

The background of the cover is a parchment scroll with a scalloped edge, featuring a sepia-toned illustration of a medieval stone castle with a crenelated wall and a conical-roofed tower. The text is overlaid on this background in a black Gothic font.

Medieval Spanking Tales

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ten stories by
Rollin Hand

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By

Rollin Hand

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Chastisement of a Princess

[From the novel *The Princess and the Rogue*. Princess Juliet has been given in marriage to the former outlaw, Rand LaFlors. She has yet to learn that husbands are meant to be obeyed.]

Princess Juliet, daughter of Robert Greystone, duchess of Darkwood and its surrounding lands, was not happy. She stood quite naked in the corner of her marriage bedchamber and faced the wall. She waited for her husband, the duke, so she had some time to reflect on her circumstances.

It had been six months since the double wedding that bound her to Rand LaFlors, and her sister, Scarlett, to Sir Roland Ferris. Sir Roland had been made the king's high minister. Rand had been given the castle and lands that had belonged to Morgaine, his followers had been pardoned, and he had been made a duke.

The newly married couple had taken up residence in the former Bathen Castle, now Castle Darkwood, to begin their new lives together. It had been a heady undertaking. She would manage the household and help her husband administer the lands. He was to shore up the western border of Westvale to help in repelling any encroachment by Ieryn raiders. The new duke and son-in-law had Robert's blessing and a portion of his army.

He also had Juliet, and for that she was grateful, for she was head over heels in love with the man who had rescued her from her abductors and devised a plan to save her father's life and his kingdom. But his discipline was a different thing altogether. Juliet pouted as she waited. She had been used to getting her own way most of her life, and that included riding whenever and wherever she pleased. Her husband took a different view of things. "The lands around here are wilder than in the east, Juliet. You may ride, but only with my permission and only in certain areas. And stay out of Darkwood Forest."

So what did he know? She had been in the forest before. Nothing had ever happened. Until this morning, that is, when that pack of wolves had come out of nowhere and chased her. It had been

terrifying, she had to admit. Her horse had bolted and it was all she could do to hang on. Fortunately for her, Rand and several of his guards had come looking for the errant duchess and appeared on the scene just as the pursuing wolves were closing in on the terrified horse and rider. The men chased them off while Rand caught up with his disobedient wife.

Rand had been grateful and relieved to find her, but his elation was short-lived once he brought her to safety. Juliet was discovering that it was unwise to disobey her husband in matters of her personal safety. He had ordered her to her chambers, to stand with no clothes on, facing the wall, until he came to deal with her.

It felt arousing to strip off her clothes, knowing her husband was on his way. But as she stood waiting, a chill of fearful anxiety ran up her spine and produced a fluttery feeling in her core. He had demonstrated his displeasure before, and in a very physical way. Juliet was torn. Those lessons, painful though they were, invariably led to heated, glorious sex. Her body responded to his touch in ways that didn't seem possible. And when he took her, it was magic. First though, there would be the reckoning, the punishment for disobedience. How could he? She was a princess. But as Rand had reminded her, she was also the wife of a hardworking duke, and he did not have the time to chase her down to rescue her from her misadventures.

The room was silent. All she could hear were birds chirping outside a nearby window. Then came a faint sound. Her ears registered the sound of boots clomping. They were coming closer. She gulped. The door creaked open.

"Well, at least you obeyed me in this," said Rand, striding into the room and flinging off gloves that landed with a splat on the floor.

She turned her head to speak. "I'm sorry, Rand. I didn't know there were... those animals. I never saw any before. Please let me dress and we can discuss it. I've learned my lesson. It's humiliating to stand here all naked." She stomped her foot for emphasis.

"Still the bratty princess, eh?" said Rand. He took her by the arm and led her out of the corner.

"Rand, stop. Where are you taking me?" She stumbled along beside him.

“Not far,” he said.

Rand sat on a chest at the foot of the large bed they shared and tipped Juliet across his knee. He gripped her about her tiny waist and shifted her forward until her nose nearly reached the floor. Her legs were left to dangle in midair. He relaxed his grip and placed one hand across the small of her back. The other he rested on her sumptuous derriere.

When she felt Rand’s hand on her bare bottom, she clenched. “Rand, no. No, please. I won’t go into the forest any more. I promise.”

“Ah, the promises of a naughty girl about to receive her just due are music to my ears, wife. But still, the lesson must not only be learned, it must be felt.”

What was he doing? She felt his hands pulling apart the cheeks of her bottom. She went cold inside as she felt something—an object. There was pressure at her anal opening. Something was sliding in.

“No! No! Take it out!” Juliet was frantic. This monstrous thing in her was unbearable.

“Sorry, love, but you’re going to do some penance fugged. This is a ginger root. It won’t hurt you, but it will be damned uncomfortable for a time.”

He shoved it in and stood her up. With a firm pat on her bottom he directed her back to the corner. “Now kneel down and face the corner. Do not take it out. When I come back, I will remove it and finish your punishment.”

Miserably, Juliet knelt on the unyielding stone floor. The plug inside her was the most unpleasant thing she had ever felt, not to mention the embarrassment of having to submit, to turn up her backside for Rand to push the awful thing inside her. There was this horrible pressure, and a burning sensation, both inside and out. She wanted to scream. It was distressing to know that she had to stay here in this position until Rand returned. And then, what had he said? To finish the rest of her punishment?

* * *

Rand returned an hour later. It had been the longest hour of Juliet's life. Her insides were burning and the presence of that thing up her rectum was horribly uncomfortable. She never felt so grateful as when he had taken her by the arm and lifted her up. He led her back to the chest and sat down again. Putting her across his knee, he deftly extracted the plug he had placed there. Juliet closed her eyes and sighed with relief as the awful thing slid out.

"There," he said when the plug had been extracted. "I was encouraged to see, my princess, that you obeyed me and did not remove the plug. The rest of your punishment will not be so unbearable, I think. Just a sound spanking with the flat of my hand."

"What?" She had thought it was over. "No, Rand," she wailed. She could feel his palm, patting, kneading, rubbing in little circles. Under other circumstances it would feel heavenly. Now it felt alarming.

Smack! Rand's hand fell square across Juliet's bottom. An explosive stinging sensation assailed her right on her sit spot.

Smack! Smack! Hard spansks delivered to left and right cheeks.

"Ahh... ah, that stings!" wailed Juliet. The feeling was like no other. It was a sharp stinging sensation that burned like an iron laid across her fundament. Each brisk smack was another explosion of maddening heat that made her clench and relax her bottom cheeks in a lurid display of her charms. She could not help but wriggle shamelessly across her husband's lap as his capable palm delivered one hard blow after another to her jouncy bobbing fanny. She could only imagine what she must look like, upended stark naked over her husband's knee, her bottom wagging in the breeze as he smacked it soundly, her legs waving – it was too humiliating to bear. Her eyes watered up, and she fought not to break down in tears.

Rand had launched into a noisy and robust spanking, landing open-palmed meaty smacks on Juliet's bottom in a measured tempo. He ignored her sputtering protests. The spansks stung Juliet's bare seat like bees. She fluttered her feet and squirmed, shifting her body as much as she could to evade Rand's punishing hand. All was in vain, though. His arm across the small of her back was like a metal bar, pinning her. All she could do was to writhe and accept her husband's correction. Rand spanked in flurries that had her back arching and her feet flying up.

“Arrr, no, Rand. I promise, I promise,” she wailed, kicking her legs and flailing her arms.

“Promise (*smack!*) what, Juliet (*smack! crack!*)?” Rand did not slow the tempo one whit. It was a frenzied dance, Rand’s hand rising and falling, impacting the satiny globes of Juliet’s bottom while Juliet wriggled in distress.

“Yow! Ow! I won’t go riding alone!” Juliet could not believe how much on fire her sitting area felt.

“I am glad to hear it, wife.” Rand punctuated each word with a lusty smack that flattened the deliciously curved cheeks of his wife’s behind. Her bottom was glowing red now, dark roses on a field of white. A final rapid flurry made her arch her back and screech.

“Ow! Ah! Yow, Rand please stop!” He did.

Abruptly, he sat her up, plopping her into a sitting position on his knee. She winced at the contact.

“Now, have you learned this lesson? Or should I have Frida prepare a switch so we may continue?”

A switch? Juliet shook her head vigorously. “No, Rand. I’ve learned, really learned.”

“Good,” said Rand. “Because I’d be a lost man without you. You’re not the princess anymore. You are my queen and I want a long life as your king.”

He moved his hand up to run it across her breasts. Juliet sighed as he touched her, a momentary thrill coursing up from down below. This despite the fact that her bottom throbbed and felt twice its size. His hand dropped to the furry nest between her legs. Juliet shifted slightly, welcoming his touch. At the same time his lips found hers. Soon their tongues intertwined and he clasped her in his arms, drawing her even closer.

When they disengaged, Rand scooped her into his arms and stood up. He carried her around to the side of their bed and laid her down gently. Juliet watched with anticipation as he removed his clothing. Rand’s body was long and lean, a body that moved with grace and swiftness. Yet there was surprising strength in those arms, as Juliet could attest, having just been manhandled as if she were a toy. And she could see that he was ready for her. His body could not hide his arousal. It pointed at her like a spear and she lay back, eager to receive him.

Juliet watched as Rand knelt between her parted legs and felt his hands as they gripped her hips. Juliet was lifted slightly to shift her into position to receive her husband. She reached for his erection and placed it between the lips of her vagina. There was a most heavenly feeling as Rand thrust forward. The feel of Rand's hard cock sliding into her fully lubricated sex was sheer ecstasy. Rand stretched out, his body lying on hers. For a moment Juliet lay still, luxuriating in the feel of her husband's erect member inside her and the weight of his lean body atop hers. Then she began to move, prompting Rand to do so as well. Their tempo increased, Rand sliding in and out of her wet sheath, causing little explosions of pleasure, a wave-like throbbing that welled up from deep inside, begging for release.

She moved more urgently now, ascending to a giddy peak. She could feel it coming. Yes, something was indeed coming. It was rushing at her like a bull, a bull that was Rand, ramming her, causing wave upon wave of euphoria that threatened to overwhelm her. Then it did and she climaxed, her body lurching into spasms. At the same time Rand, who could hold back no more, released, and together they clung to each other until the storm had passed.

* * *

"Do you miss Kingsgate?" said Rand. They lay snuggled together in the aftermath of their lovemaking. "The royal court, the courtiers, the balls, the things you were used to? After all, out here you are on a remote frontier compared to Kingsgate."

"Yes," said Juliet, a mock frown on her face. "You are a bad man. An outlaw. You stole me away."

For a moment Rand looked concerned. Then Juliet giggled. "See? I had you. But it's true." Juliet made an attempt at a serious face. "You are a bad outlaw and you have captured me."

Rand raised his eyebrows. "I'm a duke with lands rightfully given to me by the king, and don't you forget it."

Juliet threw her arm across her forehead, feigning self-pity. "I'm an outlaw bride, captive of a fierce brigand who ravishes me daily."

"You're also a naughty brat of a princess who needs her bottom warmed daily."

Juliet wrapped her arms about Rand's neck and pulled his face close to hers. "As long as you also ravish me daily, husband, I'll gladly be an outlaw's wife."

The Legend of Sophia the Fair

The scholar called upon the Earl at his manor house, but he was not there.

“You will find him at the Boar and Bugle in the village,” said his housekeeper. “The Lady Catherine is quarrelling with her daughters today over their lessons, and he wants no part of it.”

Indeed, from within the walls of the great house he could hear a periodic crack, like twig snapping, and a cry of distress in response. It sounded to the scholar like Lady Catherine was winning the argument.

He found the Earl, Sir Hugh McCaslin, at the inn seated in a corner and chatting amiably with a few of his fellows. The scholar approached and introduced himself.

“Of course,” said Sir Hugh. “You’re the lad who wrote to me from the university at Castile. You are writing the history of the Five Kingdoms.”

The scholar admitted that that was indeed the case. “I am Benjamin Montcrief and the History is to be my master work. So much has happened and it is important that it be preserved. I have written much about the Great War but in my research I chanced to hear about the Princess of the Glen, Sophia. Events that occurred at home while the great armies were away had much to do with the Five Kingdoms. So at this point I am most interested in Sophia the Fair. I understand that you knew her. I would like to learn all you can tell me about her.”

Sir Hugh dismissed his fellows to give them some privacy.

“So you want to know about Sophia the Fair? A truly great lady. She ruled the Glen of Mountvail for only a short time, but during that time she was the fairest, and most astute ruler the Glen had ever known. She was beloved of her people, and for good reason. She saved them from conquest at the hands of Richard of Avignon. They are a free people today because of her.”

Montcrief asked, “She was special to you, wasn’t she?”

“Very much so,” said Sir Hugh. “I was the captain of her personal guard.” He shouted to the innkeeper, “Ned, bring more mead. This looks to be thirsty work.” To the scholar he said, “I hope you have some time.”

The scholar smiled. “I will listen all day if necessary.”

Sir Hugh began. “I was a simple hedge knight, but an educated one, when I met her brother Edward. He needed an entourage, some skilled fighters and engineers. We became friends, comrades in arms. We hunted together, fought bandits and chased women all over the kingdom.” Hugh shook his head chuckling, recalling a rowdy youth. Then he continued.

“One day when I was visiting Edward, he took me aside. He did not know why, but apparently my presence had caught the eye of Princess Sophia. She wanted to see me. So I was shown to her chambers.”

“She was beautiful, I’ve heard,” said the scholar.

“That doesn’t begin to do her justice. She had long hair so golden it was almost white, a face like an angel and the figure of a goddess. But mainly, it was her eyes. She had the most beautiful, large, deep blue eyes. A man could get lost in those eyes.

“She sought my help in understanding certain concepts in her study subjects and I was glad to help. She said she wanted to learn, but her tutor was a most difficult man and very obtuse, not capable of explaining things in a way she could grasp. After that we spoke quite frequently. I was able to boil complicated things down for her. She was bright, kind, and not at all the spoiled princess that you might expect being the daughter of a duke.

“Then one day she came to me. She wanted me to see something, she said. I agreed. Who could deny such a lady? It was an odd request. She swore me to secrecy, then she led me through a passage in the walls that she knew about and hid me in a chamber from which I could observe her in the keep’s library. That was where she met with her tutor. And she was to meet with him that day.

“Now, not all ladies have tutors, but old Henry deValse, her father the duke, wanted Sophia, who was nineteen at the time, to learn law and history, geography and mathematics. He was getting on in years and figured that Edward, who was to be the warrior,

might need help ruling The Glen if he had to be absent. War was coming, and King Alfred wanted the knights of The Glen for his army. Anyway, Sophia confided to me that she had been doing poorly of late with her lessons and there were to be consequences. She wanted me to watch in secret. Someone was to be punished for Sophia's failings.

"It wasn't to be Sophia. Like most nobility, Sophia had a whipping girl. Actually, all of her ladies-in-waiting were at risk should she fail at her lessons. So I watched from a hidden chamber as Verna, a pretty lass and one of her ladies, was brought in. Remember, these ladies were Sophia's close friends, the daughters of minor nobles, merchants and craftsmen who lived at the keep with her as companions. But today one of them had been chosen to be flogged in Sophia's stead.

"The tutor was angry with Sophia for some recent failing. He bound the poor girl across a stool made expressly for the purpose of chastisement. It had buckling straps on all four legs and a curved in top. Well, when she was all trussed up, he raised her skirts to reveal a most shapely backside, all bare and vulnerable. He took up a rod, which, as you know, is sheaf of several whippy switches, and proceeded to whip the girl, forcing Sophia to watch. He gave her about a dozen strokes, hard. The poor girl cried bitterly as stroke after stroke striped her bottom. If Sophia shut her eyes, he made her open them. If she covered her ears he made her remove her hands. For several minutes I saw and heard the swish...thwack! of the rod, the futile squirming, heard the piteous wails. It was a thorough switching and they led Sophia's little friend away in tears.

"So I wondered why Sophia had wanted me to see that. Well, I found out. A day later she came to me and bade me accompany her on a ride. Ostensibly, I was to be her bodyguard in case of an attack by brigands. We rode for a ways until we stopped at a secluded grove. Inside the grove there was a clearing. I wondered what we were doing there. Then Sophia reminded me of what I had seen in the library. I said 'yes, but so what?'"

Sir Hugh chuckled. "I'll never forget what she did next. She asked for my knife. I gave it to her and she cut some switches from a willow and bound them with a ribbon. She handed me this rod, and

to my utter amazement, lifted her dress over her head and took it off. Underneath she was stark naked.”

Hugh shook his head. “You never saw such a beautiful creature. Her breasts were full, her waist tiny, flaring into shapely hips. I was in shock that she’d disrobe before me.”

“She said, ‘I’ve never been punished in this way. If others are to be whipped in my behalf, I want to know their pain so I can try harder. If I do better, they will be spared.’

I stood there like a fool while she turned her back. She bent over grasping a low branch and thrust out the loveliest, most perfectly rounded pair of female buttocks you’ve ever seen---firm, round, and exquisitely shaped. Then she said, ‘Strike, Sir Hugh, just like my tutor, a dozen hard strokes. And don’t hold back.’

“You could have knocked me over with a feather. But I did as she asked. I thrashed her like an errant stable boy. She took it. Her body flinched and she cried out. But throughout she presented that gorgeous posterior of hers for the rod’s painful kiss. She did not try to evade the strokes. I could see the white of her knuckles but she did not let go of that branch. Not once.”

Sir Hugh took a long drink. “And it wasn’t the only time. Any time a lady-in-waiting was to be flogged, she made me watch from the hidden chamber. Then we made a trip to the grove. If he used a leather strap, I used a leather strap. If it was a butter paddle, I spanked her with a butter paddle. Whatever the tutor did, I did the same. Later she told me she always showed her bottom to the poor girl and they consoled each other. It did not take long before there were no more thrashings. She had mastered her subjects.”

“Then war broke out,” said the scholar.

“Yes, war broke out. Henry took ill and did not go. Edward went. Sophia asked Henry if I could remain on as captain of the home guard and he agreed. Sophia took over the duties of governing. This is how the people know her. She managed the kingdom, seeing to the harvests, maintaining bridges, settling quarrels, deciding disputes of law, hearing criminal matters. It was heady responsibility for a young girl, but she managed it well. But it lay heavy on her.”

The scholar nodded. "Rumor has it, if I may be so bold, that you were more than just a Captain of her guard."

Sir Hugh frowned and leaned forward. "I'll tell you this just so you know the measure of the woman, but if it goes into that history of yours I'll find you and cut your heart out."

The scholar gulped but swore. Not one word.

"She never married. Henry died. Edward was at the war. She had a kingdom to manage. But she was a woman with needs. You understand? I was her confessor. The weight of responsibility wore on her. She decided cases that might mean poverty for the loser. She had criminals flogged and put into chains at hard labor. Better than hanging which was Henry's way, but still. So she came to me as a penitent to her confessor. What I had done in the grove was repeated in her chambers. Sometimes she wanted the rod. Or a strapping with my belt. Sometimes in a light moment she wanted a hearty spanking, to be put across my knee like a child and have me paddle her buttocks to a cherry red."

Hugh shook his head from side to side.

"I remember this one time she had come to the end of a long day after hearing a long queue of cases. She had been rather short with several of the supplicants, one an elderly woman. She ruled in the woman's favor but she was rude to her in the process. I think she was just tired. But she told me 'there was no call for that. I acted like a petulant child. She deserved more respect. I should have my bottom smacked.' She told me to sit, then she doffed her dress. Clad in her chemise she lay across my lap, slid her pantaloons down and told me to spank her soundly. I did. I spanked her until her bottom was red and she was drumming her toes on the floor."

"Why did she want this? It tempered her, she said. Took her down a peg. It was a release from the burden of responsibility, of having to be always in control and make all the decisions. When she saw me, she could surrender command, have someone else be in control and hold her accountable. Not that she made bad decisions. She usually didn't. But she wasn't perfect and sometimes got it wrong. Then she felt empathy for the losers."

"In such an intimate setting eventually, yes, we became lovers. I was, in a sense, her confessor and consort. Sometimes we were intimate after a spanking."

Hugh took a long draft. The scholar fingered his chin slowly and said, "I have heard of women like that. Ones who relish a good bottom smacking."

Hugh said, "I think that was part of it. Making love to Lady Sophia was an exquisite experience. Her passion, the way her body responded to my touch, well...I was in heaven in those days."

The scholar raised his eyebrows. "Indeed, you are a fortunate man. But, let us continue. What about the incident with Avignon?"

"Well, that was her triumph. It is why they sing songs about her. It is why Avignon has never to this day attempted to attack The Glen."

"Tell me," said the scholar. "I know so little. Only rumors."

"Richard of Avignon wanted both The Glen and Princess Sophia. He lusted after her, the dog. So he manufactured a dispute. It involved hunting rights on the borderlands. For over 100 years the forest folk have hunted in the land between the two rivers that separate The Glen of Mountvail from Avignon. There was even a decree from Henry to that effect and Sophia had ratified it. Suddenly, Richard decided that the land was his. He arrested over fifty tinkers, huntsmen, foresters and their families for poaching. He said he had proof that the land belonged to Avignon. Sophia was beside herself. He had seized citizens of the Glen and was threatening to punish them all, men women and children. Edward was away and there was only a small home guard, no match for Richard's forces. Richard intimated that if he were to marry Sofia and join the kingdoms, the dispute would be moot, but of course Sofia loathed him.

"We knew that this was just Richard's opening gambit, that he had designs on The Glen. So Sophia concocted a plan. She would lure Richard in. She knew of Richard's lust for her and of his arrogance. So she made him a proposal. If he would bring the fifty hostages to the Glen's capital at Midvail, she would offer herself, as their sovereign, and take their punishment for poaching. The punishment for poaching was a flogging of 40 lashes. She would agree to strip naked in the town square and allow herself to be bound

and flogged by Richard's executioner if he would let the hostages go after that. Richard readily agreed."

The scholar frowned. "That sounds like a display of weakness, of appeasement."

Sir Hugh chuckled. "Not if you understand her cunning. You see The Glen cannot be invaded. It is too mountainous. The only way in is over mountain passes and through narrow canyons. A very small force can destroy an invading army. So the only way an invading army can get in is if you let it in."

The scholar was puzzled. "But inviting him in? It was giving him a free passage to the heart of the kingdom with an armed force."

"Yes. Sophia counted on Richard's underestimation of her and of his lust. Richard thought that all of The Glen would be locked in with him and a force with which could take our capital. In truth," said Sir Hugh with a cunning smile, "he'd be locked in with us."

Sir Hugh paused. "He did not count on the people of The Glen or its geography, subjects that Sophia knew well. He believed that all that stood in his way was a home guard of fifty soldiers. He had no idea what effect his arrogance would have on an enraged citizenry seeing their beloved princess whipped like a common trollop. You see, Richard thought by dragging their princess into the square, stripping and flogging her, the people would be humiliated and intimidated, and they'd simply give up."

"So what happened?"

"Richard brought an entourage of 200 soldiers. The hostages were marched in shackles behind them. A scaffold had been built in the square of Mountvail. Richard and his lieutenants watched from a balcony. His guard collected Sophia who strode bravely, head held high like a queen, to the scaffold. I recall she wore a shift of white. She pulled it over her head and all gasped at her beauty. They bound her to the post and the executioner took up a rod. Since she was a

woman, it was to be the lower discipline, laid on across the fleshy parts of her backside.

“The crowd was utterly still. The whipmaster raised his rod and with a whoosh...thwack! the first stroke fell. Sophia arched her back and gasped. Lines of red appeared on her bottom. He whipped her perfect bottom again and again, the rod striking the crowns and underside of her buttocks mainly. I could see her flesh quiver with each stroke and I knew it was hurting her terribly. It seemed to go on and on in this terrible cadence of the rod whistling then landing with a sharp thwack! Then her body would jerk as her buttocks rippled from the force of the blow. It was rhythmic almost, though the executioner would pause every ten strokes or so to take up a fresh rod. This was more severe than anything I’d ever done to her, even when she’d asked. She writhed at the post, absorbing blow after blow, her backside becoming striped, then nearly purple. The people could plainly see her pain. At each stroke her body stiffened and she shut her eyes in a painful grimace. She fought not to cry out, not even to whimper, but it was obvious that she was suffering.

“Now while Richard was totally absorbed watching the lurid spectacle of the beautiful Sophia’s whipping, we were on the move. Archers were moved into position in houses on the square. Farmers and craftsmen who had been given weapons training were moved in behind the soldiers. My squad moved up the stairs in behind Richard. I crept toward the scaffold clad in the garb of a huntsman. He wasn’t paying attention, he was too absorbed by the spectacle.

“In the meantime the crowd was becoming ugly. They were watching their princess humiliated by a foreign despot. They began to pick up rocks and sticks.

“Finally the count reached forty. Sophia slumped for a moment. There was dead silence. Then she shouted out, ‘it is done. Release my people.’ But Richard just laughed. ‘You are in no position to make demands, princess. Whipmaster, give her another dozen for her insolence.’

Hugh shook his head. “He never did that because as he reared back he got an arrow through the chest. Then the fight was on. Everyone turned on Richard’s soldiers. With drawn swords we engaged Richard and his men.

The home guard led the fight and the people followed, hurling rocks, sticks, anything they could get their hands on. There were too many of us all for Richard's men. They were overwhelmed by sheer numbers. But they fought their way free of the square to the stables. They got their horses and rode out, going out the way they came in."

"I ran up and cut Sophia down. Although she was in pain and shivering, she demanded that we follow Richard and that she lead."

"After that awful punishment?"

Hugh nodded. "She knew the people would follow her, and that it was the best chance for The Glen to defeat Richard once and for all. You see," said Sir Hugh, opening his hands, "although they were trained men-at-arms, the folk of the Glen were mountaineers, hunters, and foresters who knew all the short cuts, the hidden places, the spots for ambush. Richard's force had to move single file across rugged passes and through narrow defiles. They could be picked off one or two at a time. That's what I meant by 'them being locked in with us.' It was Sophia's plan."

"For three days we pursued Richard, hitting him when he was most vulnerable, then vanishing back into the forest. His force steadily diminished until finally near the Volt river we engaged them face to face. I found Richard fought him. I personally ran him through. It was most satisfying."

Hugh paused a moment with a far away look, remembering. Then he addressed Montcrief.

"After that it was done. Avignon had no stomach to continue with Richard dead. I don't think their people ever wanted the fight in the first place. It was all Richard, his lust and his ambition."

"What about Sophia?"

"We tended her and got her back to her keep as quickly as we could."

The scholar let out a deep breath. "That is quite a story. But Sophia, she died shortly thereafter, did she not? That's what I heard."

"She did. Edward had returned and had assumed the throne. Sophia stepped down for her older brother. But then she caught a fever, a disease of some unknown type. It may have been because

she had been weakened after the awful birching and the pursuit in the mountains. She rode, even in that condition---and fought. Did I mention she was an accomplished archer? All I know is it went quickly. Edward and I were with her at the end. We were afraid it might be plague so the casket was closed.”

“She did not lie in state so the people could see her?”

Hugh shifted uncomfortably. “No, we thought a closed casket best.”

The scholar shook his head. “So unfortunate. You could have married her.”

Sir Hugh shook his head. “Impossible. I am just a commoner. It could not have happened.”

“So you were given an estate after that.”

“Edward was most magnanimous. Yes, I retired here to this quiet estate deep in the Glen and took a wife.”

The scholar took his leave.

Hugh returned to the keep to seek out his wife. He found her in the study. “I see my daughters are taking their lessons more seriously now.” All were seated at desks scribbling away, occasionally squirming uncomfortably while Catherine supervised, tapping a switch in her hand.

“Quite so, husband. But I had to correct them earlier.”

“Why didn’t you send for a whipping girl?” said Sir Hugh with a wry chuckle,

She abruptly spun around to face him. “We’ll do no such thing and you know it. Our daughters always bear the consequences of folly on their own. So no whipping girl.” She leaned in and whispered, “After all, you already have one.” She smiled mischievously. “And, she needs your attention.”

She did indeed. He took her by the hand and they ascended to her bedchamber. Sir Hugh watched as his wife divested herself of her clothing. When she was stark naked, she gave a little pirouette and said, with a coquettish smile, “Now you, sir knight.”

Good God, she was gorgeous. Hugh needed no prompting. He made it to his underclothing then sat on the bed, drawing Lady Catherine between his legs. “Now what is this about the whipping girl?” he said. “Something about her needing my attention?”

“Oh sir, please don’t spank me. I’ve been ever so good.” But she giggled as she said it.

“Over my knee, girl. It’s time you had your bottom well warmed,” said Sir Hugh, grabbing her by the waist and depositing her face down across his left knee. She gasped and protested the rude treatment as Hugh arranged her, bottoms up.

“Oh! Let me go,” she said, wriggling and squirming.

Hugh doubted that she really wanted that. He ran his hand across the resilient hemispheres, testing their pliability. The wobbly cheeks rippled as he patted them possessively. Then he raised his arm and brought his hand down with a loud smack!

“Ow! You awful brute!” she exclaimed, throwing her head back.

Hugh was undeterred. He let loose with a flurry of sharp smacks that echoed off the chamber walls. Alternating between cheeks of her bottom, and occasionally spanning the sinuous divide, he rained down smack after smack on the lady’s fast-reddening bottom.

“Oooh! Ow! Oh!” she yelped as the brisk spanks continued to fall. She kicked her legs, drumming her toes on the hard floor.

The spanking was, as spankings go, rather thorough. Hugh paddled his wife’s shapely bottom for several minutes before slowing down to pat and rub sensuously. Toward the end it seemed as though she lifted her bottom in time to meet his descending palm, then ground her pelvis against his knee. She writhed across his knee, cat-like as his fingers found her sex, wet with feminine dew, and moaned as he inserted his fingers.

“Oh, Hugh, oh. Please,” she said, humping up and down as his fingers slid in and out, “take me.”

Hugh needed no further urging. He stood her up and together they tumbled into the bed. Hugh liberated his stiff prick and plunged into her. She moaned with pleasure as he began to stroke in and out, beads of sweat appearing on the brows of both of them as they raced for culmination of their passion.

When she had quite worn him out, and passions spent, they lay side by side, gazing into each other’s eyes.

As always, Hugh was struck by her beauty. Even now, after all this time. The hair was whiter, the figure a bit more stout, but still

voluptuous and beautiful. But it was mainly those eyes, those deep blue eyes.

A man could get lost in those eyes.

A Fairy Tale

[Author's note: This is an adaptation of a story that I read many years ago in *Janus Magazine*. It was written, as I recall, in the late '70s or early '80s. I know it will not come out the same, but I thought the premise was cute, so I attempted to recreate it from memory.]

Once upon a time there lived a king, a queen and their three daughters--- Roxanne a fiery red haired beauty of twenty one with a full voluptuous figure, Christine a slender and pretty girl of nineteen and Daphne, a lively, cute and ripe figured blonde of sixteen.

One day the king received word that a terrible dragon was ravaging the countryside. He charged the royal magician to consult the ancient tomes so that he might discover what could be done. The magician gave the matter some study and reported back to the king.

"Sire, the dragon can be slain, but the lance to be used must have a blade that has been bathed in the tears of a well whipped virgin of noble birth."

Upon hearing this pronouncement, the three daughters glanced at each other nervously.

With a heavy heart the king turned to his oldest daughter and said: "I am sorry Roxanne, but you must give of yourself for the good of the kingdom."

To the captain of the guard the king said: "Accompany Princess Roxanne to the tower and take the magician with you. I charge you to give the princess Roxanne a sound whipping on her bare bottom with your sword belt until the tears flow. What must be done must be done."

The captain and two of his two of his men grasped the arms of the flustered Roxanne and hustled her off to the tower, kicking and screaming. Stripping the lovely princess naked they bound her hands to a rung on the wall. Princess Roxanne was indeed a lush figured beauty with a full, round bottom that seemed to beg for the lash. The captain removed his belt and, wrapping the end around his

fist, proceeded to whip the belt full across her lovely bottom with a loud crack that could be heard all the way down in the throne room. The captain then proceeded to administer smack after smack to the white, deliciously rounded bare buttocks of the princess. As each harsh crack of the belt landed, the princess squealed and rose up on her toes pumping her hips forward. She clenched and unclenched her lovely buttocks as the strapping progressed, shifting from foot to foot. Alas, it was her lot to experience the anguish of a sound smacking that would eventually bring the necessary tears. Bands of red left by the belt merged into a red mass and the princess began to cry. The magician caught the tears in a vial.

When the lance had been prepared, a knight was sent out to slay the dragon. Upon encountering the dragon, the knight stabbed it with the lance. This merely infuriated the dragon, and it promptly ate the knight.

When word of the knight's demise reached the king, he consulted the wizard again. The wizard was at a loss to explain the failure. The queen, however, glared at Roxanne, her eyes narrowing. "Send for the royal midwife, and you, daughter come to my chamber."

"No, mama, no, I can explain!" wailed Roxanne.

And explain she did to the tune of a whippy switch wielded by the queen across the already reddened buttocks of the weeping red haired princess. At the same time, a handsome guardsman was seen to beat a hasty retreat for the border of the kingdom on a fast horse.

The middle daughter, Christine, was made of sterner stuff.

"I am ready to take my punishment, papa, for the good of the realm. And unlike my sister, I am pure. I only ask that I be permitted to choose the hand that will wield the lash."

"It shall be as you wish, brave daughter," said the king.

Christine looked around the room and found the eyes of her beloved, Sir Roland .

"I choose the noble Sir Roland. He shall obtain my tears."

The knight implored her not to choose him. How could he bring pain to the one he loved? But Princess Christine was adamant.

“Come, Sir Roland, you must attend me in my chamber. Send to the kitchen for a sturdy paddle. I will prepare myself.”

And so it was that the brave princess removed her gown, lowered her pantaloons and draped herself across the knees of her would be lover. Roland contemplated the fleshy, perfectly formed mounds of his sweetheart’s bottom and sighed as he resolutely raised the paddle.

Smack!

The paddle fell square across the roundest part of Princess Christine’s lovely sit-spot which jiggled delightfully upon impact.

Smack! Smack! Crack! The sting was excruciating, but the princess bravely thrust her derriere high in the air so her chosen could paddle her soundly.

Roland applied the paddle with gusto, smacking and cracking the bare hind cheeks of the princess. Stoic though she tried to be, the searing pain in her buttocks caused her to wriggle and yelp with each hearty spank. After several minutes of relentless smacking from the paddle, the wriggling fanny had been spanked to a scarlet hue and the tears began to flow. When enough tears had been gathered, the spanking ended and Christine rose to embrace her punisher. All the ladies in waiting applauded (and the pantaloons of several were decidedly moist after watching the masterful Sir Roland in action).

Once again a lance was prepared, and once again a brave knight ventured forth to battle the dragon. But once again the knight was vanquished, and only a riderless horse returned.

The King and his court were perplexed. The royal wizard suggested further study. “I have found the problem,” the wizard declared. “The word ‘virgin’ in this passage means ‘one under 17 years of age’, and the whipping must occur in public.”

All eyes fell on Princess Daphne, whose face paled at this revelation.

“Furthermore, the whipping must be administered by the knight who will

slay the dragon,” continued the old sage.

“Very well”, said the king. “Sir Garth, you are our bravest, most capable knight. All others have failed. You must slay the dragon.”

At this news Daphne began to swoon, for Sir Garth was the handsomest, bravest knight in the realm. She had worshipped him even as a young child.

“Have the birching block brought to the throne room, and prepare a suitable birch rod.” Said the king. “ I am sorry my dearest daughter, but what must be done must be done,” he said to Daphne, clearly the apple of her father’s eye.

When the block had been prepared and a birch rod procured, all eyes fell on the lovely Daphne. With the help of her ladies in waiting, the fearful princess removed her gown to reveal budding breasts, a narrow waist, and flaring womanly hips. Her luscious bottom cheeks strained against her tight pantaloons which were lowered to reveal a heart-shaped bottom of exquisite beauty.

Daphne was secured to the block and a hush fell upon the courtiers as Sir Garth took up the birch.

“Forgive me child,” said Sir Garth as he raised his arm.

Swish....thwack! Swishh....thwack! Daphne’s bottom cheeks rippled at the rod’s impact.

“Yeowwww” squealed Daphne.

Sir Garth did not spare the young princess. He whipped the supple birch rod across Princess Daphne’s tender fanny causing her to wriggle and yelp. The birch switches struck then bounced off of the jiggling bottom, leaving red weals in their wake. The whine of the birch sang a song of pain as it swished and cracked against the princess’ bare bottom. At long last the tears that had welled up in Daphne’s eyes began to flow. A vial was procured.

“Stop,” said the wizard when the vial had filled.

Daphne was allowed to rise and she stood weeping and rubbing her reddened buttocks piteously. Through her tears she looked at Sir Garth who embraced her, wiping the tears away.

“I will slay the dragon for you, little one. And I will return.”

And with that, Sir Garth rode off, accompanied by Sir Roland and the captain of the guard. They tracked the dragon to its lair.

While Roland and the captain kept it at bay, Sir Garth plunged the lance into its heart killing the fearsome beast.

When the news reached the king he rejoiced and ordered a celebration. As a reward for their brave deeds he gave the hand of each of his daughters to the three heroes who had rid the land of the dragon.

And so it was that a triple wedding was held. At the altar was the fiery Roxanne with the Captain of the Guard, Sir Roland and Princess Christine, and the nubile Princess Daphne and Sir Garth.

Some say that.....

Princess Roxanne came reluctantly to the altar, but became very demure when the Captain gave her a stern glance and fingered his sword belt meaningfully. The captain installed a rung in a post in his bedchamber. A long strap made from an old sword belt hangs on a peg next to the rung.

Princess Christine presented her new husband with a unique wedding gift, the very paddle used on her posterior. Princess Christine seems blissfully happy even though the unmistakable cracking sound of a bare bottom paddling in progress from behind the door to the couple's chambers is a frequent event.

The chambers of Sir Garth and Daphne frequently resound with the loud smacking sounds of palm meeting flesh. After all, Daphne is still a child and needs discipline. Who better than Sir Garth to turn the cute Princess over his knee spank her soundly when she is petulant.

All agree, however, that the new couples lived happily ever after (even if the three princesses did not always sit very comfortably).

The End.

Anne of Wulfstedt

The setting is Northern Germany. It is the time of the 30 year's war. The kingdom, Palatine, is fictitious. It never existed, but various principalities and city-states that were very similar to it did exist at this time in history.

Northern Germany, 1630.

Palatine finds itself a nation besieged. The Holy Roman Empire and the Austrian Hapsburgs comprise the Catholic league and are intent on the subjugation of Germany. The king of Palatine is Frederick. He is old and depends upon his nobles, but they are fractious and hard to control. His rule thus rests upon uneasy alliances. His son Peter, the crown prince, will soon secede him, but now the ruling barons and their Council are at least equally powerful. Palatine is Lutheran and fears domination from Austria. But Swedish King Gustav has invaded Europe. The barons and Frederick wish to enter into a treaty with Gustav whom they see as a protector. But there are rumors that Gustav is financed by Cardinal Richelieu of France. This would not sit well with the Lutheran populace and such knowledge might be detrimental to Gustav. He wishes to keep the identity of his financiers a secret.

Peter, who, at 23 is a full grown man groomed both as a statesman and war commander, now more and more acts as proxy for his ageing father and represents him in the Council. He is smart, decisive and courageous and seeks to increase the power of the monarchy. Now however, his influence is limited by the barons and their Council.

Lady Anne of Wulfstedt is 17 years old. She is the daughter of Baron Otto von Wulfstedt who has died in the fighting against Tilly and the Catholic League. Shortly after his death her mother dies of disease and Anne, now an orphan, is made the ward of Peter by Frederick's command. He has assumed the role of conservator of Wulfstedt until Anne becomes of age and completes her education. He thinks he may marry her someday, but for now she is his ward. Anne is beautiful, intelligent, and refined and she has feelings for

Peter, too. But she is also willful and headstrong and Peter does not know quite what to do with her.

Constance Muller is a commoner. Originally the child of a servant in Otto von Wulfstedt's household, she is now an apprentice to her father, a printer. This is a trade encouraged by Baron von Wulfstedt for his old servant, Heinrick . So Heinrick, with the aid of Constance now runs a printing press and Constance is just returned from France having been educated there.

Peter, Constance and Anne all knew each other as children and played on the Wulfstedt estate together; although, as Peter became older he had other responsibilities as befitting his age, rank, and station. Constance and Anne are the same age and look almost as if they are twins. In fact, people who don't know them well have trouble telling them apart. They are very close, like siblings. To Anne, Constance is her big sister in all but blood.

The fact that they look like twins invariably leads to girlish pranks. On one occasion Constance 13, and Anne, 12 years old, perpetrate a childish prank on a household servant. The prank goes awry, causing a precious vase to become shattered. Anne's mother is informed. She is angry and vows to herself that this time the child will be punished. She instructs a servant to prepare a birch rod. Anne is to be whipped. She has not been punished physically since she was 6 years old and a nanny boxed her ears. She is terrified. Constance, who has escaped unseen, sees the switches being cut and knows what is about to happen. She fears for Anne's delicate constitution, and that she cannot tolerate such a punishment. To save Anne from a whipping she steps in and declares that she, not Anne is solely responsible for the shattered vase. Anne's mother, still furious, pardons Anne, but instructs a groom to take Constance to the stables and there to whip her soundly with a leather strap on her bare behind. Anne sees the head groom grip Constance by the arm and march her to the stables. She follows at a distance. The pair enter the barn. Anne stands in the yard, transfixed with fear for her friend. She soon hears the splat of leather on bare skin and her friend's screams coming from behind the barn door.

She never forgets.

Part 1

Crown Prince Peter of Palatine was not happy. On the eve of the completion of a successful treaty negotiation which would insure Palatine's protection, there was suddenly a problem. That protection was to be an alliance with King Gustav of Sweden, but an embarrassing circumstance had arisen. A pamphlet had been distributed throughout Palatine. In it were allegations that Gustav was financed by and secretly allied with Cardinal Richelieu of France. How could Gustav be trusted, the pamphlet urged? Would he not betray Palatine to the Catholic League? Worse, it appeared that the pamphlet had been printed by the old retainer of House Wulfstedt, Heinrich Muller. The Council's guards were looking for Muller. They would arrest him when they found him.

A few days later they did. Peter had been dispatched to meet with King Gustav to negotiate the terms of a treaty, and did not learn of all that had transpired until he returned. But while he was away, the situation grew considerably worse. The Council had charged Heinrich Muller with treason. A verdict of guilty at his trial was a forgone conclusion. Heinrich would be convicted and executed.

But what happened next was startling. Heinrich's daughter Constance had hatched and carried out a desperate plan. She loved her father dearly and was determined to get him out of the country. She had gone to visit her father in jail accompanied by her aunt, Heinrich's sister. Their stated purpose had been to provide Heinrich with additional clothing and food. After an hour the ladies had left. The guard noted that Heinrich was resting, covered by blankets on his cot when they departed. It was not until the next day that it was discovered that the body on the cot was none other than Constance. Heinrich, aided by his sister, had changed clothing with Constance, put on a blonde wig, and fled. The ladies had worn heavy cloaks with hoods and the guards had given little notice as the visitors had departed the prison. Constance had assured her father that although they'd be angry, that they would not dare to harm a young woman. But Constance had miscalculated.

The Council, now enraged, vowed to put Constance on trial for treason.

The word quickly spread that Constance had helped her father escape. The talk among the barons was that Constance herself should now be tried for treason. Fearing that Gustav would demand retribution for what appeared to be a betrayal by the people of

Palatine before he would enter into an alliance, he had to be assured that the King and his Council could control an unruly populace.

Anne, now having learned of her old friend's plight, wrote to Peter in Sweden. She urged him to return and use his influence with the Council to save her friend's life. In the meantime, Anne wrote, she would try to use her own influence with the Council.

Peter wrote back, telling her emphatically to do nothing until he returned. He left immediately for Palatine to resolve what he feared was becoming an ugly situation.

Anne felt that she could not wait for Peter's return. She embarked upon a letter writing campaign to the barons, pleading for mercy. Mostly they ignored her. Next she planned to visit their wives, to ask them to use whatever influence they could.

Anne's attempts to save her friend had created a problem for Peter: In her naiveté she had attempted to contact members of the Council. She had written letters to the wives of the barons demanding Constance's release and had attempted to personally call on a number of barons of the realm to plead for clemency. The political problem for Peter was that Anne was Peter's ward, and the perception was that she was acting as his proxy in this matter. This made it appear that Peter was not man enough to face the Council himself, and was using a mere girl to argue for him. Peter was sure that he could save Constance, but the interference from Anne was making this harder to do. She had disobeyed his warning to refrain from meddling. He decided that he would have to have a talk with his ward.

"Your ward, the mistress Anne is here, Sire," announced Peter's secretary. Peter nodded. He had just returned to his temporary quarters at Wulfstedt, but before he met with the Council there was the matter of Anne's meddling. Why couldn't she just obey him?

"Send her in. And close the door behind you. No matter what you hear during the next hour, do not enter."

Herr George, his secretary raised his eyebrows at that but said only, "I fully understand, Sire."

Anne strode into the chamber, seemingly puzzled as to why she had been summoned.

“Peter, why did you send for me? I was on my way to see Baroness Holmgren.”

She is a vision, thought Peter. Dressed in a simple frock, her long blonde hair shimmered, cascading all the way down her back. High cheekbones and a dainty nose framed sparkling blue eyes. And the simplicity of the dress could not hide the shapeliness of the figure beneath -- the full breasts, the narrow waist and the flaring hips were all quite evident. *And I might just be in love with this girl*, he thought. But that could not divert him from his present task. Anne had to be reprimanded.

Anne stood before a grim faced Crown Prince. “I told you to stay out of affairs of state, did I not? Yes or no?”

Anne was aware she had disobeyed, but was resolute in her view that she had done the right thing. “You did, Peter, but...Constance...something must be done.”

“And something will be done, Anne. I will handle this situation. This is a delicate matter and I can’t have you blundering about.”

“And I can’t stand idly by while my friend, and yours, is practically under a sentence of death. It is outrageous. She was doing only what a dutiful daughter would do.” Anne stared hard at Peter and folded her arms, now defiant, it seemed.

Peter pursed his lips in a scowl. She was defying him. He could not allow that.

To throw her off balance he chose a new tactic. “Then, of course, there is the matter of your studies,” said Peter stroking his chin. It was as if he were unaware that he had changed the subject completely.

In disbelief that he would brush aside her concerns so cavalierly, she sputtered, “My studies? What has that to do with...?”

“If you thought about it, everything. You fail to understand the subtleties of statecraft because you are too unacquainted with history, for example. At any rate,” he continued with a shrug, “I have received distressing reports from your tutors.”

Anne could not believe that they were even discussing this. “My...my Tutors? So what? Constance is in prison and you brought me in here to discuss my tutors?”

Peter ignored this outburst. “Yes. Madam Devol says you are not applying yourself in French. Your mathematics tutor, Herr Froelich has told me that you had failed to attend several sessions...for which he had made special time to instruct you. How can you be educated as a lady destined to be the wife of a noble and run his household without this knowledge?”

“I have been busy,” she said with an angry pout, “as you well know.”

God, the girl was headstrong. He sighed. There was nothing for it now. “Tell me Anne, am I not your guardian? And are you not my ward?”

“Well, of course, Peter, but...”

“It is either ‘Sire’ or ‘Crown Prince Peter’. And is it not my responsibility as such to provide proper guidance to you, to see to your education and general welfare?” Peter stood and removed his coat. As he spoke, he pulled a heavy chair from the wall toward the center of the room.

“Yes, Sire,” said Anne, watching his movements, not sure where this was leading.

“And is it not my right, and indeed my duty as your guardian to correct you when you fail to live up to your responsibilities?” As he said this, Peter rolled up his right sleeve. “And so it seems that my ward has not only disobeyed me, but, like a lazy schoolgirl, she has neglected her studies for other pursuits. Pursuits that I expressly forbade.”

Anne could only stare at him, transfixed to the spot. An uneasy feeling started to grow in the pit of her stomach.

“And, so, we come to this. What usually happens to lazy schoolgirls, Anne, when they fail to apply themselves and are disobedient?”

Anne started to back away. “Peter, no.”

“I think you know. They are chastised, are they not?” said Peter, now advancing swiftly.

“Come here, Anne. I hate to have to do this, but I’m afraid it has now become necessary for me to apply a little correction.”

She tried to retreat but Peter grabbed her wrist and pulled her to him. He sat in the chair and toppled her face down over his knee, pinning her with his left hand, while with his right he raised her skirt. She shrieked in protest but Peter held her firmly and pulled up

her petticoats leaving her clad now only in satin drawers that hugged her voluptuous bottom.

“Peter, no, stop,” pleaded Anne. She by now realized that he was going to spank her like some unruly child, and she squirmed, but he held her in a steely grip.

“You force me to do this, Anne. This is for your own good.” Peter raised his arm and brought it down on Anne’s bottom with a loud smack! Anne’s face registered a startled expression at the shock as she felt a ferocious sting through the thin drawers. Peter proceeded to smack the rounded globes of Anne’s bottom repeatedly while Anne struggled and yelped, demanding that he stop. After a dozen brisk smacks, Peter paused, but only to insert his fingers into the waistband of the thin drawers so that he could drag them down to her knee hollows. This produced renewed shrieking from Anne. But Peter had decided that he needed to see the results of the chastisement lest he do too much or, worse, too little. With her bottom bare, Peter renewed the spanking of Anne’s glorious bottom. Again and again his palm cracked down on the luscious globes of Anne’s quickly reddening behind. Anne was beside herself. Besides being thoroughly humiliated at receiving such a childish punishment, the stinging in her rear cheeks was reaching an intolerable level. Peter did not feel like he could let up until she had learned a good lesson and continued to apply spank after searing spank to Anne’s quivering bottom. By now Anne was wailing almost continuously.

The servants in the outside rooms heard the yelping and the ringing crack of hand on bare skin. It seemed to go on and on without letup. Amid knowing nods, they smiled at each other. One maid saying in wonderment, “My Lord, he isn’t half tanning her little rump, is he?” Another remarked, “I reckon she’ll be taking supper standing up, she surely will.”

Smack! Smack! Smack! Peter’s palm struck vigorously making the lush bottom cheeks ripple. “Tell me that I will not have to repeat this exercise, Anne.”

“Owww...Please stop!” She wriggled shamelessly, trying to escape the stinging pain of his hand as it fell upon what was now her well warmed bottom.

Peter laid stinging smack on top of stinging smack to her pert bottom cheeks until Anne dissolved into a sobbing bundle. He let her up and turned her around to face him

Anne was totally chastened.

“Will I need to do this again?”

“No, my Lord,” she whimpered. She’d never been spanked before. It was a new experience, very painful and humiliating, but as she reflected later, not altogether unpleasant once the sting had faded. It was a side of Peter she’d never seen, and as the evening wore on and the heat in her bottom faded to a glow that began to produce warm feelings of an entirely different nature, ones that brought a certain moistness to her feminine parts.

The trial was swift. Constance was brought before the Council and charged with treason. She defiantly maintained her innocence on the grounds that the rumors were true, that Gustav was in league with the French Cardinal.

“How do you know this to be the case, Constance Muller?” demanded Baron Holmgren.

“Because I heard it with my own ears in Paris,” she replied. “The people of Palatine have a right to know the truth.”

“I see” said Baron Oster. “Because you overheard student rumors in a French cafe, you conclude they are true? Perhaps it was in the pubs or alehouses?”

She was dismissed for the Council to decide her fate. Peter noted that there was a dangerous undercurrent to the deliberations. The majority wanted her convicted of treason and executed. They were afraid of Gustav’s reaction if nothing was done. Peter had listened, but had said little. The military envoy had made it plain that someone should be punished for the scandalous publication.

What the Council did not know was that prior to the trial Peter had met with William Devroos, Gustav’s diplomatic envoy. He had made a proposal. William had agreed. “No one wants to see a mere girl go to the block for aiding her father, but the King requires that punishment be meted out in some form if only to quell any perception that he can be trifled with. Rumors must not be allowed to be spread,” Devroos had said. Peter nodded. An agreement was struck.

Finally Peter spoke, addressing the council.

“Lords, what we have here is the impetuous act of a young woman, almost still a child. This is not treason.”

“What about the escape of her father?” demanded Oster.

Peter replied, “Who among you can blame the act of a daughter in trying to save her father? Who among you would not have done the same?”

Baron Holmgren with a smirk on his face asked, “You ply the same line as your ward, Crown Prince. Why isn’t she here speaking in your stead?”

Peter glared. “Do not mock me, Baron. Because it is none of her affair, and she has been appropriately chastised for her girlish meddling.”

A few of the barons chuckled at this revelation. They could well imagine how she had been chastised.

“It brings me to my point,” said Peter. “We are not barbarians. We don’t execute 18 year old girls for merely being dutiful daughters. She may have been naïve, she may have been headstrong. For all I know she was duped. But I do know that her death would be an act of barbarism and an affront to our Christian values.”

An older noble, Baron Rothfus said, “The child must be punished. The publication may have been her doing in the first place.” The assembly nodded. Peter saw that she could not escape scot free.

He thought for a moment. It had to be done. There was no easy way out for Constance. But it would spare her life.

“I propose this. I believe this was a childish act and the punishment should follow in an appropriate manner. I propose that she be taken to the town square of Gruen, our largest village and there be subjected to a public birching of three dozen lashes. This will show our populace that although we do not countenance slanderous printings, we are merciful. It will also satisfy Gustav that justice has been done. I have already discussed this with Gustav’s diplomatic envoy and he is in agreement, that if found guilty this should be her punishment.”

This made it easy for the barons. They now had assurances that Gustav would not hold the acts of Heinrich Muller against Palatine if his daughter were spared, and they did not have to risk the rage of the people for executing a young girl. At the same time a

public birching was severe enough to serve as a warning to all who would endanger the war effort by spreading slander.

Part 2

Anne knew none of this. All Anne knew was that she had to act, and soon, to spare her friend's life. The trial was in progress. Constance would be condemned. Her childhood friend, her big sister, would be taken to the square and her head placed on the block for the headsman to cut it off. It was too horrible to contemplate. So she made a plan. It was complicated and not without considerable risk, but Anne decided to forge ahead. Peter would have to understand. For Constance's sake it had to succeed.

Anne gathered her servants and attending ladies. "I want a carriage at once. I want three of you to dress in some of my finery. You need to look like nobility. You will accompany me to the prison at Gruen. I want a groom on horseback as well to go with the carriage and a pack with provisions for several days. I also want boy's clothing in about my size in the carriage. You will tell no one what you see or hear except for Crown Prince Peter when he returns. Get word to him that I am in Gruen prison." Her servants were puzzled but they hastened to obey. Anne quickly forged a letter and used Peter's seal granting her admittance to the prison.

Anne arrived at the prison. As the ward of the Crown Prince, she demanded to see Constance. The soldiers admitted her on the strength of the letter. They dared not ignore the royal seal.

Their meeting was brief but emotional. Constance understood her plight all too well.

"I cannot allow this to happen," said Anne. "You must flee. You know where your father is. Go to him."

"How?" said Constance. "We can't overpower the guards. You didn't bring an army."

"Change clothes with me." Constance made her ladies crowd the door. "We look like twins. Don't you remember? We tricked people all the time."

Constance understood, but was worried. “No. I can’t let you do this. What will happen to you when they discover you are not me? They will all be furious.”

“I don’t know, but they won’t cut off my head. I’m Peter’s ward. He may punish me, I am sure, but I remember the time you stood up for me,” said Anne embracing her friend. “Hurry now.”

In Anne’s clothing the guards could not tell that they were permitting the prisoner to pass. She looked like Anne and she was surrounded by ladies in waiting as you’d expect of royalty. Constance Muller just walked out of Gruen prison without incident.

They left and Anne breathed a sigh of relief. When the carriage was clear of the town, Constance would change clothes, take the horse and the provisions and flee Palatine to wherever her father was hiding. Now Anne had to wait, to continue the deception as long as possible to give Constance a chance to get clear.

Peter arrived back at Wulfstedt after the trial. He decided that he himself would bear the news to Constance in prison as to the fate that awaited her. He hoped that she would understand that he had done what he felt was necessary in order to spare her life. Even so, her punishment would be shameful and arduous. A public birching was given on the bare skin. She’d likely be stripped naked for the whipping. Three dozen lashes with the birch rod applied to the bare seat would be extremely painful, but after it was done she’d be free to join her father, wherever he was.

Upon his arrival he was informed of Anne’s absence. “Where has she gone?” he demanded. The servants told him.

“She took a carriage and a spare horse to Gruen prison to visit Constance Muller,” he was told. Peter had a bad feeling. Anne knew she could not just walk into that prison. He inspected his desk. His royal seal. Still warm from the wax. *What on earth has she done?*

“Tell the groom to fetch me a fresh horse. I leave for Gruen prison immediately.”

A grim visaged Peter strode into the cell at Gruen prison. The prisoner rose as the jailer announced that Crown Prince Peter had arrived. Peter watched intently as she turned to face him. It was Anne, no doubt of it. He turned to the jailor. “Leave us.”

Peter took her by the shoulders. "Anne," he said shaking his head. "What have you done?"

Anne held her head high. "I have saved my friend's life."

Peter shook his head. "You have created a problem, that's what you've done. Constance's life was already spared. I struck a bargain with Gustav's envoy. She was to be punished, but not executed. Unfortunately," said Peter throwing up his hands in frustration, "she is no longer here. You have seen to her escape."

Anne was silent for a moment. "She was to be punished how?"

Peter continued, "A public birching. But now that won't happen. And worse, you see, is that I had an agreement with Gustav's administrators that this would happen in exchange for her life being spared." He was getting angry now. "But now, when it is revealed that she has escaped, Gustav will believe that Palatine, that I, the Crown Prince of this realm, have reneged on the bargain. The barons too will believe I engineered this. I proposed this compromise and argued in the Council for it so that Constance would live."

Anne thought for a moment. *Yes, it would work.* She took a deep breath. "Peter, wait."

Peter paused, looked into her eyes.

"No one knows that the person who occupies this cell is not Constance Muller, except for you, myself, and members of my household, all of whom have been sworn to secrecy."

Peter was still frustrated. "That is fine for now, but we can't bring Constance Muller back here in three days time. That is when Gustav's vanguard and his ministers arrive. They expect to see Constance Muller publicly birched."

Anne sighed and touched Peter's arm. "And they will."

"What are you saying?" Peter's eyes narrowed. *What was she up to?*

"I am saying no one will know that the person who ascends the scaffold on the appointed day to be punished as the law decrees will not be Constance Muller. I look like Constance. Few can tell us apart. And certainly not the people, the barons or Gustav's men."

Peter stared at her, almost in shock at the implication. "Anne, this is monstrous. I cannot allow it."

"Peter, Crown Prince," entreated Anne softly, "No one dreads this more than I. But for Palatine, our safety, our lands, our

Lutheran beliefs, you must allow it. Gustav and the barons must be made to believe that a willful naïve girl who spread rumors was duly punished. The treaty must be preserved.”

Peter paused, working it out in his head. He had to conclude that Anne was right. He could not risk jeopardizing the treaty by announcing Constance’ escape, especially since it was now known that Constance’ visitor had been Anne. They would believe that Anne had done this with Peter’s permission. A simple deception. Then the enormity of what would happen became clear to Peter. “Anne, do you know what they will do? They will take you to the square. Likely, you’ll be stripped. The sentence is three dozen lashes, 36 strokes with a rod made of whippy switches. It is a painful and humiliating punishment.”

Anne nearly faltered. She had to catch her breath. The reality of what was coming hit her as well. “I...I can only imagine the torment. It will be awful, won’t it?”

Peter nodded. “I’m sorry, Anne. And the worst thing is, I can’t interfere. It would raise suspicion.” But even as he said that, he knew maybe he could. *Perhaps a chat with the constable.* He could at least insure that she not be scarred.

Anne recovered her composure. “It will be nothing like what you did to me in your study and that hurt a great deal,” she said ruefully, remembering the sting imparted by his hand. “But, don’t you see? I must do it and you must agree. No one will ever know.” Actually, that wasn’t true. Constance would find out in time. *What would she think? No matter,* thought Anne. *It is only right.* She owed a debt to Constance Muller.

Anne was moved to a tower cell. Peter had informed the jailer that she was to be treated as if she were royalty, as befitting someone who had been in the house hold of a noble.

The next three days and nights were agonizing for Anne. The reality of what she had let herself in for began to weigh on her. Worse, from her window high above the square at Gruen, she could see preparations being made. A scaffold was erected and on it a curious frame was constructed. It was a tripod like an easel with two legs close together that joined a post at the top. The two legs had, at about waist height, a crosspiece like a cylindrical log that rested across pegs and was covered in some cloth like burlap. It became

obvious as to how it would be used. She'd be forced to bend her body forward over the cylinder with her hands tied to the top of the tripod. She'd be stretched, with her bottom prominently presented for the executioner to apply the birch switches. She got little sleep.

She'd never seen a birching, but she had heard about them. To all accounts it was a most excruciating punishment. All she could do was to pray for strength and reassure herself that she'd done the right thing.

Peter was reluctant to interfere for fear of giving away the whole charade. But he could do one or two minor things. The first was to have Anne moved to the tower. On top of all else he did not want her to become ill in a damp dungeon cell. Next he spoke with the constable who was also the executioner. This was Harold Uber. His son Hans was his assistant. The post had been in the Uber family for generations, the skills necessary for the grim job passed from father to son. He passed his one request to old Harold—that the skin of the young lady not be broken.

“Aye, we'll see to that m'Lord,” said Harold. “We can peel the switches right down and select nice young straight shoots. It'll be fierce painful, mind you sir, but you won't see no blood. My son Hans will do the honors and the boy knows how to whip. He'll draw it out and have her shrieking, but with nary a drop of blood. Oh, she'll dance a merry jig, she will, but in time she'll recover with nary a mark.” Peter stifled an impulse to ask for clemency. It could raise suspicion. He thanked the man and said no more.

For the next couple of days Peter's mind was constantly on Anne. He could only imagine the anguish she felt, listening to the hammering, seeing the whipping frame being built. But the more he thought about it, the more he was convinced that Anne had made a bold and brave move, and an even braver decision when confronted with the reality of the politics involved. A woman that smart and that brave would make a good queen, he decided. He would make her his queen if she would have him. But after the episode in his library, Peter had to wonder ruefully if she would agree to be his bride.
Maybe not.

The populace started arriving early on market day. The flogging of an attractive girl was a rare event, and people wanted a good view. Gustav's contingent had arrived the night before. They

were to witness and report back to Gustav that the punishment had been carried out as agreed. At the appointed hour they were seated on a dais opposite the scaffold with other nobility, including Peter and the barons.

Anne spent a fitful night. She was almost relieved when they came for her. She was handed a simple white muslin shift. "Remove all of your clothing, miss, and put this on. Quickly now, the Lords don't like to be kept waiting." Mercifully the male guards turned their backs while the jailer's wives helped her undress. "Ain't had to do this in a while," said one. "We don't get too many up here to prepare for a flogging, and such a pretty one too." The other said to Anne, "You'll be quite the show. Wiggle that pretty ass of yours and they might go easy on you, but like as not, you'll not be using it to sit for a fortnight."

They marched her from the tower. She felt exposed, vulnerable. She had nothing on under the thin shift. It was a sunny day, few clouds and warm enough that Anne did not feel chilled as they led her from the gates of the prison toward the scaffold. She gasped as she ascended the steps and saw the rods steeping in a bucket of brine. There were three slender birch rods made up of half a dozen switches each. Each rod was three feet long. Standing by the bucket and clad in a simple shirt and trousers, a mask covering his face was a young strapping male. He would be the one to apply the rod, she thought. He looks strong.

They brought her to a halt opposite the whipping frame. Anne stared at it. In a moment she'd be stretched over that bolster, her hindquarters presented to receive the kiss of the rod. *Oh, God, give me strength*, she thought.

Baron Oster of the council rose and read the warrant. "Fr. Muller, for the acts of aiding an escape and for being a willing accomplice in the dissemination of scandalous tracts, you are hereby sentenced to 36 strokes of the birch rod to be applied upon your naked person." He rolled up the scroll. To Hans Uber he said, "Constable, do your duty and mind you lay on well."

Uber faced Anne. "Constance Muller, remove your gown."

Anne drew a breath. This was it. Slowly she pulled the gown over her head revealing her in all her nakedness. There were gasps from the crowd who had by now, grown silent. They marveled at her beauty. The men licked their lips in expectation of what was to

come. Many of the women, jealous, looked forward to seeing her writhe.

Uber took her hands and tied them together. Then he drew her to the frame, and with a thong of leather secured her tied hands to an iron ring at the top of the frame and pulled it tight. The movement made her arch forward over the bolster thrusting her bottom out lewdly. He then tied her ankles to each leg of the frame. Satisfied that she was secured, he strode to the bucket and drew forth a birch rod. He had been careful. It would not do to disobey the Crown prince. The withes were green switches, carefully peeled, six to a rod, tied with cloth to form a handle. He shook it to remove the brine.

Anne heard the awful whoosh as the constable sliced it through the air and turned to see. He approached and laid the rod across the fullness of Anne's bottom cheeks. She flinched as she felt the tap, tap, tap. Hans pulled back his arm to shoulder height. His arm descended in a blur. Anne heard the whine and then the first lash landed with a muffled whuick!. The rod struck Anne across the fullest curve of her posterior. She gasped at the sudden onrush of pain, an explosion of the most horrid sting imaginable Her bottom cheeks quivered and thin red weals appeared. He drew back and struck again. Then again.

Anne had never felt such pain. It was a scorching heat. Her bottom on fire.

The constable paused. He knew the pain was greatest a few seconds after the stroke, so he was in no rush. *Let her absorb that*, he thought, pausing after a stroke. Then he drew his arm back and delivered another stroke. The rounded cheeks wobbled upon impact. Another red band appeared. He admired the lovely buttocks of his prisoner as they rippled lewdly under the whippy birch rod. *Oh she'll be doing a lively dance, this one will*. He was right. The constable proceeded to lay on stroke after stroke, pausing for a few seconds between each. The crowd began to jeer. This was truly a spectacle he was providing. The prisoner's bottom bounded and quivered under the lashes as he applied them at a methodical tempo that was not too fast but not too slow. *Time it so the pain peaks then whip her again*,

he thought. She wriggled in vain against the frame as if somehow this could provide respite from the awful scourging. The constable knew better.

Anne cried out in anguish at the awful sting. Tears started to well in her eyes. She could cry for mercy but she knew there would be none. The horrible stinging in her seat escalated. She whimpered and sobbed, but there was no respite.

Peter watched seemingly impassive. Inside he was dismayed. How could he have allowed this? Anne was paying a heavy price for her brave decision. One of the nobles remarked, "A right smart whipping, that's what this is. She'll think twice now before pulling any more girlish foolishness. Look at her jump! And that bottom! Ye gods what a fulsome little rump she has. And red as a ruby."

The only thing that comforted Peter was that the spectators would be satisfied that justice had been done.

Anne slumped against the frame. The first rod was discarded. Hans procured another. The whipping began anew. The pain had reached intolerable levels. Anne could only blubber as the rod descended with its inexorable *whoosh....whuick!* Her bottom cheeks danced to the fearful tune played by the whippy switches and grew ever more red. Then a new pain arose. Fearing that perhaps her behind might cut and bleed, the whipper focused on her upper thighs, then her upper back for good measure. Anne shrieked as he struck there. Twelve lashes and another rod spent. He threw it down.

The executioner took the last rod from the brine. Shook it. Twelve more strokes to go. Time to concentrate on madam's plump little rear again. He lined up once again on the shuddering globes of Anne's bottom. Anne felt practically delusional. She was out of her mind with excruciating, stinging pain. Still the constable continued, determined to acquit himself as his office required. He'd made her

shriek, all right, and he'd made her dance. She'd remember this lashing for the rest of her days. Her rump was almost purple and her back and thighs laced with fine red weals. Time to drive the lesson home.

Anne wriggled and cried out as each of the last 12 strokes were delivered, about 10 seconds apart, to her inflamed backside. She had no composure left. It had all been erased by a whippy rod whose remorseless descent had driven away all of her courage and dignity. She could only bawl like an infant and writhe against her bonds. By the time the last lash had fallen she was slumped unmoving over the frame and sobbing uncontrollably. It took her a moment to realize that the whipping had stopped.

She was attended by the jailer's wives once again. Punishment now over, she was to be treated more kindly. They took her to the tower and applied cold compresses to her swollen rear. She was dressed and released. Through an intermediary at Wulfstedt, Peter had arranged for a carriage. It had to take a roundabout way, but by nightfall Anne was back at Wulfstedt and being attended by a physician sworn to secrecy.

"Thankfully, there are no lacerations," he told Peter. "I have given her a draught to help her sleep. She will recover, but a birching of that severity will mean that she will probably elect to refrain from sitting for at least a few days."

Peter could well understand that.

Part 3

Peter and Anne were married in the Spring. Frederick had given his blessing and the only decision was Anne's. She did not hesitate. Peter did ask, "Am I to understand that you bear me no ill will for the chastisement in my study?" Anne said "If I did, I would

not have accepted your proposal, my Lord. I suppose, too, that I will have to be a very obedient wife or you might repeat the lesson.” With a twinkle in her eye she added, “I have been known to be naughty on occasion.”

That Summer a letter arrived from Constance. She had heard of the marriage. She had also heard of Anne’s ordeal on the scaffold. Her father had, in the interim, passed away. She expressed a desire to return to Palatine, but felt she could not.

She wrote:

I am deeply ashamed for the suffering you endured on my behalf. I feel like a coward for fleeing and leaving you to this dreadful fate.

She showed the letter to Peter. “I want her to return, Peter. I miss my friend. And, I am in need of a personal secretary.”

“I understand how you miss her, but I need to be careful. People have long memories. I’ll give it some thought. In the meantime you may write back, but don’t promise anything.”

Anne did not understand Peter’s concern. She thought him overly cautious. Impulsively, she wrote back:

My dearest Constance,

It would please me greatly for you to return to Palatine. All is forgiven. How could you have known at the time that your life had been spared? I have many new responsibilities and will have many more soon. I have need of a personal secretary and more, I need you my dear friend. Please reconsider....

After some months Constance answered:

Dearest Anne,

I have decided to accept your generous offer and return to Palatine. But there is a condition and it is something you must do. First I must tell you something you do not know. I, not my father, was responsible for the scandalous pamphlet. It was I who told him of the rumors of Cardinal Richelieu’s involvement and it was I who convinced him to spread those rumors. I should have been on the scaffold that day and received the flogging you took in my stead. Nevertheless, if you do this one thing I ask, I will return. What I ask of you is....

Anne was shocked when she read Constance’s request. She sought Peter’s counsel on the matter. He perused Constance’s letter and for a moment was deep in thought. Then he said with a heavy

sigh, "I think she is right, Anne. It has to be done." Then he added. "I was going to tell you that it would be all right if she returned. But, dear wife, did I not tell you to wait? It looks to me that you took it upon yourself to promise her refuge and a position." He eyed his young wife sharply.

"I know, but there was no reason to say no. You agree, obviously."

Peter nodded. "That much is true."

"But, her request. She is my dear friend. How can we do such a thing?" Anne was visibly agitated. She slumped into a chair.

"She is to be your personal secretary. In this household. With all the people who knew of our ruse. Next to you, no one will be more powerful, and she must have their respect."

Anne looked up at Peter, understanding now. "And they are the only ones who know of the plot that substituted me for her that day. They would view her as a coward who escaped free, without accounting for what she'd done."

Peter nodded. "So you do understand. She must do this to win their respect and trust."

Peter took Anne in his arms. "Now you know what it will mean to be a leader. Sometimes hard things, unpleasant things must be done. Constance understands this and now you do too. Tell her that her request will be granted. It will be a private affair. Only those in the house who had knowledge of our little deception will be involved. Tell her that. And, for your sake, to return swiftly." Then Peter held her at arms length. "As for your impulsiveness, wife, there will be a reckoning. Later."

Anne grimaced but said nothing.

As Peter later reflected, it was only right, considering her involvement in the matter. He hadn't appreciated the level of her culpability before and grimly decided that if she hadn't voluntarily suggested this course of action, he might have done it for her. Then there was Anne. She had gone right ahead and invited Constance to return without waiting for his permission. He'd have to have a pointed discussion with her later about the importance of obedience to one's husband---especially in matters that could affect political concerns.

Constance was met at the border of Palatine and transported to Wulfstedt castle by coach. Anne was thrilled to see her oldest best

friend, her big sister. It was a tearful reunion. Both had been through much. There was also much to discuss and for a while they just enjoyed each other's company as if they had never been separated. It was Constance who brought up the subject of the request. The issue had never been far from the mind of either woman. They had wanted to pretend for a time that it was not looming darkly over the immediate future

Constance dropped the role of friend and addressed her mistress formally. "It pains me to ask you, Lady Anne, but I must know. Have preparations been made to execute my request?"

Anne could see her friend's anxiety. She laid her hand on her friend's arm and said reassuringly, "To you I am not Lady Anne, just Anne, and yes. I'm afraid it will be tomorrow when Peter returns."

"And who will...?" Constance was nervous now that the time was nearly at hand.

"We have discussed it. It will be Peter himself."

Constance nodded slowly. It was only right. He, almost as much as Anne was the aggrieved party on behalf of Palatine. As she was shown to her bedchamber that night she could not help but wonder if she would have the courage to face the next day.

Anne felt it best that Constance remain in her quarters until Peter's return and all was ready. In this way, once what needed to be done had been done she could be welcomed back to the Wulfstedt household. It was as if, she thought, she were a prodigal child returning home from a juvenile escapade to be dealt with sternly before she could be received again into the bosom of the family. And in a way, she was.

Constance could hear bustling in the halls below. Some servants were sent way on errands. Others attended to chores. A sound below in the courtyard like clattering drew Constance attention to the window. It was Peter. He had arrived. It would not be long now.

A pair of Anne's ladies arrived at Constance's chambers. They handed her a white muslin gown. "You are to wear this and nothing else, m'lady. Please, prepare yourself now. Everything is in waiting."

Constance steeled herself. She undressed and pulled the gown over her. It was nearly transparent. She shivered at the

realization that her nakedness would be revealed. *Courage*, she told herself. *Anne did this for me. I can do it for her.*

The attending ladies escorted Constance to the great gallery, a long room with high windows. As she entered, she beheld the staff of House Wulfstedt arrayed in a long circle about a wooden block that occupied the center of the room. Next to the block was a bucket. Constance could see birch rods protruding from the bucket. Standing behind the block was Peter, clad now only in trousers and a white tunic.

Anne addressed her household. "You have been summoned here to act as witnesses for what will be an act of public penance. All of you know what happened in Gruen last year. My friend, Constance Muller, who stands before you now, feels responsible. She feels that she caused the misfortune that befell me, and that therefore, it is only just that she be punished in the same way before she can be forgiven and return to House Wulfstedt and Palatine. Please know that I do this at her request and for her own personal atonement before you all. Crown Prince Peter and I understand her desire to make amends."

Anne stepped back and Constance was escorted to the block. It was an upright wooden frame supported on four legs and having a slightly concave upper surface for receiving the upper torso of the penitent. Constance placed her upper body over the frame leaning forward. The posture lifted her buttocks so that the cheeks of her bottom were presented prominently. Her legs were strapped down and her wrists tied to the front legs. A strap was passed across her back to restrain any movement. When she had been secured all was ready.

Peter took up a rod and shook it, throwing off the excess brine. The birch had been prepared as ordered. Each rod was half a dozen switches, each about three feet long made up of green willow, freshly peeled. It would do. He took his stance just to Constance's left and said to one of the ladies, "Bare her." The gown was lifted over her back laying bare a very shapely backside. At least she is not to be displayed naked on a frame like Anne was, he mused. She was breathtakingly lovely, just like Anne. Her full and womanly behind jutted outwardly from the block as if seeking the kiss of the rod. He saw her flinch as he tapped the crowns of her bottom with the rod.

Peter addressed the witnesses. "We are ready to begin. Constance, you are to receive 36 strokes. Prepare yourself."

Constance closed her eyes and prayed. She heard a whoosh! A second later she felt a hot sting across her bottom like a swarm of bees.

Peter laid on the first stroke as he had seen the constable do on the scaffold. The rod landed with a sound like *whuick!* Constance' rear cheeks wobbled with impact, then sprang back. Tiny red weals appeared. Peter struck again. Constance gasped in pain. A third stroke was applied. Another *whoosh!...whuick!* Constance moaned.

It pained Anne to watch, not only because it brought back a memory of that awful day, but because her friend was suffering. Peter plied the birch rod forcefully, as they'd agreed he would, striking her hard enough to make her cheeks dance. He would strike her bottom with the rod, then stand back and wait for a moment. Then he would take up his stance, gauge the distance and deliver another stroke.

She sobbed quietly, trying not to cry out. *But oh! It hurt so.* Like fire. Every stroke was worse than the last. It's my penance. I must endure, she thought.

For the next several minutes there was silence in the great gallery. Nobody spoke. Nobody made a sound. The only sounds heard were the whine of the birch rod, the *whuick!* of its impact, and the stifled cries of the punished woman at the block. It was a solemn tableau played almost in slow motion--the raising of the arm, the smooth descent of the birch, the rod's impact and the juddering of Constance' ever-reddening bottom. And it continued for thirty six deliberate and agonizing strokes. Constance writhed in pain, moaning. Toward the end she cried piteously, but not for mercy, they noted. She took the whole of the thrashing without begging for release.

When it was finished, Peter told her softly, "It is done now." To the attendants he said, "Replace her gown, release her, and see that she is comforted." They scurried to obey.

Peter and Anne retired to their quarters. "It was a disagreeable task, Anne. I hope now that this business is done."

Anne agreed. "She has certainly paid the price, my husband. I should go to her now."

Peter shook his head and took Anne in his arms. "Leave her be for a while. I have to admit, that while disagreeable, this action has aroused certain passions that I cannot deny." He drew her close, their bodies touching.

"Oh my," said Anne. She could feel the evidence of his passion as they embraced. "I will have to be a dutiful wife indeed if whipping a maid can do this; else next time the maid might be me."

Peter's expression grew serious. He recalled his promise. "Sooner than you think. Come with me, wife."

"Why?" Anne's face was a question mark.

"You don't recall your disobedience over the matter of the letter?"

Anne's hand went to her mouth. "Oh," she said, apparently remembering.

Anne allowed Peter to lead her by the hand up to their bedchamber.

"Now, madam," said Peter with a sternness that Anne could not determine was serious or not, "I would have you disrobe."

"Oh, sir! You wish me naked?"

It was a delicious game they sometimes played, the imperious lord of the manor and his naughty lady. Anne could sense his arousal. For some odd reason the whipping in the gallery had aroused her desires as well. At the same time she was worried that he was put out with her over the timing of the letter. *He had promised what? A reckoning?*

Anne decided to test him. She tossed her head. "I will not. Your baser lusts have been aroused by the whipping of that poor girl. Pure lechery. I want no part of it."

This was unexpected. Peter raised his eyebrows. "You refuse your husband, my lady?"

"Indeed I do," she huffed and folded her arms across her chest..

"Well, then. You offer me no choice. Wifely insubordination calls for punishment. Shall I send for a rod?"

Anne shrank back as Peter approached. "Surely you would not whip me like a common servant, husband."

Peter pursed his lips and mused, "Some husbands do, wife. And it seems to me that correction is called for. Let's see, disobedience, insubordination, defiance..." He ticked her sins off on his fingers.

Anne licked her lips and stammered nervously. "But surely not a rod, husband. That would be too cruel."

"You might be permitted some leniency, madam, but only if you disrobe and come over here to me---at once." Peter stepped back and seated himself on the bed. Anne watched breathlessly as he rolled up his right sleeve. "Well?"

Anne caught her breath. When he became masterful like this, her lower parts, her female parts, moistened. It was clear some punishment for her was in order. Whether it was a delicious game or whether Peter was somewhat put out with her now, she was unsure, but she knew for a fact that she would be chastised in that embarrassing and juvenile way that he sometimes resorted to when she was difficult or fractious – a vigorous and sound spanking of her buttocks with the flat of his hand. She approached slowly, reluctantly, unlacing her top as she walked toward him. She stood before her husband and lifted her dress over her head. The dress fell to the side. As Peter gazed at her, she lifted her chemise over her head and tossed it aside, freeing her breasts. Now she was clad only in long drawers.

Peter reached out and grasped her wrists, pulling her so that she stood between his legs. "It seems a reminder is due, wife, as to who is master here." But she detected a wry smile beginning to form as he said it. Anne did not have time to think about what was coming, though. Peter pushed her down across his left knee, making her body fold so that her buttocks were positioned prominently over his knee, jutting upward. She grabbed the bed sheets, and took a sharp breath as she felt Peter's fingers at the small of her back. He was untying her drawers. A moment later she felt that last protective layer slide down her legs to pool at her ankles. Now she was completely bare. Peter rested a hand on her buttocks and patted gently. At his touch her arousal surged, though she knew what was coming.

Good God, she is beautiful, thought Peter, as he patted her satiny bottom. *But a headstrong wench who disobeys her husband. Time to correct that.*

Smack! Crack! Smack! Crack! Peter's palm spanked the lush orbs. Right! Left! Right! Left!

Anne threw her head back and squealed, surprised at the sudden explosion of stinging heat being visited on her bottom.

"Ow! Ow! Oh, my, husband!" Anne gasped as Peter's palm connected with the cheeks of her bottom. It was a sharp, intense sting that grew into a roaring bonfire as Peter applied smack after smack to her tender rear cheeks. She writhed and wriggled, fluttering her feet. It was in vain. He held her in a steely grip.

Peter, though determined to teach his wife a lesson, marveled at the beauty of her lovely figure. The sleek legs merged into flaring hips, shaped like those of a goddess. Her bottom was full and round, and at the moment posed saucily over his knee and doing a lively dance as his palm spanked it in a steady rhythm. At each smack, her bottom rippled, growing redder by the moment as the implacable chastisement continued on without abatement.

"Ouch! Oh! Peter, please," she pleaded. "I'll be ever so good!"

"Will you, wife? (*Smack! Crack!*) Will you obey me in the future? (*Smack! Crack!*) If I tell you to wait for my permission on something will you heed my command? (*Smack! Spank! Crack!*)."

"Yes, yes, I promise," she said. But the spanking had passed into another realm. Though her seat was stinging hot, she felt intensely sexual, so much so that she involuntarily began to lift her hips to meet Peter's descending palm.

Peter saw the glistening sheen of arousal on his wife's labial lips. Her writhing, the lifting of her hips told him that this punishment had entered a different phase. He decided to give her ten more good hard stingers, which he meted out slowly, letting his palm rest on her bottom after each one so that she felt each spank quite distinctly.

Ouch! Ow, this stings horribly, thought Anne as she absorbed each of ten slow hard spansks. *But I feel so wet.*

At the last of the ten, he stopped.

"Now," he said, lifting her up and sitting her on his knee, "do you think you can behave?"

“Yes, yes,” she said flinging her arms around him and kissing him full on the lips. Their tongues intertwined as Anne pressed herself against Peter’s body. She tumbled off of his lap and into the bed, pulling Peter with her. “Take me. Now,” She said, opening her arms to receive his embrace.

Peter tore off his clothes and climbed into bed. He had to have her now. His erection was painfully stiff as he hovered above her on his knees. She took it in her hand and guided him inside her. He settled down to lie atop her and pushed with his hips to slide all the way in. Anne closed her eyes and moaned, then slowly pushed back with her hips, creating a delicious motion that generated waves of pure pleasure for them both. A climax was not long in coming for either of them, the first of many, it turned out, on a languorous afternoon.

Peter later reflected as he watched his beautiful wife sleep, that if his fond hopes were met, the day had been the first step in producing an heir, both to his house and to the house of Wulfstedt. He wryly reflected that now maybe with Anne and Constance safely under his roof, there might be no more impulsive trouble making behavior by either of these young ladies.

But somehow, he doubted it.

Incident at the Hot Spring

[From the novel *Pendragon's Lash*. Prince Alfred, aided by undercover Star Federation agent Jessica Blix is escorting Princess Penelope and her ladies-in-waiting to her wedding. The caravan has stopped for the night near a mountain pass.]

Back at camp, Alfred dismounted and made his way toward Penelope's pavilion with the intent of checking on her. He ran into one of the ladies' mistresses, Dame Frances.

"Prince Alfred, sir. Come quickly!" She was clearly agitated. Alfred felt alarm. *What was this?*

"They are gone." The woman's expression clearly projected worry.

"What do you mean, gone?"

"They are not in their quarters or anywhere in camp. I have looked everywhere."

Alfred brushed by her and ran to Penelope's tent. She was right. It was deserted. Alfred looked around. *What has that girl done now?* His only consolation was that Jessica had gone with them. She wouldn't leave Penelope alone.

Then, he spied it. A rock right at the tent's entrance pinning a piece of writing scrip. It bore the words *hot pool—upstream*. That was all. *Jessica*, he thought. There must have been little time. *Who was the damn fool who had suggested this frolic?*

Alfred quickly rounded up his knights. "Penelope and her entourage have wandered off," he told his men. "They are upstream a ways. We have to fetch them. There could be all kinds of danger up there, as you know. Let's go get them before something sneaks up on them." *Like a saber-tooth or a sloth bear*, he thought. *Or worse, an assassin.*

Why these addled-headed girls had thought they were immune from the dangers of life in the wild on Pendragon, Alfred didn't know, but he was going to drag them back and knock some sense into whoever had proposed it, daughters of noble families or not. Their fathers would thank him.

Edward, coming back from the cooking pavilion, saw Alfred mount his horse in a hurry. "Where are you going?"

"To fetch your bride-to-be," said Alfred, "before she's saber-tooth food."

"What are you saying?" said Edward.

"Bring a few men. Follow me."

* * *

Jessica was perched on a rock ledge above the pool, keeping a watchful eye.

Later, recalling the incident, she would speculate that it must have been an intriguing sight that greeted the men as they rode up the path by the stream and the hot spring pool came into view. Half a dozen naked or nearly naked young maidens splashed about in the pool while two others sunned themselves on the rocks. It was as if the men had come upon a bevy of bathing water nymphs, gaily cavorting about.

They all had been oblivious until the knights had entered the clearing encircling the pool. Alfred quietly dismounted and now stood stock still, his arms folded, a frown on his face.

Jessica saw him but did not react, nor did she move to cover herself. It wasn't in her nature to be ashamed of her own nakedness anyway, and indeed, the thought of displaying herself to Alfred in this state made it exciting. *Let him see me*, she thought. She was also guessing that a reckoning would be coming for this foolish escapade. Whatever happened, she'd have to play her part without complaint.

One of the girls finally noticed the men and shrieked. Then they all did and panic ensued, complete with yelling and flailing arms as the girls thrashed about. But there was nowhere to go. Alfred just waited until the din died down.

Penelope decided to brazen it out. "One of you, hand me my dress," she snapped at a nearby knight. "And take your eyes off me, you oaf."

She glared at Alfred, feigning indignance. "Brother, what is the meaning of this? Can't you see we are bathing? Remove your men so we can climb out of this pool and dress."

"Oh, you'll climb out of the pool and dress, sister. But first you'll tell me whose idea this was."

For a moment, no one spoke.

“If you must know, it was mine,” Bethany spoke up. “I’ve been here before. With my father and mother. It’s perfectly safe.” But she lowered herself deeper into the pool under Alfred’s angry gaze.

“Your father would have never approved of this, Bethany LeBlanc,” said Alfred. He tossed Penelope her dress. “Put it on and get out,” he said.

As Penelope struggled to get into the dress, which would be soaking, Alfred addressed his men. “I want you to follow my instructions, men. We are going to teach these young ladies the price of folly. On this trip I am master and responsible for the safety of all. This little jaunt has put these girls at risk, and they need to be taught a lesson. The instructions were, no one leaves camp. There are reasons for this. But they disobeyed.”

Each of the ladies looked at each other nervously. They could sense that someone was about to be punished.

“I want each of you to assist one of Penelope’s ladies out of the pool. But they are not to dress. Do it.”

He looked at Bethany. “Except for you, Bethany LeBlanc. I’ll deal with you back at camp.”

There was no help for it. Each girl was seized by one of the men and yanked out of the pool.

Alfred tossed Bethany her clothes. “You can watch this for now, but your turn is coming. I’ll have no more disobeying of camp safety on this trip, and I don’t care who your fathers are.”

“Gentlemen, find a log or a stump on which to sit. Put your lady across your knee and spank her bottom soundly until I tell you to stop.” At this pronouncement, the shrieks started anew and the girls twisted and wiggled in the grasp of their individual captors, trying to escape.

Jessica had sidled up next to Alfred, who looked at her and shook his head. “No. Not you,” he said.

This was the time. Now she would find out what intimate discipline felt like.

“But you must,” Jessica whispered. “If I’m spared, they will think I’m special somehow and not to be trusted. I need their trust.” This much was true, but it was only part of what now motivated Jessica. For her attraction to Alfred had grown in the course of the

mission. He was unlike any man she'd ever met—strong, assertive, and confident. His attitude toward women in particular, typical of the males on Pendragon, was something Jessica had never experienced, but it spoke to her on an atavistic level. She hadn't had that much experience with the opposite sex to begin with, and the stark difference in the nature of male-female relationships on Pendragon with those in service to the Federation was both intriguing and exciting on a level she didn't yet understand. But what she understood at this very moment was that she wanted to be treated like a naughty female who had disobeyed her male master and protector. She found the notion of the impending juvenile chastisement distinctly arousing.

Alfred raised his eyebrows at first but then pursed his lips as if to acknowledge she was right. "I hope you'll forgive me, but I have to make this convincing," he whispered. Then he dragged her over to a stump and sat down.

Jessica let herself be upended until she was lying across Alfred's lap, bottom up. She was stark naked, a condition she was comfortable with normally, but in this position she felt horribly exposed. Alfred's hand landed on her bottom with a loud smack. The sting took her breath away.

His hand must be huge, she thought. *Yow! Ahhh—Owww!*

A barrage of methodically applied smacks set her bare bottom on fire. Alfred applied his palm to every inch of Jessica's bouncing behind, from the tops of her thighs to the crowns of her jiggling bottom cheeks. The brisk smacks jarred her teeth, and she flinched as each hearty smack made loud impact with her tender seat.

It's okay to wriggle, she told herself, gasping. The fact was, she couldn't help it. The hot sting of his palm was driving her to thrash about, squirming over Alfred's lap.

Alfred's left arm was a steel band across her back. Her bottom jutted up prominently, providing a lush target for his punishing hand. She waved her legs in the air. She clenched and unclenched her bottom cheeks. But it was all to no avail. The stinging heat escalated no matter what she did, and now she ruefully understood why the spanking of a woman's bottom on this barbaric planet was such an effective punishment.

But even as the insufferable heat in her nether cheeks rose, she found her sex responding, and she ground her pelvis against Alfred's knee. Surges of pleasure began to compete with the pain of the spanking. She couldn't understand why this would be so, but she could not deny it was happening.

Jessica looked around. The same scene was playing out all over the clearing. Alfred's men were doling out sound spankings to every one of Penelope's maids, and none of them were taking it quietly. The little blonde Karina yelped lustily and wriggled like an eel as a handsome knight who had put her over one knee smacked her bouncing buttocks. The reddish-haired, tall and lithe Catherine Cuthbert was losing a battle to accept her punishment stoically. She'd always had an aristocratic air about her, but now she was just another bawling maid, kicking and screaming at the indignity of a sound spanking on a jiggling fanny from a husky knight not much older than herself. The sounds of male palms cracking against tender girl flesh competed with the shrieks, caterwauling, and abject promises of future good behavior. The cacophony was amplified by the echoes off the canyon walls.

After several minutes, Alfred signaled a halt. Edward had arrived and was standing next to Penelope, his hands protectively placed on her shoulders. She was fully dressed, but her clothes were dripping wet.

"As you can see," said Alfred, turning to Edward, "Penelope and her maids disobeyed my instructions not to leave camp. Most of them have been disciplined. So hopefully the lesson has been learned." All over the clearing, the girls were scrambling for clothing now that they had been released from their captors. "But tonight I must make a further example of the ringleader." He tilted his head toward Bethany LeBlanc, who shivered.

"I see," said Edward. He motioned to his entourage, who came forward carrying a large dead animal, pierced with multiple arrows and tied over a pole. "This saber-tooth was stalking you. My men shot him in the rocks right up there," he said, pointing up a rock formation above the hot pool. "I think these are his hunting grounds."

The jaws of the chastised ladies dropped as they beheld the size of the beast that might have killed one or more of them but for

the arrival of the men with weapons. "Take note. There are reasons for Prince Alfred's rules."

Jessica was close enough to hear Edward say in Penelope's ear, "We'll discuss this further on our wedding night." Penelope visibly cringed.

* * *

The mood back in camp was somber. The dead saber-tooth trussed up on a pole was displayed for all to see. Later it would be skinned and made into furs to grace someone's sleeping quarters or perhaps to provide covering for a cold, hard floor. But as for now, it served as a reminder that these were wild lands and that tooth and claw were never far away.

The air in the camp was expectant. There was to be a spectacle. Word had spread that Bethany LeBlanc, a lady-in-waiting to Penelope, was to be publicly chastised for her role in the aborted hot pool adventure. Those going about their normal tasks could not help but notice the wooden tripod being constructed in the center of the camp by Alfred's soldiers. It was a task those in the army were used to. Those who disobeyed orders were sometimes whipped. But tonight would be different. The penitent would be a young woman from a noble family. It would take place after supper.

Jessica took the opportunity to speak with the frightened girl. Bethany had not been one of those chosen for punishment in the aftermath of the insulting skit incident.

"They tell me I'm to be lashed twenty times," she said nervously. "I've never had the whip. I'm afraid."

Jessica patted her hand in an attempt to comfort the girl. "It won't be so bad. Alfred would never really hurt one of Penelope's ladies. He just wants to make an example of you. He's really worried about security. I think he senses the Church might try to disrupt the wedding party. That's what I've heard." But Jessica had heard no such thing. It was an attempt to tease information out of Penelope's inner circle.

"Yes, the Church in New Norfolk. They have Cecily's brother, you know."

"What?" This was a revelation.

“Cecily’s brother, Christopher. He was arrested on some trumped-up charge. He is being held by Church authorities. Not many know about it, but Cecily heard somehow. She is very worried.”

Jessica did what she could to reassure Bethany. After all, she’d been lashed too, and although it had hurt ferociously at the time, she’d gotten through it. And, there had been no damage to her skin at all. It had burned for a time but that had gone away, particularly with the application of the healing Aeolian creams.

But all the time she was thinking. *Cecily Terrill. Her brother a prisoner. That is leverage. Does Alfred even know?* Now she had another reason for stealing into Alfred’s chambers that night. The first reason was she was so sexually aroused, she was about to explode.

* * *

After the camp had been secured for the night, Alfred had Dame Frances prepare Bethany. In the ladies’ pavilion, she was told to remove her dress and the shift commonly worn underneath. She was to wear only a chemise that covered her breasts, and the knee length drawers that served as undergarments. With shaking hands, Bethany undressed and waited.

Torches flickered in the dark and a fire near the tripod illuminated the area. Alfred’s sergeant-at-arms stood ready, a switch held in his hand. He had put away the heavy, braided, multi-thonged whip that was his stock-in-trade when he needed to punish miscreants. The implement he now carried was a simple switch, about three feet long and supple. He had procured it from the caravan master, who had assured him that it was perfect for the job. “I use it on lazy serving wenches and stable boys. Smartens them up a bit, but no real harm done.”

Alfred addressed the camp. “As you know, this afternoon we averted a near tragedy. This happened because one of Penelope’s ladies, Bethany LeBlanc, convinced the girls to sneak out of camp to a bathing pool up the canyon. The saber-tooth that Prince Edward killed had, unknown to them, been stalking them the whole time. It was luck that we and Prince Edward arrived in time to slay it before it could attack anyone. These can be dangerous woods. Some of you

who dwell in the cities may not appreciate that. But here on Pendragon, in these forests, plains, and mountains, danger lurks.”

“You are here now to witness punishment for disobedience to the rule I made that no one leaves camp without an armed escort or without permission. Is that understood?”

A chorus of “ayes” was the response.

Alfred nodded to one of the men, who proceeded to the pavilion of Penelope’s ladies to inform them that it was time.

Jessica stood with the rest of Penelope’s ladies, waiting for it to begin. Bethany appeared inside the fire-lit area, having been marched there by two of the security guards for the camp.

Alfred waited until all were in place. “Sergeant, do your duty. Twenty lashes, lower discipline.”

“Aye, sir,” said the sergeant. He gestured to the two escorts. They took Bethany over to the tripod. There was a brace at waist height, and Bethany was made to bend forward over it. A rope hung down from the apex, and they tied her wrists together with it, then pulled it up, causing her to stretch over the cross brace, thus thrusting her ample buttocks into prominence. Next, her ankles were secured with ropes along the ground that ran to two legs of the tripod. Thus bound, she was ready for infliction of the lashing.

“Lower her drawers,” said the sergeant.

Jessica watched breathlessly. It was a barbaric scene, something from a dark past, and it was totally enthralling. Alfred had moved over to stand next to Penelope and the ladies, as if his mere presence was a reminder to them to behave in the future.

Dame Frances tugged down Bethany’s drawers. The pale skin of her bottom came into view. The fulsome cheeks trembled as Bethany shifted from foot to foot, nervously waiting for the lash to fall. She was naturally blonde, a pale-skinned beauty with a narrow waist and shapely hips. The rounded cheeks of her bottom gleamed in the light from the flickering fires. The men watched impassively, but few would leave this spectacle without being aroused.

The sergeant flicked the switch back and forth and took up a measured stance. The idea was to place the rod’s end square across those prominent bottom cheeks without wrapping around.

He brought the switch back and circled it over his head before whipping his arm forward. The switch struck with a sharp crack. Bethany flinched. Her body stiffened and she wailed. Again

the sergeant raised the switch. It made a whining sound and struck again, causing Bethany to rise up and clench her buttocks.

“Ahh... uhh!” she bleated.

Jessica counted in her head.

Swish... Thwack! That was three.

Bethany moaned. The sergeant measured his distance again.

Swish... Thwack! Bethany’s buttocks rippled as the limber withe fell again.

Bethany looked over her shoulder, her eyes wild and pleading. Impassively, the sergeant drew back his arm.

Swish... Thwack! Her body jerked at impact.

“Oww... please! I’ll not disobey again!”

Each time the switch fell, it seared her bottom, which rocked up and down uncontrollably over the cross beam, clenching and relaxing. Bethany’s body jerked in reaction to what Jessica knew was a sharp, burning sting. Her mind took her back to her own ordeal under the lash. This looked to be very much the same.

The switching proceeded until all twenty of the allotted strokes had been applied to Bethany’s naked buttocks. Jessica could see a pattern of red welts, even in the firelight. At the end the girl was sobbing, promising to obey orders, and pleading to be forgiven.

As Bethany was untied and led away, Jessica whispered to Alfred. “I must see you. I’ve learned something.”

Alfred looked around to make sure no one was watching. “Come to where the horses are secured later, when the watch changes. Tell your guard to escort you. I’ll be there.”

* * *

Late, after all had retired for the night, Jessica allowed the guard to escort her to the makeshift stable where the horses were tethered. Alfred was waiting for her.

“I have news,” she said.

Alfred came forward out of the shadows and embraced her. “I’m sorry,” he said. “You are faithfully trying to do your duty, and for your trouble you were punished at my hand. I am truly sorry.”

Jessica sighed and hugged him tightly, burying her face in his chest and not moving for a moment. “It’s all right. We both did what we had to do. I forgive you.” She drew back and looked up into

Alfred's face, studying the craggy lines that marked him as a man responsible for many and also as one who worried about it. Perhaps too much.

"Here is what I have discovered. Cecily Terrill has a brother who has been arrested by the Church. For what, I don't know. But potentially it gives the Church leverage that it could use to get Cecily to do what it wanted. It could be no more than a message or a signal, delivered at a prearranged time. But she now bears watching."

Alfred fell silent, thinking. "Where is he being held?"

"I don't know and I don't think she does either, but I sense he is in jeopardy."

"He could be. For what the Church deems blasphemy, he could be punished rather severely. They have jurisdiction over ecclesiastical matters in New Norfolk, like a separate government body. They can arrest and punish without authorization from the king or his council. I've heard of people being sentenced to three hundred lashes and not surviving the punishment."

"I'll try to find out more," said Jessica. "In the meantime, you must use the communicator. Get a message to Trevor Crane. He can contact Julia, who is on the inside and close to Gregori Leister. She may be able to find out."

Alfred nodded in agreement.

"Now, is there someplace we can be alone?" Jessica moved closer to Alfred and her voice dropped to a throaty whisper.

Alfred appeared puzzled. "We are alone here," he said.

"Someplace more comfortable," said Jessica. "I want you," she breathed, staring into his eyes.

Alfred took her into his arms. "Even after—" He didn't finish the question as Jessica put a finger to his lips.

"Especially after. Now, no more questions."

A nearby, empty supply caravan provided a comfortable enough berth for what Jessica had in mind. In a short time they were kneeling on furs facing each other. Jessica had undressed Alfred, her hands moving rapidly to loose buttons and ties. "You've seen me naked, but I have not yet had the privilege of seeing you," she said, eyeing Alfred's naked body. "I must say you do not disappoint."

In the flickering light from nearby torches, her eyes travelled over the hard muscular body, the wide shoulders and flat abdomen—and to the fully erect penis below, which she stroked with her hand.

“I felt this underneath me, becoming hard as you spanked me.” Alfred sucked a breath through clenched teeth. “If you want to know what that did to me, put your hand here.” She guided his hand to the cleft between her legs.

Her sex was slippery-wet with arousal. She had been on a slow burn all day, ever since the spanking had set her off. Then Bethany’s whipping—perversely, she thought—had inflamed her even more. She ran her hands up and down Alfred’s frame as he stroked her vaginal slit, his fingers finding the button that produced the waves of ecstatic pleasure she desired. She lowered her head and took his erect cock into her mouth, swirling her tongue around it. Alfred moaned and placed his hands on her head, gently caressing her as she sucked his hard, pulsing member.

Finally, he pulled her away. He took command and tumbled her backward. With his arms, he pulled her legs up until they looped over his shoulders. Slowly, he inserted his raging erection into her. Jessica threw her head back and moaned. He was inside her so deep. Then he began to thrust and withdraw, thrust and withdraw. She feared their fierce rocking might make noise, but she almost didn’t care as their bodies slammed together in a wild pursuit of climax.

Jessica suddenly decided she wanted it another way. She pulled back and rose and turned. On all fours, she offered her hindquarters to him, inviting Alfred to enter her from the rear. He slid in and from that angle, it was a feeling of pure ecstasy as he took her. She rocked on her knees and Alfred’s body smacked against the bottom cheeks he had so thoroughly reddened earlier. Something was happening, something was bubbling up from her core. Waves of pleasure washed over her, making her quiver. She let it overtake her, moaning and thrashing while the ultimate sensation cascaded over her, obliterating awareness of all else.

Alfred escorted her back to the pavilion of the ladies in the wee hours. Surely tongues would wag, but she didn’t care. As for Alfred, it was probably viewed as his prerogative. He was an unmarried man. So what if he had a dalliance with a handmaid to the princess? Little did they know that she was so much more, but for tonight she was not warrior angel from the stars. Tonight she was merely a woman of Pendragon, the obedient wench of a barbarian warlord who had punished her and then had his way with her. That

night, she dreamt of a hard man with a soft touch and did not awake until well after first light.

A Princess of Vernonia

Princess Alisha watched from the tower of Southmoor manor as the entourage filtered over the hill. A cold knot of dread formed in her stomach. But she gathered herself. She was a Princess of Vernonia and still mistress here. They would arrive soon. She had to prepare. She sent for William, her chief steward.

“My father’s men and the Earl of Rivermead will arrive soon. See to it that their horses are fed, watered and stabled. Check on space in the barracks for the soldiers. I think there may be a dozen. The captain will get special quarters as will the Earl of Rivermead, his wife and their entourage.”

He could see the strain as she attempted to put on her best face and play her role as the gracious hostess. Protocol demanded it. But William knew why they had come and his heart went out to his brave but forlorn mistress.

Alisha spent her summers at Southmoor, concentrating on her studies. Her father, King Harold disapproved, but her mother the Queen had prevailed upon him. Their daughter would be educated, she’d insisted. Still, she had not married, but not for lack of suitors. Alisha was beautiful. She was of medium height and shapely with a narrow waist, flaring hips and a womanly bosom. With her long reddish gold hair, at the age of 23 she was a vision of loveliness. Perhaps a bit too serious, her mother would have said. She had rejected the numerous suitors for her hand. It was good that none of them had pleased her father either, else she’d be wed by now. Not only was she determined to educate herself, she had wanted to learn manly arts. She could ride as well as a man, she could handle the rudiments of a short sword, and she had a genuine talent for archery. She could outshoot every man in her father’s guard save Guy Hightower, the man who had taught her.

Guy Hightower, now there was a man. Her heart fluttered at the thought. He was everything a woman could want. He was strong, with ruggedly handsome good looks. In addition he was kind and respectful, not a loud boorish dolt like many of the swaggering sons of nobility and would be suitors. But as Captain of her father’s guard he was only a commoner. She’d had an easy rapport with Guy. He’d

been a good teacher and the fact that she was a mere girl had not put him off---and he didn't patronize her. He'd been hard on her and had challenged her in training when it had been necessary, giving her no special treatment just because she was female and royalty.

And that was one reason her heart caught in her throat when she saw Guy leading the column of men-at-arms. Why had her father sent Guy, of all people, on this errand? She reflected ruefully on how it had all come to pass.

Her father King Harold had for years quarreled with the Scythian nobles whose lands bounded Vernonia near its Southern border. Thus when Rune Vargis, son of Seil Vargis had announced his desire to wed Giselle, daughter to the Earl of Rivermead, Harold saw a way to bind the Scythian nobles in alliance with Vernonia.

Alisha saw it differently. She had studied geography. Rivermead stood at an important river crossing on the boundary with Scythia. The alliance gave Scythia access to the bridges at Rivermead which were normally heavily guarded against southern invasion. You could not get an army across the Lorr River for over 100 miles in either direction. Alisha had studied history too. There was a clan of the Scythians that claimed to be descended from Harold's house and had grumbled for years that it had a legitimate claim to the throne of Vernonia. That clan was House Vargis.

Harold wouldn't listen to his eldest daughter. The opinion of a woman was not highly regarded in such matters, and Harold was already put out with his daughter's interest in matters of state as not being fit for women anyway. She had counseled that a marriage with a Scythian warlord was an invitation to danger for Vernonia. Harold believed instead that the marriage would reduce tensions on the border between Scythia and Vernonia.

The wedding itself was where things had unraveled. It had been held at Oron Keep, a centrally located fortress in the Lorr valley, a day's ride from Rivermead. The Vargis family contingent had arrived a full week prior to the wedding and had set about turning Oron's Keep upside down. Rune of Vargis was rude and boorish. One night Giselle had blanched in horror as he had backhanded a female steward, giving her a bloody lip for splashing a little wine at his feast of welcome. He treated his own servants poorly as well. Rune was a bully. He drank to excess, was loud, and

had a decidedly cruel streak. On one occasion he displayed it quite vividly by insisting that a stable lad be birched raw for failing to properly groom his horse.

Alisha had been commanded by her father to attend the wedding and had witnessed first hand the uncouth behavior of the Scythians. It bothered her especially that Rune believed himself to be superior to all things Vernonian. It appeared to her that he had nothing but contempt for Rivermead and his household. Plus, he had arrived with forty men at arms, not trusting the Vernonians. The problem was, the Earl of Rivermead didn't see it. He was too focused on the generous gifts that House Vargis had sent, as was the Scythian custom. The dowry was to be unfettered crossing at the Lorr bridges. It would line Rivermead's coffers for years. Nor did Giselle's mother, Lady Lenore notice or care. She was too busy dreaming of the jewelry and Zandian silks that the money would buy.

Giselle was appalled at the behavior of her betrothed. She had never met him prior to his arrival at Oron's Keep. Giselle was a mere girl of 18 and had come to Princess Alisha in private. She had begged Alisha for help. Alisha could understand the terrified girl's plight. Her father was in effect selling her to a barbarian warlord. Who knew what ill treatment she might suffer at his hands? Normally Alisha would have counseled her that as a daughter of royalty, an arranged marriage was her fate in life and to make the best of it. But Alisha felt that in this case, Rune Vargis was a danger to the realm. So she had decided to help Alisha.

Thus, Alisha secreted Giselle away with a trusted family in a small village not far from the keep. When her absence became apparent, Vargis blamed the Earl. And he practically tore Oron's Keep apart looking for her, thinking that the Earl had reneged on his promise of her hand while plotting to keep the money and gifts. The Earl denied any such plan. They would find her, they assured him, chastise her properly, and deliver Giselle to him in a more obedient frame of mind. But after a fruitless search for the missing girl, Rune Vargis left, humiliated. He did not believe the protestations of the Earl and Lady Lenore that Giselle had merely run away.

Three days went by. When Alisha had been satisfied that Vargis had truly left she returned in her own coach with Giselle. The

Earl, and especially Lady Lenore, were furious—with Giselle, but also with Princess Alisha. How dare she meddle?

It had been painful to watch Giselle's reckoning, but watch it she did. In the Keep's great gallery the servants placed a birching stool, a high stool on four thick legs with a concave surface. Giselle was secured across it and her skirts were raised, baring her girlish bottom. Then Alisha had watched in dismay as Lady Lenore took up a birch rod three feet in length and made up of a full dozen whippy switches. She whipped the pale moons of Giselle's tender buttocks until the pert globes bore vivid red stripes and Giselle was shrieking in agony. Alisha had winced in sympathy as the switches had whined through the still air in the gallery to land with a sharp whick! that elicited painful cries from Giselle for mercy. "Mama! Mercy!" she had cried as stroke after cruel stroke was applied to her tender bottom. But her mother had none. At least three dozen strokes of the birch rod were applied to Giselle's quivering bottom by her mother's strong right arm before she was satisfied and her rage had been vented.

When it was done and they had led the weeping girl away, Lenore turned to Alisha and coldly informed her that King Harold would be informed of her treachery forthwith. Alisha had listened to the threat in stoic silence, but inside she knew that her father would be very displeased. And she was afraid. Still, she consoled herself, she had helped Giselle avoid a life of misery. It was a good bargain for Giselle, she reflected later. In exchange for a whipping, she had avoided what would have surely been a miserable existence. Rune was not likely to press his suit again. In addition, the realm was safer, in her view, with no Scythian presence north of the Lorr.

That was in the past now, Alisha reflected. The present had been the letter that had arrived three days ago by courier from her father. "Daughter, you will receive my men at arms, Earl and Lady Rivermead, and my chancellor who will deliver to you a warrant for your just punishment for this affair. You will obey the instructions of Chancellor Gregor to the letter." It bore King Harold's seal.

So that was it. The Earl of Rivermead and his wife had demanded retribution for Alisha's aid in hiding Giselle. Even in her distress though, Alisha had understood. Rivermead was a key ally to Harold and Harold had to placate him as best he might to keep his

allegiance. He also had to demonstrate that he had had no hand in Alisha's plot to hide Giselle from Vargis.

Supper that evening in the Castle's dining hall was restrained at best. Alisha bustled, giving orders for the serving of the meal under the watchful eye of the Earl and his smirking wife. The only look of sympathy that she could see came from Giselle herself who had been forced to come along. It was almost too much. They come to see me humiliated and expect me to serve them as if I'm throwing a feast, she thought.

When the plates had been cleared, Gregor rose, a scroll in his hand. Alisha steeled herself. The warrant. What was to be her fate? She had never liked the chancellor. He was a dour man, and as the realm's chief judge he had sentenced many to the rope and the headsman's ax. And she had never liked the way his eyes followed her as she had matured into young womanhood.

Gregor left his place and walked around so that he stood in front of the banquet table. He addressed Princess Alisha. "Please rise, Princess. I have a matter of some import for you and all assembled here. It is the reason for our visit," he said unrolling the scroll. "This is a warrant signed by your father. It bears his seal. It reads, 'For the offense of aiding Giselle of Rivermead and for disobeying the lawful commands of your king you have jeopardized the security of Vernonia and have insulted my loyal subjects the Earl of Rivermead and his wife the Lady Lenore. For this offense it my judgment that you be stripped of your clothing and publicly whipped in the courtyard before the assembly. You will be given 40 lashes, administered by my captain of the guard, Captain Hightower, after which you will apologize to all for your insolent behavior. Signed by his seal, Harold, King of Vernonia.'

The blood left Alisha's face. It was ashen and she was shaking. Stripped naked and publicly whipped! How could her father do such a thing? But it only took her a moment to understand the political reality. The king needed Rivermead and if it took publicly humiliating his own daughter to appease the man, he would do it for Vernonia's sake.

Alisha gathered herself as best she could. She held her head high and said, with a tremor she could not suppress, "I will now take my leave of you all, if you don't mind. My household staff will attend your needs. Under the circumstances I fear I will not be very

good company the rest of the evening.” She stole a glance at Guy Hightower. His face bore an expression of pure shock. He had not known, she decided. At least there was that much. Still what lie ahead was humiliating beyond belief. And painful. She’d never been whipped, but she’d seen it done. She shivered at the prospect.

Gregor fixed her with a thin smile. “As you wish, my Princess. We will call for you on the morrow at noon. Please prepare yourself accordingly.”

Alisha gave him a small nod and took her leave with as much dignity as she could muster. She felt like breaking down in tears and running to her room, but she would not give them the satisfaction. She would show them what a princess of Vernonia was made of.

Guy Hightower was in shock. He was very fond of Alisha. Actually, he had to admit, it went beyond that. He could love her. He’d often thought of what a wife she could be. But commoners do not marry royalty. True, they could never wed or be together, but for him to be the one to actually wield the whip? How could King Harold have ordered this?

As captain of the Harold’s personal guard it was sometimes his unfortunate duty to administer discipline to his own troops, especially the young trainees. For that he used a braided whip that ended in a long tail that could leave painful weals on the backs of the men. He was fortunate in that he had not brought it with him. So, he decided, if do this deed he must, he would procure a whip that would be more suitable for the correction of a woman. Perhaps the household steward would know.

He sought out William, the chief steward. “I suppose you heard what is to transpire in the morning,” he said.

“Aye, captain,” said William sadly, shaking his head. “Our lovely mistress. How could her father be so cruel? What a shame.”

“It is not our lot to question, William. I have been given a command by my lord and I must obey. But here is my request to you. I need to procure a whip for the punishment, but I do not wish to leave marks on her skin. Do you understand? I was not ordered to be brutal. Do have a suitable implement?”

William pondered this then said, “On occasion it is necessary to discipline lazy maids or stable lads. The head groomsman has a whip that he made for this purpose. It is nothing like what is used on criminals. Wait here. I’ll procure it.”

William returned a few moments later bearing a coiled brown object. "Here," said William. The whip William handed him had seven strands of supple leather measuring a bit over a foot and a half in length dangling from a knot at the end of a six inch long thick leather braid. The braid was wrapped around a foot long handle. "It has, unfortunately, a ferocious sting I am told," said William, "but it will not cut her skin. It's the best we can do, sir. I'm afraid forty lashes will hurt a great deal, but the young stable boys and serving maids appear to bear it with no lasting harm." The last he said with a grim smile.

Guy tested the lash against his palm and on his leg. It had a sharp stinging bite. He grimaced. "It will have to do. Thank you William."

Neither Alisha nor Guy slept much that night. Both were preoccupied with thoughts of what was to transpire the next day. Guy was torn between his duty to his king and his affection for the Princess Alisha. Alisha was frightened, but determined to meet her fate like a true princess of Vernonia, proud and unashamed. She still felt that she'd done the right thing.

The day dawned bright. At least it promised to be warm, thought Alisha grimly as she prepared. Knowing she was to be stripped she had her ladies array her hair in a plait and chose a simple white shift. As she waited she chanced to peer from her window to the courtyard below. What she saw sent a shiver up her spine. A frame had been constructed, obviously for her, at the center of the courtyard. It was a tall tripod with front legs placed close together. A crossbar spanned the two legs at waist height. Someone had thoughtfully placed burlap padding on the crossbar. The purpose was obvious. She would be bent forward across the cross bar, buttocks thrust out to receive the whip lashes. She tightened and felt behind her with her hands. Soon her rear cheeks would be a throbbing mass of pain.

She heard the heavy footsteps approach her quarters at noon. "Princess Alisha," she heard a voice intone. She motioned for one her attendants to open the doors. Standing there was Chancellor Gregor and four guards. With him was Guy Hightower. The Chancellor was arrayed in the robes of his office. Guy's face bore a

wearily frown and sad eyes. He was dressed simply in a white tunic and black trousers. He carried a whip.

“It is time, Princess. You will follow me.” Gregor’s face displayed a triumphant smile. Her ladies stepped away reluctantly. She saw the concern on their faces. “I will be all right,” she said to them. She stepped into the hallway and was surrounded by the four man escort. Gregor led the way and Guy Hightower followed. They emerged into the courtyard’s bright sunshine. Alisha blanched as she beheld the frame. It was supported on a short raised dais, so all standing could get a good view. The Earl and Lady Rivermead and their entourage lined the balconies surrounding the courtyard. Several other minor members of the nobility had apparently ridden in at their invitation that morning to witness her humiliation.

They arrived at the dais and mounted it. Gregor pulled the warrant from his robe with a flourish and read it once again for the benefit of all. There was an audible gasp when the sentence was announced. There was murmuring in the crowd. “Forty lashes bare—that is most severe,” said an onlooker. “The poor girl,” ventured another. Alisha was popular in the region. Gregor turned to face Alisha. “Princess Alisha, you will now disrobe.”

Alisha looked him squarely in the eyes and without hesitation pulled the plain white shift over her head and allowed it to flutter to the ground. There was another collective gasp from the crowd. Alisha was beautiful in her nakedness. Her breasts were high and proud, her waist tiny, and her hips flared in womanly perfection.

“Secure her to the frame,” ordered Gregor. Guy nodded to two of his men. They guided Alisha to the frame and placed her hands high along the poles. Her feet were tied to the bottom of the poles and her hands secured to a strap dangling from the apex. This forced her to bend over the bar at a slight angle. The posture pushed her buttocks out and back in stark relief. Guy had to marvel to himself at the sight. The twin cheeks of Alisha’s bottom were full, round and high set. She was gorgeous and Guy would have given anything to be able to caress those two perfectly formed moons instead of having to administer this cruel whipping her father had ordered.

Once Alisha had been fastened down to Gregor’s satisfaction, he turned to Guy. “Captain Hightower, do your duty. Forty lashes.”

Above the spectators watched in breathless anticipation as the captain uncoiled the whip, letting the strands fall. Alisha turned her head to see. The whip was a cruel looking thing. Her eyes met Guy's. He whispered, "I am sorry, my princess." She shook her head and looked him in the eye. She whispered back, "You must do your duty as my father commands, captain."

On the balcony Lady Lenore whispered to her husband, "I hope he whips her well, the little baggage. She'll not be so high and noble when her backside burns under the lash."

Others provided different admonishments. "See that a similar fate awaits you, wife, if you fail to obey me," said a noble to his horrified wife. She gave him an astonished stare. "You wouldn't dare." But fear showed in her eyes. Other wives and daughters shifted uneasily in their seats. They were all disobedient from time to time. They were just glad it was someone else tied to the frame today.

With a sigh Guy stepped to the side and let the strands of the whip unfurl. He measured his distance and carefully lifted the whip. Alisha steeled herself. The captain drew back his arm and in a fluid motion brought it forward. The tails of the whip fanned out and landed with a loud crack! flat against the crowns of the Princess' buttocks.

"One," intoned a scribe standing by the frame.

Alisha hissed in pain and pressed her body forward. It hurt worse than she had imagined.

Swish...crack! The whip fell again. Alisha's bottom cheeks quivered with the impact of the strands.

Guy drew back again. Whishh....crack! "Three," said the scribe.

Guy fell into a smooth rhythm, drawing the whip strands through his fingers, cocking his arm and delivering the lash to its target firmly. The strokes fell. The princess's bottom cheeks quivered in response and she flinched and gasped. Red lines marking the strokes appeared on her skin. Her breathing grew labored. Oh it hurt so! She willed herself not to cry out. The awful stinging pain built and built as each searing lash fell. Guy switched to her upper back to give her poor bottom some relief, but he knew that these strokes were perhaps even more painful. In addition he knew that the

fleshy orbs of her rear cheeks could better absorb the whipping, so after ten lashes across her back, he returned to whipping her bottom.

The onlookers watched fixated on the drama before them of the naked princess enduring what looked to be a firmly delivered whipping to her flinching backside. Her rear and back were a flaming red. They noted the whiss...crack! of the steady application of the whip and wondered if they could bear the pain were they strapped to the frame. Indeed a few of the younger maids, wincing in sympathy with Alisha, even felt the stirrings of desire at the sight of the handsome captain doling out discipline to the bare bottom of the princess. And all of the men were mightily aroused at the lurid spectacle. Her bottom cheeks quivered lasciviously each time the lash struck.

By the time the count reached thirty, Alisha could no longer contain herself. She cried out in pain. "Oh...it hurts so!" Guy paused momentarily. The Chancellor saw it. "Continue, Captain. As your king has ordered," he said sharply. Guy thought grimly to himself that if he had his way, it would be Gregor on this frame and he wouldn't be using a girl whip. He swore to himself, but resumed, carrying out the sentence as commanded.

Swish...crack! Alisha sobbed softly as the last strokes fell. Her eyes filled with tears. She knew that her buttocks bounced lewdly as she writhed on the frame but she could not help it.

Guy could not help but ease up slightly as he applied the last of the lashes to the girl's backside. Her choked sobs tugged at his sensibilities. Still he had to admire her. She had borne her punishment like a true queen. She had not begged or pleaded for mercy. Her upper back and bottom were a livid red but thankfully there had been no scarring or broken skin. William had done well in procuring a whip that obviously stung mightily but would leave no lasting marks.

Guy stood back. It was done. He took it upon himself to instruct his men to release her. She stood shakily and bowed to the Earl and his wife. Even in her humiliation she held her head high. "I apologize to you Earl of Rivermead and Lady Lenore as my king and father commands, for my meddling in your daughter's wedding. I am sorry and hope that my chastisement has provided you with some satisfaction." That said, she held out her hand for her shift which Guy now draped over her nakedness. The soldiers led her away.

Lady Lenore wasn't so sure that she was satisfied. The princess had borne her punishment a little too well for her tastes. She would have preferred to have seen the child groveling and begging. She could see that her daughter Giselle was weeping. Another good lesson for her, thought Lady Rivermead. Let her see what happens to disobedient children.

Alisha was attended by her ladies in waiting. She lay on her front as unguent was rubbed into her backside. It helped, but she knew that lying on her back or sitting would likely be unbearable for several days.

Supper was a subdued affair. Alisha gave instructions to her staff but ate in her own quarters. She did not want to see anyone now. Protocol could be damned. The castle quieted down and everyone drifted off to bed. Alisha lay in her chambers finding it difficult to sleep.

And that is why she was among the first to hear the hoof beats approaching. It was a contingent of armed men, she decided instantly. It was nearly dawn and the sky was becoming faintly lighter, but the household was still asleep. They were under attack. She sprang from her bed and threw on some clothing. She chose trousers and a simple tunic for ease of movement.

Part 3

Guy heard it too, and was in the process of rousing his men, when the grounds were breached by men at arms with weapons drawn. Southmoor wasn't a castle and was not as heavily defended as Harold's main residence, Vernonia Castle. A garrison maintained in a local village was thought to be sufficient security. But this band of armed men had apparently slipped by the guards normally posted about the manor—or had overpowered them.

Alisha ran to the top of the stairway in time to see the men burst through the door to the great hall. It was Rune Vargis. Alisha instantly understood the nature of his attack. He meant to kidnap Giselle. He must have obtained word of the Earl's journey and picked a vulnerable spot to attack. Quickly she ran back to her quarters and retrieved her bow and a quiver of arrows. They would soon discover the location of Giselle's room if they didn't know it already. She hurried along the upper hallway to a niche overlooking a spiral stairway that they would have to ascend to reach Rivermead's quarters.

The black clad soldiers approached, unaware of Alisha. Vargis himself instructed them. "Up the stairs and through those doors. Search for her everywhere." But the men had barely ascended the steps when Alisha's first shots thudded into the balcony, startling them. Then the door at the top of the steps opened and the Earl emerged, a puzzled look on his face. The commotion had awakened him but he did not know what was happening.

"My Lord Earl," screamed Alisha, "get back inside. They want Giselle. I'll keep them pinned down." And she continued to fire at the intruders. The Earl looked in shock at Princess Alisha who was coolly firing arrow after arrow, defending him and his wife. Just that morning he had gloated as she'd been whipped, and here she was fighting his attackers.

The Earl retreated, but not before his wife Lenore shrieked "She's not here! She's in the East wing!" Unfortunately the attackers heard it too and they retreated. Alisha did not hesitate. She bounded down the hall hoping to cut off Vargis' men before they could breach the East wing quarters. But by the time she got there they already had a squealing Giselle in hand and were hustling her toward the front door.

By now Guy had mustered his men, but it was happening too fast. Horses were at the front gate being tended by Vargis' men. Guy had fought his way through the first group who had attacked the barracks and saw a dozen riders at the ready near the front gates. To his dismay he saw a kicking and screaming girl being carried toward the horses. He was preoccupied with fighting two men at arms and could not break free. He heard one of them say, "We have her, let's go." Guy finally dispatched the men with an overhead cut to one and a thrust to the midsection of the other. He wheeled around and headed for the stables as the dying men crumpled to the ground. He had to get to his horse.

Alisha had beaten him there. She was grimly saddling her own mount. Guy's was ready. The stable boys had had the foresight to ready some mounts when the fighting broke out.

"Princess, you cannot come." Guy was surprised that she'd even attempted to follow.

"They have Giselle. This is my house, my responsibility." She swung into the saddle, bow and quiver across her back.

“No, my Lady. I won’t permit it. Stay here. Your father would never forgive me.”

“I’m coming and you can’t stop me. They are getting away.” She spurred her horse and took off, heading out the gate. Guy followed swearing to himself. Now he had two females in danger. Guy had a contingent of a dozen men who followed. The rest remained to fight the last of the intruders. There was no time. Guy sped off in pursuit of both Vargis and Alisha.

The sky was brightening and Alisha could see that they meant to take the main road south toward the Lorr. They could even have a boat waiting. She saw them blow through a crossroads at the edge of a dense forest and it gave her an idea. She whirled around and held up her hand waiting for Guy to stop.

“Go back,” yelled Guy. He was both angry and determined.

“Listen to me,” Alisha shouted as their horses drew together. “That way—through the forest is shorter. I’ll show you. It cuts off miles. They are headed for the river. Follow me and we can intercept them. Hurry!”

“Alisha, no. Go home. I forbid you to come. Do not disobey.” Guy could not be more emphatic.

“Or what? You’ll beat me again? You’ve already shown yourself quite capable of that. We need to catch up with them and I know how.” She spurred her horse and rode into the forest without waiting for a reply. Her words stung, but there was no time for that now.

Guy divided his force, half continuing on the main road. Guy and the others followed Alisha. Guy swore. The damn girl. Maybe he hadn’t whipped her hard enough, he thought grimly to himself.

Alisha was right. She led them off on a game trail that she knew. She’d spent summers here and knew the land better than Guy. When they emerged from the forest, Rune Vargis had not yet arrived. They set up an ambush. Guy told Alisha in no uncertain terms to go back through the woods to safety. Alisha disobeyed. She climbed a tree giving herself a good view and nocked an arrow. Guy swore but it was too late. They were coming.

The ambush worked. Alisha missed the lead rider but when the others stopped in their confusion they were instantly surrounded by Guy’s men. His other contingent, just behind them, were too much for Vargis’ men. They surrendered. Giselle was safe. So was

Alisha. She'd been painfully exposed in that tree and Guy had to breathe a sigh of relief. The damn girl putting herself at risk like that!

Three months later

Alisha admired herself in the mirror. The wedding dress was beautiful. White, embroidered with stitched flowers, it was simple yet elegant. It fit her shape perfectly. Her ladies in waiting were ready. Giselle of Rivermead was to be her maid of honor. There was a knock at the door. "It is time, Princess. The wedding ceremony is ready to begin," said a smiling Lady Anne, her aunt come to fetch her.

As she proceeded down the stairs with her entourage she reflected on how much had happened. Rune Vargis had been captured and was now held for ransom in Oron's Keep. Giselle had been reunited with her mother and father. The Earl had apologized profusely to both Alisha and Harold for his part in seeking Alisha's punishment. He felt like a fool at having been taken in so completely by the Scythians and had sworn allegiance to Vernonia, Harold and Alisha for so long as he should live.

And if the rumors were true he had admonished Lady Lenore in a very forceful way. The word passed among the servants finally found Alisha's ears. It was said that the Earl had ordered a birch rod prepared and the birching stool brought to his chambers. They said that the thwack of the birch and Lady Lenore's howls had reverberated through Rivermead Hall for a very long time that night. Lady Lenore, it was said, took meals standing up for days afterwards.

As she made her way down the aisle her heart skipped a beat as she gazed upon her beloved waiting for her. Sir Guy Hightower was resplendent, handsome as ever. His eyes held nothing but adoration for his bride to be. Harold had been so grateful to Guy for thwarting the Scythian plot that he had elevated him to knighthood. He was given the lands bordering Southmoor as Earl and he was given the hand of the Princess Alisha in marriage. As for Alisha, Harold could only beg her forgiveness. She had been right all along. He'd never again discount his daughter's sage advice just because she was a woman. She had more shrewd intelligence about such matters than half of his advisors.

She and Guy had courted under the watchful eye of her father's household so their courtship had, to all watchful eyes, been chaste. Well, all that would end tonight. Alisha burned with desire for her husband to be and Guy had told her in no uncertain terms of his passion for her. They had slaked their passion in hiding, hurried undetected trysts that the two had arranged, mostly through Alisha's careful plotting. Guy had thrown caution to the winds to be with his betrothed unattended. But as of tonight there would be no more sneaking around.

There was a curious custom that attended weddings in the kingdom. Before the couple retired to the bedroom, the father of the bride would hand the groom a switch, symbolizing the transfer of male authority over the female daughter and wife-to-be. It was then customary for the groom to use the switch on his new bride once they had retired to the bedchamber, to establish his dominion over his new wife. Some used it lightly, merely an ancient ritual observed; but some not so lightly. Stories abounded of wedding nights accompanied by cries of passion as well as the whick! sound of switch meeting bare flesh emanating from the marital bed chamber.

Alisha had quite forgotten about this and so was shocked when at the wedding feast just before the couple was to retire, Harold presented the ritual switch to Sir Guy accompanied by a toast. "To my son-in-law, may he use this wisely....and often! He will probably need to!" The toast was met with raucous laughter as it always was. Guy took it with a bemused grin. Alisha almost glared at her new husband, then though better of it. She'd had quite enough of that treatment.

As dictated by tradition he carried her up to the bridal bed chamber that had been prepared. He tossed the switch on the bed and took his bride in his arms. "Let me just look at you," he said. Alisha smiled, almost giddy that they were alone. "I must prepare for you, my husband," she said coyly. Guy watched spellbound as she let her hair fall down. She disrobed shamelessly as he watched, his passion growing. When she was stark naked he beheld her, in shock it seemed, at this vision of loveliness. Then he took off his outer garments to get ready. She picked up the switch thinking to tease him. Surely he would not use it. To her surprise he took the switch

from her and flexed it in his hands. She became alarmed. Surely he did not intend to...

To her surprise he abruptly snapped the switch in half and threw the pieces into the fireplace. She breathed a sigh of relief. "I am glad to see that you do not hold with old barbaric customs, husband," she said embracing him.

Guy held her and looked into her eyes. "Hmmm...yes. I think a switch is unnecessary, darling wife, but there is a matter we must discuss, and that is the matter of your obedience in matters affecting your safety."

She looked at him quizzically. Guy continued. "Do you remember when I told you to go back that night we rescued Giselle? And you disobeyed me? You charged ahead mindless of the risk. You climbed a tree and exposed yourself to fire."

"Well, yes. But I needed to shoot, so..."

He put his finger to her lips. "I was responsible for your safety as well. I'd have died had anything happened to you. Once the ambush was set, you were safe. You endangered yourself. You ride well and you can shoot, but you are nowhere near to being a trained fighter."

"What are you saying? Why are you telling me this?"

"Because, wife, I need to instill in you the concept of obedience to your husband's orders in certain matters. Not all matters, but certainly these. And that is why I must do this." And Guy sat on the bed and pulled a surprised Princess Alisha across his knees, bottoms up. She was naked and her lovely bare bottom was presented prominently over Guy's lap awaiting his attention.

Alisha squirmed. She could not get away. He was holding her face down across his knees. Guy patted and stroked her bottom cheeks. "But you threw the switch away!" she protested, kicking and wiggling. "I thought you were not going to..."

"I don't need a switch for this, beloved. Just the flat of my hand." And with that Guy commenced a sharp smacking of his wife's pert bottom. Smack! Smack! Smack! He spanked her right cheek, left cheek, and right across the middle.

"Ow! Ow! Ow!" yelled Alisha.

"You need to know that I tell you some things for your own good," he said. Guy continued with a thorough spanking of his

wife's lovely bottom. He alternated between cheeks, smacking moderately and rubbing every so often. The treatment was both embarrassing and arousing. The spanking didn't really hurt. In fact it was shamefully exciting to be bent naked over her husband's knee while he smacked her bottom like a child. It tingled at first, then became a pleasant warmth. Her nether lips were oozing with feminine arousal. He picked up the pace of the spanking. Now the smacks were a bit harder and stung more, but it seemed her body adjusted. She squirmed, bucking her bottom up and down as his palm dealt out a brisk tattoo. She wriggled her sex against his thigh seeking relief from the sweet torture.

The spansks were getting a bit harder now and her behind began to sting, but it was still a sweet sting. She could feel her husband's hardness beneath her. Was spanking her bottom doing that to him? Her seat was becoming hot now. The spansks falling relentlessly, alternating cheeks, then right across the divide between them. Oh! she thought. Her behind was feeling hotter. She could hear the steady crisp splats ringing off the walls even as she could feel them land. She whimpered. In a red mist of arousal or stinging pain she did not know which. She began to lift her hips in time with the descent of her husband's hand so that it would catch her right across her sit spot. He would stop and rub. It practically drove her mad. Then he'd resume, sometimes with quick sharp volleys, other times more slowly, lovingly massaging her wobbling globes in between spansks. She would reach her climax if he didn't stop.

Finally she could stand no more. "Oh! Oh! Guy please no more. I'll be good. I will, husband. Oh I need you!"

That is what Guy had been waiting to hear, a promise to be good. After all he didn't want to hurt her, he just wanted to establish the fact that although she was a princess, she was his wife. He rolled her over and plunged into her. He was delighted to find her more than ready. Alisha was delirious with pleasure as she felt Guy's shaft filling her, rubbing her little button. He stroked in and out, the waves of passion building. As they rode the delicious friction of their coupling toward a mutually satisfying climax, Guy made a mental note to himself to apply this treatment frequently and vigorously.

Lady Jayne

Part 1

They saw the attack from a ridge overlooking the road. The raiders they had been tracking emerged suddenly from both sides of the road and tried to surround the two women on horseback who had ridden straight into the ambush. But the attack startled the horses and they reared up, defending with flashing hooves. To add to the confusion the storm that had been building all afternoon chose that instant to unleash a deluge. The confusion worked to their advantage.

“Time to move, brother,” said one of the men.

Suddenly the raiders were faced with a new threat, two knights, one with a drawn sword and the other with a nocked bow. The girls on horseback, realizing they were in a melee, bolted for safety. The fight continued behind them as they sped away.

It was a short fight and at its end six lay on the ground, dead or dying. The brothers from Tryon were two of the best fighters in the realm. They looked around. The girls whose abduction they had just prevented were nowhere to be found.

“Who do you think they were?” asked the younger of the two. One was light haired and older. The younger man was slender with short cropped dark hair.

“Looked like nobility to me. Whoever they were, they should never have been out on these roads alone. These were Viking raiders. There are more here than we thought.”

The other nodded. “Alfred needs to know this. Vikings this far South. In Thracia.”

“Could be Wulfram’s scouts.”

“I think it’s time we packed up the hut and left. We’ve seen enough.”

“Agreed. We’ve spent enough time here. Time proceed on to Thrace castle and warn Robert DeCorday. These are his lands, and anyway we were told he has a message for us,” said the older.

“What do you think this mysterious message is?” said the younger of the two. “Father was very vague about that.”

The older brother shrugged. “Just that it had to do with our future. I don’t know. You know our father—sometimes he talks in riddles.” He turned his horse around.

“Let’s get going.”

The two women struggled upward toward shelter, trying to avoid the sharp rocks and the crevasses between them. In this storm they knew that they had to reach shelter or they’d probably succumb to the elements. When they had spotted this hut hidden in a grove part way up the hill, it had seemed a godsend, just like the unknown men who had intervened when they’d been attacked. Jayne was grateful, but she had not been about to go back and thank them. Who knows, they might have traded one set of outlaws for another.

Now if they could only make it there. Hopefully the owner would take them in and give them shelter until they could figure out how to make it back to the keep. No doubt her father would be incensed that she had ridden out on her own, but that was a worry for later.

They had been out patrolling the borders of Thracia and had been attacked, likely by sea raiders foraging on shore. These were the very ones that Jayne and Celia had been looking for, a major threat to their lands since her father had been injured and could not lead men in battle. But in the storm and the melee the two of them, Jayne and Lady Celia, her cousin, had managed to slip away, ducking through thickets and hiding in hollows. Unfortunately, they had lost the horses.

The men who had interrupted the assault had engaged those raiders in the fight, but she did not know the outcome. Nor did she know who they were. Other outlaws, perhaps? Fighting over a prize? It now seemed that, increasingly, her lands were an open target to every rogue element in the kingdom. Sea raiders, outlaws, and adventurers, they were all descending on Thracia looking for an easy conquest with Alfred at war and her father severely injured.

That was why they had engaged in the ill fated patrol, despite explicit orders to the contrary from her father. It had been a folly born out of frustration. Sir Barris, commander of the keep’s guard, was stretched too thin. Many of the young men in the kingdom had been enlisted as soldiers in King Alfred’s war against the Danes and Viking raiders from the north. She had heard reports from villagers

of armed men. So someone had to monitor incursions into Thracian territory. Jayne fancied herself a capable horsewoman and handy with a bow and short sword, having learned from her brothers who were away with Alfred. However, she knew well that despite the fact that Jayne and Celia were not going to fight, but only observe and report, would not matter to her father. He would no doubt order a switching for them both. But that was the least of their worries now.

They reached the crude cabin and looked around the outside. It appeared deserted, for the time being at least. Tentatively, Jayne pushed at the door and it creaked open.

“Jayne, should we be here? Someone lives here. Suppose he comes back? He’ll think we’ve come to rob him.” Celia was apprehensive as they stepped inside.

It was neat to a fault. Cooking utensils were hung from the ceiling. A table and chairs dominated the room with a pair of cots along one wall. The place was swept and orderly. But it was the weapons that got their attention. A broadsword hung on pegs and armor was laid out on a bench next to it. There were empty pegs as well for other weaponry, which Jayne figured was likely in use by the denizen of this hut. And there was a satchel on a peg. “Maybe we can find out who lives here. There may be clue in this satchel,” said Jayne as brought it over to the table and began pawing through it.

“I doubt he’ll have much to fear from the likes of us,” said Jayne. “Judging from these weapons he can take care of himself.” Jayne noticed the fire smoldering in the hearth. “We have to get dry, then we have to get out of here as soon as the storm lifts.”

“But our horses. How will we find them?”

“Our horses have either been caught by the raiders, or they will go back to Thrace Castle on their own. If they do that Sir Barris will send out a search party.”

“And we’ll be for it when we get back,” said Celia absently rubbing her posterior through her trousers. “If we get back.” Both of them had dressed in the clothing of hunters in order to slip away unnoticed.

“It was a foolhardy plan,” sighed Jayne, “and I have no doubt sitting will be uncomfortable for a time if anyone tells father what we did. He will have someone else do it though, since he is incapacitated.” Then she speculated as to who might wield the rod. Even at the relatively mature ages of eighteen and nineteen, both

girls were still subject to parental discipline, which could mean a boxing of the ears for minor faults and a full scale birching for major ones. Jayne had not felt the birch rod in years, but as a result of this little episode, it just might happen. But that was for later, if at all.

“Be that as it may,” said Jayne. “We have to dry these wet things. I’ll stoke the fire.”

As Jayne built the fire back up, Celia stripped down to a shift and drawers. Then Celia took over and Jayne did likewise. The heat felt lovely and they moved wet clothing over toward the hearth to dry it. Jayne found some bread and cheese and a skin of wine. The girls were famished so they ate and drank. They pulled chairs toward the fire and alternately sat and stood, back to the fire, eating, drinking and drying out. It was so relaxing that both forgot that they had intended to dry themselves and leave promptly. Both fell asleep in front of the hearth.

Jayne awoke with a start. It wasn’t the fact that the fire had dimmed. It was instead the feeling that they were no longer alone. She hadn’t heard a thing, but there was a presence in the room. Indeed, there were two, standing in shadows so as to be partially hidden. Jayne poked Celia and they stood and whorled around.

“We don’t have any silver for you to steal, but I’m sure you intended to help yourselves to whatever else you could find.” The speaker stood in the center of the cabin, hand on the hilt of his sword. His companion held a long bow loosely and observed them with a bemused smile.

“Looks like they helped themselves to our dinner,” said the other.

“We meant no harm,” said Jayne. “We were attacked by raiders, Vikings most likely. We escaped in the storm. We saw your cabin. We didn’t steal anything.”

“Except our food,” said the first one with a dark scowl.

“We were hungry—and wet and exhausted. Please. My father will repay you...” she started to speak then thought the better of it. It would not do to tell them who they were. These could be outlaws who might hold them for ransom.

“Well, Rance, what do you think?”

"I don't know, Garth. Maybe they are just village girls who got lost. Or, maybe they were about to steal us blind. They do grow them pretty in these parts," he mused, his eyes focused on Celia who blushed.

The younger brother, Rance, was certainly correct about that last part. Jayne was of medium height with large and intense hazel eyes and soft chestnut hair that fell to about her shoulders. Her budding breasts and womanly hips were on full display, clad as she was, only in underclothing. Every curve of her body was visible. Celia was a slender blonde, her long hair parted in the middle with a waifish look that centered on deep blue eyes. Both were exceedingly pretty.

"Yes they do, Rance, but pretty won't save them for trespassing and stealing provisions. And snooping." The one called Garth noted that his satchel had been opened and it looked like someone had rummaged about.

Garth seemed the older of the two. In the flicker of the dying hearth Jayne could make out that he was in his mid twenties, the one called Rance a year or two younger. Both were tall. Where Garth had both a light complexion and light hair that fell to his shoulders, Rance had dark hair and a darker visage. Garth was imposing, husky and muscular; Rance lean and sinewy. Neither wore beards but their faces bore several days of stubble that appeared to be the result of poor attempts at grooming.

"Please, we just want to get home. We meant no harm," said Celia, now frightened. These men looked rough to her, the sort that could be outlaws. Perhaps this hut was a base from which they raided travelers' caravans, robbing the occupants.

"Suppose you tell us who you are, then we'll decide what to do with you," said Garth.

Celia drew herself up. "I'll have you know we are--"

"Nobody," interrupted Jayne. "We're nobody. I'm Mary and this is Beth. We are from the village of Fern, a few miles from here."

"Just simple village girls, are you?" said Rance. "All right then. Garth, what's the penalty for burglary in these parts?"

"Oh, I think probably hanging. Do we have a rope?" Garth made a show of looking around.

"We are not burglars!" said Jayne, angrily.

“Or maybe, given their tender youth, they’d be let off with a sound thrashing. What do you think?”

“That’s more likely,” said Rance. “Actually a good spanking would probably be sufficient to teach these two village girls not to snoop.”

“We’re not snooping,” said Jayne, now exasperated. “We only came in seeking shelter. When are you going to get that through your thick skulls?”

“A little snippy for village girls addressing knights, don’t you think?” said Rance, looking at his brother, eyebrows raised.

Garth pursed his lips and nodded in agreement. “Aye. Well, best get to it. Then we’ll send them on their way. Their fathers will probably add a touch more to the red bottoms we’re going to give them.”

A cold chill formed at the base of Jayne’s spine at the threat of such humiliating treatment. “Don’t you dare. You have no idea who…” Jayne bit her tongue. They absolutely could not tell these men their identity. *Were they really knights?* They edged back slowly as both men doffed their cloaks and made a show of rolling up their sleeves. Jayne looked about for a weapon. There—on the pegs. The broadsword. She dashed for it, taking both men by surprise. It came off the pegs as she grabbed it, swinging in a wide arc then clattering to the floor as the weight of it caught her by surprise.

“Damn!” said Garth jumping back. The blade had missed him by inches. His eyes narrowed. “We know you are no village girls, and you are going to tell us who you really are.”

“Mary and Beth from Fern,” spat Jayne, chagrined that she had let the weapon fly out of her hands.

“Not only that, you are going to be reprimanded for stealing our food and playing with a dangerous weapon that could have got somebody hurt.”

Both men moved too fast for either Jayne or Celia. Jayne felt herself being gripped about the waist and carried over to a chair in which Garth sat and deposited her face down across his knees. Her bottom stuck up at a humiliating angle and Garth’s arm across her back was an iron band. *Spanked! She was to be spanked like a child.* The dread realization hit her. But, she was powerless to prevent this man from punishing her in this juvenile and humiliating way. Celia

was faring no better. Rance had her over his knee and held her wrist at the small of her back.

“Let’s see if we can’t loosen some tongues, brother,” said Rance. With that he commenced a noisy smacking of Celia’s bottom with his powerful hand.

Crisp smacks of palm meeting tender bottom cheeks echoed off the walls. Celia wailed with pain and embarrassment.

Jayne stared transfixed but then had her own posterior to worry about as the first of a barrage of stinging smacks fell upon her thinly covered behind. The spanking stung like a hive of bees had descended upon her bottom. The spansks came at a measured pace building up a fiery sting that intensified with each blow. Sheets of fire engulfed her nether regions and no amount of squirming did any good as her bottom absorbed smack after stinging smack from Garth’s calloused palm. For the next several minutes the crack of hard palms against the tender flesh of girlish bottoms rang out in the small cabin.

“Now,” said Garth, stopping momentarily. “Who are you again?”

Jayne gritted her teeth. This was humiliating beyond belief, but Jayne would not give him satisfaction. “Mary and Beth from Fern.” She saw Rance raise his eyebrows then nod as if receiving a signal from the barbarian Garth.

Smack! Crack! Smack! The painful spanking resumed. The sting was overwhelming. Jayne’s eyes began to water. The pain had climbed to unbearable levels, and they were just using their hands. Her behind felt like it was on fire.

It was Celia who broke. “All right. Stop. We’ll tell you. Just please stop.”

“Yes?” said Rance, his arm raised and poised to deliver another stinging spank.

“Ce...Beth, don’t!” said Jayne.

“I’m waiting,” said Rance. “You know, spankings are so much more effective on the bare skin. Perhaps if we slide these drawers down...”

“Don’t you dare!” shrieked Celia. “I’ll tell you. I’m Lady Celia Downy and this is Lady Jayne DeCorday of Thracia.”

“Of Thracia? Baron Robert’s daughter?” said Garth, lowering his hand.

“Yes,” shouted Jayne. “Now let us up this instant, and I won’t have my father have you drawn and quartered.”

“Well, Garth, I don’t want to be drawn and quartered. I guess we’d better let them up.” Rance stood Celia on her feet.

“That would have been so much easier if you had told us who you were instead of telling that foolish lie,” said Garth as he placed Jayne back on her feet. Her hands flew to her backside and she rubbed furiously. “We knew you were nobility from the first minute we set eyes on you.”

“So what are you going to do with us?” said Jayne.

“Do?” said Garth. “Return you to your father, of course. What did you take us for?”

“They presumed we were outlaws, brother.”

“I know,” said Garth. “Now, you will tell us what you were doing and how you got here.”

The men turned their backs while the ladies dressed. Then Jayne told him the story.

“So it was you who the raiders attacked. You two took a terrible chance,” said Rance. “Had the raiders taken you, you’d have never seen your families again.”

Jayne and Celia looked at each other. Both realized how naïve they had been.

“So now you know who we are. Who are you?” said Jayne, scowling. Her backside throbbed. It was probably beet red. The thin drawers had done little to preserve any modesty. It had been particularly humiliating for ladies of their rank to be treated like common village girls. Then she remembered that it was she who had brought that on.

“I’m Sir Garth of Tryon and this is my brother, Sir Rance. We are rangers in the service of King Alfred sent to reconnoiter these lands and determine the movements of our enemies, the Viking raiders. Unfortunately you have popped in at a time when raider activity seems to be on the increase. We were supposed to merely report back to Alfred but now, it seems, you need help.”

“My father will reward you well if you return us to Thrace Castle immediately,” said Jayne.

“That may be difficult,” said Garth. “The Vikings are moving in in greater numbers. They may even now be between us and your home.”

“What my brother is saying is that you have to come with us in any event. We can’t leave you here in this woodsman’s hut. Fact is, your keep is in danger.”

“But my father is infirm and his guard is spread too thin. They’ll be overrun,” said Jayne. Then she thought of something. “We have couriers. You can use them to get a message to King Alfred.”

Garth and Rance looked at each other. Garth stroked his chin, contemplating. “Then we’ll inform Alfred immediately,” he said. “But we need to move. Now. There is no time to waste.”

Part 2

They had to double up on the horses. Jayne rode behind Garth, her arms wrapped around him. Her bottom was still tender, but the closeness of the man and the feel of his muscular body were having an effect on her and she didn’t like it. It was as if her body were betraying her. The trouble was, he was exceedingly handsome in a rough sort of way. Even the way he had manhandled her, the feel of his hand on an intimate part of her body as he had spanked her, it was all causing feelings she did not want to acknowledge. It would not be too soon to get off this horse and away from this man. Her nipples were hard and she felt slippery in her womanly parts. *Damn it all!* She was not supposed to feel this way. No man had ever treated her thus, and she hadn’t felt like this around any man.

Jayne knew the ways of men and women, but her experiences had been limited to mild flirting and courtly dances with potential suitors chosen by her father. She knew her father was seeking a suitable match for her now that she was of age, but events had intervened with the advent of the invasion from the North. All she knew was that she’d rather die than spend another minute longer than necessary in the company of this barbarian who had chastised her like a child, but who had made her react like a woman.

When they rode into the courtyard a great cry of relief sounded from the various guards and servants who spied them. Jayne’s mother burst from the door to the main house inside the central courtyard and hugged her daughter.

“You are safe! We thought you had been taken. And Celia,” she said hugging her niece, “Your father and mother will be so relieved.”

Once the hugs and clamor had died down, Lady DeCorday explained. “The horses came back, riderless. We had no idea what had happened. We were in a panic and were about to send Sir Barris to look for you both. Whatever were you doing?” For the first time she noticed the two young men who had been standing silently by, watching the homecoming. “And who are these men?”

“I am Sir Garth of Tryon, my lady, and this is my brother Sir Rance. We are rangers and scouts for King Alfred. Our mission was to determine the strength of Viking raiders in these parts and then proceed here to receive a message from your husband. We had commandeered a deserted woodsman’s hut for our mission. When we returned last night we found your daughter and her friend there.”

Lady DeCorday turned to Jayne. “And what were you doing there, daughter?”

Jayne started to speak, but her mother said, “No, perhaps you should explain in your father’s presence.”

Robert DeCorday, Baron of Thracia sat in a chair in the great hall, a cane at his side. With his injured leg he couldn’t even stand without the assistance of a cane. His wife sat beside him and Jayne and Celia stood rather uncomfortably before them.

“So. You took horses and took it upon yourselves to venture out looking for dangerous raiders and brigands. You found them, much to your dismay. Luckily for you, you stumbled upon these men who are not brigands, but agents of our ally, King Alfred, and that is why you are here and not in chains on a dragon ship going north. Is that about it?”

“Father, please. Someone must discover what threats we face. I am a fast rider and I know our lands. I can handle a bow and a short sword. I can...”

“What you can do daughter, is tomorrow morning right after breakfast, proceed to the garden and cut half a dozen switches, and bind them up in ribbon to make a rod for your own chastisement. You too, Lady Celia.”

The color drained from Celia’s face. Jayne spoke up quickly. “But father, we have already been punished.”

“What?” Robert sat up. “By who?”

“These men,” said Jayne. “These men had the effrontery to...to spank Celia and I as if we were children. It was humiliating.”

Garth spoke up. "Sorry, sire but we came upon them in the hut. We thought they were thieves. They said they were village girls, so we punished them in a way appropriate for common villagers who break in and steal food."

"Is this right?" said Robert.

Jayne and Celia looked at each other. "Yes, father."

Robert looked aghast for a moment, then slowly began to chuckle. The chuckle turned to a full throated laugh. It was infectious. Everyone else laughed. "Paddled like a couple of tavern maids, were you? I hope you two lads made a good job of it. Serves them right."

Then he stopped laughing and scowled. "Well, it's not going to save you from the punishment you've got coming. That is for disobeying me. But now I know who to give the job to. They put their lives at risk because of you two. They can deliver your chastisement. So off you go. We'll deal with you later."

Dismissed, Jayne and Celia repaired to their chambers. "You don't think your father means for those men to switch us, do you?"

"I think that is exactly what he means. He can't do it himself so he enlists these knights who, hopefully, we will never see again." Jayne took a deep breath. "We'd better get to it first thing tomorrow, Celia. When father gives an order, he means it."

The following day...

With a heavy sigh Jayne led Celia to the garden, having first procured a knife from the kitchen. There they chanced to run into Edwina, the chief housekeeper, who knew exactly what they were about.

"If you want my advice, Lady Jayne, you'll peel those switches very carefully. Get off all the buds. Choose only the green ones. Those won't break or fray." Then she gave both a sympathetic look and said, "Maybe your young knights will go easy on you. I've seen how they look at you...and, how you look at them."

"I assure you Edwina, I have no..." Jayne began.

"Deny all you want, my lady," she said with a knowing smile, "I've seen it all before."

Jayne flounced off in a huff leaving Edwina grinning at her back.

“I don’t know, Jayne. They are very handsome,” Celia said as they cut and stripped withes.

“Yes. Wonderful. Handsome knights are going to stripe our bare arses.”

Celia shrugged. “The young one, I like him. It could be worse, I suppose.”

“Have you lost your mind?” said Lady DeCorday. “You are going to have those young knights flog our daughter and cousin Celia?”

“It seems appropriate,” said Robert DeCorday. “After all, Garth Devane from Tryon is to be her husband and his brother is to be Celia’s. But neither of them know it yet.”

Julia DeCorday stared at her husband in shocked silence. He waved his hand dismissively.

“I have negotiated the dowry with Henry Devane, Baron of Tryon. Alfred approves as well. It will unite Tryon and Thracia into a strong alliance that will provide mutual defense against these accursed northern invaders.”

“When were you going to tell me, husband?”

“The message arrived with the confirmation only days ago. Then the girls went missing. Garth and Rance Devane were to report to me here, and I was to have them meet Jayne and Celia. But,” he chuckled, “it seems like that detail has taken care of itself.”

A chamberlain announced that Garth and Rance of Tryon had responded to Robert’s summons and were waiting.

“I guess we’d better break the news to the lads too, don’t you think?” said Robert with a twinkle in his eye.

The knights entered and upon admittance, Garth began. “We’ve seen groups of what are surely Viking raiders in the forests toward your coast,” said Garth. “They could be a vanguard, massing for an invasion. I think King Alfred needs to know this as does my father.”

“Quite true, my boy. I’ll dispatch a courier at once.” Robert summoned his chamberlain and then turned back to address the two knights.

“There is something else,” said Garth. “I know in the past there has been talk of an alliance between our houses. And I’m told

that I am here, that is, we are here, to receive a message on that point from you, Baron Robert.”

“You’re a fine lad, Garth. I know your father well. He helped me fight the northern barbarians when they came to raid. And yes, we have talked about an alliance. It is going to come to pass—and it involves you both.”

Garth and Rance looked confused. “Us, Baron Robert?”

“Aye. An alliance between houses. Alfred has decreed it. You are to marry my daughter, my boy. And Rance, you are to marry the Lady Celia, daughter of the Earl of Bockton, my brother. Now, what do you think of that?” Robert beamed, pleased with himself.

“What?” said Garth, stunned at this news. “When was this decided?”

“Nobody told us,” said Rance, equally nonplussed.

“It is your father’s wish as well as mine and King Alfred’s,” said Robert DeCorday.

The two brothers could only stand there speechless, dumbfounded at the news.

“That is why I do not think it unseemly that you two mete out the punishment in my stead for Jayne’s and Celias’s little escapade. After all, boys, they are both quite a handful. Best to lay down the law early, don’t you think?”

After dispatching a messenger with a report to King Alfred, the brothers were able to talk alone.

“Look at it this way Garth, they are both very comely. It could have been much worse.”

Indeed. Garth had to admit that. Jayne was beautiful. The sight of Jayne’s shapely bottom writhing and wiggling over his knee, barely concealed by the thin drawers had given him a powerful erection that still seemed to surge every time he thought about the lovely Lady Jayne DeCorday.

“I suppose, but Jayne, I fear is a bit of a she devil.” *Not to mention headstrong and no doubt a sharp tongue. But brave. Definitely brave—if a bit naïve.*

“All the more fun to tame her. Come, let’s go find our future wives, brother.”

“Have you forgotten the chore we are to perform?” Garth half smiled ruefully. “They won’t be happy to see us.”

Rance grimaced. “A good point, that. Still we should find them—you know to talk.”

He needn’t have concerned himself. A courtier arrived and announced that their fiancés were waiting in the gallery and that their presence was required.

“I guess we’ll talk later,” said Garth. “If they ever decide to speak to us again.”

Jayne and Celia trudged back to the main house, each carrying a sheaf of switches destined for application to their tender backsides. They were met by Edwina who delivered the summons. They were to proceed to the gallery.

“Here, Lady Jayne. Tie these ends with twine,” she said, handing Celia and Jane some rough twine. “Make it tight. I’m sorry my lady, but they want you both in the gallery. No servants will be allowed, though.” She forced a weak smile. “Be brave, my ladies.”

This was it. They cousins looked at each other in dismay. Jayne decided that she would hold her head high, and not give anyone the satisfaction of seeing her grovel or plead. She would accept her fate bravely. Thus determined, she made her way to the gallery carrying the rod that she had prepared for herself—six limber switches tied with twine at one end. Celia tried to emulate her older cousin, but her insides were quaking with fear.

The gallery was empty save for her father, her mother, Edwina and the two knights. A pair of sturdy birching stools stood in the center of the long narrow room.

“Before we begin I have something to tell you both,” said Robert DeCorday. “You may think it unseemly that you will be punished by these men who you view as strangers. They are not. They are allies to this realm. They have risked their lives to save you... and,” Robert paused, “they are your future husbands.”

“What?” croaked Celia.

“Father!” exclaimed Jayne.

“I will explain,” said Robert. “But first we will attend to your punishment. Place yourselves across the stools and lift your dresses.”

“Father, please.” Jayne’s head was awl. Her resolve vanished. *Husbands?*

“Do you require assistance? I can send for servants.”

“No, please,” said both girls almost in unison. Too shocked by this news to know what to do, they approached the stools in what seemed like a trance and lifted their dresses. Jayne and Celia prostrated themselves face down, gripping a bar at the far side. The posture thrust their exposed buttocks out at an inviting angle, ready to receive the rod.

“Edwina, if you please,” said Jayne’s mother, “take their drawers down.”

Jayne blushed beet red as the last vestige of her dignity was stripped away. Her bottom was nude, exposed to this man *who was to be her husband?* She squirmed with embarrassment before realizing that wagging her bottom was probably more provocative than lying still. She looked at Celia who also blushed. She could imagine the scene from the rear—two pairs of girlish moons on rude display, ready to be chastised.

“Sir knights, do your duty. Two dozen strokes, and lay them on well,” said Baron Robert.

Garth and Rance looked at each other and shrugged. They were still dealing with the shock of what their father had done. But the sight they were presented with now was certainly alluring. Both ladies had shapely derrieres, much more full and womanly than their sisters on whom they had had to perform similar tasks at times.

Each took a rod and stood to the side of his lady. Garth tapped Jayne’s bottom to get the feel of the weight of the rod. It was light. Her flesh quivered as he tapped her. This was to be no worse than a schoolgirl whacking he decided. Still, he resolved to do a good job, if for no other reason to teach his future wife that he expected obedience.

Garth and Rance raised their rods and both descended with a swish...thwack!

“Ouch! Ow!” Both girls squealed.

Swish...thwack! The rods fell again.

“Ow! Ouch!” This time squeals were accompanied by the stamping of feet.

Both brothers warmed to the task, delivering crisp thwacks of the rods with even regularity, one then the other. The girls hissed and gasped, squirming across the stools. Garth felt a distinct tightening in his groin as he beheld the wriggling nude bottom of his future wife,

clenching and relaxing almost in a parody of the love act as he laid on with firm, deliberate strokes.

Jayne had forgotten how much this stung. She had not had a birching since she was fourteen and had played some awful prank for which she had been punished. She remembered how she had cried. And doubly mortifying was the fact that this man was able to see everything she had. With each swish of the rod, a sheet of flame engulfed her bottom. Her eyes watered. She made little cries but promised herself she would not beg. She gripped the bar until her knuckles were white. *This was awful! The switches sting maddeningly.* Until she felt the awful betrayal of her body again. Now she was becoming aroused like before. *This was too much.*

Celia was experiencing a similar phenomenon. Only with her it had started as soon as she had been denuded. A slick wetness had crept into her sex as she imagined the man behind her feasting his eyes on her charms. And the fact that the birch rod stung atrociously did nothing to staunch that feeling.

The bottoms of Lady Jayne and Lady Celia were now beet red and both were quivering with each impact of the rod. The gallery was a cacophony of sound—the swish and thwack of the rods impacting soft flesh and the soft squeals of distress from the girls.

Edwina observed the swish and sharp thwack of the rods, the rippling of girlish bottom flesh as they struck, and the mewling sounds of distress. She shook her head. *This is what comes of girlish folly.* But she could also see the glistening dew on the nether lips of the sex of both Jayne and Celia. Both bottoms were glowing but not scarred. The weals would go away soon enough. Even under these circumstances Edwina felt a stab of envy. *I never had a handsome knight to deliver my punishment—and a future husband at that.*

Abruptly it stopped. The brothers had counted out the required twenty four strokes each.

“Jayne and Celia--you may now rise and thank these knights for administering your punishment.”

Teary-eyed and blushing, both girls managed to rise, allowing their skirts to cover them once again. Haltingly they choked out an apology.

Days later, once Jayne and Celia had recovered from the ordeal, they began to deal with the impending reality of a wedding.

“How can I face that man, much less marry him?” said Jayne. They were tending the garden, pruning plants and plucking vegetables. It was a menial task that Jayne’s mother insisted they do. “He has seen everything. It’s such humiliation.”

“But didn’t he make you, well, feel sort of squishy inside?” said Celia.

Indeed, Celia had been mooning over the younger brother Rance since receiving the news. During the times they had talked to the brothers since the “incident” as Jayne called it, it had been clear to Jayne that Celia was smitten.

“He does something to you too, doesn’t he, Jayne? Garth, I mean.” said her cousin. She caught the flush on Jayne’s face. “See, I can tell. You can’t deny that he arouses something in you.”

Jayne bit off an angry retort. She could deny all she wanted, but in Garth’s company she felt like a cat in heat with almost an animal attraction to the man. She wanted to hate him, but he had been nothing but kind to her since the incident. He wasn’t refined and courtly, just gentlemanly, a bit self-deprecating, and sincerely concerned for her well being. It was a confusing welter of emotions. And if she were truly honest, even memories of the spanking in the hut and the switching in the gallery brought on thoughts of lust under the covers at night.

But now the brothers from Tryon were off again, scouting. It was not known whether the Viking raiding party had left or were still in Thracia, planning even bolder moves. They had been told to stay in the keep until their return. The brothers were assuming the role of husbands, it seemed, even before the wedding. That rankled Jayne. And the bothers had taken Sir Barris and most of the men, leaving but a small security force.

Jayne and Celia were on their way to the kitchen when a worried looking maid stopped them before they got there.

“Oh my lady,” she said, “I need your help. Please.”

It was Katelyn, one of Lady Jayne’s attendants.

“Whatever is the trouble, Katelyn?” Jayne was able to put away her own thoughts for a moment in the face of what appeared to be panic on Katelyn’s part.

“My sister, Maggie, she hasn’t come back. She was only going to be gone for an hour or two to see her, um, young man, but it’s been all day and she has not returned.”

“Where did she go?” asked Jayne.

“To Fern.” Fern was a village less than two miles from the keep. It was considered safe to walk there.

“Surely she lost track of time with her suitor, that’s all.” For a moment Jayne felt envious. The common people met, fell in love and married. It was about being in love. Politics and alliances did not dictate marriages. She wondered if under different circumstances she might have fallen for a man like Garth Devane after all.

“No, no, she would have been back by now. She loves Tom but she would never stay so long and risk Mistress Edwina’s switch. She did not sit comfortably for days after her last switching.”

Jayne could well understand that. It reminded her of her own experience with the rod.

“Could you help her? If you took a horse, perhaps, and found her. I’m worried.”

“I’m not supposed to leave the keep, Katelyn.” But even as she said it, she knew she would. She was close to these girls despite the divide in their positions. And she knew none of the men at arms could leave their posts to assist her.

Celia’s eyes grew big. “Jayne! You can’t be thinking of going. We have been in enough trouble as it is.”

“It’s safe now,” said Jayne. “The men went north to look for the raiders. They aren’t anywhere near here. We can do this and be back before anyone knows we are gone.”

Reluctantly, Celia had to agree. They might as well go. Neither thought there was any danger. Fern was close and the mission now, as Jayne saw it, was to extract Maggie from her swain in time to avoid Edwina’s switch. So they dropped the vegetables and headed for the stables and the horses, once again throwing caution to the winds.

Later that same day Garth and Rance returned. The evidence suggested that the raiders had put to sea only to double back south. Garth and Rance reported to Robert that the raiders had not left. “And there is evidence that small groups are still nearby, foraging,

scouting and perhaps raiding villages. We had a report that a village not half a day from here was hit and that captives were taken. We are on our way to see right now.”

“Where are Lady Jayne and Lady Celia?” asked Rance. They were naturally anxious and wanted their fiancés to know they had returned. But their fiancés were nowhere to be found. Neither Baron Robert his wife knew where they were.

“I gave them a task to do in the garden,” said Lady DeCorday. “They should have been there.”

After restocking on provisions and feeding the horses, they went to find Jayne and Celia. But after making inquiries of the household staff, it seems that neither were anywhere to be found. *So where were they?* They sought out Edwina who questioned other maids, grooms and servants. A groom’s assistant provided the answer.

“They lit out before anyone saw, sir knight,” said the worried man. “Toward Fern.”

In the meantime Edwina had found Katelyn who had confessed that she had persuaded them to retrieve her sister from Fern. Robert was alerted.

“Find them,” he said anxiously to the brothers and Sir Barris, “and bring them back.”

A contingent of a dozen men rode out, led by Garth and Rance who tracked the horses the girls had taken. It appeared that they had been headed toward Fern until at a clearing Garth noticed the tracks veered off of the path. And there was more.

“Boots. Lots of them. Something happened here.” Garth looked around the clearing. A torn strip of clothing told a tale. “They were taken. Here. We follow their tracks.”

“How can you tell?” said Sir Barris.

“We are rangers,” he said. “In our land we track outlaws. Bring them to justice. We’ll find these men. They’ll probably head for the coast and their ships.”

“With our future wives,” said Rance. “Let’s go.”

They followed the tracks of the abductors along a game trail that wound through the low heavily forested hills approaching the coast. Garth found more strips of clothing on branches. “Clever girl, Jayne,” he said. “She’s leaving clues for us to follow.”

They came to the crest of a low ridge. Garth could smell the ocean.

“Down there,” he said, pointing. To the others he held up a hand. “Be silent.”

Just emerging into a cove were four men. They led Jayne and Celia who were on horseback, their hands tied. Several other female captives were being roughly tended by about twenty armed men. It looked like preparations were being made to put to sea. Longboats were being loaded and the other prisoners were being roused.

Garth studied the topography for a moment. “We’ll hit them from both sides of the cove.” To Sir Barris he said, “Take half your men to the left. I’ll lead the others to the right. Who is your best archer?” Sir Barris indicated a spindly youth in his entourage. “Go with Rance,” he said. He turned to Rance. “Brother, when I give the sign, start firing. You know what to do.” Rance nodded and grinned. They picked their way down the ridge quietly and got into position.

The first indication to the Viking raiders that something was wrong came in the form of arrows in the throats of the leaders. The surprise attack was swift. Rance and Will Jameson, the archer, laid down a steady barrage of arrows from concealment in the woods as Garth came at the raiders from one side and Sir Barris from the other. Garth made straight for Jayne and engaged a gigantic bear of a man who had attempted to grab her and put a knife to her throat. But Garth was too fast. He put himself between Jayne. Grinning, the raider swung an ax thinking to cleave Garth in two, but Garth nimbly sidestepped the blow and finding an opening, ran him through.

Meanwhile Rance had emerged from the woods and had engaged men surrounding Celia. He cut through them with blurring speed and drew her from the melee. He placed her behind him and fought off all attempts to get to her. They did not try that hard. The raiders saw they were beaten and made for their longboats. The element of surprise had been too much.

Even as they watched the stragglers make for their dragon boat, Garth sensed danger. “There may be more about,” he said. “We need to escort these people to the keep and safety.” There were several women who had been abducted, Maggie, Katelyn’s sister among them.

They rode out, doubling up once again. Jayne rode behind Garth. "Just what were you thinking?" he said over his shoulder. "With these invaders about, how could you be so foolish as to leave the keep?"

"We had to find Maggie," she said. "We thought she was just in the village."

"Well, you found her all right," said Garth, looking over his shoulder and frowning. "And I'm glad to have found you, but this is the last time you will disobey a rule meant to keep you from harm."

Despite the warmth from Garth's broad back and from the horse, Jayne shivered.

Given the exigencies of the war and the threat from the raiders, it was decided to carry out the nuptials without delay. Within days the Earl of Bockton had arrived at Thrace Castle as had Henry Devane and his wife, the mother of Garth and Rance. In the days preceding the wedding it was clear that Celia was excited by the prospect of marriage to Rance of Tryon. But it was less clear for Jayne. Although strongly attracted to Garth physically, she was finding it difficult to accept the curtailment of her independence that marriage would bring. And then there was the promised reckoning. On their return and in front of Baron Robert, the brothers had made it clear to Celia and Jayne that there would be consequences for their foolish and dangerous escapade that almost resulted in Viking slavery for both of them. Jayne's father had wanted them punished on the spot, but both brothers had talked him out of it.

"It will be more appropriate for us to correct them for this in our capacity as their husbands," said Garth, with Rance nodding in agreement.

Robert DeCorday reluctantly agreed. "But you have to promise me you will chastise them soundly."

The brothers eyed their brides-to-be sharply and Rance said, "You have our oath on that, Baron Robert."

The maids Katelyn and Maggie were not so lucky. Desiring to make an example of them, Robert authorized a public punishment. On the following morning they were taken to the courtyard, and in full view of all the servants, courtiers and soldiers, they were stripped naked. Their hands were secured above their heads to iron

rungs on two posts. Mistress Edwina took a stout switch and alternating between the two of them, she administered a much deserved whipping. The stout mistress of household switched the bottoms of the unfortunate girls soundly, placing two dozen strokes on each bounding derriere, to much pleading and crying. It appeared to be an exemplary punishment. She moved between the two in a deliberate manner, first tapping a quivering bottom then administering a stroke, one to Maggie and then one to Katelyn. Then she repeated the procedure. It was as if each stroke were an event, allowing the other girl to absorb and appreciate the lesson before it was her turn again. Bottom cheeks jiggled and bounced in a dance of painful retribution as stripes were painted on girlish flesh with the wicked switch.

The brothers watched from an upstairs window. “Is that what we are expected to do?” To Rance it looked severe. Even more so than the punishment with the light rods.

“No. I think for me, brother I have something more intimate in mind. But she won’t disobey again,” said Garth with a wry smile.

In the courtyard below the girls carried on mightily, dancing in place, their buttocks clenching and unclenching as Edwina laid on one searing stripe after another. Amid the whine of the switch, the tears and the crying, the point was made—when raiders were about no one leaves the keep. Orders are to be obeyed. Robert and Lady Julia watched from a window thinking that it was just. It was the foolishness of these two that had led Jayne and Celia into danger. But later, even the girls themselves seemed grateful. Maggie could have been lost forever save for the bravery and skill of Garth and Rance and Sir Barris. A well striped bottom was a small price to pay.

Jayne and Celia watched the spectacle with mixed emotions. “At least we are to be spared that,” said Celia.

“Yes, but our husbands to be...they have promised,” said Jayne. “They...no, surely they won’t.” Even as she said it, she knew it to be untrue. They’d been spared a public punishment for a private one.

“Yes, they will,” said Celia confirming her fear.

So, on the night of the wedding, it seemed that the first husbandly duty to be performed was to be the correction of a pair of wayward wives. Celia was philosophical about it. “If Rance has decided to punish me, I must accept it, cousin. I hope he won’t be

too hard on me, but you have to admit, what we did was disobedient and stupid.” Then with a wry smile she said, ”I’m sure he will make up for it in our marriage bed.”

Jayne was more apprehensive, but the memory of previous chastisements at Garth’s hands made her flutter in the pit of stomach and caused her nipples to harden.

The double wedding was held in the keep of Thrace Hall and presided over by Bishop Aebuld. Both brides were stunningly beautiful. The vows were said with great solemnity and the couples were blessed by the church. The festivities proceeded into the wee hours. But the newlyweds had long since retired to the marriage bed—and a delayed reckoning.

Celia had thought about tonight long and hard, and while she was excited to be married to Rance, she also knew that her deferred punishment was at hand. So she had resolved to receive it with as much grace as she could. She had decided that she would offer herself up to him, to ask him as her new lord and master to deal with her earlier disobedience as he saw fit. So in preparation she had told Edwina to prepare switches and place them in the bridal chamber.

When they entered the chamber, there it was, a collection of willow withes standing upright in a tall jar of water. *To keep them supple no doubt*, she thought. She bade Rance sit on the bed while she stood in front of him and disrobed.

Rance could hardly believe the vision of loveliness who stood before him. Her nubile figure came into view as she let the wedding dress fall to her ankles. Her breasts stood proudly, bearing against a brief chemise that was underneath. When she lifted the chemise over her head she was naked. Rance’s heart caught in his throat. Her blonde hair fell straight to her waist as she stood before him demurely, clasping her hands in front of her, eyes downcast. Her hips were narrow but nicely shaped. Her breasts were smallish, but they stood straight out. The nipples looked engorged. He had her turn around so he could see all of her. She turned slowly bringing her buttocks into view. Her bottom was compact, the cheeks pert, like apples, with an adorable dimple in each and well rounded.

Then she surprised him by walking over to the jar. It gave Rance a chance to observe the sensuous sway of her hips and the

flex of her bottom. She selected a switch and came back over to stand facing him.

“I know you must punish me, husband. So I willingly accept my punishment. Please use this rod to correct me as you will.” As she spoke she dropped to one knee and offered him the switch.

Rance had figured to put this off, but since she had obviously prepared, he had no choice but to grant her request. He took the switch and tapped it in his hand. It was a stinger. But Robert had not specified the manner of punishment, and like Garth had suggested, he had a more intimate idea.

He crooked his finger. “Come here Celia, my beloved. I may well use this switch sometime—but not tonight,” he said, tossing it on the bed. “You were a disobedient child, and I’m going to treat you like one.”

Jayne was both apprehensive and excited as Garth escorted her to their bridal bedchamber. Tonight she was to be made a woman. Tonight she had been given to a man and they had said the vows. She was now his. And tonight she was to be punished for her earlier folly. She had decided to try and make light of it. Perhaps he’d relent or change his mind. After all in the privacy of the bridal chamber who would know? She’d been instructed by her mother and Edwina as to what to do, and she fully intended to fulfill her marital duties. Maybe that would distract him.

So when they arrived and Garth asked her if she would like to prepare, she surprised him by boldly stripping off her wedding dress.

“I need no preparation, husband,” she said, as Garth gaped at the gorgeous creature disrobing before his eyes. To his astonishment she slipped her linen shift over her head to reveal her nakedness. Jayne was a shapely beauty with a full bust, long legs and nicely flaring hips. Her light brown hair fell in curls about her shoulders. Garth seemed speechless both at the boldness she displayed, and at the vision of loveliness she presented.

Seeing an advantage over the dumbstruck Garth, she seized the initiative.

“How do you want me, Sir Garth? I know I’m to be punished. Father said so.” She walked to the end of bed and bent over, grasping the coverlets and raising her bottom. “Will this do?”

I'll try to stay still. Do you have a rod—or perhaps a strap? Surely you planned ahead for this.”

Garth still didn't move. Jayne stood up. She reached above her and grasped the beam that connected the bed posters. She lowered her head in submission. At the same time she bent forward slightly thrusting her bottom in Garth's direction.

“Or shall I hold a pose like this while you thrash me?”

And a lovely bottom it was. Naked he could appreciate the curves of her body, the indented waist, the flare of the hips and the full and sweetly rounded globes of her heart shaped bottom, now presented for his attentions. Garth remained still. Jayne released her hold and stood up.

“What? Nothing to say?”

Garth moved in flash, one arm encircling her waist and the other around her shoulders. Before she could register what was happening his lips were upon hers and he was crushing her against his body. Jayne had never been kissed like this. It was deep, passionate and soul searing. The feel of Garth's lips, his hands on her naked skin stoked a fire below and she felt weak in the knees. When the kiss finally broke, he said, “That's what I have to say.” He took her by the hand, led her to the bed.

He stood next to the bed, gazing into her eyes. Then suddenly in one motion he encircled her waist, lifted her up and sat on the bed, flipping her across his knees face down.

“As for the other,” he chuckled, “I am well aware of the promise I made to your father.”

Jayne squirmed in panic as he patted and kneaded her resilient bottom cheeks. She blushed hotly as she felt his palm on a part of her anatomy as yet untouched by any man. It sent chills up her spine as well as sparking a flicker of womanly arousal. “And I have no switch or strap, but this will do for now.” He raised his arm to shoulder height.

Celia landed across Rance's lap, bottoms up. He had grabbed her and sat down on the bed in one fluid motion, putting her right over his knee. Once again Celia found herself in the ignoble position shared by naughty girls everywhere who were about to undergo juvenile chastisement.

“Oh!” she said, as she felt Rance’s hand roaming over the flesh of her bare behind. She looked over her shoulder at her grinning husband who was obviously enjoying the sight of his new wife’s bare bottom, wriggling across his knee.

Splat! Celia gasped as she felt his palm connect with her bottom. It tingled.

Splat! A second spank fell on her opposite cheek. She gasped again. It did not really hurt—yet. But the feeling was bracing, a light sting that demanded attention.

More spanks fell. Palm met bare flesh in a percussive symphony that echoed off the stone walls of the chamber. The heat in her nether cheeks began to rise. She stifled squeals that wanted to come out. *Oh, God*, she thought. *They can all hear. They know.* Rance was spanking her now in a calculated rhythm, applying a spank to one cheek then the other, sometimes right across her crease. It began to sting more, a sharp burn that grew more intense with each smack. But it was a delicious shame all the same. She squirmed. She couldn’t help it. Her bottom was hot, the flames fanned with each new smack from her husband’s palm. And then she began to feel wet between her legs.

“Please don’t spank me. I’m not a child,” pleaded Jayne. “Oh, this is so humiliating,” she said to no one in particular, futilely squirming over Garth’s knee in anticipation of what was coming.

“Aye, but a childish act calls for childish punishment, my love.”

She felt the breeze on her bare behind before she felt the first barrage of spanks. They landed in a flurry which sent a message of hot stinging pain emanated from her backside to consume her.

“Aieeee!” she squealed, arching her back in a reverse bow. *It stung!* And much more so on her bare bottom, as she was surprised to discover. A steady smack-smack-smack from Garth’s capable palm lit a blazing fire in her bottom, and she wriggled in vain, humping and gyrating over his knee in a wanton display that surely showed him every secret she had.

“I hope you truly understand,” said Garth as he continued to administer the noisy but necessary spanking to his new wife’s shapely bottom. He marveled at how she wriggled her luscious behind, the wobbling cheeks rippling with each blow from his hand.

“I’ll not have you disobeying commands that are there for your safety (smack! smack!) I don’t care how good a horsewoman you think you are (smack! crack!)”

“Oww! Yes, I’m sorry! Please-- this stings a lot!” Her seat felt like it was about to burst into flames. The searing smacks were relentless. *How did the flat of his hand get so hard?*

In the adjoining chamber Celia felt like she was on fire. Yes her bottom stung like anything, but she was also inflamed with desire. The nudity, her helplessness, Rance’s mastery of her—she didn’t know if it was one or all of these things, but she wanted him. She became aware that she was rubbing her pudendum on the rough fabric of his trousers and it excited her, just like when she used her fingers on her slit under her bedclothes alone at night.

She continued to absorb the smacks of his palm, coming at a faster pace now. The hot sting building to a crescendo.

And then he stopped, set her upright on his lap and kissed her. She melted in his arms and kissed him back, opening her mouth, allowing their tongues to intertwine. Her bottom throbbed but her sex was wet. He took her in his arms and laid her on the bed and then as she watched with growing anticipation he divested himself of his clothing. Her eyes grew wide as she beheld his manliness, sticking straight out. It bobbed as he knelt on the bed between her legs and inched his way forward. She winced as his hands went beneath her squeezing the cheeks of her buttocks that he had so thoroughly spanked. She lifted her hips and felt him enter her. A brief stab of pain and a momentary pause and then it began, a slow coupling, a back and forth motion that built in both speed and intensity. Celia felt that a volcano was building inside her, about to erupt at any moment.

Jayne found herself unconsciously raising her hips to meet Garth’s descending hand. It was her body betraying her again. She felt slippery between her legs and from within her core something was building. So her humping motion was involuntary, born of a desire that came from somewhere normally buried inside but now rising to the surface. Smack after smack seared her stinging hot seat. Then the spanking abated, and she felt the edge of the same

hand that had chastised her sliding up and down along her wet slit. She swooned with pleasure.

“Ohh,” she groaned.

Garth gave her one more sharp spank that made her squeal. “Enough of that,” he said and lifted her up, his lips seeking hers. She responded greedily. At the same time he was tearing off his clothes and she assisted him, furiously tugging, ripping and pulling until he was as naked as she was. He laid her on the bed and she spread her legs, eagerly awaiting him. When he slid into her there was a momentary flash of pain and then began the ancient reciprocal motion of love. He thrust and withdrew, thrust and withdrew until she was delirious with pleasure. A wave was coming and it would overwhelm her.

“Ouch!” said Jayne as she sat down to eat. It was two days after the wedding and the men were conferring with her father. A troop of Alfred’s men were coming. Plans for the campaign to rid Thracia of the Vikings were under way.

“Are you still tender back there, cousin?” Celia smiled and giggled.

“My husband has a very hard hand,” she said ruefully.

“Ummm, yes, but oh so worth it, don’t you think?”

Since the wedding the cousins had shared experiences. “He was insatiable,” said Celia. She giggled. “We were at it for hours.” She shot her cousin a knowing smile. “And you. I did not see you for a whole day.”

It was true. Once her passion had been awakened, there was no stopping either of them. They had made love in ways she believed they must have invented. “He was very vigorous,” Jayne admitted.

“Vigorous. Listen to you. Even now I see you looking around, waiting for him to appear, hoping you can drag him into the bedchamber and away from our father and Sir Barris so you can have your way with him.”

That was true too. She positively ached to be in Garth’s arms again. Her head turned at the sound of every foot fall. *Was he back?* Even after the childish spanking. Or maybe because of it. She didn’t know.

Celia grinned wickedly. “We could go for a ride outside the walls. That would get their attention.”

Jayne cocked her head and frowned at the outrageous suggestion. “Do not even consider that, cousin. That is not the kind of attention we need.” At the same time her mind was calculating. Maybe just a short ride...

Kingsbridge 1337

[Author note: This story is set in the fictional village of Kingsbridge as described in the novel, Pillars of the Earth and its sequel, World Without End by Ken Follett.]

It had been a hard Winter. But then again Winters were always hard on the peasantry of England in the 14th century. The Black Death had ravaged Europe. England was at war with France. The bridge over the river at Kingsbridge had collapsed. Conditions such as these made the keeping of the King's peace in every shire and village a difficult job. John Constable's job was to maintain the peace and protect property on behalf of the Prior of Kingsbridge. In this role he had the discretion and freedom to deal with petty crime, break up fights, settle minor disputes on the spot and generally keep order. His jurisdiction was only over the serfs. The landed gentry operated as a law unto themselves answerable only to the king. The clergy answered to the Prior, who was John's employer. John enforced the law for the Prior and also for the Reeve, who was the Earl's administrator. The Earl of Shiring provided protection in times of war and was chiefly responsible for combating outlawry as was common in feudal England and elsewhere in Europe.

But now it was spring. The bridge was under repair, but with so many deaths there had been few to work the land and food was scarce. Theft was on the rise.

For minor offenses John had the power to decide guilt or innocence and mete out punishment appropriate to the crime. A drunken brawl, a spat between neighbors, these offenses were dealt with on the spot. For more serious crimes, John would bring the accused before the Prior or the Reeve. The town had a square and in it were stocks and a stout post. Crimes could be punishable by confinement to the stocks or a whipping -- or even sometimes, both. Gaol, for any length of time was not an option. Too many hands were needed to till the soil, husband the animals and make the goods. So, there was the lash and the stocks, and on occasion, the gallows, to keep order.

John employed a whip to mete out the town's justice. The whip was a single thong of braided leather, three feet long and tapering to a thin point. The braid was secured to the end of a wooden handle that was nearly as long. The long handle provided accuracy and leverage, and the lash was long enough to have some weight to it but short enough that John could ply it exactly as he wished. Having had much practice, he was skilled in its application. He could reduce the most hardened prisoner to piteous blubbering and pleas for mercy. A lashing at John's hands was an extremely painful experience. It was meant to be. The serfs of Kingsbridge were hard people and the keeping of order required that the citizenry fear the consequences of breaking the law.

John had been taught how to use the whip by his father, also a constable before him. Men were usually given the upper discipline. Forced to remove their shirts, they were secured to the whipping post with hands tied to a ring at the top of the post. If the number of prescribed stripes was large, however the prisoner was likely stripped naked so that the entire backside could be whipped. This was actually more merciful because too many lashes concentrated on the back could cause open lacerations and resulting infection. The stripes were usually laid on horizontally across the culprit's backside. Ten lashes might suffice for a drunken brawl. Other crimes such as theft could get the offender three dozen, a most severe punishment.

Women were given the lower discipline, mostly. For a minor offense a woman might be placed in the stocks and her skirts lifted, thus baring her buttocks. There were pegs at the top of the stocks which could hold her garments in place and out of the way. John could use a long switch, a birch rod, or on occasion, a butter paddle on the offender's bared buttocks. If the offender was to be whipped, however, it was at the post, and she was stripped naked to be flogged. Indeed it was sometimes his unfortunate duty to flog a woman accused of witchcraft. Just the previous Winter a poor wretch had been convicted of witchcraft and sentenced to be flogged to the blood, tied to the cart's tail and whipped again all the way to gallows crossing. Sometimes men were flogged this way, too, if the sentence called for a large number of lashes. John could lay stripes from an offender's calves to her shoulders if he wished, but chose mostly to concentrate on the back and buttocks.

This was a grim part of the job, but John worked for the Prior and if the offense required the punishment, he carried it out. Generally, however John sought to mete out justice in a way that the townspeople would support. He was not a tyrant and most agreed with his steady and seasoned judgment. Punishments were made appropriate to the crime.

The theft of food and in particular, animals, was viewed as an egregious offense because it could mean the difference between life and starvation. So when John was told that Bess Hampton's chicken had been stolen, it was a cause for concern. The chicken had been kept in its coop which was attached to Cam Hampton's modest house, but when Bess went to fetch it for supper it was gone. John wasn't hopeful that he could identify the culprit. That the bird had been stolen was clear. The latch was undone and muddy footprints led away from Hampton's house. The imprint was small and not deep. John hoped it was not a child. For thievery a child could be birched in the stocks, a severe punishment if the child were malnourished. Either way, the chicken had a broken beak, hence it had been destined for the pot.

Fortunately the footprints did not lead to a child, but to the door of the house of Hugh Thompson whose wife Glynnie was cooking supper--- with Bess's chicken in the pot. The chicken's head with its telltale broken beak lay on the cottage's bare earthen floor. This is what John saw as he entered Glynnie Thompson's cottage. John could spot a guilty look and Glynnie's face gave her away, as he strode through the doorway. That look told him all he needed to know. Standing next to Glynnie was Elspeth, her grown 18 year old sister. Recently widowed as a result of the plague, she had moved into Glynnie's home. Elspeth tried to kick the lopped off head into the corner as soon as she saw John enter, but he saw the motion.

"I'll have that if you please," he ordered the girl. Not knowing who exactly was complicit in all of this, he addressed them both. "You are under arrest and you will both come with me to see the Prior."

Since this was not the Earl's business, jurisdiction fell to the Prior who presided over the affairs of the town that did not concern the Earl or his possessions. Prior Godwin was an ambitious man who disguised his ambition with piety. But he was also a dour man who

believed that all God's children were sinners whose wicked impulses needed to be curbed. Under this prior, discipline was harsh, and it was with some trepidation that John brought the two offenders before him.

An audience was arranged in the abbey. In attendance were John Constable, Bess Hampton and Cam Hampton for the prosecution. Glynnie Thompson and Elspeth Thompson were in the dock. Hugh Thompson was there to plead for his wife's sake. He had returned from a supply trip just in time to see his wife hauled off by John Constable. He was understandably bewildered to see his wife and sister-in-law being led away in Constable's custody, but to his dismay, he soon learned the nature of the charges from witnesses who had seen the arrest. Before the hearing could be arranged they were lodged in the town gaol, which held a few one room cells. Prisoners did not wait there long because guilt or innocence was quickly determined and the punishment swiftly carried out.

Hugh was granted leave to speak to her. When she told him what had transpired he could only say, "Good God, woman, what have you done?" He was genuinely afraid. People could be hanged for theft. Gypsies and outlaws had gone to gallows crossing if the theft were serious enough. It remained to be seen what the prior would do.

First the prior heard from Bess Hampton who complained that when she went to fetch the chicken it was gone. She had seen Glynnie earlier that day eyeing her coop. Cam Hampton had had the foresight to stock his supplies of animals with profits made from his business and knew that several of his neighbors coveted his good fortune.

Surprisingly, Glynnie admitted the theft, but defended her actions. "It is not fair that Bess and Cam Thompson have all of that food for the two of them. I have mouths to feed and my Hugh's shop has fallen on hard times. We haven't had fresh meat for a month. So when I saw the gate to the coop open, I thought she would not miss such a little thing. How could she not share with us?"

"And what about this one?" the prior wanted to know, pointing to Elspeth.

"I didn't steal," she said, pleading with the prior.

"She sought to hide the evidence," said John. "Had she kicked the chicken's head under the table out of my sight there could

be no means by which I could have determined whose chicken it was."

Prior Godwin thought for a moment. "Here is my judgment," he said. "Glynnie Thompson, you are convicted of theft of Bess Hampton's chicken. This is a serious offense, likely born out of jealousy and envy. For this offense you will be lodged in the gaol until market day which is two days hence. At that time you will be taken to the square and stripped naked for the whipping post. You will receive 39 lashes from John Constable's whip."

Glynnie gasped. Thirty nine lashes was a severe punishment.

"Elspeth, you were not involved in the theft but you attempted to hide the fact of Glynnie's guilt. This offense is similar to lying which goes against God's law. For this you will be lodged in the gaol until market day and on that day you will be placed in the stocks and given one dozen strokes with a stout switch."

The women were clearly distraught. Glynnie hugged Elspeth and they cried together bemoaning their fate. Then Glynnie turned to the prior. She fell to her knees. Claspng her hands together she pleaded for mercy.

"I am just a poor woman fallen on hard times. I'll never steal again, I swear it. Don't let him whip me, please. I can't bear it."

The prior was having none of it. "The theft of food in times like these would have been grounds for the penalty of hanging. Be grateful that your lives are being spared. Your punishment will be an example to all who would flout the law and order of this priory and God's law as well. Thou shalt not steal. It is a law you know well."

He addressed John. "Make sure you lay on well, John Constable, for these wicked women have sinned and deserve to have their backsides soundly whipped."

Amid the women's wailing John took them both by an arm and escorted them to the gaol, there to await their fate on market day, two days hence. The cell was dark and cold. Glynnie's husband was allowed to bring them food and a blanket.

"Is there nothing you can do?" wailed Glynnie to her husband.

"I have tried to appeal to the prior but he will not see me, wife. I'm afraid you will simply have to endure the stripes. You should not have stolen from Bess." Hugh was genuinely distraught. His own wife, to be stripped naked for all to see and shamefully

whipped. He would have punished her himself, had the prior allowed it. He'd have taken the leather to her, all right. But it was too late for that. The law was the law. He'd have her back home soon and that thought gave him some small comfort.

Crowds began to gather early on Market Day. Normally it was crowded anyway, but word had spread that two women of the village were to be whipped that day. Whippings or executions were always guaranteed to draw crowds, especially when it was evident that one of those to be punished would be flogged naked -- and an attractive woman to boot! The punishment, thirty nine lashes, dictated that Glynnie's clothing was to be removed. John knew that the stripes had to be spread out or her skin might break. The humiliation of being stripped naked was an unpleasant prospect, but it was for her own good. John reflected that she probably didn't view it that way.

As John expected, the women began to wail when he came to fetch them. It was noon and the crowd was tending toward unruly. John wished to dispatch justice sooner rather than later. Better to disperse the crowd before drinking and fights broke out.

"Come on now, you two. It's time," he said gruffly. John had deputized a pair of men that he had counted upon in the past. His son Tom was also with him. The young Tom had prepared the limber switch that John would use. It was three feet long, thick as the thumb at one end and tapering to the size of a little finger at the other.

The women tried to struggle but John had their hands bound in front of them. He tied a lead to both so he could lead them to the post and the pillory which were set upon a raised platform in the center of the square. Steps allowed the condemned to ascend the platform which was several feet high to separate the prisoners from the crowd, and to allow all to see justice being meted out. The procession emerged from the priory next to the square. The crowd saw them and began to jeer. The women visibly quailed at the verbal onslaught as they were led through the jeering throng.

"You'll dance a lively jig today," said a stout matron.

"Thief! I hope your backside is well striped." Said another.

Other comments of a similar nature were hurled at the women as they stumbled their way to the dais. When they arrived, the herald who accompanied the procession prepared to read the

charges and the prior's judgment from a rolled parchment. The crowd grew silent.

"For the crime of aiding and abetting theft Elspeth Thompson has been convicted and her sentence shall be thus: to be placed in the pillory and given the lower discipline with twelve strokes of the switch."

The crowd roared. The men took notice. Elspeth Thompson was a comely girl with blonde hair and a pretty face.

"For the crime of theft of a chicken, Glynnie Thompson has been convicted and her sentence is thus: she shall be stripped and flogged at the post with thirty nine stripes well laid on."

Cheers and jeers erupted. The comely wench would be stripped naked for her whipping.

Now the crowd really took notice. Glynnie Thompson was a dark haired beauty and the fact that she was to be stripped naked had the onlookers keenly excited, especially the men. But women too seemed just as pleased at the prospect of a pretty woman like Glynnie stripped and bound at the post for the application of the lash.

John Constable motioned to his men, indicating Elspeth. "Untie her and put her in the stocks," he said. Elspeth struggled but it was no use. They forced her head and hands into the yoke and brought the top half down. She was helpless and bent over. In this position her buttocks were thrust out prominently. She babbled woefully as John Constable took up her skirts in back, baring her nicely rounded buttocks for all to see. The twin cheeks were shapely and full. Bent over as she was, her bottom jutted out lewdly. She could well stand the punishment with a proud rump like that, thought John. The skirt was kept out of the way by stuffing the ends in holes in the cross bar and securing them with pegs. Her feet were strapped together making any but the slightest movement impossible. Satisfied that his prisoner was secured, John asked his son to hand him the switch.

John stood to the left of the pillory and slowly tapped the switch against Elspeth's quivering seat. "Twelve strokes, Elspeth Thompson," he intoned.

He drew back his arm. The switch hovered in the air at the apex of his backswing. Then Swissh...thwick! it descended with a blur landing square across the crowns of Elspeth's bottom. Elspeth

screamed and a vivid red line appeared across the center of her bottom.

John placed the switch a little lower. Tap, tap, then a second swish...thwick! rang out. Elspeth cried out in pain. The switch whined through the air again. Swishh....thwick! Elspeth shrieked louder.

John proceeded to deliver a slow, deliberate switching. He carefully lined up each stroke, marking the spot of its intended impact with a soft tap. Each time the switch landed, it struck with a swish....whuick! that made Elspeth's bottom cheeks quiver. Her shrieks grew more frantic with each stroke. John ignored them. All prisoners screamed under the lash and Elspeth was no exception. John knew it was a painful switching. The red weals John placed across her buttocks and her piteous cries were evidence to John that the punishment was having the proper effect. Elspeth drummed her feet and tried to weave her body around, but the stocks held her fast. It only made for a lascivious display as her buttocks jiggled. It couldn't be helped. John would wait until her writhing had stopped and would then apply another stroke. Swishh...whiuck! "Yeiiii...ahh!" shrieked Elspeth. Horizontal weals laddered her shapely bottom cheeks.

"She's getting it good, mind you," whispered one stout village woman to another. "I'd not want to be in her shoes," admitted her friend. "John Constable can fair lay on a right and proper switchin'. Look at her dance."

A village woman said to her daughter, "Such is the price of sin, daughter. See how her buttocks quiver when the switch strikes."

Indeed the switching was a sound one. By its end Elspeth was crying heartfelt sobs and her bottom was a patchwork of angry red stripes. He commanded his son to unlock the stocks and let her rise. She rose from her bent over position and her hands flew to her scorched backside, unmindful of her partial nudity.

It was now time for Glynnie's whipping.

"I'll untie you, madame, but you must remove your dress. Else we'll have to do it for ye."

"Oh please, John Constable, don't strip me naked. It's shameful, is what it is. Oh don't," Glynnie begged.

"I got my orders, and what's shameful is your stealing. Come on now, off with your clothing."

Glynnie began crying but she knew that if she did not obey, her clothes might be torn or cut off and clothing was too precious to allow that to happen. So, choking and sobbing, she stripped off her smock. Underneath was a shift made of a coarse cloth which she slowly and reluctantly pulled over her head. Underneath that she was naked. There were murmurs in the crowd as Glynnie removed her clothing, for Glynnie was a young and very fetching young wife. She had dark hair and a voluptuous body. Her waist was small but her hips were wide and she had well formed breasts.

John gripped her by the arm and led her to the post. As he stretched her arms above her head to secure them to an iron ring, all could see her lovely buttocks, twin full ovals separated by a dark crease. She had to lean forward slightly and this pose thrust her buttocks back as if to present them for correction. With her ankles secured with shackles to the post at the bottom she could move little.

John stepped back. She was ready. The spectators grew quiet. It wasn't every day that a pretty young wife was bared and secured to the post for a good sound whipping. Glynnie looked fearfully over her shoulder at John as he hefted the whip, flicking it to limber his arm and test its flex. He stood to the side and slightly to Glynnie's rear. He was ready to begin.

John held the handle in his right hand and drew the lash through his left, then with a circular motion he swirled the whip over his shoulder. As his arm descended the tip accelerated and landed full across the crowns of Glynnie's buttocks with a loud crack. "Aieeee...!" She shrieked in pain and jerked herself up on tip toe. A red line appeared across her bottom.

The spectators winced with Glynnie. Only one lash, but if that one was exemplary, the woman was in for a painful chastisement.

John turned to his son. "Count," he said. "That was one." He drew back the whip for another stroke. It landed in nearly the same spot with a "whiff...crack!" Glynnie shrieked again and danced in her fetters. John drew the strand though his fingers a third time as his arm drew back and with a fluid circular motion the whip's tip flew back over John's shoulder before reversing direction as John brought his arm forward. With a whine it descended to impact Glynnie's lush

bottom cheeks which rippled as the whip struck. "Yahhh.....owww!" cried Glynnie and she rose on tip-toe again, obviously in severe pain.

John had a technique. He stood to the side of the post and raised both hands over his head. Then he drew the whip back letting the lash slide through the fingers of his left hand. Taking a step forward he would pivot and swing his arm towards Glynnie. The whip traced a wide arc before impacting the soft target flesh with a loud crack. Using the same practiced stroke John laced Glynnie's buttocks with ten red welts that had her wailing and dancing on her toes. Her jiggling buttocks provided a lurid spectacle for the crowd who had gathered to watch the punishment, and many a hand strayed under a tunic as the whipping progressed.

John next applied several strokes to Glynnie's back and shoulders. She screamed anew at this different, but no less intense, pain from the lash on a different place. He placed seven or eight red stripes across her back then directed the lash to the tops of her thighs. These lashes made Glynnie shriek in agony.

Glynnie had never felt pain like this. It felt as if her backside were burning with the fires of hell. Each lash was a line of pure fire. Glynnie could only writhe and cry out in her agony and beg John Constable to stop. But she knew he would not stop until she'd been given the full dose of 39 lashes. She was delirious with pain and had no idea how many strokes she had absorbed.

To the spectators it was the lurid display they had anticipated. It wasn't every day that a beautiful woman was lashed naked at the post. Glynnie writhed at the post like it was a lover with whom she consorted. Each lash made her body spasm. Her rippling flesh juddered with each crack of the whip, especially her buttocks which were dark red and seemed swollen to twice their normal size.

John paused and wiped the sweat from his brow. He could hear the snatches of conversation from the crowd who craned their necks to get a good look at the naked woman at the whipping post.

"Do you see those welts, woman? Take care you obey the law." The woman shivered, no doubt imagining her naked body tied to the post and awaiting the lash.

Another woman said to her companion, "Did you see how she danced under the whip?" The companion said, "A shameful spectacle, but it serves her right. She should dance a merry jig to John Constable's whip."

Glynnie wriggled at the post sobbing for mercy, but there would be none until it finished. Her buttocks rippled at the impact of the lash and many would later remark how Glynnie had rubbed herself on the post like it was a lover, the whip spurring her on to greater passion.

John had laid thirty lashes across Glynnie's backside and she was striped from her shoulders to her knees. Time to drive the lesson home, thought John.

Swisshhh.....thwick! The whip fell full across Glynnie's buttocks again and she wailed, "Aieee....ahhh....!"

Whirrr....whack! This time it landed with a loud splat. Her body jerked. The opulent cheeks of her behind juddered. The whip whined its song of pain as John Constable meted out the remainder of the lashes using that fluid stroke that striped Glynnie's bottom until it was a seething mass of swollen red.

"Thirty nine," announced John when the last lash had struck. "It is finished. Take her down." The men untied the naked woman, her body streaked with red stripes from her shoulders to her thighs, and tossed her shift to her. Weeping and shaking she managed to pull it over her head. "It's over now," bellowed John. "Go about your business." The crowd began to disperse. Justice had been done.

Lady Ashley's Penance

The castle stood on an island in the lake, a dark sentinel on a misty promontory. Lady Ashley stepped from the boat onto a wooden dock that jutted into the lake. She paid the ferryman his due. He tipped his cap and prepared, hastily it seemed, to row back to the mainland---and safety. It looked serene. The water was as still as glass. A few swans plied the lake. The scene belied the grim purpose of the stone edifice before her. Squaring her shoulders she prepared to approach the formidable structure and meet her fate. The door was opened by a servant who led her down a narrow set of stairs. "You are to wait here," he said, and left her alone.

Lady Ashley gulped as she entered the dungeon. The light from the torches flickered, illuminating stone walls which held all manner of fearsome devices. A rack with its wheel and handles for turning it ran along a wall. Manacles hung from an opposite wall. A tripod supported a brazier in which instruments could be heated. An iron maiden stood in a corner.

But most fearsome of all was the tall man who stood in the center of the room. He wore a cloak that covered him from head to foot. The cloak had a hood, so she could not see his face. It was concealed in shadow. He spoke with a throaty whisper.

"This is my domain, Lady Ashley. I serve at your husband's pleasure."

Lady Ashley shivered. "Do you have a name, my lord?"

"You may call Master Henri."

Master Henri. She had heard that name. It was a name that struck fear in the subjects of the realm, a name only whispered about, furtively and in the shadows, lest he actually appear.

"You know why I am here, my lord?" asked Lady Ashley nervously.

The hooded figure nodded. "Indeed I do my lady. Your husband has sent you to me at your confessor's request. You must do penance for your sins."

"I obey my husband. But sir, these fearsome instruments that rend and tear, surely my penance does not demand such torture be my portion. I fear I shall die if you employ such wicked devices." Lady Ashley shook with fear. Her husband had commanded her to

come to this place, to meet with this man. And she'd had no idea of what was in store.

"You need not fear death nor disfigurement, Lady Ashley. That is not to be your fate---but you are to be chastised, Lady Ashley. And shamed. I'm told your indiscretions are many. Your husband has commanded that I apply my considerable knowledge and skill to your correction."

Lady Ashley was relieved to hear this but...shame? And, no doubt, pain? This was to be her lot?

"We must begin, I fear." Lady Ashley froze. *Already? So soon.* "You will disrobe, madam."

Lady Ashley trembled. "Oh, must I do so, sir? It is indecent."

"You must feel the shame of nakedness, Lady Ashley. Nor are you to question me further. You will obey."

The shrouded figure watched while Lady Ashley slowly divested herself of her clothing. First the dress slithered to the floor leaving her in a thin chemise and silk drawers. The cowed man marveled at the shapely figure---the high set breasts, the flaring hips, the full round buttocks. Yes, there is where he would concentrate his efforts. Those buttocks practically begged for correction. His manhood surged at the sight. *No, that would not do*, he told himself. *The lady is here for penance, not pleasure.*

She stood, cowering, barely covered and pleaded with her eyes. He merely said, "All of it." Lady Ashley pulled the chemise off. It revealed her high set breasts, pointing straight out. Even in the dim light he could see that she was flushed. Were the nipples hard? He thought they were. It was frequently a nervous reaction to impending punishment, the sexual arousal of the patient. She turned her back and lowered the filmy drawers to reveal the classically sculpted cheeks of her beautiful bottom.

She turned to face him. She quivered with fear. Her hands were lowered to her groin to protect what little modesty she had left. She waited breathlessly and watched as he strode to the wall and selected a pair of cuffs. "Give me your hands," he commanded her. Wordlessly she held out her wrists for him to secure. He led her to a hook dangling from a post in the center of the room. He slipped her cuffs over the hook and with a wheel along the wall raised her arms

until she was stretched, almost on her tiptoes. Her nakedness was now on full view. There was nothing she could hide. She blushed with shame. Then she looked with alarm as he went to the wall and selected a whip. It had short thin multiple thongs. A cold chill ran up her spine. She was to be whipped!

He stood behind her. She craned her neck to see. "Face the post," he ordered gruffly. She hastened to obey. "Prepare yourself. I begin." She heard the whine of the lash and felt it explode in fire across her backside. She jerked forward. Another lash fell, stinging her tender bottom globes. She sucked in her breath. Ahh, how it stung.

Sweee....crack! The whip whistled again and more fiery stripes were painted across her bottom.

A few more lashes visited her bottom and then he switched to lashing her upper back. He changed sides. Now he stood to her right and brought the whip down revisiting the flesh he had scourged, but from a different angle.

My God, but the woman was beautiful under the whip. She writhed, sometimes arching her back and thrusting her lovely globes backward toward him as if seeking the whip, sometimes cringing against the post, rubbing it like a lover. He was as hard as a rock, his maleness threatening to burst from his breeches it seemed.

He plied the whip methodically, working from her shoulders down to her thighs, but concentrating mostly on the soft rounds of her buttocks. Her skin was reddened from the lashing all the way down to her knee hollows. She gasped and moaned, jerking her body each time the whip landed.

He stopped. Her skin was flush but it had not been an overly severe punishment, more surface sting than anything. The whip strands were smooth, not knotted. He needed to change. A different implement perhaps. One more suited to chastise those lovely buttocks.

He lowered her hands allowing her to relax. She watched anxiously as he replaced the whip along the wall. In its place he selected what looked like a paddle. It was made of a stiff leather, about four inches wide and nearly two feet long. It would do justice to those luscious bottom cheeks of hers.

“For this next, you will bend forward my lady. Arch your back.”

She knew it was useless to argue but the position was humiliating. With her bottom thrust out she felt like a mare about to be mounted by a stallion. She closed her eyes and complied. She felt him tap her bottom several times, measuring, adjusting. There was a whoosh as the blade sped through the air and then a crack! Fire erupted across her rear cheeks again and she jerked forward. Mercy! It burned.

“Resume your position my lady. You must obey me in order to receive the penance in the proper spirit.”

Shuddering, she once again assumed the ignominious position, and once again there was a whoosh and a crack! It seared her bottom. How long it went on she did not know. The command to present and the thwack of paddle seemed to go on and on. Her behind was burning. But something else began to occur. She sensed a need. It was growing, coming from that spot between her legs. She bent her legs and rubbed her thighs together, anything to squeeze that spot. Was she getting wet between her legs? It felt like it.

The master could scarcely contain himself. The paddling had inflamed her lust. He could see it. His own passion had been raised to a fever pitch. Dare he? If he did, he might have to flee the kingdom. But she was so inflamed. He had to know. He dropped the paddle and stood behind her. His hand went out and he caressed the swollen moons he had so thoroughly paddled. She moaned and arched against him. He let his hand slip to between her legs. She was soaked, her sex warm and slippery. He let his fingers slide inside. She moaned and thrust herself against his hand seeking more.

“No,” she implored when he withdrew. But her eyes grew large as he divested himself of his cloak then his breeches. His cock stood up pointing straight forward. He stood behind her now pressing himself against her. His hands found her hard nipples and he pinched them and kneaded her breasts. Her breathing came in short ragged gasps as he gripped her hips and lifted her. His rampant manhood found her sex and he thrust forward impaling her. She cried out, “Oh sir. Now please, please...”

She rocked back, trying to greedily engulf his member to the hilt. Then they commenced a slow motion thrust and release that wracked their bodies with sensation. Their coupling grew more

frenzied. His belly smacked the fiery red cheeks that he had just paddled. She didn't care. She reciprocated, wildly abandoning herself, pumping and bucking toward climax. When it came they both spasmed and jerked like puppets on a string, crying out in pleasure.

After that, he undid her manacles and led her to a mattress that lay against the wall. They did not speak. There were no words to say. They both knew what they had done. He held her for a time and then her head bent and her lips stole to his limp manhood, now beginning to revive. She took it within her mouth and swirled her tongue, feeling the power return. They renewed their passion again. And again after that. For hours. In the morning they emerged, striding into a misty courtyard and into an uncertain future. What they had done was treasonous.

The Lady gazed about her, wondering. "Whatever shall we do? Wherever do we go now...?" They made their way to the dock where the boat was waiting.

"You made the itinerary for this sojourn, Henry...and how much did you say that place cost?" Ashley winced as her bottom made contact with the hard wooden seat in the rowboat.

"Not that much, really," said Henry, as the liveried "ferryman" took up the oars. "They don't care what you do. All these old castles are looking for ways to make money so --- they'll rent you the dungeon by the hour if that's what you want."

"So, husband dear, what's next? 'Master Henri' was so deliciously wicked," she shivered. "If perhaps a trifle over enthusiastic," she had to add, rubbing her bottom ruefully.

Henry was unfazed. "Please don't rock the boat, dear. It's a Tudor manor house. We have a whole wing." Ashley pondered this as Henry rowed them ashore. They clambered out of the boat and into Henry's MG convertible.

She took a hat from the back seat with slips of paper in it. "Oooh...a Tudor mansion. Goody. Let's draw. I want to know what I'm looking forward to. You draw. This is so much more fun than stuffy hotels."

Henry groaned, but he reached back and pulled out a slip. He glanced at it, saw the words “French Maid.” That sounded good. A little skirt, apron, frilly panties, high heels and a feather duster. That has potential.

She took it and read: “French maid fantasy—Madame Ashley must teach her French maid Henrietta how to serve and...oh my!” She squealed gleefully.

She grinned at Henry whose face was now ashen. “And Madame Ashley has brought her big wooden hairbrush for her Henrietta’s cheeky bottom if she’s naughty,” she trilled, pinching Henry’s cheek.

Henry cringed. What rotten luck. He gazed wistfully into the rear view mirror as the lake castle of ‘Master Henri’ faded from view.

“Step on it...Henrietta. We can be there by nightfall. Oh, you will look so cute in a frilly apron, high heels, little feather duster...”

The Princess' Tutor

[author's note: the names and places in this story sound historically real. They are not. They are made up. It would be best to think of this as an historical story set in an alternate England around the time of Edward III.]

It was nearly midnight when they arrived. It was clear from the tired looks and the muddy clothes they'd been traveling hard for days. There were eight of them--- their leader, his men-at-arms, the nurse and the boy. Earl Robert of Reston received them warmly. Edward was his cousin and rightful heir to the throne. He had sworn him fealty. Robert grew concerned when he saw the child. He had a young daughter too, little Sophie, just born.

"Robert, my old friend. I knew I could count on you," said the leader. "I am besieged by my uncle, John DeVille the Duke of Northumbria. We are defeated. He has seized the throne and I must flee to recoup and raise an army. I must hide my son. John will kill him if he finds him."

"Edward, sire, I am your loyal servant. The house of LaCoeur will stand by you. Do not fear. I will take the boy and raise him as my own son."

Edward Targanian shook his head. "That you must not do. You must hide him well, so no one will suspect his lineage. He will be told in good time, but we must all bide our time. It may be years before we are strong enough to strike."

Robert nodded. He had an idea. Sometimes the best hiding place was out in plain sight. Hide in plain sight. That he could do.

Eighteen years later

The tall man was dressed all in black—black leggings, black tunic, and a long black cloak. He stood respectfully, having been escorted to Lady Sophia by her retainers. He had arrived that afternoon bearing credentials that established that he had been sent by her father, the earl.

"I don't understand why you are here," said Lady Sophia of Reston somewhat petulantly.

Thorin Brandt ran his hands through his hair. “Because, my lady, your father believes that you need to complete your studies in order to learn how to manage the household more efficiently.”

Sophia’s older sister Francia had married Guise of Hastings and had left the estate in her hands. Since then her father had sent a succession of tutors, agents, and courtiers, all to teach her some aspect of managing a great household while her father fought alongside Edward, aiding the new rightful king in his struggle against the former usurpers, headed by John DeVille who had called himself king, now enemies of the kingdom.

“Your father believes I can be of assistance in teaching you the skills you need, my lady,” he added.

“But what is it now? I’ve been assailed by all manner of tutors sent by my father. And it hasn’t been pleasant at all. He has completely disrupted my life here. I’ve had to forgo my explorations of the foothills riding my horse to learn, bah! ----mathematics, reading Latin, and how to set the silverware properly, and now to speak Frankish. And then you show up. Just one more annoying distraction. So just what is it that you do?” Her folded arms and impatiently tapping foot told Thorin that this was likely to be a long day. Robert, the Earl of Reston, had warned him.

She was an attractive girl, Thorin had to admit. A shapely figure with wide flaring hips, a tiny waist and generously full and high set breasts. She had light brown hair that fell in ringlets about her shoulders that framed a heart shaped face with dainty features and big brown eyes. A prize to be sure, but a wild and undisciplined one. She would be a handful to whomever her father gave her hand in marriage.

She squinted suspiciously at the tall stranger. He was old like her father and had a rough look about him too, not like the other bookish teachers her father had sent over the last six months. Good God, when would this endless procession of scribes and tutors end, and she could get back to roaming the mountains and valleys on her horse, hair flying in the wind in hot pursuit of the game? When?

Thorin was well aware of her problem, but from a different perspective, of course. The Lady Sophia was a spoiled tomboy and used to getting her own way. She’d been perfectly content to let her sister manage the lands while she frolicked, definitely the willful

sibling of the LaCoeur family. Now her sister was gone. And Sophia had rebelled at the change in circumstance. She did not suffer lightly the admonition from her father that she study the subjects the tutors foisted upon her. At first she merely ran off when she got bored. Then she played pranks on her tutors to discourage them. She had succeeded in running off most of these, which had prompted angry missives from her father. She'd ignored his entreaties. It was only her chief housekeeper, Dame Minerva, who had prevailed upon her to learn what she had to learn.

“Since your sister left we are a ship without a rudder, child,” Dame Minerva had said. “You must assume your proper role now. The keep suffers from a lack of leadership and discipline. You are a LaCoeur and you must take your rightful place as a lady of your station. Your father the Earl is in the North with King Edward defending the kingdom. Your duty is to manage his estate now pending his return.”

In the end Sophia had known she was right and had grudgingly applied herself for a time, but not without a series of continuing complaints transmitted to her father by the men and women sent to instruct her. She could imagine him in his northern keep tearing his hair out at the latest missive from some effete schoolmaster. The latest was this Madame Dubois. How boring. She'd run her off soon as well.

“So what is it you do?” she demanded.

“I am versed in... compliance, my lady, and in...information retrieval.” He stood there like a statue, all grim and proper.

“What on earth do you mean?”

“I help out with the war effort.” He waved a hand dismissively. “More to the point, I am here because management of a great house sometimes requires that staff and underlings be disciplined for failure, laziness, or for petty crime, or to resolve personal disputes. I am to instruct you regarding this aspect of household management.”

Sophia just stared at him. What did this have to do with her? “Charles, the head steward or Mr. Jerrold, the groom, takes care of such things I hear. Why does this concern me?”

“Your father has instructed me that you are to learn first hand just what is involved. Although you may delegate the task to others,

he has told me that you must be well acquainted with this facet of running a household.”

She still looked confused.

He continued. “As the ultimate head of this keep and the surrounding lands, until your father returns, you may from time to time have to order the chastisement of a servant or vassal. Your father wishes for me to instruct you on this. Come, take a walk with me.”

She emitted a petulant sigh, but followed him into the courtyard and out toward the river. They wound through the grounds until they came to a willow tree. He pulled out a short knife and cut about half a dozen withes from the tree.

“This is to be a birch rod, my lady. The switches should be about two and a half feet long, and about as thick as your little finger at the thickest end,” he said, cutting each to size. “Next, it is important to peel all of the buds and shoots so that they are smooth.” He peeled the switches and wrapped the end with twine to make a handle. He presented it to her for her inspection.

“What on earth are you doing this for?” She stamped her foot. “I don’t need to know this. If a maid needs a whipping, she gets a whipping. The chief steward takes care of it.”

“Ah, but you need to insure that it is done properly. You see, a maid may need a whipping for some offense, from petty to serious, but you must be neither overly severe nor overly lenient. One is just as bad as the other. See?” he said, flourishing the rod, “a very whippy light instrument this is, perfect for imparting a great bit of sting with no lasting injury to the skin. The maid who feels this will not sit comfortably for some time but the effect will fade in time. She will remember it well, however. I think perhaps a few dozen with this and she will see the error of her ways.”

“Oh for goodness sake, what has that to do with me?”

He took her by the hand. “Come with me my lady, I have something to show you.”

“This is ridiculous, sir,” she said in exasperation.

But she let him take her arm and together they walked back to the house. She was still puzzled. Did he intend to punish some servant in her presence? She didn’t know if she could stand to watch. It was all so horribly humiliating for the unfortunate maid. She’d heard that their drawers were taken down and the rod applied to their bare posteriors. Such things took place in the servants’ quarters or

out in the barn. She was mildly disturbed by the persistent and ominous tapping of the rod against his leg as they walked.

She allowed him to lead her to the door which led to the stairway to the keep's underground.

"Now why are we going here? There is naught here but the wine cellar and the dungeon." By this time they had arrived at the dungeon, now in disuse with her father gone. He lit several torches which illuminated a number of fearsome devices.

"Because, you may have occasion to imprison someone here and you need to see what it is like. A thief perhaps, you never know, but you must be prepared."

"Me? I think not. I wish to leave." There was a rack and manacles hanging from a post. Fearsome whips and flails hung on hooks. And there was something else---a frame in the center of the room. It rose to waist height to a crossbar and then a flat board extended from the crossbar upward at an angle. There was a hook along the slanted board connected to a ratchet and manacles at the feet of the upright portion. Apparently the hook pulled you up making you bend over to present your buttocks which would be thrust up, shamefully exposed over the crossbar. She shivered.

She was distracted by a sound. It was Dame Minerva entering the chamber along with Mistress Dubois, the latest of her father's tutors. She had tried in vain to get the girl to study French. Sophia frowned. What was she doing here? Then she realized everyone was staring at her. She decided to take the initiative.

"Dame Minerva, I am glad to see you. Please escort me out of here. Madame Dubois, how pleasant to see you, but no, I am not prepared on our lesson today. Perhaps tomorrow."

Minerva just stood there. She exchanged a meaningful glance with Thorin Brandt. Madame Dubois had a most disconcerting smile on her face. Sophia did not like it one bit.

"Give me your hands," commanded Brandt.

"What? Whatever for?" Sophia sputtered.

Brandt didn't wait. He took Sophia's hands and before she could react he bound them with a short leather thong drawn from his pocket.

"What is the meaning of this?" exclaimed Sophia, now very alarmed. "What are you doing?" This was spinning out of control. Sophia jerked back but Thorin took her tethered wrists and led her to

the frame. In a swift motion he looped the thong over the hook at the top of the frame, forcing her to bend forward. Then he calmly walked around to the front and turned the ratchet.

Sophia squealed as the ratchet clicked and the hook pulled her up along the slanted board. "What are you doing? Ahhh! Release me at once! Minerva, tell him. My father will hear of this."

"Oh child," said Minerva, sadly shaking her head, "your father has ordered this. He has sent the king's chief interrogator and torturer, Thorin Brandt."

"His torturer?" shrieked Sophia.

Fully alarmed now, Sophia felt Brandt's hands at her ankles. He locked them in. Next he cranked the hook forward drawing her up until she was almost on her tiptoes. In this posture she was bent over the crossbar, her buttocks prominently displayed, but covered by her skirt. She protested frantically as he unlaced her bodice at the back, pulling it away. Beneath the bodice she wore a simple skirt held by a drawstring. He untied it and allowed the skirt to drop to her feet. Now all she wore were knee length lacy drawers.

Her shapely bottom filled the lacy drawers, the fulsome cheeks straining against the fabric. Thorin had to admit, it was an enticing sight, but he sighed. There was a job to do and Robert had been clear. "For propriety's sake have Dame Minerva act as a witness, but the rod must be administered as is customary." So there was no help for it. He untied the drawstring of her drawers and tugged. They dropped to the floor revealing two rounded pale moons separated by a deep sinuous crease. Her lovely bottom jutted out, forced into prominence by the crossbar.

Sophia continued to struggle and protest until Thorin Brandt stood in front of her holding the rod between his hands. She was fearful now, still breathing heavily but she was transfixed by Brandt's calm visage and that wicked looking rod. It was now clear. She was to be whipped.

"Now my lady, we begin. For a simple transgression, such as laziness or negligence a dozen strokes of the rod should suffice. I will now demonstrate." Sophia swiveled her head to follow Brandt as he stood to her side, her eyes wide with horror at the impending whipping. Her mind still almost refused to acknowledge the reality of what was about to happen. She had not been physically punished since her nursery days when her mother had been alive.

There was a loud swoosh and the rod impacted her rear cheeks with a loud huick! Immediately her brain registered a horrific sting and she yelled, "Owww! Stop!" But a second stroke fell, then a third. She wailed piteously. Each stroke was a blazing brand painted across her bottom. The whipping fell into an implacable awful rhythm, devoid of mercy, each stroke building upon the former creating an intolerable stinging sensation that grew worse and worse. She yelped at each stroke, the whoosh...huick! of the rod alternating with her cries that echoed off the dungeon walls.

Thorin judiciously applied the strokes with an unhurried and even tempo. He was good at this. It was actually a mild flogging, but this girl didn't know that. Still, he knew it was stinging atrociously. He skin was becoming flushed and red streaks appeared where the switches had landed. She jerked and cried as the switches impacted her bottom making the luscious mounds quiver.

After a dozen had been meted out, he stopped. "That, my lady is for negligence. Now for impertinence or insubordination, a second dozen should be applied."

She regarded him with tears in her eyes, and fearful disbelief that it was to resume. A pity really. This should be unnecessary. She cried, "Nooo!" But the second dozen commenced. These strokes produced even sharper wails. Her bottom bounded and flexed almost lasciviously as the rod struck, a dance of pain. It was becoming quite red in the wake of the swishy withes. She writhed vainly as he plied the rod.

She was sobbing and gasping as he stood back contemplating his handiwork. She was soaked with sweat and her cries had made her hoarse. Another dozen, though. That was the bill.

"Now, finally my lady," he intoned after the second dozen, "should you encounter a serious fault, say, disobedience to a parent, or perhaps defiance of a lawful order, a third dozen must be applied."

Sophia shrieked, "Oh, no m'lord. It is learned! The lesson is learned." Her eyes pleaded with him.

Thorin sighed. Robert had been explicit. "Nevertheless, it may sometimes be necessary to firmly imprint the lesson thus learned."

Sophia gaped in horror as he drew the rod back again.

Swoosh...huick! "Aiee...ow!" she screamed. Her bottom quivered at this renewed onslaught of stinging fire. She flexed and relaxed her bottom cheeks in a vain attempt to relieve the awful stinging, but Brandt knew from experience that this was ineffective. He'd been ordered to apply the rod until her behind was blazing, and no amount of wriggling was going to change that.

Madame Dubois smiled to herself. It was about time the spoiled princess got her just desserts. It was immensely satisfying to see her writhing on the frame, shifting from foot to foot, buttocks clenching, as stroke after stroke set her cute fanny ablaze. Maybe now she'd be more amenable to study.

Eleven more times he delivered a firm stroke of the rod to her wriggling bottom. He did not hurry. Each stroke was carefully lined up and applied with the precise amount of force and in the precise location desired. As a result, the skin from the small of her back to the tops of her thighs was a bright red and hot to the touch. This final volley had her squealing and dancing on her toes to the extent permitted by her bound hands and feet.

When it was over, Thorin addressed her again. "Now my lady you understand what is involved if you send a maid to the chief steward for punishment. I trust the lesson has been salutatory. I might add that your father says that it would behoove you to devote your time to your studies and pay attention to the tutors he has hired to instruct you. My humble efforts are concluded for the time being, but you should know that I am to remain here until your father sends for me." He threw the rod in the corner and left Sophia to be administered to by Dame Minerva.

She sobbed as she was untied from the horrid whipping frame. Her backside was aflame. He is to stay here now? It was too awful to consider. She would run away. To the hills. Anywhere but here.

That night in her bed she reflected on what had been the most terrible day of her life. But her thoughts were feverish. She had been stripped practically naked in front of a man. He had whipped her. Her bottom throbbed. The salve applied by Dame Minerva had helped but her buttocks still glowed. And there was something else, something she'd not felt before in this way. It was a pleasurable sensation. Her womanly parts felt slippery. She'd had sexual feelings

before, but to feel this way while thinking on her shame and nudity in front of the tall stranger, not to mention the awful whipping of her buttocks---it was most odd.

It helped to replace the stern visage of Thorin Brandt with someone more pleasing, like Thomas the blacksmith. He was a commoner, but handsome with broad shoulders and rugged good looks. She had taken notice of him, notwithstanding that unfortunate incident some years ago. He had avoided her after that. Many times she'd wanted to say she was sorry she'd been so brash and impetuous, but she hadn't. Still, with that image in mind, her hand stole to that spot between her legs and she rubbed until in a thrashing paroxysm of pleasure she drove herself to climax.

She decided the next day, she would flee. It was so embarrassing. The whole household, servants and all had probably heard her shameful punishment yesterday. And now they were all talking about it, from the stable boys to the scullery maids---all of them. She had friends in neighboring lands. They would take her in.

But she bided her time. She even went through the motions of appearing to have learned her lesson. She sat down, although somewhat uncomfortably with Madame Dubois and worked on her French. But a day or two later the weather got warmer and with it the urge to escape became stronger.

She studiously avoided Thorin Brandt. He was mostly absent anyway. A day after her humiliating punishment other soldiers arrived and he rode off with them during the day, on scouting parties. They should have asked her---she knew every nook and cranny of Reston and the surrounding lands all the way through the foothills.

In the predawn hours the third day after the horrible incident with the horrible Thorin Brandt she stole from her bedchamber with a satchel packed with clothes. She raided the kitchen and stuffed some food in it as well. Then she made her way to the barn, saddled her horse and fled.

That evening when Thorin and his men returned, he was met by Dame Minerva and Charles Coggins, the head steward. Both were

worried and agitated. A young man was with them who was introduced as Thomas, the blacksmith and armorer.

“Sir Brandt, we fear for our mistress. We believe she may have run off.”

“Why do you think that?” As if what he had to deal with wasn’t enough. He and his men had been sent primarily to deal with reports of John of DeVille’s Northmen allying with outlaws on the borders of Reston. Giving the girl a good seeing to had almost been an afterthought of Robert’s. This was not good. His scouting had convinced him that there were indeed signs of men at arms in the foothills.

“Thomas, the blacksmith, saw her on horseback early this morning galloping out. In the kitchen it looks like food has been taken and a satchel she carries and some clothes are gone. Thomas sometimes follows her to make sure she comes to no harm, but with your men about he has had his hands full.”

Brandt swore. The little idiot. “Coggins, do you have any idea which way she would head?”

“She favors the foothills to the west,” said Thomas who’d been listening. “That’s where she goes. She rides there, sometimes she’s gone all day.”

“Thank you lad,” said Brandt.

“I know where to find her,” added Thomas.

“There is a village called Hobton. She knows people there.”
Right in the middle of outlaw country, thought Brandt.

“Sir, I can guide you there. I’m concerned for Lady Sophia.”
Everyone knew how Thomas cared for Lady Sophia. He had always thought her beautiful, but she was royalty and he was a blacksmith. Indeed, unbeknownst to Sophia, Thomas frequently followed her on her treks into the hills, watching her to make sure she came to no harm. Robert, her father, had asked him to do it. Indeed, he had taken the boy away from his duties from time to time to teach him all manner of things. How to shoot, how to ride, how to use a sword. Thomas had become a skilled woodsman too, a hunter and a tracker.

“She is a wild and unruly child,” Robert had sighed. “So watch over her.” Thomas had done so, but the girl never saw him. To her he was Thomas the smithy, that was all. He tracked her, always out of sight. The one time she did see him, thought Thomas ruefully, was the time she demanded that he be whipped for impertinence for

daring to take the reins of her horse and insist that he escort her home. He'd found her wandering, apparently lost in the dark. He'd been sixteen at the time, still an apprentice. Robert had been away, so Sophia's demands were heard by her sister Francia, then mistress of the household. "He was rude and impertinent to me," Sophia had said, all in a snit. Francia thought maybe he'd done a good thing, but he had said some rude things to Sophia, chiding her for being an idiot for returning so late. So she had decided that proper respect and decorum demanded that he not be allowed to address a member of a noble household that way, and had ordered him thrashed. Sophia had watched smugly while Jerrold had put him over a saw horse and tanned him with a heavy harness strap. He'd winced while sitting down for days. The incident put a bit of a bad taste in the boy's mouth. Still he continued to look after her secretly on most of her outings as Robert commanded.

"I ride for this village tonight," he told his men. "I want you to make for there at first light."

"But won't you need help tonight, sire?" Quinn, his sergeant, was ready to go.

"No, I need stealth more likely. I'm taking young Thomas here who knows these hills—and he looks like he could be handy in a fight. But I may need help in the morning. Pick up my trail then. You know how."

"Aye, m'lord."

It was dusk but the way to Hobton was fairly well marked. He just hoped Thomas was right, that the girl had come this way. He worried. An outlaw band would sell her to the Northmen who would use her as a hostage---if they were smart. If not, well, her life might be hanging by a thread. After they were done with her, that is.

Brandt's investigative technique was to hang out at the local tavern and keep his ears open. Sure enough it did not take long before he and Thomas overheard the bragging of an unkempt patron who did indeed appear to have wandered in from the forest. The braggart's claim was that he was soon to be rich, at least that is what he told the tavern maid in an attempt to gain her favors for free. But he told the tale a bit too loudly. Brandt followed him after he left. The tale he told while hung upside down with Brandt's knife at his throat was of a royal maid being held for ransom to the agents of Northumbria who were due any day.

“Where is she being held?” Brandt’s throaty whisper was more terrifying to the outlaw than a whole squad of men-at-arms. He told him.

It took Brandt and Thomas a day to find the encampment. He was afraid they might arrive too late, but the camp was populated only by outlaws. No sign of DeVille’s men. He deduced that she was being held captive in a hut in the center of the camp. They waited until a woman, probably one of the captive slaves of the band, or a wife, perhaps, took a pail of food inside the hut. Shrieking ensued and the pail came flying out of the hut. Ah, yes, Thomas reflected, undoubtedly my wayward princess. They both spied her horse, tethered to a tree. It was lucky they hadn’t killed it for food yet.

Brandt and Thomas tethered their horses in a copse of trees and waited. Soon a party, made up of most of the able men, left. He figured it was either to rob or forage—or perhaps rendezvous with the Northumbrian agents. Either way, this was the best chance they would get.

Thomas had come equipped with a longbow. “How good are you with that bow, lad?”

“I can shoot, sir.”

“Then take out the sentries positioned there, there and there,” said Brandt pointing at various men arrayed around the hut.

He strung his bow, and with a fluidity of motion that had come from many days and nights hunting in these very woods, he loosed arrows, hitting in rapid succession each guard that was left. Confused, others picked up arms, but Brandt rushed in. Armed with a sword in his hand, he was too formidable an opponent for untrained ruffians. Surprise was on his side as well. He left several outlaws writhing in the dust, the camp in complete panic, as he strode into the hut.

“Come, my lady. We must hurry.”

Sophia stared at him. “You!”

“Yes, it is I, and we have no time to waste.” He grabbed her by the hand before she could react and seemed to fight him as he dragged her out of the hut toward their horses.

“Let me go!” She bleated.

“Lady Sophia, please.” It was Thomas who appeared suddenly.

“Thomas. It is you. Oh, thank God. We must go.” Brandt looked at Thomas. “It looks like she’ll go with you, lad.” Thomas had to laugh to himself. Now she would give him the time of day, when he had come to rescue her. Mostly he was invisible to her, just another servant.

They made for the horses and galloped away from the outlaw camp. Sure enough they were pursued by Northumbrian men at arms, agents who had arrived to take Sophia from the outlaws. But Brandt’s men had followed as instructed. As daybreak appeared the Northumbrians were ambushed. The fight was brief. The Northumbrians were killed or taken prisoner.

The entire household was relieved when Sophia, Thomas and Brandt rode in. Sophia was exhausted from her ordeal. Dame Minerva and her assistants helped Sophia down and carried her into the keep.

Thorin was relieved as he watched her being cared for. Had she been taken by John’s men it could have upset the balance of the war, just when Edward was on the brink of regaining his crown. It was good that he had been able to mount a rescue, but he could not have done it without young Thomas. Yes, Thomas. Another part of his mission here. It was time to have a long illustrative talk with the young man.

“Thomas.” He turned to Thomas who had been watching Sophia. “Come with me lad, we have some important things to discuss.”

Coggins watched them dismount and repair to Brandt’s chambers. He nodded his head in approval. It was time.

“...and so you see,” explained Brandt, “It was necessary that your identity be kept secret all these years.” He’d talked to Thomas non-stop for an hour. The young man was so stunned he couldn’t speak.

Thomas nodded, dumbstruck. The king’s son, Thomas Targanian, Duke of Essex, Prince of Windsor and God knew how many other titles.

“You will have many things to learn. Now that your father is to be safely back on the throne and Deville is on the run, you can assume your rightful place.” He clapped his hand on Thomas’ shoulder. “You’ve grown into a fine young man, and you have Robert to thank for it, which I’m sure you will. Your bravery and

skill in rescuing Lady Sophia will be reported to your father. He will be proud.”

“Now,” he said with a sigh, “I have one more bit of news for you—as if all this hasn’t been enough---and there is a task you must perform in my absence.”

“Are you leaving?” Asked Thomas.

“Your father has recalled me. We have neutralized Northumbria’s threat against Reston and Sophia, but there are captured spies who must be interrogated, so my other task here, a very minor one, is incomplete. I was to...explain to the princess the folly of her actions. It would be wise for you to undertake this chore.”

“Me?” Said Thomas. “She won’t listen to me. To her I’m only the smithy.”

“That will change, my lad. It would be wise, because she is to be your wife. Your father has decreed it. It was one of the many things I was sent to tell you. If I were you, I’d instill some repentance for her foolish behavior. Both of us could have been killed and she could now be a hostage.”

“But...how?” Thomas was unsure how he could get her to do anything. His wife? This was all happening very fast.

Thorin Brandt smiled. “Think back a few years. Also realize that what she did was a very childish act. Perhaps it calls for a childish punishment. You’d better set about to establish your authority soon, lad, or she’ll run all over you.”

Thomas watched as Thorin Brandt departed. His men at arms remained and each, one at a time, took a knee and swore fealty to Thomas. Thomas had to think for awhile. He was to marry Sophia. He, Thomas the blacksmith was to marry a princess. But what a princess. Somewhat spoiled and undisciplined, he knew Brandt was right about her. He would need to establish his authority from the very first. And he grew angry as he thought about the risk she had taken and the people she had endangered by riding off in a girlish chit. And then his mind flashed back to that strapping.

Thomas strode through the keep. By now the word had spread. This young man, who most had thought was a common blacksmith, was King Edward Targanian’s son and heir apparent to the throne. He sought out Dame Minerva.

“Where is she? I would speak with her now,” demanded Thomas.

“She is upstairs in her quarters...sire. But I believe she may be indisposed,” Minerva hastened to add. “She asked for a bath to be drawn.”

“Perfect,” muttered Thomas. He took the stairs two at a time.

Lady Sophia jerked up in the steaming tub, startled by the loud bang of the door as it flew back on its hinges and crashed into the wall. She had called for a bath after breakfast, relieved that the monster Thorin Brandt had finally left. But to her shock, striding purposefully toward her through her very private chamber, was none other than Thomas the blacksmith.

“What are you doing here? How dare you!” she shrieked.

Thomas stood there glaring at her, his hands on his hips. Dame Minerva materialized at his side. “You must know, my lady, that Thomas is in truth no mere blacksmith. He is the son of our king, Edward, your father’s cousin and sworn ally. He was hidden here as a child.”

Sophia gaped. Thomas a prince? Then she thought. Her father had spent much time with Thomas in the past, and she’d always wondered why. Now it was abundantly clear.

“But...but...” Sophia was at a loss for words. And she was painfully aware of her nakedness, prince or no.

“I’ve come to deliver a message, my lady. It was to be from Thorin Brandt but he must return to my father. But as I think about it, this message comes from me as well. You put a great many people in jeopardy by running away, including yourself.”

Lady Sophia shrank back, lowering herself in the water, her eyes as big as saucers.

Thomas turned to Dame Minerva. “Leave us. I wish to speak with Lady Sophia alone.” Sophia stared speechlessly as Dame Minerva turned and left.

“Now, to business, Sophia.” He reached for her arm which was resting on the side of the tub.

Sophia squawked as Thomas grabbed her arm and started to pull her out of the tub. “Stop!” she yelled. “You have no right! This is indecent!”

Thomas ignored her bleating protests and pulled her, naked and dripping wet from the tub. He marveled at the beauty of her nearly perfect figure, but he put that aside. He had a job to do.

“It may seem indecent now, but it won’t be indecent soon, when we are married,” he told her.

Sophia shrieked again. “Married? Who said married?”

“My father and yours, my lady,” said Thomas, yanking her along and seating himself on the bed, while a sputtering Sophia tried to cover her nakedness as best she could. Thomas pulled Sophia to his side and in a smooth motion flipped her face down across his lap. She wriggled like an eel and she was wet so Thomas had to hold her tight. He pulled her over until her delectable buttocks were perched over his knees jutting skyward. Thomas was treated to a sight no man had yet seen except for Thorin Brandt. Her skin had recovered though, and was a glistening white, the pale moons exquisitely shaped and pertly presented to receive the sound spanking that Thomas had in mind. Thorin had suggested a child’s punishment, and to Thomas that seemed very appropriate. He raised his hand and brought it down with a loud smack! on her right bottom cheek.

Sophia screamed but Thomas delivered another to her left cheek. Water sprayed and her bottom now bore the imprint of two lurid red handprints. Thomas applied a volley of brisk spanks on alternating cheeks of Sophia’s bottom. He marveled at how the flesh of her buttocks wobbled at each impact, flattening and then springing back into shape. Sophia yelped like she was being skinned and flailed around wriggling and kicking.

“You’d best resign yourself, my lady, to the fact that you are going to be punished for running away like you did. The more you wriggle the longer you’re going to be spanked.

Sophia reacted to that by yelling, “Let me go,” and squirming harder.

“As you wish, Sophia,” said Thomas and gripping her tightly launched into a sustained barrage of firm spanks that peppered her bottom and had her yelping for mercy.

Spank! “Yeow!”

Splat! “Ow...please!”

On and on it went.

Downstairs the staff could hear the loud splat of hand on bare flesh and Sophia’s yelps. “I think the young mistress has finally met

her match,” said the cook who had emerged from the kitchen when she heard the noise. The steady Splat! Splat! Splat! accompanied by Sophia’s shrill cries echoed off of the stone walls. Dame Minerva nodded. “I tried to tell her. He is to be her husband, you know.”

“Well, he is getting off on the right foot I’d say,” acknowledged the cook. “She has been a right handful.”

Sophia felt that her bottom was burning up. Each smack from the blacksmith’s palm stung like whole hive of bees. She’d never felt so helpless, upended over the man’s knee, completely naked and being paddled like a small child. But a small part of her knew she deserved it. And another small part of her became aware of a growing tingle between her legs. She’d always been aware of how handsome Thomas had been, but her station kept her from acknowledging his attractiveness to her. Now she was aware that she was being soundly spanked by the man who was to be her husband.

“In the future (smack!) you will obey (smack!) the lawful commands (smack!) of those who care for you (smack! smack!).” He punctuated the lecture with a volley of stinging spanks. Her bottom cheeks wobbled deliciously and Thomas felt his passion growing. Not yet, he told himself, but soon.

“Owww...oww...please stop! Arhhh...” Sophia wailed. Her head flew back and her legs flew up. Ahh, the awful sting. He bottom blazed with fiery pain. The man’s hand was as hard as iron and as big as board. “I’m sorry! I’m sorry!” That was what Thomas had been waiting to hear.

Finally Sophia stopped wriggling and slumped over his lap, crying. He gave her bottom four more hard slaps and picked her up, depositing her sitting sideways on his lap facing him.

“Now,” he said. “Have you learned your lesson or must we continue?”

She leaned against him sobbing, her face buried in his chest. How could she tell him? It was utterly shameful. She was wet, aroused—in fact painfully so. Her bottom was throbbing but her sex was too. So all she could do was cry in her frustration. Her husband. He was to be her husband.

Sophia wound her way down toward the river. They had been married now for six glorious months. She did not think she was with child yet, but it would be soon. She giggled to herself, reflecting that

they had tried in every way imaginable to make a baby. Thomas was a tender and vigorous lover—unless she misbehaved that is. Then the lovemaking was preceded by a lesson that she learned while pinned across his knee. And the man had hands like, well, like a blacksmith. Which fact reminded her of the reason for this chore.

Both before and after the wedding, Robert and Edward the king, now solidly ensconced upon the throne, had insisted on the further education of both her and her husband. Thomas had taken to the tutors' lessons like a duck to water, feverishly studying all he needed to know to be prepared to rule a kingdom. She on the other hand had been less enthusiastic. Which brought her back to the present.

She pulled the knife out of a pocket and cut several slender withes from the willow tree. She peeled them carefully as Thorin Brandt had taught her. She certainly did not need any harsh shoots or buds. She took a cloth and wound it about the end making a rod that she hoped he would approve of. She had learned that to mete out a proper chastisement, one must have a proper rod.

Ruefully she reflected on the events that had brought her to this point. How could she have known that Thomas would return early from the hunting party? All she had wanted to do was take an afternoon and go riding, not pour over tomes of Latin. So he had ridden out and found her. He hadn't said much except to send her on her current errand.

The cheeks of her bottom flexed involuntarily as she swished the rod, testing it. She winced. This would be a painful lesson. She just hoped he would comfort her in the usual way when it was over. He was so passionate when he made love to her after correcting her for some misdeed.

With a heavy sigh she made her way back to the keep. It would not do to keep her husband waiting.

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A compilation of short stories and novelettes written by Rollin Hand and previously published in other eBooks represents a terrific value for those who like spanking stories in medieval and historical settings. At over 54,000 words, this collection serves up ten tales of voluptuous spanking chastisement meted out by stalwart knights to fair damsels and naughty ladies. Bare bottom spankings, birchings, switchings, and strappings, both in intimate and public settings, abound in this compendium, set in days of old when knights were bold and the price of disobedience by a lady, whether princess or commoner, was often a well-deserved trip across a manly knee. In this volume are tales of adventure and derring-do, tender romance, whimsy and humor. Also included are extended excerpts from novels by Jordan St. John, Rollin's alter ego in the spanking romance genre.

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