

**THE SECOND COMING**

**OF THE REAL**

**VIRGIN MARY**

Charles Campbell

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## AUTHOR'S FORWARD

Here is my elegy to lost lust, laid waste in the sex wars of the 90s and reduced to ash in the rages of the early twenty-first century I suspect this book will offend many people, but I hope not too many of those who read it. It's hard to believe in 2018 that sex was once fun and funny. If you are not personally mocked in this book, my sincere apologies.

Can a book be created from the thin air? Some will say this one was, from an excess of the hot variety. But, no. There were roots, sources, influences, inspiration, reasons and lame excuses.

Pius XII, The Firesign Theatre, John Wayne, Madonna, Ronald Reagan, Tom Wolfe, Queen Elizabeth, Margaret Atwood, Pavel Cahoot, Calvin Klein, Andy Warhol, Mad Max, Arnold Schwarzenegger, William Borroughs, Anne Baring and Jules Cashford, Phil Andros, Andrea Dworkin, Jeff Weiss, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Thomas, and the Ontario Board of Censors all inspired or repelled me. [I have left out Hemmingway because his sentences are way too short.] A fervent desire to learn Word Perfect 5.1, drove me relentlessly to my climax. But the deeper truth is that I lived always with a desperate urge to entertain myself in the dead of night, after the grim client misery and righteous indignation in which I wallowed when the sun shone - at high hourly rates. That this story would offend my mother is another benchmark of its merit. (I almost said "virtue!")

No one made me do it, but some encouraged me to finish what I started and to share. My thanks to them, and of course I respect their desire not to be publicly identified.

Charles Campbell

## SYNOPSIS

The two Marys arrived in Golem within hours of one another, the imperious Madonna and the insatiable whore. The One True Church of the Real Goddess awaited the second coming of their virgin. And Arabella, seer of the Inner Circle of the Ancient Way, also expected her Goddess back from the coast any day.

But which one is the real virgin? One man knew them both, the gorgeous Nevada Smith, a high-end hustler with a tale to tell, who lived dangerously in quiet defiance of Ordinance 506, Golem's strict ban on absolutely all cross-gender sex outside holy wedlock. Golem is primed for the battle of the Marys. It's 1996, the first wombyn President, Rosalyn Rossiter, has arrived in town for her victory parade, with her bon vivant, long time partner, Rick Two-Prick. And he is the first to die in a wave of sex war executions and ritual de-penestrations that rock the city. That's Chapter One.

Skipping ahead to Chapter Two, Golem's Mayor, Karl Kresting, is exposed as a diddler by his brilliant and accomplished Executive Assistant, Rachael X, and her secret, identical sister, Y, and their crack team of Tattling Toddlers.

August Knight, boy chorister with the fabulous abs, gets busted for saying 'pussy', but he escapes the dank jails with the assistance of Easter Primrose, his horny and well turned out attorney, and former hooker. But, tough luck Easter, Augie runs away to join the real sluts, Chuck the Fuck, and his boy, Full Moon, who ...

And... and...

The two Marys go to the mat in this titanic battle for the soul of the New Millennium. And the winner is...

This prescient and prodigiously plotted parody set in the last days of sex leaves no ox un-gored as it wends its way the very last fuck.

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## CHARACTERS

Nevada Smith	- gilt-edge hustler
Elizabeth Eaton-Jones	- seventeenth richest woman, senior lay advisor to the One True Church of the Real Goddess
Caswell Tredgold-Martin	- her former husband and distinguished philanthropist, patron of the Tredgold Clinics
Zekus Eaton-Jones-Tredgold-Martin aka -Zeke, Jocko	- their eldest son, an escapee
Melissa Tredgold-Martin-Eaton-Jones	- their second child, a dancer and vigilante
Avery	- their third
Little Essence	- their fourth
James, James the Elder, Burradandouka, Nanny Gumbo, Sabamba	- his servants
H-Papp	- her cook
Ronaldo	- her executive assistant
Albertina aka Bert	- camp guard
Yoni aka Sarah	- camp guard and lover to Bert
Mary	- the Madonna, the White Virgin, aka - HMS The Holy Mother Superior, - from Heart Stop, Idaho
Mary Monahan	- Red Mary, Mary Mags, the Magdalena,

	kickboxer, Roller Derby star, from Lovesick, Texas
Easter Primrose	- former hooker, sharp dresser and aka - EP attorney of last resort
Hubert Humbert	- famous leader of the militant aka - Hughie Radical Misogynists for the ant-Christ
August Knight aka Augie	- choirboy, wannabe hustler
Scatha	- friend and compatriot to Melissa in the Avengers
Macha	- the same
Karl Kresting	- the last white male to hold public office, erstwhile mayor of Golem
Zimmerperson aka Zimzam	- his appointment secretary
Rachael X	- his Executive Assistant
Rachael Y	- her secret twin sister
Rosalyn Rossiter	- first feminist President
Richard Rossiter aka Rick-Two-Prick	- her husband
Herbert Dong aka Sgt.Thighs	- marine sergeant
Sally Fyshe	- Reuters reporter, troubled marriage with...
Grantley Nonsuch	- grossly overweight house dad
Kitty Cryder	- beside whom one ought not sit; executive V.P. at Universal Omnipotent, creator of Rectitude, the odourless perfume, and purveyor of intimacies to the rich and daring
Cardinal Corpus	- senior Roman in Golem who loses the

## Cathedral

- Sister Sandra - choir mistress and leader of the Ninja Nuns
- Sister Rosalia - ideologue and keeper of the relic
- Arabella - dedicated leader of the Inner Circle of the Ancient Way of the Goddess, proprietor of the Caldron Bookshop
- Derek Ducker - Assistant District Attorney, sexually confused
- Diana Dewnott  
aka Big D - sex cop, lover to Rachael Y
- Hank Crerar - brave policeman by day and scout leader by night
- Hershel Tucker - run away breast poker
- Jason Gimbel  
aka Jake - Hank's partner, a double Y over-achiever
- Rev. Wiley Perkins - of the Gay Reform Church of the Virgin Mark, gatekeeper to the green ring
- Charles Dettlus  
aka - Chuck the Fuck - top fag hustler in Golem, proprietor of Buns
- Full Moon - his boy, learning the trade
- Dr. Egostein - Director, Tredgold Clinic, leading specialist in de-penistration

## Chapter One

## SOFTLY CAME THE AUGUST KNIGHT

First came a dull throbbing pain close to his left ear. It spread forward to his eyes and up toward his hair. Eyes?! Visuals! Yes, for visuals, he recalled, you had to *open* the eyes. But his eyes were beginning to hurt. Then he remembered that when the eyes hurt, sooner or later, so would the nose and the teeth. Sudden movement was surely reckless, even irresponsible. Nevada Joe lay very, very, still. But it was useless. The teeth hurt.

He started getting other messages. Down below there was an enormous hard-on, his enormous hard-on, this he knew and understood because Nevada Joe's brain was in his dick. He knew he had to pee and he remembered peeing in the bed was a bad thing.

Bed! He moved a finger. He felt nothing except black velvet. The black felt good. How could he feel *black*? Was there a black person in the bed? Who had he fucked? But no, it was the velvet he felt. It was *that* bed!

He heard a faint whirring noise and a door close. And then there was a sudden, violent attack on his eyes, his beautiful squinty eyes, blinding golden light stabbing his lids, deep into his retina. Where were his shades? A second wave of sunlight attacked his whole sprawling, naked body, an army of whites and yellows invading through every pore of his glistening, justly famous torso, stretched on the velvet sheets. The faint warmth of the sun through the window made him quiver, more relaxed than a pre-orgasm quiver, but a distinct quiver nevertheless.

Thus movement began, He rolled over onto his back. But this only exposed his belly and his boner to the draft from the AC. He groped for a blanket to cover himself, not from modesty be assured. But Beth had striped them away as she left. He was bare to the spotlight of the early morning sun on the thirty-first floor and to the leering and yearning of a thousand naked eyeballs in the condos opposite.

A clearer consciousness came to him. It was dawn in the East Penthouse, which Beth preferred in spring and fall. It was Monday and he was wrecked again.

Beth always did this Mondays. She'd be off at six for the Breakfast Meeting of the Omnibus Steering Committee on Unified Doctrine. He'd wake up as she left, hung over, stoned, and definitely not ready for another a client. Which was alright because she left eight or nine G-notes in the front left pocket of his custom tailored, ass-cracking Denims. Ten if he was good. He could afford a day off.

Beth was superb. Sometimes his dick-brain thought he should pay her! Sustained, multiple orgasms with pudendal clamp and twist! It wiped him out every time. She was ten year older! How was it possible? Elizabeth Eaton-Jones was famous in Golem but, fortunately for her church aborning, this was not the reason. Was he getting old? No, he would not think *that*! He still had enough hair for a Norse God and abs to quicken the pulse, even if they no longer caused sudden death.

He liked it when she called him a full-bodied, main course. But, goddam, he hated the wake up call with the electric curtains.

\*\*

“Wake up, Bert. Wake up.”

She felt a bony finger poking at her left delt. Dutifully she rolled over to face the finger attached to which pre-pub she could only guess. Bravely she opened her eyes. It was morning all right but it wasn't Kansas. Two scrawny ones were standing by her bed. The sun felt warm and wonderful through the cabin screen but the pre-pubes made her sick for looking.

“What is it?” she asked with the smile she used to tell her warmest and most winning lies. “You're not supposed to be here. This is Amazon Reserve. Not for little boys.”

“You tell.”

“No, you.”

The work of Goddess in the brave new world called for patience and sacrifice, to which she eagerly dedicated herself, here in the camps, and anywhere she was sent, a foot soldier in the cause, for the greater good of the species. There were limits, or should be, on such a lovely morning. Couldn't these hideous mutant deformities be kept out of sight and mind until after breakfast, or at least until after wake up bell? Was the ticking of the clock, the imminent eruption of their gruesome juice, so immediate, so threatening, that bluebirds might sing in peace for just a few more summer moments, that flowers bloom, that grass grow, that bees ... But Albertina, aka Bert, did not doubt the importance of her custodial duties and so to these she summoned herself, albeit grudgingly, to her appointed responsibilities.

Yoni, known in polite society as Sarah, slumbered fitfully beside her. Bert wished they could come to the country alone, or with the coven, at least once. But they were always assigned to accompany the pre-pubes, in groups of two hundred, for their two weeks in the Preparation Camp. She was, they said, redeemed and sanctified by the task, something she secretly thought was a dead white male idea, carelessly slipped into the new church doctrine.

"So, what is it?" she asked the smelliest of the two pre-pubes, closest to her nose.

"Zekus is gone from the tent!"

"When we got up."

"He's gone to join the Wild Boys."

"He said."

It hit like a brick. In a flash she was up from the bed and shaking Yoni violently. Her partner slowly opened and fluttered her big cow eyes, pouted her morning pout, arched gracefully and offered up her wrist tightly together, as she was trained.

Bert not very graciously ignored the ritual gesture. "Get dressed pronto, beast." Checking the calendar above her bed she continued, "Zekus Eaton-Jones has gone for the fence. We gotta find him fast or my ass is grass. He's been milked twice and he could blow again any time."

Yoni blanched, not her best color so early in the morning. She could feel the fear, raw and real, in Bert. She watched with her big cow eyes as Bert strapped on her lead-weighted, steel-toed, pud-crushers. Oh, how she loved Bert-in-boots.

"The dad arrives Sunday for the De-Pen." Bert pulled her burlap body bag over her head. "That kid better be there!" She slipped her stun gun into her side-holster and turned to Yonni and said with great earnestness, "That pop is a megabucks fruit loop."

"Rich or poor makes no difference," moaned Yoni didactically. "Sexual violence is not class based. It is a genetic deformity ..."

"This is no time for a dissertation, professor! Pack your butt and follow me!"

Bert's imperative voice vulgarity always jolted her juices and Yoni lurched from the bed to do the duties of a soldier to the cause.

For the record, though nothing turns on it, the boy/man registered as Zekus Eaton-Jones-Tredgold-Martin was, according to his parent *degree nisi*, Zekus Eaton Jones for the first half of each month and Zekus Tredgold-Martin for the second, with the names to alternate for Memorial Days and Fourth of July's. Whether Bert's meticulous attention to parental instructions on the niceties of name was class indulgence, good politics or unnecessary obsequiousness had been debated at Staff Council and most recently referred to the Sub-Committee.

In the comforting hum and sway of the non-stop Greyhound Express from Chicago the passengers slept, twisted and bent in their seats, some tossing and turning, each lost in their private cerebrations of Golem's pending absolution or damnation. Except the driver. He was not sleeping, cranked on caffeine, but nevertheless also dreaming, but not of Golem, listening on his Walkman to the breathy tones of Marilyn's voice reading aloud his favorite passages from *Truck Stop Nympho and the Martian Major General with Ten Inches*. Totally illegal! He had jerked off neatly into his hanky as they passed through Harrisburg, and again in Phillipstown. Leslieville and Hobokan were coming up. Four would be a life-time personal best for the Chicago run.

The first light of dawn in the desolation of New Jersey stirred a few passengers and then a few more moaned as the distant stench of the city started to infiltrate the bus. When they reached the tunnel he put on the lights and all the rest, but one, surfaced from their nocturnal commiserations, bleary and twitching, like larva rising in a dark puddle of old piss.

Mary, from Heart Stop, Idaho, was still sleeping when the bus heaved to a halt at the Port Authority Building, Platform 54. She was still asleep when all the others had disembarked and hauled away their worldly possessions in battered Samsonite and knapsacks and roped bundles. Mary had nothing except a large bag, of hemp, or straw, which lay in her lap on which had been stitched two delicate felt Bambis prancing over the words Heart Stop, Idaho.

The driver approached to wake her. She gently opened her eyes and met his gaze. Her face was angelic, her skin taut and fresh, though she was no young girl. She wore no make-up. And she glowed faintly in a most unusual way. She reminded him of the famous Rectitude model from the billboards everywhere. Her smile was immediate and forgiving. He was sure, well, maybe just hopeful, that she could not actually know his respective sins, of Illinois, Michigan, Ohio and New Jersey, and those of his hero, the Martian Major-General, on his intergalactic adventure.

"Is this Golem?" she asked with serene innocence.

"This is it, lady."

The resemblance to the Rectitude model was uncanny. Indeed, one of the famous ads was visible out the bus window, her head held high and her hair tossed in the sea breezes as she directed the Fifth Armored Marine Corp up the beaches of Normandy, defiant of the Nazi barrage.

"Oh, my!" She smiled at him again.

"I'd let you sleep here for awhile ..." which isn't actually where he was thinking she might sleep ... "but you'd end up in the bus barn in Queens. Which isn't too nice, for lovely person such as yourself."

"Well, I've come this far! I better get off!"

"You come straight through from Heart Stop?"

"Yes. I've never been in a big city like this." She smiled up at him, radiating radiance, hope and fear. "Can you help me?"

He hesitated. He thought. He wondered. Was this a sting? The sex cops had no undercover agents, at least according to the guys at the bus barn. Her breasts heaved like the summer sea at Montauk. And he gave into the temptation, let's be honest, to lust, and the risk of thirty to life in Sing-Sing.

"You know, The Port Authority, it's not a place for someone like you, if you get my meaning. Why don't you duck down there in the seat. I drive right by the Cathedral on the way to the bus barn. I could drop you there."

Her silken hair fell from the top her head where it had been pinned. "Yes," she said, "yes. I need to go to the Cathedral. They're waiting for me. Thank you."

Bob, the bus driver, whose freshly pulsing dick had not felt real pussy since before the Correction, went back to his seat and fished out his street map to look up where the fuck was the Cathedral.

\*\*

Describing Easter Primrose as extremely clever, even brilliant, insightful, unorthodox and imaginative would be perfectly and politically correct, but, really, it tells nothing of appearance. As with most things P.C. it deliberately missed the main point of how the world really thinks and works. Easter was not a p.c. kind of person. Because she was clever, brilliant even, insightful, unorthodox and imaginative.

Easter Primrose was fat. Skip over the obvious objection that 'fat' is not politically correct. More important, it does not capture the facts that she was very tall and black. One could say she was 'large' but it underplays the corpulence and misses the color. 'Big' is good but 'big' alone might suggest short and waddling, which she was not. And it is colorless which is, after all, the key point, which somehow you're not suppose to notice. 'Imposing' is too male. Creamy adjectives like 'substantial' and 'impressive' get close to the physical dimensions but lie about her total lack of dignity. 'Slob' would be wrong because she was clever, brilliant, insightful etc. Unforgettable would be correct in every way but then it tells you nothing.

All of which brings us to her dress, her costumes. Convention would have it that such a person of mature years ought not buy let alone wear extra, extra large side slit mini-skirts, spiked heels and auburn, bee-hive wigs, except on Halloween or to high school reunion parties and certainly never to Court. But E.P., as she was known

to all who engaged with her in the Bail Courts in the nether regions under City Hall, E.P. was definitely not conventional. She was the reigning queen of the Police Courts, loved in a peculiar way by the third string judges and Assistant, Assistant D.A.s, the dirty cops and sleazy lawyers, and by the Jimmy Olsens schmoozing and sniffing sex to fill the space between the stereo ads. Not to mention her loyal and reliable clients in the sex trade. E.P. knew everything you needed to know of the sexual underworld, the old one and the new post-Correction world. She knew the tricks of the trade, the best flop houses, the worst pimps, the hustlers to trust, which guards were dykes and which bulls liked a blow job in the broom closet, not to mention she knew every misplaced common in the new Sex Ordinance, 506 and how to torture the grammar for benefit of her client.

E.P. loved the legal low life because ... at least before the Correction ... she could hang with her old comrades and get paid but not for sucking dick. Her novelty and popularity as a hooker who went to law school and who moved from the oldest to the second oldest profession quickly wore off. Her law school colleagues had turned on her when they discovered that she was serious about their alliance with the women of the street as they moved on to foreclosures and franchising and black tailored pantsuits. When the Correction came, and her sisters on the street were driven deep underground and into the marriage malls, her clientele evolved into the rest of the street traffic proper folk thought scuzzy, homo-pimps, winos, crazies who shouted and made suits uncomfortable, protestors of all sort, tree huggers and the odd hustler who transgressed his license. She became a talking head praising prostitution 'in general', as explicitly as she dared before she herself would be defending herself on charges of 'advocating'. If, she argued, the hustlers served a purpose, why not the hookers? Besides, besides, how can a poor gal - or guy - get through college, not washing dishes? Bad thinking, her old law school buds proclaimed. But she didn't care. None of them had ever worked on their knees and all the hookers and hustlers she had ever known were much, much, better with their mouths than any of the law students. In short, E.P. loved swimming up-stream in the sewer.

The hookers used to say that when she came out as a lawyer she had the most versatile wardrobe in town. Sometimes she would change in the washroom between cases from elegant lady lawyer to bag lady, if it suited her pitch to the judge. Visuals mattered more than words, certain visuals, she believed. It was impossible to con the judges, which was her job, by dressing up her slob clients in blue suits and presenting them as down-on-their-luck, college grads between jobs. But if a fat, black, bag lady lawyer tottering in spiked heels, could rhyme off the Sex Code backwards then why should justice presume that the bug-eyed hooker or the tattooed hustlers wouldn't or couldn't remember the terms of release. It was theatre and illusion and she won more cases playing dress-up than talking law school jive-ass lingo.

Occasionally, occasionally, E.P.'s peculiar skill set landed her a client of means with a equally peculiar needs for such skill. And such was this day and hour. A coup, of a

sort, she thought, as she tottered down the back steps of City Hall into the holding cells and Police Courts lodged deep therein. Her challenging retainer that day was to free on bail Hughie Humbert the famous anti-emasculator and leader of the Radical Misogynists for Christ. Not just Free Hughie but the twenty others arrested with him last night at the Tredgold De-Penistation Clinic demo. And not just Free Hughie but Free Hughie and his followers so he could and they would emerge from the bail court and City Hall Court facility at precisely the moment the President's limo and entourage passed by, upon which Hughie and his gang of unrepentant MCPs would converge demanding the restoration of football and pussy. It was challenging, it was perverse, it was E.P.'s idea of a good time.

E.P. brushed by the Olsens, who loitered, always, at the back door of the Bail Court in the basement of City Hall. "No comment, no comment ... Easter, not Ester ... with an 'a' ... no comment, no comment." The word was out, Hughie was 'downstairs', in custody. She knew, they hoped, that when she came this way again, there would be a muscular crowd of mindless big dicks gathered to bellow. The abolition of football had been a big strategic mistake by the forces of righteousness. A few broken necks was a small price to pay for keeping the unemployed lumpen males off the street. Never mind. The powers never listened to the likes of her.

Down, down, she clomped, following her nose to the rancid perfume of urine and Aqua Velvet and her ears to the cacophonous din, to the place where the sun doesn't shine. Never follow the signs, she learned early. The copper fucked with the signs. 'Bail Court' usually put you in the parking garage and made you late for Court. As she descended she began to make out the words, the hymn, in the din. She laughed. Hughie was at his best. It would be a fun day.

Hughie was a shit disturber of the old school, though as a man of the modern church he called what he did 'empowerment'. He was unflagging in spirit and cranked by adversity. 'If you can't fuck or play football, organize' a demo'.

E.P. signed in at the Great Gate of Hell, and entered therein. The Gates clanged shut behind her and now the chorus rose to mighty roar, drowning out the other, petty moans of minor miseries "... if he doesn't smoke the same cigarette as me ... I can't get no ... no, no, no ... I can't get no ..." Ah, the old hymns! Not just the twenty-one Anti-Emasculators but all the rest of the trash swept up that night to clear the streets before the President's triumphant Wombyn's Day Parade, the drunks, the pickpockets, the profaners and even a few hustlers, the whole damn jail, bellowing their verboten anthem in one voice. This would be a piece of cake. Her Honor Judge Speculum would jump at any excuse to rid her jail of this pernicious choirmaster. The Assistant, Assistant D.A. would be pleading, 'what terms will he agree to, please!' The problem would not be securing bail and release but stalling it until precisely eleven forty-five.

E.P. thought. A white guy watching would never know it, such was her genius and his stupidity.

She picked a random name of the Court Docket posted on the wall, 'the morning catch' the guards called it. Here's one. August Knight, a cute name. Got to be in trade. And E.P. called it out with the bellowing authority of a super-max prison warden. "August Knight! August Knight!"

And out from the dank, dim bowels of City Hall where the sun never shines, up from the roiling mass of stinking flesh, softly came the August Knight. He was young and blond –you can never be too blond - and he wore a deep scoop, tank top which revealed pecs more perfect than most tits and jeans more likely paint than denim. He was not too young but not too old and not too big and not too small and just barely legal, and just right for Easter.

He pressed against the bars and shouted above the din, "You calling for an August Knight. I'm him. Are you a lawyer?"

Easter's heart skipped a beat or three. Whatever the charges, he had to be innocent.

"I am a lawyer, the best lawyer. You like my disguise? I love yours."

Easter was no fool, even in heat. She suspected immediately this delicious hors d'oeuvre was served by professional help. He was so nubile and pure he could be served to either team. And given the modern age he might be happy at both.

Easter knew the allure for sexually ambitious young men. Intellectually and even emotionally, she knew, she remembered the dreams of stardom that struck those of freak genetics and luscious young beauty and the imagined opportunity Chuck offered. But she knew the dangers and disappointments of 'the life' and she wondered, given that Augie had not yet signed, she wondered if it was yet too late that August Knight might yet commit himself instead to the love of a good woman, a substantial black woman of maturity and insight.

The kid was twitching to the rhythm of the riotous hymn and grinning at her through the bars.

"So, what'd they grab you for ... *not* ... doing?"

He blushed and tried to look away. "Pussy", I said 'pussy' ... in the locker room. And they got on tape."

"Profaning in a public place', Section 425.6.5. Serious stuff! Third time, you could lose your pecker. Do you even know what 'pussy' is?"

"First time. Honest, the first. I'd never of said it if I knew they were taping."

"Sweet buns, for straight boys ... off to camp."

"I can't go away. I'll lose my job!"

"Which is?"

"I sing ... in the Cathedral Choir."

"Ah ... is that a job these days?"

"I get an allowance."

"The sister will miss you."

"They seem," he said drolly, "to like me."

"I'll bet."

"Spend a lot time in the gym, looks like."

"I try. You like?"

The kid obviously did better in traps and delts than Math and French.

"What about a green ring? You registered?"

"Ah ... I'm thinking about it."

"Well, hon, I'd never dissuade you ... but if a greenie gets caught saying 'pussy' there's no point in re-education so, no time in the Correction Camp. It's only fifty bucks and bam, free to go."

"Really. Hmm ... hey ... you know a guy ... Chuck the Fuck?"

Looking at him E.P. thought he wasn't so straight that three months with Chuck wouldn't bend him enough to pass the green test. Maybe three minutes. A price to be paid.

"I mean, other than missing the Sisters, who, speaking frankly can be replaced, if you're needin' a momma, if you get my meaning, you care about ninety days in the camps?"

"They got a gym?"

"Well, I hear yes. But they'll fuck with your head so you'll never touch a wombyn again."

E.P. wondered whether this angelic baby mesomorph was as naïve as he was pretending. She was deeply vexed by the innocent and naïve who didn't know and couldn't figure out that cash was not the only way to pay the bill.

"Sweet cakes, personally I don't want what you're selling, or care to whom, but working the streets without a green ring is asking for trouble. And let me warn you, if you get confessional and tell them you're selling your pud to the ladies they are obliged to take it away altogether. Obligated. Even though the chop surgeon, a lady I know *well*, buys dick three times a month."

"Really."

"Really.

"So I have an idea. A little legal trick I've been dreaming of. Maybe I can spring you from the trip to the Camp with a little legal perversion."

"How much?"

How much was gratitude worth, E.P. wondered. She felt a sudden surge of non-professional affection for the low fat, well hung, baby beef ball with the un-waxed pecs. If he had no green card he wasn't bad, just a bit, well, stupid. He would require months of mother love and ... in the fullness of time, three, fours, days, at least, he'd let her sit on his face.

"I'm willing to help you get a reasonably facsimile, an excellent facsimile, of a green ring without the fuss and bother of re-education."

The August Knight pondered. "That would be cool. Hey, you know Chuck ... the Fuck?"

Two steps forward, three steps back. Slow and steady.

Was Augie Knight ready for the constitutional stardom of a 'cruel and unusual' defense? Probably not. To him, she supposed, 'cruel and unusual' would be a night with the Cardinal.

About this point Hughie's anthem grew so loud it drowned out their conversation. E.P. checked the Court List. August Knight came up before Hughie. She put herself down to do a Bail Hearing, a *habeus corpus*, a Section 7, a bias application and a Constitutional Reference. She would argue grandly, that compulsory Correction Camp time just because you had no Green Ring, proving you were a worthless fag and no threat to wombyn kind was cruel and unusual discrimination against the gays who were just as cruel and dangerous to their own kind and nobody cared.

E.P. adjusted her boobs, straightened her bag lady dress, and puffed her hair. She caught Hughie looking at her askance. She winked. He scowled. She checked her watch.

“Honey, I’ll go a few rounds for you this morning *for free* but I give no guarantee.” An insignificant lie, Hughie was paying.

“Momma”, he replied, “neither do I.”

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Melissa Eaton-Jones had ditched her dim-witted morning minder with a convoluted story about German declensions in the language lab at school, which was only available early, early, for grade threes. And so, indeed, she arrived quite early at Miss Peabody’s Institute for Advanced Young Wombyn, but not at the language lab (one of which she had at home, somewhere in the east wing). She had inspired business to conduct, missionary work, in the schoolyard, before the guards and their supervisors and the supervisors of the supervisors overran the place and just before the limos started arriving.

The yard was screened from the street view by a thick privet hedge that grew on the street sides, rather patchily it must be said, of a ten-foot chain-link fence which was itself lined with thick green plastic. But Melissa knew precisely where the peepholes were, all nine of them. And there were, she counted as she entered, already six peepers in the different hiding spots. Six for a Monday was high.

She quietly slipped out her tunic and underwear and stretched in the chilly air and put her trench coat back on before she began. The very rich had special opportunities and privilege and responsibilities. Later she intended to run for Congress. Now, she had a specific project. It was many things. It was conceptual and ironic intervention, solidarity with dispossessed and deprived, it was her charity work, her mission, it was her gift, it was dance, it was revenge for offences not yet committed. Don’t say she was padding her resume, don’t! She strolled along the hedge pausing in front of each peephole, before each anonymous hungry eyeball and, elegantly, casually, exposed her hairless young body, carefully keeping her back to the school so no prying teacher could see and spoil the moment. It was more than art, it was her destiny, her epiphanic consecration of self to the cause, her sacrifice of self to others that they might live their lives to the fullness of their destiny and be sped on their way to the earthly prisons and then the catacombs of hell.

When she was done she slipped back into her tunic, her mind a reverie of joy as the sirens screamed and grown men tussled in the shrubbery. There was still more business to do before class. Her first and second lieutenants, Scatha and Macha, new girls from somewhere foreign, but rich, who ran – ‘delivered’ mother would say,

angel dust for her, arrived promptly at seven forty-five with the usual tandoori weenies and double, double, *chocolait du chocolat*. They lounged on the steps for a few minutes dreaming of Wild Boys and dissing the legend that Miss Peabody could have once dismissed *all* the boys from the school with a single yell.

Warning bell rang. Melissa herself always distributed the black mollies to the Grade Twos, Scatha had collections, Macha had shakedowns. And classes started at nine.

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It wasn't every day that the first wombyn President paid her first visit in her official capacity to Golem, the city at the center of the universe. But a courtesy call at Graceful Mansion, home of mayor Karl Kresting? Not! Karl Kresting, the best friend protector the wombyn of Golem ever had! An invitation to the Wombyn Day's Parade? Not! The First Man luncheon? Not! But was Mayor Karl Kresting, 'the 'Great Protector', bitter or brooding? Not! Was he taking it sitting down? Not! Was Karl Kresting going off duty! Not! The wombym of Golem were safe on his watch! Not.

She and her faggot husband could do their parade! He would stand by his post, he would do the heavy lifting! There was a reason he was the last male mayor in the country! His programs were the gold standard to keep wombyn safe!

It was seven-thirty and he was up, he was sober, he was shaved, he was fed and he was doing his job, phoning reporters to be sure they knew that he was up and fed and sober and in his office making phone calls, and he reminded them that he, Mayor Kresting had done more to protect the fair sex of Golem in his ten years than the up-start President in her first three months or her prior ten years as Governor of Utah and today, today like every other day, would be another great day for the weaker sex of Golem under his stewardship.

Golem lay spread before him, thirty storeys below and ten million stories across, silent and screaming, behind his floor-to-ceiling, triple-ply, vaccu-seal, safety glass. Look at all the wombyn down there! Everyone of them grateful to him for truly meaningful protection, from men, just like himself. Who did the - manly - heavy lifting? Kael Kresting or President what's-her-name? Who established the Green Ring Program to certify who were the true homosexuals, the gold standard - which determined which males could be out after seven pm? Who could have jobs? Who could be trusted? Who established the re-education camps? Who backed the De-Penistation Clinics? Who! This up-start, the Jenny-come-lately to the cause, this new President, who rolls into his City, needlessly, needlessly provoking the Anti-Emasculatationists and the Wild Boys. Why! Why!

He, Karl Kresting, would ride with the police in the squad car, leap on top, and quell the inevitable mobs. It was a man's work to protect them, from their own folly! They were so lucky to have him!

Karl Kresting scratched his balls. They were big and Golem was safe.

Just then the Police radio reported a Sec. 514 'breast poke' in Queens. What luck! Just as the President is rolling down 5<sup>th</sup>, doing nothing! He would be on the scene, grim faced and resolute, and drag the teenage perp into the Court House in front of all the cameras! Another pimply thirteen-year old shipped to the camps to have his pecker cropped! Timed for the evening news!

How lucky could a white guy get! Fuck the President!

But luck had nothing to do his scheduled eleven am Press Conference! And that would knock the President clear back to Idaho! At eleven was the kick off of the Tattling Toddler Program!

This was his crowning glory! - a 'distant early warning' system to stop diddlers dead in their tracks. Karl Kresting was a genius. And modest. He was a genius because he hired such brilliant staff, who created this astonishing program!

Rachael X was amazing. Three months ago she came from the Wombyn's Studies Department at the University with such enthusiasm and energy for the cause and admiration and gratitude for Karl and everything he did and was doing and everything he stood for not to mentions ideas, incredible fresh ideas that even Karl himself could not imagine. She was the most efficient, the busiest, the cleverest, political operative he had ever know. Not to mention the family of seven fatherless children she managed like an NHL hockey coach. It was as if she was two persons, not one! She accomplished so much, every day.

And indeed, unbeknownst to Karl Kresting, Rachael X was in fact two persons! She employed her twin sister Rachael Y to do personal appears and academic research. She, they, had a C.V. as long as your arm, for a reason. Girls need to stick together.

And then there was Zimmerperson, ZimZam. Mr. Organization. The Party *insisted* on a Certified Green Ring on his staff, as, officially, Appointments Secretary. ZimZam was really a *minder*. Zim drove him home at night, checked his ankle monitor and all the other details, designed, they said, to keep him 'out of trouble'.

Karl Kresting's reverie on the safety of wombykind was broken by the *basso profundo* of ZimZam calling to him through the intercom.

"Mr. Mayor, that 508 Breast poke up in Ghetto Park, thought you better know. The video heads got there before the Blues but not before Rachael."

Extraordinary, thought Mayor Kresting. She is so efficient he doesn't even need to come to work!

"Rachael's giving a statement on your behalf ... "The perpetrator is being punished *swiftly*, before any excuses are heard. Sexual thoughts, gestures or feelings of any sort among the male youth must be stamped out. Etc. etc. ... Mayor Kresting would have been here himself except he's on duty this morning at the City Hall Supervising Day Care ... blah, blah."

"Thank you, Zim. Thank you! Where would I be without you and Rachael?"

"Probably in jail, Mr. Mayor."

Zim was in the outer office. , Karl Kresting scratched his balls and thought to add, 'I get better sex than you do faggot'. But he didn't.

ZimZam scratched his dick, even bigger than the Mayor's. Zim, was, if truth be told, which it was very, very rarely after the Correction, Zim was more than a little contemptuous of the straight men's inability to adapt to the new regime and Mayor Kresting first on the list. 'Minding' Karl Kresting was such a stupid job. But it was it only one he could get after The Correction.

The Mayor was on the face of things, a model of submission to the new regime. He was the first to be required to take a new SWD nose implant, the 'Sex Warning Device', known in the street as a 'Clarabelle'. It flashed orange in his nose if it registered impure thoughts and red if an any elevated temperatures in lymphatic hormones were detected. Certified gays were no danger to wombyn so no one asked Zim to wear one. Karl Kresting was, on the other hand, a ticking time bomb.

Karl Kresting was less stupid than Zim and Rachael X thought, and had more slush funds hidden away than they ever imagined. Slush Funds sufficient to buy a 'Nose Neutralizer', which recalibrated the lymphatic diagnostics to zero. And it had a '642 Adaptor' which, when activated, locked the reading of the ankle Locator Device, as if he were right there, wherever that was at the moment it was switched on, home in bed, at his desk, wherever ... harmless and safe. Ha!

With Rachael X covering all bases, Karl Kresting was bored, and horny, as he was often early in the morning, and in the afternoon about three and the evening before and after supper. So he activated the Interceptor, stripped off his bespoke grey suit and wrapped himself in his flasher coat and headed out the back door of his office and down the Mayor's private elevator and into the crowded streets, looking for blue rinse ladies pushing prams with full baby virgins to whom he might introduce himself, the Mayor of all the People.

Tomorrow would be Wombyn's Day in Golem. It was a bigger event even than the Washington Inauguration, the true coronation by the faithful, in the town where it all began. The parade would be mammoth. Its composition was a masterpiece of Post-Correction iconography. It would be lead by the Wombyns' Kill Team of the Navy Seals, followed by the 101 Amazonian Air Infantry, the L.A. GIRLS SWAT, New York's own famous Sex Police Marching Band, and then, and then ... down those same canyons of power that once roared for Eisenhower and Paton and Lindberg and Ed Sullivan. Rosalyn would star, of course, the final float. And he would march with the Green Rings United, close to the front of the parade, just behind the De-Penistration Majorettes. An entire genre of public kitch, rebranded in one mighty swoosh!

He hadn't actually seen Rosalyn for two months. Their schedules were ruthless. It was his 'job' to draw the political fire but you would think - by the tabs - he was in and out of jail *daily*! Such exaggeration! And - by *The Times* - that She never left Her post in the Oval Office and the ceaseless task of doing the right thing. The burden of high office.

But now, here they were, together, at last, in the Presidential Suite, getting ready, *together* for the big day! Richard, never Dick, liked to think that the luxuries of high office had not changed them. The Presidential Suite was just a slightly larger apartment than their bed-sit in Boise, for the indispensable live-in staff of twenty-five. Rosalyn, she of the common touch, was in the next room being prepared, Luigi lacquering her hair, Mario her nails, and Pasquale, her feet. She did her own face, still the master of blush.

He would wear Prada orange and lime sneakers - the fashion *cognoscente* were in an uproar - Elton's own sunglasses, a personal gift, his favorite burgundy, velvet, track suit by LaLa, over his grandfather's, never washed, last remaining prison T-shirt. 'Fraud-U-2' Then She, the one of dignity, would enter in an Italian spaghetti dress that would knock their cocks off, that is any that were left.

The kick-off Prayer Breakfast was about to begin. The table was laid with the traveling Spode. The cameras hovered. Rosalyn had in fact eaten at five but would munch a little for show. Richard Rossiter, never Dick, he had been up all night, cranked on Blue Speed, in a blond wig, and was enjoying his only trip to Golem in years.

Joanne deBruski Point, of the *Times*, the pool reporter doing the live pre-breakfast interview gushed all over Rosalyn. Ten other handpicked, fourth estate, sycophants would shortly join them for shrimp quiche. Marilyn Fatzsqueeler, the Press Secretary, was handing them, right now, their customized personal copy all ready to file, so they could enjoy their brunch without the stress of deadlines.

No hostile questions today. And why would there be? There stories were already written.

Rosalyn's popularity was at an all time high! Three weeks into her first term she had proved herself tough. When the Caribbean island of Minutia imposed a tax on returned Coke cans, on top of the already exorbitant fines for littering - 'taxation without representation', she called it - and she bombed them into the stone age, not before the Boys' Auxiliary 101 Air Infantry had rescued all the virgins, three actually. The red state masses loved her, not just the Golem feminists where her numbers were through the roof.

It was, Richard thought (but never spoke) a little unfair to the local mayor, a guy, who had the most progressive record in the country. Karl Kresting stayed in power against all odds. The Tredgold De-Penistration Clinics, which he had nothing to do with starting but a lot to do with promoting, were all the rage. The procedure was voluntary ... 'a man's right to chose'. And choose they did ... if they wanted to survive in Golem. And it was the standard term of probation for sexual thinking. Richard was against Kresting's *Designated Husband Support Act*, a definite dark side to getting a Green Ring and registered as an official faggot. If a fellow didn't marry, or ever touch a wombyn, or even think of children, why should he be forced to marry and adopt. Rosalyn let him have his opinions on this and other topics because she ignored them, especially on pay equity for men, which did not apply at the very top. But she let him keep Sargent Thighs, so what the hell!

Ros looked ravishing as she entered the banquet room. "Questions. Are there questions?" She knew of course, there would be none.

"Questions for my darling, Richard?"

He loved her most when she lied about him with wanton bravado.

This is for Mr. Rossiter." It was, from Sally Fyshe of Reuters. He braced himself. Sally was not a friend. He smiled manfully.

"You were spotted last night at Buns in a blond wig sucking three cocks. I have your stained trousers from the cleaners. Would you care to comment."

Every time! *Blond questions* are so yesterday.

"Only three? You must have left before eleven, darling. The party was only getting started."

## Chapter Two

### DO WE NEED A CHURCH!

Kitty Kryder cranked the winch a few more notch, and took a dainty nibble from her muffin. The flabby wreck of the Cardinal's body stretched a few more inches on the vestry table. He moaned seraphically. She smiled demonically.

"We have nothing more! Nothing!"

"Cardinal Corpus ... Car ... din ... al, this can't go on! We love you, darling, but we told you last year we would have no option but to foreclose. Universal really does need the money ... back!. How is yours, darling. And we need it *on time!* You don't pay us, we can't pay our creditors and then they can't pay their creditors and they can't pay theirs. It's called the multiplier effect. Pretty soon the world banking has *collapsed* and anarchy ensues.

"Can you have that on your conscience, as a man of God!"

Wack. Wack. Wack.

We have Nothing! Nothing!"

Cardinal, Cardinal, I am just a working girl ... a prisoner of ruthless market forces. And responsible to a demanding corporate bosses. I can't go home ... empty-handed!"

She took the cattle prod from her purse and waved it under his nose. "Where's the gold Madonna. She melts."

"No! Not the Blessed Madonna in the blue dress, with the halo!"

"Cardinal, Cardinal, no more excuses. No ... more ..."

Kitty loved Collections. Visceral. She knew when to shout, when to smile, when to crank, whom to call for Knuckles and Knees. Collections was where she got her start. It was practical, meat and potatoes. She was the first wombyn at U.F.O. to crack Ten Million. She won Fearless/Shameless two years running. Yes, she had moved on to Marketing but she missed it.

"Don't try to make a 'deal', Cardinal. The *word* makes me blush!"

Wack, ... Wack ... Wack.

"What did you have in mind?"

Wack ... wack ...

"My soul will burn in Hoboken ... the shame ..."

"You could have the limo ..."

"I have one."

"The rose window?"

"Too difficult to monetize.

"How about the gold Madonna? She melts."

"No, no! She'll cry!"

"She won't cry after she melts.

"Here's an idea. It's only because I've moved to Marketing, Cardinal ... that I'm aware of special circumstances ..."

"Yes, yes ..."

"You sign an irrevocable consent to vacant possession ...

"And we'll hold it in abeyance ... to guarantee your cooperation ... in certain arrangements ...

"Arrangements?"

"Marketing can use the Cathedral for a photo shoot and a launch site and for PR appearances ... for our Madonna ..."

"*Your* Madonna?!"

"Figure of speech, Cardinal.

"She's on tour ..."

"On Tour?"

"Next week ... we're launching a new line of ...

"You know the fabulous perfume 'Rectitude'? Of course you do?

"Well, this is very confidential ... we're launching a new line ..."

"A Cathedral would be a perfect backdrop ... and a Cardinal ...extending a welcome

...

"We'll need the Cathedral for a couple of weeks."

"A couple of weeks?"

"And full control of copyright. ... Legal is very fussy about things like that. We always do a back story. We might be doing novelization ... a bio ..."

"Novelization?"

"You know. Like a missing book of the Bible. About ... we'll work it out. You can consult. ... Better yet! You can find it ... in Egypt! In the basement of your hotel in Cairo!"

"Only the Pope, the Pope ..."

"My people will speak to people in her bank. Don't worry."

"It'll only be for a couple of weeks or months ... and then you can have the Cathedral back ... on terms ..."

"Terms?"

"We'll think up something. Condos. A micro-brewery by the nuns?"

"My limo?"

"We'll leave you the Plymouth."

"What about the choir?!"

"Sorry, chum, we have plans."

The Cardinal turned silent and looked away. And started to cry.

Kitty hated it when they started to cry.

"You'd throw a deal that would keep the church afloat .... For a couple of prepubescent alter boys?"

"Just one!"

"Alright! Alright. One! Only one."

"My choice."

Kitty sighed, as if in weary resignation.

"My boy will bring over the papers for your signature this afternoon. And Cardinal, don't touch his bum! And consider yourself in trusteeship, darling."

She took the keys from his pocket with a flourish. And finished off his ... now her ... muffin and strode down the center isle, the clicking of her heels reverberating through the lofty hall. She left him strapped to chancel table and headed back to another a bonus at Universal Omnipotent.

It was true, Collections was a kick, more lasting satisfaction than sex.

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Mondays and Fridays Derek did the late shift, but didn't need to punch in until ten and he could do extra delts and pecs, as long as he was done and gone from the weight room by nine. Which meant, he was usually in the middle of his third pec set when Charlie Chestman, a.k.a. Concussion Chuck, a.k.a. 'Cussion" waddled in. In pre-Correction days, he was a famous F-ball fullback and swaggering glam-pus, darling of media, famous for smashing runbacks, traps and delts and six cheerleaders fucked in a row! 'The Dude with the Moves'. But two kids later, his famous Atlas figure had sagged to a fair likeness of a Bartlett pear. And 'Concussion Chuck' brain had evolved to something close to a nine year old's. He still got the odd tab story, 'Cussion' Pushing Pram'. Still, they spelled his name right. That's something. One paradigm of the new man.

Everyday he dropped the twins at the Daycare downstairs at 8:30 am and came upstairs, on the elevator, 'to get back in shape'. Really, to strut and gab. (Derek was pressing 220 and 'Cussion' was pushing three hundred.)

"Heavy-duty, Derek. I can't even lift the twins anymore. They're so-o-o-o big."

Of Derek we can say - because in a novel we can tell everybody's secret thoughts - that he lived in the pre-Correction past *gloire* when real men rode horses, saved girls from bikers and punched out guys with long hair. Failing that he wanted to be a cop or a Sex Prosecutor. In Derek's un-reconstructed view, Grantley had fallen very far, from a very high place. Derek's unreconstructed fantasy life of macho derring-do must remain a secret or he'll never get a job or a life partner.

Fallen, it is true, but 'Cussion' had one amazing thing from the old days, a wife, from before the Correction. She famously loved him back then - 'one sexy dude'. Such reasons, she famously repented, along with thousands of others, in the Great Disavowal. But - and this is the miracle - she did not dump him at the time of the Statutory Dump. She, Sally, was at that point, well advanced in her career, wanting children and needed live-in childcare. He was breeding stock. And he had his own funds, so the carrying cost to her was minimal. When they had the twins, Sally went back at work within forty-eight hours. Cussion stayed in the hospital with the boys and brought them home.

Derek was himself another paradigm of the 'new man' but not so jolly about *his* fate. He had a Masters of Law, from Michigan State and working at the Court House as an

Assistant Junior ByLaw Infraction Prosecutor and Security Guard. He was hoping, hoping, for an opening as a Sex Prosecutor. But Catch 23. His bosses expected him to muscle the pervs and street punks in the cells but if he looked too buff in the lunchroom he got charged with 'visual intimidation'. He could sort of hide his lats and pecs but there was no hiding his traps and delts. He looked like a gorilla in a baggy suit. He had been brought in for questions twice. He confessed ... admitted ... he lifted weights but ... but, he said, he did these exercise for his shoulders, only so he could stand straight for long hours in court and still have strength to punch out the perverts in the cells after closing. They put him on probation. He hated this. He couldn't get into Yale but they wanted him to look like someone who went there.

Anyhow, life is what it is, Cussion had a wife! Which Derek did not covet ... did not covet ... did not covet ... ! Derek's Partner applications had been rejected six years in a row because of his traps. And, to be fair to the Committee, and because he put on his application form in the box labeled Other Comments, his hope that he would be assigned to a partner who would permit fucking. Which he imagined would be nice. Once in a while. I mean, what was it for! Which lost him forty-three points. Other than the 'wife' Derek felt sorry for Cussion. That he was a brain dead house dad was a blessing in the circumstances.

Speaking of which, Cussion had in his hand, as he often did, a copy of *House Dad Confidential*. And was reading it, and then reading from it, aloud, to Derek.

"Derek," he said, "do you believe this? It says *aliens* beamed up the whole Pittsburgh Steelers team! All of them *together*! Can they do that?"

"Aliens are great at nano engineering. They can do just about anything they want in fantasy football. It's still legal!"

"Really!"

"But it says the players stayed on Planet Yerkey, because the beer is free."

"Sounds good."

"Yea! Where is Yerkey, anyhow?"

"West Virginia," Derek replied, very straight-faced.

Derek was expert at hiding every emotion. Which was something he learned from a Yale-ee. Yale -ee learned it from fags, who were very, very good at it.

Two green-ring muscle studs on the next bench, who obviously had not been to Yale, started snickering. Derek wanted to laugh. But the green rings put him on edge. Green rings got priority for security clearance. Which he did not covet ... did not covet ... did not covet ... !

“And guess what, Derek, I got a job, part-time, driving a *limo*.”

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The wombyn of the world had rallied and all but united with a swiftness, which had shocked even themselves – as instinctive cooperative, kindly, lovingly, respectful people - and they had welded together, almost, in five short years a unified church, the Church of Real Goddess. The mainline religions – once the last bastion of the male leaders – were consolidated and their male leadership deposed and replaced, perverts, everyone. And the previously marginalized cults and orders were suddenly attending every tea. And the Presbyterians were learning Zen yoga. The urge for unity was powerful. The grass roots unification was not that difficult, most members of the old religious organizations were wombyn, and naturally congenial. Membership was through the roof. They had an option on the Golem Cathedral through the Roman orders, provided it was not lost in foreclosure proceedings. All but united. All but! But, but, exactly what did they believe. Beyond – the fact that the northern sky god, who held the throne, was a rapist and was deposed. Period. There had to be more. What’s a religion without doctrine. All the problems about doctrine were just a problem of male ego, right? Simple negotiations among instinctively cooperative, congenial, loving, respectful wombyn, finally, finally, free of male domination.

Elizabeth Eaton-Jones did not understand the discussion of doctrine. At all. Which was why, they all agreed, she was the perfect Chair for the important discussions on doctrine. Not to mention that she paid all their hotel bills while they deliberated in Golem. There was only one thing in her entire life that made her nervous, not the bankers or trustees in their smart skirts, not the smart-ass children and supercilious nannies, not the nameless, numberless, unctuous servants, not the Clinics, not the galas, not the President, not the five-on-the-floor green Porche, not Nevada ... only one thing ... the meetings of Confidential Sub-Committee on Unified Doctrine of the One True Church of the Goddess. She was invited to chair these important meetings, well, she volunteered, more or less, by offering to pay all the expenses, thinking she ‘could make a difference’ to the cause. By which she meant, money makes a difference, and a lot of money makes a lot of difference. What is it for, if not the greater good. Unifying the new churches was of course very important. In her hands, under her gavel, this very morning, was the confluence and turbulence of historic forces, the way forward and upward for the wombyn’s movement or path downward to destruction. The Doctrine of Return of the Virgin, was the deal breaker! What squabbling!

Elizabeth Eaton-Jones brushed the lint from the left shoulder of her somber, pearl grey, Chanel morning suit, straightened her gloves, gave a slight tug to the triple rope of modest black pearls, which tug –to those who knew her well - was the clue

to her inner nervousness. She entered the Conference Room. She strode confidently, manfully, to the head of the table. Money, poise, grace, money, stature, elegance, money and money were time-tested tools of persuasion which she brought to the table, backed by selective and judicious honoraria from the Eaton-Jones (two-billion dollar – money) Perpetual Trust for Sexual Correction for the purpose, *inter alia*, of finally, finally, consolidating all the churches in The One True Church under Her. (the 'OTC')

And the factions! So many! They all insisted on separate representation and separate hotels and meals. Were the wiccans, 'witches'? Were the Methodist, methodical? Were the Christian Scientists, scientific? Depended who was asking, and who was answering, it seemed. And better, she decided, not to ask. Or to smile and complement and dissemble and agree to whatever everyone said, which came naturally to her as a mother.

Melon balls and rye crackers were set out at every third place setting in sterling silver dishes from Beth's own collection. Specially trained castratti in hooded robes waited in the ante-chamber for whatever services might smooth the way. And here they were, on the brink of a unified dogma for the new millennium. A few final compromises, a nuanced ambiguity to seal the deal. A Unified Theory for the Return of the Madonna.

Elizabeth Eaton-Jones observed early on that progress was most sure at these breakfast meetings, when the assembled were most sober and hungry. It was her job to notice such things and she did. What they were agreeing to was, however, a fog. But that not a curse but a blessing. It was widely observed and praised that after the Correction and the ascension to power of the wombyn agreement and smiles and niceness was everywhere. And Elizabeth Eaton-Jones was playing this for all it was worth. How important was it, really, whether the one true Goddess was the mother or the bride of Christ. She could be a space wombyn for all Elizabeth Eaton-Jones cared, as long as everybody signed on. Shallow and quick was the ticket.

Not everyone shared E-J's (as she was called) nonchalance on matters of doctrine, a fact of which she was well aware, and hence she always evinced a deep and sincere interest in... indeed she agreed with ... everyone's theory ... 'in a sense'. And since she was paying everyone's hotel bills she was never pressed to commit in *which* sense. The Donald Trump of church unification. This was essential to her ability to negotiate because the discussions were intense and more than a little confusing 'in a certain sense'.

Sister Sandra and Sister Rosalea, representing the ancient Roman orders, were already in their swivel seats and deep in conference with the Precious Box on the table in front of them, as always. Their compromise on the heresy for Foreplay had been the key to launching the Sub-Committee's efforts to achieve a unified doctrine. But they now resisted further concessions. And why not? The Protestant Common

Front, four proper ladies, sat grim-faced, sucking rye crackers. They too felt they had conceded plenty by agreeing that the Virgin was in the first part of the indivisible Trinity, Goddess-creator, not, as the Reformed Temple insisted, the whore of Jesus and the hapless victim of the roaming ghost rapist – and, *ipso facto*, definitely not a Virgin. Anyhow, better this than the Mother of God with all the messy diapers and breast-feeding. The Feminists-in-Spiritu insisted on creator status for the new Number One. And that, if, if, there was to be an ‘evil one’ it, she, must also be female, Lilith, of course. Here the Protestant Common Front divided, half denying flat out that there was an evil one at all. The others, insisting that the evil one would, of course, continue to be male. And on this they were backed by the Evangelicals who insisted that the Devil and, AND, the seven Princes were male. But if Lucifer were a girl, pointed out the Feminist Sophists, Jesus would have to be a girl because Lucifer was his identical, if fallen, twin. Crucifying a girl would be against the Human Rights Code. The Marxist Feminists insisted. The Goddess was not just the creator of everything but also the owner *in trust for the people*. The Catholics and the Anglicans were united against that, but divided on who, if not the Goddess, was the owner, the Church or the Queen. The Catholics insisted the Pope owned all the churches, regardless of what the mortgage lawyers said.

The Evangelicals always made a fuss about the melon balls not being fresh and always sent out for donuts, which they didn’t eat. The Spiritualists brought tofu sticks because the rye crackers *might* not be organic. The Presbyterians liked tuna casserole for breakfast!

And then there was Arabella!

Arabella, Arabella, Arabella! Bracelets and necklaces jingling, arms waving, ribbons swirling. She always dressed in layered black and red, quite effective as a message costume, Elizabeth thought to herself, but why draw attention to the message. Peasants and anarchists were so over, at least as far Elizabeth Eaton-Jones saw the world. Witches? Not so sure. Her claim she represented more ‘believers’ than anyone else in the room was credible, whatever the distress of the Romans and the envy of the Protestants. Direct access to the true Earth Mother, without the intervention or mediation of corrupt institutions of mortals – except of course Arabella herself. Protestants liked the ring of that but not the sting. Arabella liked ‘Wicca’ not ‘witch’, which was too Disney. And for her, as a true believer, a merely fecund Earth Mother was only half and a green sellout. The real Earth Mother never levitated sticky buns the way Arabella could and did – or a tea cup – just to keep the doubters off balance during intense theological tussles. Privately she believed anyone impressed by that cheap circus trick just wasn’t ready. And the Feminists-in-Spiritu were impressed! Arabella rejected their theory of ineffable orgasm. Which the others did not want to speak of *at all*.

Arabella claimed linear descent through the Isisian Cult of Delos, (unjustly) cast out of the Egyptian mother church, which migrated in the fifth century to the Pyrenees, where they infiltrated the Cathers but evaded the massacres by hiding in the

nunneries of the Order of the Magdalena. Thus deep within her cult was presence of Osiris, the One-Horned God celebrated in the spring rituals. The Amazonians disapproved of this, even though he had devolved to a bound and hung and harmless figure of sacrifice, however, and nevertheless, erotic to the younger followers and altogether too potent to the Inner Circle.

At one of the Sub-Committee meetings Arabella claimed to have fragments of the Coded Testament of the Sibylline Oracles found in a dying vats of a deserted laundry in a flooded Upper Nile town of ... she wouldn't say. The claim itself was heresy to the Roman Orders. But the supposed content of the fragments, as translated by Arabella, and shared, at first quite privately with the Chair, proved to be beyond inflammatory as translations leaked out - cross-gender fertilization by copulation! The leaks were obviously deliberate. Elizabeth Eaton-Jones thought Arabella quite advanced in this area and was thinking of inviting her for a tea.

And indeed it was too much for Sister Rosalia who had buttoned her lips regarding her own secret cult for the sake of unity. But no longer. The Madonna, she now exclaimed, was the missing link to the ancient He-God, and they, in her Cult, had preserved and guarded for two millennia, the cherished penis of the Christ. Arabella hooted at this. That, she claimed, had been looted and swallowed in *one* gulp in the eighth century by a true Wiccan named Vulva during the sacking of the Carolingian nunnery at Avion. Who was to argue? Except Rosalia, who claimed ...

Elizabeth Eaton-Jones wondered, as she tried to call the meeting to order, if it had been so difficult for the men when they started out. It must have been worse, she thought, because they are by nature so quarrelsome and stupid. But still she hoped, in the back rooms, in the early hours, in the spirit of compromise, under the pressure of de-funding, she was hoping for breakthrough.

No such luck. Sister Rosalia took from her purse an oblong, exquisitely carved, silver box and placed it triumphantly on the table in front of her.

"We must stop - you must stop - all this," she shouted. "The time is short. Very short. We can now confirm", she said with great drama and apparent conviction, "that this very day the Madonna will return, here in Golem. To sanctify the relics." She glared at Arabella. "The Virgin returns!"

For a long moment the only sounds were rye crumbs falling from the lips of the Episcopalians.

"Ha!" shouted Arabella. "Ha! Last year it was the Virgin Twins from Mexico selling Holy Water".

"Slander, slander!" shouted Sister Sandra.

"Well, we agree on one thing," Arabella continued.

Elizabeth Eaton-Jones perked up. Maybe there would be a basis of unity after all.

"Today is indeed the Day of Return. Today the Magdalena will arrive in Golem and ..."

"The Slut! The Slut!"

"... to recover this!"

Arabella made a lunge for the silver box.

But Arabella was quicker and snatched it to her bosom. And she marched triumphant through the west door, followed by the Romans and the Baptists.

Arabella quickly exited the east door. And soon the room was empty.

Elizabeth Eaton-Jones sipped her tea. Sad she thought. And then she was seized with a strange sensation in her belly. She knew. It was Nevada's juices on their futile journey deep in her gut, they suddenly stopped, each and everyone and all at once, and shook their million tiny heads in a furious contession, and then with uncanny unanimity and speed, convulse as a single being and reverse their course a full one hundred and eighty degrees and in a ferocious frenzy beat a furious path to the exit.

## Chapter Three

### TATTLING TODDLERS

The Portland bus wheeled up in front of the Cathedral as the first few tourists were lining up for their entrance tickets. Mary peered out the front window. Yes, it was lovely.

There were more folks across the road in front of one of the street-level scratch-and-sniff Rectitude billboards. They had said it would be a saturation campaign. At least that part was the truth. It would be hard not to be recognized. Recognition was not necessarily a problem if she could manage the crowd control.

As she watched, one of the castratti came out and hung a sign – ‘Under New Management’ – Re-opening at 2 pm – and disappear back inside in a flash. With no one to complain to the crowd drifted away. She caught a glimpse of Kitty Kryder slipping out the side door and settle into a waiting limo. Mary followed the small print under Fixed Obligations in the Cathedral’s Annual Report. It did not take divine intuition to figure in a flash who was “the new management.” She had done the Rectitude ads for Universal Federated Omnipotent, and Kitty in particular, never suspecting they would have the nerve to foreclose. And she worried. A thorough mind. Should the Cathedral be put into bankruptcy by UFO, what would happen to the various copyright and residual rights she had assigned to it. Which she never intended to pass directly into their hands. Kitty, of course, had her right to visions of condos – with ten percent non-refundable deposits. And it was true that she never made clear to this very aggressive young business lady the limits of her dreaming. Indeed she allowed her to think that she, Mary, was agreeing to a make-over ... in the order of pale yellow, large floral print drapery and cushions. Standards of deportment, devotion and abstinence were not an explicit part of the discussion. But how could that surprise her, given the temper of the times.

“Follow that car”, she growled to the bus driver, who had recently discovered a new interest, nay, binding devotion, to things spiritual.

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The silk-lined suede jacket slid off Rachael Y’s shoulders like a fresh Malpeque oyster from a greased belly dancer. She caught it with her left ring finger, and twisted slightly right, to see if the new guy was watching. He was not. Good for him. She noted he had no green earring. Bad on her! She draped the jacket carefully over the closest chair. She tucked her blouse tightly into her skirt to give clear form to her well-primed figure. No professional woman should go into the ghetto not dressed like one. The most successful social workers, studies showed, had knockers that reminded every male, but only very subtly, of his best friend’s mother.

Big Marilyn DewNOTT ('Big D') from the Sex Squad, (the 'S.S.'), Morality and Correction ('M&C') was there as usual hunkered down in the corner with the victim. Y did nothing to acknowledge her, which was the M.O. of their on-the-job contact. The new guy slouched against the wall watching Big D work the slobbering victim. He was beefy, trim and grim with a good fall of healthy hair, but no earring. All the men permitted to work in the S.S. were Certified Fags ('C.F. '), she thought, and all wore the green E-ring to prove it. It was a status placement, an opportunity to prove what side they were on. If this guy was straight, he was brave or crazy, or both.

She put out her hand to test his grip. "Rachael X, the Mayor's Executive Manager." Firm but not harsh. She loved calling herself X. They were identical in almost everyway - but Big D knew a crucial difference. Most people didn't know that the phenomenally accomplished, talented and energetic proto-Feminist Achiever-of-the Decade, was in fact two people.

"Ma'am, Henry Crerar. Friends call me Hank."

"Great work today, *Officer* Crerar."

"Sargent DewNOTT is the best!"

"You're new to Sex?"

"Second day, Ma'am.

"Came from International Terrorism, Mass Killers and Major Bank Frauds - six years each."

"This is quite a promotion.

"You know this is our first arrest in the Accelerated Reprisal Program?"

"Yes Ma'am."

He had very big feet and large-ish ears. Always a bad a sign. X had taught her that extreme good manners and proper respect in a man probably concealed repressed and bitter rape/murder fantasies. She made a mental note to pull his file. No red ring. Not fixed. Neither fixed nor fag. In the book she wrote for her sister she identified the clues, *Recognizing the Rapist Without Even Looking*. This guy was a walking time bomb. Thank God Big D was around for protection.

"Let's hustle, gang. I have to be out of here by eleven sharp." She turned and took a seat beside the blubbering victim, a thirteen-year old with foot-high teased maroon and green hair, black eye-liner and a torn wet T-shirt that read 'Grab my tits', in gothic script. Rachael Y gently took the girls shaking hand in her own, did an excellent empathy tremble. "There, there, Hun, it'll be alright. Sargent, here,"

gesturing to Crerar, who nodded, "Sargent here, will bust his balls. Whatever he did. What'd he do, hon? Better to talk about it."

"He ran away!"

"The rat!" Y replied, shaking with anger.

Secretly she thought, what fool would run, could run, from the these luscious knockers. Certainly not Big D.

She held her firm and comforting, sobbing in her arms, as Big D opened the door for the Press Corp. "Get over here, Hank," she hissed, "and show some traps".

"This creepo will be camp meat before sundown!"

The victim obliged with a perfect pout and a instinctive sense of the best angle for the torn shirt in the light from the east window.

On the way out the door one of the V-heads whispered to Hank, "get a ring, Sarg, or Rachael will eat you for breakfast. She's got the appetite of two!"

As the last camera left the room Rachael rose abruptly. "Good work, kid. But your fifteen are up. Be at court at 2 sharp for the Victim Impact Statement.

"Hank, arrest his parents, have them on steps at 2:30. Crying. Got it!"

As she rushed out the door she grabbed Hanks arm and dragged him out in hall behind her, pulled to the corner and gave him the eye. "Sargent, I do notice you are attractive in that manly sense. But I'm only interested in cutting the balls off guys like you. Got it! Do your job."

Thirty minutes later Sargent Crerar found a suspect out in the street, big kid sucking a smoothie, took him into custody and after a tire squealing tear through the mid-town traffic had the suspect in custody - one Hershel Tucker, age sixteen, he said, in the lockup in the basement of City Hall. Now he would face off again with Rachael X, not that he knew the difference.

"Did he try to escape, Sarg?"

"No Ma'am, He's too sacred to stand up!"

"Damn! We'll have to go with the Courtroom scene!

"Why's your shirt all wet, Sargent? Can't handle your coffee cup?"

"He was cryin', Ma'am. All over me. No much I could do."

"Says she dragged him into the alley ..."

"So what! Section 514 – B. A female can't consent until she's twenty-seven ... and five witnesses in writing!"

"Actually I was going to let him go with a warning."

"Says he just poked a tiny, teeny, little ... and she started laughing ... and the Squad came and she started hollering 'he touched me!'"

"No excuses! Punch him out ... but don't throw him down the stairs ... in City Hall. And get a clean shirt ... short sleeved ... for the photographers."

"His mom had a stroke last week and she can't be moved from the hospital."

"So! "

"No mercy, Sargent! This is a crackdown!"

"Ma'am, can I talk to the girl?"

"Sargent, are you crazy? You can't do a female interrogation. You don't have a Green Ring, or didn't you think I noticed!"

Sargent, there is an election in nine months. I want every punk in the north end to see his bawling mug on the T.V. tonight as he get shipped out to Camp Chop-Chop. He is a message."

"He's a juvenile! You can't release his photo or a name. Reg. 706!"

"Who let an obstructionist like you on the Sex Prevention Squad? This kid is a rapist!"

"That's a bit over the ..."

"Dirty male fingers ... brushing ... touching ... think of the terror ... for the victim ... not just the moment but what is next! Pregnancy! Marriage! Children! *The suburbs!* Sargent, take him out the back door ... "

"No way! That's where the V-heads hang out. Worse than a Press Scrum!"

"Put a bag on his head! I'll do the talking!"

"The fuck you will!"

Crerar stormed out of the room. He took the blubbering boy to his mother's hospital bed in the trunk of Squad car and left him there, not before he stuffed in his pocket a three-by-five flyer in disappearing ink, being an invitation to a meeting that night of the Brotherhood.

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The puffy face and many chins of Reverend Wiley Perkins spilled over the edge of his cream-colored, clerical collar. Derek Ducker sank deep into the tatty old sofa. It embraced and comforted him, did everything intended, including taking the change out of his pockets. The famous 'Rev' of the Reform LGBT Church of the Virgin Mark knew the purpose of the bagged-suited gorilla before him. The tenth this week. 'Please, Sir, can I join the church ... and get a green-ring .... so I can get a job and a wife.

Derek admired the heaps of snowy white hair. Aged faggots had something going. He didn't appeal sexually, like the ten muscle heads at the gym, at least once he decided he had to make the leap.

"I think ... I've denied my true ... my ex-wife ... when she came out as a lesbian ... she thought ..."

The Reverend Wiley Perkins pushed the box of hankies across his desk. "So you were thinking of joining our church?" he prompted.

Derek nodded. "I've been doing a lot of thinking ..."

Wiley smiled the smile of a man confident of a big donation.

"She's the lesbian slave master in a Denver orphanage. We never even talk."

"Our church is a refuge open to all. Strange to say, we have admitted more straight men recently than gay brothers. At least they were straight when they walked through the door and sat where you are sitting. But our certification process is now no different than the government clinics."

"I thought ..."

"You thought, just by joining, you could get a green ring? Well, not anymore, alas, or I'd be rich." Wiley smiled sadly as he lied about not being rich. "What we can do is, let's say, facilitate the process, make some introductions, that might speed things along ... so that someone, like yourself, desiring a Certificate, to qualify for a promotion ..."

"To prosecute rapists! That's what I want to do."

"Yes, well, to prosecute rapists. You've got the shoulders for it, Yes, I see that," said the Rev, wondering whether Mr. No-Neck in front of him knew, yet how to suck cock."

"That would be a great help. I'm happy to donate ...  
 "I'm sure you are. You'll have to learn a few hymns."

"I went to Princeton."

"Well, then, you'll know all the right songs.  
 "And what about wombyn? Any ... *urges*?"

"Gone now. All gone."

Wiley knew that answer wouldn't fly further than a plucked chicken before Sunday supper. But who would question, once he'd signed the Certificate ... for bull-necked prosecutor!

"What you need, just for our files, of course, is an "Encounter Record". Verifying you're really one of us."

"How do I get that?"

I'll give you a list of available gentlemen, and contact information, you can visit them and they will ... test you ... and punch your Card."

"What do you mean 'test'?"

"I mean you will suck their cock dry, 50 points, and / or they will fuck you till you scream , 100 points. You will pay them for the service. Not me" He doesn't need to know they pay me 33%. "All you need from us is the Card ... which has an administration fee ... and of course the donation."

"It seems expensive, getting to be a ... becoming queer."

"Well, of course ... the Clinics are free ... but that's a different *procedure*."

"I ... I ..."

"You're not sure ... about the ... cock sucking?"

"The thing is ..."

"Mr. Drucker," I can refer you to a charming young fellow, Half Moon, if ... "

Derek nodded. There was only one way forward.

"Call this number.

Miss Purpose, in the cashier's wicket, in the foyer, will get you registered.

"And we'll see you on Sunday."

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The swaying of the Dallas Express hurtling up the Interstate was pleasantly relaxing and the midmorning sun filtered through the glazed windows warmed her breasts. Golem was fast approaching. Back, again. Love Sick, Texas, was far behind. Notwithstanding a night on the benches of the station in Kansas City and another night on the bus, Mary was radiant. She'd heaped her red hair in a loose bun and wore a loose halter top for comfort on the bus. And every time the bus stopped she re-did her lips, cherry. She loved red! She called herself Red, when she wasn't Mary.

The broad-shouldered sailor in the back row checked her over every time he passed by. He reminded her of Tommy Trotter back in Love Sick. He'd blush and look away when she pouted to him and flashed her button 'I'm a Virgin'. Missionary work took patience.

Mary tucked her book in her purse as they hit the tunnel. She concluded, after careful research between Kansas City and Pittsburgh, that *Truck Stop, Sex Pit, Teenage Nympho*, was deeply flawed, albeit profoundly tragic, but probably not *the* great American novel as the dust jacket claimed. She was not upset. It was in the nature of men to overstate their merits and assets. That they eventually all fell flat was no never-mind. All the better to comfort you, my dear.

She descended into the fluorescent gloom of the Port Authority Terminal light as a feather and waited for the sailor. She glowed. The sailor finally emerged, even better looking on the platform, stretched to full height, neck like a fire hydrant, flat-bellied, well-filled trousers. She waved a cig at him and asked in her best sultry drawl, "Hey sailor, can you set me on fire?"

The sailor, more familiar with local Sex Ordinance 506 than Red, put his head down and scurried toward the Bronx Express like a rat escaping a trap.

This worried her a touch as she made her way down the dingy corridor and into Lobby of the Terminal. It was plastered with Rectitude ads. This worried her more. She passed through the doors onto 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, home at last with the addicts and street castaways, the ex-pimps and homeless hookers, sad and broken, every one.

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It was 11:15. Karl Kresting flashed his morning smile as he ushered the Press into the Conference Room and seated them in front of the drawn curtain. It was a poor turn-out by normal standards but good, considering ... that the President and her consort were parading just outside before millions. *Numero uno* was there, the Family Life reporter from the Times, plus two from the tab scrum, indeed the two

most universally admired for their venal subordinate clauses. One solid story would do for the wire services. Then the columnists could opine about it based on junk info and then the intellectuals could tweet the columnist's opinion back and forth to one another and, presto, consensus would emerge. He, Karl, would ignore the tumult in the streets below as Hughie and the rogue males threw themselves in riotous bluster on the President's Motorcade. The louder and more obnoxious the better, to scare the good citizens, who would read – albeit on page ten – of his new program, shrewd, far-sighted, targeted, to save them - “all the better to save you with, my dears.”

“How proud we are,” he began, reading the words prepared for him by Rachael X or Y, “to present our latest initiative to rid our great city of one its greatest terrors. I present, Tattling Toddlers. This morning we are going to peak into the City Hall Nursery and watch this extraordinary program in action.”

With a flourish he pulled the drawstring and the curtain opened to a view of the Nursery and seven little charmers in their nursery bassinets, babbling and peeing and shitting in their nappies.

“We have developed techniques whereby ... whereby ...almost the very first words these infants speak ... will identify their sex abusers from past lives! Extraordinary but true! Children never lie about their past lives.”

“Rachael knows you are here watching but they do not. We are going to listen in.”

Karl pressed the “on” button and the sound of babble and cooing of little babies filled the room with the clarity and richness of the best Hollywood sound track. Rachael in the nursery gave a nod in the direction of the one-way mirror, then took an anatomically correct doll and showed it to the first toddler, who was standing in crib, clutching the rail.

“She spoke kindly to the first baby. “Sylvia, do you want a cookie?”

“Cookie! Cookie! Cookie!”

“What did Mayor Kresting do to you on May 14, 1986?”

There was a pause. Then Sylvia grabbed the cookie. Then she spoke, in a clear Oxbridge voice. “May 14, 1986, might have been ‘85. I could check my diary, if you like.”

“Extraordinary!” gasped the lady from *The Times*.

The tab staffers started panting.

“Did someone do something naughty then?”

The mayor beamed. "Probably a Democrat!" he chuckled. "Joking, joking!"

"What did they do?"

"Oh, what he always did that year. Such a pest! Waving his wanker at my pram. "Can have the rest of the cookies?"

"Do you know who it was?"

"I should say! Every other day for six months. The Mayor of Golem, that's who. "Can I have the cookie."

Rachael smiled broadly into the one-way mirror. But nobody noticed. The press hounds were racing for the video cameras in the Pressroom and the Mayor had passed out cold on the floor.

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Cussion muscled the limo through the late morning traffic on 10<sup>th</sup>. He'd actually spent most of the morning, since getting the call, sitting, waiting, for the very important person inside, Station 52 to come out. He read *Mush*, his second favorite tab and in particular "Fruit juice smoothies that will keep her home for breakfast." When she suddenly she came out she jumped in the back before he could even think to open the door.

Rachael X looked up from the passenger seat in the rear of the limo and said to Cussion, "Driver, I need to stop at City Hall for five, you wait, then I need to be at the Carlyle for 12:15. Can you make it?"

"I'll do my best."

"The right answer is, 'yes'."

"Yes, Ma'am!"

"You must be new."

"Yes, Ma'am. First job since football."

Rachael laughed. She loved being out among the little people.

"There's a luncheon there for Mr. President. I have to present him flowers, from the Mayor. What do you think about that guy?" She knew drivers were told that they

should never, never, express political opinions to their customers. She was testing him.

Cussion was thrilled. The very first day on the job, the first customer, and he was being consulted on affairs of state.

"Well, he's very lucky ... "Rachael snorted, "to be married to the President ... or else he'd still be blowing queers on Christopher Street."

"Yes, Ma'am."

"You didn't hear that."

"Deaf like dump truck."

Rachael just then got a call on the blue - her personal - phone. She turned away.

"City Hall", she barked.

He did not know who she was, except attractive, commanding and on the phone.

"Cre ..er..ar, I don't know how you spell it! ... just transferred from International Terror ... or ... Major Fraud ... see if you find ... yes ... no ... run a ... no, I won't tell you what he looks like! ... How did he get into the S.S.? ... .... A Longitudinal Attitude Profile ... How did he get ... It is a major break of Security! ... The Mayor's Office does so have access .... I am speaking for the Mayor! ... Call me back!"

She sighed.

Cussion wondered who she was, obviously somebody very 'big' the way she dressed and talked. He wondered if she had a regular homeboy, or maybe a handyman once a month. But then, could a wombyn such as this run such a risk! They stopped for a light at 43<sup>rd</sup>. He saw she was staring at him in the rear view mirror. He believed that he still gave great face, even if the profile had fallen off, 'a little'. This what they said in Group'. It hurt a guy who was once loved for his body. Still, she was noticing. Maybe with her driver? He sucked in his stomach extra hard but all it did was make room for flabby pecs to fall further from his chest.

Another call came in. She took it eagerly. "Zim! How'd it go! ... Yah ... yah ... fabulous. Be there in five! Lock his desk! .... Step on it driver!"

Cussion sighed. Not his day. Not his type. He wondered again as he had so often, maybe it was time. He was washed up on the shoals of childcare, getting fat while his wife got to be a grown up. He would take the boys and split for Canada. Sally

wouldn't miss him or them. He heard that if you played hockey the guys up there could keep their peckers. Such a place! Such a place!

## Chapter Four

**RECTITUDE, RADIANCE, REBOUND**

“Remember what I said. The slightest touch below the neck and you squeeze the alarm. It’s in your pocket.”

Melissa squirmed.

“It activates the hormone trace detector and the heat sensor.”

Mummy was a fanatic.

“And don’t wash until you’re scanned.”

Daddy wasn’t that bad, almost harmless, in fact. And he had more money than mummy. What’s not to like.

“Renoldo will get the readings and when the .... He’ll call the S.S.”

The straps around her chest were too tight. Nobody else in her class at Miss Peabody’s had to wear a body pack for lunch time visits with their dads at the Access Control Center, except Cynthia Rothwell-Hepworth-Anderson who wasn’t in her class because she was in Grade Six and she had tits.

“What if he just shakes my hand? That’s below the neck?”

“Don’t be smart, young lady. You know what I mean.”

Melissa sat in silence in the back of the maroon limo, the one for the trip to school and the doctor. Mother was staring at her in high definition on the screen. Stony silence. Eventually Elizabeth Eaton-Jones broke the impasse.

“Please don’t pout, dear. This is my quality time. Did Mrs. Abdoula-Harizarixapapa make your eggs the way you like? I told her to”.

“Yes, they were fine.” She lied. Why send yet another illegal immigrant back to the deportation cells, just because she forgot the tarragon mustard. Besides her mother lied first. She wasn’t at home last night herself, nor was she on any Sunday night when she shagged the cowboy in the East Side Penthouse. Did mother do D.N.A. tracking on Sunday nights!

"Are you frightened? You haven't seen him in two weeks. He's always looking at you funny. He might be horny. Very dangerous."

"Mother, he's cross-eyed!"

"That's no excuse!"

"Darling, look at me."

Melissa looked right into the camera lens, then momentarily right past it into a passing steel grey limo where two dykes in pin stripe grey suits and black leather ties were reading the *Wall Street Journal*. They looked supremely happy. No doubt - *no mother!* She wished she could run off with them and be their houseboy.

Now her mother's personal secretary, Ronaldo, was also smiling at her in the monitor. He nodded and smiled as mother spoke. She found his intense supportive intimacy very trying.

"Darling, you know I wouldn't put you through this if it wasn't absolutely necessary. But it's in the Court Order. You *have* to visit. No visit, no money. Then where would you be?"

"I could get a job! As a cleaning lady."

"Don't be foolish. You're much too rich to work."

"It would be fab on my resume. 'Summer intern, broom handler.'"

"Anyhow, why can't I go to his condo after school. When I go to the Access Control Center, I'm missing Trig class!"

"Far too dangerous!"

"Trig is not dangerous, mother. What can happen? You already cut off his wee-wee!"

"I didn't do it, darling. The doctor did it. In his own clinic. For his own protection, darling. Totally."

"I could get a job at Luigi's, sweeping up the scraps of lettuce. "That'd be neat. Could I walk home?" She knew the answer. Which was why she asked the question.

"Don't be smart. Darling, you know you can't be out in the streets. There are certain sorts of young boys ..."

"Wild Boys?"

"Yes, Wild Boys. They are dangerous ..."

And better looking than that cowboy you ... which she didn't say.

"No, You can not sweep lettuce scraps. You're going to Smith and Yale and then to Wharton and then the I.M.F.! Or Johns Hopkins. You don't sweep lettuce!"

Ronaldo chuckled.

"Oh mummy, you have no sense of humor!"

"Not true. I told two jokes yesterday at Committee. They all laughed ... at both!"

"Only because you're paying their hotel bills!"

"Darling," she replied, ignoring the cut, "you're all I have left! Don't be cynical. *I'm* not cynical."

"I sort of like the old guy."

"Darling, he only acts old so he can get close to you and ... .."

"All he did was hug me to get me warm."

"And in doing so he touched your breasts."

"Through my parka!"

"He touched your breasts, sugar plum, that's what you said."

"But I don't have any boobies."

"Well, you call if he does it again."

"But mummy, he's so fast," she said with droll malice calculated to ruin her mother's day completely.

"Dearest, I'm so worried for you. I'll be here at the Trust company ... "

"Counting the money?"

"... and then at the club and then at the church with Planning Committee for the reception for the Return of the Virgin."

"Oh, is she coming?"

"They say, very soon."

"You call Ronaldo if you want to talk. As long as you want. You're billable for him."  
Ronaldo nods. "The moment he makes a move."

"O.K. O.K."

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A giggle of uninvited ankle biters were gathered at the elevator foyer as Caswell Tredgold-Martin rushed across the lobby of the Hotel Carlyle. He was late for the Luncheon with Mr. President, the Consort, in The Room on the sixty-third floor. To get to the Express elevator through the giggle he had to wiggle. He was wearing his best Babbladuchi. Babbladuchi made fabulous suits, silk woven with Shantung mohair ... 'so light, you feel *nude*'. And Caswell Tredgold-Martin, rushing across the lobby of the Hotel Carlyle checked all the mirrors, to be sure he wasn't. But, now he realized to his horror, that dark circle of underarm anxiety had stained his Babbladuchi. And, worse still, as he wiggled through the giggle, some the ankle biters were sniffing right up to his armpits and pointing and snickering.

Had the luncheon been on a Wednesday, instead of Monday he would have to face these two events on the same day. But who can schedule perfectly? Who? Maybe Dr. Annequiche could have given him some of the little pink pills, which make things so pleasant. If only, if only ... if only he wasn't Caswell Tredgold- Martin!

If he known it would be so intense at the Access Control Centre with Melissa he would have had his black Armani in his Suite on the 52<sup>nd</sup>, to change on the way up to the luncheon. How was he to know Melissa would cry all the way through the session and try to hug him through the glass. Very unsettling. Melissa caused him more anxiety than his even his missing son. At least with his son he had faith that he would soon be captured and fixed and be no trouble ever again. Nobody seemed to think how to fix the girls!

Today was the first day he was publically wearing his red earring and the first time a red ring had been worn to a State Function. There would be those who disapproved but he was determined to earn for the red the same public acceptance as the green. Indeed, the safety rating should be higher. Should be. Total removal, what could be safer!

He kept his arms tightly at his side as he rode up the elevator to the Royal Dining Room. A very formal elevator operator with a green ring spotted his red ring, and sniffed him. What an idea!

His invitation was taken at the door and he was ushered to a table at the back. He tried to slip in quietly. Jason Mason was at the podium droning on about, whatever, nobody was listening. But everybody was listening to Heckie Johnson very loud whisper from three table over.

“Hey, Tredgold, I’ll trade your suit for my Caddie.”

Twenty people laughed. Caswell prayed silently to the Goddess that he might disappear. Why, he asked himself, did he give money to this jerk. The First Man noticed the commotion, looked over, nodded and then smiled. Then Caswell noticed Rachael X staring at his armpit. Death could not come too soon.

Mason Jason was beaming at him. “Caswell, Caswell, welcome. Welcome. Better late than never. And thank you for most generous contribution”.

Caswell had no idea to what he had contributed but wasn’t the slightest surprised that he had. Someone downtown looked after the money!

Someone placed the right hind quadrant of a featherless, skinless, laser-toasted, free range, Zen chicken in front of him. At least seven people were watching to see if he ate any of it. Being famous was not so thrilling.

Jason Mason was babbling on about the false compromise of chemical castration, that ‘every man was free to chose’, the tremendous opportunities for those who choose ‘correctly’, blah, blah blah, the Green Ring Certification Program and the voluntary Red Ring Program - the latest and very best guarantee of sexual safety from the Tredgold Clinics, for the mature male. *‘Take it all off.’* And somewhere after the skim milk cheese and before *eau minerale glace ...* Mason Jason petered out.

Caswell was pleased with the speech. A mention, the light touch, in this company, all that was required. It was a semi-official endorsement of his new program. He was the only one in the room with a Red Ring. The first ‘establishment’ – if you must – figure to acknowledge, nay, boast of the fact that he had given up his pecker. As if, as if, he were a dangerous sort, where this procedure would be done in the camps. The crowd was staring at his ear, not his armpit, which made him very proud. The moment was historic. Not everyone makes history.

The crowd gave Jason a big hand, immensely glad he had finally stopped. And then, the moment they had been waiting for, The First Man strode to the podium to give his address, the ‘Green and Red Equals Brown’. Richard Rossitor was remarkably calm, even jovial, given his day. He pulled from the inside pocket of jacket the noon edition of The Post and held up the headline for the crowd.

### **Presidential Cocksucker.**

“So”, he began in his famous, droll, off-key voice, “how’s *your* day been, so far?”

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“Mary, darling”, the Kitty purred as she sidled up beside the Radiant one, embracing her dear, dear friend, “Mary, darling, you should have told us you were arriving *today*! No one is ready! We were expecting you next week!”

Mary Darling, the Radiance, smiled radiantly and yet with that serene disapproval that scared and scarred the souls of normal mortals, but not that of Miss Kitty.

“We were expecting you *next* week. We have a whole week of events planned for the launch, appearances, interviews ... it will be fabulous. You’ll be fabulous! You are fabulous! We look after everything! Darling, that’s why we get along! Isn’t it? It’s all planned!

“Can I make a teeny suggestion, teeny ... Let me put you in hiding, for just a few days. For the boys in marketing!”

“You are so sweet. But, Kitty, it was time to come into town. So here I am. Looking after business.”

“Well”, Kitty continued, ignoring the potential wreckage of the most expensive marketing launch of the decade, “well .... We’re so glad you’re here! And you look, better than ever! ‘Divine’ is the word! You will be a smash, whenever you arrive. Rectitude has been a smash. Sold out in the major stores. In a week! Unheard of!! Radiance will sell itself! Itself.”

They were seated at Kitty’s table at Twenty-Six. The normally polite denizens of that normally glamorous establishment were so normally polite. Women gathered round their table, ostensibly to chat with Kitty, but clearly drawn by Mary’s astonishing radiance, the glow, a very definite golden light that seemed to shine from beneath her skin.

When she was first spotted in the stable where she worked outside Heart Stop, the scouting reports spoke of this. And when Kitty made her first trip west to investigate she was blown away. She thought at the time that Chemicals had got there first and had mis-applied some of their Strontium 80 lotion. She made a panicked call to Legal. Who called Research. Who called Chemicals. Who confessed they had got there first, taken some DNA samples from the glowing girl. They had succeeded in creating glowing rats and baby pigs but it faded after three weeks. If the rats had sex it faded within six minutes. It was interesting, and important, that the glow worked as well in artificial sun and moonlight.

But then the breakthrough. If fresh D.N.A. was injected every month the rats – who refrained from sex – maintained their glow. Then the pigs, every three months. And then the humans, with once a year injections. Researched developed a very rich cream which replaced the need for injections. And – bonus – required reapplication of fresh product every six weeks. Alas, for the consumer, a very expensive Treatment to maintain. But not, alas, for United Federated Omnipotent. If they could

maintain their source of D.N.A. from the glowing girl. Because second generation D.N.A. from the rats and pigs had no kick.

All Kitty needed, desperately, was to get her signed! Monthly, fresh, D.N.A.! A finger nail would do it! So little ... for so much! And Kitty would be rich beyond imagination! Her gratitude to the stable girl would be bountiful. Of course! The stable would be preserved ... maybe bronzed ... but all that could be looked after later. After the signing!

The photos of Mary, which launched Rectitude, the odorless perfume, had had a stunning effect. The image of Mary was magical. The street level touch ads had been a smash. People claimed the touch cured arthritis and leprosy. Radiance was a second linked product that would be over the moon. What she needed was a lock on Mary's D.N.A. so U.F.O. could be assured of source material to run the market.

Mary ordered the nettle soup and spoke at length about the filth and corruption of Golem, Kitty had re-hydrated lettuce and eight-grain, vegan crisps with sea salt and nodded in seeming agreement with every word, confident in her heart that this aestheticism would not last. Gently she steered the conversation to 'business', it was after all the corner table.

"We were thinking, oh, I don't know, some kind of facial cream, moisturizer, maybe a powder. Your skin is so fresh. And ... maybe some shoes?"

"Monetizing, are you, my dear?"

"Business. Business."

"I might be interested. I have decided that there is work to be done in Golem. Which needs ... funding."

"Oh, that would be wonderful, if you stayed. I just thought ... well ... that you'd want to get back to the stable. But we could provide you with plenty of 'work', if you want to stay. Marketing already has a list of requests for public appearances ... and they know how to 'monetize'. We could get you a manager ..."

"I need a proper place to stay."

"Darling, leave it to me. I'll find you a place you will love." Surely she has enough in petty cash to get this hick a flat Hoboken. "But we need to sign something. For Legal. They are such pests about the paper."

"Well, I have been thinking."

Not a good sign, thought Kitty.

"I'll want a final edit on the advertisements."

"Darling, don't bother your head about those details. I'll gladly look after that."

"They're not 'tasteful', if you know what I mean."

"Really."

"Too 'sexy'."

"I'll speak to marketing. U.F.O. is definitely against it, in the modern age."

"Not appropriate for my purposes. I want the men in shirts, long sleeves.

"And, I should tell you, I'm talking to Global Megatron ..."

"You won't be happy with them, darling! I guarantee it!"

"Oh ... did I mention .... I think I need a Cathedral for my work ..."

"Darling, what a fabulous coincidence! Oh, but I'll bet it is no coincidence! It is fate! It is divine intervention ... I have just the place!"

"I've heard," Mary replied, with a slight arch in her soft as silk voice.

Arch enough that Kitten, the best negotiator and closer in all of U.F.O., took two steps back. "Darling, here are the keys. Why don't you have a look at the D.N.A. clause in this tiresome contract that Marketing seems to want.

"I'll speak to Legal about the Cathedral. We can add it as an Addendum, whatever that is."

"Send you're proposal, and draft agreement round tomorrow and I'll have a read."

"We can work together."

Kitty took up her purse and opened it looking for the keys.

"Inner left zippered pocket."

"Thank you."

Kitty handed over the keys to to the Cathedral to the glowing dream across the table and felt not just the keys but millions and millions slipping from her fingers.

"It's a bit drab but with her touch! It could be fabulous. Do you know Laura Ashley?"

Mary clutched the key to cheek and glowed so bright for a tasteful instant that Kitten had to look away from the blinding light.

“Is she the one with the chintz?” Mary sighed as she pushed away from the table. “I might like that.”

She floated across the room in radiant splendor and out the door and into the traffic glowing brighter and brighter. The traffic screeched to a crashing halt like the waves of the Red Sea as Moses passed through.

She floated! She floated. The Twenty-six-ers were staring, at her feet, her dainty shoes, to see if, whether, they touched the floor. They did not! And it came to the Kitten in a blinding flash! Shoes! Shoes - to go with the odorless perfume and the radiant blush - Rectitude. Radiance and *Rebound!!!* Rebound - Shoes - that never touched the floor. Walking in clouds! She saw a vision of Mary floating over acres of chained mesomorphs reaching skyward, trying, hoping, to touch the glowing, floating, angel. *The New You! From UFO!*

Who was this mystery woman? So full of surprises! Suddenly Kitty had a flash. It occurred to her as she watched Mary float out the door that if, if, the D.N.A. samples she could now provide from the finger smudges on the salad plate she slipped into her purse ... if the Chicago lab could marry these to D.N.A of the mutant salamanders which grew arms and legs ... why not a cream that re-grew the ruptured ... if, if ... but if it worked, Radiance Rectitude and Rebound would have another, and the greatest, in the product line based on the stable girl from Love Sick. Of all her product ideas that would revolutionize the world - Restoration!

And Kitty rushed for her limo.

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The receptionist's interruptions were always welcome but never more than this day. Boring was not strong enough for Derek's sentiment. Five hundred lane blockage by-law infraction cases were piled on his desk. And Management Services wanted a full report on why he was so slow at his job. Despair! Oh, to prosecute rapists!

“Charles DeltsLats to see you Mr. Ducker.”

Charles DeltsLats was one of the names the Reverend Wiley Perkins had given him, father to Moon, licensed faggots who could sign his Certificate of Verification. But Derek he had not phoned. DeltsLats was better known ... well know ... as Chuck the Fuck, who publically proclaimed he was the best 'paid' hunk in the City. For what he was paid, he did not say, other than 'his time'. He no longer serviced' wombyn, since the Correction, only males and he ran the famous gay bar, Buns. Now that F-ball was

gone, he was, if not the last, certainly the most famous 'big guys, making serious money from his bod. For which he was a hero to many in the underground of the unreconstructed.

In strode Chuck, well-scented, muscles barely covered. He was bigger and better looking than any of his pictures, heaps of golden wavy hair, tied back, tumbling in a ponytail to massive shoulders. His green earring glistened. His famous bum rode high and hard, following him like the trunk of 57 Caddie. Derek got a feeling in the pit of his stomach. The pile of shit work on his desk screamed at him. And his commitment to same-sex conversion suddenly surged.

"Mr. Ducker, may I call you Derek, Derek," The Rev thought you could help me out of a jam."

"A man of insight," Derek replied.

"The blue jackets picked up my boy last night. Such a problem when they get to that age and size ... I'm sure you know. Moon is his name."

"How can I help?"

"I am very anxious to get him out of custody. How do I put this? He's never been ... tampered with ... We're old-fashioned. I want ... he has the biggest prick you have ever seen. It would really be a terrible ... The Rev said you would understand."

I'll bet he did.

"If there's anything we can do for *you* ...

"Poor little guy. Works for me part time as a dancer."

Which, Derek thought, probably means his ass is worth five bills a night.

"I've got a club. Buns. Ever heard of it?"

"I don't even know what he did, if he did, you know."

The Presbyterian soul of Derek Druker recoiled at the faintly disguised offer of unofficial emoluments. The rest of him wondered how many times Chuck the Fuck would punch his fag card.

Derek went down the hall and pulled the Full Moon file and returned. "'Profaning'. He's up on 'profaning'. He said 'pussy' in a public place."

"No! 'Pussy?' He wouldn't even know what that is!"

"Call me, Chuck."

"Surveillance. West End Y. This is ... open and shut ... it appears ...sentence is no option ... the camps."

"Can I visit him? I'm Chuck. Call me, Chuck. What can I do?" He tugged his earring. "Anything."

Derek's heart stopped. Piss surged right up to the tip of his pecker and seemed about to squirt down his pant leg. But Derek was a brave and strong man, considering his height and receding hairline. Derek wrenched his pecker valve shut. He kick started his heart. He motored on. This was bribery. This was corruption. This was opportunity.

"Why don't you drop round the Club," Chuck oozed.

"I might do that."

"Come to the basement door in the back."

"I'll find it."

"Hey, where ..." Derek mumbled, with studied embarrassment, "where did that file go? You know Mr. DeltsLats, the administration of justice is sometimes so inefficient. Files just get lost."

Chuck flashed his pearly choppers and bunched his traps.

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Stragglers from the 3 pm tour were exiting the Cathedral through the bronze door and starting to climb into their bus when Nevada Smith wheeled his sleek black Testosterone XX-750 into the spot just in front. Their religious reveries first disturbed by the bass rumble of the car now crumbled in erotic distraction as Nevada's sumptuous body sauntered up the steps and in through the decorous portal.

"It's the angel Gabriel", one whispered to her fatter mother, "come to deliver us!"

"Well, you go git him, honey, before I git delivered elsewhere!" And she was, loaded back on the bus for the return trip to the Golem Home for the Discontinued before Nevada got the message.

Inside the church the junior organist was riffing Bach with an intensity and such profound volume that the non-believers lit candles and hunkered down in the pews to reconsider their options. The afternoon sun poured through the west rose

window and broke into a thousand shafts of red and blue and gold and into the largest of the latter Nevada stepped and lingered and let the heavenly light wash over him and make him glisten. After a few minutes Nevada took a candle from the rack and proceeded slowly back down the center isle and then took a seat near a smartly dressed woman of indeterminate age, her head bowed and covered in a shawl. She seemed not to notice him and he went to his knees close by in his own private reverie, or something like it.

Anywhere else in Golem such a close approach of a man, even one with a green ring, to a wombyn in a public place would have set off alarm bells and the police would be racing to the scene. But here in the sanctuary all seemed safe in the pious and omnipotent surging power of Bach.

Kneeling crumpled in the pew Nevada's striking physique folded into a lump. And Kitty Krasner was so well draped she seemed just another piece of virginal statuary in the Cathedral's vast collection. None but the most persistent and nosey would have detected that their whispered words were not directed to God but each other.

"Where the fuck have you been Nevada! I've been here thirty minutes! We're buying seven Japanese banks, closing at 5!"

Nevada looked over, ever so carefully. He saw the calculator in the folds of her dress. "Well, ma'am, life is what it is. And looks like you been keeping busy."

"I'm required in my office ten minutes ago."

"Heck, you shud be there then."

"If you want to play on my team you play by my rules!"

"Some like it big. Some don't."

Nevada wondered whether the big bucks he earned off Kitty's A-list clients were worth the aggravation but it was never the right time to break off. She was more than the Testy, she was a pension, something hard to come by in his business, especially after the Correction.

"I'm sorry," he drawled.

"You are not!"

"Look, bud, there are other cocks on the walk. Shape up or you're back to turning tricks in the bus terminal."

Nevada sighed, a heavy sigh of resignation. He was too tired to resist. Pussy beats cowboy every time.

A passing blue rinse heard the sigh from beneath the tousled hair and mistaking it for some transporting religious reverie, she sighed herself in minor ecstasy. A priest noting her reverie sighed his own profound relief for the rewards of the soul hard won. Three supplicants kneeling at the altar, heard, and they sighed. Five green rings in the front row sighed. Soon these murmurings filled the Cathedral, as if, some thought, the Holy Ghost was rushing about, Now Kitty sighed. Such was the sweet chant of their curious liaison.

But after this brief moment of mysterious calm, Kitty came to her sharp point – the lull before the storm. So, your church matron, your Sunday fuck, what’s her plan for the One True Church and this new Virgin, the one who floats?”

“Well, hells bells, Kitty, we weren’t talkin’ ‘bout a virgin! We had others things ...”

“I don’t send you these high class lays just to exercise your dick!”

“Kitty!”

“Come on, Nevada. Don’t try to tell me she doesn’t tell you her problems once you mess up her hair-do.

You blush! How charming.”

Nevada sighed. “Well ... hell ... she did say something, there’s talk, she said, ‘bout a virgin comin’ to town. All I know. Maybe two.”

“What about zinc, they unloading their stash, or holding?”

“Sellin’ next week.”

“Good boy. Good boy. I’ll put a short position on your margin account.

“I will say, I admire your expertise in orgiastic frenzy and spiritual unburdening.”

“Well, we all have to specialize these days. You taught me that. Want to give it a go. Love to know your secrets?”

“Not me, stud. Never mix business with business.”

“So who’s up next? Somebody under fifty, I’m hopin’.”

“What I like about, Nevada ... after your cheek bones and bow legs ... is your unflinching devotion to duty. There aren’t many men like you left.”

“Stop with the kissy-kissy. Put the money in my Bermuda account. This is risky business.”

“Someone very special. I mean *very*.”

Nevada knew what ... who ... that meant. "No shit! When?"

"She likes your style.  
Tomorrow night."

"She's needin' cowboy comfort.  
"Not surprising, is all."

About this point Nevada noticed Kitty's paw was trembling. This was surprising. No one tougher. What could, what ever, rattled her.

"Somethin' troubling your pretty heart, Miss Kitty?" Comforting powerful women was a business and it was definitely work - for which he insisted on payment. And plainly dangerous after the Correction.

"Well, I have to tell you. I'd like not to ... but I have to. It's just ... There is somebody else making it with Elizabeth Eaton-Jones."

"So what. I'm the main event."

"Don't be so sure. You're cancelled for the next two Sundays."

"No shit!"

"He's very young. Nevada, you're getting' .... I mean I think you look fabulous. But the customer is always right. I can't afford to lose this client. It's not the money."

She seemed more than satisfied the other night.

"Always the last to know!"

Nevada rested his head on the pew in front. He fancied himself a craftsman, maybe an artist. "I was great!" he sniffed.

"Well apparently you're not the best judge of that sort of thing ... any more."

He felt his belly. It was firm but the ripple was gone.

"Nevada, the thing is, I can't take chances. There is too much at stake."

His ass was shaped nice but it was, he had to admit, soft.

"There is no option, stud. You've lost it, plain and simple."

His shoulders were getting hairy. Did that really matter?

"I'm sending you to the Ranch."

He lifted his head into the blue hue from the rose window. A tear rolled slowly down his beautiful cheek.

"I've put the new kid under option.

"He's fantastic, Nevada. I'm speaking professionally, of course.

"Your professional pride is wounded. I'm sorry. You are, bar none, the biggest prick I have ever handled. A legend! But times change."

"Who is this kid?"

"Name's Full Moon. Works for Chuck DeltsLats."

"Gimme a break! A fag!"

"You can't tell these days. Kids swing both ways. Got no pride. Or too much."

And now Nevada was sniffing, the way cowboys do when normal people cry.

Kitty hated it when her studs cried. It rusted her steely resolve. Nevada was still blessed despite his advanced age. And, more to the point, there was no way out of the turf war with DeltsLats. Her own business model of covert, het-sex was deeply threatened by a fag takeover. Kitty had a plan. Kitty always had a plan. Nevada was motivated. She would use his muscle in other ways.

"Nevada, here's another option. We'll get Beth back on track. You'll just have to look after this puppy. Unpleasant, perhaps, but that's what cowboys do, so I've heard."

"What!" was the faint reply.

"You heard me. Take him out. Warning to DeltsLlats."

"That's not my thing."

"I don't want you to fuck him! I want you to ice him."

Nevada was frozen in place in the sullen pew, a slowly rotting slab of sagging flesh. How did it come to this?

The Cathedral bells began tolling afternoon mass.

Kitty hissed this time. "Ice him. I don't care how or where. Get rid of him. And don't call for money until you do. Your accounts are frozen."

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Hank parked his pickup a safe three blocks down the street. Not his favorite neighborhood, boarded up storefronts every fourth building. A dozen old dames were warming their asses round a fire in the trunk of an old Chevy. Poor things – no doubt ‘retired’ hookers, lucky to be alive after the Correction. They all carried fake ID available for twenty bucks just about anywhere as ‘retired housewives’. Same diff. But he had no interest in busting them and he passed, head bowed, down the street to the Tredgold Outreach Clinic.

The Clinic was very downscale, not just plain but the windows were painted black and protected by an iron grill as defense against Humbert’s firebombs. No amount of scrubbing could erase last week’s graffiti – SAVE YOUR PRICK FOR CHRIST.

Humbert kept a token picket on at all times, even at this outlier clinic. The usual crew of loonies were there, parading, shouting, but today there was also a huge gang of photographers.

Some of picketers had been busted thirty times. Hank hated doing that and only when he had to. He was on their side. He loved his dick and they did too, their own, usually, not his, but even if, it was the principle of the thing. There was one razor thin girl who carried a sign “Don’t give it to them – give it to me.” She reminded him of Susie Swartz back in high school. He did give it to her once or twice. Charity fucks. A stud’s duty. Probably the only guy ever. Shows how charity pays off in the long run. The rest of them, a zoo wouldn’t take. With friends like this? No wonder some of the so-called real men still preferred the enemy. But Hank swaggered down the street and kept his poker face. Above all and everything, Hank was a cop.

Even though his partner Jake did his picket duty in disguise, you couldn’t miss him. If he wasn’t the most famous he was certainly the biggest Anti-Emasculationist on the line and picket captain to boot. Hank admired Jake for up front political guts. Being there was a big career risk.

Hank did not know why the commotion here in this boonies. Usually the pickets were downtown at the ritzy clinics.

And then, there was the reason for the paparazzi! Limping out the front door, looking pale, supported on the arm of Caswell Tredgold-Martin himself, was the President’s faggot husband, both of them wearing red earrings! The Jimmys went bananas! The two got in their limo and the Jimmys and the crazies chased it as it sped into the night. The clinic was left deserted.

Jake was done. They got in the truck and headed downtown on a mission of their own.

## Chapter Five

**TAKE BACK THE STADIUM**

There is a natural order of things, relations, behavior, bred in the bones and made manifest in manners, good manners. They, his *natural* servants, stood quietly, aside, heads bowed slightly, but alert to his needs. Comfortable in their skin. He presided over the guests, or, perhaps alone, read the papers. And then one retires to the library, or the conservatory, depending on the guest and season, at the right moment with just the right token from the table, a coffee, a sweet. We do this not because it is pleasant for the guests but because our presence makes it difficult for the servants to clear the table. We do this naturally, instinctively, so they can fulfill their role, just as we do our own, by enjoying our coffee away from the detritus of the meal. Caswell believed good manners were not a 'social construct', as some vulgar Marxists claimed. And so he, this particular evening, retired, with coffee in hand as James and Lesser James bore away the plates and cutlery to a room called the pantry where, somewhere, they cleaned and polished them, by some mysterious process, mysterious to Caswell, which they knew, from birth.

Money does not buy happiness, Caswell thought to himself, sitting by the fire, but, the thought continued its roll out, as James brought his brandy, but a lot of money does. Nanny Gumbo was calling from the nursery that little Essence was ready. Even though Melissa was living with her mother, notwithstanding his best efforts, he had 'custody' of the two babies, a total joy. And, Zekus. God bless Zekus, his 'little man', this very moment away at camp. Children, he thought were wasted on wombym, who belonged at the office and in the committee rooms, doing what they do best. The two little ones were a total joy, to raise, to shape, to guide, in one's own image. And it was money, a lot of it, to pay for round-the-clock Guards, nannies and cooks. He did not begrudge a penny. Elizabeth, rich in her own right, paid him ten thousand a week for her share of the care of the three boys. Melissa only cost him three to Beth, plus fifty per cent of school fees. He was a man of the hearth. His formal portrait, just about completed, showed him at the cradle.

Sabamba brought him slippers. He was so proud of Sabamba. He had financed his PhD. at Columbia. And now, of course, he would return to his Nigerian village, to teach cheese souffles and semiotics. He, Caswell, would give little Essence his bottle – pure bliss – and be free to spend the rest of the evening with Avery. Tonight would be Avery's first hot-wired aversion session with Little Whammo. Avery would never make his mistake! He even planned, contrary to Dr. Annequiche instructions, to slip in a picture of Beth among the big breasted monsters ... and ... Whammo!

Caswell and Beth had married under the old regime. They both now agreed that at thirty-eight, they really didn't understand what they were doing, influenced by the

wrong sorts of people - their parents. It was incredible to think back on the primitive methods of conception employed that had produced Zekus. He was opposed from the beginning. After that, the syringe. And the next was from the sperm bank deposit he made before he had it removed. And the last, Essence, was not his but a genetic cocktail of physicist, neurosurgeon, acrobat with a dash of poet. Procreation without Penetration. He thought this would please Beth. But it did not. She wanted Creation without Pregnancy but mostly Life Without Caswell. He gave her a bank when they split. It was almost amicable. But then she wanted Zekus. He gave her another bank and they settled on the agreement Zekus would go the camps before age thirteen. He pretended to be opposed.

It was during their disagreement over Zekus' de-penistration that he had his greatest idea. Of course Zekus would get snipped, but why should society wait fifty years before male rage was finally and totally purged. Voluntary De-Penistration. VDP. It was so obvious and after some experiments in Angola, so easy, as a medical procedure. It was really a problem of persuasion, persuading the male population to voluntarily give up their rage. The Tredgold-Martin Clinics would do the procedure for free, the Red-Ring Program for adults.

He thought of Zekus. He was getting big and suffering that telltale hardening of the triceps and fuzz on his upper lip. The Camp Director had confirmed two days ago that they had ten sperm deposits, five more than Regulations allowed. Next Sunday he would be snipped and Caswell would attend the ceremony. He had a ruby earring to give him, for dress, and a glass one for everyday.

Caswell thought, as he sometimes did, he should have a bath to prepare for the feeding. He rose and headed for that room, somewhere down the hall on the left.

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The Coalition meeting was fractious as always but, this time, also jubilant. Radical Misogynists in their baby blue headbands sat on the left as always, and as always disputed. The Masculist-Humanists sat the right in their traditional plaid t-shirts. The Gay Coalition BrianWith Anybody strung its banner across the back and sat in the front. Regular Guys / Fourth International had a particularly big turn out, And as usual Take Back the Stadium hollered at all the wrong times. But never mind, the day had been a triumph.

Humbert was in fine form as he spoke to the Mass-Male United. He had a wonderful way of posturing lewdly as he prayed for the boys in the camps. The geldings loved it.

They cheered wildly when he announced the most recent camp break, even though they all knew 'solace and comfort' were actionable misdemeanors. He read openly the famous and banned passages from *The Secret Sex of Mothers and Sons* and they

prayed in unison for its imprisoned author and that they might recover memories, any memories.

Aside from his strident opposition to de-penistration, Humbert also advocated a Death Premium payable to men. The average female has a life expectancy seven years greater than the average male ... blah, blah. The idea had not caught fire. But he kept plugging away. The bottom line, idea was not too complex - guys wanted to fuck, not get paid to die young but if the fucking wouldn't happen and the dying would, then ... gimme money honey!

E.P. watched from the back row. She loved that he was stubborn. His thinking, not so much. Mostly she wanted another riot, and more clients ... and a new car.

\*\*

"Rachael. We call you back to Goddess, to the Circle of Love."

Rachael Y hugged the wall. She was shy to a fault.

"Join us. Join us," the Circle chanted.

Someone took her hand and gently pulled her. "You look divine. Join us."

"The Goddess unites us, The Goddess forgives us. There is no sin among the sisters."

"Join us. "

Arabella was always so regal when she spoke for the Goddess.

"Take the Little One Horn."

And so, slowly, Rachael came to the Circle. The White Witch shifted the stones to make room for her and she took her place. The Red Witch handed her the ear of the toad.

Confessing was ... complicated. Her repentance was a kind of misunderstanding. The sisters didn't know there were two - of her. They would think it was the Mayor's very prominent Executive Assistant.

The thing about it was, is, that she still coveted that taut teenage boy bod she spotted at the gym, the angelic choirboy. She had been free of such wicked thoughts for months ... and now this slide, this horrendous up-welling of heterosexism. She feared her inner passions as much as she feared the sisters and more than she feared her sister. And the damage to the cause if ever rumors started. The Correction had been salvation for all ... except, it seemed she had not been corrected.

She stroked the ear of the toad. Tears welled. The chanting rose to a crescendo.

Her confession, tearful and convincing to the sisters, was a total lie. Two nights ago after stretch class, she had followed him from the gym in the night, driven on in the dark by the demons of lust. But she lost him. She checked the juke bars but, nadda, nadda. She thought over and over of the hair, the face. In her lonely bed that night the demons spoke to her! 'The choir! Check the choir!'

In the morning she attended Early Mass. And there he was! The tall one in the back row. And in the great Cathedral she had fallen to her knees to worship the false God who ran the place and who, perhaps, hopefully, please, might be so wonderful as to make an introduction. But this she did not confess to the sisters.

\*\*

After much prevaricating Derek Ducker went to Buns that night. He toured the club itself before he went to the basement door as instructed.

The club blasted his frigid mind. He had heard that the gay way had boomed after the Correction and especially after President Rossitor's inauguration ... and her husband came to that vicarious respectability. But he had no idea!

The day's events had not hurt business! Buns was not just a large dance bar, it was five or six of them, strung together by dark tunnels. Well, five or six, that he found. And a piano bar, a winkle room, several chicken coops, dungeons ... French Gothic and Dracularian-Romanian and a back room for square dancing and another for laundry and dry-cleaning. It was packed. He was speechless – not that anyone could have heard a word he said in the roar and racket.

There were cross-dressers, leather men, cowboys, and total mix of green and red rings but most of the crowd had no ring – straight guys doing their after-hours thing! If the Commission thought sex was being brought under control they were dreaming. He saw a thousand by-law infractions in twenty minutes! Licensed hustlers with green rings were everywhere, which was a kind of relief. They could be found ... if one wanted ... that sort of service. And the prices were posted on the wall!

Eventually he reported and was admitted at the back door by a golden-haired young man who took him into the back office where he met again the famous Chuck the Fuck, this time decked out in his leathers.

"So, I seen you on the monitor. Checking us out? See something tempts your fancy?"

"It's quite the place."

"Actually a slow night."

"Really!"

"Strange to you, huh?"

"Yes, it is."

"Well, what's happenin' is this. Straight guys, like you, deciding to convert. Get certified. Need a green ring. Just like you. Need to get fucked, get their card punched. Just like you. We're about the only depot in town."

"How's that goin'?"

"Good business. Can't complain. Guys buy in bulk.

"And you know, we get a lot of paroled sex offenders. Come here for relief. I'm the best thing that every happened for the wombyn of Golem."

Chuck undid the leather halter he wore over his massive chest. "Ever have sex with a real man, Derek?"

"When I was a kid."

"Like it?"

"It was ok."

"Get fucked or what?"

The guy was disturbingly direct and very big and obviously had a dick to match. And he was grinning.

"Actually, no."

"Well, ain't I glad you come to me first.

"You looking good, Derek. I can tell you work out.

"You got a card to get punched?"

"You just going through the motions to get a green ring. Or you already in the choir?"

"I guess ... I guess ... I'm open. About joining,"

"Well you're gonna like it!

"And I think it's real nice," Chuck drawled as he un-cinched his belt, "that Moon's new best friend got a virgin ass which is all mine."

## Chapter Six

**AND THEN TO THE DANGLING FAGGOT**

"Wake up, pretty boy. You're out of here." The clock in the corridor said 1:15. It was the middle of the night.

Augie had been dozing since they took Moon out of the holding cell. The place stank. At first he was very scared because he no longer had the Full Moon to protect him. And then he was gone. But none of winos came on to him. He was so tired. And then he slept.

It was very mysterious. Court was in the morning. There were no lawyer around.

"How come? Where I'm goin'?"

"You want to stay? Hurry up. We gotta fumigate."

The fat guard tossed him the clothes he had been wearing when he was arrested. It was cold in the cell. He wanted to stay wrapped in his blanket. His flimsy ass-crackers and deep clefted T would do nothing to warm him. But the guard tore off the blanket as if ... as if ... he wanted to see the naked choirboy shiver.

But once Augie was standing and in his costume and lookin' good, he perked up. Was this adventure or danger? Alas, for the choirboy, he wasn't very good at telling the difference.

The guard cuffed him behind and steered him out of the cell and down the hall toward the outer door. Augie started getting hard, wondering if it was the sisters who were taking him ... back to the laboratory at the Church school for more 'experiments in behavior modification'.

"And here's yer f-g green ring, faggot!"

"Augie picked it up and put it on as if he owned it, with his best imitation of Moon's nonchalance. But ... where did this come from? Moon got his the same way three hours earlier when he was released. He wondered, was it his fat lawyer who arranged this – and what would it cost him, in terms of face time. Not likely to have been Sister Margaret Rose. Was Moon's famous dad, Chuck the Fuck, that famous, and powerful? Maybe a hook-up with such a daddy was something he should think about.

The cold steel of the cuffs cut his wrists and gave him a major hard-on as they pushed him roughly to the van and then in it.

After a while, not a long while, the van stopped somewhere. The door opened. It was a dark street, somewhere scuzzy.

“Out you get, pretty boy.”

Augie climbed out.

“Free to go.”

Augie looked at him puzzled and held up his wrists behind to be unlocked.

The guard laughed. “Na. Too easy fag boy.” And the fat guard took the key to the cuffs and hurled it down the dark street into the night and climbed back in the van and sped off into the foggy night.

\*\*

Six men squatted, backs to the concrete wall beneath a crumbling railway underpass. Yong men. Stylish haircuts, trim and fit, but dressed like refugees from a flop house.

A train could be heard approaching, a far away distant rumbling that grew louder and louder. Soon enough it was overhead with a deafening thunder.

Four men jumped to their feet, two hesitated, the youngest. There were a few friendly kicks, to encourage, and soon they were on their feet, at first tentative, but determined.

The four began to shout at the top of their lungs, the four then the six, over and over, that their words might be heard over the roar above. All shouting in glorious disobedience, in perfect naughtiness, in defiance, the forbidden word, the thought, the idea now banished ...”Pusssssssyyyyyyy”.

As the train passed they collapsed panting, then rose as one and grabbed as one the crotch of ones who hesitated.

“Swear, Zekus, swear!”

And he swore. “Fuck, fuck, fuck.  
I’ll do my best.  
Fuck, fuck. Fuck.  
Long to reign over them,  
Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck!”

“Right on, Zekie!”

"Hershel, do you swear?"

And he took the oath as five hands gripped his privates which were solemnly consecrated.

"Thou who has heretofore been known in the world of wimps as Zekus, shall henceforth be known among men as Butch. Be worthy Butch!"

Thou who has heretofore been known in the world of wimps as Hershel of Harlem shall henceforth be know among men as Stiffy. Be worthy."

"Alright!!!! Let's do it! Let's find some pussy!"

Zekus grinned - and whispered to Hersh, "Do you know what it looks like?"

And off they went, on their bikes and blades, the Wild Boys of Golem.

In the shadows two older men watched with pride. Hank grinned at Jake. "Love to see to face of pecker-less pop when he learns little Zekie is gonna keep his and is wild in the streets."

"Hope he finds somebody sweet."

Jake looked sad. "Know how many young guys left with peckers that will ever taste pussy?"

Hank said, "I think these are the last six."

Jake was sadder still. "Still, I'm proud."

"Now", Hank said, get your ass in the cruiser. We gotta chase these bad ass boys, as if we mean to catch them."

\*\*

Augie hunted in the fog for twenty minutes. He heard the key land, but where? There wasn't a soul around. Nobody to whom he might say, 'Hi, I'm a choirboy from the cathedral and these cuffs are giving me a hard-on. Seen any cuff keys flying around?' But then he heard a car approach and he ducked into the nearest dark alley. And what to wondering eyes should appear but gargantuan Greyhound bus, which passed slowly, then stopped a dozen yards beyond his person, quivering in the ally. He was panic- stricken. He rehearsed. 'Hey, hi ... I'm a hard-on ... from the choirboy...'

But nothing happened.

Carefully he peaked around the corner into the street. Where he observed a matronly, but shapely, female form of a figure, descend from the bus. She was in a white Spandex body suit under a billowing trail of diaphanous veils and skirts and capes, five seven wedding dresses reassembled more or less as a cloud. The figure was appealing to him for its classic form, just as Moon was, for his variant of neo-classical perfection.

The figure proceeded down the street, floating more than walking and the bus followed. As the bus rounded a far corner and disappeared, it knocked over a trash can, which rolled and clattered across the road, spilling refuse ... and a shinny handcuff key ... on to the pavement!

Inserting a tiny key in an almost as tiny a hole in a pair of handcuffs behind your back is a task for the agile and required intense concentration. Such that he did not notice the sleek black limousine roll up. The driver rolled down his window.

“You look like you got a problem, son.”

“Well, I guess I do. I was looking for my keys ... which fell out of my pocket ...” The driver was obviously military. “... and I am grateful our country is safe in the hands ...” The driver got out and came over. He had enormous thighs and an endowment that would make Harvard proud. “The keys work these ... things ... on my wrists ...”

“The handcuffs?”

“Is that ... that’s what he called them. Yes ... and ...”

The Sargent laughed. “You want, I could help with that?”

“That would be ... yes ... good. It would be good. They hurt, kinda, not too much”.  
(They hurt.)

“Need to kneel down, first.” Which Augie was not hesitant to do, given the captain’s eager bulge. Augie’s diligent labor quickly produced an inspired erection. The major lifted Augie to his feet and then carried him to the hood of the limo which was strangely marked PRES TOO, and with deft hand removed his pants – indeed faster than Augie could ever manage – and with equally deft fingers was probing the hole where his cherry was hiding when ...

They both heard hollering from down the road, running and shouting, “Pusssssy”

The Kernel knew they weren’t talking to him. And probably not to the choirboy. And before they were spotted by the notorious Wild Boys they were back in Augie’s dark

ally, Augie was set free of the cuffs and they were stuffing their boners into their pants ...

Two stragglers from the boy mob staggered up, huffing and puffing, a black and a white. "You seen a beautiful babe and a Portland bus?"

"That way," said the General.

As soon as they had passed the General turned his attention back to Augie and slid his big hand down his pants and took hold of his nuts. Augie was paying close attention when they were interrupted, again, by two Amazonian-type females on a Harley, driver and passenger, shouting at each other by name, Bert and Cow, and at the two men standing by the limo, who could not understand the words spoken but directed them anyhow in the direction of the now long gone Portland bus ... and the Wild Boys.

The General grinned. And bent him back over the hood of the limo and kicked Augie's legs apart.

At this point there was a tapping from the window of the limo. Augie had blanked out the obvious, there was likely a very important person inside!

A window opened slightly and there was a voice. "Leave this one. He's very nice but four is better."

"Sorry kid, duty calls. Get you again."

And the limo sped off toward Portland.

Augie thought ... no complaints. He scoped up the cuffs and key. Maybe he could play Sargent with the blond guy in the second last row.

Over? Don't even think it!

Four teen girls wheeled up in an armed dune buggy.

"Wild Boys?"

"Thatta way."

Then a police siren! Augie was of no mind to tell them the obvious and ducked into the alley. And indeed they knew the way to Portland and sped past. He thought. But he heard the cruiser screech to a halt. And doors slam. He pressed hard into a doorway in the dark alley. He heard, "This way Jakey." He saw their flash light coming.

Suddenly the door he was pressed against opened. He tumbled into darkness. The door closed just the search light approached. He could hear them trying the door but it didn't budge. He lay very still. There was a very faint light off to the side of wherever room he was in. He could discern a bulky figure standing over him.

He felt nylon next to his cheek. A fat leg filled the nylon.

"Lordy, lordy, sweet buns, you is filthy dirty. Gimme those clothes, baby boy, all of them. Momma's gonna wash you all up."

\*\*

Sex Ordinance 509 notwithstanding, there remained in Golem a few discrete establishments where the sex professionals, elite sorts, gathered to suck a few and talk trade. It was in one such, shall-remain-nameless establishment that Nevada happened on Red Mary. She was exceedingly voluptuous in a red halter top and fringed leather vest. He was rather drunk and she wore a button, which said 'I am virgin'. He laughed. Said 'so am I'. She laughed.

She said 'buy me a drink'. They had five screwdrivers between them. He knew she wasn't a cop because she had no money.

In the dark days that followed, when asked to tell the story again of how they met, he would say, he thought he was picking her up to save her from Golem, to teach her how to dress and talk and not to wear that stupid button. Her bravado touched him. She made him ashamed because his only political principle was to cover up and hide from trouble. She had bigger balls than a rodeo cowboy. She would tell the story that she thought he was hunk who needed a good time and didn't have any money.

They told 'john jokes' for an hour. And talked about 'the west' from which they had both fled. After a few more she confessed her lust for first-time, young guys on a no-name basis. ... and sentimental old codgers who just wanted to touch her titties. In his misspent youth Nevada had sold his bod as an inexhaustible teen sex machine. Two more drinks and he was confessing his current problem and banishment and claiming, hope against fear, that he was a better fuck now than he ever was.

All she said was, "I'm fair, I'm very fair."

In the early days Mr. Teen America was pretty much a stud position. You didn't need to play the tuba or do science quizzes. He toured a year with his shirt off and learned first hand the transcendant appeal of young male flesh, specifically his. It was only years later that he realized how much others had made off his body but not him. Not that he didn't have a red Corvette by the end of that year, thank you very much. A horse is damn inconvenient when you're paid to fuck in the penthouse. Being a sex object was fine work. When his term was up he got an undercover job with the Utah State Troopers as a recently released rapist. He'd visit the small towns and scare the

shit out everyone. It was intense and busy for the two months before the cops presented their budget to the Legislature. Then, after they got their bump up - nothing. Woe to the liberals who didn't see the absolute necessity for helicopter gun ships to fight rape. But being the visiting rapist wasn't a job that lasted. Then, just in time, he got recruited by Ms. Kitty, who brought him to Golem.

"Are you really that good? You look good." A cigarette hung from her lower lip. The smoke swirled around her head, her silhouette framed in door by the fog and streetlight. She let the vest slip off her shoulders and the hot pants off her hips.

Real men don't talk about it, they just do it. And he did. And he was very, very good. Great in fact.

And she was a virgin!

\*\*

The price of admission to his new life was steep - a certain call to the jail to deal with business arrangements there. Chuck was clear, 'I don't do token fucks., gonna rape you, like you payin' for'. And Derek's words were clear, 'not asking'. Chuck took him in a bear hug of an embrace and forced his tongue deep in his mouth like. One hand ripped open Derek's jeans and took eternal hold of his tiny manhood. He let Derek feel his huge cock before he forced him to his knees and stuffed it down his throat. Strong as he was, and struggling against it as he did, Derek loved being possessed, owned by the greater force. He fought it and he wanted it. He was raped and he consented to it. They broke all the rules. Chuck got him in a full nelson he could not break, bent him over and entered his tunnel. The chug-chug-chug of the freight train in his bum made him twitchy all over until they came together in a torrent.

The price of a 'second go' was steep - all the money left on his Visa credit limit. And another call to the jail to deal with some 'choirboy' friend of Full Moon. Derek had always imagined he was a dominant type but now understood life differently. Chuck knew his business and sealed the deal with the kind of orgiastic frenzy only available to men in heat who are out of juice. By the time Chuck was finished with Derek's conversion therapy, the last Uptown Lex was two hours gone on its way. Chuck allowed him to sleep on the floor, in the familiar ritual of debasement and gratitude. To sleep, perchance to dream of that first embrace and golden curls falling round his head like a veil, to being taking and surrender to the greater force.

He rode the early A -Train north to get dressed for work. He was staring vacantly at the adverts, five hunky models with heaps of hair, and they were staring back at him, cocking their hips and pouting like girls. He flexed his pecs for them. Chuck said he had great pecs. He did. They just stared blankly.

What explanation could there be for a would-be sex prosecutor entering his apartment building at six am, in torn jeans, except one that would wreck the new career for which he had now qualified himself. Fortunately the concierge was asleep.

\*\*

Biff took the reports as the Wild Boys straggled in. Wild Boys reported on the honor system, so the records for that night show a whole lot of wild fucking going on. Most of the talk was of the diaphanous jogger who Butch and Stiff had failed to catch. Nor had the motorized teams who were trailing them.

Butch's mind was elsewhere. How she had changed! It was only luck he hadn't blown his sister away before he recognized her. They found a quiet place away from the chase to chat. The thought of sex with his sister almost spoiled the whole thing. Sacha and Macha joined them, then Stiffy. Who would want to rape them. He and Stiffy showed them their 'thing' and they showed them their hairless pussies. Ugh! If they raped them he knew they'd tell at school whether they were 'any good'. The boys didn't even know what that meant, besides they had more fun when the girls tied them up and tickled them and Butch allowed that maybe he'd quit the gang and be rich again but only if he could keep his pud and he'd like to see his dad even if he would be mad that he took off from the camp and his arms were too skinny to be a Wild Boy and maybe his mom still loved him, even if she was a wild and reckless cunt.

\*\*

At five a.m. a crowd, even a small one, at the Bergdorf windows was 'not normal' ... not normal at all! 'Not normal' pushed Hank's alarm button. And Jake, Jake was hot wired to go DEF-CON Six at the slightest weirdness. Which was why they worked so well together as cops, they fed off each other's paranoia at the deepest level. So when Hank spotted this little situation of unusual-ness. He gestured, ever so slightly, to Jake, and they both silently mouthed the word - 'weird' and wheeled the squad around one-eighty and made for the trouble makers, weirdo, hippy, terrorist, freaks, standing quietly in front of the Bergdorf window, to give them a good shit-kicking before they had any chance to give some stupid-ass explanation, which they would be duty bound to write down in their little books.

They screeched to a halt and radioed to the SQAT Team that they had first dibs, they got into their helmets and masks and loaded their uzis and leap from the car and swaggered across the road, reading rights and busting heads along the way, to see what was so interesting.

"Freeze, motherfuckers, or you die!"

The folks ignored them.

Hank and Jake threw five Jamaican cleaning ladies up against the wall and emptied their purses so they could have a better look.

The words "August Days and August Nights" were scrawled in lipstick on the window. In the window seven sexless mannequins hung upside down spinning languidly, dressed or partly dressed, as the case might be, in silk pajamas or bow ties or topless beachwear. The backdrop was an enlarged photo, clumsily hung, of some deserted meat-packing plant.

"What a f-g way to sell PJs," muttered Hank in disgust.

Then he noticed that one of the sexless mannequins had no clothes whatsoever and its arms dangled loosely over its head and it had hairy arm pits and its throat was slit and it was bleeding from the crotch and it was Raymond Rossitor, the President's fagotty husband.

"Holy shit," murmured Jake, "did he ever have a bad night!"

Hank cast his eyes around, first to the crowd and then to the bloodless mannequins and then to the dagging fagot. He boxed the ears of the closest cleaning lady who was sobbing too loud and kicked a passing puppy as evidence for a PTSD pension from this crime scene.

"Jakey," he said, can I borrow your comb? Eye Witness News 'll be here real fast".

## Chapter Seven

**BRAZEN AND CHEAP**

Mary rinsed the night catch under the tap in the washroom at the back of the Portland bus. She sprinkled on a little lemon salt, wrapped them in newspaper, like fresh trout, and put them neatly in a plastic bag in her purse. And she wheeled a way from Buns like a stunt driver in a gangster flic. Buns, she thought, was the deepest and darkest pit of the metropolitan cesspool of depravity and corruption, fag or not, whose cleansing she had just begun.

\*\*

Sally knew the story was on the Proscription List. He knew too - because she told him three times a week! But he was reading it again. She knew one day he'd be caught. The boys would blurt it out as school, 'Daddy reads, "*The Little Lame Halfback*". She would deny she knew. She'd say he did it when she was at work. She'd say, she'd say ... he hid the book in the garage. She'd play the warning she gave him (and surreptitiously recorded). That part would be fine. But, but ... he'd be sent to camps, probably for gelding ... and there goes the daycare!

She could hear him upstairs. The twins loved the way Grantley did it, loud gruff bass voice, high squeaky voice, wild sighs and histrionic faints. One on the left and one on the right, the twins would clutch his neck trembling, each time he reached the part where the fat coach sent the little lame halfback to Canada on waivers. Then they would laugh and cheer when he finally signed a ten-year no-cut contract with the Bills for 20.8. And they cried, but only a bit, when, after twelve years as Best Running Back, the doctor pronounced that his brain had been dead for six and his Real Estate Brokers license would require annual renewal.

Anyway, soon it would be time for the boys themselves to be sent to the camps for clipping so what difference did it really make. Camp clipping was mandatory for any male off-spring of football players. Would it really, this tiny, transitory memory of male roughhouse, really, scar them for life? Besides, he was so touchy these days, since he started 'working', as he called it, if she confronted Cussion on this tiny matter, he might desert and *not* take the children - and then where would she be? She was, she could admit to herself, maudlin and permissive.

But then who stayed out till three?! Who came the morning after her birthday to find her all time favorite desert, angel cake with peeled cherries, shriveled almost to melba toast ... on the kitchen table with unlit candles?! Who slept on the sofa in the recreation room that night and didn't flush the toilet for fear the noise would wake the boys!? And him.

She heard him upstairs start the story a fourth time. She knew that he knew she would sneak out without saying good morning, and he was giving her time so the boys wouldn't see her. He was reading extra loud, manipulative bastard. How dare he!

But who could face him! What self-respecting wombyn would tolerate such the creature ... as he had become, with his 'indomitable abominable abdomen', he joked! Joked! He wouldn't touch the yard work, rake and sweep, things a man does best. He was the new breed of sloth and decay. Too much soccer and gymnastics – all that was left – on the telly. He was uncontrollable with money. He had a cupboard full of jogging shoes, none of which, ever, touched pavement! If he threatened suicide again, she would accept!

She had just about decided to call it quits. She would have the children delivered – if they would go – on alternate weekends to her mother's and she would visit them there. It was important to keep up the connection. She had read that young boys separated too early from their mothers often grow up to be lawyers.

How could she have botched it so badly? She had the great job but she needed meaningful support on the home front ... something more than a Posture Perfect Foundation Plus Super-Sleep Mattress. She had only herself to blame. She bought him at an early Bachelor Auction right after the Correction was proclaimed, with her first pay cheque. He was gorgeous then, and so was she. He was funny, great in bed and followed her like a puppy. Now she couldn't give him away. What smart girl would take a guy with no hips? Children aren't that hard on a guy's body.

The phone rang. She snatched it up but not fast enough. She heard his voice. How did a champion halfback with a great basso learn to speak that whinny pained, half-sobbing ... "Hello."

"Is Sally there?" came the other voice.

She gasped. The gall! The thrill! It was the dyke from the bar!

"I've got it, Grantley." She jumped in before Big D. could say another word. "It's from work." She lied.

"Sure." Click.

"Is that the dude who's about to be wasted, legally, I mean?"

"You've got a lot of nerve calling me here! I'm a married wombyn with young children."

"No means yes, right".

Icy silence.

"Hey, doll, married girls turn me on. Love to light them up. It's my mission in life. Besides, the kids will love me. I'm a cop. With a gun!"

Sally finally spoke. "What do you want?"

"You."

"Aren't you a little brazen?"

"And cheap, too. But a great lay." Big D laughed. "Meet you tonite?"

"What are you going to do to my husband?" Did she care or was she just curious?

"Don't ask on the phone. Too hideous and bloody to describe. The phone wires would fry. Meet you at eight-thirty? How about Cathars?"

"I really don't know."

"Alright, alright, I'll arrest him at seven, stash him somewhere cozy for the night. Give the grown-ups some quality time to really get it on. I'll get the kid's picked up from Daycare and taken to your mother's - in a squad car. They'll love it! It'll be fantastic! I'm fantastic! Whadda ya say, doll?"

"My mom plays bridge on Tuesday nights."

"Trust me, she's standing by."

Sally was speechless.

"82 Melrose. Cathars. Corner table. Eight-thirty. Don't disappoint me."

Sally could not form words. It didn't matter. Big D was gone.

And so was Sally, out of the house as fast as she could, so she wouldn't have to face a tear-streaked, waddling, ex-halfback with an illegal volume of sentimental football stories.

On the front stoop was the morning paper and the headline:

CLINIC HEIST NETS DICK'S DICK.  
RANSOM - \$10 MIL FOR HOMELESS MEN  
HUMBERT

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Melissa rolled in at five.

“Rather late for a girl of ten,” sniffed the doorman who actually made her show her pass, cheap, petty, macho, bullshit. The Co-op bylaws allowed her to shoot him if he made her feel ‘uncomfortable’ - it was private property - but not in the lobby. But that would hardly be enough fun. He was old and slow. Clearly he did not appreciate the importance of the battle her Avengers were waging in the small hours for The Right To The Night, against slime and scum and Y chromosomes and specifically the Wild Boys, from good family, perhaps, but genetically deformed from birth – from before birth. This was her destiny and it was not to be interfered with. Fun or not, the doorman would have to ... and yet, and yet ... he was wearing his Electro-Sex-Flasher which was not even glowing. Inexplicably, perhaps shamefully, she softened, let it and pass, and she slipped him the customary nickel bag of Alaska Snow as she entered the elevator.

“Our little secret, Max. The work of the Goddess.”

“Naturally, Miss Melissa. Of course,” he replied, stuffing the dope deep into his left pocket.

Despite their fierce battles on many subjects, Melissa’s mother, Elizabeth Eaton-Jones, understood that a young wombyn should be free in every way to express herself without restrictions. From her fifth birthday she had allowed her mother to come and go as she pleased, although in her heart of hearts Melissa had doubts that her mother had the maturity for such freedom. But she had so much money, what could you do! “That’s what money is for”, her mother would say. Her secret predilection for male sex was impossible to understand but ... what can you do! She was Family! At least she kept it secret.

Mrs. Abdoula-Harizarixpapa was waiting as always, to help her off with her boots and leathers. ‘H-Pap’, as Melissa called her affectionately, was a gem, much better than the others inasmuch as she was able to cope with mother’s wayward habits, because she was unemployed but a qualified psychiatrist, Melissa went into the library to relax before breakfast and reflect on the nights adventures. H-Papp brought her a orange juice stinger. Scatha was on the video-phone talking a mile a minute before she even got to sit down. That girl! “What were you *doing* with that cute black Wild Boy named Hershel under the bridge? The one with Zekus!” “Oh, him! None of your business!” “And what was Zekus doing out there in the night, like common Y tramp-rapist, when he should have been in the camp!” Anyhow, who was Scatha to talk! She tied and untied Zekus three times! What did she see in him! Brother’s cocker was so small - why were they bothering to chop it off! The black boy was way more interesting. He could dance, very strange, but still, and talk a rhyming language she had never heard. His pecker was huge, at least. He could tie

his own shoes, but he didn't, which, he said, was part of his religion and had a body that could sell beer to an Adventist! "So there!" And, as it turned out, Hershel was more scared than she was. Maybe it was because he was with her brother that she decided not to 'kill him'. What he needed to make everything right, she thought, was a lot of money. He might be fun to have around the house a couple days a week, especially because, she supposed, mother would hate his black ass. Which, it can be said, indicated the fault line in their relationship. It was the blackness mother couldn't handle, the ass, they would agree, was a ten.

Speaking of whom, Melissa dialed the Video in the East Side Condo, to check in, on and up with mother. Behold, she had left the transmission on! There was someone Melissa didn't recognize, with an incredible hairdo, tied to mother's bed. 'Bed' was a word that did no justice to mother's device. He was bucking like a bronco. Melissa's somewhat inexperienced eye could tell he was extremely strong in the butt but Mother rode him like a rodeo champ! Melissa switched on - record. Who knows when the church ladies might like a little entertainment, or mother might like, very much, that they not be entertained - and not be entertained with this particular video. Melissa needed options.

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The first thing that came to him when he awoke was that she was gone and his wallet was not. The second thing was the note, "We'll meet again! Fabulous tongue, Great foreplay, excellent control, sustained expert climax. A+. Red"

He rolled on his back, lay still for a few minutes pondering. For a virgin she had very refined opinions.

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Caswell loved his daily bath, the silky feel of warm whole milk laced with honey and rum. He loved to stew in it, 'his Park Avenue Chowder'. He loved his bathroom, the bath also served as his conservatory. The Balinese orchids thrived on Monteverdi on marble. Their captivity was unfortunate but, why not, they should enjoy it. Fair is fair. Marble, yes, but old marble, very old, scuffed by the ancient cavalry processions to the Capital, and the stained slaves of Empire, naked and sweating. Quadrophonic Monteverdi. Phones off but incoming available on speaker phone. Water temperature automatically adjusted to the verbal commands - 'warmer', 'stop', 'cooler', 'ah so'. All this installed by those clever Japanese fellows to whom he lent so much money.

It was not only himself he cleaned in this splendiferous chamber each morning and afternoon and evening. Each day of the spring and summer he would have brought in from the garden one of the champion rose shrubs, one plant a day, and he would personally pick from their tender shoots the spider mites and the little green ones and squish them to death, without mercy. And squab the underside of the leaves for powdery mildew, black spot with a Tasmanian rose dust, not tested on animals. The top sides he would polish, of course.

Of all the roses his favorite was Eleanor Roosevelt – the Pinko, who, like himself was unappreciated by his spouse but smelled very nice. And it was on her very first tender bud he was working this morning when the dulcet tones of his private, private secretary, spoke to him through the Japanese shower head. *Raptus interruptus*.

“It’s the Clinic, Sir. It’s Dr. Egostein.”

Dr. Egostein was his new Director and her enthusiasm for de-penistration exceeded his own epiphanic insight. He appreciated her Jewish perspective on the work she performed daily in his downtown clinic – “*De-penistration, - ‘circumcision plus’*”, she called it. She came to the Clinic from a research position in chemical castration but, as she said in her interview, she ‘preferred the knife’.

“Caswell, I’ve got some bad news.”

Why didn’t she call him he ‘Sire’, like the rest of the staff!

“We’ve had a break-in. It’s bad. They took all the removals, cleaned out the Discard Room to the bare walls. Very bad, if news gets out. But, it’s worse than that.”

“I hesitate to ask how it could be worse.”

“Mr. President’s penis ... is gone, with all the rest. It was labeled. And his file. Everything.”

Caswell went limp in his bath. Eleanor went limp on the stem.

“And there’s more. There’s a ransom note. It says, ‘\$10M for Mr. President! To Cas, from Hughie, with Love.’ The Radical Misogynists. You know him?”

“You’ve ruined my bath.”

“I have to go. The Police are here!”

"Wait!" he commanded, in a tone only two billion in Preferred shares could generate. "Which ... how many penises did they take ... how many did you have ... from Mr. President?"

"... I only had one ... the one that ... that was added, so to speak. The transplanted one. I've only ever seen two other specimen .... creatures .... with two ... penises. No one has ever left my office ... like that. I felt terrible."

Rick Two-Prick would be very, very, pissed off if his medical records were disclosed to the public.

"Have you got \$20 million ready to go?" she asked.

"Why twenty?"

"Ten for Mr. Humbert ... and ten for me!" And she rang off.

Before he could sit down the dulcet tones were at him again. "It's the Camp, Sir. Zekus ran off last night. They're hunting for him. But ..."

Caswell plopped down in the bath with a splash that drenched Mrs. Roosevelt, though she suffered it with the inestimable dignity of the truly ugly and very rich.

Gone! Fled! Disappeared! Loose in the world, driven on by those terrible frenzies ... he inherited from his mother! The doom and shame about to fall on a great family.

"Sire, Sire ... do you want to speak to them?"

Caswell didn't answer. He flashed on the television expecting the worst! "Tredgold Clinic loses President's Prick!"

"I'll talk to them later. Oh, and cut off their funding!"

"Consider it done, Sire."

And there on the screen was the blanched body of Rick Two Prick hanging by his heels in the Fifth Avenue window of Bergdorf's, two pricked no longer. And the Announcer telling all that the Tredgold Clinic had been burgled ... where Mr. President had been earlier for D-P ... and the ransom note ... and the file was missing and ... and ... and ...

Mrs. Roosevelt wrapped firm leaves around the tender buds and strained on her dolly to avoid the next splash, as Caswell Tredgold-Martin shit in the bath.

The President was already at work on her face when she got the dreadful news about Rick and the black limo, which would be out of service all day as they dusted it for prints, and cleaned the windows.

The whole week would have to be rescheduled for a Martyr's Funeral. It would be a nuisance, but it was do-able. Anyhow there was no avoiding it. It would have to be grand, proud, sad, humble. More to the point the Administration *couldn't* afford not to do it - it was totally free broadcast time, a prime time spectacle - the New Man martyred by the rabble, the dregs, the football scum. She did not begrudge Rick his big day, except, except she hated wearing black. And now her arrangement with Kitty Kryder for a special treat would have to be put off till Wednesday. It was just like Rick! Every time he delivered a big media op there was some sidebar backlash, which *she* had to suffer in silence.

Not that she was indifferent to Rick's demise. But in affairs of state time screams by like an F-18 on the way to Bagdad. One has to get on with it. She was who she was, after all was said and done, because she was efficient at all things, especially at emotions. Rick was dead and she had forty-five minutes for sad and twenty for mad. None of his sexual escapades, however brazen, warranted this attack.

The ransom note presented some special problems. The President had received a copy before she learned of the murder and had partially confided her difficulties to her Budget Chief, who, reading the note, addressed to Rick, asked, logically enough, why should he pay to get back something he had so recently disposed of. To this impeccable logic the President gave no answer. That was before the news of the murder itself. Now the point was even more obvious. Why pay anything at all when there was nothing living to attach it to, if and when? But still the President was deeply troubled.

The early papers had the news only of the ransom ... because the body had not been discovered by press time. Very bad timing. It was obviously the work of political amateurs.

The other top story of great interest was the foreclosure of the Cathedral and copyright assets of the Roman Church by United Fundamentals Omnip. Inc.. It was being called a 'recapitalization' rather than a 'raid', or a 'take-over'. The doctrines and beliefs of the One true Church would not change, said the reassuring statement. It was good news indeed. U.F.O. were people she could deal with. In the hands of their more enlightened and efficient management the Church and State could finally merge as she always dreamed.

But with regard to the body, there was something deeply troubling. The body had been found with no prick! This surprised no one but her at this point. Her staff all understood that Mr. President had laser de-penistration at the Tredgold Clinic Monday afternoon. And even the few who knew of the anatomical peculiarities of

Rick Two-Prick had assumed that both had been removed at the Tredgold. Not because anybody told them that, they just assumed. And not that she really cared what he did with his own appendum, but the other was not his to deal, and now they were one prick short! This was not the plan! And where was the marine sergeant known as Thighs, now mysteriously gone AWOL? He was not Rick's exclusive property either. Rosalyn had more than a casual interest.

Contrary to public perception, it was not Rick's indiscretion at Buns the night before that had precipitated his trip to the Tredgold. His sexual habits were worth a lot of votes. No, it was much deeper and older than that. Many years ago when they both were very young and hustling in the Castro, long before the epidemic, there was a time when Ross decided he would become Rosalyn. At first Rick was against it, but he reconciled himself on one condition, that he got the discarded member that he had come to know and love. Doctor Plastic took up the challenge, and, miracles of miracles, the graft took. Rick started making megabucks in the bars, and that financed her first campaign, and rest is history.

And now both pricks were gone! She definitely wanted hers back, and she didn't want to talk about it. But which one did Humbert have? His or hers? Did he even know?

'Dress well and carry a big stick', was the saying. Rick had carried hers for her. And now she would have to bluff.

## Chapter Eight

**ALL THEM DADDIES ARE FRIENDS**

Humbert reveled in the man smell of the locker rooms, the sweat-stink of the truck stop washrooms, the 'remembrance of nicotine', of which the best bars quietly boasted and always, the urine and vomit stench of the holding cells. The unemployed mob of the Massed Male United chanting in the street gave him a lift every time, the fallen and dispossessed crying out as one. But so did the squeaks of the therapy groupies dressed as toads and snakes, painted blue and drumming, hugging and weeping, gay and straight, black and white, jerking all together and remembering football. Humbert believed the rich males suffered as much as the poor. They had slightly different needs and fears and required a slightly different approach. But they too could be rallied to 'Fight the Correction'. And for them he wrote a book, *Proud Savage He-God - The Life Force in You*.

Humbert was smart and deep and far-sighted, and subtle. But Humbert was not just a rah-rah, in your face, trouble, on-the-stump, gas bag. Humbert loved his readers and the book tours and most of all the high-end Seminars. Humbert's heart went out to all those in post-Correction personal crisis, no less those with substantial disposable income. His midtown, mid-week, Mid-Life Intensive cost \$3000, if you have to ask. It required a more challenging, upscale presentation, something muted but powerful, something corporate, secretive yet anodyne. These were occasions Humbert seized with considerable but controlled passion. He didn't need to shout, just be intense. And to one of these up-scale, pep talks he was committed, unfortunately, on this of all days.

No gauntlet here of fat bros hawking *Male Rage*, no row of tables laden with T-shirts and posters and illegal, obscene buttons, no petitions, no protest postcards to the President. Just a tasteful sign on the notice board in the lobby directing Seminar Registrants to the Ivan Boseky Room 2B, Second Floor. 'STP Institute: 10:00am, sharp'. There was, at the door, an unmarked folio for each 'Member' that contained a weighty set of materials, evaluation forms, and a receipt for registration paid in advance. And there was, as well, an advanced copy of Humbert's latest book, *The Post-Correction Gulag*.

The Registrants were a sharp lot. The prerequisite for the Intensive was at least three prior weekend sessions, including at least one each of Purification, Deconstruction and Saturation. So by definition everyone present was a veteran of the Humbert System. That meant no infirmary filled with crash-and-burns weeping for their wasted lives. Humbert did 'hand-holding', very well, thank you very much, but not today. Humbert could address mid-week Registrants in compound sentences, instead of chants, and he openly enjoyed the challenge. Even though this particular session was large by mid-week standards it was intimate by the standards of the streets, and the typical 'weekend in the woods'. This particular

program, 'Living Type A', was intellectually demanding and frankly draining for Humbert and he loved it. That these guys were hard-core and tended to buy individual expensive follow-up Intensives was of important to the Marketing staff. Humbert, personally wasn't in it for the money. But the Marketing demographics indicated that these would probably be the last generation of males with disposable income before the Correction worked its full effect.

The warm-up this a.m. was a new Motivator out of Dallas, 'Butch Beef Heart', doing his signature piece, *Heart Like a Porsche*. Humbert got thirty percent of any follow up billings Beef Heart generated from this appearance, guaranteed by the exclusive management contract he had just signed with this avatar. He liked Beef Heart as a revenue stream as much as a singer.

Notwithstanding his strict rules of no-interruption during Intensives, Humbert did get a call on the Executive line from Officer Hank Crerar, passing on the urgent news of the demise of the Presidential Consort and the indignities to his pathetic corpus. The raid and ransom note of the night before, had been in the hands of the popular press since midnight. They were calculated to raise a rebellion. But a murder! Surely he, Humbert, was beyond suspicion for the hideous deed! What would be the point of murdering the man you were blackmailing? Everyone would see that?! Humbert switched into Strategic Command mode and gave Hank strict instructions to find and forward the missing records of the Tredgold Clinic on Mr. President. Those records would prove there were two - for those unfamiliar with Rick Two-Prick's unusual anatomy. Yes, The Mass Male had absconded with one, and that only for ransom. Once these facts were public everyone would know that Humbert, and the Massed Male, had nothing to do with the foul murder. No doubt the grisly job was the work of misguided Feminist assassins, or the witches, if you held to that effete distinction. Truth will out, and the real panic will set in! With any luck Caswell Tredgold-Martin, Dr Egostein and the President herself would soon be exposed as clumsy co-conspirators in the assassination and would perish on the pyre of public outrage. He, Humbert, would emerge the hero, not the villain.

Hank insisted he had to go. His partner Jake was pulsing with hormonal rage and desperately needed to do justice to someone fast or burst.. There must be Wombyn out there in desperate danger who needed to be locked back in their kitchens for their own good! And failing that they would find an off-shore oil rig blaze to cap or a KGB triple spy to turn in invading gooks to kill. Manly duty called.

"Soldier on, my man, the quest is great, the cause is just, and the Warriors of the Perpetual Him .... " But Hank had already hung up. He was a man of action, not words. Still. A shame to waste a good speech.

Humbert cinched up his glittering gold studded jock as the applause from above signaled his time. He dashed through the basement maze of makeshift dressing rooms and props to the wings and stage above and launched himself boldly into the spotlights and applause. And set sail upon the sea of seekers.

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It was understandable, thought Officer Krupki, that people would stare. After all, she was quite famous from the ads, and rather fetching. Of course no notation of 'fetching' would ever appear in his official Notebook where Sergeant Prim might observe his dirty thought. He thought, the crowd ought not follow Her so closely. But then the following group got larger and closer. They did not disperse when he asked her to "move on", or them to "stay back". Oblivious they were to his commands. He would have arrested Her for Mischief, but when he radioed for instructions the afternoon Desk Sergeant, ever the wimp, said "no way." And all Krupki could do was try and keep order as she and the crowd proceeded north on Eighth, snarling traffic throughout the midtown. Later when the Captain finally did give the orders to take her in for Public Nuisance, or Riot, anything, Krupki refused. Historians have likened this minor act of defiance to the guard who let the mob into Versailles the day they came for Louie and his Viennese show girl.

When Mary let her cape down, and her hair flowed with the breezes, she was that much more sensational. She looked just like the fair creature in the Rectitude ads, who had saved the world at Normandy, or was it Waterloo? The crowd continued to swell and soon spilled off the sidewalk and onto the street. And - She continued, sweetly of course, to ignore all entreaties from the constabulary to come back another day with a proper Parade Permit. She did agree to ride on the top of the Portland bus, which until then had been following at a discrete distance. A bus, Krupki noted, which only the day before had been reported hijacked. The Desk Sergeant ... bless his retarded brain, he meant well, ... thought this would help with crowd control. But from her perch on top of the bus Mary's radiant glow was that much more visible and caused even more excitement. The crowd tripled, then tripled again.

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Call it serendipity, call it brilliant timing, call it intuition, call it whatever you want, but it was this very morning that Kitty's Big Idea Memo landed on the Chief's desk, not five minutes before the T.V. monitors flashed on with Eye Witness coverage of the Virgin Mary's unexpected appearance. "Rectitude Is Not Enough - Get Radiance Toner For the Righteous Blush". There it was, a totally integrated package, from pre-teen to matron, starting in the darker range and ascending to the golden hues. And "Re-Bound - the Shoes that Make You Float". This was in-your-face, kiss-my-ass, marketing brilliance!

But she said nothing of the Phase Two possibilities in her Memo. There would be time enough, if the lab delivered and so far Kitty had nothing from them. Getting the

boss excited about renewable virgins before she could deliver would be a career mistake. Delivering that would make her a star, if, if and when they mastered hymen regeneration, as they claimed. It would be a marketing Mega-Monster. She was ready. "Once You've Got the Glow, He'll Really Want To Know. Are You?"

As Kitty walked into the office of the President/U.F.O. the bank of T.V. monitors was covering Mary from every angle. It was no surprise to the folks at U.F.O. that the cameras loved her. But the glow! They'd missed it completely in the clean air of the prairies, and at the Normandy shoot. She was a shimmering illumination in the smog and dust and pollutants of the big city!

Within ten minutes U.F.O. had five dozen hawkers following the parade peddling Rectitude, and Rectitude for Children, their latest. And shortly thereafter there was highly visible on the screen a giant Rectitude banner which the marketing execs themselves, at Kitty's urging, rushed out to carry proudly. United Fundamentals at its very best. Blitzkrieg! Spontaneous product demo. The Chief heaped praise and Kitty sucked it up. He took up her Memo! "Brilliant," he called it. A "marketing genius" he called her. He promised in front of the twenty people crowded into his office that she would be made Executive Commander, next in authority to himself and equal to the Chief - Presidential Executive Team, and the Senior Executive Vice-President, Operations, Finance and Planning, and the Chair of the Executive Implementation Committee. None of these guys had lasted more than eighteen months in their exalted positions.

The Chief rose from the Big Chair and insisted Kitty try it on for size. She demurred, but no longer than corporate modesty required. "Someday this will all be yours." "Shoes I could never fill." "I trained this girl! Would you look at her!" "The very best mentor a girl could have." "This is talent, folks, real talent." "I owe it all to you, chief." But just when they were about to orgasm, Sorenson, the prune from Legal, asked 'whether The Madonna had actually signed'.

"Not exactly," Kitty was forced to confess. Sorenson smiled slightly and slyly in the direction of the Affirmative Action staff and turned triumphantly to the Chief. It was not the answer the Chief wanted to hear. He dumped Kitty unceremoniously out of the Big Chair onto the splendid Big Carpet, on which she had only twice before in her career been called, and once hauled...but never dumped. She made a note to arrange that Sorenson's leather master pick him up in full drag at the Chief's office next Thursday after the Legal Affairs Committee meeting, on 'Purity of Thought', over which the Chief always presided, before going to Evening Mass.

About this time Sister Rosalia appeared on the screen. She had inserted herself right behind the Portland bus with a large contingent of bustling black robes and was doing her best to float. Everyone's recollection, and it really is nothing more than that, is that it was she who started the rumor that Mary was heading for the Cathedral. A self-fulfilling prophesy.

Kitty now explained delicately to the Chief that she had lent Mary the keys to the Cath as consideration for the "Radiance deal", the keys she had obtained from the Cardinal in the (unauthorized) collection settlement.

"Lent! What do you meant `lent'?" Sorenson whined.

"I mean `lent', as between women of integrity! She's a straight arrow," Kitty replied curtly.

But things were moving faster than even the executives of United Fundamentals could manage. Then in the midst of this burgeoning quarrel shots rang out from the T.V. monitors. Walter Cronkite flashed on gravely reassuring that "we'll be right back after these important messages." Sixty seconds later the instant replay was on, showing Mary fine and dandy, thank you very much, as the bullets from the Time-Life Building passing right through her chest in slow motion, frame by frame - in - pause - hold - pause - hold - pause - hold - repeat. No muss, no fuss, no marks. Replayed five times, backwards and forwards. And that was it! Bedlam! The marketing guys were at their desks within the minute doing the copy, layout and distribution for Radiance - the Memorial Edition. It would be in the stores by Monday or, said the Chief, he would gas the Day Care.

"Yes," intoned Sister Rosalia now on screen "it is the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, Creator of the Universe, Queen of Heaven and Earth, come again, as we have always predicted!"

"And the Executive Patron Saint of United Fundamentals, if she'll take the job!" shouted the Chief as he grabbed Kitty by the scruff of her neck. "Get us that Radiance contract printed up Sorenson, before you draw another breath. And leave the signing bonus blank. We're on our way to the Cathedral to pay our respects, and talk a little business."

The U.F.O. chopper was revved up before Kitty and the Chief were on the roof.

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In the streets the effect of the assassination attempt was electric. The crowd swelled to a mighty throng. Elizabeth Eaton-Jones was lucky to get her limo into the procession at all, but soon she too was on the roof of her vehicle, shouting "Re-Po-possess - Re - Po - sess - Re -Po - sess!" Not from my trust company, what fun! The staff at the Cathedral knew intuitively the destination of this strange conglomeration, even before the rumors started, or the T.V announcement, which was just speculation anyhow. From the moment the Cardinal announced, earlier that day that United Fundamentals would be taking possession, everyone had been so very glum. But now the mood was euphoric, except the Cardinal's. He was scheduled

to leave at noon. But by eleven the Plymouth was loaded and he was ready to go. It was arranged, he claimed, that August Knight would drive him to the country, but August Knight was nowhere to be found. And by eleven-thirty, as the procession turned up Cathedral Boulevard, Cardinal Corpus was somehow gone. No one noticed, no one cared, so ignominious was his retreat.

Cardinal Corpus was not the only person looking for August Knight, choirboy *errant*. Sister Sandra had designs of her own. Should she put him in the choir on the front steps to welcome the Madonna in the Hallelujah chorus, or, her true heart's desire, on the cross on the south transept in florescent gold body paint. None of the other boys had quite the right abdominal undulation for the midday sun, she thought. Her only possible substitute was a well-muscled Jamaican, who might – but only might – play well to a multicultural crowd.

Then in strolled Augie at eleven-forty-five. Lost in the subway indeed! This would be his last out-all-night! He would be on his way to the camps in the morning! But at this particular moment Sister Sandra needed him, symbolically speaking. Augie, for all his sins, was obliging, perhaps the root of his problem, she thought, as he was scrubbed, scourged in record time, highlighted in luminous yellow-gold body glow and fixed, albeit wiggling, to the ceremonial cross and hoisted high in the south transept.

By five to twelve the roar of the crowd advancing up the Boulevard could be clearly heard. From nowhere a make-shift band of trumpets and cymbals, drums and flutes, had assembled in front of the Portland bus, and was now leading the procession with its celestial percussion. Precisely at noon as the bus pulled up to the steps of the Cath, the clock in the bell tower rung out the hours in deep thunderous gongs, and then stopped forever. Angelic trumpets in the parapets sounded a clarion call, as Mary floated down from the roof of the bus and wafted up the steps.

Among the crowd of believers and instant converts was one handsome skeptic. For once Nevada Smith was not the visual center of attention, which perhaps explains his uncharacteristic indiscretion, for he turned to the person next to him, a total stranger, and said quite audibly, "I know that broad!" The stranger stared blankly. "Biblically, I mean." And he then disappeared in the crowd.

As She entered the Cathedral her radiance intensified, and a miraculous thing happened. Even in the bright noon sun the massive windows of the church glowed from the inside out, with a glittering splendor that made the Cath a crown.

In the chopper not too far above the Chief peed his pants.

The choir followed Her into the Cathedral and up the center aisle ringing out Hymen 319, 'Day of Judgment. Here At Last'. Mary paused and nodded, but without visible approval, to the human form of Jesus twisting and glowing perilously high in the south transept. The fulsome robes hid her voluptuous figure from all the rest, but

not Augie, who recognized the radiant jogger immediately. And he, who had always found crucifixion stimulated his imagination, a bit too much, suddenly wished his garb was as fulsome as hers, as he felt the blood surge to the most inappropriate part of his body, given his scanty robes. Sister Sandra would go nuts! And he knew for sure now as he felt darkly then, that the sultry midnight jogger who caught his fancy in the foggy streets downtown was somebody really extraordinary.

She ascended to the chancel where she hovered silently while the crowd filed in. When all those who could be accommodated were inside, and the outside speakers were turned on and collection taken, Mary spoke these words.

"I have awakened from a long sleep, and I have recovered my memory of many things. The journey has been hard, but here am I. Let us join together and put the Goddess in Her rightful place."

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"Who dies first? Tell me that! Every sixty-year old man in this room will die, on average 6.3 years earlier than every woman you meet on the street of that same age. Think about that! Now I know that this room has seven senior accountants and five smart attorneys. Well, tell me gentlemen - how much is that worth?

"What's the value of one year of life? Of 6.3 years of life? The lost income? The leisure time? The time golfing with your buddies?

"Immeasurable, you say? Well let's measure it anyhow.

"I hear \$35,000 a year. I hear \$45,000. I hear \$27,000. Depends on the discount rate, somebody says. Give me an average? Shout it out!

"\$36,000. I'll take that. And the present value of those 6.3 years? I hear it from that whiz kid in the corner - about \$160,000.

"Think about it. The first Wombyn you meet on your sixtieth birthday should pay you - wait for it - should pay you ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTY THOUSAND DOLLARS, that is, if we want to be *fair* about it.

"We hear a lot about 'fairness' don't we?" He twisted the word with delight.

"Well ask her, that Wombyn you meet, ask her for a certified cheque, or cash.

"I hear the brothers laughing! Does somebody think she won't deliver!

"Ask the next Wombyn? And the next? And the next?"

"Or ask them if you can buy 6.3 years of their life. How much would they take for 6.3 years of life breath? Offer \$160,000. I have a standard form contract you can take, carry it with you. Offer a cashier's check for \$140,000. `Sweetheart, sign hear. Enjoy the money. My man will be around to kill you on sometime next week. Don't wait up.

"I hear laughing!

"And what will she answer? `Don't call me sweetheart, Pig face.' That's what she'll say! `And fork over the money. I need it to support myself, because you die early.'

"I hear sobbing.

"I hear laughing because no brother would ever dare complain about their early death ... to those who profit by it.

"Those are the gracious good manners - that MOTHER taught you!

"Rise up, doormats. Rise up!"

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"....So smitten was I, so mesmerized, so blinded by *His* perception of *His* destiny and *His* burden, that I buried my hopes and dreams and pain and rage, buried them in servitude, in centuries of homage and of subservience. *He* taught me to worship the very act that despoiled me, to *pretend* that *his* violation of my body was a sacred visitation, to *pretend* my impregnation was a spiritual thing, that his slimy thing never actually entered my body.

"And, sisters, my greatest shame is that I preached this to you for two millennium. And I am here today to *repent those words* and seek your forgiveness.

"Amen," came the murmur from the crowd.

"I preached this blinding stupidity because for two thousand years I believed it! Strange but true. I believed it.

"And then one day in Heartstop, Idaho, where I have been passing my present life, I woke up. I don't know why. I don't know how. I just woke up. I woke up in this body. Why? I know not.

"Amen, amen." The voices were louder.

"May-be it was the day I heard a Wombyn telling her story on the radio. One day she suddenly realized, in her graduate seminar on the 'Feminist Theory of the Daddy' ...

she suddenly recovered her memory, she said. 'Daddy is both the theory and the Monster'. She remembered things she never knew. Things she never imagined she could imagine, but things she now knew were true. Evil was in her heart and her heart belonged to daddy.

And do you know what?"

"Tell it, sister, tell it!"

"Here is the dangerous truth!"

"Amen." The cry was sharp and clear.

"And do know what the Goddess told me that morning in Heartstop, Idaho, when I woke up from my two thousand years of blindness and stupidity and remembered what was true? Do you know what?"

"Tell it sister, tell it!"

"Amen, sisters. Amen. She told me, 'All them daddies are friends!'"

"Amen, AMEN, AMEN!" The words resounded to the rafters. Spontaneously, miraculously, the choir broke into to refrain, instantly and in perfect harmony, "All them daddies are friends, lord, lord, all them daddies are friends..."

She tried to hush the crowd, but the choir continued in a thunderous and melodious rage... "Lord, Lord..."

And slowly from within the refrain grew the chant, from out of the refrain came the word, first in a whisper and then in a shout, until it drowned the song with words of vengeance, "Kill them now, Oh ... Goddess ... Kill them now! Kill them now!"

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"Alright, now, Thunderheads, listen up, moment of truth – moment of truth ... "

"Tell it! Tell it!"

"Ten years ago, when it was the hot thing to do, how many of you *claimed* that you'd burned your jock strap? Not that you actually did it, just that you told somebody you did, somebody you wanted at that moment to believe you did it? Come on, come on, hands up, I know you're out there. It's usually forty percent.

"There, see, you're not alone. It was the rage - what shame is there admitting you were 'with it'.

"It looks like it's fifty percent to-day.

"This is my private little opinion poll. I know, not a random sampling and all that. It proves what I want to hear. And since when is that a bad thing?

"Alright, and six years ago when the ten football players were burned to death in a locker room fire during a co-ed riot at Ohio State when the Exit was not so mysteriously tied shut by that infamous rope of singed bras. And no one was charged. Remember that? How many wrote the Governor? Or participated in even a polite protest in the streets? Don't lie because you're ashamed. We'll deal with Shame this evening. Hands up! Wow! If you Thunderheads are telling truth this is totally excellent. Eighty percent!

"Here's an easy one. How many of you have attended a sensitivity group where they told you to spill your deepest, darkest, innermost sexist secrets? Hands up, hands up! Usually it's everybody. And, see! It's everybody!

"Now, how many of you spilled? Okay. Everybody again! Now, how many have felt foolish ever since? See! And of that group, how many spilled to a Wombyn? Look at that guys! Everybody again! And - here's the killer - how many married that Wombyn! Wow! Do those numbers tell you something real important? You bet they do! This afternoon we're going to practice Obstinance and Silence. You guys need it real bad."

"Now, quick, how many have smaller than average pricks? Don't think! Hands up!

"Surprised! I'm not. In every session for four years, except two groups of convicted murderers, eighty-five percent have always said 'smaller than average.' Think about it.

"Last question. Two years ago in Texas a mother claimed that her estranged husband had abducted their young boys from her custody. Then it was proved that she had taken the boys to her coven, where they were sacrificed in a Goddess ritual, and eaten. That woman has disappeared. Her husband is in jail for 'threatening'! And how many of you have recently seen her? In your church? At your office? The supermarket? And done nothing!

"See. Everybody!

"And you know what? Hundreds of thousands of young boys have disappeared without a trace!

"You and you and you, you have been silent. Why? Why? Why?

"Rise up, rise up!"

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"And all that buried rage ... it burst like a volcano, right there in my kitchen in Heart Stop, Idaho. It poured forth from the inner depths. I was mad as hell!" She lingered over these words with sweet menace. "I put down my paring knife and I marched right out the door and down to the bus depot, and I came straight here, to you, today, to tell you. "

"Amen, amen!" roared the crowd. Even the Protestants were clapping, politely.

"Tell it! Tell it!"

"I'm going to buy a bigger knife!"

The crowd roared with laughter and chanted again, "Kill them now. Kill them now!"

She hushed them. They obeyed.

"You already know it, don't you, sisters, it wasn't the Goddess who ... treated me so cruelly in Galilee...who defiled me..."

"No, no..."

"...while ... that carpenter looked the other way."

"ALL THEM DADDIES ARE FRIENDS!"

"Amen. Amen."

"I want you to know I tried with that boy, I really did. Sure he was cute when he was little, but, then, aren't they all. Don't let them fool you. I should have known when those three... *gentlemen* arrived with the perfume this would end badly." The crowd roared with laughter. "Yes, I kept him. And it isn't like we didn't have a choice in those days. There was the desert, where lots of the runts were put out, not just the girls. That's true! That's true. But I kept *him*. So does that mean I have no one to blame but myself? I ask you!"

And again the crowd roared, "No. No." The choir broke into a Hallelujah chorus but in a few moments she silenced them with a stroke of her arm like a mighty conductor.

"We, are the Sisters ... we are the meek ...come to inherit ..."

Tell it, Mary! Oh ya!"

"We, the dispossessed are *now* come collecting... and we shall bring the light!

"Amen, Mary!"

"SUFFER MEN NO MORE!"

And as the Hallelujah chorus swelled magnificently, Augie's pecker shrunk smaller than a baby gherkin. She took the Mike in hand, descended the chancel to be among the sisters. She walked, she stalked, the center aisle, voice low and she cried as she spoke.

"I say unto you, beware the Gospel stories ... written by men in the Dark Ages, twisted stories, told to enslave Wombyn".

"Amen."

"And beware the false gospels of the Gnostics, put forward, supposedly 'discovered', by the minions of the Magdalene. Beware the Magdalene for She is beautiful, but She is a whore! The secret rituals are not the freedom of wombyn ... but our slavery!"

"Amen."

"Let me tell you the true story of Jesus."

"Tell it, Mary!"

"Yes, I am the Mother of Jesus. And who, WHO, is the Daddy? Who was that philandering Spirit, blowing up my dress?"

"Amen, Mary, Amen!"

Her voice fell to a whisper, loud in every ear.

"Yes, I bore him, in a stable, and I raised him ... and ... and ... I've asked myself a thousand times, where did I go wrong?"

"He had his own room. We let him go out after super. Everything he wanted. I was doing alright. Married to my little boy chick. Until he reached a certain age, a certain time of life, I think you know my meaning."

"Amen".

"Still, I had hope that we'd make it through 'that phase' ... he was so good, until ...

"One year, just before the spring holidays I sent him to the market in Jerusalem to buy some rice, and a few potatoes. I said, 'Take the donkey, and be home by ten-thirty'.

"And he was gone almost a week - would you believe it!

"Amen , sister, amen!"

"I never should have let him out of my sight!

"Of course, now we know. *She* got her hooks in him the first day in the big city. There is the lesson! *That* was the fall of man! Forget the snake.

"Disappearing act. Just like his father!"

"Amen, Sister, Amen! Tell it, Mary!"

"But let me tell you, Mary Magdalene is not the bride of Christ, much as she wanted to be - and there's no secret about that, is there? She may have corrupted him, but there was no way I was going let her marry him ... and take him away from his momma ... even if he was a sneaky little shit!

"You wouldn't believe the trouble he caused at the Temple. Well, no, you do believe it. Him and his old gang from the swim team, who all, piled together, don't have the brains of a single gnat.

"Lines had to be drawn! And I drew them. And, I admit it - with the help of some of the better sort of Romans ... I knew from duplicate bridge. I don't know what I would have done without Pontius!

"We found him, well they found him, after five days, sleeping it off in an orchard!

"Ponty had him arrested, just to get him out of her clutches, you understand, hold him overnight, let him reflect upon consequences...that sort of thing. The situation was really rather desperate.

"And I have never blamed Ponty for what happened. It got completely out of hand. He did his very best, his very, very best. And I can't blame the scribes and Pharisees for being so mad at him and that gang of his ...

" ... and .... at ... that dreadful girl."

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Humbert continued.

"And the boy met a magic pony in the dark forest by the still waters, where his mother had left him to starve and be eaten by wolves, because there was not enough food for his ugly sisters. The pony had a painful stone wedged under one of its golden horseshoes which the boy pried out ever so gently with his Boy Scout knife. Then before his eyes the pony turned into a wizened dwarf with foul breath. He'd never met his father but he knew this must be him. The dwarf squinted at him fiercely for the longest time and finally said that he would only be safe if he performed four important tasks, which his father knew, but wouldn't tell.

"And then the dwarf pointed to the deepest and darkest part of the forest and motioned him to go and never return, and said to him but one word 'Budweiser'.

"And so began his life journey. For many days he broke trail through the densest brush he ever had ever known or seen in all his years of watching Tarzan movies. He had nothing to eat but rotting apples picked from a tree and offered to him by a snake, and grilled hedgehog he killed with the magic stake he stole from the kindergarten locker room. He finally came to a huge and magnificent gothic castle with rococo turrets and, unfortunately, conflicting neo-classical banding, though, fortunately, the banding was so completely overgrown with vines that this was barely visible to the undiscerning eye.

"After he cut down and burned the vines, restored the gardens, cleaned the stables, and fixed the light switch in the dining room, and made coffee, he went to the bedchamber of the Princess, who in the clear light of the midmorning was frankly not all that great looking. She said she was *itchy*. He didn't have any Consent forms – or, Lord knows, independent witnesses - but he ravished her anyhow, out of a profound sense of mythic duty. She awoke and called the police claiming lack of consent. He escaped by leaping from the tower into a large and deep pile of very sloppy manure. The magic pony and the wizened dwarf were nowhere to be found, and he almost drowned in his own fantasy. But eventually when he freed himself he was four inches taller with a much deeper voice, and he knew he had performed the first task, and learned the first lesson. Which was this: Shit happens.

"He bathed himself in a river of tears and continued on his journey.

"After many days the path led out of the forest into a high alpine meadow of yellow, gold and blue flowers, and many beautiful birds. The sun was huge and magnificent, and he was glad to be out of the dark forest. As he tramped across the field a baby Billy goat all fleecy and white bounded up to him as friendly as a little puppy. He knelt to pat the little creature, and just as he did, it turned into a pus-belching lizard with shark teeth, which snapped at his crotch. He jumped away in the nick of time, but not before suffering a bad gash to his inside left thigh. The mad creature lunged at him again, but he slew it with his magic stick, and bravely proceeded on his way,

knowing, now that he was wounded, that he was surely on his way to manhood. Which was the second lesson, Guard your Prick.

"He came to a patch of wild strawberries and ate his fill and lay in the sun pondering whether engineering or law was the safest route to take. Later he vomited violently, chose law, and got up to proceed on his way, when in the glitter of the late afternoon sun he saw his beloved magic pony galloping across the meadow toward him belching invisible poison gas and deadly viruses. Before the pony could get too close he dropped him with a single shot. With a gun he got out of a box of Cheerios.

"Night came and it was cold and he wrote the third lesson on his laptop. Trust no one.

"But as he slept a ring of fire appeared to him in his dreams, and he knew he was not yet fully a man."

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"The Goddess knows, and now you know, and in the fullness of time it will be written. Raising Him was not worth the trouble!

"I went up to Calvary, that day. I had every right! I wanted to be sure he was dead! And if he wasn't, I certainly thought he owed me an apology! Everybody knew about him and the slut. My sister was coming that weekend. What was I suppose to say? He's run off with a temple whore!

"Let alone, what to tell the neighbors! About the stolen donkey.

"He was just so damn irresponsible! Water into wine? Done! Walk on water? Done! Need some loaves? Done! Blind? See! Dead? Rise! So why *steal* a donkey!

"They had him almost stripped, hanging there, flexing and panting. I'm sure every degenerate in Jerusalem was there!

"Certainly all the prostitutes ... *her friends* - were there. There aren't enough rocks in Galilee to bury that lot, I tell you. I was disgusted. The way they were moaning you'd think every single one of them had ... known him. And he was grinning at them, twisting and writhing, showing off. It was revolting! I think he liked it!

"A sick and demented pervert, I don't like to say it, but I found *things* in his bottom drawer when he was a teenager. A mother knows!

"It was all I could do to watch! It couldn't be over fast enough for my liking!

"Well, three days later I finally, finally found out where they buried him. His own mother - three days! I mean he should have been buried by the family, I don't care what his downtown friends thought!

"It is written in the Bible - by them - that 'Mary went to the garden with Mary Magdalene, and the rock was rolled away from the cave.' Well that's true about the rock. But not with Mags, I didn't! She was up early alright! I can tell you we had words later!

"Yes I went out there. It had been three days. For the first time in years I was feeling free, really free. I never realized before what a burden he had been. It was a kind of a celebration, a new spring, the early morning sun, first tulips, the little bunny rabbits. I had some carob balls. The true celebration of rebirth, simple, not the circus it has become.

"Let's be clear on one thing. He was gone when I got there. Of that there's no doubt! She couldn't let him rest in peace! She took him, his gorgeous pink flesh, there's no doubt of it, for what monstrous indignities! Magdalene was not only a slut, but she was also a pervert!

"They claimed he had risen from the dead! Which was of course impossible! Once he dipped the holy rod in the poison well of that scarlet she-devil, he was history!

"This is the ugly truth. He was trouble right from the start. You want to talk about sacrifice. Fall down and worship the Goddess, for I have suffered that we might now live! And now She calls for the taking of accounts!"

"Amen."

"Beware the Magdalena, the copulatrix from Hell, for she is among us even to-day."

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"On the twelfth day at the twelfth hour, as he trudged across the Bonville Salt Flats he came to a fork in the road. To the east he heard the soft panting and moaning of hungry vulva. To the west he heard the whine of Lamborginis. His pecker pointed west.

"At about two-twenty mph he spun out of control, rolled twice and the car flew through the air toward an abutment. As the crowd cheered he was visited by a phantasmagorical orgasm. He floored the accelerator, blasted the horn and screamed mad exuberance at the sun. He hit the abutment in a fireball and creamed his pants in a torrent. This was the fourth task and the final lesson, and it was

learned in a blinding flash. *Don't ride the Clutch*. He was wild at last, he was dead, and it was totally awesome.

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Outside the Cathedral, lost in the crowd Nevada was feeling sick indeed, when he felt a hand firmly on his bum with two fingers as deep in his crack as the fabric would allow. This was not that unusual for Nevada in crowds, albeit quite illegal. But the crowd was thick and delirious and no one could notice. He didn't twist or shout, or even move.

"Nevada..."

It was Kitty!

"Nevada, I need you this evening."

It was, he noted, the first time she had ever actually touched him, in three years of booking his flesh and collecting the cash, she had herself, in person, never, until now, so much as sampled the wares. The thought of porking his cold hearted pimp boss filled him with dread.

"I thought I was seeing Mrs. Big at ten."

"You still are, and I expect you to be at your best."

"Then you better not set me up twice in one evening. My union's got rules." He was trying for polite, sardonic. He knew perfectly well that Kitty would book him twice, and then complain if he didn't deliver to perfection. There were burdens at the very top of any profession that mere aspirants would never know.

"This is rather different. Just posing. Under-utilizing your talents, of course, but it's an opportunity to get a kind of an introduction."

Nevada relaxed his ass so Kitty could free her fingers. One thing Kitty did well was network. She deserved her cut, even if she was a ruthless B.

"Who's the customer?"

"The Holy Messenger inside, who sets the church aglow. Mary herself. But like I said, it's just posing. The Sisters are giving her a bedtime present, a crucifixion scene. You're a sideman."

He didn't want to tell her that an introduction was the last thing he needed, and it might not be the opportunity Kitty imagined. But then, he thought, Mary had been

denying him for years. Maybe she really didn't remember. Why not! It might be a hoot.

"You are full of surprises, Miss Kitty. Where and when?"

"Six to nine is the booking. Sister Sandra wants you at four for rehearsals, which is, frankly, a freebie, a visual freebie only and don't you forget it."

"I can cope. I'll get pumped up and give them a show". And then he snarled, "And if one of them so much as touches me, I'll scream."

"Don't overdo it, stud. But we'll bill for any extras. It'll be a walk. When you're done I'll have a driver pick you up at the back door of the Cath ... at nine-ten. There's a room booked for you in the President's hotel so you can shower, and whatever you do, before you go up the Penthouse.

"Two big ones in one night, Nevada. I'm counting on you."

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While the White Madonna was preaching the Red one was busy down the street. Her unannounced visit in sultry cleavage to the over-crowded wards of the Golem Benevolent Society's Men's Home for The Deprived was a sensation. She drove the social workers out of the building with a piece of garden hose. The cheering inmates sang dirty songs off key as she did a strip tease up the middle of the ward, and squirted them with the Coors and gave them all 'I'm a Virgin' buttons.

In the back ward she found a blind wretch with no legs and made tender love for free. He said he always knew the angel would come one day. And he died in her arms.

They watched her boobs bounce and partied in their walkers until dusk when she departed promising, "I am with you, always".

Great was the joy of the old men, even in their sorrow. And yah, and yea, verily did they find hope.

## Chapter Nine

**SHOW HIM THE ROPES**

The moment the White Virgin floated out the door of the Cathedral Rachel X zapped off the monitor, and spun in the mayor's chair a full one-eighty. Y and Zimzam were still fixed on the screen, dumbfounded and awestruck.

"This chick is good! Wouldn't you say?"

"Definitely superior to the last Virgin", said Zim recovering quickly. "The one in Miami who bled from the eyes if you put a silver dollar in her mouth."

"Forget her." Rachel X was impatient.

Where do you suppose she comes from?" asked Y, who like her sister, was seriously impressed, though for somewhat different reasons.

"We'll check her out," Zimzam.

"Get somebody in Special Effects working on that. I'd like it for the Funeral Parade - tomorrow. Zim, you should have been on that!"

"Yes, mam, I'll get someone on cloud control, right away."

X laughed. "Get to it, smart guy. I'm serious."

"Y, we're announcing Trusteeship at four-thirty, right after Humbert's 'message', which they have set for four. It's risky, but we have no choice. I'll need the afternoon to get ready, something, humble but firm. But I'm booked for the gymnastics tournament. Could you cover me there?"

"Right," Y replied with evident reluctance, "but, if it's all the same to you, I'd like the night off. I'm a bit bushed."

"Sweetie, this is not the time! I need you. We need to sparkle, two places at once! If you're staying in, why not rewrite the Budget for tomorrow."

Y pouted.

"Is Ms. D off on a frolic? You going to order in?"

Y was too controlled to blush, too honest to lie, to her sister.

X turned away and said coldly, "The last time you had the itch we both appeared at the Bronx Ladies Book Club, remember! That cost me plenty." Y was silent.

"Anyhow, we've got to move dramatically. I want the new Capital Budget done by Friday," X continued. "I want the Jails for Males Program ready for next Monday. I want the Root Out Rot Campaign ready to go for Tuesday. Am I going too fast?"

"Don't forget there are some folk in the Party who don't exactly approve of this unusual succession." X shrugged. "Of course if it were anyone other than me, I'd agree with them."

Without a second's pause, she pulled out a plain brown envelop from the bottom drawer and shoved it across the desk. "And this arrived, on very authentic looking paper, don't you think. His Grade Five Guidance Counselor's Confidential Record Book. Deeply disturbing. Haven't read it yet. Find some witnesses. I'm counting on you, Sis, now more than ever."

"Are you sure you did the right thing, approving bail?" Y asked.

"'Right thing!' What am I, Mother Theresa! I figure he'd make more trouble for us inside. Three free meals a day and a phone, and he'd have something by suppertime. He's shrewd. Diddlers stick together! Anyhow, he's now he on the street and totally penniless! Bail was set in cash at one mil seven, the total of his all his assets, and all his lines of credit. His salary's in suspension. Right, Zimmer?"

"Penniless to the penny," replied her trusty helper through the intercom.

"Do you listen in on everything?" asked Y surprised.

"You should have seen his face when the D.A. announced the amount!" continued Zim, ignoring the question. "He'll see how mean the streets can be! 'McDonald's Feeds Molester!' Never."

"What if he starves?"

"Zim! Don't be maudlin!"

"I've got you booked on 'I Remember Him', with the Tattling Toddlers? This afternoon. Right after the Trustee announcement."

X turned to Y and continued, "I, we, me and my little helpers are going to be the first guest," X said with a grin. "I predict he'll be locked out of his Co-op before the show is over! He won't even have a place to park his shopping cart. We've got him cold! "Now you two get to work. I need time to compose our reluctant acceptance of Trusteeship. And Zimmer, I don't want to be interrupted, unless it's a Priority Apprehension, or a Grade A Photo Op."

Y left quickly. And X turned her attention to her speech.

"It is with a heavy heart ... We were all shocked and saddened ... It is hard to believe that a man we thought we knew ... Of course we have no conclusions about guilty or innocence of this sick, pathetic, disgusting, old man ... regarding the particular facts of these charges ... at this early stage of the proceedings. The jury will decide whether to believe these darling, innocent children.

"In the mean time .... My Duty ... Duty alone demands, indeed requires ... affairs would grind to halt!  
A terrific loss to the City."

Well, she thought, an *excellent* loss.

She rose from the big chair and solemnly walked to the window. Golem was spread before her, thirty stories below, ten million stories across, silent and screaming behind the three-ply, triple-tint, vacu-seal, safety-glass. Just looking down on that teaming tangled mass of hard assets and retained earnings, her mind turned the harder, the bigger, the longer-term problems.

The problem was how to achieve a redistribution of assets without damage to assets themselves. Rachael was an artist of the possible and she had a plan. She would announce a limited renewal of afternoon touch football in five designated stadiums for area residents. She believed that the great mass of men would willingly move to the five designated Football Districts especially if a full season were allowed and free passes into the stadium, for men living alone in those particular neighborhoods, who would, unthinking, abandoning the occupation and protection of their other assets. And to keep the men safe 'from Amazon terrorists' a heavily electrified security fence constituting a mile per meter around the five stadiums would be built the next year. Admission to the zone of Protection would be by Pass only. The men might miss their golf but at least they would be safe. As would their capital assets, in more responsible hands.

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Jake was at the wheel as the squad car sped south toward Buns, sirens blaring, lights blazing, and random burst of automatic fun fire from the machine gun on the roof. It should have been a gas but it wasn't. Hank was grim and silent, not to mention scared shitless about Jake's driving. Two more men murdered, within the hour, in the manner of Mr. President. A mad faggot? A deranged misogynist? A Fembitionist? A space alien? One of the witches? What fiend? And she, they, it, was, is, were, are, still at large. Hank and Jake were tough cops, real men, action guys, squared jawed, but this!

The report said the two bodies were found in the locker room of the famous fag bar when it opened at four that afternoon, both freshly emasculated. One was already identified as Marine Sergeant Herbert Dong, one of the President's personal guards, who had been reported missing the night before while on a secret mission with Mr. President. The other was an unidentified bus driver. Whatever secrets the Sergeant might have revealed about the death of Mr. President were now lost to history. And who was this other guy, this driver, and where was he no longer going?

They wheeled up to the front door of Buns and triggered a press riot. The guy from Sleaze was screaming about Jill the Ripper! Four bull dykes with shoulder camera charged from the left, and a platoon of Jimmy Olsens emerged from the right. Jake blocked and Hank danced up the middle and into the building, with the press hounds screaming "speak to me, speak to me!" Hank said, "No comment. No comment," not thinking how badly that would come across.

Inside the place was crawling with cops, all insisting they'd never been there before, and all giving very precise directions to the locker room, which they all swore came from somebody else. Hake and Jank found the locker room faster than a horny priest.

The removals were surgically neat and bloodless, just like Mr. President. There was no other sign of violence. The bodies were found neatly and identically posed side by side near an emergency exit. At least one, maybe both, had been dragged inside after being murdered somewhere else. But where? It looked like a message murder, and it smelled like a revenge killing. Poor Dong! He had been the top cock in the whole marine Corps and now... nothing!

The bodies were stone cold and pretty stiff and had presumably been dead for quite a while, Jake guessed twelve hours. Dong might have been killed before Mr. President, but surely not long after. The Coroner would tell. They searched Buns from stem to stern but there was no sign of the missing peckers.

Chuck the Fuck was there in all his very substantial glory. What a great cop he could have been! Jake never could understand what a beautiful big guy like that was doing running a fag bar. Surely he could get all the high-class broads he wanted, in pairs, on the sly, of course, given the Sex Code, but ... what the hell. And now, he's fucking skinny, faggots for chump change. There was a beefy kid named Moon at his side, with a very strange unicorn haircut. The guys said he was his actual son and was rumored to be straight! Although, from the look of him, he was more fruitcake than his Dad! Chuck stopped for hardly two minutes to talk. Said he'd never seen either of the stiffs before, that he ran a clean club, strictly legit, drop around, lots of straight guys do, and love it, and, excuse me, they were in a rush to get ready for opening.

There was a phone call for Hank, urgent from HQ. He took the call. Jake watched him go ashen. So did the whole room full of cops and faggots. Hank tried to be

nonchalant as he sauntered over to his partner. All eyes were on him as he took Jake by the arm and guided him out the door.

"There's another one at City Hall in the storeroom, real fresh," he whispered.

"Do tell, do tell," muttered Hank.

"And," hissed Jank, "there's another one, after that, in the basement of the Tredgold mansion. Someone called James the Lesser. Medium cold."

"Let's hit the Hall and see the fresh stuff," Jake remarked dryly. "If this an epidemic I want to stay away from old meat. And let's stick together real close, good buddy, real close!"

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Shortly after the two coppers departed Chuck turned the locker room clean up over to his crew and left, with Moon following close behind. When they got to the office Chuck closed and locked the door behind them.

Augie was cuffed to the overhead rafters in the corner of the office with his feet properly spread. His flag was at half mast.

"Moon, this punk showed up here and says he's was looking for work and he says he knows you."

"Ya, this is the guy I met."

"So ... where'd you two meet up? In the slammer? Is that it?"

"Was saying he's thinking of leav'n home. Gettin' a job." Chuck was suppressing a bit of a snicker.

"Told me too. Told him to come round. Great ass! Whadda ya think?"

"Kinda skinny," said Chuck gruffly.

Augie was pretty sure there was a market niche at Buns for 'skinny' ... with a great ass, ... but, more particularly and immediately, as between Chuck and Moon, he wasn't sure who got first dibs.

"Don't be so tough on him, Pop. Look at his abs!"

"Well, that is a good point about him "

All Augie could think was which one of these two was going to pork him? It seemed pretty clear life wasn't going to advance much further without the ceremony of the cherry. He was glad, but scared. Based on equipment and their time together in the slammer, Moon was ahead on points but then Chuck hadn't got his pants off yet.

"He works for his keep round here, *if* he's staying," Chuck said to Moon, very nasty.

"I was thinking, Pop, I could look after him by myself."

"Whadda ya mean, by yourself!"

"I found him!"

"You wanta to pimp him! Outta my joint! You got a nerve!"

"I gotta get started sometime."

"You're only eighteen!" Chuck shouted. "No f-ing way! What will people think!"

"Take it easy, Pop. Take it easy. It was just an idea! Instead of getting an allowance. Cheaper for you. Think about it."

"You and your f-ing ideas!"

"Just thinking of the bottom line. Besides, look at those abs!"

"Another thing. Where were you last night, anyway? I got you sprung by midnight, and you weren't back here till noon!" Chuck was almost shouting.

Moon turned beet red.

"On one of your 'out' calls?" he demanded angry and sarcastic.

"His application says he fucks Wombyn," Chuck was shouting at Moon as if Augie wasn't there. "You know that, Moon?" Then he turned to Augie. "My boy here does that! Did he tell you in the slammer that, he fucks Wombyn for money! Is that what you two dudes were talking about! You know *that* is - completely illegal! How could you do this to your old man? Your own flesh and blood! Runs off to it, right out of the slammer - the very night I save ass!"

"Awe, Pop ... It's really not that dangerous. "

Chuck turned to Augie. "After all I've done for him! Some day all this could'a been his!"

Augie was easily swayed. It was indeed a great dungeon, So why would Moon do such a thing?

"You want more allowance, is that it?" Chuck was getting real pissed off at his kid.

Moon shook his head.

"And look at his body. I gave that to him! Not that fruitcake mother! And he ...!"

Chuck was so fierce, so hurt, Augie felt terrible for him. Yes, yes, it should be Chuck.

"Awe, com'on, Pop. It's good money. And besides, some of them really, really like it!"

"If I ever hear you say that again I'll wash your mouth out with soap!"

"Pop, I want a life of my own. Besides, I do my job here. I look after the place. I like it. Last week I wanked twenty seven guys! And ten of them had no dicks! You got no right to complain."

"But Wombyn! They're illegal! It's dangerous! I only care about you, baby!"

Such a caring and tender father, thought Augie. I couldn't do any better.

"Pop," replied Moon somewhat coldly, "I *like* the danger. It turns me on. And besides it's easy, way easier than some of the dudes 'round here! "

Chuck turned back to Augie. "Do you really fuck Wombyn? I can't believe it! You kids! Do they really like scrawny little guys? I always figured that was an act."

"Well, I...I used to. But I gave it up," said Augie. "Swore off it, never again. Really not my thing. That's why I come here."

"Lay off the kid, pop. He'll be alright."

Chuck drilled Augie with his baby blues. "Maybe you'll be good for Moon. Teach him the straight and narrow."

"I'll do my best, sir."

"One thing, kid," Chuck went on, talking to Augie but staring intently at Moon, "you still got your cherry?"

Augie said "yes," not really knowing whether this was good or bad.

Moon shrugged. Chuck looked satisfied.

"Well, I'll break him, and train him," said the big guy. "And you stay out of his bung hole, Moon, until I say, or I'll break you! Maybe I'll give 'em to you for your birthday."

Moon brighten up. Down three, up two. And Augie brightened up. Start with the experienced professional and then ...?

"Well you're hired. Start you on the tables to-morrow night. Dancing. Can you come back then? On one condition."

"What's that, sir?"

"Promise me you won't do your hair like that young dork over here. It's a sacrilege."

"Awe, dry up, Pop. It's *my* hair!" shot back Moon. "I seen your pictures! You had a Unicorn when you was wrestling! I've seen the pictures."

Augie looked stern and disapproving at Moon's horn, but hoping he wouldn't take offence, because he actually thought it looked kinda sexy. But neither of them was listening to him.

"That was for 'special event' for your mother! And I burned all them pictures. So forget that!" Then Chuck lit up in a flash! "Are you doing The Unicorn for that fruitcake mother of yours!"

Moon sulked, and didn't answer.

"Well, don't! Is what I got to say! Don't."

Augie obviously wasn't meant to know the meaning of this.

Chuck turned back to Augie said, "Okay, kid, you're hired. Moon'll show you around tomorrow. Right now Moon's got something else to do. I'm goin' show Augie the ropes. So, see you later, champ."

Moon slouched out the door like a whipped puppy. Augie felt so sorry for him, and suddenly Moon was back in the lead.

Chuck locked the door behind Moon and approached Augie real slow. He was deliriously menacing, bunched shoulders, huge arms, like Moon, but bigger in the body, not fat, just bigger. He pulled Augie's flimsy shorts off and stepped back for a look. "So, kid, see, these are the ropes. What are wrapped around you so I can I fuck you without havin' to hold you down, you know what I mean."

"I see."

"I knew you'd understand. See, I'm stick my pole up in there and bounce you up and down. Fantastic!"

"Will it fit?"

"Eventually, everybody fits.

"You sure you know what you're getting into, kid? I hate to see someone make a big mistake."

Augie nodded. "I think so." Chuck was his prince, once again.

"You look good," he said casually and turned to where the various strands of the rope pulleys were gathered at set of large cleats on the wall and pulled them down and Augie's feet were stretched wide apart, and he was hung with the balls of his feet just barely on the floor. "And what I'm goin' show you is how to take it up the ass, 'cause that's what the customers want. Protected of course. If you don't like it, better git outta Dodge." Chuck slipped off his sneakers and out of his shorts and peeled the T over his head and stepped up to Augie.

"Is it really true you fuck Wombyn?"

"Once. Before. Only for money," he lied.

Chuck ran his hands down Augie's back, from shoulders to ass, and kissed him tenderly. "Well, don't," he commanded. Augie trembled and opened his mouth wide to him. Chuck kissed him again.

Chuck's huge tool was swelling against his belly. He felt strong hands grasp his ass, and pull his cheeks wide apart, and two fingers probe his hole.

"Not that there aren't pleasures to be had ... but the price is high and this is way better. You stick with me and you'll never think of pussy again."

Augie nodded, and not thinking about it at all just then.

For several minutes Chuck pawed him all over, obviously lining him up for in depth penetration when there came a pounding on the door. Moon was shouting, "Pop, come quick, come quick, there are two guys rutting in the control room, and they locked the door!"

Chuck cursed, backed off, slipped back into his shorts, unlocked one of the wrist cuffs for Augie and handed him the key to do the other himself, and he was out the door in flash. "I'll get you later, kid. Let yourself out the back way. And don't let Moon into your pants!"

\*\*

"You must be Cussion!?" growled Big D pushing her way right past him into the messy little house. "Mind if we look around?"

"Hi, Officer, What's happenin'?"

D just stared him down.

"Badminton Semi-Finals are just starting. God, can those girls move!"

"Not today, thanks. We're looking for the guy who murdered Mr. President. You know anything about that?"

"Well, I saw it on television. I mean after. How'd you know it's a guy? They didn't say that. "

"How'd you know it's not!

"You should lay off the pop corn."

Cush looked at her uncomprehending. Then, trying to be friendly, "Say, who ya pickin' for the Giant's game next weekend? I'll give ya points."

"You betting on underground football! Mister, I'm gonna pretend I never heard that. I got enough balls to break to-night. Don't fuck up my life!"

"Share a pint!"

"You ever shop at Bergdorf's?" with icy professional disdain.

Cush blushed. "Occasionally, sure, every now and then."

"Got the receipts?"

"Hey, no man. I don't do paper."

"Mind if I have a look around?" continued D, a request that was really an afterthought, since she already had pulled the closet door off its hinges. Within ten seconds she had his old football cleats in hand, holding them up triumphant like a dead rabbit in the mouth of the hound. She grinned.

"Mister, you're under arrest. Possession of illegal footwear.

"Not to mention THIS!" D shouted, holding high the fake gold tie clip she always had tucked up her other sleeve and which she had magically pulled out of his ear.

"You have the right to remain silent. You have the right to an attorney approved by the State Bar Feminist Qualification Commission. The words you speak will be taken down, and rearranged as necessary and may be used in evidence against you if you don't plead guilty."

"But I have a family!"

"Not any more!

"Better shut your trap if you know what's good for you. We're rounding up all guys with tie clips in the ear. And that is just about everybody."

And Cush was in the trunk of the squad car even before the second set of the Semi-Finals began. The car dropped him at the Unmarked Warehouse Detention Centre, entrance at the back of the fourth level of the underground parking garage, down the ally and under the bridge, at the back of the abandoned steel mill crawling with rats.

\*\*

Humbert was obviously not happy. The raid had been a total success. But the murder of the Consort cast the ransom and the auction in a different light. The Flyers were printed. IT was too late to call back the distribution. By 6:30 they were handed out on every corner. For better or worse, the Auction was on!

The Radical Misogynists have recently liberated hundreds of fresh cut cocks. Big ones, huge ones, brown, black, yellow, black, straight, hooked, fat, thin, all shapes and drapes.

This huge inventory is going to be raffled tomorrow, after the Presidential parade. Proceeds to the RMC.  
Be there!

Regret your deP? Now your chance to get it back! Move up! Do it,

THERE'S STILL MORE! The one and only `Presidential' Pecker will be up for auction!!! Everyone (rich( has an equal chance. Yes, I said `Presidential'.

And it could be yours! This one's fresh from the Clinic, and we've got the papers to prove it.

\*\*

The Press Room was full. Rachael was pumped.

"Trusteeship was necessary" she began, "as a technicality. Legislation cannot be signed into effect by a felon. In order that the Administration carry on its vital work I am temporarily taking over formal responsibilities. Nothing, not these horrible murders, or these deeply distressing disclosures about Mr. Mayor, should, or would, deter the Team from delivering on the promises of the campaign. Everyone on the team knows the Mayor would agree ... if he weren't under a gag order."

There were no questions.

The evening coverage was entirely supportive of her smartly styled double-breasted Chanel pant suit, in black and charcoal which, the columnists agreed, projected compassion and warmth and decisiveness and a hint of ruthless *savoir faire*, contemporary but not flashy.

\*\*

Humbert watched Rachel's statement with bemused respect. "I like this chick," he muttered.

He dialed the President.

"Hello," she said.

"So I read your file," he began dryly. "Very interesting."

"You cur," she snarled.

"Relax. Relax. You didn't really think you'd last a lifetime without being out-ed."

"That was despicable! You virtually told the world! Who gave you the right!"

"We're low on funds. We're desperate." She could hear him grinning. "Somebody's gonna have to explain what was that thing the Femibitionists cut off Rick after the ball last night. Where'd it come from...babe?" He laughed.

"How much?" The President was sullen.

"The file will be five million."

"I want the prick too."

"It's not for sale. It's the top draw."

"How much for the winning ticket?"

"What would you do with it anyhow?"

"How much?"

Then the light went on and Humbert realized the President's true intentions. He realized this was a political, not a financial transaction. A public recantation, confession and restoration, would be a triumph for his side.

"Mr. President, Sir, it's available anytime you're ready for surgery, sir!" And a pause, and then gently, "Of course, after you overrule this foolish decree from our new Mayor. And sign this little statement I've got here, sir," he said as he started to scribble.

The President was silent.

"Repent and ye shall be forgiven!" he said gently.

"I'll think about it." And she hung up.

\*\*

At 6:12 pm a Synopsis arrived by fax from the Chicago Lab. Kitty devoured it cover to cover in twelve minutes flat. It was a shocker. Every attempt to create a restoration cream had failed, and they had just about to give up, report their failure, and submit their resignations, when they happened, quite by accident, on a summary of the medical records of all the players on U.F.O. sports franchises. In it a Roller Derby player, since suspended, was highlighted by the local team doctor because of her remarkable recuperative powers after a series of brutal injuries. Fresh blood samples from the player were available, and yielded gene samples remarkably similar to those of the frog species the lab team had been experimenting with, without success, for five years, because of that species' unusual power to regenerate severed limbs. And the file revealed not a single challenge to her claim to virginity despite ... never mind the tales told. The lab now stated un-categorically that they had cloned her genes - and could anytime again, if they had fresh samples monthly.

By 6:18 pm Kitty had completed her instructions to U.F.O. operatives worldwide, to find one Mary Monahan, and bring her back alive. By 8:30 the senior marketing team had been recalled from their spousal equivalents, freeze-dried stroganoff dinners and pay-as-you-play health clubs, for a major brainstorm. "Integrity - The Day of Reckoning Approaches - The Modern Girl Never Makes a Mistake."

\*\*

Nevada remembered Jesus was in the center. There were two sidemen, maybe Moses and Adam, he wasn't sure. He always figured the whole lot, were pretty poncy.

But the other sideman in Mary's bedtime passion play was no ponce. Barrabus was a big guy, not at all flabby, but too hairy for trade, and more than a little stoned. A groundskeeper, they said. Looked more like Security.

Nevada claimed he always got a rubdown before any crucifixion. The sister blushed. "In a good cause," he assured her. She was shy. "Can I call you Sandy, you remind me of my first wife. Alas, who died young of cancer and left me broken hearted." He stretched himself out on the table in his underwear that she might kneed his meaty flesh. A tease? He'd been called that. Kitty would shit, he knew, she always wanted to charge for everything. But Nevada wasn't giving away cream, and what the hell! He pouted. Sandy blushed. He flexed. That usually did it, but, disaster - she ran from the room. Nevada felt guilty. He shouldn't push so hard with the tender and vulnerable. He wanted to apologize. He was about to put his shirt back on when she returned, with some sturdy leather cuffs, and elegant silver chains. He noticed only at that very moment that the massage table was rigged for serious action. Shy, but not boring.

Jesus came in late, but already in costume, a great looking young dude, with spectacular abs that made Nevada feel fat. He introduced himself as Sandy was strapping Nevada to the table. He helped her. August Knight. The name meant nothing to Nevada.

The lash was not part of the deal, but Sister Sandy obviously wasn't taking no for an answer. Nevada figured if that's what turned her on, it was the least he could do. She didn't look like she could lay it on very hard anyhow, and she couldn't. But Mike could, and by that point it was too late to stop. Jesus got a hard-on watching, and then Nevada got a hard-on watching Jesus watching him. Then Sandy gave Augie the cat for the scourging of Barabus and the kid got into that in a really big way. And so did Nevada. As a matter of fact so did Mike and Sister Sandra. There was obviously something extra special going on at the Cathedral Choir School.

By seven the three of them were ready, sweat-streaked and dirty, bruised, bloodied a little, and huddled in blankets in a little room off the south transept. The three crosses were laid out on top of the pews. The ropes and pulleys were in place so they could be erected quickly. These were retrieved props from the annual Passion Play, so they told Nevada, though he came to believe after the session in the basement that they practice quite regularly. There was a bed, a severe single bed, made up entirely in white, set in the very center of the Cath. What a scene! Nevada hoped he wouldn't be too far away to get a good look at Mary. It had been a long time.

Mike went off to snort some of the Holy Spirit, he said, leaving Augie and Nevada alone.

Nevada took a shine to the kid. "I couldn't see that much this afternoon when she arrived. Was it you hung up there for a welcome?"

"Yup."

"So, what was she like, this afternoon? The new virgin? Could you hear her pearls of wisdom from up there?" Nevada asked, motioning to the location of Augie's cross in the ceremony at noontime.

"Oh, ya, I could hear all right."

"The radio say it's the Second Coming," said Nevada.

Augie nodded. "I'm pretty sure she came twice."

"So how you get in with these chicks," asked Nevada in his best swagger, eyeing the troop of nuns at the back of the Cath.

"I don't know. Lived here as long as I can remember. They say they found me in the desert wrapped in Saran Wrap."

Nevada didn't laugh. Obviously the kid thought he should laugh.

Just then Sister Sandra burst in, followed by her team of Ninja Nuns, with ropes. Before Nevada could speak again they had hustled he and Augie to the crosses laid out on the front pews. Then Mike staggered in. And within two minutes the three were secured on the crosses, which were hauled to upright, the church lights dimmed, and the spotlights focused. The Ninjas disappeared and the organ started, quietly, with ethereal fugues. And then - She wafted down the aisle in a long, pure white, flannel nightgown, crossed herself solemnly at the chancel, placed a little silver box at the foot of the bed, and snuggled in. She assumed the posture of a well-laid corpse, hands folded on her chest. But she didn't close her eyes. From her bed she devoured the crucifixion scene. Mike cried seraphically. She smiled faintly. Someone would get a promotion in the morning, from cutting grass to pruning roses.

Augie hung his head and sighed. Someone stuck a sponge in his mouth. He muttered in Latin. The kid was good! Someone else stuck him with a retracting spear, which bled nicely, slowly, drop by drop, on to the eager Virgin in her bed beneath. Another passion play trick. She sighed and smiled faint approval.

Then Nevada noticed Augie's feet, that the forth toe on each foot was longer than the third, just like himself! His heart leap! He noticed that Mary was staring at him, still without any apparent recognition. How could she! And yes, after all these years he was still bitter. But after the longest time she called out, "Nevada?"

Well, this was a howdy-do! Should he laugh or cry, or say, 'cuse me, ma'am, do I know you?' He didn't know what to say, so he said nothing.

But she called out again, commanding, "Nevada, verily I know you!"

"Yo, Mary... long time, no see," he said.

The organ stopped.

"Are you thinking that pretty little shit hanging next to you is your boy?!"

"Well, I'm wondering, snookums, confess to that! Got my daddy's chin. Got my toes! But hell no, couldn't be me! 'Cause I never laid a hand on you! Did I? There's no way that could be my kid. Look at him, can't even keep his perch!"

Mary closed her eyes content, and dozed off. Nevada looked over, very, very casual like, at Augie. He dared not give any signal, too many stern eyes were surely watching.

Augie's feet slipped off his perch and he hung there by the wrists. Now in pain and confusion Jesus wept.

And Nevada loved him.

\*\*

So far, so good. He was stunning. The pecs! The traps! But it was the wig! The wig. Why had he not thought of this before. To think how close he came to turning fag. It was astonishing. It was wonderful. The chicks were eying him! He'd find a wife - whoops, partner - for sure.

He polished off his third Rolling Rock Dark. He downed the double Vodka chaser. He squinted into the smoky mirror behind the bar and admired himself for the first time in ten years. The Delts! He was devastating! He turned around, his back to the bar and mirror, and surveyed the crowd with an icy disdain he had practiced many times in the mirror at home. No one would know, no one could know. It was excellent, superb! Now he could see as the hairy ones saw. This one was too fat, that one too tall, that one too wacked out, another with too much make-up. At last he could take his pick because they all wanted him! If heterosex had been this easy in

the old days he never would have gone to university. Ah, the cruel irony. At long last he was drop-dead gorgeous, albeit a little short, and it was not too late for all these beautiful women who were after him tonight. And ... and ... he was brilliant to boot.

On his left he heard a voice.

"Hi there, big boy. Buy me a drink?"

It was Miss Dollarquarter from accounting. She'd never spoken to him without a sneer in the three years she'd been delivering his pay check and never spoken at all if it were not in the line of duty. She didn't even recognize him!

"What'll it be," he said, leaning over and whispering the last word in her ear, "doll?"

"Call me LaLa. And make it a Martooni, a double Martooni, hold the ice."

"Come here often?" he asked with smile.

She smoothed her dress down over her hips, tossed her hair back with a shake of her head, and smiled coyly at him. "When I'm lonely. And what about you? What your name, sailor?"

"Rip," he responded quickly. "Rip Quickly."

"So, Rip, you got a room mate?"

\*\*

Jesus was down and gone before Nevada was untied. There were sharp words between Augie and Sister Sandra as he left, but Nevada couldn't make them out except, "Buns."

Kitty was as good as her word. There was a limo waiting at the door. And in short order he was in his room at the President's hotel readying himself for who knew what, in exchange for a lot of money. He dressed conservatively, T-shirt and crewneck T, and reported to the fifteenth floor promptly at ten, and was let in by the Deputy.

While many people have, through the centuries, tried to fuck with the President of the United States, no one, except the true native born, have ever actually fucked the President. It's in the Constitution. Nevada for all his other malefactions was pure blood and native born and a patriot. His great-great granddaddy had distributed smallpox blankets to the Indians and been honored by the Congress! So sex with the President was a sacred honor and duty, of which no indiscreet tales would ever be told. And so, despite all the pain subsequently inflicted on him by the high and

mighty, which this tale will subsequently reveal, Nevada has never told anyone else what a lousy lay she was, that she sucked on his dong like it was the last popsicle in Philadelphia, and that she wanted it in the bum like a fag, or that the Government was planning to dump silver in October. Except about the silver, to Kitty, for 15% on a major short position, he never breathed a word.

As a regular thing, Nevada concluded, patriotism wasn't reason enough. But as a professional credential, it was world class. And now he had a Certificate from the Deputy to prove it.

And he was on his way by midnight.

## Chapter Ten

**MY DRESS IS A WRECK**

About the time Nevada's limo was pulling away from the back door of Hotel Hotele, Kitty Kryder was arriving on the outermost boundaries of Golem. For a trip this far into the Mass Market Zone Kitty required a team of U.F.O.'s elite Security Forces. She loved and trusted the people of outer boroughs as marketing categories, but not, like, in person. Mary Monahan had been located, Intelligence Ops had advised, doing 'Sex Ed' in the back alley behind the Bronx Rollerarama. She was still, they were sure, in the windowless white panel truck behind the Arena with the little blue neon sign that flashed in front windshield - 'Virgin...Virgin'. The last customer, a nervous, pimple-faced teen boy, was just leaving the van.

"Darling," she cried as they tossed Red into the cavernous back seat of the Lincoln, "we must talk. Come for a drive."

"Pricey wheels," remarked Mary. "You must sell perfume."

"Not exactly."

Kitty laughed. "Your work with the poor is not what Mother Teresa had in mind. But, darling, I'm hip! U.F.O. is hip!"

The driver flipped the automatic door locks and the limo squealed away from the curb, and sped south into the darkness surrounded by its motorcycle escort.

"Totally illegal, as you know, but, personally, and, quite confidentially, I understand that necessity is opportunity. Or it the opposite? But, darling, really, you're too down market for your obvious talents. Help me help you.

"It was a terrible mistake in Chicago, that Rollerball suspension. They'll miss you! They really will. But it's so good to have you in Golem. I think your talents are just what this dreary city needs."

"What exactly do you want?" Red interrupted. She was plenty annoyed by the interruption of her mission but intrigued by the bull-necked driver, so close and yet so far.

"Darling, we want you! For fame and riches beyond your wildest dreams."

"You get a cut, right?"

"Darling, we get the pie, you get a cut! But then it's such a huge pie, and we have so many accountants, lawyers, marketing expenses, shareholders, so, so boring, Don't ask. We don't tell. And everybody is happy, happy, happy! And, Darling... rich beyond your wildest dreams! Absolutely!"

"What are you selling?"

"You, darling, The Virgin Whore! It's fabulous!"

"Ah," said Red.

"Not tits and ass. No heel-to-the-jaw pow-pow! Just you! Which we love, darling, don't get me wrong. Not you personally that we love. That would be ridiculous. We love the inner you! The slut made whole! The Madonna risen from the gutters of sin! The Whore Become Virgin! That You!"

"You've already got a top virgin down at the Cath. You really want another?"

"And she *is* fabulous! Divine. Don't get me wrong. The two of you! Together, I mean, not together-together, more yin and yang! Mary, dearest, trust me. You open vast new markets for Radiance and Rectitude and *Restoration!*

"With Integrity in your Purse You Need Radiance on your Face.' I'm sure you see. "Our lab in Chicago discovered that with you, and you alone ... they can do a 'restoration' cream, that works in two days! *Always and forever the virgin of his dreams.*"

"I get it. You want to clone me ..."

"And so intelligent too."

"...and peddle my ..."

"There's really nothing to it! Really! Monthly samples. Like a trip to the..."

"Fucked by U.F.O., once a month!"

"Darling, No! No! No! Where did ever pick up thoughts like that! Think of a lovely house, a fabulous house, in...? Newport? Palm Beach? Bar Harbor? Two fabulous houses! A driver! Don't think I didn't notice. We'd have to adapt ... yes, re-conceptualize .... your charity work. Yes, you could ... darling, darling, darling, think of the happiness you could bring to the world!"

"Can you lend me five Gs?"

"Of course. If you give me a sample.

"And think of the opportunity to restore the moral integrity of America."

"That Mother in the Cathedral won't be too pleased, what with you debasing her coinage, peddling virginity like aspirin."

"She's such a thing, isn't she? But not to worry. She'll get her cut, if she's smart. Besides, she's got you beat with Rectitude. Not your thing. I understand. Like I said - yang and yin."

"I'll think about it."

"Just one thing. We would have to have an exclusive. I'm sure you understand, on a deal like this."

"I'll think about it, I said." Red was curt. "Drop me at the Park. And where's the bread?"

"Darling, take ten, take twenty." said Kitty emptying her purse.

"I've changed my mind. Can I get out here?"

"But, of course. We'll talk again."

The bull neck pulled over, and Red hit the bricks, and the limo disappeared into the evening smog. The first mugger she met got a blow job and, a crisp G note. The second got a better blow and five hundred, and the third...and the fourth....as she worked her way south through Central Park.

\*

The silence was deafening when Sally stopped by to change shortly before eight. As Big D promised. Her mother called to say she had the kids, and she really didn't mind SACRIFICING bridge, that's what mothers are for, to help their adult children who still can't manage their lives, and didn't she warn her against anybody named Cussion, and I suppose it wasn't a surprise, but still, and who was that nice police man, and wouldn't it be nice to have a gun like his, even a bigger one, an automatic, with telescopic sighting and the boys want to grown up to be just like him and they probably will and ...

Sally napped, showered, and put on the jeans she hadn't worn since another night she never mentioned and found her way to her rendezvous.

She waited twenty minutes at the back table, reserved, in the downstairs back room - The Heresy Pit. She was about to leave figuring she'd been made a fool when in strode D. She waved at four, patted three, and kissed two, before she finally landed like an attack helicopter, at the designated table in the darkest corner and grinning her big shit-kicking grin at her one and only, for this evening.

"Sorry I'm late, babe."

Sally nodded, faking indifferent.

"It's hell out there, tonight, doll. Love your hair." D downed a couple of beers with chasers before dinner, which was entirely oysters. Four rapists and six abusers were dispatched to the dark and various dungeons of revenge before D finished her dramatic account of her day at work. "Fuck, I pity you, it's hard to love a cop." Several young things sidled up to talk, but D shooed them away like flies. Sally was hooked.

After the meal Sally rode far up town on the back D's Harley heading to Club Hell for exhibitionism and nude dancing. At a long red D took Sally's hands and touched them tenderly to her breasts that buzzed like the big engines of a 747. Sally clung tighter still round D's waist as they bounced through the potholes. The road to Hell was paved with bad intentions.

\*

Right after the marriage ceremony Derek and LaLa took a cab to his apartment.

He was allowed, he had learned at Princeton, that he could close the door because they were legally married. She didn't know that.

"Are you sure you want to do this? You don't need to just because we're married. Do you appreciate the nature and quality of the act of sexual connection? There is a risk of pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease that may cause blindness. Some participants experience dizziness and shortness of breath." he asked three times, in English, French, and four other languages he'd learned for the occasion.

She did. Once he had his one ankle cuffed to the bed frame – still required - she took off her clothes slow and sexy, and his, and kissed him again and again on the lips. She moved close and she let him kiss her breasts, which were soft and full. It was so beautiful to Derek. He grew hard. She bit his nipples gently, that made him quiver, and took his penis in her hand massaging slowly, then roughly as they kissed, and brought him to a rock hard erection. He strained at the cuff but LaLa moved closer and embraced him, guided his manhood to the cave of eternal salvation. He entered slowly and firmly as she pulled him over her. He started to pump with a perfect arch thrust sustained at first for the count of six, then eight. He had arrived at last at the doorway to heaven.

And then his wig fell off.

\*

Hell was a stormy sea of hot, gyrating flesh, all female, but otherwise similar to her recollections of her days of heterosexual excess, in the days before Grantley. Clothes piled steadily higher around the perimeter as the revelers stripped down in the increasing heat. All-girl, hard-rock, screaming grunge blasting out without stop. Sally danced until she was exhausted, but D kept right on bopping. Sally swore she'd get back into Aerobics next week, as she pined after the young tits that flitted around D like wild winged creatures.

Sally wanted to go home, and get it on. Big D wanted to go yet another club, something quieter, more sensitive, she said. They did, indeed it was. Victims was boozy, smoky, slow blues, juice and cocoa, fruit plates and whole grain pastries,. The front room was not so large, but then there were the back rooms. It was packed, even at two-thirty when they arrived.

Big D tossed her jacket to the hatcheck boy, and elbowed through the haze to an empty table. Sally followed. No sooner had they sat down than D was up again, wading into the crowd of tables, kissing ears, groping tits, stroking hair.

"Come here often?" she muttered to herself as she watched as Big D worked the crowd.

Somebody handed her a boysenberry juice. Sally watched D devour an underage tart with heaped red hair and T-shirt in proper gothic scrip she couldn't read, and finally disappear round a corner of the bar into the smoke. And Sally fell asleep.

\*\*

Melissa put H-Papp under with a double dose of her best Horse and the posse rode out early that night. The Wildboys were ravaging in the Midtown and the Avengers were determined to check them out. In the back pocket of her Chanel Junior Ms. black-on-black, was the forty-blade Swiss army knife she'd given to Zekus for his birthday, then repossessed on Boxing Day. He'd never missed it. Such a wimp! Sacha wore her Madonna outfit with the steel tits. She was awesome. They cruised up and down Fifth a few times in Macha's gold flecked dune buggy mooning the hustlers. Then headed for the Park to set their traps. It was still early when they finished so they went their fave juice bar planning to be back on patrol by one.

\*\*

"You're bald!" she shrieked. "Bald!"

Derek strained against the cuffs desperate to comfort her, but she backed away shrieking hysterically. "Rape! Rape!"

"No, no, please..." Derek started to cry.

"You never told me you were bald! I never would have ..." And she drenched him in a torrent of tears. "I wouldn't have ... if ... I didn't ..."

"This is fraud!"

"Yes, yes," he nodded vigorously. "Fraud, not rape, fraud, fraud!"

"Fraudulent rape!" she exclaimed. "Rape by fraud!"

"Please, please, don't tell ..."

Suddenly she calmed. "Is this a real Modigliani?" she inquired admiring the single item of value in the whole apartment, which he had inherited from his uncle, a major drunk who had a youthful obsession for long-necked wombyn and made one lucky purchase at a garage sale in Westchester a million years ago.

"Yes, yes," he sobbed.

"It's lovely." She smiled at him sweetly. "I feel better, just holding it," she said as she started to dress.

\*\*

Jocko, Stiff and the Wildboys met up with Hank and Jake in an alley behind an abandoned crack house just to the north of the Park. Jake gave a pep talk and they all undid their sneakers, shouted, 'Pussy' three times, and then fanned out across the north end of the park and headed south, beating the bushes in case any pussies were hiding there.

Fortunately Bert and Yoni heard them coming soon enough to put on their clothes, and double back behind their line, and then to stalk the stalkers from the rear through the deep brush.

The war was on.

About one-thirty Melissa was vogue-ing under a small bridge when she caught one, a big one - Jake. From his point of view, he had caught her and he was blind with hormonal lust, which made the big guy crazy that his boys had missed a keeper, even a small one.

He grabbed her arm hard before she could even think to run, though she wouldn't have got far in her mother's heels. "Stupid little ..." he growled as he ripped her suit off to the waist. She scratched him good, but it just seemed to make him madder. "Rich bitch!" He was stronger than she ever imagined a person could be, and held

her two hands in one of his, lifted her up and yanked her Chanel pants and panties off with his other hand. Out fell the Swiss army knife. He picked it up with a look of shock and horror. "You! You! You did it to Mr. President! Even the faggots get to keep their cockers!" he roared. She shook her head vigorously, but he took no notice. And he threw her up against a large rock, and pinned her there as he undid his shiny, navy blue, polyester, single pleat, cop pants, with cuffs. This was certain death. It was more than too, too much! Her hair was a mess. She was terrified.

What happened next is now legend, and legend is history, written by unemployed journalists seeking Pulitzers.

Zekus rushed out from the left and Hershel from the right and threw themselves at Jake with all their might, which wasn't much, but enough to shake him. He dropped Melissa, turned, and grabbed the boys by their collars, sneered, and said, "So, you *are* feminist double agents! Well you next, wimps!" And threw them to the ground.

Then out of nowhere suddenly appeared this crazy broad on rollerblades, all in red spandex. She came flying through the air over Melissa's head, and - pow - with both feet, right to the square jaw of the lecherous cop. He reeled back stumbling, and his trousers fell to his knees. Incredibly the Red Rocket landed on her blades, did a quick turn, and was back at him with a low flying kick to the groin. He toppled to his knees. And then two karate chops to the back of the neck, and a knee to the chin and he was out cold before he hit the dirt.

Melissa was flabbergasted, but she recovered her poise quickly. Zekus and Hershel were wide-eyed.

"You all right?" Red asked Melissa calmly.

"Yes, of course, thank you. You're too kind. But my dress is a wreck!"

"How'd you do that?" asked Zeke.

"Practice, kid, practice," Red replied. Then turning back to Melissa, Red asked, "Who are these punks?"

"That's my brother Zeke, and his black friend whose name I can't remember. But he's cute, don't you think. He'll fill out nicely. Good skin tone."

"Well, nice go at him, guys. Couldn't have done it without you!" And she gave them a big hug. Zeke blushed, and Hershel fell in love.

Melissa picked up the knife on the pavement and reached to give it to Red to do the honors, but Red shook her head. "I hate blood," she replied quietly. Then she took some cord from her pocket and said, "We'll tie him to this tree till the real cops get here. Can you give me a hand?"

Jake was a big guy, and it took all four of them to drag him back to the tree and lift him. But Red was expert with rope, and soon he was strung up like a side beef, naked from the knees up. Red hung the Swiss army knife, blade open, by a string round his neck, dangling right at the level of his pecker. "That'll give him something to think about when he wakes up." Red grinned.

Just as they were finishing in wandered Sacha and Macha. "Look at your dress!" wailed Sacha, who had always loved the Chanel.

"You know these two?" Red asked Melissa.

"Yes, they're my associates on a school project." And she introduced them properly.

"Charmed I'm sure," said Red, "But you better get your asses out of the forest. It ain't safe!" Zekus and Hershel nodded vigorously. Red pulled a little card from her back pocket. "You three," pointing to the three young Wombyn, "take a cab to this address. Now! Tell Arabella I'll be along shortly, and ... fix your dress. Move!"

As soon as the girls had disappeared out of sight she pulled the two boys toward her and stood them back to back to compare their height. "Mm," she smiled. "Who's biggest?" she said, as she slid a hand into each pair of trousers, looking scientific as she fingered the young donges.

Suddenly from the bushes there was another frightened voice. "Freeze," shouted Bert waving her stun gun, "or I'll drop you! Fifty thousand big ones! You won't wake up for a week. Back off Sister! These are our prisoners."

Red was cool. "Glad you got here. Couldn't handle both these dudes myself. Where we takin' 'em?"

"Back to the Camp," snapped Bert.

Red frowned.

"You tie these two to the lamp pole," Bert barked at Yoni, "and I'll cover Super Girl here, till you get back with the van."

Cuffs didn't do it for Zeke. Hershel started to cry.

While Yoni went for the rented van, Red went for Bert. "I like your boots," she said, the heels of which had hinges, Red divined, if oiled right. Notwithstanding her preference for firm male flesh, she knew about lesbos, and one sloppy kiss was all it took, just like in the movies. But then Red was a piece, and she knew it.

Yoni came back like a bad case of herpes, all too quickly, and at exactly the wrong time.

The van wouldn't start, she whined. But they hailed a cab and set out for Arabella's.

The driver commented, but only once, that the teen boys might be more comfortable in the trunk than on the roof.

\*\*

Nevada figured wearing his suit to Buns was maxi un-cool, so he stopped by his condo and changed back into his ass-crackers. So what if he got groped by the queers. There was a certain wonky professional pride in that. He hit Buns about two-thirty. The crowd had died down in the far reaches, but the main hall was still bopping.

Augie was on the central dance platform bouncing away in a gold lame strapless jock. A large crowd was gathered round shouting out the words of the disco song with him. Even after all the troubles at the choir school, he still loved to sing. Nevada pushed into the crowd to get closer. Five wandering hands brushed his shoulders and chest, all of which he politely ignored as he muscled his way front and center. The music was deafening, but his boy was looking so happy. Nevada couldn't understand the words. The sign above Augie read - "Still Fresh - Available Thursday." Nevada stood mesmerized. Some guy was on the floor crawling up his leg to his crotch. He brushed him away like a fly. He felt old. Augie spotted him, and grinned. Their eyes locked.

"I'm your dad," Nevada shouted. "I'm your dad." No one could hear these words but Augie.

The song changed, and another dancer jumped up to take Augie's place. The hopefuls gathered round, but alas, Nevada's arms were full. The sign above the new dancers changed - 'Book Now! Hot and Hung!' - but the song remained the same.

Augie and Nevada hugged again and again.

"So, kid," he finally said with a teary smile, and not knowing quite what else to say, he tried the oldest. "Come here often?"

Augie laughed as they drifted off to the side. "I'm gonna work here! Maybe you need a job?"

"Not me, kid!" replied Nevada with a grin. "I got my own business."

Augie shrugged.

Before they could say another word a beefy young guy with his very considerable hair starched into one big forward leaning spike approached. Augie called out to "Moon." The guy had bouncer written all over him, but Nevada knew a Unicorn when he saw one. This had to be Beth's new stud! In a fag bar! Not a flicker of purpose crossed his face. He was a very cool cowboy. "Hey, buddy," said Moon, "this guy's is reserved for tonight. Try the Rumpus Room if you're looking for chicken," Moon was friendly enough. But Nevada felt his boy tense in his arms.

"Augie, Chuck's ready for you upstairs. It's time, good buddy."

Moon took one of Augie's hands to pull him away. Nevada wanted to resist. He felt Augie tremble, and he saw a look of apprehension in his eyes.

"Hell," says Nevada, "it's Chuck I come for! He better not be booked. I came all the way from Nevada."

"Well, I think he's booked, cowboy," responded Moon, "but if you..."

"Shit, boy, don't tell me that. I only got tonight. 'Sides, how much can this kid put down! I got paid yesterday for more than just an oil well. And I ain't leaving till I had me a big dessert."

Nevada watched the Unicorn do a series of hand signals into a camera somewhere, and in an instant there was a coded answer flashed on a light board beside a second floor doorway along a catwalk.

"That's a G. Interested?" Moon was straight-faced. Nevada was pissed. That was more than he charged! But quick action was called for. Hard choice! Leave the boy here with a freak who I'm suppose to kill, or go up and get fucked, me instead of him, by the biggest dong in town!

Augie was now engulfed in Moon's beefy arm, looking not at all unhappy. And that settled it. To be sure all this confused Nevada but then what are dads for.

"Goddam, boy, where do I pay!"

Nevada kissed Augie good-bye with his eyes. Augie smiled. Moon pointed him up the stairs and said, "Pop'll take your money. And I'll look after the dude."

The heavy door swung shut behind him and he heard it lock automatically. The roar and din from below evaporated completely. The room was dark. He heard a voice.

"Well take off your duds cowboy, and let's see your equipment."

Meanwhile downstairs Augie spotted Sister Sandra in her best farm-boy-plaid shirt and dungarees. She'd been watching him dance. He narrowed his options very

quickly. He and Moon were in the back room in a jiff, threw on some pants, and were off down the back alley on who-knows-whose skateboards, before Sister Sandra ran into one of the fathers and three of the castrati and left in disgust.

\*\*

Arabella divined that banging on the front door at the midnight hour must be the three Warriors of Lesbos come back from the dead to serve and protect the Goddess on the eve of the Spring Sacrifice. Trust your instincts. She opened the door and there they were! She let them in and made cocoa. Their leader, named Melissa, asked very nicely, for a Lesbos warrior, for some help to restore her robes that had been torn badly, presumably during a fierce battle in the Underworld. While Arabella was busy with the cocoa the three fighters browsed in the store, mostly in graphic novels. About an hour later Red arrived with two more mature warriors, a vulgar one in boots, and another, an utterly divine young thing with glasses and two prisoners, two not dangerous looking, pre-pubescent boys. (Sometimes it is very hard to tell.) And to her amazement the High Priestess ran up and hugged the white pube. It could only be, she thought, to prepare him for sacrifice.

Once inside and calmed down Red spoke to the older warriors. "Hope you won't be put out, but these boys are mine."

"I'm sworn to take them in," replied Bert with admirable bravado. "At least him," she asserted, motioning to Zekus - the white pube - "back to Camp. His Time of Life is at hand."

Red was unyielding, but before she could speak Melissa was in it.

"Well I'd like the black one," she proclaimed waving a roll of bills at Bert.

"How'd you like to work for me?" she whispered to Hershel as she undid his cuffs with a skeleton key she always carried. "Your ass is perfect, and I know a very rich customer. Fifty-fifty."

Hersh was more than a little interested in the roll of bills, but didn't speak. He looked to Zeke who was more than a little exasperated with his sister. And Bert was flabbergasted by the young Wombyn in the torn dress. But she had no warrant for Hershel, and no legal excuse to object to the release of the black one.

"Really, trust me," continued Melissa, to the mystified Hersh. "What are you doing tomorrow night? There's an Auction happening that's got your name on it! I know a lady who shops there. She's loaded, and she loves dark meat."

Sacha and Macha nodded vigorously. Zeke looked glum and the cuffs that bound his wrists behind him hurt like hell. Hershel looked up at the ceiling but still didn't answer.

"Hardly fair to let the black one lose, and not the white one!" Red taunted. "Equal treatment, and all that. We'll let 'em both loose."

And that was it. Bert had lost the face-off and everybody knew it. But then was there any question that against Red, that would be the outcome. Red hugged her. And Yoni slunk to the back of the store.

Red sat to unlace her blades. "You boys promise not to run away?" They nodded vigorously. Red indicated to Melissa she could let them loose, which she did. "I'll talk to her," she remarked dryly about Yoni.

With these major tensions resolved a wave of fatigue overwhelmed the group. The girls flopped in the big armchairs in the front put there for foot-weary readers. Zekus and Hersh studied a picture book of leather-wrapped naked ladies, a prize winning book of lesbo porn that boys were never intended to see, and shortly fell asleep standing up in the Mens' Washroom with their hands in their pockets. Arabella remained deeply engaged in the semiotics of dialectical mysticism with the divine Miss Yoni, who found her engaging, if a bit flighty. And in the back room Red glowed like Rudolf's famous nose, and was totally convinced Bert that Zeke was not needed in the Camps for the foreseeable future.

\*\*

Biff was the first to find him. The mighty Jake, dangling by his thumbs from the tip of the lance of some noble bronze General on a huge black steed twisting in the night breeze, no pants, and no cock.

Wildboys don't cry but they did that night and sat on the grass and blew a joint and told big, important Jake stories for an hour, and didn't notice the rustling in the bushes behind them, until it was too late.

\*\*

Nevada stepped into the office. It was dark. He heard faint jungle drumming.

"Turn off the fuckin' sound effects, faggot," he snarled. "Your pecker is still the size of a gumdrop."

"Oh ya!" says Chuck. "I'll split you top to bottom! Put your money on the table!"

Chuck flicked on a dim lamp. He was big!

Nevada put ten bills on the table beside him, the same ten he's received from the President's attendant a few hours before.

"You call that a fuck pole! No wonder you're still down here on the fruit farm!" Nevada snapped. In for a penny, in for a pound.

"Stud, you sure you got one. All I see is the stub of a pencil."

"I seen peanuts bigger'n that!" Nevada shot back, thinking this was a bit silly.

"Buddy, that thing would fit in a thimble, and still leave room for my Porche."

"Your Porche is a hunk of tin. I got a black Testy."

"Cowboy, I got enough juice in my balls to send you to the Moon. This is a ride you'll never forget!"

Nevada laughed. Chuck laughed. And then they laughed together, deep and hardy, long and hard, snorting, roaring, wild and raucous, till the tears rolled, and the hills were split asunder, and the earth moved.

\*\*

Suddenly a phone rang. Sally opened her eyes, and there it was on the restaurant chair beside her. The crowd was gone and the club was empty. She answered it.

"Hello."

"Is D there?" was the very impatient, disembodied voice at the other end.

"No," she answered, short and proper.

"Who's this?" demanded the voice.

"Who's this?" she responded trying not to be insolent.

"You tell that SLUT to get her big ass home if she knows what's good for her ... sister!" And whoever it was hung up.

Sally was about to say, "You don't own her." But a voice inside said `Don't.'

Big D appeared out of nowhere and came over to the table, lifted Sally's chin with her hand. Sally looked deep into her eyes and said, "Your wife called."

Big D puckered gently and blew her a kiss.

"Sorry about that. That poor kid was looking at me. An emergency. We could go to a friend's place? I got a key."

And they sped off into the darkness on the black Harley.

\*\*

Now surrounding the dangling stud cop, the Herculean but cock-less figure of Jake, hung by his thumbs from the tip of the aforementioned lance, etc., were the seven Wildboys of Golem, stripped, neatly tied and de-penetrated with evident skill, were arranged neatly in a semi-circle around Jake, facing the rising sun, offering up their gender modification to the brave new world.

\*\*

As bad luck would have it, it was Moon and Augie who next cruised by an hour later. They circled five times and decided to return to Buns in a major hurry, and hope that the nun from hell had departed from their previously safe home base.

They did, and she had, and Moon took Augie to his room where they dove under the covers. Moon was as frightened as Augie, which was, frankly, a little disillusioning for Angel Abs. They clutch each other for hot comfort, and groped their own cockers to affirm that they were still secure and functional. And then each others. To their relief all systems were in tact, though hardly up for action. They slept for awhile. They woke at dawn. They tested again. Moon's was working very well now.

"You ready to fuck broads for money?" Moon asked quite matter of fact, looking down on the face fully pressed hard against his belly, the big cock deep down Augie's throat.

"You're gonna work for me doin' it, boy. Pop can sell your ass to the fags and I'll sell your pecker to the cunts." And Moon, who held Augie's ears in his two hands caused it to nod, yes. He pulled out his now huge plunger, and Augie sucked some air. Moon got up and pulled Augie to his feet, then bent him over the bed. Augie complied as Moon spread his cheeks. "And I'll fuck your ass on the side."

"What about your Dad?" Augie worried.

"He gets your Dad and I get your cherry. Sound fair?"

Augie smiled shyly.

"Just do like I say." And he slapped Augie's bum hard.

But just then the buzzer went, and Moon's boner collapsed. After an eternity of loud electronic squawks and squeals a voice spoke. "Good morning, hardy fuckers. It's seven o'clock. All customers must be checked out in fifteen minutes, and all staff report to the infirmary for morning checkups." The lights came on very bright. And

marching bands began to play very unsexy music. "What a factory!" Moon exclaimed. "There's a reason the old man is so rich!"

He fingered Augie's hole tenderly. "Save it for me," he said mumbled. Then he pulled away, grabbed his pants, and headed for the showers.

"Let's go! Augie," he barked from the showers. "After chores we're goin' to the gym. My ass is up for auction to-night and I think I can get you added as a last minute extra. Angel Abs. The broads will love you. And don't tell Pop. He'd freak!"

## Chapter Eleven

**YE SHALL FIND THE BABE WRAPPED...**

A severe young novitiate with a M-16 slung casually over her shoulder ushered Kitty into the Cardinal's former office. The freshly stenciled sign on the door said, simply and severely, 'IS-HMS'. Kitty knew, of course, she was at Inner Sanctum of the Holy Mother Superior. Elizabeth Eaton-Jones, had got her at least this far.

The sturdy oak table where once the Cardinal had, allegedly, rutted with the choir boys, was now stacked high with freshly opened prosecution files. In the corner, at an extremely tidy desk The Holy Mother Superior herself sat with her back to the door, studying three small monitors which displayed flashing signs and symbols in a language or code unknown to Kitty. Gone was the heavy oak office chair that once bore the Cardinal's bulk. Instead she was seated on a small fluffy cloud, her feet tucked neatly into the mist, if misty it was. Fabulous, Kitty thought to herself, and isn't it nice that this country girl has at least some taste in furniture, and wouldn't all this go well with some pale chintz, eventually.

"You're early, Kitty," Mary said, not looking up. "I'll be with you in a moment." And after exactly a moment she handed her some charts and said, "You might be interested in these. You're in marketing."

"I'm cross-referencing our donor profile with confession-regression analysis. Did you know that the largest male donations to the Church correlate strongly with confession made within five days, but rarely where confession is more than ten days out, especially where carnal transgression is unknown to the wife. And almost perfectly when confession precedes a confrontation with a wife."

"Is that surprising to you?"

"So this proves confession works extremely well. What do you think?"

"It depends," Kitty replied evasively.

"On what does it depend? Don't be evasive."

Dare Kitty say 'On how much you need the money'? She elected not to speak.

"Were you about to say, 'It depends on how much you need the money'?"

"I am in business, Holy Mother," she replied quietly.

Mary gave her 'the look'.

"I thought you'd like to see the new Rectitude portfolio," said Kitty trying to change the subject. "And the Radiance. The team have been working all night! I think... we all think... these are fabulous," Kitty purred as she spread the mock-up boards around the room. "Aren't they just stunning?"

Mary glided out from behind the table on her heavenly chair and cruised from board to board studying the photos and the graphics without saying a word.

"Oh, and I brought over some contracts and things, for you to sign, that is, if you're satisfied. It's just our little agreement all written down, to keep Sorensen happy. In Legal. You know those men." As an afterthought, a trivial detail, housekeeping, she hoped it would seem, not the career-breaking main event that, in fact, it was. "I'm sure you'll be more than pleased."

"Well," said Mary without even turning to look at the document, "if you want to know, I'm not happy with clause 4-5(a) on accelerated depreciation of market copyright. And we're not interested in your definition of 'net gross-up.' I may be from out of town, but I'm not from Mars!"

Kitty was stunned. She had never thought that the irradiated bimbo from Idaho might actually read Sorensen's turgid prose. For which he was on probation. And she tried to change the subject back to the fabulous adverts. "This one's great, n'est-ce pas?"

Mary was studying it, a new version of the famous original, of herself in the familiar pose, the French lass, virginal and grateful, standing astride the bombed out Nazi bunker above the Normandy beach, radiating, beaming, as fifty thousand troopers storming ashore. To which had been added in subtle sepia tones three muscular young marines sprawled shirtless around her feet.

"These boys should be wearing long-sleeve shirts. don't you think?" she finally said, and not as a question.

"Marketing thought they were somewhat eye-catching. It gives pizzazz ... they thought. What do you think? I think what you think."

Mary studied it a few more moments. "I believe," she said very slowly, "it makes me look like an object of sexual desire. As if ... as if ... I am the reason they fight!"

"Oh, noooooo."

"I won't have it. They weren't there when we took the snapshots."

"We do appreciate your suggestions. I'm sure Marketing will agree. I'm Marketing."

Mary replied archly. "As currently configured it is inappropriate, don't you agree?"

"Why don't we discuss it some more after we do our paper work. I just need a few signatures."

"And this new poster over here. Too much flesh!"

"Why darling, those are Boy Scouts! You are their titular leader. It's New Cubism."

"Well good. Then do as the leader says and cover up those knees. And the arms. And the ankles."

"Mary, we're selling cosmetics!"

"You never told me that," the HMS responded angrily.

"Oh, darling, don't tease me. We must have! When we took the pictures. Remember?"

"I thought it was for good teeth and a fresh complexion," she replied blithely.

"But I told you all about our plans for Radiance, at lunch. At Trend. You must remember, darling. The fabulous crisps! You must!"

"I don't do trends." Mary smiled.

"It's a restaurant." Kitty whispered. "Are you trying to tell me, Mary darling, you've forgotten our little understanding. I'm hurt, personally hurt. We go back a long, long way. How can you do this to me, of all people, after what I've done! We're family!"

"Won't people think it unseemly for a woman in my position to be selling perfume, in the vulgar company of uncovered male flesh. Look at that one! The top buttons of his trousers are undone!"

"Oh ... so they are!"

"But it's odorless perfume. It's perfect for you! And besides he's totally shaved, harmless, like Sampson, a pussy cat."

"That's all too easy for you to say, but I can't allow it. In my business, reputation is everything!"

"Well," replied Kitty somewhat curtly, "you certainly had some well hung meat on those three crosses in the west transept for the big processional the other day! And don't think a lot of people didn't notice."

"That was a passion play!"

"Yes, darling, and that's exactly what it looked like."

"You missed the spiritual point."

"I usually do," Kitty replied trying to remain calm. "But maybe you're missing out on the financial - oh, I don't know - reality. Exactly how are you going to make payments on this sacred pile without this endorsement revenue. This place could be foreclosed any day. Do you know what that means? United Fundamentals could put you out at any moment. Not me personally, of course. But U.F.O. requires this marketing agreement as collateral to secure any new mortgage. Which you need. That is, if you plan to stay. It's as simple as that."

"Mortgage? What's a mortgage? I never signed a mortgage," Mary responded curtly. "This is a new administration. Or have you forgotten?"

"You could be out in the street. To use the vernacular."

"I do very well in the street, thank you! "I don't know a single solitary policeman who would enforce your mortgage, darling. You're bluffing!"

"Well, there is something else you should know about."

"All ears, Kitty."

"We are going to market very soon with a extraordinary new product ... in the Purity line. Restoration. An endorsement from you ... would be wonderful."

"I will not promote cosmetics."

"Not to worry. This is a *health* product.

"It's a morning after vaginal cream. Restores the hymen. In eighty-seven percent of the cases. So you can marry, again and again, as a virgin.

"Seemed like something you'd be interested in.

"Too bad we're not doing business ... any longer."

Mary was silent for the longest time, and then she said, slowly, "That is something best kept out of the hands of the public. Bad, very bad for behavior. Although, perhaps, it could be useful ... in some limited circumstances.

"We thought you'd be interested."

"Where did you find this?" Mary asked rather sullenly.

"We've come upon an a rather amazing young woman..."

"The Magdalena! ..." exclaimed the HMS in a sudden rage. "The slut!"

"She does seem a little loose. I gather you know her?"

"She's here? In Golem?"

"And she's very lovely - in an earthy way." Was the tide changing? Kitty plunged. "They love her in wardrobe. We were thinking of a whole line - subordinate to yours, of course, you know, the fallen woman. The lab says just one fresh sample a month and we can replicate all we could ever sell."

"You must bring her to me!"

"Darling, she's a client, and you're ... a stranger to me now. I can't breach privilege."

"I think," said the HMS, "we will talk some more."

\*\*

The gals were really great about it in the morning. A big mistake. Could happen to anybody. Free to go, bud. Actually looking for Custurd Nopus, from Dunsmore, Scotland. They couldn't have been nicer about it, couldn't have done more, except maybe find the money from his wallet, and his shoe laces and belt, but he could see they were busy. Hell, he'd rather walk anyhow. The kids would meet him at the Donut Shop, any time after ten.

Sure enough, there were the boys, tearing about in the Donut Shop across from the Cath. They ran to him with big hugs. He bought donuts for three with the change still in his pocket. And there was Rachel X, the Mayor's Chief Executive Assistant, who he had been driving around two days earlier. She was sitting in the window, despondent, eyes glued to the side door of the sacral behemoth. He said, "Hi" but she didn't even know who he was.

\*\*

"Who was that lovely child in the center last night, Sister?" the HMS inquired.

"Lovely child indeed!" replied Sister Sandra. "Holy Mother, that one is no end of trouble! No end! No end!"

"Pity. He seemed so perfect. I thought we might hang him again today."

"Mary, have mercy, but he's run away!"

"Run away? But where would he go?"

"Sweet Mary, Mother of God, you don't want to know! You wouldn't believe me if I told you, and I couldn't find the words if I tried! A place of unimaginable filth and corruption, unrepentant sinners and unmentionable acts."

"Buns," said Mary. "That precious child went to Buns?"

"Pray for us sinners, now, and in the hour of our death, Queen of Heaven. Someone has told you then, before me?"

The HMS just smiled.

"Just tell me who, and I will tan his hide. That's my job, and I do it well!"

"Could you find the boy, and bring him back?"

"Oh, ma'am, I tried that. Went in there myself, I did, last night. Almost caught him, too. Him and that muscle bound cowboy, both of them. Hugging him, saying he was his Dad! Perverts! Imagine! I'd lay it on that rascal, I would, give me half a chance."

Mary leaned forward in her chair, solemn and stern. "Tell me, Sister Sandra, How did the child come to join the Heavenly Choir? Where did he come from? Answer carefully."

"Oh, Sweet Mother. I found him myself, barely a day old, done up in Saran Wrap, behind a rock in the dessert, in the summer of 1980. Abandoned by some wicked and sinful mother. He was yelping so sweet. Nobody claimed him after ninety days. We kept him for the Choir."

Mary eased back on her cloud. "It seems he thinks that he's not `ours' any longer."

"Why no, ma'am, and good riddance, if you'll allow me. Good riddance. I couldn't beat sense into him no matter how hard I tried!"

"I think," said Mary firmly, "you should find him and bring him back!"

"Yes ma'am, but that won't be none too easy."

"And why is that?"

"Well, I saw it with my own eyes, he run off with a unicorn."

\*\*

Yoni woke early. There was Bert snoring away on her left side, and Arabella blissfully slumbering on her right, Bert's left hand rested on her one breast, and Arabella's right on the other. She'd had better nights. She heard grunting noises from downstairs, like caber tossing cross the Firth of Forth. She crawled slowly and carefully out from between her two nocturnal companions, and crept down the back stairs to the store. By the time she'd arrived the noise had stopped. The girls were gone. Zeke was still asleep by the magazine rack. And the black kid was lying starkers on the Navaho rug in the Child Care Department staring vacantly at the ceiling. And Red was sitting in the corner, tits akimbo, sucking a cig.

\*\*

The Mayor's Power of Prayer Breakfast was a regular Wednesday event for the cognoscenti, literati, eleganti and paparazzi. It was tightly timed to wind up just before Bloomingdale opened. It was Rachael's first time at the podium and her first appearance before the public after the trusteeship. She was nervous.

The murders of Officer Jason - Jake - Gimbel and the seven Wildboys was the top story on the Breakfast Phone-ins, and in the morning editions of the Times which lay folded at every place. People were shocked and appalled before shopping. Bad things do happen in the big city, but to a police officer, and to white boys! This was going too far! Several were from very good families.

But Rachel was cool. She opened with a prayer and her presentation was masterful.

"Let us prey. Dear Goddess, or Sex-Neutral Transcendental Spirit of Oneness and Hope - give me guidance and strength in these troubled times - give me the backing of key party organizers while our beloved leader, former Mayor Kresting, suffers the long, long wait for his trial, and after that the inevitable appeals, until he dies. Pray that his sins his corruption and depravity do not infect the reputation of so many good people, people who worked so hard, and gave so much money to get him elected. Pray for the little children who have come forward to tell the truth. Pray for all the little children who always tell the truth. Pray that many more little children will gain that courage, and come forward and speak out against the Republicans, before they have the chance to vote again. Amen."

She pleaded.

"I begged them, don't ask me do this! I have family. My precious little children! My good husband! Why me, Why me! What twist of fate has brought me here. I would gladly give my talents, my expertise, my experience, to any other. Take this burden from me! Only to the end of this term, and no more. No more. I am a private person. I will NOT accept a draft for Senator. I am NOT available for the Ticket."

She schmoozed.

She sang a few Cole Porter numbers, and showed slides of her family in the mountains, and a videotaped message of support from her husband who read her Curriculum Vitae.

And she promised.

"I promise to proclaim the Deemed Marriages Act today! No more delay. As I speak the final Regulations are being drafted. Deeming Notices will be delivered by four o'clock to all unmarried men. This I swear! Why should the unmarried, the widowed, the lesbian community, be excluded from sharing the property of men by the cruel twist of fate that they have no husband to divorce. That would be an egregious inequality, and we will not permit it. And", she proclaimed to loud applause, "Saturday will be the first Day of Collection and Redistribution."

And she was humble when they acclaimed her Supreme Commander and Ultimate Leader of the Party.

\*\*

Sally woke up with a start. It was late. D was gone again. There was a printed card on her pillow. "Emergency call, must run, it's been swell,"

The apartment was a mess. No surprise.

The phone rang. With some trepidation she answered. She heard the pained rumble she once loved. "Why don't you come home, honey? We miss you". She could hear the boys yakking in the background.

She said, "yes" with her lips. She couldn't make the sound, but he knew.

She put the note back on the dresser, and left the door unlocked behind her.

\*

Dr. Sue leaned over, quite confidential, just before the opening commercial, "Madonna was on last week ... that girl ... you'll do fine." And, wham, the lights went up.

"Welcome to *Recovered Memories!* The show where you remember long lost fantasies and tell the studio audience! And we all work together to find and destroy the man of your dreams!

"Our guest this afternoon is Rachel X, the brand new mayor of Golem. She's a law professor, cabaret singer, champion gymnast, weaver-potter-psychologist, mother

of eight, married to a blind mountain climbing poet ... let's give her a big welcome to 'I Remember Him'.

"Great to have you on the show, Rachel. So tell us about your living hell."

"Well..."

"Can we get a close up of Karl Kresting for the viewers at home? There he is! Doesn't he just look it! You can see it in the eyes. Tell it, Rachael!"

"It's so difficult really. It's almost embarrassing. It just went out of my mind, I guess. Until yesterday. I was trying on his shoes. They were big. It started coming back. I spoke to my therapist. Then I knew, I had just had to speak up."

"That's the most amazing tale we've ever heard on our show! I'm truly shocked. "Let's see that close-up of the former Mayor again for the viewers."

"Should I go on?"

"You don't have to, darling. The phones are ringing. Get the lady a hanky!

Thanks Dolly.

First caller. Don't give your name, or any means of tracing the call. Just tell us your city."

"Billings, Montana."

"Well tell it, sister...you're on the air."

"I remember him."

"Don't we all."

"Five girls were late for Guides last year on a single Tuesday night. And I saw that man at the 7-11 the next day. Same eyes. Everything."

"Shocking. He made all five late for Guides."

"That's the God's truth."

"Second caller, you're on the air!"

"I remember him. He sat beside me on a flight from Nairobi to Delhi in 1954. He pinched my bum. I'd recognize him anywhere."

"Third caller, you're on the air!"

"I'm a like a Golemite. I remember him. From when I was a baby. He use to flash me in my baby carriage ... I was three weeks old..."

"Fourth caller ... folks, all the lines are busy but just keep calling ... Rachel darling, could you come back tomorrow, and next week, you've been fabulous ... Fifth caller."

\*\*

Derek had heard on the noon news that Deeming had been proclaimed, and unattached males born on odd dates in December were first to be tapped. That was him!

He went home sick.

At four-thirty his Deeming Notice arrived. He poured himself a double scotch. He tore it open slowly and pulled out the form. His new family - a Rumanian widow with a family of eight non-scholarship medical students just entering Harvard.

\*

The ex-mayor started to cry.

Easter loved the mighty who had fallen, the further the better; these were the cases that truly challenged her talents. Besides she'd serviced him years before, in her other life, and she knew he had something substantial to offer. The nurturing crap with Angel Abs was taking longer than the deal was worth. Further and besides, he'd taken off and she knew in her heart of hearts, the little shit was just like all the rest.

"Alright, alright, I'll take you on, but I ain't gonna be seen in public with you. Let's make that clear." Karl Kresting was more than willing to agree. "I'm gonna take you home for service." To that Karl Kresting had no choice but to agree. "But you gotta stay inside. I got neighbors." Karl felt immense relief, and there was for the first time in two days a tiny glimmer of hope in his heart. He kissed her desk.

"So, did you see that show!" she asked. All those people! Callin' from all round the country 'bout you!"

Karl nodded, then hung his head.

"You do all that stuff? You been a busy guy!"

Karl didn't speak.

"Those five girls in Montana?"

Karl nodded slowly.

"That lady on the plane to Delhi?"

Karl nodded again slowly. "Never been there but she must have got the flight wrong. It's coming back to me."

"That little girl in the baby carriage?"

"Oh ya, that's me," he replied firmly.

"Diddling those toddlers at the Day Care?"

"I think I remember that. Little children don't lie."

"Boil ten secretaries in vats of flesh in the City Hall gymnasium?"

"Well, I must have done something. They kept quitting on me."

"What about the rape-murder in Atlanta?"

"It's part of a pattern."

"Serial rapist at the Ratcliffe dorm in '73?"

"Could have been me. My head's so fucked I probably did."

"Mr. Mayor, you haven't been accused of no rape-murder in Atlanta."

"But I remember it. I do."

"And there weren't no serial rapist at Rat-cliffe - never!"

"But that caller said."

"No she didn't! No caller even mentioned Rat-cliffe!"

"Well, I was sure. If I made a clean breast of it...the children..."

"Mr. Mayor, we better fix it so you done somethin' you really regret! Now you see that big green suitcase over there in the corner?"

Kresting nodded.

"Well, you git in it. 'Cause we're goin' home, right now!"

## Chapter Twelve

### THE BACHELOR AUCTION

The Bachelor Auction had evolved. Indeed there were those who said it was the best measure of evolving sexual manners. It started as a bad-girls night-out, rich bad girls, raising money for something good, it really didn't matter what. Then the professional women with earned income – imagine – with no time for husbands and an itch they could afford to scratch. Those were rather raucous. The event became private. Then came the intellectuals, to prove they could have it all. The talent contest was broadened to include poetry! But as the sex war progressed, the state of undress of the bid items had become decided conservative. This year only the talent section showed flesh, and it was just shirtless, not even shorts or low rise jeans, hardly enough to make intelligent choices, but still, it hadn't hurt attendance. The astonishing events at the Cathedral that day were so fast upon them that the Committee had no time to consider any further changes to the program or the dress rules. But the writing was on the wall, these might be the last naked pecs to be seen in public for some time.

Beth returned to the Ballroom, took her seat at one of the tables near the runway to wait for the Main Event and ordered a vodka martini ... damn the doctor who said it was bad for her blood sugar ... and was discretely studying the Data Supplement on her lap, when ... well, well, well ... along came Miss Kryder and sat down beside her.

“Shopping darling.”

Beth tried to slide the Supplement in her purse, but not quick enough that it escaped the sharp eyes of the U.F.O. marketing exec, who was hardly a stranger to Beth's voracious appetites and cosmopolitan tastes. “Just browsing,” she replied primly, turning to the fuller, glossier Official Catalogue on the table in front of her. “I'm only here to help the cause.”

The highest bid item in the show always got a `modeling' contract with U.F.O. Kitty always made several showy purchases, - strictly for U.F.O., she said. But those ‘in the know’, would know who to call, oh, about four weeks later, Kitty's Private Placements, hourly, nightly, weekends or extended travel. ‘Placement’ had become a delicate business and Kitty did it well for the well endowed.

The Main Catalogue had a photo spread on each item in the Men's Open and a short report from the Volunteers Selection Committee, stats and some titillating quotes. The young men were carefully interviewed, inspected, and tested by the Committee. Family histories were verified for genetic impurities. The Committee screened for manners and attitude, a very time consuming, but personally rewarding task. The terms of indenture were uniform and signed in blank ready for delivery to the

successful bidder. The men received a stipend and fifteen percent of their bid price, tax free.

After an interminable dinner discussion of perfume politics and free trade with Quebec and water conservation in Montana and, and, Kitty leaned over during desert and whispered, "Your new Virgin is fabulous. I just adore her! Now I expect you'll be seeing me at church! Can you imagine!"

Beth laughed politely. She knew the day Kitty showed up at Sunday service she ought to reinforce the rafters.

"We're so pleased to be using her again," Kitty continued. "We had no idea when we did the shoot for Rectitude that she was such a fine public speaker."

Beth had the greatest respect for Kitty's day job and special skills in finance and marketing. Her sideline, pimping hard-to-come-by-quality beef, was a sophisticated method of networking at the highest level. Post-Correction beef was hard to buy. And Kitty had the greatest respect for Beth. She was rich for a reason. There was no disguising Beth's purpose in attending the Auction, to buy wholesale and cut Kitty out of the loop. On one thing they agreed: good that it was the men for sale now, not the girls.

A young underwriter and part-time, deep-sea treasurer hunter paraded out. He was very well groomed, and had a superb tush which he carried high on the hip and he read movingly some of Beth's favorite parts from *Way Beyond the Valley of the Dolls*. But alas, as the Supplement revealed, his performance stats were disappointingly low. Such a shame, he exuded bad boy, but what's the point if even the missionary position is too great an exertion? Beth and Kitty passed on him, but he did fetch a respectable price from an obviously uninformed shopper.

"Isn't Mary a sweetie!" Beth continued, as they waited for the next. "And just what the Cath needs. I hear Collection this afternoon was spectacular. That silly mortgage will be paid off in no time," Beth cooed.

"Beth, darling, they are so lucky to have you on the Board. We would be thrilled not to foreclose. U.F.O. doesn't want a Cathedral? I mean, the best we can do with it, other than condos, is a Make-up Mall. But I'm sure you've been through all those options."

"Well, give us a month and I think we'll cash you out, I really do. The little people are lining up at the door."

"That is superb! But then, we really should be talking marketing, not mortgages, don't you think? Listen, I have some fab ideas. Mary, herself, is not as savvy about such things as ..."

"Oh, we'd be thrilled. But we could never afford your expert advice." Beth was almost as good a liar as Kitty.

"We have some knockout new product ideas which I know would interest you. Win-win. It would be an absolute sin not to move on them."

But then they both went quiet for a sensational Yale Junior named Stinger, with short, tight, curly hair on top, but otherwise smooth and clean as a fine marble. Kitty and Beth leaned over together and checked his size and weight, endurance, repeats and thrust ratios.

Kitty whispered, "He has Nevada's hips, don't you think?"

"Very nice, very nice. I wonder if he idles as well as he throttles?"

"Should I buy him for the service? What do you think?"

"Sweet heart, you know your customers, not I. I won't presume to advise," Beth whispered, admiring the curve of his butt. "However I'd be wary of that school. They take themselves all too seriously. It says he repeats, but ... is that really credibly? I know two guys from Yale who reread books looking for the 'meaning'! Really. They learned nothing. All that money wasted!"

"But he does have Nevada's hips, right? Or am I imagining?"

"I see your point."

Kitty smiled, and raised her paddle. "I'll try him. If he doesn't work out, ... he *reads*, you say ... I'll put him in Typing.

"Would you test drive him for me?"

"Oh, but then I'd have to charge you."

"But I'd pay you for that, darling! The benefit of your years and years of experience!"

Beth thought for a moment. While he had ears and feet of intriguing size, she concluded he would probably be a one-nighter, better managed by Kitty, and she decided not to bid. But Kitty lost the bidding to Hester Birenbaum, a horsey type from upstate, who always needed help in the barn.

"Darling," said Kitty tenderly, resuming their earlier conversation, "would you talk to Her about the marketing opportunities? I mean you must be close. You're the senior person. She and I, we're just not connecting at the moment. I'm afraid she ... we ... you ... us ... me! We're about to miss out on something spectacular."

The next two items were passable, but certain unfortunate imperfections deterred the serious bidders. The first had excellent shoulder definition but unfortunate 'ab-sag'. It was nothing you'd notice in a well cut suit, viewed from the front, but it spoiled his side profile, which was a shame, because he gave great face. The next had that little bald spot some of them get, just a thinning really, but in this competition that kind of damage meant a heavy discount, and coming so early in the auction that translated into virtually no bids. He was lead away, nearly in tears. These things do happen.

"Your people really think they'll be able to redeem the mortgage?" Kitty inquired as a potty one did a Johnny Carson imitation. "The Hari Krishna want it right away. But a lease ties up capital. We'd rather not. If there was some hope of a marketing exclusive with you and Mary."

"Well, Mary loves the Cath and says she wants to stay. And frankly, Kitty, how would you get her out anyhow, assuming we couldn't redeem the mortgage?"

"Oh, you can reason with her, darling. She was very easy to deal with, before." Kitty lied. "But now I don't have the opportunity to get close to her, like I use to," she lied again. Beth knew she lied. Kitty knew that Beth knew she was lying. Beth knew that Kitty knew that she knew how much trouble she was in, trying to repossess a building that had effectively been seized and occupied by someone she was begging to sign up to the biggest marketing exclusive in history. Would Beth take advantage of Kitty's acute desperation? The only question was whether before or after dessert?

But then they were both swept away by the best in the show, the item that had brought Beth out to auction. The bargain of the decade, she hoped. The Unicorn. Tonight he had specially shaped and lacquered his trademark hair-do to a bulbous top, looking suspiciously like a... The cheek! He was thick in the shoulder and he rolled his hips when he came down the runway with a flair that ignited the whole room. His performance data was world class. The paddles were flying even before he popped his triceps. Beth signaled her bidders.

Kitty noticed instantly. "You buying? Why darling that's wonderful. You think he's good?" she inquired like an innocent.

Beth blushed.

"It's so sensible, really. I mean I have to mark up, of course, and why pay me, I mean as much as I'd love your money. Volume buying must be compelling."

Beth did not like being caught out. "I am not buying. I'm scratching my ear!"

"Well I'm buying him for the service if you're scratching your ear, and he is gorgeous."

"I trust you will keep this to yourself!"

"Darling, discretion is my middle name! And I won't tell Mary the first time I see her."

"If you bid against me, sweetheart, you will never speak with the Holy Mother ever again."

"Then you'll speak to her for me! That, darling, is a done deal!"

Only four people in the room knew that it was Elizabeth Eaton-Jones who paid a record amount that night through a surrogate bidder for the punk stud and one of them was not Full Moon. But he was smiling a 'new Harley' smile. Maybe Pop would come round to these heterosexual adventures now that he could show some major green stuff. He didn't know till later that the buyer was really the athletic matron who he'd been fucking the last two Fridays and who, over the year-long contract, stood to save a bundle. And frankly he didn't care. He was free Saturday to Thursday.

As the cheering died down Kitty leaned over and inquired, "What shall we do with Nevada? He is getting a little paunchy."

"I expect I won't renew Sundays, but my great aunt in Rochester might be interested."

"Would you mind awfully if I sent him to the Ranch. He needs a rest."

"Not at all. Not at all."

"I'll try to find something else nice for your auntie."

"So kind."

Beth smiled benignly and rose gracefully from her chair, graciously bid everyone good evening, and raced for the delivery room.

Kitty was exhilarated. She'd probably lost the best inside source on Cath finances she'd ever have. But then she'd also probably, she hoped, had closed the biggest marketing exclusive in all history.

\*\*

Y's keen eye spotted them leading Augie from a grey Plymouth down a dark alleyway on the south side of the Cathedral, his hands were bound behind, and a black hood was tied loosely over his head. Her darling was in danger! But by the time she'd paid for her donut, and raced across Cathedral Boulevard, the big back

door was closed and securely locked. She prowled in the dark in the back lane looking for another entrance. In the total darkness she tripped over something in the bushes, and cursed. The something moved, and became a foot.

"Whoever you are," she said firmly, "I will pay you handsomely to help me rescue a young man currently in desperate danger in this very building."

"You gotta be shittin' me!" said the voice of Nevada Smith. "What do you want with the kid?"

"I expect not the same thing as you," she replied with a Brahman crispness that he didn't like, but was born to obey. But, suddenly, as they stumbled together in the dark alley, they fell together, through a secret unlocked trap door into the basement of the Cath, and into a vast bin of moldy wafers.

They climbed out, dusted off the crumbs and she ordered "Follow me." And he did.

After passing through a dark cave of vipers and across a rope bridge over a huge pool of molten sputum, they saw a faint light at the end of a long dark tunnel, crawling with spiders, and heard distant muffled cries. They crawled through the tunnel of spider and shortly they were standing on the outside of a thick oak door marked Secret Chamber. They heard more cries, and they both knew it was Augie, and that he needed their help.

As they pressed close to the door they heard Sister Sandra, "The Mother Superior says we should take you back to the desert tomorrow, and stake you down, right where we found you! Never should have picked you up, she says."

"There ...," she said, tightening down the straps, "you're not going anywhere! And I am! To bed! I'll deal with you in the morning."

They heard another door close, and then silence.

Nevada tried the door. It wouldn't budge.

Rachel Y took a set of keys from her purse. The third one worked. Nevada decided this strange broad was alright.

And there he was, strapped down to a low leather-top table in the middle of the room bound, hand and foot, gagged, crying, all done up in Saran Wrap waiting for delivery.

Quick as a flash they cut him free. No time for hugs, and within moments the three were out through the wafer dump and back in the street, running north as fast as they could.

Ten blocks later they stopped for breath. "So who are you anyhow?" asked Nevada to Y as they rested.

She was relieved to be in the company of the politically disinterested, or ignorant, who did not recognize her from the vast over exposure her sister had suffered in the media in the previous few days.

"I know her from the gym, Pop," interjected Augie. "She's an interested shopper," he twinkled.

"More than interested, I'd say," Nevada drawled.

Rachel Y blushed.

"Sweetheart," said Nevada, "let me fill you in. This kid is a major no, no. The Sisters think this skinny runt is the only male flesh in two thousand years from the Sacred Womb. And that's one too many for them. He's more than hot stuff!"

"Pop! Lay off!"

"These disadvantages are historically relative," she said. "Besides the configuration of abdominal musculature is unique and I'm a photographer."

"Well, you are warned. And personally I don't care ...." said Nevada non-committal. "But, my boy don't take checks."

\*\*

Red and Zeke cuddled in the Herstory Section all evening waiting for Melissa to report back with the news of stupendous commercial triumph. Zeke was just getting the hang of the basics, when Red had to leave to catch the late shift at the shipyards. Yoni again observed from the stairs Red's violation of Golem's Cross-Gender Regulations, not to mention the Corruption of Minors Act, and the wanton abuse of her tender charge, before he could be liberated, in accordance with the clear directions from his wise and rich parents. Enough was enough! Within the hour she was on the phone to Golem's finest to report the violations. And by a grand coincidence, which is the peculiar logic of the novel, Big D took the call on her bedside emergency number, where she was wrestling with Proper Gothic. She arranged to meet Yoni much later at Victims, after she finished her 'important business matter' and took a shower, and informed Gothic an emergency had come up.

Shortly after Yoni's unexpected departure, Arabella began the preparation of the traditional elixirs required for the Feast. Bert agreed to sample, and rather shortly

came to a heightened sense of the earthy charms of Arabella. This was one of the principal advantages of Arabella's considerable skills as an herbalist and expertise in pagan ritual. These private ceremonies were the best part of her job.

Melissa delivered Hershel to his first appointment, collected the money at the door, and waited in the hall. When he was finished she took him to her home and, filled with munificence, chained him to pantry faucet as a reward for X-Papp.

At Buns Chuck fucked three customers within an hour with the machine gun precision that had made him famous, and consequently he did not notice that his friend Derek was back, buying three hits from the pros in the Rumpus Room, who dutifully punched his card and patted his head.

Easter Primrose found her new retainer highly satisfactory and she confided in Karl Kresting that she expected a long delay before trial, and an even longer appeal. The former Mayor was understanding. He promised not to leave his shopping cart in the drive, and have the dishes done before five every afternoon, and fresh salad ready every day, whether or not she came home for dinner, or even called.

After seeing Augie and Y off to his favorite sleazy hotel Nevada went home to bed. He was very tired. But not so tired not to be pissed indeed to find a Suspension Notice from the Agency signed by Kitty herself and a ticket to Wyoming, slipped under his door.

And Sister Sandra was in a rage when she discovered the theft from the Secret Chamber. The HMS was out for the night, so there was no one to tell how upset she was, except Mike, the sideman, which she did most severely.

\*

The first thing that came ever so dimly into her murky consciousness was a sense of dull throbbing pain close to her left ear. It was spreading forward toward the eyes and up toward the hair. To start the visuals she recalled somehow you had to open the eyes, but such sudden movement seemed rash indeed.

She heard a faint whirring noise, and then suddenly, a violent attack on her eyes, her beautiful eyes. A second wave of light sent jolts down her spine. She groped for sheets or blankets to cover herself, but they had all been ripped away the night before, or tossed to the heavens in the nocturnal conflagration.

She could hear him, somewhere, huffing, huffing. Finally she peered over the edge of the bed, and there he was in the morning sunlight. Dear Goddess, he was, doing push-ups! He stopped, he rolled over, and he grinned up at her. He was hard, and raring to go again. His lacquered horn had been crushed by the frenzies of the night, and the long hair hung loose over his face. But he was otherwise fresh and eager. Teenagers are so much more work to care for than little babies, the magazines all

said. So true, so true, she thought, though she would never dream of leaving this one with a nurse.

She hurt all over. He looked at her expectantly, she said nothing and collapsed back on the bed. He took her dangling fingers to his mouth and kissed them fiercely, then he rose to the bed and tenderly licked her nipple. She rallied valiantly, but collapsed during the crescendo of the fifth movement.

Later she discharged him as kindly as she could, promised to call next week about another appointment. And within the hour she had the Vuitton loaded in the limo for a month in the country.

## Chapter Thirteen

### THE LAST SUPPER

By Thursday, six a.m., a dozen more de-penistrated males had been found in trashcans and back alleys in south Bronx and north Manhattan. There was much sloppy butchery compared to the precision cutting of the prior two days, but also many signs of ritual abuse. It appeared there was at least one serial killer who started in outer Brooklyn and was working her way downtown, notching the ears of her victims in order of assassination, one little nick, two little nicks, three little nicks. But there were many victims where the nicking seemed random. To this flood could be added at least a portion of an extraordinarily number of domestic homicides the night before, this night for the first time in statistical history, more dead male than females.

Rachel X tried hard to suppress the news. The major networks were prepared to cooperate as always, but already almost all the local and regional stations had home video clips of mutilated bodies in their area and several anonymous phone messages claiming credit. The wake-up shows were electric with fear. At least one limo was photographed on Park Ave being loaded with golf clubs and file boxes. And so the story spread that men of property were beginning to flee, taking with them what they could fit in the trunk. First there was one and then many, as the panic spread.

By seven-thirty the 'mass flight' was the lead story on several local stations. Rachael struck hard. While this partially assisted her plan for property re-appropriation in the very short term it left hundreds of males loose and free instead of in the Stadium 'safe zones'. She solicited several vigorous denials of any lack of confidence in the new Administration's ability to keep order, starting with Caswell Tredgold-Martin." It was "a month in the country, nothing special," he said, in a faxed Release, which, it was later discovered, came from his Leer Jet on the way to his fortified compound in Bermuda. The release was subsequently judged to have been successful in that it had the desired effect - of temporarily quelling the panic in the Upper East.

One step forward, two steps back. No sooner was this reported than Rachael X received a stiff 'Reminder' from the President herself that the funeral procession would proceed regardless of the wave of murders. The Army would march in dress battle gear and was ready to 'rock'n-roll'. Rachael was forced to issue a further statement that every possible measure would be taken to secure the parade route and its participants. But the Police Commissioner issued her own Emergency Regulation, no men should be out in the streets without female accompaniment, whom, she reminded, the men, they could neither touch nor look at. Further, she strongly suggested, the men should refrain from provocative clothing. And she announced that the Department was forced to decline all 911 calls for assistance to males, for the foreseeable future - because of pension issues.

By nine a.m. the National Networks were reporting over a hundred cult murders, of males of all races, and every class and religion, in all sectors of Golem and the surrounding suburbs. No less than five liberation front organizations claimed credit. The National Caucus for Redress issued a statement denying responsibility for what they called the wave of 'suicides' and re-iterating its position that the designated re-possession could and should be enforced by 'all means necessary'. A series of local Hotlines were established for callers to report any males with 'bad attitudes' and a computer Bulletin Board to post their photos and former home addresses and places of employment. The State Caucus of Wombyn's League demanded an end to poisonous and inflammatory talk of 'self-defense' which they said, "would pervert and corrupted the essential dignity of this spontaneous program of balance, focus, and historical equity."

Both the Mass Male United and Radical Misogynists issued warnings to their members, and other males, that they should not be out alone even with green rings and not to speak even to formerly friendly waitresses. With notable swiftness Humbert's smiling face appeared on a thousand lamp poles in the inner city. It was the familiar graphic - Humbert hugging a gang of boy bankers, and aging football ball players. 'Join Now!'

The Mayor's people in the streets reported to her the ominous sign that in the new photos, if you looked closely, they were all, football players and bankers - were *all* wearing cleats. There were small but growing crowds of single men at all the main intersections of the parade route, Green Rings and not, burning their Deeming notices and chanting, 'We love Football'. Rachael hadn't even issued the detailed Regulations! It made no sense to her. It wasn't about *football!* Men are so stupid. But then the announcement of 'free football zones' would seem like a victory.

The faggots had organized the day before to protest the proclamation of the Deemed Marriage Legislation. But that issue had been superseded in the streets by the frightening realization that the assassinations were not sparing the fags, green ring or no.

Far from a net flight of males from Golem, in fact the opposite was occurring. Every bridge and tunnel was crammed with mourners, and revelers, come for the bacchanal that Rick-Two-Prick, the President's Consort, had by his Will decreed, a protest which Rachel X had by her decree unwittingly enflamed. The Governor called to say there had been three major breakouts from the Camps and herds of testoseronal teenage crazies were headed for Golem in stolen buses. And worse, the suburban constabulary reported thousands of dirty old men, long quiescent and living in trailers and campers and vans, were advancing on the Island and their numbers multiplying hourly.

In the Mayor's office Rachel X was feeling overwhelmed. Y had not arrived for work! The Outer Office was desperately trying to cope with the flood of incoming calls. She didn't dare postpone the effective date of the new Reg. But at ten she announced a

Committee To Advise on Exemptions from the Regulations, and to which she appointed an equal number of males. She thought she had found six trusted geldings to serve, but by eleven, four of them had renounced their appointments without so much as a call to her office. She appealed to the President to declare a National Emergency, but the President's office again told her the army was needed for the parade and then at three for an invasion of Cuba. The funeral procession started at eleven, and the huge crowd below in City Hall Square, that threatened to break in, departed from the Square and headed for the parade route ten blocks east.

In these precious moments of relative calm Rachel X herself finally traced Y's cell to a no-name hotel in Yonkers. Finally she got Y on the phone and tried to explain the crisis. All she could hear was Y giggling, and another ... tenor giggle.

"What are you up to, anyhow? I hope this isn't trouble!"

"I'm just taking pictures," was the coy reply.

Y finished her good-byes, to who knew whom - this was not the time for X to inquire further - and Y was put on the speaker phone in the Mayor's Office dictating Official Statements and advising on strategy for most, but not all, of the duration. Big D reported to the Mayor's office at eleven fifteen. D happened to pick up the office phone. There were tense words. If it wasn't D, then who was Y with?

The Cathedral called offering support, mind you in exchange for two very particular prisoners, who meant nothing to D, who took the call and therefore made the deal. Their apparent insignificance to D accounted for the fact that this condition of support, and its acceptance, was not passed on to Y in Strategic Planning until much later. It was shortly after Y learned this in the mid-afternoon that her line went dead and she disappeared from City Hall.

The major networks struggled valiantly to contain the mounting hysteria. Their color-casters focused on the parade, called it "a majestic procession," "Presidential," "pomp worthy of a great man," ... as instructed ... "unusual ... exotic..." And, for the most part this worked, and the nation's attention now shifted to the spectacle of it all.

Ric had decreed by his Will that his funeral procession would be an open competition with a prize for the best float and the best individual costume. When he wrote this he never figured the public position he would hold at the time of his death. He was thinking his mourners could link up with the annual Mardi Gras.

The President said 'her hands were tied' by the terms of the Will. And she thought, hoped, that this one last blowout would lay to rest all the carping criticism that she did not embrace gay rights. The public would enjoy the perversity of it, as the last throws of a famous eccentric. People could be uncharacteristically tolerant at funerals.

And what choice did she have? If the parade did not happen the way he dictated she would not inherit control of his private papers, including about eighty complete and incomplete pornographic novels, in much of which oeuvre, especially the early efforts, she starred by name. That was real trouble! So a zoo it would be! The titillating military drag would seem stiff and formal compared to the 'open competition'. The generals would survive. Who knew what the overall effect would be? If it proved not to be quite the vote-getter she had originally hoped, it would still play well in Golem. Ultimately her handlers resigned themselves - it would be an exotic male happening on prime time, up the nose of the new mayor - and they would make the best of it.

First in the procession, the Army Precision Drill Team in their traditional uniforms, which Ric loved, and their rifles, which they tossed around like batons, consistently killing far fewer bystanders than predicted. They were followed by the Ninja Assassins in black Lycra, gyrating and bogey-ing all over of the street. That got the folks up and dancing. And then Then came Ric's Honour Guard in the rather scanty, new uniforms he had personally designed for private parade duties. (It was the public debut for the new apparel, and there was violent objection from the military brass, "aging and over-weight obstructionists", sniffed the President, who conceded only that the Generals, if they insisted, might ride in covered jeeps at the back of the parade in their traditional duds. Which they did.) Then came the coffin born on the shoulders of six glistening body builders - Ric's very special last wish.

And after that - the deluge - thousands of contestants in their best Mardi Gras, cross-dressers, un-dressers, chickens, bears, giraffes, bowling balls, hangmen, luciferian professors, pellucid necromancers, a gaggle of opaline Antoinnettes and oleaginous fops, and clowns and cons and cowboys, and so many more. And floats, floats which came out of nowhere, joining from the side streets, it was impossible to keep track. The production from Buns was spectacular, Scylla and Charybdis in neon and glitter, with Moon and Chuck as the fiends of the dark passage, and Augie as the young Odysseus, lithe and lashed to a mast, which passed every forty-five seconds between the pecking and grasping ogres, who slowly but surely snatched away all but the last threads of his costume. The Clit Club, in a very grand gesture of solidarity, sent a troop of Harleys to escort.

And for better or worse the rumors of straight male participants proved true. They came in force, and in the spirit of the event. The Radical Misogynists for Christ had a smallish but effective neon penis, set atop a mountain of specimen jars liberated from the Tredgold Clinic, radiating a golden hue from the preservative. Humbert himself was born on the shoulders of an agile crew. This was followed by dozens of conservatively dressed young men working the crowd selling raffle tickets. Yes, dear reader, by rights he should have been arrested then and there, but there are points in history when the law dissolves.

Solidarity groups brought up the rear, marching under their banners - Parents of Serial Rapists, Misogynists' Bowling League, Wildboys Baptist Rowing Club, and many more.

But the opaque windows of the President's black limo were shut tight, and all this she could not see or hear, sitting quiet and limb as a lonely foreskin, fighting the tears that streaked her makeup.

A disturbing element emerged about an hour after the procession began. A voluptuous creature in red Spandex on rollerblades, glowing and floating like the White Virgin had two days before, swooping and soaring, recklessly, joined the parade followed by thousands of dockworkers shouting "Virgin ...Virgin ...." The Cathedral was on the phone to the Mayor's office instantly. "That is NOT, REPEAT NOT, the REAL VIRGIN." And a troop of Ninja Nuns left the Cath almost immediately, marching in close formation south to the parade route. A short while later the Cathedral's hot air balloon was drifting over the crowd tossing leaflets, which explained politically correct virginity.

About this point the busloads of uncut camp refugees started arriving and joined the parade - following Red. Police intelligence picked out a few Wild Boys done up in their Sunday best, bowing obscenely to the Red Madonna as she swooped by. And then the dirty old men started to join in from the ranks of the spectators, a few a first, then more, then thousands, marching arm in arm with dockworkers, then the lawyers and the professors, everyone waving their briefs. And then football teams in cleats materialized out of nowhere. This was total defiance. Big trouble was brewing, and the Rachael's were worried.

Shortly after two-thirty there was random gunfire, but it seemed no one was hit, and the parade carried on. However the balloon disappeared in a hurry and it was soon replaced by the Cathedral's Sikorsky helicopter gunship.

Fortunately the procession arrived at the Stadium without incident. But the passage of the huge crowd through the gates was inevitably slow, and it was an hour and half before the Stadium had finally filled. Many thousands were turned away, and departed for the bars, where they could watch on television and in comfort, the monster trucks and dirt bike daredevils who entertained the crowd inside, until the official party was ready to come up to the stage.

The coffin was the last part of the formal procession. It was wrapped in gold satin, and when the six near naked and perfectly tanned bodybuilders bore it out of the home team dressing room entrance into the glare of the stadium's spotlights and set it on its special podium, the crowd, at first hushed and awed, rose as one to their feet, and roared approval as seventeen Janis Joplin imitators parachuted in the Stadium and sang 'America the Beautiful,' and the crowd joined in.

Humbert, was first to speak, or not speak. How he managed to get up on the casket, not part of the program, needless to say, was never determined. He was there for the longest time trying to speak, taunting the crowd that he was about to speak, each time cut off by a mighty roar. Rachel was not amused! Finally he summonsed them to silence. He spoke four words - "We have the stadium!" The crowd roared, and within the roar a chant grew, "Play ball! Play ball" And nothing else he ever said was heard or recorded that day, or ever more.

The costume winners were announced on the giant scoreboard with homerun fanfare. Slowly they found their way to podium to be presented with their prize and a solemn white gloved hand-shake from the President.

But while the interminable presentations were going on D, Sandra and the Ninja Nuns were working with feverish intensity outside, bricking and sealing up the all the Exit gates. And by the time the President finally got up to speak all the Exits and exterior windows were completely sealed, and the four teams of crack operatives from the Pay Equity Program of Golem Gas were ready to move on to the final phase of Operation Liberation.

And the President rose to address the crowd.

"This tragic death, this unnecessary death, this brutal death, calls each and every one to account," she began.

"Out! Out! Out!" the crowd cried in support.

"What true profit is there that we achieve great power, rule nations, vast dominions beholden to us, and lose our love, our intimacy, our self-respect ..."

The crowd fell still.

"How painful this is, dear Ric ... But what peace can there be in this dark and fearsome closet."

"Out! Out!" A few solitary cries.

"The truth will out" ...the roar began...

"I am not" ... she choked. A roar began to build ...

"... a woman ..."

...and grow ...

"I am a man."

... into a frenzy ... as the dome roof slid silently across the sky and sealed the wailing mob in their sarcophagal frenzy.

The President held high a pickle jar.

"This I receive from him ..."

A faint mist, a sweet smell ...

"And this I reclaim!"

Nevada grabbed Zeke and Augie, and Chuck did the same with Moon, when they first noticed the mist drifting down from the upper reaches of the stadium. The crowd in the upper tiers began to collapse in their seats, but the crowd in the lower tiers seemed oblivious. Augie lead the group, he knew not why, to an obscure Media Exit underneath the reviewing stand. They waited helpless, Chuck and Nevada pounding on the door with all their considerable might. The mist descended row upon row putting down the thousands of males. Miraculously Hersh found them. The boys began to cry. Then they all began to gag. But suddenly the door opened. There was Rachel Y. Quickly she shut and bolted it behind them.

"Run," she whispered, "Run!" And with a fleeting pat of Augie's bum she disappeared as fast in one direction as they did in the other.

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"Necessary security measures," was how the announcement from the mayor's office described it. "An apprehended insurrection lead by Cuban communists who had infiltrated the crowd and were 'making rude noises, had been crushed. Swift action was required."

"Those in the stadium were safe," it said, "but would remain in protective custody for a few days."

And while the President was in mourning, it went on curtly, "the Mayor would temporarily assume Presidential responsibilities."

"For those who had lost their Deeming Cards," the announcement said, "fresh card would be delivered by supper time."

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Moon lead them by way of subway tunnels to the Caldron. Their story was received with shock and horror. Still Arabella was thrilled to see her young man with a lovely little friend, young Augie, at long last, and especially since neither of them were the least bit interested in the picture books that other boys always found, and were not

supposed to see. She hugged her old sperm donor, Charles DettsLats, with positive affection. Melissa, thinking how close she'd come to a major capital write down, hugged Hershel. Nevada, who had feared he'd never see Red again, embraced her with a particular passion. And carried away by the emotion of it all Zeke hugged Bert and Sarah like long lost cousins, even though they had come Golem for one purpose only, to cut off his wanker.

Then Arabella waved her arms and the curtains at the rear of the shop opened with a puff of smoke, stairs leading down to the Sacred Chamber. Only Chuck of those present had seen this stunt before, but he feigned amazement.

"Tonight begins the dark days of the Moon, first following the vernal equinox and thus the return of the wise Goddess from Underworld to rule in the endless cycle. So we must sacrifice the bull, to revive the fountains of life." And she disappeared with a flourish down the stairs. Chuck winked at the guys, and Nevada figured it wouldn't hurt none to go down and have a look. Bert and Yoni were aghast. Never had they celebrated the Spring Sacrifices in the presence of actual males who weren't being sacrificed! They had heard of the ultra-liberal covens, but this! Without hesitation Red lead the Processional down the stairs with Augie and Hershel on each arm singing the same strange song as Arabella, and then followed Melissa and Zeke, Bert and Yoni, and last but not least, Chuck the Fuck grinning, pumping himself to full size, and ready for sacrifice and the Full Moon, butching his Dad, pose for pose.

As serious as she was about the ancients Arabella had never been pedantic about the precise form of the ritual. Hadn't it changed a thousand times? Besides she didn't want anything too rigid for the young ladies, and potential benefactors, from Uptown, for whom this would be their first Craft Dinner. So she proposed, over Yoni's silent but clearly perceived objections, that the men and boys could sit close to the table on low stools instead of bound and gagged as strict Orthodox observance would require. She made it a little joke. "The ancient ones," she observed, "kept many males as house pets."

The Feast of the Spring Sacrifice was, and always will be, a slow meal, one course at time, a story about each sacred food, and what it meant to the old Order during the centuries of oppression in hiding, from which the Craft was only now emerging. But there was time. And soon the potions did its magic work and the horrors of the afternoon were left far behind. After the dung wafers and carrot juice, and another round of that damn fine ancient brewski, Arabella rose to speak.

Of course her words are sacred, and secret, and not available to the uninitiated. Of all the secrets told in this book, these secret words will remain secret. But the reaction of her listeners was not, and is not, protected by any vow, or curse. So we can report that next Red spoke, unsteady it is true, but hey, these are very ancient potions. Her red glow was quite noticeable to all. Chuck just thought she'd had too much to drink. But Nevada started to tingle in the right place just looking at her. Arabella suddenly knew she was in the presence of the Divine Messenger.

"I'm no good about making speeches and fancy dinners. Arabella's the one. She knows the stuff in the books.

"Arabella says this is feast of the body. Bring it on!" She tousled Augie's hair, as he sat beside her, and the males snickered. Augie blushed. "The Goddess had it figured right. The body is good.

"Now, all I want to say – because I'm a do-er, not a talker – is I hate seeing the men chased out of the world. Definitely some bad dudes who need to be taken apart ... but there are many more good ones. I happen to like getting it off with the good ones. Don't need them for it every time. But *some of the time* – we can't do without 'em! We need to get charged up pretty regular. Fast driving is the way to do it."

They all laughed. Not all. So transfixed were they by Red's words that no one noticed Yoni slip away from the table during this toast and the several that followed, nor did they hear her whispered words on the upstairs phone with her designated contact at the Sex Squad, nor did they notice her Camcorder wired into the store's surveillance system.

"So let's do a toast ... to Arabella... a great gal... and to her unending quest for the ... everlasting ... whaddu call it, the uneffable ... and all these horny guys ... and ... on to the sacrifice ..."

They all stood, and raised their glasses.

"Fuck long and hard," Red cried out, and they downed the brew.

She then said she would be moving on in the morning, and not to grieve. It was farewell, but not good-bye, and she loved everybody, and shit like that.

Bert started to sniff. Arabella dragged her to the kitchen to help sprinkle nettles and wolf hair on the roasted doves, which were then laid upon the table and their tale told once again in the ancient way.

By this point Augie was about as randy as a young guy can get. Red lead him back upstairs and whispered, "Take, eat, this is my body ...". She undressed him, and called him "my beautiful boy," and licked his belly, and he quivered with delight. And he scrambled up the magic mountains like he was home at last and found his way in to the cave of his birth and with very little assistance began to rock'n roll. Augie quickly divined that the Mary wasn't going anywhere, and the object was not to shoot and run, but keep on riding, a considerable insight for a beginner, she thought. Not only did he figure it, he did it with an exuberance and passion that tipped Red over the edge. The copulation, which took place in Contemporary Fiction, was of such ferocity and heat that it shook Sylvia Plath from her shelf, and singed dust covers all the way down to Virginia Wolfe. Augie was considerably rattled by the

pure pleasure of it all, but assured Moon over sugar barley curd, after he stumbled back to the table, that nothing fundamental had changed, and that he only did it because he felt sorry for his Dad, who might be the only straight guy left on the planet. But still he loved her.

Moon, in the spirit of the evening, made a pass at Yoni, but she kissed him lightly, and left the table with a pile of dishes. And at ten thirty the Wombyn left the males to clean the table and wash the dishes - you heard it right! - and solemnly departed for the Ritual Dance and Sacrifice at the Clit Club.

The Clit Club was a jumping, throbbing mass of happy ass. Melissa was enthralled, and joined in with rapture. They boogied hard, and without rest, until the midnight hour, when there came, in a flash of strobe lights and stage smoke, the wild whirling figure of the Bull smeared with blood and with hung gold chains, and little other clothing in the traditional place for little other clothing. The figure danced in a vulgar frenzy to the taunting of the crowd, who threw coins at him. It was a only man in the mask of a bull, Melissa quickly realized, in fact it was Chuck, the beefcake from dinner, the only man ever allowed to dance at the Clit, she was told. He spun madly, wildly, to near exhaustion. Then several maidens leapt forward into the circle and jabbed t him with padded poles and sticks. He staggered. The crowd cheered. They poked and stabbed. Slowly, with a grand flourish, he sank to the floor, and expired in a grossly over dramatic death, to great laughter and cheers. Much more money rained down. And then the crowd resumed its dance, but now they were in a line, winding round the room, and each in turn jumped over the still gasping bull. And when they each had their turn, a demure Full Moon, his hair now done in a tidy pony tail, appeared and hauled away the aging carcass, and Yoni received thirty buckets of coins and bills for the Inner Circle's Benevolent Fund, as the applause and kisses of the madden crowd showered down on Chuck and Moon.

After the show Red stepped out into the street to cool off, sauntered down the street, and took a seat on a bench in a little parkette. Yoni followed, and approached her gently. Red smiled a sad smile of resignation. Yoni kissed her on the cheek.

And then out from behind a row of crates and trash bins sprung Big D and the Sex Squad and half a dozen of the Ninja Nuns shouting "You're Under Arrest! You're Under Arrest!"

Red did not resist as they clapped her in chains, hand and foot, and lead her away to the deepest place in hell.

Yoni watched them pull away, flashing lights fading down the dark alley. "Float," she shouted, "damn you, float!" But she did not. And there was nothing but the earthly wail of sirens and then blackness.

Yoni shrugged, and stuffed the cash into down her dress. She found a phone and called Big D to finish their affair, but the answering machine replied that D was out on an 'emergency'.

## Chapter Fourteen

**GLOW WORMS**

Rachael X sat intense and proper. She wore tiny earphones behind each ear, and it appeared she had no difficulty listening to the transmitted instructions and speaking at the same time. Red glowed defiant in the prisoners' box. Her distinguished, fat, attorney sat at a nearby table nervously thumbing her notebook. The small room was crowded entirely with black-robed Sisters, somber and fiercely attentive, looking very Roman. Still a very small group to witness the momentous trial.

But the broadcast audience was huge. And to this high definition spectacle of justice, in living color, the habitues, patrons and guests at the Caldron Bookstore turned their undivided attention this Friday noon, to the Bookstore's large overhead T.V. monitor.

Speaking slowly into the microphone in front of her Rachael X began. "This special expedited session of the Golem District Court for Sex Offence will come to order. We are here on short notice, duly served, to deal with an extraordinary crime, and an extraordinary criminal. Family life and the American Way are threatened not only by a shortage of gasoline, but by sexual licentiousness and impudence so extraordinary that we cannot speak of it in specifics. We proceed on the motion of the Holy Mother Superior Recently Ascended of the One True Church of the Real Goddess, who has deposed to the offences."

"She's toast," muttered Nevada.

"The Holy Mother Superior has instructed me by formal Encyclical that the State should fairly and impartially apply and enforce the law. The Church is neutral with respect to the application of the law. No one will be ex-communicated or damned to the hell fires, provided the New Procedures are followed. I am totally reassured by her confidence in our new administration.

"I should also add that I have also thoroughly discussed these extraordinary procedures with the National Caucus for Sex and Justice. And they entirely agree. Are there any objections?"

"Could somebody tell me," asked Easter, "what these New Procedures are and I'll object."

"We'll receive your submissions in writing, Ms. Primrose, when your client has completed her sentence," Rachael X said impatiently. "That's one of the new procedures. Not sooner than ten days, nor less than thirty days after completion. In the mean time we must move forward resolutely to deal with the immediate task of approving the allegation and to speedy disposition. You understand?"

"Well, that don't mean nothin' to me, Judge." Easter looked around for a supporting smile but the only encouraging look she got was from her own client. "Well then, how do we `approve the allegation' under these new procedures?"

Rachael X ignored her appalling ignorance. "Mr. Ducker, you have been appointed Special Prosecutor. Please proceed." Then turning to Easter she said, "Pay attention, Counsel, and you'll find out."

"Well, Judge," Ducker began with evident trepidation, "given the sensitive nature of the charges, cross gender connection with a minor, the investigation has been handled in accordance with the new rules, which, I can assure the court, have been designed to be entirely supportive and nonthreatening for the Informant. As specified, no male has been allowed to ask any questions. The Informant has never been requested to give any details that might contradict the allegation. The factual details and the summary of the factual details and the identity of the victim, have been, and will be, kept completely confidential to avoid disclosure and surreptitious fact checking. And the identity of the Informant is known only to the operator who took the call whose identity will also be kept confidential."

"Thank you, Mr. Prosecutor. I approve the allegations. Ms. Primrose, Defense?"

"Defense to what? What did my lady do to your *informant* anyhow, Mr. Derek?"

"Not to the *Informant*. Your Honor! To the *victim*!"

"Excuse me," replied Easter. "Well, let's hear from the *victim* then. And I sure hope he's cute!"

Red couldn't contain a snicker, but every one else was stony silent.

"Ms. Primrose, your well known tactics will not inflame me. Don't waste your time. Is that the defense?"

"Well, no. I need to know what she didn't do."

"How is that relevant?"

"Exactly. Let's go home."

"'Improprieties with minors, Judge," shot back Derek, sounding authoritative and very indignant. "A very serious matter, Ms. Primrose."

"Well I declare! What part'da body? What day of the week? What City? The relationship of the Informant to the Queen of England? Come'on, tell us *something*?"

"That might make the Informant uncomfortable and deter others from making accusations," Ducker replied.

Rachael X smiled the smile of promotion on the prosecutor. Derek beamed.

"Defense don't care nuttin' for the Informant, Judge. Let's hear from the victim."

"Impossible!" Derek shouted.

"How's that, Mr. Prosecutor?"

"He hasn't been interviewed yet!"

"Well, let's call him up. Maybe I could ask him some questions."

"Ms. Primrose, the new rules do not permit questions to the victim", said Rachel sternly.

"We couldn't even if we wanted, Judge. It isn't him who has complained."

"Still sleepin', I'll bet."

"Strike that," Rachael ordered instantly. "Ms. Primrose, you are perilously close to a Cross-Gender Humor Citation. I am feeling uncomfortable. I would be very careful."

"Well, does he have a name?" Easter inquired with great solemnity.

"Not permitted under the new rules, Judge," replied Derek dryly. "But we have pictures."

"Well, that's grand," exclaimed Easter. "Let's have a look!"

"Can't do that either, Judge," said Derek.

"And why's that?" shot back Easter. "New rules?"

"Exactly!" replied Derek triumphant. "The pictures might disclose the identity of the informant."

"This isn't a trial!" exclaimed Easter. "I wanna see some little hot cock in the box."

"Strike that."

"Then, I can smother him with questions, and test his mettle. Ain't that so, Judge?"

Back at the store Augie turned to Hersh and said, "I wouldn't let that big momma ask you no questions, good buddy. Were you fiddling around with Red?"

"Why would you think it was me, bro? I think it was little Zekie. Ain't that so, Zekie?"

"A gentleman never tells, Hershel. Isn't that right, Melissa?" Zeke smirked to his sister. Melissa was silent, knowing absolutely nothing on the subject of gentlemen. "Besides," said Zeke, "I think it was Augie."

"Well I do sing for a living," replied Augie with a faint smile, "and I don't know if I want to sing for that momma!"

"Ms. Primrose," Rachel continued firmly, but slowly, repeating the words she was hearing from her ear-phone, "questions are not allowed of informants or minors or witnesses under the new rules. Children never lie. How would it look if doubted the little children."

"Well, ya gotta have some evidence!" Easter exploded.

"Pictures, Your Worship," replied Derek. "We've seen the video pictures of the entire act."

Arabella blanched. "I hope not in my store! Did you boys ..."

"Show 'em, then. Let's see!" shouted Easter.

"There'll be no dirty movies in this Court, Ms. Primrose."

"Dirty movies! No way to heaven we watch dirty movies in the Court Room, honey. We gonna watch `experimental art film.' Ya'll feel better 'bout it?"

"Guilty," shouted Rachael.

"Don't be smart, Ms. Primrose. It doesn't become you."

The screen suddenly switched to a commercial.

"Nevada dear," Arabella chimed, "be a prince and check the video monitor down in the store. Did Yoni pull a Candid Camera? Is that why she disappeared in the last Chapter and we didn't notice?" A knowing gloom descended even before the sullen Nevada returned and the proceedings trial resumed. They all silently cursed Yoni, even Bert.

"Moon," Arabella suddenly asked sharply, "I hope you didn't .... not with anyone in my store!"

"Not me, ma'am, not me!" And he ran to Chuck, who grabbed his nuts till he squawked and swept him into a salacious embrace. Arabella's faith in her sperm donor was restored.

"There must be a message, Judge," Derek was saying. "This is a case of straight forward inveigling. Strong deterrence is essential. The State seeks the chair."

The collective gasp in the Caldron was drowned by chanting crowd on the monitor, "Fry her, Fry her!"

"Whoever he was," taunted Easter, "he consented! Beggin' for it! We all know ..."

Rachael X cried out, "That's it! You've gone too far! Gag her! There was a scuffle on screen as five guards tackled Easter Primrose and the screen switched again to a commercial.

"Yo, bros, was you 'beggin'?" cried out Hershel in glee.

It was the debut commercial for Rectitude, featuring the Holy Mother, although you might not know it, as a farm girl applying the odorless new fragrance. Propriety in a bottle. HMS never seemed so necessary and so right.

The camera flashed to Rachael X. She was very stern as she addressed Red. "The victim was a tender chorister who you wantonly corrupted," she began. "He is in desperate need of counseling."

The Caldron rocked with laughter.

"I believe even now you know where he is?" continued Rachael. "It would be best for you to speak up. The Holy Mother Superior has promised to personally see that she finds a home for the boy."

She was calm and persuasive as she spoke. No one else could know that as she spoke her invisible twin sister was shouting into her left ear bud about the absolutely incredible abs and, at the time, the disembodied voice in her right ear was calling for the IMMEDIATE return of "fruit of the womb" to Holy Church where he belonged - as property.

All eyes turned to Augie. He shrugged. "Five hundred smacks a poke, sweetheart, not a penny less!" growled Nevada.

"You can work for me, Augie, if you want," said Melissa. "I got A List customers waiting by their phones."

"We know he is part of a gang." Rachael was very sharp. "Where is this gang? They need our help."

The Caldron erupted again, but this time the laughter had a nervous edge.

The crowd began to chant, "Burn her ... burn her ... burn her ..."

Red was glowing noticeably when the camera switched to her, but she was strangely serene.

Suddenly Easter Primrose wrestled free of her restraints and ripped off her mask.

"I'm wonderin' whether these new rules allow for evidence from our side?"

Rachael X was caught off guard by the shocking question. But the answer came quick enough in her ear and out her mouth. "Certainly any statements from properly qualified persons will be accepted if filed ninety days before and approved by the Committee. "

"And how'd you get 'properly qualified' Your Honor?"

"The Sisters are in charge of that," Rachel replied.

"Lordy, lordy," muttered Easter. "Do tell. Do tell." After a pause she went on. "Well, tell you what Judge, my little lady," she continued slowly and defiantly knowing full well the fuse she was about to light, "is prepared to allow any legitimate medical team to examine her at any time," she continued, "to verify that she is still a ..."

And then the screen went blank again.

When the broadcast resumed the assembled watched in stunned horror as Rachael X inquired of Derek Ducker, "Disposition, Mr. Prosecutor?"

He replied grimly, "The only sanction consistent with public safety, your Honor, is the Chair."

"Fry Her! Fry Her ! Fry Her!" chanted the dancing crowd.

Rachael nodded and spoke, "So it shall be!" and then quickly disappeared into Cathedral for the Execution Lunch. And golf, if she could get away on time.

\*

The appeal was a private affair, ten minutes later in the Martyrs Chapel. The Holy Mother Superior officiated. She wore her formal Robes, an elaborately layered ensemble, in off-white, lace on silk, on linen and was attended by the Senior Sisters

of Propriety, in their best, starched black. Mary Monahan looked much better in the interior light than she did outside. Her ensemble of denim hot pants and her trademark red leggings, and a white leather fringed vest over a red halter top, caught the sun from the transept window. Her attorney Easter Primrose has changed into an ankle length, turquoise, body sock with matching heels, and an overcover chemise, in purple, gathered beneath the bosom by a large zirconium broach. The Appeal verdict was swift. And after The Holy Mother departed Mary was re-dressed by the Sisters in the traditional grey moo-moo of the condemned. It covered but, just barely, the sterling ankle chains, but not the wrist cuff. The Sisters placed round her head a rusticated red bandanna in raw cotton, which they tied so tight that she felt faint.

Two hours later Bert and Zeke were there, on the curb opposite, as they loaded Red into a Plymouth for the long trip upstate to the Big House. There were a few silent supporters with them on the steps of the Cath, but the vast majority present were accusers taunting and jeering, "Tart" and "Burn!" Red was abject, but she still glowed. They followed on Bert's scooter, at a careful distance, as the Plymouth and its motorcycle escort sped north. Zeke clung close behind his custodian, now protector, as they sped along upstate, hoping against hope that their journey's end would not be the death and departure of the one they both loved.

True history is fortunate that Bert had the presence of mind to make notes so you can know at least something in this book is true and correct.

\*\*

The Escort presented the Execution Orders to the Warden who met them at the gate.

"Time to fry, is it, slut?" she snarled. Red flicked her tongue at her like a snake, then blew her a kiss. The warden spat. And they lead her straight to The Room.

Arabella had given Bert and Zeke her Subcommittee passes which entitled the bearer to admission to all OTC functions. The ticket-taker seemed indifferent that Zeke was under-age, perhaps because there were so many younger children going in with their mothers, although surely, Albertina presumed, only for the free day care. Bert and Zeke followed the crowd, hand in hand to The Room, and took seats in the back. Fortunately for Zeke his mother had gone to the country for the month, and was not presiding at this particular function.

Red did not resist as they strapped her in the Big Chair, though she muttered continuously, "Pussy, pussy, check it out, check it out!" She saw Bert and Zeke, but did not let on.

Just as they were finishing the preparations, a buxom guard from Central Casting came running in with the message, and shouted, "Hold everything! There's a message from the Governor."

As the excited titter ran through the crowd, the Warden took the phone, spoke for a moment, then walked over to Red, now snug and secure in the Chair. "It's for you," she sneered. "Taking calls?" The warden placed the receiver on Red's shoulder so she could cradle it with her neck.

"Is that you, Nevada?" Red cried out plaintively. But the receiver slipped from her shoulder before there could be an answer.

The Warden laughed, and switched on the speakerphone so all could hear. Bert had to restrain Zeke who was about to leap to his feet.

The voice of the Holy Mother Superior crackled long distance, but it was still indomitable. "It is harsh, Magdalena. It must be harsh. So many watch and listen."

Red hung her head. Defeat was bitter.

"You had such an opportunity to be an example."

"I've been framed!" Mary shouted. "I'm just a working girl."

"Don't play innocent with me, young lady. I'm on to your games. Don't forget I've known you for a long time."

"How can you do this to a virgin?" Mary cried out.

"That's a cute trick with the hymoplasty, sweetheart, but they'll forget you, soon enough, mark my words!"

Red was silent.

"We've bought all the rights, and all the samples, and all the research, from United, Magdalena. With you gone this little biogenetic slight-of-hand will be out of circulation. Never again! I have the last bottle in my hand right now. And it will be put to proper use, let me assure you."

Red said nothing. She cast her eyes downward and her soul cried out 'Gaia, Gaia, why hast thou forsaken me?'

"Beg forgiveness, child. It is written."

Red said nothing.

"Don't be stubborn, child. Sulfur will ruin your complexion."

Red finally spoke. "I have no shame. I loved all men."

"Didn't you, though," was the icy reply. "Now then," she went on, condescending from a great height, "we would like to locate this Nevada Smith, and the boy August Knight. Can you help us? This is your last chance."

"You mean the kid in the Saran Wrap diapers?"

"Don't be smart, young lady."

"I've never seen him."

"I doubt that."

"Seen Nevada's though. He is a piece, ain't he? Did you get off on him, HM? Not much in his head, but damn fine butt, wouldn't ya say, babe?"

"I know nothing of that!"

"Ya, well, that's not what I..." but her impudence was cut short by a short burst of juice, and an angry cry..."Silence, whore!"

Red strained at her straps, but shook off the electric jab.

"For the last time, Magdalena, where are Nevada and the kid?"

"Loose in this world, bitch, and you'll never find them!"

"My, my, my, you are a willful girl."

"There's always one who gets away! I'll bet he's out there fucking right now! Maybe he'll be starting his own Church!"

"He will return to the Mother Church," the Virgin proclaimed with imperious certainty.

"Not after he's tasted cunt! Never! He'll glow like a Russian reactor. Believe me, you'll know him when he comes calling!" "

"Then good riddance child!"

The phone line went dead. The yellow light went on. The warden grinned and pressed her pointy index finger to 'Dead'. Sparks flew from the chair. Red leapt in contorted agony. She screamed out in a passion, "Uckful longgalay ansay ardful", then collapsed in a heap.

A few reporters heard it and wrote it down, but none except Zeke and Bert understood her pig Latin admonition - Fuck Long and Hard.

When they lifted her crumbled but still glowing body from the chair they found the initials burned on the backrest behind her heart - U.L.A.A.

\*

When they got Bert's coded message from the Big House that "dinner was ruined" Arabella drew shut the Caldron shutters and put the 'Closed for Renovations' sign on the door. The Inner Circle of the Ancient Way gathered round five blue candles in this dim light in the Assembly Hall and chanted together, holding hands, and breathed deep the fumes from the ceremonial fires.

"They have destroyed her body," Arabella intoned, with sibylline intensity, "but she will carry the message in the astral realms. Her spirit will always be with us."

Arabella did something to a frog with the tail of a beaver and a first edition copy of *The Well of Loneliness* flew across the store below and crashed into the video rentals with a great racket. Arabella collapsed to a mumble.

Nevada wasn't listening. To Nevada it was incomprehensible noise, which could not touch the grief, nor still the fear, that so fine a fuck would never come his way again. And if Arabella thought that spirit fucking in the astral realm would satisfy that girl, she did not understand those in trade. He was mad at Red. She just had to flaunt it! And Chuck had never come back from the night before, and no one knew where he was. Nevada felt all alone. And worse, Responsible for others. His balls began to shrink.

Melissa, whatever her fascination with Arabella's superb sense of specialty marketing, was also uncomfortable as Arabella droned on. There were, and are, proper ways to bid adieu to the departed, whether dearly so or not. This was not the way they did it for Grandmother Tredgold, or Uncle Aldrich Archibald Eaton, the one with the antique Spanish sterling. Granted they were of a different class and generation, but still. She quietly left the circle, taking Hersh with her, and by the time the rest were finished upstairs she had set a lovely tea with proper cups and saucers she was lucky enough to pick up round the corner from a desperate cracknoid of formerly very refined taste, looking to fence his useless crap. She ordered in four dozen pink and green rolled devilled egg sandwiches, and some date squares, all of which were laid out in the Porno Section on a white sheet draped over the remainder bins. Tea was served from the counter beside the cash register. It was less than elegant but at least it was proper. She invited in a few knowing neighbors, and the dirty old men from the Golem Home down the street who loved Red *in extremis* from her visit. A couple of stevedores dropped by. Hershel poured. They huddled in quiet groups and spoke lovingly of her breasts and pudendum. This firm grasp of propriety in one so young was a minor inspiration to the assembled, and was thought to reflect her father's influence, though the generous distribution blue bennies in a little silver chaffing dish seemed more like her mother.

\*\*

The tribe bedded down early that night, the men and boys on the sofas and on the floor in the book shop, and the Wombyn upstairs in the sanctuary. But none of the males could sleep. Nevada was still worried for Chuck. Moon assured him again and again. "He knows his way around." But Nevada couldn't help himself, and by ten-thirty he was dressed and on his way out to look for the big guy. He made the boys promise they'd stay put. Which they did for about ten minutes, when Zeke and Hersh took off. Augie thought for a while on the fact that Chuck had surely rattled his old man's chains, and fell asleep.

Despite the very down day, or perhaps because of it, Moon was horny by eleven and looking for relief. He decided Augie's time had come. He rose quietly, checked carefully to be sure the video monitor was off, and took a twenty from Augie's pants, just on principle. Then in not too many minutes he had roused Augie from his slumbers.

"Time for cherry pie, pal," he said tenderly.

Augie put his arms round Moon's neck and opened his lips tentatively. Moon's tongue invaded fiercely as his hands popped open Augie's button jeans. Each hard young body was devoured by the other in a tumultuous feast of joyous aggression. But the victor was never in question, though Augie strained mightily to avoid the appearance of facile surrender. His tender hole was probed and stretched and oiled by skilled fingers before the full Moon rose in the August Knight with a penetrating flash which dispelled forever that fear of darkness. Three times that night Moon took Augie to delirious orgasm, and once Augie climbed the Moon, a privilege never before surrendered by the dedicated top man.

Arabella watched proudly from the stairs. Moon would be the new One-Horned God in the fullness of time, she was sure. And she returned to her bed, where Bert waited.

When they were sated Augie and Moon dozed a while, then stole out to reconnoiter. But no one partied that night. The clubs were closed. No one danced. The few males left wandered the streets in search of friends and lovers missing since the parade.

Buns was deserted. "Where's Chuck?" Augie asked after they'd looked around a bit. "My pop's really worried. I thought he might be here."

"He's gone to the Underworld, it's usually three days." Moon replied without emotion.

\*\*

Nevada returned at six, un-fucked. He had searched as best he could for Chuck but without the slightest success. He slumped in the kitchen sucking java while Arabella worked steadily at the sink, clipping the ears off a litter of fresh spaniels, which she had mercifully sedated and needed for the morning brew. For the first time Nevada noticed that he was glowing slightly, like Red. Was this his 'change of life'? But he worried more about the boys, who he now discovered were still 'out', than he did about the puppies or the irradiation. He blamed himself for leaving them alone. Arabella seemed unconcerned.

Nevada was depressed. Red was gone. Chuck was missing in action. And here he was, in the Caldron of this major dyke fruitcake.

And now he felt the press of flesh tipping over his belt, and the hair thickening in the small of his back and thinning on the top of his head, and Kitty's Termination Notice stuffed in his ass pocket. Earlier in the week it begun, right after his night with Red, this slow growing sense of bodily decay, that one foot had slipped and was rooted in the grave. Now responsibility for a kid, for several, had just taken hold of the other. He couldn't run, or even twist, only sink. Where were the hard-bellied, little bastards and their ever ready peckers? Could he, should he, warn them of this earthly rot, or let them charge balls out ... to the wall?

The Saturday dawn came grey with driven sleet, and the day that followed brightened only imperceptibly. About six-thirty Moon and Augie came rapping at the window. Arabella let them in. Moon had draped Augie in a dark hooded cloak, for he was glowing now like Nevada, only brighter. Moon's horn had melted in the rain, but he was strangely cheerful. Buns was safe, he reported, but no Chuck. Augie was not so sanguine. For the first time the streets of Golem had frightened him. But he was a big-hearted lad, and sensing Nevada's despair, he came to comfort his Pop. And the radiance of their embrace filled the room.

Moon still insisted Chuck would be safe. "He's lived underground before. I've been there with him, lots of times, in the big sewers." He explained that in the days before Stonewall that's where the Chuck lived with the other faggots of the day, when he wasn't playing football. More recently the old digs had been taken over by straight guys who couldn't cut it in the Corrected world. Moon went with his dad twice a week to leave food hampers and old Playboy magazines, and do a life skills clinic, and sell black-market earrings to those who could swallow their pride ... and his dong.

Zeke and Hersh rolled in at seven with a large gunnysack they carried between them. Zeke spilled the contents of sterling, gold coins and jewelry on the kitchen table. Melissa nodded, but said nothing. "We'll need this," Zeke said matter of fact, passing the goods out among his friends.

They cooked up a pot of oatmeal, and ate toast and peanut butter, which Melissa thought primitive and charming. At nine they switched on the box hoping for warmth and comfort. But the usual Saturday programming was pre-empted by special live coverage of the HMS visit to Bloomingdales for a major bulk purchase of pale, white and yellow, large peony, drapery chintz. The first news break, right after Her entrance to the Fabric Department, was about "the vagabond cowboy, Nevada Smith, and his radioactive sidekick, August Knight." They were, it said, "wanted for re-education." There was a large reward. There were pictures. Nevada blanched at the risks he had unknowingly run by his night-time excursion in the streets. They had laughed the day before at the silliness of the charges against Red, and the attempts to extract from her the location of the corrupted youth. Apparently someone had spotted Augie glowing in the night. The situation was turning from ridiculous to dangerous.

The Bloomingdales coverage returned briefly with interviews in the storeroom, where huge bolts of large print chintz were being wrapped and loaded by the frenzied staff. But this was cut short by another Official Announcement - a special taped Regulations of Instruction from Rachael X, regarding Self-Help Collection Procedures for Deemed Spouses. These would begin at noon on that day. From that hour Deemed Spouses would be entitled to half the worldly goods of their designated partner. Immediate action was recommended to avoid dissipation. Rachael X also announced an important Emergency Program of compulsory and universal Electro-Flashers for all remaining unregistered adult males. Special clinics would be operating in all post office, library and public educational facilities from one to six that afternoon, and all untreated males must report for installations of updated devices. "Your presence in the streets without lights is a form of rape," she said sharply. "Be warned."

Enough was enough. The conclave shut off the box and gathered round the kitchen table for some heavy strategy. Moon lead off quite decisively, that Nevada and Augie should go underground. They were glowing bright and too easy to spot, and they put the rest in danger for "harboring." Augie was forlorn to hear Moon's words. Moon knew Augie's heart, but he continued nonetheless, he would not abandon Buns no matter what. He wasn't glowing, maybe he never would, and until he did he would hide out in the day, and carry on business by night.

Nevada was despondent, but there were no other options it seemed. Arabella expressed her concern that Moon's plan to carry on without a flasher was foolhardy and dangerous. But ultimately she agreed that if Chuck didn't return, Moon would be needed as the Bull, and no Bacchanalian fertility God could appear for Sacrifice with a nose flasher! And more than anything, Moon wanted to be Bull.

Hersh was glowing very faintly, if you looked close, but color has its advantage, and all agreed the uninitiated would never notice. His prospects for work were good, Melissa assured them, and offered that he could stay at her house, disguised as a stable boy.

Zeke was questioned closely about his tryst with Red. He insisted he understood the meaning of penetration, and no, it hadn't happened, and then he started to cry. They comforted him, and assured him it would, someday. On all available theories they figured Zekie was uninfected, and he should remain above ground for now, they all agreed, and watch television. He and Hersh were too young for the compulsory flasher law anyhow, they thought.

And so it was decided. The hour of departure was set. Moon gave Nevada and Augie instructions to the sewers. Arabella packed them a hamper of leftovers from yesterday's Feast. Bert was able to buy some sturdy rubber boots. Arabella announced proudly that Nevada would be named God of the Night Walkers Emeritus. And they were gone.

\*\*

Later that morning Arabella hoped for a few brief moments that the political tides had turned. Here in her store were first two, then five, black-robed nuns buying Craft books, and lesbian fiction. What breakthrough this! By eleven there were eight of them speaking madly to one another in Latin. But then their speech became bitterly agitated, and then their manner, and when the first book was set on fire on the floor they were jumping on it and shouting wildly. Then they piled on the rest. One of the nuns ripped the phone from the wall. There was nothing to do but flee. They gathered in the street to watch in horror. No fire truck came. After a while they were told to move on, but unto where they did not know.

All around was chaos. The Day of Collection was not so tidy as the Announcement had suggested. Pick-up trucks were everywhere loading goods. Those remaining males so unwise to resist, were marched naked to the stadium, where their heads were shaved and their weenies cropped, and they were held for transport. All this, and the Declaration of Longitudinal Sexual Separation was not scheduled until Monday! Why a ghetto for the remaining males was even necessary was totally unclear, other than as a 'precaution'.

Moon was determined to make his way back to Buns, still expecting to find Chuck on the Third Day. Arabella agreed. And he silently disappeared. Hershel and Zeke were eyed suspiciously everywhere they went. It was obvious they would not have lasted long were they not in the company of the three Wombyn. They were stopped repeatedly by Sex Patrols wanting to inspect the boys for flashers. Arabella insisted Zeke was her child, and they were allowed to pass. It was thought unwise to introduce Hershel as spouse to Melissa, so he was presented as her pageboy, which pleased her, and amused the Sex Police. But it was apparent that without apparently rich and privileged owners the boys would have been detained and shipped out. And they decided, with the greatest reluctance, that surrender was the only way to avoid the sewers, for which Zeke at least was deemed unsuited by birth.

By three the group arrived at one of the Flasher Clinics midtown, and by luck there was hardly a line-up at all. They had resigned themselves to this as the lesser of many evils. They were taken in, fingerprinted, promptly strapped to a gurney, and wheeled into the back room to be fitted. The sheath was stitched to the skin of the penis with surprisingly little pain and the pressure-heat sensors on the inside very shortly seemed a part of the body. The radio-operated flashers were inserted in their sinuses with, surprise, a new feature, a tiny explosive charges behind each eye. They nurse showed them several salacious photos to test the sensors before the charges were irrevocably set. Three degrees of het-sex arousal triggered the flasher, and three more within two hundred feet of any X chromosome set off the charge behind the eyeballs.

"Where'd you get these?" Hersh inquired ever so meekly.

"United Fundamentals rushed them out to us this morning. Aren't they fabulous," replied the nurse.

"Nobody told me about the detonator."

"Then it's free."

She smiled and warned them, "Don't get a boner, guys," and rushed them out the door.

Melissa was outraged. Her asset base was in ruins.

"What do we do now?" asked Hershel glumly.

"I always felt someday I would want to give you your freedom," Melissa said to Hersh, almost in tears. "Just not so soon.

"There's the road. North is a good direction. Write when it snows."

Zeke and Melissa took Arabella and Bert to their mum's condo. H-Papp was gracious as always. They called mother at the farm, just to be safe and say hi, but she was busy with a new stable boy.

\*\*

The highway was crowded with heavily loaded trucks and vans, but the traffic was nevertheless moving at breakneck speed. Hersh thought himself lucky to have hitched a ride so quickly with a short, bald guy moving to Canada to start a new wife. They could go all the way together, the guy said, gently touching Hersh's afro. The radio played upbeat marching bands and reported which border crossings into Canada had the shortest lines. Maybe, just maybe, thought Hersh, this might work out alright.

After a couple of hours they pulled over for a burger and gas. Hershel sat on the fender of Derek's old Ford and watched the traffic and the customers passing in and out of the busy service center. It was reassuring, thought Hersh, how many Wombyn were making the trip north with their men folk, but he did not allow his eyes to linger over their earthly allures. He concentrated hard on his newfound sense of prudery.

Then three polished red Porches in a row pulled up for juice.

"Wow," he exclaimed digging his hands deep into his pockets, unthinking, to stoke his envy. And suddenly the lights went out.

\*\*

Moon arrived at Buns in the early evening to find a notice posted on the door - 'Closed! New Owner - Mrs. Sandra DeltLats - Deemed Partner - Monster Bingo Tomorrow Night.' He ripped it down in a fury. The door was padlocked. But he broke in the back door, and forced open the main entrance from the inside, then defiantly switched on the 'Free Beer' sign. And he waited.

First came three of the staff, who had been hiding in the basement, then Queen Liz, their resident drag queen and regular Saturday night Interlocutor. Then Arnie, the maintenance guy, who'd obviously had a nose job, but was apparently determined to live on the edge till the very end.

Slowly customers appeared. Some arrived hauling suitcases and sleeping bags, some in rags, many in tears, old and young, street punks and bankers, all homeless now, some to dance their last if the music played, some to drink and wink and pinch ass, some just to see the sights. By ten there was a respectable crowd. Moon stripped down to his jock and jumped up to the platform to dance. The crowd came alive. By eleven the joint was jumping.

At midnight Chuck's deemed partner arrived with a large troop from the Cathedral to enforce possession of her deemed matrimonial asset. The confrontation was brief and bloody. The men were wild and, some said, foolhardy. But in realm of legend they are called 'brave', when the brave dare to speak of the famous battle. Some have it Moon was taken alive, but the favored story has it that he escaped into the sewers where he lives strong and healthy.

Once, and only once, several years later, on a dark and foggy night, the sort in which the luminescent August Knight might safely venture back up into the nether world, he thought he saw the Full Moon rise in the East River. But before Augie could call out the Moon had disappeared.

\*\*

Sunday morning was cool and crisp. The sun had returned. Arabella was up very early and on her way to rendezvous with the faithful for the Resurrection. Bert tried and failed to persuade her that this might be dangerous, and was probably unnecessary since the faithful were unlikely to venture out in the chaos. But she was determined to preside, as had the sibyls since the dawn of time.

Augie and Bert decided to take a ride to the Big House to see if by some slight chance they might retrieve Mary's body. It was required by the Regulations to be taken out at eleven on the third day, and buried in an unmarked grave in the section of the cemetery across the road, specially reserved for Scum.

They left the scooter in some bushes about a quarter mile down the road and approach the rear gate of the Big House on foot. It seemed, at first, like a lot of traffic for such a quiet country lane on an early Sunday morning. Then it became apparent that something was happening. From a distance they could see two vehicles parked across the road from the gate, all doors open and a group of six or eight persons talking, no, arguing, and in fact, close to blows. One was a Plymouth, which was in the care of several burly folk in black robes, one with clerical collar. The other limo, they soon observed from the discrete letters on the side door was from United Fundamentals. A Sikorsky zoomed by overhead. The quarrel, as much as they overheard it, was mutual recriminations and threats, that the others had taken "it," "ours", "delivery"...

They strolled past the little contretemps at the rear gate, and disappeared casually round a corner. Only then did they enter the cemetery over a fence. The unmarked graves for Scum were not easy to find, but eventually they did, in the far back corner. For there was an empty body bag lying limp beside a recently dug pit.

So now what? They were both total bewildered, except for the clear knowledge that the circumstances, especially with the Romans at the gate, spelled danger. They pretended disinterest in that particular grave, and strolled on past to study the headstones about fifty yards further on, of the family of one Harris Smith, his mother, wife and two son, the last of whom died in 1910 at a young age.

As they stood by the graves surreptitiously watching for any action back at the empty body bag, a radiant woman in a dark maroon hooded cape appeared from over a hillock in the other direction, flowers in hand. And sure enough she came straight on to the Smith family plot. They dared not move.

"Family, then, are you?"

They nodded silently.

"Ah, those boys, those dear, dear boys," she said laying two bouquets on their graves. "I knew them both, you know," she said wistfully standing over the graves. "Beautiful lads. The one as strong as the other."

They said nothing. The stranger said nothing more, and shortly she wandered off and Bert and Augie headed back the way they came. When they passed the gate there were now three police cars, two D.A.'s taking notes and a photographer heading into the cemetery in the direction of the unmarked grave and empty body bag. Representatives of the warring groups followed together with a troop of police.

"I was thinking," said Bert ten minutes down the road, "who was that woman?"

"Like you'd seen her before?"

"Right."

"How could she know someone who died in 1910?"

"Was it...?"

"Too spooky?"

"We have to be open to the possibility..." Bert stumbled on her words.

"That's what she called me...when she got my pants off...'beautiful lad'."

"We better tell Arabella!" Bert exclaimed.

And they started to run.

They found Arabella sobbing wildly in the kitchen. Her long perilous journey to the secret site where each year the One Horned God rose mysterious (from a hidden manhole) had been for naught. No one rose to meet the nubile maiden, not the Bull, not Chuck, not the OHG, not Moon, and no one danced in bright spring morning. "Famine in the land," she wailed. They opined it might not be that bad. She called them "doubters", but they consoled her tenderly, and they all worried for Chuck and Moon, for now it was clear that they had both truly disappeared.

Then they told her the wondrous news of a different resurrection. And she was deliriously happy.

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On the seventh day after her corporal termination, and the fourth day after her first appearance to the faithful in graveyard, it seems the Red Virgin appeared again, at The Body Erotic Boutique at the sleazy east end of the West Edmonton Mall, the world's largest self-enclosed shopping venue in the far distant northern perimeter of conventional civilization on the eastern shadow of the Canadian Rockies, at a

product launch for something called Integrity Restoration Cream, about which the sultry, young, red haired and bodacious proprietress made astonishing claims, which would not have been approved by the Federal Food and Drug Administration or their local franchise, had they been presented by way of formal submission, and which, when the claims came to attention of certain clerics, gave rise to a series of hurried calls to the recently re-named Central Cathedral of Unattainable Virgin Perfection, and thereafter to the dispatch of a well planned covert visitation by three carefully wired operatives, well coached in the language, mannerisms and regrets of fallen women, but which, unfortunately for the Central Cathedral, arrived too late, and found only a Sold Out and closed-up shop, to the door of which was affixed a neatly lettered hand-written note, "We must talk, darling. We could still make a fabulous deal! Call me at the office. Please! Love Kitty."

Within a fortnight five more quick-close, guerrilla retail attacks were recorded in Denver, St. Louis, Dallas, Austin and Phoenix. Church officials were more than a little confounded by the rash of church occupations in those same cities by gangs of certified virgins and their children claiming leadership and ownership of local Roman assets. Surrendering the highly levered properties was not a major problem, at first. But the credibility of the HMS, however, was. And within the week it, and the cash flow at the Central Cath in Golem, had crashed.

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Easter reported Karl Kresting AWOL when his trial date came up. "He just disappeared," she said. "Dangerous, dangerous, Lordy, Lordy, yes indeed." She smiled. They posted his picture all over Golem, but he was never heard of again.

However the former mayor lived many years, quietly, modestly and in modest contentment, working for his keep in Easter's well-stocked kitchen. He never ever heard of the underground of the tainted ones who carried the dream in the dank sewers of the city he once knew so well, and he never saw a glowing ghost on a foggy night. As well he had perfected punt return, and politically correct sexual manners, so to he learned cross-dressing, and passed with perfectly anonymity in the solemn sea of Golem flesh. He bought a baby carriage, and met some steady, though peculiar, afternoon friends, including a muddleheaded, grossly overweight, house dad, who also knew about punt returns, and who had twin boys who knew the story of the Little Lane Halfback by heart and to whom Karl taught The Secrets of the Spiral Pass. He shopped early for the best vegetables, and made quilts containing, encoded, the famous pass patterns of that golden era, and he never watched the television news. Easter was happy, he was dependable, grateful and economical. "My long lost sister," she told the neighbors. They rutted once a month like fat pigs, and he never complained if she stayed over to nurse her drunken friend. "Who says good help is hard to find?" she purred, nuzzling her now porcine pet. Evenings they would sit by the VCR and watch his favorite grainy reruns of an ancient game with a ball they threw high overhead. She knew it once. He tried to explain the rules but she fell asleep.

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Chuck found them in the sewers that first Saturday. He stayed on a couple of days to look after Nevada, who was freaked out by everything that had happened. Then a couple more after that, then a month, then he was just there all the time. There was nothing left up top anyhow, he said. Chuck and Nevada started getting it on like a house on fire. After a while Chuck started to glow, the first faggot, after Augie. He said he got it from Nevada. Nevada grinned, and said it must be because he didn't make Chuck pay any more. It was a treasured bit of pleasure; otherwise things were pretty grotty down below.

On the thirtieth day Red appeared to Nevada as he waded east in the main cross-town trunk right opposite the dump chute for the Strumpet Towers. He was late to meet Chuck and Augie for supper at the slop drop of the Hotel Hotele. He tossed a chicken sandwich in the tray of the guy with no legs who was always begging at that same spot, and who shone almost as bright as Nevada. The "glow worms", as they called themselves, had largely taken over the underworld from the ancient faggots, with whom they got along well. The numbers of the unreconstructed hets quickly shrunk as irresistible temptation lured them skyward to certain death. Nevada waved to the gaggle of dockworkers who hung out here shooting dice in the glow of their own illumination, and the pimple-faced kid from the Bronx, whose name he never knew, but who had, obviously, somehow, somewhere, been blessed by the same magic as the rest.

Nevada's unwashed and once tanned skin was yellow now and his hair a tangled mess of knots and little clumps of shit, and other things too disgusting to speak of. His boots, which had never been dry from the first day in the sewers were rotting on his feet. The tattered remains of his last T hung down his back.

She smiled and said, "Come here often?"

He tipped his hips, and gunned her with eyes and bunched his traps like the first night, and answered laconically, "Where ya been, doll?"

"You're looking good, Nevada." She touched his hip where once a handle bar of fat had tipped over his belt and caused him tears and fears. "Working out?"

He shook his head. "Just careful what I eat," he mumbled shyly, and his still proud cock began to tingle.

She touched him again, and he became clean. In the darkness they embraced and she began to glow brighter, that luminous red, and he recalled a better life. Their lips brushed like velvet sheets, and her tongue invaded like high tides of Fundy. After a long moment he gasped for breath, and she released him from the kiss, but took his cock in her hand.

"This still work?" she asked gently.

He nodded.

"Nevada, I'm going away soon. To Hollywood. They're gonna make me a star," she said sadly. "So remember this."

And they tumbled back upon a bed of moss under the azure sky where soft breezes caressed him. Yes, he sighed, yes and yes and he was gentle when he broke through and entered her, for she was still a virgin, she rode him like a stallion in wild delight across the foothills and high up into the golden mountains, and he poured out his essence, and kissed her breasts, and fell into a deep and everlasting sleep of permanent and final contentment.

Augie cried and cried when he and Chuck finally found him.

And Nevada was still glowing faintly when the Honor Guard bore his body to the final out valve to the sea.

In the streets above some noted on that day two heavenly apparitions glowing pink, which rose from the sewers and drifted skyward. They were, it seemed, entwined in a perpetual embrace and floated high over the city and dissolved in the cloudless sky. What it was, those watching in the streets above, did not know. And those who could not see, did hear the strange, rumbling groans of anguish from below as the dream departed.

And those few sentient souls in Golem who understood the signs, took cold showers and said nothing.