

# VILLA ROSA

by Richard Manton

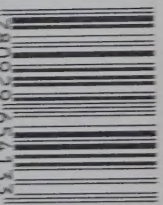
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In the weeks that followed Jeevan's use of the ponylash, Margarita gasped and squirmed with the intensity of her natural warm-blooded passion; she moaned and shuddered as if unable to express it all. The art of the Asian mistress had provoked desire in the Spanish girl's strong young loins, pent up and constantly seeking enough release. Margarita made love to herself on the bed when she thought no one was watching her. Hesitantly at first, she slipped one hand behind her and played with her bottom at the same time. She smacked its cheeks lightly, as if to spur herself on. The olive-tan cheeks of Margarita's arse were now eagerly and almost lewdly at Mano's disposal. She was passionate for excitement in whatever way he chose.

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*The Victorian Era*

# Villa Rosa

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ROMANCE ENTRE DEUX MERS

by Richard Manton



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## Dreams of a Summer Day

When the lover thinks of ghosts, his imagination is peopled by the living. Surely it is hopes and fears of what is happening now, elsewhere, that most disturb the mind. The dead are as they were. With the living we engage thoughts and desires while they pursue a quite independent existence elsewhere. Like us, they live two lives, one in their own minds and one in the thoughts of others. So it is with places and seasons. The spirits that haunt us now are ghosts of the future.

Thoughts of summer pleasure are most powerful at the onset of early darkness during December or January. In the shoplit evenings of the winter city, the memories of summer possession gather in the rainy boulevards as the crowds press homewards. A warmth like the brightness of July sun on the whiteness of tide-washed sand shines from the fashion displays of the shop windows. The bloodstone jewels and polished shoes, the draped silk and lace frills parade behind plate glass of the long department stores like the booty of that summer campaign. The wax mannequins with their demure and breathless grace, their long attenu-

ated limbs and fingers, are like the supplicants of the conqueror's frieze. Beyond their little worlds of artificial brilliance, the scattering snow glides through the haloes of the ornamental lamps along the Boulevard Haussmann, the Kurfürstendamm, Fifth Avenue, or Princes Street. A cloudy breath of the tired crowds hangs frosted in the air. Somewhere in the dreaming mind the spotlight is transformed to yellow sun, falling on stone and sand in the islands of summers yet to come.

Here and there the passions of love or cruelty are hinted at by the subtle shop-display of a woman's silk underclothes laid out behind the warmly-lit glass, next to the suggestive curve of an elegant black riding-whip on a stand of polished walnut. How easily then, even in the chill of the December evening, the imagination of the dreamer turns to those fresh mornings of the ocean promenade, the golden afternoons of the beaches, and the long lamplit evenings of the villa courtyard, lulled by the beat of a distant tide and the warm resinous air of pine. Are they gone—or is it only that we have yet to experience them?

Memory and anticipation are fused. At such moments as these, the phantoms of the future move the imagination more powerfully than those of the past. Pressing into the winter terminus, from which the rails may run to the chill streets of Berlin or Paris, the snowfields of Warsaw or Madrid, the homeward crowds stand among marble columns and iron-framed glass. Here and there a poster, left from the last season, pictures azure sea and white villas, the cherry-colored tarmac of tennis courts and esplanades, through Florville and the coasts of August. Men and women in faultless tailoring smile beside a lavender sea under pink pergolas hung with purple grape. It is never winter in such places. They hold the promise that this

moment one might take the blue and gold wagon-lit of the express from the winter city and find, tomorrow morning, that the summer still runs its course beside a blue millpond ocean where the sun falls peach-coloured on stone and pine woods. In that dream lies the secret of present pleasure. And there the Villa Rosa holds its promise, a land of summer seen in a time of frost.

Such was the time before that summer at Carailac. In those dark months of the winter city, the ghosts of sunlit days rose in quiet moments. At the opera, in the reflected stage-light, the lovers of adolescent beauty studied the girls in silk and velvet, sitting demurely with their escorts. The sun-browned sleekness of these bare-shouldered nymphs might be glimpsed in the low cut of the dress. Velvet bows, like the folded wings of bats, lay soft and dark on the sheen of the hair's silken fall. As the orchestra swept through the overture, the blades of such young shoulders seemed elegant and fragile as fins. The sight of them quickened the images of a summer past and a summer to come. In the dim reflection of Rossini or Offenbach, an admirer of such early beauty hears the voices of sunlit days.

Noisy and naked as children, a few months ago, the young *débutantes* of the opera stalls splashed and shouted in the glittering tide of Biarritz or St. Jean-de-Luz, San Sebastian or Estoril. Languid and warm, they adorned the sands or hid among the dunes by the coast of summer flowers. On another dark night of winter, among the bouquets and piano'd gloss of the recital-room, their obedient attention to Brahms and Schumann recalled the evenings of courtyard dinners and secret pleasures in the twilight and mothlight under a warm southern sky.

As the chill sharpens, in the electric-metallic air of the *métro* or the quiet streets of snow, the days of perpetual

flowers become treasured and remote as a romance of chivalry. To the dreamer, the grey weight of snow-clouds is transformed to the hot pearl sky of morning beyond the rails of the Promenade Atlantique. The wind at his ears is the dull bombardment of distant breakers and the shouts of children in the pale blue heat of noon. The reflection of light on a field of ice becomes the silver sea-glare of the sun's decline in the torpid afternoons of July and August. The deep flame of the winter fire is the sun's descent into a placid tide, darkening from blue to violet.

The stirring of cold air in the city tunnels is the breeze carried from the tide across August fields of maize and open land, where old women in dresses and aprons the colour of earth are digging potatoes from the soil. The brightness of the lamps in the frost recalls yellow fields of mustard and the first rows of early vines.

The dream sustains the dreamer until the days lighten and the first warmth stirs in a wind from the distant ocean. Then, in the softening air of spring, he feels the distant presence of Carailac or Florville, Rochefort or Biarritz, and the coasts of summer. The Villa Rosa, by whatever name, is the substance of that dream.

I turn from these visions to the reality of the Villa Rosa, to my own story and all that went with it.

## Souvenir d'Antan

If I close my eyes and try to relive the events of those summers by the light of winter, the first image that comes to me is of a framed print seen through the window of a secondhand bookshop during the early dusk of November afternoons. *Souvenir d'Antan—A Memory of Times Past.*

In my mind I recall it as a dark and shadowy drawing of the 1890s, rather in the manner of Félicien Rops. It shows the interior of a sparsely-furnished room, hinting at absinthe and poverty. An old man sits in the glow of an open hearth, the only light in his parlour. He wears a cap in the French or Belgian style and his clothes hang a little slack on emaciated limbs. His bent head directs a downward gaze, a little aside, as if in deep thought. One hand holds the bowl of his pipe as he draws upon it. You might take him equally well for an aged philosopher or a retired sailor. The room is almost bare except for the high-backed chair he sits in and a small plain table covered with a cloth, on which stands a bottle of wine and a long French loaf.

The curiosity in the picture is the far wall of the bare

firelit room. On its shadowy surface, six naked girls are depicted life-size in charcoal drawing, almost covering the wall on that side. One of them stands boldly facing the viewer, arms behind her hair, drawing it back, so that her breasts are pronounced. The lithe sweep of her flanks and belly appears more tautly muscled in this pose. Another naked girl rises from a posture of sleep, emphasising the swell of her hips. Another turns her back, arm raised like a torch-bearer. Another lies propped on her elbow with her back to us. A chignon of fair hair sweeps silkily across the bare gloss of her shoulders. Her lower leg is drawn up and the upper one stretched out, so that she presents that slight contortion of her rounded buttocks which makes them erotically suggestive.

Do these figures on the shadowy wall represent the old man's dream of his lost youth? Or are they a composition of his own, charcoal designs shaded there in a voluptuous and loving tribute to his past? I cannot answer that. When I summon up the picture in my mind, I cannot even be certain that I do so accurately. Lying in bed before sleep, the sheet cool under my hand, I view it against the starlit air of my room. Seen like that, it has the shifting and elusive composition of pictures in the fire. A moving shadow-play.

I could not tell you for certain whether the figures represent six different girls or one girl in six different poses. I no longer remember them clearly enough for that. I do not know whether the old man in his peasant cap dreams of a girl in every village or the one love in his life to whom he was always faithful.

So much for the composition. It disturbed me so agreeably that I went into the shop at last and inquired the price of it. The print was not for sale. After that, I could only admire it at a distance, through the rows and crescents of

books behind the shopfront window. I studied it furtively through these tiers of sumptuously-bound volumes that filled the small-paned window. It hung framed in thin gold on the far wall. Next to it was a door whose honey-coloured panels were of carved Spanish oak. This particular Broad Street shop was one of those on several floors with an old narrow front and bow windows. The books which it displayed were voluptuously antique in binding and gilding. They ran in sets of deep sea-green leather or russet brown. Their pages were marbled and their labels stamped with gold. There were Second Empire tales of illicit passion, in plum-coloured silk and gilt italic script. Desire and intrigue breathed from the ivory-tinted satin of Italian novellas. There were plainer volumes from the world of Paris between two great wars, neatly lettered on cream buckram.

One or two were darker-bound memories of the Weimar republic. Their titles were gilded in gothic script. Their lightly colour-washed illustrations displayed the perverse affections of Berlin by night. Pretty girls from the Savigny-Platz or Moabit bent smiling perversely to receive the tubes and syringes of their capricious masters and mistresses. Flanking them were handsome volumes of the most orthodox kind. Great novelists in calf leather. Pretty romancers in silk. Here and there an old volume of Aldus Manutius or the Elzevir Press, Lucretius or Seneca printed centuries ago. Row upon row, these gems filled the window. Within, the shelves of the narrow shop were filled with curiosities, like a lamplit cave of shipwrecked treasure.

It was a strange collection of ancient and meticulous learning next to veiled impropriety of the most extreme kind. The man or woman who sought sweet dreams of two teenage sisters or the warm passions of beauty in silken bondage would find them here. The darker punishment-lessons and extreme ordeals of a fifteen-year-old schoolgirl

tomboy, Elaine Cox, filled a handsome volume of maroon leather lettered in gold on dark green labels. I gazed at these rarities. Did the young women who looked after the shop know what such pages contained? And if they did, what did they think?

I had been in there several times that year to buy a set of Laclos or a novel of the Belle Époque. I sensed the confinement of female passion during my presence. There was an air about the place which I thought hinted at the amorous, the cruel, the commanding. But whenever I entered, or paused to admire the handsome sets of volumes in the window, the print of the old man and his girls caught my eye. *Souvenir d'Antan*. And the door beside it. A heavy frame and the inset panels of light wood that had been so elaborately carved. To what did it lead? I had never seen it opened.

I could have told you, without ever stepping through it, that it was the door to an adventure of some kind. But of what kind? I began, casually, to note the visitors to the shop.

There was a young woman of thirty or so—Patricia—who took care of the establishment from time to time. She was the guardian of the secret, I never doubted that. I heard her called Trish and I began to take an interest in her. She had been married long enough to look for a little variation of pleasure. Perhaps with another man. Perhaps with a woman. Perhaps in a ménage where strange seductions and demands would rule her life. She was tall, maturely filled out at hips, thighs, and backside. Her dark hair was cut quite boyishly short to her head with a little curling. Her face had clear neat features, her dark eyes were long-lashed, and her lips always seemed parted a little as if in expectation.

My fascination with the shop grew. When I was far

from it, at certain times of the afternoon, I imagined the scenes in that secret room. When I passed the young brunette in the street, I tried to catch her eye, as if to interrogate her silently. At first she looked at me uncertainly. Then she walked on, avoiding my gaze. What the outcome to this would have been, I cannot tell you. The matter was decided in the most obvious way by a small card which appeared in a corner of the shop window.

As if to deter all but the most discerning, the instruction was in French. "À louer pour saison d'été. Villa Rosa. Priez s'adresser à Lasalle, rue de l'Océan 16, Carailac-sur-mer, Grand Côte de l'Atlantique."

For the time being, I did nothing. But not a day passed without the urge to sit down and write at once to Monsieur or Madame Lasalle. I had no reason to suppose that the Villa Rosa was connected with the manner in which Trish and some pupil in lesbian arts carried on their strange liaison. I could not prove it but I knew with the strength of instinct that the connection existed. The perversely-inclined married woman was seducing a sly yet innocent youngster with fondling and caressing, naked writhing and passionate release. When the seduction of this young female victim was complete, she would be the startled and naked prisoner at the mercy of her captors in Carailac-sur-mer.

Even as I thought of such things, I smiled at them. They had the absurdity of an old-fashioned novelette. Such things do not happen in real life. Or, at any rate, they do not happen any more. But, though I dismissed these dreams, the secret of the Villa Rosa plagued me during the early months of the year. I waited until April and then I went into the shop. It was the other young woman, not Trish who was there. I made my inquiries about the Villa Rosa. The girl did not know but she would ask. Several days later I went back. The girl shook her head. Madame Lasalle

regretted that there were no further vacancies this season. So much for Carailac-sur-mer.

Strange as it seems to me now, my first feeling was one of relief. The matter was at an end. It was useless to be tempted by a villa that had been fully booked for the season. I thanked the girl for her trouble and turned away.

I had every reason to suppose that that was the end of the matter.

But there are few things stranger than the coincidence of discovery. It is a far more powerful force than any law of probability can allow or explain. One day you may notice for the first time the title of an old novel, the description of an obsolete experiment, the name of a remote historical figure—perhaps a court secretary of Gustavus Adolphus or Louis XIII. Whatever it may be was entirely unfamiliar to you before that moment. You have lived thirty, forty, fifty years in ignorance of it. Then, in the space of a few weeks, you encounter the very same obscure fact or person several more times. A superstitious man might believe that the novelty had been there all the while, like the beast in the jungle, waiting to pounce.

So it was with the Villa Rosa. Until that afternoon when I saw the card in the bookshop window, I knew nothing of it. But I was soon to hear of the mysterious Carailac-sur-mer again in a quite unexpected quarter. Let me explain.

A week after my rejection, I received a letter from Sussex. I did not know the writer well, having met him once as the friend of a friend. I shall call him Mano. Pinned to his letter was a cutting from the personal column of a magazine.

“A gentleman travelling en route to Bayonne, who could escort two pupils and maid from Southampton to Carailac-s-m, Grand Côte de l’Atlantique, in the month of July is invited to reply to Box 219.”

For the second time in my life, I had heard of Carailac. I put the advertisement aside and read the letter. Mano was a man of property whose establishments included a summer *pensionnat* on the Sussex coast. It was kept by Miss Woodward, a young teacher in his employment, as a house where he took girls from Italy or Spain, France or Germany, and taught them English. Among his other investments were properties in France. At Carailac, he proposed to institute a summer finishing-school and have one or two young ladies trained in the arts of life.

Mano confessed himself the author of the advertisement. He had learnt of me as a man who might be going to Carailac. How had he learnt? It was hard to imagine that Madame Lasalle had bothered to write to him. My thoughts turned to the winter afternoons of the old-fashioned bookshop. Had it been the boyishly-cropped brunette or her assistant who passed my name to Mano?

I turned to his letter again. Two girls of eighteen, Sharon and Louise, were to make their journey to Carailac in July. It was impossible to send them with no company but their maid. Three girls would provide ample chaperonage for one another, so long as there was a man to see them through their "difficulties."

Had it been a few weeks later, Mano would have gone himself. But it was difficult for Miss Woodward to find anyone to assist at the *pensionnat* in early July when all the schools were still in session and their teachers busy. My correspondent hesitated to offer me money. But if I had the leisure to remain at Carailac for the summer, I should be his guest at the Villa Rosa for as long as I chose.

By this round-about way, I discovered that my fantasies about the Villa Rosa were nothing but the truth. What was proposed was no less than a *partie de plaisance* of the kind I had first supposed. Mano did not say so yet. In his first

letter, he gave himself ample room to draw back. Only when I met him for lunch at Claridges in early May did he indicate that Sharon and Louise had been chosen with great care for the training they would undergo.

Why had he been so frank with me from the first? He wrote his letter as if he knew me well. We had scarcely met at that time. But someone had recommended me to him. Someone who knew my tastes.

I wondered again whether the lofty young ladies who worked in the bookshop ever read the contents of some of the volumes. I was thinking of those Berlin tales of the perverse bound in black and gold, the French romances of illicit passion in plum-coloured silk, the lewdness of old Italy in white buckram with a gilt design. Did they breathe from the pages the warm bedroom air of lesbian gasps and squirmings? Did they linger over a young woman's chastisement in a lamplit vault? If they did, perhaps they judged the character of each customer by the books he chose.

I never inquired of Mano if that was the information upon which he based his letter. But I could not help recalling my purchases from the bookshop during those winter months. I had chosen the languid passions of French society beauties, naked in one another's arms in *L'École des Biches*. I had seen Lady Jenny Langham stripped of her silks and satins by barbarian hands on the couch of harem captivity in *The Odalisque*. I had watched the bare tomboy bottom-cheeks of fifteen-year-old Elaine Cox sadistically whipped for her impudence to her betters. No doubt I had shown Trish and her assistant my interest and approval of such things in print by returning to buy further volumes of this kind.

When I visited Mano to make the final arrangements for the journey, he showed not the least doubt of my suitability.

ity. He stood by the French windows, looking out across the sparkling water, in his white ducks and dark blazer, tapping a Turkish cigarette on the rolled gold of his case. He turned to me, his hair carefully pomaded and his strong features clear against the light, talking in the most relaxed manner of anyone I ever knew. While he turned the silver oval of the cocktail-shaker in his hands, or while we sat with the ivory pieces of Mah-Jong, he spoke quietly, as if he knew all about me. And so, I think, he did.

A week or so of July was to be spent in this Sussex house that stood on the cliffs beyond the promenade of an elegant resort, fronting the sea with the downland rising on one side and the long expanse of gardens and promenade running to the pier on the other.

A man with a house of this kind may certainly turn it to his profit during the summer months of holidays and language studies. Mano's handsome mansion stood in its own extensive gardens at the upper end of the esplanade in the town he had chosen. One drives there along the shore past the pavilioned pier with the quiet tide sparkling about its iron supports. There is a view of the sand below the shingle where children play and swimsuited girls romp together. A double-funnelled steamer beats the tide with its paddle wheels on the excursion to Boulogne. Then along the elegant promenade with its sky-blue rails there is the bandstand, where the Coldstreams or the Grenadiers entertain the crowd of promenaders, afternoon and evening, on shining brass. The upper end of the marine drive is steep enough to have cliff walks running down to the shore through yellow broom and pink tamarisk, here and there a glimpse of blue wind-slashed veronica.

I was to spend these few days with Mano and his pupils among the leafy avenues of Edwardian villas. It is that upper end of the select resort where all is spacious and

expensive, mellow red brick and cream-painted gables. The houses are set well apart, some with little corner towers and others with pretty gothic conservatories and ample lawns kept smooth and trim as green baize. In the mornings there are gardeners who come to weed the beds of blue delphiniums and mow the lawn or clip the hedges of thick yew. Through the mellow afternoon one hears the distant dance-music of a phonograph and the laughter of a party. Girls in beach-pyjamas or slacks, even the tight sleekness of swimsuits, are glimpsed through a screen of tall hedges. As the warm shadows lengthen, there is quiet broken by the light tinkle of ice against glass and the murmur of voices. Sounds of dinner and a fragrance of tobacco fill the garden twilight, haunted by hawk-moth and the swoop of a bat.

From time to time I was left to myself, while Mano attended to some business of his own. The radio in its handsome cabinet would pick up the voices of France and Germany with ease, the roar of crowds in Berlin or the excitement of a road race at Le Mans. When the sweep of pearl-gray curtains was closed against the darkness, the light from the frosted glass of the ceiling-bowls bathed the elegant painted furniture with electric brilliance. I turned to the shelves of the bookcase with its modern novels and new detective stories in yellow jackets. Among Mano's leisure reading, I found other titles and books that I must open. Some were new to me and others were familiar. There was Lady Jenny again, dismayed in the moment when her last silken covering was ripped apart by barbarian hands. There was the slum-child insolence in Elaine Cox's face, even as the goaler measured his cane across her bare schoolgirl bottom. At the back of this volume, in a specially designed pocket, were two photographs taken of her.

Only afterwards did I suspect that someone might have watched me as I discovered these treasures. If so, my actions seemed to inspire further confidence. I had only to await the rendezvous with Sharon and Louise before my vision of the Villa Rosa became a reality.

## Margarita

Most of the girls from France or Germany, Spain or Italy held no interest for me during my days at the *pensionnat*. I thought of Sharon and Louise, whom I had so far seen only in a photograph that did them little justice. Mano's protégée, Miss Woodward, ran his establishment on a simple system. Mornings were occupied by instruction, afternoons by leisure. Leisure was a matter of the girls sprawling on the warm pebbles or sand in their swimwear or wandering casually dressed among the shops and boutiques of the town.

I knew that one of the girls, a Spanish student named Margarita, was to be the companion of Sharon and Louise on their journey. She was a "servant" only in title. Margarita was not trained as a lady's maid. She was one of those students who pays her way by acting as a helper in the family while learning the language of her hosts at the same time.

I knew all this but I do not think I was truly conscious of Margarita's appeal until I happened to catch sight of her in the street one afternoon. Separated from most of the

others, the young senorita's assertive qualities seemed more distinctive. Margarita was a forceful and good-looking Spanish girl of seventeen or so whom one could imagine doing well in her studies. I understood—from overheard remarks by the other students—that she already had eyes for Alicia, a younger gipsy-like Italian girl, loud and impudent but undeniably pretty.

I had been to buy cigarettes in the town. In the Terminus Road that led from the sea, I noticed several girls and one or two boy-friends walking in a row ahead of me. There was something about one of the girls that held my attention. It was the slight seductive fullness of her figure in dark blue sweater and the denim smoothness of tight pants. I could see nothing of her face yet, only the sleek black hair swept back plainly to cluster below her collar. As I overtook the group, I saw a badge with the word "España" and her name, "Margarita," on the rucksack she was carrying on her back. Also written upon it in a wistful scrawl were the words "Villa Rosa." Then I passed and glanced back. I recognised the strong features of her Hispanic-tan face, the tall brow, the rounded chin and firm mouth, the dark eyes behind big-framed summer glasses, the dark hair combed back clear to give her a stronger and nobler look to her gaze.

Margarita was certainly not the most beautiful girl I had ever seen. Yet there was something in her look, and even in the strong full shape of her thighs and backside as the smoothly tightened denim pants displayed her. How did I know from the start that here was a girl of seventeen or eighteen from whom her own sex had more to fear than from the most depraved of male admirers? I cannot explain it but I knew it was so.

And what of Alicia, two years younger than this Spanish martinet? She was not with Margarita and her friends when

I encountered them. But most of Mano's girls had just got off the bus nearby and were in that part of the town. It was when I came out of the shop again that I noticed her with two or three other Italian youngsters at a telephone kiosk.

Alicia was a perfect foil for Margarita's dignity and resolute manner. The Italian youngster was pouting and sly, pretty and petulant, impudent and furtive. She had the pert little nose, rounded face and dark eyes of a teaser. Her olive skin had a Neapolitan tan and her dark hair was combed back in an artfully disordered mane of little curls. Her figure was trimmer and less developed than Margarita's, though the white cotton of her beach-pants fitted tight enough and her brown jacket was short enough to show her budding promise. On her rucksack, near the name "Alicia," was that same carefully-lettered destination, "Villa Rosa."

There was no evidence that any of the other girls had ever written those words. What was it that fitted Margarita and Alicia for the Villa Rosa? Was it chance that made me stop and watch these two girls among all the others? I think, subconsciously, I must have sensed a connection between them before. On that afternoon, however, I did not see them together nor even at the same time. I paused and studied Alicia with her friends, the end of a pencil touched to her lips in an almost childish sulky manner. I could not prove that she or Margarita had relieved their natural passions with any of the other girls or boys. And yet I knew it was so.

It was not only intuition, of course. These foreign girls make a display of vigorous and lascivious behavior while free from the restraints of their own people. There is no doubt in my mind that a girl who leaves her own country will behave with greater freedom and even randiness in another. Where she is not known and where she will suffer

none of the reproaches that would attend her in her home town, why should she care what people think of her? In addition, there was the free and easy atmosphere of the seaside town in summer. Would Alicia be permitted by her family to stand slack-hipped on street-corners at home like a little whore? I thought not. As for Margarita, it was impossible to imagine her swaggering through the evening paseo of the Spanish bourgeoisie in the hip-snug pants as she did in this resort-town. At her age, however, one expected such moral collisions between innocence and novelty. And so it was with Alicia, too.

How their experience of mankind might begin, I could not say. Margarita's warmer Mediterranean tan would prove as irresistible to the pale Anglo-Saxon as Alicia's olive-skinned pertness. The northern races can never resist exploring the warm-skinned beauty of teenage Latin girls who come their way. Alicia would attract any man who preferred such tawny-skinned beauty at its first ripening.

I spied upon the two girls. There are those who despise and deplore voyeurism. Yet how is life to be learned apart from observation? I noticed Margarita and Alicia casually for a few more days—and learnt very little from them. But my instincts about them seemed to me as sure as they had been in the case of Trish and the girls at the bookshop. My reward came soon after my first interest in them. Appropriately, I was in company with Mano.

It was a fine afternoon in the first week of July, a day that showed the early summer at its most agreeable. The tide was slack, its waves breaking as a distant glitter of warm light. The long beaches lay quiet below us, despite the holiday folk who clustered far off by the pier. The downland was peaceful and sunny above the town, the sheep grazing among bushes of yellow gorse.

The house itself stood above an unfrequented stretch of

beach with a private path leading down to it. Where the promenade ends and the white cliffs begin, the pebble beach is hardly accessible to the public, even at low tide when the shelves of rocks and their mysterious pools are exposed. I had decided to break my routine by an hour's walk down there. Mano came with me, discussing his plans for what remained of the summer after his female pupils had gone home. Without intending it, we found ourselves following Margarita down the path. She had not the least suspicion of this. She wore the dark singlet, the canvas shoes with their rubber soles, and the pants that fitted tight and smooth on the suggestive weight of her hips and thighs.

Presently we parted company a little from the Spanish girl. She went down to the beach where long wooden groins divided the shelves of rock and enclaves of sand left uncovered by the tide. Mano and I took the path at the foot of the downland, running along the shore a little above the pebbles of the beach. Margarita had no idea that we were there, so close but unseen. She set down the canvas bag and stretched out on the pebbles to bask in the sun. She was wearing her big-lensed summer glasses and the sleek beauty of her dark hair was once again swept back from the tall brow and the firm young face.

We sat and watched her, not taking much notice of her as yet, sufficiently concealed by a thicket of gorse at the edge of the low chalk cliff. Purple sunbursts of clover shone through the tall nodding heads of the summer grass. There was a deep silence broken from time to time by the busy rhythm of grasshoppers among the fronds of dried seeds. The sun was high in a pale hot azure. Far off the waves of the channel glittered and broke in sighs on the damp sand of the lower beach. Margarita drew a book

from her rucksack and prepared to improve her acquaintance with the English language.

She looked up from time to time, as if she expected to see someone else. There was no one. The colour of the afternoon sky grew more intense. Overhead the blue canopy seemed deeper and more remote. Hot light caught the sea with a molten silver. I looked aside, hardly for a minute, discussing with Mano my ideas for a school of his kind in the winter city. My friend interrupted me silently by a significant touch on the arm. His eyes directed my gaze to one side. When I turned to where Margarita was lying, the scene had changed and a strange little drama had begun.

Alicia stood over her uncertainly, perhaps a little timidly. The Italian girl was as I had seen her with her friends by the telephones, dressed again in white pants and short brown jacket. She was posing before Margarita in the same manner of a slack-hipped little Neapolitan whore, one knee bent forward, the pert little cheeks of Alicia's bottom contorted so that one was high and round, the other low and slack. That mass of dark little curls, forming an aureole round her face and clustering on her shoulders, was as I had seen it when she was with her friends by the telephones in town.

Margarita looked up from her reading. There was a pause. Heat and silence prevailed over the glittering water and shimmering cliffs. Alicia spoke to her as she stood there but without looking down at the older girl. Her pretty, petulant face, her troubled dark-eyed glances, were directed away. It was as if the young Italian pupil could see something I could not.

"They would make a fine couple of servant-girls for the Villa Rosa," Mano said. "We should find masters for them easily once they had been taught to obey."

I looked at him but Mano seemed lost in his own thoughts. One hears so much nowadays about "white slavery" that the topic is little more than a joke. But the joke conceals a nervous recognition of reality. The "closed houses" of Cairo or Buenos Aires, the latter-day harem of an Arabian businessman who is equally at home in Rabat or the Faubourg St. Germain exist in fact. Read the papers. See the tragic fate of the French girl, "Madame Fahmy," sodomised by her new Egyptian husband until she could stand it no more and shot him dead in London's Savoy Hotel.

Sitting on the downland cliff, I thought that the Golden Arrow, its Pullman coaches speeding between London and Paris, the romance of the Orient Express to Venice, the *Alcantara* and those buff-funnelled liners crossing the south Atlantic to Argentina and Brazil carry their cargoes of well-dressed girls on their way to perfumed bondage. For the less fortunate, it may be a cramped cabin in a fetid steamer, a crossing to Algiers or Oran on the Messageries Nationales paquebot, then the flies and tyranny of a casbah brothel, hard use and beating. No one who has seen the world of our time can doubt the reality of the trade. Whether there was a hint of it about the Villa Rosa I could not yet say.

As if commanded by Margarita, Alicia knelt down and took off her brown jacket. She dropped her hands to her waist and I saw that she was undoing her pants. The Spanish girl sat up and watched her, as though to see that her orders were obeyed. Alicia turned a little awkwardly on her side and began to push her white beach-pants down with her knickers inside them. I caught a glimpse of bare fledgling hips and thighs that had an olive-skinned Neapolitan warmth to them.

"Little whores like Alicia grow up quickly in such

countries as hers," said Mano softly. I knew from the tone of his voice that he would not interfere with the furtive playing of the two girls with one another. Alicia and Margarita were under his roof for three weeks or so. It was nothing to him if they carried away the consequences of their lascivious conduct.

Margarita sat up, her firm Spanish face with its sweep of dark hair a study in command. Beside her lay Alicia, naked except for a white blouse that did little more than cover her shoulders and ribs. Her rounded young face and mass of dark ringlets had a warm and brooding sensuality.

Alicia turned over with her back to Margarita and put her hands behind her with her wrists pressed rather awkwardly together. The Spanish girl took a silk scarf from the rucksack and tied the Italian youngster's wrists firmly together behind her back. Then she produced a length of cord, about the thickness used to hold the weights of sash-windows. She began to truss Alicia round the loins and hips. First she looped the white cord round the younger girl's bare brown waist. She drew it tight down Alicia's belly, through the new growth of dark hair at the triangle of her loins. Still holding it taut, she tensed the cord back between the Italian girl's thighs and up between the pretty olive-skinned curves of Alicia's bottom-cheeks until she could tie it to the looped cord at the back of her waist.

Alicia offered no resistance to being tied up like this. Quite the contrary. I saw her cock one leg a little so that Margarita could pull the cord back. Alicia even stuck her impudent little Italian bottom out so that the cord could be pulled up tighter between its cheeks. Now Margarita used the rest of its length, drawing it down between Alicia's bum-cheeks, forward under her legs and up her belly. She

tied it at the front of the waist and knotted its end to the front of the younger girl's belt.

Alicia was more securely captive on this sunlit beach than if she had been locked in a prison cell. Yet she still did not seem to mind. Though it was charming to see her pretty Italian thighs and buttocks laid bare in such a defenceless posture, I could not understand the purpose of it. Mano seemed not the least surprised at what was going on. When he offered an explanation, he spoke as casually as ever.

“Lesbianism has a more perverse flavour in countries like theirs. The women in the tobacco factories of Spain will sometimes rape a new girl as her initiation. And they will do it without hesitation to punish her if they think she has tried to steal their man. Here we think such things impossible unless they happen between man and woman.”

But was it lesbianism? Margarita lay down facing her companion but without quite touching her. She watched her closely, leaving Alicia to twist a little with her wrists tied behind her back and her legs and arse trussed up. Trying to see the purpose of it, I supposed the Italian youngster must have enjoyed the feeling of being undressed with her girl-friend and that she might have found pleasure in the friction of the cord against her sex by writhing on it.

Whatever the explanation, one could not doubt that Alicia enjoyed being tied up. Nor could I doubt that Margarita enjoyed doing it to her. It was half-way between a child's game and a bedroom excitement. In some respects it seemed like the conflict of enforced chastity and sexual banditry in just those proportions which conjure up the vices of village life in the stony hills of southern Europe.

Though Alicia allowed herself to be undressed and tied

up, the two girls did nothing that was properly sexual. They performed their ritual because they knew it excited them—but without knowing quite why it did. In that respect, even Margarita at seventeen or eighteen seemed unaware of the profound erotic truths of her age.

They were content to lie together, Alicia now in the Spanish girl's arms as Margarita moved closer and fondled her a little. Then a struggling began, or so it seemed. It was partly an amorous rubbing together, Alicia's nudity against Margarita's jeans and sweater. And it was partly like a wrestling match. Alicia worked herself hard against the cords that trussed up her loins and hips. Margarita sought out the younger girl's lips and worried them with quick, sharp kisses.

Alicia was one of the youngest beginners in the art of love that summer while Margarita had a year or two of seniority in sports of this kind. They went at it hard for about fifteen or twenty minutes. The pretty little cheeks of Alicia's bottom with their warm Neapolitan tan already had the first hint of an Italian woman's swaggering voluptuousness as she writhed. They shone presently with a light and suggestive sweat of exertion.

It ended almost as suddenly and as inexplicably as it began. From such a distance, I could not tell if either of the girls had brought herself off. I think Alicia may have done—and I think it was perhaps Margarita's pleasure to have her a prisoner like this and to make her do so. They lay still for a moment. At last, Margarita began to untie the Italian youngster and Alicia pulled on her underpants and white cotton trousers. I think they were suddenly aware that someone might be coming along the beach. Then they lay down again, calm and motionless as if asleep. At length Margarita sat up and said something, no doubt about the time. They got up, lifted their rucksacks

on their backs, and sauntered indolently up the path from the beach to the house.

Neither Mano nor I revealed to the girls what we had seen. There was no purpose in that. But I asked Mano why he thought the Spanish teenager would be so welcome at the Villa Rosa.

“Because Margarita has the makings of a girl who can be a hard and vindictive young bitch with other women,” he said. “That is rarer than you think. Margarita’s interest is in her own sex, not in men.”

My curiosity about the Villa Rosa was still unsatisfied. That evening I asked why nothing had been said about the duty of escorting three girls to Carailac when the card advertising the Villa Rosa appeared in the bookshop window. Mano smiled.

“I cannot imagine that Anton de Xantra would advertise for guests in quite that way. On the other hand, you will be three times welcome there if you can take Margarita and the other two girls with you.”

“I may regret agreeing to take them.”

Mano smiled.

“I think you will find that Margarita is a perfect match for Sharon and Louise.”

I laughed at this but Mano was entirely serious again now.

“These things are not left to chance,” he said. “Carailac is a place where girls are taken when there are no impediments—when they may be unaccounted for without undue inquiries. You see? Margarita’s family background is of that sort. She is a ward of the Spanish state. The reasons are complicated but her situation is convenient.”

“Did she agree? If I am to escort her, I should like to know what to expect.”

“It has been arranged for her. She makes no complaint.

Few girls of her kind would choose to go back to institutions where the Spanish state holds its wards like prisoners."

That night we said no more on the subject. It was the next evening when he spoke of it again.

"Anton de Xantra has the Villa Rosa for the rest of the season. I know him well. There are several girls to be escorted there by boat and car from England. By taking Margarita and the other two girls into your care, you will be a most welcome guest. Four men and their female companions make up the party at the Villa Rosa. The expenses are moderate enough when shared between them. On this occasion there will only be three of us. But Jenny who is mistress here will be mistress of the girls there. She will bring Alicia with her, when the time comes. Ça va mieux comme ça."

I did not quite believe all this. That night I thought again of the absurd romances and novelettes with their tales of beautiful girls decoyed into white slavery at Tangier or Rio, or carried off to the harems of oriental despots. Of course no sensible person believes such extravagances. Yet every sensible person also knows that there is a truth behind the fiction. As I drifted to sleep, I felt a growing sense that I had been chosen to escort Margarita, as well as Louise and Sharon, because I was "safe." I was unknown to the vigilance of the law—and unsuspected. The authorities would see nothing amiss in the three girls being in my company. But other faces were more familiar to the uniformed officials and their plain-clothes colleagues at Dover or Folkestone, Calais or Ostend. Mano or his friend Anton de Xantra would not have passed through ports and controls so easily with their beautiful cargo. Such was my suspicion. But as yet the Villa Rosa was a pleasant fantasy. I would form my judgment in the light of experience.

It was after breakfast next day when Mano came to me with an envelope and four slips of paper.

“The tickets for your crossing tomorrow,” he said. “One Lagonda tourer and four passengers. Jenny has gone to fetch Louise and Sharon, so that she can put them under your care at the cross-channel ferry. I shall follow in a week or so. Jenny will bring Alicia at the end of the month. You see? Three masters and a mistress. Four girls. One a-piece. And two shopgirls that Anton de Xantra employs, Sian and Helyn. I think we shall find the tedium of the summer bearable.”

He spoke as if he was making a joke of the whole thing, pretending there would be lechery and impropriety when the truth was there would be none. And yet I knew he was not joking. True, I heard the amusement in Mano’s voice. But I also saw the look in his eyes when he spoke of the girls and what was intended for them.

That night I slept little. Watching the lighthouse beam sweep across the curtains, I tried to recall the dreams I had had of Carailac. I told myself that the reality must prove to be different, but no less stimulating.

## Amours de Voyage

Miss Woodward was waiting for me at Southampton as I parked the open tourer with its long sleek chassis on the quayside in the last darkness of the summer night. We were shown to the walnut-panelled first-class day-cabin booked for our crossing, while the luggage and the car were swung into the ship's hold. I had scarcely made the acquaintance of Sharon and Louise when visitors were ordered ashore and the red-funnelled French steamer cast off from its berth by the long sheds of the Ocean Terminal. There would be time enough for getting to know the two girls. With Margarita, they went down to the cabin, leaving me on deck by the ship's rail. For me, the channel crossing and the journey through France was rich in memories and images of earlier travels.

In a misty light of early summer morning, the engines of the *Ile de la Cité* beat across the slack calm of Southampton Water. From the jetties below wooded cliffs the first little yachts with their butterfly sails were putting out into the warm calm of the summer day. Elsewhere, the little white houses of Lyminster and Yarmouth were just wak-

ing. In silk-curtained bedrooms the pale sunlight caught the coloured-glass fantasy of Lalique dressing-table sets, the dull shagreen leather of ornamental boxes. Beyond expensively smooth lawns and yew hedges, behind French windows, the new light shimmered in cocktail cabinets lined with mirror-glass. It was warm already. Two of the little yachts that had put out into the estuary were tacking about, becalmed in the stillness. From one of them came the low melodious wail of American jazz.

The screws of the channel steamer throbbed slowly past the great Atlantic leviathans, their tall sides and giant funnels touched with rust after months of the crossing from New York. There was a blast from the siren on the firebox-red funnel of the *Ile de la Cité* as she cleared the muddy shore line and rode the stronger tide of the open sea. Two sailors, locking the winch, exchanged a few words of demotic French. Here and there in the passageways below, by the saloon and the bureau de change, there was a scent of rich roasted cigarette-tobacco—Gaulloise and Gitanes—flakes of dark leaf in blue packets. The burnt fumes of it brought images of France to one's mind. The drab cement-dusted port of Le Havre. The Trocadéro terrace overlooking the river and the Champ de Mars beyond the Eiffel Tower. The deep gorges of the Tarn or the Dordogne with their rust-coloured earth. The moonlit cities of the eastern frontier with their pale-faced women in dark velvet.

Even by day one takes a cabin for the Cherbourg crossing. Yet I spent much of the time walking the deck and the passenger lounges. In the long saloon and the steamer's forward bar, the walls between the portholes were hung with framed posters. Wagons-Lits Cooks in the plain blocked colours of Cassandre, the allure of Biarritz or Deauville in a child's vision of sea and gulls and sunlit sand. In the bars of Nice and Mentone, women in the heavy pearl-white silk

of pyjama-suits coiled their hips on the chromium-legged bar-stools and drank Pernod or St. Raphael at the end of a waking night.

A crossing of this kind gives one an hour or two to sum up the other members of the party. Margarita was at a disadvantage in the presence of Sharon and Louise, who were like conspirators in their closeness to one another. The Spanish girl was the odd one out. She looked it in appearance and the other two made her feel it.

As for Sharon and Louise, I summed them up carefully, knowing that they were to be under my care for a long time to come. They were both about eighteen years old but neither had yet reached the sophistication of pearl-white pyjama-suits in heavy silk. They wore the rough-and-ready clothes that girls who are not quite women choose for a channel crossing. They were almost old enough to have been young women. Yet they still had the manner and even the puppy-fleshed look of a pair of adolescents.

Sharon was the taller of the couple, though she was no more than average height. She was dressed in a pair of tight denim pants and a flower-print blouse. She appeared a fair-skinned and soft-figured teenager. Her brown hair had been coloured black as if to match her friend's and seemed to overlap her collar by just a few inches. This intensified the pale rounded beauty of her face.

Though casually dressed, Sharon had made some effort to look more glamorous. One could sense the sweet air of perfume as she brushed past. Her hair had surely been coloured black but it was worn in a more elegant coiffure. She had gathered it back and tied it with a red and blue silk scarf on the crown of her head so that it fell in a pretty fan-shaped tail a few inches below her collar. This left her face and her ears well-exposed, as well as showing the

beauty of Sharon's bare elegant neck. The fringe on her forehead was reduced to a mere lick of dark hair.

The full pale oval of her face that might have looked rather dull at sixteen or seventeen was now transformed. Her face seemed thinner and her brow taller. Seen in profile the points of her cheekbones were rounded, her nose straight but demure. There was a long flat line to her cheeks which, combined with the slight ellipse of her brown eyes, gave a slavic or even oriental hint to her glance. She had made-up her face with a little cream and there was a heightened blush of rouge discreetly applied to her cheekbones. Her black hair and the pale painted beauty of her rounded face suggested the look of a Chinese doll.

She was more self-conscious about the puppyish adolescent softness of her figure. The tight blue denim of her pants moulded the slight fatness of Sharon's bottom-cheeks. She left her blouse-tail pulled out to cover her jeans-seat, as if from a ladylike prudence at the sight she might offer! I guessed that when studied by a man, Sharon's response varied. Sometimes there might be doubt in her brown eyes and a calculated turning away of the pale oval beauty of her face. At other times there would be a self-confident indifference to her middle-aged admirers.

Louise was the shorter of the two, the collar length of her fringed dark hair framing a firm and rather hard young face. The jut of chin and the bold little nose suggested a certain independence and disdain. Both girls had the languid and lazy manner of voluptuous airless afternoons in curtained bedrooms. They had a sensual pallor and the softness of their figures suggested self-indulgence and lack of exercise. Though Louise lacked Sharon's height, she was certainly not petite. Like Sharon the smooth tightness of her blue jeans showed a little surplus weight in her young

thighs. At the tight seat of her blue jeans one could see that Louise's bottom was a little too big for her height.

I watched these two girls carefully on the Cherbourg crossing. They did not show the open resentment of adult company that they might have done a year or two earlier. At lunch in the first-class dining-saloon, the white linen and cut glass caught the brilliance of the marine sun, reflected through the windows from the roll of channel waves. Sharon and Louise talked eagerly and pleasantly, but only to each other. As the wine was poured and the polished cutlery set before them, they affected to ignore me. The truth was that they talked loudly to one another, but glanced quickly at me from time to time as if to see what I thought of their conversation.

There was nothing surprising in that. I had two girls of eighteen in my care who were at that most difficult stage of abandoning childhood for ever and committing themselves to the adult world. They were exhilarated. One heard that in their chatter. But they were also frightened. The combination of these emotions and the thrill of the present voyage left them overwrought.

As the sun passed its zenith and the grey horizon-image of the French coast appeared, the sea turned from its harsh morning-blue to a deeper bottle-green. The wash of the steamer churned away behind us in a sparkling and wind-blown foam. The wing-rattle and cackle of gulls kept us company, riding almost motionlessly beside the ship's rail or in the warmth above the shimmering heat of the funnel.

Cherbourg on a summer afternoon was still a port of grey cement and dusty streets, the dark shell of the Gare Maritime busy with passengers from Paris waiting to join the liner for New York. The open Lagonda bumped over the railroad tracks and tram-lines of the docks, following

the long avenue of concrete houses and dusty trees to the hill that winds south from the port.

The powerful engine of the open tourer purred like the wings of a moth in the warm slipstream of the Normandy landscape. Our journey through France to the blue mill-pond ocean at Carailac in the latter half of summer had begun. The rest of the warm afternoon was spent on the switchback roads of the Normandy *bocage*. The route was straight and clear for miles ahead, climbing and dipping out of sight again across the shimmering heat of the hills. Scattered farms and grey roadside villages lay at the foot of thickly-wooded slopes. The long fields of dairy herds sloped down to quiet valleys and the banks of deserted rivers. Far ahead on a hill-top, from the centre of a prosperous market-town with its provincial garrison walls, rose twin cathedral-like spires of the new gothic revival. Its storeyed windows stood row upon row like the flank of a walled fortress.

The road through Normandy seems measured by the penitential monuments of 19th century gothic, the country churches in granite or tide-washed stone, the severity of the exterior contrasting with the candle-lit colour of the Catholic revival inside. The Place de l'Église in the towns themselves stands high with its iron-railed view of well-planted fields below stretching to distant wooded hills.

Of all European scenery, that of France is the most suggestive of passion, possession, and even cruelty. Anjou and the Loire, the flat and lonely pastures of the western Vendée, the deep river gorges beyond Bordeaux are rich in ancient romance of whipped brides and virgins put to rape. It was not Margarita with her Spanish tan but the pale-skinned Sharon and Louise whom one imagined thrashed and penetrated while the flame-light played on the baronial vaulting of the dungeon ceiling. The drama of tyranny

exercised upon two such wilful pupils promised a thrilling climax.

That last thought was present to me, however little, each time that we passed the high-walled courtyard of a manor house with its round corner-tower and arched gates behind which the watchdogs barked.

Sharon and Louise. The promise of what might be possible with two girl-friends of their sort plagued me for the rest of the day. From time to time I glanced at them in the mirror. I caught smiles and movements which stopped the instant they thought they were being looked at.

In my imagination I saw the scenes of my first journey through France, many years before. A sleepless night on the express from Paris-Austerlitz to the Atlantic frontier of Spain at Irun. I would not have slept, even had it been possible. I preferred that waking dream of vast moonlit pasture beyond Orléans. A timbered hunting-lodge or stone manor-house shown briefly among dark trees. The streets and tunnels of an unknown city and a wide bridge over a commercial river. The dark pride of a hilltop fortress, a memorial to war and slaughter on the plains at its foot. How often in the flames of the torches had the high note of a girl's frenzy risen and died within those massive walls as the tormentor drew back from her a little and studied his handiwork?

The first light of evening now touched the vast expanse of the sunlit western sky as we turned off the road towards Coutances. The land was flatter here, the fields lined with a silvered quiver of poplar, hushing the wind in their branches. There were ancient farms of meal-coloured stone, iron rings set in the inner walls where footsteps sounded softly as water-drops.

The first gloaming of moth and bat gathered in the white beams of the headlamps as we approached the village. On

its outskirts, the high shape of a plain grey wall enclosed the cemetery. The drab stonework was patched by the tattered posters, faded by months of sun and rain. Official proclamations in black letter were overlaid by a circus tableau with tigers and dancers, announcements of farm sales and horse-races.

The Hôtel de la Poste was a tall timbered building on the broad road westward through the clustered dwellings of the village. It was a place of dark faces and suspicious glances. The uniformed girls in their black dresses and white aprons attended the tables of the *salle à manger* with peasant reserve and brusqueness.

This oak-beamed dining-room, its red-shaded lamps glowing on white linen and the dark bottles of *cru bourgeois*, looked across the road to the west. On the far side stood a broken tower and a gatehouse. In the remains of this castle a poet of the Third Republic had made his home. His books were inflamed by the brandy and satanism in his blood. His brain was a caserne of virgins put to martyrdom in sealed rooms. Adulteries glimpsed at night through parted curtains, by travellers in strange towns. Candle-wax on a nude woman's thighs as she sprawled naked at dawn among the wreckage of a banquet table.

There is a luxury and well-being in the first night's dinner, even in the most ordinary commercial hotel in a little French town. One finds style without excess. The bedroom corridors are uneven, their thin carpeting on ancient boarding. Prints of old barbarities hang on the walls of the wax-scented bedrooms themselves. Beyond deep window recesses the dark-panelled dining-rooms sound to the slow beat of a tall clock made by a country craftsman in Napoleon's time. The dark red walls are hung with the deep polished copper of old cooking pans. A bottle of *vin ordinaire* in such places tastes like Chambertin.

When dinner was over I retired to my room with its old-fashioned bed and the deep comfort of a feather-mattress. There were three bedrooms in a row, divided by bathrooms, looking out towards the fringe of poplar trees and the twilight glimmer of the lake. A verandah ran along outside above the yard at the rear of the hotel. From below, as I stood there and smoked a cigar, I heard the clatter of the kitchens and the banging of doors as the dinner was cleared away and the doors were bolted for the night. The regime in all the hotels of provincial France seems the same. Evening exists in order that dinner may be eaten in the proper style. When that is done, there is to be no loitering, no lounging in the foyer. The true French hotel, its clientele made up of commercial travellers and government inspectors, or middle-aged couples travelling on family business, does not provide what the world calls "public rooms." After dinner, the tables are cleared and the guests despatched to their rooms. They may read, make love, do as they please. But downstairs the doors are closed and the lights turned off. The business of the day is finished.

I stood in the fragrance of dog-roses and wall-flowers rising from the yard and the hedges of the little garden-plots beyond the fence. By this time the dusk had turned the trees to black. A flush of starlight gleamed upon the grey mirror-shards of tranquil river backwaters. Fields of young wheat and grass lay pale in this luminescence as the pastures of the moon. Beyond the bulk of the building itself, a car passed from time to time, a white beam of light swinging across the dark sky as its tyres swished through the single street of the village, the engine droning away towards St. Lo, Rouen, or Paris. A glow of light, tinted pink by the curtains, showed in the rooms of my companions. Did I spy on them or not? If they left a chink

in their curtains, were they to blame or was I for what I saw?

Margarita was innocently employed. There was an alcove in her room with a long mirror, a basin, and a bidet. She stood before the glass in her tight denim pants and black sweater. Watching herself, as if it were another girl obeying her commands, she drew up the waist of the black sweater and pulled it off over her head. Her face in the mirror was firm and direct, the dark eyes meeting their own reflection with a fierce intensity. She held her own gaze for a moment, perhaps admiring the Spanish beauty of her wide-boned cheeks, tall brow, the resolve in her mouth and chin. Yet it took only a smile or a little softening of her expression to show a natural beauty in the firm lines of Margarita's face. She was the type of Spanish girl who would have appealed to a sculptor of the academic school or a painter of social reality.

Margarita brushed her black hair clear of her tall tan forehead and began to undo herself at the waist. She unfastened the brown leather belt which strained the smooth denim of the jeans so tight over her hips and backside that a sheaf of little creases radiated from the parting of her legs. Then she undid the jeans and wriggled the denim down her hips and thighs, side to side, until it fell to her ankles in an untidy tangle of cloth. She kicked it clear of her feet and returned her gaze to the mirror.

I looked to see if Margarita had been wearing any knickers under her jeans. I caught just a sight of the white cotton in the tangle of her discarded jeans and knew that she had stripped down jeans and underpants simultaneously. In other words, she behaved like a normal girl of her sort, not like a romantic heroine or striptease artist peeling off a layer at a time.

To see Margarita standing naked before her washroom

mirror like this was to find the qualities of her mind reflected in her figure. She was a well-built girl, her back and shoulders warm with the tan of Barcelona or Valencia. Her breasts had a proud upward thrust and her belly was lightly-muscled. Her back was finely shaped and sleek, the olive-skinned cheeks of Margarita's bottom being a little heavy and therefore lascivious in their appearance. Her thighs had the same look, which suggested strength and lassitude at the same time.

She watched herself for a moment more, then reached for the soap and ran some water. Beginning at her shoulders, she spread the sheen of wet soapiness over and down her body. Her hands fondled her breasts until, as she drew them away, the mirror betrayed the erection of her nipples. Her fingers returned to these hard yet sensitive buttons of flesh, which she excited further without a change of expression on her face. There was no shame in Margarita, only a frank curiosity about her own body and the pleasant sensations of such caressing.

Holding the soap in her left hand, she smoothed her right palm down her belly in a slow circling rhythm of comfort. When the lather shone upon it she began to work it into the dark triangle of her hair which crowned her sex. At that point she looked away from the mirror. Was it embarrassment at what she was doing to herself? Or did Margarita prefer to imagine that it was the hand of some boy-friend, or even some idol of the movie screen, doing this to her?

Still looking away from the mirror, head down like a little girl just scolded by her teacher, Margarita shifted her knees apart a little. Her fingers slowly spread the sheen of lather up the inner surfaces of her thighs. A warm-blooded Spanish girl of seventeen or eighteen masturbates impetuously—and so it was with Margarita. As I watched her, she

used her second hand. It spread the wet sheen of soapy slipperiness over the warm hispanic tan of Margarita's bottom-cheeks, the small of her back and the rear of her thighs. Then it seemed that she needed that hand to support herself as she manualised with a muted resonance of wet flesh between her legs.

At last she looked up, the black hair just long enough to touch her shoulders as it spread along them at the back. Her knees were pressed tight and the slight heaviness of Margarita's sallow buttocks clenched together, as if to imprison a delicious surge of erotic excitement. I waited a moment to see what she would do. Without bothering to reach for the towel, still sleek with moisture from waist to knees, she stretched out on the bed. She lay there naked, on her side, facing the mirror and with her back to the window.

Even had I not been able to see her face in the mirror, as well as the way she plagued herself with her busy fingers between her thighs, the rear view of this naked Spanish student-girl would have betrayed her guilty self-indulgence.

The sleek and soapy-wet seat gave a smooth and flawless gloss to the paler olive-skinned tan of Margarita's rear contours, making her show the heavy swell of her backside most suggestively. On the curve of the Spanish girl's smooth rear cheeks the film of moisture caught the light with a sheen like silk. Wet and sleek, the olive-skinned gloss gave a suggestively fuller and fatter look to the cheeks of Margarita's sallow-tanned bottom-cheeks.

The moist gleam was like a pair of translucent tights or panties on the erotic double-cheeked swell of the Spanish girl's backside. It exaggerated their warm fullness and glistened soapily in the suggestive anus-crack between them. Now the tan-skinned cheek-swell of Margarita's seventeen-year-old arse began tensing and slackening in a

slow, languorous rhythm. Her firm lazy thighs whispered together. A girl of Margarita's kind, thinking herself alone in such a wanton mood, innocently offers the most intimate glimpse between the rear of her legs as she writhes with languid self-indulgence. I saw her fingers working back, rubbing and squeezing, stroking and fondling. There was a sense of conquest in being able to enjoy her most private erotic moments, unknown to Margarita, as this well-built Latin girl caressed herself. Margarita masturbated out of pure need, reflecting the passionate and yearning trait in her character. But the society from which she came afforded her no other expression than this. Even this was morally forbidden. Had Margarita been caught at home, making love to herself, the most vindictive punishments would have been devised for her. These would not have been mitigated merely because she was seventeen or eighteen and her natural passions well-developed.

She had no idea that anyone had ever watched her. So long as she was under my supervision, Margarita had no need to fear the consequences of being spied upon. I was determined to let her continue for my own pleasure as well as for her own, wanting her to get tantalisingly close to her climax before I would think of intervening. In such a state, Margarita would have little choice but to submit as she felt another hand covering her own. Glossy and suggestive, the sleek wetness of the soap endowed the tan-skin cheeks of Margarita's bottom with that fuller and fatter appearance. This made the swelling and rounding of her young back-side extremely seductive as she squirmed and panted softly. She was a strong proud girl who thought a lot of herself. I could not help smiling as I tried to imagine what her response would be when she discovered that she had offered this display of self-caressing between her thighs and that the man who watched her had greatly enjoyed the

bottom-cheek swelling and writhing, the urgent tightening, the trembling and whimpering of pleasure, the desperate riding of her loins upon her own busy fingers. I doubted if she had the equanimity to accept this as a man's natural response.

Her movements gained speed and vigor. It seemed that Margarita was now frantic to finish herself off. I heard the hard and rhythmic creak of the bed's wooden frame as her hips bucked hard against the mattress. There was a pause as she turned on her back, knees hugged up to her breasts and fingers playing rapidly on the exposed underside of her sex. At last she turned her face aside and bit the pillow hard between her teeth. The fingers went faster. The bed creaked in a quicker but erratic rhythm. There was a shuddering, a muffled groan. Her hand fell limp to one side and she extended the fingers as if to ease the strain in them. Her legs slid down and she let them lie apart. The stillness in the room was all the more potent for being so sudden. Margarita had had her orgasm at last.

Without getting up from the bed, she reached for the towel. It was needed to wipe off the last of the soapy moisture as well as the slipperiness between her legs. Then she reached again, drawing on the slinky black silk of her brief pyjamas. There was a low cut top with shoulder straps, ending at her waist in a frill. Below that she had only a tight and brief pair of panties, which clung all the tighter because of the perfumed dampness of her rear-cheek flesh that the towel had not quite removed.

She slid a silver clip back into her dark hair to keep it from her face. Then she turned over again in the warm room, lying once more with her back to the window. She lay uncovered on the bed, her hands clasped between her thighs, for comfort rather than arousal. I watched her for a moment more, her bare legs and the swell of Margarita's

bottom-cheeks in the tight slinkiness of her black panties. The two rear cheeks themselves, as well as Margarita's bottom-crack and the soft flesh of her sex between the rear of her thighs, were presented most suggestively. I could quite understand why men and women would enjoy watching Margarita masturbate but would, nonetheless, want to whip her for it afterwards.

I went to bed, my mind occupied by these moral paradoxes before I fell sleep. I did not ponder them for too long. The next day's journey was a long one and we were to make an early start. Croissants and coffee were ready for us in the breakfast-room of the hotel by eight o'clock. I looked at Margarita as she dipped her croissant into the bowl-like cup of strong coffee. She was quiet and content, compared with the overstrung and resentful conduct of Sharon and Louise. It was true that she showed a certain pride of young Spanish womanhood but that was preferable to the self-regarding indifference of Sharon and Louise towards the rest of the world.

While the girls went back upstairs to do the things that girls do on these occasions, I lit a cigarette from a first packet of Gitanes and inhaled the fragrance of France.

In the panelled annexe of the hotel bar, where breakfast is served before the travellers depart, a small painting on the wall commemorates imperial commerce. Two negroes in singlets and straw hats are rowing across a harbour from a vessel's loading-port, caught energetically in their mid-stroke. The white bulk of an Agence Maritime vessel with a red and black funnel rises to one side. The liner has steam up, and is waiting. Against blue African hills, a white littoral city looks as if Boulogne or Dieppe had been carved in marble and set down on this alien shore. To the owners of this country hotel, remote from cities and cul-

ture, such a painting summed up the history and greatness of Imperial France.

Twenty minutes later, the open Lagonda turned on to the road that runs south and west to still more remote and mysterious landscapes beyond the broad and quiet valley of the Loire. This second day's journey ended just before twilight at the Hôtel des Voyageurs, with its iron verandahs and red flowers, in a prosperous market-town of western France. The farmers and farriers, corn merchants and advocates gathered in its bar among red plush and bentwood, patterned marble and opaque yellow lamps. Outside, on a vast republican square, the tall white-stone houses with their grey shutters and mansard roofs seemed bleached by the sun and rains of the ocean that lay not many miles away.

I had no opportunity to watch Margarita that night. It was a pleasure postponed until our arrival at Carailac, where I assumed that Anton and Mano arranged such matters. I did not doubt that the Spanish girl made love to herself again. She had nothing to fear in a French hotel, where the walls are thin and the sounds of marital passion are commonly heard by other travellers. It would be assumed that Margarita was a young bride with her groom, as the bed creaked and she sobbed with relief while she eased the tension between her thighs. The habit was too deep-rooted in her to be broken except by the methods learnt under conquest from the Arabs by Spanish midwives in the primitive morality of Andalusian villages. But to trim and prune Margarita's playthings would deprive her of release without checking the strong Latin passion of the girl's loins.

On that second night, my room was next to the one shared by Sharon and Louise. I saw nothing but heard a little. Before the light under the door went out, there were

murmurs and quiet laughter. Then came excitement and the panting of wrestlers. I heard a smack that fell on the seat of tight cotton briefs, not on a bare bottom. There was more struggling and giggling. Then a moment of serious murmured conversation. After that the light went out.

In its way, this was more curious than the sight of Margarita masturbating. Sharon and Louise were the same age as the Spanish girl but they acted almost like children, by contrast. They romped and wrestled, smacked and played. They were each other's "best-friends." I guessed that they wanted to do something to one another. Were they too timid, too frightened of the new relationship which must succeed the present one if they experimented sexually? Or did they not know how to begin? A Spanish girl like Margarita, though forbidden to taste sexual pleasure, learns of such things early. How could she not in the warm and passionate culture of Iberia? Sharon and Louise, by contrast, were still playing with each other like little girls. I do not deny that they were knowing and contemptuous of their elders. They were certainly not loving little girls, perhaps not even to one another. But it was Margarita who was qualified to be the mistress and the two fair-skinned girls who were still at the stage of being her pupils.

There was enough in these thoughts to occupy me while I smoked a cigar on the balcony above the vast republican square and then went to bed.

Our last day's journey was the longest. It lay through the lush vineyards, by purple Judas trees and yellow fields of mustard across the Garonne. There, over the flat upland prairies and the fierce white dust south of Bordeaux, one comes to a high hill-town bastion, remote from the world as far as the eye can see on every side. It is a town of wide spaces and silence in the white dusty heat of noon. Barracks and prison stand in pale stone on a vast gravelled

square. Even the little café square is no more than a sanded space with stunted plane trees before the church. A narrow and deserted street of old buildings on the hill's edge, little shops with their awnings pulled out against the fierce midday glare, sums up the commercial life of the town.

There is an air about such places that contradicts the easy assumptions of modern life. A little before this, across the plains of Aragon and the mountains of Andalusia, the warm nights were crossed by white searchlight beams and the drone of bombers. Might the exuberance of civil war inspire such a white and dusty garrison as this? If so, the final disappearance of Margarita, even of Sharon and Louise would be unremarked. As we passed the white shuttered barracks and prison I thought of this. Margarita, her jeans and underpants round her ankles, her mouth wadded, held over a stained office table in a plain-walled room. A uniformed captain pressing over her, breathing in the Spanish girl's frenzy. A second officer drawing a glowing metal knitting-needle from the iron stove, holding it with a gloved hand, approaching the bare olive-skinned cheeks of Margarita's bottom.

The world knows nowadays that such things are not impossible, nor were they in the Thirty Years War or the Spanish Conquests. They are not only possible but frequent. And as surely as our car approached the western coast, France and her people drew closer to a division worse than civil war.

Even in this it was the Spanish girl rather than the other two who occupied my thoughts. Our final afternoon took us down from the dusty plateau through the summer heat of forest and coastal plain. But Margarita's fate would be as dark here as during a garrison interrogation. No man who could bring his captive beauty to these remote and mysteri-

ous places of south-west France need dream of harem bondage and Arabian skies. The suspicious and taciturn people of these little settlements would listen to no protests or pleading of hers. Divided from them even in the simplest use of language, she would be received with shrugs and a refusal to interfere in the customs of an alien race.

There was a sinister charm in such remoteness as this and the knowledge of what was made possible. You might do murder here, for all they cared, so long as you did not bother them about it. The man who strangled fifteen-year-old Elaine Cox after his final riot of pleasure with her need only have brought her here to do it. The unfrequented miles of dark pine forest would have concealed his crime as it has done many more. You might have taken Sharon to a glade in the depths of the dark pines, tied her between two trees, and flogged or ill-used her to your heart's content, in the knowledge that there would be not be an eavesdropper for miles around you. Even had there been one, he would have shrugged and gone about his own business.

A clearing in the flat sandy forest of Austrian pines revealed a rare crossroads village of the Haute Lande. Children on bicycles, three in a row in white and blue, were riding on the narrow roads. Old men in berets played boules before the Second Empire gothic of the church with its narrow grey tower and pointed slate under a humid forest sky. Near the centre, the older houses were of daub and wattle with vertical timber. Old women in straw hats occupied their doorways, wearing clogs, their black legs thin as storks. The visitor, usually priest or doctor, steps down into such cottages from their doorway, entering a mediaeval gloom. There is scarcely enough light to see the walls of ancient family photographs and gaudy madonnas in frames of polished mahogany, nor the heavy furniture

brought back from Mont de Marsan or Paris by newly-wed couples a century ago, the symbols of damp, penury, and narrow lives.

There was no charity here except the grim routines of the Maison de Retraite, near the church. Its white modernism with a low square tower-flank at either end seemed like a cinema or a casino, showing the first influence of Spain. There was no other recent building here apart from one or two chalets among the trees beyond the older cement-rendered villas of a bijou kind. There was no cultivation, except for allotments on which white ashes of burnt wood were scattered. Everywhere one heard the constant whine of the mechanical saw.

Our way through the Landes was horizonless. The riders' paths between the trees ran wide and straight as a ruler. Where the trees had been cleared, a browned prairie grass grew tall. There was brown bracken and stacked logs, the vertical timbering of white houses in the clearings. Sheep grazed under the trees of small holdings and there were little settlements of four or five houses in the middle of the forest. Here and there there was a tennis court in green and raspberry tarmac and again, the modern style of the little cinema at St. Symphorien.

The forest was gone and we came in the last of the afternoon sun to Quelay, where the mineral tang of the sea and its tide-washed sand was almost in the air. Quelay was flowery and sunlit with buildings washed the colour of vanilla cream. By the Avenue du Lycée and the Parc Rameau, a metal-railed bridge over the river crossed the embankment gardens below, willow and magnolia, japonica and cherry. The little brown stream runs below the back of old town-houses. At the far side is the grey rendering of the Police and the Palais de Justice. Beyond this is the crossing to the Rue Clemenceau and the Hôtel

Richelieu, the theatre with its market stalls under the arcading. The centre of the town is an old colour-washed square with another bridge and tall mansard roofs beyond.

Short of Carailac, before the racecourse and the aerodrome, stand the grand villas of the Atlantic resort. Here one glimpses the lime-green stucco of Spanish arches, a moorish courtyard with arcading and a fountain. There are grander designs still, surrounded by a protective fence of tall iron palings and dense trees. Even through the bars of the closed gates one sees nothing but the curve of a gravel drive and the conical roof of a baronial corner-tower far beyond. In the space between, the guardian of the gates has slipped the leash of the guard-dogs and left them to do his duty for him in the hours of darkness.

Furthest from the resort itself and most extensive in its grounds, the Villa Rosa stands almost half a mile from the road. In reply to the sound of the Lagonda's approach, the keeper drew back the tall gates and admitted us to the shaded drive.

## La Vie en Rose

The first weeks at Carailac linger in memory as a cloudless world of shimmering sky and ocean, mingled with images of girls whose names alone quicken the pulse. Along the pink tarmac of the Corniche Victoria-Louise the tricolor flags stood out stiffly in the warm ocean breeze against sparkling water and a morning sky washed pale blue by the early light of summer day. Across wide sand drifted the hot burnt-sugar scents of *nougat Montelimar*. Here and there the rapid piano-flow of a Chopin waltz or an opera melody hung like perfume in the mild air of the promenade. The little shops among the white chateau luxury of the grand hotels displayed the frivolities of the season in their windows. Perfume flasks and velvet masks, Spanish fans with scenes from Goya, hand-mirrors and combs of tortoiseshell bound with silver.

Beyond the window-glass at the end of the promenade, two of the boutique girls were the possessions of Anton and Mano. Sian and Helyn. Sian, the married wanton of twenty-two with the pale red hair, the fair skin, the lipsticked mouth, the dreamily sensual blue eyes. Helyn the quiet

and pretty brunette of nineteen with the deep brown eyes and the mane of dark ringlets. Sian with her swaggering sluttish young rump. Helyn self-conscious about the slight weight of her backside and hips in tight riding-jeans.

At the heart of Carailac itself stood the old town. The pale stone of the provincial cathedral, its low and ancient pillars, its pediment and squat tower were washed by the Biscay wind. Within, as one stepped down into the narrow nave, the light filtered through crudely-painted glass upon groups of curious peasantry. Everywhere at the heart of Carailac stood the craftsmanship of the provincial stonemason and gardener. Palm trees and beds of red flowers flanked the bishop's palace. Dried plane leaves, withered and fallen in the summer heat, rattled in its doorways.

Here and there, the iron bars upon the windows of old signories and the wicked laughter on gutter-spout gargoyles spoke of punishments gleefully inflicted upon the peasant girls by cloaked authority. Here lived bishops who had been the diplomats and secretaries of Bourbon kings long before the age of revolutions. Their names stood in the schoolbook lists among ambassadors and ministers of princes. Through the palace archway passed a coach from Versailles or the Palais-Royal, perhaps the carriage of an episcopal mistress. In the paved and cloistered yard, the harlots of the little ports were flogged naked for their public sin by the masked executioner.

The ancient centre of Carailac was a concourse of little shops, the fragrant cooking of the charcuterie and patisserie, the sporting cafés with their bentwood chairs and tables, the blind walls of convents through whose open doors the meek and uniformed schoolgirls walked two by two under the guard of their superiors.

But Carailac-sur-mer was sea and sand. It was the scattered glitter of light on the lavender-blue curve of

afternoon tide. The sudden furnace brilliance of sun on a distant breaker, dwindling to a translucent green arch of water before the smash of foam. On quiet days, it was a walk across damp sand and rock-weed, uncovered by the withdrawn tide's long quiescent waves. It was a shimmer of wind and light on fish-pools. As one walked beyond the corniche, among the firm winding ways of ribbed sand, across half-sunk stone, there were fish-scents of weed and the fragrance of sweet thyme in a warm breeze from the low cliffs.

At night the Chinese lanterns glowed in the white Arcades behind the Casino. A warm wind from the dark sea rattled the palm fronds, stirring the last blossoms of magnolia and orange. The area of the Casino was quiet and affluent. The *École de Musique* and the *Hôtel Beau Séjour* stood in a little park, opposite a row of small modern shops, a café terrace and the *Ciné Gaumont-Pathé*.

Mano, Anton, and their kind had withdrawn from the little town. The *Villa Rosa* was set apart in a world of brown-shuttered lodges and the sandy stucco of secluded villas; formal gardens of stone-columned pergolas overgrown with white and crimson roses. By day it was a world of woods with milkmaid flowers in long grass and wild camellia running riot. The air was bright with violets and yellow butterflies. There were forests of blue-green cypress and the rich syrupy scent of pine.

In such places, the rest of July seemed a procession of fine mornings, when the sun cast its apricot-light on white surfaces, and afternoons of a tide rippling sapphire-blue. At sunset, the sea beyond the parasols and silk dresses of the promenade faded to a tranquil yellowed blue and silver. The sky dwindled to a faint pale green across the deeper Atlantic surges. A band of dusky fire ran along the horizon

cloud, while the rock pools shone like molten flame on a dark volcanic surface.

Mano and Anton, the hosts of the Villa Rosa, drew to them those girls over whom they exercised the power of possession. There was instinct or intuition in their choice. The girls were as different from one another as they were from those who had no appeal to the two men. In Sian they saw the willingness of the easy wanton. In Helyn they found the natural and apprehensive habit of obedience. In Margarita, as I had seen for myself, there was the strong sexual passion of young Spanish womanhood striving for expression and dominance. Mano and Anton were men of eclectic tastes, opportunists in matters of sexual love who never lost sight of their purpose.

My acquaintance with Sian and Helyn began in the heat of midday when the town was at its quietest. The little streets leading to the beach were empty as if at the world's end. Shutters closed the pink or orange stucco boutiques of baker or shoeshop. Even the creperie and the blue wooden stalls of the fishmonger were locked and deserted. The only sounds were the clatter of plates or cutlery beyond the drifting curtains of open windows, the dark gleam of light on the green glass of a bottle of *vin du pays*. Beyond the open spaces of the town's limits, the sea glittered in strong sun where the Rue de l'Océan ended in a slipway to the water's edge. The Bazar de l'Océan, its peeling white stucco lettered blue with "Souvenirs" and "Maillots de Bain," stood open but unfrequented, the window glass dark and the interior dim in the searing light of day.

I suppose the two girls ate and drank there, perhaps in one of the shuttered rooms above. Mano had no need of them at the villa just then. Margarita, Sharon, Louise, and the other girls were enough to serve him during the day. But I stopped and studied whichever one of them was

displayed in the shop among the rails of beach-pyjamas and picture-cards that stirred with the light breeze from the slipway.

Despite her wantonness, Sian seemed no less feminine than her brunette companion. She had the right to wear a wedding-ring and had for several years enjoyed her bridegroom's erection nightly in a simple back-street bedroom. Perhaps Sian's crowning glory was her set of red tresses which clustered down to overlap her collar, adorned at the side by a tortoise-shell comb. I was intrigued by the sensuality in her wide mouth and blue eyes. But in the arrangements of the Villa Rosa there was a shortage of men to match such girls, which suited Mano and Anton.

Sian the redhead with the rather vacant sensual look breathed feminine desire. Small wonder that her longing soon embraced Helyn, a rather softly-figured girl of nineteen. Helyn had a sun-kissed skin with dark vivacious eyes whose prominent whites gave her a look of innocence and warmth simultaneously. Her dark hair was worn in a mane of carefully-styled little ringlets trimmed at her collar. Helyn's sun-tanned face had a neat prettiness combined with a look of easy laughter and strong affection. Perhaps, when one saw her in close-fitting jeans, Helyn's bottom and hips were a little heavy. But this, like so much else about her, made the libertines of the Villa Rosa all the more determined to have the girl at their beck and call.

Nor was it a matter of the men alone. In the course of these weeks we were joined by Jenny, the young mistress of Mano's *pensionnat*, a hot-tempered and perverse young woman with her pale blue eyes and her sweep of dark henna-tinted hair covering her shoulders. Whatever the reason, she was capable of a vindictiveness towards her own sex which would have brought equal dismay to a

well-behaved girl of nineteen like Helyn or a red-haired wanton of twenty-two like Sian.

I said nothing to Mano or Anton about my accidental spying on Margarita. There was no purpose in it. Mano had seen for himself the little lesbian scandal in Sussex when Margarita had seduced the younger Italian student, Alicia. And, as it happened, I needed no assistance in my own dealings with Margarita. But that was a matter of good fortune.

My conquest of Margarita was far easier than I had expected. The bedrooms in which the girls slept were on the upper floor of the villa. The walls between them at that height were no more than wooden partitions of vertical boarding. They were enough for ordinary privacy but it was the work of a moment to pick away the sealing between the boards and provide a crevice, an inch long, through which the occupant of the room might be observed.

I was amused to discover from Anton that the first little spy-holes had been the work of the villa's previous owner. They had not been done out of lechery but in response to a strong moral belief. "Monsieur," as we called him, had been a corn merchant and mayor of a small town near Carentan near the fogs and mist of the Normandy coast. Year after year, with his wife and three daughters, he had come to the Villa Rosa for six weeks of sun and rest. He had brought two maidservants with him.

When his daughters reached puberty, Monsieur thought it best to learn something of the modern ways of young girls. As it happens he was one of those self-made men who suffer mild but constant anxiety about the provisions of their wills. Posterity is not to be trusted. Once a year he put on his brown tweed suit and his huntsman's cravat to visit Paris and take advice from his nephew, an attorney in Vincennes. While on his way back to the Gare du Nord

one year, he went into a bookshop near the Métro at Barbes-Rochechouart and picked up a volume of instruction. *The Confessions of Mademoiselle Sappho*. What he read struck terror in him. "Lesbian seduction" was a phrase that had meant no more to him before this than the court ritual of the Byzantine emperors. Now he saw it everywhere. Monsieur dared not mention it to Madame. But his great fear was that his adolescent daughters would be "undone"—somehow, he knew not how—by a randy maidservant. Then what might become of his property after he had gone?

The warm languid weeks at Carailac and the Villa Rosa posed the greatest moral danger. Monsieur could not rest until he had made the spy-holes in the partitions of the maidservants' bedrooms. His face racked with anguish and the perspiration gathering upon his moustache, he passed hours of day and night squinting his moral supervision into their rooms. He saw nothing but well fleshed young women heaving and snorting in solitary self-relief. His daughters were all married, mounted, ridden, and given fine swollen bellies a few years later by rough and honest farming sons from Laval and Mortain. But Monsieur never thought it right to fill in those little spy-holes again.

I need not repeat what is already known. My next observation of Margarita showed me the same performance as at the Hôtel de la Poste. There was the unbuckling of the belt and the pushing down of the tight jeans with the cotton briefs inside them, the same stripping up and off of her black sweater. It was curious, this soaping herself before a mirror, but it seemed important to her. The wet look and the wet feeling gave her pleasure.

The night after Anton told us the story of Monsieur, I went up to the attic floor of the villa soon after ten o'clock when the girls were in their rooms. On the way, I stopped

in the hallway at the foot of the stairs. From the stand where coats were hung and walking-sticks lodged, I drew a slim leather switch, about two feet long and with a rounded ivory handle. A good many visitors to the Villa Rosa went riding in the park or on the beach. I did not intend to use the switch on the Spanish girl, merely to carry it as symbol of authority over her.

Quietly, I went up the stairs to the top floor. The chink in the wall between Margarita's room and the bathroom, which I occupied as my observation post, was ideally placed. One had a view of the bed and, indeed, across the room to the dressing-table and its mirror. There was a swish of material. Margarita was just closing her bedroom curtains for the night.

So I watched while she went through her preliminaries and then stretched out on the bed, lying on her side with her back to the observation hole as before. Her sleek and soapy-wet backside again gave a smooth and flawless gloss to the paler olive-skinned pride of Margarita's rare contours, making her show the heavy swell of her arse most suggestively. She began to writhe gently on the fingers between her legs, the Hispanic tan of her bottom-cheeks glossy with moisture surged fuller and fatter, then contracted inwards in the slow voluptuous rhythm of her self-arousal.

Though her warm Spanish temper and her feminine pride would have been insulted by the comparison, Margarita's bare arse and hips were performing horizontally in a manner that a harem belly-dancer or a striptease girl would have envied. The swelling out and clenching in of Margarita's bottom-cheeks, the tensing and slackening of her thighs on the saddle of her own fingers, offered the viewer tantalising half-glimpses. As the thighs relaxed, one just saw the dark-haired sex before her legs tightened upon it

shiveringly. As the full Latin tan of her rear cheeks swelled out, there was an exciting but shadowy hint of the forbidden valley between them and a dim but definite image of the tight little vortex of Margarita's arsehole.

I allowed her to work herself up to the point where desire was stronger than shame. Then I opened the little door behind her without a sound and moved softly across the room. Even so, it was surprising she did not turn. When I reached her, I understood why. Margarita was already breathing hard with her exertions. This, plus the creaking of the bed, concealed my approach. With a mingled feeling of excitement, triumph, and tenderness, I slid my hand down and covered her own, whose fingers were plunged between her legs.

There was a gasp and a stifled cry of panic from Margarita. She went tense and frightened, clutching both her hands to her loins now as if this would conceal and protect her more effectively. She was so shocked that she could not even bring herself to turn her face to me—to see which of her guardians it might be! Instead she dropped her chin to her chest and refused to look up. I laid the riding-switch down quietly on the table by the bed.

“Have you been playing with yourself long, Margarita?”

“No!” Still it came as a gasp of fright. “I was not. It was not that!”

I stooped over her, stroked back the lank black hair from her face and kissed her gently. But in her dismay the Spanish girl flinched even from such gentleness.

“You must not lie to me, Margarita. That will only make matters worse for you. You make love to yourself every night before you go to sleep. Don't you, Margarita? I've been watching you for the last ten minutes, seeing the things you like to do to yourself. On the first night of our journey I watched you through the window of the hotel

bedroom, from start to finish. I think you had your climax that night, didn't you? But now I must teach you a lesson. You're too old, Margarita, to be like a little girl playing alone with her toys. Aren't you?"

"No," she gasped helplessly. "It was not that!"

"Must I send for Mano or one of the others, Margarita?"

The dismay of it appeared like a slow dawn in Margarita's bold young face. I stroked back her dark hair for her.

"Must I, Margarita? No? You would rather I rewarded you myself, here and now?"

Margarita's own feminine instincts served her well. If only she could exhaust my own passion first, surely I would not then hand her over to the others.

I suppose it was a confusion of thoughts that made Margarita reach out and take my hand to hold me back from fetching Mano. But I also suspected that it was a long time since this firm-featured teenage Amazon had known anything but her own caresses between her legs. Perhaps it was the need for a man that made her protest as she did. I moved closer to the bed and sat down.

"Please!" Margarita's voice was quiet but intense in her prettily-accented English. "Please do not tell the others what you saw!"

In the lamplight I looked down at the Spanish girl, Margarita's firmly rounded chin and well-cut features, the tall brow and the dark hair swept back. She had turned on her side towards me so that I could see the tautly-muscled young belly with its triangle of dark hair inadequately covered by one hand, the opening of her legs and the smoothly moulded strength of her young thighs.

So that she would not misunderstand, I took her hand and led it to the front of my pants, where she must have felt the erection hard and taut with excitement. To my surprise and delight, Margarita unbuttoned and released

the stiffness. She began to circle it with her hand and excite it.

“Must I deal with you myself, then, Margarita?”

“Yes!” Her assent was quick and fierce, as if she was committing herself before she could think what it meant or change her mind.

I was naturally intrigued by the thought of Margarita sacrificing herself to save her reputation. The offer was quite irresistible. I drew back from her and went across to the door of the room. I turned the key in the lock to prevent interruptions. Then I switched on the main light in its ceiling bowl of frosted glass and flooded the room with a soft radiance. The bedrooms of the Villa Rif had been decorated in the modern manner. The curtains and the silk covers were gathered in palest pink, the panels of the walls picked out in dove gray. Even the pale satin-wood of the dressing-table and the wardrobe echoed the plain uncluttered design.

I lay down with Margarita and began to put her to the test. There was a directness about her passion that corresponded to the bold look of her dark eyes and firm features, the tall brow with the black hair swept back from it. Margarita's lips and tongue responded to the first kisses. I heard her breath coming in sighs of pretended longing, her thighs and hips squirming as she smoothed herself against me. Margarita put on this performance willingly to save herself. Presently I drew away from her and slipped off my pants. I showed her the hard-headed state of the tool that was waiting for her and caught her fierce dark eyes with a smile.

“Are you ready to pay such a price? Are you, Margarita? I think you may regret your rashness in a while.”

“Yes!” It was a gasp that conveyed defiance rather than submission. I took it as that.

“Then I must really put you to the test, Margarita. Turn over on your belly for me.”

She hesitated only a moment. Then she slid over the pale pink silk of the bed-cover and lay on her belly. I pushed the two pillows under her to raise and broaden the proud rear-cheek swell her firm olive-tan presented.

I looked at the rear view of her in the light from the bedroom lamps. I smiled at my memory of following her along the Terminus Road several weeks before, entranced by the double-cheeked jeans-denim swell drawn drumskin tight over the slight heaviness of Margarita's bottom. Now I drew my finger down between the cheeks of the Spanish girl's bottom, feeling the humid warmth of her there. I murmured in her ear, assuring her for the first time what I was going to do to her. Her buttocks tightened together in alarm but she uttered no protest.

“You understand, Margarita? You must pay a forfeit beyond what your boy-friend might expect or even your bridegroom on your honeymoon night.”

So Margarita lay on her belly over the pillows, her sweep of dark hair brushed aside.

“Keep your face that way, Margarita. Watch yourself in the dressing-table mirror. I know you like to do that when you make love to yourself. Do it now as well.”

There was no reply to this. She was naked below the singlet-hem at her waist. I stood up by the bed and then stooped over her, so that the hard cherry touched her lips while I bowed my head over Margarita's bare Spanish bottom and the rear of her thighs.

“Play with it on your tongue, Margarita. Open your mouth a little more.”

The hardness touched her lips. When Margarita hesitated to obey, I needed only to remind her that Mano, or Anton would put her to hard use and then whip her bare

bottom-cheeks afterwards. So the pleasure which she had consistently refused to her boy-friends was now performed without further demur for a man she scarcely knew. I fondled the smooth olive-tan cheeks of the Spanish girl's firmly voluptuous young bottom. I parted them and admired the tight inward dimple of Margarita's behind. Where the proud sallow cheeks curved in together, the intimate pallor of the skin assumed a tint of yellowed ivory.

"Use the tip of your tongue on the rim, Margarita. Tickle the vent with it as well."

While she obeyed me, my own lips touched the cool sallow smoothness of her bare thighs, at the rear and close to the top. While she drew on me inexpertly but instinctively, my tongue tasted her feminine moisture. I kissed the slight heaviness of Margarita's olive-skinned bum-cheeks.

"Turn over on your back now, Margarita," I said presently. "Lie like that and open your thighs a little."

She wriggled round and lay as I suggested. But there was doubt in her steady brown eyes. I had no intention of rewarding Mano by making his female pupil pregnant. I lowered myself on to her, slipped my hot stiffness between the tops of Margarita's thighs and felt the cushiony flesh close lightly on either side. I rode like this for a while without penetrating her. The result was that Margarita's most sensitive folds of flesh—already humid from her own fondling—were tantalisingly roused. I rode her like this enjoying the sight as well as the feel of her strong young thighs. At last she gave a strange falling cry, like a climber slipping back into an Alpine gulf from a toe and finger hold. More hard exclamatory cries, sharper and quicker, from the depths of her throat. And at last a delicious quivering of the thighs that held my stiffened manhood and the firmly-muscled belly on which I rested.

"Now turn over again, Margarita," I said softly.

She did so slowly and dreamily. Did she half-guess what I intended? Margarita had come off and she must have known that I would find a way to do the same. She twisted her face, brushing her black hair clear, and looked at me over her shoulder as she lay there.

I sat on the edge of the bed and took the slim leather riding-switch from the table. Its smooth ivory handle was about the size and thickness of my thumb, round in its length and rounded at its tip. I reached for the wet soap that Margarita had used when lathering herself and spread the handle of the switch with it. The Spanish teenager began to squirm a little but I held her firmly round the waist with one arm, looking down at the sallow cheeks of Margarita's bottom until she lay still again.

"Must I send for the others, Margarita? I shall have to unless you show me what a good girl you can be."

I parted the rear cheek-swell and pressed the rounded end of the ivory handle firmly until Margarita yielded under the increasing pressure with a muted cry of alarm. Then I exercised her bottom in this simple manner for five or ten minutes. At the same time I kissed her lips and eyelids, her ears and neck, my other hand manipulating her between her legs until she grew restive with a new arousal.

After ten or fifteen minutes of watching Margarita's rear approach stretched round the smooth insertion of thumb-sized ivory, I arranged her a little more carefully on her belly over the pillows. I continued to exercise her a little longer, hearing the slippery soapiness of the movement and the faint suction of the makeshift ivory phallus moving in her. There was an extra suggestiveness in Margarita submitting to the handle of the whip, the symbol of punishment and authority as well as passion. Now my other hand stroked the voluptuous Latin tan of Margarita's proud

young buttocks as if to calm her while I drew the ivory handle clear. She turned to me over her shoulder. With the collar-length of her black hair swept clear, there was now a fierce directness in her dark eyes, as well as the firm set of her chin, her wide-boned cheeks and clear brow. Margarita never once pleaded to be spared her ordeal. Nor did she even plead that I must be gentle with her. At the time, I assumed Margarita was a realist who knew that promises to be gentle are always broken in the tyranny of release. Later I understood that she perhaps hoped I would not use her gently.

However, I employed the ivory whip-butt again and saw it enter with soapy ease. I continued it slowly until I saw the first sign of Margarita's backside moving in a furtive rhythm by contraction and slackening of her buttocks. At last she was responding to the excitement of her nerves in this dark and forbidden area of feminine sensitivity. The first morbid arousal had begun to plague her. It was the antidote that female anatomy provided against the ordeal of being ravished in such a place. She would have denied her state of excitement if I had teased her about it. But I could see the quicker pulse in her throat and I knew that Margarita's heart must be pounding with anticipation at what was about to happen to her. I cannot tell you whether that anticipation was frightened or eager, or perhaps a little of both. In her present confusion of thought and feeling, I doubt if Margarita herself was quite sure!

I knelt astride her and touched the cherry-head between the sleek tawny swell of Margarita's rear cheeks. There was a moment of narrowness and difficulty, the erection being more bulky than its ivory imitation. I murmured softly in Margarita's ear, assuring her that she could take it if she tried. I asked her if she had not sometimes had to rid herself of a load that was quite as big. I smeared a little

more pulp of wet soap where there was such tightness. Presently, under the pressure of the smooth head, there was a single muted cry. I felt Margarita yield and was gripped by an elastic tension, in which I sheathed myself slowly, but firmly and deeply. I allowed a minute or two for the Spanish girl to get used to the feeling of so large an intruder in such a place.

“There—is that better now, Margarita? Are you used to feeling how big it is, in such a tight place? Does it really make you feel any more uneasy than having a normal weight to carry there until you can release it? But this time you will not be the one who can decide to relieve yourself of it.”

There followed a whisper of soapiness in a firm but gentle rhythm. I paused from time to time while still in place, so that I might prolong the enjoyment. At last it was Margarita who stirred again first, now the initiator of her own continued submission to this freak of a man's passion for her.

In the mirror, I was able to admire the reflected face of the sallow-skinned young Amazon who lay bottom-upwards over the pillow and endured that form of ravishing which symbolised her bondage in the Villa Rosa. It was provoking to look in the glass and see the image of the Latin beauty of Margarita's sturdy young womanhood being used as if she had been an overgrown page-boy or stable-lad. The firm resolute lines of her face were clearly shown, the intense dark eyes still held their steady gaze. But I had only to move a little harder and deeper to make Margarita bury her face on her folded arms, hiding the gnawing anxiety. At each sinking to the hilt, I could feel the tension of alarm in the line of her naked hips and thighs. But as I rode closer to the finish, it was necessary to move faster and deep all the same.

Margarita's bottom pressed bravely upwards. I slipped my hands under her, holding her breasts and firming them as I rode her. In my passion I kissed her shoulders and neck with sharp love-bites. Mad with desire for her, I felt myself bursting with the quantity of passion.

I warned Margarita of what was to come and saw her wad her mouth with the corner of the pillow and bite hard upon the padded cotton to stifle her cries. Then I released a first pulse of passion. I smacked the olive tan of her robust firm thighs and raked the flanks of her hips with my fingers. The vent let out its warm passion into the depths of Margarita's bottom. It was an ecstatic release, in the knowledge that this Spanish slave-girl was so threaded that she could not refuse as much as I chose to give her.

My commands to her ended in a gasping and shuddering. Yet as Margarita stirred and began the cautious movements to expel the limp intruder, her lightly squeezing contractions caused it to harden again. Margarita gave a cry of dismay as she felt its stiffness restored and her tightness still fully stretched by it. I smiled at her in the mirror. The movements began again, slowly and almost teasingly.

My second tribute was paid after a longer and more leisurely session. I was with Margarita from an hour before midnight until an hour after. When at last I drew out and the tight little bulls-eye went urgently small and tight, the effect of the soaped intruder made it necessary for the Spanish girl to go hastily to the next room and bolt the door. When she returned I was sitting in the chair. I commanded her to turn her back and bend over so that I might see she was in a decent state. I need not have worried. As she bent with the full-cheeked swell of her bottom's Spanish tan, I could see and smell—from the

Palmolive perfume—that Margarita had washed herself like a well brought up daughter of the bourgeoisie.

I had no other adventure with her of quite that kind. We were overtaken by events. From the Villa Rosa, after dark, it was just possible to see the headlamps of cars crossing the night sky like searchlights while the powerful Citroen saloons or Sports Bugattis hummed distantly on the main coast road. Two nights later, after dinner, one pair of headlights swung directly towards us, the full beam illuminating the front wall and shuttered windows of the villa as the dark shape of a Chrysler Airflow saloon scattered the gravel of the forecourt with its tyres.

The arrival was not unexpected. Indeed, these two guests were several hours late. It was the young mistress Jenny, with the Italian girl-student, Alicia. This arrival in itself made no difference to my feelings about Margarita. Yet I suspected that there were secret thoughts which Margarita and Alicia held about one another. There were, I know, furtive meetings. I glimpsed hand-holdings in quiet parts of the garden, which ended the moment they saw me. There were intense and murmured conversations in the angle of the stairway or at the end of a corridor. Convention sees nothing sinister in two girls chaperoning one another when the toilet is visited. There were half hours behind its locked door from which both Margarita and the younger Italian girl emerged.

I made nothing of this, it did not concern me. There was greater interest in Jenny, the young mistress, who was then about twenty-five or so. She was attractive with her dark hair worn loose and the mocking energy of her light blue eyes. She had a smile that was almost like a pretty sneer of her thin lips—if there can be such a thing. As she shook her hair into place and one admired her slim but languid movements, there was a sense of the perverse and the

unhinged about her, a sardonic humour and a malicious taste for pleasure.

But even this did not concern me immediately. A week or so passed and then there was an incident. Alicia had misbehaved. Mano and Anton left the matter to Jenny. If Jenny was in her later twenties and Alicia in her early teens, it would have been biologically possible for the girl to have been the young woman's daughter. She was not, but the fact gave Jenny an instinctive authority over the youngster. This also added to the following scene something of a domestic discipline, the kind of thing normally inflicted at home in the bedroom of an errant daughter.

After dinner, Margarita served us coffee in the library, dressed casually in her black sweater and jeans tightened skin-smooth by her leather waist-belt. Jenny presently sent her to fetch Alicia from her room. I thought she was to be scolded for her impertinence and then forgiven. Alicia appeared, her round and pretty face more appealing with its Neapolitan tan. Her dark hair was once again worn in its cloud of little ringlets to her shoulders. She was wearing her short brown top and white cotton trousers.

Jenny, sitting in a tapestried wing-chair with her blue eyes bright and her hair swept back, beckoned Alicia to her. Mano stood close to assist. Before Alicia knew what was happening, she had been seized and put face-down over the young woman's knee. Jenny curbed her with her left arm round the girl's waist and Mano held her wrists firmly. Jenny's right hand undid Alicia at the waist, pushing the white trousers and underpants down to the Italian girl's knees. Anton, Mano, Margarita, and I stared at the trim olive-skinned cheeks of Alicia's bottom.

Hobbled by her own pants, there was little resistance that the Italian girl could offer. Jenny picked up a slim leather switch, very like the one I had taken to Margarita's

bedroom but with a black wooden handle. She touched it once across the prettily rounded cheeks of Alicia's bottom and then thrashed the youngster with it hard.

I must not make too much of it. Alicia screamed as if a red-hot spit were being thrust up her backside. Certainly Jenny tanned the girl hard, as she deserved. But it was not much more than a child's whipping of the kind that the little Italian bitch ought to have received a month earlier during her language studies.

It was not Alicia who held my attention. I happened to glance aside at Margarita to see how she was taking this exhibition of domestic chastisement. I quite expected to see her fearful or indignant on behalf of her girl-friend. But what a change there was! Margarita's beauty was perhaps of a rather stolid kind. Though there was intensity in her dark eyes, the expression of her face tended to be rather firm and set. But now her lips were parted and her whole appearance was one of profound excitement. Alicia's screams thrilled Margarita in a way I had never anticipated and can scarcely describe. It is not enough to say that the Spanish girl's lips were parted, her eyes shining or that her tension was obviously sexual. It was more than that. She quivered with eagerness at the sadistic and perverse—of which there was little enough in the display. I think she envied Alicia a very little. But she envied Jenny far more.

I knew in that moment that Margarita's temperament was such as one finds in certain Spanish girls. Dark excitements and voluptuous cruelties held a fascination for her. Indeed, it was stronger than fascination. She would be the uniformed Amazon monitoring the pulse of a female suspect strapped on a table while the interrogator's probe tested the pretty rebel to the limit. She would take his place if the chance were given her. But there would also

come a moment when Margarita would beg him to let her change places with the victim.

In the next few weeks I thought it strange that I had not seen this in her character before. That same night, after Alicia had had a beating, I went to bed and lay in the dark thinking of such things. Apart from the one night which I have described, I had had no dealings of a sexual kind with the Spanish girl. But I imagined that the way she had been compelled to submit to me then had fuelled her waking dreams ever since.

I fell asleep thinking of this. I woke when the moon was setting, aware of her presence. Margarita had come softly to my room and now slid naked under the sheets with me. It was she who took my manhood and felt it stiffen as she lay upon me. Placing it between the softness of her thighs, she rode with squeezings and tensings. But this time she stopped before her own release. In the fading moonlight through the curtains, I saw little. But I heard the unscrewing of a jar and sensed her hand go behind her as she lay face-down upon me. There was a sound of slipperiness. She slid down on her side, her back to me, and drew me to her. The cherry-head touched vaselined tightness between the soft weight of her robust sallow bottom-cheeks. Margarita wanted to make this ultimate feminine submission again. And she did so. But the perverse in her was no longer concealed from me. As I enjoyed the tightness of her backside, I was aware that her own fingers kept time between her thighs.

Paradoxically, that was the last time I ever possessed her. For the next week I saw little of her, except coming from Jenny's room or going there. Alicia was quite forsaken. Alone with Mano and Anton one evening, Margarita waiting upon us as we drank coffee and liqueurs, the other two teased me with having been the Spanish girl's

lover. It was no secret from them and they did not greatly care. I made my confession to them in Spanish, wanting Margarita to know that her particular submission was common knowledge.

“La tuve en el culo.”

Margarita took the tray and left the room. Mano and Anton smiled.

“No longer,” Mano said sympathetically. “She belongs to Jenny now, by her own wish. They are mistress and pupil. Or mistress and slave. There is a natural lesbian streak in Margarita. But more than that. She needs the bizarre and the deviant. A life as the commander of a women’s prison or a harem would suit her well.”

Though we talked of this for the rest of the evening, there was nothing further that I could discover. It was several nights later, when we were once again talking without Jenny and the girls at present in the villa, that Anton enlightened me.

“I think Margarita has made her decision,” he said. “She wants to go with Jenny to the *côte sauvage* for several weeks, to the cottage that I keep there. I shall stay here, of course. But Margarita has a fierce desire to be put to the test by her mistress. She is determined to do anything that her beloved orders her to—and to forfeit anything that Jenny makes her forfeit.”

I was sceptical about this. I went across to the silver cigarette box on the mirror-table.

“You mean that Jenny and Margarita are having an affair,” I said casually.

But Anton looked at me and shook his head as the flame of the lighter snapped out.

“No. A slave-girl does not have an affair with her mistress. She adores, obeys, submits, surrenders. You and Mano may go with them if you choose. There is no secret

about it. Things will happen that may shock you. Things concealed from Margarita herself until the time is right. When she agrees to submit, she will not be allowed to ask what she must submit to. No limits are set to that. But in the end she must surrender the possibilities of pleasure in one way to increase the strength of it in others."

I did not understand in the least what Margarita's fate was to be nor would Anton be more specific. That the Spanish girl was to undergo a rigorous training was beyond doubt. When it was suggested that Mano and I might accompany the two women, we accepted. But in the week before that happened there was another event, a dinner-party from which Margarita and Alicia were excluded. I was to discover at last the uses of the two other girls whom Anton possessed. The wanton young redhead Sian and her demurely pretty brunette companion Helyn.

On the night before we escorted Jenny and Margarita to the remote cottage on the *côte sauvage*, dinner was cooked at the Villa Rosa by the finest chef in Carailac. Anton's guests were Mano and I. Sian and Helyn were to be our waitresses.

## Crépuscule du Soir

I had caught only a few glimpses before the evening of the dinner of the two girls who were to be our waitresses during the meal. Once or twice I had stopped by the boutique to study them and my mind stored away those first impressions like camera studies.

I see the images now, as if they were printed before me. Sian with the sensual fair-skinned face, the clear-cut beauty of her features and the slope of her cheekbones. Sian with the distant look of her indolent blue eyes, her lipsticked mouth, the tresses of her red hair held back from her face by a headband or a comb, clustering on her collar at the nape. Sian in a pair of tight light-coloured jean-cotton trousers and sleeveless blouse, showing bare arms and the shadowed contour of pretty young breasts. Sian with the trim line of her thighs, seeming taller by the wedge heels of her shoes. Sian bending over behind the window-glass, smooth tight jeans showing the resilient but seductively rounded bottom-cheeks of a married girl at twenty-two.

Helyn at nineteen, a demure and quiet brunette, pretty enough to make one's heart miss a beat. The neat pretti-

ness of Helyn's sun-browned face, its parted lips and the soft dark eyes so appealing. The prettiness of a little girl at twelve or fourteen still unspoilt in this nineteen-year-old. Helyn's dark hair worn in a mane of little ringlets. The clustering ringlets hanging below her collar at the rear and touching her shoulders at either side. On plainer days the artificial ringlets lost, the dark hair still gently framing her face and lying forward a little on her lapels. The smoothly stretched jeans and singlet showing a softness in Helyn's figure, sufficient to make her self-conscious about her shape. Helyn in loose-fitting trousers, shyly concealing her figure. Helyn, unaware of being watched, in tighter jeans. Helyn's bottom full-cheeked and broadened but only enough to make her admirers smile affectionately. Helyn's arse, as she bends over to some chore in the boutique, suggestively swelling in a way that makes the lips of the voyeur tighten and the smile fade.

I cannot tell you how Sian and Helyn had been acquired by Anton de Xantra, but I assure you they were not at liberty to refuse the duties soon to be demanded of them. I understood that both Sian and Helyn, as well as two companions named Lizzie and Annie, had embarked upon a journey from which there was no returning. Being merely shopgirls or something of the kind and having no great refinement or breeding about them, the world would not inquire after them. I think Anton's purpose was to show what enjoyment could be had with such unpromising material. How two girls who had known one another only in the common rituals of their working life could be made to put their relationship on to a new intriguing foundation remained to be seen.

It would be quite wrong, however, to deny the pair their individual characters. They represented innocence in Helyn's case and experience in that of Sian. I glimpsed them, as I

say, very briefly beforehand. Jenny, the young mistress with her vein of amused severity towards her own sex, accompanied them one by one down the corridor to the room where they were to be prepared.

Both girls were only of moderate height and Sian was the elder of the two by a few years. Her wedding-ring suggested she was well-used to regular exercise on a man's erection. Indeed, her appearance and sluttish attitude hinted that she might like it a good deal.

Little was done to change the appearance of this redhead from what it was when one saw her working in the boutique. The lightly waved hair was still combed back and its ends clustering over her collar and forward a little on either side of her fair-skinned sensual face with its rather creamy complexion. Even now her blue eyes were dreamy and distant, as if contemplating some fanciful vision of their own. Looking at Sian closely, I thought perhaps her nose was a little crude and prominent, the chin a little weak. Her mouth was quite large, the lips once again generously lipsticked and lightly parted as if in a thoughtful mood. In profile the points of her cheeks seemed quite prominent and then, when she turned to look at me, I thought the slope of her cheeks appeared rather flat.

As she waited outside the room for Jenny to prepare her, I was able to study more closely the appearance of Sian's lower figure by the snug fit of the jeans she was wearing. Her thighs and hips, as well as the cheeks of Sian's bottom, had that first slight softness or fattening of a girl whose teenage trimness is beginning to yield to fuller womanhood. There was just the beginning of a rear-cheek swagger in Sian's walk, of the kind one detects in girls who are not very tall and past their maidenhood. In the company of her dark-haired mistress, I had watched her walk down the corridor. Then Jenny opened the door

and took Sian inside to supervise the sluttish young red-head's preparation.

Despite the unspoilt prettiness of her looks, Anton assured me that Helyn was now nineteen years old. Whatever her age, she was an extremely pretty brunette with firm-set lines to her young face and wide brown eyes. The rich darkness of her hair was tied back in a little tail with red ribbon. On her arrival that afternoon, her hair was combed plainly round her face though somehow pulled up in a slight peak at her crown. By the time that they had prepared her, its soft collar length was a mass of tiny ringlets, rather fluffed out for effect. When I saw her first, she was wearing tight silk matador pants, black with a leaf-pattern, which showed her figure to be softer than Sian's. But in this case, Helyn's bottom-cheeks and thighs had retained a natural softness of girlhood rather than acquiring the slight fattening of womanliness. I think this young charmer was naturally quiet and affectionate, though understandably apprehensive at what was about to happen to her now. I judged that she had yielded a little to a man of whom she was fond, but she had not been ridden as regularly and energetically as the young redhead.

The courtyard of the Villa Rosa was laid out with table and chairs in good time, long before the twilight of the hot summer day and the first flutter of beautiful moths or the metallic rasp of the cicadas. Anton had given instructions that the table with its white linen was to be set at the centre of the old paved enclosure near the disused well, under the wrought-iron of the heavy Spanish lamps. It was far too big for three of us, being quite six feet square. Yet it suited Anton's purpose. We were to be served from the stone arcade that ran round three sides of the leafy courtyard, leaving uncovered only the wall upon which the vine and the bougainvillea climbed to the upper windows.

Though we had all the comforts that civilisation could devise, we were so remote from the fashionable society of the resort at Carailac as if we were in one of the remote valleys at the foot of the Col d'Ispeguy. The hushed summer tide was barely a whisper. Round the enclosed and leafy courtyard lay the elegant suites of the villa. Beyond that the lawns and paths stretched for quarter of a mile on every side. Then there were the screens of poplar trees and beyond that the high walls which the most nimble maiden would never climb. The only gate was locked securely and the key remained in Anton's possession. But had the bell in the wall outside rung on that evening, it would have rung in vain.

Having dressed for dinner, I joined Anton and Jenny in the library where Margarita and Alicia were waiting to serve us with cool glasses of Frascati on silver trays. Louise and Sharon were in their rooms. It was quite beneath the dignity of these two daughters of the bourgeoisie to act as page-girls in attendance on their masters and mistress.

We drank our Frascati as the sun declined to a cloudy gold horizon-band across the flat coastal fields. The conversation was entirely about events at Bayonne, the new piece at the theater by Duval and the latest exhibition at the Musée Bonnat. It was as if the arrangements for our bizarre dinner-party had been quite forgotten.

Jenny went out for a moment to confer with Maître Raymond, the chef. Presently she returned and Anton led the way to the courtyard. We took our places at the table, sheltered from the warm night-wind that was already beginning to gather somewhere off the shallows of the Bidassoa. In a moment more, our two waitresses appeared, one carrying a decanter and the other a tray of cool melon slices. I knew then that Sian and Helyn would be put to hard use before next morning.

It was their characters rather than their appearance that still intrigued me, though their costumes—if one can call them that—were designed to make them feel with every movement that they were slaves in attendance upon us. They were dressed almost alike but Sian came in first with the tray. A simple band arched over her head to prevent her red hair from falling forward about her face as she bent to serve us. From breasts to waist she was encased in a bodice of tight black silk with a black leather collar round her neck to make her hold her chin up. Below the waist, she was bare-legged, though Sian wore the high-heeled shoes she always affected in order to give a little extra height to her young figure. What intrigued me was that the young redhead had also been obliged to wear what looked like a leather chastity-belt—a strange garment for such an occasion as this!

Round Sian's bare waist was a tight-fitting black belt that had been locked at the small of her back by a tiny key. A little triangular piece ran down from the belt at the front, just concealing her sex. It narrowed to a polished strap drawn tightly back between her legs and up between the slightly fattened and wanton cheeks of Sian's bare bottom. It was locked, as I say, in the small of her back. But the true ornament was a plume of hair, a pony-tail that exactly matched the redhead's own colour. I guessed how it had been fixed. A thumb-sized leather butt, inserted in Sian's behind, was the base of the tail. The stem of the pony-tail ran up between Sian's pale buttocks, under the rear strap whose tension held the butt in place. The plume itself arched out—under and over her waist-belt at the rear—for all the world as if the red-haired tail sprouted from the base of the girl's spine.

But what intrigued me still more was the expression on Sian's face, for it had scarcely altered. I cannot think there

had been screaming and holding-down and compulsion when the tail was fastened in place. Her blue eyes still had the same dreamy voluptuous langour, her wide lipsticked mouth was still lightly open. She walked calmly across with the tray and, as she passed me, I saw that the falling plume of the redhead's tail brushed lightly to and fro across the naked squirming and tremor of Sian's pale bottom-cheeks.

Jenny turned to us.

"Does she tempt you? I hope so. Sian must accomplish Helyn's seduction on the table after dinner. Before the strap was drawn tight, three of those little Japanese geisha pleasure-balls of smooth metal were inserted between her legs. As she moves, they move within her. I promise you they give Sian a delicious and exciting feeling. Look at the young bitch! Can you see how much Sian loves it? She has been well broken-in, well ridden by her man. A girl of her sort in one of those back-street bedrooms learns not to refuse her husband's demands."

Sian walked to the serving table and set the tray down, as if quite indifferent to the comments made about her. Jenny looked at me and said quietly:

"There is another smooth metal globe in the set. Or, rather, an oval. The size of a small egg. Sian's bottom carries it, so that her sensitive nerves will be stimulated there by its movement. She is to be your bedfellow to-night. You will prefer her to be conscious of all her possibilities, will you not?"

There was something in the slant of Jenny's smile, while she spoke almost from the corner of her mouth, that made me certain she was referring to what I had done to Margarita. She bore me no ill-will for this. Indeed, Jenny confided to me that, since Margarita had committed herself to her training in the distant cottage of *côte sauvage*,

Jenny had striven to keep the girl in a state of almost constant sexual arousal—floating high and dreamy with desire—so that she might not have second thoughts in the matter.

Sian turned and began to serve us. If she heard what Jenny said about her, it certainly brought no blush to her young face. I daresay Sian was well aware that other men and women thought of her as a randy young bitch. Indeed, when she turned from me to serve Jenny, she seemed to stoop a little more than was necessary and the slightly fattened pallor of Sian's bottom-cheeks was offered to me. Then the girl turned while stooping, so that the redhead pony-tail slid aside and revealed her rear cheeks fully. The black leather chastity-strap was drawn sensually tight and deep between Sian's bare buttocks but still visible as it separated them suggestively by its strained tautness.

Helyn was similarly dressed, though Jenny had denied her the three smooth metal balls and the lascivious oval. Sian's power alone must seduce her. Pretty Helyn with her wide dark eyes and the firm lines of her young face, the little ringlets of dark hair clustering over her bare neck, was a charming study in apprehension. In her case, a brunette plume of pony-hair brushed across the softer milky-pale cheeks of Helyn's broader bottom as she walked. She looked so intently and beseechingly at each of us when she poured our wine. And Helyn tried hard not to bend over in a pose of blatant provocation as she waited on us.

There could be no doubt that we were about to witness Helyn's initiation in the art of lesbian affection. Her demeanour was that of a girl who had never experienced such things before and whose young belly fluttered with nervous anticipation. By lewd contrast, Sian walked here and there, the pale red pony-tail bum-brushing across the young redhead's pearly rear cheeks as she seemed to swag-

ger a little. Helyn walked with cautious steps and her lovely brown eyes were lowered, as far as the leather collar round her fair throat would permit her to dip her chin. It was as if she feared to provoke us to be lascivious or cruel with her by meeting our gaze or allowing her hips and backside too free or seductive a movement.

There was a moment when Sian turned, her hands empty and the characteristic dreamy vacancy in her blue eyes. She came to pick up the empty plates from which we had just eaten the *terrines Raymond*. She stood beside Anton and leant right over the table in a most ungracious stoop to collect Jenny's plate. As she did this, I saw that Sian seemed to turn her creamy fair-skinned face with its lipsticked bow of a mouth and its rather crudely prominent nose. She was half looking sideways at Anton, as if to see how he would react. To pause and watch Sian bending over to her ordinary shopwork in high-heels and tight jeans is to smile at the slight lascivious fatness assumed by her bottom-cheeks in such a posture. She bent now and the pale bare cheeks of Sian's bottom swelled suggestively—all the more seductively for the plume of her red-haired pony-tail whose silky fall brushed the outward curve of her young buttocks.

Jenny took the leather collar round the girl's neck and held Sian like this, pulling her over. Anton studied the view she offered. He laid aside the pony-tail so that it now fell over the flank of her hip rather than her seat. Sian seemed to be rising on her toes in a slight exertion. She was tensing her bare thighs together unmistakably. There was surely no doubt that the young redhead was squeezing the smooth little globes which had been inserted between her legs, giving herself a good time in anticipation of what Anton might do to her.

The answer to that came soon enough. His mouth tight-

ened a little and he administered a sounding cheek-smack on Sian's bare bottom, which made her sleekly swelling buttocks jump and quiver. But she never ceased to tense her thighs self-lovingly together. Another smack rang out on the same cheek of Sian's twenty-two-year-old bottom, and then another. For the first time Sian's red tresses swept her neck and she tried to twist round to look at Anton, her mouth wide and distorted a little in a silent admission of being hurt. He turned to one side in his chair to spank the young slut more soundly, while dark-eyed Helyn looked on with a troubled and apprehensive stare.

Sian was not enjoying herself quite so much now, the tensing and twisting of her seductive young bottom was evidence of that. But as Helyn watched, the older girl lay over the table, hips still jiggling a little as she squeezed her sex between her legs, eyes not yet responding to Jenny's gaze. The callous young mistress smiled at her. Jenny greatly enjoyed holding Sian down by the leather choke-collar for Anton's spanking. By this means the dark-haired mistress vented her most vindictive spite on the young redhead, knowing that Sian's shrillness, however frantic, would be heard only as a faint owl-cry at the distant walled boundary.

While Jenny conveyed to her victim the sense of this with her shining blue eyes, Sian responded in a reproachful and self-pitying manner. But I was fascinated to see that the squeezing and tensing, agitating the three smooth globes in her loins, still continued. It was well for the young tart that she could find pleasure to help her bear punishment. Sian might sing, "No!" and "Please!" up every note of the scale until the force of her soprano wildness almost made one cover one's ears. She would still not persuade Jenny to pity her.

Jenny held her over the table like this, gripping Sian's

collar for a while longer. There was naturally some reproachful glancing from the young shopgirl and a subdued mewing of self-pity at the threat in Jenny's eyes. But of the three of us it was Helyn with her cloud of brunette ringlets who was watching in most astonishment. Sian was slowly beginning her squeezing and tip-toe movements again, even while she lamented the callousness of Jenny and her master Anton.

"You see, Helyn?" said Jenny looking up at the young brunette. "Sian is quite different to you. She is a lover of luxury and voluptuousness. But she is rather too slow and preoccupied in her pleasures for such an occasion as this. It requires something sharp to give her passion a keener edge. Sian needs to be stung or pricked a little to get the most out of her climaxes. It hurts her. But that is the spur she needs."

And so it seemed to be, for Sian was certainly tensing and squeezing all the harder upon the smooth little globes in her loins, as if to offset the prints of the smacks that glowed upon her fair-skinned bottom-cheeks. I was to see far more evidence of this with her in the future. Pretty Helyn shed tears and mourned after scolding or whipping. But Sian sought refuge, even while being spanked, in the distraction of sensual enjoyment.

When the meal was over we took our coffee and armagnac at leisure in the comfortable armchairs at the wide table. Sian and Helyn stood by obediently, waiting for us to finish and give them our commands. Two of Anton's manservants closed the doors and stood with their backs to them, guarding us from interruption and preventing any attempt at escape by the two girls. It was now the hour when the warm southern night comes on, the bats hardly discernible any longer against the sheer blackness of the vaulted sky. Anton and I lit our cigars while another footman cleared the cups from the table.

“Get yourself ready, Sian,” said Jenny quietly.

Sian put one bare knee on the edge of the table and drew herself up with a pretty squirming of her thighs. She stretched out so that Jenny could unlock the leather belt at the back of the young redhead’s waist. Then Sian lifted her hips a little for the dark-haired mistress to draw the belt clear. She opened her legs for Jenny to free it from between them. Sian was naked now except for her hair-band, the black silk corselet that ended at her waist, and the suggestive plume of the pony-tail.

Jenny gave another command. As the redhead obeyed, it was intriguing though rather lewd to see the butt of the tail being squeezed cautiously from Sian’s bottom. A further word of instruction was spoken and Sian delivered the egg-shaped metal globe from her behind into Jenny’s hand. Even while Sian did this, there was no sign of a blush. Any form of sensual indulgence, however rude or menial, gave satisfaction to Sian. She had been well trained to obey such commands, her natural timidity or modesty long since suppressed. The squeezing of the metal play-balls in her loins or the expulsion of the silver egg from her bottom would be performed with the same dreamy look in her blue eyes, the same insolent self-assurance in her fair-skinned face, with which she received the admiring glances of those who passed her at her work.

“Come to me, Helyn!” said Anton, as Jenny attended to the redhead. Helyn obeyed, walking apprehensively towards him. “Turn your back, Helyn. Bend over and rest your hands on your knees.”

Helyn obeyed without protest but, though the little cloud of dark ringlets fell forward round her pretty face as she stooped, it was just possible to see the blushes playing in her cheeks. Anton unlocked the belt in the small of her waist and drew it from her.

“Now put yourself face-down over my lap, Helyn,” he said.

Still wearing her brunette pony-tail, she obeyed him, lying like a little girl about to be spanked. But nineteen-year-old Helyn was not to be spanked and she was a far more suggestive and voluptuous burden over his knee than a girl-child would have been.

“Release your pony-tail, Helyn,” he said.

It was the easiest thing in the world to do, but in her confusion the pretty brunette could not bring herself to do it. The act required something that she had never done in front of anyone since infancy and which she had never done at all in the presence of a man. Anton did not raise his voice to her. But Helyn with the delicate modelling of her pretty face and the fall of her dark hair held by its red silk ribbon, must be trained all the same, for her own sake. Anton tapped ash from his cheroot and considered the soft pallor of Helyn's nineteen-year-old bottom-cheeks. He drew the havana bright and stroked the nearer cheek of Helyn's backside. I watched with great curiosity as Helyn's struggling wildness rang round the courtyard walls. Helyn screamed her promise to obey. She cared nothing more for who might see her. Indeed, the three of us watched her as Helyn expelled from her bottom that leather thumb-shape holding the tail in place.

Jenny told her to compose herself at once and climb on to the table round which we sat. Helyn and Sian were stretched out side by side, lying so that they faced one another closely. Sian's blue eyes met Helyn's with a faint and lascivious reassurance. But the wide dark eyes of the other girl were troubled and almost fearful from the brief moment of anguish.

“Make love together, Sian and Helyn,” said Jenny casually, “I'm sure you know by instinct what to do.”

There was no possibility of refusal unless displeasure and penalties were to follow. Both Sian and Helyn knew that. In a charmingly awkward way, they drew close and kissed each other's lips. Helyn hugged the young redhead but only with the awkward affection that girl-children show each other. Sian, however, brushed back the dark little ringlets, kissing Helyn's sensitive bare neck and ears so that the nineteen-year-old brunette shuddered with sudden excitement and anticipation, spiced by a horrible thrill at doing such things with another girl.

But Helyn's bottom still stung dreadfully from the kiss of the glowing cheroot. She did what she must. She drew back and kissed Sian repeatedly on the lips, as if she did not know what else to do. Sian ran one hand down the younger girl's back, slid her fingers between the cheeks of Helyn's bottom and came to the sensitive feminine flesh by a rear approach. But at this touch, as if stung by an electric shock, Helyn bucked her hips back to escape the caress of the randy young redhead.

Sian drew her hand away and stroked the cloud of brunette ringlets instead. Helyn would permit kisses and cuddles but could not bring herself to share more than that. In this she was disobedient. Jenny smiled.

"Get down from the table, the pair of you."

They did so, Helyn standing before the mistress with confusion and apprehension, Sian's lips parted to suggest pleasure interrupted. Jenny summoned the two footmen. She spoke to them aside so that neither of the girls overheard. One of the footmen took Sian by the arm and led her to a room adjoining the courtyard. Before the door closed a little I was able to see that the other man was holding a short tailed strap of thin leather. Through the half-open doorway we heard a dozen measured impacts of the strap on the bare smoothness of Sian's rear cheeks.

The men brought her out presently in some disarray. The bare-bottomed smart of the spanking-strap had brought sharp tears to the redhead's eyes and her mouth was wider open as if a cry might escape at any moment. And yet, as I later heard, Sian had bent over as seductively as possible and had tried to make her tanning as enjoyable for the two men as she could.

"She is so sensual," Jenny assured me, "that Sian's bottom seems to flirt with the strap while it tans her."

But Helyn uttered a wail of dismay as they now led her to the same room. Sian stood like a little girl in disgrace, the prints of the strap scarlet across her bottom-cheeks and one or two across the backs of her legs. This time, before the door was pushed to, I saw that they had Helyn bending over, head down to her knees, thighs sloping back, the full soft pallor of her bottom-cheeks presented as a target. They gave her eighteen and we heard Helyn shrill and frantic before it was over. The footmen brought her back in a very mournful state, the wailing portrait of a punished little girl. The pallor of Helyn's backside was flooded with the deepest blush of all.

Jenny turned to me.

"You think it unjust that both should suffer a little for the fault of one? In that, my dear, you are mistaken. Pretty Helyn has had the strap in order to heat her up and overcome her reluctance. She was too cold and indifferent but she has a warm and passionate nature. As for Sian, a taste of the strap will make her try harder to overcome her girl-friend's bashfulness. I promise you it will inspire them both. They know that if they have to be taken back there again, the second time will be far worse than this."

I had no doubt of that, nor did the two girls. They clambered back on to the table and this time Sian took command of the unwilling brunette without delay. They

did not lie as before but head-to-tail. Each girl lay on her side and presented herself to the face of the other in what I would call an upward squat. Sian guided Helyn to draw her knees up a little more. Helyn's broadened thighs and hips, as well as her bottom, were offered to Sian's kisses and caresses in a more fully spread and revealing posture. At the same time, the lascivious young redhead posed so that her femininity peeped between the rear of her legs while she almost sat naked on Helyn's face. They made a charming study for a camera portrait.

We leant forward round the table for an hour or more and watched at close range the seduction of innocence by experience. It was evident that the two had never before had amorous feelings for one another, not even of the most secret kind. In the case of the young brunette, there had never been such yearnings for any girl. That being so, it was Sian who took the initiative and Helyn who became the pupil, copying what was done to her.

A further delay would have meant another visit to the room where the footmen waited. Sian's fingers gently and comfortingly took Helyn's sensitive femininity, stroking and rousing it. She worked slowly but coaxingly, no doubt judging that what she had sometimes done in private to herself would cause arousal when she did it in the same way to another girl. In this she was proved right, as Helyn's hips began to stir. Sian also kissed the soft bare cheeks of Helyn's bottom, as if soothing the lingering smart of the strap. Helyn was almost gasping as she drew breath and she could not keep her thighs from squirming a little.

Meanwhile, the swelling cheeks of Sian's bottom and her spreading thighs were presented patiently and expectantly to Helyn's gaze. The brunette's pretty face with its wide dark eyes was a charming study in hesitation. Her

own enjoyment troubled her. As one watched, it was clear without any question that Helyn was receiving pleasure. At last her fingers tentatively stroked the peep of Sian's feminine flesh between the rear of the girl's thighs. Sian lifted her upper leg a little, crooking it back from the knee, to make herself more fully accessible.

Helyn closed her eyes as if to create some vision of her own while Sian caressed her. Her own fingers began to fondle Sian's intimacy, although she did it rather inexpertly.

"Keep your eyes open, Helyn," said Jenny, chiding her gently. "You mustn't hide your feelings from us while Sian makes love to you."

The beautiful brown eyes opened again, startled at the command and a little dismayed. But she looked closely at what her fingers were doing, as if fascinated by Sian's secret anatomy. Despite herself, Helyn was intrigued by the other girl's body and the effect that her caresses were having upon it. The young brunette's eyes grew gentle and loving as she continued to gaze at the moistening and roused feminine flesh of her fair-skinned redhead partner.

"Use your other hand as well, Helyn," said Jenny coaxingly. "Sian's bare bottom is beautifully presented to you. You needn't be shy about doing anything to her. Sian is sensitive there as well, especially just around her rude little dimple."

There was no protest from the pretty brunette. Helyn looked lovingly and tenderly at the lightly parted cheeks of Sian's backside. While her other hand remained busy with more important matters, she also stroked the young redhead's bare rear cheeks. Then, as if imagining what she would like Sian to do to her, Helyn's fingers slid gently between the pale cheeks of Sian's rounded arse, feeling and stroking.

Helyn's eyes were wider now and she was drawing

breath through lightly parted lips. There was excitement in her demurely pretty face where before there had only been bashfulness. Soon there would be no more difficulty in persuading Helyn to play the part of a boy with another girl. She began to kiss the backs of Sian's bare legs, starting behind the knees and working up. Sian, excited at this, touched her lips to the brunette's roused and moistened sexual flesh, kissing it lightly and then beginning to flicker her tongue upon it. Helyn shuddered and moaned but never ceased to kiss the redhead's thighs. Without more ado, they settled down to kiss and nuzzle and tongue-tease one another in the most intimate and sensitive places.

Both would have reached fulfillment in a few minutes more, but Jenny and Anton drew the girls' heads back and held their hands away. There were two bereft little sobs as the pleasure was interrupted. But it was interrupted only in order that it might be prolonged. By having their hands held away from one another for five or ten minutes, the two girls did not fall back into contentment and relaxation. They lay fretful and restive, making self-pitying little sounds of frustration. When Sian and Helyn were permitted to resume, they did so in the most hungry and passionate manner. It was true love-making now, where each was as eager to feast upon the other as to be feasted upon herself.

It was delightful to see Helyn, after so much reluctance, quite unable to hold back. Her fingertips played lightly and tantalisingly on the young redhead's secret places. At the same time, Helyn kissed the cheeks of Sian's bottom which Sian now thrust out more fully. Helyn hesitated and then, flinging caution aside, kissed between them.

"Kiss her there, Helyn," murmured Jenny encouragingly. "No need to be afraid or shy. Don't hold back, Helyn. Enjoy being rude with her there. Use your tongue between her cheeks, Helyn. Make her cry out with excitement. Don't you want to hear that, Helyn?"

Sian herself was manualising Helyn with great skill and had brought her close to a crisis. An excruciating pang of pleasure seemed to paralyse the young brunette, as if she had been impaled upon the cruel pike of a conqueror. Then in its spasm, Helyn's tongue was stuck out, firm and urgent, its tip disappearing where Sian's bottom is better imagined than described. Helyn was shuddering with the first release of her tension. Jenny and Anton held her firmly while she was having it. When it was over, there was a danger that Helyn would burst into sobs of relief and remorse. She might lie there in dismay, cold and ashamed at what she had done. They held her so that there should be none of that. The caressing would continue so that the last spasm of her release would merge with the first tickle of the next arousal.

"Lie still, Helyn," whispered Jenny. "You'll come half a dozen times on the table tonight. Was this the first one you've ever known? You'll be with the young Asian women soon. They'll make you let yourself go like this several times a day and once or twice during the night. You have almost everything to learn as yet about your own feelings. You need to have your climax like this many times, Helyn, before you know yourself properly."

As she said this, Jenny also began to rouse Sian with quick expert fingers, bringing the redhead to a gasping and shuddering conclusion.

"Lie still, just as you are," the young mistress said to the two girls. "Now begin all over again."

And so they did while we watched them. This time there was no holding back. They hurried to regain the heights of excitement from which they had just gently descended. There was no doubt of the exertion which the labor involved during the warm night. A gloss of sweat shone on the soft pallor of Helyn's bottom and hips, the wetness

slippery between her legs and rear cheeks. Jenny took a white linen napkin and wiped her over, though without interrupting the nuzzling and caressing, the tongue-tickling and kissing of the two girls.

This time, Sian reached her reward first. Her back arched and she flexed her legs, her mouth opened in a long soft cry and her blue eyes rolled back as if she might swoon. But she never ceased to caress her brunette girlfriend. When Helyn had finished as well, they lay together, touching lightly and apparently exhausted by their labours. I think they could have slept then and there, upon the table.

It was Jenny whose cunning prevented that. Gently with her own hands she began to rouse the moist and sensitive flesh of each girl again, one hand attending to Helyn and the other to Sian. Despite their languor, it was not long before they stirred, squirming and sighing. The second bout of love-making had been hurried and eager, this one was slow and luxurious. They were like contented and sleepy female animals, playing with one another's bodies rather than bacchantes going to it with desperate passion. The girls studied each other's loins and thighs and bottoms, fingers examining and testing rather than caressing. The slipperiness of their sweat made them look like two beautiful girl-wrestlers making up to one another and sleepy after combat.

Without inquiring too deeply, it seemed evident that both Sian and Helyn were destined for a private collection. They knew this and probably understood that it was futile to protest or argue against their destiny. I later heard Helyn begging Jenny to arrange that she should be allowed the same destination as Sian. Jenny would not promise that such arrangements could be made. But she consoled Helyn by assuring her that the dark-skinned beauties in such

places were experts in love between women. In a life where amorous idleness was their only occupation, a soft fair-skinned brunette would be irresistible. Several hours a day were passed in the kind of kissing and caressing we had just witnessed. Again, Jenny assured her that Helyn would have her climax several times before each sunrise on the busy fingers of the native girls. Sian, too, might be spoken for by an Arabian master. That arrangement was not to be altered because of a sentimental attachment to Helyn.

The separation of the two girls need not be the doom of love but merely the end of an infatuation. Indeed, if Sian and Helyn were now deeply in love, this exclusive passion might not have been welcome to the man whose household they joined. Jenny understood this and was wise enough to make no promises. The separation of Sian and Helyn must be permanent if it came, but it would not come for a few weeks or even a few months, not until the season of the Villa Rosa had run its course. During that time, they were permitted to sink deeper and deeper into their mutual affection. They might kiss, caress, and play with one another all night and most of the day. It was to be encouraged, so that Helyn's reluctance in such matters would be quite overcome.

It was long past midnight on the occasion of Anton's dinner when the two loving girls on the table sank back from their third mutual release. Anton lit a fresh cigar and stood up, leading us over to the side-table where we might refresh our glasses. We stood there talking for a little while, ignoring the redhead and the brunette who lay humidly and sleepily together. It was about ten minutes later, as we were still in conversation, that I turned to say something to Jenny. As I did so, I looked towards that spacious table under the wrought-iron Spanish lamps. Sian

and Helyn stirred sleepily again. But Sian's fingers were gently examining Helyn's intimate flesh which was moistening readily. And Sian in turn was dewing Helyn's fingers and lips with her copious feminine excitement. Without being commanded, and indeed doing it furtively because they were not commanded, Sian and Helyn were beginning all over again.

The first still light of summer dawn caught the dark silhouette of the eastern roof of the Villa Rosa before our two girls ceased playing the boy with each other on the table. I led Sian up to the cool light of the bedroom where, upon silken covers, she was to yield to me the pleasures that Helyn had lovingly prepared. After what I had witnessed, it would have been absurd for the young redhead to pretend to modesty at front or rear when required to present herself in either way. Nor did Sian pretend to it.

Though it was late, I had no need to hurry with her. Time in the Villa Rosa is allotted by pleasure, not pleasure by time. Even before I had undressed, Sian was naked on the bed, lying on her back, hugging her knees up to her breasts, so that she presented the underside view of her hips, thighs, and sex to me, full spread and well prepared. The sight of the tool made her turn her head towards me as I approached, the pale red tresses held back by her headband from the creamy sensuality of her face, the blue eyes dreamy with thoughts of desire.

Helyn had prepared her well, making Sian slippery and easy. Her knees opened, her heels touched the small of my back. I gave the young wanton a good time, moving vigorously and deeply, which she acknowledged by urgent cries, threshing her head sideways in demented ecstasy, teeth fretting at her lip, letting me feel the shudders of her pale thighs as they clasped me.

After her second release, I drew away. I made her lower her legs and straighten them.

“Turn over, Sian.”

She looked at me doubtfully and I explained.

“Your bottom, Sian.”

There was doubt in her dreamy blue eyes but she obeyed me, wrestling round on her arms and arranging herself on her belly. I packed the pillow under her loins so that the pale gloss of Sian's bottom had a fuller-cheeked and more seductive shape. She submitted without argument to the finger parting of her rear cheeks and the vaselined caresses. I teased her a little as I did this.

“If you are to have an Arab master, Sian, you must expect to be treated like this almost every night.”

It was exciting to see that Sian strained hard to admit the swollen cherry-head, despite her misgivings. When the full length of the warm bulk was sheathed, I could see that she was intrigued by the feeling, despite her unease. Sian's bottom with its pale wanton cheek-swell seduced me easily. She was tight and yet the lubrication made her easy to ride. I kissed her red hair and pale face, sensing her natural randiness even now. She turned her lips to kiss and I felt her tongue playing lewdly in my mouth, while my manhood was filling and stretching the tightness of Sian's bottom. Her tongue was even more excitedly active in my mouth as my passion boiled over and spent pulse after pulse in the depths of Sian's backside, rousing the young redhead's randiness by the feel of it.

So much time went by before I was finally satisfied with her, that we fell deeply asleep and woke only when the sun had passed its highest point.

Sian and Helyn now remained under the guardianship of Anton and his trusted servants in the Villa Rosa. In a few days more the car which took Mano and I on our journey with Jenny and Margarita was prepared. Mano was the driver and I his passenger. Throughout the hours of our

journey, Jenny sat in the back seat with Margarita. I cannot be sure of the extent of fondling and caressing that the mistress bestowed on her young Spanish pupil. There was hugging and kissing, stroking back of Margarita's lank black hair, pillowing of Margarita's head in Jenny's lap for petting and soothing.

I noticed that the Spanish girl had not put on the waist-belt of her jeans. Once, in the mirror, I caught a glimpse of the jeans unzipped at the front. I think Jenny's hand had slipped in and that she was fondling Margarita intimately through the thin veil of the girl's elasticated cotton briefs. Margarita shifted and sighed. Jenny had used the passion that Margarita felt for her with great skill. She kept the Spanish girl high on the dreamy bliss of such fondling and arousal, day and night. It was a dream from which Margarita would not be permitted to wake until the drama of her submission was complete and the destiny imposed upon her was inescapable.

It was simpler than I had imagined for Jenny to keep the passionate olive-skinned girl in a state of simmering excitement until it was too late for second thoughts.

## Côte Sauvage

The journey which began among the summer frivolities of Carailac ended on a remote and primitive coast. Even in summer it was a wild and romantic place. Even in the tranquil sunlit days of the western ocean, it held a certain promise of nights of flame-lit drama and desire whose passion overflowed into violence.

The cottage itself lay a mile or two beyond the last of the ochre-coloured farm buildings, screened from them by the belt of pine trees that fringed the coast. Fields of tall maize and wide pastureland made up the flat interior landscape. A hundred years before, this low-lying country had been reclaimed by Dutch engineers from spring floods and the invasions of the sea. Now it was drained by quiet canals and little streams. The willow leaves and aspens quivered silver along their banks in the strong light.

Above the flat land of vast shimmering horizons and infinite sky rose the solitary broken watch-tower of Port d'Araq, the sea long since gone and the river dwindled to a stream in a deep muddy canyon. Square and massive even in decay, the stone tower rose among the broad and quiet

fields. It was the last vestige of a baronial castle, destroyed in the campaigns of the virtuous republic. Here and there, cattle stood in the noon shade of its exposed foundations. The ruined walls of Bourbon power spoke of stern delight in popular justice. The blade to the throat of the oppressor. The reckoning with his womenfolk in a locked room. The image of the lash on their white uncovered hips.

Ten miles from this, the cottage stood where the road ended in a broad sweep of hardened earth, a few feet above the seaweed of the tide-line. Like most of the old buildings on that deserted coast, it was a single-storey structure, raised a dozen feet above the rocks and sand. A sea wall secured the garden and the ground was concealed by a tall fence of brushwood, stacked and bound. From the end of the narrow road a short track led to the cottage. The clear ocean sunlight was filtered to a dappling of yellow on the earth road by the interlacing branches of firs.

The appearance of such a cottage was familiar to travellers in any part of the western coast from the Vendée to the Spanish frontier beyond St-Jean-de-Luz. Its white-rendered walls and green shutters were matched by a shallow-pitched roof of terra-cotta tiles that had been darkened by seasons of rain and sun.

A small latch-gate in the hedge led to the concealed garden, running between the front of the cottage and the drop of ten or twelve feet to the beach. The wall of parti-coloured sea-stones, grey, brown, and white, concealed it from below. Sheltered as it was, this cottage garden on the ocean's rim was a haven of warmth and colour. There was crimson-feathered tamarisk and the tall dry clumps of pampas grass, rising above the sunflowers and blood-red geranium petals.

Though it stood at the end of the little road, the cottage was at the inward point of a long bay. Towards the south,

the land extended in low cliffs and dunes with wide deserted miles of sand at low water. On the far point, the finger of a lighthouse rose faintly in the haze of heat. At the northern limit, two or three miles distant, the long sandy beach ended at a rough breakwater, where a few white houses and a grey ruined windmill with broken vanes marked the nearest settlement.

It was not hard to see why Mano had acquired such a summer retreat. To the south one might walk for miles along the firm wave-ribbed sand that was crisp with the fragments of tiny ocean shells. The cliffs were low enough, crumbling here and there to dunes, to make access easy to the quiet shady paths among the pine woods. Across the wide expanse at low tide, the arrowheads of swifts darted and swooped after midges. Distantly one caught the shouts of children and the bombardment of the surf as the tide turned again.

By day, the long receding roar of ebb tide uncovered a broken plateau of rock and weed. In the summer mornings the drifts of cloud were scattered by a fresh breeze across the pale blue of the ocean sky. A few children explored the pools, vast and shadowy, that shimmered with transparent fish or stirred at the scrambling of a crab. Far out on the dark rocks appeared the figures of the mussel-gatherers, filling their buckets and baskets for the next day's market. At sunset and twilight, the beach below the garden became a rendezvous. Slimly-dressed girls in riding-pants and shirts, managing bay mounts with the pressure of their thighs. The firefly glow of the horsemen's cigarettes. By moonlight the graceful equestriennes explored the black water worlds of the tidal pools.

For a day or two, neither Mano nor Jenny proposed to begin Margarita's training. The cottage with its red-tiled floor had been furnished in a simple style of basket chairs

and low tables, old-fashioned armoire-cupboards and brass lamps. There was no concession to modernity beyond the comforts of the Lagonda with its ice-box and cocktail shaker, its silver cigarette-box and the turntable with a stack of half a dozen records.

A room on either hand of the front door looked out across the garden and the sea. To the rear of these were the bedrooms and bathroom, the kitchen and another bedroom to one side. It was plain to see that this had never been built as a peasant cottage, not even one of the grander kind. It was the summer plaything of a lawyer or a banker beyond the reach of telephone or cable. From the shelter of the garden the crystal glitter of the waves at noon darkened through blue to violet under a salmon flush of sunset cloud. It was easy to spin time away. From time to time there were walks by the sandy paths of the low cliffs and crumbling dunes, among gorse thickets and pines. It was a sunlit world of grasshoppers and lizards, bright dragonflies among the gold and blue flowers of tufted grass. The honeyed scent of wild thyme, the haunt of mauve and yellow butterflies, came in drifts of the warm salt air.

At night Jenny occupied herself with Margarita. Their shared room with its rush matting on red tiles reflected the simplicity of the cottage. It held only the plain bed, the bleached wood of the dressing-table and mirror-frames, two basket-chairs and a small table. The green shutters were closed across the window, concealing the scene within from Mano and I after dinner. We stood in the sheltered garden, the smoke of cigarettes drifting and fading in the luminous reflection of the night tide. The lighthouses in the distance played across the shore. First from the Ile de Rhé, sunk almost below the horizon, a rapid arc, dimly lighting walls and cliffs from a dozen miles out to sea. Four quick

sweeping beams and then a pause. From another at La Tranche, an intermittent pulse of vivid green.

"Make love," said Jenny's voice quietly to Margarita, "Leave your knickers on the chair, you won't need them. Turn on your side. Your face to the mirror. Pull the hem of your blouse higher. Well above your hips. Unbutton it at the front. Now begin."

The well-built Spanish girl murmured something, too softly for us to catch.

"On your own," said Jenny. One almost heard the smile in her voice. "Does it matter? I have done it to you often enough. Now I should like to see you make love to yourself. Does that surprise you?"

The basket chair creaked as the young mistress sat down to watch, the sole spectator of the teenage girl's self-caressing. Far out across the beach rang the crack and rush of incoming breakers as the flood tide began.

"One hand behind you, Margarita," said Jenny softly. "Play with that proud young olive-skinned bottom of yours at the same time."

One heard the movement of the bed as Margarita turned a little more on her belly and there was the lightest whisper of a hand moving on sleekly rounded flesh.

"Properly," Jenny said, the first hardening of her voice just discernible. "Between the cheeks."

In the warm air of the garden the night was filled by an electric throb of passionate crickets from the gorse and grass above the sandy cliffs. The Ile de Rhé swept in four faint pulses and La Tranche replied with its glimmers of green.

"You think I make you do this only for my own pleasure?" Jenny asked the Spanish girl softly, the basket chair creaking as she moved. "I do it for your improvement. It will teach you about yourself, how you feel when

you have to arouse yourself in front of someone else. And when you have made love to yourself in my presence, you will obey my other commands more easily. Lift your knee a little, clear of the other. A little more so that I can see if you know what to do with your fingers between your legs. Yes, I can see that you do. Someone taught you, no doubt. One of the other girl-students in Spain or England perhaps. Not Alicia. Those Italian girls are precocious little sluts but they have too much to learn at her age."

Margarita was gasping now, like a girl panting at the end of a race. Her strong young hips were in motion as the excitement grew. One could hear the springs of the bed moving in a firm rhythm which broke into an erratic or convulsive beat as she neared her climax. Now she was uttering those half-spoken and half-grunted exclamations, each sharper than the last, of a girl coming to her conclusion. Margarita's passion had the sound of a girl who felt a knife being driven into her belly-button inch by inch. Yet it was the torment of pleasure that drove these animal cries from her throat.

"Come over here, Margarita," said Jenny presently, now more gentle with the girl. "Lie over my knees."

There was the light slap of bare footsteps on the tiles and then the harsher creak of the basket-chair under the double weight.

"Your thighs a little apart," Jenny murmured.

Fireflies danced over the wide uncovered sands of the long bay. A lamp at the end of the road was just bright enough to show the drooping tricolor stirring on its official staff. Through the close slats of the shutters, a watery light fell on the garden paving. There was a soft cry from Margarita, urgent and submissive. The basket chair creaked in a steady rhythm as Jenny's arm moved and her fingers masturbated the Spanish girl with slow tantalising skill.

This masturbation of Margarita was still continuing when Mano and I pitched our cigarettes into the rock-pools below and went indoors.

From dinner until the long hours after midnight, Margarita squirmed under the exquisite caresses of her mistress. She sank, exhausted, to her sleep in Jenny's arms and woke as the same loving fingers stroked her to consciousness. After a bedroom breakfast of croissants and coffee, fed from mouth to mouth with languid kisses, Jenny accompanied the Spanish girl to the tiled annexe with its shower and bidet. Margarita must lie on her belly over the white wooden chair, while her young mistress filled the pencil squirt with liquid soap. Only after insertion in Margarita's bottom and a long probing exercise was the rubber bulb of the squirt pressed hard. And while the cold depth of the probing slimness between the Hispanic tan of her swelling bottom-cheeks made Margarita catch her breath, Jenny's other hand manualised skilfully between the girl's legs.

This session over the stool was prolonged for the greater part of the morning. In the afternoon, Jenny led Margarita to a garden chair, cuddling her there, stroking her hair, soothing her with a hypnotic enchantment. After dinner, they withdrew to the shuttered bedroom. Margarita's jeans and underpants were slipped off. The long caressing ritual of the night began once more. More clearly than at the Villa Rosa, I understood how Jenny managed to keep the girl high on a dream-cloud of arousal. Sleepless nights and days of fondling and soothing reduced Margarita's resistance and fired her fierce passions until she was moulded to the most extreme demands of her lesbian mistress.

It was a week later when I overheard Jenny say to her, "You shall have a visit from Jeevan soon. She is a wise and skilful beauty from the East. She will take you in her hands and make you what you should be. After that, you

will be more passionate and more resolute in your dealings with other women. Little girls like Alicia, or even Sharon and Louise, will be your slaves. You will be the mistress of such creatures and a proper man's woman as well."

Jenny did not expand her explanation. Nor did Margarita ask. The next night, Jeevan's car stopped at the end of the long road to the cottage and the lonely bay. It was arranged that neither she nor Margarita should see one another during her visit. To ensure this, Jeevan would arrive late each night and leave before dawn. She came the first time to explain her intentions to Jenny. Next morning I heard Jenny say to the Spanish girl,

"You will be a better mistress of other girls, Margarita, when Jeevan is satisfied with you. Tonight you must confront your destiny. Tomorrow you will be ready."

Jeevan was one of those young women who combine the beauty and even the barbarity of Asia with the sophistication of Paris or Berlin. She was still young, marriage and children being accomplished and put behind her early in such a culture. In her light blue pants and jacket her figure was still trim-legged and supple. The long ear pendants and the carefully brushed bell-shape of her sleek dark hair suggested her western pretensions. Jeevan had the seductive facial qualities of her race, the firm young face with tawny complexion and broad-boned cheeks, the lips rather full and sullen, the eyes with their high dark brows calm and beautiful. Much of that beauty was in her dark eyes. They were not slanted in the Oriental manner but large and finely curved with the grace of an Indo-European, their gaze direct and self-assured.

Was Jeevan the young woman to prepare Margarita for the destiny that had been chosen? Sometimes in talking to her one noticed a sly evasion in the movement of her eyes, a gleam of the sardonic and anarchic which reminded me

at once of Jenny herself. Once or twice I chanced to see the young Asian woman when she thought she was unobserved. There was a certain look then, which she concealed at other times. The lips had a downward curve, sullen and brooding but suggesting a vein of cruelty. The handsome face, if one can use such a term for feminine beauty, had a strained and almost a scowling air.

I heard nothing much of her conversation with Jenny on her first visit. She said little to either Mano or I. But one explanation by the Asian woman remains in my mind.

“A certain frustration and a certain vindictiveness. That is how Margarita will learn to be a bitch with other girls—even with women older than she is. Her natural sexuality is strong in a Spanish girl of her age and type. She is like an Arab girl in that respect. You want Margarita to be truly passionate, in submission to a man and in ruling a woman? See to it that she is constantly roused but that she cannot quite release or relieve the tension of it. It is the secret of the Arabian harem. It is why their midwives prepare their girls as they do. Margarita’s desperation for a man’s tool or a woman’s caresses will make her a better servant. She will even provoke you to beat her with a whip, knowing that the frenzy and the tears will leave her calm afterwards.”

Before she left, Jeevan said,

“You must tell her and explain to her what is going to happen tomorrow night. Give her the reasons. Make her understand the severity and the new way she must go. Tell her that we give her no choice in the matter. We know her character better than Margarita does herself. We know what is right for her, better than she ever can. We are resolute to do what she would be too timid to accept. A fierce ordeal between her legs. Make her understand that. She is to be the slave of men and the mistress of

women. I think she will find more excitement in that than in the tepid marriages of Barcelona or Seville.”

The next night after dinner, I witnessed a strange scene, part of which was enacted in the tiled sitting room of the cottage with its square-armed leather chairs and low table. Between that room and the kitchen was a waist-high hatch. Margarita was bending over it so that her head and shoulders were on the kitchen side, her hips, backside, and legs in the sitting room. I could not see what had happened on the far side but it was impossible to believe that Margarita's mouth had not been well-wadded and her arms secured at full stretch down the far side, her head supported by Mano with a bottle of sal volatile to her nostrils.

Margarita's jeans and the plain elasticated cotton of her panties lay on one of the sitting-room chairs. A black strap round each of the Spanish girl's thighs pinioned them tight to the wall in which the hatch was set.

The hatch had been lowered until it touched the small of her back, then locked in place. The heavy velvet of the curtain was closed as well and corded tightly round Margarita's waist. In this manner she was presented to Jeevan. By seeing the Spanish girl only from the waist down, the young Asian wife was able to work impassively and without compunction. She was never to see more of her pupil than the rather heavy-cheeked Hispanic tan of Margarita's bottom, her bare hips, and those thighs whose parting offered an easy approach to her intimate femininity from the rear. A girl who was no more than a bottom, a pair of thighs, hips and legs to the woman who dealt with her was the best subject. The wildness of her mouth was never heard. The frenzy of her eyes was never seen.

Margarita could do nothing to prevent what followed. But nor could she quite keep still in her panic. Her feet moved this way and that, trying to walk one way and then

the other as she bent through the hatch, moving the few inches that her position allowed. The rather heavy-cheeked tan of the Spanish girl's arse and the movements of her legs made her look like a restive filly.

Jeevan gave a smack on one bare olive-tan cheek of Margarita's bottom to chide her, and then another. After that, her fingers slipped between the legs, fondling back the warm folds of secret flesh. Fondling, caressing, and finger-tickling, she made Margarita's toes curl with the exquisite torment of arousal and alarm. Jeevan's fine tawny-skinned face was impassive with the arched beauty of her dark eyes, the falling forward of her bell-shape of black hair, and the shiver of her long silver ear-pendants. Before long, Margarita was writhing with arousal, her pressed knees twisting side to side so far as the straps round her sleek olive-tan thighs would permit.

There was a thin resonance on the table. The light caught a fine edge and Jeevan let the cold blade touch lightly, high up on the back of Margarita's tan-skinned thigh. She held it, making the girl wait. The spilling of Jeevan's dark hair as she looked down did not quite hide the steady passion in her dark eyes. She made her pupil wait a little more. Her fingers played a dance between the sallow double-swell of Margarita's bottom-cheeks.

Jeevan still fingered back the warm folds of humid flesh, fondling and choosing. Skilled as she was in female passion, she had brought a last spending from her subject easily. Then her mouth tightened a little and with her other hand there were quick expert movements, a distant but intense frenzy.

"A little more yet," she said quietly to Jenny, who stood close by with her pale blue eyes animated by expectation and excitement. "Severely curbed but not entirely deprived. Quick to feel passion but with no risk that she

will exhaust it all. More easily roused and sensitive but never able to disperse her desires. That way, she will be pitiless with the girls under her command. Now, a little more trimming, here and here.”

And so Margarita's femininity was curbed harshly to make her a more jealous mistress of her own sex. By removing the means of satisfaction the natural desires of the Spanish girl's loins were pent up until they found their release in more extreme forms. She was so wild for a day or two that restraint was necessary.

“There is nothing she will turn from now, if it will help to relieve her feelings,” Jeevan said softly as she finished. Margarita's knees had given forward. The Asian woman stroked Margarita's bare bottom-cheeks with the back of her hand and played her fingers between them to restore the tan-skin victim of passion. “A Spanish girl's arse is her last resort. But she will resort to it if she must.”

It was almost dawn when Jeevan left that night. The headlights of her car swung in an arc across the dark sea above the phosphorescent glimmer of the incoming tide as she drove away. I concluded that she was a guest in one of the châteaux further down the coast but I never learnt if that was true. Yet every night for some time the scene was repeated. Jeevan with her strong Asian beauty and westernised style would arrive an hour or more after dinner. Margarita would be presented to her, bending through the hatch in the same manner. There was no repetition of that first night's initiation into harem womanhood. It was the Spanish girl's frantic discovery of the consequences to herself that Jeevan sought to calm.

She stroked the slight sallow heaviness of Margarita's bottom-cheeks. Her cunning fingers slipped between, stroking and tickling. For an hour every evening, she fondled the girl's olive-tan backside, rousing and teasing the sensi-

tive nerves between its cheeks. The slim glass probe was dipped in oil and entered her behind easily. It played in and out, doing those things that Margarita would find perversely rousing. The woman's promise to sensitise the Latin girl in these places was fulfilled. At the end of three weeks, Margarita's resistance, the tightening and refusal had stopped.

"She likes it now," Jeevan said, "you will find Margarita responsive at once to a caress or a tickle between her rear cheeks."

But Jeevan also explained that the denial of Margarita's easy sexual relief would drive a warm-blooded girl of her culture to extremes of perversity.

"There are many girls of her sort in Arabia," Jeevan said. "Their desires grow so strong that they are mad for release of their tension. In the end they will provoke a whipping, if there is no other means. You will find this with Margarita from time to time. She will be like a she-cat on heat, unable to relieve her feelings. Despite the torment of the whip, it will calm her afterwards. She will spend the energy of her frustration in screaming and weeping. Then she will be exhausted and relaxed at last."

Jeevan endeavoured to prove this on an evening when even the movements of Margarita's backside and thighs showed her restiveness as she bent through the hatchway. The young Asian wife picked up the coiled lash with its carved handle. The sallow Spanish tan and the slightly heavy-cheeked look of Margarita's bottom made the seventeen-year-old student offer an excellent target to her mistress.

"She must be broken in," Jeevan said, "like a new filly."

For half an hour the bare white walls of the cottage room rang with the sharpness of the whip smacking hard

across the fattened olive-skinned cheeks of Margarita's bottom in this posture. The vicious imprints of the woven snakeskin marking her rear cheeks by the end told their own story. One could not, of course, see the wildness in her face nor hear her wadded shrillness. But next day there was no doubt. Margarita was calmer than at any time since Jeevan had made a woman of her in the Arab way that first night. She was self-absorbed and troubled in her looks. Yet the hysteria of her loins had found an outlet for the time being.

Twice more before she left the cottage, Margarita's temper and frustration made it seem she was goading her guardians to whip her. And she was whipped each time. There was a final occasion when, her voice edged with uncertainty, she went to Mano to confess her violent frustration and challenged him to beat her. When it was over, the Spanish girl lay thrashed and tearful over the bed. But she took his hand, kissed it, and thanked him for what he had done.

In the weeks that followed Jeevan's use of the pony-lash, Margarita gasped and squirmed with the intensity of her natural warm-blooded passion, she moaned and shuddered as if unable to express it all. The art of the Asian mistress had provoked desire in the Spanish girl's strong young loins, pent up and constantly seeking enough release. Margarita made love to herself on the bed when she thought no one was watching her. Hesitantly at first, she slipped one hand behind her and played with her bottom at the same time. She smacked its cheeks lightly, as if to spur herself on. The olive-tan cheeks of Margarita's arse were now eagerly and almost lewdly at Mano's disposal. She was passionate for excitement in whatever way he chose.

"You would be lascivious and cruel with young Alicia now, Margarita," Jenny said, teasing her one day. "Per-

haps Anton will give you the chance to be loving and severe with her soon.”

The last of Jeevan's visits was not allowed to pass without Margarita being made to thank the young Asian mistress for her attentions. The encounter took place in the shuttered bedroom with Jenny as matchmaker. Two silk scarves were used, one to blindfold Margarita and the other to bind her wrists behind her back. It still remained an inviolable rule that she must never see the woman with whose hands she was so familiar. Her wrists were bound for fear that she might have held some secret resentment against Jeevan.

“Before you leave here, Margarita, you must pay your tribute to the mistress who has determined the pleasures and passions of your life for you,” Jenny had said to her. Margarita made no protest.

It will do no harm to say that Mano and I, the slats of the shutters being altered, saw Jeevan strip the matador-pants and briefs from her own tawny hips and legs. She lay on her back with knees drawn up while Margarita was obliged to kneel, her own hips high as she bowed her face to the exposed underside of the young Asian woman's spread thighs and hips.

The work of Margarita's lips and tongue was long and loving before Jeevan's breath expired in a long gasp. Presently the Asian beauty turned on her side, obliging Margarita to kiss from the rear. When the tawny cheeks of Jeevan's bottom had been printed with the Spanish girl's kisses, there was a murmured command. Open-mouthed and quick-tongued, Margarita pressed to the tight postern gate. The cheeks of Jeevan's bottom seemed to swell a little and the young Asian wife tensed her belly. Margarita drew back startled but, being reprov'd returned.

Neither Jeevan nor Jenny spared Margarita on that last

night in the shuttered room. It was thought best, for her own sake, that Margarita should taste such humiliation and know the excitement that the memory of it would breed in her. She had come so far now that there could be no going back. Those who had brought her to this place knew that the young Spanish student soon learnt the futility of regret for what had been done to her. Jeevan had worked quickly and implacably with a keen blade. Accepting the inevitable now, Margarita was eager to embrace the destiny chosen for her.

And so, Jeevan's visits ceased. Then it was Mano who took command of the Spanish girl as if to put her to the proof. To make Margarita present her behind for it was the ultimate insult to a young woman of her kind and therefore the greater test.

The result of these nightly tests was curious. Jenny assured me, smiling, that Margarita could not sleep in her apprehension at waiting for it. When Mano did not come to her, she lay awake all night. It was an act of kindness to do it before midnight, to feel her relax as if in contentment when it was over and then drift into sleep. From this they passed to Margarita wanting it when she went to bed, in order that it should be finished for the night. To invite this, she learnt to position herself as if asking for it, the light olive tan of Margarita's bottom-cheeks swelling suggestively towards the open door of her room as she lay over the bed. Mano made each session last for half an hour or so. After a week or two of this regular and prolonged stretching, he found her easier. A Spanish girl-student was a delightful subject on which to exercise his talent. Despite her fierce proud nature, Margarita belonged to a culture where girls of her type learnt to submit at last. His tool ran deep between the Hispanic tan of Margarita's broadened

bottom-cheeks and his passion flowed repeatedly on warm infertile soil.

After Mano's visits to her bed, Margarita slept, curling up a little, fondling herself in her dreams, the tribute of her master's spilt milk shining on her thighs and the warm tan of her bottom-cheeks.

It was six weeks since Margarita's training had begun. Jenny had prepared her well by the arts of arousal and seduction. But still the time would have been too short, had not Jeevan's skill cut short any purpose in protest or rebellion. The perverse and passionate Asian woman had made the Spanish girl what she now was.

The days passed quickly until the time came to return to Carailac. I looked for any sign of rejection or disavowal by Margarita. I saw none. Instead, there were incidents which confirmed that the perverse and the aberrant were now the sources that forced her passion with hothouse intensity. I concede that the warm balm of Mano's tribute poured each night on to Margarita's infertile soil. Nonetheless the sense of being ploughed and inundated in this manner bred powerful feelings in the Spanish girl's mind. The proof of this was soon to be seen.

## Les Deux Amies

The weeks of Margarita's education in the cottage with its tide-washed garden wall extended into the last days of summer. In all that time the brilliance of the season had scarcely waned. The bone-white rocks above the tideline were scoured by sun and wind in the final days of August. Farther out, the strengthening breakers gathered towards their equinoctial climax, washing across the oyster-grey slabs of stone set in the stretches of sand. The first decline of the ocean summer appeared in days of pale emerald sea under dove-grey cloud, windless and humid. By morning, the overcast horizon was clear again. A depth of cloudless blue sky vaulted the afternoon, stunning and silent in the calm of slack glittering water. The vibrant lizard-green of gorse and grass edged the undulating cliff-paths. The sand was burnt to pale gold and the sea lay hushed in a royal blue stillness. At dusk the waves were dimmed to grey and salmon-tinted ripples.

Margarita's behaviour went through predictable phases during the weeks which followed Jeevan's departure. At first there was a certain dismay and desperation at finding

herself left in such a situation. Then there was a fury of passion that seemed to find no means of release. The climax of this was a week in which she sought to work the torment of desire from her system by seeking impalement, ravishing, even provoking the whip across her bare backside by her aggression. Then there was a time of calm, in which she sought the same remedies from Mano and Jenny but without that degree of violent conduct.

It was not hard to see why the wisdom of the harem requires that such girls are sometimes restrained, as a matter of routine, after a wise woman of Jeevan's sort has superintended their coming of age. To judge from Margarita's conduct, she might have done violence to others and—even more probably—violence to herself in the rage of her frustration. Jeevan's skill had left the sensitive flesh tormentingly vulnerable to ever more easy and constant arousal by the friction of the tight jeans or the saddle, the accidental touch of fingers or of the normal soaping and sponging of such areas. To vent the power of the feelings which this inspired was now quite beyond Margarita's ability.

I was intrigued by the way in which the Spanish girl gave herself so vigorously to Mano's love-making with her backside. She had been sensitised in that area by Jeevan's nightly caresses but the tribute she now received there could never be sufficient to relieve her stronger feelings. Even Mano's comfort between her legs still left her unfulfilled. I concluded that Margarita's ready and vigorous assistance in the impaling of her behind was merely a method of taking her mind away from the torture of desire elsewhere by the energy with which she sacrificed herself to her master. While she lay on her belly over the pillow, Mano astride her, one heard the Spanish girl's rhythmic panting and the short hard exclamations of breath. She

sounded as if she was labouring in vain to exhaust herself by this method, so that she might sleep soundly when it was over.

Sometimes exhaustion overcame her in the soft tranquillity into which she sank at last and slept until late in the morning. There were other occasions when this was not to be. Once when Mano had finished with her and the door of the room was open, Jenny and I watched them together. There was no secret in this and, I think, Mano had opened the door to display the sequel.

Margarita was still lying on her belly over the pillow as Mano stood by her. She turned to him, cursing and snatching at him. She did not fight in her frustration, as a woman sometimes will with a man. It was an attack on her lover for doing less than she needed, leaving her roused and fretful at the end of their pleasure. Nor did she attempt to get up from the bed as she clutched and cursed.

Mano took all this calmly, knowing what the malady was and what the cure must be. He fended her off and took from the drawer of the bedside table the short woven lash with its carved handle. Margarita was naked except for the black high-necked pullover which, curiously, was the one she had worn when I first saw her walking along the Terminus Road near the language school several months before. It ended at her waist, leaving the sallow tan of her hips and voluptuous bottom-cheeks completely bare.

At the sight of the whip, she slid down on her belly again, play-acting a whimper of terror and reproach. She swept back the sleek dark hair from her face and twisted her head, the firm round chin and determined mouth, the intense dark eyes, tall brow and wide-boned cheeks now turned upon her master.

The sounds that came from Margarita's throat were all of fear and loathing of the whip as Mano stood over her.

Yet her conduct and her attitude, even the way she lay over the pillow, was provoking it. A moment ago she had fought him. Now she acted like a girl who submits because she knows she will get the lash anyway.

Without a word, Mano brought the short snakeskin lash down hard across the olive tan of Margarita's surging buttocks. She let out a hiss of torment and her voluptuous Spanish bottom-cheeks flesh-creased as she tensed them together. Mano brought down the lash again—and then again. Margarita cried out and covered her backside with her hands. But when Mano laid down the lash, took her wrists and fastened them to the bed's frame, there was no resistance beyond a whimpering of self-pity that was put on for effect. Jenny whispered to me that Margarita could not quite find the courage to ask Mano to strap her down for a whipping. Therefore she covered her bottom with her hands, knowing as she did so that the result would be the same.

At the same time, one could see that there was nothing pretended or faked about the punishment. The prints of the whip across the sleek Hispanic tan of Margarita's bottom-cheeks were vivid enough and raised enough to make one catch one's breath. Her whimpering and plaintiveness at first had been play-acted to provoke the situation. But there was nothing acted about Margarita's screams as they rang from the bare distempered walls of the lamplit cottage after twenty or thirty strokes of the whip across her bare backside. She twisted side to side on the bed like a swimmer wallowing and floundering. The lash imparted its angry brand-marks with such force that the very pattern of the woven snakeskin could be seen.

Mano gave the Spanish girl an unrestrained beating across her bottom with the whip, a punishment of the kind that follows family disobedience by such a girl rather than

the measured chastisement of a prison discipline. It lasted quite a long time, during which I think he gave her about fifty strokes. When he put down the whip, Margarita burst into tears, having been dry-eyed throughout her ordeal. She poured out all her pent-up frustration in this storm of weeping. Mano sat on the edge of the bed, stroking her black hair gently, kissing her tear-wet lips from time to time, waiting for the sobs to grow calmer.

At length they did. He stroked and comforted the young Spanish student until she was quiet at last. There came from Margarita a sigh that had a bizarre overtone of contentment about it.

“The whip is not the worst torment for her now,” Jenny said to me with a smile. “Far worse is the agony of desire that can find no outlet. Now you understand why harem girls sometimes court a beating.”

I found it bizarre and yet it seemed to be true. Margarita exhaled a sigh that suggested she was falling deeply and exhaustedly asleep as Mano drew away the hand that had been stroking her hair. Had one not seen the ordeal half an hour earlier, it would have been impossible to deny that she exuded a strange contentment. This was the most paradoxical of many paradoxical memories that I bore away with me from the *côte sauvage*. Had you seen Margarita walking with her friends through the cool sunlight of the shopping streets a few months earlier, nothing in her conduct would have led you to anticipate this.

Were these tendencies in her all the time? Or was Margarita now the product of Jeevan's handiwork? A little of both, I concluded. Jeevan had done much but she and the Spanish girl's mentors had detected in Margarita those tendencies which would make her responsive to such treatment. For that reason, one could not regret that she had undergone the initiation between her legs that the wisdom of the East prescribes.

In the few weeks remaining to us at the cottage, everything I saw and heard confirmed me in this opinion. Despite her aggressiveness at night with her lover, born of her own frustration, Margarita's general behaviour was eagerly obedient. There was not a command given her, in the running of the cottage, that she did not obey at once. As for walking alone upon the beach or demanding to be set free of her obligations, there was no hint of it. After what Jeevan had done, it seemed that Margarita clung to those who sanctioned it as if there were no safety in the world elsewhere. In her new life, she longed to be secure with the only people who could make her so.

As if in recognition of this, she was seldom left alone. Mano woke her in the morning, kissing and caressing. Jenny led her to the bathroom, sponging and soaping. Not a morning passed without Margarita lying face-down over the stool, Jenny inserting in Margarita's behind the slim glass squirt with its perfumed liquid-soap. Half an hour of a gentle probing rhythm preceded the squeezing of the rubber bulb. The morning passed after that under Mano's caressing hand over the tight denim of Margarita's jeans as she curled in a chair with him. The afternoon walk with Jenny was full of kissing and cuddling. During the evening, the Spanish girl lay before us on the lamplit rug, self-caressing by inclination or command until her embarrassment in doing this was overcome.

How would she be when she was left alone? I suppose that was the doubt which we all felt.

There was an incident soon afterwards which may have been contrived by Mano to put the girl to a test. How would Margarita behave, if free to do as she pleased? One afternoon, Jenny took a volume of Paul Verlaine and walked off across the shore towards the distant finger of the lighthouse. Mano and I took the opposite direction, as

if heading towards the breakwater and the broken windmill at the far end of the long sweep of coast. Margarita was left entirely alone in the cottage.

Mano and I did not go far, having agreed to keep the cottage under observation. For half an hour there was little to see. The shutters of Margarita's bedroom closed and we knew she was in there. After a while we saw a movement behind the frosted toilet-glass. It was suggestion rather than observation. Margarita took the flannel from the window. The colouring showed that she was naked. Her movements also showed that she had wet the flannel and was washing herself round the hips, backside, thighs, and between her legs. Presently we saw the dark back of her hair as she sat down for a moment. The water ran and Margarita's shape vanished. She appeared at the cottage door in her black high-necked sweater and her jeans which were tightened by their leather waist-belt. Then she walked away down the beach in the direction that Jenny had taken.

She could just as easily have walked down the road to the inland farm, begged their assistance, and taken the train to Orléans and Paris to make her complaints. As Mano and I took the cliff-path above, it crossed my mind that Margarita even now intended to avenge herself in some way upon Jenny. It was easy to follow her unobserved. The dunes of the cliffs and the fringe of the pine trees concealed us easily. Margarita, walking along the wide and open bay, would have been difficult to lose sight of.

From time to time there are gaps in the edge of the low cliff where the sea has eroded the contour, making a sandy slide down to the beach with the sparse dune grass surrounding its edge at the level of the cliffs. The top of these slopes is a convenient and sheltered place to lie. Jenny had chosen one of them, lying there with her book in her hand.

She had stripped off her black trousers and was lying in a turquoise blouse and the white elasticated briefs of her underwear, her fair-skinned legs and arms exposed to the sun. Though she held the book in her hands, she was not reading. Jenny lay curled on her side, her eyes closed, as if she might be dozing.

Mano touched my arm and we withdrew to the shelter of the pine trees about twenty feet away. Margarita had turned and was walking up the beach. She stood in the loose powdery sand at the foot of the hollow where Jenny was lying. The Spanish girl sat down in the loose sand at the feet of her young mistress, hugging her knees to her chest and staring doubtfully like a wondering little girl. The lascivious slackly-rounded cheeks of Jenny's arse were tautly-shaped by her stretch-briefs. Her lithe pale legs were bare from thighs to ankles. The tight warm cotton also moulded suggestively the vaginal flesh as she lay curled on her side as if squatting.

Even if Jenny had been asleep before, she was certainly not so now. Margarita lay down, her head level with the young woman's knees. The girl's mouth tightened and she gazed at the cotton-sheathed curve of Jenny's loins and backside with the fierce intensity of her dark eyes. Then Margarita knelt over her mistress's hips. Jenny swept back her dark hair from the hard fair-skinned oval of her face. The dark lashes intensified the malicious pleasure in the steady gaze of her pale blue eyes. She looked down at the girl.

"If you touch me," she said, "I shall beat you, you young bitch. I shall beat you as a four-legged young bitch is beaten. Would you like that, Margarita? Would you?"

Margarita said nothing. With an excited commitment to her fate, she bowed her face and began to kiss the slight swell of Jenny's most intimate flesh through the warm web

of the tight cotton briefs. Not daring to strip down Jenny's knickers, the Spanish girl passionately kissed and tongue-washed the body-warm cotton of the young woman's underpants as if it was the most precious thing in the world. Jenny raised her hips a little. It was both a permission and a command to Margarita to pull the panties down. Margarita's fingers did so with gentle lovingness, until the knickers hung in a tangle round Jenny's knees.

Jenny snuggled down with a sigh.

"I shall beat you afterwards," she said gently. "Do you understand that?"

Margarita understood it. She bowed her head over Jenny again, pouting gentle kisses on the roused sexual flesh that was now so flushed and moist, running her tongue along the most exquisitely sensitive crevice. Jenny murmured to the Spanish girl from time to time, commanding more attention here and there. The firm smoothness of Margarita's olive-skinned face brushed Jenny's pale thighs as she kissed all the way down to the tangle of panties at the mistress's knees and then back up to her sex again. Her mouth closed over the swell of feminine flesh and Jenny shuddered as the tongue performed its dance. Margarita slid round and began to kiss from her rear, browsing over the agile cheeks of Jenny's bottom and forming a kiss between them. It was as she did this that Jenny arched her backside out a little more, pressed the Spanish girl's face closer to her behind, then tensed her belly and made Margarita perform the most menial acts that could be demanded of her.

This passionate encounter lasted for about half an hour. Then Jenny pulled up her tangled panties and drew on her black beach-trousers. Now it was Margarita who obediently undressed, folding her jeans and knickers at her feet. Jenny held her to a tree, close to where we were standing,

the sun dappling the sandy earth through the pine-branches. She took the leather waist-belt from Margarita's jeans and, making the girl wrap her arms round the trunk of the largest pine, she strapped her wrists firmly together on the far side. From the beach, Jenny fetched a length of cord, washed up on the pebbles at the cliff's foot by the tide. It was about four feet long and the thickness of a little finger. Dry and dusted with sand, it would scarcely make an effective whip. But the young mistress was not to be denied.

Jenny's dark hair caught the light as she brushed it aside from her face, settling it on her shoulders again. There was a look of hard amusement in her blue eyes and the broad fair-skinned oval of her face, the natural hardness of her expression softened a little by the surrounding mane of her dark henna-tinted hair. She walked away and put the coil of whipcord on the sand by the pine tree. Then she undid her black beach-trousers at the waist pushed them down and squatted on her haunches over the cord. Margarita twisted her head round, watching over her shoulder. There was a long whispering flood. Jenny stood up, pulled up the pants and fastened them again. She picked up the cord from the sand where it was dark with moisture. Slowly she walked back to where the pinioned girl pressed her belly against the pine trunk. The cord dangled more heavily from Jenny's hand. She let it lie across the tan swell of Margarita's bottom-cheeks while the last two or three drips to fall ran down the backs of the Spanish girl's thighs.

For a while Jenny gave a series of light, wet slaps with the soaked cord to the slightly heavy sallowness of Margarita's bottom-cheeks, until they shone with streaks of moisture. Only then did Jenny swing the loop of cord back and slash Margarita hard across the backside with it. The tan-skinned body arched forward against the rough fir-bark, her belly grazed against it and her back was deeply

incurved. Margarita's robust young buttocks were violently contracted together and skin-creased under the smart of the wet cord. Jenny lashed the improvised whip again and then again across the tensed buttocks. Margarita seemed to be holding her breath, biting back her cries, her face in a grimace of endurance as if pride forbade her to scream out.

Jenny thrashed harder and faster, determined to break her resistance. Margarita, performing a wild dance with her belly against the pine tree, screamed out at last, all the louder for having the shrillness forced in this way. By the time that Jenny laid down the cord, it was instructive to see that the smooth olive-tan firmness of Margarita's belly was a mass of little cuts and abrasions from the energy of her writhing against the pine bark.

Jenny untied the girl's hands. She pulled Margarita down into the sandy hollow of the cliffs nearby. There the young mistress drew her knees up, exposing the spread of her own thighs and sex, while her Spanish girl-pupil knelt, sucking and tongue-tickling the sensitive flesh of the dark-haired young martinet. They returned along the broad deserted sands at low water, the late sun cutting the wavelets with pale bronze. They walked slowly, legs moving in a strange irregular languor, arms twined about one another, Margarita's head on Jenny's shoulders, Jenny's dark hair sweeping sideways as she bowed her face to kiss the Spanish girl's lips. A walk that might have taken half an hour was prolonged to three times that length. If Margarita was not in love with her young mistress, then surely the term could have no meaning.

That night, when Mano had finished with the girl, Jenny slipped naked into bed with her. So it was every night for the rest of our time in the cottage. What happened between them I do not know. But if Margarita endured an anguish

of trapped passion and imprisoned desire, she no longer did so alone. The light in their room burnt late. Twice, at least, it paled in the reflection of summer dawn from the flood tide that rushed and scattered below the garden wall. They were still mistress and pupil, chastiser and culprit when necessary. But despite that, Jenny loved Margarita. The fate she had chosen for the girl was her expression of this strange and perverse affection.

On the day that was chosen for our return to Carailac, the tall sunflowers of September hung their heads in the fields like black-faced dolls. The quiet colours of the sky lay reflected in remote canals and the slack water of ancient wharves from which the sea had long since retired. Locks and bridges, the mansard roofs of pilots' cafés in grey slate rose among the reeds and pastureland. Morning glory by cottage gates opened in broad petals of celestial blue.

Margarita had learnt the lesson of acceptance. She was the slave of her mistress and of the two men who had brought her to this place. But by their command she was also the ruler of slaves like Sharon and Louise, Sian and Helyn. Like most girls of her kind, this young Spanish student was a realist, under the passionate glance of dark eyes and the warm-skinned temper of her body. She had paid a price and earned a reward. But there could be no such reward until that price had been paid. What she had lost at Jeevan's hands was to be regained with interest. Margarita's passion was an explosive force in her demeanour. Like all such forces, its power was increased when the means for its release had been curtailed. By curbing her, her mistress had turned Margarita from a passionate girl into a modern fury.

## Louise

Mano had remained with us until Margarita's training in the cottage of the *côte sauvage* was complete. Returning to Carailac in the first days of September was a little like coming home. Our weeks with Margarita, the ordeals of pleasure and submission she had undergone, had been an experience of nervous exhaustion. Even the most perverse and thrilling moments with her drained one's energies by their very intensity. It was impossible to regret what had been done to the girl. It was necessary for her new role. But it was reassuring to return from that remote and stormy coast to the pleasures and sophistication of the world.

I noticed, as I had never done before, the picturesqueness of the little streets in the old town of Carailac. They converged in the Place Louis XIV by the cathedral, the house-fronts of timbered baroque above the little shops and cafés. Here and there the square white pavilion-towers with their Roman-tiled roofs, the long shutters behind wrought-iron balconies overhung with lilac-blue wisteria reminded one how close Carailac was to the warm breeze that blew across the Biddasoa from Aragon and Spain.

For a day or two it was pleasant enough to wander among the cafés and little bars with Mano and Jenny, while Anton himself put Margarita to the test. It was necessary to be sure that her frame of mind was constant, not merely conditioned by the isolation of the cottage on that lonely coast. My memories of those first few days at Carillac return as café scenes. The Bar Vaubon with its black buttoned leather and dark polished wood, dim as a cave in a sunless cliff, lit by cut-glass ceiling lights and countless mirrors. Here among antique brass fittings and the frosted glass of the wall-lights, the ornamental signs for Croque-Monsieur and Café Ligeois offered the specialties of the house.

In the glassed-in terrace on the Boulevard Gambetta, with basket chairs and marble-topped tables rimmed with brass, Mano and Jenny talked of Margarita's past and future. Jenny remarked that the Spanish girl's bottom, though slightly heavy-cheeked for elegance, would offer pleasures to her master that such a girl seldom gives willingly. But Margarita would invite hard use as a means of exhausting the passion pent up in her loins.

Late at night in the Café des Basques, near the brick and cream station where the trains stopped for the frontier, Jenny's blue eyes shone as she flicked back her dark hair and spoke of the decision she had made on Margarita's behalf. The dark interior of the café, where the town whores and the travellers gathered at this hour for the Madrid express, was the place for such confessions. When I think now of Jenny's words, I cannot separate them from that image of the lamplit interior, the marble floor and wall-mirrors, timbered ceiling and brown distemper, chairs in bentwood and red leather. I see the old clock with its brass pendulum and the football league names scrawled in chalk on a black board. I hear Jenny defend the Arab logic

of imprisoning feminine desire, driving the most dull or lethargic girl by the razor-edge to erotic mania. As she talked, Jenny hinted again at the violent means by which frustration may be driven to find its release at any price.

Then she smiled at us and talked more easily of the practical consequences, making them sound like nothing more than a children's quarrel.

“Margarita will be a real bitch with Sharon and Louise from now on. Wait a day or two and you shall see for yourselves. A Spanish girl in her predicament will provoke men to act severely with her. But she will find excitement and satisfaction by her own severity with such girls as those.”

I thought at the time that the final comment was true of Jenny herself. For the rest, I could not say. So far as I knew, all Jenny's sexual release was obtained through other women.

Since our return to the Villa Rosa, I had noticed that Sharon and Louise were sometimes absent. I had not bothered to ask where they might be. It was late one evening, returning from the Casino, that I crossed the Place de la Pergole where the little boutiques in their arcade look out across the central gardens. There was a lamp, under which I saw Sharon, standing slack-hipped in earnest conversation with a boy of her own age. Nearby on a wooden bench I saw Louise, sitting in the shadows with another boy.

I mentioned it to Mano. He smiled at me, for my innocence, I suppose.

“These secret meetings have been going on for some time in our absence. Louise is the true culprit. At least, in my judgment she is most to blame. But both girls are going to answer for their conduct. Louise shall do so this evening. Sharon will be kept for a more elaborate lesson.”

Just after that, he called Louise to his room. She came out ten minutes later with her head lowered and her hands fumbling in front of her. At lunch I asked Jenny if she knew what had happened. The young mistress shrugged it off, as if it were trivial.

“Louise and Sharon must give an account of themselves this evening,” she said. “Mano intends that Louise should be whipped. He wants Margarita to do it.”

I questioned the wisdom of this, saying something about the scandal that might be caused when Louise and Sharon returned home to reveal what had been done to them.

Jenny shook back her dark hair and smiled again.

“They will leave here with Margarita,” she said. “Did you not understand that? Like Margarita, Sharon and Louise are on their way to a place from which their complaints will not be heard. That was the intention from the beginning.”

Jenny was right. I had not understood it. I had thought it might be Margarita’s destiny after the weeks in the cottage. But I had always supposed that the other girls were only to be in Mano’s possession for the summer. I was wrong. It now seemed that their rendezvous with the two boys in the Place de la Pergole was to be the last time when they were free to come and go as they pleased.

That evening the two culprits as well as Margarita and the rest of us were in the library after dinner. Sharon was still dressed in a pair of blue jeans and a flower-print blouse. As usual in the evening, this fair-skinned and soft-figured teenager had gathered her brown hair back and tied it with her red and blue silk scarf on the crown of her head so that it fell in a pretty fan-shaped tail a few inches below her collar. This left her face and her ears well-exposed, as well as showing the beauty of Sharon’s bare elegant neck. The fringe on her forehead was once again a mere lick of dark hair.

One caught the sweet fragrance of the perfume bottle touched to her ears and neck before she came in obedience to Mano's command. She had made-up her face with a little cream again and there was the same heightened blush of rouge discreetly applied to her cheekbones.

Louise stood beside her, the collar length of her fringed dark hair still framing a firm and rather hard young face.

The arguments were over and the decisions made. Anton took Sharon by the arm and led her away, through the arch and into the long corridor. We heard the footsteps grow fainter and then the door at the far end opened. It closed again. A key turned distantly in the lock. There was a pause and then we heard the footsteps of Anton coming back alone.

There were four of us, apart from Margarita and Louise. Jenny stood to one side, leaving it to Mano and Anton to deal with the culprit. Louise, despite the high heels of her black shoes, was a more diminutive figure in her short woollen top and the denim tightness of her jeans. Louise had the prettiness which goes with firm well-cut features. Her straight nose and the firm line of her chin was softened by a fringe of black hair, the collar-length of it framing her eighteen-year-old beauty. The seat of the tightened jeans showed that Louise was a little broad-bottomed and full-hipped for her height, but that was convenient on the present occasion.

She offered no resistance when Mano led her to the low and heavy table.

I was watching this and had not realised that Margarita, standing somewhere behind us, had quietly undressed, laying her clothes on one of the tapestried wing-chairs and waiting in olive-tan nudity to deal with Louise. Small wonder that Louise began to squirm at the menacing sight of Margarita naked and holding a short pony-lash of woven

snakeskin. Margarita saw this panic. Her deep-set Spanish eyes shone, her mouth and jaw were set firmer and more resolute with the exhilaration of what she was going to do. The excitement in her face seemed eagerly sexual. Denied the expression of it by her own hands alone, she sought a more violent opportunity. By now she was ready to deal pitilessly with the adolescent softness of Louise's eighteen-year-old bottom. The Spanish girl had good reason to feel a grudge for the disdain and indifference Sharon and Louise had shown her. Now she was visibly eager to avenge herself in the cruellest manner.

Anton helped Mano to bend Louise over tightly along the table and attach her leather wrist-cuffs to the far end. Jenny undid the girl at the waist, drawing down the jeans and then the white elasticated cotton briefs. Louise struggled so far as she could, tensing herself as if to trap the underpants between her thighs and the cheeks of her behind so that she could not be stripped. The collar-length of her dark hair flew as she gasped and protested, twisting the hard features of her young face towards us. But Jenny's probing and prying fingers soon freed the body-warm cotton, stripping Louise from her waist to her heels. The tail of her blouse was tucked up, laying bare the broadened pallor of Louise's backside and hips. A strap round the pallid flesh of Louise's thighs did the rest. After that, Jenny drew back and left her to Margarita.

I saw Margarita's hand smooth up and down the pale shimmer of Louise's thighs, smacking gently here and there, fingers slipping between them. Her fingers manualised Louise for a moment in what seemed the most blatant caress. Louise twisted her head this way and that, the firm pale face urgently turned to us. Her legs began to tense and writhe in their straps. Margarita fingered back to the rear of her leg-opening the warm folds of intimate flesh,

so that we might study Louise's young femininity in its flushed state. She fondled the soft teenage weight of Louise's pale young bottom-cheeks, standing close behind her so that the bending fair-skinned girl might feel Margarita's own Latin nudity. Margarita pressed the rear cheeks apart. Louise's arse must be displayed as a means of curbing her pride for the future. During all this, Louise responded with writhings and shivers and murmurs of sexual excitement. Perhaps she did not feel it but, in her fright, she longed to divert Margarita's thoughts from the lash.

Margarita spent a little longer with her, fondling, stroking, tickling, and patting, hands shaping the other girl's hips and seat, finger-tips testing her feminine sensitivity and the tightness of Louise's rear blow-hole.

At last Margarita stood back and drew the short lash of woven snakeskin through her fingers. Louise twisted her face round, brown eyes wide and lips parted a little in fright.

Before Louise could plead or protest, Margarita had raised her arm high. The bright light of the lamps caught the flash of a black leather curve. Then the whip landed with a report like a pistol-shot across the fattened pallor of Louise's bottom-cheeks. I think the anguish of it searched her very deep. She struggled and twisted on the punishment-table, as if frantically trying to draw one knee up in an attempt to ease the smart. The thigh-strap prevented this. Then the whip snaked down a second time and printed its splendid curling brand across her eighteen-year-old buttocks. Urgently Louise tensed those rear orbs together and let out a hiss of suppressed torment.

"Don't twist your fat young arse, Louise!" said Mano, his command peremptory but his mouth smiling, as she tensed her knee upward again against the restraint of the strap round her thighs.

The whip cracked a third time and the tip of the lash caught the sensitive undercurve of her softly-swelling bottom-cheeks, just above her thigh. With a sudden shrillness which made the heart jump, Louise screamed. Margarita smiled. Having found the place where Louise was so responsive, she aimed at it again. Louise offered a seductive target, the full soft buttocks of a teenage girl which were made to broaden and swell into a pair of more fatly suggestive bottom-cheeks by the way she bent over. The whip caught her artfully low across them again—and yet again. Whatever one's thoughts about Margarita, it was impossible not to admire her skill in this matter.

After this, Margarita made dark-haired Louise scream at almost every lash of the whip. But the Spanish girl deliberately missed the target on a few occasions. She gave Louise two across the backs of her knees and a few across the rear of her well-fleshed thighs. She caught Louise's bare bottom again, and soon its pallid cheeks bore a thicket of raised imprints. Presently the whip landed with more savage energy in a sounding smack.

Louise was like a swimmer, floundering and wallowing as she lay bottom-upwards on the table. She tried to roll from side to side, turning on her hip to avoid the whip across her bottom again. She tried to draw a knee up against the pinion of the black strap or bend her leg back at the knee until her heel almost touched her backside. Once or twice she tried vainly to kick out at her chastiser but this merely made her legs liable to reprimand by the savage kiss of the lash.

With teeth set and eyes shining, Margarita lashed Louise's fattened young bottom six or eight times more to catch her low on its cheeks. Louise's dark hair flew this way and that as she twisted her head round and screamed her refusal and her inability to endure such torment—but she screamed in vain.

Margarita paused. She picked up a small dressing-mirror on its stand and placed it so that Louise, when she twisted her face round should see her bare backside and legs reflected. Louise twisted her collar-length of dark hair to and fro, weeping self-pityingly. She had looked into the mirror and I think it was the sight of her eighteen-year-old behind in its present disciplined state which caused such reproachful wailing.

Margarita was ready again. The Spanish girl began to brand Louise higher up, where her delectable young buttocks swelled most fully. Frantically shrill, Louise performed a sinuous squirming of her hips and an erotic writhing of her whipped backside which would have sent any boy-friend and even her best friends like Sharon wild for her, if done as a bedroom dance. I think the first half of the punishment would have been adequate and the second half took her far beyond what she might be expected to bear. Yet Louise had only herself to blame. Like Sharon on a later occasion, it was the languid sensual pallor of Louise's young bottom and thighs that earned this extra ordeal.

She would do anything to interrupt the discipline. Struggling to push herself up, as if to kneel on the table, Louise merely presented her backside as a fuller spread-cheeked target with a tight little rear bulls-eye revealed at its centre! Once, as the whip lay limp down her backside after a lash, Louise clenched the pale softness of her bottom-cheeks upon it, as if to detain it and deny Margarita its use. The Spanish girl tugged it clear at once. A second time when the whip flashed down Louise tightened her rear cheeks on it as it sped through the air. Her face instantly showed a superb portrayal of beauty in the throes of a torment too intense for vocal expression. Skinning her in the force of its motion, the speeding whip wrought havoc between

Louise's bottom-cheeks. Another ear-stunning smack of the lash caught her between them and we heard Louise scream for Sharon, for her boy-friend, even the names of her family, as if they might burst in to rescue her.

Mano uncorked *sal volatile*, enabling Louise to receive discipline in full. The admirers of her full-swelling bottom-cheeks would not permit the infliction of the lash to be curtailed. When the punishment was finished, they kept her over the trestle while they considered Margarita's handiwork and heard Louise's quiet soprano lamentation and reproach.

It would be hypocritical to pretend that the onlookers did not enjoy seeing Louise bare-bottomed for a whipping. I think it was a pleasure heightened by knowing that she and Sharon might be extremely sensual and voluptuous with one another, while refusing to share their charms with mankind. This look of voluptuous pallor and an air of feminine masturbation on rumpled sheets behind closed curtains and locked doors sealed her fate.

When Mano untied Louise's hands, she made no attempt to get up from the table on which she still lay. She hid her face in her hands and wept for the humiliation she had suffered and the state of her young buttocks. Louise had no knickers to put on and she contracted her bottom-cheeks hard together as she lay there, as if concealing her sex and her bottom-crack from those who stood over the table watching her.

At last Mano and Anton took her by either arm and helped her down from the table. Louise was still gulping down her sobs and I was intrigued to see that her thighs trembled and her knees shook as she tried to stand. The emotional exhaustion of the whipping had taken its toll of her quite as much as the agony of the lash. Presently she managed to walk, though slowly and with obvious discom-

fort. The tender welts left across Louise's bottom-cheeks by the whip pulled smartingly each time her legs moved and the marked skin tightened.

They took her down to the shared bedroom where Sharon had been locked in. It had been intended that Sharon should hear Louise's screams. So she had. When the door was opened, Sharon stood there, trembling almost as much as Louise herself. Sharon had begun preparing for bed before she heard the first shrillness from the other room. At least, she had taken off her jeans and folded them on a chair. Since then, it seemed that she had stood immobilised by the horror of what she heard. Now she was still standing there in her blouse and cotton briefs, while Louise was naked except for her singlet. In this state they were left for the night. But they were not alone. Mano exercised his privilege of watching them, unknown to the two girls, from the adjoining room. Anton and I accompanied him.

Sharon and Louise had been best friends since childhood. They had hesitated on the verge of becoming lesbian lovers. They were well-suited to this in almost every way, languid and sensual, secretive and self-absorbed. Perhaps they lacked the knowledge of what to do. Perhaps they lacked the final resolve. Each was apprehensive, I think, of being rebuffed by the other if she tried to turn their bedroom romps into solemn and passionate love-making.

It was not a matter of prudery. They had shared a bedroom and even a bed. Sharon and Louise had accompanied one another to the toilet and used it in one another's presence. They were as intimate as two girls could be without being lovers. They were not indifferent to pleasure. Sharon masturbated, Mano had watched her secretly in the bathroom. Louise masturbated as well. But they did so separately.

Now, as Louise was left with Sharon, whipped and

sobbing, Sharon put her arms round her and Louise hugged Sharon. They sat together on the bed and then lay down quietly. Sharon hushed Louise, stroking her hair and kissing her. Louise kissed Sharon. The kisses were on the lips, then the cheeks and neck, the ears, and the lips again. Louise, as if driven to it by the whip, took the initiative. She pressed her loins against Sharon's and began to pull down the elastic waistband of Sharon's briefs.

Instead of resisting, Sharon lifted her soft adolescent hips a little to make it easier. When Louise could reach no further, Sharon stretched down her own hand to the tangled knickers that were round her shins. She drew them off over her feet and tucked them away under the pillow.

Louise slipped her fingers between Sharon's thighs and began the most urgent arousal of her friend. Sharon tugged up the front of Louise's singlet and began to kiss the nipples of the other girl's breasts to a state of erection. At the same time as she masturbated Sharon, Louise got astride Sharon's thigh and began to ride it so that she roused herself. She was leaning over Sharon now, one knee between Sharon's legs and Sharon's thigh between her own. Louise was not merely seeking consolation after the torture of such a whipping as Margarita had given her. By some perverse excitement, the whip had brought her to a state of erotic tension that she was desperate to relieve. She did so in a manner that would have been impossible to her the previous day.

It would be quite wrong to say that Louise had enjoyed getting the whip or that she had courted it as an aphrodisiac. The excitement was one of release after being tanned. It was all the more tumultuous because it had caught her completely by surprise. Sharon herself was no match for such an assault. It was like a contagious fever, irresistible in its passionate impetuosity.

Louise came off very quickly, which was not to be wondered at. She came astride Sharon's thigh with the fierce bucking and gasping that betrayed her erotic energy. But her fingers never ceased to play with Sharon. Louise's second crisis almost coincided with Sharon's own. After that they turned over so that each had her head at the other's tail. Sharon kissed over the cheeks of Louise's bottom, as if soothing the curling weals of the pony-lash by the touch of her lips. Louise herself kissed the fatly-presented pallor of Sharon's bottom-cheeks but reserved her most gentle and teasing kisses for the sensitive folds of flesh between Sharon's thighs.

The two eighteen-year-old girls were restless and restive. They made no attempt to turn off the light in the bedroom. Their erotic excitement increased by seeing one another's nudity as they made love. And though they did so furtively, I noticed each of them glancing quickly and slyly at the oval glass of dressing-table and wardrobe, enjoying the mirrored image of the scene on the bed, as if spying on another lesbian couple making love.

When they lay quiet at last and fell into a doze, it was not for long. They were so closely entwined that the least movement by one girl woke the other. When that happened, there was a light caress. The slight lifting of a leg or rounding of a backside responded to this. Lips formed a pout against lips. The gentle fondling began again. And then again.

The consequence of this was that their sleep was brief and fitful from midnight until dawn. Then, their pale adolescent bodies twined lasciviously together. Sharon and Louise sank into a sleep of sexual exhaustion that lasted almost until noon.

Mano assured me that there would be no scandal over these two girls. They had suffered nothing that they could

complain of. Louise had misbehaved and had been whipped by one of her own sex. That was nothing. The depravities she would now share with her girl-friend had become the most precious thing in her life. In Mano's opinion, the two girls would leave Carailac protesting that the months at the Villa Rosa had been the happiest of their lives.

I believe he was right in his judgment. For reasons which I cannot demonstrate here, I suspect that a darker fate lay in store for Sharon and Louise. Neither Mano nor Anton would choose to let such girls go to waste, when they might have become the possessions of a master who would appreciate what they had to offer him.

But that was not a matter which concerned me then. In the last September days at the Villa Rosa, the summer season faltered and died. The beaches of Carailac grew quieter and then began to assume a deserted air. By now the children of the sands had returned to school in a misty autumn somewhere to the north of us. One morning the row of beach tents had shortened by half. The posters at the Casino now promised winter masquerades. A blustery squall broke across the pink-paved promenade where the hot sugared smell of nougat had drifted in the sunlit air only a week before.

One decision remained. Whether to go north or south. Most visitors to Carailac had prepared a return journey, rolling back their route through the forest roads of the Landes, the flowery heights beyond Bordeaux, the wide western plain, and so to Paris and Berlin or the grey seas of the channel ports. But there was another route. It lay south, a land where summer was not yet over. There were mountain ranges to cross and wide arid plains to traverse. From Carailac there was an inland road, by a fast-flowing river. At a quaint old town with fortress walls and timbered houses, a second road wound up through the wooded

hills to steep and stony heights. In a little town, where two frontiers joined, the way opened out again. Vast and dried by months of summer sun, it stretched to Africa or Portugal, and then by steamer to that southern hemisphere where summer was just beginning.

The temptation was strong. But I did not commit myself to Rio de Janeiro or Cape Town. Instead I undertook a journey in Mano's company to prolong summer just another month or so. There was a final week at the Villa Rosa. In that time a good deal happened which decided the future for the young women who remained under its roof. What that future might be is best not described by one who was partly responsible for it. For the moment, I pass the story to a young observer of that scene.

As the first storm of the equinox broke, the Villa Rosa was bolted and shuttered for the winter. There had been departures over several days before this. Then the last car reversed on to the driveway and the iron gates at the entrance were chained and padlocked. That night, the house was in darkness and the leaves from the plane trees in its park began to fall, scuffing and slithering in the colder wind from the sea.

## Feuilles d'Automne

With the passing of the equinox that divided summer from autumn, the season faltered and died. In the longer shadows and yellow sun of early October afternoons, the wide sweep of sandy coast with its rock-pools was almost deserted. Parties of little girls too young to go to school were brought down to explore the trapped tidal pools of crab or shrimp. In the last warmth of the afternoon, a few older girls came briefly on bicycles to undress and lie in their swimsuits, catching the sun's slanting light. Sometimes, when the weekends were fine, family groups came with bottles of wine to picnic and prolong the summer. Then, on Monday morning, the beach was given back to the old women and their baskets who stooped and scrambled for mussels, far out on the rock-ledges at low tide.

This Indian summer was soon over. A cold sea gathered and broke in pale green surges on cloudy mornings. The doors of the Hôtel Clemenceau were closed against the darkness while the remaining guests sat down to dinner. The rain-drops of an ocean squall slapped and broke against the glass. At night, where the wavelets had hissed and

whispered on the warm sands of August, the dark stillness was broken by the crack and rush of the incoming tide against the harbour walls. A lighthouse beam circled the troubled waters of the bay.

By the end of October the first rain-laden storms swept the outlying Rue Fief de l'Abesse with its single-storied cottages. The water dripped from the blinds and shuttered windows of the Bazar de l'Océan with its peeling stucco and its damp walls painted in tall blue lettering for Souvenirs and Maillots de Bain. The world of such summer frivolities seemed as remote now as a lost childhood.

The tenants of the secluded villas beyond the tennis-courts and the lighthouse had long returned to the metropolitan pleasures of Paris or Berlin, Madrid or Lisbon. Their lives were bright with shoplit evenings of the Avenue Victor Hugo or the Rue de la Paix, the wide tobaccoscented elegance of the Avenida José Antonio or the long slope of the Avenida da Liberdade towards a southern ocean. The girl-children of July and August who had romped carelessly in wet swimsuits on the public beach were no more. Like emergent winter butterflies, they were now the perfumed and bare-shouldered young débutantes who sat attentive to Rossini or Massenet in the footlight glow of the Opera stalls.

By the Feast of Toussaint the afternoon sun was low in the ocean sky. The window-models of the smart perfume boutiques and the couturier looked out upon the fashionable boulevards behind the Casino. But the broad avenues already rustled with fallen leaves of the plane trees and chestnuts. Old men and women walked slowly in the sea-mist of the promenades. The Villa Rosa itself had long been abandoned and shuttered by its summer tenants. Even the concierge had withdrawn to her cottage. The blue and gold of July's morning glory flowers had withered on the

terrace wall and the sign that threatened the intruder with a *chien méchant* was overrun by bramble and briar.

It was on an afternoon of wind and rain in the late autumn that a boy of fourteen or fifteen, a nephew of the taciturn concierge, entered the grounds of the villa by the garden gate. He was a youth of solitary habits but intriguing desires and dreams. In the dank afternoon, he had chosen a short cut across the bed of fallen pine needles to the grey and windswept prospect of the cliffs, a volume of the *Chants de Maldoror* in his pocket. There was no one to challenge him as he followed the path beside the house. Already the first storms had brought down frail branches, brittle as old men's bones, and forced the catch of a wooden shutter. The boy heard the intermittent banging of hinged wood against a stucco wall.

It was not his intention to do more than secure the shutter. But he could best do this from inside. He must climb in, fasten the shutter and window, then let himself out through the door which would close automatically on its lock. Slipping his volume of *Lautréamont* into his pocket, he climbed easily through the space of the open window and dropped down into the first room. A hint of early November dusk had already begun to gather among the bare and rain-beaded branches of the garden trees outside.

The fine proportions of the interior had a spectral air in the dim and clouded half-light which filtered through the slats of the shutters. There was space and emptiness, for the furniture had been removed and the floors were uncarpeted. The boy closed the shutter and the window behind him. Then he made his way through the unnatural twilight of the abandoned rooms.

Across the head of the stairs lay a shaft of grey cloud-light. He went up and found that it came from the open

door of the washroom, the only room in the villa whose barred windows made shutters unnecessary. Its floors were paved with marble and its walls were white-tiled. As one would expect, there was a handbasin and a toilet-pedestal. Yet it was far too large a room to serve only for the purposes these indicated. There was ample space at the centre of its floor for the heavy divan of black buttoned leather. Two round leather bolsters similarly padded lay across it. The divan was a curiosity, for it was the only item of furniture left in the villa by its summer visitors. More curious still were the stout restraining straps riveted at intervals to its heavy mahogany frame.

It seemed that in the haste of their departure the guests had forgotten to repair the disorder of this tiled suite. On the sofa lay a girl's panties. They were tight-fitting stretch-briefs in black elasticated cotton. The boy's interest quickened as he picked them up. A slim leather pony-switch and an open jar of lubricant were on the floor nearby. He noticed that the varnished wood of the sofa bore sheaves of tiny scratches, as if from the nails of strapped hands in the frenzy of pleasure's climax or the moment when torment grew unendurable. A soft cloth and the roll of paper removed from its place lay on the sofa. A pulse of excitement and curiosity beat harder in the boy's throat as he tried to conjecture what had been done to the girl in this room. On the handbasin ledge lay a soft pliable gag-strap, upon which it was just possible to see the impress of her teeth clenched in desperation. A pencil-shaped glass-squirt and the liquid-soap dispenser from the handbasin had been left on a stool nearby.

His first thought was that this room had been very recently used, perhaps that it was still in use. But he looked again and saw the dull veil of dust on the black

leather and on the glass of the vaseline jar. The yellowish lubricant of the vaseline itself had crusted and darkened a little from exposure. The boy had no doubt that the state of the room betrayed the depravities of a last summer night.

He examined the stretch-cotton of the briefs eagerly. He had learnt enough about girls of his own age to know that these were the knickers of a teenage nymph. Of course, the girl's panties looked smaller, a handful of black cotton web, discarded as they were. But the boy could see that when stretched to fit they must have enclosed the full hip-pallor of a girl of eighteen or nineteen. Their blackness on white hips and thighs would be erotically suggestive, which indicated her greed for pleasure. At the same time, the panties were plain, suggesting to him that she might be a rather cold and self-important young woman in her dealings with men.

He tucked the black briefs in his pocket as a souvenir of the interesting scene, went back down the stairs and made his way through the rest of the half-lit rooms. Exploring one of these, he stood before a grand stone fireplace carved with serpents and gryphons. In the grate he made out a large bundle of papers. One or two were a little charred, as if the departing tenants had put a match to them and left, without waiting to see them burn. Perhaps it was carelessness in arranging them that had saved them from destruction. Or perhaps a sudden chimney draught had extinguished the blaze rather than nurturing it. The boy picked the bundle out of the grate and examined it.

First and most curious, there was a reel of tape, a sound recording, sealed in a large envelope, perhaps so that it might not be discovered by the servant deputed to burn the papers. There was also a short dossier describing the girl, Sharon, her name and age, her bourgeois education and

upbringing, her sullen assertion of her own rights and those of her sex against the demands of mankind. Intriguingly, she had sought relief a few months earlier by finding fulfilment in the arms of another girl of her own age. Soft feminine caresses woke cunning ecstasies in her body and lingering cries of desire.

At the top of the first bundle there were several photographs lying loose that had been taken over a period of several years. In the first, Sharon appeared as a tall and long-haired girl of fourteen. These first photographs had been taken surreptitiously, while she was standing alone and thoughtful, no doubt by those who planned her abduction. They showed her as having a high-crowned sweep of brown hair that fell like a gently-waved silken veil down her back. It framed the firm-chinned oval of her pale face, the self-assertive stare of her brown eyes. Any man would find a challenge in the firm fair-skinned features, the dismissive glance and the sulky weight of her mouth and chin. Nor would he ignore the long adolescent thighs, puppy-fleshed hips, and the soft swelling out of her bottom-cheeks in the fulfilment of girlhood at seventeen or eighteen. But still the arrogant brown eyes looked a little away from the lens and the fair-skinned facial beauty under the parted fringe was marred by that sullen air of a spoilt little girl.

Several views showed her standing in the same appealingly thoughtful mood. In several other pictures she stood alone, head turned in contemplation of the view beyond the camera. The dossier assured the boy that the girl of eighteen had been compelled to undergo a night-long session by the wish of her possessors. Looking at the photographs of her, the thought of what had happened excited him greatly. Anticipation rather than unease provoked him as he collected up the packages and made his way from the

Villa Rosa. Returning home, he locked the door of his room to guard against intrusion. Then he read through the dossier more carefully. The boy found it exciting to know so much about the girl whose fate he was to witness in the photographs. Her conduct as schoolgirl and daughter, girlfriend and lover, had been detailed. Her moral delinquencies and defects of character were listed. Next he began to examine the pile of photographs.

There appeared to be fifty or sixty full-plate photographs of her, taken throughout a late summer night in the Villa Rosa. There was a clock on the wall whose hands stood at half-past ten in the first of the night's photographs and after three in the morning when the session ended. Most of the shots had been necessarily but skilfully taken with the magnesium brilliance of flash in the white-tiled room. Some were full-length studies of her and others were intriguing close-ups. Though Sharon was a girl of eighteen according to the dossier, the boy thought it possible that the photographs of her punishment belonged to a time when she was a year or two younger. She looked more the long-haired adolescent girl.

Among the other full-plate prints, some close-ups would have done credit to the portrait studio and others to a démonstration of female anatomy. A dozen of them showed her looking into the camera so that the entire picture was filled by views of her firm fair-skinned face and the veil of brown hair. Several of these had been taken early on. They showed the wilfulness and self-possession in her features, the spoilt child who would grow up to be an ungracious young woman, believing in her own right to choose pleasures and partners as she wished. There was an indifferent coldness in the brown eyes under the parted fringe of her long hair and a self-centred indifference in her sullen mouth.

The boy smiled at the revelation of her character in these images. Sharon was the sort of girl who would be treated far more cruelly by her female rivals than by her male captors. The men would certainly make her submit to their use in whatever way they chose. But other women would view her moody selfishness with vindictive jealousy. They would want to hurt her merely to punish what she was, rather than what she had done. Sharon had much to fear from men who tormented her. But she would find that it was other women who knew by instinct how to hurt her more ingeniously. Men might be distracted from punishing her by the desire to use her body. A jealous older woman would feel no such softening.

The full facial portraits of Sharon that followed showed an intriguing change as her ordeal began on that summer night. There was dismay and indignation in the widening brown eyes. Then came outrage and wildness. Thereafter the eyes brimmed over with tears and the mouth widened in a wild cry. The portraits of Sharon tearful and self-pitying or screaming and frantic were unique of their kind and might have been an object of curiosity to men who study human behaviour in all its moods.

Other full-plate close-ups would have brought joy to the learned anatomist. Her mentors had made Sharon lie naked on her back and draw her knees up to her breasts. Then the camera had photographed her splayed thighs closely from below. Sharon's most intimate femininity was shown in photographic close-up. Her own hands were not visible. The boy supposed that someone was holding them out of the way—or that her wrists had been strapped to the bed-rail.

Later there were shots that caught the gleam of wetness engendered by her excitement. Well-used to the furtive

hand of a boy-friend in her pants, or the sharing of a bed with one of her girl-friends, she responded readily to teasing fingers, despite her gasps and denials. The dossier noted that Sharon had masturbated regularly, even as a schoolgirl and when having a close relationship with a boy of her own age. She did this in the belief that her body was hers to do with as she chose. But since girlhood, she had also nourished a lesbian inclination. In this case, the fingers that roused her were not her own—nor had it been done for her pleasure. They had brought her just far enough for the purpose of the camera-studies, then left her to twist and gasp and gnaw her lip in frustration.

A dozen full-plate photographs were camera studies taken when she had been made to turn over on her belly across the bolsters. Sharon's bare backside was the subject of interest, its pale cheeks swelling fatter to fill the picture, raised and broadened by the leather bolster over which she lay. Some photographs were angled to show the broad curve of her behind's fullest outward cheek-swell. Others offered the softer and rather fatter bottom-flesh low down on the cheeks. Several showed the most private inward slopes where her rear cheeks curved in together excitingly. The boy smiled and hoped that the cheeks of Sharon's backside would be pulled hard apart and that she would be made to show herself properly to the camera.

He studied these close-ups of the girl's behind with great care. The tightening and tensing of her buttocks, their shifting and fattened swelling and clenching were excitingly suggested by the prints. There was still a soft adolescent pallor about her figure, even when she acted as a self-possessed teenage beauty.

In three close-ups her captors had made her bend over very tightly indeed so that he saw the change to a yellowed-ivory skin-tone on the inward slopes between her bum-

cheeks. In two of the pictures, as another note in the dossier added, the tight dark vortex of Sharon's anus was the focus of the composition. The boy looked closely at the anatomy of her rear hole, seeing this view of a grown-up girl for the first time. Perhaps no one but a randy old medical examiner had ever before enjoyed such a leisurely and prying view of her rear anatomy. The boy looked from the cold disdain in the face of this young Venus with her silken veil of brown hair to the mute study of Sharon's bottom with her anus displayed. He smiled as he imagined seeing the confusion in her eyes just then.

Making sure that no one was close by and that he would not be interrupted, the boy began to go through the rest of the photographs systematically, following the sequence of events. It was evident that Sharon was unaware of the camera, and this added to the enjoyment of spying on her in her private moments. The accompanying recording was incomplete but there were snatches of conversation, matching certain photographs on whose backs several of the words had been scribbled in pencil.

The first photograph taken that night in the tiled suite, showed Sharon already on the black leather of the divan. She was naked but for a leather collar at her neck, and a tight belt around her bare waist. From the way she was lying, her wrists might have been fastened together in front of her.

The boy admired the view she offered. Sharon's pale teenage figure was more exciting in her black leather collar and waist-strap than she would have been in simple pale nudity. She had bowed the sweep of her silky brown hair as she lay on her side, so that her face was partly hidden. But her young breasts were shown, softly developed globes with a sleek pallor of early womanhood and rosy nipples

naturally erect. The pale curve of her back was clear of strapping above her waist. The boy admired the adolescent nudity of her thighs, which appeared a little heavy in their sensuality. The girl's hands were folded over the light hair of her loins, either in modesty or self-comfort. From the rear, the effect of the tightened waist-strap was to emphasise the adolescent cheek-swell of her backside and to draw attention to this part of her. It was clear that she had not long undressed. A slight flesh-print left by the elastic edge of her snug-fitting black cotton briefs arched high over each pale cheek of her lightly-fattened young arse from the rear opening of her legs.

It seemed unlikely that the session in the photographs had taken place on her last night at the Villa Rosa, though there had been such a session then to judge from the disorder of the tiled room. But similar provision and precaution was shown in the photograph. On the table by the divan there was a slim leather switch and a vaseline jar, a snakeskin lash with rounded handle and short tail. There was also a glass pencil-shaped squirt with a black rubber bulb and the glass globe of liquid soap from the basin, an intriguing full-sized erection made of black rubber and the rolled paper removed from its holder. Even the most ordinary attentions were not to be spared her.

But the session in the photographs appeared to be Sharon's initiation in slavery, perhaps a summer or two ago.

The clock had moved on five minutes in the next picture, but now the captive was not alone. Her companion was another girl of similar age. She was not as tall, though with cruder and bolder features and a collar-length of black hair. She was identified in pencil as "Louise." Louise was standing almost naked before Sharon, wearing only the tight cotton briefs that seemed proper to teenage fashion. She had well-developed hips and the cheeks of Louise's

bottom—as her tight cotton briefs already suggested—were perhaps a little too heavy for her shorter build. There was a bold and contemptuous air about Louise so far as mankind was concerned. But she also exuded a sensual laziness. From this, the boy thought, there was no doubt that she and Sharon were already lovers.

The next picture, following almost at once, was a charming study of Louise taking her knickers off. It had been timed at the most precarious moment when she was balanced on one leg, the elasticated briefs loose round her shins. Steadying herself with one hand on the divan, bending and half turning, she had crooked her other leg out behind her and was in the process of pulling her foot clear of the white cotton web of her elasticated briefs.

It was two or three minutes later. Louise had stretched herself out on the leather divan beside Sharon, more naked now than the other teenage girl in the black strapping. With practice learnt from their shared bedroom, Louise had turned on her side to face Sharon and was making love to her in a slow and dreamy fashion. From the angles of Louise's head and Sharon's body, it was clear that they were drinking each other's kisses. Their tongues wrestled softly in one another's mouths, as if trying to share the tastes that ran there.

The way in which Sharon's wrists were strapped in front of her made it difficult for her to respond in other ways. But Louise was masturbating her as only an experienced girl-friend could. She had done it often enough, the boy thought, to know just where the stroking and tickling would rouse Sharon most deliciously. Moreover, it suited Sharon's self-indulgent and languid appearance that she alone received the ultimate pleasure. She was lying on her side facing Louise, her upper leg lifted a little to allow free play to the bolder girl. The hidden camera was now behind

Sharon, level with her thighs. Louise's fingers were to be seen playing and squeezing, tickling and stroking the lightly haired folds of intimate feminine flesh between the pale weight of Sharon's thighs. The first glistening trace of Sharon's excitement rewarded Louise's loving fingers.

A facial portrait of Sharon was taken at about the same time. The long sweep of luxuriant brown hair had fallen aslant a little. The eyes in the full fair-skinned oval of her face were closed, the lashes fine on the cheeks. The mouth was lightly parted as if with irregular breathing and shivering sighs. This portrait of Sharon while being masturbated by her best friend was followed by another in which her teeth fretted at her lower lip and she seemed to groan with desperation and shudder in anticipation. It was a face that betrayed a delicious mingling of torment and delight. Louise was leaning over her with an expression of anxiety. Her eyes mingled love with a perverse concern that Sharon should suffer a keen and nerve-shrilling ecstasy in her crisis.

The hands of the clock showed next that it was just after eleven. The teasing arousal continued, as it had done for nearly half an hour. Sharon's excitement shone high up on the sleek pallor of her thighs' inner surfaces. The soft adolescent mounds of her bare buttocks were tightened and contracted together with energy as she rode Louise's hand like a love-saddle.

In the following picture, the brightly-lit white-tiled room with its handbasin and pedestal seat had hardly changed. The clock hands stood at quarter past eleven. But now Louise was caught in the act of rising hastily from the black leather divan with a look of unease. Sharon had twisted her face and was looking back with an expression in which resentment, alarm, and self-pity were all mingled. The boy had no doubt that these two girl-friends

were in danger of being caught at their love-making like a pair of naughty children. He smiled at their predicament, seeing that Louise had snatched up her white cotton briefs in one hand and was poised to hurry from the room.

Louise did not appear in the other photographs of Sharon. There was a single one of her on her own. She was in a room that looked like a cellar and was bending tightly forward over a wooden trestle, fastened to it by anklets and wrist-straps. She wore a waist-length singlet and her briefs, which had been pulled down in an untidy tangle round her knees. Someone evidently called to her as the photograph was taken. Louise had flicked back her dark hair and was looking round, the firm bold features a study in dismay, her eyes startled and her lips parted in breathless apprehension. Louise had wanted to act the boy with Sharon and so they had treated her like a boy here. The rather heavily sleek pallor of Louise's bottom-cheeks had been seductively fattened by bending her over the trestle and fastening her. As he studied the photo, the lad wondered if Louise's boy-friends would have been secretly excited to see her in this predicament. He liked the idea of that and hoped Louise's suggestively fattened young bottom would taste the pony-lash which lay like a black snake on the nearby table.

Sharon's penalty was more complex. In the next photograph, it was five minutes or so later. Sharon was now alone on the black divan, the high crown of her silky brown hair lowered, as if watching her own strapped hands. The boy stared at the photograph, excited and scarcely able to believe what Sharon was doing to herself. She seemed desperate to finish off what Louise had begun before the gaoler with his whip entered to thrash her. But there was no doubt of it. She had no idea she was being spied upon through some peephole or chink by the hidden

lens. The concealed cameraman had caught her beautifully at a most private moment. Taken from the rear, as she watched her own hands, the picture showed the pearly-smooth cheeks of Sharon's bottom tensing and slackening in a slow languorous rhythm. Her pallid thighs were squirming together in a whisper of bare skin.

A full-plate close-up of the rear parting of her legs showed beyond doubt that she was playing with her own femininity, its lips, its secret places, and its little sentinel. She had drawn one leg up a little, clear of the other. The boy could see in the photographs how her fingers were travelling to and fro between her thighs, over the excited wetness of the sensitive light-haired folds, rubbing firmly then stroking lightly, squeezing and fondling. The photograph had the voyeur's sense of amusement and excitement at the girl's expense.

When the next picture was taken, she had been alone for ten minutes. A mirror showed her eyes closed under the parted fringe of her veil of brown hair. Her mouth was open as if drawing air deeply in her exertion. She caught her breath unevenly in wordless exclamations and gasps. But the rear of this pale-bottomed adolescent girl caused the boy's first sense of erection. The photograph had once again caught the laboured writhing and ecstatic tightening of her buttocks. It suggested cunningly the vulgar rounding and lewd tremors, the fattened swelling out and inward clenching of Sharon Anne's bottom-cheeks in the labour of her self-fulfilment. The boy was excited to see Sharon having fun with herself and yet hoped keenly that she would be caught and punished severely for her misbehaviour.

It was not clear that she had managed to bring herself to a conclusion. Probably not, for it was only a few minutes later. The first of the men was with her now. He was

standing in front of her smiling and unbuttoned, showing her the erection which stood out stiff and urgent. Once again the camera had superbly caught her expression. The teenage defiance in the brown eyes was matched by the sullen weight of her rounded chin. The man was holding the stiffness immediately under her eyes, as if to show her what she was about to get.

The clock hands showed that it was just half-past eleven. He was lying on the divan behind her as she lay on her side, as if to make a minute inspection. But he was lying further down so that his face was level with her hips, her arse and the rear opening of her legs, no more than twelve inches from her. The area of his interest seemed to lie between the black strap round her waist and two more straps now fastened round the middle of each thigh. He had allowed Sharon to keep her folded hands pressed between her thighs under the pretext of shielding herself there. By this subterfuge, she might continue to gratify herself with furtive pressing and touching. But the man was no barbarian, knowing that a girl of her age, so fresh and excitable, would want to finish her self-indulgence. Provided that it did not impede him, he seemed to have no objection.

His kisses, beginning in the warm blue-veined hollows at the backs of her knees, had traveled up until he was nuzzling cool smoothness on the rear of her silky-skinned thighs close to their tops. In the photographs which followed, his kisses grew more general, his lips browsing over her thighs and bare back, her breasts and shoulders. Between her legs he tasted the mineral tang of her arousal. Nor did he hesitate to nuzzle the pale cheek-swell of Sharon's backside, which had not long since squirmed humidly on the hard seat of a school desk.

Her sex in its excited state came next. He had made her

curve forward from the waist and draw one leg up. Now he was taking her roused folds of flesh in his hand like a fledgling bird, and was kissing those moist lips and slit deliciously with a skill that must have driven her frantic. There was a second photograph of this, the movement of the clock showing that she had endured more than ten minutes of such exquisite torment and that the man had brought her to a shuddering conclusion by such light pouting lip-touches and tongue-tickles.

Her sleek soft-fleshed bottom-moons were being kissed again. Her face was lowered as if in dismay and only her long parted fringe was visible. Like a randy bumble-bee he pouted over the cheeks of Sharon's pallid young backside. These photographs even showed his lips moulding a shameless kiss to Sharon's arsehole. Her instinctive shudder at this caused him to draw away a little and view the area. His fingers stroked her up and down her rear crack. His lips touched the warm inward slope of one of her bottom-cheeks where the skin-tone turned from white to yellowed ivory. He settled down to give her a good long kissing on the other slope of her bum-cleavage. The mirror showed dismay in the broad firm-chinned oval of her face and in the ellipse of her brown eyes.

He drew back the lustrous veil of hair to kiss her neck and ears, teasing her a little. The words were softly spoken and the recording had picked up few of significance. The lover settled down and pouted his lips lightly to the tight rear dimple. The photograph showed a tension in the line of Sharon's bare flank that suggested she would have closed the way to him, had he not kept her rear cheeks firmly pressed apart. Her attempted refusal ensured that this attention was more prolonged. It was a perverse and mocking tribute, not paid to most girls of her age, even by their most outrageous boy-friends.

He made her lie quite still, kissing and finger-stroking Sharon's bottom-crack. Beyond the window, in the photograph, the boy sensed a humid darkness of the southern night, the scent of resinous pines and the distant impact of breakers with the incoming tide. In the room itself, it was just possible to see the first pale gloss of perspiration on Sharon's bottom-cheeks and hips.

At a few minutes past midnight, the kissing between her buttocks was finished. Sharon had been turned bottom-upwards over the leather bolsters, her arms now drawn out at full stretch and her wrists held at the end of the divan. She had shaken back the length of her brown hair and was looking at the man over her shoulder with the sullen reproach and woeful self-pity by which a schoolgirl of ten or twelve tries to melt the heart of the teacher about to punish her. In this picture, the man's hand was holding an open jar so that its rim just touched her bare thigh's pale gloss of flesh, high up at the back.

There was a second close-up from behind. Sharon's buttocks drawn a little harder apart as she was pulled more tightly forward over the leather roll of the bolster. A gleam of vaselined flesh. The print also showed that her firm fair-skinned thighs had been secured and that the black strap round her bare waist was now holding her. And there was another picture in this group, angled to show Sharon looking back self-pityingly over her shoulder at her ravisher. It was the woeful look that reproached him on behalf of her sleek pale backside, fattened suggestively in its present posture.

At the same time, another snatch of recorded conversation paralleled the photograph. There was a sullen and half-audible protest from Sharon, answered by Jenny, the young mistress with her sweep of dark hair and the cast of cruelty in her light blue eyes. Jenny had not appeared in

the photographs, except in two taken on a different occasion which showed her tossing back her sweep of dark hair as she stood in black beach-pants and sweater against a view of sandy cliffs. This was the first indication that she had entered the room with the man who was to be Sharon's lover.

"Take your hands away from your bottom, Sharon! It's because you're so tight there that he wants you in that way."

There was another scarcely audible protest, still peevish and self-justifying, again answered by Jenny.

"No!" It was another wail of outrage.

The young mistress said something inaudible. From Sharon there was another sulky murmur on behalf of her feminine dignity.

A pause ensued on the recording. Then the sofa springs moved as Jenny stood up and the man added his weight instead. There were more frantic protests from Sharon, a cry of alarm and then a diminishing wail of enforced acceptance.

"She's tight!" the man said with a breathless laugh. The sofa springs were compressed and eased in a steady rhythm. Presently there was another cry of alarm, slighter this time, and a few self-consciously mumbled words.

"You need a man who's not afraid to create havoc with you, Sharon," said Jenny with a laugh at the girl's timidity.

After that there was only the sound of the sofa moving for several minutes. This rhythm of the springs grew more rapid, paused for a moment and then began again. Sharon had been having it for about twenty minutes with desperate and resentful little sounds when she began entreating the man to withdraw at the last moment, not to let loose the storm of his warm lust in her entrails.

This sullen and self-pitying protest was answered by

Jenny. With a soft flick back of her dark hair, the mistress assured her pupil that the lover's satisfaction came from shooting as deeply and fully as possible.

The man who now stretched Sharon's vaselined tightness had brought her to quiet submission. He watched her rear cheeks, his bone-hard erection engulfed. The soft swelling pallor of Sharon's bottom-cheeks was now presented to him fully and compliantly as she lay forward over the leather bolster. She held the pallid moons of her buttocks passive and still like an obedient little girl submitting to her elders' commands. Sharon did not dare to resist him now, despite her reluctance and resentment. Taken behind by her lover's insistence, she seemed fearful of the ruin that wriggling or resistance might bring upon her. Her lover fondled and tickled her hind cheeks gently as he paused a moment, admiring his pupil's stretched backside. There was no doubt that he enjoyed making Sharon wait in uneasy anticipation with the fleshy bulk widening and filling her behind. He swept back the silky veil of dark brown hair and leant forward a little more as he kissed her pale neck and ears. Perhaps he found a perverse enjoyment from knowing that he was stimulating ambiguous excitement in Sharon's backside, a certain furtive and morbid pleasure mingled with more menial needs and urges.

The rhythm of the springs began again. The man was really in the mood now. There was no need to be prudent. The fattened sleekness of her buttocks in this kneeling posture obliged her to present herself most suggestively to his admiring gaze. He sounded Sharon deeper still by the bottom way. She tensed with a natural fear that he might burst her. The man felt increasing excitement as his knob invaded the deeper and most secret recesses of her behind. He outraged nature and modesty, by probing so far. Shar-

on's natural reticence and prudery were now challenged by his quest for intenser pleasure. With her backside stretched so hard, the adolescent beauty also had to endure the shame and panic of being caught in her present state.

At full length, he kissed the crown of her long silky hair and whispered in her ear, teasing her still. She tensed and caught her breath at the repeated pressure he brought to bear in a place where he had already made her feel such deep unease. She gasped that she felt him all the way to her belly button. He rode close to her now for several minutes, withdrawing only an inch or so at each stroke.

At last the man panted, as he went to the hilt, warning Sharon that she would soon feel the release in her bottom. Her face was bowed and only the high crown of her long veil of brown hair was at his disposal to kiss. Her slight instinctive tightening of alarm precipitated his crisis. Faintly, there came a muffled constricted pulse, suggesting that the tightness of her behind upon his stiffened muzzle had increased the force. He released his passion deeply within Sharon's warm tight grip.

The rhythm of the springs began once more.

The boy listened and after about ten minutes of hard breathing heard once again the constricted muffled squirting. Sharon gave a short cry of panic and a crestfallen little murmur which the recording failed to catch. Jenny spoke quietly to her.

The lover murmured and panted, kissing her bare neck and shoulders, assuring Sharon how great was the enjoyment she had given him. He described how the tightness of her was a thrilling stimulant and how the release in the soft warm depths of her backside had excited him greatly. Teasingly, he asked Sharon if she had enjoyed the feeling of it. It was hard to hear her muffled words but a peevish, self-pitying tone of denial was unmistakable.

Her lover laughed at this and administered a ringing cheek-smack on the sleek bare pallor of Sharon Anne's bottom. He smacked her a second time and then again, much harder so that she caught her breath.

In the next camera study, it was half an hour after midnight by the clock. Sharon sprawled on her belly over the bolster, arms again drawn out at full stretch, wrists fastened to the end of the divan. The round padded bolsters of black leather still raised and broadened the full double-cheeked pallor of her backside. Sharon's posterior would be teased and plagued by the lingering sensations of intrusion long after she had expelled the flaccid serpent. The cold thought of the whip would also inspire a flutter of panic in her smoothly curved belly, so that she squirmed in fearful anticipation over the bolsters and gave vent to little gasps of dismay.

Beyond the divan, the tiled room was visible. Across the seat of the porcelain pedestal lay a slim pony-switch, a yard long. Its handle was as thick as a thumb, the leather tapering to a finely quivering pencil-point tip.

Her chastiser was with her now. He was a more shadowy figure than the lover who had enjoyed her an hour or so before. Sharon's face was turned with reproach and apprehension in the ellipse of brown eyes under her fringe. But it was the sulky face of a self-indulgent and self-loving girl. The sight she offered keenly excited the passion of this middle-aged disciplinarian.

The next photograph showed the long sweep of her brown hair spilling in disorder, her head bowed, as if in desolation at the man's further refusal of her request. The area of the rear view that seduced him was conveniently framed by the shiny black leather of the waist-strap and the strap round the middle of each thigh. He sat on the edge of the divan to admire the pale puppy-fleshed softness of

Sharon's bottom-cheeks and thighs. The black straps round the sleek maturity of her bare pale skin made her bottom-cheeks and thighs, her flanks and hips assume a paler and finer gloss.

The camera showed her truly frantic now, as he perched on the side of the divan and examined the area of his interest. He leant over her, his face no more than twelve inches distant. Her wrists and waist were fastened but her legs were free as she lay on her belly over the bolsters. In her alarm at the whipping she was about to get and the growing panic in her belly, Sharon tensed and squirmed in a manner more seductive than she could have realised. The pale mounds of her behind rounded and contorted before him. As she struggled to contain herself, Sharon's bottom-cheeks contracted and swelled rhythmically, touching and parting lightly with a whisper and glistening of unwiped soap from Jenny's attentions.

The man tightened his mouth with vindictive promise at the writhing peeps of light-haired flesh and the shadowy forbidden cleavage between the two rear cheeks which she tightened in panic. He studied the urgent, contractions of Sharon's arse for a minute or two. Though she was helpless to prevent it, these little tightenings of it were bound to be sexually suggestive to a man who was watching them, because they seemed almost as if she was getting excited in that area. And he did watch her, very closely from this angle for several minutes.

Moreover, her squirming over the bolsters was also bound to stimulate him, for it suggested Sharon writhing bottom-upwards in a strenuous labour of sexual passion. Indeed, as her sex peeped between the rear of her thighs, its roused state was visible after love-making with her girl-friend Louise. And when the sleek pale buttocks parted as she writhed, there was a tell-tale gleam on the inner

surfaces of Sharon's bottom-cheeks which betrayed her perverse uses. This suggestiveness made her swelling buttocks and tensing thighs seem even more deserving of the whip. Having her positioned as she was, her new guardian therefore judged such a young wanton well able to take the severest whipping that he chose to inflict upon her.

In the next photograph, Sharon had shaken back the length of her silky brown hair and was looking sidelong over her shoulder at the man who made the preparations for her discipline. A last defiance of self-possession still lingered in her brown eyes. The thought of what lay in store for her did not quite dispel a sullen moodiness of her mouth and chin. Because he was going to tan her properly, the gaoler was interested in every aspect of the teenage girl's thighs and her behind. He was closely studying the pallid adolescent swell of her bare backside.

The moment approached when Sharon knew she would soon flounder and wallow over the sofa in the naked smart of the pony-lash across her bare bottom-cheeks and thighs. This anticipation drove her to squirm and surge in panic. Such provocative writhing and rounding of her arse and legs understandably determined the chastiser to deal with her even more severely. He was not alone in his zeal.

He went across to the pedestal and picked up the slim leather pony-switch that lay across its seat. Sharon shook her high-crowned sweep of hair clear of her face and looked back, catching her breath with instinctive fright. Though firmly on her belly over the bolster, she was struggling and panting in desperation. The supple switch was quite three feet long and quiveringly fine at its tip. The man touched it lightly across the pale double-cheek swell of Sharon's backside. The springs of the divan shifted as the girl began to tense at the touch of the leather whip

measuring the mark it would make across her bare rear cheeks.

“Keep you bottom still, Sharon!” he said with quiet authority. “Lie right forward over the bolster and lie still!”

“No!” Her tone betrayed that she was begging rather than refusing. Her buttocks clenched and squirmed tightly as the cold menace of the leather switch touched lightly across them. The boy studied the pale cheek-swell of Sharon’s bottom in the photograph. There was a finer tauter sheen to her hind cheeks, as if her panic at feeling the menace of the leather whip had given her buttock-skin the electric gloss of tightened silk. The boy sought relief a little as he studied this camera portrait of Sharon’s eighteen-year-old backside.

The slim wand cut the air with a sharp swish and landed with an ear-stunning smack. There was a second’s pause. Then she gasped at the naked intensity of the swelling anguish. “Lie still, Sharon!” the man with the whip said sharply. “Lie right over with your back straight and keep your bottom up towards me!” The searing smack of the pony-switch was repeated across her bare rear cheeks, and repeated again. She gave a wild protesting cry.

“Quite still, Sharon,” the chastiser repeated softly. “Lie quite still until you’ve been finished with.”

The boy listened to see if it would be ten strokes, but it was more. He waited for twenty and thirty, but that was not even a beginning. The cries of the pale-skinned girl grew more intense and desperate. In the next photo, he saw that after several strokes across the crowns of her bare buttocks, the supple switch caught Sharon very low down across the pearly cheeks of her bottom with a vicious impact. The photos and recording conveyed the deliber-

ately repeated smacks of leather low across the softer and fatter swell of her bottom-cheeks just above her thighs. The sounds of her frenzy grew. But the gaoler continued to aim low down across her backside. A moment later, when the whip caught yet again cruelly low across her bottom-cheeks, Sharon screamed. The boy's heart jumped with shocked excitement. In the photo the wall-clock stood at half-past one in the morning.

But her chastiser was increasingly zealous in dealing with a sulky and wilful girl of Sharon's kind. The whip rang out with savage energy. The wordless shrillness soon broke into Sharon's pleading not to be whipped any more. Under the parted fringe her brimming eyes implored her chastiser. Her mouth had the woebegone downward line of a penitent child. The disciplinarian had thrashed her soundly with the switch, leaving countless deeply-coloured weals across the pale fullness of Sharon's bare bottom, as well as several given deliberately across the backs of her thighs. Far into the small hours of the morning, Sharon's bottom-flesh jumped and quivered, her rear cheeks dancing to the tune of the whip, as she drank her own tears from her lips.

The photographs already showed that Sharon's bare backside had been soundly whipped. From her urgent but rather peevish appeals on the recording she had yet to understand the man who dealt with her. The pallid cheeks of her bottom were tapestried by the art of the supple riding-switch and smarting untouchably. The sight of this might have moved some men to leniency. But for the gaoler, the state of the young woman's behind stimulated his vindictive zeal. No one would reproach him and Sharon would never be free to tell tales. He discarded the rod and drew the short tail of a snakeskin pony-lash through his fingers. The smarting imprints of the switch across the bare buttocks of this spoilt teenage girl made her supremely re-

sponsive. But the state of Sharon's buttocks merely served to put some cruel ideas into her guardian's mind.

The full-plate photograph taken from the rear showed that Sharon was now kneeling very tightly forward over the scroll at the end of the sofa. Her arms were at full stretch to the base of its frame. Her full pale buttocks were pulled wide and hard by this posture, showing the yellowed-ivory smoothness where their slopes curved in together.

The boy unwrapped a candy and ate it as he listened intently to the recording. The tiled room rang with sounds of a training stable as the pony-lash was used. Sharon's wildness rose and fell, reaching the top of her soprano range as each stroke caught her bare bottom. At first the intensity of her frenzy shocked him. But then he grew more and more intrigued by it. While looking at the photographs of her face and of Sharon's suggestively fattened bare-bottom posture, the lad went back and played over this same part of the recording several times. Then he unbuttoned, lay back, and sought relief for his tension as he listened to her and studied the photographs.

At first her shrillness had been edged by outrage that the man should affront her femininity in this way. It was necessary to take her far beyond this. By making the whipping last far into the night, the chastiser was breaking Sharon's wilfulness and arrogance, making her the most obedient slave. The most exciting moment to the boy was when at last Sharon pierced the night-air with her shrillness as the whip caught her bottom—and when he could hear that her keening had been purged of all resistance or resentment until it was utterly wild and without any control.

The gaoler curbed her teenage rebellion with the pony-lash and its short tail of braided leather. He cracked the sinuous thong across the bare pale moons of her buttocks in a curling cut. The photographs showed how the whip

curved and clung agonisingly to the first swell, curled in between the bare cheeks of Sharon's bottom, and flicked round the far flank of her bare hips. Her wilful, sulky young face with its sweep of brown hair tossed clear was twisted round in open mouthed and wide-eyed frenzy. Those brown eyes, brimming over, matched her soprano frenzy on the recording. Her strapped hands were clenched into fists, every muscle in her thighs and hips seemed contracted by the anguish. She had jammed one knee into the back of the other, as if to contain the smart. Her toes curled with the searching intensity of the whip.

The recording caught the small sounds of her desperation, the breathless squirming in the pauses as she awaited more discipline. The sofa springs echoed the strapped writhing of her pallid young thighs and hips. The lad heard the girl's bare belly slithering in her own perspiration against the smooth sofa-leather in the sweltering southern night.

If the wall-clock was correct, Sharon's discipline at her captor's hands began almost an hour after midnight and concluded just after three o'clock in the morning, when summer dawn was close. Beyond the barred windows, the last of the photographs caught a first hint of misty light over the grey early sea.

Presently, her shrill protests confirmed that the gaoler had caught Sharon between her rear cheeks. As daybreak outshone the harsh brilliance of electric light on white tiles, he was pitiless with her. Though the restraint of the straps enforced her posture, the disciplinarian was intimately severe. He made Sharon take one crack-shot after another, aiming repeatedly at the tightened rear bullseye. The boy did not blame him for yielding to this temptation and, indeed, envied him. Each pistol-shot smack took Sharon to the thrilling peak of her range.

At last, with uncharacteristic gentleness, the chastiser

released Sharon from the sofa over whose scroll she knelt. He raised her carefully to her feet.

The next climax of the drama moved the boy profoundly. It assured him of the severity which had been inflicted on this moody teenage girl. Her long sweep of hair slid aside and her head drooped on the man's shoulder as he raised her. Her arms fell limp. As if in tribute to the ordeal he had inflicted upon her, Sharon hung limp like an hysterical virgin-bride in her chastiser's arms.

This might have caused consternation during a domestic or bedroom discipline. But in a secure and soundproof room where mature young women, as well as teenage nymphs and adolescent tomboys, underwent the gaoler's discipline, such little dramas were very common. The incident caused no alarm to the disciplinarian who smiled as he supported Sharon, her head lying against him and the sweep of her hair falling clear. Very gently, he lowered the drooping eighteen-year-old face-down over the divan and coaxed her over the buttoned leather. He bent one of her knees up gently towards her breasts so that she showed her feminine secrets more fully. Several photos recorded this sentimental moment, while Sharon lay motionless for several minutes. Her sleek hair spread across the leather and her head still drooped. The bare swell of Sharon's back-side and thighs were raised to her admirer's face as she sprawled like a dreamer on her belly over the sofa.

To restore her, he fondled and stroked Sharon's femininity which he had exposed to the camera by bending her knee up. After a minute or two of such fondling, she began to stir. At this, he drew his hand away and began to tickle Sharon's behind knowingly while he revived her. He teased her there with his fingertip while she lay over the buttoned leather, her bottom raised and its cheeks parted a little by the posture.

As her eyes fluttered uncertainly, she instinctively tightened her behind against the finger, as if to check herself. Then, with gentle cunning, Jenny intervened. The chas-tiser resigned his command over Sharon. It was now Jenny who caressed and roused the girl, as Sharon rode to her own relief with soft cries and shudders.

Several other pictures were taken at ten in the morning, on a later day in the white-tiled suite. The sky was bright with reflected brilliance of sea and summer. Sharon had no doubt been brought there for her routine morning use of the tiled room. But once her briefs were off, the demands of her mentors took precedence. She was again on the black leather divan, lying on her side with her back to the door, naked but for her short waist-length singlet. There was a stranger standing by, unsmiling and intent as he watched. His presence suggested the scene of a white slave-girl displayed for sale.

Jenny, the sweep of her own dark hair almost hiding her face, was looking down at Sharon. The print showed, from the rear, the roused folds of Sharon's flesh. As usual Sharon was receiving caresses rather than giving them. Her eyes under the parted fringe were languorously closed and her lips had parted in the more laboured breath of excitement. The stroking of her ticklish cleft and the tick-ling of her sensitive flesh-button had entranced her utterly. She had abandoned herself to the bliss of Jenny's expert caress.

The next photograph had been taken at the crisis. It was the most intriguing. Sharon had moved one leg to allow Jenny to finish most exquisitely. This revealed how deftly the other woman was fondling her. Sharon's bottom was thrust out. Her backside and the rear of her thighs were still marked lightly by the prints of her recent punishment, the pattern of the lash clearly visible.

But Sharon's face was turned over her shoulder to the doorway, to which a rather hard-faced younger girl with shorter-cropped brown hair in a sweep across her forehead had been brought. The moment was precisely chosen. The boy saw in the sharp looks of the younger girl's face the same quizzical ellipse of brown eyes as in the face of the older girl writhing on the divan. There was no doubt that the prim little imp was Sharon's sister. But Sharon had reached a point from which she could not draw back. The gaze that she directed back towards the other girl combined desire and dismay, delicious languor, imploring, and self-love. The youngster watched calmly and unprompted.

Jenny, with the scornful amusement in her light blue eyes, continued expertly but impersonally. Sharon still looked over her shoulder, unable to draw her eyes from the cause of her dismay. In the anguished and exquisite moment, she helplessly showed this intruder the release of her desire, reflected in the passion-racked tensings of her face.

The boy spent an hour or two with the photos. He studied the sullen young face, the moody mouth and chin, dismissive brown eyes, the fringed and silken veil of lightly-waved brown hair. He chose a close-up, the pallor of Sharon's bottom-cheeks swelling fully over the leather bolster. In the dossier were one or two scraps of paper which, he supposed, would give a few details of the girl and her fate. It was common enough for a girl herself, in Sharon's plight, to smuggle out an appeal for rescue. Whatever his feelings now, sooner or later he might respond. And there was no doubt in the boy's mind that if he left her to her fate, it would be a bizarre one.

Light faded from the gathering ocean rollers that burst in spray and thunder on November's empty beaches. The boulevards were wet and deserted, the lamps shining by four o'clock. He listened again to the recording and stud-

ied the photographs once more, putting himself into the mood for his decision. But it was dark before his decision was made. He guessed it was what most men and women would secretly like to do in Sharon Anne's case.

He took the scraps of paper on which her hopes of rescue might have depended. Without turning them over to read what they contained, he walked across to the fireplace, dropped them on the hot coals and watched them darken and flake into ash.

## Torre de Senhoras

While the storms broke open upon the shores of Florville and the *côte sauvage*, the friends who had left the Villa Rosa followed the last of summer far to the south. By mid-October they had crossed two mountain ranges and a dozen rivers on a journey which brought them at last to a capital city and its pleasure resorts on a warm coast.

On a day of silver sun and a warm Atlantic sky the colour of mist, the wide arterial route of the Avenida Marginal looked out across a sweep of pearl grey breakers. By then Mano and I had found the mild autumn of Lisbon and its resorts. On the broad drive of the coastal avenue, the smart buildings and crowds of Estoril passed like a filmed sequence. In the curve of arcades to either side of the Casino gardens stretched rows of café tables where families from Lisbon were eating lunch under the spreading boughs of camellia trees. Above the coastal highway, the older, peeling villas rose in colours of apricot or blood-orange stucco. Schoolgirls smartly uniformed in green tops and grey skirts clustered by the Club de Tenis do Estoril with its deep terra cotta courts and dark green

paintwork among palms and bougainvillea. The silver glare of a southerly Atlantic calm turned blue at last in the Tagus estuary. As the cold season stirred in Paris and London, the ghost of high summer hovered in the mild southern air.

The autumn was turning slowly in the city itself, as if reluctant to part with the months of heat. Lisbon girls walked home through the autumn sun of early afternoon, the younger ones in formal green jerseys, pleated grey skirts and white knee-socks or else in gymslips. The older ones were in casual pants and blouses. They went laughing on their way home past the Estrela gardens, up the hill from the Avenida Pedro Álvares Cabral, looking back and smiling at strangers without fear or inhibition. One was peering innocently into each parked car and the other playfully slapped her bottom each time that she stooped to look.

Lisbon on that October afternoon was a place of acrid roast-chestnut smoke in the Largo da Estrela, mingling with the warm southern mist to darken the day. Old men and their women sat on benches just within the park gates. Outside, the trams drew up at their quay near the square towers and dome of the white Estrela church.

At the upper end of the Avenida da Liberdade, the Parque Eduardo VII sloped upwards into blue inland sky. The broad marble-paved paseos lay at its centre with green between them, trees on either hand. Our car negotiated the Rotunda before the park gates, the Praça Marquês de Pombal, a low afternoon sun across the Tagus striking the marble paving with the shine of sea. The offices of international commerce occupied the four segments of the circle, the black statue of Pombal on its column rising at the centre, and the park approach crowded with bus-loads of

country-folk, groups of women, and hawkers with white lace tablecloths or counterpanes.

Parallel with the park ran the Avenida Sidonia with shuttered apartments looking on to the trees. The buildings seemed silent, expensive, and blank. Beyond and parallel lay the bus route of the Avenida Antonio Augusto de Aguiar. It had an air of the calmer thoroughfares of Montparnasse, a street of quiet apartment blocks, a central reservation planted with trees and with cars parked under them. On either side, the marble mosaic paving underfoot was like walking on the floor of a sea cave. There were a few expensive travel-agents, cafés, and shop windows showing wine and tins of ornate biscuits. Following it from the centre of town, the avenue ended in a three-lane highway and the grassed spaces of a vast traffic roundabout at the Praça de Espanha.

It was here that Mano had taken a large apartment, looking across the slope of the park towards the blocks of the Ritz and the grand hotels on the far side, over the Estufa Fria, an indoor Brazil of fern and palm, cactus and bush, with raised walks and pools.

But even here the season and the year were running to an end. No longer did one plan to fill the space of weeks or months, as we had done in June. It was a matter of seizing what opportunities were left in the shortening days.

As October goes on, the Lisbon afternoons grow humid but cloudy with a gathering wind that veers and slides in a city built on so many hills and levels. Grey rollers break west of Alcântara and Belém. Lights are turned on in the blunt-nosed little trams with their green leather seats and polished pine. As their wheels labour on the steep Rua do Alecrim, the broken circuit fills the interior with a white flash.

There were two girls to serve us in the apartment over-

looking the park, Annie and Fiona, Helyn and Sian being with Anton at his house near Sintra. Margarita was to arrive in Jenny's company a few days later when the liner from Bordeaux anchored off the Cais de Sodr  in the broad river estuary. But for the moment we rested and relaxed in the mild autumn air. In those first afternoon mists of October, Mano and I walked on the Avenida da Liberdade, under the palms and chestnuts of its wide central reservations, grass and trees with caf  tables grouped here and there. A young prostitute from one of the pensions in the narrow side streets would strut and pose in pink trousers and shiny black handbag like a badge of office. Her girlfriend sat tight-trousered on one of the benches. Her pimp tried yet again to sell a "gold" ring to a passer-by. On the eastern side of the avenue, the late sun lingered on the art nouveau of the Tivoli cinema with its dome and coloured glass.

One afternoon, before the arrival of the young mistress and her Spanish pupil, Mano began to talk about Jenny. I had never thought that the young woman had a past worth knowing. We sat among the trees and pools of the central reservations of the Avenida by the green octagonal kiosks of the tea gardens. The mosaic pavements made a curved geometry of black designs, suggesting sea-flowers and the grace of ships, as if you might walk from here to Rio.

He told me of Jenny's profession, a mistress of girls in a Parisian finishing-school, her attachment to some of the pupils. But there was a rebellious streak in her. She would march with the workers to the *manifestations* of the Place de la R publique and La Chapelle. As Mano described this, we walked on towards the centre of one great city while the images of another occupied the mind.

The lower end of the Avenida da Liberdade, near the Restauradores monument, is the busiest. The air fills with

a roasted smell of Brazilian tobacco and women's perfume. The central reservation is taken up by chairs and tables of the café stalls under the trees. The shops here sell English tweed and whisky. Beggars cadge sandwiches and glasses of milk at the outside tables of the little bars near the Mercedes showroom and the Hôtel Avenida Palace.

On one of these Parisian occasions, Mano explained, Jenny had encountered a *commissaire du police* whom she subsequently met again. He had invited her to dinner in one of those pleasant lamplit restaurants that look out from the upper floor across the gravelled spaces of the Palais-Royal. With a toss of her dark hair and a flash of her blue eyes, Jenny took the opportunity to mock and insult him publicly. It was only for this, I suppose, that she accepted his invitation.

The brave gendarme shrugged. He called a car and handed her into it, as if to send her home. But the car took a roundabout route and pulled up in the courtyard of the *brigades territoriales*. The rebellious young bitch was marched from it and into one of the offices. Before she knew what was happening Jenny was stripped of her skirt and knickers, strapped face-down over a trestle. Two gendarmes and three convicts employed to clean the cells took her between the legs or in the backside according to choice, with the door of the room closed. Then the door was left open. The commissaire arrived with a slim riding-switch, determined that she should taste what it was to be a young woman of the people in conflict with authority. The typewriters in the offices stopped and even the young women crowded the open doorway to watch. The commissaire thrashed the pallid bare cheeks of Jenny Woodward's bottom black and blue. She screamed from start to finish and humiliated herself in every way imaginable. When it was

over, she was handed weeping and limping into another car, which took her back to her rooms.

“And the consequence is curious,” Mano said. “You might expect Jenny to loathe the male sex and take the part of womankind. Nothing of the sort. The beating and the humiliation is several years in the past. But it almost seems as if, despite her protests, she admires her chastisers and seeks to treat other women as she was treated then. Curious, is it not? But that is the mainspring of her conduct.”

By the time that Mano had finished his story we had reached the Tagus at the Praça do Commercio, a vast pink-washed square of Italianate arcading with the mercantile air of Venice. It lies open on the south to the Tagus and on that day of unsettled weather it had become a landscape of windy spaces and pedestrians hurrying through the shelter of the great arcading. Rough water chopped and slapped by the jetties of the ferry-boats behind the vegetable-stalls, roast-chestnut stoves, shoe-shines, sellers of umbrellas and lottery tickets.

Mano never added to his story of Jenny, nor did I ask him to. The tanning she had had from the commissaire may have precipitated her into her present attitudes. But I thought that she must have been predisposed to such feelings for her own sex long before. Before her arrival in Lisbon, there followed several days, alternating between warmth and mist. The first winter gloom gathered on the steep descent of the Calçada da Estrela. Its little shops were grimy in the mist and the green wall-tiles had been dulled by city dirt. The trams would grind down the steep and narrow way where one side of the street was blocked by the wall of the National Assembly building.

On the morning of Jenny's appearance, it seemed that summer had returned. Mano and I walked the ramparts of

the Castelo de São Jorge, overlooking the city from the east, the houses with orange trees and pomegranates in their little walled gardens clustering on the slopes just below its crusader ramparts. Along the wide walks, the fortress cisterns were full with the first rain, there were fountains and wells everywhere. The promenades lay under ancient archways high above the city roofs in a garden of gravel and evergreen, shaded here and there by umbrella pines.

From here we watched the grey and white liner with its banded funnel as it came up river and moored at last on the river quay, opposite the elegant wrought-iron and stone of the Estação Santa Apolónia, from which the trains run below the rising houses to Oporto and Madrid. The arrival of Jenny with Margarita brought new energy to our ambitions for what time remained. It was Jenny herself who remarked that we had not finished with Sian and Helyn. Indeed, she said, we had scarcely begun. There was talk of Anton de Xantra and that house in the hills above romantic Sintra, not twenty or thirty miles from here. Arrangements were made for closing up the apartment and joining him there. He had gone there himself, taking the Italian youngster Alicia, and making arrangements for Louise and Sharon. None of these three girls were there when we arrived. Nor were they spoken of. Sian and Helyn, as well as Margarita, were to be our companions there.

While all these discussions were going on, I looked at Jenny surreptitiously and wondered if Mano's story about the *commissaire de police* could possibly be true. There was something about Jenny which suggested a daughter of the people, the black clad rebel carrying the red flag in a worker's demonstration from Belleville or Aubervilliers. I studied the dark hair with its henna'd rinse as it lay brushed back from her face to lie in a cluster of lightly

waved tresses down her back, spread across her shoulders. How easy to imagine it stirring or blowing in the breeze across the massed ranks and grey spaces of the Place de la République. The fine ellipse of her pale blue eyes was well set off by the deliberate darkening of their lashes. The slight sallow tan of her face formed a broad oval with a straight tight mouth, palely lipsticked, a firm rounded chin and broad-boned cheeks. From the side one saw the long slope of her profile, the hardness of nose and chin, the wrinkles of the eyes.

There was equal hardness in her voice and in her face which confirmed this impression of a daughter of proletarian struggle. That such a young woman should wish to be the mistress of younger women was inconsistent with that, I thought. It was not her class or her beliefs that motivated her. What then? I knew that Mano's story was true. In my mind I pictured the policeman's whip cracking agonisingly across the pale cheek-swell of Jenny's bottom. How that bleak institutional office must have rung with her shrillness. In such places they are expert in making a young woman scream. The long-nozzled devices up her backside, as well as between her legs, would have been the sardonic preliminary. And while she was whipped, the quiet laughter of the gendarmes and the smiles of the girls from the offices must have met the wildness in her eyes every time that she twisted her face round.

How could it not be true? It is strange, as Mano said, that a young woman who has undergone such torture should be obsessed with inflicting it in the same manner. Paradoxical that she takes revenge by inflicting it in imitation of those men who beat her and not in revenge. And yet experience tells us so. Jenny wished to do to others what had been done to her. And, as if meticulous in this, she chose other young women as her victims.

One could not argue over the truth of this in her case. But Mano had also explained that Jenny was a mistress at a Parisienne *pensionnat* when her adventure occurred. She was already the martinet and chastiser of schoolgirls, of fourteen-year-olds like the blonde Linda Jennings and the auburn *gamine* Valerie Bishop, fifteen-year-old tomboys like Sandra Williams and willowy nymphs of sixteen like Judith Terry. Even before her police-barracks whipping, Jenny was conditioned to finding emotional release in her punishment of such girls.

Before our departure for Sintra, there were arrangements to be made. One afternoon, it was my duty to escort Jenny and Margarita to the plateau above the Tagus on which stands the fashionable shopping district of Chiado. One goes down to the busy streets near the docks and takes the Carmo elevator, built by Monsieur Eiffel, to the upper level. The elevator is a tower of battleship-grey girders with polished wood inside, like the seats of an ancient but elegant third-class railway carriage.

The couturier's shop was near the Rua Garrett, where the street slopes down again to the pillared façade of the São Carlo Opera. The district is one of balustraded upper windows in green wrought-iron, the mimics of a renaissance palace. The Grandes Armazens do Chiado lies across the bottom of the Rua Garrett, a street of quiet opulence.

Inside the couturier's, rose a temple to old-fashioned Lisbon commerce, the pale polished oak of gothic doors with carved panels that seem to lead to confessionals rather than fitting rooms. The counters were faced by a padding of brown buttoned-leather with marble tops in swirls of dark green and black, cool to the touch. There were frivolous little umbrellas and parasols displayed, fine evening gowns and walking clothes in brown and grey. In the

misty afternoon, the shop was lit by electric candelabra in brass, moulded like upward bunches of bananas.

With an older woman and a girl in attendance, I followed Jenny and Margarita to the changing room where certain dresses were to be tried on. There is nothing in this. The proprietors of such shops know quite well that a man will bring his young mistress here and sit in a chair, a stick balanced on his knee, while she parades before him. It raises no blush among the girls or the older women who work here.

The changing room was like an old-fashioned first-class wagon-lit, heavily perfumed by bees-wax polish. There was more brown padded leather on the door and the interior was panelled in light oak with a thick yellow carpet. There was a good chair, a long mirror, and a rather heavy table of carved oak.

The dresses were brought. They had been chosen as uniforms for Margarita to wear when the girl served us. To try them on, she must undo her brown waist-belt and take off the jeans she was wearing. The woman and the shop-girl thought nothing of this. It was their constant trade to see young women standing in their underwear and then to dress them in the new fashion.

Margarita slowly undid the belt and pushed down her jeans while the two attendants pretended to turn aside, though they watched her in the mirror from the corner of their eyes. But the Spanish girl was wearing little enough underneath. She had a pair of panties in black silk that had been cut scandalously brief. At the front there was just enough to cover the triangle of dark hair in her loins. At the rear the seat arched up high and tight from the parting of her thighs, leaving bare the sallow cheek-swell of Margarita's bottom. She flicked her black hair back and stared defiantly as if this were nothing.

The two assistants turned to look at her. It was nothing to them if a girl liked to wear brief panties. But in this case their eyes widened. The manner in which Margarita's bottom-cheeks had been laid bare showed several oyster-coloured bruises on the Latin tan of the skin and several slim purple imprints which bore the unmistakable pattern of a bamboo cane.

"She was thrashed for her misconduct last week," Jenny said, smiling at the older woman as if she would understand, "nothing more than that."

The two assistants controlled their feelings well. There would be whispers and laughter later on. For the moment their eyes met in a silent and significant glance. Then they returned to Margarita, helping her on with a plain black dress, its skirt short above the knees, which suggested a waitress or housemaid of some kind.

We were there for some while in the afternoon warmth. By the time that Margarita had been fitted, the close air was heavy with the natural perfume of feminine nudity and the warm scents of bare intimate flesh. On the pretext of adjusting the dress, I saw that the two women drew Margarita's panties at the back until they were little more than a twist of black silk between her buttocks, her olive-fleshed bottom-cheeks almost closing over them. This tightness was designed to make them rub and rouse a little more between her legs as she moved. The women smiled at her in the glass by Jenny's shoulder.

By the time that the session was over, we came out into the dark, the Carmo trams rumbling up the steep hump of the Rua do Alecrim above the docks. The Avenida da Liberdade is busiest when sudden darkness falls. One goes into a shop with the light still yellow in the sky across the Tagus and comes out into lamplit night. The elderly shoe-

shine boys and the women at the chestnut stoves are doing good business. The green neon is lit on the fortress-solidity of the São Jorge super cinema and the coloured dome of the art deco Tivoli is lit. The Italian ice cream parlour seems arctic with its cold blue neon. The teenage whores gather and chatter outside their shabby little hotel in a side-turning near the funicular tram of the Calçada de la Gloria.

Next morning the last stage of the journey began.

The hired car that took us north from Lisbon skirted the shores of Estoril and Cascais, winding through avenues of houses in every style of extravagance, the weekend retreats of wealthy Lisbon. Beyond these, in the hills and forests to the north, lay the romantic prospects of Sintra. It was a place of silence in the mists of October, a little town of palaces bereft of kings where the sound of coffee cups and café tables seemed sharp and brittle in the quiet air.

If Kubla Khan had been possessed of a Gothic taste, Mano wrote to me afterwards, he would have built Sintra. At first sight, it seemed like a village set in the depths of a steep mountain gorge, more like Austria or Switzerland. But here and there one glimpsed the land falling further away to a wide plain and the hazy sunlight sparkling on an Atlantic calm off Cabo da Roca, the westernmost point of Europe. Misty hills rose like wooded cliffs above the rooftops, clothed in fir and chestnut, oak and spruce. The crowning castellation of the Moorish battlement was just visible through the vapour.

The life of the little town centered on the square by the old palace of the Portuguese kings, the café terraces and the blue-tiled walls. The Poussada de Byron and other tributes to romance stood heavy with association. The Paço da Vila itself was a palace of pale tiled rooms and dark paintings, the interiors heavy with red velvet and the

sleek ebony richness of Brazilian mahogany. The air seemed rich with fanaticism and cruelty.

In the cool afternoons the few visitors retired to the *salon de thé* where chocolate cake with cream accompanied coffee and long conversations. Wide mirrors and the frosted globes of wall-bracket lamps. Pink and white marbling like raspberry and cream. Chocolate-brown buttoned leather. The little tables with wrought-iron legs. Waiters in black aprons and bow ties. Outside, the sheltered terrace and the blue tiling of the street-walls.

Beyond the town, the road curved upwards towards Anton de Xantra's villa between the silence of the trees. The season of eucalyptus and lemon was over. Water dripped constantly and everywhere, almost the only sound. From time to time, between the walls and trees by the quiet road, there was a panorama far below, stretching across the flat miles to the sea. High above, on the ridge stood the remains of the invaders' fortifications at the Castelo dos Mouros among a more arid landscape of white boulders.

As we approached the Xantra estate, pale green ferns grew thick between the trees. On the grey rendered walls the moss was richly emerald-coloured. Within the grounds of the fine houses lay formal gardens and stuated walks, stone loggias with tiled interiors. Anton de Xantra's favourite was built upon pink Moorish key-hole arches. Palms and pines grew in the thick woodland of cork and oak. Ivy and moss hung everywhere, among virginia creeper and banks of red flowers.

The Sintra houses of the bourgeoisie still exuded a fear of revolution, ornamental iron grilles protecting the priceless collections of ivories and manuscripts, porcelain and Spanish silver-gilt lamps that lay within. Garden gates

were locked and chained. The houses on the lower slope stood massive and empty, blinds down and terraces empty. Their architecture was the florid and ugly gimcrack of Portuguese Gothic, copied at a time when English style was the last word in Lisbon. Stone obelisk shafts pointed upwards on the corners of houses and on garden pillars.

Anton de Xantra's house on the hill above was reached through wooded parkland high above the town. It was one of the older houses, dating from the last days of the Portuguese monarchy, a place of stucco rendering and large pebble-dash, grey and damp as gravestone. From the terrace to one side there was a high view above wooded hills to a warm expanse of sea. Within, there was pale tiling and dark velvet in its rooms and little courtyards. One's eye caught long interior vistas of heavy red velvet and mahogany. In the reception room, on a grand piano, stood family photos in frames of red or russet padded velvet. The pale yellow sofas looked heavy and fat. The light through the windows was filtered by German painted glass. To my taste, after the simplicity of the Villa Rosa and the *côte sauvage*, the house was grossly over-furnished with its thick yellow carpets, Meissen figurines, chandeliers, ivory and ebony, portraits in darkened oils. Even the polished Brazilian mahogany had a chocolate richness that added to a sense of darkness.

Yet I began to see that it suited the mood of the occasion. The house was remote and high above the little town. Access was difficult. The world of the dimly-lit rooms was turned in upon itself, brooding and sensual, decadent and overblown. Here and there one was briefly aware of the world outside. At the foot of the little tower—the Torre de Senhoras, as it was called—was a round room in pale stone, well-lit with plain framed photographs on the bare

wall. Through windows and interior doors, one glimpsed courtyards with blue and yellow azuleju tiles, lush with palms and ferns among the murmur of fountain-water in lily-pools.

We were far from prying eyes and inquisitive ears in the depth of parkland on this misty hilltop. In Anton de Xantra's dark-panelled and stuffily-furnished rooms there was no further need for pretence or concealment. A long velvet draped gallery connecting two ends of the house was hung with more than thirty full-plate photographic studies of a young woman who had passed through the hands of her masters and mistresses into whatever submission and captivity lay beyond. One paused by the nearest leaded window that looked out across the damp forests and ferns, in order to study the first camera portrait, taken while the young woman was still at liberty and unaware of the camera spying on her.

A high-crowned pudding-basin crop and fringe of straight fair hair, perhaps to make her more boyish for her girlfriends. A challenge to men in the firm fair-skinned features, the dismissive blue eyes and the sulky weight of mouth and chin. Long trim legs, taut hips, and the firming out of her bottom-cheeks in the fulfilment of youth at twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old. Arrogant blue eyes looking beyond the lens. Fair-skinned face under the parted fringe with a sullen air of a spoilt peevish little girl.

On the far side of the window hung another picture. A suggestive view from behind as she bent tightly to the flower-bed, drawing skin-taut the thin trousers of her black coolie-suit. Legs tensed astride, knees braced forward, bending in the effort of garden-labour. Mature firmness of thighs and hips, full broad swelling of Lesley's bottom-cheeks. The parting of her buttocks, the inward slopes of

her bottom-crack, even her vaginal flesh clearly shaped by thin black cloth, drawn skin-smooth on her hips and backside.

The first full-plate facial portraits of this self-possessed young woman in captivity hung in a row on the next stretch of wine-red wall between two windows. Dismay and indignation in the blue eyes of the firm young face under its long parted fringe. Then outrage and wildness in the wider eyes and distended mouth. Close-up portraits of her sulky young face face taken during a prison whipping, the eyes brimming over with tears and the mouth widened in a wild cry. Lesley tearful and self-pitying after the spanking-strap across her bare buttocks or screaming and frantic in her nudity under the stable-lash. Studies of a mature young woman under chastisement, rare of their kind.

Full-plate close-ups for the learned anatomist hung opposite these in the aqueous light of the long velvet corridor. She had been made to lie naked on her back and draw her knees up to her breasts. Splayed thighs shown closely from below. Lesley's intimate folds of feminine flesh and the soft fleece of the hair displayed almost at life-size. Her sex never shown so publicly before, even during marriage and child-bearing, an outrage to her dignity provoking the most vehement protest before grudging obedience.

The sex of a young wife in repose, these folds of intimate flesh warm and slack. A study from underneath as she lay in a horizontal squat, her naked thighs and hips swelling with the strain, her warm secrets revealed fully. Her hands not visible, her wrists prudently strapped to the frame of the divan.

A gleam of moist excitement on her inner thigh-surfaces, drawn from her by her excitement and response to teasing

fingers, despite her struggles and vain refusals. A view of Lesley after arousal by another woman's fingers.

A full-plate photograph taken when she was made to turn on to her belly. Lesley Hollingsworth's bare backside the subject, pale cheeks swelling firmly to fill the frame of the photograph, raised and broadened by the leather bolster over which she lay. Full-moon pallor of rear cheeks erotically firmed out by youthful maturity and well-controlled child-bearing.

Lesley's bare backside filling the frame again. A view angled to show the broad curve of her behind's fullest outward cheek-swell. Then low down on her rear cheeks, the softer and rather fatter bottom-flesh at twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old. Next the more private inward slopes where Lesley's pale rear cheeks curved in together excitingly. Sulky resentment under the fringe of her fair boyish crop but the straps holding her over the bolster so that—despite her indignation—Lesley seemed to be asking to have the cheeks of her backside parted and her rear anatomy displayed.

Lesley writhing against the straps that held her on her belly over the bolster. The tightening and tensing of her buttocks, their shifting and fattened swelling and clenching excitingly suggested. The firm moon-cheeked backside of an erotically mature young Venus who had done her duty in the marriage bed, and now asserted her rights to take pleasure as she pleased. The texture of her rear cheek-skin was so well suggested by the camera that one almost breathed in the flesh perfumes of Lesley's bottom and thighs.

Another close-up rear view. The boyishly-cropped young woman made to bend over very tightly indeed, showing the change to a yellowed-ivory skin-tone on the inward

slopes between her hind-cheeks. The tight dark vortex of Lesley's anus as the focus of the composition. Her bottom filling the view. This supercilious young woman made to advertise her tightest avenue of pleasure.

After so much amorous exercise, the labours of pregnancy and the firming out of her hind-cheeks in consequence, another close-up to show how small and tight Lesley Hollingsworth's arsehole still appeared, making it even more shrinking and vulnerable. Lesley's awareness of this was suggested in her tensing of her bottom-cheeks, trying to contract the little hole still harder.

One passed down the red-walled corridor, by crimson velvet chairs of gilded wood, pale aqueous light through arched and leaded windows contrasting with the warmer spot-lighting of each photograph. Another sequence showed Lesley Hollingsworth masturbating, moodily self-indulgent, unaware of the camera photographing her.

A rear view of Lesley's pale figure, naked but for black straps at waist, wrists, and ankles, more exciting than simple nudity. Her high-crowned crop of fair hair bowed as she lay on her side. Her face partly hidden. Her breasts shown as firmly developed globes befitting a woman in her late twenties, rosy nipples naturally erect. The pale sleek curve of her back clear of strapping above her waist. The trimness of her thighs appearing well exercised. Hands folded over the light hair of her loins.

Another rear study. The erotic firming out of the full-moon pallor of Lesley's bottom-cheeks. The tightened waist-strap emphasising the firm swell of her backside and drawing attention to this part. A slight flesh-print left by the elastic edge of her snug-fitting black cotton briefs arching high over each pale cheek of her proud young arse from the rear opening of her legs.

A study from the rear, as she watched her own hands, the firm pearly-smooth cheeks of Lesley Hollingsworth's bottom tensing and slackening in a languorous rhythm. Thighs squirming together in a whispering of bare skin.

A close-up of the rear parting of her legs showing her fingers playing with her own femininity, its lips, its secret places, and its clitoris. One leg held up a little, clear of the other. Fingers travelling to and fro between her thighs, over the excited wetness of sensitive light-haired folds, rubbing firmly, stroking lightly, squeezing and fondling.

A study in self-arousal, her eyes closed under the long parted fringe of her fair hair. Her lips parted, drawing air deeply in her exertion. The laboured writhing and ecstatic tightening of her buttocks. The vulgar rounding and lewd tremors, the fattened swelling out and inward clenching of Lesley Hollingsworth's bottom-cheeks in her self-fulfilment.

A fine erection engulfed between her buttocks. Lesley strapped down for it over the divan, outrage, rejection, and dismay in the petulant wilful face as she looked back over her shoulder. But then the sleek swelling pallor of Lesley's bottom-cheeks presented to her possessor fully and compliantly by the young woman as she lay forward over the leather bolster. Lesley offering the pearly moons of her buttocks passive and still like an obedient girl-child submitting to adult inspection. Lesley apprehensive, fearful of havoc inside her that wriggling or resistance to the impaling manhood might bring.

His hands stroking her smooth rear cheeks gently, making Lesley wait in uneasy anticipation, the bulk of his erection widening and filling her behind. His lips kissing her pale neck and ears, the crown of her fair urchin-crop.

The young woman's pearly hind cheeks as she cautiously expelled the deflated intruder from her bottom with gentle squeezings or contractions. A second wider view

with her head pillowed on one side, the long parted fringe of her plain crop shaken into place and the clear fair-skinned features still suggesting a fractious little girl but now in a more chastened mood.

The listless knob lolling across one of her swelling bare buttocks. A shining trail, a last dribblet of male passion strung wetly across the moon pallor of that rear cheek. The serpent withdrawn limply from its daring and indecorous depth of impaling her backside, leaving a lewdly suggestive muddy smudge across one proud pale cheek-swell of Lesley Hollingsworth's bottom.

Aloofness and rejection in her sulky young face under its parted fringe, looking back over her shoulder, an educated and emancipated young woman disdainful of male domination. But the rudeness of the tan smudge on her pale bottom-cheek making Lesley look sluttish and sexy all the same.

The downlights of the opposite wall illuminated the continuation of the series against the deep red silk of decoration. Lesley bottom-upwards over the leather bolster. A "still life" composition of cane, liquid soap and squirt, a pony-lash, vaseline jar and chamber-pot.

The first imprints and weals of a sadistic prison-farm caning embossing the proud bare cheeks of Lesley Hollingsworth's bottom, a gleam of vaseline between its cheeks left by the randy gaoler. Then the firm pale swell of Lesley's backside with sinuous ruby-dotted whip-prints of the pony-lash.

These later punishment-studies were matched by portraits of the cool self-possessed young face under the parted fringe of boy-cut hair. But the aloof blue eyes brimmed with self-pity at what had been done to her. The sulky mouth was drawn down mournfully, like a little girl after her first spanking. One photograph was taken to show

her backside after a whipping, Lesley looking back over her shoulder in wailing reproach. Another showed that while her eyes were still brimming and the gaoler still held the lash coiled in his hand, Lesley had opened her mouth and sucked her chastiser who was just coming over her tongue. Her first refusal to serve him had been well curbed by the whip.

The large framed photographs which hung along this corridor between the south drawing-room and the Torre de Senhoras were much admired by Anton de Xantra's guests. He would offer them a choice of copies from these prints. It was instructive to hear the choices that were made.

Most male guests chose a portrait of Lesley's wailing self-pity after her whipping as a keepsake, framing it on the walls of their private rooms. They paired it with a close-up of Lesley's bottom after the gaoler's whipping with a pony-lash. Women preferred a portrait of the blue eyes under her parted fringe wild with frenzy, her mouth desperately wide, dismissive young woman screaming while still beyond punished. To partner this, they chose a close-up of the black snake of the lash curling round her bare backside, its tip catching wickedly between Lesley Hollingsworth's bottom-cheeks.

A few preferred the romantic swoon across the leather divan that followed this. The high-crowned crop of fair hair drooping like a dreamer's, her eyes closed and lips parted. The gaoler smiling, easing one of her knees up to give his hand freer access to her sex, fondling it to restore her. Lesley arse-upwards in a suggestive sprawl, her bottom presented most seductively to her chastiser. Her eyes fluttering open, the catch of fright in her breath, the prison whip tickling menacingly between her hind cheeks.

To walk in the watery light of Sintra afternoon along

that gallery was to know why Sian and Helyn had been brought here and what their destiny must be.

That night Anton's servants stood guard below while Sian and Helyn were escorted up the winding stone stairway of the Torre de Senhoras to the lantern at the top. From here, one saw by day high across the forests to the western coast. Jenny and Margarita followed the girls. Mano, Anton, and I came last.

Just below the lantern-room of the Torre de Senhoras were smaller rooms, with velvet couches and narrow gothic windows. It was arranged that Mano and I should spend an hour with a girl of Anton's choice who would be waiting for us in one of these tower-rooms. Jenny would spend the time with Margarita and Anton himself with the impudent Italian youngster Alicia.

I was not displeased to find that it was Helyn waiting for me, unease and doubt in her wide brown eyes as she stood demurely by the couch. The jeans seemed to fit very tight and smooth on the softness of her young figure, creasing here and there but showing the full swell of her bottom and thighs.

"Slip your jeans and panties off, Helyn," I said quietly. "Lie back on the couch. Draw your knees up. Let me see the little bird in its nest. That's a good girl!"

She did as she was told, quivering a little and gasping out her tension as I fondled and roused her.

"You should play with yourself more often, Helyn. That relaxes you for times like this. I'm sure they'll make you do it in the place you're going to."

She was ready soon, despite her self-consciousness. I slid in easily. It was not her first time, though Helyn had been careful in her choice. She was a good mount for an experienced rider, eager to obey for fear of being pun-

ished. She came off with little cries, half-stifled behind her hand. I turned her on her belly and applied vaseline at the rear, despite her half-hearted, "No! Oh, no!" Gently, I stroked the soft pale gloss of Helyn's bottom-cheeks and took a sure aim between them. The soft brunette was such a pretty dark-eyed girl that this in itself made it more exciting to enjoy the tightness of Helyn's backside. I stretched her rather hard and rode for longer than I had intended. At the squirting of the hammerhead in her behind, Helyn was overcome with bashfulness and would not look at me, though the blame for the state her behind was in was mine not hers!

I smacked her bottom hard, several times, for being such a foolish girl. There was a bell-push to summon the servants. I told them that Helyn was ready and they took her up to the lantern-room at the top of the tower, the first girl to be presented there.

When I had dressed, I went up myself. Sian had been in one of the other rooms and her time was now come as well. But she had got no further than the storeroom, whose door opened from the stone staircase immediately under the lantern.

Before taking her up to the lantern, two of the footmen had thrown Sian arse-upwards over a mattress in the storeroom. She was naked apart from the sleeveless white blouse that was pulled up well clear of her hips. I think they had just finished with the young tart as I passed the open door. Sian's pale red tresses swept her shoulders as she twisted her face round. The blue eyes were vacant with dreamy sensuality, the lipsticked mouth lightly open. I think she was trying to look down her back to get a view of her bare bottom and hips. There was wetness on the fair-skinned inner surfaces of Sian's thighs, partly her own

arousal and partly the spending of her lovers. The pale cheeks of Sian's bottom also showed a splash or two of male passion. A tell-tale smear of vaseline where her rear cheeks curved in together suggested that they had had her that way, too. This was beyond doubt when one saw the muddy blemish left by the departing cheery-head which had been so rudely deep in Sian's bottom. Redheaded Sian looked lewd and sluttish as she lay there, which suited her character. She was the naughty girl and Helyn the good girl. I had no doubt that they would make Sian appear in the lantern room just as she was.

When the preparations were complete, two padded leather rocking-horses were set side-by-side at the centre of the lantern. Sian was put astride one and Helyn astride the other. They were made to lie forward, wrists and ankles secured to the four wooden hooves. Standing behind them, one saw two pairs of thighs wide astride the saddle, two bottoms with cheeks stretched hard. Margarita, her sallow figure naked but for a black leather waist-strap, retrieved the two pairs of discarded cotton briefs. Dipped and wrung out they made convenient wads to silence shrillness and complaint.

Then the Spanish girl straddled Sian's neck, lying in reverse so that her chin rested on the base of the redhead's spine. Her black hair brushed Sian's pale hips as she looked down, fingering the rear of the girl's sex.

Margarita took a jar of cold cream, heavily spiced by the hottest Madras pepper. She smoothed it into the sensitive folds between Sian's legs. As the first fierce heat died down, the irritant would set up an ineradicable itch of desire. Margarita dipped her finger again. This time its length intruded in Sian's behind. Helyn underwent the same preparation. As Margarita stood back, the two bound

beauties rocked their wooden horses to and fro, as if riding a race.

The sight of them over the two rocking horses was instructive. Helyn was tense and fearful, Sian still sluttish and randy.

Margarita chose the short woven lash of snakeskin and began with Sian. The red hair fell forward as the rocking-horse went down. The bare rounded cheeks of Sian's bottom faced up towards me, their former teenage trimness softened into the first womanly fullness. For half an hour the walls of the room rang like the training ring of a riding-school. The whip printed its scalding kisses on the cheeks of Sian's arse, sometimes cruelly low across them and sometimes catching her thighs. She drove the rocking-horse faster, as if goaded to it by the lash. But at the same time, I could see that she was energetically riding the slippery saddle between her legs, squeezing and tensing, trying her hardest to bring herself off as a distraction from the lash and to soothe the tormenting fiery itch. Nor was that all. Even in the frenzy of being whipped there was a lewdness about her. At the end of her endurance, Sian showed a peep of the greatest rudeness that was in her power. I think it was not all desperation to expel the heated itch from her rear, but that it excited the young slut to do it.

At one point her red tresses split forward and she drooped. It was only necessary to intrude one's fingers and fondle her intimately for a moment. This restored Sian by its teasing and rousing. Though Margarita continued to discipline her, it is a measure of Sian's randiness that I think she actually managed to bring herself off while she was getting it, or perhaps in the intervals of getting it.

After Margarita had finished with her, we left the two girls with Jenny for half an hour. When we returned I was

intrigued by the sight of Helyn. The pretty, soft-eyed brunette looked a little sorry for herself. One could see that she had been canned quite as severely as any reform-school girl. But I knew what Helyn's future would be. She had many lessons to learn.

On Jenny's orders, Margarita now whipped Helyn to teach her a lesson in obedience. The pretty young brunette with her gentle dark eyes and the neatness of her demure face had thought that because her soft young bottom had been canned, the sight of the marks would make us pity her. This was an error and she must learn the truth. Helyn's prettiness was to be her downfall. The very sight of imprints left by the bamboo cane across her swelling bottom-cheeks would make her more tempting to chastise.

So Margarita whipped Helyn hard for her own good. I did not doubt that the leather pony-lash across the bare cheeks of Helyn's backside was a ferocious ordeal. As the horse rocked forward, the soft pale swell of Helyn's bottom-cheeks faced up towards us. The Spanish girl brought the whip down across them with all the vigour she could muster. The wooden horse rocked back. Up came the soft dark mane of Helyn's hair, spilling clear to show the delicate and rather solemn prettiness of her sun-browned face. Mano thought she was only a common shopgirl, which was true. Yet there was much about Helyn to give pleasure on such occasions as this.

Margarita slipped a wedge under the rocker so that the horse was tilted forward and held there. She slipped a leather wedge between each of Helyn's knees and the polished flank of the horse, making her widen herself. Now, as her behind faced up to us, its halves were parted firmly.

"Now the crack-shots, Helyn," Jenny said quietly. "A long session with the pony-tickler. You'll have to bear it

because you have no choice. That is the lesson you must learn. So sensitive there, Helyn, even when a finger strokes you? Or is it fright?"

We explored the endurance of Helyn's rear anatomy so thoroughly that the mountain sky towards Badajoz was growing light when at last we handed the two young wenches over to the servants again.

The excitement of that occasion inspired a dinner-party some time later, in the lantern of the Torre de Senhoras, where Sian and Helyn were our waitresses. Few demands were made on them that night when dinner was over. Instead they were left to one another in the room, on the very table that was littered with the remains of the feast. They made no effort to leave there, nor to turn down the lamp's gentle glow until the first November dawn lit the grey windows. Presently, through the open door from the stairway, the servants who had risen early peeped in upon them.

The two girls sprawled upon the littered dining table, as nearly naked as made no difference. Their sole adornments were the tight black waist-straps and the black collars which gave a still more lustrous sheen to their pale nudity. Redhead and brunette beauty sprawled in a most ungainly attitude, Helyn with her head and her dark hair thrown back, biting her lip gently with the exquisite sharpness of her pleasure. All the demure brown-eyed submission had gone and her pretty face was racked by the pangs which betrayed the true sexual gratitude of a woman for a lover.

Sian had one arm round Helyn's fair-skinned waist to curb her writhing of pleasure a little. Her other hand was busy between those soft young thighs of purest pallor that relaxed and opened innocently to her expert caress. The redhead with the pale-skinned nudity of her smooth shoulders and back, her wanton young thighs and the dreamy

lasciviousness of her blue eyes, was seducing Helyn by the pleasures of a woman's fingering that the victim would soon be unable to live without. In any city as cosmopolitan in its tastes, as Lisbon or Madrid, there were olive-skinned girls of Helyn's own age who would train her in the most preverse arts of lesbian love. As she moved slightly, the soft dark hair, drawn up into something like a little peak at the crown, fell loose about Helyn's face, concealing part of her langour and contentment.

The naked white-slave girls lay among the littered plates and drained glasses, the guttered candles and linen napkins of the banquet. There was a smear of Sian's lipstick on Helyn's own lip and the moisture of the redhead's tongue on her breast. Helyn was wet round each nipple where Sian had worried her tantalisingly with the lightness of her teeth and tickled her with an expert tongue.

There was no longer the least self-consciousness or apprehension in Helyn's face. The soft figured young brunette had lost all fear of her own passions in the arms of the young redhead. Now it was Helyn herself who appeared bold and insistent in her love-making with the sensual arms of Sian about her and their sleek pale nudity writhing together. There was wanting and demanding on Helyn's part, thrusting and shuddering as they squirmed on the polished table. Sian too had lost something of her slack and sluttish look, her blue eyes now gentler with desire and its fulfilment.

As Helyn faced the interior window, so Sian presented the rear view of her sleek and pearly skinned figure. Helyn was straining with the passion of youth, swelling till it must overflow in her loins. Sian's head lay back, the collar-length of her pale red tresses touching the stained china while she opened the firm swell of her thighs in the warm and yearning expansion of desire. Those smooth and

sleekly pale curves of Sian's bottom-cheeks were arched backwards towards the voyeur, as if inviting the camera or the eye of the intruder to explore her most intimately. In her abandonment to passion she had shown herself in a manner that might have brought a blush even to Sian's wantonness if she knew she was being watched. Sian's pearly-cheeked arse swelled seductively. Its pale moons were lightly parted, appearing innocently to invite the smack of a hand, the fierce kisses of a slave-master's whip, the hectic drama of enforced sodomy.

Left alone among the debris of the banquet, it seemed that Sian and Helyn had been making love together on the table for much of the night. The look of relaxation and fulfilment on the face of the prettily demure brunette was proof enough that Helyn had climaxed on the expert fingers of the wanton redhead. But they had both continued to play with one another's bodies in a gentle and affectionate manner, tickling a sensitive spot or intruding a playful finger. They were like two rude and over-excited little girl-children, secretly alone together in a hidden place on a dull afternoon, while the adults are busy with adult problems.

Sian had turned turtle, so that she and Helyn lay head to tail, presenting themselves to one another in their usual upward squat. But they no longer did this under duress. There was no master commanding them, no smiling mistress like Jenny Woodward drawing the pony-lash menacingly through her fingers. The wetness of Helyn's tongue shone on the pale satiny inner surfaces of Sian's thighs. Sleek with butter, Sian's forefinger showed compromising evidence of having been sunk in the heat of Helyn's bottom to the very knuckle. They had been perverse and played at being dirty girls together. But pretty well-mannered Helyn and wanton easy Sian each loved the other all the more for these humiliations. After years of being mere

friends, they had explored the hidden forests of desire and found their secret treasure. Sian and Helyn were now as deeply in love as two girls of their sort could possibly be.

But Sian's finger in Helyn's bottom and their outer playfulness had been only an interlude not an epilogue. Now the two girls lay head to tail again, each having her eyes and lips level with the loins and backside of the other. Helyn's lips returned and she tasted again the wetness of her own tongue on the satiny pallor of Sian's thighs. In their kissing, the mineral-tang of Sian's inner thighs, so often splashed by her own wetness, had been transferred to the redhead's own lips. Sian sighed in the delicious depravity of sharing with the other girl her own most intimate tastes. Believing themselves safe from discovery the two girls were having fun with each other in the lewdest and most excited fashion. Pretty, soft-eyed Helyn was as guilty of this as her wanton redhead partner. They sucked one another's sensitive adornments, and trilled their tongues in places of excruciating responsiveness.

Helyn was running her tongue nimbly in the russet-haired paradise between Sian's thighs. At the same time, the tongue of the red-haired lesbian ran everywhere along the cleavage from the base of Helyn's spine to the guardian clitoris at the portal of her sex. The seduction was cunning and remorseless, Sian playing in the sensitive slit, not even hesitating to intrude her tongue-tip into the tight rear hole. Gnawing her lip and twisting her head murmuringly side to side, Helyn was squatting fuller, as if to admit the intruder as far as possible. The pretty brunette soon rose to her climax with such cries of release that an eavesdropper might have supposed it was an impaling spike that was up Helyn's backside.

At last, in the first grey light of November dawn across the misty landscape of Sintra's hills, Helyn and Sian lay

quietly among the guttered candles and the debris of the banquet, still naked in their gentle embrace. They were lying with eyes closed in dreamy recollection of the love-making they had just shared. The light shone full on the pale gloss of Sian's bare thighs and hips. Inspired by the joy of release she had shared with Helyn, her sleek pearly skin displayed a living sheen that only the excitement of gentle but cunning kisses can bestow.

The two girls lay more calmly together after the fierce passion of their female masturbation. Helyn's dark lashes were closed over her soft dark eyes. The light caught the dark tousled mane of little ringlets that lay now in some disorder. Helyn's pretty face had a childlike solemnity as she dozed. Sian's thigh was crooked lightly and possessively across the soft pallor of Helyn's hip, as if to remind her prey how easily the act of sexual conquest might be repeated upon her.

Anton de Xantra's valet passed and paused at the open door, smiling at the sight of the sluttish young redhead as the two girls slept in their abandoned nudity. The pearly-sleek ovals of Sian's bottom-cheeks were arched backwards with suggestive vulgarity. The valet could see the girl's russet-haired sex between the rear of her open legs. The satiny pallor of Sian's pale-cheeked backside swelled seductively and its twin mounds were drawn apart by the way she was sprawling, so that she showed her complete rear view without knowing it. Seeing this, the Portuguese valet studied her intently as certain thoughts crossed his mind. His was not the smile of a simpering suitor but of one who was vindictive with such young wantons as this. He would not shrink from putting Sian's backside and loins to the question. His sentence upon Sian's fair-skinned bottom-cheeks envisaged the stable-lash and the long nozzle of a pair of serviceable bellows.

Before waking his master, the valet shyly rewarded Sian, standing over the sleeping girl with weapon erect in hand. Exciting himself by watching the bare pale-skinned cheeks of the redhead's shapely young bottom, he pumped up considerable passion, releasing it in short vigorous gusts of warm libation upon the pearly cheek-gloss of Sian's backside. The early light caught clearly the shine of splashes and the tell-tale trickles down the pallid ovals of her buttocks, which for the moment she slept too soundly to feel. The valet drew back and tiptoed from the room, turning once to grin to himself at the state he had left the young redhead in. She stirred soon. The valet peeped from the door to watch the young tart as she woke and felt behind her in some dismay at the manner in which she had been used.

Even before this intrusion, there was ample evidence of the gasping and threshing frenzy with which Helyn had undergone her first willing lesbian seduction. One of her soft pale breasts was stained by wine, for she had rolled on to her belly where a glass of claret had been upset. A blob of grey candle-wax had fallen on one pale cheek of Sian's backside, almost in her rear cleft. The sting of it had been nothing to her as she laboured on top of the other girl. It seemed that Helyn, convulsed by the action of Sian's fingers or tongue between her legs, had sat back in the dish of dead cigar butts. A powdering of the grey ash now smudged a bare and softly pale cheek of Helyn's bottom as she displayed it unwittingly to the half-open door.

That was the last celebration of my visit to Anton de Xantra. From the misty woods of Sintra, I made my way back to Lisbon a few days later. I had time only for an afternoon to myself before the liner docked on its return. I walked the streets and gardens where memories still came easily. Old men dozed and artists sketched in the Estrela

gardens where the seats were set out on the paving of black and white marble lozenges. By the ornate bandstand in olive green the bulbs of spring flowers were being planted by trousered girls. Across the wide road, at the upper end of the park, the long blank wall of the foreigners cemetery was filled with political murals in bright primary colours, denunciations of capitalism as the death of the proletariat. Standing on the upper slope among urns and obelisks, under palm trees and firs, umbrageous and enclosing as a cathedral, one saw the city slope away to the sea. The Tagus glimmered with the first tides of winter. Among the obelisks, rose a November smoke of burning leaves.

The dream of summer and Carailac had passed.

## Les Portes d'Hiver

So the adventures of the Torre de Senhoras yielded at last to the damp autumn of the Sintra hills. The fugitives of summer turned back to the misty afternoons of the winter city and its early darkness. Of all the mysteries of the Villa Rosa, there was only one that remained unresolved. The enigmatic print, *Souvenir d'Antan*, still hung on the bookshop wall beside the door of pale Spanish oak. The two young women who superintended the place were the same two who had been there twelve months before. Nothing had changed and the door of pale oak still guarded its secret—if there was a secret to guard.

Once more I followed the trail which had begun before my meeting with Mano, my first encounter with Margarita, and my first sight of Carailac. Once more my attention returned to Trish, with good reason. I thought in the first place that she had been married long enough to look for a little variation of pleasure. Perhaps with another man. Perhaps with a woman. Perhaps in a *ménage* where strange seductions and commands would rule her life. She was tall, maturely but firmly filled out at hips, thighs, and

backside. Her dark hair was still cut quite boyishly short to her head with a little curling. Her face had clear neat features, her dark eyes were long-lashed, and her lips always seemed parted a little as if in expectation.

I doubt if I had spoken to her more than half a dozen times, even after all this. She was the type of young woman who looks aside from a smile or a greeting. Is it because she distrusts the one who greets her—or because she cannot trust herself? A man who was in the mood to enjoy an experienced beauty of a rather perverse sort would have a good deal of pleasure with her. Or so I thought.

But it was not this young married woman who suggested to me first the secret that lay behind the door of carved oak. I owed that to another beauty who was scarcely half her age. Trish and Vanessa between them inspired my further curiosity about that strangest of all pleasure palaces, the Villa Rosa.

I did not connect the young wife and the schoolgirl at all to begin with. The first time that I saw Vanessa was in another street of the winter city and under quite different circumstances. I had no idea that she had anything to do with the bookshop. It was an autumn afternoon and, being half-term, the girls of the high school had been given a holiday. I had just come out of the bank and was standing by its doorway when Vanessa first walked across my field of view.

She was with several other girls from her group at the high school. I should never have known that she belonged there except that she was carrying a blazer with the school crest on its breast-pocket. For the rest, she was casually dressed in quite tight-fitting jeans and dark blue sweater, a white blouse and a little tartan scarf worn loose.

My photograph of Vanessa, lies before me as I write. If

she was only an adolescent at the time, I insist that she looked perter than her age. Vanessa has a lightly suntanned face, prettily heart-shaped with high cheekbones. Her light blue eyes showed a quizzical and suggestive slant. They narrowed easily in a sly glance or mocking smile. She had the clear-cut nose and chin of a well-bred middle-class girl. She wore her rather lank fair hair fringed on her forehead and cut in a long page-boy style so that its rounded shape hung to cover her collar at the back.

When not wearing her uniform at that time, she certainly looked more like a budding nymph than a girl who spent her days sitting at a desk in the high school. The jeans showed her thighs as being quite long and trim, though Vanessa's bottom and hips had that charmingly awkward fullness of the adolescent goose not yet become a swan.

She and the girls she was with stood for a moment, on this first occasion, discussing what they would do or where they would go next. Vanessa walked away and then turned to come back. I could almost have believed that she was deliberately parading before me to catch my attention as I followed her through the Kodak's viewfinder. As she and her girl-friend began to walk up the slope of the street, in the direction I was going, I followed a little way, out of curiosity.

It was at least two weeks later that I found myself walking down that same street behind two of the girls who were going home, this time dressed in the school uniform of dark green sweaters with pale blue piping and navy blue skirts with white socks. I had not the least interest in them until one turned her head to look into a shop window as they passed. I saw that she was Vanessa.

Now this was quite extraordinary, for she appeared so different. On the previous occasion she had looked almost

like a young woman. Now she seemed not so tall, being obliged to wear the flat-heeled shoes of her uniform. The hem of the dark blue skirt was at her knees. Below it her bare calves had the distinctly girlish look of adolescence. There was a childish slovenliness about her movements, a slow and heavy manner of the apathetic teenager. In a grown woman it would appear sluttish.

I confess that I recorded her appearance then and on subsequent occasions. It was not because I felt any surge of desire. I was quite simply intrigued to see how she could look so nubile one day and then so much like a lumpish girl when dressed in uniform again.

That might have been the end of the matter. As time went on, however, I had become aware that Vanessa's route home, at about four o' clock in the afternoon, took her down the hill, across the London road and into Broad Street. As a rule she walked on and waited in the High Street until a woman drove by, stopped the car, and picked the girl up. I supposed that Vanessa was the woman's daughter.

But several times I saw Vanessa open the door of the bookshop and go in. It was always when Trish was there with another young woman as her assistant. On those winter afternoons the sun went down at four o' clock with the fierce glow of a frosty night to come and the mist hung like the smoke from burning leaves upon the surrounding hills and over the water-meadows. By waiting in the shadow of a doorway across the narrow street, I could see all that went on in the brightly-lit shop.

Trish would say something to the assistant. Then she would open the mysterious carved door and lead Vanessa inside. I waited and watched. Half an hour would pass. Even an hour. The chill of dusk and early dark gave a keen edge to the November air. Then the door would open and

Trish would come out alone. Ten minutes might pass and then Vanessa would appear. This time she did not go to the High Street but wandered about the brightly-lit shops for an hour or more. I soon understood that she paid her visits to Trish when the woman who collected her in the car was otherwise engaged.

Soon I found that I passed that way every afternoon. Once or twice when the boy-cropped young wife and the sly schoolgirl had retired behind that heavy door, I went into the shop and browsed along the shelves. I could hear nothing. Absolutely nothing. Yet I sensed everything.

Had I told anyone of my feelings, I would have been regarded as a suggestible fool. Where was there scandal or immorality, other than in my own mind? But my reward came and, as so often happens after long waiting, it came in abundance.

It was February and the evenings had become lighter. By the time that Vanessa left the bookshop after her visit, the street lights had only just outshone the sky. Earlier on, I had happened to see Trish walking to the shop in the cold afternoon. There she was with her neat and rather haughty features, dark long-lashed eyes, the cropped curly black hair. Trish was wearing the dark blue woolen top whose hem ended above her hips, and her close-fitting matador-pants that were the palest shade of blue. I was walking behind her and the tension of the pale blue pants was smooth over the rather proud and swaggering cheeks of Trish's bottom. It was impossible not to see the ridged outline of her knickers under the taut denim. She was wearing stretched cotton briefs of the most ordinary kind. Just then, I thought nothing of it.

In this costume she followed Vanessa into the room behind the carved door at about half-past four when the high school girls were on their way home through the

town. An hour later she came out. I had ample opportunity to watch her closely as I spied between the rows of books in the window. There was no doubt whatever that the ridged outline of Trish's panties was no longer there. I do not suppose that she realised how clearly she had shown them earlier on. Or else she did not imagine that anyone would follow her so attentively. But there was no doubt. Trish had taken off her matador-pants and briefs while she was in that room with Vanessa.

The realisation was like an electric shock. I stood at the shop window pretending to study the books but watching Trish every minute and in every posture. Still there was no doubt. No doubt whatever. At the very least she had offered a display of her most intimate feminine anatomy and her softly-mature bare bottom to the high school pupil. What other explanation could there be?

I waited until Vanessa emerged from the shop. She was a little flustered and hurried. I think she had spent longer there than she realised. How intriguing that she almost ran down Broad Street to be in time for the car that fetched her. She behaved exactly as a girl does who has kept a secret rendezvous with her boy-friend and fears being found out. But that was not all. The girls of that school wore white socks up to their knees as part of their uniform. But in winter, these were sensibly replaced by full-length stocking-tights of dove grey that came right up to the waist. Now, it was a wet day and the traffic coming up the street splashed the legs of passers-by from time to time. There was an oval mud-splash on the calf of Vanessa's right leg, staining the pale grey translucence and the skin beneath. In itself it was not surprising. But I had noticed that mark when she went into the shop.

I thought later on that my mind had merely wished a lesbian seduction upon her! But I had made a note of

Vanessa going into the shop, as if to illustrate the drama. When she came out again, the stain of the splash on her skin was no longer aligned with the same mark on the tights. And, beyond question, the ridged appearance on the seam down the backs of her legs showed that the tights were now inside-out. Vanessa had not merely taken her tights down, as she might have done in the toilet. She had taken them off, as she would when going to bed. And then she had put them back on, inadvertently, inside out. Vanessa had undressed in that room at least to the extent of being naked under her skirt. Trish had removed her jeans and knickers. I hardly slept that night for imagining the scene behind the carved door.

During the next weeks, the bookshop and its visitors claimed much of my attention. Under one pretext or another, I remained one of its best customers. While Trish and Vanessa were occupied privately behind the door of the carved Spanish oak, the shop was looked after by a girl who was prettier than either. She was far more girlish than the rather awkward high school pupil or the young wife with her boyish crop of dark curls. And yet she seemed like the guardian of the temple of Sappho, where the boyish high priestess performed the sacrifice of pleasure upon the awkward adolescent nudity of Vanessa.

I saw very little during my browsing along the shelves, beyond the images that filled my thoughts. Once or twice while I was in the shop, the door of carved Spanish oak opened and I glimpsed a chaise-longue whose cushions were out of place and crumpled. Once I heard Vanessa say, as she was about to leave,

“I must find my hair-grip. I know I lost it here.” It was the voice of a girl dressing herself. There could be no question of that.

Several times, late at night when the house was quiet, I

sat down and recalled my memories of Vanessa as well as those of Trish. There was even a photograph of Vanessa on that first occasion, turning to look at me outside the bank. The slight quizzical slyness of the narrowed blue eyes, the fringe of the lank fair hair parted on her forehead, the pert little nose and demure chin. Vanessa in woollen top and jeans with tartan scarf, the long thighs and the soft adolescent bottom-cheeks. Trish with her tall figure, the elegance of her face, the perversely boyish cropping of dark curls. The slight fullness and swagger of her rear cheeks in the skin-fit of pale blue matador-pants.

Was it seduction? If it was, had the young wife of thirty set out to seduce a fourth-form school girl? Or was it Vanessa who had developed a schoolgirl "crush" on this attractive and gentle older woman? I recalled another story that I had once been told. In the old days, when the high school girls displeased their mistresses, it was beneath the dignity of such teachers to punish them physically. They were sent to a woman who dealt with them. Was that it? Was Vanessa incorrigible? Behind the carved door, did she undress to lie face-down over the chaise-longue while Trish took the bamboo from its shelf?

That was impossible. She did not emerge like a girl who had just had the cane. Therefore, either my imagination was fired absurdly, or else I was the silent and unsuspected witness of a passionate love between two women of greatly different ages.

And what of the pretty blonde, Heather, who served in the shop? How could she be unaware of such a dark and guilty passion? But if Heather knew about it, she seemed not in the least put out. She was the willing protector of the lovers.

The enigma of Trish was not easily resolved. It could not be until I had penetrated the mask of neat pretty features,

the long dark lashes, the lightly parted lips and the boyishly short crop of gently curled dark hair which was the appearance offered by this young married woman of thirty or so in her dealings with the world. I pondered her appearance, the slight swagger of Trish's bottom in the tightness of blue matador-pants which betrayed the womanly softness of her figure.

There was to be no explanation until the afternoon when I was in the shop and she came out of the inner room. In her hand was a leather bound volume that was warm from being held while she read it. Studying the display of books in the window on the following afternoon, as I walked down the street, I saw her come again from that room and replace the same book on the shelf. I waited a week and then purchased it. It was the romance of an insolent striding tomboy of fifteen *Elaine Cox*. Though no detective, I had glanced at it once or twice on the shelf during the time that Trish must have been reading it. I could even follow her advance through the book. It was her habit to hold it so that, without realising, the tip of her nails dented the soft paper on which it was printed. By this means I could follow her progress as the little indentations appeared on more and more pages. Here and there, as they appeared several times on the same pages, it was even possible to see that Trish had read a chapter two, or three, or even four times.

One man's lechery in the book was a *coup de grace* for fifteen-year-old Elaine Cox and her big sister Pauline. He had taken Pauline Cox first into a sinister room of a house "beyond the Danube." After a long session he emerged alone. The trestle held the younger sister soon after. The camera portrait showed the broad oval of her face with thin lips and narrowed eyes, lank fair hair combed from its central parting to lie loose upon her shoulders. The air of

snub-nosed insolence was heightened by the brazen shortness of her grey pleated skirt, which she wore with her school blouse and tie, laying bare the robust pallor of her adolescent thighs.

Such was the subject of Trish's reading. In that sinister room of the story, a whip which no riding academy or penitentiary would permit was tested on the sturdy bare cheeks of Elaine Cox's schoolgirl bottom. A little device stirred in the glow of the brazier coals. The full pallor of Elaine Cox's bottom-cheeks was rouged by its glowing caresses. A suggestive device of cucumber girth then took the bottom path. After every other possibility had been explored, her leather collar was drawn inexorably tight. After this, the trap hung open and the guilty evidence draped over a bar across it. Before the bar was withdrawn, a last photograph displayed a full-cheeked view of Elaine Cox's tomboy bottom and a black silk band round one of her bare adolescent thighs.

It was a dispassionate account, though Trish had been moved to read it several times. The younger sister's demise was explained quietly. With the fatal intruder he had chosen to sound Elaine Cox's backside in order that the havoc should be decisive. As the youngster herself felt the giving and sundering, her instinctive feminine sense of her own anatomy assured her that matters were beyond remedy. Her dispatch, the tightening in of the leather collar, was unhurried. With a ruffianly bare-bottomed tomboy like Elaine Cox such a moment was to be savoured. His hands drew it out long and strong, elaborating and intensifying the final act of the melodrama. The last flush of sunset was in the sky when he laid bare the full-cheeked pallor of Elaine Cox's schoolgirl bottom. When the collar was finally firm and still, a pale dawn had already touched the east.

From this unlikely source, rather than from what had been overheard or glimpsed, I gathered most of Trish's dealings with Vanessa. I could not doubt for one moment that next summer Vanessa would be a pupil of the Villa Rosa and that she would never return to the high school or anywhere else.

My interest in Vanessa was inspired by the knowledge that I knew the destiny awaiting her while the girl herself did not. I photographed her only once more, a few months later. It must have been during a school vacation. Vanessa was out with a girl friend. Her shorter crop of fair hair had been styled and tinted a little. She was wearing a white sleeveless blouse and a pair of cotton trousers striped in red and white, the sort of thing more suited to the beach than promenading in the more fashionable city streets. She was with another girl from the school, Julia, a creature of short upward-brushed hair and tight pants. If they were close friends, as it seemed they might be, then I thought Vanessa and Julia would be the pupils who took the place of Sharon and Louise. In the months that followed, I extended this to include a charming little creature from the same school, Natasha. With her prim and rather disapproving features, her soft chignon of pale blond hair, this younger girl would be a perfect subject for Jenny, as for Mano and Anton.

But all this was speculation. I did not know and could not predict what the outcome might be. That Trish and her young pupil Vanessa undressed each other and lay down together on the sofa behind the locked oak door was beyond dispute. Or so I thought. And yet I had seen nothing. But, in the pages of the books along those shelves, I was assured that such things were happening all about me. If I believed what I read in such romances as the shop sold, I had only to walk a little way from Broad Street or

look aside as Vanessa took that way down the hill from school, to see a strapping young trollop by the name of Noreen dressing the window of a store and to become involved in a vigorous adventure with her. I preferred to bide my time.

I did so until the following spring, when the world about us grew darker and the clouds spread a shadow over the Pyrenees and beyond. But passion and desire are the food of a moveable feast. The Villa Rosa existed in Carailac. Might it not as easily exist among the flowery gardens and white mansions on the slopes above Estoril? Might it not even be found on a Sussex cliff, where the promenade sloped away to bandstand and flower beds, where the sun glittered on the green chalky waters of the channel? Like the visions of summer that rose in the winter city, the Villa Rosa lived on as a state of mind. And like the past, it was everywhere and nowhere, a figment of the past, the present, and the future.

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# VILLA ROSA


by Richard Manton

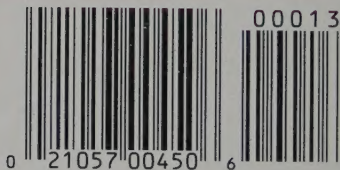
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*The Victorian Era*

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