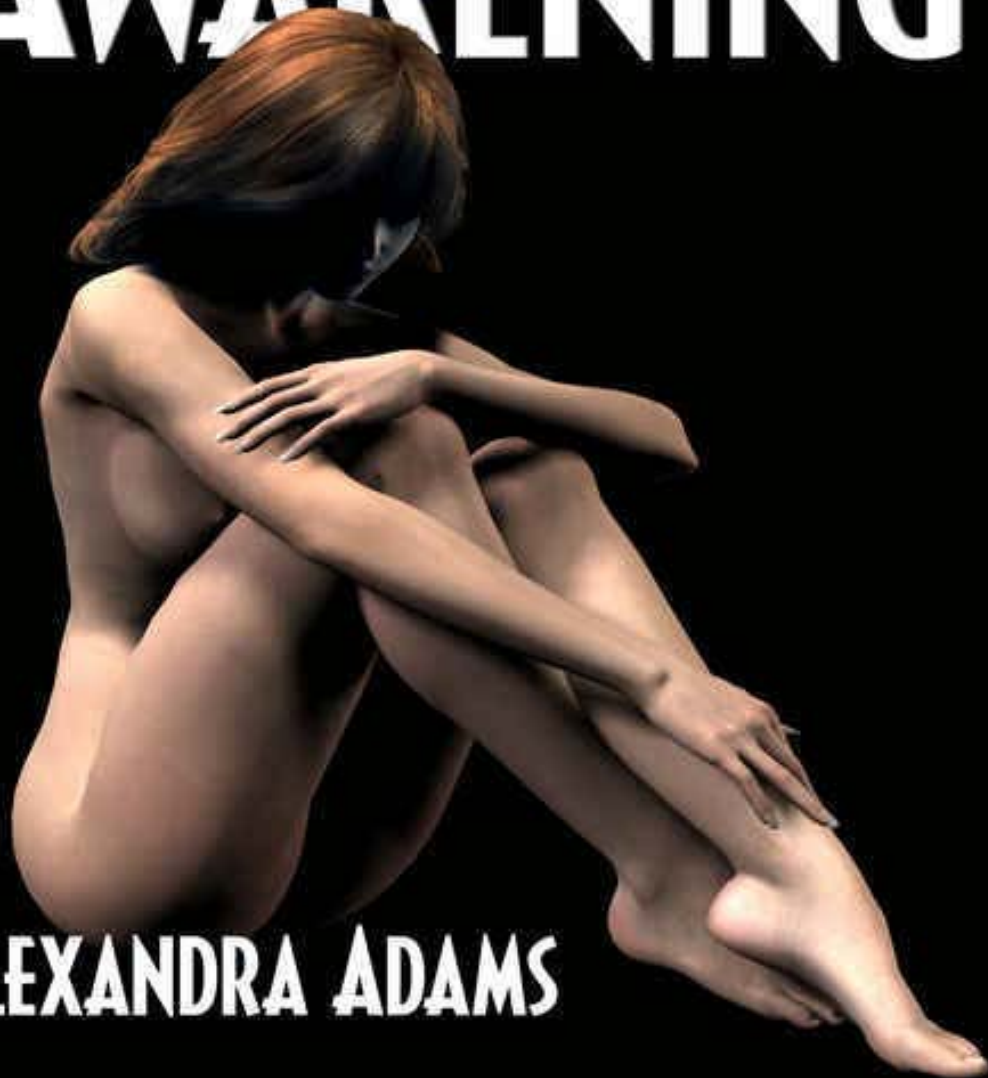


BOOK ONE IN THE ORDER OF THE BLACK LILY

GABRIELLE'S AWAKENING

ALEXANDRA ADAMS



Gabrielle's Awakening

by

Alexandra Adams

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About the Author

An admirer of classical erotica, Alexandra Adams most emphatically believes that no social stigma ought to attach to the reading, writing, or publication of well-crafted literary works that celebrate sensual pleasure. Her erotic novels target mature, sophisticated, uninhibited readers who frankly enjoy character-driven narratives featuring explicitly sensual scenes. An author who writes passionately and evocatively of adventurous lovers, she consistently strives to fire the imagination and liberate the sensualist living within each of her readers.

Other Novels By Alexandra Adams

Evolution Of An Affair

Eternal Triangle

In Honor Bound

INTRODUCTION

Unexpectedly widowed, Gabrielle, a sexually inexperienced author/historian, turns for emotional support to her late husband's closest friend, a courtly cosmopolite who radiates masculine appeal. When Michael reveals that he desires a slave willing to exist solely for his pleasure, his shocking invitation resonates on some gut level within the woman married for fourteen years to a man afflicted by periodic bouts of impotence. Trained by Michael to submit and obey, Gabrielle grows to crave both the pain and the pleasure he uses to lift her to astonishing heights of ecstasy.

Just as she rejoices in having learned how to please him, a magnetically appealing stranger enters her life as Michael's guest. Raoul levies a bold demand that Michael considers himself obligated to grant. Both virile, dominant lovers strive with all their skill at erotic art, all their compelling mastery, to win the slave's permanent favor. Ever more emotionally distraught, Gabrielle achieves a startling new insight into her own sensual nature that enables her finally to resolve the dilemma tormenting her.

CHAPTER ONE

Warm fog swirled around the woman in the shower. The forceful spray set the nerve-endings in her skin tingling; the hot water coursing down her nude flesh induced a feeling of hedonistic abandonment. Groping for the control, she turned off the barrage of droplets, and lathered her upper body with fragrant soap. Sudsy rivulets coursed down smooth white skin, mimicking caressing finger-strokes tracing sinuous curves. Beguiled into dwelling on their slow, sensuous descent, Gabrielle cupped a firm breast in one hand, and soaped the soft skin beneath it. Her thumb inadvertently brushed the nipple, sending tantalizing impulses racing down hypersensitive nerves. A foam-finger insinuated itself between her thighs, riveting her attention on the most intimate part of herself.

Yielding to an irresistible urge, the bather slid a palm between legs that without conscious volition, she spread wide apart. Little gusts of breath hissed between delicately bowed lips that parted to accommodate their expulsion. Employing her right hand as her left still cupped a breast and teased the nipple, she massaged the clit swelling now with need, even as the image of the man due to arrive shortly took surreally clear form in her mind. Hot, sticky essence erupted into the cunt into which three fingers avidly dipped before continuing their vigorous manipulation of the now lavishly lubricated organ of pleasure.

The masturbator's sphincters loosened. She gained a sense of opening, of spreading, of yielding, of abdicating the last vestige of control over the body she imagined to be fucked by the man she desperately wished would care for her other than as a friend. Shivers, heat flooding into quivering loins, waves of blissful tremors coursing upwards from the rigid shaft protruding from the folds of tender flesh which normally hooded it: that magical combination of exquisite sensations led almost instantly to climax. The paroxysm of internal contractions the woman experienced as the epicenter from which wave after shuddering wave of pleasure expanded relentlessly outwards.

Gratified by her success, she stood motionless for a time, savoring the rush that ebbed all too soon, leaving frustration at the aridity of her sexual life in its wake. Sighing, she reached for the control, and set the forceful spray scouring the last traces of foam from her skin.

I owe Michael a major debt, Gabrielle reminded herself as she dressed. I don't know how I'd have coped last week, but for his smooth handling of the funeral arrangements, and his help with the tangled financial mess arising from Richard's dying right in the middle of the court proceedings. Suing Richard for divorce took a dreadful toll on my emotional balance, despite our living apart this past six months—and then to have him die so suddenly, in so ghastly a fashion! That drunk driver must have been doing ninety when he ran that stop sign. Michael assured me that Richard died instantly, but still...

Pain blended with an onslaught of guilt that the surviving spouse knew to be irrational. Richard wasn't even driving, she reminded herself. Random happenstance, that triple fatality. Evil luck. The hot desire we initially felt for each other died long before the wreck: years ago. Why he balked at letting me go, I'll never figure out. Does Michael know, I wonder? They were close associates in a business sense...but were they good enough friends that Richard might have confided in Michael? No. I doubt that he ever unbent that far with any friend, however close.

Clad now in a stylish black pantsuit which breathed respectability without offering the least suggestion of dowdiness, her perfectly coiffed short hair falling in soft waves around a face devoid of makeup except for a dusting of powder and a light application of rosy lipstick, Gabrielle surveyed her image in the bedroom mirror, and sighed again. No one would take you for other than the scholar you are, she chided herself. You look like the eminently respectable author of three critically acclaimed commentaries on medieval history. You project absolutely no blatant sexiness—none of the exotic allure of the women Michael escorted to the annual shareholders' dinners, after Richard's company undertook to manufacture those unique electronic components Michael invented. A different woman each time, each more striking than the last.

Enigma, John Michael Rakoczy. Courtly, assured, urbane...but unfathomable. Why did he do me so inestimable a favor this past two weeks? Richard called him a recluse—couldn't believe he'd appear at those company dinners. But Michael not only came, he lent a magical aura to the table we four shared, and made me feel when we danced as if my glass-shod feet trod on air, and my coach totally lacked the power to turn back into a pumpkin.

A musical chime sent the hostess conscious that her heart fibrillated, hurrying to the entry of her quaintly rustic townhouse. Throwing open the door, she smiled warmly on the commanding figure standing on the threshold, noting in a split-second appraisal the casual elegance of the suit she unerringly judged to be costly, the impeccably correct tie, the stylish shirt, the imported shoes buffed to perfection. "Come in, Michael. Why, thank you! Does this need to be refrigerated?"

"It's at its best cool, not chilled. If you care to sample it, I'll open the bottle, Gabrielle. It's more pleasant before dinner, than after."

"By all means, open it. Dinner's in the Crock-Pot; we can eat any time. I didn't dare make a stab at choosing wine for a connoisseur—figured on playing it safe by whipping up a batch of whiskey sours." Waving a hand towards the small, wellstocked bar, Gabrielle let the cosmopolite she knew to possess a most discerning taste in wines serve his offering.

"Ahh! You do that with such ease!" she commended him.

"Comes with practice."

The setting out of goblets, the popping of the cork from the cobweb-streaked bottle deftly wrapped in a towel, the careful pouring of the sparkling wine, seemed to the hostess exquisitely aware of her guest's raw masculine appeal, a ritual fraught with sensual significance. His voice, melodious, cultured, set up sympathetic vibrations in some obscure receptor in her brain, causing her to see him through superclear air. She experienced a heightened awareness of the carnal urges still tormenting her, despite her self-achieved respite. Seating herself in a plush chair, she took the long-stemmed glass he proffered, smiling with friendly warmth as he settled with fluid grace onto the couch.

Raising his glass, Michael proposed a toast. "To your future happiness, Gabrielle."

Moved by the wish that came across as wholly sincere, the widowed intellectual raised her own goblet, even as her face betrayed doubt that the wish would be granted. "I thank you," she responded softly. "Without your help this past two weeks, I'd never have gotten through the trauma."

"You'd have coped, but I took pleasure in relieving you of the need. Tantalizing bouquet, mm?"

“I’m no judge of wines, Michael, but if you served this to a connoisseur whose palate equaled yours, he’d genuflect before imbibing it, would he not?”

An appreciative laugh greeted that observation. An unconstrained silence fell as hostess and guest sipped slowly, savoring the costly vintage. During the silent interval, Gabrielle filed her benefactor’s image in a mind trained to observe and interpret minute details. Lean hawk-features of no especial comeliness seemed ageless to her.

Michael could be any age between forty and sixty, she judged ruminatively. His face exhibits strong character beneath that whimsical smile lacking the least hint either of arrogance or condescension. He wears his hair rather long, but beautifully styled. Brown hair...and tawny brown eyes curiously flecked with yellow. Those compelling eyes strike me as his most intriguing feature. An arresting face, expressive, changeful, but one he controls perfectly. Why did he go out of his way to help a widow who’d proved herself implacably determined to divorce a husband whose friendship Michael obviously valued?

Gratitude prompted a smile that the shrewd beholder correctly perceived as purely friendly—free of any subtle overtone conveying sexual invitation. Musingly, the guest studied the woman seated opposite, as if to etch her beguiling image into his mental files. Dark hair devoid of a single strand of gray framed a piquant face characterized by an appealing vibrancy. Small, inoffensive crinkles at the corners of liquid dark eyes—creases most prominent when their owner laughed—accentuated the uniform smoothness of high forehead, rose-tinted cheeks, patrician nose, and dimpled chin. Dark brows arched over those wide-set eyes shaded by long lashes, in striking contrast to the creaminess of skin assiduously shielded from the sun. Knowing Gabrielle to be forty-nine, the connoisseur of more than wine admiringly acknowledged that she looked no older than thirty-five.

Over the spicy dish of beef and vegetables served with crusty homemade bread and a tasty salad, the hostess chatted animatedly and wittily, as did the guest whose business ventures resulted in his possessing intimate knowledge of a score of foreign countries. At the conclusion of the leisured meal, Michael smoothly insisted on tidying the kitchen while the hostess loaded the dishwasher.

When his companion preceded him into the living room, he caught up to her. Slipping his arms around her from behind, he held her for a few seconds pressed against his lean torso, calculatedly assessing her response. When he turned her to face him, she congealed against his chest, her guileless, upturned countenance nakedly betraying hot need.

No trace of his fierce satisfaction did Michael let show. Lifting her, he carried her to the couch, settling her so that she sat in his lap with her head resting on his shoulder. “You sorely needed what Richard failed abysmally to give you, this past ten years, eh, little staunch-heart?” he murmured in her ear, smiling knowingly as she melted against him.

Succumbing to shock, Gabrielle stiffened. “I can’t discuss...how did you...” Her normally assured voice broke off abruptly, as the painful flush suffusing her face deepened.

“He confided in me, one night, nine years ago, after downing four shots of brandy on an empty stomach. The liquor melted his habitual reserve—led him to reveal that he suffered from periodic bouts of impotence,” came the equable reply. “I urged him to consult a competent medical specialist, and kept what he told me strictly to myself. When your frustration finally drove you to sue for divorce, you refused to use that wholly legitimate leverage in court. Instead, you employed

the far more vague charge of irreconcilable differences, out of concern for his feelings. You likewise refrained from demanding the exorbitant share of his wealth that any other wife divorcing a successful corporate founder would consider her due.

“I admire your integrity, Gabrielle. Rest assured that Richard’s secret’s as safe in my keeping as it is in yours.” His mellifluous voice an aural caress, Michael murmured cajolingly, “You’ve built up a backlog of excruciating need, mm? Longed for a partner who knows better than you do yourself, what will arouse you...what will lift you to heights of rapture unparalleled in your experience?”

“Yes.” That bald admission came couched in a tremulous whisper. Longing so intense as to equate with physical pain rose out of depths in the widowed historian’s psyche that she scarcely knew existed.

Accurately gauging the potency of that yearning, Michael launched a campaign to engineer an outcome long envisioned, but impossible to achieve until now. Not troubling to hide his amusement, he laughed softly, cocking his head as he spoke. “You’ll need to shed a burden of crippling inhibitions, little innocent—violate some deeply ingrained notions of propriety. I warn you, I possess tastes guaranteed to shock you.”

Liquid doe-eyes widened, but no hint of wariness surfaced; no fear flitted across the face in which nascent hope dawned. “Perhaps they will. I’m dreadfully ignorant,” came the spirited rebuttal. “*I need* to be shocked, Michael!”

A hearty laugh, not in the least derisive, greeted that vehement admission. “So you do. Stand up, and face me.”

Rising, Gabrielle obeyed, conscious of a loosening in her loins paralleling that achieved earlier while bathing. Color flooded her cheeks; delicately bowed lips again parted.

“Strip to the buff,” her guest ordered in a lazy drawl, seeming to the woman unhesitatingly obeying his directive to be the epitome of debonair nonchalance.

The speed with which she complied provoked inward mirth in the worldly sensualist well aware that her cultural programming rendered her incapable of making on her own initiative a brazen sexual overture even to a man she passionately desired. When she stood naked, he commanded, “Clasp your hands behind your head, and make a full turn.”

Flushing scarlet, Gabrielle complied, the tangible impact of the glance tracing her every curve sending galvanic impulses down nerves strung to their limit. Feeling like a slave exhibited for sale to some languidly critical Oriental potentate, she grew aware of the wetness gushing into her cunt. Shivers raced across her abdomen; her nipples hardened into a semblance of pink rocks.

Amber-flecked cat’s-eyes minutely examining a fine-boned, delicately contoured feminine body observed with satisfaction the absence of any excess fat, or any offensive flab. Muscles kept firm by frequent exercise flowed easily beneath unblemished skin. The rounded breasts and curvaceous hips the intent observer saw to be no whiter than the vividly expressive face, the shapely arms, the long-fingered hands sporting no tan whatsoever. The ample breasts lacked the uplift that undoubtedly characterized them in Gabrielle’s youth, but the sight of that soft white flesh set the beholder’s loins stirring. He noted that she shaved her legs and armpits, but obviously never dreamed that a lover might prefer that she dispense with a thatch of crisply curling pussy-hair. “Come here,” he ordered. “Lie on your back, with your ass-cheeks in my lap.”

Nothing in her prior experience of callow lovers taken at infrequent intervals during her university days, or of the husband who gained her lasting affection but failed nine times out of ten to lift her to orgasm, prepared Gabrielle for the impact to her sensibilities delivered by this near-stranger who cast so powerfully erotic a spell. Disposing her body as he desired, she obeyed his peremptory directive to spread her legs.

Lying along the couch, her arms thrown back over her head, her legs thrust wide apart, so that one hung down over the front of the seat, she quivered visibly. Hot shivers rippled through her abdominal area. Her clit, engorged, protruding from its folds, formed the focal point of the raw lust befogging her mind: a primal craving which the scholar found herself graphically comparing to that experienced by a bitch-dog in heat. The emission produced by that compelling carnal urge dribbled onto her outthrust thighs as she consciously willed the man minutely scrutinizing her most private parts to thrust his cock into her. Her breath coming now in explosive little bursts, she all but begged aloud that he take her to bed.

“Vulnerable, you are, in your need, eh, little hedonist?” he inquired lazily, his amusement patent to the woman longing for the touch of his forefinger on her stiff clit. “Well...so am I, in mine. You want a lover who’ll drive his prick up your hot, wet cunt, and lift you to ecstasy for a night, or perhaps only for the span of an hour, after which he’ll obligingly leave. You envision a gallant admirer who’ll court you exactly as did your late husband, fourteen years ago: take you to dinner, to the theater, to concerts, or whatever, and perhaps, at some future point, beg you to marry him. You’ve no notion whatsoever that any other course lies open to either of us. But what I want falls in that latter category. Shall I outline what I want—what I’ll demand, if you don’t rise up in wrath at this pivotal juncture, and order me out of your house?”

Frozen into paralysis by that wholly unexpected challenge, Gabrielle went taut as she digested it. Suppressing an instinctive impulse to leap up in acute disarray and clutch at the clothing scattered about the rug, she succumbed to the magnetic, mocking smile wreathing the face of the man whose monumental self-assurance amazed her. “Tell me,” she breathed, as the tension abruptly drained from the body draped over the lap of the guest whose elegant attire exhibited no rumpling whatsoever.

“I want a slave, Gabrielle. A submissive, obedient slave who offers herself unreservedly to a demanding master who’ll use her lovely body exactly as he wishes. A pliant, yielding slave not only willing, but eager to undergo the rigorous training he’ll conduct, so as to mold her into a partner perfect for him. A passionate, uninhibited slave who gives herself with total abandon when he deigns to prove himself a master of erotic art.”

Shock so great that it impaired Gabrielle’s ability to reason momentarily deprived her of speech. Her ability to employ logic shattered, she reacted on a basis of raw emotion originating in her nonverbal, intuitive right brain. A startling sense that she wanted to submit to this man so utterly unlike any she had ever known—a bemused realization that the word “slave” resonated uncannily on some subliminal level with an elemental, inchoate, intense yearning—took firm hold in her diminished consciousness.

Stifling an urge to rear up and confront the impudent autocrat making that outrageous proposal, she instead relinquished all control of the body that melted over Michael’s lap like a flow of honey spilled on a slope. “You didn’t exaggerate when you said I’d find your tastes shocking,” she rasped hoarsely. “But I want what I suspect you’ll give me...eventually. I need it...far more than I realized, all these years. I offer myself as your...slave.”

Fiercely exultant at having gained what he half expected would elude him, the guest raked the nude body arched across his thighs, with eyes gone dark with passion. No other evidence of the emotion gripping him showed on the mobile face so perfectly obedient to his will. "Mm. Easy to say—even to think, little adventuress. But before I'll consider initiating you into a mode of living totally foreign to your experience, you'll pass a test designed to assess the strength of the resolution you just made. So."

Smiling into eyes that for the first time betrayed fear, Michael slipped a hand into the pocket of his suit-coat. Gabrielle stared apprehensively at the small item he held up for her perusal: a wafer-thin golden disc, which he pressed against her pussy-hair. The slightly convex object adhered to her mound as if it had grown there. Even as she involuntarily tensed, her self-styled master slipped two thin, flat, golden rings over her nipples. The metal clung to her aureoles, held by some mysterious attractive force.

Placing a fingertip on each pink nubbin, Michael vibrated the ultrasensitive flesh, causing the nipples to stiffen, and protrude from the rings.

That sensuous touch electrified the woman whose lust surged back with primitive force. "Ohhh...that feels so good," she breathed. Newly generated fear swiftly subsided.

The nipples remained tautly erect after the massage ceased. A hand laid itself flat on the firm flesh of the novice's abdomen. "This device—one I invented—clings by electrostatic force: attraction generated by an electrical charge opposite to that occurring on your skin," her guest informed her, his melodious voice detached, almost clinical in tone. "When I activate the shield, it'll excite local nerve-endings in your skin, sending electronic impulses coursing down your nerves. That stimulation your mind will interpret as pain. The contact causes no injury, no scarring, no harm whatsoever, however intense the sensation. Because the nerves thus excited most often transmit pleasurable impulses, they'll strive to function normally. You'll grow conscious of a most intriguing erotic overtone blending with the pain that you'll welcome purely because I derive pleasure from inflicting it.

"If you flinch, or stiffen, or writhe, or utter the slightest sound, you'll fail this initial test of your willingness to please. If that happens, I'll tuck you into your bed, and take my departure, Gabrielle—cease intruding myself into the even tenor of days as free now of stress as of sexual satisfaction. So. Go pliant, little probationer. That's right. Stay relaxed."

Fear, not of impending pain, but of failing to please this self-proclaimed sadist, and thereby forfeiting any hope of enlarging her meager experience of sensual pleasure, contended in Gabrielle's clouded awareness with shock generated by his revelation. Fear rose uppermost, as a formerly stern sense of propriety ceased to operate. One clear concept held prominence in a mind gone chaotic: a frantic determination to avoid at any cost, failing this crucial test.

A long forefinger touched a rough spot on the gleaming metal shield. Pain exploded into the cognizance of the candidate braced for its onset: an agonizing stimulus unlike any in her prior experience. Waves of intense sensation radiated outward from the quivering pussy to which the shield adhered, from the tormented nipples, from the softly mounded flesh of breasts shot through with pain. Somehow, the sufferer avoided any convulsive tensing of her gut as she bit back the moan fighting for utterance.

"Ahhh...hurts, hm? Relax, little braveheart. Investigate the pain. Explore it; savor it; enjoy it. Think of the pain as the opposite side of a single sensation: the dark half without which the

pleasure I'll give you would seem incomplete. Submit, little neophyte. Offer yourself with abandon."

The incisive commands sliced through the fog of emotion afflicting the woman striving gamely neither to stiffen nor to writhe. "Significant, but bearable, the pain, eh?" The richly musical voice exerted irresistibly hypnotic force. "You project a most appealing innocence, Gabrielle—a most astonishing ingenuousness, for so capable a businesswoman, and so competent a scholar. You're a natural submissive: a slave only now assuming the role for which nature designed her. That's right. Let the pain loosen you; open you—set your juices flowing. Strive to please me, little wood sprite."

Even as those diabolically persuasive injunctions fell on ears hypersensitive now to the mesmeric power of the man issuing them, the hearer's sphincters went utterly slack.

Flaps of tender flesh swelled and parted as her cunt opened to the worldly sensualist inflicting what amounted to agony. Her clit throbbed, more from need than from the pain suffusing it. Wetness ran down the thighs spread wide.

Controlling his hard erection with an ease born of rigorous self-training, Michael fingered the stiff little shaft, bestowing the touch the sensually deprived widow had so desperately longed for earlier. Idly, unhurriedly, he traced the circumference of the tip, noting the rapt expression overspreading the face that until now had mirrored only the distress caused by the electronic stimulus.

Gabrielle found it harder to stifle moans of pleasure than groans induced by agony. Skilled fingers marched on wet flesh, manipulating the clit the guest deftly moistened with its owner's essence. Expertly, Michael caressed the swollen pussy-lips, and massaged the cunt gulping like a beached fish. While continuing that delectable teasing with his left hand, he thrust three fingers of the other into the orifice dribbling wetness, and moved them provocatively, thereby conferring pleasure that blended seamlessly with the pain still radiating through breasts and loins.

The invading fingers unerringly targeting an exquisitely sensitive site all but wrung a cry from the woman savaging her lip with her teeth so as to obey the command that she utter no sound. The rhythmic, steady thrusts providing heady pleasure changed abruptly to penetrations far swifter, and more forceful. Heat suffused Gabrielle's inner thighs, flooding the love-tunnel so deliciously stimulated by the novel combination of stimuli. Her ass-cheeks grew hot; her thighs burned.

The fingers quickened their tempo. The heel of Michael's hand pressed against the golden disc, causing shuddering waves of pain to ripple outward from the intensely stimulated mound. Working the heel of the hand against the non-shifting shield, he caused the flesh beneath the pussy-hair to rock back and forth, and then rotate even as two lavishly lubricated fingers rubbed along the sides of the engorged clit.

As her mind narrowed its focus to dwell exclusively on those indescribably erotic dual sensations, Gabrielle without conscious volition arched her back, and lifted her ass. Within the circlets of metal, the nipples thrusting upwards grew rock-hard. The intense pleasure-pain totally absorbing her, set her pulse pounding. When she came, the contractions convulsing the cunt awash in a flood of juice stretched on and on. When the white heat of culmination ebbed, its passing left her barely cognizant of her surroundings.

A long finger again touched the shield, causing the pain gripping loins and breasts to die away as if it had never existed.

Only dimly aware of the strong arms lifting her slack, spent body, Gabrielle yielded to their pressure. Her head lolled on her guest's shoulder. Smiling knowingly to himself, he held her close.

When at length she stirred, he raised her to a sitting position. "You passed the test I set you, little stalwart—the first of many," he assured her, the welcome implication prompting her to heave a sigh of pure relief. "Listen, now. I'll tuck you into bed, shortly—leave you to weigh with exceeding care the proposal I'm about to make you. I want a slave who holds nothing back, if and when I accept her as such. In the harsh light of morning, you may well shrink from the bare idea of undergoing an initiation which I warn you, will probe the upper limits of your tolerance for pain, and put to a severe test that unstudied submissiveness which so enchants me."

Still enveloped in the afterglow of an orgasm more fulfilling than any ever achieved with Richard, Gabrielle shivered as she digested that blunt warning, but her relief lost none of its force. "I doubt that," she demurred. "Will you come back for me tomorrow?"

"If you wake, bathe, dress, and eat a hearty breakfast without faltering in your resolve to offer yourself as my slave, you'll drive to the park at the end of this street. Bring nothing but a small purse in which you'll put your automobile registration, and any medications you take daily. On the stroke of eight, you'll pull up alongside the fountain, where you'll see me sitting on the bench. When I reach the driver's side of your Buick, you'll signify that you consent to let me spirit you off to a private retreat, by handing me the keys, and sliding over to the passenger side. If at the last minute you flinch from relinquishing every iota of the firm control you habitually maintain over your life, we'll part friends, Gabrielle, but we'll part—cease seeing each other."

That somber warning served only to stiffen the sensually deprived widow's determination. "I won't back out," she assured him stoutly, intuitively refraining from asking how long her initiation would last.

Michael's next words set her wondering whether he possessed the power to read her mind. "From the moment when I utilize the keys, until the time when I end the short but indefinite span of your initiation, you'll not know from one minute to the next how this open-ended experiment geared to altering your perception of your role as a sexual partner will proceed, or how it will end. I give you only two firm guarantees. First: you'll incur no significant injury—take no permanent harm—however intense the pain I inflict. Second, you'll run no risk whatsoever of contracting any sexually transmitted disease."

Slipping a hand into his inside breast pocket, the guest withdrew a sheaf of folded papers. "Tomorrow morning, you'll read these results of my recent, comprehensive physical examination so as to set your mind at ease on that score. You'd have let me impregnate you tonight without using any form of protection, mm? Without stopping to reflect that I've undoubtedly fucked scores of women since you've known me?" Mockery tinged the voice chiding the widow flayed by her consciousness of the justice of Michael's reproof, and scalded by shame at the intensity of the animal lust shown nakedly to this sadist who exhibited such admirable control over his own passion.

"I own to being culpably reckless," she admitted, flushing hotly. "Michael...I can't offer you similar reassurance. I'll need to make an appointment..."

Tipping up her chin so that she perforce met his eyes, the advocate of safe sex correctly interpreted the bitter pain mirrored in hers. "You never indulged in any adulterous liaison, did you?" he asked, knowing the answer.

“No! Not ever! But...”

“Nor did Richard,” Michael asserted as if certain, as indeed he was. “Fourteen years of monogamy I consider an adequate safeguard. So. Bed for you, Gabrielle.” With that, he rose, and bore the woman torn between hope and fear, up the stair, and into the bedroom. Having deposited her slack, nude body in the welcoming depths of her double bed, he kissed her lightly on the forehead, murmuring, “I’ll let myself out, little voluptuary.” A few minutes later, the hostess bemused by a sexual encounter as fulfilling as it was extraordinary, heard the door close behind her departing guest.

Out of a welter of conflicting emotions, one rose to prominence: sheer, overmastering joy. Floating in a luminous bubble of euphoria, Gabrielle savored the knowledge that Michael desired her, until other considerations intruded, to dampen her spirits.

Grown hyperconscious of the touch of cool percale sheets on her bare, satiated body, she reviewed the unsettling proposal tossed into her lap by the benefactor who alleviated one thorny difficulty only to generate another. The lethargy induced by carnal release fled. Scenes from her life with Richard flashed by as if fast-forwarded, on the screen of her inner vision. Nights when she obeyed his urging to tell him what she wanted in bed, only to find that his efforts to please her generated such anxiety in him that he failed to come himself. Nights when she coaxed him into confiding what he wanted, and then strove to give it to him, with the result that he ejaculated before she grew sufficiently aroused to achieve orgasm. Nights when he experienced one of his recurring bouts of impotence. Nights when his fear of impotence proved a self-fulfilling prophecy. Rare nights when he and she lay clasped in each other’s arms, simply enjoying the closeness, and unexpectedly grew aroused enough to achieve mutual satisfaction.

Sexual intercourse with Richard, the widow reflected bleakly, always included an element of nervous dread—of failing to please, of enduring frustration, of hurting sensitive feelings, of being hurt that way.

I’m utterly fed up with battling frustration! the surviving spouse railed as her discontent with her present life rose to smite her. Tired to the bone of struggling to please a dysfunctional partner—weary of the emotional strain of making crucial, painful decisions! But do I truly want to become the slave of a fascinating but cruel master? Why does that radical notion hold such insidiously beguiling appeal?

I don’t know, but it does. The very sound of his voice makes me melt. The pain he inflicted tonight intensified the marvelous pleasure the mere touch of his fingers conferred. I want Michael’s cock in me! I want his mouth on mine, his tongue on my clit, his hands on my breasts! I want to be his slave—want him to control every aspect of my life! Why does that idea make me cream? Why? Am I temporarily deranged—unbalanced by the shock of Richard’s dying so horribly?

No. Admit the truth, woman. You dribbled hot jizz every damned time you danced with Michael. He’s haunted your dreams for years. You’re incapable of cheating on a husband—of sneaking a one-night stand behind the back of a man you knew would never cheat on you. Soiled, you’d have felt. That’s why you finally pursued the only honorable course, despite your knowing how grievously your rejecting Richard would hurt him. But now you’re free. Richard’s passed beyond suffering, and Michael wants you.

For how long?

The fear that lanced through the widowed intellectual slowly succumbing to emotional and physical exhaustion colored the unsettling dreams she failed to remember on waking.

CHAPTER TWO

The harsh light of morning produced no lessening of Gabrielle's determination to offer herself to a demanding master. The misgivings still nagging at her failed to do other than make her forget what she ate for breakfast five minutes after she cleared the table. Out of pride, she resolved to appear at her best. That determination prompted her to don the most attractive pantsuit she owned. Head held high, shoulders squared, she drove to the park, and pulled up in front of the fountain at exactly the time specified.

The sight of the commanding figure striding across the lush turf set her heart fluttering, and her chest constricting. Little isolated contractions teased the cunt awash in wetness produced by the mere idea of being owned, body and mind, by a man who epitomized the ideal lover in Gabrielle's perception. When he neared the window, she wordlessly, eagerly, handed him the keys. Keenly intent on studying his expression, she scarcely noticed that he wore a black turtleneck shirt, black western-cut jeans, and glossy black engineer's boots with the same debonair grace as he did his costly designer suits.

No hint of the magnitude of Michael's relief at seeing her arrive surfaced on his lean hawk-face as he slid into the driver's seat. Turning, he raked the probationer with an imperious glance. "Drop your watch inside your purse, and set the bag between us," he commanded. When she complied, he handed her a pair of what she assumed to be wrap-around sunglasses. "Put these on, after you fasten your seatbelt. You'll then fold your hands in your lap, and keep them there. Remain silent during the ride. Efface from your consciousness every thought but one: you exist solely for my pleasure."

The glasses, which proved to be totally opaque, formed a most effective blindfold. Sitting erect, her heart hammering, her tightly clasped hands feeling as if bound by invisible fetters, Gabrielle paradoxically experienced a most exhilarating sense of freedom as she consciously, willingly, abdicated control of a life direly lacking in fulfillment of late. During the ride that seemed to the woman staring into total blackness to last for hours, she lost all sense of direction—even of time. Realizing the degree of trust she just placed in this self-confessed sadist, she wondered at herself even as wetness dampened her lacy black panties. Thrusting all doubt from her mind, she indulged in vivid fantasies of what use Michael might presently make of her yielding, needy body.

When the Buick finally came to a smooth stop, and the motor ceased purring, the passenger sat silently awaiting a command. The door on the driver's side closed; that next to her opened. Strong hands released the seatbelt, and thrust themselves under her knees and armpits. Muscular arms lifted her bodily out of the automobile. No sound of traffic met her straining ears; no breeze ruffled her hair. The measured tread of her master's boots on some hard surface, and the whispery rasp of several doors sliding open seemingly of themselves, apprised her that he bore her through a building.

At length, he set her on her feet. "Don't touch the blindfold," he warned. "Strip to the buff."

Mutely, Gabrielle obeyed, her hands managing not to fumble while undoing the fastenings of jacket and pants, the snaps of her garter belt, and the hooks of her lacy black brassiere. Sliding her feet out of gleaming black pumps, she stepped over the pants encumbering her ankles. Black nylon

stockings fell about her feet like soft, diaphanous restraints, only to be swiftly overlain by lacy panties. Bending down with lissome grace that enchanted the unseen observer watching her out of eyes gone dark with lust, she pulled off the nylon clinging to her feet, guided solely by the feel of the sheer fabric. Rising, she stood naked, erect, patently aroused, before the master whose nearness she unerringly sensed.

When he again lifted her, she rejoiced to feel the warmth of his bare skin against her breasts and hips. Quivering in the throes of both apprehension and anticipation, she lay pliantly in Michael's arms, scarcely daring to hope that the sight of her naked self might have induced lust as primitive as that tormenting her. When he lowered her, and laid her slack body supine on a solid support sheathed in what felt and smelled like leather, she automatically thrust her arms back over her head, and spread her legs wide.

Laughter—a hearty effusion of mirth—rang in her ears as Michael removed the blindfold. “Hot as a cat in heat, eh, little sybarite?” her master taunted, his tawny eyes brimming with amusement.

“Yes,” came the swift, baldly truthful reply.

The glance initially leveled at the mobile face of the man standing nude in her sight, now strayed downwards, focusing solely on his lithe body as Gabrielle completely ignored her surroundings. Fine brown hair thatched Michael's chest; muscular shoulders graced a compact torso that tapered in towards narrow hips. Admiringly, she traced the contours of legs hard as spring-steel, and corded arms lean, but obviously strong. Her eyes riveted themselves to the cock rearing stiffly erect, remaining fixed on that enticing sight until Michael seated himself on the step running down one side of the solid rectangular block sheathed in smooth black leather. “Look at me,” he demanded sharply.

Liquid doe-eyes shifted hastily back to the face grown purposeful—coldly intent. “Listen well, little probationer,” came the stern injunction. “You're my possession, my property, my chattel. You exist for my pleasure, not your own. You face a series of tests of your willingness to submit, to obey, to welcome the pain I'll take exquisite pleasure in inflicting. All your energy will be channeled into one overriding goal: to please me. So. Lie perfectly still while I render your nudity complete.”

Mystified by that final command, Gabrielle lay as if carved of creamy marble, awaiting her owner's pleasure. When he withdrew a gleaming straight razor and a spray can of shaving cream from a cavity in the block, enlightenment dawned, and with it, consternation. Creamy foam erupted over her pussy-hair, causing her to go taut. A curt command to relax, delivered in a tone conveying sharp annoyance, jarred her badly, but she managed to force tense muscles to loosen. With a few deft, expert strokes, Michael denuded her mound, and wiped the instrument on a towel.

Her transitory relief that she sustained no cut from the ultrasharp edge of the blade during the process, proved short-lived. To her horror, he sprayed the creases surrounding her clit. Fingers closed on a flap of tender flesh, pulling it taut. Galvanic impulses raced down nerves tingling from that intimate touch, despite the intent prompting it. Fear gripped the woman not daring to breathe, let alone move, as the gleaming steel shaved the interior of soft crevices. The expert wielder of the frighteningly sharp implement swiftly scraped clean the entire area between Gabrielle's outthrust thighs.

“Much better,” he declared as he wiped the unmarred soft flesh with a damp cloth. “The

shields adhere far more efficiently to hairless skin.”

Chilled by that revelation, the initiate silently—vainly—willed him to finger her shaven pussy. Expecting the ominous touch of cold metal, she discovered to her surprise that he refrained from attaching a golden disc.

Seating himself on the step, Michael noted the erectness of his slave’s nipples, the fullness of her clit, the rapidity with which her chest rose and fell, the longing showing nakedly on the piquant face that so plainly mirrored its owner’s thoughts. “Look around you,” he ordered the novice lying spread-eagled on the hard, leather-sheathed block.

Flushing as she realized that her absorption in Michael’s nude body drove all thought of her surroundings from her mind, she stared upwards to behold a vaulted stone ceiling supported by gothic arches reminiscent of medieval cathedrals. Artificial light, bright but diffused, radiated from modern fixtures. The cavernous chamber she saw to be circular, its walls of gray rock windowless, its floor stone-flagged. A number of smooth metal doors set into arched stone jambs evoked puzzlement as she observed that they lacked handles. Intrigued, she glanced inquiringly at the man she intuitively knew would not tolerate any questioning.

“When you handed me your keys, you voluntarily relinquished all control over your life,” he reminded her levelly. “You can’t leave here, unless I so permit. Should you regret choosing as you did—beg to be released—I’ll ignore your plea, and punish your temerity in making it. If you disobey, or rebel, I’ll introduce you to pain designed solely for punishment—quash your rebelliousness swiftly and effectively.

“I doubt, however, that you’ll offer the least resistance, Gabrielle. You’re a natural submissive—ardent, affectionate, ingenuous—but you’ve yet to comprehend the literal meaning of the word slave. You lie there dribbling juice, panting after the cock you saw with delight to be hard. You’re absorbed by your own need, when your sole concern ought to be satisfying mine. You regard pain as a burdensome prelude to pleasure—brace yourself to endure it, instead of welcoming its infliction. Well, you’re about to undergo restructuring of your thinking, little voluptuary.”

Thrusting his arms under the woman manifestly dismayed by his reproof, he lifted her, bore her limber body a short distance across the chamber, and set her on her feet beside a black metal cart. A sable cloth covered whatever lay on the gleaming surface. Next to the cart, a slender stone pillar supporting a box housing controls rose to waist-height. A touch on a switch caused two cables to descend within reach, from cylinders affixed to the vaulted stone ceiling. The ends of the cables, fitted with short chains from which hung fetters lined with resilient leather padding, dangled over a narrow, shallow, but fairly long rectangular depression in the floor.

“Step into the hole,” Michael commanded.

Her mind a blur of fear, Gabrielle obeyed.

Standing facing her, her master raised each of her arms in turn, and manacled her wrists to cables pulled in from positions over the ends of the trough. A touch on a switch caused the cables to retract, thereby lifting the frightened trainee’s body so that her feet dangled in the air slightly below the plane of the main floor.

Dropping to one knee, Michael seized a chain attached to the lower floor at one end of the depression, and snapped the manacle at its end around Gabrielle’s left ankle. When identical

restraints enclosed both ankles, he attached to each padded fetter one end of a tubular, rigid spreader. Rising with sinuous grace, he touched a switch on the pillar.

The cables now retracted further, so that the chains attached to the manacled ankles drew tight, exerting new tension on legs already held apart by the metal bar. Awash in fear, suspended by her wrists, her legs spread painfully wide over the trough, her feet at the level of the main floor, the pinioned novice acutely aware of her utter vulnerability fought to control an onslaught of panic.

Michael took up a position on the rim of the depression, facing her. Cocking his head, he let his eyes rove slowly down the tense, nude, wholly exposed body of his possession. “That posture renders you acutely conscious of your helplessness, eh, little love-slave?” he remarked, accentuating her fear. Turning, he whisked the cloth from the cart, and lifted an object—one of several—from the surface.

“Observe, now,” he commanded, displaying the item for her consideration.

Through dilated eyes, the immobilized woman beheld a smooth black shaft, about an inch in diameter and eight inches long, rounded at the tip. Below the circular base fitted with small buttons, a four-inch-long extension served as a handle. That portion consisted of four black glass spheres, seemingly strung on a rigid support. From the end of the handle dangled a loop of black cord.

Gripping the implement by the handle, Michael thrust the shaft into the view of the trainee hanging spread-eagled. A touch on a button caused a small opening to appear in the rounded end. Six slender thongs emerged, each about eighteen inches long and tipped with a small knot. Pressure on a button caused the strands dangling limply from the end of the shaft to assume an aura of eerie blue light.

Unable to tear her glance away, Gabrielle saw that as the illumination appeared, each shimmering tendril immediately distanced itself from all the others, as if possessed of repulsive electrical force.

“This lash provides painful stimulation to the nerves beneath your skin, exactly as do the shields,” Michael informed his chattel, the timbre of his voice sending chills cascading down her spine. “The thongs will cling until I release them. The force of my light blows alone, you’d scarcely feel.”

Scared spitless, Gabrielle hung mute, shivering despite the warmth of the air.

“As with the shields, an overtone of pleasure accompanies the pain produced by each application of the lash,” her master added, his eyes on her, not on the device. “That subtle effect will require concentration on your part, to be appreciated. You’re hot and wet—tormented by need. Just right, your mindset. Your mental focus will narrow as I wield the whip—center only on those areas of your lovely body most suited to the generation of pleasure. You’ll explore the pain, Gabrielle. You’ll concentrate on it, and accept it fully. You’ll achieve a complete suspension of your will, when you surrender unconditionally to the master wielding the whip.”

Lifting a second, identical device from the cart, Michael activated it as well. Grasping an implement in each hand, he swept an appraising glance over the pinioned neophyte he saw to be consumed with dread. Employing simultaneous motions of his arms, he slapped a set of thongs down over each of her breasts.

The electrified strands repelled each other while in midair, but clung tightly to the tender skin exhibiting an attractive force for their surfaces. Pain radiated outwards from the ultrasensitive flesh, to course through Gabrielle's chest and constrict her breathing. Involuntarily, she writhed, and bit her lip.

"Hurts, the lash, eh?" Michael drawled, letting the thongs adhere for a few seconds before releasing them with a touch on a button. Smiling into eyes in which he detected no rebelliousness, he flicked the electrified tendrils against both sides of a flat, taut abdomen, inflicting pain that convulsed the gut of the woman whose flesh felt flayed by the contact.

Falling into a graceful, unhurried rhythm, the adept in the art of wielding the strange devices lashed the ass-cheeks, hips, abdomen, breasts, and inner thighs of his twitching, writhing slave. Employing an upward stroke of a single device, he sent pain radiating through the clit so prominently exposed, owing to the cruelly wide spread of the legs. Agony wrung a moan from the sufferer struggling frantically against the bonds.

Abruptly, the tormenting tendrils ceased making contact with shrinking flesh. Frowning blackly, the irate autocrat barked, "Stop squirming! Force yourself to focus on the pain. Explore it, Gabrielle. Yield to it. You're not to strive to dominate the pain. Let the pain dominate you!"

The whipping recommenced. Methodically, the whip-wielder targeted the same areas, over and over, watching like the proverbial hawk for any writhing.

Consumed by fear of rousing him to even greater wrath, Gabrielle strove to prevent her body from reacting. She hung passively as the thongs whistled downwards, and clung. Unable to block out either the torment or the attendant pleasure, she grew ever more conscious of her nipples, her breasts, her hairless mound, her clit, her pussy-lips, her thighs, her ass-cheeks, the cleft between them, and even of her anus, duly targeted in its turn. Her will to resist annihilated, she perforce dwelled on her sensations. A series of isolated contractions within her cunt impinged on her awareness. Moisture gushed; her inner thighs grew hot. Her nipples again hardened, and protruded from the encircling rings.

Searching eyes observed that latter change. The telltale fullness between the outthrust legs likewise registered. Michael's cock reared stiffly erect in response to the pleasure whipping this beguilingly attractive slave afforded him. Gratified to detect that evidence of arousal, he brought the lash up between the parted thighs once again, provoking a visible shudder, but no writhing.

Again he stopped. "For what do you exist?" he demanded of the sexually inexperienced woman amazed at the intensity of the desire produced, she acknowledged in wonder, solely by the pain.

"For your pleasure," she gasped, automatically repeating the phrase so relentlessly driven into her cognizance.

A hand spread her pussy-lips; fingers massaged the amply moist outer portion of her dripping orifice.

Electrified by that sensuous touch, Gabrielle reacted without thinking. "Ohhh...don't stop," she pleaded when the hand withdrew. Belatedly realizing that she just betrayed her continuing absorption in her own need, she cried, "I'm sorry! I didn't mean to think only of my pleasure!"

"Ahhh...but you did. You'll offer to atone for your failure to shift your focus, will you not?"

“Yes!”

Inclining his head, her master observed trenchantly, “The thongs can’t reach within your cunt, but your love-tunnel can nonetheless be stimulated. Observe, now.” Laying one whip on the cart, he retracted the thongs of the other, and then activated the device, pointedly demonstrating that the blunt-tipped shaft itself exhibited the aura of blue light. Having deactivated it, he faced the neophyte cringing in consternation as she divined his meaning. His melodious voice exerting the hypnotic force he knew so well how to generate, he inquired evenly, “What constitutes your primary obligation?” Eyes gone cruel impaled the slave trembling at this juncture with dread.

“To please you.”

“And what would please me, right now?”

“Ohh...Michael...I couldn’t bear taking that thing in my cunt!” Gabrielle protested tremulously.

Eyes hard as tiger-striped agate bored into hers. “So you set a limit on how much pain you’ll bear for my pleasure?”

“No! But it’ll hurt so dreadfully...”

“I offer you the chance to provide me exquisite pleasure, little self-absorbed sensualist. Do you decline my offer?”

“No!” Desperate now, the woman feeling like a mouse delicately tormented by the sharp-taloned paws of a cat, mustered the remnants of her courage. “I...I’ll do anything, to please you.”

“Be specific, Gabrielle.”

“Slide the thing into me!”

Exultant at having produced submission, Michael inserted the black whip-shaft to its base in the orifice awash in juice, and touched the button.

A strangled shriek tore from Gabrielle’s throat as pain exploded within her hot, wet feminine depth: pain accompanied by an equally intensified echo of pleasure.

“Control your urge to scream,” her master snapped, his voice edged with anger. “You freely offered to prove your willingness to please. Don’t cheapen your gift by whimpering!” Letting go of the handle, he stepped back.

Stung by the virulence of his rebuke, Gabrielle hung slackly, savaging her lip with her teeth. After the initial shock passed, she grew fully as aware of the ghostly pleasure generated by the stimulus, as of the pain.

From the cart, Michael now lifted a small, pear-shaped, solid mass: a carpenter’s plumb bob, fitted with a hook at its blunt top. Dropping to one knee, he fastened the weight to the loop of cord dangling from the handle protruding from his suspended slave’s cunt. With a flick of his hand, he set the pendulum thus created, swinging forward and back.

Agony flared in the loins thus cruelly worked: torment accompanied by an intensification of the pleasure-echo. The electrostatic attraction to the walls of the orifice prevented the device from sliding out, but the motion of the pendulum caused the rigid handle to move forward and back, setting up a corresponding motion of the shaft carrying with it the flesh to which it clung.

Indescribable sensations radiated through the woman's groin. Agony dominated, but nerves accustomed to transmitting pleasurable sensations throbbed, tingled, and sought to function normally. Gabrielle's sphincters loosened, exactly as they did when she masturbated. Wetness gushed around the inanimate shaft, heightening the twin effects. Rosy nipples swelled as the dually stimulated passage contracted around the invading object.

"Yield to the pain," Michael again commanded, his mesmeric voice an irresistible goad. "Let your thighs loosen—your bowels turn to jelly. Enjoy the penetration." Having set the plumb bob swinging anew, he laid light, quick strokes of the whips over ass, thighs, stomach, and breasts, as if to review the lesson. Satisfied that every site targeted contributed to the overall effect, he expertly laid the whips high on his trainee's breasts, so that the tip of a rigid shaft lay against each nipple. Leaving the thongs activated, he let go, thereby allowing each shaft and handle to dangle.

The agonizing stimuli, intermittent initially, but continuous now, pulsed along nerves excited by the prior stimulation. Her urge to resist annihilated, the sufferer surrendered her diminished will, accepting the pain as a fundamental component of her existence. The attendant pleasure demanded, and received, its full share of her impaired ability to focus on her sensations. Her fear vanished, as pain seamlessly merged with pleasure. For a span of ten seconds, those two realities became the totality of her universe.

Unerringly, Michael judged her surrender complete. Stepping close, he gripped the handle protruding from the moist, swollen cunt-lips, detached the plumb bob, and switched off the stimulation. Holding the handle in his hand, he let the shaft descend halfway, and then with slow, sensuous motions, slid it in and out, tilting it, turning it, oscillating it.

The thumb of his other hand rested on the base of the clit drenched in moisture. Two fingers laid on the wet underside pressed against the folds of flesh hooding the ultrasensitive organ on either side of the head, and drummed against the solid pressure of the thumb. Those expert manipulations generated pleasure almost painful in its intensity. Gabrielle groaned, but not from pain.

Gauging to perfection the degree of her arousal, Michael ceased caressing her. A touch on the control lowered her body, so that feet still spread wide apart by the rigid rod attached at its ends to the manacles, touched the flagging within the depression. Grasping his partner's hips from the rear, he pulled her ass towards him, forcing her to bend forward at the waist as her feet rose over the lip of the depression to rest on the main floor.

"Stiffen your arms, for balance," he ordered, prompting her to place the weight of her upper body on the wrists still attached to the cables, thereby enabling her to keep her back parallel to the floor.

Satisfied, Michael thrust his cock into the cunt awash in juice, solely to lubricate his stiff prick lavishly with her essence. Just as quickly, he withdrew, smiling as a low, hoarse whimper of frustration broke from Gabrielle's lips. Reaching around her, he reinserted the whip-shaft into her quivering orifice, and activated it. Gripping the hips of the woman all but sobbing with disappointment, he drove his turgid, throbbing cock deeply into her virginal ass.

No pain attended the anal penetration, but a stifled gasp prompted purely by shock escaped the slave. The hand clamped over her left hip maintained its hold; the other arm encircled her torso, enabling the right hand to massage her stiff, wet clit.

Employing only minimal force, Michael thrust slowly, rhythmically, into his woefully

inexperienced trainee's deliciously tight rear. The impulses generated by the whip-shaft separated only by a thin membrane from the passage enfolding his cock stimulated him as well. Intoxicated by the effect on his own sensory system, he spoke softly in Gabrielle's ear. As her back pressed against his chest, he commanded, "Surrender, little innocent. You'll come for your master, mmmm?"

Michael's long, slow, sensuous thrusts deepened his possession's lust; his questing fingers evoked delicious sensations. The pain tormenting Gabrielle's breasts, her inner space, her still-shackled body, blended with the subtle pleasure integral to the whip-stimulus, and melded with the erotic impulses radiating from the clit still assiduously worked by a master of erotic art. Other wholly unprecedented, amazingly pleasurable sensations centered in her anus.

The fettered partner gasped at the violence of the gathering, the quickening, in her loins. She cried aloud as her intensely stimulated love-tunnel contracted around the whip-shaft. Heat suffused her; shivers raced up and down deep inside her torso. Her back arched; her breath came in explosive gasps. An orgasm shattering in its impact, its onset obvious to the man driving his rock-hard tool into her ass, occurred simultaneously with his.

The author of the triumph stood with chest heaving, eyes dark with passion, gripping both hips of the slave bent forward at the waist. "Marvelous," he exulted. "Mmmmmm?"

"Michael...I've never come that hard...in my life...from getting fucked in my cunt!"

That spontaneous admission, couched in the venerable, blunt, socially unacceptable Anglo-Saxon terms that he knew Gabrielle had seldom if ever spoken aloud, set Michael laughing as he circled the slave unable to change position. Still chuckling, he removed the whips clinging to her breasts, and the shaft protruding from between her thighs. "Never had a man fuck you in your delectably tight ass?" he inquired, his merriment plain to the partner shocked by the intensity of the orgasm gained in such fashion.

"Never!"

"Poor, too long deprived innocent," he commiserated, his mobile face alight with mirth. Having freed his possession of the restraints, he bore her to the block, and seated himself on the step while cradling her in his arms. The hands gentling her, stroking her, induced in the mature woman emotionally stressed by the ordeal, a sense of infantile dependency on an adult. Unknowingly, Gabrielle regressed momentarily back into her childhood, feeling safe, cherished, free of all care.

After a considerable span of time passed in that fashion—a respite that gave the novice wholly unharmed physically by her experience, a chance to rest her mind and regain her composure—Michael set his burden on her feet. "Stand with your hands clasped behind your head, your legs spread as wide as they'll go, and your eyes downcast," he ordered. "Assume that posture without being told, whenever you await my pleasure."

Bemusedly conscious that the agony so recently endured left not the slightest trace of its ever having existed, Gabrielle stood as directed while her master removed a cloth, soap, and a basin from a cabinet in the side of the block, and filled the pan half-full with water from a tap within the recess. When he ordered her to wash his cock, she hastened to kneel at his feet and comply, finding that handling his now flaccid organ set her heart fibrillating. When she finished, she sat back on her calves, and glanced up at him inquiringly, evincing no slightest resentment of his inflicting the pain that she now conceded, aroused her at some primal level reached by no prior lover.

Her beguiling air of innocence, the natural, unstudied grace with which she moved, her artless, instinctive submissiveness, delighted the man buoyed by the ease with which this utterly desirable woman thus far handled the rigor of a regimen designed to subordinate her will to his while preserving the sprightliness of speech and manner that so entranced him. Allowing no hint of his potent satisfaction with her progress to show, he commanded, “Suck my prick, little plaything. Get me hard.”

Kneeling before him on the hard flagstones, Gabrielle unhesitatingly took his cock in her mouth, and avidly sought to arouse him. Her efforts made up in diligence what they lacked in skill, prompting the man merely intent on achieving an erection prior to beginning a delicate exercise, to refrain at this point in time from offering extraneous instruction. “Desist,” he commanded, when his delight in her eagerness to please reinforced the stimulation producing the desired effect. “Stand up.” When she hastened to obey, he noted with satisfaction that she clasped her hands behind her head and spread her legs without being ordered to do so.

A touch of a finger on a switch integral to the leather-sheathed support set the massive furnishing readjusting its shape: splitting on the ends, which then parted to form an elongated X. “Lie supine, with your ass-cheeks resting on the point of the V, and your legs spread along the arms,” came the crisp order.

When Gabrielle swiftly disposed her body thus, Michael attached to her shaven pussy a shield larger and thicker than that employed earlier. Deftly, he slipped matching nipple rings in place.

Positioning himself in the angle of the V, between her outthrust thighs, he raked her spread-eagled body with eyes gone cruel, and spoke in a tone that chilled her to the bone. “When I introduced you to the whip, I immobilized you, thereby relieving you of any need to fetter your body with your mind. I deliberately prevented your doing anything other than focusing exclusively on your sensations. You failed at a crucial point to think only of my pleasure—grew culpably absorbed in your own. The demand I lay on you now will force you to restructure your thinking, little hedonist. You’ve longed all along to be fucked in your cunt—to enjoy deep, hard penetration while passively savoring bliss. That’s not how you’ll experience your first impregnation by your master, Gabrielle.”

Gratified to see his slave flush scarlet with shame on being reminded of her egregious error, Michael thrust two fingers into the passage that speedily oozed juice, and spread them, facilitating the moistening process. His mocking smile sent shivers rippling through the trainee’s abdomen, even as her cunt opened to him. “You’ll take my cock,” he informed her evenly, “but I’ll be the passive partner. That shield differs from most, as you’ll discover shortly. But first, you need to learn an essential skill you presently lack.” The fingers drove deeper, prompting Michael’s possession to arch her back, and lift her ass.

“Squeeze my fingers,” came the imperious command. “Employ the sphincters that afford you control of urination and defecation. Squeeze harder! Ah, that’s much better. Don’t stop; squeeze rhythmically and continuously, without slackening the force of the contractions. You’ve never consciously exercised those specialized muscles, have you?”

“No,” the widow unversed in the subtle variations of intercourse gasped, finding that each hard squeeze sent a cascade of pleasurable shivers rippling up her torso.

“Continuing for an indeterminate time requires concentration, rather than effort, you’ll discover. This exercise strengthens muscles that you’ll consciously employ, hereafter, to squeeze

my cock when I fuck you. That sensation delights me. Keep on squeezing while I tell you what I demand of you.”

The fingers withdrew. Squeezing convulsively, Gabrielle listened, her heart palpitating as much from anticipation as from fear.

“When I activate the shield, you’ll experience the effect you expect—pain that’s significant, but bearable. That pain will last the duration of this training exercise. When I penetrate your cunt, I’ll be wearing a small disc on my prick. That auxiliary device will sense your squeezes, and respond by triggering a tiny, incremental increase in the pain tormenting you, with each new squeeze. You, not myself, will control that intensification. You won’t be restrained, so you’ll be forced to dominate your urge to writhe, or to rebel. You’ll bear the pain willingly, while remembering to squeeze. Simultaneously, you’ll obey—instantly—the commands I issue.

“This little game will put your willingness to please me to a rigorous test. You’ll work your loins on my passive cock while voluntarily offering me the exquisite pleasure the squeezing confers. If the pain intensifies to a level you refuse to endure, you’ll earn no punishment for ceasing to squeeze. You’ll merely incur my disdain, and endanger your present status as a candidate striving for acceptance into an elevated realm of sensuality. If you manage to squeeze until I come, you’ll earn no reward other than the satisfaction of having willingly offered an acceptable gift to your master. So. For what do you exist, Gabrielle?”

“For your pleasure.”

Gripped by consternation, the trainee sought to calm herself as Michael affixed a tiny golden disc to his again fully engorged member, and thrust his cock deeply into her while standing in the angle of the V. Having done so, he ceased moving, and touched a rough spot on the shield.

Standing erect, still, he observed the effect that Gabrielle, lying supine, could not see.

A faint vertical groove bisecting the golden shield lit with silver radiance. Raking the probationer with a coolly appraising, pitiless glance, he noted that she remained utterly relaxed as the device sent pain surging through her groin.

Exulting at experiencing hard, rhythmic squeezing that tested his superb control over his lust, he savored the delicious sensation, delighting in the illusion of being sucked even deeper into a cunt awash in juice. Resting his eyes on the shield, he beheld a faint red luminosity overlay the silver at the base of the groove, and creep upward as the squeezing progressed. Secure in the knowledge that he could tell exactly how closely his slave approached the limit of the shield’s capacity for intensifying the stimulation, he exulted in his dominance, enjoying his cognizance of the severity of the agony she gamely inflicted on herself, solely to please him.

Desperately willing herself not to fail what she perceived to be a pivotal test which could well affect her future happiness, Gabrielle managed to lie slackly while offering the intimate caress demanded by the sadist wielding ever more power over her will as her initiation proceeded. Pain racked her: torment that slowly but inexorably intensified. Fear that at some point, the pain would grow intolerable, deprived her of the pleasure which taking her master’s stiff cock in her cunt should have produced.

Just as she geared her stressed mind to handle the triple tasks of forcing herself not to writhe, remembering to squeeze, and enduring the slowly escalating torment, the neophyte found herself compelled to take a far more active part in the encounter.

“Raise your legs, and press your feet against my upper arms,” came the command couched in a tone that admitted of no evasion. “Using your knees for leverage, work yourself on my cock.”

Mastering an attack of panic, Gabrielle lifted legs she bent at the knees, and pushed her feet against the corded arms of the partner standing erect between her thighs. Discovering that she could move in an inverse of penetration, she thrust her pelvis against the invading cock, and pushed away, striving to confer pleasure even as bursts of agony attended each new movement of her straining body. Desperately, she squeezed, relieved to find her power of concentration adequate to the new demand levied on it.

“Ahhh...nice, little rosebud. Now, use your imagination. Work your hips as well as your legs. Rotate your slippery hole around my prick, while squeezing hard. So. Offer what delights me. Marvelous! Keep it up.” As he spoke, Michael watched the groove in the shield redden to a fourth of its length.

Engulfed in torment so great that it deprived her of the ability to grow aroused herself, Gabrielle resolutely kept up the squeezing while gyrating her entire pelvis around the hard member serving as a pivot. Reversing direction, she took heart as she heard a gasp of pleasure slide past the lips of the master enjoying not only his sensations, but also his awareness of her agony. “Thrust your ankles onto my shoulders,” she heard him order. “Raise your ass, slave! Work at pleasuring me!”

Driven by his harsh tone to even more frenetic activity, the panting initiate grew aware of a new danger: exhaustion. Gritting her teeth, she redoubled her efforts, lifting and letting fall tortured loins while thrusting her wet cunt madly against the passive organ filling it.

“What do you want, little plaything? Mmmm? Beg for what you want. Be specific.”

“Please...fuck me,” came the hoarse plea.

“Shall I breed you, little cat in heat? Mm?”

“Yes!”

“Be specific!”

“Michael...please...breed me! Juice me! Squirt me full of come!” Those frantic pleas carried an overtone of desperate urgency.

As the red line reached the halfway point, Michael grasped the ankles using his shoulders for leverage. Pulling his partner’s legs straight upwards, he spread them wider, sending agony coursing through the novice’s groin. “Work your ass!” he commanded. “Arch your back, and let my tool slide the full length of your hole! Feel my balls in your crack? Make them slap your tight little asshole, slave! Hurts, eh? Offer yourself like a sacrifice laid on an altar. Hold nothing back—you’re my belonging—my property! Now, tell me what you want!”

“Hose me! Fill me with jizz!”

“Squeeze harder!”

Agony so great as to convulse her gut and constrict her breathing narrowed the tormented chattel’s awareness of her surroundings. One overmastering urge consumed her: to seduce the man goading her with those incisive, sardonic commands, into achieving orgasm. “Fuck me!” she begged, her control of herself growing dangerously fragile. “Give me your load...pump me full of

juice!”

“Milk it out of my cock, slave!” The hands thrust the panting, struggling woman’s legs still farther apart while exerting upward pressure. “Squeeze my prick! Suck it into you! Harder!”

Sobbing now with frustration as well as pain, blinded by salty tears wrung out of her by agony, Gabrielle convulsively tightened her sphincters, even as the stimulus grew unbearable. “Fuck me, master! Please!” she shrieked.

Cognizant that the shimmering red stripe neared the top of the groove, Michael relaxed the rigorous control he so flawlessly exerted over his urge to ejaculate. Groaning as the essence of his lust erupted in long, satisfying spurts into the woman whose willingness to tolerate agony roused him to unqualified admiration, he entered the white heat of passion, swaying as his own consciousness momentarily diminished. His chest heaving, he savored a rush of exquisite pleasure, his tawny eyes half-lidded, remote. Only after a full thirty seconds passed did he touch the shield, causing the now excruciating stimulation to die away as if it had never been.

Giddy with relief, Gabrielle sprawled on the block, her breath coming in ragged, labored gasps. Her racing pulse manifested itself in a throbbing centered in her throat; perspiration glistened on her skin. Wondering dimly how she ever managed to withstand the all but irresistible urge not only to stop squeezing, but to tear the shield from her shaven mound, she relished the thought of having avoided earning blistering contempt, or rousing her master to regal wrath. Lying so slackly as to seem congealed to the sleek black leather, she mastered her disappointment at being unable to enjoy her first experience of impregnation by the cruel autocrat who owned her.

At length, he spoke, his melodious voice falling on her ears with beguiling, hypnotic force. “You pleased me, little lovetoy. What do you want of me now?”

Poised on the brink of blurting an impassioned plea that he make her come, Gabrielle caught herself barely in time, warned by a momentary gleam in the amber-flecked eyes, or by some subtle cue exhibited by the man’s lithe, hard body. “I want to keep on pleasing you,” she responded in a tremulous whisper. “Do whatever you like with me.”

Fierce satisfaction, which Michael took no pains to hide, wreathed the fluidly expressive face. His eyes brimful of malicious amusement, he raked the probationer still exhibiting emotional strain, with an intent, possessive glance. “Mm. I find myself longing for the delectable taste of your hot, wet clit, slave. Arch your back, spread your thighs as wide as they’ll go, and open to me.” Dropping to his knees within the V, he closed his mouth over the engorged, sticky shaft of the woman stunned by his action.

Caught up in the throes of animal lust, Gabrielle forgot ever receiving a command that she utter no sound. Michael’s customary insistence that she lie passively still likewise fled her mind. A hoarse, throaty cry tore across lips bruised from being savaged by her teeth during her ordeal. Her stiff little ornament quivered as a deliciously warm tongue licked it in long, sensuous strokes, from base to head. Pleasure so great as to border pain radiated from the tiny focus of delight. Her own essence mingled with her master’s saliva, and with his pungent semen. Enfolding her clit with his lips, he sucked as if to tear out her organ of pleasure by its roots.

Waves of intoxicating sensation spread in an ever-widening circle, generating rapture that engrossed the woman entranced by it, to the exclusion of all else. Her suffering forgotten, she artlessly exhorted the lover generating such heady pleasure, her words tumbling out in no coherent order—spoken with scarcely any consciousness of their meaning. “Suck me...oh, that’s so good,

don't stop, ohh...I can't stand it, it's so delicious...lick me, kiss my pussy, Michael, tease my little prick, yes, oh yes, keep doing that—slide your fingers in, that's marvelous...ohhh, eat my pussy, lick my clit...ohhhh, your tongue's so hot, so wet, so hard, I love it, don't stop...ohhhh, I'm coming, I'm doing it, I can't bear any more, it's too intense...ohhhhh!"

Passing into near-trance as she experienced an apocalyptic climax unparalleled in her experience, Gabrielle scarcely knew when her master lifted her slack, boneless body, and cradled her in his arms. An onslaught of silent mirth shook his shoulders as he gently ordered tousled hair damp with sweat, and stroked the flesh over the ribs of the satiated sensualist flowing against him like viscous gel melting in the sun.

"You did more than please me," he murmured to himself, rather than to her. "You intoxicated me, little wood nymph. Your long deprivation's kept your innocence intact—preserved it for the prince waking a slumbering beauty to fierce, hot desire with a kiss—eh, little lotus flower?"

Reacting to the tone rather than the words, Gabrielle nestled against his chest, trusting as a child, and blissfully content with her status as his property.

CHAPTER THREE

Lifted in corded arms, the novice emotionally drained by two sessions of agonizing if harmless stimulation lay limply in the arms of the master whose penchant for inflicting pain as well as pleasure inexplicably failed to rouse her to resentment, let alone hot ire. He makes me melt, she conceded dreamily. I haven't felt so vitally alive in years. Sex with Richard shriveled my self-esteem—blasted my perception of myself as a desirable woman.

Experiencing menopause didn't cause that distress. I avoided any ill effects by taking the hormone supplements. No...we simply didn't fit, sexually, Richard and I. But Michael's so unshakably assured...so knowledgeable about my body...more so than I am myself. He radiates power, decisiveness, virility. Just being carried in his arms...like now...makes me cream.

Halting before a smooth, featureless, arched doorway, the subject of her ruminations commanded, "Open to me, Door Two." The metal panel slid all but noiselessly sideways.

Watching in surprise, Gabrielle recalled his warning. I most definitely can't leave here unless he permits, she acknowledged, shivering a little. But that's not what's worrying me. What if I fail some new, dreadfully difficult test—flunk my initiation, so that he vanishes out of my life? What if I pass, only to discover that he loses interest once he succeeds in molding me into his conception of a perfect partner? What if he grows bored, later on, from the lack of any further challenge to his ingenuity? Did he persuade those exotically lovely women he escorted to those dinners, to undergo this sort of training? He never brought the same one twice! Will he toss me aside when the thrill of the chase lures him into some new quest for dominance?

Fear of rejection lanced with brutal force through the widow scarred in her psyche by a failed prior relationship.

Thrusting a horde of nagging doubts from her mind, Gabrielle glanced around a circular chamber designed for bathing. Deposited on her feet in a shallow, concave depression fitted with a drain, she beheld nearby, a large, sunken, rectangular stone pool filled with roiling water from which rose fog perfumed by a faint fragrance. An oaken pedestal table occupied a position close to the shallow concavity featuring the drain. Beside it reposed a three-legged stool. A toilet wholly unshielded from view completed the furnishings.

"Relieve yourself," came the peremptory command.

Needing relief, Gabrielle promptly obeyed, secretly deploring the lack of privacy. She noted that Michael showed no interest whatsoever as she emptied a stressed bladder. He focused instead on adjusting the temperature of a showerhead on the end of a flexible hose that he unhooked from a slender stone column stretching from the stone-flagged floor to a point above his head. When his slave reappeared beside him, he pointed upwards to a horizontal bar supported by a vertical rod suspended from the vaulted stone ceiling. "Grasp the tee," he ordered.

Employing fragrant soap, he lathered his hands before sliding them over every square inch of the shapely feminine body of the bather gripping the bar overhead. Delicious impulses raced along nerves hypersensitive to this man's touch, as slippery palms traced the contours of breasts, stomach, thighs. A hand insinuated itself between the legs that of their own accord spread to accommodate it, and provided an intimate cleansing.

Circling the probationer, Michael rubbed enticingly plump buttocks. Soaping his middle finger, he thrust it into her anus, noting that she gave an involuntary start, and tightened the sphincter. "Stand still," he barked. "Open your ass to me!"

Flustered, Gabrielle forced the offending muscle to go slack.

The invading finger probed deeply, moving forward and back so as to explore the dimensions of the orifice. As the palm of the hand thrust upwards against the crack, two fingers and a thumb pressed into the cheeks, and the forefinger slid inside the cunt. "I own you, slave," came the stern reminder. "No aperture of your lovely body, however tender, will you regard as closed to my entry, my probing, my inspection—or as too sensitive to be stimulated, should I wish to inflict pain in that site."

Chilled by the ominous final adjuration, chastened, Gabrielle whispered abjectly, "I'm sorry I went tight, master."

Noting that twice now this mature intellectual had addressed him as master when stressed by agony, or stricken by her perception of having angered him, he savored satisfaction, reflecting that her instinctive, artless submissiveness pleased him more than would forcing her to address him thus, constantly. Perfectly secure in his own self-image, supremely confident regarding his ability to mold the most rebellion-prone woman into a submissive, obedient slave primed to go to any length to please him, he deliberately left a degree of slack where doing so would facilitate, rather than hinder, his trainee's progress.

Withdrawing the finger, he rinsed her curvaceous body with warm spray from the showerhead. "I expect your cunt's sore, hm?"

Exceedingly wary now of falling into traps baited with loaded questions, Gabrielle replied meekly, "I exist for your pleasure, so I'll willingly suffer the soreness."

"Ahhh...you're learning, slave. You'll bear what I demand that you bear, and accept remediation of what could ultimately interfere with your progress, if I choose to alleviate the problem." Having driven that point home, Michael scooped up a gob of odorless ointment from a jar. Inserting the greased finger into the cunt chafed from its electrostatic adherence to the electrified whip-shaft so cruelly oscillated by the pendulum, he massaged the orifice. The anesthetic medication provided almost instant relief, evoking a soft sigh of satisfaction from the beneficiary.

"Your tissue will toughen slightly, from prolonged, hard use—cease to grow sore," her master drawled, noting that the implication in that remark produced a rosy flush.

Observing liquid doe-eyes stray yearningly to the hot tub, he laughed as he shook his head. "No pleasurable soak until you earn one, little probationer." Sweeping her up into his arms, he bore her back through the chamber housing the X-shaped block, and into another of comparable size.

An imposing feature riveted the glance of the novice lying slackly in the strong arms of her master. A huge bed dominated her view, its massive, ornately carved, oaken headboard set close to the curving wall of mortared gray stone. The mattress, six feet wide, eight long, its surface covered by a creamy contour sheet, lacked any coverlet. Four plump pillows rested against the headboard; two oaken nightstands flanked the head of the bed. A solid, twelve-inch-thick oaken block served as a footboard, stretching the width of the bed, and rising to a height equal to that of the mattress.

At each end of the footboard a round, smooth, eight-foot-tall oaken post reared upright. From the upper end of each pillar hung a short chain that ended in a fetter. An identical restraint the viewer saw to be attached to the foot of each post.

At a short distance from the side of the bed, a large, black, square mat of the type used by gymnasts lay on the stone flagging. Beside it rose a pedestal table on which reposed an array of chillingly familiar electronic devices.

Wrenching her eyes from the footboard obviously designed as a site where a slave could be exposed, spread-eagled between the posts, to the view of the master reclining in the bed, Gabrielle studied the gleaming black tubular metal frame located between the mat and the wall. Failing to divine its purpose, she focused on the kitchenette located on the opposite side of the bed from the mat.

The base unit featured a counter fitted with a sink, above which stretched oak-fronted cabinets. A microwave oven occupied the near end of the counter; a combination refrigerator-freezer abutted the far end. A square, pedestal table, which she saw to be higher than one intended for use with chairs, stood in the central space between the cabinets and the bed. On its far side reposed a tall stool. No matching stool met her eye.

The man effortlessly bearing her weight set her on her feet on the side of the table opposite the stool. Glancing down, she beheld two small blocks the size of a brick, on opposite sides of a circular hole directly beneath her feet. "Slide your feet outwards until they press against the blocks," came the crisp command.

When she obeyed, and stood with her legs spread uncomfortably wide, she heard him add, "Lay your palms flat on the table. At no time are you to move them lower than its surface, nor are you to shift your feet away from the blocks."

From a cabinet, Michael withdrew a slender metal cylinder, adjustable for length: an object fitted at one end with a circular solid base, and at the other with a U-shaped contrivance resembling an oarlock. A rubbery wheel, a hand's breadth in diameter, Gabrielle saw to be mounted on a cross-member in the seeming oarlock. When he offered the wheel for her inspection, she noticed that soft, slender projections reminiscent of the cilia integral to some tiny marine animal extended from the rim.

Dropping to one knee at his slave's rear, Michael fitted the base of the cylinder into the hole in the floor. Deftly, he adjusted the height so that the upper rim of the wheel fit between her pussy-lips. A touch on a switch set the wheel rotating. The cilia swept up the underside of her clit, tickling the opening of her cunt. The wheel oscillated gently as it spun, maximizing the teasing effect.

Rising, the instigator of the sensations bestowed a mocking smile on the flustered woman experiencing instant arousal. "No meal ought ever to be gobbled in haste," he drawled. "We'll dine in civilized fashion, conversing while we enjoy a leisurely late lunch. You'll nonetheless remain constantly, exquisitely aware of your sexual organs, little satiated sensualist. I want you hot but unsatisfied. That device will tease, but fail to provide relief. You'll converse in sprightly fashion throughout the meal, even as the wheel accomplishes its purpose."

Leaving his thoroughly disconcerted dinner-partner standing with palms pressed to the table, Michael thrust two packaged meals retrieved from the freezer into the microwave oven, and set the table with imported china, elegant silverware and linen napkins. From a crystal pitcher, he poured

chilled milk into a crystal glass. With courtly grace, he served his companion before himself. While the food cooked, he launched into a discussion of the career of John Hunyadi.

The delicious teasing stimulating her nether region distracted the scholar until her fascination with the fifteenth century Hungarian national hero overrode the effect of the sensual stimulation. When the timer dinged, she waited while Michael served her meal, and his own. While enjoying an entree guaranteed to delight a gourmet, the historian discovered that this reclusive, enigmatic electronics engineer knew his Hungarian history. Eagerly, Gabrielle offered penetrating comments on events occurring in an age as notable for fiendish cruelty as for idealistic devotion to the cause of preventing militant Islamic Turks from conquering Wallachia, Transylvania, and Hungary with intent to sweep through Europe.

Standing at the conclusion of the meal with her palms on the table, Gabrielle watched her master wash the crystal, the plates, and the silverware, and discard the disposable food-containers. Consumed by curiosity, she all but succumbed to the temptation of asking if he descended directly from the noble Hungarian family so prominent in seventeenth and eighteenth century history. She nonetheless refrained, lest he react with outrage at his slave's daring to inquire into his lineage. He may spring from an illegitimate Rakoczy branch, she warned herself, or a line wholly untraceable. Don't risk angering him, when you aren't even sure whether you'll succeed as his initiate.

On his part, Michael exultingly observed that the scholar who spoke with the assurance born of expert knowledge exhibited the vibrancy that so entranced him, and yet in no way presumed on his willingness to allow his possession to converse with him as an equal during the short span of the meal. So easy to erase a slave's individuality, he mused—to cripple a charming woman's capacity for providing pleasant companionship, by heavy-handed overuse of humiliation as a means of breaking her will. I prefer the more difficult challenge of utilizing her ability to please in ways other than sexual, while driving home to her that I own her—that she exists for my pleasure in whatever mode I choose to enjoy her.

At the conclusion of the meal, he rose. Pleased to behold the evidence of his trainee's hot and unsatisfied state, he removed and stored the teaser. His satisfaction mounted as he perceived that Gabrielle at this juncture automatically resumed her role as probationer by standing with her legs spread wide, her hands clasped behind her head, her eyes downcast, meekly awaiting his pleasure.

"Position yourself on the mat, close to the table," came the imperious command.

Facing the nude, barefooted neophyte standing in the required submissive attitude on the resilient surface of the pad, Michael observed evenly, "You're ripe, wet, and full of need, little hedonist, exactly as I want you, but you'll focus exclusively on satisfying the demands I lay on you. For what do you exist?"

"For your pleasure."

"Just so. And what enhances any sexual pleasure I derive from the use of your body?"

"Inflicting pain on me," Gabrielle gamely responded.

"How must you conduct yourself, when experiencing pain inflicted solely for your master's pleasure?"

"I need to bear it without flinching, or writhing, or crying out, or even going tense."

"And if I issue you commands while you suffer?"

“I obey them, however dreadful the pain.”

“That recital forms an accurate summary of what you’ve learned so far. At this time, you’ll be required to add another rule to your list. Inflicting pain on a submissive slave deeply arouses me. Enjoying the efforts of a slave skilled at offering me erotic stimulation pleases me all the more if she does so while bearing pain solely to please me, as you did earlier today. Inflicting pain on a slave who perceives that powerful stimulus as a means of enhancing and prolonging her own pleasure while she works diligently to satisfy my lust intoxicates me. So. You’ll bear all those considerations in mind, this afternoon. You face a rigorous test of your willingness to please, little lovetoy.” The melodious voice purred; the tawny eyes glittered.

Standing nude, her legs spread, her breasts uplifted by the arms raised and bent so that her hands could clasp the back of her head, Gabrielle experienced a subtle shift in her perception of what awaited her. Pain inflicted by the hand of this man who demanded and would accept nothing less than absolute, unqualified submission, began to equate in her mind with foreplay: a powerful erotic stimulus that melted her bowels, loosened her loins, and sent her essence surging into her cunt. I want to intoxicate him! she cried in the privacy of her mind. I want to satisfy him—want to enhance whatever pleasure he might deign to confer on me!

Turning to the table, Michael selected a trapezoidal shield and a set of nipple rings. Dropping to one knee, he affixed the golden devices to the shaven pussy and the aureoles surrounding nipples hard as pink granite.

A touch set now familiar pain radiating through breasts and loins. Rising, he surveyed the slave whose abdomen failed to quiver, and whose nipples, if anything, grew even more erect. “That stimulus arouses you now, eh, little voluptuary?” he inquired, smiling knowingly.

“Yes,” Gabrielle breathed.

Reaching out, her master took a nipple between a bent forefinger and a thumb. Squeezing the hard nubbin, he noted the parting of rosily bowed lips, and the breathing gone shallow, rapid. Exerting pressure, he rolled the nipple back and forth between the fingers, causing the pain tormenting the electronically stimulated tit to intensify cruelly.

No gasp, no cry burst from the woman who quivered visibly at his touch.

Desisting, he laid a palm on the flesh below her breast. Slowly, sensuously, he slid the hand down her torso, sensing the degree to which the caress titillated the slave. His forefinger moistened itself in the juice oozing from her cunt, and toyed provocatively with her stiff clit. A shuddering expulsion of breath hissed between lips still parted.

In the mind of the recipient of those electrifying caresses, the pain grew indistinguishable from the pleasure.

“Ahhh...you like that, eh, little passionflower? What do you want, mmm?”

“To please you,” came the now fully automatic answer to that question.

“Bend forward at the waist, while keeping your legs spread wide, and grasp an ankle with each hand.”

Bent into the ignominious posture demanded of her, Gabrielle held it as pain coursed in waves through her torso.

Unhurriedly, Michael squirted lubricant on his middle finger. Poised to bark a reproof, he thrust the finger into the anus so enticingly exposed. Gratified to find that the slave so sharply reproved earlier readily opened her tight ass to him, he again probed deeply, rendering the passage slippery.

Withdrawing the finger, he selected a device: a slick black shaft six inches in length, narrower at the tip than at the flared base. That implement he thrust into his slave's lushly lubricated rear until the flared rim pressed against her crack. A touch on a control on the base set the shaft and rim clinging. With a second flick of a finger he activated the whip-stimulus.

Pain exploded in the ass of the initiate.

"Stand erect," came the imperious command.

Given that no nerves within the afflicted orifice of the woman unused to anal intercourse normally transmitted erotic impulses, only a faint echo of pleasure accompanied the pain setting Gabrielle's teeth on edge, but she rose to face her tormentor. Before she could raise her arms to clasp her hands behind her head, Michael curved a muscular arm around her torso. Pulling her against his chest, he smiled down into startled doe-eyes, even as the stimulus produced by the devices clinging to her flesh sent a muted version of the dual sensation afflicting her, radiating through his chest and groin. "For what do you exist, little plaything?" he murmured.

"For your pleasure," Gabrielle gasped, as her nude, pain-racked body melted against that of the master for whom her cunt watered.

With his free hand, Michael ran a finger across her upper lip, tracing the curves of the bow. Smiling in patent amusement, he inquired lazily, "The pain intensifies your desire for a cock in your love-tunnel, eh, little sensualist?"

"For *your* cock," came the spontaneous, artless qualification.

"Mmm. You need a lesson in pleasuring the tool I'll drive into you at some future point. Until then, you'll regard this dildo"—a hand swept an object off the table—"as a surrogate for your master's prick." Still holding his slave clasped in one arm, Michael presented the item for her perusal.

Stifling acute disappointment, Gabrielle studied a gleaming black replica of a fully engorged, sizeable penis, lifelike in shape to the veins standing out on its non-metallic, jelly-like surface. A flared base matched that of the shaft still tormenting her anus. "You'll find this cock warm to the touch," her master assured her. "It'll monitor the squeezes you'll employ when you work your hot little cunt on the surrogate with as much fervor as you would my pole. So. Come here."

Letting go of the pain-racked neophyte, Michael strode the short distance to the frame, and thrust the dildo against a flat surface to which it promptly adhered. "You'll kneel on these supports," he instructed, pointing, "and lower your slippery hole over the cock. You'll then bend forward, and grasp the handholds you see to lie considerably lower than the knee-rests. Your nipples will brush against those feathery teasers as you work your pelvis back and forth, and rotate your cunt around the prick you'll imagine to be mine. You'll squeeze continuously, knowing that this dial"—again he pointed—"will flash at each squeeze.

"Your ass will rear straight up as you pleasure the surrogate cock. You'll rivet your full attention on the task of pleasing me—on accepting, even enjoying the pain. You'll continue your efforts until the monitor tells me that you achieved orgasm. I demand that outcome of you, so let

the pain serve to loosen you, open you, and set your juice flowing.”

Exhibiting no hesitation, Gabrielle knelt erect on the resilient kneepads. Gingerly, she sank over the up-thrusting dildo, which, to her relief, caused no additional agony. Bending forward, she grasped the two handholds closer to the floor than were her knees. Positioned now with thighs spread wide, back arched, ass-cheeks rearing upwards, breasts hanging pendulously over two sprays of feathery fronds that prickled as they repeatedly brushed the tits tormented by the golden rings, she flushed hotly as the ignominy of her posture flayed her consciousness.

“Squeeze!” came the imperious command. “Work your loins! Use what you’ve learned!”

Galvanized into swift compliance, Gabrielle rose and fell in an inverse of penetration over the surrogate cock offering a tactile sensation indistinguishable from that of a human penis. Using her knees for leverage, she thrust forward and back, rotating her slippery cunt around the inanimate shaft filling it, while squeezing madly. Each deliberate, hard contraction sent shivers cascading the full length of her torso. Concentrating on the goal of exhibiting variety in her efforts, she relegated the pain surging into agony with each convulsive movement of her body, to the back of her consciousness, determined to impress the viewer with her diligence.

The enticing sight of his slave’s upraised, gyrating ass-cheeks produced a hard erection in the man moved by the sight to activate a whip, and adjust the setting so that instead of clinging until manually released, the glowing thongs delivered stimulation that automatically occurred in short, staccato bursts. Standing to the rear of the woman frantically striving to stimulate herself into coming, he lashed her buttocks, targeting the plump cheeks, and occasionally, the crack. Each time a luminous tendril made contact with the flared base of the shaft stimulating her anus, excruciating pain shot down the tortured passage.

Tears welled, threatening to fall on the stone-flagged floor as that new stimulus refocused the sufferer’s mind on the pain enveloping her. Knowing whose hand delivered it, she sought to accept the agony again foremost in her awareness. Michael owns you! she reminded her alter ego. He desires you! Cream for him! Come for him! A vivid vision of tawny eyes impaling her as a strong arm encircled her rose with surreal clarity. Seduce Michael into juicing you! You’re his slave—his belonging!

Working her loins frenziedly on the warm, stiff pseudopricks, rotating her cunt around the upwards-thrusting substitute for the human cock she so wished would fuck her, rising and falling even as she squeezed, so as to provide deliciously erotic friction, the novice reached a mental plane where the pain merged seamlessly with the pleasure. Yielding to the single stimulus blotting all extraneous thoughts from her narrowed awareness, she tipped over into orgasm. Her breath coming in audible gasps, she groaned aloud as her inner space contracted around what she now perceived as her master’s male organ. Her back arched. Her squeezing ceased as she floated into the incandescent luminosity of near-trance.

Apprised by the monitor that his slave climaxed, warned by the ominous slackening in her body to take quick action, Michael thrust both arms around her middle. Lifting her bodily off the dildo glistening with her essence, he bore her to the mat, and stood her on her feet, facing him. Even as she reeled, he pulled her slack, yielding body against his chest, and fastened his mouth over hers.

Gabrielle melted down the front of him. One of his hands gripped her ass, recklessly pressing her tortured mound against his own bush as his stiff cock slid along her dripping clit. Forcing her

mouth to open wide, he explored its warm, moist depths, probing with his tongue, playing with hers, insinuating his between her upper lip and her teeth. Having sent delicious impulses racing down obscure nerves, he enfolded her tongue, and sucked as if seeking to ingest it whole. He knew how to kiss, and he took his time.

The pain still racking her loins and breasts fled Gabrielle's awareness. Her master sucked on the bow of her upper lip. Gently, he pulled it. Releasing that soft flesh, he licked the entire inside of the mouth he again forced to open wide. Held in an unbreakable grip, his chattel gave herself up to blissful enjoyment of his intimate, passionate, lingering, erotic kiss. Her sense of being his property deepened—grew integral to her perception of herself. When at long last he freed her lips, her face he saw to be rapt.

Assuring himself that she could stand without swaying, he held her at arms' length, and tilted his head. "The pain enhanced your pleasure, did it not?"

"Yes," came the bemused reply.

"You offer it freely, mmm?"

"Yes!"

"And if I intensify it, that would spur you to redouble your efforts to please?"

Even as fear flickered in eyes gone wide, Gabrielle whispered, "Yes."

"Clasp your hands behind your head, and spread your legs wide."

Having assured himself that she could stand, Michael strode to the frame, removed the still-wet dildo, and again fronted the slave submissively awaiting his pleasure, albeit fearfully now. With his free hand, he pinched her nipple. Letting go, he cupped the breast, vibrating the soft pink protrusion with his thumb. When the nubbin stiffened, he ran his hand down Gabrielle's torso, and fingered the clit drenched in her essence. His touch stirred her again to need, the more readily for her longing to be filled by his hard prick rather than the surrogate—to be totally possessed by this sadist who owned her. "What do you think would please me?" he queried, his melodious voice mesmeric.

Divining his meaning, she breathed in dismay, "Ohhh...master...please..."

"Please do what?"

The hand toyed with the wet clit, as feral tiger-eyes bored into those mirroring conflict. The fear prompting that near-protest dissolved in a flood of renewed lust: a primitive craving to be fucked by this man—to be used for his pleasure in whatever way he wished—that drove the trainee to offer him the sacrifice he demanded.

"Stimulate my cunt, if that would please you, master."

Fierce elation gripped the man exerting rigorous control over the course of his passion. In a swift, fluid motion, he thrust the glistening, jelly-textured dildo into the love-tunnel still awash in moisture. As the flared base clung, he set the whip-stimulus exploding into the passage separated by only a thin membrane from that tormented by the anal stimulator.

Barely stifling a shriek, Gabrielle stood as if rooted to the mat, fighting an all but irresistible urge to tear both intrusive objects out of her body.

Curving his arm around her, Michael drew her against his chest. His mouth closed once more

over hers. His questing tongue again teased, before he sucked as if to ingest her own. An overwhelming sense that the intimate oral contact set the seal of possession on her person as even being fucked in her cunt could not, Gabrielle congealed against her cruel master, her will in abeyance.

When he loosed her, and commanded, “Suck my prick, slave,” she sank to her knees before him, the agony inflaming her loins coexistent with a rabid desire to seduce him into shooting his load in the orifice he deigned to impregnate. A once-strong reluctance to let a lover eject his jism into her mouth—an aversion hitherto harbored—abruptly vanished.

Michael’s original intent—to offer sardonic instruction to the inept partner pleasuring him orally—altered, as he beheld the passionate fervor with which she sought to make him come. Controlling his throbbing tool by the sheer power of an indomitable will, he delayed ejaculating despite the savage intensity of his lust, enchanted by the voluptuous abandon that drove his inexperienced slave to improvise—to experiment. Forcing himself to remain utterly passive, he reveled in his sensations as this woman tormented by stimuli the potency of which he well knew, threw herself with such abandon into the task of sucking him off.

Moving her head in long, sensuous strokes, Gabrielle took him as deeply as she could without gagging. Desisting, she teased the head of his prick with her tongue while caressing his wet shaft with her hands, provoking the emission of a few premature drops of pungent semen. Again and again, she thrust her head forward as if bent on swallowing his cock, while silently willing him to come.

Only at the end did Michael abdicate his passive role. Microseconds before shooting his load, he pulled back, so as to ejaculate on his slave’s tongue rather than squirting so far back in her throat that he overrode her taste-buds while triggering a swallowing reflex that would cause her to ingest his juice without even being aware of its flavor.

Gabrielle’s mouth filled with a sticky, pungent effusion that forced her to sample a taste more pleasant than otherwise, as the man in the throes of culmination groaned aloud. Instinctively, she swallowed: willingly drank the essence of her master’s passion as if imbibing a sacramental draught. The pain existing at this juncture as an integral part of her being, merged with the ecstatic joy produced by her accomplishment. Spent, drained, overdosed on intense sensation, she embraced her owner’s loins, and laid her cheek against his hard, taut abdomen.

His chest heaving, his breath coming in sobbing gasps, Michael savored triumph. Lidded eyes, their pupils dilated, focused on a distant point. Awash in euphoria, the satiated sensualist stood swaying just a trifle, as his rush ebbed. Grown aware of his slave’s embrace, he glanced down, enjoying to the hilt his consciousness that despite his skirting the upper limit of her tolerance for agony, she yet put on that astonishing performance.

Bending, he lifted her to her feet, and set about freeing her tortured body of the devices. When the pain died away as if it had never been, he swept her limp form into his arms, and bore her to the bath. As he walked, he contemplated the delicate, exacting challenges still facing him as he progressed towards a goal long harbored, and now tantalizingly close to attainment.

CHAPTER FOUR

Standing in the shower cavity, grasping the tee, Gabrielle savored the pleasure conferred by the soaping and rinsing performed by her master's hands. When he swept her up and carried her into the hot tub, she rejoiced in her cognizance that she must have pleased him.

Seating himself on the broad, submerged step running around the perimeter of the sunken bath, Michael held his slave's shoulder blades against his chest, as she sat in his lap, facing away from him. Enveloped to the neck in roiling, deliciously hot water, she sighed in delight as his fingers spread her pussy-lips, allowing the turbulence to massage the outer portion of her cunt.

At length, he pulled her up a trifle, and held her so that her head lolled on his shoulder. Smiling into liquid gazelle-eyes, he observed evenly, "You passed three severe tests of your willingness to submit, to obey, and to bear pain for my pleasure, little staunch-heart. I'm pleased by your progress thus far, but I warn you—formidable new challenges await you."

Shivering despite the warmth, Gabrielle further hardened her resolve to prove herself worthy of being owned by this most demanding master. Her hand caressed his chest; her face nakedly attested to her contentment with her present posture. Murmuring, "I'll do whatever I must, to please you," she teased his wet nipple with her tongue.

"Keep that resolve, little songbird."

His acute awareness that she might fail to measure up to the standards of submissiveness he absolutely refused to lower, tempered Michael's satisfaction with her total lack of resentment at his inflicting all but intolerable agony, and lessened his delight in her ability to come while tormented thus. Will she succumb to anger tomorrow—tip over into rebelliousness when I probe the limits of her physical endurance? he asked himself musingly.

Perhaps—but I need to know how she handles anger. Rage produces a formidable rush of adrenaline. The safest way for a master to test a slave's propensity to generate blind rage is to induce severe physical stress. The rush of adrenaline produced during strenuous exercise renders any athlete—especially a fierce competitor—exceptionally anger-prone. The athlete's mental state while physically stressed differs no whit from that produced by his hearing an intolerable insult leveled by an enemy—or by a slave's receiving some command that her cultural programming predisposes her to view with outrage.

Gabrielle's a natural, exquisitely sensitive submissive who readily learned to regard pain—even agony—as sexually arousing, but she won't see the point of the demands I lay on her tomorrow. No matter. I want a slave prepared to welcome any demand I make on her, of whatever nature—even this woman. Especially this woman!

Soothed himself by the action of swirling water, he murmured in the ear of his possession, "Lovely, you are, little innocent. A fresh, ingenuous girl cloaked in a mature body—a passionate nymphet long fettered by culturally induced inhibition coupled with ignorance of your sexual nature: chains more restrictive than any with which I'll ever bind you."

Thrilled to behold fierce possessiveness animate the fluidly mobile face, Gabrielle conceded bleakly, "I tried to cast off the inhibitions my ultraconservative parents instilled in me, Michael, but I never encountered a man able to dispel to any significant degree my ignorance of erotic

techniques...until now.”

“Mm. So you wish to learn erotic technique?”

“Yes! I want to make *you* melt!”

A laugh devoid of the slightest sardonic overtone erupted from the man tickled by that wholly artless and manifestly truthful statement. Sobering, he warned, “Gear your mind to accept whatever demand I lay on you, without analyzing my motive in so doing, little wood nymph. Drive out any thought other than that of submitting, of obeying, of subordinating your will to mine.”

“I exist for your pleasure,” Gabrielle murmured dreamily, as her palm idly traced patterns on a chest sporting a light thatch of fine brown hair plastered now against misted skin.

Hands of iron shifted her, arching her body backwards across their owner’s thighs, so that her hair dipped into the turbulence, and her breasts thrust upwards. Strong fingers squeezed her nipples, making that tender flesh smart and burn even as it hardened. Changing focus, the hands slid sensuously down her body to her groin. Fingers toyed with the submerged clit while others thrust deeply inside the cunt that loosened at the first touch of those hands.

All too soon for the woman savoring her sensations, the teasing ceased. Gathering her supine body into corded arms, Michael bore her out of the sunken bath, and briskly toweled her dry.

Borne to the chamber featuring kitchenette and bed, Gabrielle positioned herself at the table without waiting for any order. When her master produced the teaser, she watched him add a new feature: a crescent-shaped cup arranged so that the lower rim of the vertical wheel passed through lubricant poured into the receptacle. Thrusting apart her pussy-lips, he inserted the top rim of the wheel between them, and set it rotating.

“I want you hyperconscious of your clit,” he informed her, circling the table so as to face her. “The lubrication will enhance the tactile stimulation enough to allow you to skim from one mild peak to another, while intensifying your longing to have my cock drive into your cunt. You’ll gain practice in forcing your mind onto the exacting task I set you, and off the carnal need tormenting you. You’ll uphold your end of the conversation I initiate during every meal, however distracting you find the teasing I’ll require that you endure.”

Flustered both by that peremptory order and the sensations exceedingly difficult to ignore, Gabrielle in a burst of clarity saw herself as if viewed by a ghostly, impartial observer: standing stark naked, her legs spread wide, her engorged clit relentlessly stimulated by an outlandish device while she strove to form a vivacious dinner-partner for a nude history buff amazingly well versed in one facet at least, of her area of professional expertise. Resentment stirred, but swiftly died as she succumbed to the magnetic, irresistibly appealing force of the smile this debonair sadist bestowed on her as he again drew her into discussion of topics that he well knew, fascinated her.

Beguiled into active participation in the discussion, Gabrielle nonetheless experienced considerable difficulty in keeping her mind focused on the conversation her master initiated while they dined. Launching into a discussion of the pivotal battles in 1462 during which the Wallachian tyrant Vlad the Impaler dealt the Turkish Conqueror of Constantinople the most humiliating defeat of Sultan Mehmed II’s otherwise highly successful military career, Michael pointed out that during that desperate struggle, Vlad Dracula shrewdly utilized techniques learned from John Hunyadi, an avid student of military strategy.

“That’s true,” the historian agreed even as her attention divided. For a span of seconds, her

eyes went remote as the teaser lifted her to climax. Feeling herself flush, she forced her attention back onto the conversation. Spiritedly, she added, “Nonetheless, Hunyadi didn’t originate the idea of using armed battle wagons the way modern field commanders use tanks, or of chaining the wagons to each other to form a fort. He learned those highly effective techniques from the Hussite Bohemians.” The flush lingered: rosy color that Michael well knew, owed nothing whatsoever to any emotion generated by fifteenth century military strategy.

Concealing his inner mirth, the man proud of his noble Hungarian lineage replied blandly, “Early on, Hunyadi learned from Filippo Visconti to wage war like an Italian condottiere—studied the newest techniques from any professional war-leader willing to take him on as an apprentice. Fighting skill—personal valor—characterized a good many national leaders in those days. Even Vlad Dracula, as bloodthirsty a mass murderer as he was, commands one’s admiration in that respect.”

A delicately bowed lip curled, as the historian retorted, “My horror at Vlad the Impaler’s fiendish cruelty—his rabid lust for torturing and killing—so far outweighs any tendency to admire his accomplishments, that I’ve always found it extremely hard to assess his short, blood-drenched reign fairly, when writing about Wallachian history.”

Inclining his head, Michael drawled in patent amusement, “How refreshing to encounter an American who doesn’t connect the patronymic Dracula exclusively with vampires!”

Even as the rippling laugh evoked by that observation died away, the telltale abstraction again stole over the piquant face of the scholar. By the time she again stood in the required stance, pink-cheeked, awaiting her master’s pleasure, she did indeed experience frustration: a poignant longing to be fucked in her cunt by this autocratic master able to wield such rigorous control over his own lust.

His tawny eyes purposeful, Michael fingered her slippery clit. “Hot and needy, eh, little voluptuary?” he drawled. “Well, so am I. You’re about to gain much-needed practice in arousing me with your hands, your lips, your tongue, your pendulous breasts, and your stiff little ornament. When I recline on the bed, you’ll kneel astride my hips. You’ll then tongue my nipples, lick the full expanse of my chest, and rock your pendulous breasts, so that the nipples stroke me. You’ll tongue my navel. Periodically, I’ll issue you new instructions, which you’ll obey instantly.

“Work at pleasing me, slave. If you anger me by clumsiness, or shrink from obeying an order, you’ll spend the night strung between the bedposts, your mound fitted with a shield, your nipples with rings, and your cunt with a whip-shaft equipped with a pendulum.” Pausing only to take a bottle of clear, viscous lubricant from a drawer in the nightstand, Michael disposed his lean body in the center of the huge bed. Curtly, he ordered, “Begin.”

Chilled by the threat, Gabrielle knelt as directed. Bending forward, she strove to obey those relatively innocuous commands to the letter. As her erect nipples plowed the fine, scant hair thatching a hard-muscled chest, her heart raced, and her cunt gushed jism. Having repeatedly tongued, licked, and kissed Michael’s nipples, she sought to thrust from mind her own hot need.

As she probed her master’s navel with her tongue, he ordered, “Sit back now, and listen.” When she complied, he commanded, “When I finish issuing orders, you’ll rise off me. When I turn so as to lie prone, you’ll lick my ass-cheeks, and then my cleft, down its full length. You’ll repeatedly, forcefully, thrust your tongue into my anus. You’ll then lubricate your fingers, insert the middle finger into my ass, and grease its interior. You’ll use your middle three fingers to

massage my slippery hole while simultaneously fondling my balls with your other hand, until I tell you to stop.”

Shocked to her core, the inexperienced widow all but gasped aloud, but she managed to maintain her composure. Dismounting from the hips of the man who now lazily rolled over to lie face down on the luxuriantly soft surface of the bed, she knelt between the legs spread to accommodate her ministrations. Bending down, she licked her master’s ass-cheeks until they glistened. Flogging her shrinking self into complying with the demand that appalled her, Gabrielle spread his cleft. Gamely, she licked him along its length, and probed his puckered brown orifice with her tongue.

She found that not so repulsive a chore as she had feared. His skin smelled of soap, and tasted salty. Having forcefully penetrated his anus until she felt sure that he must be satisfied with her effort, she tentatively inserted a finger moistened with lubricant. Feeling his sphincter relax, facilitating its entry, she thrust three fingers in to their fullest extent.

The groan, patently expressive of pleasure, that escaped the recipient of her caress stimulated her to massage him vigorously as he raised his rump, enabling her to cup his balls in her other hand, and gently knead the eggs within the sac. Michael groaned again, provoking in the slave striving desperately to please him, an upsurge of quintessentially feminine pride in having wrung that positive response from a worldly sensualist.

At length, Michael ordered her to desist. Rolling onto his back, he raked her with narrowed eyes, noting no evidence of perturbation, let alone resentment. “You’ll now reach beneath me and knead my ass-cheeks while licking my balls, which you’ll then take into your mouth. You’ll tease them with your tongue, and suck on the sac. Finally, you’ll rub your dripping clit on my groin, without daring to allow my cock to enter your cunt, while you hold your upper body off me with your arms.”

Her own need now excruciating, Gabrielle nonetheless obeyed. Thrusting her hands beneath him, she kneaded his buttocks while licking the hairy scrotum over its entire surface. Straining her mouth painfully wide, she took the tender flesh fully. Gagging, she strove to still the reflex, but found it all but impossible to move her tongue, or to create suction. Fear mounted as she abandoned that technique, her jaws aching. To compensate for what she perceived as failure to satisfy, she licked Michael’s balls again, while holding his thighs apart with her hands.

Changing position, she rubbed the cunt awash in her essence against his groin, allowing the lush lubrication to seep out on his skin. As she slid forward and back on the slippery area, poised on stiff arms and hands laid flat on the mattress, her pendulous breasts swayed enticingly in the sight of the man lying totally passive, regarding her with eyes brimming with malicious amusement.

“Hot and unsatisfied, eh, little cat in heat?” he taunted her, enjoying the pressure of her slippery crotch against his stiff member.

“I want only to please you,” his slave protested meekly, even as her eyes nakedly betrayed rabid desire.

“Kneel between my legs. Take my prick in your hands, and lick it over its entire length.”

Marveling at this man’s ability to control what she suspected must be an all but irresistible urge to ejaculate, Gabrielle obeyed. For a span of time that seemed to stretch into infinity to the

woman tormented by lust, but passed with surreal swiftness in the perception of the master delighting in the delicate touch of his slave's hot, moist tongue, she licked his stiff cock.

At length, he repaired the omission made earlier: offered explicit, sardonic instruction. "Your oral stimulation of my prick's inept—lacks variety, slave. Take my tool in your mouth. Probe the tip, and suck me hard. Move your head in long, sweeping strokes so as to offer me the delicious stimulation I crave. Take my cock fully, pushing against me until the head penetrates deeply. Relax the muscles that govern swallowing, so that you'll avoid gagging as the head rams the back of your throat. Stimulate me thus until I come in your mouth."

As the realization drove home that he once again intended to pleasure himself while denying her the satisfaction of taking his cock where she so longed to enfold it, Gabrielle blinked back tears of frustration. Avoiding the egregious mistake of letting them roll down her cheeks unhindered, she ignored the need tormenting her. That necessity grew easier to accept as Michael's threat belatedly rose to mind, sending chills cascading down her spine.

Taking his rigid cock in her mouth, she probed the tip, provoking the ejection of little squirts of pungent juice. Sucking until her jaws ached, she desisted, and commenced to provide the long, sweeping strokes that her master demanded, gagging each time the head struck the back of her throat.

"Relax, and that won't happen!" came the sharp rebuke.

A film of moisture blurred the vision of the slave frenziedly striving to prevent any triggering of the reflex that so angered the partner using her for his pleasure while offering her no stimulation whatsoever: pain or pleasure. Succeeding to a degree that forestalled his barking any new reproof, she ignored the fatigue afflicting the mouth stretched so wide for so long, and offered the stimulus he savored as exquisite, until, relenting at last, he relaxed his superb control over his passion. Deliberately, he shot his load on his slave's tongue, forcing her to sense its expulsion, and assess its flavor.

Swallowing convulsively, Gabrielle ingested the essence as relief washed over her. Having seduced her master into coming, she judged that she must have avoided incurring the threatened punishment. Her disappointment ebbed as she contemplated a night spent snuggled against his lean, hard body in this palatial bed.

Having taken the time to savor the rush of pleasure slowly subsiding, Michael commanded, "Rise up and stand in the submissive attitude on the floor, taking care not to let your thighs touch each other, or your hands touch any part of your body while you exit the bed."

Shock gave way to an onslaught of dire fear that he considered her performance substandard. Silently, the slave obeyed, her heart hammering. Her burgeoning panic registered on the man who himself got out of bed, and pulled open the lower drawer of the nightstand.

As his trembling possession eyed him silently but beseechingly, he fastened a thick leather collar around her neck. "Hold out your hands," he bade her curtly. When she thrust them forward, he reached for a pair of lined fetters sporting short lengths of chain. Those restraints he locked around her wrists.

Convulsively obeying a new order to raise her manacled hands above her head, Gabrielle stood still as if carved of stone while her master snapped the two dangling chains to rings on opposite sides of the collar, thereby forcing her to keep her wrists in the air. Dropping to one knee,

he attached a fetter to each ankle. A sharp metallic sound assaulted the ear of his possession as he opened a tubular, telescoping spreader to its full length, before linking an end to each restraint. Rising, he surveyed the woman whose expressive face nakedly mirrored fear.

“You pleased me well enough to avoid a pain-filled night,” he informed her equably, noting the moisture dribbling down her thighs. “I’ll therefore condescend to allow you to sleep on the mat. Those restraints will prevent your masturbating in the dark, or even rubbing your wet thighs together. You’ll drift towards sleep hot and unsatisfied, which will afford you excellent practice in focusing solely on your status as my property. You’ll dwell on the concept still fuzzy in your understanding: you exist solely for my pleasure, not your own. If I hear any sobs, or whimpers, or sighs, or moans, little cat in heat, I’ll cancel your reprieve—stretch you between the posts, and enjoy the sight of your lovely, pain-racked, writhing body as I lie in comfort.”

Relief at her escape from the threatened torment blended with bitter disappointment in the naked, pinioned slave unceremoniously deposited on the mat. Laid supine, her legs held wide apart by the rigid spreader, her elbows bent, her hands chained to the collar, and thus forced to remain in close proximity to her head, she blinked back salty drops. The warmth of the air prevented any discomfort owing to the lack of a coverlet, but her cunt quivered with fierce need. Fear shriveled the tears burning behind her eyes. Rendered almost afraid to breathe, she watched her master switch off the overhead light prior to reentering the bed. Enveloped in blackness akin to that of the vastness between the stars, she sought to adjust to the change.

Realizing that he just deliberately forced her to focus on his pleasure at the expense of her own need, Gabrielle confronted the core demand he levied. He owns you! she chided her alter ego. You belong to him—body and mind! Get accustomed to harsh reality. He’ll use you simply as a vessel in which to get relief of his urges, if he so pleases! Wipe your mind of this painful yearning for his cock in your cunt. Michael knows exactly what you’re thinking. Your face betrays you, and very likely, so does your treacherous, unsatisfied body. If you don’t expect sensual satisfaction, it’ll come as a pleasant surprise—if and when he deigns to confer pleasure on you!

He most definitely knows how. Frustration reminiscent of that caused by Richard’s dysfunction in no way seemed the same to Michael’s slave. Recalling the moments of pleasure achieved while in the throes of agony, Gabrielle yearned all the more desperately to complete this probationary period successfully. Her master’s magnetic, irresistibly winning smile floated disembodied in her inner vision. A sense of acceptance of her owner’s dominance, of abdication of her own selfhood, possessed her as a progression of shivers caused her sphincters to loosen of themselves. Even as she rededicated herself as Michael’s possession, the aching emptiness in her cunt impinged on her awareness, persisting until sleep finally claimed her.

Roused by a crisp command that she wake, the pinioned chattel raised leaden lids. Instantly, she grew painfully conscious of stiffness from the rigidity of the posture unchanged during the night. Fatigue made its presence known, prompting her to wonder what hour this was. Early, she concluded.

Thrusting his arms under her, Michael lifted her to her feet, and freed her of the restraints, even to the collar. “Relieve yourself,” he commanded.

Grateful at least that he cast no glance in her direction, but busied himself in preparing breakfast, Gabrielle sought to abide by her resolution of the night before: to stifle frustration, and please her cruel master so thoroughly as to prompt him to relieve the still-sharp need in the body

tantalized by what limited pleasure it recently enjoyed at his hands, into wanting far more.

At breakfast, he employed the cilia-lined wheel without providing the delicious lubrication, making certain that the stimulus kept his slave aware of her need without satisfying it. Making full use of his power to fascinate, he beguiled her into spirited conversation. Consciously, he employed his melodic voice to charm her, to captivate her, to seduce her into displaying the vibrant warmth that so enthralled him.

When the meal ended, he served on a small crystal dish, two familiar pills. “Wise precaution, your replacing the hormones your body no longer manufactures,” he remarked serenely. “Not only will you avoid your bones’ turning brittle, and other complications, but you’ll also retain your strong sexual drive, and preserve your potent sensual appeal.”

Reflecting that her strong sexual drive at present served mainly to torment her, Gabrielle nonetheless nodded. “I work extremely hard at keeping in shape,” she assured him. “So easy for an author/researcher to grow sedentary—shirk aerobic exercise!”

Smiling at his chattel over the rim of a cup of fragrant coffee, Michael observed blandly, “A dedicated sensualist knows the value of keeping his or her body in top physical shape.”

That double-edged remark failed to generate the faintest apprehension in the slave enjoying this interval of pleasant conversation.

Borne across the chamber featuring the X-shaped block, Gabrielle heard her master issue the verbal directive that caused a portal to open, revealing a cavernous chamber far bigger than any hitherto used by the man bearing her into its interior. In the center reposed a carved oaken armchair. Nearby, the novice beheld a rectangular, leather-sheathed, solid block approximately three feet in height, nine in length, and three in width. Beyond that stood a cart covered by a sable cloth, a three-legged stool, and a stand on which reposed a basin, towels, and a large pitcher. At six points equidistant from each other—points located two-thirds of the distance out from the center of the circular chamber—the wary viewer spied stations featuring apparatus of which she caught only a fleeting glance as Michael bore her to the center of the wide expanse of floor.

Setting his burden on her feet, he watched her automatically assume the posture required of her. “For what do you exist?” he demanded, his tawny eyes chillingly purposeful.

“For your pleasure,” came the reply so ingrained in the slave now that she uttered it without conscious thought.

“You face a crucial test of your willingness to subordinate your will to mine, little probationer,” he informed her, the timbre of his voice setting her nerve-endings curling. “The demands I’ll lay on you this morning will push you to the limit of your ability to withstand physical stress. At no time, however, will you be forced to participate in the exercises. If you cease striving—stalk away from the apparatus in hot ire—your action will signify that you wish your initiation to end: a wish I’ll lose no time in granting. If you keep on striving, but fail to meet a required goal, you’ll present yourself for punishment, and bear without flinching, the pain I inflict. So. Do you willingly consent to undergo this severe, prolonged test?”

Fear arising from dismay at the rigor of the demand instantly transmuted into even greater fear of being rejected by this man exerting so powerful a fascination. “Yes— most willingly!” she assured him with adamant force.

Gratified by her vehemence, Michael asserted evenly, “If and when you hear the raucous

buzzer announcing that you failed to satisfy a requirement, you'll voluntarily present yourself for punishment, which I'll then inflict. You'll now assume the posture you'll maintain while enduring any punishment you earn. Lie on your back on the block, with your ass-cheeks resting at the edge."

Fearfully, Gabrielle obeyed, the knot constricting her gut grown hard as stone.

"Bend your knees, reach around and beneath them, and pull your legs towards you as far as they'll go. At the same time, extend your elbows outwards, and spread your legs as wide as they'll go. Hold your legs raised and spread thus until I order you to rise from the block."

Stricken with acute dismay, Gabrielle yet complied without evincing the slightest hesitation. Her back curved slightly, as the knees drew up, and the legs spread apart. Exquisitely conscious that her entire array of private parts—clit, pussy-lips, cunt-opening, and anus—lay exposed to the scrutiny of the master examining her exposed crotch minutely, she flushed hotly. Trembling, she wondered exactly what punishment he would inflict. Will he whip just my *clit*? Horror rendered her faint.

"You'll assume that posture without waiting for any command, as soon as you know you'll be required to do so," she heard him order in a tone edged with menace. "You'll hold it afterwards, until I tell you to rise. So. You just dined, and you spent a night confined to one position. Your muscles need time to adjust to strenuous activity, so as to avoid injury. I'll therefore provide you a warm-up period more pleasurable than otherwise, but make no mistake—the rigor will steadily increase, thereafter." Sweeping up the woman desperately bracing herself to endure whatever harsh demand he laid on her, Michael bore her to one of the six stations, and set her on her feet, facing the apparatus.

Hastily, Gabrielle assumed the submissive position while riveting nervous doe-eyes to the contraption that she saw to be the stylized torso of a horse, mounted on an ingenious base obviously designed to mimic the various up-and-down motions a rider of a real horse would experience, even though the simulation provided no actual forward motion. From the contours on its back, which resembled an English saddle, rose a purple dildo: a highly flexible, compressible shaft. Stirrups hung from straps attached to rings. The set lacked straps mimicking reins, but two elastic tethers ending in stirrup-shaped handholds dangled above it.

Michael inquired blandly, "Do you know how to ride a horse?"

Wary of verbal traps, Gabrielle qualified her answer. "I rode often as a child, but I haven't mounted a horse since graduating from high school."

"Ahhh—so you know how to post to a trot, and sit to a lope, eh?"

"Yes."

"Then this exercise will cause you no undue stress. That purple dildo will keep you aware of your need, but most likely fail to provide relief, given that the more skilled an equestrienne you are, the less stimulation the cock will provide. Posting to prevent you from bouncing as your steed trots, will nonetheless serve to lift and settle your body rhythmically on the cock, which will monitor the squeezes you'll give it. You'll continue riding until the chime sounds. You'll grasp the rings, not for support, but for balance. If you fail to squeeze constantly during the time I allot for this exercise, the buzzer will sound, prompting you to dispose yourself on the block, and await punishment."

Sure of her ability to remember to squeeze, Gabrielle stepped on the stirrup from the left side,

as was proper, and swung astride the stylized solid steed sheathed in smooth black leather. Gingerly sinking onto the purple shaft, she raised her arms, only to find the handholds out of reach. As she watched, they descended until she could grasp them. The elastic stretched a trifle, but exerted noticeable tension on her arms. Judging that the handholds would keep an inexperienced, wildly bouncing rider from falling off, she nonetheless savored profound relief that she knew how to sit a horse.

The mount began a slow trot, which grew choppy as the pace increased. Falling into a familiar rhythm, Gabrielle posted: rose as the saddle did, to a point slightly above its surface, only to sink back to sit flat on its surface at the low point of the up-and-down motion. The dildo lubricated with her ample essence vibrated soundlessly as her cunt repeatedly rose upwards, and then descended. Far from experiencing fatigue, she derived keen enjoyment from the “ride” bringing back pleasant memories. When the trot lengthened, she sat the horse with easy grace, her expert posting serving to maximize the effect of the vibration.

Watching with patent amusement, Michael conceded that the motion chosen for its ability to fluster a novice horsewoman, who would inevitably bounce disconcertingly and painfully until she developed the knack of posting to a trot, failed in its intent with this accomplished equestrienne. From the vantage point of his oaken chair, he gazed appreciatively at the lift and fall of the breasts drawn high by the upraised arms, and admired the shapely bare ass performing so expertly.

A quickening in the man’s loins accompanied his perusal of the remote control in his hand. The dial revealed that Gabrielle squeezed dutifully. As he watched, the evidence that she achieved an orgasm appeared. Shifting his attention to the rider, he observed the rapt absorption mirrored on the piquant face. Stifling a chuckle, he sent the steed into a lope.

The posting ceased as the gait changed. Gabrielle now sat glued to her seat, her feet turned parallel to the horse’s body, the balls of her feet in the stirrups, her heels down. That posture caused her parted legs to fit the curve of the horse’s sides, enabling her to grip with her knees. She no longer moved in the inverse of penetration on the purple shaft, but rode as if part of the horse. The loping motion, far more pleasurable to a rider than the choppy trot, soothed nerves strung tightly from fear of the far greater trauma looming ahead. The shivers resulting from her hard squeezes intruded more forcefully now into her awareness, as did the vibrations pleasuring her cunt. Exquisitely conscious that her master monitored the most intimate aspect of this exercise performed in the nude under his exacting eye, Gabrielle felt her loins loosen. A vivid sense of being owned accompanied the new climax duly noted by the observer.

Entranced by her grace, Michael let the loping continue for some time, savoring the quivering in his own loins. As the chime sounded, the lope changed to a trot, to a walk, to a halt. Dismounting with practiced ease, the dually invigorated slave advanced to stand in the submissive posture before the master exulting in discovering her prowess as an equestrienne. Tipping his head to one side, he regarded her quizzically, noting the rosy flush, and the lack of any breathlessness from the exertion.

As she awaited his pleasure, he attached a golden disc to the center of her chest, above her breasts. Expecting an assault of the whip-stimulus, Gabrielle fought an urge to go tense, but no such effect occurred. “This device will monitor your heartbeat, rate of respiration, and the like,” her master informed her evenly. “It’ll warn me if your level of stress grows so severe as to pose the least danger. I’ll not allow you to suffer any harm.”

Relieved by that assurance, the probationer yet experienced a chill as the implication drove home to her: this ordeal would pose a severe challenge to her stamina. Her piquant face set into lines of fierce determination as her master swept her into his arms preparatory to initiating a crucial test of her acceptance of his dominance.

CHAPTER FIVE

Deposited on her feet facing the second station, the trainee fighting dire apprehension beheld what she recognized as a species of exercise bicycle. The banana-shaped seat, sheathed in black leather, sported a nubbly green dildo that bulged at the forward end of the base into a narrower, shorter, additional shaft. Beyond the handgrips of the device stood a pillar supporting a large, easy-to-read meter, featuring an arrow that pointed straight up against a green background. A third of the curving, colored stripe the nervous observer saw to be red. A box attached to the side of the pillar, she accurately judged to be the governing mechanism. On the top of the box reposed a remote control.

As she stood contemplating the whole, Michael commanded, "Mount the seat, and settle yourself over the cock."

Gingerly, Gabrielle straddled the device, sinking over the flexible dildo that penetrated her cunt as the shorter projection thrust against her clit.

"I levy no demand that you squeeze," came the welcome reassurance. "The cock will merely keep you reminded of your status as my love toy. You'll pedal fast enough to keep the arrow centered in the dial. The effort you'll expend to accomplish that will increase gradually but steadily. You'll pedal until you hear a signal. A chime will indicate that the exercise ends without your having earned any punishment for slacking off.

"The buzzer will automatically sound if the needle moves down into the red area. On hearing that latter signal, you'll dismount, approach the block, and dispose yourself for punishment. When it ends, you'll resume the exercise. If you keep the required pace until the chime sounds, I'll reward you by awarding you points for diligence. The cumulative number of points you earn thus, today, will decide in what posture you spend the night."

Taken aback by that final warning, goaded by rapidly escalating fear, Gabrielle began pedaling, finding the task easy. Riveting her eyes to the dial, she sought to adjust her effort so as to keep the needle upright. To her dismay, she discovered that she could not settle into a steady pace, as the force demanded of her increased slowly but continuously, rather than in discrete amounts occurring at specific intervals. Compelled to expend slightly more effort with each new up-and-down motion of her thighs and legs, the athlete perceived the insidious danger posed by the ever-so-gradual intensification of the energy required. Used to performing rote manual tasks while letting her conscious mind dwell on other matters, she struggled to keep her full attention riveted to her performance.

Grimly pedaling, alert, wary, she yet remained conscious of the teasing action of the nubbly dildo as the motions of her legs rotated her hips. The stimulation continuously obtruded itself on her notice, annoying rather than arousing her.

Symptoms of stress appeared: aching, tiredness, a stitch plaguing her side, perspiration trickling in rivulets down her forehead to sting her eye. Tormented by that latter effect, she risked wiping her brow with an arm, but found that the needle dipped ominously towards the red. Frantically, she made up the lapse, but the spurt of effort took a pronounced toll on her store of energy.

Lounging in the chair, holding the remote control, Michael surveyed the cyclist's straining thighs and pumping legs. Her breasts swayed with her movement. Her tenacity won his unqualified admiration, as did the athleticism he considered amazing for a scholarly female author who could so easily shirk daily exercise. Don't fail, little staunch-heart, he silently admonished her. Don't let rage goad you into rebellion!

Her chest heaving, her mouth dry, Gabrielle pedaled against stiff resistance. Her neck-muscles cramping, her legs leaden, her hair sodden, her body exhibiting a sheen of salty moisture, she kept up the taxing rotary motion by the sheer power of her will. Anger flared as she began to regard failure as inevitable. Tears burned behind her eyes—moisture generated as much by a sense of being unfairly pushed beyond her strength, as by the distress occasioned by the exercise. What drives Michael to do this to me? she railed in the privacy of her thoughts. I stay in top shape! He's being cruel for no good reason!

When the chime sounded, the cyclist pedaling frantically all but fainted with relief. It took her time to slow, and then to stop: a span during which that incipient wrath swiftly subsided. Dismounting with effort, she determined that she could stand and walk without falling.

Producing a basin and cloth, Michael sponged her down and towed her dry, leaving the monitor attached to her chest. Deftly, he rubbed soothing cream into the flesh of her groin and the inside of her cunt, which he judged—accurately—to be sore. That nagging source of resentment vanished as his ministrations produced almost instant relief. Lifting his limply pliant slave, he seated himself in the chair, and cradled her in his lap.

The pleasure engendered by Gabrielle's consciousness of her master's warm, bare flesh pressed against her own, allayed the uncharacteristic ire generated by the stress. Relaxing within the embrace of corded arms, the tired athlete regained all her initial determination to succeed.

Waiting until her respirations returned to normal before bearing her to the next station, Michael again silently willed her to control any anger that ignited.

This apparatus, the nervous viewer decided, must be a rowing machine. It, too, featured a dial, an arrow, and a red warning zone. From the sliding seat projected a bright yellow dildo also equipped with a shorter auxiliary shaft. As she sought to estimate how difficult this task might prove, a crisp warning impinged on her ear. "The resistance to your efforts to row will slowly increase. If the buzzer sounds, you'll advance to the block, and assume the posture for punishment. You'll otherwise row until you hear the chime. Begin."

Sinking over the garish dildo to sit grasping the truncated oars while bracing her feet against the rests, Gabrielle reflected uneasily that not only had she never rowed a boat equipped with a sliding seat, she had not rowed even a small aluminum boat since adolescence. Gamely, she pulled on the resilient, padded oar-handles. To her surprise, she discovered that the sliding of the seat rendered her able to exert more force than would be possible otherwise. The vigorous back-and-forth movement of her ass, hips, and legs rocked the now vibrating yellow shafts, enhancing their teasing effect.

The rowing action, easy at first, slowly but inexorably required the straining probationer to exert greater effort. Tired from her stint on the bicycle, she pulled grimly, working legs, hips, shoulders, arms, and chest. The second wind caught during the brief respite abruptly failed her. The specialized motions stressed muscles unused to this wholly unfamiliar form of exertion. Her neck ached; her arms hurt; her hands cramped. Losing all cognizance of how long this ordeal had

lasted, she felt the resistance grow to a magnitude she feared she could not overcome. Adrenaline surged as she strained on the oars, putting her back into the long, pulling motions, and the vigorous forward-thrusting motions.

A muscle-spasm in her upper back took on the semblance of a knife-thrust, with every pull, every push. The shafts vibrating within her cunt and against her clit, far from arousing her, sharply annoyed her. Gritting her teeth, she willed herself not to fail, even as sweat blinded her. Frantic with fear, she pulled frenziedly. By the narrowest of margins, she avoided disaster. Her chest heaved; her lungs burned. The tormenting stretch of brutal labor seemed interminable. Perspiration dripped now from the back of the rower's hair. Her chest hurt; her arms grew leaden. Her throat burned; her tongue cleaved to her dry mouth; her heart pounded. Why doesn't he sound the chime? she raged as hot wrath ignited. But he won't—he wants me to fail! Wants an excuse to inflict pain! But he doesn't need an excuse—he does that whenever he pleases! When he whips me, I grow aroused—but right now I'm totally turned off! Why won't he relent—whip me if he so desires, without making me drop from sheer exhaustion! Why? He's indulging in pointless cruelty now—nothing to do with sex—with arousal—with sensual pleasure! Nothing!

Tears of rage mingled with the sweat the rower dared not wipe away. The salty drops stung her eyes. Unaware of her danger, she slacked her pace owing to the dial's growing blurred in her vision. The needle dipped ominously. A chilling sound impinged on her ear, all but stopping her heart.

Horried, Gabrielle realized the import of the hideous din. Ceasing to row, she rose to stand motionless beside the machine, her breath coming in long, sobbing gasps, her body trembling with fatigue. The incandescent wrath subsided, extinguished by a floodtide of agonizing dismay.

You've failed a crucial test! she castigated her shrinking alter ego in near-despair. You gave way to blind anger, and failed abysmally! You can't seem to get it through your head that Michael demands absolute submission—assumes the right to use your body exactly as he pleases—for whatever reason! If you flunk your initiation, you'll never know to what heights of bliss he's capable of raising you! If he rejects you—fades out of your life—you'll die of longing for the touch of his hands...the sound of his voice! What have you done? Her heart thudding erratically, she turned, and gamely faced the punishment awaiting her.

His own heart hammering from the suspense that sorely racked him during the few seconds in which his slave stood panting beside the tread, seeming in his perception to be weighing whether or not to storm over and demand to be taken home, Michael savored fierce satisfaction as he watched her advance to the block, lay thereon, and pull her legs towards her while spreading them.

Exulting at her capitulation, he lifted a pair of whips from the cart. Activating them, he proceeded to lash the slippery cunt-opening, the wet clit, the quivering pussy-lips, the exposed anus, the thighs spread wide. As one hand fell, another raised, so that the pain seemed continuous to the woman suffering as acutely from her exquisite consciousness of having failed, as from the agony radiating through her loins. The thongs clung to the ultrasensitive flesh, cruelly tormenting the most delicate parts of her body. No sound escaped her, gasp, cry or groan: a circumstance which moved the master enjoying his infliction of the punishment, to renewed admiration of this affectionate, naturally submissive slave's raw courage.

After a seeming eon, the lashing ceased. Obediently maintaining her direly uncomfortable posture, Gabrielle waited for the command to rise. Delaying giving it, Michael stared fixedly at the

most private parts of the body so ignominiously exposed, thereby deepening the chastised athlete's sense of having failed dismally. When the order finally came, the sufferer's arms and legs ached from the unnatural strain.

Curtly commanded to resume the exercise, she began again. The machine reverted to its initial state of offering little resistance. The force required never attained its prior level by the time the chime apprised the emotionally distraught rower that she could desist. Her movements sluggish, she stepped off the seat. For a few seconds, she stood beside the mechanism, swaying from fatigue. Slowly, she advanced to assume the submissive position before her master.

Lifting his exhausted possession in corded arms, Michael sat her on the stool. Wasting no time, he sponged her down, even to the hair plastered to her forehead and neck, and rubbed her briskly with a towel. When he completed his ministrations, he again seated himself in the chair, and cradled her in his arms.

Congealing against him, Gabrielle murmured guiltily, "I'm ashamed of having failed, master...ashamed of having given in to irrational anger. I deserve a pain-filled night."

Concealing the fierce satisfaction produced by that final avowal, Michael drawled, "You face another severe test of your submissiveness, little initiate. Control your urge to give way to rage. That emotion's dangerous for you. I'll be monitoring your reactions closely. If you succeed in achieving a state of surrender to my will even as your physically stressed body cries out for relief, you'll earn extra points that will balance the lack owing to your succumbing to rage, just now. Concentrate on one, single, overriding concept. You exist for my pleasure, Gabrielle. I demand heroic effort of you."

"I won't grow angry, master, whether or not I manage to exert the effort required." That whispered assertion, breathed almost directly into his ear by the possession whose head lolled on his shoulder, and whose slack, still-stressed body melted against his, reassured to a considerable degree the autocrat conducting so rigorous a test of this utterly desirable woman's submissiveness. She's shaping so well! he congratulated himself. Critical, the accuracy of your judgment on this final lap! Employ every iota of your skill at divining her state of mind, during this crucial next phase. Make sure that you handle this emotionally fragile treasure with delicate care.

Once again depositing his belonging on her feet with her back to the apparatus, Michael lifted the cloth covering a cart, and removed an item that he displayed to the trainee standing in the submissive position. Gabrielle studied a pair of black straps joined by an elastic thong. A spherical teaser, covered with soft spines like those of the wheel, bulged the center of the thong.

Dropping to one knee, her master wrapped a strap around each of her thighs, close to its juncture with her torso, and fastened it. When he secured the second strap around her other thigh, the teaser strung on the stretched elastic thrust between her pussy-lips, and pressed against the opening of her cunt. "Take five steps forward," he commanded as he rose.

On complying, the probationer discovered that as she took a stride, the other leg lagged behind, causing the elastic thong to stretch, and press harder against her moist orifice. At the moment when she prepared to advance the other leg, the elastic drooped slightly, setting the teaser wriggling provocatively. Each step caused a repeat of the two alternating effects.

Turning at Michael's command, she beheld a long treadmill similar to those used by physicians monitoring the state of patients' hearts. The front she saw to consist of a fluorescent yellow bar supported on two uprights. Two square posts painted the same hue occupied positions a

third of the distance from the bar, on either side of the tread. A second pair of posts painted a brilliant fluorescent red marked the spot two-thirds of the distance from the bar. Two chains hung from fasteners capable of moving along parallel horizontal tracks suspended from the ceiling. The dangling chains the anxious beholder saw to be fitted on their ends with triangular handholds.

“You’ll run on the tread, while grasping the supports,” Michael informed her levelly. “You may find it awkward to run with your arms raised, but you’ll adjust as best you can. You’ll run between the yellow side-markers, gauging your position by observing your distance from the bar. If you fail to keep up the required pace, and drop back between the two red posts, the buzzer will automatically sound, and the tread will cease moving. You’ll advance to the block, and dispose your body for punishment. After its infliction, you’ll again step onto the tread, and complete the exercise. If you maintain the required position, you’ll run until the chime signals the end of the exercise. So. Begin.”

I’m exhausted! the sorely tried athlete wailed silently. Before I even start to run! But I’ve got to put out—succeed, or pass out trying! Standing between the yellow posts, she grasped the handholds dangling from the tracks that descended, allowing the supports to come into the reach of her outstretched hands.

The tread began to move, impelling her to walk at a brisk rate. The necessity of keeping her arms upraised bothered her. The teaser intruded on her notice, rendering her keenly aware of her genital area. The straps conveyed a subtle sense of being held in bondage.

The pace inexorably quickened, forcing her to jog. My cunt belongs to Michael! she reminded herself as the spiny ball wriggling between her pubic lips set moisture running down her thighs. That cognizance, added to her nudity, alone constituted a departure from her sense of normalcy, given that she jogged daily. The wholly familiar exercise exhilarated her, exactly as her usual workouts did.

The relentless teasing reawakened the longing relegated to the back of her mind during the prior stressful exercises. How much frustration must I take before Michael drives his cock up me? Acute yearning seared the runner’s consciousness, until enlightenment struck. As long as you feel frustration, he won’t! You exist for his pleasure! Take delight in suffering whatever pain he inflicts—whatever stress he causes you!

Narrowly observing the runner, Michael noted the easy grace with which she moved. Her breasts, lifted by the upward reach of her arms, failed to bounce uncomfortably. The enticing sight of her pumping ass set his loins stirring. Tawny eyes darkened with lust.

Running hard at this juncture, the woman chastened by her earlier failure generated no hot ire. Even as her chest labored, and her legs grew leaden, she acknowledged her master’s right to drive her thus cruelly. Automatically maintaining the proper distance to the bar, she achieved a euphoric endorphin high which intensified the state of exaltation produced by the total surrender of her will to the man whose power over her mind astonished her, even as her sense of being owned by him proved irresistibly seductive. Running with all the compulsive energy of a terrified doe pursued by a pack of wolves, she existed at this moment solely for Michael’s pleasure.

Perceiving no evidence of anger, the slave trainer keeping his tawny eyes riveted to the face of the mature intellectual putting out so amazing an effort, beheld the onset of rapture. Recognizing the change as evidence of unqualified acceptance of the trauma he demanded that his chattel endure, he exulted in a victory more absolute than any yet achieved. Fierce joy set his heart

galloping, his loins stirring.

With a touch on the remote in his hand, he caused the chime to sound. Reaching the side of the apparatus before it stopped, he swept the runner giddy with a combination of euphoria and exhaustion, into his arms. Bearing her boneless body to the stool, he set her thereon, supporting her with one arm as he removed the dripping teaser and sponged away the sweat pouring off her in rivulets.

Having towed her dry, he dropped into the chair, holding her against his chest. “For what do you exist?” he demanded of the woman whose will he saw to be in total abeyance.

“For your pleasure,” she murmured dreamily. “I’m your belonging, master. I’d no longer exist, apart from you.”

Overcoming the all but irresistible temptation to fuck her right on the stone-flagged floor, Michael contented himself with brushing his lips over her damp, tousled hair while savoring fierce delight in her submissiveness. At length, he rose, bore her to the last station in the chamber, and set her on her feet, noting that the interval of rest allowed her to stand without swaying.

Harboring no wish, now, other than to please her master, Gabrielle braced for new trauma, but found herself facing what she divined to be a swing. The seat, a rectangular frame composed of two slim, leather-sheathed rods ten inches apart, she saw to be held rigidly parallel by two stout, triangular end-pieces. Flat straps hung from one of the rods. Long chains attached to the apexes of the triangles supporting the seat—chains that depended from iron rings affixed to the vaulted stone ceiling.

Just as the realization dawned that no luridly colored dildo rose from the seat, she heard a crisp command to spread her legs wide.

His tawny eyes brimful of mischief, Michael lifted an item from a cart. Dropping to one knee in front of the woman eyeing him in puzzlement, he offered the device for her inspection: two silver balls, each an inch in diameter, joined by a short elastic tether, and featuring a longer, inelastic cord which dangled from one of the pair.

After issuing a crisp order that she relax, he spread her wet pussy-lips, and inserted the first sphere into the cunt still awash in her essence. Having thrust the object deep inside, he sent the second after it. With gentle pressure from a finger, he coaxed both balls to recede as far up her love-tunnel as they would go. The cord attached to the second sphere dangled now between Gabrielle’s legs.

The melodious voice seemed an aural caress as Michael drawled, “Ancient device, this—no invention of mine, little braveheart. A smaller, massive ball rolls freely inside the outer of the two hollow spheres occupying so snug a retreat. As you swing, the motion of the enclosed mass will gently rock the outer sphere, which will constantly nudge the inner sphere against your cervix. The vibrations transmitted outwards affect your entire feminine center. You’ll experience intense, rolling orgasms guaranteed to delight you.”

Titillated by his insertion of the teasers, Gabrielle rejoiced in the reprieve from traumatic striving, accurately judging that swinging on a device modeled on those which provided wondrous enjoyment during her childhood ought not to stress her unduly.

“One ball’s modified to serve as a monitor,” her master informed her. “You’ll relax as you swing, and let the spheres perform their function. If you fail to climax during the time I allow for

this exercise, you'll cease swinging at the sound of the buzzer, advance to the block, and dispose your body for punishment. The chime won't sound until you achieve three peaks of pleasure. When you hear it, you'll stop swinging, suck my cock until I'm hard, and then position yourself on your hands and knees on the block, with your rear towards me. I'll fuck you in the ass until you afford me relief. So. Swing vigorously, soaring as high as you can go."

Fleeting disappointment at his again disdaining to shoot his load in her cunt dissolved in the still-operative euphoria of submission. Seating herself on the parallel bars, Gabrielle waited while Michael fastened the straps around her thighs. "Grasp the chains where you find a hold comfortable," he instructed.

When she quickly complied, he snapped fetters to her wrists, and linked them to the chains. Wondering at his seeing any need to bind her to so innocuous an apparatus, she yet refrained from even so much as resting a quizzical glance on him. Obeying his order to begin, she began to swing, exerting herself to attain the required height.

Finding the motion utterly pleasurable, the athlete swiftly discovered that the long chains allowed the seat to sweep through a wide arc. Swooping downwards from the stasis achieved at the highest point, plunging with ever-increasing speed into the lowest point of the parabolic path before soaring again to a new giddy height, Gabrielle exerted herself to reach the loftiest altitude possible, no whit disconcerted by her cognizance that the design of the seat offered her master a most enticing view of her cunt, her clit, and her round, plump ass.

Mindful of her exposure, Michael positioned the chair so as to gain the best vantage point from which to observe.

Arching her back, working her hips, maintaining her soaring flight, Gabrielle grew exquisitely conscious of the sensations caused by the balls. No teaser encountered thus far matched these paired spheres in erotic impact. She felt as if some invisible ravisher rode her body as the swing bore her along the wide arc of its path. Unaware of uttering a sound, she groaned aloud. Her face rapt, she swung in a daze, as wave after wave of delicious sensation impinged on a consciousness narrowing its focus the better to appreciate the overpowering effect.

The sight of her rocking bottom, her thrusting hips, her breasts lifting and dropping with each arching motion of her back, entranced the watcher. Scanning the remote control in his hand, he noted that the swinger achieved the task set her, far in advance of the time he intended to allow. Elated, he made no move to sound the chime.

Lounging in the oaken chair, Michael let the deliciously arousing sight riveting his eyes stimulate him into hardness. Not for the first time, he reflected that Gabrielle's persona did indeed seem that of an eternally young, vivacious girl trapped within a mature body. Musingly, he acknowledged that her trim, shapely body belied its age.

Satisfaction set him smiling to himself. Gabrielle's emerged from the change of life with her femininity unscathed, her ardor undiminished, and her sexual potential as high as before, if artificially maintained, he exulted. Her mind's mellow, mature, original; her personality's winning. In manner she's sprightly, courteous, not in the least abrasive, and wholly lacking in arrogance—despite her formidable erudition. She's a lady to her core. The girls of today don't know the meaning of the term, used as I just employed it. Perfect, my enthusiastic, little-girl swinger. Perfect!

Enveloped in a luminous cloud of euphoria, the object of his ruminations swung on and on.

Her mind detached from the flesh so deliciously pleased, letting slip its control of the body soaring through the air—rushing downwards, and swooping upwards. Giddy with rapture, the swinger ceased actively to exert herself. Her body went slack. She would have fallen, but for the straps securing her thighs, and the links holding her fettered wrists to the swing-supports. Her awareness diminished, she gained a sense of being held in strong arms—of being deliciously ravished by some winged being as he flew away with her.

The instant he beheld that ominous slackening of the body hitherto eagerly swinging, Michael sounded the chime three times in succession. Watching like the proverbial hawk, he saw that the sound galvanized the woman slipping into a state of near-trance, into coming back to herself. The plunging motions slowed, and eventually stopped.

Her eyes pools of contentment, her lips parted, Gabrielle sat motionless, firmly fastened to the seat. As her consciousness of her whereabouts flooded back, she shook her head in wonder, feeling as if she had ascended to Olympus, and been gang-fucked in the cunt by a host of horny pagan deities.

Stifling an almost irrepressible impulse to laugh aloud, the man who had monitored her reactions freed her of the restraints, hauled her to her feet, and ordered her to spread her legs. Tugging on the cord, he caught the slippery balls that popped out one by one into his cupped hand. “You’ve enlarged your experience of skimming from one delicate peak to the next,” he observed blandly, concealing inner hilarity. “Your mental circuitry very nearly shorted out on that round. So. Suck me, before kneeling on the block so as to present your ass to me.”

That command brought the blissful swinger swiftly back to earth. Dropping to her knees, she took her master’s cock fully into her warm, wet mouth, and sucked as if to pull out his stiff prick by the roots.

Her long, swift motions of her head, her hard sucking, her manifest wish to please, deeply aroused the sensualist who found this charming, sensitive submissive a delight to be savored like a choice, well-aged vintage—sipped appreciatively, not gulped. Michael knew better than to indulge to excess in wine. Smiling to himself, he reflected as passion mounted that his regimen suited the exacting challenge this utterly desirable slave represented. I’ve annihilated her will without breaking her spirit, he exulted, but a final, exacting challenge still lies ahead. Gauging with exactitude his nearness to climax, he ordered the probationer to cease her efforts, and mount the block.

Unhesitatingly, Gabrielle positioned herself on hands and knees, her ass-cheeks exposed to the rigid cock about to invade the anus unused to such penetration. Mindful of a prior reproof, she determined not to earn one now. As her master laved his fully engorged tool with lubricant, she relaxed the sphincter as she spread her thighs.

Standing between the legs angling outwards, while exerting a powerful grip on shapely hips, Michael thrust deeply, but not forcefully, into the anus he exultantly perceived to have opened to him. Owing to the lushness of the lubricant, no pain afflicted his inexperienced partner as he thrust rhythmically into her tight ass.

Relieved to find penetration by her master’s amply endowed manhood painless, the neophyte experienced a surge of potent arousal. When a hand reached around her to knead her erect, slippery clit, a soft sigh of delight escaped the slave shocked at the intensity of the pleasure engendered by the dual stimuli. “Fuck my ass harder,” she cried softly. “Oh, that’s so good, do it faster, ohhh,

tease my clit, that's right, don't stop, ohhh, keep playing with me, yes, oh yes, I'll come for you, master, ohhhh, I love your prick in my ass!"

Controlling to perfection the course of his passion, Michael held himself in until he knew his softly squealing slave's orgasm to be imminent. His own need now excruciating, he again grasped both of her hips, and thrust faster. Her cry drowned out his groan as the pair achieved simultaneous fulfillment.

Michael stood erect, still, his pelvis pressed against firm white ass-cheeks, his tawny eyes glittering, his chest heaving. When he withdrew, he left his panting love toy kneeling motionless on the block for a considerable time, exulting in his power to refrain from scooping her up and indulging his yearning for the delectable taste of her tongue.

Borne to the dining/bedchamber, Gabrielle stretched like a well-fed cat as her master selected a teaser. When he positioned over her clit a soft nest lined with tiny flexible stems, each topped with a solid, minuscule sphere, a short rounded projection similar in texture thrust between her pussy-lips. The whole commenced to vibrate noiselessly, sending waves of pleasure coursing along nerves hypersensitive to such exotic stimulation. Her piquant face mirrored both the pleasure thus engendered, and relief at having—she supposed—passed the tests of her ability to tolerate physical stress inflicted solely for her master's pleasure.

Seated across from his dinner-partner, enjoying his lunch, Michael again forced her to concentrate on upholding her end of a spirited conversation. Amusement brimmed, sparked by her inability to govern her face as the stimulation produced pauses in her discussion of the superbly effective methods used by the Turks to train janissaries.

At the conclusion of the meal, as his companion stood in the submissive position, Michael stored the teaser. Dropping to one knee, he fingered his slave's dripping clit. Meditatively, he observed, "The ability of a woman to experience multiple orgasms constitutes a learned reflex. The triggering of that reflex occurs with ever greater ease, if she's repeatedly, relentlessly stimulated. This afternoon, I'll enlarge your experience of sensual pleasure, little hedonist—hone your reflexes to a hair-trigger sensitivity."

Swept up in hard-muscled arms, Gabrielle reflected resentfully that for over a decade now, attaining a single orgasm during a sexual encounter with Richard constituted a passionately desired but woefully elusive goal. Fear burgeoned as she contemplated the effect Michael's rejecting her would produce on her scarred, fragile psyche—fear that generated fierce determination to complete this initiation successfully.

CHAPTER SIX

Borne in strong arms into the center of a chamber new to her—a cavernous space as huge as that where she spent the morning—Gabrielle darted a few hasty glances about this new arena where some exotic new experience awaited her. Staring straight ahead, she studied a huge cylindrical block lying on its side, determining that its diameter exceeded her height, and its horizontal length exceeded its diameter. The surface sheathed entirely in black leather she saw to possess noticeable irregularities: a few shallow depressions, and slight local modifications of the overall steep curvature. A pair of short, stout elastic tethers tipped with fetters dangled from rings located high up on the curved surface. A second pair reposed on the flagging, their ends affixed to points just above floor-level.

From a vertical slot about six inches long—a narrow aperture which conformed to the steep curvature of the convex surface—a slender, jet-black, blunt-tipped shaft protruded, at approximately the same height as the crotch of the woman nervously contemplating the dildo that she saw to be encased in a clear, transparent sheath. Moisture gleamed upon the outer surface, as though the clear membrane sweated, but the sleek black inner surface remained dry. A three-legged stool reposed on the stone flagging, close to the huge support forcefully impacting her imagination.

Wrenching her eyes away, she observed other, more familiar furnishings: a king-sized bed possessing neither headboard nor footboard, cables ending in chains and fetters hanging from the ceiling, a cart covered with a black cloth. At a distance, she beheld an unenclosed bathing cavity in the stone floor, flanked by an overhead tee and a pillar featuring a showerhead.

“Face me,” Michael ordered.

Standing with her back to the monstrous cylindrical block, the probationer fronted him, her liquid eyes nakedly betraying fear.

“You’re about to suffer pain that will loosen your loins, melt your bowels, and open you wide to receive my cock where you’ve yearned to take it—in your hot, wet cunt. During this exercise, you won’t be required to fetter your body with your mind. You’re to concentrate on exploring and investigating your sensations—on letting the stimuli arouse and excite you. This experience will forever alter your perception of the sexual act.”

As the slave digested a promise as enticing as it was unsettling, her master commanded, “Reach behind you, and spread the crack of your ass.” When the recipient of that unnerving order obeyed, he grasped her arm, and forced her to back up until she felt the blunt shaft press against her cleft. “Stand absolutely still,” came the stern warning.

Dropping to one knee, Michael made certain adjustments, which resulted in the dildo’s targeting his slave’s anus. After lubricating her rear passage with a finger dripping viscous liquid, he ordered her to move back until the head of the shaft barely penetrated.

Obeying, Gabrielle gamely opened her ass, and allowed the tip of the inanimate object to enter the space ringed by her sphincter.

Having inspected the fit, her owner squatted, facing the slave standing still as if sculpted of ice. Expecting him to assess the wetness of her clit, she awaited the touch of his fingers, but no

such examination occurred. Of a sudden he grasped her hips, and with a single, forceful movement, impaled her ass upon the black shaft, which penetrated to its full length as he thrust her torso against the side of the cylinder.

“Ohhhh...!” That gasping shriek prompted by shock rather than pain, produced a black frown. “I’m sorry, master,” came the abject apology.

“Scream one more time, and I’ll gag you!” Michael grated.

Grasping her right wrist with his left hand, he pressed on her chest with the other. As her back arched to conform to the steeply convex shape of the cylinder, he thrust her arm outwards and upwards, and manacled the wrist to the surface. Swiftly, he fastened the other in like fashion. When he stepped back, her weight rested on the balls of feet barely touching the floor.

Michael next shackled each ankle to the short elastic tether situated close to where the convex surface met the flagging. Satisfied, he rose, leaving his slave stretched tautly supine on the outwardly-curving surface, her back arched, her legs spread cruelly wide, her feet making no contact with the floor, her breasts thrust outward, her ass filled by the black, sheathed shaft. Her head rested in a slight depression flanked by small rings, tilted backwards, so that the juncture of the curving wall with the vaulted ceiling filled her field of vision.

Craning her neck forward so as to determine what her master intended, Gabrielle saw him mount the stool he set before the cylinder. Leaning forward, he blindfolded her before tipping her chin back. She heard him snap the sides of the blindfold to small rings affixed to the surface of the cylinder. A brief essay at moving revealed that she could no longer raise her head.

Unable now to see, she tremulously awaited whatever pain he planned to inflict, primed to accept it, and determined to enjoy it. Seconds later, the whip-stimulus radiated through her anus. That sensation, originating in the clear sheathing, gained in intensity as the lubricant rendered the electrostatic contact unusually firm. The inner shaft now slowly retracted, while the outer cleaved to the walls of her rear passage. Before the intruding object withdrew completely, it again thrust slowly forward. New penetrations and retreats occurred with no pause, no change in the rhythm.

A whip-shaft penetrated her cunt, sending new waves of pain radiating through her groin: agony intensified by the tug of a pendulum. No need existed for her master to set the plumb bob swinging. The motion of the shaft thrusting and withdrawing within her anal passage kept the dense mass in constant motion. Biting back a groan, she sought to accept the torment.

“So,” she heard her owner say. “Yield to the pain, little sybarite. Let the knot in your gut relax.” A palm pressed her abdomen, gauging the tension. Electrified by the touch of her master’s hand, the slave let muscles instinctively drawn tight, slacken as she yielded mentally as well as physically.

Lying pressed against the cylinder, her loins enveloped in pain, Gabrielle sought to handle the intensity of the dual sensations. The slow thrusting movement stirred her to lust. Practiced now at separating the subtle pleasure integral to the electronic stimulation from the more potent pain, she discovered that the thrusting cock conferred distinct pleasure, in concert with the pain. Just as she concluded that she actually did welcome the intense stimuli, Michael brought dual sets of whip-thongs down on her outthrust breasts.

The ensuing agony all but forced a new cry from the probationer who bit her lip, stifling the dangerous impulse. “Let the pain dominate you, slave,” came the bewitchingly persuasive

injunction. “Enjoy your task of affording me exquisite pleasure. Dwell on the sublime joy you’ll experience when my rock-hard cock drives into your cunt. Reflect on what purpose you now serve!”

The melodic voice thrilled along nerves grown exquisitely sensitive to its nuances: cadences that compelled, beguiled, enticed, commanded, caressed. Unable to move, to writhe, or even to arch her back any higher than its already painful curvature, Gabrielle perforce dwelled exclusively on her sensations. The lash repeatedly descended on breasts, flanks, abdomen, thighs, and clit, driving her not to hot rage, but to fierce arousal. I belong to Michael! she acknowledged in the innermost reaches of a mind programmed now to accept whatever he did to her pinioned, pain-racked, pleasure-titillated body. Master, fuck me in my cunt, she implored wordlessly. Possess me utterly!

As if in response to her unspoken plea, the whipping ceased. The whip-shaft withdrew from the passage awash in her essence, but the smooth black dildo went on thrusting into her ass.

Michael’s male organ, hard as sun-warmed marble, now drove into the site vacated to accommodate it. Timing his penetrations with precision, he thrust while the anal invader receded, and withdrew while it advanced. That slow dance intoxicated the immobilized slave reacting to agony as if it were erotic foreplay. He’s doing it! she exulted. Fucking me where I’ve so longed to take him! Pleasuring me—not forcing me to work myself on him!

“Ohhh...master...diddle me...do me...jam that big rod right into my womb,” she breathed without realizing that she broke the rule enjoining silence. “Feel me squeeze? Feel me milk your cock—wring you dry? Squeeze you like a grape? Oh, come in me, juice me, hose me, shoot me a big, hot load!”

That breathy stream of artless exhortations delighted rather than angered the man they aroused on a visceral level. Even as the pleader uttered that final adjuration, a moist tongue teased each rock-hard nipple in turn. Its owner’s stiff prick maintained the rhythmic penetrations as he playfully pinched the tiny protuberances between his teeth, and nibbled enticingly. His tongue circled them, licked them. His lips closed on them, and created delicious suction.

Changing tactics, he pinched them hard enough to make them burn, rolled them between thumb and forefinger, pulled them so that they elongated. Holding them fast, he jiggled the breasts while squeezing the tingling nubbins forcefully. Letting go, he kneaded each outthrust breast, palpitated the soft flesh, sucked the stiff nipples with renewed vigor.

“Oh, yes, master, yes—suck my tits—nuzzle my boobs—nurse off my titties!” As the gasping, twittering slave’s pleasure mounted in discrete waves, spurts of her jism bathed the human cock. As her respirations grew harder, quicker, Michael kissed her throat, her shoulders, her breasts. The torment generated by the black shaft transmuted into a tantalizing stimulus which accentuated Gabrielle’s pleasure, driving her to squeeze on the invading human organ repeatedly.

Her will suspended, the neophyte surrendered to the pain, to the pleasure, to the master of erotic art making himself free of her arched, intensely stimulated body. Awash in bliss, she experienced the gathering, the heat, the ecstatic shivers signifying imminent culmination. Michael’s juice erupted into his enraptured possession’s inner space at the same moment that she achieved an orgasm mind-shattering in its intensity.

The still-shackled woman passing into near-trance lay for a time, drifting in rarified ether. A hoarse question couched in an imperious tone roused her. “To whom do you belong, Gabrielle?”

Caught up in euphoria, conquered, impregnated, owned, she breathed, “To you, master. Now and forever!”

Fierce pride, regal possessiveness, suffused the autocrat reveling in his dominance, even as he prepared to intensify his hold over this utterly desirable woman.

Unable to see, the slave enveloped in the warm afterglow of fulfillment caught no hint of the silent approach of a crescent-shaped pillar fitted on its convex side with a black, clear-sheathed, sweating shaft identical to that still stimulating her ass. This dildo equipped with an extra feature, her master adjusted so that it penetrated her cunt. When the new intrusive object set the whip-pain coursing through her feminine depth, the now utterly submissive slave welcomed the agony for the pleasure she knew her bearing it conferred on the man inflicting it.

No tug of a pendulum intensified her sensations. This pseudocock thrust rhythmically, in perfect synchrony with that driving into her ass, exactly as Michael’s had done. A will in abeyance surrendered anew to this new onslaught of pain all but indistinguishable now from deliciously erotic pleasure.

The immobilized sensualist grew aware of an insistent pressure on the clit awash in the essence of her master’s passion. The attendant feature, a soft concave cap lined with cilia and equipped with a central bulge, parted her pussy-lips even as it covered both her clit and those tender flaps of flesh. The cap began to vibrate, sending delicious impulses racing along nerves simultaneously forced to transmit pain.

As if with intent to surfeit his slave on exotic stimulation, Michael now mounted the stool. To the surface next to Gabrielle’s breasts, he affixed two curving rods, the bases of which adhered to the leather sheathing. Deftly, he adjusted the cluster of thongs tipped with flat, soft tabs so that the tips brushed rock-hard nipples still rosy from his squeezes. As her chest rose and fell with her respirations, the flat-tipped thongs swayed, vibrating the pink flesh. The teasing never stopped.

From the vantage point of the stool, Michael surveyed the visage half-hidden behind the blindfold—a piquant face that he regarded as lovely in its vibrancy. Cocking his head, he smiled in potent satisfaction. “When a man comes, he’s done for a time,” he informed his chattel equably. “But a woman can skim from peak to peak almost indefinitely, so long as she’s properly stimulated. You’re going to spend a delicious interval with your loins unceasingly worked between two tireless, nonhuman lovers, Gabrielle. You’ll drift down from the heights, only to rise again. You’ll learn an advanced lesson in savoring the pain for the enhancing effect it exerts on your pleasure. Your thighs will burn, your juices flow, your loins loosen, your bowels melt. You’ll lie like a sacrifice on an altar, being groomed and readied by your two attendants before being offered once again for your master’s pleasure. You’ll ascend to a pinnacle of ecstasy wholly unprecedented in your experience, and emerge from that state forever changed.”

The startled hearer sensed that he departed, though the soundless door failed to confirm her assumption. Shrouded in silence, she stared into darkness, relentlessly, rhythmically stimulated at four ultrasensitive sites. Enveloped in pain so intense as to class as agony, she reveled in having at last been actively fucked in her cunt by the master who owned her, body and mind.

Awash in dreamy contemplation of her status as Michael’s possession, she lost the power to dwell on any other reality but the unceasing, powerful sensations dominating her awareness. The tactile stimulus provided by the smooth leather against which she lay went unheeded, feeble in comparison to the pleasure-pain, the endless dual thrusting, the vibration pulsing through her erect,

full clit. Swiftly, she rose to orgasm, shuddering with delight.

The two monstrous entities, mindless, bodiless, went on kneading her pelvis: palpitating her, rocking her, unceasingly working her loins. Given no respite, she skimmed to a new peak. Rosy, delicately bowed lips parted; her rate of respiration rocketed. Shuddering with exquisite pleasure, she breathed through her mouth in long, sobbing inhalations, as she engaged in a silent monologue. Oh, I can't take this. It's too intense, too...ohhh, I'm creaming again! Don't...no...yes, oh yes, knead me, fuck me, ready me for my master...don't stop...ohhh...

As the stimulation relentlessly continued, Gabrielle's seat of rational thought fragmented until her mind verged on chaos. Her entire existence seemed centered in her sexual organs. Unaware of any part of her body but her ass, her cunt, her quivering clit, her rock-hard nipples, she ceased to think coherently. As she rose to a new peak, the pleasure-pain took on the aspect of an utterly absorbing sensual titillation to which she yielded utterly. Her mind detached from the reality of her place, her time. She existed only in the specific sites dominating her awareness. As she slid from peak to trough, she faded in and out of trance before rising to a new height of ecstatic bliss unparalleled in her experience.

Time hung in stasis. Gabrielle floated in a timeless now, her psyche a formless embodiment of rapture. Michael's image rose in her fevered vision. Fragments of his final words drifted through her diminished consciousness. Slave. Sacrifice on an altar. Groomed...readied for your master's pleasure. Only half conscious, she yet hung onto her cognizance that Michael desired her—wanted her. Her loins indeed loosened. When he returned to find her quivering in the grip of a new, infinitely satisfying orgasm, he judged that his assessment of the effect this experience would produce on her will fell exactly on the mark.

As in a dream, the trainee felt the intrusive shaft withdraw from her feminine depth, moments before the teasers ceased brushing her nipples. The anal stimulation continued. Michael's stiff pole penetrated her slippery orifice, and the kneading of her loins began anew. Her master sucked her nipples, pulled them, pinched them, squeezed them between thumb and middle finger, tickled them, licked them. His hands palpitated the forward-thrusting breasts, cupping the soft flesh while he tongued the nipples. His palms caressed his immobilized slave's armpits, and stroked the flesh over her ribs. Controlling his hard erection, he willed her to climax a final time. When her slippery cunt at length contracted repeatedly around his tool, he ejected his seed in forceful spurts. Achieving rapturous fulfillment in his turn, he lay panting, gasping, groaning against her arched torso.

Barely conscious, Gabrielle floated in a nebulous parallel universe.

Descending from the heights, Michael observed her lethargic state. His glittering eyes fiercely possessive, he pinched both nipples cruelly. When she failed to respond, he slapped each breast with stinging force. Having thus roused her from torpor, he demanded, "Who is your master, Gabrielle?"

"You are. You...and only you...forever." That barely audible, gratifyingly qualified response to his insistent query intoxicated him.

The human organ slid out of the enfolding cunt, trailed by a gush of mingled, pungent emissions. The robotic shaft ceased moving. The vibrations halted; the pain died away. Having removed the blindfold and loosed the bonds, Michael carried the inert body of his satiated slave to the bed.

Dimly conscious of being gathered into a close embrace, Gabrielle melted against the lean torso of the man holding her. Existing within a luminous fog of euphoria induced by that surreally protracted series of intense culminations, she yet savored the warmth, the closeness, the tactile sensation of her bare flesh pressed against her master's skin. Her surrender total, abject, programmed by some command-center deep in her brain, she knew herself his possession.

Relaxing his grip, Michael moved her so that she lay with her upper back supported by his arm as he reclined half on his side. Her head lolled back, exposing the white column of her throat. He felt her to be pliable as boneless warm gel. Idly, he toyed with a nipple. The rosy tip remained soft, slack. Darkly fringed lids veiled the liquid eyes; delicately bowed lips parted slightly. His possession seemed scarcely to breathe. Casting a penetrating glance over her inert body, he exulted in his consciousness of having annihilated the will of this supremely desirable partner. More for his pleasure than for her benefit, he let her rest for a generous span of time.

At length, he lifted her, sat on the side of the bed, and cradled her still-limp body in his arms. Raising her almost into a sitting position, he ordered, "Look at me, Gabrielle."

The recipient of that imperious command opened unfocused eyes, and stirred only a trifle. Closing heavy lids, she slumped against the chest of the man holding her, murmuring an inarticulate soft phrase that he took to be a refusal to obey.

Rising, Michael bore her to the shallow concavity fitted with the drain. Standing her in the center, he raised both of her arms, and placed her hands over a tee. Holding her hands clamped around the horizontal bar, he delivered a stinging slap to her ass. "Wake up!" he commanded with regal vehemence. "Grasp the tee, and don't dare to let go!"

The icy anger suffusing his voice served better than did the painful slap to rouse the torpid inebriate drunk on sensual pleasure. Her hands closed convulsively on the metal. Confused as to her whereabouts, she thought herself in the bath-chamber. Awaiting a soaping, she stood with eyes half-closed, no whit averse to receiving the ministrations she expected.

A barrage of icy water, painfully forceful, impacted her body. Taken wholly unawares, she let out a yelp. Warned on some subliminal level not to let go at any cost, she clung to the tee, shivering uncontrollably as the frigid spray played over every surface of her shrinking flesh. The arctic shower setting her teeth chattering jolted her out of her torpor.

Michael towed her dry, rubbing her roughly all over. "Woke you right up, didn't I?" he taunted sardonically. "Only my realization that your lethargy bordered on unconsciousness prompts me to overlook your disobeying my command."

Shocked into total wakefulness, Gabrielle gasped, "I'm sorry, master! What command did you...I'm sorry!"

Divining that he likely erred in judging her deliberately disobedient, won to admiration of her refusal to defend herself, he felt his hot wrath ebb. "Stay awake!" he adjured her sternly, prompting her to murmur meekly, "Yes, master."

Sweeping his now warily alert slave into corded arms, Michael carried her to the dining chamber. Abjectly eager to propitiate him, she hastened to position herself, mindful that he might well decide to shackle her pain-racked body to the bedposts, if she annoyed him further.

Her placatory effort succeeded in smoothing the frown from his mobile face. Selecting a teaser that seemed to his chattel identical to that employed during lunch—a soft nest lined with

tiny, flexible protrusions that enfolded her clit as a rounded knob sporting similar texture thrust between her pussy-lips—he activated it.

This device, she discovered, sweated lubricant as it vibrated. Wave after wave of pleasurable impulses coursed anew along nerves excruciatingly sensitized by a myriad multiple orgasms. Thus deliciously caressed, Gabrielle barely managed to sustain a coherent dialogue during the meal.

Deliberately dawdling over his final cup of fragrant green tea, her master smiled into dark, doe-like eyes gone suddenly remote, dreamy. Grown aware of the knowing look, Gabrielle flushed hotly.

Standing with legs spread, waiting for him to finish his chores as the teaser fulfilled its purpose, the scholar found it difficult to recall the daily routine pursued during her former life, so pale did that unexciting existence seem by comparison to her present circumstances. Recalling the aridity of her sexual life—the ignorance and inhibition characterizing what limited pleasure Richard managed to give her—she grew exquisitely aware that she now craved far stronger stimulation.

How did Michael learn what he knows? she wondered. Through experimentation? From experienced, worldly female sensualists? Did some male friend—some senior master of erotic art—teach him skills that he then honed on women he seduced as easily as he did me? Did he then tire of them...as he eventually will, of me?

That latter supposition—one that she considered highly likely—sent agony lancing through her mind. On some gut level she resented the notion of being one of many. A poignant longing to discover that her unfathomable lover found her unique in his experience assailed her. Bleakly, she chided her alter ego, denouncing that idea as wholly untenable. Unable to fathom why his current choice fell on a widow of forty-nine instead of a voluptuous nymphet in her twenties, or an exotic beauty such as the women he escorted to the company dinners, she generated a nagging fear that he might simply tell her that she failed her initiation, and use that excuse to vanish out of her life.

As her master detached and stored the teaser, Gabrielle struggled with burgeoning desolation as well as fear. If Michael loses all interest in me, she reasoned despairingly, I'll never again experience the raw, hot lust, violently induced, that he so skillfully arouses, and so totally satisfies! I'll suffer continually from frustration worse than any Richard caused!

Fear originating in some libidinous depth in the widow's psyche combined with a desperate yearning to spend the rest of her life as Michael's slave—fear that flayed her newly healed perception of herself as desirable, and damaged the self-esteem rendered so fragile by her prior relationship.

A few minutes later, Michael raked with imperious eyes the nervous probationer standing in the submissive position before him. "At this moment, slave, you've scored points enough to avoid a pain-filled night, but you face a final test of your willingness to please. Last night you learned techniques for arousing me, and satisfying me, but you performed them by rote, methodically checking off each new move on a mental list stored in your mind.

"Tonight you'll develop the fire I demand in a partner. You'll offer yourself wantonly and enticingly, while using all you've learned to make me come. If your performance fails to turn me on to a sufficient degree, I'll order you to assume the posture for punishment on the bed, and whip your clit and cunt until the pleasure that activity generates renders me rock-hard. After I've satisfied myself, I'll suspend you between the bedposts. So act the temptress, Gabrielle."

Having issued that ultimatum, Michael reclined supine on the sheet.

Her mind churning, the widowed intellectual exquisitely conscious that prior to offering herself as a slave to this demanding master, she knew pitifully little regarding the fine points of erotic art, sought to seize on a mental strategy which would allow her to grow suddenly brazen—to take the lead, not with an equally inept partner like Richard, but with this sadist whose lofty standards of excellence she feared she lacked the skill to meet. Seduce him into wanting to make love to you—to fuck you in your cunt! Gabrielle urged her flustered alter self.

Having thus hastily conceived a battle-plan, she cast into the void what lingering shreds of inhibition still survived. Concentrating single-mindedly on conveying to this exacting master that she hungered for the touch of his hands, his tongue, his cock, she rose to the occasion with verve, with grace, with utter abandon, and embarked upon her first attempt at seduction.

Reclining beside the lover she ardently desired, her hips touching his ribs, her left arm encircling the thigh of his bent left leg, she took his flaccid cock in her mouth. Teasing the head with her tongue, she probed its tiny orifice. Feeling his prick stiffen, she took him more fully, and sucked hard, gratified by his gasp of pleasure.

Changing focus, she licked his balls. Thrusting her fingers into her cunt to lubricate them, she again reached around his thigh, and thrust a wet finger into his anus. Diligently, she massaged his back passage while continuing to lick his hairy scrotum, heartened by hearing him groan.

Taking him once more in her mouth, she advanced her head until the head of his cock rammed against the back of her throat. Managing to relax muscles still untrustworthy, she avoided gagging. Again and again, she treated him to long, swift, pleasurable strokes gliding the full length of his tool. To her intense satisfaction, he groaned again.

Having roused him to hardness, she desisted, and straddled his hips. Sinking gracefully over his stiff prick while facing him, her knees bent, her body upright, her back arched so that her breasts lifted, her arms raised, and her hands clasped behind her head, she rose and fell rhythmically on his hard pole. Sphincters adept now at offering the delicious stimulus to an invading cock, squeezed and released in synchrony with her rising-falling motion, rousing her passive partner to hot lust.

“I love your stiff prick,” she murmured, her face rapt. “My cunt exists to take your cock, whenever you deign to fuck me!”

“Hot and tight, your pussy,” came the amused response.

Galvanized by the commendation into redoubling her efforts, Gabrielle rotated her hips around the organ penetrating her cunt, without alternating the tempo of the squeezing, or shifting the position of her hands. Breasts uplifted by the posture of her arms swayed provocatively as her hips gyrated. Sinuously, voluptuously, she generated exquisite sensations in the supine partner riveting eyes dark with passion on her vividly joyous, vibrantly alive face. In his perception, she brought to mind the beguiling grace of a premier ballerina, rather than the blatant sexiness of a film star.

“Melt for me, master. Get ready to shoot your load into whatever part of me you condescend to fill!”

The full breasts so seductively displayed, and the swiveling hips performing that intoxicating dance competed for Michael’s attention. His pulse-rate quickened. Mastering himself, he

controlled his erection with ease generated by long practice in delaying his own gratification so as to prolong the joy of dalliance. Eyes darkened with desire grew hooded by half-lowered lids. "Nice, little rose-petal," he murmured, setting his slave's heart fibrillating.

Driven to improvise new delights by her need to avoid any semblance of rote behavior, Gabrielle lifted her cunt off his cock. Gracefully, she remounted him with her rear to him, her knees resting on either side of his torso. Thrusting her upper body forward between his legs, she lowered herself on her forearms, her ass in the air. Raising her crotch by working her legs and hips, she rose and fell in the same rhythm as before, squeezing and releasing in synchrony with the lifting.

Entranced, Michael lay still, watching her delectable ass while savoring the delicious shivers racing back and forth deep within his gut. At length, she lifted her dripping cunt off his slippery cock, and backed her ass towards him so as to take his prick between pendulous breasts. Pressing that soft flesh around the organ thus enfolded, while moving her torso so as to let the slippery tool slide back and forth within the pseudo-orifice thus created, she rejoiced to hear her master sigh with satisfaction.

Rigorously resisting the temptation assailing him, Michael refrained from pulling her hips down and licking the clit so temptingly exposed between her outthrust thighs. Instead, he limited himself to passive enjoyment of her wholly admirable efforts to rouse him to elemental lust.

Lifting first one leg and then the other over his torso, Gabrielle turned so that she again faced him, and once again sank over his stiff cock. Extending her legs backwards, she lay prone, thrusting forcefully against his groin with her pelvis as she worked her hips with intent to lift him to a new height of rapture. Pressing her palms against the bed, she straightened her arms, thereby supporting her upper body. Her pendulous breasts now swayed against her partner's torso, full in his view, as her rock-hard nipples rubbed against the fine hair thatching his chest.

At length, she dropped on him. Without ceasing the thrusting motions of her pelvis, or the rhythmic squeezing of his cock, she kissed his throat, his shoulder, his nipples.

Tormented by excruciating need, she yet raised her head, and queried breathlessly, "Shall I deny myself the privilege of coming with your prick in me, master? Suck it instead, until you shoot your load in my mouth?"

"No, little love toy." Exulting at her putting his wishes above her own, Michael abandoned his passive role, pressing down hard with his palms on the small of his slave's back while thrusting upwards with savage force. Grown aware that the lushly lubricated orifice contracted around him in convulsive orgasmic shudders, he released his firm hold on himself, and expelled a voluminous stream of his juice into the lover entering the white heat of passion.

Gabrielle collapsed to lie prone on her master's chest, her inner space still enfolding his cock. Dreamily, she savored the ebbing wash of sensual pleasure.

I made him *want* to come in my cunt! she exulted. If only he'd let me snuggle against him for the night! I so long for his arms around me...so wish he'd show me affection as well as desire! But he won't, during this period of probation. I'm to think only of his pleasure. Resigned to that need, she murmured a new query. "Shall I retire to the mat, master? Or..." Belatedly cognizant of making a perhaps unwarranted assumption, she gasped, "Do you wish to inflict a pain-filled night on me?"

Fleetinglly tempted to stretch her satiated body between the bedposts simply to indulge a

sudden desire to watch her writhe in pain as he lay at his ease, Michael banished the pleasurable vision, conceding that she had earned points enough to avoid an outcome she so obviously dreaded, and did not deserve. Besides, he reminded himself, she'll need all her stamina, all her limberness, tomorrow. What she endured today will cause her muscles to stiffen, tonight—the more severely, if she sleeps on that hard mat. “You avoided spending a night thus, by your unflagging efforts to please, slave,” he informed her equably. “You'll sleep across the foot of the bed, lying at my feet like a faithful dog.”

Relief contended with a wistful longing to be held close and kissed, but no hint of disappointment crossed Gabrielle's guileless face as she whispered, “Thank you, master,” and disposed her nude, tired body as he directed. When darkness akin to that of the tomb enfolded her, she took comfort from lying close enough to him to hear the slow, steady respirations indicating that he dropped off to sleep almost as soon as his head touched the pillow.

Roused by a crisp command to rise, Gabrielle reared up on the bed. Hastily scrambling out, she grew acutely conscious not only of stiffness, but of pain in muscles stressed so unmercifully on the prior day. Obeying a curt command to relieve herself, she found that walking failed to allay the stiffness. When at length she assumed the submissive posture before the man making no move to cook breakfast, he ordered her to step onto the mat, and proceeded to bark instructions for performing a series of stretching exercises that served to relax to a marked degree muscles plagued by spasms. After twenty minutes spent thus, the sufferer discovered that the pain receded as her body limbered.

Sweeping her up into corded arms, Michael bore her to the bath, where he instructed her to grasp the tee. Having treated her to an intimate, thorough scrub, he ordered her to bathe him. The ritual completed, he swept her into his arms, and carried her into the hot bath for a ten-minute soak. When he again stood her in the concavity, and bade her grasp the tee, she failed to notice that he adjusted the shower-spray before directing it at her. “Don't let go,” he commanded.

Nowise expecting what occurred, Gabrielle managed to stifle a screech as a barrage of cold water that seemed icy to her, impacted her body. Hanging on, she cringed as the frigid deluge played over skin that shivered, and then shuddered visibly. For a full two minutes, her master forced her to endure the icy shower, but when he at last briskly towed her dry, she discovered that she felt invigorated, as well as free of any lingering stiffness.

“Better, eh?” he inquired blandly.

“Much better,” she admitted, smiling into eyes brimful of amusement.

Sweeping her up, Michael bore her to the table. Dropping to one knee, he mounted the slender cylinder between her legs. She felt the intrusion of a soft, flexible, lushly lubricated shaft, which commenced a languid, ceaseless thrusting as she ate the hearty breakfast he served, and engaged in discussion of the tactics employed by Sultan Mehmed II that enabled him to achieve a feat long considered impossible: breach the walls of Constantinople, and conquer that formerly impregnable stronghold.

Waving her fork for emphasis, the historian used it to punctuate a spirited tale. “At the Saint Romanus gate, a giant janissary—a warrior named Hassan—became the first Turkish attacker to set a foot atop the wall of the besieged city,” she informed her listener. “But at the very instant he achieved the renown he craved—won himself a pashalik—he fell, mortally wounded, amid a hail of handgun fire, cross-bow quarrels, and arrows. Hassan died a hero of the Empire, having

rendered famous the name given him in the Corps. The name deriving from his Christian parentage passed early in his career, into obscurity.”

As she concluded her tale, she noted that Michael regarded her purposefully. He listened intently, but at the same time he seemed to contemplate whatever aspect of her initiation would engross him at the conclusion of this meal. Shivering as she divined the implacability of that purpose, she yet rejoiced in her cognizance of having thus far succeeded in retaining her status as probationer. The imminence of another rigorous test of her willingness to please set her nerves tingling, and her adrenaline flowing, even as the moist shaft lifted her to a mild but delicious climax.

When she again stood submissively awaiting his pleasure, Michael impaled her with merciless eyes. “At no point prior to now, have I offered you any choices, Gabrielle,” he observed evenly. “You’ve learned to submit, to obey, to subordinate your will completely to mine. You’ll continue to do both, but today you’ll be required to make a choice: one that determines which of two possible courses your training will now take. The end result will be the same in either case, but the route to that end will depend on your response.”

Mystified by that unexpected announcement, the slave direly afraid of failing some crucial test shivered anew under the imperious glance fixed on her.

“Your first choice is this. You’ll be blindfolded, and taken to a small chamber devoid of any furniture but a toilet. You’ll be seated thereon. Your arms will be raised, and chained to a support above your head. Your legs will be spread wide; your ankles will be shackled to rings on the floor. Under the ball of one foot will rest a control. Pressing it will allow you to flush the toilet. On leaning far forward, you’ll find you can close your mouth over a straw issuing from a water bottle suspended from above.

“You’ll be able to satisfy your basic bodily needs, but you’ll be prevented from touching yourself. You’ll suffer no pain, but neither will you experience any pleasure. Your sensory system will record only the tactile sensations provided by the toilet seat, the shackles, and the floor. You’ll spend the bulk of today sitting thus, in silence, in darkness, in solitude, forced to assess the level of importance you assign to intense, powerful sensation when ranking the various components of sensual pleasure.”

Mystified as she contemplated that option, Gabrielle listened, scarcely breathing.

“Your second choice is this. You’ll consent to be subjected to three successive whippings—protracted sessions, each more rigorous than the last. You’ll assume a different posture for each. The agony I inflict on you won’t constitute punishment, nor will it serve to enhance or reinforce any sensual pleasure. You’ll be offered no pleasure, except for that ghostly echo inherent in the whip-stimulus. You’ll suffer solely because I desire you to suffer. You’ll not only accept the pain—you’ll surrender to it absolutely, Gabrielle. You’ll let it master you to the point where you enjoy it.”

Raking the novice with feral eyes that seemed to her to scorch her skin, Michael watched hers nakedly betray fear. Of a sudden, his mobile face melted into the magnetic, beguiling smile that she lacked the power to resist. “But this crucial test of your willingness to offer yourself unreservedly to a demanding master won’t end there, little braveheart. Should you manage to complete the third session without incurring my anger, I’ll bear you to the bed. I’ll then proceed to use my every art to confer exquisite pleasure on you—treat you to a long, slow, delicious ascent to

ecstasy in my arms, using my tongue, my teeth, my lips, my hands, and the cock grown rock-hard during the prior activity.

“No pain will accompany the intoxicating pleasure you’ll experience. I’ll even bestow the tenderness you crave—the affection you want so badly.” Amusement wholly unmixed with malice infused the melodious voice as the keen observer beheld his slave’s lips part in astonishment. “I’ll give you thirty seconds in which to weigh the choices open to you.”

Shock radiated through the hearer. Astounded at the intensity of the raw lust incited by that final promise, she yet hesitated, daunted by the price exacted. Conditioned now to expect constant stimulation of all sorts—fear, pain, pleasure, and violent physical exertion—she shrank from the idea of spending a day in isolation, darkness, and inactivity. Heart pounding, mouth dry, she focused on the central facet of this initiation she so desperately wished to complete successfully: she existed now for this man’s pleasure.

Yield to his demand! she adjured her shrinking other self. You achieve rapture when you surrender unconditionally! However intense the agony, you’ll take no harm, and if you balk at offering Michael what he demands today, he’ll likely terminate your apprenticeship—reject you! Vanish without a trace! You’ll spend the rest of your life hating yourself for denying him what he asks of you now! Don’t throw away all you’ve gained. Standing with legs spread wide, arms raised, hands clasped behind her head, she melted as she contemplated the rapture attainable through submission. When the mesmeric voice demanded, “Choose, Gabrielle. Will you opt for solitude, or stimulation?” she replied hoarsely, “Stimulation.”

Fierce exultation gripped the man controlling his face to perfection. “So. You’ve passed the point of merely accepting pain. You’ve achieved the mental state where you welcome it for the pleasure it affords your master. Strive during this infliction of it, to enjoy it as well for its power to loosen your loins, open your cunt, set your juice flowing, and annihilate your will, little rosebud.” Lifting her, he smiled down into a face suffused now with the calm engendered by perfect submissiveness as he swept his possession into his arms.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Lying limply in the strong arms of her master, Gabrielle experienced no regret, but fear tempered the euphoric calm attending her consenting to endure so daunting a degree of agony solely for his pleasure. Melting against him, she nonetheless acknowledged that no real choice confronted her—that life without him now constituted a far more terrifying prospect than could any agony he might desire to inflict. When he gave the command that opened a door, she took no notice of which one he entered. Keeping her eyes closed, she willed herself not to falter in her resolve—not to scream, or writhe, or otherwise rebel, so as not to fail this crucial test of her submissiveness.

When her captor at length set her on her feet, she again beheld the huge horizontal cylinder upon which she had been stretched while two nonhuman shafts worked her loins. Staring in momentary puzzlement, she realized that she gazed upon the opposite side of the massive object from that on which she had lain during that memorable experience.

No black shaft protruded here. She saw only two sets of fetters attached to heavy elastic tethers secured high up, and a low, T-shaped block positioned with the base of the T touching the spot where the curved side met the floor. That feature, obviously intended as a platform on which the whip-wielder could stand while delivering the strokes, reposed midway between the ends of the cylinder. In her fixation on the imposing sight riveting her attention, she failed to notice that two other stations occupied the space between the cylinder and the curving wall of the huge circular chamber.

Michael set her on her feet facing the first of those: a low, rectangular, leather-sheathed block, flanked by a cart covered by a cloth. Automatically assuming the submissive posture, Gabrielle stood with her back to the cylinder and her eyes downcast, nervously awaiting his commands.

“You’ve voluntarily chosen to incur the pain I inflict,” he reminded her, his melodious voice exerting hypnotic force. “You’ll endure it without offering the slightest resistance. If you squirm, or stiffen, or flinch, or whine, you’ll forfeit the pleasure perfect submission will earn you. Fetter your body with your mind, if no restraints bind you. So. Kneel, and kiss the head of my cock to signify that you voluntarily consent to undergo this first phase of this exercise.”

Sinking to her knees, the slave obeyed. Despite her agitation, the touch of her fingers and lips on the flaccid organ sent galvanic impulses shooting down her torso.

“Dispose your body on the block in the attitude you assumed yesterday for punishment. Hold that position until I order you to rise.”

Swiftly, Gabrielle obeyed, knowing what to expect, accepting both the ignominy of the posture and the agony about to engulf her. When she lay with her legs pulled back and opened wide, her clit, cunt and anus bared to the view of her master, Michael spread her pussy-lips, exposing the opening they guarded. The flaccid flaps of flesh obediently remained parted after his hand withdrew.

Lifting two whips from the cart, he extended their thongs, and activated them. He then proceeded to whip the exposed thighs, the plump ass-cheeks, and the ultratender genitals still moist from the recent teasing. As on the prior day, each device struck alternately with the other, but

the wielder slowed his pace, letting the thongs cling to the quivering flesh far longer than had been his wont. That prolonged contact intensified both the agony and its ghostly echo of pleasure.

Desperately willing herself not to cringe, not to squirm, Gabrielle concentrated on maintaining the firm grip on her legs that enabled her to hold the position. That necessity distracted her attention a trifle from the excruciating pain afflicting her most sensitive parts. Exquisitely aware that if she moved, if she so much as whimpered, she would forfeit the promised pleasure, and very likely flunk her initiation, she managed to lie still, conscious of the brooding presence of the cylinder at Michael's back.

This ordeal seemed to the tormented recipient of the lashing to be endless. Just as she grew despairingly convinced that she might fail to maintain her rigid attitude, the thongs ceased striking her quivering, shrinking flesh. Relief at succeeding blended with joy at having pleased. Moving no whit, she waited a seemingly interminable span of seconds for the command to rise. When it finally came, she rose to her feet stiffly, and a trifle unsteadily. Swaying, she stood facing her master, whose cock she saw to rear erect, solely from the pleasure inflicting the whipping afforded him.

Michael's eyes bored searchingly, pitilessly, into hers. Spying no slightest evidence of anger, he savored satisfaction. "Kneel before me, and kiss the head of my cock to signify that you voluntarily consent to undergo the second phase of this exercise," he commanded.

Sinking to her knees, Gabrielle took his erect tool in her hands, and kissed the head, astonished by the animal lust engendered in her by that fleeting contact. When she rose, conscious of the heat flooding her cunt, her master marched her to the next station.

"Drape your body face down over the frame, so that your ass centers over the support," he now bade her.

The woman tingling with apprehension even while driven by rabid desire beheld a hollow square block intended as a platform on which to stand. Within the hollow portion reposed a frame composed of triangular metal ends, connected by rigid bars welded low down on the sloping sides of the triangular supports, the bases of which rested on the stone-flagged floor. A cylindrical cross-member stretched from apex to apex of the frame: a support that Gabrielle saw to be sheathed in the omnipresent black leather.

Her heart hammering, she stepped onto the block. Leaning forward, she disposed herself so that she lay prone across the support that reminded her of a rigid black bolster, her ass in the air, and her chest, arms and head hanging down the far side of the frame. Her legs dangled helplessly from the side facing the man watching her obey his command.

Employing fetters attached to elastic tethers, Michael shackled her ankles to the triangular supports, leaving her legs spread wide. As her torso slipped backwards, she gamely gripped the underside of the support so as to avoid sliding off. Having strolled around the platform, her master drew her arms straight downward, and tethered each manacled wrist to the rigid sidebar joining the triangular supports.

The second set of elastic tethers now balanced the pull on his slave's legs, so that her rump rose again into the position the whip-wielder desired. Placing three fingers under the point of her jaw, Michael tilted her head upwards, and thrust under her jaw a light, cylindrical, sheathed rod on which he let her chin rest. Noting with satisfaction that the pressure of her head kept the rod from rolling down her arms, he snapped a short tether to the rod, passed the elastic strap over her neck,

and fastened it on the other side, thereby rendering her head immobile. That arrangement forced her to look outwards, not down, so as to make her face available for inspection should he care to observe her expression.

From the cart, Michael removed an item new in her experience. “Observe, slave,” he commanded, offering the object for her inspection.

This ominous-appearing device possessed an outsized whipstock, but it featured no blunt-tipped shaft. The shivering probationer instead beheld a flat, stiff, barely flexible extension some two feet long and four inches wide, projecting beyond the handle. Even as she watched, that portion assumed the telltale blue aura.

“This broad, stiff strap will cause considerably more pain than do the whips,” her captor informed her with his customary equanimity. “It stimulates a larger surface area, but a second factor will also operate. I’ll wield it with far more force than I do the thong-whips. Your skin will grow hot and red—sting uncomfortably from the force of the blows, while simultaneously experiencing the whip-pain. You’ll take no harm, but you’ll smart for some time afterwards. No need will exist for you to fetter your body with your mind. You’ll therefore concentrate solely on analyzing the sensations afflicting you, accepting them, and surrendering to them.”

Striding around to the far side of the platform, he raised the device bathed in the eerie blue light, and brought it down hard on his immobilized slave’s ass.

Expecting pain, Gabrielle lay unprepared for the resounding thwack impacting her ears as the wide strap landed with jarring force on her shrinking cheeks, and clung. The prolonged contact over so large an area of skin caused agony intensified by the smarting owing solely to the force of the impact. The sound assaulting her blistered nerve-endings somehow rendered the pain all the more frightening. Biting her lip, she stifled the cry almost wrenched out of her.

New blows fell, rigorously testing her ability to lie motionless while enduring severe pain so unnervingly amplified. Tears filmed her eyes, blurring her perceptions of her surroundings. The sensation took on the aspect of punishment by an authority-figure, in the mind of the mature woman whose father, on rare occasions during her childhood, had spanked her hard while holding her over his knee. Intuitively, she yielded even more abjectly to the authority of the master belaboring her upraised ass.

As Michael’s arm rose and fell with steady, unrelenting force, he watched his chattel’s buttocks grow pink, and then scarlet. Eyeing that indicator, he varied the angle of the strokes, laying the strap lengthwise, crosswise, or slanted, as the whim took him. At length he broke the rhythm: ceased delivering the blows falling now on flesh stinging from the physical impact.

Unhurriedly, he moved to the far side of the platform so as to scrutinize the face of his victim. Observing closed eyes and a jaw clenched tightly, he admonished, “Relax, slave. Welcome the pain for its ability to annihilate your will. Focus on the subtle attendant pleasure—on the ecstasy to which I’ll raise you, once you surrender to the fullest degree.” Having issued that cajoling, compelling reminder, he circled the support, and recommenced the whipping. The sharp cracks of the strap’s impact on quivering pink flesh mottled now with red blotches echoed off the convex surface of the cylinder, and reverberated with diminished volume from curving stone walls.

Forbidden to scream, forced silently to endure the torment, Gabrielle of necessity dwelled solely on her sensations. She hung limply, not even shrinking now in anticipation of each blow about to fall, but in desperation she sought to separate the ghostly pleasure from the more potent

electronic stimulus noticeably intensified by its being delivered to flesh stinging and burning from the physical impact of the strap.

Longing suffused her, to lie prone on cool black leather with Michael's palm on her smarting ass. That visualization lingered in a consciousness mainly occupied by unnerving loud cracks and blows raining down with cruel force. Lying limply, surrendering to the pain, the sufferer experienced a euphoric sense of being rendered worthy of her master's touch, his kiss, his cock in her cunt.

Abruptly, the whipping ceased. Having minutely inspected his slave's hot, smarting rear, her master judged accurately that the redness would soon fade, not deepen into purple bruises. The pain, he well knew, originated chiefly in the electronic stimulation. Having removed the shackles from the possession lying slackly across the support, he thrust a powerful arm under her waist, lifted her off the bolster, and set her on her feet.

Feeling her sway alarmingly, he supported her until the giddiness passed, noting with keen satisfaction that not a whimper passed her lips. She stood erect, her face utterly calm as she raised her arms so as to clasp her hands behind her head. Prudently, she resisted an insidious urge to clap both palms over her sore ass, knowing that her owner would class such an egregious error as outright rebellion.

His cock erect, throbbing, Michael stood for a few seconds admiring his probationer's courage, and congratulating himself that his judgment regarding her readiness for this rigorous step in her training seemed flawless. Don't fail now, little neophyte, he silently urged, willing her to generate the mindset he sought to create in her. Gripping her by the upper arms, he impaled her with amber-flecked cat's eyes, and demanded, "To whom do you belong, Gabrielle?"

"To you," came the firm reply. "I exist for your pleasure, master."

Freeing her arms, Michael commanded, "Kneel before me, and kiss my cock, to signify that you voluntarily consent to endure this third phase of the exercise."

Her rump smarting, Gabrielle obeyed, her doe-eyes seeming to the man watching like the proverbial hawk, to be pools of yearning.

"Advance to the cylinder, and mount the tee," came the crisp command. "Stand with your back against the surface."

Gabrielle obeyed, gratefully pressing the hot, sore cheeks of her behind against the cool leather.

Lifting her at the waist, Michael thrust her body back against the steeply curving surface. Holding her there with pressure from his abdomen and knee, he pinioned her wrists. Leaving her hanging by her arms, he fettered her ankles. As a final touch, he propped a curved support under her neck, forcing her head forward while rendering it immobile.

His slave now hung in almost the same attitude as on the prior day: her back painfully arched, her breasts outthrust, her arms pulled back over her head, her neck bent forward, her face held out and down so as to be fully visible. Her legs, spread painfully wide as well as drawn tightly against the convex surface, concealed nothing of her most private parts. Her pussy-lips gaped wide, exposing her engorged clit, and the cunt suffused with moisture.

Feeling hot juice trickling down her thighs, Gabrielle realized that the whipping had deeply

aroused her on some elemental level below the plane of her consciousness. Desire surged through her, inextricably mingled both with fear and longing. The tingling, stinging warmth in her rump took on an inexplicably pleasurable aspect.

“Observe, now,” came the incisive command. Riveting her eyes to the object Michael offered for inspection, she beheld a whip-shaft thicker and longer than those familiar to her. From the shaft, six round thongs emerged to hang limply. Those she saw to be a half-inch in diameter, and perhaps twenty-four inches in length. As she gazed, the lashes assumed the blue aura. Reaching for an identical device, Michael activated it also.

“The whip-strokes I’ll now deliver will cover more area,” he informed her as if offering reassurance. “The thongs will linger on your flesh.” His melodic voice an aural caress, he added, “You’ll be whipped over a wide area of your body. No distraction will draw your attention from the stimulus. The pain will loosen you, soften you, open you, ready you for my entry. Surrender to the pain, little love toy. Savor it; enjoy it. Offer yourself unreservedly, for my pleasure.”

As that last admonition, uttered in a diabolically seductive tone, impinged on her understanding, the pinioned slave’s loins quickened even as she quivered with fear.

The thongs whistled audibly as they flashed downwards to land outspread on each defenseless, projecting breast. The tendrils clinging as if hungry for contact sent pain radiating through the sufferer’s upper body. Falling into a languorous rhythm, Michael targeted breasts, ribs, abdomen, mound, thighs. A whip-stroke hissed upwards between the legs spread wide. A thong landed squarely on the tender clit, and clung, even as did two other lashes adhering to wet, quivering pussy-lips.

Her mind befogged, her will weakened by the prior whippings, Gabrielle accepted the pain that seemed now to constitute her natural state. No sound passed her lips. She lay pliant—utterly unresisting. Her loins loosened. She grew aware that her sphincter had relaxed to the fullest extent, letting the walls of her cunt slacken. Feeling herself open, she welcomed the sensation. Moisture bedewed her entire groin, and trickled down her legs. Her bowels turned to water; her body congealed against the smooth convex surface. Her breasts, each again caught in the cruel, six-taloned grip of the lash, throbbed; her nipples grew rock-hard.

The stimulation once again separated itself into pain and the echo of pleasure. Effortlessly, she concentrated on the pleasure, enhanced in this experience as much as was the pain. She began actively to welcome each new application of the lash, for the sake of that enticing fraction of the stimulus. As the euphoria induced by her surrender deepened, the pain grew indistinguishable from pleasure. A single heavy sensation dominated her awareness to the exclusion of all else. That pleasure-pain surged and ebbed repeatedly, in slow, undulating waves.

The immobilized slave felt the loosening intensify. The delicious quivering within the depths of her abdomen increased. She lay opened, spread, her cunt oozing hot, sticky essence. Her mind narrowed its focus to an insatiable craving for the entry of her master’s engorged prick. She ached for the touch of his hands, his tongue, his cock, his hard, lithe body, on the breasts, the nipples, the clit so prominent in her awareness. Her selfhood all but annihilated, she subordinated her will to that of this master who owned her. Knowing herself Michael’s possession, she welcomed the whistling blows dealt by his hand, rejoicing as they fell. Her capitulation—absolute, voluntary, ineffably liberating—equated now with ecstasy.

His delicate sensors straining to spy all but unobservable cues flashed by the face and body he

scanned with expert eyes, Michael caught the subtle intensifying of the slave's pliancy, the swelling of her clit, the lavish overflow of her essence, the minuscule changes in respiration, the dreamy exaltation overspreading the piquant, surreally euphoric face. That evidence he weighed with perfect accuracy. Determining her surrender to be total, he savored all-but-ungovernable exultation.

The whipping ceased. Through the diminished consciousness aware only of being dominated, mastered, possessed, came a mounting sense of victory: cognizance of the sudden cessation of agony, of the imminence of the fulfillment so ardently craved. Joy expanded throughout the pliant body, the yielding mind. Gabrielle grew dimly aware of hands loosening her bonds, of arms lifting her, of being crushed against a muscular chest. She slumped against her master as he bore her inert body to the bed.

Circumventing the huge cylinder, Michael laid his burden on cool leather. Its enticing scent impinged on the novice's olfactory nerves, which proved at this juncture less impaired than her other senses. Reclining beside her, he gathered her into his arms, laid his hand on a cheek of her rear, and determined that the heat had dissipated, and the hue had faded to pink.

Her longing for that exact touch satisfied, Gabrielle thrust an arm around him, and melted against his hard, lean body.

He held her thus, for a time, enjoying the tactile pleasure provided by the press of her breasts and abdomen against his skin. His hand stroked her back, her hair. Savoring his caresses, she grew aware of the strength of his rock-hard erection. Through her blissful consciousness of his warmth, his encircling arms, lanced a notion that generated regret. He'll come too soon, she fretted. My pleasure will end too quickly. Her arm tightened. She held him convulsively now, as if striving to merge her flesh with his.

Gratified that she had not drifted into sleep, Michael laid her on her back. Before she could interpret that action as rejection, he dropped prone on her, and fastened his mouth over hers. His lips enfolded the bow of hers. His gentle tugging sent a mad cascade of shivers radiating all the way to his slave's groin. His tongue probed the space between her upper lip and her teeth. Lazily, he explored her mouth. That area charted, he engulfed her tongue, sucking as if to absorb it into himself.

Gabrielle's loins melted; her cunt gaped. She clasped him with savage ardor even as her body lay slackly beneath him.

Slowly, his mouth freed hers. He kissed her cheek, the hollow of her throat. Playfully, he nibbled her earlobe. Awash in bliss, she welcomed the touch of his tongue on the soft flesh of her shoulder, on her heaving breasts. A warm, moist mouth sucked nipples gone hard as pink granite. Sliding lower, the master of erotic art tongued his chattel's navel. Strong hands massaged the flesh Michael knew to lie over her ovaries, sending pleasurable pulsations down obscure nerves.

Gabrielle lay with arms thrown back in abandon, reveling in the sensations he caused. Small, anticipatory contractions occurred in her feminine depth as she awaited impregnation.

No penetration ensued. Michael slid further backwards. Parting her thighs with his hands, he probed with his tongue each fold of flesh hooding the clit rearing erect: swollen with need. Delicious sensations raced up and down the site thus caressed. His tongue circled the ultrasensitive head of his partner's hard little ornament, generating pleasure so intense that it shaded into pain. His mouth enfolded the entire organ, and sucked, driving moans from the recipient of that

exquisite, prolonged pleasure. Soft, urgent adjurations fell on his ear: that he not stop, that he eat her pussy, suck her love-bud, tickle her stiff little cock.

Soft lips now closed on the hood, and pulled. The gasping cries impinging on Michael's ear grew incoherent. His engorged tool, forbidden by its autocratic owner to ejaculate, throbbed almost painfully. Ignoring the craving in his own loins, he concentrated on generating waves of intoxicating pleasure in the clit he so deftly caressed.

Gabrielle welcomed the gathering, the heat, the shivering, the intensification of pleasure, the gush of moisture. Her back arched. Thrusting with her slippery, swollen flesh against Michael's mouth while rubbing her crotch against his face, she came with shuddering force, moaning as the stimulation failed to slacken for that outcome. Her master's persistence prolonged her pleasure—deepened it.

Wondering confusedly if he had ejected his juice on the undeserving leather as he rose off her supine body, she felt him lift her legs so that they bent, and set the feet he planted on the sheeting, wide apart. Seating himself facing her spread thighs, he crossed his legs in such wise that his ankles touched, and his partner's legs rested across his bent knees, which lay flat against the smooth black mattress-cover. Leaning far forward, he urged, "Reach for my hands, little lotus-flower."

When her hands stretched towards his, he grasped her wrists, and pulled her to a sitting position. To her amazement, she perceived that his prick still reared stiffly. Thrusting a corded forearm under each of her bent legs, he pressed his palms against her back. Exerting prodigious strength, he lifted her body upwards, drew her forward, and set her ass-cheeks in his lap. One hand now pressed palm-down on her back, while the other inserted his still-rigid pole into her lushly lubricated feminine orifice.

Michael now clasped his partner against his chest, as her arms encircled him. Gently, languorously, he rocked her back and forth, back and forth, thrusting into her cunt in rhythm with the rocking motions.

Enfolded in arms of iron, enveloped in warmth while invaded by a cock manifestly offering pleasure rather than seeking it, Gabrielle floated within a luminous bubble of euphoria. The unimaginably erotic rocking, the slow, gentle thrusting, the close embrace, sent new waves of bliss undulating through her loins. Her head lolled on Michael's shoulder. Again she regressed back into childhood, feeling cherished, protected, soothed by a solicitous adult. Her consciousness dimmed. Aware only of her lover's body, of the bliss she enjoyed, she forgot where she was—who she was. With surreal certainty, she knew herself this man's possession. Waked again to passion, she rose effortlessly to orgasm, voicing a long, throaty cry of delight when the supreme moment arrived.

Exerting iron control developed over long years of rigorous self-discipline, Michael mounted towards climax, but he controlled its course. As his own pleasure escalated in ever-more-intense waves, he achieved an exalted state of mental rapture that drew on the energy produced by his slave's ecstasy, even as he consciously willed himself not to ejaculate. Exulting equally in his perfect mastery of himself and his domination of this utterly desirable possession, he savored his triumph.

At length, he ceased rocking. Again thrusting his arms beneath Gabrielle's legs where they bent, he lifted her upwards, and thrust her outwards, setting her ass-cheeks on the bed beyond his

crossed legs. Employing sinuous motions of his hips and pelvis, he uncrossed his legs, pivoted on his rear, and moved.

Now, he knelt on both knees behind the woman astonished by his ability to prolong her pleasure. A strong hand bent her over a corded forearm thrust across her waist in front. The hand next pressed her upper back, gently forcing her to rest her shoulders on the bed even as her outthrust elbows pressed flat against the sheet. Positioned on bent knees with her back arched, and her delectable ass in the air, Gabrielle yielded to the pressure of the hands parting her legs, and slid her knees sideways. Expecting to be penetrated in her anus, she discovered that her master's still-rock-hard cock drove deeply into her cunt from behind.

To her delight, the probationer found that the ensuing penetrations stimulated sites that responded only in this position. His hands gripping her hips, Michael thrust deeply, rhythmically, powerfully. No thought of her posture's being undignified, let alone ignominious, crossed Gabrielle's mind. Her breasts swayed. The passage stimulated in a fashion subtly different from that which occurred when she lay on her back gathered, quickened, and contracted repeatedly in a delicious culmination. A long, tremulous sigh floated out on the ambient air. "Ohhh, marvelous—absolutely unearthly!" she breathed.

Sensing the contractions gripping his shaft, Michael went on thrusting until his partner stopped arching, and ceased shuddering with delight. Withdrawing his still-hard member, he swept his arms under his chattel's legs. Gently, he flipped her onto her back. Parting her thighs, he dropped prone on her, savoring her pliancy, delighting in her ultrafeminine softness. Her swollen pussy-lips parted, exposing the quivering orifice drenched in her juice to the probing prick unerringly connecting with its target.

Michael drove deeply into this woman he dominated, possessed, and prepared to impregnate. His thrusts came faster. "Come for me, little love-slave," he urged, his voice an aural caress. "Cream for me!"

Moaning as those powerful penetrations of a cock swollen to its fullest produced intense pleasure, Gabrielle savored her master's dominance. His tenderness melted seamlessly into possessiveness reinforced by fierce ardor. Holding nothing back, she surrendered her flesh, her will, her consciousness. When the essence of Michael's passion exploded within her, and his final thrust lifted her to an orgasm shattering in its intensity, she passed into full coital trance. Her psyche detached from the body surfeited, overwhelmed, by the intensity of its sensations. Her liberated spirit rose into an intangible, formless realm where it floated in the ether, the embodiment of transcendental bliss.

Michael lay on his partner, his cheek pillowed on her breast. Rapt, fulfilled, he existed in near-trance himself. A vast contentment suffused him: emotion overlaid on a firm foundation of satisfied masculine pride. Awash in euphoria, he exulted in the success of his endeavor to mold an inexperienced, inhibited, mature woman into a voluptuously abandoned partner who craved the whip, surrendered her will to his, and rose with such ease to giddy heights of rapture in his embrace. She's perfect! he congratulated himself once again. Ripened into a peerless partner. You've one more victory to gain. You'll need to employ your golden tongue with flawless skill. Don't fail at the last, crucial second. If you do, your painstakingly erected castle will crumble ignominiously into the moat.

At length he rose off his satiated partner. His left arm slid under her shoulders to draw her

slack body against his. Cupping a breast in his right hand, he idly palpitated the nipple with a forefinger. He lay thus for the span of time it took his enraptured slave to come back to herself. Her eyes opened, to widen in wonder.

Amused by her amazement, Michael smiled down at her as he offered an explanation. “Absolute surrender to a demanding master lifts a woman into an ethereal realm of transcendental ecstasy, Gabrielle. At the moment when you achieved the total suspension of your will, you and I became one.”

The wonder deepened as the woman slowly emerging from her trance-state acknowledged the truth of his words.

His eyes danced. “It took courage to choose as you did, but the pain loosened you, opened you, inexorably encompassed your surrender. You now enjoy pain inflicted by my hand during a sexual encounter, little initiate. Desire grown insatiable drove you to choose the arduous route leading to ecstatic fulfillment in my arms.” The melodic voice gently teased; the mobile face creased into lines of patent amusement.

Exquisitely aware of the magnitude of her desire for this man—lust indeed insatiable—Gabrielle flushed rosily. Fear of rejection fleetingly reared its head, only to vanish, swept away by an onrushing tide of happiness. “I so wanted you to fuck me in my cunt—to possess me utterly,” she admitted, caressing his chest with her palm. “You make me melt, Michael. I cream just being carried in your arms. And just now...that was unbelievable—absolutely otherworldly!”

A musical laugh greeted that artless admission. “I’m not finished making love to you, little rosebud,” her master drawled, his tawny eyes roaming possessively down her body. Lifting her so that her breasts thrust upwards against his chest, he clasped her against his torso, and closed his mouth over her own.

His questing tongue turned Gabrielle’s loins to jelly, causing her to flow against him like a viscous liquid. Thrilled by her cognizance of that fierce possessiveness, she responded with new abandon as her master sucked her tongue, and probed the inner surfaces of her warm red mouth while holding her pressed against him by an encircling arm, and a hand spread palm-down on her ass. When he freed her lips, he smiled into eyes soft with remembered pleasure, and with anticipation of the delights to come.

“Lie prone on me, little voluptuary, and take my cock in your mouth. When you’ve teased me back into hardness, desist.” Gently, Michael laid her on the bed. Reclining beside her, he positioned himself with his hips next to her head.

Kneeling astride his hard torso, with her rear to him, Gabrielle dropped her chest prone on his abdomen. Eagerly, she took his flaccid cock in her mouth. Employing the artistry that now came effortlessly to her, she offered the stimulation she knew he found elementally arousing.

Gripping her thighs even as she pleased him, he pulled her rump downwards until his mouth came in contact with the cunt spread open by her outthrust legs. His moist tongue teased, probed, licked her pendulous pussy-lips, sucked her full, moist clit, and finally penetrated the cunt again awash in juice.

Roused on some primal level by a stimulus she found powerfully erotic, her excitement doubled by the dual contacts of her lover’s hard prick in her mouth and his tongue so deliciously caressing her loins, Gabrielle shivered with delight as her sphincters loosened. Recklessly, she

prolonged her ministrations to her lover's shaft, caring no whit whether or not he ejaculated into her mouth. Her awareness narrowed: focused solely on the exquisite pleasure he conferred. Thrusting with her hips, she trembled as she experienced the onset of culmination. Absorbed in her own sensations, she relaxed to an unprecedented degree the muscles triggered by the gagging reflex. When she rose to a peak, she took her master deep in her throat, and swallowed as if to consume his manhood.

A cry of pure bliss escaped the man rigorously forbidding himself to ejaculate. Once again, he achieved a state of rapture without the attendant ejection of his essence.

Both partners now lay slackly still. A sigh escaped Gabrielle as she released Michael's still-hard tool, and rested her cheek on his thigh. At length, she slid off him. Thrusting an arm across his abdomen, she snuggled close, amazed by his ability to maintain his hard erection for so long a time.

"You're a phenomenally skilled lover," she breathed in his ear.

"You turn me on, little nymphet. Lie on your back, with your legs across my hips," Michael commanded, without moving.

Obediently, Gabrielle disposed her body so that her ass-cheeks pressed against his thigh, and her legs draped across his torso. In a single, sinuous motion, he turned on his side. Sliding his hard prick into the cunt still awash in her essence, he thrust languidly, rhythmically, his deep penetrations a slow dance needing no reciprocal effort from the rapt partner reclining supine with her arms thrown back over her head. Gabrielle effortlessly skimmed to a new peak. A soft, bemused cry of delight fell on her lover's ears like the delicate ring of wind chimes.

With lithe grace, Michael withdrew his stiff cock. Moving so that he knelt before his partner's bent knees, he sat back on his calves. "Give me your hands, little orange blossom," he commanded. Grasping her wrists, he pulled her to a sitting position. Smiling into limpid eyes, he thrust an arm under each of Gabrielle's bent legs, and clasped his hands behind her. Exerting all his magnificent strength, he lifted her upwards and forward, bidding her as he did so to slide his prick into her orifice. As her hands eagerly guided his engorged pole, he held her above the slope of his thighs, and rocked her back and forth, back and forth, in a slow, infinitely erotic rhythm.

Ecstatic, Gabrielle clasped her arms around him. Low, throaty cries issued from her parted lips, sending explosive gusts of warm moist breath rippling over his skin. Still he rocked. After an interval of delight during which desire again surged though the woman congealed against his torso, he changed the rhythm. Lifting one of her legs, then the other, as he rocked her from side to side, he rotated her cunt around his stiff shaft with expert skill. Seemingly tireless strong arms bore her full weight the while, generating bemused wonder in the recipient of the exquisite sensations. Relaxing the rigid control maintained until now over his passion, Michael pumped his load into the slave who rose to ecstatic fulfillment simultaneously with him.

His consciousness diminished, the autocrat yet held the woman in his arms, in place, for a span of time unutterably sweet in his perception.

Still deep in trance, Gabrielle remained unaware that Michael thrust her outwards and down, and let her boneless body slump backwards to lie supine. Himself at a pinnacle of bliss, he harbored no consciousness of the dull ache afflicting the arms now freed of his partner's weight. Stretching out beside her, he clasped her against his chest. Awash in ineffable contentment, he floated bodiless in the void, one with his wholly mastered love-slave.

For an interminable interlude measured by a myriad seconds marching one by one into annihilation, the paired lovers lay twined, their commingled spirits existing in another dimension—a realm bathed in multicolored, brilliant luminosity.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Michael came back to himself first, to find that he clasped his still-entranced partner in his arms. Loosening his hold, he disposed her body so that she lay against him with her head on his shoulder. Tawny eyes roved slowly down the shapely torso pliable as soft gel. Her face the viewer saw to be ethereally serene. In his perception, she seemed ageless—an immortal pagan deity, infinitely desirable.

He lay thus, uncharacteristically patient, until she grew aware of her surroundings. When darkly fringed lids fluttered open, he smiled, setting his partner's heart fibrillating. "You fought your descent from the heights," he teasingly observed. "But ecstasy can't last indefinitely, little sensualist." Lifting her effortlessly into arms unstressed by the harsh demand levied on them earlier, he rose, and bore his satiated slave to the bath-chamber.

Weak from the intensity of those multiple culminations, Gabrielle savored the touch of the palms soaping her skin. Stretching with feline grace, she spread her legs so as to offer her groin to the ministrations of the bath-attendant. Stifling an urge to laugh aloud, Michael caressed her there, prolonging both her pleasure and his. When her turn came to minister to her master, she returned the favor with interest, sparking a new upwelling of mirth.

"No hot soak," she heard him announce when she finished. "You're limp as wet silk now, little sybarite." His brisk toweling braced her, banishing the worst of the weakness. Sighing resignedly, she blew his hair dry with a hand-held dryer. Bidden to sit on the stool, she massaged his inner thigh with the palm of her hand as he fluffed her wavy locks.

Her unstudied caress, absently offered, pleased him. Lifting her, he bore her to the huge bed in the dining/bedchamber, and sat on the edge, cradling her in his arms. His possession slid her arms around his neck, and nestled against him, trusting as a child. Michael's pulse-rate quickened as he braced himself to meet the challenge facing him.

Held almost in a sitting position, her left arm still encircling the man who she saw to be regarding her purposefully, Gabrielle smiled up at him, her eyes brimful of affectionate warmth.

"You've completed your period of probation," her master informed her. "Successfully, let me add. I'm willing to take you on as my slave, but the conditions I'll set may daunt you."

Pausing to assess the impact of his words, Michael saw the piquant face light with joy unalloyed with the least wariness. "I doubt that," Gabrielle assured him firmly.

"If you offer yourself as my slave, I'll control every aspect of your life," came the uncompromising assertion. "I'll use your lovely body exactly as I wish. I'm basically a loner, Gabrielle—a recluse of sorts. I no longer travel abroad on business, as I once did with unfailing regularity. I own a series of retreats as secluded as this one—quarters you won't be able to leave without my consent.

"On occasion, I immerse myself in research, purely for the thrill I derive from intellectual creativity. At such times, I'll permit you to pursue your career as an author. We'll both engage in scholarly endeavors so as to avoid growing dangerously obsessed with carnal pleasure, but you'll only do so if and when I grant you permission. You'll sell your townhouse, your Buick, and your furniture. You'll store whatever possessions you wish to retain. You'll invest the money in

long-term securities where it will remain indefinitely. You'll cut yourself off completely from your former life, and entrust yourself wholly to the master to whom you voluntarily surrender your freedom."

Shock melted into almost instant acceptance. The house holds too many memories of Richard, the widow reflected, no whit disturbed by that directive, at least. I'm embarking on a new life! "Selling my belongings will pose no problem," she responded gamely.

"Be very clear on this point: I won't marry you, Gabrielle. I'll own you. A civil ceremony performed by some officious bureaucrat, I regard as utterly meaningless. If, at some later date, I render your place in my life perfectly secure, that elevation of your status from initiate to consort will occur in a manner I refuse to discuss at this point in our relationship. So. Do you consent to offer yourself as my slave, knowing that you'll be abdicating every iota of control you're used to exerting over your existence?"

Acutely cognizant that she would be severing every tie, and abandoning every prior association dear to her, Gabrielle experienced a sudden knotting of her gut, but her fear of losing this lover able to lift her to dizzying heights of passion extinguished all other concerns. "Yes," she breathed, so swiftly as to make her assent seem instantaneous. "Oh, Michael, yes!"

Scrutinizing her minutely, the autocrat asserted evenly, "If you fail at any point to submit absolutely, or if you grow dissatisfied with your status as an initiate whom I own, body and mind, I'll terminate our relationship."

That blunt threat produced an impulsive, vehement protestation. "Michael, if you only knew how deeply I long to belong to you! My only fear..." Breaking off abruptly, the woman terrified of rousing this autocrat to anger by questioning what he might do in the future, dropped her eyes, unwilling to let him see the consternation animating them, lest he misinterpret its cause.

Tipping her chin up so as to force her to meet the glance impaling her, the man who seemed to search her soul demanded forcefully, "Share your fear with me—frankly and freely."

Thus flatly ordered to confess, Gabrielle responded huskily, "Now that you've molded me into a partner who suits you, you might grow bored from a lack of further challenge. You might tire of me even if I strive desperately to please you, with the result that you cast me off in favor of some younger, more flamboyantly sexy partner: one as exotically lovely as those women you escorted to the company dinners. And if you did that, I'd die of loneliness, Michael...expire from despair. Any conventional lover I took would seem colorless...intolerably inept...more so even than..." Breaking off in dismay as unshakable loyalty to the dead husband who had commanded her affection despite his sexual dysfunction sent shame surging through her, she again dropped her eyes.

Admiration blended with keen satisfaction in the master who tightened his grip on his possession. "You suspect that you're the latest in a long succession of slaves I've meticulously trained to please me, and then discarded, eh, little plaything?"

"Yes," came the all but inaudible whisper.

"Mmm. And if that suspicion turned out to be perfectly accurate, you'd withdraw your offer to become my slave?"

Despair turned the piquant face bleak. Fear shadowed it, but the initiate shook her head. "No," she asserted stoutly. "I'd figure that however short the span of bliss, I'd snatch at it—enjoy it while

it lasted. The thought of returning to the lonely, drearily uneventful, exclusively work-oriented life I led after Richard and I separated, appalls me, now that I'm conditioned to enjoy the intense sensations you inflict—to experience sublime joy when I surrender to you. But I'll be tormented constantly by the knowledge that my bliss will prove short-lived." Tears burned, but Gabrielle kept them from spilling.

"You've been deeply wounded in your self-respect, eh, little stalwart?" Michael queried gently. "Blamed yourself, perhaps, for being the cause of Richard's problems?"

"Yes," came the whispered admission.

"Mm. The fault never rested with you. You've always needed a demanding master, not a sensitive, emotionally insecure introvert too vulnerable in his perception of his prowess as a lover to assert himself to the least degree while fucking a natural submissive who instinctively longs to be dominated." That firm, wholly accurate assessment came couched in a tone that admitted of no argument.

Smiling with malicious amusement into eyes full of pain, Michael chided sardonically, "You've arrived at a conclusion based on scanty data which you've misinterpreted, Gabrielle. You've let emotionalism color your normally keen ability to reason logically, and acted thus while lacking crucial pieces of the evidence."

Stung by the taunt, the historian who prided herself on her objectivity cried heatedly, "What are you talking about?"

Throwing back his head, her lover indulged in a mocking laugh. "Scalded your pride, didn't I? Well, contrary to your unfounded assumption, you're not the latest in a long succession of slaves whom I've seduced, trained to please me, and discarded. You're the first such."

Shocked to her core, Gabrielle gasped, "But—I can't be!"

"I've traveled constantly, all over the world, for decades, little skeptic. Between trips, I've immersed myself in engineering projects that proved highly profitable. When I indulged my exacting tastes in sensual pleasure—as I did often—I either hired a high-priced call girl who specialized in satisfying men with tastes similar to my own, or I temporarily took a lover trained by numerous masters of erotic art: members of the same secret Order of practitioners of those arts, to which I belong. Those women—uninhibited, independent-minded sensualists who enjoy variety, and seek a succession of partners—don't yearn to be owned. They merely wish to be pleased by a master while forming no close emotional tie to any lover."

"I only began to entertain the notion of training a slave perfect for me, after I'd accumulated wealth enough to satisfy me. Whenever I contemplated who might fit the image I harbored, the same face continually rose to mind: that of the one supremely desirable woman of my acquaintance who I knew to be beyond my reach. You, Gabrielle. I waited ten years for the chance to beguile you into wanting to be trained, without blasting my honor by seducing the consort of a friend I valued."

Stupefied with astonishment, the widow gasped, "Those exotic beauties were..."

"Call girls, little innocent. Professional artists I hired."

"Oh...Michael...I thought..." The magnitude of the relief produced by that admission rendered Gabrielle giddy. "I want to be owned by you!" she averred emphatically. "I'll do my utmost to

please you! You needn't worry that I'll grow dissatisfied!"

Fierce elation suffused the autocratic sensualist crushing this utterly desirable submissive against his chest. Relaxing his grip, he issued a stern warning. "You think so now, but you face a new probationary period. Any oath of fidelity I take, I keep. I won't risk making any such promise unless I'm perfectly certain the consort to whom I make it won't ever bestow the affection she professes to bear me, on another man. So. Knowing what you know now, will you consent to sell your belongings, give up your freedom, and live as my slave?"

"Yes. Gladly!" No hesitancy whatsoever tinged that breathless, vehement assent.

Crushing within corded arms this prize so long coveted, Michael exulted in his victory, savoring the emotion he consciously identified as happiness, despite his knowing that lust, not love, drove this lonely, sexually deprived widow into the arms of a sadist like himself. She loved Richard, right to the end, he reminded himself somberly. She loved him despite his not being able to satisfy her basic carnal need, let alone her craving to be dominated. She desires me, but she's never professed to love me. I've encompassed her total surrender, but at a potentially costly price. She entertains no slightest idea of the power she now exerts over the master whose heart she holds hostage!

Allowing no hint of his thoughts to surface even fleetingly on his face, Michael set his slave on her feet. "I'll take you home, Gabrielle—give you a week in which to pack your belongings, store them, and sell your townhouse. That latter task ought to be easy, given the desirability of the property. I won't take any part in your financial dealings. I seek to own *you*, not your wealth, which will remain in your name. I merely demand that managing your wealth not require any of your time, as it would if you rented your home."

"As for clothing, you need nothing but the suit you wore here, when you meet me at the park where you began this period of probation. I'll specify at what time you're to arrive, when I leave you on your doorstep later today. So. We'll depart as soon as we're dressed. I'll give you seven days in which to reflect on the finality of this step you just agreed to take. If you fail to show up at the designated time and place, Gabrielle, you'll never see me again."

"I won't change my mind!" came the adamant retort.

"Time will tell, little hedonist."

When the woman determined on so radical a change in her life stood, clad in her pantsuit, before the master demanding so absolute a submission to his will, he handed her the opaque glasses worn on her arrival. When she donned them, he bore her pliant, blindfolded person back through the entry of the retreat she knew she could never find again.

Bidden once again to sit in silence with her hands folded, Gabrielle reviewed the period of probation. Flayed by burgeoning uncertainty, she sought to clarify her feelings about this sadist to whom she determined to offer herself so unreservedly. Do I love Michael? she agonized. Or am I crazed by lust—driven to take this radical step out of some hormonal imbalance caused by the stress of seeking a divorce from a man I truly did love, but couldn't satisfy sexually, any more than he could me—and then hearing that he died so horribly? Does Michael feel affection—love—for me? Or only desire? Am I really what he considers me: a natural submissive? A woman designed by nature to want to be owned, body and mind, by a cruel, demanding master?

Is that why I've always felt empty, unsatisfied, full of vague longings, and wishful of being

possessed by a masterful lover, instead of loved by a kind, considerate, caring one? Is that why my fantasies so often run to being captured by some swashbuckling pirate, or to being carried off by some dashing desert warrior? Unsure of the answer, Gabrielle yet hardened her determination to become Michael's slave. I would die of despair if he discarded me now, she concluded. I would!

During the ensuing week, the historian spent long, hectic days ridding herself of her personal possessions, and short, restless nights yearning for the touch of her master's hands, his mouth on her clit, his cock in her cunt. She found herself craving the whip—missing the heavy sensation to which he had accustomed her. The more she puzzled over the origin of the yearning tormenting her, the more her resolve to become his slave hardened.

When at long last she stepped out of a taxi onto the lush turf of the park at eight o'clock of the day appointed, she acted in the absolute certainty that she must obey whatever rabid subliminal urges drove her. When the commanding figure of her lover appeared in her fevered vision, she all but fell on her knees in full view of the passers-by, and embraced his loins.

Relief at seeing her alight from the cab rendered Michael faint, for a span of half a second. No hint of the magnitude of that relief showed on his lean hawk-face as he escorted his slave to a taxi idling at the curb. Handing her into the seat, he gave the driver the address: a multistoried office building in the financial district close to the heart of the city. Slipping an arm around the shoulders of his slave, he murmured in her ear, "You don't lack courage, little adventuress."

"I never wavered in my resolution, master." That whispered confidence sent Michael's pulse-rate soaring. Gabrielle nestled contentedly against him as the cab bore her into a future she could not have imagined two weeks ago.

Her heart fluttering, the slave exulting in her abdication of all control over her life preceded her owner into a posh restaurant on the tenth floor of the towering structure so near in miles, yet so far in essence, from the narrow world upon which she now resolutely turned her back.

With courtly grace, Michael pulled out a chair at the table to which the crisply uniformed female employee led them, and seated the lovely woman whose willingness to place her life and happiness in his hands set his heart hammering, and his pulse racing. Savoring fierce satisfaction in the victory so meticulously planned, so expertly engineered, he smiled on the slave he considered perfect for him, as he ordered for them both. As had been his wont throughout the term of Gabrielle's stay in his secret retreat, he beguiled his companion into engaging in conversation as they dined.

Her eyes shining, her face alight with joy, the widowed intellectual reveled in her consciousness that she no longer need suffer either from loneliness or sensual deprivation. Delicious shivers—half anticipatory, half occasioned by trepidation—coursed down her spine as she noted the possessiveness with which her escort regarded her. She grew acutely conscious of her smartly styled black pantsuit, her clinging undergarments, her sheer, smooth, wrinkle-free stockings, her sleek black pumps. Shock assailed her as she detected in herself a yearning for the freedom conferred by nakedness.

Wearing his black turtleneck shirt, black western-cut jeans, and glossy engineer's boots with debonair grace, Michael read her mind. Amusement crinkled the corners of tawny eyes. "Irked by the appurtenances of civilized life, eh, little voluptuary?" he teased, his melodic voice falling on his chattel's ear as seductively as the onrush of surf across a moonlit beach.

"You taught me to be," came the ingenuous, honest answer.

That admission provoked a delighted laugh. “Ah, but we’re compelled to endure a mercifully brief sojourn among staunch upholders of propriety,” he informed her, his mobile face mirroring mirth. Over the hearty, tasty breakfast, he engaged her in discussion as he normally did over a meal.

Listening in fascination as he compared certain aspects of fifteenth century military strategy with that characterizing a recent modern military campaign prominent in the public’s awareness, Gabrielle listened even as she studied him minutely. His urbanity impressed her. He calls no attention to himself, she noted approvingly. He projects no hauteur, no arrogance, no condescension, either to the cabdriver, or this suave waiter who just showed Michael far more deference than he now seems to be offering that brash young swaggerer who just made so ostentatious an entry. That innate courtliness—that regal bearing—I suspect to be hereditary: a legacy bequeathed by six generations of noble holders of feudal privilege, to John Michael Rakoczy, whatever line of descent—legitimate or illegitimate—produced him.

Escorted by her master into the hall, Gabrielle stood with her arm tucked into his in quaintly old-world fashion, as he summoned the elevator. Paying no heed to what button he pushed, she watched the doors close, wondering where he would take her next. Expecting the car to descend, she fought an unexpected sense that her inner arrangements dropped precipitately, when the conveyance rose instead. Flustered, she emerged to find herself standing on the heliport occupying the roof of the towering pile of steel and glass.

Her face bathed in hot, bright sunlight, her hair blowing wildly in the wind, she clung to Michael’s arm as he led her to a large, bubble-fronted helicopter. Having helped her inside, he strapped her into the passenger seat. Astonished to find that he intended to fly the craft himself, Gabrielle yet passed no comment.

Borne high in the azure sky, the successful initiate succumbed to delight at experiencing a mode of flight new to her. Devoid of the slightest fear, she reveled in the sight of the sun-drenched, rugged terrain spread out below. The metropolis receding into the distance seemed to shrink to Lilliputian dimensions before passing completely from view.

CHAPTER NINE

Watching in fascination from the bubble that seemed so fragile a partition between her vulnerable person and the limitless blue of the sky, Gabrielle gasped in wonder as the pilot sent the craft dropping towards the head of a cloud-shrouded, steep-walled canyon. A round stone tower rose above the all-enveloping mist: a crenellated, flat-topped structure reminiscent of a medieval keep. Swirling gray fog enshrouded the lower two-thirds of the massive pile, effectively hiding from view the bulk of the edifice of which it formed a part.

A castle in the desert? the historian speculated, intrigued. I can't estimate how many miles we've traversed, or pinpoint what area of the Southwest this is, but the terrain's rugged. That dirt road down below winds behind those windswept hills, and vanishes. No heavily traveled thoroughfare serves Michael's demesne, that's clear. He assuredly goes to extraordinary lengths to guard his privacy!

As the passenger ruminated thus, the skids touched down on the stone-flagged roof of the tower. Having shut off the engine, the pilot remained in his seat, scanning the horizon. Sheer walls of cream-colored rock rising out of that all-encompassing gray mist eclipsed both observers' view of the desert on three sides. On the fourth side, a bend in the canyon that Gabrielle judged to begin here prevented her eye from ranging over a much greater distance. A pleased sigh escaped her master: the contentment of a tired traveler coming home after completing an arduous journey.

Exhibiting the old-world gallantry, in part possessive, in part genuinely chivalrous, which characterized his treatment of his cherished possession in any situation other than a sexual one, Michael assisted her to descend onto stone flagging from which waves of suffocating heat reflected: rock identical to that forming the walls of the canyon. Bright, hot sunlight beat down on Gabrielle's unprotected head, its intensity no whit diminished during its passage through the superclear dry atmosphere of the desert. Staring through shimmering distortions generated by unevenly warmed air, she awaited any explanation her master might condescend to give regarding their whereabouts.

Michael finally shifted his glance from the environs of the tower to the woman regarding him quizzically, if silently. "Ask no questions as to the location of your present place of residence, slave," came the stern warning.

"No, master. I'm simply happy to be where you are." The meekness produced by the rebuke failed to lessen the joy radiating from the piquant face, or the excitement generated by the flight.

Placated, Michael unbent so far as to add, "I own several retreats, all equally remote from prying eyes. This one's guaranteed to fascinate an historian delighted by medieval architecture. It formerly housed a contemplative order of monks. Vocations impelling pious young men to take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and live in cloistered seclusion, rarely occur in this hedonistic age. The surviving members of the company reduced to a few physically frail centenarians, de-sanctified the chapel, sold the property, and moved to a less isolated spot. The quiet suits me. The modifications I've wrought in no way clutter the clean, severe lines of the building."

Intrigued by the origin of the imposing edifice, Gabrielle beheld a featureless metal door set into an arched entry in a spiral extension that rose to door-height along the perimeter of the circular

roof. The metal panel slid open at Michael's voice-command. He evidently favors those doors that he alone can open, in all his retreats, his chattel surmised as the realization drove home that she could no more leave here without his consent, than she could during her first stay in one of his dwellings.

Taking her arm, Michael guided her down a steep flight of spiral, wrought-iron steps. "This must once have been the bell-tower!" the historian cried in delight, catching sight of blue sky through a series of unglazed apertures ringing the tower at a height just below the roof.

"So it was. The monks refused to part with the bells, which now sound the canonical hours in their new monastery."

Having descended to ground level, the pair emerged into a narrow, rectangular hall distinguished by a lofty vaulted ceiling. High up in the end walls, tall but narrow arched windows, glazed with panes of translucent glass, allowed light to stream down. This long, preternaturally silent antechamber wholly devoid of furniture seemed to exist solely to provide entry to other apartments.

A huge arched door, fashioned of heavy dark wood bossed and hinged with wrought iron, graced the center of one long wall. A second, identical door situated in the center of the opposite wall, stood open. That aperture offered a pleasing vista into a cloistered quadrangle. A covered walk supported by colonnades ran along the walls fronting the quadrangle on four sides.

In the center of the stone-flagged open space, the raptly gazing scholar imbued with a deep appreciation of gothic artistry beheld a graceful fountain. Water gushing from an orifice in a stone pillar arched high into the air before falling into a circular pool bordered by a broad stone wall two feet in height. An imposing sculpture—a massive, stylized flower cast in gleaming black metal—rose to the height of a man's waist from the creamy stone flagging between the covered walkway and the fountain. In the perception of the historian, the work of art resembled a black, sleek fleur-de-lis.

Curiosity overcoming caution, Gabrielle asked, "That lovely sculpture's your addition to the decor, not that of the monks, surely, Michael?"

"Mine alone, little inquisitor. Its symbolism stands in total opposition to the philosophy espoused by those unworldly advocates of a celibate life."

Warned by the form of address that she trod on slippery ground, Gabrielle probed no further. Reluctantly, she tore her eyes away as her master drew her arm into his, and escorted her to a smaller portal: an arched jamb set into a narrow end of the rectangular hall. This entry the observer noted to be identical to one gracing the opposite end of the antechamber. The door she saw to be fashioned of dark hardwood, bossed and hinged with black wrought iron. Michael changed nothing here, she conjectured approvingly, but even as she drew that erroneous conclusion, the wooden door swung silently outward at his voice command.

Ushered into a sizeable square chamber lit by windows set high into the creamy walls—windows glazed by translucent glass—Gabrielle focused on the dominant feature: a huge bed, its ornately carved headboard of dark, gleaming wood set against the side wall. A pale green, contoured sheet formed the only bedding except for numerous pale green pillows piled against the headboard flanked by two matching nightstands. No ominous bedposts sporting shackles met her questing eyes.

Relieved by that observation, she swept a glance over a wide, long, mirrored dressing table fronted by a cushioned bench, which occupied the center of the wall to her left. An arched, open doorway flanked by chairs, bisected the wall opposite the entry. A tall chiffonier stood against the wall to her right; a bureau topped by a mirror graced the space to the left of the entry. Those exquisitely crafted furnishings matched the bed. Through air pleasantly warm despite being noticeably moist, wafted a faint, enticing fragrance.

“Strip, little hedonist,” came the imperious command. “Shed the clothes you won’t need here.”

Obeying with alacrity, Gabrielle rejoiced to see Michael divest himself of the casual attire that she readily acknowledged suited him equally as well as did his designer suits. Standing naked, she marveled that the creamy, stone-flagged floor seemed warm to her bare feet. Turning, she faced the demanding master whose cock she saw to stiffen as he drank in the sight of her nakedness. Desire showed nakedly on her flushed, vibrant face.

Drawn close by strong arms, she melted down the front of her lover, full of hot need the more intense for her being denied satisfaction over the past seven days. Her arms encircled his neck; her head lolled against his shoulder, prompting him to smile down at her in malicious amusement. “Hot and wet, breathlessly awaiting my driving my cock into your cunt, eh, little initiate? Your sojourn among the straitlaced seems to have rendered you forgetful. For what do you now exist, mm?”

“For your pleasure,” came the reply offered almost without volition, as the woman longing to be fucked voiced the phrase repeated so often during her initiation that it assumed the force of a mantra.

“So you do.” Tawny eyes raked the slave Michael now held at arms’ length, tracing the sinuous curves, the full breasts, the curvaceous hips, the hairless mound that she had shaved herself at the close of the week devoted to the disposing of her worldly goods. “I find myself moved to adorn your shapely body—to create an effect that will accent your loveliness, little wood nymph,” he drawled, as usual maintaining perfect control over his own lust. “You’ll submit as I trained you to do—obey me implicitly. Rest well assured that this stately retreat possesses a chamber in which you can be subjected to pain designed solely for punishment.”

“I live to submit, now, master.”

Sensing that placatory statement to be the naked truth, Michael bore his belonging through the arched doorway, which gave onto a narrow passageway. Bypassing two prominent side-doors constructed of dark wood, he proceeded through a third portal located at the far end of the hall. Gabrielle beheld a windowless square chamber, featuring a narrow, rectangular block sheathed in black leather: an object similar to others encountered during her probationary period. On the far wall of creamy stone, a tall, wide mirror set into a frame integral to the masonry reflected her image. Her gut knotted, even though she spied neither chains nor fetters.

“Lie supine on the block, with your legs spread, and your arms thrown back over your head.”

That uncompromising order, issued in a tone of absolute command, sent apprehension swirling into the mind of the slave yearning for sensual satisfaction. Hastily, she disposed her body on the block. From a drawer in the side, Michael removed a golden shield fringed with thin strands of varying lengths. That oddly modified device he pressed against her shaven pussy. “I commend your diligence in maintaining the degree of nakedness I demand of you,” he drawled, smiling

maliciously. "The pain will attain its full potential."

Shivering more from anticipation than dread as she felt the familiar touch of cold metal, Gabrielle tensed no whit as the gleaming object clung tightly, held by electrostatic attraction to her skin. The golden tendrils fringing the disc sprawled inertly, untidily, over her flesh. Deft fingers now slipped into place two ultrathin, slightly convex nipple-rings fringed with long strands that lay slackly upon her breasts. As a final touch, her master set a small golden sphere into her navel: an ornament that clung as readily as did the shield and the rings covering each aureole.

From the same drawer, Michael lifted a round, flat plate fitted with a handle: an object shaped like a hand-mirror. This he held above the initiate's left breast, at a height of some eighteen inches. The fringe of metallic strands instantly rose upward, and spread, as each now faintly luminous tendril repelled all the others. At the touch of a long forefinger on the shield affixed to his partner's mound, the upward-reaching strands reversed their direction, and plastered themselves against her breast. The clinging golden cords assumed the telltale blue aura wholly familiar to the slave who involuntarily tensed before forcing her unfettered body to relax.

Pain radiated through the breast held now in a many-taloned grip: the eerie pleasure-pain the woman so missed during her seven-day-long period of sensual deprivation. Holding the plate over the second breast, the inventor of the unique devices touched the shield, thereby duplicating the effect.

The onslaught of intense stimulation satisfied a craving Gabrielle still failed fully to understand. "Ohhhh...that's making me cream," she murmured, half to herself.

"You hungered all week for pain inflicted by my hand, eh, little voluptuary?" came the amused, purely rhetorical question.

"Every waking hour," Gabrielle admitted candidly.

Savoring the fierce satisfaction engendered by his chattel's craving the whip-stimulus, Michael now held the plate high over her metal-sheathed mound. The golden tendrils attached to the governing device rose, and spread. When the finger touched a third spot on the shield, they swooped down to adhere to the shivering flesh of the wearer's abdomen, assuming curving paths owing to their disparate lengths, which slightly distorted the repulsive force keeping them separate from each other.

Pain now radiated throughout Gabrielle's entire torso, as each clinging tendril excited the nerves below the skin, in concert with the more intensely focused pain generated by the shield stimulating her mound, and the flat rings encircling each nipple.

"Hurts, mmm?"

"I bear it gladly, because your hand inflicts it. I missed you, master!"

That final, artless admission set Michael's pulse-rate galloping.

A new command galvanized the submissive savoring the heavy sensation, into movement. "Rise, and then lie face down on the block, with your legs spread wide."

Obediently, Gabrielle lay prone. She tensed no whit as her master centered a round, fringed shield on each cheek of her ass. Employing the same technique, he watched the multi-sized gold strands rise, spread, and reverse themselves to leap onto the rounded cheeks, where they clung fast. "Stand up," came the crisp order. "Face me, and spread your legs."

The severely intensified pain now tested the initiate's ability to bear the sensation without flinching. Suppressing a violent urge to writhe, she rose to her feet, and spread her legs.

Dropping to one knee, Michael affixed a tiny shield trailing long, ultrafine gold strands to the inside of each moist pussy-lip. When those trailing, hair-like tendrils stretched towards the plate he held between the outthrust thighs, he touched yet another spot on the shield covering the woman's mound. The fine strands now leaped sideways, to trace exactly the curves of her flesh, dipping into both creases and emerging to trace parallel paths down the flesh of her inner thighs. The gold-ornamented pussy-lips spread wide by the pull of the strands fully exposed the cunt oozing moisture. The erect, full clit rearing from the hooded folds remained free of any clinging metal.

"Ahhh...lovely," Michael purred. "A most artistic effect. Survey your ornaments in the mirror, my gilded lily."

Racked by agony that skirted the limit of her ability to bear it without groaning, Gabrielle stared in wonder at her image. Her rosy nipples stood erect above the discs adhering like a coat of shining gold enamel ringing the pink nubbins. The clinging metallic strands squeezed her breasts, acting as would the cups of a brassiere: molding the soft flesh while offering support. The softly mounded tissue she saw to be lifted, and thrust outwards.

Long golden strands traced graceful, curving lines, outlining her hips, emphasizing the contours of her belly, snaking around her sides. One lone tendril traced a straight path from the shield to the golden ornament set into her navel. Her ass felt as if clutched by some monstrous, sharp-clawed bird; her breasts hurt as if gripped by a cruel ravisher. She indeed appeared to have been gilded—striped in fanciful, graceful patterns by golden tracery illumined by blue fire: tracery that seemed integral to her smooth white skin. Pain radiated throughout the tenderest parts of her body.

Cocking his head, Michael nodded in satisfaction as he studied the effect. Reaching into the drawer, he removed two tiny shields from which hung strands tipped with miniature golden bells. Those he attached to her earlobes. The additions, which caused no pain, merely tugged and tinkled. Stooping, he clasped golden chains adorned with a multitude of identical tiny bells, around slender ankles.

Smiling into the dark eyes fixed submissively on him, he touched a finger to the delicate bow of his slave's lip. "You exist for my pleasure," he reminded her, his tone lightly mocking. "Focus on the pain. Let it dominate you, Gabrielle—arouse you. I'll enjoy you the more, for the pleasing effect of the ornamentation. We'll stroll about the garden, while you savor the sensations, and I admire your graceful carriage. So."

Lifting the woman who felt as if encased in a netted garment of flame, he carried her back through the bedchamber, and emerged into the rectangular hall. The corded arms supporting her back and her bent legs avoided contact with the most of the metallic strands, but those adhering to her ass-cheeks pressed against the hard, flat flesh of the man's abdomen, sending pain tingling along his nerve-endings—pain which prompted his cock to grow turgid. Tawny eyes darkened, and narrowed.

His bare feet making no sound on the stone-flagged floor as he traversed the entire length of the imposing antechamber, Michael commanded the door at the far narrow end to open. Striding through, he bore his slave into what she at first judged to be the grounds of the former monastery: a garden open to the sky. Trees rose in her sight: exotic flora topped with feathery foliage.

Stone-flagged paths wound through raised beds in which natural groupings of native plants flourished.

Staring upwards expecting to see azure sky, she instead beheld bright but diffuse luminosity. Far overhead, a canopy of translucent glazing spanned the full width of the canyon, its myriad panels set into a steel framework. Warm, moist air moved languidly against her skin.

Amid a tinkling of bells, Michael set her on her feet, and offered her his arm in the quaintly old-world gesture he habitually used when escorting her down a street, or through a building. “We’ll stroll along the paths, little voluptuary,” he advised his gilded companion. “You’ll take no harm from the sun that would fry your tender white skin to a crisp if you walked for any length of time in its unfiltered glare. Bask in my approving gaze, and welcome the pleasure-pain for the delight your gaily enhanced loveliness affords me.”

Feeling like a devotee of Astarte bound to offer herself to any man who entered an ancient temple with intent to fuck a love-priestess, Gabrielle walked down warm, stone-flagged paths, amid exotic wild beauty. The huge enclosure seemed far more the wide outdoors than a giant terrarium. A turbulent stream flowed along a winding course, which the rapt observer saw to be its natural bed. Staring in delight down a long vista bounded by creamy, nearly vertical canyon walls on two sides, a tall masonry wall on a third, and a bend in the narrow, steep-walled valley on the fourth, she deduced that the stream issuing from an arched opening in the masonry wall rose at the canyon’s head, and flowed away down its winding length. Wisps of fog hovered above the rippling, swiftly flowing water rushing over a rocky bed.

The source must be a hot spring, the observer new to the sight surmised accurately.

That would explain the mistiness that hides the glazed canopy from the view of anyone flying over this property. Entranced despite the pain assaulting her senses, she gazed her fill, her eyes wide with wonder.

“Lovely, eh, Gabrielle?” That question, uttered reflectively, bore no overtone of mockery. Michael’s eyes, still dark with desire, yet expressed a vast contentment with his surroundings.

“Marvelous,” his gilded slave breathed, her sincerity patent. Unwittingly, she yielded even more completely to the pleasure-pain.

A leisurely stroll brought the pair to a patch of grassy turf. Lifting his companion, Michael held her as with lithe grace he settled onto the grass, his legs stretched out before him. Bells tinkled as he disposed her upper body across his lap. An arm supported her shoulders, but her head lolled back, exposing the delicate column of her throat.

“Spread your legs,” came the firm order. Michael’s free hand slid between gold-striped thighs. The fingers closing gently on Gabrielle’s erect, full clit tugged on the hood, and vibrated the ultrasensitive tip. A sigh escaped the woman consumed with desire for this sadist who owned her.

“The pain’s loosened you, little lovetoy,” Michael observed musingly, smiling out of half-lidded cat’s-eyes. “When I fuck you, I’ll feel a muted echo of your pain which will serve as a delicious spur to my own passion.”

Lying in his arms, Gabrielle savored the pain laced with overtones of pleasure. Fingers expertly worked her wet clit. Switching tactics, they massaged a deliciously sensitive place deep inside the cunt rendered easily accessible by the pull of the golden strands. Shivers coursed through her abdomen as her sphincter relaxed. Loosened, opened, ripened into hot, insatiable need,

she willed her master to drive his cock deeply into her slippery hole.

Michael rose, lifting his pliant burden as he gained his feet. Her eyes pools of yearning, she moaned—from carnal need, as the man delicately attuned to every nuance of her expressive contralto voice well knew. A light, amused laugh flayed the slave's vulnerable ego. "Hot as a cat in heat," she heard her master remark in a lazy, teasing drawl as he set her on her feet. "You're going to dance for me, little bacchante. Raise your arms over your head, and gyrate your hips. Use your fertile imagination, and play the seductress. Inflammé me with desire to match yours."

Thus cruelly bidden to flaunt her gilded, pain-racked body in a manner wholly foreign to her most basic inclinations, Gabrielle froze for a fraction of a second, as her stunned mind sought to compel unready muscles into some semblance of obedience. Even as her master's mobile face melted into a black frown, she began to move. Rote training in the elements of ballet, learned as a child and forgotten since her eighteenth year, rose from dormancy in some obscure recess of her brain.

Her arms rose. Her fingers moved with delicate grace as her wrists bent, and circled, varying the poses of the expressive hands as the arms executed classic movements of the dance. Her gold-striped body began a slow, sensuous writhing: movement controlled, deliberate. Her hips gyrated, even as her arms continued their stylized, extraordinarily graceful motions. She stamped a foot to the accompaniment of tinkling bells, and pirouetted on the ball of a slender, bare foot.

The sole planted itself flat on the creamy flagging. The dancer's spine arched as her free leg extended backwards, and her arms stretched upwards. Her head tilted. Her face lifted, as if she implored a favor from the hidden sky. Inspired by an echo from the past, driven by the primal lust consuming the middle-aged body that seemed to the fascinated beholder so much younger than it ought, she projected a most astonishing fusion of virginal innocence and voluptuous, seductive invitation.

Entranced beyond all expectation by the riveting, wholly unrehearsed exhibition, Michael stood rooted to the spot.

The gilded dancer held the pose only fleetingly. Her extended leg bent, and her arched upper body curved forward. Poised on the balls of her feet, she glided towards the lover standing rigidly still, his shaft erect, throbbing. In a slow, sinuous movement, the performer thrust her pelvis against her owner's up-rearing tool. Turning, she rubbed her gold-striped ass against his hip.

"Oh, no, master—not yet," she taunted provocatively. Weaving away, out of the reach of the hands with which he instinctively sought to clasp her breasts, she laughed over a round bare shoulder. That rippling laughter fell on his ears more enticingly than did the tinkling bells. The performer's piquant face projected witchery as she teased in her turn. The impromptu, spontaneously generated dance in no way struck the lone watcher as lewd, far less as coarse. The amateur artist projected sensuousness wholly natural. She seemed to the enraptured witness a goddess of love reveling in her alluring femininity—a deity bent on driving a bemused mortal into the sacred madness.

Gabrielle danced without accompaniment, without any preconceived plan, for five minutes, circling her admirer, touching him provocatively, weaving away, bending, turning, writhing, arching in a combination of classic movements and others delicately evocative of the act of coition. At the end, she dropped with enchanting grace to her knees before her audience of one, and took his stiff prick in her mouth.

Consumed by lust, Michael all but lost the magnificent control over his passion so habitual to him. His bowels melted; his juice very nearly exploded without his consent. Reaching down, he slipped his hands under the arms of the slave sucking him with wanton abandon. Lifting her to her feet, he clasped her against his nude torso. Pain enveloped him: pain less intense than that still exciting the feminine nerves exquisitely sensitized to the stimulus, but none the less arousing to the man more used to inflicting that sensation than to experiencing it.

Michael's mouth closed over that of the dancer, forcing hers open. His imperiously questing tongue licked the inside of her moist mouth. Enfolding her tongue, he sucked as if wishful to absorb that organ into himself. Gabrielle congealed against him, sending new waves of pleasure-pain throbbing through his chest, his abdomen, his groin.

Sweeping her up, he strode down a tree-shaded path to a grassy knoll close to the rushing stream. Squatting, he disposed her pliant body so that her torso arched backwards over the hump. With a single continuous movement, he turned, and dropped on her. Taking care not to let his moist tongue touch the discs, he licked each rock-hard nipple in turn. His hands pressed on the arms flung over their owner's head.

Releasing his grip, he rose on his knees, pulling his body loose from the golden strands which adhered far more tenaciously to the woman fitted with the governing shield, than to his own flesh. Free now of pain, he slid backwards, thrusting his knees apart, thereby spreading his partner's legs wide. His mouth closed over her erect love-bud; his tongue probed delicate folds. Soft lips sucked the hooded shaft, forcing muffled cries from the woman whose own bowels melted, whose cunt-opening gulped as if seeking to swallow. "Ohh, yes, suck my gilded pussy, master—tease my stiff clit! Ohhh, tongue me, lick me, eat me for dessert!"

Gauging his partner's nearness to climax with unfailing accuracy, Michael drove his rigid pole between gilded, fettered pussy-lips. With compelling force, he thrust into the slippery cunt that squeezed as if seeking to milk his turgid organ of its essence. Pleasure-pain suffused both the invading prick, and the flesh sheathing it.

Exerting every iota of his magnificent self-control, Michael continued those deep penetrations until he felt the love-tunnel awash in its owner's juice contract frenziedly around his engorged manhood. In a conscious act of will, he ejected the essence of his passion into this slave he owned, body and mind. Intoxicated by his consciousness of mastery, enraptured by the affection he had never until this point in his life allowed himself to feel for a woman, he passed into trance, sprawled on her pain-racked, outlandishly ornamented body.

Locking her arms around the master for whom her soul had hungered during the past seven days, Gabrielle reveled in the total suspension of her will. Raptly, she savored the pain, aware that her partner shared it now. Her seat of rational thought ceased to operate as her ardent, ageless psyche detached from its generative flesh, and rose to float free in a luminous altered state of unmitigated bliss. Drained of desire, awash in the mingled essences of their passion, still impaled by her master's cock, she lay slackly beneath his lean, hard bulk, barely conscious.

CHAPTER TEN

Coming back to himself, Michael rose off the body of the partner lying supine on the ground, her face rapt. Lifting her, he set her on her feet, holding her as she swayed groggily. Extending a forefinger, he touched the shield, causing the pain to cease as completely as if it had never been. A host of golden strands dropped precipitately to hang from breasts, mound, ass-cheeks, and pussy-lips.

Deft fingers detached the shields, the rings, the ornaments affixed to ears and ankles. Leaving a pile of bright gold adorning a flat rock, Michael lifted the slave now as nude as he. Striding into the swift-moving stream, he settled himself against a slanting, submerged ledge smoothed from long contact with the rushing water.

Water warm to the point of being classed as hot rose high on the chest of the chattel reveling in her non-gilded nakedness. Lying clasped in her master's arms, her chest pressed to his, she savored the touch of his bare, wet skin as she basked in the warmth of his smile. "I love you, little temple-dancer," she heard him murmur.

Shocked to her core, Gabrielle went rigid within the arms refusing to let her rear upright. Fixing eyes gone wide on the hawk-face suffused with contentment, she breathed, "Michael, you can say that...to me? To a slave you own? I thought..."

"Of course I can say that! Did you think I simply desired you? You're perfect for me, little innocent. All I dreamed of possessing, through long years of self-training in the art of attaining transcendental ecstasy. You come to me relatively late in life, but the more precious for that."

Stirred to her depths, the widowed intellectual experienced an onslaught of shame. Do I love this sadist whose declaration I sense to be the bare truth? she asked herself, unsure of the answer. Does this cruel master's definition of that word truly match mine? Does my yearning to submit to him; to be used for his pleasure; to bear the pain he inflicts, represent anything besides lust? A self-centered craving for strong sensation—for carnal satiation? I enjoy conversing with him, but I can say that of at least ten intellectuals of my acquaintance. "Michael...you're so utterly unlike any other man I've ever known...I can't truly define even for myself how I feel about you emotionally, as opposed to sensually," came the shamefaced admission from the slave who dropped her eyes, and flushed hotly.

Strong arms tightened around her. "No equivocator, are you, little wood nymph?" her master commended her, even as pain lanced through him. "That inability to profess to an emotion you aren't sure you feel forms one of the reasons I find you captivating. You're as incapable of lying to a lover as you are of cheating on a husband. You've a strong sense of honor: a trait I admire in man or woman. Don't ever lie to me, Gabrielle—for any reason. I can live with the uncertainty you harbor at present, but I couldn't tolerate your putting on any kind of an act."

"I'd never do that," the patently distressed initiate protested.

Sensing that assertion to be the truth, Michael murmured, "Just go on being your charming, ingenuous, submissive self, little lovetoy. Your perception of me might change—gradually...almost imperceptibly. Rest certain that I'm content with you."

Manifestly reassured by those softly uttered words, Gabrielle seized on an opportunity to talk

intimately with this enigmatic persona who so seldom discussed his feelings. “You amaze me, at times, Michael. You’re able to control the course of your passion to a degree I find astounding.”

Amused, the master of erotic art idly traced the delicate bow of rosy lips. “A man who can’t exert perfect control over his emotion, his temper, his carnal appetite, and his ejaculation, had better not dream of training any slave, but most especially not a psychologically vulnerable, exquisitely sensitive natural submissive. That rigorous self-mastery I value above all else, except my unstained honor.”

“Your regard for honor’s refreshing in this pragmatic, cynical age. Perhaps my fascination with medieval history owes something to the appeal of chivalrous ideals—even though I fully realize that most often those ideals took second place to greed, cruelty, rapacity, and a lust for power.” The question she so wished to ask tingled on Gabrielle’s tongue, but she shrank from running the risk of voicing it.

Divining the origin of the curiosity she so tactfully refrained from seeking to satisfy, Michael laughed, gratified rather than annoyed by her assumption regarding his lineage. “I spring from a long line of autocrats,” he observed serenely. “A trait I share.”

“I rather thought so,” the historian countered, her own eyes sparkling.

“I expect I was born in the wrong century, Gabrielle. I value my honor above my life, but the code by which I live differs radically from most of the ethical systems in vogue during this age. I’m not alone, either in my philosophical convictions, or in my adherence to a strict if unusual code of honor. A small, select group of proponents of a liberating philosophy—an order composed of powerful men scattered around the globe—thinks as do I.”

“To me, you’re a highly prized possession: a slave who exists for my pleasure. Despite my viewing you as such, I love you as deeply as any man ever could—for your affectionate, intelligent, charming self, but also for your willingness to surrender your will so completely to mine. I’ll continue to reward that submission by cherishing you, supporting you lavishly, offering you close, warm intimacy, and periodically lifting you to a pinnacle of ecstasy—whether or not you learn to love me.”

Touched beyond measure, Gabrielle caressed the chest of this man a bit less of an enigma to her at this juncture. “Michael,” she queried anxiously, laying all her fears on the table, “What will happen when I age...lose my feminine appeal? I’m forty-nine—no girl!” Twin furrows deepened across a normally unlined brow as the slave scanned the lean, ageless hawk-profiled countenance of the master who, to the best of her ability to judge, could be any age between forty and sixty.

Merriment animated the tawny eyes effortlessly reading the expressions flitting across the ingenuous face wholly unused to concealing its owner’s thoughts. “If I’m able to satisfy your insatiable need, little sensualist, and you my singular tastes, does it really matter how old I am? Or how old you are?”

“No,” his consort conceded with a wry smile. “Not now. I’ll age, though.”

“Do you think me immune to that process?”

“No...but you’ll tire of a possession who goes gray, and develops wrinkles.”

“Those tiny lines that’ll gradually etch themselves deeper will only accentuate the character your face reveals. If your hair goes gray, you’ll tint it—prolong your youthful appearance

artificially, exactly as you're currently prolonging your sexual potency by ingesting a hormone supplement. I value character above youthful allure, Gabrielle, especially if that allure coexists with an undisciplined, lazy, poorly educated mind, and a vapid, narcissistic personality. You suit me to perfection, my love. I don't bestow affection often, but when I do, I give it for life."

Michael's arms tightened around the woman stunned by this new facet of his complex personality. So do I! she cried to her alter ego. But do I truly feel affection for this sadist who owns me? Do I truly feel love in addition to the desire that indeed seems insatiable? I've become addicted to danger—to pain—to unbridled sensuality! I loved Richard! Nothing I feel for Michael remotely resembles anything I've ever felt for anyone! How will this union end—and when? And what will become of me afterwards?

Soft lips brushed a damp cheek; a hand gently thrust a dripping lock of dark hair back from a forehead creased into lines of perplexity and fear. "Enjoy the moment, little rosebud," Michael coaxed, his melodious voice a caress in itself. "I'll order your life hereafter. You've no cause to worry about anything other than pleasing me."

Unaccountably comforted by that imperious declaration, bathed in warmth, soothed both by the swiftly flowing water and the hand now stroking her back, Gabrielle melted against this man for whom she harbored such direly mixed feelings. At this moment, she conceived herself to be in love with him.

At length, he rose, bearing in his arms the woman for whom his heart hungered. He sensed that she had laid her fears to rest—at least, for now. Wading without a single stumble through the misty water, he emerged onto the bank of the stream, and set her on her feet. Smiling, he gathered up the heap of gold before offering his slave his arm. "We'll shampoo our hair, and blow it dry before dining," he announced. "Later on, I'll treat you to an extended tour of the grounds, little passionflower."

The bathing area Gabrielle discovered to be located in the corridor leading to the chamber where she had been so painfully ornamented. Standing in a concave depression after using the unshielded toilet, holding to a tee fastened to the ceiling overhead while staring at a bubbling hot pool, she could almost imagine herself back in the retreat where she had undergone so rigorous an initiation.

With supple grace, she stretched under the warm spray directed at her body, luxuriating in the shampoo offered by her bath-attendant. Enthusiastically, she returned the favor. When the lover seated on a low stool slid an impudent, questing finger into her cunt while she briskly massaged his scalp, she developed a pronounced stirring in her loins. Slickness enveloped the invading finger. "No need for constant teasing now," Michael observed blandly, his eyes brimful of mischief. "Hot and wet constitutes your natural state."

Flushing, Gabrielle nonetheless spread her legs wider, the better to accommodate his caress.

Emerging clean, her dark hair fluffed into soft waves, the newcomer to the exotic premises found herself once again in the hall. When the huge doors opposite the entry to the cloistered quadrangle opened silently at a voice-command, the pair advanced into a short hallway flanked by two narrow doors. One of those, Michael informed the woman intrigued by the castle, was a guest-washroom, the other, a closet.

Strolling out from under a relatively low ceiling, the rapt observer beheld a long, rectangular chamber distinguished by a vaulted ceiling: a spacious hall brightly lit by tall, arched windows on

both sides. Couches and chairs richly upholstered in black leather she saw to be arranged in scattered groupings, so as to accommodate small, discrete assemblages of conversationalists. Does so confirmed a recluse occasionally entertain here? she wondered, puzzled.

Two exceptionally sturdy recliners faced the hearth of a fireplace built of dark rock offering sharp contrast to the warm ivory of the walls. A wide, plush cushion rested on the floor between the handsome seats. Two elegant small tables reposed on the far side of each. A wrought-iron support holding firewood occupied a position to the right of the fireplace. On the left stood an imposing, obviously antique cabinet ornamented with fine carving. To the rear of the seats hung a chandelier crafted of wrought iron.

Six globed lamps rose from the rim of the massive metal ring suspended from the lofty ceiling by three strong chains.

Tables of dark carved wood occupied the space between the other large items of furniture. Two chandeliers identical to the one near the fireplace hung at points forming a triangle, each equidistant from the others. Massive lamps fashioned of wrought iron graced several of the tables. Those, the newcomer saw to be electric, their cords plugged into outlets set into the stone-flagged floor.

Passing through this sprawling living area, Gabrielle studied a low railing and a raised expanse of floor below a triple set of wide, arched windows. This area used to be the chapel, the historian surmised accurately. The monks departing their quiet refuge took the altar and the altar-stone away with them, so this chamber's no longer a sacred place. A rectangular dining table and six handsome chairs she saw to occupy the spacious area once dominated by the altar.

Below the triple window, at the rear of the elevated portion of the floor, a row of cabinets topped by a counter formed a base unit situated below other cabinets affixed to the stone of the wall. A refrigerator placed side by side with an upright freezer stood at one end. A microwave oven reposed on the counter.

With the courtly grace habitual to him, Michael held out a chair for his dinner-partner.

Seating herself, Gabrielle gazed about the brightly illuminated dining area, savoring the quiet, the stateliness, the elegance, the spaciousness. At the far end of the hall, above the entry, she spied the old choir loft. Gasping in delight, she surveyed the array of tall pipes rising vertically at the rear. The keyboard of the pipe organ still occupied the center.

"Can you play the organ?" she inquired.

"Alas, no. Can you?"

"No. I played the French horn, in school."

"As a wood nymph in Diana's hunting train should," came the prompt reply. The laugh that sally evoked fell on Michael's ears like the echo of a magical hunting-horn sounded in a mythic forest.

Over the late lunch of packaged meals served on fine china, Michael engaged his companion in conversation with the easy courtesy he invariably exhibited while dining, whatever his intentions might be for the subsequent hours. Responding with her usual wit and verve, Gabrielle smiled at her master over the rim of her crystal glass as she briskly debated an obscure point of feudal law.

The thought crossed the author's mind as she admired the silverware, the crystal, the Limoges china, and the snowy linen napkins, that no clock ever graced a wall in one of Michael's retreats. She wore no watch, nor did he. Time flows by unnoticed here, she acknowledged in wonder, intrigued by the discovery. So strange, that I don't feel the least need to know the hour!

When at last the diners departed the living area and emerged into the hall, Michael guided his companion to the bedchamber. Reaching into the chiffonier, he withdrew a pair of tall, extremely flexible, low-heeled thigh boots fashioned of glove-thin black leather. "Don these," he instructed the woman who had never seen such boots in use. A portrait in oils rose with surreal vividness on the screen of her mind: a depiction of the haughty French Chevalier who she knew to have been a military officer in a force commanded by King Louis XIII. The militant nobleman wore similar footwear.

The boots, which fit to perfection, rose to mid-thigh. Standing nude except for the strange appurtenances, the wearer failed to see the second garment emerge from the repository. Slipping both hands around her from behind, Michael confined her bare breasts within a brassiere of black leather: a minimal garment which offered stiff support beneath each breast, while leaving the nipples and aureoles fully visible. Having snapped the fastening in the back, he drew two black leather straps over bare shoulders.

Staring down at her chest, Gabrielle saw that the straps hooked into rings on the cups, lifting her breasts so that they thrust outwards. The stiff leather conferred total immobility on the mounded flesh. Shifting her glance, she beheld her master don a black leather brief consisting only of narrow straps supporting a codpiece that cupped his balls and cock.

Surveying his slave, he drawled, "Ahhh—perfect. Lovely, you are." Taking the arm of the woman feeling the more exposed for the partial covering, he escorted her out the door leading to the garden.

A low bench occupied the space to the right of the door. Beside that reposed a wide, tall, deep cabinet of dark wood. From within, Michael withdrew a bucket of grain. Hooking two fingers into his mouth, he emitted an ear-piercing whistle: a sound that prompted Gabrielle to clap both hands over her ears.

The issuer of the signal waited, seemingly in vain. Frowning with characteristic impatience, he repeated the signal. The woman still holding her ears detected the dull thudding of hooves.

At length, two gray mares loped around the far end of the castle. The sleek animals, each distinguished by the dished face and graceful shape that bespoke their Arabian ancestry, trotted up, dancing, snorting, arching their necks, and tossing their heads. One allowed herself to be beguiled into dipping her head into the bucket, only to be caught by the man looping the reins of an English bridle around her glossy neck. Bowing to need, he let the mare eat for a time, to reward her obedience to his summons before slipping the bit into her mouth.

"Ohhhh...how lovely they are!" Gabrielle breathed.

"Dainty as steeds come," came the prideful response.

The other mare now succumbed to temptation. Michael allowed each handsome animal to consume a generous portion, switching from nose to thrusting nose as the horses took time to chew. Handing the reins of the captured mount to his companion, he bridled the second mare, his melodious voice, deepened for the occasion, uttering soft endearments. "Ahh, coy, you are, little

Fleet-Foot. Unmatched for beauty. So. You'll bear a precious burden today. And you, Gazelle-Eyes, you'll carry your master. Easy, now."

Taken a trifle aback on finding herself expected to mount this dancing steed while clad only in boots and a tight-fitting leather brassiere, the equestrienne hesitated for a split second, but Michael gripped the reins below the bridle, and led the mare to a mounting block. "Up you go," he commanded.

Stepping into the iron stirrup, the flustered slave swung her right leg over the smooth black leather of the English saddle, while grasping the double reins of the Pelham bridle. Noting approvingly that she slipped the curb-rein between the proper fingers, and held her hands with impeccable form, Michael let go of the reins. With the ease born of an admirable athleticism, he swung into the saddle of his own mount, unfazed by any worry that the stirrup straps might rub his legs raw. "Follow me," he directed.

Posting efficiently to a smart trot, Gabrielle allowed her slim-legged mare to fall into line behind the horse bearing the man who sat his steed with awesome grace from which his near-nakedness detracted no whit. She now felt grateful for the pliable leather protecting her tender thighs from abrasion. Relief suffused her as she discovered that the stiff brassiere prevented her breasts from bouncing. The equestrienne reflecting worriedly that not once during the last thirty years had she ridden a horse nonetheless sat her mount with easy grace.

Michael took a route bordering the stream. Pulling up at a point beyond the knoll where he had enjoyed his gilded slave earlier, he bade her to pass him. "Follow the path," he instructed. "It's wide enough for us to ride abreast. I'll fall back to where I can enjoy the view."

Acutely aware that his remark in no way meant the rocky gorge into which she now guided her mare, Gabrielle laughed wickedly at him over her shoulder.

"Kick Fleet-Foot into a lope," came the imperious command from her rear.

Sitting with her ass-cheeks glued to the saddle, the equestrienne warming to the exercise thoroughly enjoyed the swift lope down the narrowing canyon. The path followed the stream that wound through outcrops of bare rock interspersed with stands of feathery foliage shaded by slender trees. Overhead, the seemingly limitless canopy shielded the untanned woman from the brazenly hot sun of the desert. Her spirits lifted; her heart raced. Easy-gaited as ever a horse could be, the Arabian responded to the slightest command transmitted through knees or reins.

Drawing alongside, Michael noted the light touch of the rider's hands, and the entrancing grace with which she sat the loping mare. Perfect, he commended her silently. This skill's purely a bonus—nothing I expected. Perfect!

Gabrielle pulled up when confronted by a tall wall of ivory masonry. Fascinated, she watched the rushing water disappear through an arched opening fitted with vertical iron bars.

Michael now took the lead. Crossing the stream, he led the way back along a new path that wound around the foot of the towering wall. When the ride ended at the point where it had begun, he feasted his eyes on the flushed, vibrant face of the athlete whose joy in the exercise matched his.

"May I...?" At her master's ready nod, Gabrielle unsaddled her mount, and turned to seek the currycomb and brush. Smiling, Michael handed her a set, and watched as she groomed the mare nuzzling her cheek with lips as soft as a woman's. When at length the two graceful animals loped away, the booted equestrienne emitted a sigh of artless joy.

Two strong hands slid around her from behind. Fingers vibrated each nipple, even as their owner nibbled an earlobe. "You sit a horse with laudable grace," Michael commended his possession. "I'm minded to treat you to a few strokes of the whip, to ready you for a long, languorous session of dalliance in my arms."

Moisture gushed into Gabrielle's cunt as she beheld the promise implicit in the tawny eyes.

Five minutes later, divested of her riding attire, nude, tremulous, she lay slackly in the arms of the man who bore her into the base of the round tower down which she had descended after entering this retreat a seeming eon ago. Instead of mounting the spiral open staircase crafted of wrought iron, he entered a stone stairwell: broad, creamy steps that wound downwards into a subterranean level of the former monastery.

Emerging into a rectangular hall which his slave concluded to lie below the unfurnished antechamber, Michael traversed that space, the slight sounds made by his bare feet sending faint echoes whispering off the stone walls. Bypassing two huge, forbidding, dark doors studded with iron, which appeared on his right and his left, he entered a smaller door to a square enclosure that the woman dimly conscious of her orientation sensed to be situated beneath the bedchamber.

This enclosure Gabrielle saw to be windowless, and silent as the tomb. No bed, no block met her eye. A pair of padded, leather-lined manacles dangled from chains above a second set of shackles attached to other links fastened to the stone-flagged floor. Farther off, she beheld a tee suspended overhead. The wall to her right featured an arched doorway. Artificial light diffused from fixtures set into the vaulted ceiling. At her left, she caught sight of a rectangular stone tabletop supported by a fluted pillar. On this reposed an array of familiar black whips, and other devices new to her.

At the instant Michael set her on her feet, she assumed the submissive position, quivering with renewed desire. "You crave the whip, eh, slave?" he queried, not troubling to hide his amusement. "At this stage of your training, I should demand that you fetter your body with your mind, and stand motionless while I pleasure myself, but I'll deign to spare you the need."

Hanging spread-eagled in the air, stretched taut, spread wide, unable to writhe even if driven to do so by the agony, Gabrielle yielded to the pain now imminent. Her face rapt, she offered herself freely, unreservedly, gladly, knowing herself this man's possession.

Dropping to one knee, Michael thrust her cunt open, satisfying himself that moisture trickled downwards into the cleft of her ass, and glistened on her thighs. "Ahh...hot and wet once more, little initiate," he purred. "Soon you'll qualify as an adept able to bear even greater torment for the pleasure of an exacting master."

Puzzled by his remark, the immobilized submissive exquisitely aware that Michael had on numerous occasions skirted the limits of her ability to bear pain without shrieking, experienced a momentary chill that died away as delicious shivers raced over the body primed to achieve a total suspension of its owner's will.

Watching as her master selected a pair of whips, Gabrielle saw them to be identical to the instrument that he had employed during the third stage of the ordeal that led to her initial experience of transcendental ecstasy. Six thongs each a half-inch in diameter and twenty-four inches long emerged from the tip of the shaft to hang limply. Michael activated the device, causing them to repel each other even as the aura of eerie blue light surrounded each tendril. Holding that implement well away from the second, he activated the latter as well. The twin sets of thongs

whistled in the air as the wielder brought them down with considerable force on each outthrust, defenseless breast.

Pain exploded in the slave's cognizance as the glowing thongs molded themselves to tender flesh. The lashes clung for thirty seconds during which the stimulus intensified cruelly. Moving both hands in steady, rhythmic motions, Michael targeted breasts, ribs, stomach, mound, hips, and ass-cheeks. With deliberate care, he set six hurtful thongs clinging both to the tender flesh of the hooded clit, and the orifice guarded by tender flaps of flesh.

When the lash fell away, he spread the quivering lips, which lay back obediently. Again, he brought up the whip-thongs squarely on the unprotected cunt. That stroke drove a hissing expulsion of breath out of the slave engulfed in agony that lanced from the shivering pussy all the way to her chest.

Rejoicing at being spared the need to control any urge to squirm, Gabrielle focused solely on the pain and its potent pleasure-echo. Conditioned now to savor that delectable minor effect while considering the agonizing portion of the stimulus to be an acceptable offering to the master deriving exquisite pleasure from inflicting it, she experienced a familiar relaxation of her cunt. Her loosening loins opened, as moisture gushed into the passage simultaneously tormented and titillated. Euphoric, exalted, she welcomed the dual stimuli, gaining a heightened sense of being immolated within a ball of blue fire for the pleasure of the master who owned her.

As the lash whistled, Gabrielle hung passively, silently, reveling in the impact producing the delicious sensation she perceived at this stage of her training, as a single, welcome sensation. Her awareness dimmed; her mind once again achieved total suspension of her will. She existed in an altered state, conscious only of an intense longing for the touch of her master's hands, and the entry of her master's cock.

The blows ceased; the pain died away. After freeing her of the restraints, Michael bore her back up the stair, to the bedchamber. Depositing her on the luxuriantly soft mattress, he thrust his head between the thighs he spread wide, and held apart with his hands.

A groan now escaped the woman raptly savoring the insistent probing of a moist tongue, the delicious tugging of soft lips, the intoxicating effects produced by the lover sucking her erect, full clit. Her outcry represented a response evoked solely by pleasure. "Ohhhh, eat me, lick me..."

A shrill ringing unexpectedly assaulted the ears of both master and slave. Rearing abruptly to a sitting position, Michael let a low, impassioned "Damn!" escape him before his habitual self-possession reasserted itself.

Poised on the verge of culmination, Gabrielle struggled to comprehend that some outside event just interrupted her ascent to ever-deepening ecstasy. Belatedly, she sat up, wondering what the jarring sound signified.

Striding into the passageway leading past the bath-chamber, Michael opened the door opposite, and entered. The heavy panel closed behind him. When he emerged a full ten minutes later, he found his property sitting cross-legged on the pale green sheet, eyeing him anxiously. She saw that his cock, rock-hard when he left, now hung flaccidly.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

More dismayed on her master's behalf than her own, Gabrielle asked, "Has something happened to upset you?"

Reaching into the bed, Michael lifted her. Seating himself on the edge, he cradled her in his arms. His eyes remote, his face distant, he rocked her for a time without answering. At length, he smiled down at the slave whose manifest concern touched him. "Not really," he replied to the question posed some time ago. "That shrill noise that issues from a panel in every chamber signals that a telephone's ringing in my office. That line's wholly private. Only members of the Order to which I told you earlier today, I belong, know the number. A call would constitute a rare enough occurrence, but this call precedes an imminent visit."

"But how...By helicopter?"

"No. By Land Rover—within thirty minutes. Raoul called from his vehicle."

Flustered by her consciousness of her nakedness, Gabrielle risked asking, "Do you wish me to dress, master?" Dark, troubled eyes fixed themselves on the man who she intuitively sensed to be disturbed rather than delighted by the unexpected news.

Still a trifle abstracted, Michael stroked her hair. To her surprise, he issued no curt directive, or harsh reprimand. At length he announced, "I'm forced to postpone the slow ascent to ecstasy I'll eventually give you, little stalwart. Of course you'll dress—but not in your pantsuit. I'll supply you a gown, shortly, but right now I'll condescend to explain what you've no need, actually, to know. Our stay here might be abruptly shortened."

Dismay deepened into stark fear that reflected nakedly from the face of the woman riveting her eyes to his.

Tightening strong arms around his cherished possession, Michael rocked her soothingly. "I've known Raoul for a considerable span of years," he informed his slave in a tone kept studiously noncommittal. "Once, long ago, he saved my life, and shortly afterwards, he did me an inestimable favor. I found myself quite unable to make him any return. I was young; far more impulsive than I am now. Drawing off the golden signet ring bearing the crest of my House, I pressed it into his hand, and passed him my word that once I carved out for myself a position of wealth and power, I'd grant him any favor he asked when he presented me with that ring. I'm bound by that word, Gabrielle. Whatever he asks—whether material goods, or service to be rendered—I'll give him. That obligation I'll count as taking precedence over any other."

"Ohh...my soul," came the astonished exclamation. "Might he claim this retreat?"

An audible sigh slid past a wide slash of a mouth, but Michael's hawk-face set like stone. "If he does, it's his," he informed his possession flatly, "but I rather doubt that he'll ask that. Raoul seldom seeks solitude. He frequents the great metropolitan areas of the world—glittering capitals in Europe, and ancient cities in Asia or India. He knows how to live sumptuously in any society—makes himself at home wherever he happens to roam." Brightening a trifle, he remarked ruminatively, "He may not even offer the ring—may choose not to ask any favor. I doubt that he needs any possession I value. He may simply wish to visit."

A premonitory chill crept down Gabrielle's spine. Wishful thinking! she protested silently,

shocked at this evidence of rigorous adherence to a stern code of which she knew next to nothing. Michael, how could you make so unqualified a promise, and then live with so dreadful a sword hanging over your head all these years? she silently castigated him. Surely this suave cosmopolite wouldn't venture across this all but unpopulated desert on a mere whim! He may well be primed to appropriate a retreat he can gain at no cost!

Impaling his belonging with a glance that chilled her, Michael divined the magnitude of her uneasiness. His amber-flecked tiger-eyes smoldered ominously as he reiterated, "Whatever favor he asks—should he ask it in your presence as well as mine—is his, slave. You'll control your face, or suffer a harsh, prolonged punishment for disobedience the instant Raoul leaves."

Scorched by the regal wrath radiating from the speaker's lean person, Gabrielle nonetheless affirmed with quiet force, "Of course, master. I'd have done so, had you issued no order."

Attuned to the subtle nuances of her voice, Michael judged her reply to be the naked truth. Placated, he lifted her, set her on her feet, and nodded. Reaching into the narrow closet integral to the tall chiffonier, he withdrew a long dress of soft, flat-black, stretchy material. Dropping the seamless sheath over her head, he drew up the tapering straps that rose from both front and back to meet at the wearer's right shoulder. Laying the ends one on top of the other, he pressed a ring of what she unerringly judged to be high-carat gold, against the cloth. Exerting care, he thrust a slender, round-headed golden pin in and out of the fabric outlined by the circlet, allowing the head and tip to rest on indentations in the ring. Having thus secured the straps, he smiled as he drawled, "So. Black suits you, little hothouse flower."

Glancing at her image in the mirror, Gabrielle saw that the gown clung to her body as it descended from that one shoulder. The soft fabric covered her breasts, but plainly revealed their curves. The drapery emphasized the slenderness of her waist and the flare of her hips, before falling in graceful straight lines to her ankles.

Studying her reflection, she noted that while nowise sheer, the soft, clinging fabric allowed the outlines of her nipples to show. Grateful at least that the dress covered her breasts, and followed classic lines rather than imitating the tight, blatantly provocative evening wear so often seen on celebrities, she harbored no reluctance to appear before a total stranger clad thus.

Her master now attached tiny gold earrings, each set with a single pearl. "Lovely, you are," he assured her, smiling possessively. "You need no slippers. Your slender, prettily arched feet delight the eye."

Feeling like a member of an Oriental harem, Gabrielle watched the host don a black, tightly fitting, pull-on, short-sleeved shirt tailored of material identical to that of the gown. When he stepped into tight, black, matching pants, she noticed that they revealed the outline of his sexual organs. His bare feet he thrust into slippers of the same material, which stretched to fit.

The scholar intrigued by the revealing garb studied the elegant silver pin, approximately an inch and a quarter in diameter, fastened high on the right side of Michael's shirt. The design she instantly identified as the crest of his House, wrought of metallic strands cunningly interwoven so as to reproduce the intricate heraldic design. She deduced that the signet ring, should it appear, would sport the same device. As she conceded that his attire hid nothing of his virility, a thought impinged that set her smiling wryly. I've grown so used to nakedness that I didn't even notice until now that our formal dress isn't meant to be worn over undergarments!

At that moment, a chime sounded from the same small panel that earlier relayed the shrill ring

of the telephone.

Taking the arm of his possession, Michael escorted her to the exit leading into the garden. Striding down a path new to the slave afflicted by vague fears that this day might end with her master's suffering a severe, exquisitely painful loss, he advanced down the flagged walk that wound among several tall outcrops of rock, and stopped before a tall gateway set into an ivory wall. The massive wooden door swung wide at his voice-command.

Beyond the portal lay the desert. The sun hung low in the sky: a blaze of molten gold. Ten feet from the gate, casting a long, dark shadow, reposed a dusty Land Rover. On the threshold stood a tall man who Gabrielle saw to be garbed exactly as was his fellow member of a mysterious order. The only difference lay in the design of the crest outlined in silver tracery.

The intent beholder formed only a fleeting impression of the guest before he strode forward to meet the host advancing with outstretched arms. The two men embraced: clasped each other tightly for a span of seconds, before holding each other at arms' length, and raking each other's countenance with quizzical, appraising eyes.

"Raoul, it's been far too long," Michael breathed, smiling at the newcomer with manifest warmth.

Strikingly handsome. Thus did Gabrielle instantly categorize the stranger. Black brows arched over wide-set eyes so deeply blue-green, so variegated in hue, that they seemed iridescent. A few tiny lines clawed out from the eyes; two deep creases slanted away from the long, straight, patrician nose. A wide, sensitive mouth, the upper lip bowed, the lower full, she saw to be separated from the firm, clean line of an iron jaw by a pronounced cleft. The pleasingly chiseled plane of one cheekbone bore a long, straight, thin, white scar: a defect that seemed to emphasize rather than mar the perfect harmony of the aristocratic features. The smooth, vibrantly alive skin the intrigued beholder saw to be darker than Michael's.

Unable to decide whether that hue represented its natural color, or a light tan produced by exposure to the sun, she dismissed the question as irrelevant. The man's smile, dynamic, quintessentially masculine, irresistibly appealing, set her heart beating a shade faster, even though she knew the smile to be directed at the associate whose arms the guest still gripped. Raoul she saw to be fully as ageless as Michael. No—more so, she marveled. He's got to be older, surely, she ruminated perplexedly, but he looks fifty. No more, I'll wager. Less?

As she debated with herself, Raoul scanned the lean face of his host. "You've changed, *mon ami*," he averred, raising an eyebrow. "You're far more conscious of your maturity—of your power. Success becomes you, Michael. A rare gift, that. So often it spoils a man—renders him arrogant—coarsens him."

"It never spoiled you," Michael countered, laughing softly.

"I thank you. And who is this delight to eyes nearly burnt out of their sockets by the glare of a pitiless sun?"

"This is Gabrielle—my slave." The overtone of pride suffusing the host's melodious voice quickened his possession's pulse-rate, even as she wondered that he would describe her as such to this worldly guest. But likely Raoul shares his tastes, she reminded herself. Is that a characteristic of the Order?

A pair of mesmerizing eyes now impaled the woman reacting at some subliminal level to the

powerful sexual appeal that this commanding stranger projected. Reaching for her hand, he bent, and kissed it in a gesture wholly lacking any theatrical nuance. His salute came across as supremely natural—princely. When he rose, he smiled with magnetic warmth into the beguiling face upturned to his. “Fortunate, the man who commands your heart, *ma belle*,” he affirmed gallantly.

His voice, deep, resonant, and ever so slightly accented, set Gabrielle’s heart fibrillating. A half-century of social conditioning operated to prevent her making the sort of conscious response which this man’s overpowering male appeal might have provoked in a younger, less inhibited woman. The scholar grew sensible of the impact without being consciously aware of reacting. Her piquant face radiated ingenuous, wholly friendly warmth—nothing else.

Her response entranced the guest, even as it sent fierce pride surging through the man searching for the least hint of any behavior he could condemn as unseemly. Incipient jealousy swiftly faded. Laying one arm over Raoul’s shoulder while tucking his slave’s arm under the other, Michael conducted his visitor to what Gabrielle mentally classed as his castle.

Noting that the doors opened at the host’s voice-command, Raoul shook his head, and laughed. “Even so quaintly monastic a retreat bears the unmistakable signature of your mechanical genius,” he complimented the engineer.

Stopping to gaze into the quadrangle distinguished by the plume of water and the gleaming black sculpture, he smiled appreciatively. “Ahhh—lovely, the fountain. That sound reminds me of a Moorish palace in Spain...brings back decidedly pleasant memories.” A soft sigh, evocative of regret, escaped the guest. For an instant his handsome face lost its animation, and grew infinitely, startlingly world-weary. In the eyes of the woman watching in fascination, the visitor seemed for a fleeting second, far older. Before she could fully record that impression in her memory, the moment passed.

Michael escorted his companions down the cloistered walk bordering the stone facade of this wing of the castle. The door at which he stopped required manual unlatching. Standing aside, he waved the guest inside.

Following in Raoul’s wake, Gabrielle beheld a bed as huge as that gracing the spacious master bedroom—part of a set of furniture fully as impressive as that which Michael reserved for himself. This bed sported a plum-colored, down-filled, silk-covered quilt, laid over a sheet of the same delicate hue. A profusion of matching pillows rested against the tall headboard. A narrow fireplace constructed of the same dark stone as the larger hearth in the dining area, rose against one wall. A fire had been laid on the grate, ready for ignition. An iron support flanking the hearth held a generous supply of split pinewood.

“You’ve a private bath, through there, Raoul,” Michael announced, pointing to an arched doorway. “I doubt that you’ve lost your liking for cozy warmth, so I’ll light the fire now.”

An eloquent shrug of massive shoulders accompanied a rueful glance directed at the lovely woman gazing understandingly at the guest. “I’m heat-loving as a pampered house-cat,” Raoul admitted candidly. “A weakness my friends indulge.”

“I love a crackling fire,” the slave confided, smiling with patent warmth.

Over the elaborate, packaged dinners no less delicious for having been frozen before being cooked in the microwave oven, the three companions engaged in a lively conversation. Gabrielle

noted admiringly that the suave world-traveler well able to dominate the discourse exerted himself to draw her out. The delight he exhibited after discovering her to be an historian, she judged absolutely genuine. Raoul turned the talk to European history, and then to Asian, spicing his shrewd comments with fascinating portraits of ancient cities. Actively soliciting Michael's opinions as well as those of the scholar hanging on his words, he occasionally related a short, riveting tale of one of his many adventures.

Entranced, the historian experienced an upsurge of poignant yearning: a wish to visit exotic places known only to her through deep and extensive reading.

After clearing away the plates, Michael served a wine that intoxicated not by its alcoholic content, but by its rare and exquisite bouquet. Having inhaled the tantalizing fragrance, Raoul closed his eyes, and then opened them wide. He sipped, his face expressive of wonder as he assessed the effect on his palate. "*C'est magnifique*," he breathed. "I regard myself as privileged."

Inclining his head, the host smiled at a fellow connoisseur over the rim of his glass.

When at last the meal ended, Michael picked up the bottle, taking care not to disturb the contents. "Bring your goblets," he invited. "We'll sit by the fire, and enjoy another glass after savoring the effect of the first."

Waving Raoul into one recliner, Michael caught the eye of his slave, and pointed to a plump cushion resting on the flagging between the two sturdy seats. When she obediently settled upon it, he dropped with lithe grace into the other chair. Setting the bottle on the table to his left, he toyed idly with a lock of his chattel's hair, as if to demonstrate possessiveness.

The fire crackled on the hearth. The three companions sat within the circle of light cast by the massive chandelier: the only fixture Michael had set alight. The soft radiance established a mood of coziness that rendered the company forgetful of the spacious expanse on three sides, now shrouded in dimness.

Perfectly at ease, Raoul leaned back in his chair, which angled, as did Michael's, so that the men could view each other's faces while still seeing the fire in their peripheral vision. His resonant voice grew meditative, but his smile attested to malicious amusement: the sort of look one friend bestows on another when holding a hand of cards featuring four aces. Thrusting a hand into a pocket, he withdrew a small object that gleamed in the firelight. Leaning forward, he reached across the woman seated on the cushion, and passed the familiar item to his host. "You recall giving me this," he remarked blandly.

Michael stared at the signet ring resting in the palm of his friend's hand. No sign that his gut clenched, that his heart hammered, showed on the face he controlled to perfection. His smile serene, warm, he nodded. "Most assuredly. You have only to ask, Raoul, for the favor I'll bestow gratefully and readily." No slightest hesitation marked that gracious acknowledgment. Languidly, he passed the ring back to the guest, as if to emphasize that he would repossess it only after granting whatever boon the guest asked.

Torn between admiration for her master's regal bearing, and fear that this moment might end with his being deprived of the estate she intuitively knew that he loved, Gabrielle ceased to breathe. Her heart raced as she waited for the blow to fall.

"Ahhh...but yes. *Mon ami*, I find myself at a low point in my life: a crisis, as it were. I've grown world-weary...jaded, even. That malaise drove me to seek solitude broken only by the

company of a well-loved friend. I little dreamed that a man so withdrawn, so averse to living among his peers, would possess a priceless remedy for my pain. I ask that you grant me the use of your slave—that you assist me to enjoy the so lovely woman at your side, tonight, and tomorrow. I further request that when I depart tomorrow at sunset, you allow this beguiling dame to choose freely between us—to stay with her current master, or leave with a new owner.”

The shock fogging Gabrielle’s vision rendered her—fortunately—speechless. Not so much as a gasp passed lips gone bloodless. Frozen into immobility, she sat still as if carved of ice.

Agony ripped through Michael’s mind. Pain tore at his vitals, and constricted his chest. Exerting the stern self-mastery on which he so prided himself, he managed to control his face. Turning, he examined that of the possession sitting rigidly still at his side, so as to assess whether she might disgrace him. His eyes impaled those gone wide with shock. His whole aspect palpably threatened.

Fear enveloped the recipient of that manifestly plain warning: fear that contended with nascent outrage, and held her mute.

“I offer you my slave freely and gladly, Raoul. You’ve but to ask, and I’ll dispose her body as you direct. Priceless indeed, this diverting lovetoy. Should she choose a new master tomorrow at sunset, she’ll enter upon a new life.”

Michael—how could you so casually part with me! Gabrielle shrieked within her mind. You just told me you love me! Anguish seared the emotionally vulnerable woman scarred by her prior experience.

“Of course, *mon ami*, I can prove myself free of any sexually transmitted disease,” came the firm assurance Michael expected, but considered—knowing this man—a mere formality.

“As can I, old friend. Your word suffices, for me.”

“As does yours for me.”

The satisfaction radiating from the iridescent eyes of the guest subtly galvanized his lithe, robust body. Taller and more broad-shouldered than his host, endowed with more pronounced muscularity, he yet projected a supple, feline grace which forcibly reminded the distraught woman studying him minutely, of the youthful star of her alma mater’s widely renowned fencing team. Even through her violent agitation, she leaped to a wholly accurate conclusion. That fluid grace, the thin scar on the cheek...This man’s a duelist! A killer? Oh, my soul, Michael, how could you so casually offer the woman you profess to love, to this dangerous adventurer? How could you?

The slave so submissive when whipped by the master who for years now existed in her eyes as the ideal lover, generated hot wrath at his using her body as the coin with which to settle this thrice-damned debt. Even so, she failed to tear her eyes away from the sophisticated world-traveler whose masculine appeal now seemed magnified in her awareness. Her anger subsided somewhat as Raoul favored her with a magnetic smile projecting an anticipation almost boyish.

Expecting to behold naked lust, Gabrielle found his reaction not only reassuring, but also arousing. Offering no slightest resistance as her master lifted her to her feet, she quivered more with desire than fear, when he turned her body so that she stood with her back against his torso, facing the holder of the ring. With a single, deft movement of a hand, Michael withdrew the slim gold pin that pierced the fabric at her shoulder. The clinging sheath slid precipitately down her torso, to lie in a heap on the flagging. Gabrielle stood nude before the guest examining with

manifestly appreciative eyes, the shapely body framed in the firelight.

The convulsive inhalation of breath forming the only sound she uttered, caused Michael to tighten his grip on her arm briefly but painfully, before releasing her.

Raoul sat relaxed, his face as serene as that of his host. “Ahhhh...*ravissante*,” he observed, his luminous eyes darkening. “Clasp your hands behind your head, *mon amie*. So. Now walk forward, that I may feast my eyes on your loveliness.”

Flushing crimson at having so far succumbed to agitation as to fail to assume the submissive position without being ordered to do so, Gabrielle approached the recliner rocked only slightly backwards, and stood as the guest commanded, her eyes downcast.

Raoul twisted his lithe body, so that both knees turned to his left. Laying his right hand flat on one cheek of her ass, he drew her even closer. “Spread your legs, *mon bijou*,” he commanded. His brow furrowed as he minutely inspected the smooth white skin of the slave’s abdomen, the snowy fullness of her breasts, the soft contours of her inner thighs. Tilting his head, he glanced inquiringly at the man standing to her rear, and slightly to one side. “Not the faintest marking,” he noted, raising an eyebrow. “No welt, no bruise, not the tiniest white scar. Surely this so enchanting slave’s no novice?”

“She’s an initiate who stands on the threshold of becoming adept,” Michael responded equably, while cringing inwardly.

Enlightenment overspread the handsome face of the man still shaking his head. “But of course,” he acknowledged, his admiration manifest to the host. “You’ve invented instruments which leave no mark. Most intriguing, that notion. Turn, *ma chérie*, and divest your master of his attire.”

Taken aback as the realization drove home to her that this man about to make himself free of her defenseless body evidently employed leather whips rather than electronic stimulation, Gabrielle nonetheless complied with the order, recalling all too well Michael’s overt threat regarding punishment. Thrusting the black shirt upwards, she drew it off over the head of the master whose tawny eyes vividly reiterated the warning issued so short a time ago. Willing her hands not to shake, she loosed the fastening of his pants, and thrust the clinging fabric downwards. Dropping to her knees, she drew off the slippers, and then the pants. Without conscious thought, she folded the garments, and laid them in a neat pile on the stone flagging, next to the hearth.

“Now undress me, *ma fleur*.”

Her heart racing, Gabrielle leaned over the chair where Raoul still reclined, and lifted his shirt over his upraised arms. Kneeling, she drew off his slippers, regarding him with askance when she finished.

In a single sinuous movement, he rose, so as to allow her to remove his pants. When he stood naked, the woman staring through a shimmering veil of agitation saw that his skin uniformly displayed the light tan hue that she earlier surmised might be due to exposure to sun. That discovery satisfying idle curiosity fled her mind as a riveting sight impacted her consciousness. Raoul’s cock, erect, engorged, exceeded Michael’s generous endowment in thickness, and even in length. My perishing soul, will he fuck me in the ass with that pole? Fear racked the slave whose eyes, pleading, apprehensive, met those of the guest who lifted her to her feet.

Stepping back, Raoul savored the satisfaction produced by the woman’s tremulous, docile

demeanor. As she stood in the submissive posture, he cupped a breast in his hand, and palpitated a nipple with a forefinger. A delicious cascade of shivers lanced down the body of the recipient of that sensuous, unthreatening caress.

Having toyed with the nipple for a time, the guest ran his hand down to rest the palm on a cheek of the woman's rear. Dropping to sit on the edge of the recliner-seat, he drew Gabrielle's hips towards him. A long middle finger of the hand sliding between her legs from behind, penetrated the cunt lushly lubricated despite—or perhaps because of—her flustered state. The guest's palm pressed upwards against her ass-cheeks; the intrusive finger massaged a most sensitive place, even as the forefinger thrust along the wet flesh until its tip vibrated the clit rapidly stiffening from the stimulation. New waves of delicious shivers now radiated back up through Gabrielle's abdomen, clear to her breasts.

The hand withdrew. Rising, Raoul guided her to a spot on the floor directly in front of the fireplace, but at some distance beyond the circle of light cast by the chandelier. Standing with her hands clasped behind her head, facing away from the fire, she heard him bid her to stand thus until he summoned her. The guest strolling back to his chair smiled on the man standing with his back to the fire, dominating the searing emotion causing his gut to seem tied by cruelly barbed wire.

“Ah, *mon ami*, you're a connoisseur in more respects than one,” the guest acknowledged mischievously. “Surely there's some chamber close by, where you keep the instruments I so long to examine?”

“There surely is, but we needn't leave the fireside, Raoul. This cabinet holds the prototypes—an example of every implement I've ever crafted. Shall I display the trays while you enjoy a second glass of wine?”

“*Bien entendu!*” came the appreciative, eager reply. “By all means, exhibit them here.”

Gabrielle stood erect, still, her loins stirring, her skin a playground for shivers, while Michael explained the operation and function of the devices that caused both intense pain and the ghostly echo of pleasure. Fascinated, Raoul examined them, activating some, the better to understand their function. “You've duplicates,” he noted, frowning in perplexity.

“No. Those I used paired—one in each hand.”

“Ah, but yes. These are what you employ to begin?”

“Yes. And these. The devices in the lowest drawer, I've never used on Gabrielle.”

“Mmm. Which whip do you favor at this stage of her training?”

“This.” Lifting two replicas of the heavier, longer whips he had employed that afternoon, Michael handed the pair to the guest.

Raoul activated one of the implements. Holding it extended, he smiled roguishly at a fellow master of erotic art. “One must make the experiment which immediately suggests itself, *n'est-ce pas?*” he asked, his question purely rhetorical. Dropping his eyes to his turgid cock, he flicked the lash against that ultrasensitive flesh, letting the tips of three thongs bathed in the blue aura make contact. A convulsive shudder rippled through his hard-muscled body, but his magnificent prick failed to lose its erection.

Standing as if cast in bronze, Raoul savored the effect, his eyes lidded. “I see what you mean about the echo of pleasure,” he conceded admiringly. “Amazing, your invention. A milestone in

the enjoyment of sensuality.” Only then did he touch the switch. His superb endowment remained rigid as the thongs slid off to hang limply from the whipshaft.

Michael’s eyes riveted themselves not to the triumphantly erect tool, but to the iron hand gripping the device. Mentally, he braced himself to comply graciously with the demand he knew to be imminent. “You’ll join me, when I enjoy your delectable lady, eh, *mon ami*? But the prelude to rapture—that I’ll orchestrate. She’ll need a support to grasp, as I test both the efficacy of your so unique instruments, and Gabrielle’s submissiveness. What do you suggest?”

“I’ll lower the chandelier, as I do to replace the bulbs,” Michael offered, his lean hawk-face a mask of calm. Striding to a panel on the wall, he touched a switch, thereby lowering the massive ring of wrought iron suspended by three stout chains. The circle of illumination provided by the six globed lamps shrank in size, but increased in intensity, as the fixture soundlessly descended to a height barely greater than the top of Raoul’s head. The host remained where he stood, prepared to fine-tune the adjustment.

“Come here, *ma chérie*,” the guest commanded, his resonant voice hypnotic—irresistibly compelling.

Trembling with a combination of resentment directed at Michael, apprehension sparked by Raoul’s words, and hot desire engendered by this stranger’s raw masculinity, Gabrielle positioned herself beneath the fixture, to stand facing the muscular athlete gripping two inactivated whips in his left hand. Shivers coursed across her skin, despite the warmth from the fire.

“So docile,” the guest murmured, palpitating a nipple that hardened even further under his touch. “Do you offer yourself to me willingly, Gabrielle? Acquiesce in the act by which Michael preserves his unstained honor?”

Impaled by the imperious glance of the handsome sensualist whose eyes seemed to search her very soul, the slave wounded in her vulnerable self-esteem at her master’s valuing her less than he did this associate claiming a right she regarded as bizarre, found herself reconsidering her reaction. Michael’s acting as his code demands, she acknowledged bleakly. If he loses what he perceives to be his honor because I flinch at this crucial juncture, the love he professes to feel for me will turn to hatred. But if I consent, can I ever grow to love a man who doesn’t cavil in the least at handing me over to this stranger in payment of a debt?

Torn by the inner conflict convulsing her, Gabrielle yet melted inwardly as a hand moved slowly, sensuously, down the flesh of her torso. Responding to the caress offered by this potently attractive cosmopolite whose touch set her nerve-endings vibrating, she succumbed to an onslaught of primitive, all-consuming desire. “Yes,” she breathed, that consent wrenched out of her not by concern for her master’s honor, but by a sudden, inexplicable compulsion to yield absolutely to this masterful stranger.

Standing as if carved of the same stone as the walls, Michael unerringly divined the motivation prompting that whispered consent. Pain lanced through his heart to claw at his vitals, but no hint of that agony showed on his mobile face.

“Grasp the ring,” Raoul ordered.

Obediently, Gabrielle closed her palms around the smooth iron, keeping her hands far enough apart so that her head failed to touch her arms. “Spread your legs wide,” she heard the guest command. When she obeyed, Michael adjusted the height of the fixture so that the slave’s feet

remained flat on the flagging, while her arms stretched upwards to their fullest extent.

Advancing to observe from a spot closer to the participants in the drama, he stood motionless, his face expressionless, willing himself to offer his precious possession with debonair grace, as his honor demanded.

Raoul swung the dual whips against the nude woman's sides, minutely searching her face, her arms, her torso, her legs, for the least sign that she flinched, that she tensed, that she writhed. He spied none. Smiling with patent satisfaction, he brought the whistling thongs down on her breasts, and let them cling.

Pain enveloped the tender flesh so recently stimulated in similar fashion. Denied the ascent to ecstasy that ought to have followed the surrendering of her will during that prior whipping, Gabrielle felt the desire suffusing her deepen to an unbearable intensity. I want Raoul! she cried distractedly to her alter ego. I want to surrender to this dangerous stranger fully as cruel to Michael as to me! I want that huge pole in my cunt!

As if to emphasize her awareness of that part of herself, the lash rose between her outstretched legs, targeting the aperture from which moisture exuded. Agony engulfed the slave exquisitely conscious of being desired by the whip-wielder—dominated by him. Submitting willingly now to this new master, Gabrielle yielded her body to the strokes dealt by his hand, shrinking no whit under the lash.

At length, Raoul ceased plying the instrument. His fingers thrust deeply into her lushly lubricated love-tunnel. With deliberate care, he pressed her moist pussy-lips back from the aperture they guarded. The thongs again darted upwards, flaying that tender, wholly exposed flesh. A soft exhalation of breath hissed past the euphoric slave's lips. Without conscious volition, she squeezed, as if the huge, rigid cock riveting her eyes already drove into her opening, loosening, yielding feminine depth.

The whiplashes fell away. Having deactivated the device, Raoul retracted the thongs. Thrusting the shaft deeply into the passage awash in the slave's jism, he set it clinging. The cruelly intensified pain erupting in the cunt voluntarily opened to the man inflicting agony, put to a rigorous test Gabrielle's ability to bear the sensation without writhing, crying out, or worse, letting go of the iron ring she clutched in a death-grip.

Nonetheless, she stood without flinching, surrendering her tormented flesh, her weakening will, to this virile new master. The hand gripping the handle of the device worked it back and forth, causing the flesh in contact with the surface to move with the shaft. Letting go of the handle which he left protruding from the passage, Raoul circled the woman's body, and whipped her ass, not omitting to lay the thongs deep in the cleft between the quivering cheeks.

Tiring eventually of that game, he circled once more. The lash descended on each breast in turn. Laying the whip aside, the guest again manipulated the handle of the device lodged in Gabrielle's moist, pain-racked feminine depth.

Agony assailed the slave bound by no fetters, even as her mind achieved the euphoria to which perfect submissiveness now raised her. The intense pain, the eerie pleasure-echo, the languorous pliancy of her limbs and torso engendered by her consciousness of being owned, of being desired, of being used for this fascinating stranger's pleasure, merged into a single heavy sensation that lifted her to an unprecedented height of rapture. Achieving a total suspension of her will, she entered a mental realm bordering on trance.

The pain enveloping her cunt died away as if it had never been. That tormenting her breast vanished. Befogged, she felt herself lifted, and held against a broad chest thatched with a pelt of fine black hair. “*Quelle bravoure!*” came the soft murmur falling on her diminished consciousness like a welcome accolade.

Striding to the fireplace, Raoul inclined his head to the man composedly awaiting his guest’s pleasure. “Recline on the seat you lower to its fullest extent, *mon ami*,” he urged, smiling on the host whose cock he saw to be rock-hard. “We’ll together offer this deliciously submissive lady the relief she so needs, before she pleasures us. Eh?”

Nodding, Michael unhurriedly seated himself. With a touch, he lowered the recliner so that he lay supine on the surface now almost flat.

A troubling afterthought struck Raoul. Seating himself on a hassock that he dragged close to his chair, he turned his burden so that she lay face down, across his lap, bent at the hips. As strong fingers spread her ass-cheeks, he inspected her puckered brown anus. Casting an inquiring glance at the host reclining in the seat, he asked, “Is this tempting orifice virgin?”

“No,” came the perfectly equable reply. “But she’s tight, Raoul. I employ lavish lubrication when I enjoy her in that manner.”

“I see. It would be a pity to tear her there, I agree. Is that bottle in the cabinet what you employ?”

“It is.”

Raoul again gathered into his arms the slack body of the pliant slave whose desire proved greater than the fear suddenly assailing her. Lifting her so that her breasts pressed against his chest as her head rested on his shoulder, he supported her with a corded forearm under her ass, much as a mother carries a sleeping child when she needs a free hand. While thus encumbered, the guest removed the bottle from the cabinet. “Lave your manhood, *mon ami*,” he instructed with a smile, letting the bottle fall into Michael’s lap.

Gabrielle offered no slightest resistance as hands of iron shifted her into a new position. Slipping an arm under her knees, and another below her back, Raoul moved so that she bent forward at the hips. Exerting magnificent strength, he thrust his arms outward, and lowered her curled body so that the head of his fellow master’s lushly lubricated organ pressed against her anus. Michael guided his shaft as Raoul thrust the slave forcefully downwards, impaling her ass on his friend’s upraised cock. He then laid her supine, her head on Michael’s shoulder, her torso resting atop that of her master.

Circling to the front of the lowered recliner, he thrust the passive lovetoy’s legs wide. Michael’s legs moved apart of themselves, as he bent his knees and dropped his calves over either side of the footrest. Kneeling between the legs of the partner penetrated in the rear, Raoul leaned forward, and closed his mouth over her erect, full clit.

Setting the fingers of each hand curling under a breast, Michael vibrated both of his chattel’s nipples simultaneously. Slowly, languidly, he thrust into her anus, employing just enough force so that she experienced the penetrations as a background to the exquisite pleasure generated by the probing tongue tracing each fold of flesh hooding her throbbing clit. The tongue circled the ultrasensitive tip, causing pleasure so intense as to border pain.

Just as she judged the intoxicating dual sensations to be more than she could bear, she felt the

moist mouth enfold the erect shaft, and suck as if to tear her organ of pleasure loose from its base. Groaning in rapture, she arched her body. Hands spread her thighs. The invading tongue now swept in long strokes up the back of her clit, and then retreated to penetrate shallowly into the cunt oozing juice. Moaning, she thrust upwards even as the rigid cock driving into her anus lifted her. Rising, Raoul thrust his massive manhood deeply into the woman sobbing with pleasure.

Squeezing as if to milk the intruding tool of its essence, Gabrielle unwittingly offered exquisite stimulation simultaneously to the two masters between whom she lay sandwiched. His upper body supported on his hands, Raoul thrust in synchrony with the man driving his pelvis upwards as he repeatedly penetrated the wet back passage of his slave.

Reminded of the time when she lay stretched immobile, worked by two nonhuman shafts, Gabrielle's bedimmed rational faculty made the inevitable comparison. Instantly, she deemed this experience even more profoundly erotic than that earlier one. Michael's hands kneaded her breasts, and vibrated her nipples. Wave after wave of delicious sensation lifted her to ever-more-intense pleasure that drove her into a prolonged climax. A long, throaty cry emerged from between parted lips as the contractions felt by three joined partners sent the dually pleased slave into ecstasy.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Only dimly aware of her surroundings, Gabrielle felt herself lifted off Michael's body, and cradled in the brawny arms of his guest. Noting that Michael's manhood still reared as stiffly upwards as did his own, Raoul acknowledged within the privacy of his thoughts that the host's self-control equaled that in which he himself took fierce pride. Standing the woman in his arms on her feet, he supported her until the giddiness passed, and her mind again focused on the deep, resonant voice addressing her.

"*Eh bien, mon ange?* Did we lift you to the heights?"

"Yes," came the breathless whisper.

"So now you'll pleasure your master as you offer yourself to me. But first, fetch a basin and cloth, *ma chérie*, and wash your master's cock. Relieve yourself, if you feel the need."

"There's a basin in the guest-washroom, Gabrielle," Michael informed his belonging in a lazy drawl.

Still befogged by the aftermath of ecstasy, his slave retired to the facility where she filled the basin, and soaped a cloth. Awash in bliss, she took the time to relieve herself, grateful for the privacy. Hastening back lest she arouse the anger of either autocrat, or both, she washed the cock of the complaisant owner who raised his recliner upright to facilitate her efforts. Disturbed anew by Michael's willingness to allow Raoul not only to use her body as he pleased, but also to dispose that of his host as he wished, she mentally compared the masterful stranger to a theatrical director choreographing the actions of three intertwined actors.

Setting the basin next to the two sets of folded clothing, Gabrielle advanced to face the guest seated in the other chair. Despite her inner turmoil—wounded feelings further lacerated by resentment directed solely at the owner who seemed utterly unfazed by the possibility that she might choose to leave, tomorrow, with this magnetic persona raking her with eyes dark with passion—she yet trembled with primitive, hot need. Standing submissively with eyes downcast, she discovered her field of vision to be wholly filled with the sight of Raoul's huge, rock-hard prick.

Rising with feline grace, the guest guided her to a position facing the man she perceived as airily unconcerned about her feelings. "Bend forward, *mon trésor*, and with your mouth beguile your master into favoring you with the divine draught soon to issue from his *lance d'amour*," came the peremptory command.

As she sought to kneel, Gabrielle felt strong hands grip her hips. "No, no, petite ingénue," her mentor reproved her. "Bend from the hips. I'll provide you support, never fear."

Stricken with dire apprehension as she braced for the entry of that massive cock into the ass she nonetheless submissively opened, Gabrielle took Michael's hard prick deeply into her mouth. Delight surged through her as Raoul's huge tool targeted not her anus, but her cunt. The owner of that imposing endowment drove deeply into her from behind, while pulling her hips towards him. The triple contact of Michael's shaft in her mouth, Michael's fingers teasing her nipples, and Raoul's magnificent love-lance thrusting repeatedly into her pain-free, slippery, convulsively squeezing passage while his fingers worked her rock-hard clit, sent waves of exquisite pleasure

shooting down, and then up, the shivering slave's entire torso.

Stimulated so intensely that her entire existence seemed centered in her loins, the initiate outdid herself to please the man groaning with pleasure as she sucked him greedily. Changing tactics, she took him deep in her throat even as he relaxed that extraordinary control he habitually exerted. Eagerly, she swallowed an explosion of her master's juice at the same moment that Raoul ejected the voluminous essence of his passion into her convulsively contracting cunt.

Her chest heaving, her heart pounding almost audibly, her eyes glazed, her body trembling, Gabrielle grew dimly aware of huge hands pulling her upwards and backwards, to lift her, and finally cradle her in strong arms. A deep, compelling voice murmured soft endearments as she sagged inertly against this new master's chest. "Charmingly done, *petite sensualiste*. You do indeed stand on the threshold of growing adept. So. You need to sleep—to dream. Michael, *mon ami*, we must address the problem of the virginal back passage of this otherwise perfect partner. The ingenious instrument I so admired will serve, will it not? Stretch her there, while your lady sleeps in my arms, warmed by your body and mine?"

"It'll help, Raoul, but the pain will be so intense as to deprive her of sleep. No matter. She exists for your pleasure, tonight and tomorrow."

On hearing that ominous exchange, Gabrielle stirred. All but imperceptibly, she tensed, prompting Raoul to stroke her brow, and smile with reassuring warmth. "She'll sleep, never fear. Oblige me by fetching the contrivance, along with those so intriguing rings, and the governing shield. And I beg, also my pants."

His gut knotted by a combination of fear and a devastating sense of loss, Michael strode to the cabinet. Too soon, for too short a time! he groused in silent protest. This treasure's delicate—barely waked from innocence. Damn!

No hint of his inner perturbation showed on the host's face, but Raoul sensed his reluctance. "Not to worry, *mon ami*. Your flawless lady's mature—well able to relax, and savor the delights I've yet to give her. I'll hold her, while you insert the device. It can't harm her, eh?"

"No. It senses when her sphincter becomes stretched so wide as to approach the danger point, and stops expanding. But one night falls short of the time required to accomplish the maximum effect."

"Ah, but it will make the necessary difference."

Strong hands again lifted the still pliant, but inwardly frightened slave. Turning her, Raoul draped her limber body over two iron thighs. Fingers spread her ass-cheeks, exposing her shrinking anus. Michael lubricated the object he now produced: a narrow shaft seven inches in length, wider at the lower third of its tapering length than at the upper part. Holding the item by its large end, he inserted it into his chattel's rear, pressing until the flared base clung by electrostatic attraction to the skin of her cleft and cheeks.

Astonished to find the implement slender, Gabrielle relaxed, having lost her fear. That premature relief she soon found to be totally unwarranted.

A touch of a finger on the center of the base set the shaft expanding: widening slowly and inexorably. The pain thus generated swiftly increased, as relatively inelastic tissue stretched to accommodate the inflating object. A gasp escaped the woman fighting an all but irresistible urge to clap both hands over the base and tear the swelling monstrosity free. Just as she concluded that the

instrument would rip her open, it ceased widening. A second touch set the whip-pain coursing through the passage now cruelly distended.

Oh, I can't take this all night! she cried to her alter ego. I can't!

Lifting her, Raoul turned her so that she lay supine, her ass in his lap, her back supported by his arm, as Michael affixed a shield to her shaven mound. Under the intent gaze of the guest intrigued by the operation, he slipped two wafer-thin discs over the nipples gone soft, small. A touch on the shield set the pleasure-pain coursing through every sensitive area of the slave's body. The keen observer, judging in the light of his own experiment just how intense pain originating in multiple sites must be, saw with delight that the sufferer's nipples nonetheless grew erect.

Raoul held out a free arm. "Let me reach into the pocket of my pants," he instructed. Thrusting a hand into the garment Michael proffered, he withdrew a tiny vial: one of several. Satisfied that he grasped the right one, he nodded. Deftly, he twisted the top between two fingers. "Support her back," he directed the man who obligingly held Gabrielle positioned on the guest's lap.

Having forced her mouth open, Raoul squirted two drops of the contents on her tongue, and firmly closed the jaw of the woman now convulsively swallowing the bitter liquid. Smiling up at the witness whose shock showed fleetingly in his eyes, the guest hastened to reassure his host.

"Totally harmless, the potion," he protested vehemently. "A mild dose of muscle-relaxant which will take effect immediately, combined with a soporific that will produce drowsiness, and gradually induce a natural, healing sleep. This so lovely lady will dream of pleasure while subliminally aware of pain that she'll accept as inevitable, and come to regard as enjoyable. She'll associate that pain with her equally subliminal awareness of the touch of our hands, and the warmth of the bodies of the masters lying on either side of her. What she experiences while asleep will subtly enhance her ability to welcome pain."

The deeply disconcerted slave now became exquisitely conscious that her limbs grew alarmingly sluggish. Driven to risk angering her owner, she fixed imploring, fearful eyes on the guest holding her. "Enjoy your helplessness, *ma mignonne*," Raoul bade her cajoling, smiling in manifest amusement. "You lie wholly vulnerable—loosened, opened, unable to do other than savor the pain and the pleasure. You'll drift off to sleep soon. Calm your mind, *ma fleur*. There can be no ecstasy without submission: unqualified, willing acceptance of domination by your masters. You exist for our pleasure."

Clasping in his arms the woman whose limbs now possessed no power to stir, Raoul rose to his feet. "Shall we retire?" he inquired of the host, inclining his head in askance.

"By all means," came the courteous acquiescence. Having led the way to the guest-chamber, Michael stood back, allowing the visitor to precede him through the portal. Warmth enveloped both men.

The host turned back the silken quilt. "Remove it," Raoul directed. "You hate coverings, as I well know. The fire serves my need, *mon ami*." As the host whisked the coverlet away, the bearer laid the inert, pain-racked body of the slave in the center of the bed. Reclining beside her, he clasped her against his chest. Michael, lying on the opposite side of his slack possession, turned so that his back pressed against hers.

Paralyzed, drowsy to the point of near-stupor, but nonetheless aware both of her total helplessness, and the pain suffusing her loins and breasts, Gabrielle lay bathed in warmth. The

heavy scent arising from the essence of three people's passion emanating from the slave's cunt, hung in the warm air; intermingled with the faint, musky odor of male bodies, and the more pronounced fragrance of pine wood. Muscles drugged into laxity melted against the hard torso of the man embracing their owner. Raoul's sweet breath flowed along the woman's skin.

Fear prevented the onset of the euphoria integral to submission, but the agony arising from the distention and the pleasure-pain of the whip-stimulus both swiftly dulled before the rapidly encroaching drowsiness. Surfeited on strong emotion, benumbed by the rapidity with which the startling events of the day had succeeded one another, Gabrielle entertained only one clear impression: that of lying in Raoul's embrace. She remained aware only of his strength, his dominance, his mastery. A tenuous image danced on the periphery of her mind: herself, gowned in luminous ivory, walking on his arm through the winding streets of an ancient city.

As if the man holding her sensed that her thoughts centered on himself, he tightened his grip, smiling beguilingly into the eyes still open, still marginally aware, so close to his own. "*Tu m'enivres, mon amie charmante!*" he murmured in her ear, his resonant voice thrilling along auditory nerves not yet dulled by the soporific.

And Raoul will end by intoxicating Gabrielle, Michael mourned, suddenly stricken by that conviction. I'll lose my treasure. Damn the day I ever impulsively promised what I did! Agony far greater than that gliding in spectral fashion through shadowy reaches below the plane of the sleeping slave's consciousness, kept Michael awake well into the early hours of the morning.

Gabrielle floated up out of an all-encompassing sea of oblivion, her mind fragmented, her awareness existing as tenuous wisps of disjointed thoughts. The pain relentlessly registering on her senses below the plane of her consciousness now impinged on the rational faculty slowly shaking off sleep. Only half awake, she remained slackly still, her eyes closed, reviewing her sensations. Gradually, she grew aware that a strong arm held her back firmly pressed against a hard, warm torso while expert fingers worked her wet clit.

The intense pleasure-pain pulsating through her breasts, her loins, and her tortured anus blended with the delicious sensation caused by the fingers. An overriding, intuitive certainty that she must accept the pain—offer it willingly to the master in whose arms she lay—suffused her still-clouded mind. Her loins loosened as her sphincters involuntarily relaxed, and her every muscle went slack. Her consciousness narrowed to focus solely on her clit: the epicenter of her femininity. Almost instantly, she experienced the gathering, the heat, the familiar, delicious shivers that swiftly intensified into orgasm.

A deep voice murmured in her ear, "*You slept, ma belle, n'est-ce pas?*"

"Yes," the still-intensely-stimulated slave breathed.

The pain suffusing mound and breasts died away as if it had never been. Iron hands lifted her, and turned her.

"Michael, *mon ami*, remove the clever device."

The torment afflicting her cruelly distended anus ceased. Gabrielle savored a most welcome relief as the flaccid shaft slid out. Corded arms clasped her against a barrel-chest thatched with fine hair that tickled her breasts. Thrusting out her own arms, she embraced Raoul in her turn, giddy with the consciousness of her warm, pain-free, sensually satisfied state.

At length the guest sighed. Gently, he disengaged the arms encircling him. "I must relieve

myself, *ma princesse*,” he murmured. “*Pardonnez-moi*.” With lithe grace, he rose and vanished into the bath-chamber.

Michael’s arm now slid under Gabrielle’s shoulder. Turning her towards him, he impaled her with eyes that burned with amber fire. “You held my honor in your hands, last night,” he stated levelly. “As you will all day today. I trust that my honor will remain intact—as it is at this moment.”

Gabrielle sensed the intensity of the emotion over which this man retained perfect control. My honor—the way I feel—means nothing to you! she retorted accusingly, albeit silently. You used my body as coin in which to pay a debt! If I choose to leave with Raoul tonight, I’ll do so because you dealt a lethal wound to the self-esteem I so naively imagined you’d healed! How could you profess to love me, and then casually agree to let me depart with this stranger? Raoul asked my consent before he used me for his pleasure! He’s less cruelly detached than you!

Michael unerringly divined the gist of the unspoken recriminations hurled at him by this woman he dreaded losing. He winced mentally under the sting of that silent condemnation exactly as if she had shrieked the castigations aloud. The emotional agony searing him for once showed plainly in his eyes. “I told you,” he rasped hoarsely. “If I cravenly forfeit my honor, I can’t love myself, let alone you! Yes, I sacrificed you so as to retain my honor. You offered yourself as my slave! I reserve to myself the right to use your body exactly as I choose, at any time—for any reason. In subordinating your will to mine, you accept that domination! Your honor’s absorbed into mine—one with mine. I’m committed now to assisting Raoul to enjoy you. I’ll do so without the least compunction, but that doesn’t mean that I find the duty easy! I remain in perfect control of my emotions, Gabrielle. You let yours infringe on your ability to think rationally and judge soundly!”

Initially calm, Michael’s melodious voice grew steadily more impassioned as he delivered that scathing rebuke. Shocked to her core by his final accusation, the scholar stared wildly into a face suddenly transformed by grief, by longing, by naked hunger for understanding.

I’ve refused to surrender my honor, the stricken medievalist well able to understand ardent devotion to honor, acknowledged in a sudden, blindingly clear accession of self-knowledge. I surrendered only my will, and that temporarily. Can I really do both? Her ire dissolved in a fog of confusion—an acid-bath of searing uncertainty. I can’t think, she wailed to her alter ego. Too much has happened to me, too quickly! Am I driven solely by desire grown insatiable? Desire now split—torn—strung to the limit of its strength in a dangerous tug-of-war between two cruel masters who regard me as a possession that exists solely for their pleasure? I need time to reflect—to sort out my feelings!

Watching his sword drive into his slave’s vitals, Michael sensed that he had scored points. His mouth closed over hers, forcing hers open. His erotic, passionate, intimate salute she sensed to be the kiss of possession: the seal of ownership laid on the one orifice of which Raoul had yet to make himself free. Her heart pounding, her loins melting, her cunt creaming, she yielded to the master who until last night dominated her every waking thought.

Raoul returned to find Michael rising off the supine, pliant body of the slave they shared. Smiling with hospitable warmth, the host vividly projected his readiness to accommodate his guest’s wishes.

“Ah, *mon ami*, it’s early yet,” Raoul drawled. “I find myself wishing to enjoy your lady in

leisurely fashion, before breaking my fast. We are neither of us hard, eh? And the fire, *hélas*, died in the night to gray ashes. Could I prevail upon you to rekindle a blaze in the living area, while I rouse us to renewed passion by applying the lash to Gabrielle's delectable *derrière*?"

"By all means," came the assent all the more easily given for the stubbornly intractable anger generated by his slave's setting a limit on her perception of his ownership of her person. That anger he could control, but not extinguish, and the offense he could not, while acting as host, punish swiftly and harshly, as he itched to do at this moment.

Taken aback, Gabrielle found herself lifted in the arms of the man who now turned on her all the magnetic power of his commanding persona. "You'll willingly offer us this pleasure, eh, *ma charmeuse*? Suffer, so as to rouse us to the requisite hardness we'll employ in pleasuring you? Mm?"

Again rendered exquisitely conscious of her helplessness against this man's strength—of will, as well as of physique—the submissive subtly programmed by a night of subliminal conditioning to surrender even more readily than usual, grew aware that her loins quivered. "I exist for your pleasure," she murmured, flowing against him.

"But of course, *ma douce amie*." Raoul's beguiling smile set the slave's heart fibrillating, even as he bore her towards the site specified for her whipping.

Gabrielle found herself draped over the rounded back of a solidly constructed, overstuffed leather chair, her rump in the air, her legs straddling the armless seat, her upper body hanging down the back of the support. "Grasp the chair-legs," came the imperious command that she instantly obeyed. Unable to see anything but the smooth leather sheathing the back of the chair, she heard Raoul address the host engaged in rekindling the fire. "May I make a selection from your collection?" he asked.

"By all means. The wide strap reddens the skin, as well as providing the signature stimulus."

An amused laugh greeted that observation. "You know my little peccadilloes, *mon ami*," came the rejoinder. "I don't feel that I've truly dominated a woman if her body bears no mark of my favor, afterwards."

Chilled by that pronouncement, Gabrielle shivered. Bracing herself to bear intense pain while exquisitely conscious that this fencer/duelist possessed wrists of iron and arms of prodigious strength, she desperately forbade herself to cringe or to squirm as she heard the all but inaudible approach of bare feet. She waited, picturing in her fear-befogged mind the long, flat, barely flexible strap, imagining it to assume the eerie blue aura. On the screen of her fevered mind, she saw the hand tighten its grip on the handle, raise the implement, and bring it down with all the force at the command of powerful thews.

A resounding thwack assaulted her ears as in perfect synchrony with her imaginings, Raoul landed a hard blow on her quivering ass. Biting back a moan, she bore the agony induced as the broad strap clung, and lingered on flesh reddened from the impact. Having ceased only for a moment, the pain returned with renewed force, accompanied by that unnerving loud smack. Gritting her teeth, the slave whose flesh smarted ever more painfully now between the rhythmic descents and spans of contact of the broad, stiff strap, managed to suppress the moans fighting for utterance.

An eon later, the whip-pain died away. The sufferer hung limply, her cheeks hot, the

bright-red flesh of her ass hurting far more than it had when Michael employed an identical strap. Insistent fingers thrust her pussy-lips apart; a finger slid deep inside the cunt now lavishly lubricated. A soft grunt of satisfaction impinged on her hearing before the fingers withdrew, and Raoul circled the chair. A lavishly lubricated middle finger now stabbed into her anus. “Relax, *mon ange*,” its owner warned, his resonant voice pitched to compel obedience.

Michael stood watching, his cock as rock-hard as that of the master who had inflicted the agony which Gabrielle now discovered to have aroused her deeply.

“Michael, *mon ami*, recline, I beg,” Raoul instructed rather than requested as he lifted his pliant burden and carried her face down, supported by two powerful, outthrust arms. Moments later, he set her astraddle of the man lying supine in the fully lowered recliner. As her knees came to rest on the seat, Raoul commanded, “Lower yourself on your master’s manhood, *ma fleur*. Let your breasts caress his chest. So. The pain left you loosened, opened, ripe for our pleasure. Relax, and submit.”

Letting her cunt sink over Michael’s hard prick, Gabrielle flattened her upper body against him. She felt his thighs spread as his lower legs dropped to either side of the footrest. That support now flipped downward to hang vertically at the front of the seat. The slave forcing herself to relax felt sinewy hands grip her hips. A second later, a huge, lavishly lubricated, fully engorged organ drove deeply into the anus so cruelly prepared for its entry.

The force of the penetration wrenched a gasp from the woman again worked between two rigid, thrusting cocks. Michael’s hands pressed her arched back downwards. His mouth targeted hers; his questing tongue probed relentlessly. The hands gripping her hips pulled her backwards even as their owner’s massive cock drove her forward. Gabrielle’s will weakened—faded to nothingness. She knew herself the possession of the two masters enjoying her nude, pliant body simultaneously.

Without conscious thought, the slave squeezed madly, letting her loins move in whatever way the two invading organs required. A groan tore from her throat, followed by another. Her inner space contracted of itself around the shaft over which Michael relaxed his control. The slave tipping over into orgasm felt his juice explode into her cunt at the exact instant that Raoul ejaculated a powerful stream into her ass. The climax stretched surreally into seeming infinity constituted proof of the intensity of the primal lust consuming her.

Three joined bodies remained thus for some seconds. At length Raoul withdrew, and heaved a sigh of pure pleasure. Bending, he lifted the slave half in trance off her satiated master, and bore her boneless body to the other recliner. She flowed against him like a warm gel as he cradled her in his arms.

“Any pain in your so delicious back passage now, *ma charmeuse*?” he inquired softly.

“No,” came the bemused reply. “No...none.”

Michael heaved a sigh of unqualified relief.

At length, Raoul bade the woman nestled in his arms to fetch a basin and bathe both his hands and his cock. Having washed his own hands, the host heated frozen cinnamon rolls in the oven, and poured a crystal pitcher full of chilled apricot juice. Bearing the breakfast suited to Raoul’s tastes rather than his own, he returned to the hearth, where he set the elegant silver tray on the table next to the guest.

“Ahh...you know all my weaknesses, *mon ami*,” came the amused remark. “Help yourself first, I beg.”

Having seated himself with a glass and a plate, Michael watched as Raoul fed sweet morsels to the slave sitting on one cheek of her still-sore rump, with her calves tucked against her outer thighs, on the cushion. Her piquant face wreathed in a beguiling smile, she raised her head to accommodate the guest placing the tidbits between her delicately bowed lips. Her shapely body curved gracefully as she leaned over the low arm of Raoul’s chair. Her hand idly toyed with the flaccid cock she had so lately bathed, and cupped the balls. The master thus beguilingly caressed lifted a goblet to her lips, smiling admiringly on her as she sipped the juice.

Pain lanced with brutal force through the silent observer as he beheld the joy animating the vibrant face of his possession.

Gabrielle’s never grown to love me, Michael acknowledged despairingly. She never pretended to love me when she agreed to become my slave. Not long ago, she candidly admitted to ambivalence regarding her feelings for me. She’s angry that I offered her body to Raoul in payment of a debt, but that anger doesn’t extend to him. He’s subtly increased her readiness to submit to pain. She bears it willingly—joyously—so as to enjoy the supreme pleasure conferred by his size. She’s responding consciously now to his raw masculine appeal—to that regal air of command that even I find hard to withstand. She’ll choose him, tonight. I’ll be left bereft of the only woman I’ll ever love. If only Raoul did indeed claim this retreat! I could part with my castle far more easily than I’ll be able to surrender this perfect partner I’ve yearned to possess for over a decade!

When the leisurely continental breakfast ended, Raoul addressed the host returning from the raised dining area. “Michael, one significant fact leaps to my notice, as I’m certain it does also to yours. Gabrielle proved herself twice in my view and yours to be a worthy initiate. Shortly, you’ll demand that she cross the threshold into the more rarefied realm tenanted only by adepts in the arts of sensuality. I beg that you share with me the joy and the privilege of inducting your lovely lady into the company of those who class as adepts.”

That appeal generated direly mixed feelings in the man thus importuned. He bridled at finding himself asked to share a momentous step in the continuing education of his possession: a rite of passage inextricably intertwined with his consciousness of his masculinity, his role of demanding master, his proprietary right to use this utterly desirable woman solely for his own pleasure. Even as he shrank on that score from acceding, he reflected that Gabrielle might well emerge from the induction far less disposed to favor his guest over himself than she seemed now, given Raoul’s penchant for going to lengths which she knew her master voluntarily abjured.

Whether or no, I’ve no choice but to agree, he conceded bleakly. Why does he even ask, when he knows I’ll not balk, no matter to what use he puts Gabrielle? To drive home to me that he’s exacting his due? Or to drive home to a woman emotionally wounded by my seeming willingness to watch her transfer her affection—her desire—to a new master, that I won’t flinch at acceding to the most rigorous demand he makes?

Suddenly certain that the latter explanation best fit the evidence, Michael smiled a shade sardonically at the man whose iridescent eyes scanned the host searchingly. “Raoul, I told you I’d assist you to enjoy Gabrielle in any manner that you wish. So of course I’ll agree. But my slave’s unaware of what the transition involves. Explain to her what the rite by which an initiate advances

to the rank of adept entails—both for her, and for her master.”

“*Mais oui.*” Raoul smiled serenely at the host, well aware of his reason for making that request. Leaning back relaxed, he inclined his head as he rested a shrewdly appraising glance on the initiate who stiffened palpably. Mentally chiding himself for being an inveterate gambler, he chose his words with care.

“Both last night and today, *mon bijou*, you submitted to the whip without flinching, without writhing, without allowing a sound to pass your lips. I put to a rigorous test your ability to offer yourself thus. That test you passed. You subordinated your will to mine—submitted totally, so as to afford me pleasure, and render me able to satisfy you. You grew deeply aroused, proving that you’ve learned to savor the pain which loosens your loins, melts your bowels, and opens you wide.”

Hearing nothing that she had not heard previously from Michael, Gabrielle sat tautly still, her expressive face a study in perplexity.

“The most abjectly submissive woman’s ability to bear pain without flinching, without making any outcry, isn’t infinite, Gabrielle. A master handles the initiate he trains, with delicate care, even as he relentlessly increases the severity of the regimen. He determines with exactitude the upper limit of her ability to bear pain without flinching. As long as he refrains from exceeding the rigor that pushes her to that limit, she remains an initiate. He reserves to himself the right to take her across the threshold into a new plane of experience, knowing full well that while her ability to bear agony without flinching won’t improve, her ability to subordinate her will to his can deepen still further.”

Fear now showed nakedly in the liquid doe-eyes of the slave hanging on Raoul’s words.

“He may choose not to exercise that right. But if he does, he then compels her to offer him pleasure far greater than any she generated in him thus far. He binds her in such wise that she can move freely, but not flee. He then inflicts torment that exceeds her ability to bear pain without flinching. He indulges his desire to see her face bedewed with tears, to watch her writhe, and twist, and squirm under the lash, to hear her plead, and sob, and scream as he relentlessly forces her towards an elevated threshold of submissiveness. That latter boundary he must reach, but not cross.

“The rite levies a harsh demand, not on the initiate, but on her master. He must know unerringly where to stop. If he goes too far—disgraces himself by exceeding the legitimate use of a slave subordinating her will to his even as she suffers pain greater than any in her prior experience—if he degrades himself by descending into crude, direly injurious brutality repellent to a civilized sensualist, he forfeits his right ever to force her past her limit again. He also incurs the bitter scorn of his fellow members of a brotherhood of sensualists: masters of erotic art whom the peer serving as witness informs of his transgression, being bound by a solemn vow he took during his induction into the Order. A master must control himself even more rigorously than he controls the woman he dominates and enjoys.”

Shocked to her core, Gabrielle sat frozen, wide-eyed with horror. Why would these men wish to inflict that degree of agony, when a lesser amount renders them rock-hard? she cried in anguish to her alter ego. Why?

Even as he smiled, Raoul shook his head reprovingly. “Ah, *petite novice*, you just now set an upper limit on the pleasure you willingly consent to give your master, or the man to whom he

offered you. But surrender knows no limits, nor does the ecstasy it engenders—always supposing that your master stays within the bounds set by ancient wisdom. In driving you past your upper level of tolerance, he rises to a breathtaking height of bliss. You can't control your reactions to the pain, but by voluntarily suffering it, you put his control of himself to the ultimate test. At the same time that you offer him the most intoxicating pleasure possible for him to experience, you gain vastly expanded power over him.

"If he fails the test set him, he suffers severely in his male ego, damages his most cherished possession, and forfeits her regard. If he succeeds, he knows his mastery of himself to be perfect. He knows also that on rare occasions separated by widely spaced intervals he can again enjoy this ultimate pleasure. Not all masters attempt to walk the sword-edge over the abyss that this rite represents. Those who dare to try, and who then succeed, cherish their adept so ardently that she enjoys a security few women know. She walks in pride, savoring her consciousness that she gave the ultimate gift, and exhibited a degree of control over her emotions fully the equal of that displayed by her master."

Wonder now blended with shock, as Gabrielle digested that summary of ideas wholly foreign to the philosophical convictions that until now governed her thinking, her behavior, and her reactions. Questions rose to her lips: queries she dared not utter.

Stroking her hair, Raoul smiled into troubled eyes. "You listen, and weigh what you hear, *petite échoière*. You boast an open mind—the mark of a scholar. Two things I must emphasize, *ma chérie*. Sharing means exactly that: not doubling. The pain will attain the same intensity whether we deal it together, or Michael alone inflicts it. He just stated that he intends to compel you to participate in this rite. But I'll ask your consent to allow me to share this privilege with him. If you refuse to give that consent, you'll suffer at his hand alone."

Turning to fix wide, fearful eyes on the man implacably bent on forcing her to undergo this terrifying ordeal, Gabrielle saw the strain revealed by the line of his jaw, and the set of his lean face. You hold his honor in your hands, she reminded herself distractedly. He lives by a code you don't fully understand, and don't truly accept. You'll suffer this agony whether you consent or not, given that you already offered yourself unreservedly to Michael.

The memory of the scathing criticism leveled at her by her master after she woke returned to scald the emotionally stressed woman. I haven't controlled my emotions! she admitted to her alter ego. I've let raw desire rule me! But can I bear what faces me? A shudder coursed down the spine of the initiate so recently raised to that ranking. I've no choice but to bear whatever torments this ritual entails! she concluded, mindful of her status as Michael's possession. So give them both what they want!

Turning to Raoul, Gabrielle met his eyes squarely. Her face, white now as milk, filled with fierce determination. "I freely consent to submit to two masters, during this rite they deign to conduct jointly," she stated firmly, if a shade hoarsely.

Rising, Raoul lifted her, and folded her against his chest. "*Quelle bravoure!*" he breathed, his eyes alight with admiration wholly genuine. "You honor me, *madame*."

Torn between relief at her refraining from blasting his honor by voicing an objection, and agony engendered by his growing certainty that she would choose Raoul despite the differences in their approach to this rite, Michael winced mentally as fear knotted his own gut. Even as he did so, the underlying anger sparked by his slave's refusal to understand his position flared into new

intensity. I can't succumb to anger at this crucial, delicate juncture! he agonized, well aware of the danger. I need to blot it out of my mind—dwell only on the pleasure this rite will confer on both of us! I can't let myself be swayed by anger at Raoul's insinuating himself into what ought to be a private, delicate interaction between master and slave! I need to get a grip on myself—or I'll risk disgracing myself in the full view of one of the three highest-ranking members of the Order!

A brief, sharp struggle ensued—an inner conflict which nowise reflected on the visage of the host standing as if carved of stone. When Raoul turned to the man whose slave he coveted, he perceived Michael's hawk-face to be utterly serene.

“You have a chamber set aside for purposes of this sort?” the guest inquired.

“Of course. Follow me.”

Swept into corded arms that held her in an iron grip, Gabrielle fought the faintness that suddenly blurred her vision and turned her bowels to jelly. Fear set an icy hand clutching her gut. Even as she strove to recall the arguments Raoul had advanced for her acceptance of what faced her, she encountered blankness as her mind verged on chaos.

One thought alone remained clear. I don't need to try to bear this torment without flinching! I need only to accept it! Can I manage that? Can I? Doubt tore at her fragmenting consciousness, setting tremors coursing through smooth, firm, tender flesh utterly unmarked by any contact with whips cunningly fashioned of tightly braided leather.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Bearing the woman who he sensed verged on terror, Raoul followed his host down the spiral stone staircase in the tower. Dimly aware that the man whose superbly athletic body moved with feline grace smiled triumphantly as he supported her unresisting body by an arm thrust under her knees, and another under her back, Gabrielle sought to keep a firm grip on her emotions. Fragments of Raoul's explanation of how he and Michael perceived both their role in this terrifying ritual and her own, rose on the screen of a mind still verging on the chaotic.

In suffering the agony they'll inflict, I put their self-control to the ultimate test, she reminded herself bravely, fighting repeated onslaughts of terror. Theirs, not mine. But if I refuse to surrender—let virulent anger at a penchant for cruelty greater than I ever suspected either master might harbor curb my willingness to serve their pleasure—I'll lose all control of my emotions. They control theirs so perfectly! Can I do less?

Suddenly, inexplicably, a fierce accession of elemental female pride surged up from some obscure recess deep within the woman's subconscious mind, to contend vigorously with the anger flaying the natural submissive. I can—I will give my two lovers the ultimate pleasure allowed them! she exulted, her reaction shaped by the totality of her recent experiences.

A span of time short in reality loomed as infinitely long—a seeming eon—in the view of the slave whose mind fast-forwarded the highlights of her initiation on the brilliantly colored screen of her fevered inner vision. I can gain power not only over myself, but also over both masters—render each desperately desirous of possessing me, even as I ponder the choice that will leave one of them bitterly disappointed. Can I overcome the hurt arising from Michael's using me to pay a debt—agreeing to part with me? Can I control my dire fear of Raoul, who admits to taking cruel delight in leaving visible reminders on the body he torments for his pleasure? Can I achieve a total suspension of the will—offer myself unreservedly, withholding nothing, not even my own honor?

Yes! came the ringing declaration hurled by the submissive's alter ego. Yes! You've changed! You crave the pain that will drive you to surrender absolutely! You yearn for the ecstasy into which your two lovers will lift you, if you dominate your emotion as they dominate you! Yes!

Even as her rational faculty thus asserted control over the welter of emotions still churning her mind, Gabrielle shuddered as her masterful bearer strode down the antechamber, and through the tall, iron-bossed doors that opened at Michael's voice-command. The affrighted slave about to endure pain so great as to equate with torture, grew marginally aware that this huge vaulted chamber occupied the space below the long hall formerly the chapel. Turning her head, she stared wildly about her.

Raoul cast grimly approving eyes over the premises.

Bright but diffuse light flooded the chamber: illumination that revealed every intriguing aspect of the furnishings, every tiny irregularity in the windowless walls mortared of massive blocks of ivory stone. No shadow hid the slightest defect, the minutest detail, the tiniest hair, distinguishing the three nude bodies bathed in that all-revealing radiance.

In the center of the rectangular floor, Gabrielle perceived a dull gray circle perhaps four feet in

diameter. Above it, two chains that ended in cushioned fetters lined with black leather, hung suspended. At opposite sides of its perimeter lay an identical pair of shackles.

Beyond this central feature, a long, wide platform upholstered in glove-thin black leather caught the eyes of the beholders. In shape basically a rectangle, the couch greater in height than the average bed featured an open V at one end—an extension continuous with the main body. A tall pedestal table reposed near the end opposite the V. On that rested a silver basin and a matching pitcher. Flanking that same side, and running parallel to the couch, reposed a long, sturdy, movable wooden bench, ornately carved, and topped with a thick plush cushion sheathed in the same black leather as the couch. Its height the woman saw to be lower than that of the more imposing feature.

Gabrielle cast only a fleeting glance on the most distant items. Her eyes gravitated unerringly to the pedestal table of dark, gleaming wood, which stood at a short distance from the metallic circle inset into the stone flagging of the floor. Upon that support reposed an assortment of whips, and other devices—all black, and some new to her. A palpable shudder coursed down her torso as she found herself unable to tear her eyes away from that ominous array.

Raoul swept his gaze past the instruments he expected to behold, before Gabrielle belatedly succeeded in doing the same. Next to the table stood a three-legged wooden stool: an elegantly fashioned object the seat of which approximated chair-height. On the far side of the gray circle, at some distance, the woman beheld a depression in the floor over which hung chains and fetters. Shuddering, she shifted her gaze to a tall, smooth stone pillar fitted with two iron rings at an elevation two-thirds of the distance above the floor. Beyond that, she spied a rectangular, leather-sheathed block shaped like an elongated X. Shivers coursed down her spine as she realized that this huge subterranean hall most likely served as her master's punishment-chamber, as well as the setting for the ritual about to commence.

Michael strode to the table on which lay the gleaming instruments. Gesturing Raoul towards the stool, he directed, "Turn Gabrielle over your thighs. Since we began the process of stretching her anus, we'll continue that necessary treatment during this exercise."

Even as her gut clenched, Gabrielle mastered the urge to stiffen as a soft, slender, well-lubricated shaft slid into her shrinking orifice. Shivering, she braced herself. The intruding object expanded relentlessly, producing the painful distention she found so direly difficult to bear. As the whip-pain enveloped the site, she bit back a moan.

"Turn her so that she lies supine."

Having complied, Raoul watched through lidded eyes as Michael affixed a black shield to the shaven skin of his chattel's mound. He next slipped two black, ultrathin rings over her nipples, and activated the shield. "This set generates pain more severe than the others, but the pleasure inherent in the stimulus is correspondingly enhanced," he explained, for Raoul's benefit rather than for that of the possession whose gut clenched convulsively owing to the savage onslaught of agony. "Stand her on her feet. So. Spread your legs wide, slave."

Acting almost without volition, the initiate racked by pain she found herself hard-pressed to bear without writhing, obeyed.

Michael spread her pussy-lips, noting the lush moisture which trickled down the tender flesh of the outthrust thighs. Into her moist cunt, he slid a smooth black dildo about the size of his own generously sized prick when it became fully engorged. Holding the short base pressed upward, he activated the stimulus that rendered the shaft impossible to dislodge. He next let the added feature

held in his palm, swing free: a slender chain six inches in length, tipped by a solid ball of black metal.

That mass Gabrielle instantly judged to be more dense than iron. The excessive downward pull intensified the pain produced by the dildo clinging tenaciously to the inner surface of her tormented cunt.

Unmoved by his cognizance of her suffering, Michael set the ball swinging. The sensation generated by the rocking shaft forced an audible expulsion of breath from the slave exquisitely conscious of having reached the limit of her ability to bear agony before the rite even began.

Fear fogged Gabrielle's mind as Michael instructed Raoul to fetter her right wrist while he secured the other. Standing in the center of the rough-surfaced gray circle, planted squarely on the soles of her feet, her arms raised, her wrists shackled above her head, the trembling initiate obeyed the command to spread her legs wide. Each man manacled an ankle. Chains attached to rings on the perimeter of the circle prevented the pinioned slave from closing her legs, but her feet remained flat on the surface she sensed to be metallic. No painful tension manifested itself in her arms, or her legs. Bearing her full weight on her feet, she knew herself free to move in limited fashion. Racked by intense agony, flayed by rapidly escalating fear, she failed to generate the euphoria that normally attended the infliction of heavy sensation.

Mustering her abundant courage, Gabrielle battled anger, terror, and resentment. Managing to gain a tenuous hold over an explosive mix of dangerous emotions all but out of control, she concentrated not so much on the pleasure integral to the stimuli dominating her consciousness, but on the challenging mental task of willingly offering the torment now imminent.

As if in a dream, she heard Michael provide Raoul with an explanation, his melodious voice as casual as if he discussed the merits of a particular vintage year. "Wetness accentuates the whip-stimulus, owing to its rendering the contact with the skin far more perfect. The whip I'll employ would not of itself mark dry skin. Laid forcefully on wet flesh, it produces a faint, linear redness, which lingers—a telltale mark that permits me to lay the lash on skin hitherto untouched. The electronically induced pain enhanced by the wetness is thus delivered over the widest possible area. This remote that I carry in my left hand allows me to mist the slave's body. Observe, now."

Warm gray fog streamed from a myriad minuscule holes in the circle of gray steel, and rose like a pillar of cloud to the height of the shackled woman's neck. Every square inch of her skin now glistened with moisture. As swiftly as it rose, the mist disappeared.

"*C'est merveilleux!*" Raoul exclaimed, his admiration wholly genuine.

"While I emphasize that I offer you free choice of any implement laid out, I suspect that this long lash will best satisfy your penchant for leaving your mark on the body of the woman you favor with your attentions. It inflicts the whip-pain, but if wielded with maximum force, it also raises welts painful of themselves. That latter effect's most pronounced if the skin is dry—able to provide friction that keeps the lash from sliding over the skin. Dryness concentrates the force of impact over a minimal linear area. You'll therefore employ this remote control. Observe."

Gabrielle's body Raoul now saw to be enveloped in a cloud of rose-colored radiance that appeared instantaneously over the gray plate. Warmth enveloped her: a sensation that she swiftly classed as heat. The sheen of moisture evaporated with astonishing swiftness, leaving her skin hot as the forehead of a feverish child.

Abruptly, the radiance vanished. The slave's body the delighted observer saw to be bathed solely in the white light rendering its every pore visible. Michael now handed his guest both the remote, and the device which he proffered handle-first.

"Ah, *mon ami*, this will serve to perfection."

Tawny eyes impaled the high-ranking member of the Order: a man whose dynamic persona and regal air of command even Michael found compelling. The host's tone nonetheless admitted of no argument. "We'll take turns inflicting the pain designed to force Gabrielle to achieve a total suspension of her will—short spans, so that we share the task at every stage. But I'll be the one to gauge with precision when she stands at the threshold neither of us must cross. You'll bear witness to my ability to control myself to perfection, old friend. Your self-mastery I well know to be flawless."

"*Mais oui*," came the instant reply. The guest's handsome face expressed respect as he bowed deeply to a daring adherent of the strict code by which both men lived, his gesture as courtly, as natural, as aristocratic as that by which he acknowledged his introduction to Gabrielle. The grace of the salute which the observers saw to be no whit diminished by Raoul's nakedness, registered on the mind of the woman enveloped in pain, as well as on the consciousness of the man fiercely controlling the turbulent emotion seething below the plane of his consciousness.

Michael bowed in his turn, his lean body exhibiting grace no less feline than that characterizing his guest. Turning, he swept up a device from the table, and again set the column of gray mist rising about the woman standing erect, almost defiant, in her bonds.

A sinewy hand grasped a handgrip composed of four black-glass spheres strung on a rigid support: a handle that featured a flat, disc-like hand guard on which tiny buttons appeared. No shaft extended from that circular base. A lash five feet in length, tapering to a point from its widest diameter of three-quarters of an inch, hung limply from the hand guard. That sleek, black, flexible thong attached directly to the handle. The strap curved sinuously as it assumed the characteristic aura of blue light.

As Michael advanced to stand within the perimeter of the circle, the mist vanished. Extending his arm horizontally, perpendicular to his side, he stood raking the moistened flesh with eyes gone cruel. In a blurred, swift motion, he set the lash whistling through the air. The strap curled around the flanks of the pinioned slave unable to move far enough sideways to avoid its impact. There it clung as if grown to the skin.

The snake-like tentacle seemed to the initiate who writhed under the impact, to burn as if wreathed in fire for the second during which it congealed against her quivering flesh. When it fell away to curl menacingly as its wielder raised the arm he poised to deliver a new stroke, a faint red line marked the site of its impact. The whip now drove against the full length of the slave's torso, tracing every contour from her right breast to her left hip.

That impact prompted a convulsive twist: a movement aborted by the pull exerted by the device generating an attractive force far stronger than the muscles seeking to tear free of the tormenting lash. With a twist of the wrist, Michael jerked the sufferer's body towards him, even as she sought to pull away. Only then did he deactivate the whip and instantly thereafter sweep it into a new upward curve.

That jerking-forward motion sent agony surging through the flesh seeking to avoid the agonizing contact. The pain wrung a shriek from the initiate conditioned never to let such a cry

pass her lips. The lash whistled through the air, targeting the other breast, the other hip. Stroke after stroke applied so cunningly that none duplicated exactly the route traced by another galvanized the tortured body into violent, agitated motion.

Awash in agony far too great to bear passively, Gabrielle failed to control her reactions. A scream tore from her throat. Tears spilled from eyes blinded with the salty moisture, to roll down cheeks gone pale as parchment. Goaded into struggling, the recipient of the whip-strokes frantically sought to twist out of the path of the whistling lash. The dense ball on the short chain suspended between her legs swung in a circle, causing the shaft from which it hung to perform a most tormenting precessional movement. Excruciating pain shot through her loins.

Jerked around by the clinging whiplash to front her tormentor, she struggled frantically but impotently, causing the ball to strike her on both thighs while sending searing agony lancing from her groin to her chest. The long, reptilian lash curled around her hips, her breasts, her abdomen, her waist, her thighs, whistling as it fell, and emitting a slapping sound as it struck to cling like molten lava to her shrinking wet flesh. "Please, master, don't," she cried beseechingly. "Please! I can't bear this!"

The lash fell again, across both breasts. Lifting, it snaked malevolently around her hips.

Her mind a fog of pain, Gabrielle grew conscious that the tormenting whiplash ceased its dance. Blinded by the tears flowing from under half-closed lids, she failed to see Raoul step into the place Michael vacated. Only when the rose-light bathed her, and the heat enveloped her, did she comprehend that a new tormentor now faced her. The heat vaporized the tears as well as the sheen of moisture augmented now by sweat.

Staring out of eyes dilated by terror, she saw that Raoul gripped a handle a foot in length, by the four glass spheres at its end. Beyond the divider separating the handgrip from the four solid metal spheres weighting the handle, stretched a flexible implement: a tightly braided lash six feet in length and three-quarters of an inch in diameter at its base—a strand bathed in blue fire, which gradually diminished in thickness from its base to its free end. An extension attached to that extremity: a six-inch-long braided cord tipped by a tiny cluster of feathery projections.

In her fear-magnified vision, the whip-wielder fronting her stood larger than life—a magnificent athlete whose engorged manhood riveted her eyes. Raising the handle, he brought his extended arm down in a sharp, swift motion. The long black whip rose in a sinuous curve, reared backwards, and shot forward like an evil projectile. A sudden, backwards flip of the handle caused the lash to crack like the sound of a pistol-shot, even as a two-foot-long section of its end struck the shrinking flesh of the slave who shrieked as the blow landed. The lash clung only for a span of a second before it rose, curved, reared, and struck again. Once more, the deafening crack reverberated through the still air.

Frantic with fear and pain, Gabrielle struggled madly. Screams reverberated off walls of stone, punctuated by the cracks of the whip. Salty drops blinded her even as she sought to twist, to turn, to avoid the ghastly impact—but to no avail. Welt after stinging welt rose on her quivering flesh, leaving thighs, hips, belly, and buttocks red-striped. Shrieks echoed through the cavernous space, followed by frantic pleas that went ignored.

Agony so intense that it rendered her faint, tortured the flesh still smarting from the prior whipping. "No, please, I can't take any more!" she pleaded as tears streamed down her cheeks. "Ohhhh, no, don't, master, please," she wailed, to no avail. The lash snaked across her back, and

struck her shrinking rear, adding to the array of parallel welts visible on each garishly scored ass-cheek.

Twisting frenziedly in her bonds, the slave unable to focus any fragment of her attention on the echo of pleasure integral to the torment, sobbed aloud. Her head lolled forward, allowing her to see the parallel stripes laid horizontally down the entire length of her torso, from just below her breasts to just above her knees.

The agony deepened. Closing eyes brimming with tears, she writhed, rather than seeking to twist. "Please stop!" she begged, her voice cracking. "Please, master, I can't stand pain this dreadful!"

As if in response to that rasping, final plea, the blows ceased, but her relief proved short-lived. Feeling the mist rise, Gabrielle moaned piteously. When the column dropped, the whistling sound of the lighter lash set her teeth on edge. Through the tears filming her eyes, she saw that Michael's turgid manhood reared as stiffly as had Raoul's.

Pain so great that it blotted out all cognizance of the pleasure-echo, now forced the writhing body into hanging passively, too exhausted by its convulsive struggles to continue them. That enforced inertia left Gabrielle feeling utterly defenseless, even though no frantic motion of hers had succeeded in deflecting a single stroke of either lash. Her knees buckled, forcing her wrists and arms to bear her full weight. As if that physical surrender prompted a mental parallel, she let go of the terror, the anger, the sheer panic clouding her mind. Pain formed the universe in which she existed.

Knowing herself utterly helpless, relentlessly tormented by every new whistling blow falling upon flayed skin that failed even to quiver, she found herself offering her dually ravaged flesh as if it were a sacrifice laid on an altar. I exist to suffer this agony. I'm Michael's possession, and Raoul's. I accept my role—offer myself freely. Take my suffering, my will, my honor, my sense of self! Absorb those attributes into yourselves as I immolate myself on your cocks—grovel at your feet! Unaware that she couched her reactions in those words, she nonetheless heard them resound within her head as the rose-light penetrated a fog of tears, and shriveled the drops, leaving a salty deposit on tear-stained, frost-white cheeks.

Dimly sensing the difference in the nature of the strokes, Gabrielle heard the unnerving crack as if the sound drifted in from afar. Her body now existed as a fluid, plastic, boneless embodiment of agony too great for the mind to comprehend or the flesh to bear. The pain-racked slave felt her psyche detach from its generative flesh, and rise to hover above the tortured, emptied vessel it vacated. At that supreme moment, she achieved a suspension of her will more absolute than any hitherto experienced. Her tear-bedewed face grew rapt: surreally exalted, even as the snaking lash laid a new welt on the hips cruelly striped in red.

Cognizant of the significance of the change, Michael spoke with imperious force. "Enough, Raoul. Enough!"

The whip rearing back in mid-stroke cracked harmlessly to one side of the inert figure it targeted, as the hand gripping the handle reacted with lightning swiftness.

Both men strode forward. Having detached the shield, Michael caught the rings slipping downwards from reddened nipples. Deftly, he slid the intrusive shafts out of each sorely afflicted orifice. Raoul unshackled the slave's ankles, and loosed the restraints binding her wrists, as Michael's strong arm encircled her torso, supporting her. His voice cut like the whip lying now on

the stone flagging. “For what do you exist?” he demanded of the woman barely conscious.

“For your pleasure,” came the all but inaudible answer. “And Raoul’s.”

Pain stabbed with brutal force through the man hearing that amendment: pain he kept off his face. His tone softened. “You conferred exquisite pleasure, little stalwart. You rank now as an adept. Kneel, and kiss our cocks, to signify that you surrender not only your will, but your honor, your essential femininity, your very selfhood, to your masters.”

Even as he loosed his hold, Michael stood ready to catch his cherished possession should she succumb to the giddiness he knew to be afflicting her. Reeling, swaying alarmingly, she yet managed to keep her feet. Her shapely body he saw to be ringed with parallel red lines. Those narrow welts, raised on skin nowhere broken, appeared to be superimposed upon a fainter pattern of fine red lines that crisscrossed: stripes overlaid on delicately woven lace. The effect seemed to the tiger-eyed viewer to be ornamental—an artistic decoration similar to that provided by the golden strands.

Slowly, Gabrielle sank to her knees at his feet. Her face still rapt, she took his cock in her mouth, and caressed the head with her tongue. She then kissed the rock-hard organ repeatedly, probing the orifice oozing premature drops, licking the shaft down its length.

Fierce pride suffused the recipient of that unmistakably eager caress. Michael lifted her to her feet. She swayed, but kept her balance. Slowly, she moved to stand before Raoul. Again, she sank to her knees, and repeated the gesture exactly, on the massive member of the man whose iridescent eyes seemed to smolder with dark fire.

Raising her, he held her at arms’ length. “Adept indeed,” he commended her, his resonant voice echoing in the vastness of the chamber. “Michael, *mon ami*, you control your emotion to perfection, as does this so lovely dame whose courage astounds me.” With that, he kissed Gabrielle on one cheek, and then the other, his salute formal, regal. That gesture came across to the man watching like a hawk out of eyes gone suddenly hard, as symbolic—utterly passionless. A savage onslaught of jealousy died as quickly as it ignited.

Lifting Gabrielle, Michael handed her pliant body to his guest. “Bear her to the couch,” he commanded. “Oblige both me and my chattel by taking the lead during the next phase of the rite.”

Deeply gratified by that supremely gracious offer on the part of the host bearing himself in what the guest conceded to be princely fashion, Raoul bore his burden to the resting-place so lushly cushioned. Feeling as if caught in a closely woven net of white-hot wires, the whipped slave gratefully welcomed the delicious coolness of the smooth leather against her smarting, throbbing flesh.

Joy suffused her: happiness that dominated her diminished awareness. She savored an elemental, quintessentially female pride in having matched two demanding masters at the delicate art of controlling violent emotion: an accomplishment which they valued even above their enjoyment of the exquisite pleasure she knew she just afforded them.

Raoul smiled with magnetic warmth on the lovely submissive still focused inward, still devoid of volition. “*Mon ami*, tongue her breasts,” he directed, even as he thrust her legs apart. Small red spots rapidly darkening to purple signified where the massive ball had struck her inner thighs—flesh less heavily marked by the pattern left by the dissimilar whips, than was that of her torso. Lying prone on the couch, the keen observer kissed each bruised area gently, before

applying his tongue to the clit he saw to rear stiffly erect, swollen with need.

Her will inoperative, Gabrielle now surrendered the body still engulfed in lingering pain. Awash in euphoria, she lay pliant, loosened, opened wide. Her owner's moist tongue circled her nipples, which hardened instantly. His moist mouth sucked each stiff pink projection—licked, and teased. Fingers pulled, elongating the tiny centers of delicious sensation. Changing tactics, they moved rapidly, jiggling the breasts. Teeth bit the nipples, playfully, painlessly. Fingers vibrated the sensitive nubbins before pinching the flesh reddened from the whipping.

Wave after wave of shivers coursed through the torso of the slave simultaneously pleased by the guest who licked her from anus to clit, in long, languorous, sweeping strokes. That deliciously moist tongue proceeded to insert itself into her lushly lubricated cunt. Circling lazily, the invading organ savored the flavor of her essence, sweeping forward to trace each soft fold of flesh hooding the tiny focus of delight so provocatively engorged. Moans melted into cries of rapture as the dual stimulation drove the recipient into the arching, gasping throes of culmination. Observing its onset, both men intensified their efforts, thereby prolonging the delectable moment for a surreally stretched span of time.

Rising, Raoul lifted the limp body lying supine before him, moving Gabrielle so that her still-smarting ass rested above the angle of the V, and her legs lay along the arms. "We will proceed to mental rapture without ejaculating, as we raise this exotic flower to ever greater heights of bliss, eh, *mon ami*?" he asserted.

"No other course would serve," came the serene response.

"Lie prone upon her pliant body, and thrust into her honeyed mouth as you suck the pearl gracing the threshold of her luscious grotto," came the regal command.

Having disposed himself thus, Michael tongued the clit still quivering from Gabrielle's climax. Raoul stood on the stone flagging, within the angle of the V. Reaching into a recess in the frame of the couch, he withdrew a bottle, and lubricated his magnificent tool. Grasping the slave's ankles, he raised her legs straight upwards, and spread them wide, forcing the man sucking her stiffly erect focus of delight to raise his head a trifle. Thrusting his pelvis forward, Raoul drove his massive manhood into the slave's anus.

That deep, hard penetration of a passage wholly relaxed, its sphincter slack, caused no pain. On the contrary, the owner of the stretched tissue loosened to a degree resembling that produced by the muscle-relaxant, welcomed its entry. Had the voluptuary's mouth not been filled with Michael's rigid prick, which thrust repeatedly against the back of her equally relaxed throat, she would have cried aloud in delight.

Her consciousness narrowed as she strove to appreciate the entrancing sensations radiating from the clit Michael now sucked, even as her pelvis rose and fell with the rhythmic thrusts periodically lifting it. His middle finger slid into her cunt, and massaged the thin partition of tissue separating the shaft invading the slave's ass, from itself. That sensuous stroking transmitted a muted set of parallel sensations to the massive organ so near in proximity. Gabrielle's sphincters contracted involuntarily, squeezing repeatedly as she rose to an even more breathtaking peak.

Bittersweet pleasure-pain engulfed the man plunging his cock into a moist well of sweetness, even as he offered the erotic caresses that he sensed conferred exquisite pleasure. Michael remained acutely aware that Raoul's iron thighs framed his head, and that Raoul's formidable endowment pleased the passage so lately virginal. The tormenting consciousness that this

infinitely sweet dalliance might well represent the last such intimacy he would ever know with this woman for whom his soul hungered, impacted heart as well as mind. Emotional pain seared him more savagely than could any whiplash ever wielded. I love you, little innocent, he cried despairingly in the depths of his mind. Don't leave me! I beseech you, don't!

Focusing not so much on the pleasure engulfing his cock, as on the yearning to absorb this well-beloved flesh into himself, Michael rose swiftly to a peak purely mental, his agitation nowise interfering with his astonishing ability to achieve so ethereal a height of bliss without ejaculating.

No less rigorously self-trained, Raoul emulated that feat. Yielding to passion, he stood like a statue carved of pale tan stone, savoring rapture.

At length, he laid the legs he still held upraised, on the arms of the V. Observing that the fellow sensualist rising from the supine body congealed to the bed displayed no lessening of his erection, he smiled on his host with magnetic warmth. "Ahhhh...*mon ami*, you govern yourself with a perfection permitted to few men."

That polished compliment fell with all the force of an accolade, even through the emotional agony pulsating through the recipient.

Raoul strolled over to the stand by the head of the couch. Having poured water into the basin holding cloth and soap, he bathed his cock. Michael sat on the side of the support, gently massaging the bruised inner thighs of his beloved.

At length Raoul finished his ablutions. Striding to the low bench, he positioned it parallel to the side of the couch. Tossing Michael the bottle of lubricant, he issued a brisk directive. "Lave your manhood, *mon ami*. Lift the *amoureuse* whose ascent to ecstasy has only begun, and position her so that she kneels on the bench, facing the bed. You'll then enjoy the effect produced by the ingenious contrivance which rendered perfect her delectable rear passage—but maintain your magnificent control over the essence of your passion."

Complying, Michael lubricated his up-thrusting organ. Positioning the slave floating in near-trance while totally oblivious to the pain of the welts, on her knees on the bench, he maintained his hold on her. Seeing that Raoul seated himself on the couch facing her, he bent her forward, so that her head descended towards the imposing member rearing from the groin of the man whose legs spread wide. Without waiting for a command, Gabrielle opened her mouth, and took Raoul fully, thrusting her arms around his hips as she did so. Michael's heart lurched, even as his cock impaled the ass of the kneeling woman bent forward, her back arched, her legs spread wide.

Without waiting for a command, Gabrielle demonstrated her mastery of oral technique. As strong hands gripped her hips, she marveled at the ease with which Michael's nowise slender organ thrust deeply into her anal passage. Pleasure rose in discrete waves, to set her shivering, quivering, thrusting in her turn. Skimming like a soaring swallow to a new, more elevated peak of pleasure, she convulsively embraced the man delighting in her proficiency.

Gently but firmly, Raoul detached her encircling arms, and thrust his hands under her armpits. Lifting her as he rose to his feet and strode forward, he raised her upright, and arched her backwards as she continued to kneel on the bench, her knees spread wide. Her spine now touched Michael's chest, even as he went on thrusting into her anus. Raoul now drove his manhood into the cunt yawning open between her outthrust thighs. Although his hands held the limber slave's arms upraised and outstretched, his pelvis drove her backwards even as Michael's thrust her forward.

Worked once again between two lushly lubricated, sensuously performing cocks, sandwiched between two warm, hard, musky male bodies sinuously rubbing against her breasts, her belly, her ass-cheeks, her arching spine, Gabrielle moaned, and then cried aloud as she rose into a state of luminous euphoria. She again welcomed the gathering, the heat, the unbearable imminence of culmination, emitting a shrill cry as she plunged into an intense, prolonged climax.

The two men joined with her experienced mental rapture that fed off the energy of her orgasm. Each master dominating an all but irresistible urge to ejaculate maintained his erection.

Having withdrawn his turgid organ, Raoul clasped the upright torso of the woman against him. Michael pulled out, and stood back, allowing Raoul to let Gabrielle fall forward before he lifted the swooning slave in strong arms. Smiling in amusement on the man occupied now in bathing his still-rigid tool, the master bearing the woman spoke in a provocative drawl. “This *belle dame* skims from peak to peak with all the ease of a bird in flight, eh, *mon ami*? We’ll allow her no respite. One at a time, we’ll ejaculate the essence of our passion into her luscious grotto, as we stand in ecstatic union with her. The one standing will rock; the one in attendance will work her feet.”

Cogitating rapidly, Raoul made a crucial decision. He gambled that his host’s ability to control both his emotion and his ejaculation while dominating the primal jealousy which the shrewd student of human nature knew still seethed deep below the plane of Michael’s consciousness, might just possibly fail a younger master less experienced than the worldly cosmopolite looking back on an astonishing number and variety of conquests. His own flawless control Raoul well knew would not fail *him*. Instead of claiming the right to enjoy this prize he coveted, last, he now stood her on her feet, facing him, supporting her swaying, tremulous body with his hands.

Squatting, Raoul thrust his arms behind Gabrielle’s knees, and drew her close. “Michael, facilitate my entry,” he commanded. “*Ma chérie*, embrace me around my neck.”

As Gabrielle thrust both arms around him, the guest swept her upwards, his arms under her knees, his hands clasped behind her back. Standing to one side, Michael guided his guest’s huge shaft into his slave’s dripping cunt. In an awesome display of strength, Raoul stood proudly erect, bearing the woman’s full weight on those corded arms as he rocked her forward and back.

Mastering an all but irresistible desire to close his mouth over hers, he refrained, being exquisitely aware that he had not yet won the right to bestow the kiss of possession on this adept he so passionately desired to possess in perpetuity. Turning his head so that hers bent forward over his shoulder, he nibbled Gabrielle’s earlobe. Seconds later, he murmured a soft, all but inaudible endearment directly into her ear, noting as he did so that a certain feral glint died out of the tiger-eyes of the man standing to the side where the woman’s head rested, watching his peer while poised to retaliate.

Satisfied that Raoul prudently refrained from overstepping a well-drawn, time-honored boundary, Michael now moved to his slave’s rear. Setting the sole of a delicately arched foot in the palm of each hand, he rocked her sideways even as Raoul rocked her forward and back, raising one leg as he lowered the other, and then reversing the direction, thereby generating exquisitely erotic sensations in the cunt madly squeezing the huge cock serving as a pivot.

Dimly aware that she had offered her mouth only to be refused a kiss, Gabrielle pondered the reason. That effort caused her to emerge, to a degree, from the euphoria blotting out rational

thought. She divined, finally, that Raoul forbore to take what was not yet his. Thus cruelly reminded that she must shortly choose between this dynamic lover and the demanding master who had awakened her to the heady delights of transcendental ecstasy, she winced inwardly as pain convulsed her gut. Why did Raoul leave this agonizing choice to me? she wailed to her alter ego. He could have demanded that I form the payment for the debt! I can't choose! I'm strung like fragile wire between my two cruel, marvelous, unbelievably passionate lovers!

Raoul's lips caressed her cheek, his sweet breath flowing along skin so lately bedewed with tears. Seemingly tireless, he rocked her even as he thrust repeatedly into her lushly lubricated depth. Tilted from side to side, her orifice rotating around that magnificent manhood even as the shaft penetrated to its full depth and then withdrew to drive in again with unflagging vigor, the woman reveled in her sensations.

Her consciousness inexorably narrowed. Waves of pleasure radiated outward from her loins, igniting warmth that flared into heat, and set cascades of shivers coursing through her torso. Convulsively, she tightened her arms while squeezing her feminine depth as if to milk dry of juice the wondrous prick pleasuring her.

Moans changed to shrill cries. Her heart pounded; her chest heaved. The nipples buried in a thatch of black hair grew rock-hard, stabbing palpably into the barrel-chest. Gabrielle rose ebulliently, joyously, towards the latest in a most astonishing series of multiple culminations, blinded by the white heat of passion to all sensation but that of imminent orgasm. Topping the rise, she soared into a blaze of brilliant light, and passed into ecstasy.

At the moment the contractions in her cunt became uncontrolled, Raoul ejected spurt after spurt of his seed into the womb of the woman whose body rested on no support but that of his corded arms. Fierce ardor lifted him to a dizzying height. Intoxicated by the splendor of cosmic union, he felt the ground tremble. Just in time, he realized that he himself all but reeled on his feet. The lover whose bowels melted, whose heart hammered, whose eyes dimmed, exerted the dregs of his self-mastery. Walking forward, he sat on the edge of the couch, holding on his lap the woman he knew to have passed into trance.

For a span of seconds, he held her thus—in trance himself. Raising his head, he saw through smoldering, lidded eyes that his host's throbbing shaft, if anything, had grown even harder. Pain wrenched his heart: the galling pain all too familiar to an inveterate gambler who suspects that he may have fatally miscalculated the odds.

Michael stood as if carved of stone, his heart pierced by a razor-sharp javelin. His certainty grew ever more absolute that his exquisitely sensitive, alluringly submissive slave could do no other than choose this magnetic persona, this irresistible lover, as her new lord and master.

His breath coming in sobbing gasps, Raoul fought the ebbing wash of passion. Shifting his hold on his partner, he turned her so that her back rested against his torso. Having thrust a palm under each of her thighs, he lifted her as if she sat in a chair with legs outspread. Holding her thus, he advanced to the man standing with feet planted solidly, apart, on the warm flagging. Raoul impaled the feminine orifice of the woman he offered, upon a cock hard as a steel I-beam, even as Michael thrust an arm under each bent knee of the burden which now passed to him. Claspings his hands behind Gabrielle's back as she twined her arms around his neck, the host now rocked her forward and back, forward and back.

Entranced, his slave raised her euphoric face to his. Intuitively, she opened her warm red

mouth. Savage elation tore through the man whose mouth met hers in the kiss of possession: a prerogative still solely his.

Raoul now stood to Gabrielle's rear. Weaving forward and back in time with the man rhythmically thrusting into his consort's dripping orifice as he clasped her and rocked her, the attendant gripped one of her feet in each hand, lifting the left foot as he lowered the right. The woman's body once again rotated on the cock impaling her, even as that stiff member thrust and withdrew.

Held clasped against the chest of the master who had trained her, her mouth possessed by him, her cunt filled by him, her body exquisitely worked on his thrusting tool, Gabrielle felt her heart fibrillate wildly. Joy expanded within her, to set the blood coursing tumultuously through the confining vessels.

No lingering trace of resentment remained. She kissed with abandon, reveling in the lingering, erotic, wholly possessive kiss of her demanding master. The dilemma posed by her need to choose faded from her mind. Still enraptured from her impregnation by Raoul, she skimmed to yet a new pinnacle of bliss, advancing into the luminous, ethereal, altered state where her will dissolved, her rational faculty vanished, and her selfhood merged with that of the man who by the power of his undiminished will, now impregnated her. His juice she dimly sensed to mix with that of his predecessor, and with her own. Those separate acts of coition seemed to the intuitive feminine mind functioning solely on emotion, surreally to merge into one ecstatic co-joining. Three bodies, three minds, Gabrielle sensed to fuse into one single entity.

Michael now reeled as he fought to master the weakness threatening to drop him and his precious burden to the flags. Exerting the last tattered shred of his self-control, he walked to the couch. Lifting Gabrielle from his fellow master's arms, Raoul laid her crosswise in the bed. Both drained, staggering men stretched out prone on either side of the supine woman. Each pillowed a cheek on one of her outstretched arms; each laid a hand palm down on a soft, full breast, and hooked a leg over one of those which the ecstatic voluptuary had automatically spread wide. Three satiated sensualists drifted into the rarefied realm of transcendental ecstasy, as time hung in stasis.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Gabrielle dreamed that she walked naked down a sunlit street in a walled medieval town, amid crowds of admiring, bowing folk: men wearing doublet and hose, and women clad in brocaded gowns with slashed, ornate sleeves. Her hand rested on the arm of her escort. Turning to smile up at him, she found him to be cloaked, masked, his aspect wholly hidden from her. Sorrow flayed her mind: sorrow that survived the dissolution of the dream into clouds of swirling mist. Her heart heavy, she floated up into consciousness of her time, her place, her regrettable mortality. Dull, nagging pain lent impetus to the stiffness that grew apparent as soon as she sought to stretch.

Lids fringed with dark lashes reluctantly lifted. The newly awakened dreamer lay between her two masters, each of whom sat on one cheek of his rear, smiling down at her in amusement. Their glances shifted to meet across her supine body. His tawny eyes soft with remembered pleasure, Michael developed an irresistible urge to prolong the dalliance that generated such intense delight despite its undercurrent—for him at least—of piercing emotional pain.

“A soothing soak in a hot mineral bath’s what we most need now, would you not say, Raoul?”

“*Mais oui, mon ami.* Your castle boasts so delightful a feature?”

“It does indeed. Lift our sleep-drugged adept in your arms, and follow me.”

The designation so casually employed sent pride surging through the slave exulting at so swiftly attaining that intermediate rank in a hierarchy evidently employed by members of the mysterious Order. Probationer, initiate, adept, she mused. And some day...consort? To which—if either—of these two masters forcing me to make a choice so dreadfully difficult?

Gabrielle found her pain-stabbed body borne back through the huge, iron-embossed door that opened at Michael’s voice-command. Raoul followed his host across the antechamber, and through the identical door opposite. That portal, which the woman far more wakeful now knew must lie under the quadrangle with the fountain, closed behind the three people enveloped in warm mist, amid soft, pleasantly dim, diffuse light. A delicious sound impacted their ears: the patter of rain falling on a shelf of smooth rock.

Both the guest and the slave nestling against his barrel-chest gasped in delight. This chamber featured no flagging. The walls they saw to rise from a foundation of solid ivory rock, so as to enclose a portion of the canyon floor featuring three deep pools left wholly in their natural state. The surface of the water heaved with turbulence far greater than that induced by mechanical contrivances integral to the average hot tub installed in a home. Great balls of liquid rose, enlarged, and burst as others displaced them. Steam swirled upwards from the middle pool in greater abundance than from the first; tenuous wraiths of fog hung over the third. Irregularly contoured rock, rounded by the action of water where it was not originally flat, separated the pools from each other, and from the higher, roughly circular outcropping upon which the rain fell ceaselessly.

The rapt beholders divined that the shower of droplets falling from a circular canopy attached to the ceiling must lie directly below the pool into which the water shooting skyward from the fountain in the quadrangle fell. The three natural springs, so pleasingly irregular in outline, occupied two-thirds of the space around the central shower. The remaining third of that area, higher even than the rocks against which the drops splattered, the observers saw to be covered with

a carpet of soft, dark green moss growing from a layer of soil.

“The warm pool will acclimatize our bodies so that we can endure the heat of the mineral bath,” Michael announced, not troubling to hide his pride in his cherished retreat. “We can’t stay in that water long, as it dehydrates one’s body. While you and I reinvigorate ourselves afterwards in the cool pool, Raoul, Gabrielle will dance for us in the rain. She’ll then suck us until we’re hard, as we stand beneath the downpour, after which she’ll lie between our bodies like an olive in a press. The only difference will be that we, not herself, will end drained of juice, eh, old friend?”

A ringing laugh that fell on Gabrielle’s ears like orchestral music, greeted that convoluted simile. “But yes, *mon ami*. That so turbulent cool water will indeed restore our vital forces!”

Bearing Gabrielle in his arms, Raoul followed his host into warm, roiling water that rose to his knees, and then to his chest. Loosening his hold, he let the adept’s stiff, sore body float outwards from the arms passed under her armpits at the elbows. As she lay suffused with warmth, Raoul’s hands gently palpitated breasts faintly striped from the impact of the implement so lately wielded by her owner. Michael, up to his neck in water, advanced between her legs, which she bent, and hooked around his hips. His fingers spread her pussy-lips, allowing the warm, swiftly churning water access to the tender flesh thus exposed.

A sigh of pure bliss escaped the soundly whipped slave so sensuously bathed. Her dream returned to sadden her profoundly. I can’t choose! she mourned despairingly, but silently. I can’t! My will’s still suspended. I exist for these two masters’ pleasure. They, not I, ought to decide!

Submerged fingers now vibrated her nipples, even as others languidly toyed with her clit. The warmth, the turbulence, the buoyancy akin to a delicious weightlessness, served to dull the emotional pain fogging Gabrielle’s mind. Exerting effort, she shut out the pain, and savored the pleasure.

At length, Michael led the way into the mineral bath. The woman engulfed by heat almost too great to bear grew exquisitely conscious that each separate welt now stung sharply, tormented by the salts dissolved in abnormally dense water that smelled faintly of sulfurous compounds. Automatically tensing, she forced her pain-racked body to relax. The heat penetrated deeply, reaching beneath the surface of her smarting, aching flesh.

Gradually, the stinging grew less burdensome, and finally faded into insignificance. Submerged to her neck, with Raoul’s hands under her armpits, and Michael’s holding her ankles at his sides, she luxuriated in the heat enervating her body, and soothing her troubled mind.

All too soon to suit her, the delicious soporific bath ended. Strong hands dunked her unceremoniously into water that seemed by contrast icy. Gasping, spluttering, she thrashed impotently within Michael’s iron grip. Laughing, he spread her pussy-lips, and thrust three fingers deeply into her cunt, as if to demonstrate possessiveness. Raoul kneaded her breasts, tugging on nipples so soft as to seem retracted into the snowy mounds they ornamented. Thus restored to full alertness, the shivering slave found herself peremptorily ordered to mount stair-like shelves of rock, and dance under the pattering rain.

Wakened once again to consciousness of an art taught in her youth, but never employed since her eighteenth year, Gabrielle sought to please these cruel, masterful lovers who used her shapely body in whatever manner took their fancy. No shred of modesty remained to her. Reveling in her cognizance that she possessed an artistic power to please them, she raised her arms in the classic movements of the ballet.

Carefree as a water nymph, she let her hands assume the intriguing postures that so captivated Michael when he first beheld them. Her shapely, sinuously curved body writhed with conscious purpose, gyrating sensuously below those expressive arms. Having executed a classic pirouette, the dancer sank in a voluptuous posture of surrender, before rising to tease, to seduce, to beguile. The epitome of gracefulness, she stood poised on one delicately arched foot, her other leg pointing rearward, her arms outstretched to the canopy from which issued the ceaseless downpour of rain. She held that pose for a time, her face beseeching, rapt, before spinning on the ball of an upraised foot, her hands pressed modestly flat upon her bare, full breasts.

Seconds later, she gave way to mirth, her laughter a bewitching cascade of tinkling bells that tantalized the men watching mesmerized. Gaily, she arched the nude body poised on one foot, backwards, while the knee of the other leg rose in front, and then swiveled thirty degrees outwards, joyously flaunting her shaven, red-striped pussy. The sole of the upraised foot welded itself to the leg planted like a stone pillar on the rock upon which its owner performed.

Slowly, the dancer's bent leg rose, extended forward, and straightened before descending to rest again on the rocky stage. Her arms curved. Her hands met in a graceful palm-to-palm clasp before her glistening, hairless mound, as she bent backwards, riveting the attention of the beholders on her outthrust, rain-drenched breasts. She smiled archly, maddeningly, at the two worldly sensualists whose cocks engorged, whose eyes narrowed, whose lids lowered. Primal lust still further stiffened love-lances already rearing up, ready for conquest of this utterly desirable slave's soft, moist, pliant, willing depths.

Gabrielle's every inhibition vanished in this timeless now: this temple-dance performed before two cruel, expert lovers who had possessed her in ways she had not dared to imagine in a former life that now seemed a colorless echo of the vibrant, pulsating present. Exultantly, she stamped her foot, and gyrated her hips. Pressing her palms together over the top of her head, she smiled bewitchingly as she lowered her torso upon legs bent at the knees. Her feet planted flat on the rain-splattered rock, she widened the space between those bent, outthrust knees. Her torso wove sinuously from side to side, in a provocative, infinitely beguiling invitation the more compelling for the bewitching full exposure of her cunt.

As if struck simultaneously by one all-encompassing thought, the two men moving as one swarmed up the seeming steps to confront the dancer now sinking in a single voluptuous movement to her knees. Pressing a palm under each rigid male organ, she kissed each cock in turn. The rain beat down upon the three participants in the drama, each drop stimulating the nerve-endings beneath the skin so enticingly bombarded.

Gripping each throbbing prick with a hand, Gabrielle closed a thumb against each forefinger, and rubbed the ring thus formed briskly back and forth against each forward-thrusting tool. Eagerly, sensuously, she sucked each turgid shaft in turn, without ceasing the while to offer manual stimulation to the other. Her torso weaving, curving, she switched her mouth repeatedly from cock to throbbing cock.

At length, she sat back on her calves, and laughed up at the two men whose rigid members dribbled juice. "I'm an olive for your press, my masters," she teased roguishly. "Lie on the moss, whichever of you wishes me to work my cunt on your cock, while the other of you drives his prick forcefully into the anus so cruelly stretched for your pleasure." With that, she rose with supple grace, and laughed over her shoulder as she retreated to the expanse of lush moss.

Raoul caught her there. Sweeping her knees out from under her, he held her rain-soaked front against him as he dropped to lie supine on the dark sward. Gabrielle sank over his towering manhood, squealing in delight as his huge shaft impaled her to her womb. Plastering her breasts against his black-thatched chest, she shuddered with pleasure as Michael's stiff organ stabbed deeply into her ass. Crying "Ohhh, yes, work my loins, my masters, don't stop, make me cream, ohh, that's marvelous, I exist to take your magnificent cocks in me!" she arched her back, and ground her ass-cheeks against the crotch of the man impaling her from behind, even as the partner beneath her thrust forcefully upwards. Keeping up a rapid-fire monologue of breathless exhortations, she took an active role: squeezed, rocked sideways, thrust against one lover with her pelvis, and the other with her rump.

"Ohhh, I love both your pricks, I'm a grape squeezed into wine between those gorgeous poles," she gasped before ceasing her cries so as to tongue Raoul's nipples. Growing mischievous, she bit them playfully, worrying them as if she were a puppy exercising milk teeth. Spreading her thighs to their limit, she bent the right leg, and inserted the edge of the foot into the cleft of Michael's ass. Wantonly, provocatively, she rubbed his anus with slow, sensual motions. Aroused on a primal level, she rose effortlessly to the brink of the final ecstasy, crying aloud as the two lovers simultaneously working her loins ejected the essence of their passion at the exact same moment that their partner's uncontrolled contractions apprised them that she peaked. Her climax went on and on, surreally, wondrously prolonged.

Spent, enraptured, Gabrielle lay awash in euphoria between the two men drained dry of juice, and emptied of passion. Her selfhood divided, and then departed to be absorbed into the selves of her satiated masters.

When at length her owner rose, the slave lay spent, unmoving. Smiling, Michael lifted her off his guest, and laid her supine on the moss. Raoul sat up, his eyes smoldering with the embers of passion lately white-hot. "Ah, *mon ami*, I died, and wake reborn!" he affirmed, smiling with magnetic warmth upon the man taking a sudden, hard-driven rapier-thrust straight through his heart.

Concealing his pain to perfection, Michael lifted the slave to her feet, and offered a hand to the man who accepted it only out of courtesy. "I keep shampoo and soap in a cavity in the rock," he informed his guest. "We'll bathe in the rain before drying ourselves in the rose-light emanating from the circle where Gabrielle surrendered her will to us earlier."

The dripping adept borne in her master's arms back to the scene of her ordeal, shuddered palpably as she stood in the heat-glow that dried skin and hair with astonishing swiftness. When the rose-light died, and Raoul thrust his arms under her knees and back, she buried her face in his barrel-chest as he carried her out into the antechamber. Only when she divined that he mounted the spiral steps in the tower, did she fully relax, so vividly did the memory of her torment hover in her awareness. Only when she felt the man bearing her in his arms sink into a recliner by the embers still smoldering on the hearth in the dining area, did she open her eyes, and smile tremulously up at him.

Having replenished the fire, Michael cooked a delicious repast. Three nude diners, awash in the afterglow of prolonged, intense pleasure, talked of art, of music, of the beauty of women long dead. Anxiety intruded itself on the minds of all three: fear engendered by the fast-approaching moment of decision.

At length, the leisurely meal ended. Michael placed gourmet cheese, silver knives, a bottle of choice wine, three goblets, and an empty crystal bowl on a handsome silver tray. “We’ll repair to the garden, and pick pears from my tree,” he explained. “When the sun hovers above the horizon, Gabrielle will make her choice. We three will then partake of the food and the wine, thus signifying that no rancor abides in the heart of the man losing her, and that no stain rests on the honor of anyone concerned in the discharging of this sacred debt.”

Raoul made no attempt to disguise his admiration. “*En vérité, mon ami*, you speak well! You do credit to an order of men who stand head and shoulders above the common herd.”

Rising to his feet, Michael bowed with effortless lithe grace to the high-ranking member of a select company that nowise granted membership lightly. Fierce pride contended with piercing sorrow, though only the former emotion showed on his lean hawk-face.

Standing beneath a gnarled tree, picking red-gold pears from low-hanging branches, Gabrielle sighed audibly, dreading the moment when she must render a painful decision. I can’t choose! she wailed to her alter self. Why can’t I belong to both men? Why did Raoul leave this heart-wrenching task to me? Oh, my shattering soul, I can’t choose!

The pears piled in the bowl every ornamental groove of which sparkled with rainbow points, themselves caught the light of the setting sun streaming through a break in the mist above the canopy, so that they glowed with a pale aura. Both men turned to the woman whose piquant face they saw to be a mask of anguish, and waited expectantly.

Forced now to decide, Gabrielle found her mind ordering itself. Sweeping her gaze from lover to lover, she sought to read their very souls.

Both men riveted an intent glance on the object of their longing.

Raoul stood erect, his handsome face as dynamic, as vibrant, as ever. The iridescent eyes compelled, rather than beguiled. The air of command always so potent, now projected a siren pull which all but drew the soul out of the affectionate submissive so susceptible to its force. Her bowels melted; her heart thundered. Even as she felt irresistibly drawn, she yet sought to understand why this man had not simply taken her. Michael would have agreed! she cried inwardly. His honor demanded that he give whatever Raoul wished to possess! Why must I bear this pain? Why?

An answer lanced out of the blue to detonate within her direly stressed mind. Because Raoul takes infinite pleasure in inflicting pain on those over whom he gains power: men, no less than women! If he’d demanded that Michael relinquish a chattel allowed no say in the matter, his fellow master’s pain would have been that of loss of a precious possession. But if I freely choose Raoul, that pain will be doubled—agony born of rejection overlaid upon the misery occasioned by irreparable loss. Rejection! Of all the kinds of pain a lover can feel—that’s the worst!

Shifting her glance from the hypnotic persona palpably willing her to choose him, to the lean, mobile hawk-face of her first master, she saw that the control Michael habitually exerted over his facial expression suddenly failed him. Torment looked nakedly out of the tawny eyes: agony that melted into ineffable love—unmistakable, powerful longing. A memory rose with surreal clarity: this man’s frank avowal made as he held her close while lying in the very stream flowing so swiftly past the place where she now stood. “I don’t bestow love often, but when I do, I give it for life.”

Michael does truly love me! the wounded survivor of a failed relationship acknowledged in a

blinding burst of clarity. And I love him! I did when I offered myself as his slave, but my inexperience confused the issue! I equated the easy companionship—the comfort of shared intellectual tastes that I enjoyed with the man I married—with love! But I never loved Richard to the point of abandoning every shred of control over my life to him! Never loved him with the passionate fire I feel for Michael—I see that now! I love this cruel master who waited so long to find a partner perfect for him, and then chose me! Michael trained me to give him what I never dreamed I could give any man. He accepted me as his slave despite my telling him candidly that I wasn't sure what I felt for him emotionally! Michael woke me to ardor—to vital life—to fierce passion—to transcendental ecstasy! I love him!

Gabrielle's eyes shifted now to meet Raoul's squarely. In her peripheral vision, she watched despair overspread the lean face so defenseless, so naked, in its grief. She spoke, her voice clear, strong, supremely assured. "Raoul, what I feel for you is desire greater than any I've ever known—but what I feel for Michael, is love."

Turning, she walked to her first, and now her only master, and held out both arms to him.

Incredulity flashed into the tawny eyes. For a fraction of a second, the man reeling on his feet wondered if perhaps he hallucinated. As belief exploded into his cognizance, he savored an upwelling of male pride so overpowering as to leave him giddy.

Crushing his most cherished possession against his hard-muscled chest, he squeezed the breath from her lungs. Neither rapt lover caught sight of the pain mirrored in the eyes of the loser in a game of his own choosing—the guest who for a fleeting instant, aged twenty years.

That instant passed. Mastering the agony tearing at his vitals, Raoul smiled a shade wearily. You gambled and lost, *mon ami*, he chided himself sardonically. You let a veritable treasure slip out of your grasp, *hélas*.

Drawing from his little finger the gold signet ring, he proffered it with a smile no whit less magnetic than usual. "I honor your staunchness, Gabrielle," he affirmed with gracious warmth. "And your loyalty to the master who wakened you to sensuality, and taught you proficiency rare even in an adept. Michael, *mon ami*, let us partake of fruit and wine."

His heart hammering, his pulse pounding in his ears, the host pulled out a chair—one of four placed around a pedestal table under the pear tree. "Sit down, old friend," he urged. Having seated the woman now radiant with joy, he served the wine, and passed the crystal bowl. Three people ate slices of fruit and wedges of cheese while sipping the choice vintage. As the sun sank towards the horizon, they dined in companionable silence, too wrought up emotionally to converse.

At length Michael rose, and raised his glass. "To Raoul: a man of stainless honor and flawless self-control," he intoned.

Three goblets rang like silver bells as they touched.

Setting his glass down, Michael turned to the woman who had risen to reply to the toast. Taking her hands in his, he spoke. "Gabrielle, before this august witness, a high-ranking member of the Order of the Black Lily, I take you for my consort. Never, for so long as you live, will I ever pleasure myself in the body of any woman but you. Never will I love any woman but you. Will you swear to love me, and no other, for so long as I live?"

"Yes! I swear to love you, and only you, for so long as you live!"

Gabrielle's heart swelled almost to the bursting point as the man abdicating his power to reject her slipped the golden signet ring onto the middle finger of her right hand as a pledge of faith. Pulling her against his chest, he closed his mouth over hers in the kiss of possession.

When Michael released the consort breathless, alight with joy, Raoul raised an eyebrow, seemingly awaiting a declaration that failed to materialize. Finally, he broke the pregnant silence. "Michael, *mon ami*, I know why you hesitate to initiate the rite designed to set the seal of finality on the vow you just took. But *la belle dame* you honor ought by right of ancient tradition to bear on her body the indelible mark of your favor: a symbol proclaiming to each and every member of the Order her exalted status as your adept/consort. Ah, but yes, I know the reason for your reluctance: you harbor a scruple few of us share. If you so desire, I'll gladly imprint the badge of honor, leaving to you the subsequent act of possession."

For a fleeting instant, fear leaped into the amber-flecked eyes: fear that swiftly melted into fierce possessiveness. Michael's arm tightened around the waist of his consort, but he replied equably, "Only if Gabrielle consents, old friend. Explain to her in detail what this ritual entails."

Raoul's smile bore the faintest overtone of cruelty as he obliged the host. "A man who vows to cleave for life to the one woman he honors above all others, by right of ancient custom immobilizes his consort on an altar possessing the shape of the five-petaled flower which symbolizes the Order. He then lights a torch, and holds the silver pin wrought in the likeness of the crest of his House—the insignia he wears in the presence of his fellow masters—in a pair of tongs. Having heated the silver tracery until it glows red, he presses the pin against the center of his beloved's mound until the incandescent metal burns deeply enough to insure that the scar will be permanent. The pin you know to be modest in size, and most delicate in its outline. That delicacy assures that the scar thus formed serves merely to catch the eye of a knowing beholder, but the hair will never grow again above it. That latter effect renders the outline immediately noticeable, should the wearer ever seek to conceal it thus.

"Once the imprint adorns her body, the master leaves his consort immobilized, while he offers her an antique form of pleasure. He then impregnates her so as to signify his total domination, and her absolute surrender. The indelible mark she bears thereafter testifies to her inclusion within a small, select group of women held in the highest honor by all members of the Order of the Black Lily."

Gabrielle all but recoiled in horror. Mastering her face with difficulty, she stared out of dilated eyes at the guest so casually offering that chilling explanation. Gradually, her horror abated, as she intuitively sensed the undercurrent flowing between the two men regarding her out of eyes that reflected fierce pride, as well as certainty that she would agree. Turning to Michael, she asked breathlessly, "You wish me to bear on my body the indelible mark of your favor?"

"Yes," came the fiercely insistent assent.

Michael would have forgone exacting the costly price I'll pay in pain, because he promised right at the start never to cause me significant injury! Marveling at that realization, the woman suddenly suffused by elemental pride in being offered the honor this rite conferred, consigned her fears to the void. Empowered by the dauntless courage Michael so admired in her, she met the eyes of her beloved squarely. "I consent," she stated firmly and proudly.

The master engulfed by a potent new accession of male pride swept her into his arms. "Raoul, remove the pin from the shirt still resting on the flags by the hearth," he commanded. With long,

swinging strides, he crossed the living area and the antechamber, and stopped before the gleaming black sculpture holding so prominent a place in the quadrangle. Reveling in the sight, he swept his eyes over the graceful contours: a convex center featuring two shallow depressions, three petals relatively close to each other, extending from one side of the solid center, and two petals in the shape of a V projecting from the opposite side of the stylized flower. The wide base tapered downwards to a ball-joint, where the central mass shaped roughly like a child's top rested on its point.

Michael laid Gabrielle supine in the center of the massive ornament serving now as an altar on which she offered a supreme sacrifice to the man who just made her so welcome a vow. Both men positioned her body over the convexity that forced her torso to arch upwards. When they finished disposing her unresisting person, her ass-cheeks rested in the two shallow depressions, her head tilted back along the middle petal of three, while her upper arms rested on the two petals flanking the one supporting her head. Her thighs Michael spread, so that her upper legs rested on the remaining two petals forming the sides of the V.

Reaching into a cavity in the massive base supporting the flowerhead, he withdrew two elastic tethers featuring a manacle at one end. Those he snapped onto Gabrielle's wrists, while Raoul fastened identical restraints to her ankles. Each man then pulled on the elastic tethers, which they stretched over the down-curving rims of the petals, and attached to rings on the undersides.

Lying with her thighs spread wide apart, her arms drawn back over her head, her back painfully arched, her breasts thrust upward, her mound easily accessible to a master standing in the angle of the two petals supporting her legs, Gabrielle lay stretched so tightly that her flesh congealed against the smooth metallic surface. The restraints rendered her taut body rigidly immobile.

Raoul now walked to the far side of the altar. Smiling down at the inverted face of the woman regarding him out of wide doe-eyes, he produced a tiny bottle. Having pried open her mouth, he let two drops fall on her tongue before closing her jaws.

Sweetness impacted the senses of the woman expecting the taste to be bitter. "That dose won't mitigate the agony you'll soon experience, *mon bijou*," the guest announced, his iridescent eyes brimful of malicious mischief. "Nor will it confer sleepiness. It's a euphoriant—the nearest thing in our modern pharmacopoeia to an aphrodisiac. For a day or two, you'll exhibit insatiable desire for your master: desire so hot, so insistent, so relentless, that it will blot out all thought of the pain still afflicting your mound. That much I can give you, *ma charmeuse*. I only wish that the emblem I imprint were my crest, rather than Michael's."

Even through the fear engulfing her, Gabrielle sensed the poignancy of that final admission. On studying the man making it, she beheld no hint of cruelty in the dark blue eyes gone suddenly deeply wistful.

Michael now shifted the face of the flower poised on the ball-joint, tilting it so that the woman's exposed cunt rested at the height of his stiffly erect cock. Raoul withdrew a curving, wedge-shaped object from the place where it fit almost seamlessly into a cavity designed to hold it, in the base of the sculpture. Lifting Gabrielle's head while thrusting it forward, he slipped the wedge behind her neck, so that her chin rested below the hollow of her throat.

The woman fighting dire fear now found herself forced to gaze down her exposed front. "The ritual requires that you watch the glowing metal press against your mound," Raoul informed her,

his resonant voice compelling in its intensity.

The consort staring through a shimmering veil spun by rapidly escalating dread watched Michael hold a lighted match to the pointed end of a slender cylinder fashioned of black glass. A blue flame rose from the tip, accompanied by an ominous hissing noise. His hand as steady as his gaze, he held the torch. Raoul thrust the pin, which he gripped in the tips of a pair of tongs, into the flame, positioning the delicate tracery above the inner blue cone. In a few seconds, the gleaming metal assumed a red-orange glow.

Unable to flinch owing to her being held rigidly against the slick metallic surface so cunningly shaped that it fit her body's every contour, Gabrielle riveted eyes dilated with terror to the emblem etched in luminous red. Watching its swift advent, she felt the heat even before Raoul thrust the red-hot metal against the center of her mound.

A shriek reverberated within her mind, but her pride forbade her lungs, her throat, the tongue cleaving to the roof of her dry mouth, to allow that response utterance. A long, shuddering, sharply indrawn breath ended in a series of audible gasps that rattled within her throat before hissing past the mouth opened in that silent scream. She still convulsively drew in air as the red-hot tracery seared her skin.

The faint, acrid smell of burning flesh assaulted the nostrils of the men.

Excruciating agony impacted the female mind cognizant now of nothing else. For a few seconds that stretched like a millennium, that torment persisted. When Raoul lifted the still-glowing pin from the woman's deeply scored mound, the pain fell to a level severe by normal standards, but blessedly mild in comparison to the initial sensation.

Holding the fast-cooling pin, Raoul observed the glistening, pearly-gray lines etched into quivering flesh.

"Perfect, old friend," came the hoarse commendation of the man well able to inflict pain of that degree, but not injury of that nature. "Sharp in outline, and nowhere too deep. Perfect."

"Pleasure this lady whose *bravoure* astounds me, *mon ami*."

Fierce pride surged through both men reflecting on the phenomenal ability of this adept to bear agony without flinching—to offer pain of this magnitude so readily to the master honoring her by the vow each member of the Order considered sacred when sworn in the presence of one of their number. Able to think rationally now that the pain lessened, Gabrielle divined that no conventional marriage ceremony qualified in their view as binding. With a start, she realized that this ritual forged a bond wholly indissoluble. Pride suffused her, even as shock and pain rendered her faint.

Michael now advanced to rake her with eyes that burned with amber fire. She saw that he held an implement cunningly fashioned of ebony: a contoured handle, which curved at its end. That curved end she saw to be fitted with a convex, circular, shield-like extension, featuring a small bulge in the center.

Even as she studied the convex shield reminiscent of a tiny black breast with a hard nipple, Michael wound the golden key that protruded from the end of the handle, until it would no longer turn. "Ancient device, this," he assured his consort, smiling into puzzled eyes. "It vibrates far more effectively than do those teasers with which you're familiar. I'll wield it until it winds down and stops. You'll forget your pain, little staunch-heart."

Dropping to one knee, he released the finger that, until now, prevented the key from turning. No sound issued from the device, other than a faint, metronomic clicking. Touching the rim of the madly vibrating shield to the base of his consort's clit, Michael held it there.

Pleasure so intense as to shade seamlessly into pain now captured the immobilized woman's full attention. This device produced no gentle teasing. The vigorous vibration set her tiny shaft rearing instantly erect—instantly full. The hand wielding the object produced exquisite, almost unbearable pleasure, as it moved upwards. Slowly, it circled the tip of the ultrasensitive organ from which discrete waves of delight swept outwards in concentric circles, like the crests generated by a pebble tossed into a pond.

Shivers, then shudders, rippled across the flesh of the adept's abdomen. Moisture welled from the cunt never touched by the shield. The vibrating nipple continued to stimulate the love-bud gone as stiffly erect as it could rear. Shrill cries issued from the throat of the woman too proud to scream from the pain. I can't bear this! she shrieked in her mind. It's too intense! Her sphincters squeezed ever more tightly, without releasing; her abdominal muscles contracted until she concluded that her gut must be touching her spine. Far from skimming to a peak, she leaped to one. No sooner did she enjoy its delicious impact, than she rose immediately to another, and another.

Her mind reeled; her eyes glazed. Pleasure became her universe. Held rigidly immobile, unable to writhe, she lacked the power to release any iota of the sexual tension by a single movement of her loins. She lost track of how many orgasms filled the eon during which the vibrating shield relentlessly, violently, teased her shuddering epicenter of femininity. When the clicking stopped, and the action ceased, her engorged clit went on vibrating endlessly of itself.

A long, inarticulate, gasping cry slid from between her lips. Both men, their shafts erect, turgid, impaled her quivering ornament with eyes dark with passion, but Raoul stood back. Michael drove his cock into his consort's dripping cunt, thrusting repeatedly, forcefully, penetrating to her womb. Groaning, she soared to a peak once again. During this latest ascent to ecstasy, her master impregnated her, his juice exploding into her opened, loosened feminine depth as her will underwent annihilation and her selfhood merged with his. Standing triumphantly erect, his cock still lodged deeply within her, he exulted in the victory he had so lately despaired of achieving.

As the host stood enraptured above the woman he loved, Raoul slipped silently into the guest-chamber. When the guest emerged, his male member hung flaccidly against his groin.

Michael loosed the bonds. Lifting his consort in strong arms, he set her on her feet, and held her firmly erect. "Raoul, stay the night," he urged, exhibiting genuine concern for the rival defeated in a game of his own choosing. "It'll be dark on the desert."

A laugh of protest greeted that appeal. "Better the pale light of the moon, than the brazen glare of the sun," the guest averred. "*Mais non, mon ami*, I must go. I'll dress by the fire, with your permission, eh?"

Pain diluted what Gabrielle until now perceived as perfect happiness. When the three companions again stood before the fire, she lifted the pile of folded clothes she had yesterday stripped from the guest, and held the pants as Raoul donned them. Bidding him sit, she slipped the shirt over his upraised arms.

His eyes, magnetic as ever, regarded her with amusement. "So deft, your little hands, *ma belle*. So lovely, your body. You'll wear the indelible mark of your master's favor with pride, eh?"

“I will indeed.” Her sorrow deepened as the affectionate observer intuitively sensed the pain underlying those lightly bantering remarks. “I’ll never forget you, Raoul.”

“Nor I you, *ma fleur*.”

When the outer gates swung wide, and Raoul prepared to take final leave, Michael embraced him. “*Au revoir*, old friend,” he declared as he held the departing guest at arms’ length.

Raoul smiled with all of his dynamic charm, but replied in English, employing the term denoting finality. “Good-bye, Michael; Gabrielle.” Taking the hand of the woman, he bowed over it as he kissed it, employing all the princely grace at his command. Turning, he walked without looking back, to the vehicle casting a long shadow on the sandy soil. Red fire still glowed in the sky where the sun had so lately set.

The doors closed. Master and consort stood facing each other, devouring each other with their eyes. In a swift, imperious motion, Michael swept his pain-racked possession into his arms. “You’ve had a lively day,” he observed in a masterpiece of understatement. “You’ll drift off to sleep in my arms, little stalwart. Tomorrow I’ll devote to satisfying desire even more insatiable than usual.”

“I love you, Michael,” his consort breathed, melting against his chest as he bore her off to the bedchamber.

Lying snuggled against him in the huge bed, as she had so longed to do during her initiation, Gabrielle murmured in his ear, “You can’t know how happy your raising me to the rank of consort made me!”

“If Raoul couldn’t shake your devotion to your master, little rosebud, no man ever will. You’ve enjoyed a meteoric rise in rank, I’ll admit—an acceleration forced on me by the need to honor my vow. But you’re a worthy adept, my love. Certainty, not impetuosity, drove me to make you my consort so quickly.”

“I’m still your slave, master, whatever rank a mysterious company of shadowy figures assigns me. I exist now solely for your pleasure.”

“So you do, little heart’s delight.” Affection rather than arousal prompted the languorous, intimate, possessive kiss bestowed on the lovely submissive clasped in the corded arms of a man still quivering from the narrowness of his escape from despair.

Lying on the pale green sheet, enfolding his physically and emotionally exhausted consort in his arms, Michael bade her sleep. Himself wide-awake, he held her close for a span of time exquisite in its sweetness, savoring fierce, raw, quintessentially masculine pride generated by his having retained sole proprietorship of this utterly desirable woman.

Drowsy from the wine that dulled only marginally the pain afflicting the seared flesh, Gabrielle let her mind drift back over the events of the day, and the prior night. Raoul’s magnetic smile again beguiled; his magnificent manhood again drove into her dripping cunt. The daunting realization that never again would she know a triple joining of that virile lover, herself, and the man she now knew that she loved, generated keen regret. I enjoyed those wantonly erotic couplings, she admitted candidly. I’ll likely never see Raoul again. Sorrow flayed her, distracting her attention from the agony pulsating through her mound. That sorrow persisted, haunting the dreams drifting through her mind as she slept.

Far out on the desert lit by a huge full moon, a ghostly observer riding undetected in the Land Rover would have beheld broad shoulders slump, and iridescent eyes lose their normal fire to grow dull, listless, remote. The spectral watcher would have seen the handsome face of the man gripping the wheel grow shockingly old, unutterably regretful, hauntingly, heart-breakingly sad.