity of the Great Plains, through the lonely Rocky Mountains, through the wheat fields, pastures, and apple orchards of the eastern region of Pacificum. Only when she was passing through the last long tunnel, under the last range of mountains before her destination, did she muster enough self-control to proceed with the plan she had set out for herself.

Chapter 2

"I may get off to a slow start as a lady companion here, I fear," Pauline said to Sir Arnold Bathwright in his office at the Victoria and Albert Club, directly across from the Seaview County Courthouse in Pacific Heights. "You see, I happened to over-indulge in erotic delights with a gentleman I knew in Boston, and then with another gentleman I met on the train between Albany and Chicago. It has been taking me a while to recover from the effects of the over-indulgence."

“That is more than understandable, my dear,” said the bald-headed, aging gentleman with a strong British accent. “I am sure you will do very well here. You are even lovelier than your photograph made you appear—and a lady who can take advantage of a casual encounter on a train, in order to indulge in the conduct that is a speciality of our lady companions, is exactly the sort of lady we most desire. You will be glad to note that vulgar expressions such as *‘female impersonator’* are not here applied to our lady companions with special secrets beneath their skirts, such as ordinary ladies do not possess. You will be treated as a lady like any other; only a discreet code in your listing, in our pictorial directory of lady companions, will mark you as out of the ordinary.”

“That is exactly as I would wish,” said Pauline.

Sir Arnold then escorted her to the studio in which she would pose for her photograph in the pictorial directory. “That is precisely the thing,” he said when she posed. “The impeccable pompadour, the bright and daring-looking blue eyes, the full and eminently kissable lips, the high-necked blouse with the most delicate suggestion of the possibility of removing it, the dark and dignified skirt, which yet might be swiftly pulled up or slipped down for the delectation of a member of the club—all this will mark you as a lady companion of the first water.”

“I hope to assume my duties soon,” said Pauline. On hearing Sir Arnold’s compliments, she had found her erotic feelings beginning to return at last, and she felt she could indeed do her duties soon. “But first, I believe, I should begin my daytime employment as a school-teacher at Rutland Ridge High School.”

“Very well,” said Sir Arnold. “This is rather daring of you, you know. The principal of that school, Donald Buckworthy, is a fine man, and a member of this club—but some of the students, I am given to understand, are rather rough characters. They would not take kindly, I imagine, to discovering a so-called female impersonator passing as a female teacher, if that were ever to occur.”

“You do not think it *will* occur, I trust?” Pauline asked. A sudden shiver of fear overcame her.

“I do not,” Sir Arnold assured her. “Your figure is tall and slender, yet not unfeminine; your face, your voice, your dress, and your whole bearing proclaim you to be a true lady of the finest quality. I do not expect your secret to be discovered, except when you voluntarily disclose it.”

“I certainly hope you are right.”

A genuine rough frontier town would not have electric streetcars, Pauline imagined as she rode the streetcar out to Rutland Ridge, near the northwestern edge of Pacific Heights. Indeed, she had read, the streetcars not only were used here but were actually manufactured here by the Magnum Electric Company, the city’s largest employer. Just as she had told Eliot, Pauline had come to a bustling metropolis—still small by comparison with the great cities of the East, but growing rapidly, and bidding fair to enjoy every modern convenience.

Pauline arrived at the high school, a new-looking brick building on Rutland Road, up which the streetcar line ran. In the principal’s office she met Mr. Buckworthy, a tall, still young-looking man with a full head of reddish-brown hair and a mustache to match.

“Miss Spurtridge!” he greeted her. “Say, it’s grand to meet you in person. I’ve been looking forward to meeting you ever since I got your glowing, enthusiastic reference letter from Mr. Oswell.” Pauline smiled. Her former headmaster at Brimwell Academy, Ralston Oswell, had been most helpful to her—not least in writing of her as “Pauline” and “Miss Spurtridge.” Paul Spurtridge, a slender, long-haired young man of aesthetic taste and effeminate demeanor who had taught at Brimwell for several years, would never have dared to try to pass as a female there.

Mr. Buckworthy showed her around the school, advised her about policies and procedures, and gave her helpful hints. Finally he gave her a key and told her, "You may not need this often, but it will be very helpful in case you ever do. This is the key to your bullwhip drawer. Have you ever wielded a bullwhip?"

"Er—no, I have not."

He unlocked the drawer and showed her a large, fearsome-looking bullwhip. "I'd suggest you get in some practice with it before the students arrive tomorrow," he said. "Most of them are well-disciplined, but some are not. You may need to show your skill with a bullwhip on occasion, to keep the ill-disciplined ones in line. Here, stand out of the way and let me show you."

He raised the whip and cracked it hard. An empty student's desk shuddered at the impact. "Now you try it," he said. Pauline cracked the whip against the desk, but it did not shudder.

"It takes practice," Mr. Buckworthy told her. "You'll get used to it. Now, the trickiest maneuver is to wind the whip around a recalcitrant student, and then use it to fling the student sprawling. That one takes considerable practice, and of course you can't practice it on the students, but you can practice it on a wastebasket, like this." He placed a wastebasket upon a desk, stood back, and whipped. Sure enough, the whip curled around the basket; Mr. Buckworthy then yanked the whip hard, and the basket flew off the desk, making a great crash as it fell.

"You should try to master that one if you can, for it has the most impressive effect in showing your control over bad students," said Mr. Buckworthy, "but often a bit of brute-force whipping will suffice, like this." He raised the whip and flogged the desk repeatedly.

"Well, I'll leave you to your practice," he said. "Just lock the door of the classroom when you go out, and we'll see you here bright and early tomorrow."

Mr. Buckworthy left Pauline alone to practice with the whip. She practiced long and hard, imagining



that she was fighting off a monstrosly vile student who was trying to lift her skirt, pull down her drawers, and reveal her secret. By the end of the afternoon she had gained considerable skill, the desk was shuddering repeatedly, and occasionally the wastebasket was even flying off the desk.

“Good morning, class,” Pauline said to the assembled students in her classroom the next morning. “I am Miss Spurtridge, and I shall be your teacher for English grammar and composition.” She surveyed the classroom quickly with her eyes. The students toward the front of the room, mostly girls, seemed attentive; those toward the back, mostly boys, did not. She quickly picked out the worst-looking of the lot, a large, stout, dark-haired, loutish-looking youth whose dark eyes seemed to radiate defiance. Only once, in her years at Brimwell under the name of Mr. Spurtridge, had she had such a rotten-looking student. He had been expelled for openly indulging in self-pollution in the classroom.

“We will begin by taking roll,” Pauline announced. She read off the students’ names and they answered “Here.” She took special note of the bad-looking lout’s name, Frank Scuggotts. He lazily, insolently scanned Pauline up and down with his eyes before answering, “That’s me.” She did not correct him and require him to say “That is I,” as she might have done at Brimwell.

“Very well, class,” she said after the roll call was completed. “Today we shall start with an easy exercise. You are to write a short essay entitled ‘What I Did on My Summer Vacation.’ If you have any questions, just raise your hand and I will come around to your desk. Be sure to write your name at the top of the page. When you have finished writing, bring your essay to my desk.”

“Teacher, I got a question,” said Frank Scuggotts almost at once.

“Yes, Frank?” said Pauline. She moved toward his desk at the back of the room, expecting that he might

need to look up some fairly easy word in the dictionary.

“How do you spell ‘*impersonator*’?”

Pauline jerked involuntarily in fear as she walked. Exercising the most rigid self-control, she kept moving, dictionary in hand, just as if he had asked how to spell some far less offensive word. In vain did her brain rush to supply innocuous explanations of why Frank might wish to spell that dreaded word. Her will had no power at all to stop her galloping heart, her deeply labored breathing, her shaking limbs.

“Frank, here is the dictionary,” Pauline said. She gasped for breath with open mouth, hoping against hope that her gasp was inaudible. “You may look up that word for yourself.”

“Nah, I ain’t too good at looking up words in the dictionary,” he said. “You spell it for me. You *gotta* know how to spell it.” The bad boy was actually leering at her, with lewdness oozing from his eyes and his mouth.

Pauline swallowed hard. “Very well,” she said, trying her hardest to pretend nothing was amiss. She spelled the word, and he laboriously wrote it down. “I knew you’d know how,” he said.

Pauline walked back up to the front of the room with her narrow hips swaying in their most feminine manner. A boy wolf-whistled at her, and other boys broke out in laughter. Pauline reached her desk and collapsed into her chair.

Frank Scuggotts was the first student to finish. He leered and swaggered as he brought his essay up and placed it directly in front of Pauline. She could not force her eyes away from it. It said only this: “I did some sinnin with a female impersonator that was a teacher. She aint a teacher no more.”

Pauline’s brow broke out in sweat, but she dared not apply a handkerchief to it. Her last faint hope, but one, demanded to be heard: had there really been another teacher, another “female impersonator,” who had been discharged for misconduct with Frank?

“Er—Frank,” she called out in a shaking voice, “your essay is incomplete. Please write the name of the teacher, or the former teacher, to whom you are referring.”

His leer and swagger grew even greater, if possible, as he returned to the front of the room. He wrote in big letters: “Her name is Miss Spurtrij.” Then he laughed out loud.

“Paul, you are mistaken,” she chastised him in terror. “This incident did not occur, and—er—what you say about this teacher is not true.” Her last hope of all, that this vicious lout had not really discerned her secret, but simply called every female teacher a female impersonator and claimed to have sinned with her in order to insult her, hung by a slender thread. He cut it off.

“Oh, it ain’t, ain’t it?” he said with a loathsome grin. “Prove it. Let’s see what you got, or what you ain’t got.”

Pauline knew she must retrieve the bullwhip at once. Her fingers were trembling so dreadfully she could hardly insert the key in the lock of the bullwhip drawer, but she did it—just in time. Frank Scuggotts was coming around the desk to attack her. She rejoiced at the thought that he would be expelled for attacking her.

“Stand back!” she cried, raising the whip. He did not stand back, but grabbed her skirt. She was forced to hit him in the head, again and again, with the heavy end of the whip. He lost his grip on her skirt for a moment. Rapidly she backed off and whipped him. She got the whip around his neck all right, but she could not fling him down. Outraged, he flung himself upon her and cried, “Boys! Get her!”

A crowd of four or five henchmen raced to the front of the room. Two of them grabbed Pauline’s arms, two more her legs. Frank Scuggotts jerked her skirt down, then her drawers, and stood aside to reveal what lay beneath to all. Girls screamed as Pauline’s member was revealed for all to see.

"Told you so!" Frank shouted. "God-damn female impersonator! Boys, hold her steady! That skunk needs a mighty hard whipping!"

The henchmen complied. Frank extracted the whip from Pauline's hand and applied it to her masterfully, making her writhe in pain while standing. The worst of it was that her member grew hard from the writhing, and everyone could see.

"Frank, she loves it!" one of the henchmen cried. "She's hard! Whip her harder and let's see if she'll spring a gusher!" Frank eagerly whipped Pauline harder and faster. Apparently disappointed that Pauline did not spring a gusher at once, one of the boys grabbed her member and manipulated it. Her unsuccessful efforts to break free only increased the frightful stimulation. Girls were shrieking and running out of the room. When Mr. Buckworthy entered the room to investigate the commotion, he was confronted with the spectacle of Miss Spurtridge, nude from the waist down, displaying a most unfeminine-looking member and springing an equally unfeminine gusher, while being manipulated by one boy and frantically whipped by another.

"Miss Spurtridge," Mr. Buckworthy said in his office, "I'm sure you'll be glad to know the boys responsible for this outrage will be expelled." Pauline nodded "yes" in silence.

"But I'm afraid," he went on, "this incident means—well, it means the end of your career as a teacher in the Pacific Heights Public Schools."

Pauline had feared it would, and yet she must try to defend herself. "But I have done nothing wrong!" she protested. "Those boys attacked me by force! Everything that happened—*everything*—was against my will!"

"I'm sure it was," Mr. Buckworthy said, "but you have to understand: the parents of Pacific Heights are just not ready to have a—what's known as a fe-

male impersonator teaching their children. Those boys were wrong to expose you, but you *have* been exposed, and that can never be undone.”

Pauline gave a deep, sad sigh. “I suppose that is true,” she said. “Well, I shall just have to make my living in another way.”

“I’m sure you can do it,” Mr. Buckworthy assured her. “Out here, you know, there are a surprising number of ladies with secrets like yours, and many of them do quite well. I happen to know, for example, that at least one of the lady librarians at our public library has the same secret.”

Pauline smiled faintly. “Presumably the library patrons do not force her to reveal it,” she said. “May I ask, then, how you have come to know of it?”

“Oh! Well, er—if you must know—I’m a bit of a connoisseur. I mean, such ladies are among my peculiar fascinations. I’m pretty good at spotting them.”

“Then you presumably know that they are to be found at the Victoria and Albert Club.” Pauline’s smile grew broader.

“Well! Now, you understand, I certainly hadn’t meant to suggest that you seek employment *there!* But still, if you did happen to have any interest in that direction—and please forgive me for mentioning it if you don’t—”

“I do,” said Pauline. “When I came out here, my plan was to write a book—of a rather curious nature—about my adventures as a prim schoolmistress by day, and a lady companion at the Victoria and Albert Club at night. I now find that the daytime portion of the plan will need revision, but perhaps the nighttime portion will not.”

“Say, that’s first-rate!” cried Mr. Buckworthy. “I happen to belong to that club myself. Maybe I’ll see you there one evening—or more than one.”

“I certainly wouldn’t rule out that possibility,” Pauline said, giving him a really big smile as she rose to

take her leave. “Good day, Mr. Buckworthy, and thank you for your kindness.”

“That is truly dreadful,” Sir Arnold sympathized upon hearing Pauline’s account of the day’s events. “Those rough, vicious boys deserve far worse than expulsion from school—and *you* deserve far *better*. Perhaps someday the time will come when character and merit are regarded as sufficient qualifications for a schoolteacher, without regard to what may or may not be concealed beneath the teacher’s clothing—but that day has not yet come.”

“It certainly has not,” Pauline affirmed. “Well, I am ready to begin my duties as a lady companion.”

“Very well,” said Sir Arnold. “Let me introduce you to—well, I had almost said to the Princess. I am getting old, and set in my ways. For many years, until her recent announcement of her forthcoming retirement from the club, our leading lady was Princess Jacqueline Semakoboomish, a native of the Quoheemish tribe. She is what the natives call a—what is their word?—a *kabavoomish*, I believe, meaning a ‘male woman,’ with a secret quite like yours. We now have a new leading lady—a Bostonian by birth, like yourself. Her name is Mary McConnachy. I will take you to her, and she will introduce you to our ways.”

Chapter 3

Mary McConnachy gazed through her window at the ocean. Her rosary beads were still in her hands, and her prayers in her heart. From childhood she had believed that the Blessed Mother would help even the most hardened sinner who, in spite of everything, was devoted to the holy rosary. Now, more than 20 years after her ruination, she feared she was a hardened sinner indeed—what with all the thousands of sins she had committed with hundreds of men at the club, and the prospect of still more sins

stretching into the unknown future, since she still would feel the fierce desire and still would have no husband. Still, in spite of everything, she kept up her prayers—and her secret hope of enduring love—even when God, and her heart's desire, seemed as far away as the end of the ocean.

She heard a knock at her door. Rising, she put the beads in her drawer, lest she give offense to anyone who would think them superstitious or worse. "You may come in," she said.

Sir Arnold entered with a tall, slender, dignified-looking, dark-haired lady, whose blue eyes met Mary's at once. From the lady's height, her shoulders, and her hips, Mary silently marked her as a possible impersonator. Her face, though, was as lovely and womanly as any natural-born woman's face had ever been—especially when she smiled, and she was smiling now at Mary. Mary tried to match her smile in return, and found it surprisingly easy to do.

"Mary, this is Pauline Spurtridge, our newest lady companion," said Sir Arnold. "Pauline, this is our leading lady, Mary McConnachy."

"I'm very pleased to meet you," the ladies said to each other almost at once.

"Well, there are certain matters best discussed among ladies themselves," Sir Arnold said, "into which an aging gentleman such as myself had best not intrude. Pauline, you will see that our lady companions have a great deal of freedom in determining how best to satisfy the desires of the gentlemen of the club, so long as they do satisfy them. I shall be in my office, if I am needed for anything."

Sir Arnold left the room. "Please have a seat," said Mary. She sat on the plush love seat across from the bed, and gestured to Pauline to sit next to her.

"It's a good thing we're not in Boston any more," Pauline said, before Mary could speak. "Back there, it would have been deemed beneath my dignity to speak to an Irishwoman as a—an equal."

“You are from the so-called Brahmin classes, are you?” Mary said. “And I a poor untouchable.” She laughed.

“I’ve left the so-called Brahmin classes far behind,” Pauline assured her. “And you’re not untouchable. Look here, I’ll prove it.” She touched Mary softly on the shoulder. “I hope you don’t mind.”

“Not in the least.” Mary was very far from minding. The touch of the female impersonator—if she *was* an impersonator—awakened gentle feelings in her, and perhaps even started to soften the hardened sinner’s heart.

“What brought you out here, all the way from Boston?” Pauline asked, surely little knowing how much pain the answer evoked every time Mary told the tale.

“A boy ruined me,” Mary said bluntly. “When I was only 16, young and foolish as could be, he promised me the moon and marriage too, if only I’d give him the rights of marriage before the time. After I gave him his way, when I was still crazy about him, he laughed and threw me off—and I fled here, to the ends of the earth, in shame.”

“I’m terribly sorry for you,” Pauline said, almost in a whisper.

“Well, it’s over and done with now, in a way,” said Mary. “I’ve been living with the consequences ever since, but that’s how it must be.” She sighed in sadness, but quickly composed herself. “And may I ask what brings *you*, a genteel lady from the upper crust, out here alone, 3,000 miles from the self-styled Hub of the Universe?”

“Oh, I’ve always been a devotee of things aesthetic,” said Pauline, “and I thought this would be an excellent aesthetic adventure. You see, I was planning to write a book about my experiences as a prim schoolmistress by day, and a lady companion in this club at night. I had to revise the plan, though, when I was exposed as a—a female impersonator after less than one hour teaching school, and the principal told me I must leave the school.”

“Oh, that must have been shocking,” Mary sympathized—but she was glad to know so soon, without a doubt, that Pauline was an impersonator. “But you’ll surely have no trouble about that in this club. Many of the men just love the impersonators, and you’re a very convincing one. You know, the leading lady before me, Princess Jacqueline, was an impersonator—what the Indians call a *kabavoomish*, meaning a ‘male woman.’ She’s a real Indian princess, and she’s retiring to live on the reservation. You’ll have to meet her before she leaves.”

“Thank you, I’d love to meet her,” said Pauline.

“And now, Pauline,” said Mary, “we’ll have to get down to business. Have you experience in letting men take liberties with you?”

“Yes, many men, and the greatest liberties,” said Pauline. “A man in Boston, an artist, was my constant companion in such matters for years. Before that, a variety of men took liberties with me since I was 18, in reality—and, in my fantasies, since I was no older than 12 or 13.”

“Very well.” Mary dared not indulge any hopes about Pauline. Surely Pauline’s desires, like those of the Princess, had always been for men alone—and they always would be. And yet—what if they would not? What if Pauline were no more fixed in her desires for men alone than Mary was fixed in desire for the endless succession of men who mounted her at the club? Even if Mary did not dare hope, she did not dare cut off all possibility of hope!

Pauline was looking at her expectantly. Mary had been silent for too long, lost in her wild, outlandish thoughts. “Now, the ladies of the club,” Mary resumed at once in her most businesslike tone, “even the impersonators, do not permit the gentlemen to commit the infamous and detestable crime against nature, which is prohibited by the laws of Nature and of Nature’s God, and also by the laws of the State of Pacificum. In other words, your dung-hole, if I may use that lowly word, is to be strictly off limits to the men. Aside from that, you may comply with the men’s wishes in almost any way their heart desires.

With you, the men will not need to use a rubber, as they do with the natural-born ladies.”

“How shall I be notified that a—a gentleman desires my company?”

“On the first occasion of your meeting, the gentleman will select your picture from the directory, and an agent of the club—or perhaps, on occasion, Sir Arnold himself—will make the introduction. After that, if the gentleman desires another encounter, he will simply request the honor of your presence.”

“Very well.” Pauline looked into Mary’s eyes, and did not look away. “And I trust there will be ample time for the ladies to visit with one another, as well?”

“Yes, ample time,” Mary assured her. Mary’s heart was beating absurdly fast, yearning to break free from her self-imposed refusal to hope, as she added: “The ladies may become very dear friends with one another, if they wish.”

Mary McConnachy’s image, and her words, lingered long in Pauline’s heart after their first meeting ended. The little lady was lovely all over: in her curly reddish-golden hair, her fair freckled face, her blue eyes that could surpass Pauline’s own eyes in brightness, her little pink lips that seemed to smile even in sadness, her petite but unquestionably womanly figure. Always before, Pauline had looked at beautiful women with an eye to emulating or even surpassing their beauty. She could never look like Mary, she knew—but somehow Mary’s beauty shone all the more gloriously in Pauline’s mind.

Was Mary’s heart, Pauline wondered, even lovelier than her looks? Did she deserve a far finer, nobler life than that of a high-class harlot in the Victoria and Albert Club? Did even her strange superstition about being “ruined” by a boy, merely because he had congress with her and then declined to marry her, evince an ardent yearning for a better life in which there would be no ruination? Pauline, who had hardly ever

thought there could be a better life than that of full erotic satisfaction with a man or men, found it hard to believe that she was thinking of such things—and yet, without question, she was.

She would be Mary's dear friend, Pauline decided at once, if Mary would have her. She would carry out what remained of her plan, she would have her adventures with men and write her book, and her remarkable exposure at school would even figure prominently in the first part of the book. Still, some things, too delicate and too noble for the eyes of even the most refined connoisseurs of things erotic, would not be mentioned in the book—and her friendship with Mary McConnachy would be among them.

No gentleman selected Pauline that night, but the following night one did—and his face was familiar. Sir Arnold himself introduced Pauline to none other than Mr. Donald Buckworthy.

“Good evening, Mr. Buckworthy,” said Pauline, extending her hand to him. “I am delighted to see you again, under far more pleasant circumstances than at our last parting.”

“Yes, far more pleasant!” Mr. Buckworthy laughed. “My dear Miss Spurtridge, it's simply grand to see you again—and I've got to say I hope to see more of you very soon!”

“Oh, Mr. Buckworthy, can this be a *double entendre* I hear from your august lips?” Pauline laughed.

“Miss Spurtridge, you are too quick for me; you have caught me out!” Mr. Buckworthy responded with a heartier laugh.

They dined in the club dining room and made polite conversation on high-minded topics: literature, art, music, education, and more, though always steering clear of the three taboo subjects of religion, politics, and the carnal indulgence that awaited them

after dinner. When dinner was done, they quickly retired to Pauline's room.

"I am told," Pauline said, "that the ladies of the club have sometimes been known to entertain gentlemen in their nightgowns. Can that really be true?"

"It can," Mr. Buckworthy said. "It is true. You may have my permission to entertain me in your nightgown, if you wish."

"Oh, it sounds rather daring," said Pauline, "but I think I might like it very much. Is it the custom for a lady to—er—to remove her clothing in a gentleman's presence before donning her nightgown?"

"It is," Mr. Buckworthy assured her.

"Well, I shall blush!" Pauline exclaimed. "Still, if it is the custom, I shall conform to it." Pauline unbuttoned her blouse and removed it, revealing her corset. Next her corset came off, revealing her chemise. When her chemise and her skirt came off, Pauline was nude above the waist, dressed only in her drawers, and her volcanic nipples seemed about to erupt before Mr. Buckworthy's eyes. She reached into her drawers and pressed her erect member down into hiding between her thighs; then she dropped her drawers, revealing her womanly-looking junction, and rubbed her breasts for Mr. Buckworthy's delectation.

"Oh, Miss Spurtridge! You are exciting me beyond belief!" Mr. Buckworthy cried. "You may dispense with the nightgown! Remain as you are, I beg you!" He began to remove his clothing at top speed. Soon he, too, was nude. His fully erect member was slightly shorter than Pauline's, but as stout as Mr. Ruckaby's, with a bulb as big as his.

"Miss Spurtridge," he said, approaching her with a mock-serious expression on his face, "I am torn, deeply torn, between two aspects of myself. In my official aspect, I know it is my duty to punish you for your misconduct in daring to place yourself, as a female impersonator, before the impressionable students of Rutland Ridge High School—causing great danger to their morals and their purity of mind. You

deserve a sharp spanking for your naughtiness in doing so. On the other hand, in my personal aspect, I deeply desire to console you for your ill treatment at the hands of bad students, for the loss of your position as a teacher, and even for any pain you may suffer from being spanked.”

“Obviously, then, sir,” said Pauline, “you must spank me first, and then console me. Shall I lie across your lap for my spanking?”

“Yes, please do. Here, I will sit on the edge of your bed, and you may lie across my lap.” This was swiftly accomplished, with Pauline lying semi-diagonally so that her upper body was on the bed and her legs hanging down. She felt Mr. Buckworthy’s erect member pressing hard against her as she lay.

“Oh, exquisite,” said Mr. Buckworthy, caressing Pauline’s member where it protruded from between the backs of her thighs. Pauline’s buttocks clenched in delight.

“Please forgive me for any pain I may cause you,” Mr. Buckworthy pleaded as he began to spank Pauline with his bare hand, first gently, then with increasing sharpness, hitting her protruding member as well as her buttocks. Pauline’s hot buttocks and her hotter member quivered with mixed pain and pleasure as the spanking grew intense, and her hips began to move in rhythm. “Oh, Mr. Buckworthy, please console me!” she begged. “Console me—but do not stop spanking me, for it excites me marvelously!”

Mr. Buckworthy stood up with Pauline, embraced her with one hand, and kissed her on the mouth, while still he spanked her with the other hand. She guided his member into her junction, between her hidden member and her thigh, as she had so often done with Eliot, though Eliot had never spanked her. Then she clutched Mr. Buckworthy as hard as she could with her fingers and her thighs, and their lips and tongues made frantic erotic movements together, as did their hips and loins at the junction, while Pauline’s buttocks were bucking and burning from the spanking and the rapid friction of both of their members next to her thigh. At last she cried out

as she felt her sperm spurting beneath her buttocks, while Mr. Buckworthy moaned in ecstasy, thrusting hard into Pauline's junction and spanking her even harder at the climax of their union.

"Oh, Miss Spurtridge!" Mr. Buckworthy gasped. "Miss Spurtridge! That was the finest! You are the most excellent! I could never have imagined! Your appearance as a schoolteacher was so perfectly prim and proper!"

"Until I was unmasked," Pauline remarked.

"Oh, yes, and now I have unmasked you again," he agreed. "My dear Miss Spurtridge, may I dare to hope I may unmask you again, and yet again?"

"You may," Pauline said. Even as she said it, she wondered what new delights she might undergo with Mr. Buckworthy, or with other men, so as to provide additional erotic matter for her book. Her double unmasking would provide two fine episodes, in addition to her escapade with Mr. Ruckaby on the train which would make the first of three—but would thirty episodes be ten times as fine as three? If not, she would just have to cut the book off before it reached thirty episodes, so as to avoid tedium for the reader. Perhaps, she fancied, she would find herself returning to Boston and to Eliot in far less than six years. She would keep a sharp eye out, she resolved, to know when to cut off the multiplication of erotic adventures, and—most importantly of all—to know how the book should end.

Chapter 4

"Pauline!" Mary cried while knocking hard on Pauline's door. "May I come in?"

"Certainly," said Pauline. She quickly turned over the sheet of her book manuscript she had been writing on, which detailed last night's adventure with Mr. Buckworthy. She was not, perhaps, exactly *ashamed* of letting Mary see it, but still she strongly preferred not to. If Pauline had awakened any sentiments of honor, friendship, and even admiration, in Mary, like

those which Mary had awakened in her, they must not be quenched.

“Pauline,” Mary said, “Princess Jacqueline is leaving soon for the reservation! She’s invited us to come with her as far as Quoheemish, on the new interurban line. Can you come?”

“Oh! Well—yes, of course,” said Pauline, rising from her desk and locking it. Mr. Buckworthy could wait. Pauline must not miss what might be her only opportunity to meet the Princess.

Before long the passengers on the interurban car were witnesses to a remarkable sight: two fashionably dressed ladies in their thirties, one tall, one short, accompanying a short, elderly Indian lady who wore the traditional women’s dress of the Quoheemish, but carried traveling bags in the latest style. The three ladies proceeded to the extreme rear end of the car, where there appeared to be a little space for a three-way *tLte-B-tLte*. Before they sat down, the car had started to move and was quickly picking up speed.

“Oh, Princess, I’m so sad to see you going,” Mary said, “but I suppose it’s all for the best.”

“Yes, it is,” the Princess said. “When Moon Owl went home to the Great Spirit, I knew it would soon be time for me to leave the club.”

“Moon Owl,” Mary explained to Pauline, “was the dearest friend of the Princess. She was an impersonator too—I mean, a *kabavoomish*, a male woman, and one of the ladies of the club. She passed away not long ago.”

“I need to prepare to go home to the Great Spirit too,” said the Princess, “and my own people will be best to help me. I hope they will still hold me in honor for what I am, a male woman, although I am afraid some will not. Many of the younger Quoheemish, they say, have adopted the modern ways, and would hold an old-fashioned male woman in contempt.”

“How dreadful,” said Pauline. “Is it really true that, in the old days at least, your people would actually hold a—a male woman in honor?”

“It is true,” said the Princess. “My father, who was called Chief Semakoboomish, was proud to proclaim that the Great Spirit had made me a male girl. I was shocked when I found out that, among the—among many of the white newcomers to our land, male women were detested and degraded.”

Pauline could see that the Princess had once been a great beauty, but now an ugly frown disfigured her face. “Moon Owl was degraded,” she said. “She was a lovely young white male girl who came to live among the Quoheemish, hoping to escape from the life she had been living. I loved her as my own self, I taught her Quoheemish ways, and I mated with her in the woods. But then white policemen came and forced her to return to where she had been before, the house of an evil woman called Ma Hellfire, where men degraded her. For many years after that, I hated the white men for what they had done to Moon Owl.”

Pauline had many questions, but she was silent for a decent interval before she spoke. “Did you stop hating the white men at last?” she then asked. “And how were you and Moon Owl reunited?”

“My father was always a friend of the white men,” said the Princess. “Before he went home to the Great Spirit, my father asked me to live among the white people and learn their ways. For love of him, I agreed. He was great friends with Zeb Kingsley, the governor of Pacificum Territory, as it was then. Zeb took good care of me. Soon I came to love him, and I secretly mated with him. Our mating had to be kept strictly secret, and it also had to be kept strictly secret that I was a male woman, for most of the people would not have approved if they had known, and Zeb had to be approved by most of the people if he was to remain their governor. My heart ached from keeping the secret, but I kept it so well that I was accepted as the First Lady of Pacificum Territory—just as President James Buchanan’s niece was earlier accepted as the First Lady of the United States, for he and Zeb had no wives.”

“The First Lady of Pacificum Territory!” Pauline exclaimed. “Can this really be true?”

“It’s true, all right,” said Mary. “The Princess was First Lady when I came here. I remember the reporting of the whole scandal when she was found out.”

“That was the worst time of my life,” the Princess recalled. “Long ago, when I was young, a bad man called Mighty Bear was expelled from the land of the Quoheemish for trying to violate me. Many years later, when I was First Lady, Mighty Bear reappeared and started saying I was a male woman. I lied and said I was not, but the truth was found out—and, when it was, Zeb shot himself to death. I saw him on the floor of the governor’s mansion, with his brains blown out.” Pauline gasped.

“Whenever I think of that time, I weep,” said the Princess. “I am terrified to think what torments Zeb’s spirit must be undergoing, for having thrown away the Great Spirit’s gift of life, merely because many people would dishonor him for having a male woman as First Lady, and would not vote for him in the election of 1880. A man in his right mind would not have done this. But I weep for myself in shame, too—because I lied and said I was not a male woman, and because I had promised Zeb I would be faithful to him, and yet—when Zeb shot himself to death—I was mating with Sir Arnold at the club!”

The Princess softly sobbed. Pauline and Mary sat in silence. The interurban car had left the city and was speeding through the woods, dark evergreen woods, like the woods that had covered this land before the white men came, Pauline fancied—or the woods in which the Princess had mated with Moon Owl in her youth.

“Princess,” Pauline said softly when the Princess’s eyes were dry at last, “after all you’ve been talking about, why did you stay at the club?”

“It was my destiny,” said the Princess. “Ever since my maidenhood ended, I have known it was my destiny to mate with men who had no women. But at last, after Moon Owl went home, my heart was no longer in me when I mated with men, and I knew it

was time to move on. This is the way of wisdom: to know when your destiny has been fulfilled, and then to follow your heart into a new life, as the Great Spirit guides you.”

In due time, after passing through several small towns of which Mary knew little but the names—Farquhar Village, Seaview Grove, Appledale, Montbeamish, Reardon Bay, New Invercargill—the interurban car arrived at the city of Quoheemish, perched on steep hills surrounding a harbor. Two big Indian men, one in traditional clothing with long hair, the other in modern clothing with short hair, met the ladies as they emerged from the car. Pauline and Mary embraced the Princess and promised to write. Then the men escorted the Princess to a horse-drawn buggy, and the ladies saw her no more.

“Oh, dear, I hope I won’t be too terribly lonely without the Princess,” Mary told Pauline after the car had turned around and returned to pick them up, and they had again taken their places at the extreme rear end. “She was my dearest friend.”

“It must be dreadfully hard to see her go,” Pauline sympathized. “You’ve known her for 20 years, I believe?”

“Yes. The scandal broke soon after I came, when I was still 16, and I met her at the club soon after that.”

“Well, I’m sure I could never replace her,” said Pauline, “but—well, I’ve been hoping we might become dear friends too.”

Mary’s mouth opened wide in surprise at Pauline’s forthrightness, but she smiled in delight. “I’ll be very glad if that happens,” she said. Her heart was beating too hard again. She did not think she dared tell Pauline, not yet, about her most secret fantasy: that someone at the club would love her and marry her, really marry her, even after all these years of sin. It would have to be someone at the club, of course, for only a fellow sinner might ever wish to marry her who

was thousands of times not a virgin—but still she could not give up hope of it, and she surely would not rule out a female impersonator, especially one as sweet and lovely as Pauline.

No, she did not think she dared to tell—and yet, did she really dare *not* to tell? If Pauline were really to be her dear friend, perhaps her dearest friend now that the Princess was gone, wouldn't Mary wish to reveal her heart's desire to Pauline? If Pauline were not an impersonator, she would surely do it—and why should it make any difference that Pauline was an impersonator? Mary had revealed her heart's desire to the Princess long ago, after all, and there had been no disaster, though the Princess's desires had always been for men alone. Even if Pauline's desires were the same, surely she would be kind as the Princess had been.

"You know, if we're to become dear friends," Mary said very softly, "we'll want to reveal our hearts' desires to each other. Won't we?"

"Er, yes, we certainly will," Pauline agreed.

"Well, this may sound foolish, after all I've been through," Mary said, "but my heart's desire is still what it ever was: to be married, really and truly married, and live happily ever after. It's unbelievable that it will ever really happen, I'm sure—but still I can't give up hope. It would be like killing myself to give up hope."

"No, don't give up hope," Pauline said at once. "It doesn't sound foolish at all."

Mary wondered if Pauline could hear her heart pounding like a big bass drum. "Oh!" she cried. "It doesn't? Really?" She laughed for joy. "Well, that's a great relief! Pauline, you may be my dearest friend at once, if you wish, for saying such a thing!"

Pauline's bright eyes opened wide; her broad mouth broadened even further into a great, hearty smile. "I do wish," she said, embracing Mary. Mary's heart burst wide open in crazy, blissful fantasies, but these she really did not dare reveal to Pauline: *Oh,*

Pauline, would it be foolish to think you and I might ever be—be joined in holy wedlock?

That would be a most remarkable and unexpected ending to my book, Pauline was thinking that evening—and presumably it would impart most satisfying shock and horror to the self-styled better classes of Bostonians! Might she really throw over her life at the club, notify Eliot that she would never return to him, and give a lovely Irishwoman—yes, an “untouchable” Irishwoman, with all her lowliness, her superstitions, her abysmal unsuitability for marriage to one of the Brahmin caste—the marriage she had been so long denied, after her 20 years as a high-class harlot? Would not this be a worthy conclusion to Pauline’s excellent aesthetic adventure, which otherwise might be arbitrarily cut off when the succession of erotic episodes with men threatened to grow tiresome?

Pauline’s thoughts were interrupted by a knock at her door. “Miss Spurtridge?” said a young man, presumably an assistant of Sir Arnold, when she answered. “A gentleman wishes to see you.” He introduced a stout, elderly, balding gentleman in a dressing gown. “Mr. MacCraikie,” he said, “this is Miss Pauline Spurtridge. Miss Spurtridge, this is Mr. David MacCraikie.”

“Good evening, Mr. MacCraikie,” said Pauline. “Please come in.”

“Thank you,” said Mr. MacCraikie, entering the room and quietly closing the door. “I—I hope I’ve come to the right place.” Without further ado, he removed his dressing gown to reveal an extremely sheer negligee in the latest Parisian style.

“Oh, how lovely!” Pauline exclaimed. It was true, and not only of the negligee; the stout old man’s body was actually attractive beneath it, and he was obviously highly excited. He had fine, round, hairless breasts, large portions of which could be seen bare above his very low neckline. His nipples, plainly visi-

ble beneath the sheer fabric, were as volcanic-looking as Pauline's. His member was very short, hardly half the length of Pauline's seven-inch one, but it was stout and fully erect, with a very large bulb on the end. His thick thighs looked strong and ready for erotic action. His buttocks were big and feminine-looking, as Pauline could see when he turned sideways to let her see them. He was the most erotically stimulating old man Pauline could remember ever having met—and yet Pauline could not help comparing him unfavorably to Mary, thinking of how unbearably lovely Mary might be in the nude, opening herself to the husband she did not yet have.

“Do you really think I'm pretty?” the old man shyly asked.

“I do indeed!” Pauline honestly said. He was not nearly so pretty above the neck as below, but even his face (below what might once have been his hairline) might have passed for a plump, pretty woman's face; his small, but full, deep pink lips looked especially womanly. The Scots and the Irish were blood relatives, Pauline recalled; the old man's lips might even pass for Mary's lips, especially if Pauline were to kiss them.

“And I admire your taste in nightwear, too,” said Pauline. “I have a Parisian nightgown much like yours. Would you like me to put it on?”

“Oh—yes! Yes!” Mr. MacCraikie exclaimed.

Pauline readily complied, turning away from Mr. MacCraikie to strip, retrieve her nightie, and put it on. “Now, Mr. MacCraikie,” she said on turning to face him, “do you think *I'm* pretty?”

“Eureka!” Mr. MacCraikie cried. “You're astoundingly lovely!” He approached Pauline, who stood still with her member concealed between her thighs. When he was almost touching her, he pressed his own member into hiding like hers. Then he embraced her, pressed his junction against hers, and kissed her deeply on the mouth. Soon she was rubbing and squeezing his breast with one hand, while clasping his great womanly rump with the other.

“Oh, I need this,” he said, still holding her tight. “I’m afraid I can’t get excited for my wife any more. This is the only thing that arouses me. I used to be a man for my wife, had five little ones with her, but then there came a time when she wanted more than I could give. I used to play girlie for the men when I was younger, before I married her, and I thought it might help me with her if I got girlish again in secret. I thought maybe it would get me excited enough, and then I could transfer it to her, somehow. It didn’t work, though; all that happened was I started wanting to play girlie for the men again. So, here I am.”

“I’ll be more than happy to help you with your needs,” said Pauline, still rubbing his breast and grasping his rump. She felt a twinge of discomfort—she had never before indulged in erotic delights with a man who openly admitted he was married—but she rationalized that Mr. MacCraikie could do nothing of the sort for his wife any more in any event, so Pauline was depriving his wife of nothing.

“What about my need to play the woman for a *man*?” Mr. MacCraikie asked. “Can you help me with *that*? I mean—can you play the man for me?”

Pauline gulped. She had never played the man in her life, always the woman. Still, if she were ever to marry Mary, she would have to learn to play the man. Perhaps this was her great opportunity to start—and another fine, distinguished episode for her book, as well.

“Well, er—I’d certainly be willing to try,” Pauline said. “But you’ll need to guide me. It will be my first time.”

“Gladly,” said the old man. “We’ll just lift your nightie, like this”—he did so—“and then gently reach in here, and pull out your manhood.” He slipped his hand between Pauline’s thighs to caress her member; then he grasped it firmly and brought it forth until it stood firmly erect in front of her.

“Oh, my, that’s a beauty!” Mr. MacCraikie exclaimed. “I can’t wait!” Indeed he did not wait. At once he lifted his negligee and pressed Pauline’s member

into his junction. “Easy does it, now,” he said. “Just a little at a time, until you’re all the way into me.”

Pauline excitedly complied, imagining she was entering Mary, though the old man’s junction was far different from what Mary’s womanly entryway must be. Pauline’s member pressed hard against Mr. MacCraikie’s hidden one, then slipped past it and entered fully into his junction, while he clasped both their members tightly between his thick thighs.

“Oh, yes, yes, *yes!*” Mr. MacCraikie cried. “That’s lovely!”

“Oh, so are you!” Pauline responded, getting quite carried away. “You’re a fine, fine woman! What shall I call you? You do have a woman’s name, don’t you?”

“Yes, I’m Daisy,” said Mr. MacCraikie.

Pauline laughed. “Well, this is hardly a position in which to ride a bicycle built for two!” she exclaimed. “But it’s a wonderful position for lovemaking!”

She clasped the old man’s big buttocks—*Daisy’s* buttocks, rather—and began to thrust more rapidly. Daisy clutched her hard and moved his hips, or *her* hips, in union with Pauline’s own. “Oh, this is astounding!” Daisy cried. “Kiss me! Please! Kiss me!”

Pauline complied, pressing her wide lips to Daisy’s narrow ones and thrusting her tongue deep into Daisy’s mouth, all the while imagining Daisy was Mary. Daisy clutched Pauline even harder and bucked her hips with surprising strength and speed for one so old. Before long Pauline could feel Daisy’s sperm spurting onto her member. The lubricity of the old girl’s sperm made Pauline able to thrust between Daisy’s thighs with truly frantic intensity, while she gripped Daisy’s huge, womanly buttocks with almost equal intensity. At last Pauline gained relief, her sperm gushing in seeming torrents between Daisy’s thighs—but Daisy was no longer in her mind at all. At the climax of her ecstasy, Pauline’s heart could do nothing but cry out again and again in silence, “Mary! Yes! Oh, Mary, my love! I love you! *I love you!*!”

Chapter 5

As the days and nights went on, Pauline spent more of her days in the public library, reading all manner of books—and also trying to see if she could spot her fellow female impersonator. Before long she got the idea of doing volunteer work for the library. This, if all went well, might lead to daytime employment. Being a prim librarian would presumably be as good as being a prim schoolmistress, for the purpose of her double life and her book—and she might, she fancied, even have an erotic encounter with the other impersonator. The thought of marrying Mary never vanished from her mind, and grew greater and more delectable as their friendship began to mature—and yet she felt sure she was not ready to try to carry it out, not yet. That, she fancied, would be the last chapter of her book, and surely there were many chapters remaining to be written before that.

Mr. Buckworthy gladly recommended Pauline to the head librarian, Miss Cecilia Oates, as an excellent choice for a volunteer, who might prove a worthy employee should a position open up. He also kindly gave Pauline the name and description of her fellow impersonator: Miss Prudence (née Peter) Farquhar, a tall, slender, bespectacled, brown-haired lady in her late thirties, of rather plain appearance, with her hair usually drawn back in a severe-looking bun.

It did not take Pauline long to recognize and meet Miss Farquhar. She did not await a formal introduction. “Excuse me,” she walked right up and said, “are you Miss Prudence Farquhar?”

That lady’s brown eyes opened wide behind her spectacles. “Yes, I am,” she said. Her voice was soft, high, and at least as feminine-sounding as Pauline’s own. Her face was thin, very plain indeed, and not particularly feminine-looking; her expression seemed timid, as if she were afraid of being found out as an impersonator, and yet her demeanor was not unfriendly. Her figure was even thinner than Pauline’s, and her old-fashioned corset made her appear to have even smaller breasts than Pauline appeared to have beneath her newfangled swan-bill corset.

"I'm very pleased to meet you," Pauline said. "My name is Pauline Spurtridge. A mutual friend of ours, Mr. Donald Buckworthy, suggested that you might wish to meet me."

"Oh, you know Mr. Buckworthy!" Miss Farquhar's thin lips curled upward in a shy smile. "He's such a fine gentleman, isn't he?"

"Very fine indeed," Pauline agreed. "And very knowledgeable, too!"

"He is," said Miss Farquhar. "Very discerning. Don't you find him so?"

"Extraordinarily discerning," said Pauline. She looked around to see if anyone appeared to be listening; no one did. Then, drawing near and speaking very softly, she said, "I'm told that he has discerned some things about *you* that—er—are not matters of common knowledge."

Miss Farquhar gave a short gasp, but quickly gained control of herself. "He has indeed!" she murmured. "Are you suggesting—er—that he may also have discerned some such things about *you*?"

"Oh, yes, indeed!" Pauline gave Miss Farquhar a big smile. "He discerned them to the full!"

"Why—" Miss Farquhar was blushing, and seemed hardly able to breathe. "Why, then, would you like to meet me after work this afternoon, to discuss matters of common interest?"

"Yes, very much," said Pauline.

"Meet me at the front entrance at 4:30 sharp, then, and we will go together for a bite to eat," said Miss Farquhar. "And you may call me Prudence," she added, almost whispering into Pauline's ear.

"Very well, Prudence," said Pauline. "I'm looking forward eagerly to it—and of course you may call me Pauline!"

At 4:30 sharp, the two ladies left the library and went to John Blessing's little dining house nearby, which Prudence highly recommended. Hardly had they sat down when Prudence commenced to make inquiries about Pauline.

"From your manner of speaking," said Prudence, "I gather that you are not a native of the Far West."

"No, indeed," said Pauline. "I am from Boston."

"Boston! Oh, dear! You must find our little library very unsatisfactory by contrast with the famous libraries of Boston, such as the Athenaeum and the Boston Public Library!"

"Well, the new public library is very grand, and has an immense collection," Pauline acknowledged. "I spent a great deal of my spare time there during my last few years in Boston. As for the Athenaeum, I admit I did not subscribe to it. I was never one to put the pursuit of money foremost, and as a result I did not have a great deal of it."

"Oh, how noble of you!" Prudence exclaimed with an admiring look. "One must always put the finer things in life ahead of mere money-grubbing—in which too many members of my own family, I lament to say, have specialized!"

"I do try to put the finer things first," said Pauline. "But I cannot say I find the Pacific Heights Public Library at all unsatisfactory. I dare say certain Bostonians, who cannot imagine that anyone other than rough frontiersmen, lumberjacks, and—er—harlots would inhabit a place like this, would be extremely surprised at the level of learning and culture to be found here." Pauline had to admit to herself that, as yet, she had little idea what that level might be—but she was sure she would hear about it from Prudence, and in the most favorable light.

"Oh, yes!" said Prudence. "We do have what some might think a surprisingly high level of learning and culture. Our university has already begun to make a

name for itself, and we have a small, but fine, symphony orchestra, a very talented theater company, and more than one first-rate literary discussion group.”

“As well as a surprisingly large and well-stocked library,” said Pauline, evoking a grateful smile from Prudence. A waiter then interrupted their intercourse to take their orders.

“Now then,” said Prudence after they had ordered their dinner, “how did you come to know our mutual friend, Mr. Buckworthy?”

“Well,” said Pauline, “as you may know, he is the principal of Rutland Ridge High School. I was a teacher there.”

“You are no longer?”

“No. I lasted less than one hour.”

“Oh! But—but *why*?”

“Well, you see—there were some very bad boys there, and they exposed me as a—a female impersonator.”

“I see!” Prudence said, gazing deep into Pauline’s eyes with what seemed quite profound sympathy. “That is a terrible shame. I must say I am extremely glad that such—such exposures do not occur at the library.”

“The library does seem a far more sympathetic environment for—you know—people of our type,” Pauline ventured to say.

“*Our* type indeed,” said Prudence. “I am glad we have been able to reach an understanding about that so quickly.” She gently touched Pauline’s forearm, causing a sweet thrill to pass through Pauline.

“Have you been such a person since childhood, as I have?” Pauline asked.

“Yes, since childhood. I cannot remember a time when I did not yearn for the beauty, grace, and sweet-

ness of a girl. I imagined myself as a girl for years before I was ever able to dress as one."

"And so did I." Pauline did not wish to admit that she had imagined herself as an erotically precocious girl who admitted boys to her bed at the age of 12.. Perhaps, she fancied, she would have a pure and noble friendship with Prudence, with no admixture of eroticism.

Her fancy did not last long. "I admit," said Prudence in a soft, low voice, drawing very close to Pauline, "I imagined myself doing things, with other girls, that would have been thought shameful if they had ever been detected." She glanced at Pauline, as if to see her reaction. "I hardly dare bring myself to reveal the details," she went on, "but I imagined myself doing deeds of—of *Sapphic love*."

"Not all would think them shameful," Pauline assured her. She touched Prudence's forearm, as Prudence had touched hers.

"You are among those who would not think so?" Prudence whispered, again touching Pauline in return.

"I am," said Pauline. "There are those, and I am one, who would think *Sapphic love* among the highest and noblest activities of womankind."

"Oh, I am one too!" said Prudence. "I have always thought it more elevated, more exalted, and I dare say more *pure*, than mere run-of-the-mill, animalistic mating with men, with which too many women seem satisfied."

Prudence smiled. "You make me wonder what it might be like," she ventured to say, "if such a thing—I mean, an episode of *Sapphic love*—were ever to happen between you and me."

"Oh!" Prudence cried, clasping Pauline's right hand with both her own. "Do you—do you really think such a thing might ever happen?"

"It is entirely conceivable," said Pauline, placing her left hand on Prudence's hands and gazing deeply

into Prudence's lonely, hungry, yearning brown eyes. "Indeed, such a thing might even happen this very evening."

"Oh, Pauline! That would be sublime! It would be the fulfillment of my lifelong dream! You know, I am almost 40 years old, and I have done such a thing thousands of times in my fantasies—but never once in reality!"

"Well, then, we will certainly have to do it this evening. I am employed during the evenings as a lady companion at the Victoria and Albert Club, and you may enter the club as my guest."

"The Victoria and Albert Club!" Prudence exclaimed. "I have never been there, but I have heard certain rumors of—er—remarkable goings-on there. Do such goings-on really, you know, go on?"

"They do," Pauline affirmed. "Such goings-on might, indeed, be said to be the *raison d'Être* of the Victoria and Albert Club—though one would not wish to say so in public."

Prudence's eyes were wide with astonishment. "You are so dignified, so high-minded, so elevated in bearing!" she exclaimed. "And yet you have taken part in such goings-on!"

"I have," Pauline admitted. "But I am no more dignified, or high-minded, or elevated in bearing than yourself. This will not prevent you from accompanying me to the club for certain Sapphic goings-on, now, will it?"

"Oh, dear!" cried Prudence. "No, it certainly will not!"

After their dinner and high-minded discussion, largely of literature, the two ladies walked arm in arm to the Victoria and Albert Club. "You may come to my room," said Pauline. "There we will have privacy."



In her room, Pauline stood face to face with Prudence, with her hands clasping Prudence's slender waist. "And now," said Pauline, "you will have to instruct me, for I have never before engaged in Sapphic love."

"No more have I, in reality," said Prudence, "but I have often fancied that the way of a woman with another woman is like this." She caressed Pauline's face with both her hands, and raised her thin lips to Pauline's full ones. Her tongue entered Pauline's mouth, probing deeply, then darting quickly in and out. Pauline responded in kind, caressing Prudence's face and kissing her deeply on the mouth.

"It will be more dignified and more ladylike, I think," said Prudence, "if we retain our upper garments as they are, and remove only our lower ones."

"Very well," said Pauline. "May I remove your skirt and your drawers, and allow you to remove mine?"

"Oh, yes!" This was hardly sooner said than done, though both ladies pressed their members into hiding between their thighs before their drawers were down.

"And now, I fancy," said Prudence, "we come together, like this." She clasped Pauline's buttocks and pressed her junction against Pauline's thigh, while Pauline did the same to her, intertwining her legs with those of Prudence. Their blouses and hard corsets impeded their Sapphic lovemaking to some extent, but still they were able to move their hips and thighs and hidden members together to fine erotic effect.

"Oh, this is exalted!" Prudence cried. "Pauline, you are making me ascend toward heavenly bliss!"

"Prudence, please, let us strip off this ridiculous armor and be fully nude together," Pauline begged. Without waiting for Prudence to respond, she began to undo her blouse and remove her corset. It was not easy while keeping her legs intertwined with Prudence's, but she did it.

“Oh, Pauline, for you, I will,” said Prudence. “I know you won’t laugh at how tiny and little-girlish my breasts are.” She removed her blouse and corset, revealing a chest even flatter than Pauline’s own, but with fine, dark, erect nipples.

“I certainly will not laugh,” Pauline said, rubbing one of Prudence’s nipples. “Yes, this is far finer. Let us lie down on my bed.”

This they did, with Pauline on top and Prudence underneath. Their kissing was uninterrupted now, and their hips undulated together like the waves of the ocean in a gathering storm. Their interlocked thighs clutched one another tightly, and their erect members slid rapidly up and down one another’s thighs. Pauline could feel that Prudence’s member was much shorter than her own, but no less extremely excitable.

“Oh, Pauline! Yes!” Prudence cried, freeing her mouth from Pauline’s. “This is most exalted ecstasy! This is utterly sublime! I could never have imagined!” Prudence’s hips were quaking with surprising strength, lifting Pauline up and letting her down in rapid rhythm, as Prudence’s climax came upon her. Pauline’s own climax was not far behind, and soon Prudence’s thigh was slippery with Pauline’s sperm.

“Oh, that was wonderful!” Prudence murmured. “Pauline, I know you must be very busy with the men, as a lady companion—but if you might ever find time to do this with me again, you would find me incredibly grateful!”

“I will,” said Pauline. “And you will find *me* incredibly grateful too!”

Chapter 6

As the days, the nights, the weeks and months went on, Pauline became quite a favorite at the Victoria and Albert Club. Hardly an evening went by when she did not have an erotic encounter, and the demand was sometimes greater than she could supply. If only she had written a chapter about each encoun-

ter, her book would have been too long already. Still, not every encounter was unique or unusually remarkable, and she could not risk boring her readers by recounting those that were not.

Her encounters with Mr. Ruckaby, Mr. Buckworthy, “Daisy” MacCraikie, and Prudence—though not under their real names, of course—had all been recounted in delectable detail in her manuscript, along with her shocking unmasking at the hands of Frank Scuggotts and his henchmen. A second encounter with Prudence, in a locked librarians’ lavatory in the basement of the library, with their drawers down but their blouses and corsets still on, had been added because of the excitement of getting away with such a thing in the library—but third, fourth, and fifth encounters with the ever-hungry, ever-grateful Prudence did not survive the cut. Mr. Buckworthy had returned to see still more of Pauline, but with no effect on her book. Pauline had also been the secret erotic companion of numerous gentlemen in high places in the government of the City of Pacific Heights and the State of Pacificum; she disclosed this in the book, but without great detail, for these gentlemen’s erotic distinctiveness largely fell far short of their presumed expertise in political and administrative matters.

Only her friendship with Mary, which still was not disclosed in the book, continued to rise far above the level of routine rutting. She dared to introduce Mary to Prudence at the library, of course with no suggestion to either of them of Pauline’s very different fascination with the other, and the two ladies began to like each other very much. She read and discussed books with Mary, and found her views to be as noble and high-minded as those of Prudence, though without Prudence’s tendency toward excess in praising all things sublime. Mary appreciated fine art and classical music as much, and far less stuffily, than the average Boston Brahmin of Pauline’s past acquaintance. Pauline and Mary even attended one another’s services of divine worship; Pauline found that, although her Unitarian service was unquestionably far ahead in comprehensibility, Mary’s Catholic one was at least equally superior in beauty. Above all, Mary’s sweet and loving heart attracted Pauline more

and more; she began to yearn for the time when her book would end, and her new life with Mary might begin.

Among men, Pauline found none to rise above routine rutting until one evening near the end of April, almost eight months after her arrival in Pacific Heights. In the great club parlor, among some men reading newspapers or talking politics, and some (including the almost ubiquitous Mr. Buckworthy) flirting with ladies, she saw one man alone at a small table, fixing his eyes on an album of photographs. They were family photographs, showing himself with a plump, pretty wife and four children. Pauline hoped she would not give him offense by intruding, but she felt drawn to this unusual man, and hoped she might befriend him.

“You have a fine-looking family, sir,” she said softly.

The man looked up. He was a young-looking man with reddish-golden hair and a small mustache of the same color, lean and sharp-eyed, with mingled fear and fascination showing in his sky-blue eyes. “Er—thank you,” he said. “I’m glad *somebody* thinks so.”

“I’m sure I’m not the only one,” said Pauline.

“No, not the only one in the *world*,” said the man, “but the only one in this club—or on this side of the mountains, for all I know.”

“You are from east of the mountains, then?” By now, Pauline knew enough about Pacificum to know that the eastern and western sides of the state were very different in many ways, not least in the views of the people. More people here on the western side held views that would be thought advanced, enlightened, progressive, forward-looking, and the like, by those who specialized in deeming themselves and their kindred spirits to hold such views. On the eastern side, the views of a great majority of the people would be deemed quite the reverse by the same specialists in the classification of thought.

“Yes,” said the man. “I own a big ranch outside of Rolling River, in Hartlock County. I decided to run for the legislature because a lot of people were sick and tired of the bankers running roughshod over the ranchers and farmers, and I wanted to try to help put a stop to it. I won the election, so here I am.”

“That is admirable,” Pauline said, “although I do not think you will be able to avoid meeting any bankers in this club. Some of the club’s leading members, I believe, are bankers.”

“That’s all right, as long as they don’t try to run roughshod over *me*.”

“Running roughshod over a fellow club member, I believe,” said Pauline, “would be grounds for immediate expulsion.”

The man laughed. “Say, you’re all right,” he said. “Not like some of the ladies here, if you can call them that. I joined this club because it was supposed to be a place where leading citizens could meet. It didn’t take long before I found out it was—well, some people treated it as hardly anything more than a high-class whoreh—I mean, a high-class house of ill repute; I don’t mean to use a bad word in the presence of a lady.”

“Not all the gentlemen of the club, nor all the ladies, regard it as such,” Pauline assured him.

“Are you one of the ladies that don’t?” the man demanded to know.

“Yes, I am,” said Pauline. She felt a brief twinge of fear that she was not telling the truth, but she tried to assure herself that it really was true, at least where this man was concerned. For him, at least, she would not play the high-class harlot.

“Well, then, I’m pleased to meet you,” said the man. “I’m Lem Landsborough. May I ask your name?”

“I am Pauline Spurtridge, and I came here last year from Boston.”

“Boston! That’s a mighty long ways away! What brought you all the way out here from there?”

“Oh, I came in search of adventure,” Pauline said vaguely, “and to escape from the stuffiness of Boston society.”

“Well, you won’t find a lot of stuffiness out here, that’s for sure! If anything, you’ll find a lot of people going too far in the other direction.”

“I have already noticed that,” Pauline acknowledged, “but neither you nor I need join them.”

“That’s for sure! I’m glad you don’t want to, and neither do I!”

Pauline could see that Mr. Landsborough would like to see more of her, though not in the same way as Mr. Buckworthy had done. Quickly thinking of a way in which this could be done with decency and propriety, she said, “You know, I am thinking that I and a couple of my lady friends would like to go for a picnic this Sunday afternoon, and I wonder if you would like to join us. I was just reading that the Stimson family, one of the leading families in Pacific Heights, have donated a large part of their extensive estate on the Capitoline Hill to the city, to be used as a public park known as Grand Stimson Park. The park is now open, and it sounds like a fine place for a picnic.”

“Well, that sounds like a grand idea!” said Mr. Landsborough. “It’s a deal!”

On Sunday afternoon, Pauline, Mary, and Prudence rode together up the Capitoline Hill on the new Underground Screw Car. This ingenious device, unique to Pacific Heights, was produced by two local companies, the Magnum Electric Company and the Supreme Screw Products Corporation. The car was driven uphill by a gigantic screw in a tunnel, operated by an electric motor, and stopped at stations approximately every quarter mile up the steep hill from the harbor, through the city center, and up to the foot

of the grand, newly completed Pacificum State Capitol. Unlike the awkward, jerky cable cars in cities such as San Francisco, the Underground Screw Car was smooth in operation and comfortable for passengers.

The ladies emerged from the car and ascended the stairs to the ground at the Garfield Street station, near the corner of the new park. The plan, proposed by Pauline at the club and later approved by Mary and Pauline, was that Mr. Landsborough would walk down from his lodging house nearby and meet them there, whence they would stroll through the park until they found a promising spot for a picnic. The first part of the plan had been carried out already, for Mr. Landsborough was near the top of the stairway awaiting them when they arrived.

“Mr. Landsborough!” Pauline exclaimed. “How gentlemanly of you to meet us so promptly! I would like you to meet my friends, Miss Mary McConnachy and Miss Prudence Farquhar.”

“I’m very pleased to meet you both,” said Mr. Landsborough, accepting the offered hands of Mary and Prudence. “It’s not often that a lonesome legislator like me gets a chance for a social outing with *three* lovely ladies!” This was very kind of him, Pauline thought, for surely few men could honestly think Prudence lovely, though many might think Mary so, and even Pauline herself.

“May I carry your picnic baskets?” Mr. Landsborough asked. Mary and Prudence, who were carrying the baskets, gratefully handed them both to him. The four of them entered the park, where they soon found a grassy meadow suitable for a picnic.

Hardly had they sat down and begun their meal when none other than Mr. Buckworthy happened to pass by, escorting a tall, lovely red-haired lady whom Pauline strongly suspected of being a female impersonator. “Miss Spurtridge!” Mr. Buckworthy cried. “And Miss Farquhar! What a pleasant surprise! This is my friend Miss Lucy Foe-hawke,” he said, introducing the red-haired lady. “And you must introduce me to your companions, too!”

"This is my dear friend Miss Mary McConnachy," said Pauline, "and this is Mr. Lemuel Landsborough, a state legislator from Hartlock County. Mr. Landsborough, this is my friend Mr. Donald Buckworthy, the principal of Rutland Ridge High School."

"I am most pleased to meet you, sir," said Mr. Buckworthy, shaking Mr. Landsborough's hand vigorously. "I read of your election some months ago. I am quite a connoisseur of politics in our fair State, you know."

"You must be, to know about our little election out east of the mountains," said Mr. Landsborough.

"Yes, indeed," said Mr. Buckworthy, "and I congratulate you. It was a remarkable victory. But do not let me interrupt your picnic. You must have quite enough to talk about with these three lovely ladies, without any interloping on my part. Good day, sir, and again I congratulate you."

So saying, Mr. Buckworthy moved on with Miss Foehawke, and the remaining foursome began to fulfill his prediction of having quite enough to talk about. Much of their conversation was quite normal in nature, covering such matters as Mr. Landsborough's family, his ranch, his position in the state legislature, as well as Prudence's employment at the library and Pauline's volunteer work there. Eventually, however, Mr. Landsborough grew so familiar with the three ladies as to confide in them: "I don't mind telling you it means a lot to me to have some feminine companionship around here, with decent, high-minded ladies who wouldn't try to lead a man to commit adultery. You wouldn't believe how much adultery goes on here, even on the highest levels in society."

"Alas," said Pauline, "I *would* believe it, all too readily. But you may be assured that, even if you wished, you would not find it possible to commit adultery with all three of us at once—and, if you tried with one, the other two would promptly restrain you."

Mr. Landsborough laughed out loud. "That's the spirit!" he said. "You know, what with the shortage of

eligible ladies out here, I wonder why none of you three were snapped up long ago.”

All three ladies were silent. Pauline had not anticipated such a question, although now she thought she should have. “Er—perhaps suitable men,” she ventured to say, “are not to be found in such great abundance as one might imagine.”

“And *unsuitable* men,” Mary added, “are to be found in far greater abundance than one would wish.” Pauline cringed within herself to hear it, thinking of Mary engaging in carnal congress with countless unsuitable men for 20 years. Her book must end soon, Pauline thought—and the last chapter must be her marriage to Mary, just as she had envisioned.

“Well, that’s the truth, for sure,” Mr. Landsborough agreed. “You sure wouldn’t want to marry a man who’d turn around and commit adultery behind your back.”

“No, indeed,” said Pauline. “I admire you very much for being a faithful husband, and—we too, I am sure I can speak for all of us, would be steadfastly faithful if we were ever to marry.”

“Well, I hope you’ll get your chances, all of you,” said Mr. Landsborough.

Pauline looked to Mary, whose eyes were fixed at first on Mr. Landsborough—and then on Pauline. The yearning in Mary’s eyes reached out to Pauline’s heart and drew it close to Mary, closer than ever before. Discreetly but unmistakably, Pauline smiled at Mary and nodded “Yes!”

That was all. Nothing even remotely resembling, nor even suggestive of, adultery occurred. Imagine Pauline’s shock and horror, then, when Tuesday morning’s *Pacific Heights Informer* carried this titillating tidbit of news, headlined “Legislator Picnics with Female Impersonators”: “Sightseers in the newly

opened Grand Stimson Park on the Capitoline Hill were treated to a rare and shocking display last Sunday afternoon: the Honorable L_____ L_____, state representative from H_____ County on the eastern side of our fair State, was seen openly picnicking with known female impersonators. It is not known in what secret delights the Honorable Mr. L_____ may have indulged with one or more of these lovely non-ladies after their shameless repeat and intercourse in the park. Calls for his resignation may be expected to ensue at once.”

The words “shock” and “horror,” indeed, were far too weak. This was a vicious, outrageous, nauseating sneak attack upon an innocent and honorable gentleman, perpetrated by someone who knew that *both* Pauline and Prudence were female impersonators. Any one of many members of the club, perhaps not far short of a hundred by now, might have identified Pauline as an impersonator—but Prudence, Pauline believed, was known as such only by a select few. Indeed, aside from herself, she knew of only one man who knew Prudence to be an impersonator, and she had seen that man at their picnic in the park. She could hardly believe him capable of such perfidy—but she would confront Mr. Buckworthy about it, as soon as possible, and have the truth.

First, however, Pauline must apologize to Mr. Landsborough for her part in this disaster—if only she could find him. Mr. Buckworthy she could call on the telephone in his office at Rutland Ridge High School, but Mr. Landsborough she could find, if at all, only in person. She had only one idea how to try to find him, and she would do it now.

Rapidly Pauline dressed to be presentable in society, emerged from the club, and walked to the Underground Screw Car station entrance in the city center. The car soon transported her to the uphill terminus of the line, near the entrance to the Pacificum State Capitol. She walked up the steps of the magnificent, shining domed structure and entered through the high double doors.

Inside the building, which she had never before entered, she saw a wide circle of grand,

larger-than-life statues of allegorical male and female figures representing "Art," "Industry," "Commerce," "Education," "Science," "Law," and such like human endeavors. Looking up, far up, she saw the many-colored brilliance of sunlight flooding the great dome through stained-glass windows. Below the dome, she saw two circular marble railings around the open rotunda on the building's higher floors. On the walls of the building were gigantic murals depicting the past, present, and future of Pacificum. So full of beauty was the capitol building that Pauline almost—but not quite—forgot what she had come here for.

To one side of her, not very conspicuous amid the monumental works of art and statuary, was a small booth beneath a sign not quite so small: "WELCOME, CITIZENS OF PACIFICUM." In the booth was a small, bald-headed man who appeared to be waiting to give assistance to visiting citizens. Pauline approached the booth and spoke to the man: "Good morning, sir. I wish to speak with a state representative, the Honorable Lemuel Landsborough."

"Only members of the House are permitted upon the House floor," the man said. "You may see whether this representative is in his office, or you may go up to the gallery and watch the proceedings. When there is a recess, you may try to speak with him if he enters the rotunda."

Pauline got directions to Mr. Landsborough's office, ascertained that he was not there, and found her way to the gallery entrance. When she entered, she was dismayed to find that the discussion on the House floor was turning toward Mr. Landsborough, Prudence, and herself.

"Mr. Speaker," said a handsome gentleman who looked to be about 40 years of age, with perfectly groomed golden hair and a mustache to match, "I find myself in the unenviable position of having to bring a most lamentable matter to the attention of the House. One of our members, I deeply regret to say, has brought shame upon our Legislature, and is in need of the strongest possible censure. I refer to

the Honorable Lemuel Landsborough, of Hartlock County.”

“*What?*” cried Mr. Landsborough, shooting up from his chair. “What is this? I’ve done nothing shameful!”

“If, indeed, the Honorable Mr. Landsborough does not regard it as shameful to engage in *public flirtation with female impersonators*,” the golden-haired gentleman shot back, “then it may fairly be inquired what, if anything, he *does* regard as shameful.” Loud talking broke out at once all around the House floor.

“Female impersonators? You’re lying!” Mr. Landsborough shouted. “If you’re talking about my Sunday picnic with three decent, high-minded ladies—if you and your henchmen had somebody snooping on me and trying to make up some filthy scandal about me—then let me tell you there was no flirtation, and those were no female impersonators!” The talking grew even louder. The Speaker of the House, alone at the front of the House chamber, pounded his gavel and called for order. “Mr. Fortmouth,” he said, “you will be pleased to present the factual basis for your most disturbing allegations.”

“I will be *most* pleased, Mr. Speaker,” said the white-haired gentleman, “though also, of course, I need not say, most dismayed. A civic-minded gentleman of my acquaintance, of the highest character, a leading educator in our fair city, has taken it upon himself to investigate and expose the degraded character and the abominable practices of the female impersonators who, in recent decades, have become all too common here. He has acquired extensive knowledge of the underground network of female impersonators. Happening to observe Mr. Landsborough and the three so-called ‘decent, high-minded ladies’ who surrounded him, he discerned that *two* of those three supposed ladies were, in reality, female impersonators known to him as such!”

“It’s a lie!” cried Mr. Landsborough. “What if I said some unnamed leading citizen told me *you’re* a *male* impersonator, and a female in reality? That wouldn’t prove anything!”

“I can and will bring forth the proof of my allegations in the due course of the proceedings of this House,” said Mr. Fortmouth, “while there could be no proof of any absurd allegation that I myself am a male impersonator. But the business before us this morning is too urgent to allow for a moment’s delay. This is a crisis of decency and morality, as appalling as the crisis that faced our former territorial government when my father, the Honorable Senator Runnion W. Fortmouth, exposed the so-called First Lady of Pacificum Territory as, in reality, a female impersonator! I call for the immediate suspension of the Honorable Mr. Landsborough from active membership in this House, pending a full investigation of his scandalous abominations at the earliest opportunity!”

“I will call for a voice vote,” said the Speaker. “All in favor, say Aye.” A loud chorus of “Aye” rose from around the chamber.

“All opposed, say Nay.” The chorus of Nays was loud too, but not quite so loud as the Ayes.

“The Ayes have it,” said the Speaker. “I must declare the Honorable Mr. Landsborough suspended from active membership in this House.”

Mr. Landsborough stood stock still for a dreadful moment; then he wheeled round and strode off the House floor. Pauline arose at once from her seat in the gallery, emerged into the hallway, and flew down the stairs. By the time she arrived at the bottom of the rotunda, Mr. Landsborough was nowhere to be seen.

Pauline tried to preserve her decorum so long as she was inside the capitol building. She walked quickly to the double doors through which she had entered, passed through them, and looked down, to the bottom of the great stairs and beyond to the steep slope of Capitoline Avenue. Mr. Landsborough was there, striding fast downhill, already far ahead of Pauline.

She dared not cry aloud, and yet she must speak with him. She picked up her skirts and ran, down the stairs, down the avenue, almost breathlessly fast, al-

ways fearing she would trip and fall, yet seeming to gain only slowly on Mr. Landsborough.

Several blocks down the avenue, he turned a corner. Pauline raced even faster to avoid losing sight of him. When she turned the corner, Mr. Landsborough was turning toward a house, which Pauline supposed must be his lodging house.

She could wait no longer to cry out. "Mr. Landsborough!" she cried. "Mr. Landsborough, please wait!"

He turned to look at her, scowled dreadfully, and turned away. He jammed his hand into his pocket and rummaged for something, presumably his key. Pauline caught up with him at last. "Mr. Landsborough, please!" she said from behind his back. "I must speak with you! I am dreadfully sorry this has happened!"

He clenched his fist and turned toward her, with outrage and loathing in his eyes. "Well, so am I," he said, "now that you mention it—*Miss Spurtridge*." He seemed barely able to restrain himself from striking Pauline, then and there, in full view of anyone who might be watching through the windows of houses all along the opposite side of the street.

"So you're a female impersonator, are you?" he demanded to know. "Well, I never would have imagined it—but I guess stranger things have happened, especially *here*. I can see it all now: the bankers and their henchmen put you up to it, and you pretended to be friendly, to admire my family, to be so pure and high-minded and—and *feminine*—all so you could ruin me!"

"No, Mr. Landsborough, that is not true!" Pauline cried. "I beg you, as you are an honest and upstanding gentleman, believe me!"

He stared her down in silence. "Well, then, what is true?" he asked at last. "Are you a female impersonator, or not?"

Pauline lowered her eyes and blushed. "Yes, I am," she admitted, "but obviously you did not know I was."

His eyes bulged, and his scowl returned in full force. “No, I sure didn’t,” he said. He seemed on the point of saying more, but stopped himself.

“And you did nothing wrong in associating with me, thinking I really was a pure and high-minded maiden lady, as I seemed to be.”

“No, I sure didn’t,” he said again, “but that Fortmouth and his fiends can twist anything to make it seem like evil when it ain’t—I mean, it isn’t. I’m done for in this town. I might as well resign from the legislature and go home right now, and just hope against hope my wife believes me when I tell her I didn’t commit adultery with any female impersonators.”

Why did Pauline recall the Princess’s horror at seeing Zeb Kingsley with his brains blown out on the floor? “No, Mr. Landsborough, you mustn’t just give up like that!” she cried. “You would never commit *suicide*, would you?”

He stared at her. “No, I could never do that to my family,” he said. “And besides, I couldn’t be sure I wouldn’t just go straight to hell, and *that* sure wouldn’t solve my problems.”

“No, it certainly wouldn’t!” Pauline agreed, despite her lifelong doubt that anyone would really go to hell. “But, don’t you see, *political* suicide wouldn’t solve your problems either. You don’t really think you ought to give in to those lying fiends who twist good to make it seem like evil.”

“No, I don’t,” he said, “but I don’t see any way around it. What am I going to say to the people back home? ‘Please believe me, folks, I didn’t know they were female impersonators, and I didn’t commit any sins with them?’ You know what they’ll say? They’ll say, ‘Sure, Lem, it’s just like when all the old-timers here thought Zeb Kingsley was too fine a man to fall for a female impersonator—but he wasn’t, and neither are you.’”

“You didn’t even know that’s what I was,” Pauline protested, “and I’ll wager they wouldn’t either!” Even as she spoke, a daring plan was beginning to form it-

self in her mind—so daring that she feared she would not dare to carry it out.

Mr. Landsborough looked astounded at the thought, but he had grasped the plan at once. “You don’t mean,” he said, “you want to come back home with me, and try to pass yourself off as a female there?”

“That is exactly what I *do* mean,” said Pauline, trying her hardest to screw up her courage to do the deed. “I propose that Miss McConnachy, Miss Farquhar, and I should all accompany you, so that your people can see for themselves who are these supposed female impersonators you have been accused of consorting with.” Mary and Prudence, she trusted, would surely go along with the plan, if she begged them to help.

Mr. Landsborough stood in silence, breathing deeply. “Well,” he said, “I guess it couldn’t hurt. I couldn’t be any worse off than I am now.”

“It not only couldn’t hurt,” said Pauline, “but I think it could help; it might even help a great deal!”

Chapter 7

“Pauline!” Prudence cried, walking quickly toward her friend at Union Station next morning, in accordance with the plan. “Pauline, Miss Oates tells me she has accepted you for the new position at the library! You’ll be a real librarian at last!”

“Oh, how delightful!” said Pauline. Turning to Mr. Landsborough, she said, “Now you will be able to introduce us truthfully as two spinster librarians.”

“That’s got a fine, decent sound to it,” said Mr. Landsborough. “Now, what about Miss McConnachy?”

Pauline could not think how to introduce Mary, whose only occupation was that of a lady companion at the club—but Mary herself spoke up. “You may introduce me as a cleaning lady,” she said. “That, I ex-

pect, will be my occupation when I retire from the club. There will be no harm in a bit of anticipation of the truth.” Pauline’s heart leapt high, unreasonably high, at the thought of Mary retiring from the club, though Mary had not said when it might happen. At once Pauline began to imagine that she, too, might retire from the club, and much earlier than she had expected.

“Very well, a cleaning lady you will be,” said Mr. Landsborough.

“All aboard,” called out the conductor, “for Manahowaka, Rolling River, Hoosanauga, Empire City, Billings, Fargo, Minneapolis, St. Paul, and points east!”

The ladies and the legislator boarded the train, and before long they were out of the city, ascending into the foothills. Mr. Landsborough told the ladies many stories about his family and the people of Hartlock County, especially his good friend Sheriff Bill Hitchpoke. Mr. Landsborough had sent telegrams to his wife and the sheriff, telling them he would be coming to Rolling River with three ladies, and giving the scheduled time of arrival. “Ladies may need protection from crowd,” his telegram to the sheriff had mentioned, and the sheriff’s telegram in return had assured him, “Sheriff and all available deputies will be on hand.”

They entered the long tunnel under the mountain pass. Soon the train began to fill with acrid smoke. Mary began to cough, and Pauline embraced her to comfort her. “Oh, this is dreadful!” Pauline said to Mr. Landsborough. “Can something be wrong with the train?”

“I don’t think so,” he said, with his eyes closed and his nose covered. “It’s always like this on the way east, because the grade in the tunnel is uphill that way. Just hold your breath as much as you can. We’ll open the windows for some fresh air when we’re out.” Pauline held her breath, hoping that none of the company would lose consciousness before reaching the end of the tunnel. She embraced the coughing Mary more closely, while the words “in sickness and

in health . . . for richer, for poorer . . . for better or for worse” echoed in her mind.

Mary seemed almost to be unconscious by the time they left the tunnel. Pauline, Prudence, and Mr. Landsborough all raced to open the windows of the car. “Mary, come to the window and breathe the fresh air!” said Pauline, lifting Mary from her seat and helping her to the window. Gradually Mary revived and began to breathe normally, with the help of Prudence who offered her some smelling salts.

At last Mary sat down by the window, and Pauline sat next to her, again with her arm around her. The train, now filled with fresh air, began to descend through meadows and apple orchards. Pauline could now enjoy the sight of them, for the black reaction was not gripping her as it had done when she had passed through them from the east—but her enjoyment of the passing sights was far less than her enjoyment of Mary’s warm, tender, yielding presence in her embrace.

It was well after noon by the time the train reached Rolling River, many miles east of the mountains. Shortly before entering the town, the train crossed the river from which the town got its name, which seemed almost as wide as the Mississippi. The town seemed a big one, bigger than any they had seen since leaving Pacific Heights. They emerged from the train at the station near what was obviously the courthouse square, at the far side of which was a courthouse that looked like a miniature replica of the Pacificum State Capitol. A large number of people were assembled in the square; it appeared the news of Mr. Landsborough’s return had spread quickly.

“Welcome home, Lem,” said a tall, stout man in a sheriff’s uniform, carrying a shotgun. “I got your telegram, and I saw the news about what they were saying about you. Folks here just want to know the truth.”

“They’ll get it, all right,” said Mr. Landsborough. After quickly introducing the three ladies to Sheriff Hitchpoke, he asked, “is my family here?”

“They’re all waiting for you at the top of the courthouse steps,” said the sheriff, gesturing with his free hand. “Your wife didn’t think it would be safe to take all the little ones through the crowd, and they thought you might want to say some words from there.”

“I do,” said Mr. Landsborough. “Let’s go.”

“OK, boys, clear a path for us,” said the sheriff. Several men in deputy sheriff’s uniforms, who had been standing back, began to walk through the crowd ahead of the sheriff, Mr. Landsborough, and the three ladies. Mr. Landsborough waved right and left at the people, many of whom applauded him, though some booed.

On reaching the top of the courthouse steps, Mr. Landsborough embraced his wife, while his children crowded around him. He introduced Pauline, Mary, and Prudence to his wife, whose name was Penny; she seemed a bit unfriendly upon meeting them, but polite. Then, with the shotgun-wielding sheriff standing next to him, he began to address the crowd.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” he said in a loud voice, “if you haven’t yet heard about the lies in the *Pacific Heights Informer*, about me associating with female impersonators, you’re going to hear about them now! The bankers and their henchmen have gotten me suspended from the legislature because of those lies—and I want you to see for yourself that they *are* lies! These so-called female impersonators have agreed to come here with me, so you can see them and meet them for yourselves. Here they are, three high-minded ladies of the finest character: Miss Spurtridge and Miss Farquhar, both librarians, and Miss McConnachy, a cleaning lady. I went on a picnic in the park with them on Sunday. The bankers and their henchmen on that lying newspaper twisted that into a story about me degrading myself with female impersonators. I ask you, how dare they—how dare



anyone—insult and vilify these pure, decent ladies by calling them female impersonators?”

“There’s only one way to find out for sure,” retorted a big man with a big mustache, a big cowboy hat, and scraggly hair, near the front of the crowd. “And that ain’t by listenin’ to you talk!” Turning to face the crowd, he cried out, “Boys, let’s find out for sure! Are you man enough?” Then he began to stride up the courthouse stairs, followed by a number of other men. Pauline shivered with fear, remembering all too well her unmasking at school.

“Boys, are you man enough to go to jail—or to hell?” the sheriff shouted, pointing the shotgun straight at the big man. “Me and my deputies are man enough to put the whole lot of you in jail, if you even lay a finger on any of these ladies—and we’ll get help from every *decent* man in this county! And if you do anything you need to get shot for, you can be damn sure you’re going straight to hell!”

“Boys, he’s bluffing,” said the big man. “He won’t shoot into this crowd, and they could never handle all of us, if we stick together.”

“Yeah, he’s bluffing, all right,” said a deputy, quickly coming up behind him, “but I ain’t. Get these handcuffs on.” The big man swore and shouted in outrage while that deputy and two others arrested him. “God damn it, you got nothing on me!” he yelled. “I ain’t committed no crime!”

“Have too,” said the deputy with the handcuffs. “Soliciting a crime of moral turpitude, by trying to get them boys to strip off these ladies’ clothes.”

“Boys, come on! Get ‘em!” screamed the big man, committing the same crime again. Many men began to run up the steps. The first one up pointed a pistol at Pauline and said, “All right, get them clothes off! Now!”

The sheriff had not been bluffing after all. He fired the shotgun at the pistol-wielding man at close range, killing him at once. The ladies shrieked. Pauline tried to turn away from the gruesome spectacle, but she could not avoid seeing the fighting all around

her. The only good thing was that the sheriff's prediction of help from every decent man in the county was being fulfilled. Most of the men were actually fighting to defend the ladies, and they seemed to be winning the fight—but still the outcome seemed to be in doubt, and many men were being hurt.

“Stop!” Mary cried. “Stop this! I will submit to an examination—if only you will stop fighting!” After some delay, her words had their desired effect, though not before one of the defenders hit an attacker so hard that he flew almost all the way down the steps before landing on his back with a terrific groan.

“Please, I beg you,” Mary pleaded, “let me offer myself to a midwife, or to any discreet and honest lady, for a private examination, and she will see that I am no female impersonator. Only, I implore you, do not subject my companions, Miss Spurtridge and Miss Farquhar, to the same indignity. I must admit that my character has not always been of the finest, and one more indignity will mean far less to me than it would to them. Miss Spurtridge and Miss Farquhar are maiden ladies of the most delicate sensibilities, and it would be a grossly impertinent outrage even to *suggest* that they should submit to an examination such as these—these men have proposed. Accept me, I pray, as a sacrificial offering for the good name and the decency of us all; do not let more men be arrested or harmed, or even die, in trying to abuse Miss Spurtridge and Miss Farquhar.”

“That’s fair!” cried Mrs. Landsborough. “There must be no more fighting!” Murmurs of assent, and then applause, arose throughout the crowd.

“I am a midwife,” said a wrinkled, graying lady, ascending the stairs. “I can perform the examination in a private area of the courthouse.” Mary entered the courthouse with her. After several minutes they returned, and the midwife proclaimed, “This lady is no female impersonator; she is a natural-born woman!” Applause rose from the crowd.

“Well, that settles it,” said Sheriff Hitchpoke. “We can’t bow down to those bankers and their hench-

men, with their lies about Lem and these fine ladies. I propose that every decent man in this county should sign a petition to reinstate Lem in the legislature at once!”

Above the applause of the crowd, Mrs. Landsborough called out, “What about every decent *woman*?”

“Well, but women can’t vote,” the sheriff said in a doubtful voice.

“This isn’t voting, it’s showing we all support Lem,” she retorted. “I want to be the first one to sign the petition!” The applause grew louder, and the sheriff agreed that the women should sign the petition too. After the petition was drawn up and read to the assembly by the sheriff, the first four to sign it were ladies. Mrs. Landsborough came first, followed by three ladies who, though not residents of Hartlock County, had a deep personal interest in the matter: Miss Mary McConnachy, Miss Prudence Farquhar, and Miss Pauline Spurtridge.

Chapter 8

After spending the night as guests of honor at the Landsboroughs’ large ranch house several miles outside of town, the three ladies returned to Rolling River early in the morning and rode the train back to Pacific Heights, accompanied by Mr. Landsborough and Sheriff Hitchpoke. Though taking part in conversation when spoken to, Pauline was deep in thought for much of the journey. Her thoughts were fixed on Mr. Buckworthy and his dark, unworthy perfidy in disclosing to the newspaper that Mr. Landsborough had picnicked (though unknowingly) with female impersonators. She must confront him about it, she thought—but how? When? What could she say?

By the time the train arrived at its destination, her plan, such as it was, had been formed. She bade good-bye to Mr. Landsborough and the sheriff, who promised to tell her about the proceedings in the legislature at the club. She embraced Prudence and departed from her, hand in hand with Mary, toward the club.

“Mary, please excuse me; I must make a call on the telephone,” she said at once upon arriving at the club. Gazing into Mary’s eyes, she embraced her even more warmly than she had embraced Prudence, and gave her a little kiss on the cheek. “I’ll explain everything,” she said, “but I can’t right now.” Then she walked away, down the plush-carpeted hallway, to one of the enclosures in which there were telephones for the use of the ladies and gentlemen of the club.

“Good day,” said Pauline to the young-sounding man who answered the telephone, “is Mr. Buckworthy still at school? Yes, I would like to speak with him. I am Miss Pauline Spurtridge.” She hoped the young man would not know who Miss Pauline Spurtridge was, and how her brief employment at the school had ended; she could only trust that, in this at least, Mr. Buckworthy had been the soul of discretion.

“Miss Spurtridge! Good afternoon!” said Mr. Buckworthy. “It’s been far too long since I’ve seen you!”

“I was just thinking the same thing,” said Pauline. “Perhaps you would like to dine with me this evening at the club.”

“Yes, indeed! No doubt your conversation will be as scintillating as always!”

“I sincerely hope so. Shall we say six o’clock for dinner, then?”

“We certainly shall.”

At dinner, Pauline wasted little time in turning the scintillating conversation toward the topic of Mr. Landsborough. “Oh, Mr. Buckworthy,” she said, “I must tell you that two of my lady friends and I have been honored with a visit to the residence of one of our state legislators, Mr. Lemuel Landsborough.”

“Really! That is quite an honor indeed!”

“Yes, and we thoroughly enjoyed our visit with his family.” There was no need, Pauline thought, to mention the confrontation at the courthouse, which was far from enjoyable. “I believe you have already met Mr. Landsborough,” she went on, “at our picnic in the park last Sunday.”

“Yes, so I recall.”

“I thought it quite a remarkable coincidence,” Pauline ventured to say, “that, so soon after our picnic occurred, it was mentioned in the newspaper—and that the vulgar expression ‘female impersonators’ was used to describe Miss Farquhar and myself.”

“Yes, well, you have been here long enough to be quite familiar with the *Informer*—a veritable fountain of vulgarity. I myself prefer the *Times of Pacific Heights*, which maintains a far higher standard of dignity.”

“A wise choice—and yet, it seems, you are not above communicating certain interesting information to the *Informer*.”

Mr. Buckworthy raised his eyebrows high. “An unwarranted inference, I believe, Miss Spurtridge,” he said. “You have become quite a favorite at this club, you know. Any one of a hundred or more men might have recognized you as a so-called female impersonator.”

“But only a very select few, I believe, would have known Miss Farquhar to be such a one,” Pauline retorted, “and the article referred to ‘female impersonators’ in the plural. Not only that but, among those select few, only *one* greeted us at our picnic with Mr. Landsborough.”

Mr. Buckworthy’s smoothness of manner did not leave him; indeed, it seemed to grow greater as he smiled. “You are far too quick for me, Miss Spurtridge,” he said. “You have caught me out again. Yes, I must admit it was I who divulged that information to the *Informer*. A man can always use a little spare change, you know, and the *Informer* has been known to provide it for news items that the *Times* would not touch.”

Pauline feared that her own smoothness of manner would fall far short of Mr. Buckworthy's as she contemplated him ruining a man's reputation for "a little spare change"—but at once she determined that her smoothness must equal his, if not surpass it. Sickening shock gripped her heart at the thought of what else Mr. Buckworthy might have done, how deep into the abyss of moral turpitude he might have fallen, in his quest for spare change—perhaps even seeking to blackmail Mr. Landsborough. All the while, her eyes grew brighter, her lips smiled more enchantingly, her whole body grew more seductive, while in her secret heart she plotted Mr. Buckworthy's downfall.

"I admire your forthrightness, Mr. Buckworthy," she said. "You are a man who knows his aim, states it without fear, and proceeds to achieve it. Is it your aim this evening to spank me for my naughtiness in catching you out?"

"It is," he said. "You deserve a very hard spanking for that."

"I shall make it richly worth your while," said Pauline, leaning forward and forming her lips in the shape of a kiss—unmistakably foreshadowing yet another erotic encounter that would not be recorded in her book.

"I haven't yet been reinstated, but I thought the session today went very well," Mr. Landsborough told Pauline at the club next evening. "The Speaker was actually eager to give us a hearing. Fortmouth complained that the petition was invalid because it had signatures of women who couldn't vote, but the Speaker said that didn't invalidate the whole petition because there appeared to be plenty of signatures from men who could vote. Then Bill held them spell-bound when he told about how almost everyone who showed up at the courthouse, starting with Lem's wife, was convinced you ladies were no female impersonators, and the whole thing was a lie made up by the bankers and their henchmen."

“Don’t forget how I told them you were well known as one of the most decent, upstanding men in Hartlock County,” Sheriff Hitchpoke added, “and you would no more associate with a female impersonator than you would kiss a rattlesnake.”

Pauline was startled to see none other than Mr. Fortmouth himself approaching, perhaps within earshot. Worse yet, she was sickened to see none other than Mary McConnachy at his side. She feared a confrontation—but none occurred. Mr. Fortmouth quickly averted his eyes and moved on with Mary.

“Speaking of kissing a rattlesnake,” Mr. Landsborough said when they were again out of earshot, “it looks like that little lady is about to do just that.”

Pauline felt sick to her stomach. She hoped she could refrain from vomiting, but she feared she could not. *Mary!* her heart cried out. *Leave this life and come away with me!*

It was time, Pauline thought, or almost time, for the last chapter of her book to be written. She could easily fill up the middle of it by selecting from her many erotic encounters at the club. Then she would write of the marriage of the humble librarian, herself, to the humble cleaning lady, Mary, and of how they would eschew erotic encounters with others ever after. She yearned to move on to the last chapter without delay—but she could not, not yet. One other chapter, an extremely important one, must be lived and written first.

“Mr. Landsborough,” she said, “speaking of rattlesnakes and their human counterparts—before that article that said you picnicked with female impersonators appeared, did anyone ask you for payment for preventing it from appearing?”

Mr. Landsborough frowned. “Well, now that you mention it,” he said, “A man did ask me, on the day after the picnic. I think he was the same man who greeted us at the picnic, the one with the red-haired lady friend. He came to me in my office after the session was done for the day, and told me he had an interesting news item to sell me. I asked him what it was, and he said it was about me picnicking with fe-

male impersonators. I told him he had to be joking, and he said he wasn't, he knew all about female impersonators, and you and Miss Farquhar were among them. I said I didn't believe him, and he said plenty of people would believe him if I didn't want to buy the news item, because then the *Pacific Heights Informer* would buy it and publish it."

"Blackmail," said Pauline, burning with outrage. "Did you notify the police?"

"I guess I should have," said Mr. Landsborough. "But I didn't think of it. I guess I couldn't imagine he was serious. Besides, I didn't remember his name from when you introduced us. All I remembered was that he was the principal of some high school."

"Now you know he was *dead* serious," said Pauline, "and I happen to remember his name very well. Mr. Landsborough, since you have not yet notified the police, I would ask you to hold off for a very little bit longer. I have a plan, and the intervention of the police, at the right moment, forms part of that plan. Mr. Buckworthy does need to face legal justice—but he also needs, I believe, to face poetic justice."

"Ah, yes, Miss McConnachy," said Mr. Fortmouth. "You are the finest of your kind, without a doubt." He was nude, and so was Mary. His hands were on Mary's small breasts, and his thick member was between her legs. In a quick, businesslike manner she put a rubber on his member. The Princess's words resounded in her mind: "My heart was no longer in me when I mated with men, and I knew it was time to move on."

"Oh, this is most excellent," said Mr. Fortmouth, pressing his rubber-covered member into Mary's womanly opening from behind as she knelt on her hands and knees. "My wife has still never permitted me to enter her in this magnificent way. Only here, with you, am I free to fulfill my most overwhelming desire—now and, I trust, for many years to come."

Never again, Mary's heart retorted—from afar, for it was no longer in her. Only her small, lithe body remained here on the floor, receiving Mr. Fortmouth's eager thrusts, preparing to falsify a climax when he ejaculated into the rubber. Her heart, her soul, her mind, her very self, all hovered far above her vainly rutting body, yearning for a quick end to this loveless congress.

“Oh, yes, this is most astounding!” said Mr. Fortmouth, thrusting hard into Mary from behind, almost crushing her breasts with his hands, rushing up the rapids of excitement toward ejaculation. “Oh, yes, this is the life! Oh, oh, *oh, my God!*”

“Oh, Mr. Fortmouth, yes!” Mary dutifully responded, though her far-off heart was crying, “No!” Falsifying an ecstatic climax as best she could, she echoed him, “Oh, oh, oh, my God!”—but for her, though not for him, it was only the first words of the Act of Contrition: “O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee”

Mr. Fortmouth was quickly gone, after thanking Mary profusely for the erotic encounter—the detestable sin, Mary was now thinking. It would be her last, she resolved. She would notify Sir Arnold that she was retiring from the club, effective immediately, and she would seek a position as a cleaning lady. She still did not know for sure whether Pauline, or anyone, would ever marry her—but at least she would become free from vice, she would go to confession, she would return to the sacraments at long last, and become a decent lady after all these years.

“Pauline?” said Mary, knocking at Pauline's door. Pauline opened to her. “Pauline, I'm retiring from the club at once!” Mary cried out.

“Oh, Mary, I'm so glad for you,” said Pauline, embracing Mary and kissing her on the cheek, making her heart leap high. “I was hoping you would.”

“Well, now that you mention it,” Mary ventured to say, “I was hoping *you* would, too.”

“Oh, I will!” Pauline exclaimed. “I will, I promise—but I cannot do it just yet. There is one more thing I must accomplish as a lady of the club. Please do not ask me to tell you about it yet—but I promise to tell you all, after the deed is done.”

“Pauline, you are too mysterious for me,” Mary gently chided her, with eyes wide open in unknowing.

“I fear I am,” said Pauline, “but only for a little while longer. After that, I trust, we shall each be exactly mysterious enough for each other, neither too much nor too little.”

And for the rest of our lives—together! Mary’s heart cried out. Still she dared not hope too strongly—and yet, all the more, she dared not fail to hope.

Chapter 9

“Prudence!” Pauline said, next Monday morning, at the library. “I must meet a member of the school board. Do you have any idea how to go about it?”

“Well, my uncle, Mr. Robert Farquhar, is a member of the school board,” said Prudence. “But I am not sure he would welcome an introduction from me. His opinion of me, ever since he learned that I was a so-called female impersonator, has been extremely low. I fear he thinks me guilty of moral turpitude for that reason alone.”

“He is strongly opposed, then, to moral turpitude of the erotic variety?”

“Yes, very strongly.”

“What if he were to learn that a high-school principal was guilty of such turpitude—of having an erotic encounter with a female impersonator?”

“Oh! Why, I am sure he would be outraged, and demand that the principal be removed from his position.”

“Prudence, you must introduce me to him, I beg you. I have learned that Mr. Buckworthy tried to blackmail Mr. Landsborough. After Mr. Landsborough refused to pay him, Mr. Buckworthy disclosed to the *Informer* that Mr. Landsborough had picnicked with female impersonators. Is that not moral turpitude of the basest sort, on Mr. Buckworthy’s part—and does it not cry out for poetic justice?”

“Legal justice, I think, would be more to the point,” said Prudence.

“Oh, that too, of course,” said Pauline. “Indeed, I envision a momentous convergence of legal and poetic justice.”

“Uncle Robert?” said Prudence on the telephone right after work. “This is Peter. I’m sorry to interrupt your work, but a friend of mine must tell you something of the utmost importance—about moral turpitude on the part of a school principal. I’m sure the school board would want to know about it.” After a moment of listening to her Uncle Robert, Prudence resumed: “Yes, we can come over as soon as—er—I change out of my work clothing.” Another moment of silence ensued, and then Prudence said, “Yes, we’ll be there as soon as we can. Thank you very much, Uncle Robert.”

After hanging up the telephone, Prudence said, “Let’s go. We’ll need to stop quickly at my apartment so I can put on some male attire. Uncle Robert knows I don’t wear it at work, but I’m sure he’ll give us a much more nearly pleasant welcome if I put it on now.”

“All right,” said Pauline. “I don’t need to put some on too, do I? I hardly have any left.”

“No,” Prudence assured her. “You’re the female impersonator who took part in turpitude with the principal. He’ll want to see you as you are.”

“We’re here to see my uncle, Mr. Robert Farquhar,” said Prudence, now awkwardly attired in ungainly male attire, when she and Pauline had arrived at the office of the Magnum Electric Company, not far from the library. “He’s expecting us: Mr. Peter Farquhar and Miss Pauline Spurtridge.”

“Very well, I’ll see if he’s available,” said the lean, handsome young man in Mr. Robert Farquhar’s front office. He stepped into the inner sanctum of Mr. Farquhar’s presence, and soon returned. “You may go in,” he said.

Pauline and Prudence entered a large, splendidly furnished office with a view of the ocean. At a great desk sat a stout, imposing-looking man with a bald head, a fringe of white hair, and a big white mustache. “Hello, Peter,” he said without smiling or getting up. “What’s this about moral turpitude on the part of a principal?”

“Well, er—Uncle Robert, this is my friend Miss Pauline Spurtridge,” said Prudence, “and she is the one with the information.”

“I’m pleased to meet you, Miss Spurtridge,” said Mr. Farquhar, though he did not look highly pleased. “What is this information you have?”

“Well, sir,” said Pauline, “I deeply regret to inform you that the principal of Rutland Ridge High School, Mr. Donald Buckworthy, has been guilty of moral turpitude, by way of most indecent encounters with a female impersonator at the Victoria and Albert Club.”

Mr. Farquhar stared and scowled in seeming disbelief. “Mr. Buckworthy,” he said, “is well known as a fine, upstanding gentleman and educator. And who are *you*?”

“I, sir, am the female impersonator in question.”

Mr. Farquhar’s eyes bulged. He stared at Pauline from head to toe. “Well, I’ll have to take your word for *that*,” he said at last. “But why should I believe what you’re saying about Mr. Buckworthy? His character is, for all practical purposes, impeccable. Yours, if you are what you say you are—and if you have done what you say you have done—is not.”

“Sir, I believe I can offer you proof of the most convincing kind. You will see with your own eyes, if you are willing, that what I say is true.”

“You expect Mr. Buckworthy to engage in such wretched, sickening behavior in my presence?”

“Yes, if you will conceal yourself in my closet until the time comes to observe the deed.”

“Conceal myself in your closet! Is this some kind of joke?”

“Sir, it is no joke. It is deadly serious. I am ashamed of myself for waiting so long to disclose this. I do not think Mr. Buckworthy is the kind of man the school board would wish to be in charge of the education of our youth.”

Mr. Farquhar clenched his fists and looked away, as if deep in thought. Then, suddenly, he looked back to Pauline. “Have you tried to blackmail Mr. Buckworthy, by threatening to disclose this information if he did not offer payment?” he demanded to know.

“No, sir,” Pauline said at once. “I am not guilty of blackmail—but Mr. Buckworthy is. He tried to obtain payment from a state legislator, Mr. Lemuel Landsborough, by threatening to disclose that Mr. Landsborough had picnicked with female impersonators, including myself. After Mr. Landsborough refused to pay, Mr. Buckworthy did disclose the news about the picnic to the *Pacific Heights Informer*, which promptly printed the item and predicted calls for Mr. Landsborough’s resignation from the legislature.”

“Well, have you or Mr. Landsborough reported this to the police?”

“We are just about to do so. You see, sir, I envision a concerted effort on the part of the police and yourself: the police will arrest Mr. Buckworthy for blackmail, directly after you have observed that I am telling the truth about Mr. Buckworthy’s scandalous private life.”

“So you want a policeman to hide in the closet with me?”

“Yes, sir.”

Again Mr. Farquhar clenched his fists and looked away. “Well, I tell you what,” he said at last. “If you and Mr. Landsborough can convince the police that Mr. Buckworthy is really guilty of blackmail, and you can get a policeman to go along with this scheme of hiding in the closet, then I’ll do it. If not, I won’t.”

“Blackmail?” said the big, dark-eyed policeman, Sergeant Ferkins, to whom Pauline and Mr. Landsborough were referred when they went to the police station at their earliest opportunity. “Well, that’s a very serious charge. Tell me what evidence you have of it.”

“Here is a so-called news item from the *Pacific Heights Informer*,” said Pauline, producing a clipping of the article about Mr. L_____ L_____ and the female impersonators, “which the blackmailer offered to withhold from publication, if only Mr. Landsborough would pay him for it. Mr. Landsborough declined to do so, and the news item was published shortly thereafter.”

From the look of his eyes, Sergeant Ferkins seemed to be frowning as he read the news item, although his big black mustache hid much of his mouth. “Well, the offense of blackmail is complete when the request for payment is made,” he said, “even if it’s refused. This news item is certainly the

kind of thing that could constitute the subject matter of blackmail; a legislator's reputation could easily be ruined by stories about cavorting with female impersonators. Now, Mr. Landsborough, do we have only your word for it that the request for payment was, in point of fact, made?"

"Well, yes, I guess that's right," said Mr. Landsborough.

"Was the person who made the request known to you?"

"No. That's one reason why I didn't report it right away. I knew it was the same man who had greeted us at the picnic that's, er, mentioned in the news item—but I didn't remember his name until Miss Spurtridge reminded me."

"Miss Spurtridge, who is that man?" Sergeant Ferkins asked.

"He is Mr. Donald Buckworthy, the principal of Rutland Ridge High School."

Sergeant Ferkins raised his big black eyebrows high. "Blackmail in high places, eh? Or at least in high school places." He laughed, but only briefly. "And how do you come to know Mr. Buckworthy?"

"I was a teacher at Rutland Ridge."

"You are no longer? Did he discharge you from employment?"

"Yes. Well, he told me I would have to leave because I had been—er—found out as a female impersonator."

Sergeant Ferkins covered his eyes with his hand, but then removed it. "So the story about the female impersonators was *true*?"

"Yes, but Mr. Landsborough had no way of knowing it was true."

Sergeant Ferkins looked Pauline over with bulging eyes. "I'll say he hadn't," he admitted, "if all he had to

go on was your looks. But, see here, I'm not saying you're lying, but that would be a pretty good motive for lying—the principal let you go, and you wanted to get back at him. And even you, sir," he added, turning to Mr. Landsborough, "might have a good motive for lying, if Mr. Buckworthy did submit this item to the *Informer*, and you wanted to get back at him by calling it blackmail."

"Yes, I guess I might," said Mr. Landsborough, "but what I'm telling you is the truth."

"Maybe so, but I'm not sure we've got enough evidence that it is the truth."

Pauline stared into the void, desperately trying to see how more evidence of Mr. Buckworthy's guilt could be obtained. For many seconds, seeming like many minutes, she could see no more than she had seen from the window of the train crossing the Great Plains at night, while the black reaction had attacked her in full force. Then, at last, she thought she had the answer.

"What if Mr. Buckworthy himself could be brought to admit what he had done?" she asked.

"Well, that would be a lot more like it," said Sergeant Ferkins. "Do you think he can?"

"I wonder," said Pauline, "what would happen if Mr. Landsborough were to call him on the telephone and say he regretted that he didn't buy the news item as Mr. Buckworthy had requested. Officer, could you listen in at Mr. Landsborough's end and see if Mr. Buckworthy made any incriminating remarks?"

"Oh, of course, that's perfectly legal in this state, as long as I have the consent of one party to the call."

"And then perhaps you could lend Mr. Landsborough some marked bills for the transaction, so you could identify them as having come from the police?"

"Yes, I'm sure that could be arranged."

"Well, then, Mr. Landsborough, you consent, don't you?"

“Um, yes, of course,” said Mr. Landsborough. “Let me just think about this for a minute.” After at least a full minute of silence, he said, “All right, I think I’ve got it.”

Sergeant Ferkins picked up the telephone, requested the operator to contact Rutland Ridge High School, and handed the mouthpiece and receiver to Mr. Landsborough. “I’d like to speak with Mr. Buckworthy,” he said to the person who answered at the school. “My name is Lemuel Landsborough.”

“Good day, Mr. Buckworthy,” he said after a moment. “Er, is our conversation private?”

“Certainly,” Mr. Buckworthy said. Pauline, trying to get as close to the receiver as she could while not crowding out Sergeant Ferkins, heard him faintly but distinctly.

“Good,” said Mr. Landsborough. “You know, I’ve been thinking I ought to have accepted your offer to sell me that news item you mentioned, about the picnic with the female impersonators. Is there anything that might still be done about that at this late date?”

Mr. Buckworthy softly laughed. “Well, you know,” he said, “I think a retraction could be arranged, on the same terms we previously discussed.”

“You want me to pay you the same amount you wanted for keeping the item out of the news?”

“Yes, that would do nicely. I happen to have some influence with the editorial staff of the *Informer*. I’m sure a retraction would be promptly forthcoming as soon as the payment was made.”

“Very well, then. Shall we meet at the Victoria and Albert Club for the transaction?”

“That would be splendid.” Pauline listened closely as they arranged the time of the transaction this evening. As soon as possible afterward, she determined, she would induce Mr. Buckworthy to enter an erotic encounter at least as splendid as the transaction—and its culmination would be more splendid still.

“All right, now, please wait in my closet,” Pauline said to Mr. Farquhar and Sergeant Ferkins at the fateful time, while Mr. Buckworthy and Mr. Landsborough were engaged in their transaction in a private room. “I will induce Mr. Buckworthy to come in, impressing upon him the urgency of my desire for an erotic encounter. During the encounter, I will cry out in admiration of his manhood. That will be your signal to emerge from the closet.”

“This is sickening,” said Mr. Farquhar. “I can hardly believe I have agreed to this.”

“Mr. Farquhar, it is your duty,” Pauline exhorted him. “You must not allow the students of Rutland Ridge High School to be any longer in the charge of such a man—and you must see for yourself that he is such a man.” Mr. Farquhar reluctantly entered the closet, and Sergeant Ferkins followed him.

Pauline peeked out of her door. Down the hall, after a few moments, she saw Mr. Buckworthy and Mr. Landsborough shaking hands after emerging from a private room. Mr. Landsborough turned away, for he was to have no further part in the evening’s events. Mr. Buckworthy, with a jolly smile on his lips and a spring in his step, turned toward the club parlor. After a discreet but short interval, Pauline followed him in.

“Oh, Mr. Buckworthy!” she was soon saying. “What a pleasant surprise! I hope you have recovered from your displeasure at my catching you out the other evening!”

“Oh, certainly,” said Mr. Buckworthy. “Indeed, I recovered from it very well on that same evening—with your valuable co-operation.”

“I was wondering,” she said, coming very close to him and almost whispering in his ear, “if you would value some further co-operation from me this evening.”

“Miss Spurtridge!” he cried. “You have read my mind! I’m in a very jolly mood this evening, and your valuable co-operation would be just the thing to make it a really perfect evening.”

“I am eager,” said Pauline, “most eager to co-operate with you. Please, let us waste no time.” Pauline really was erotically aroused—all the more so because of the culmination she foresaw. She and Mr. Buckworthy quickly walked arm in arm to her room.

“Oh, Mr. Buckworthy!” she murmured when the door was locked. “You are quite irresistible to me!” She entered his arms and kissed him full on the mouth, without stopping to conceal her erect member between her thighs. She pressed her hips close to his, letting him feel her member through her clothing. Soon the clothing was no longer an impediment.

“Please, Mr. Buckworthy, stand behind me and caress my breasts,” Pauline begged when they were nude. Mr. Buckworthy eagerly complied, pressing his member between Pauline’s thighs beneath her buttocks. Her own member was standing up straight forward. She reached down to clasp Mr. Buckworthy’s member with one hand, and soon had pulled him down into a kneeling position. If his position behind her made him appear to be committing the infamous and detestable crime against nature, she thought, so much the better.

“Now plunge me fervently, I pray, and excite me to the maximum!” she begged. Mr. Buckworthy did just that, thrusting hard between her thighs while stretching forward above her back to clutch her breasts. “Oh, yes, Mr. Buckworthy, yes!” Pauline cried. “Your manhood! Yes! Your manhood!”

At the pre-arranged signal, the two men emerged from the closet. Mr. Buckworthy’s sperm was spurting into Pauline’s hand, and he was gripping her breasts with all high might, when she heard Mr. Farquhar shouting in horror, “Mr. Buckworthy! What is the meaning of this?”

Pauline felt Mr. Buckworthy jerking in fear, even while he could not stop thrusting and spurting sperm.



As soon as Mr. Buckworthy had finished ejaculating, Pauline escaped from his grip and turned toward Mr. Farquhar so that he could see her fully in the nude, and know without a doubt that she was a female impersonator. He did, but not for long. He turned away, found no receptacle, and vomited uncontrollably upon the plush carpet of Pauline's floor.

"Mr. Buckworthy," Sergeant Ferkins announced, "I have a warrant for your arrest upon the charge of blackmail, a felony. Please extend your hands."

Still in the nude, Mr. Buckworthy arose from the floor and grimly submitted to be handcuffed. "Thank you very much, Mr. Buckworthy," Pauline said politely, "for your valuable co-operation."

"I thank *God!*" Mr. Buckworthy shouted, his eyes aflame with outrage. "I thank God for these handcuffs—because, if not for them, I would be strangling you right now for your betrayal!"

"Thank you very much for the handcuffs," Pauline said to Sergeant Ferkins. "You may pass my thanks on to God, if you wish."

"You will be dismissed from the club at once," Mr. Buckworthy said, "as soon as Sir Arnold finds out about this outrage—and he will find out as soon as I can make bail for this trumped-up charge!"

"I will be dismissed sooner than that," said Pauline with a smile. "I am on my way to Sir Arnold's office as soon as I leave this room, to resign from the club. I have a new life to live, but I needed to see justice done before beginning it."

"I am terribly sorry it has come to this," said Sir Arnold after Pauline had told him, in outline, of the evening's events, "but there is no way around it. You must be dismissed. You have broken the club's first rule, that against exposing a fellow club member to public obloquy."

“I have indeed,” Pauline admitted, “but so has Mr. Buckworthy. It was he who was responsible for the article in the *Informer*, stating that the Honorable Lemuel Landsborough, also a member of the club, had picnicked with female impersonators.”

“Alas, I did happen to read that article,” said Sir Arnold, “but I could not have believed that a member of this club would sink so low as to submit it. Gentlemen of the finest character, I fear, do not abound here at the ends of the earth. I must say that I, too, shall be leaving the club within another year or so, and leaving it in other hands. I have made my fortune many times over, and I shall retire to England, to spend my declining years in peace and comfort.”

“I wish you happiness,” said Pauline.

“I wish you the same, and more,” said Sir Arnold.

“I trust I shall have it in abundance,” said Pauline. “I plan to ask Miss McConnachy to marry me, and I think there is reason to hope she will accept my proposal.”

“Oh, dear, this will be the end of an era at the club,” said Sir Arnold. “You have not been here long, but Miss McConnachy has been here since before the breaking of the great scandal about the Princess, more than 20 years ago—and I, of course, have been with the club since its founding.”

“I trust the club will survive and prosper without us, and without Mr. Buckworthy as well,” said Pauline.

“Oh! Do you really think that Mr. Buckworthy will leave the club, merely because he will be deprived of the principalship for this act of so-called moral turpitude?”

“Mr. Buckworthy, I fear, will be serving a term in prison for blackmail.”

“Blackmail!” Sir Arnold stared at Pauline in horror. “Oh, this is dreadful! This can scarcely be believed! I fear I am losing my judgment of character, which has served me so well for so long. I had thought Mr.

Buckworthy a man of the finest character—and now *this!*”

“Well, we may still hope for his reform,” said Pauline, rising to take her leave, “though perhaps not for his reinstatement in the good graces of society.”

“Yes, indeed,” said Sir Arnold, shaking Pauline’s hand. “Well, I wish you the greatest happiness with Miss McConnachy. If I do have any capacity left for judging character, I must say she is worthy of it.”

Chapter 10

Mary McConnachy gazed through her window at the western sky, still illuminated by the sun that had set beyond the ocean. Her rosary beads were in her hands, but she could not very well meditate upon today’s mysteries, those of the sorrowful passion and death of Our Lord. She had too much, in this world right now, to thank God for. Sir Arnold had been more than kind, giving her a position at once as a cleaning lady in the club after her resignation as a lady companion—and even letting her keep her old room, which now would never more be defiled by sinful encounters with men. She had gone to confession at long last, disclosing in a few quick minutes her thousands of sins over more than 20 years, and receiving an astonishingly light penance. She had returned to the sacraments, she had walked to church with a spring in her step and a song in her heart, she had worshipped God in the beauty of holiness with decent people—and, if not all were really decent, no one but God could tell. She even fancied she had some hope—if only she dared to hope—that her long-desired marriage would come at last.

She heard a soft knock at her door, and the voice she most wished to hear calling out, “Mary!” Her heart leaped high, and she almost rushed from her love seat to the door—but instead she simply said, “Come in,” while retaining her beads in her hands.

Pauline came in. “Mary!” she said again, rushing to join Mary, and to embrace her, on the love seat. “I’ve retired from the club!”

“Well, it’s about time!” Mary twitted her with a smile. “And shall I now be let in on the mystery of what took you so long?”

“Yes, indeed,” said Pauline. She related to the wide-eyed Mary, in detail, the story of Mr. Buckworthy’s exposure and arrest.

“Well, no doubt that was worth waiting for,” Mary said when Pauline had finished the story. “But I’m glad there was no need to wait any *longer* for it.”

“Oh, so am I!” Pauline exclaimed. “Because, you see, I had to wait until I’d retired from the club before I could—er—ask you to marry me.”

Glory be to God! Mary’s heart cried out. Her lips, more demurely, said only this: “And now, my dear Pauline, since you have retired, is that what you wish to do?”

“It is,” Pauline affirmed. “Mary, I love you. Will you marry me?”

Now Mary could not restrain her lips from joining her heart’s celestial song. “Glory be to God!” she cried. “Oh, Pauline, yes! Yes! I will!” Her lips met Pauline’s, and their tender kiss lasted long—foreshadowing a lifetime’s devoted love.

One obstacle only remained to be overcome. Mary had long thought and prayed about it; more recently she had talked about it with Father O’Toolihan—*Bishop O’Toolihan*, as he now was, since the old St. Genesius Church had become a new cathedral. Surely, she thought, Pauline would come along—and leave the Brahmin classes of Boston as far behind as possible.

“Oh, Pauline,” Mary said, “and to think this never would have happened if you’d stayed in Boston among the Brahmins!”

“Well, I wasn’t much among them, for some years, even when I was still there,” said Pauline. “Decadent devotees of the aesthetic life, especially if they’re female impersonators, are not much in favor with the

prim and proper upper crust—whatever the upper crust's other sins may be.”

“Some decadent devotees of the aesthetic life,” Mary said, “have left the upper crust as far behind as possible, in some ways. I've read of Aubrey Beardsley, a few years back, and now, just recently, of Oscar Wilde. I've been hoping and praying that you'll join them.”

“Er, but they've both died, haven't they?” asked Pauline.

“Oh, dear, I don't mean in *that way!*” Mary assured her. “But—well, I know Unitarians don't believe in the Holy Trinity. I happened to ask Father—I mean, Bishop O'Toolihan, here at St. Genesius, what would happen if a Unitarian were to marry a Catholic, and he said it would be invalid, because a Unitarian hasn't been properly baptized.”

For a long, strange moment there was silence. “So this,” Pauline said at last, “is how you wish me to leave the upper crust as far behind as possible. You wish me to be properly baptized.”

“Well, yes,” said Mary, “if you can see your way through to it. You'd have to take instruction, of course, but that shouldn't take too long if you've really left the Brahmin superstitions far behind.”

Pauline laughed. “They, of course, wouldn't agree about who's got the superstitions and who hasn't,” she said, “but I've never agreed with them about much before, so I could imagine myself not agreeing about this too. Well, all right, I'll give it a try, and I'll do my best to jettison those old superstitions—all for you, my love.”

“Prudence,” said Pauline at Blessing's dining house during lunch hour the next day, “I've got some wonderful news, and I'd like you to share my happiness. I'm to be married to Mary McConnachy, and I'd like you to be a bridesmaid.”

Prudence stared at Pauline, bit her lip, and blinked her eyes repeatedly. "Oh, why, that's wonderful indeed," she said. She was crying, and Pauline was not sure it was for joy. Soon she was sure it was not, for Prudence was sobbing her heart out.

"Pauline, please forgive me," said Prudence, trying to dry her eyes after a long, long silence. "I really am very glad for you, and I'm honored that you'd like me to be a bridesmaid. It's just so sudden, and—well, it was so silly of me to imagine that you and I might ever have a—a life together, you know, like married life, only between two ladies."

"Oh, Prudence!" Pauline said softly. She should have known, she thought, but there was nothing she could have done about it even if she had known. She would just have to make amends now, as best she could. "It wasn't silly at all! I do love you, and—well, if I could marry you and Mary both, I would, but I can't."

"No, of course you can't," Prudence agreed. "Some of the greatest men of Old Testament times did have more than one wife, but such a thing has always been disfavored among Christians. No, I will bear up, and I will lead the life of a decent maiden lady—but I know I will not be the only decent maiden lady who has known Sapphic love, and I will always cherish the memory of ours."

"I will always love you, Prudence," Pauline proclaimed. "Except for my wife, you will be my dearest friend."

"And you mine, with no exception," said Prudence. The two ladies' hands clasped one another warmly.

"Oh, Pauline," Prudence whispered, drawing very close, "please forgive me if this is improper, but—is it really too late, already, for just one more encounter—for old times' sake, and for the sake of our enduring love?"

Pauline sighed deeply. She knew the proper answers: yes, it is improper; yes, it is too late; no, such a thing must never happen again. She could not speak the words. She feared that, at this rate, she was on

her way to becoming a rather bad Catholic—but she was not a Catholic yet, nor married either, and her desire for Prudence was dismayingly strong.

“No, Prudence, it is not too late,” Pauline whispered. “Let us go quickly to our basement trysting-place.”

This was hardly sooner said than done. Within the locked librarians’ lavatory, the two ladies’ lips and tongues met yet again, their arms clasped one another tightly, their skirts and drawers dropped to the floor, their members slipped into hiding between their thighs, and their junctions joined in Sapphic union. Still with their bosoms bloused and armored, they ascended together to their ancient ecstasy, clutching one another’s hard-bucking buttocks and spurting sperm together onto one another’s thighs.

“Oh, Pauline, thank you so much!” Prudence murmured when the encounter was at an end. “You have been so kind to me!”

“I hope I always will,” said Prudence.

“Please do not think of committing adultery with me, after you are married,” Prudence begged. “I know you must save your—your seed for your wife, and I respect, and honor, and agree with that. At most, I wonder—“

“Yes?” Pauline asked.

“Well, I wonder—if ever our lips were to meet, and you were to slip your hand between my thighs, after you were married, so long as you did save your seed—surely that would not be adultery in the true sense of the word, would it?”

Pauline laughed. “With anyone else, I fear, it would,” she said. “But with you, my dear Prudence, I fancy it would not.”

The months before the wedding passed quickly. Pauline took instruction from Bishop O'Toolihan himself, who had known Mary for many years—for she had always attended Holy Mass on Sundays, even when away from the sacraments. Pauline's book was soon completed and sent off with a chatty letter to Eliot, who would see to its publication. It ended, not with her proposal to Mary, but with her supposedly last encounter with Prudence.

The encounter, however, was not really the last—for Pauline, to Prudence's great delight, took temporary lodging in Prudence's apartment after leaving her room at the club. Prudence dutifully refrained from evoking climaxes from Pauline, in preparation for not committing adultery after Pauline's marriage—but she was often marvelously grateful for Pauline's kisses, and for Pauline's kind hand upon her short member between her thighs. After Prudence had come to climax, Pauline discreetly lay down upon her cot and spurted sperm with her member beneath her abdomen, pretending she was with Mary.

One day shortly before the wedding, Pauline opened an envelope and laughed when she read the letter within. "That letter must be a fine source of amusement," said Prudence. "May I share the amusement?"

"Certainly," said Pauline. "This is from a gentleman in Boston, an artist, with whom I had many erotic encounters in my time. 'My dear Miss Spurtridge,' he says, 'I have successfully submitted your most remarkable book to a publisher of extreme discretion, and I look forward to its appearance in bookshops where equal discretion is displayed, though not in the hands of the police. I do not know the views of the police in your new city of residence—which, despite your protestations to the contrary, I must continue to regard as inhabited primarily by rough frontiersmen, lumberjacks, sailors, and others with too little concern for public propriety—but in Boston such a book would still be the

subject of grim official disfavor, were it ever to be discovered.”

“I did not know you had written such a book,” said Prudence. “Er—does it mention anything about certain Sapphic encounters between two very dear friends?”

“It does,” Pauline admitted, “although neither my own identity nor that of my dear friend is disclosed, nor even suggested. But here, let me read you the finest part of this letter. This gentleman, Eliot, you see, was quite enamored of me before I left, and begged me not to leave. I suggested that I might return within six years, and he severely reproved me for my cruelty in abandoning him for such a length of time. Now, you see, hardly more than *one* year has elapsed since my departure from Boston—and yet look what he has to say.”

Prudence looked over Pauline’s shoulder, but Pauline read the finest part of the letter out loud to her anyway. “I must now turn,’ the letter said, ‘to a subject of a more personal nature. I dreaded the day when I must disclose this to you—but the news of your impending marriage, and your decision not to return to Boston, has emboldened me. I had imagined myself capable of lifelong faithfulness to you, even in your extended absence—but life, in all its ardent, urgent fluctuations of primordial being, was too strong for me. Not two months after your departure, I admit, I commenced a liaison with another young lady, also an artist’s model, with a certain secret something such as you also possess, but the vast majority of ladies do not. Our acquaintance, our friendship, our passion, our continued connection ripened marvelously into love—and now, though of course marriage itself is denied us, our union has every quality of true marriage but one or, at most, two.”

Now Prudence laughed too. “Ardent, urgent fluctuations of primordial being, indeed!” she said. “Seldom, if ever, have I heard such an astounding euphemism for what, stripped to its basest terms, should rather be called mere male fickleness!”

“Well, I suppose all is well,” said Pauline. “Eliot has his marvelously ripe love, and I have mine—with Mary, and with you.”

“And you, unlike him, will never be fickle,” said Prudence. “Pauline, I am ready. We have had our blissful times of Sapphic love, and now we will move on. I will be the most decent of maiden ladies, and no one but you will know of my passionate past. If ever I should weaken, I beg you, repulse me sternly.”

“I shall do my best,” said Pauline, “though I shall find it most difficult to be stern with you. And, if ever we should both weaken together, I now know the remedy: ‘Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. On one occasion since my last confession, I manually stimulated an unmarried friend to undergo the complete effect of impure delight.’”

“Oh, dear,” said Prudence. “Do Catholics really rationalize that they might as well commit what are defined as sins, because they can simply go to confession and then proceed to sin again?”

“Some do, no doubt,” said Pauline, “but some do not. I shall need to make a firm resolve to do the same thing no more—but, in case my resolve should weaken, it is marvelously comforting to know that more and more forgiveness is always ready at hand.”

“You think, then, that your resolve may weaken from time to time?” Prudence murmured, leaning forward over Pauline’s shoulder to press her cheek against Pauline’s.

“Of course I will not intend that it shall,” Pauline responded, “but I do foresee that, from time to time, it may.” She turned her face toward Prudence, their lips met, and their tongues delicately touched.

The wedding was a quiet one, with very few people in the great cathedral. Mary, who joined the cathedral choir soon after her return from 20 years’ exile, had now prevailed upon two choir members to serve

as the needed witnesses. These were Irina Magnetti, a plump grandmother who sang soprano, and Rupert Rogerson, a shy young bachelor who sang tenor. Several other choir members were in attendance, singing four-part sacred polyphony a

cappella. All the women in the choir were there by dispensation from the bishop, since boy sopranos and altos who sang well were in short supply, but their song was none the less lovely for their not being boys. Aside from the choir members, the only people in attendance (other than Mary, Pauline, and Bishop O'Toolihan) were Prudence, the solitary bridesmaid, and Mr. Landsborough, the solitary groomsman, who had returned to Pacific Heights to attend the preparatory meetings for next year's legislative session. Though neither was a Catholic, and Prudence was not even a female beneath her clothing, that did not matter for the wedding.

Pauline wore her long dark hair down and had no corset on, so as not to suggest actual effeminacy too distinctly, but still she looked more feminine than masculine, with her womanly face shining in joy and beauty. Mary thought she looked splendid in her white gown with golden trim, as if she were one of the saints in heaven come down to earth. Mary herself was dressed in white as well. She had questioned whether this was quite proper,

since she was not a virgin, but Pauline had corrected her with a smile: "Mary, my love, your official standing is that of a virgin. Anything that may have happened with gentlemen at the club, or with the boy who treated you so heartlessly, was strictly unofficial, and must now be ruthlessly disregarded."

The words of the wedding went quickly, and were soon completed. Almost before Mary knew it, she and Pauline were joined in holy wedlock, and the great words were echoing in Mary's mind: "to have and to hold, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part." Then began the Holy Mass, and Mary could well believe she was witnessing heaven come down to earth.

A short, plain reception followed in the basement of the cathedral, with well-wishing from all present. Bishop O'Toolihan was genial, attentive, and kind, though he did call Pauline "Paul" in accordance with the words of the wedding. Prudence wished the newlyweds the greatest blessings for many years to come; she embraced Mary and kissed her on the cheek, and politely shook hands with Pauline. Mr. Landsborough laughed while describing Sheriff

Hitchpoke's words, and the expression on his face, when he learned that Pauline was to marry Mary. "What? You mean that beautiful gal was nothing but a female impersonator after all?" the sheriff had exclaimed. "Why, I could have sworn she was the real thing. Matter of fact, I *did* swear she was the real thing! Lem, promise me you won't let this get out, or I'll never live it down—and maybe you won't either!"

After the laughter and well-wishing had ended, and the wedding guests had departed, Pauline and Mary walked hand in hand back to the club, where Mary still resided. They were saving up for a little house, but could not afford one quite yet. The scene of Mary's many sins, now forgiven and vanished into the past, must now serve as their pure and decent home for a little while, beginning now on their wedding night.

When Pauline and Mary are in their nightgowns, their eyes meet first. In Pauline's eyes, Mary's lovely little face shines with the brightness of a sunlit day. In Mary's eyes, Pauline's long, womanly face, with her wide smiling lips, gives promise of heavenly delights. Their lips and tongues meet, their arms embrace one another, in total trust and love.

They enter the nude together, swiftly stripping off each other's nightgowns, and sit on Mary's big bed—now Pauline and Mary's marriage bed. Their tongues plunge deeper; then Pauline's lips descend to Mary's nipple, making Mary clutch Pauline hard in a rush of desire. Mary soon returns the favor, kissing and licking each of Pauline's volcanoes in turn, mak-

ing Pauline gasp with pleasure even more intense than Eliot ever gave her.

Pauline's member is hard between her thighs; her hand descends to Mary's womanly opening. Hardly does she find Mary's tiny love-button, and feel the heat and moisture of her entryway, when Mary begs her, "Pauline, come into me! Please! Now!"

Mary lies on her back for Pauline and opens wide to receive her. Pauline's member emerges from hiding; she lies between Mary's legs and finds Mary's hot, dripping lower lips with the tip of her member as she had done with her finger. Mary guides Pauline into her, kissing her member fervently with her tight, throbbing channel—glad beyond belief to feel the bare-skinned member of her faithful lover caressing her within, not a cold, loveless rubber ramming her below an equally cold and loveless heart.

Pauline can hardly hold back her sperm, for her urge for full congress with Mary is stronger than she has ever felt with a man. "Pauline! Yes! Now! I love you!" Mary cries. Pauline releases her flood of sperm into Mary, her narrow hips racing up and down without control, as Mary clutches her and kisses her with all her might.

Long they lie in silence, in union too deep for words. At last Mary gently laughs and says, "And to think that, when you were still in the land of the Brahmins, you might have found the likes of me untouchable!"

"Oh, Mary, don't say anything so dreadful and sickening," Pauline pleads. "As you know, I am—or I was—a maiden lady of the most delicate sensibilities, and my sensibilities cannot bear to hear such talk." She laughs and kisses Mary on the cheek. "To me, Mary, my love," Pauline murmurs, "you are the farthest thing in the universe from untouchable!"

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