



**ETERNAL
SINNER**

**By
Michel Poulin**

ETERNAL SINNER

An erotica/fantasy novel

By Michel Poulin

© December 2014

WARNING TO POTENTIAL READERS

THIS NOVEL CONTAINS GRAPHIC DESCRIPTIONS OF SEX, VIOLENCE AND EROTICISM, AS WELL AS COARSE LANGUAGE AND CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECTS THAT ARE MEANT SOLELY FOR AN ADULT AUDIENCE. WHILE THIS NOVEL DEPICTS SOME HISTORICAL OR ACTUAL PERSONS, THIS IS A WORK OF FICTION AND WORDS OR DEEDS ATTRIBUTED IN IT TO PERSONS WHO EXISTED OR ARE STILL LIVING DO NOT REFLECT REALITY. THIS BOOK DOES NOT REFLECT IN ANY WAY THE RELIGIOUS VIEWS OR MORALITY NORMS OF THE AUTHOR.

ABOUT THIS NOVEL

This novel is meant to depict with humor and openness the adventures of a very special young woman who lives by the three 'S' : Seduction, Sex and Sin. It is not meant in any way to promote the lifestyle of the main character, but rather to simply provide entertainment to adult readers.

TABLE OF CONTENT

CHAPTER 1 – A NEW START	4
CHAPTER 2 – LOOKING FOR A JOB	23
CHAPTER 3 – FRATERNITY MAYHEM	38
CHAPTER 4 – THE PRICE OF SIN	48
CHAPTER 5 – PLAYING ROUGH.....	56
CHAPTER 6 – ANOTHER LONELY SOUL	78
CHAPTER 7 – IN THE NAME OF THE LAW.....	94
CHAPTER 8 – TROUBLE FROM HEAVEN	126
CHAPTER 9 – FAMILY VISIT	142
BIBLIOGRAPHY	147

CHAPTER 1 – A NEW START

11:18 (California Time)

Sunday, September 3, 1972

Los Angeles International Airport

California, U.S.A.

Richard Radner was still considered a rookie by the other Immigration and Customs agents in Los Angeles International Airport, having been on the job for less than four months. Because of that, he often found himself under the close scrutiny and supervision of his senior supervisor, the no-nonsense Senior Inspector Frank Capriano, while processing newly arrived travelers. As the junior agent in his team, he drew more than his fair share of weekend and night shifts, but Richard had not complained about that, knowing that it was the price to pay to progress in his new career. At 22 years of age, he was tall, fit and handsome, something that had helped him a lot when dealing with female customers, who seemed to tone down any bout of feistiness after a close look at him. It also had helped him in getting many warm smiles from the occasional airline stewardesses he had to process from time to time.

Richard had now been on duty for over eleven hours at the customs inspection stations that received the travelers from outside the United States. He had just finished processing and inspecting the luggage of a number of passengers that had arrived from Mexico and was now expecting a few travelers that were just arriving on a United Airline flight after transferring on it in New York from a Pan Am flight from Paris. He soon saw the United Airline Boeing 707 arrive at one of the gates of the passenger terminal, with about a hundred passengers then disembarking and proceeding first to the reception counters, then to the baggage carrousel to retrieve their luggage. Those that had registered their luggage on international flights with connections in the United States then started arriving at the customs inspection counters. The first travelers Richard processed turned out to be an American businessman and his wife, returning from a vacation in Paris. Greeting them with a smile and a polite question about any imported item bought in France during their vacation, Richard raised an eyebrow when the businessman said that he and his wife had nothing to declare. Staying polite, he then

asked them to put their luggage on the counter and to open them. Richard saw the couple tense up as he started looking through their possessions, something that confirmed his suspicions. He quickly found an apparently expensive dress with matching high heel shoes and jacket, all of which were missing their brand stickers. On closer examination, Richard saw that the said stickers had been cut away. Keeping a polite façade, he looked up at the businessman and his wife.

“Did you buy these items while in France, sir?”

“Of course not!” Replied the pot-bellied man in a vehement tone. “My wife bought them at a boutique here in Los Angeles that imports the latest in French fashion.”

“I am sorry, sir, but the brand stickers on them have been cut away. Could you explain that to me?”

“I don’t know what you are talking about!”

“Sir, are you still saying that you bought them here and not in France?”

“That’s what I’m saying, young man! Could we go now? I have an important business lunch meeting to attend and am going to be late if I lose more time here.”

Richard looked the man into the eyes for a short moment, then turned around to make a sign to Senior Inspector Frank Capriano. The latter was besides him in a few seconds and listened to his whispered explanations before nodding his head.

“Let me handle this, Mister Radner.”

If the traveling couple believed that Capriano would prove more amenable, they quickly found out that they were wrong. With Richard watching and listening carefully, Capriano politely but systematically demolished the stories of the businessman, with the latter ending up having to pay a fine on top of paying importation duties on half of the items in the couple’s luggage. As the fuming couple was finally allowed to leave with their luggage, Capriano looked at Richard and smiled to him.

“Nice initial call about that couple, Mister Radner. Keep it up!”

“Thank you, sir!” Replied Richard, feeling pride at the compliment. Capriano then returned to his previous position, letting Richard handle the next travelers.

The three next travelers proved to be honest ones, declaring all their imported items, which were anyway within the limits permitted by customs rules. The fourth next traveler then arrived at Richard’s inspection counter with a cart loaded with two suitcases and one carry-on bag. Richard felt blood rush to his brain and he had a hard time keeping a straight face at the sight of the absolutely ravishing young woman, a

teenager actually, that now stood in front of him while giving him a very warm smile. The girl was very tall, close to six feet in height, had a curvy, extremely sensual body with long legs and a large, firm chest that was made quite evident by the wide cleavage of her blouse. Her long black, silky hair fell to the middle of her back and her large green eyes sparkled with malice as she spoke in a mellow voice to Richard while handing him her custom declaration and her passport.

“Good day, mister. I have nothing to declare. Do you need to inspect my luggage?”

“Uh, let me just check first your declaration, miss.”

Looking first at her customs declaration form, then at her passport, Richard saw a couple of things that intrigued him. Looking up from the passport and doing his best not to stare at the girl’s fabulous chest, he gave her his best smile, even though he couldn’t help getting quickly a tremendous erection.

“Miss Patricia Love, you have an American passport, yet you have no return stamps from the United States Customs, while you have a number of European entry and exit stamps in it. How come?”

“That’s easy enough to explain, Mister...Radner.” She answered while glancing at his nametag on his uniform’s jacket. “I am the daughter of an American couple that lived in Paris. Unfortunately, my parents died recently in a car accident and I decided to come back to the United States in order to attend university here in Los Angeles. This is actually the first time that I come to the United States.”

“I am sorry to hear about your parents, Miss Love. Please accept my most sincere condolences.”

“Thank you, Mister Radner. You are most kind. Do you need to look at my luggage now?”

“Yes, but I am sure that it will turn out to be a simple formality, miss.”

“Please, call me simply Patricia.”

Richard hesitated then and glanced quickly at Senior Inspector Capriano, ever vigilant in his corner, then made an apologetic smile to Patricia.

“Uh, I’m afraid that regulations forbid me to be familiar with customers, miss.”

“A shame indeed! What about after work? When does your shift end, Mister Radner?”

With crazy hopes sprouting at once in his mind, Richard couldn’t let such an opportunity pass and he answered her in a low voice.

"I am due to finish my shift in twenty minutes, at noon."

That made the sensual teenager grin with satisfaction.

"Excellent! I was due to find an hotel on arrival, since I don't have yet a place to stay here. Maybe I could abuse your services and ask you to drive me to a decent hotel in the Westwood area after you are done with your work shift?"

"It would be my pleasure, miss, truly." Replied Richard, as horny as he could be. "Let me just look quickly at your luggage."

Patricia grabbed her two large suitcases and, without apparent effort, put them flat on the inspection counter, opening them after also putting down her carry-on bag on the counter. Richard started searching in a perfunctory manner through them but had to pause after a few seconds only: he had just exposed an assortment of sex toys, including vibrators and a whip, lying under a layer of sexy underwear. As he gave a stunned look at Patricia, the latter made a devilish smile to him.

"Please don't be scandalized by these, Mister Radner: It is simply that I like my fun. You could say that I am a very bad girl, I suppose. I hope that you don't mind that?"

"Er, not at all, Miss Love." Replied Richard, now more than ever anxious to finish his work shift. "Well, everything seems to be in order here, miss. You may close and take back your luggage."

He then lowered his voice to a near whisper while he was bent over her luggage.

"Wait for me in the visitors' hall, near the taxi station. I will pick you up there in about half an hour."

"I will be there." She replied, still smiling. Patricia then put her luggage back on her cart and left the counter after a last wink at Richard. The latter, his heart beating fast and with sweat on his forehead, blew air out and took a few seconds to gain back his composure before calling forward the next passenger waiting in line.

At twenty past noon, Richard showed up in the visitors' hall and anxiously looked around for Patricia. He blew air in relief when he saw her, sitting on a bench and waiting patiently with her luggage cart besides her. Her long, shapely legs, mostly left uncovered by her outrageously short skirt, were crossed and attracting more than their fair share of male looks around her. Carrying his briefcase in his left hand, Richard hurried to her and smiled down to her after stopping in front of her bench.

"I can now drive you, Patricia. By the way, my name is Richard. Let me push your luggage cart for you."

"You are the perfect gentleman, Richard." Said Patricia before getting up and passing her right arm around his waist. She actually proved to be as tall as him, even though she was not wearing high heel shoes. Patricia then surprised Richard, although in a pleasant way, by kissing him on the cheek.

"Let's go find an hotel in the Westwood District. You do know a bit that area, no?"

"I do, Patricia. I recently graduated from the UCLA, the University of California at Los Angeles, which is situated in Westwood."

"You went to the UCLA?" Said Patricia, beaming with enthusiasm. "That's where I have enrolled for the next fall semester. Then, you could tell me about it later tonight."

"I will be happy to do so, Patricia."

Walking together like a pair of young lovers, Richard guided Patricia outside to an apparently well used Ford sedan parked among hundreds of other cars in a huge parking lot. Loading quickly her luggage in the trunk of the Ford, Richard sat behind the wheel, with Patricia wasting no time in putting her left hand on his right leg as soon as she was sitting herself. Richard's erection returned at once with a vengeance and he could not stop himself from bending sideways to kiss her on the mouth. She returned his kiss hungrily, while her left hand started rubbing his hard dick through his trousers. Richard took a deep breath before stopping gently her hand.

"Let's wait until we are at the hotel before continuing, Patricia. It would be too stupid to have an accident through a lack of concentration on my part."

"You are right, Richard. You certainly are a sensible guy, on top of being most handsome. I like that!"

"Thank you, Patricia!"

With her withdrawing her hand with regret, Richard was free to concentrate on his driving, backing out of his parking spot and leaving the parking lot, then going to take the nearby Highway 405 and rolling towards the North. As he drove in the dense Los Angeles traffic, Richard started conversing with Patricia, eager to learn more about her.

"So, Patricia, what are you going to study at the UCLA?"

"Photography and film! I am aiming for a Bachelor of Arts degree."

"Do you have a job lined up to sustain your studies?"

"Not yet, but that is not a pressing issue for me: my parents left me with a sizeable inheritance that will allow me to pay for my studies and even pay possibly for a house in Westwood. The furniture that belonged to my parents is also on its way to Los Angeles and should arrive in the next week or so, so I don't even have to worry about buying a whole set of furniture."

"At least, your parents didn't leave you in the street with nothing. You are lucky in that respect, Patricia."

Richard noticed the brief frown that she made on him mentioning her parents, but didn't ask about that, not wanting to antagonize her with potentially embarrassing questions. It wasn't his business anyway to intrude in her personal life or family history. He thus stayed mostly silent during the trip, until they arrived in the parking lot of an hotel in the Westwood district and parked in an empty spot near the main entrance.

"Well, here we are: the Westwood Holiday Inn! It is comfortable enough, while not too expensive."

"It will do until I can find a house or an apartment." Pronounced Patricia before stepping out of Richard's car and going to the trunk. Richard took out her luggage and volunteered to carry her two suitcases, which she gratefully accepted. Walking in and going to the reception counter, Patricia smiled to the receptionist, a mature man wearing a blue-gray suit.

"Good day, sir. I would like to rent a room for a few weeks, time for me to find a house or an apartment."

The receptionist, mesmerized by her beautiful face and sensual body, returned her smile and opened his register while taking a pen.

"We have plenty of rooms at the present, miss. Could I see some identification, please?"

In response, Patricia fished out of her purse her passport, giving it to the receptionist.

"I just arrived from a long stay in France, so I don't have an American driver's license yet. Here is my passport."

"A passport will do just fine, miss." Replied the man, taking her passport and consulting it in order to fill his register. He took a minute to note down her name and passport number, then gave back to Patricia her passport, along with a room key.

"Here you are, Miss Love: you have Room 226. Have a good stay!"

"Thank you, sir!"

Then followed by Richard, who was still carrying her suitcases, Patricia took a nearby elevator to the second floor and walked down a carpeted hallway, stopping in front of a door numbered 226. Unlocking and opening it, she stepped in a comfortably furnished room of fair size with a large bed. A bathroom was attached to the bedroom, making her nod her head with satisfaction.

“Well, this certainly beats some so-called hotel rooms I saw in Paris. The bed seems to be most comfortable.”

“It looks most comfortable indeed, Patricia.” Replied Richard, his tone making Patricia grin with malice at him.

“You are anxious to exercise those male hormones of yours, hey? Close the door and lock it, then we will get to the truly serious business.”

Those last words made Richard grin as he locked the door behind him while looking at her.

“You do take your fun seriously, Patricia.”

“You can’t believe how true that is, Richard.” Replied Patricia with a mysterious tone of voice. She then walked to the young customs officer and glued herself to him, kissing him on the mouth. That kiss quickly turned into a French kiss, with her tongue twisting around his tongue while his hands went to her firm, well-shaped buttocks to caress and fondle them, followed by her fabulous breasts. At the same time, Patricia rubbed her belly against his groin, making his steel-hard dick spew semen within seconds inside his shorts. Patricia next took a step back and took off her blouse, then her bra, exposing her firm 38D-sized breasts. Richard stared hungrily at her tits, with their now puffy nipples sticking out like spiked caps, and raised his hands to grab and fondle them gently while she shed her short skirt, then her panties, revealing a smooth, hairless groin.

“God, you could damn the Pope himself!” He said passionately before getting on his knees in front of her to use his tongue. He started with her erect nipples, kissing and licking them and making Patricia moan with pleasure.

“That’s it, my handsome stud, make them feel alive!”

After a minute concentrating on her breasts while using one hand to fondle her clitoris, Richard went down gradually to her groin, licking her clit and outer vaginal lips while inserting three fingers in her moist vagina and then pumping his hand inside her. With her breathing gradually becoming faster and heavier, Patricia, still standing, stiffened as spasms of pleasure came after a few minutes of stimulation by Richard. She kept in her

shout when she reached orgasm, but the tight grip of her fingers on his hair and head told Richard that he had done his job right. Exhaling deeply, Patricia smiled down at Richard and made him get back up on his feet.

“Your turn, Richard.”

Undressing him slowly while caressing and kissing him, she soon had him fully naked, like herself, and made him lie down on his back on the bed, where she eyed hungrily his hard, erect penis while holding its base with fingers from both of her hands.

“Time to acquaint myself with this nice dick of yours.”

She first slowly passed her tongue in a circular motion on the tip of his penis while still pinching the base, lubricating it with her saliva, then used one hand to delicately but expertly caress the tip with her fingers while grinning devilishly to Richard.

“You will soon beg me to stop as your brain will explode with sensations.”

Richard, who already felt waves of pleasure from her fingers' caresses, replied with clenched teeth.

“Never! I will not surrender so easily.”

“Brave words indeed! We will see about that...Dick!”

Using both her fingers, tongue and mouth to stimulate the swollen, hardened tip of Richard's penis while still pinching its base with one hand, she soon had him tremble with spasms of pleasure radiating from his penis. He would have ejaculated as the spasms became continuous, but her hand pinching the base of his dick prevented that, keeping it hard and erect as Patricia played with the tip. She kept her grip on until Richard spoke haltingly after three minutes of heroic resistance.

“En...enough! My groin is about to explode!”

Patricia released her grip then, making him shout with ecstasy as his contained orgasm exploded and radiated up to his brain. Patricia was however not finished with him. Getting on top of him, she presented her firm breasts to his mouth as they hung down over his face.

“Let's see if I can get your dick to harden again.”

Richard didn't have to be told twice and started licking again her nipples, alternating from one to the other while Patricia used one hand to rub his penis. The sight of her fabulous body soon had the young customs officer horny again. Mounting him, Patricia impaled herself on him and starting to rock back and forth, making Richard moan with pleasure. Her rhythm accelerated gradually until both were about to climax, at which time Patricia increased the speed of her movements to the maximum. Both exploded into intense

orgasms at about the same time, with Patricia's orgasm going on a bit longer than his. With the sexual energy from the orgasm flowing through her body, she kissed Richard passionately while still impaled on him, profiting from the fact that he was still radiating pleasure to extract more energy from him. Not wanting to kill or hurt him, Patricia was careful to restrain herself as she sucked in a small part of Richard's life essence through his mouth and into hers. She could have sucked all of his life essence then, killing him, if she had wanted to, but Richard seemed to be a nice man and she truly didn't wish to hurt him. She thus sucked in just enough of his life essence to feed herself for a day or two while making him only weak for a short while. When she looked into his eyes, smiling down to him, Richard looked up at her with an exhausted expression.

"God, Patricia, you can really burn a guy out!"

"You could say that, I suppose." She replied with a malicious smile before rolling off him and on the bed. "Did you like it?"

"Hell yes! You are one hell of a girl! The boys at the UCLA don't know what is coming to them."

That made Patricia giggle as she imagined all the eager teenage boys and young men she was going to meet on the university campus. As a fertile hunting ground for her, it couldn't get much better. She certainly was not going to suffer from energy starvation there. Richard then got up from the bed at a tired pace and started slowly dressing back up.

"Phew! I feel totally beaten. I better go home and get some serious sleep before my next shift at the airport."

"Be careful on the way home and don't fall asleep at the wheel, Richard. I would hate to see you get hurt." Said Patricia, both serious and sincere. She may have just fed on him, but he was nice enough and didn't deserve to die. There were plenty of persons in Los Angeles truly deserving to die anyway.

Richard left her room after a last kiss and occasion to fondle her breasts, with Patricia then locking the door behind him. Going to the easy chair besides the bed, she sat in it and contemplated the view of Los Angeles that she had through the windows of her room. She was truly hoping that this new episode in her life was going to be less rough and difficult than the one before in France. There, she had been a lost, lonely little girl left to herself in a totally alien environment and had gone through some very hard times indeed until she had managed to adapt and gain some control on her life, thanks

to her intelligence, dodged determination, special skills and powers. What she had now, save for her life, she didn't owe to her parents, only to her own efforts and labor. She had a brief thought for her father, who had died while protecting her as Patricia's mother transported her out of reach of those who wanted to murder her. Her heart pinched as she thought also of her mother: she must have been made to answer afterwards for taking Patricia away. She however knew too well that she could never return to her place of origin, on pain of death...or worse. After a good ten minutes of contemplation and reminiscing, Patricia shook herself out of her thoughts and got up from her chair to get dressed: she had tons of things to do in the next few days, starting with finding a place to live, establish more solidly her new identity, get a car and go pay her university tuition fees before the start of the Fall session at the UCLA at the end of the month.

10:20 (California Time)

Monday, September 4, 1972

Registrar's offices, university campus

University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA)

There were only a few dozen students lined up to pay their tuition fees for the Fall session when Patricia showed up at the Registrar's offices of the UCLA that morning. All the male students and staff, along with more than a few female ones, stared at once at her as she walked in and sat down in the tuition office's waiting room after taking a numbered ticket at the entrance. She innocently crossed her legs, showing most of them while discreetly pulling up her pleated skirt and making the boys in the room salivate at once. She was wearing what one would normally consider a rather conservative schoolgirl uniform of black shoes, knee-high socks, pleated skirt, white shirt and a blazer decorated with an embroidered school crest, but her skirt was notably shorter than the norm, while her shirt's front was bulging out, filled to capacity by her firm 38D chest. Patricia smiled to herself on seeing the lustful male looks she attracted, along with a few jealous female ones.

Her turn came after less than fifteen minutes of waiting, with a severe-looking matron sitting behind one of the registration desks calling her number up. Picking up her leather briefcase and getting up, Patricia calmly walked to the matron's desk and sat in

the chair positioned in front of it, smiling good-naturedly to the big woman and speaking in her English tainted with a slight French accent.

“Good morning, miss! I arrived from France yesterday to attend the Fall session of the School of Arts. I already have been admitted via correspondence and am here to pay my tuition fees. Here is the letter of acceptance from your university that was sent to me in Paris.”

The matron grabbed the letter she took out of her briefcase and read it quickly, then eyed the crest on her blazer before speaking, appearing to have mellowed a bit after reading her letter.

“So, you graduated from the college of the American School of Paris, Miss Love? It has quite a reputation of high standards and quality curriculum indeed. Do you intend to find living accommodations in one of our students’ residences on campus?”

“No! I intend to either rent or buy something near the campus in the days to come, miss.”

“Very well, Miss Love. Do you have a list of the courses you registered for?”

“Certainly, miss! Here you are!” Replied Patricia while taking out more documents from her briefcase and passing them to the matron, who consulted them before starting to add up the appropriate fees on a form. After a few minutes of work, the woman turned around the form and pushed it towards Patricia.

“Here is your bill for the Fall session, miss. You can pay now via cash or check, or you may return another day if you need time to get the money.”

Patricia had one look at the sum at the bottom of the form, then took out a wallet from the black leather purse slung from a strap passed over her right shoulder. The matron didn’t miss the thick pile of banknotes filling the wallet as Patricia counted out a number of fifty and twenty dollar bills and put them on the desk.

“Here you are, miss.”

Favorably impressed by both her overseas credentials and her apparent financial means and figuring that she must be the daughter of a rich couple of expatriates, or maybe of a diplomat, the matron counted the money, then gave her the change due on the sum and stamped and signed the payment form. Next, she filled a receipt, stamping and signing it before giving it to Patricia, along with a booklet.

“Here is your receipt for your tuition fees, along with an introduction guide to our university. You will have next to go in succession to the identification office next door, where a photo will be taken of you and a student card in your name will be produced,

then to the scheduling office, where you will be able to get a schedule of your courses produced.”

“Thank you, miss!” Said Patricia, smiling to the matron while taking the receipt and the booklet. Grabbing back her briefcase, she then got up and left the tuition office, adopting a sexy gait that made all the boys follow her with their eyes again.

Getting her student’s identity card done was actually more important for her than just having a proof of being a student of the UCLA: it was also a useful addition to the limited paperwork in existence that certified that she was indeed Patricia Love, the orphaned daughter of a wealthy American expatriate couple that had recently died in a car accident in Paris and had then bequeathed their fortune to her. Soon, hopefully, she would be able to add to that paperwork trail, both for her present identity and for two other, alternate identities. With all the ones who wanted to find and kill her, she definitely needed those alternate identities in order to keep them off the trail of what she hoped to be her long term legitimate identity in Los Angeles.

14:49 (California Time)

Wednesday, September 6, 1972

Corner of Lindbrook Drive and Malcolm Avenue

Westwood District, City of Los Angeles

Patricia examined from the other side of the street the two-storey brick bungalow with red tiled peaked roof for a minute, then crossed Malcolm Avenue and walked to the front door of the house, knocking on it. A slightly overweight man in his forties answered the door after a few seconds and looked with both curiosity and admiration at the eerily beautiful teenage girl facing him.

“Yes, miss? What can I do for you?”

Patricia pointed the ‘For Sale’ sign planted on the grass of the front lawn and gave the man her best smile.

“Mister Cole? My name is Patricia Love and I called yesterday to arrange a visit of your house. It is still for sale, is it?”

“Uh, yes! I must say that I was expecting someone, er, a little bit older.”

“Don’t worry, Mister Cole: I may be young but my parents left me with a well-padded bank account.”

"Left you? Are they dead?"

Patricia didn't have to fake the sad look she then put on her face.

"Yes! They recently died in a car accident. I just moved to Los Angeles to study at the UCLA."

"I'm truly sorry to hear about your parents, miss. Please accept my sincere condolences."

"Thank you! You are very kind. So, could I visit your house?"

"Certainly, miss!" Replied the man, who stepped out of the way and opened wide the door, letting her in. He then swept one hand around at the empty vestibule and adjacent lounge visible from the door.

"I have already moved out to my new house in Long Beach, where my new job is. You would be able to move in at once if we are able to conclude a deal."

What he didn't say was that prospective buyers had been few and far between, mostly discouraged by the present high inflation rate and rising housing prices caused by rampant real estate speculation. With his new house to pay for in Long Beach, he was getting desperate to find a buyer for his old bungalow. Without letting it appear, Patricia was able to detect his mental anxiety and was fully ready to use it to her advantage. The man then led her through a tour of the house, which had a concrete basement, a garage, two bedrooms, two bathrooms, a private study, a huge lounge and a large kitchen and dining room. The rear lot was comparatively small but the house was in good shape and Patricia didn't see any obvious problems with it. It was also well situated for her, being barely a quarter mile from the campus grounds of the UCLA. She thus gave the owner an encouraging smile at the end of the tour.

"I like this house, mister. Your ad quoted an asking price of 35,000 dollars. Could we discuss it?"

"You certainly can, miss. However, I believe that my asking price is more than fair, considering the local real estate boom."

"Boom? We are well past the traditional moving season, yet you are still saddled with this house, Mister Cole. I am offering you 28,000 dollars for it."

That started nearly ten minutes of polite but firm price negotiations, until they finally settled on a selling price of 32,200 dollars. When the man asked her about how she was going to finance the deal, Patricia smiled and took out her wallet, along with a checking book.

"I won't need to obtain some mortgage for this house, Mister Cole: I have enough money in the bank to pay straight for it. I am ready to give you right away a cash advance of one thousand dollars, to prove that I am serious, plus a check for the remainder of the sum once a proper sales contract has been done and notarized."

Daniel Cole glanced at the checking book from the Chase Manhattan Bank, then at the big bills she was taking out of her wallet, and shook hands with her.

"Deal! I will tell my notary to step on it. I am sure that you will love this house, miss."

"I think I will, Mister Cole. My furniture should arrive soon from France, so I will be able to move in pretty quickly. It was a pleasure to do business with you."

"The pleasure was mine, miss." Replied Cole with a smile while eyeing discreetly her fabulous chest. Patricia noticed that but didn't offer him to have sex with her, even though he was a fairly handsome man: she didn't want to risk their fresh deal by making him think that he was selling his house to a young prostitute. Getting a receipt from him for her cash advance, she then left the house, happy with her new acquisition.

10:02 (California Time)

Tuesday, September 12, 1972

Santa Monica office of the California Bureau of Motor Vehicles

Santa Monica, California

Patricia did her best to hide her nervousness as an employee finally unlocked the door of the local office of the California Bureau of Motor Vehicles: a lot depended on the success she would have here today. She was still learning all the complications and intricacies in terms of bureaucracy and government regulations in this alien world. However, she had no choice but to fit into this world as best she could, on pain of becoming visible and thus vulnerable to those who wanted her dead. One way to fit in was to have proper identification and having a driver's permit was one important part of that, especially since the local law enforcement agencies and government bureaucracies used those permit registries so often to check on persons of interest. Taking a numbered ticket at the entrance, Patricia then sat down in one of the dozens of chairs lined up in front of the service counter, with the chairs around her filling up rather quickly. She had however come early to take a place forward in the waiting line and was soon

called up to one of the wickets, where a middle aged woman gave her a semblance of a smile.

“What may I do for you, miss?”

“I arrived recently from France, where I spent many years, and would like to have a local driver’s permit made into my name, madam. I have my American passport, an international driver’s permit and a notarized house sale as a proof of local residency.”

“Please show me your papers, miss.” Replied in a blasé tone of voice the woman, who then took a few seconds to examine her passport, international permit and house contract. She finally nodded her head and returned to Patricia her documents, plus a multi-layered form.

“Everything seems fine, miss. Please fill this form, then go to the identification section next door, on your left. NEXT!”

A bit put off by the woman’s cursory manners, Patricia went to sit at one of the small tables in the hall to fill her form. Once she was done, she went to the identification section, where she was made to pay for her permit before an employee took pictures of her, using one to make and then plasticize a driver’s permit card in her name. After a bit less than one hour spent at the office, Patricia was walking out with her brand new card. She was however still tense, as the hardest part was still to come. Going to a small nearby restaurant, she ordered a coffee and croissant, in order to pass some time before returning to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles. After drinking her coffee and munching on her croissant, she paid her bill, then went to the women’s washroom, which in this case was a single user bathroom. Locking the door behind her, Patricia took off her blouse and skirt and stuffed them in a shopping bag she had with her, then put on a T-shirt and a pair of jeans out of the same bag. Once dressed, she looked into the mirror of the bathroom and concentrated, picturing in her mind the face of a young redhead woman of the same age as Patricia. A faint glow surrounded her body as it shifted shape in seconds to conform to the mental picture she had made. Once the transformation was complete, Patricia stared at the new face in the mirror, locking its features in her mind for future use.

“Hello, Jennifer Woods! Pleased to meet you!” She said maliciously to one of her planned alter egos before leaving the washroom and the restaurant, to return to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

Repeating the process she had gone through as Patricia Love, she presented herself as Jennifer Woods at the counter, then stared at the male employee facing her, directing her power of illusion at him before giving him the same documents she had used as Patricia Love.

“Good morning, sir. I would like to have a California driver’s permit made. Here are my passport, international driver’s permit and proof of residency.”

His mind now clouded and partially controlled by her mind, the employee looked at the documents and saw what Patricia wanted him to see: the name and picture of a redhead named Jennifer Woods, who had just bought a house in Santa Monica. He thus processed her as such, sending her to the identification section with a form. Still keeping the appearance of ‘Jennifer Woods’, Patricia had her picture taken, then her driver’s permit card made in half an hour without further ado. Going out of the office and returning to the nearby restaurant, she had another coffee before going to the washroom to change shape yet again, this time taking the form of very busty blonde with blue eyes and also changing her T-shirt. Returning for the third time to the motor vehicles office, Patricia had yet another driver’s permit made in the name of a ‘Sylvia Thorn’, resident of an apartment in Westwood.

It was already mid afternoon by the time that Patricia had obtained her third driver’s permit and left for good the motor vehicles office to return home, going to a nearby garage’s washroom to return to the shape and dress of Patricia Love. As she was walking slowly along the sidewalk of Wilshire Boulevard, enjoying the sunny day and looking at the sights around her, a car dealership attracted her eyes. Now that she both had a valid driver’s license and a registered home, she decided that she could go for her next big expenditure and get herself a car. Crossing the boulevard at the next intersection, she went to the new cars exposed in the parking lot of the Pontiac dealership, walking slowly down the line of vehicles and examining them with interest. Humans were showing a remarkable and quickly growing flair for science and technology and cars were prime example of their rapid progress in those matters. Some of the cars on show also had body styles and colors that Patricia found truly attractive. She stopped in front of one such car as a salesman hurried to her, to present himself with a big smile and an extended hand.

“Good afternoon, miss! My name is Ronald Biggs. May I help you?”

Having noticed that she was presently the only visible customer around and that many cars on sale sported 'special' price tags, Patricia deduced that business was slow at this dealership and decided to use that to her advantage. She smiled back and shook hands with the salesman.

"Yes, you may, Mister Biggs. I'm Patricia Love and I recently moved here from Europe, thus need to buy a car. Tell me about this car here."

"Ah yes, a Pontiac Firebird Trans Am, equipped with a 455 cubic inch V8 engine and a three speed automatic transmission: a fine-looking, fast and powerful car. It is advertised at 4,895 dollars. Would you like to have a closer look at it, Miss Love?"

"I certainly would, mister."

"Then, let me get the keys first: I won't be long."

As the salesman nearly ran inside the dealership, Patricia went slowly around the sports car, a 2-door convertible, and looked inside through the driver's window. She was getting definitely interested in that vehicle by the time the salesman came back with a set of keys and unlocked the driver's door to let her sit behind the wheel. He in turn went to sit in the passenger's seat to describe to her the options included in the car. Next, he opened the engine hood to let her see the big V8. However, as he half expected, she didn't seem to know much about car mechanic and figured out that she probably wanted a flashy car to better attract boys. The salesman smiled to himself as he eyed her fantastic cleavage while she was bent down to look at the engine. *'This girl doesn't need a car to attract boys. Just her tits will do, unless those boys are blind'*, he thought. Confirming his opinion of her as a mechanical ignoramus, Patricia straightened up after only a cursory look at the engine and declared her intention to buy it, without even asking for a test drive. There was however a catch.

"...but I find the price a bit high, Mister Biggs. I see a lot of new cars in your lot, a quarter of them being Firebird models, while customers don't seem to be flocking to your dealership. Is there something wrong about this car model that repels the customers, apart from the price?"

"Miss, I assure you that there is no hidden vice in the Pontiac Firebird. What is affecting its sales, and those of all the other sports cars with big engines, are the climbing gas prices and car insurance premiums, plus the ever tighter government regulations on car exhaust emissions. In truth, all car dealerships across the States are hurting this year. You may not see again such a powerful beast as this Trans Am on sale in a couple of years. How about 4,695 dollars for it?"

Patricia thought for a moment before smiling at the salesman.

"I will be a good girl and will offer you 4,600 dollars for this car."

Biggs didn't have to think long on that: even though that would represent a significant cut on his normal commission, it still was much better than ending selling no cars at all and business had been bad enough this month. He thus grinned to her and presented his right hand.

"A price of 4,600 dollars it is, miss. Let's shake on it."

Patricia shook his hand, surprising the salesman by the strength of her grip, which was one of a strong man, even though she didn't seem to put any effort in it.

"Thank you, Mister Biggs. What's next?"

"We go inside to fill the paperwork, miss."

Both of them were soon inside a small office with internal windows covered by shutters. Giving him her driver's permit first, Patricia let Biggs start filling the numerous forms involving the sale of the car, its registration, its insuring and its financing. On that last aspect, she helped him by giving a cash advance of 600 dollars, promising to get a certified check for the rest of the amount the next day. Both happy to see one more thing in her 'to do' list being arranged and being hungry for some sexual energy, Patricia got up from her chair as Biggs was finishing the paperwork and went to the internal shutters, closing them before locking the door of the office. The salesman looked up at her with surprise when he saw her do that.

"Uh, what are you doing, Miss Love?"

"I just want to thank you for your comprehension about the price of my car, Mister Biggs."

She slowly walked to him with a sensuous gait, then bent down in front of him, presenting him her chest and undoing the buttons of her silk blouse, revealing the fact that she was not wearing a bra. The salesman gulped hard as he stared cross-eyed at her big, firm tits with erect, puffy nipples. Patricia gently took hold of his hands and raised them to her breasts, making him fondle them.

"You may play with them and lick them as you wish."

The salesman didn't have to be told twice and went at it with gusto, while Patricia started rubbing his erect penis through his trousers. At the same time, she used her other hand to rub her clitoris and warm up to the act. After a minute of fondling and rubbing, she took off her panties and unzipped his fly, making his hard penis spring out. She then

straddled him and impaled herself on his penis while keeping her tits against his face. Bumping up and down in his lap, she savored the waves of sensations coming from her genitals and tits while increasing progressively the rhythm. Sensing that he was about to climax before her, she used one hand to pinch the base of his penis, preventing him from ejaculating and going limp on her before she could climax herself. She also increased the rhythm of her bumping to a frantic rate, making his eyes bulge while his face turned red and his body became as tense as a steel bar in his chair. She finally released her grip on his penis after a glorious orgasm exploded inside her. Letting the waves of pleasure and sexual energy go through her body first, she then kissed the salesman and sucked in part of his life essence. She was however careful about the amount she sucked in, stopping after a few seconds and leaving the man panting in his chair.

“G...God, this was one hell of a sales pitch!”

She chided him at once, shaking an index in front of his eyes while keeping her denuded breasts in his face.

“God had nothing to do with this, mister. Like many say these days, make love, not war. Thank you again for accepting my price, Mister Biggs.”

“You’re...you’re welcome, Miss Love.” Said Biggs, still catching his breath. “You will be able to pick up your new car at the end of the week, once it has been registered in your name and you had time to get insurance for it.”

Patricia smiled to him while putting back on her panties and buttoning up her blouse.

“I will be back then, with an insurance coverage for my car. See you Friday, Mister Biggs.”

The salesman then remembered that his penis, now limp and soaked with both sperm and vaginal fluid, was still hanging out and barely had time to tuck it back in and zip his fly before Patricia opened the door of his office and walked out. He watched her go with a satisfied grin on his face.

“If only I could get more customers like her!”

CHAPTER 2 – LOOKING FOR A JOB

13:51 (California Time)

Thursday, September 14, 1972

Offices of the Pink Films Studios

West Hollywood, Los Angeles

“How could you expect to become a porn actress when you suck so bad at blowjobs, girl? You’re wasting my time! GET OUT!”

The young woman that was being interviewed by Larry Berman, owner and manager of the Pink Films Studios, burst out crying, totally humiliated, and nearly ran out of his office. Berman, a big man with a pot belly and curly black hair, threw his hands in the air in exasperation.

“Christ! Where does Steve finds such bimbos? I’ll have to talk to him after this. MISS WALKER, SEND THE NEXT CANDIDATE IN!”

His frustration and impatience however evaporated when the next girl walked in with a calm, sexy gait, a sensuous look on her beautiful face. She was tall, had long red hair, long and sexy legs and a big, apparently firm chest bulging through a tight T-shirt. Thinking at once that he may have something serious at last, Larry eyed her from head to toe before showing her the sofa in one corner of his office.

“Please sit down, miss. You have your résumé with you?”

“I do, Mister Berman.” She answered in a soft, mellow voice. She then gave him a two-page document while she looked into his eyes with near hypnotic power. “My name is Jennifer Woods. I arrived recently from Paris, where I was using the stage name of Mélanie D’Amour.”

She then sat with him in the sofa and stayed silent as Larry read quickly her résumé. He had to say that he was impressed at once: that girl had performed for four years in some of the top cabarets of Paris and had also done some escort and modeling business there. She also supposedly spoke French, Spanish, Italian and German, on top of English.

“Well, I must say that this looks pretty good, Miss Woods. Have you any experience or training as an actress?”

"Not formally, but some of my stage work involved a degree of acting. I am confident that I will be able to handle any job you give me, Mister Berman."

"You are, hey? We will see about that. Now, get up and undress."

She obeyed him but, to his satisfaction, didn't do the mistake many of the previous candidates had done: to simply undress without making a show of it. What he got from Jennifer Woods was a strip number that quickly made his dick as hard as a steel bar. Her body, an athletic and supple one, could only be described as 'fantastic' and her chest was all that any man could wish for. Once naked, Jennifer crawled onto him while hypnotizing him with her large green eyes and her temptress smile, presenting her big tits to him.

"They are a hundred percent natural: you may check if you want, Mister Berman."

Larry didn't have to be told twice and started fondling and licking her breasts, quickly becoming mad with desire. While he was still playing with her chest, Jennifer undid his belt, then his fly, pulling out his hard, erect penis.

"Let me take care of your birdie, Larry."

She then played manually with his dick for a few seconds before starting oral sex on him. Larry, waves of pleasure radiating from his cock, let out a moan when she impaled herself on him and started a grinding movement with her hips while letting his hands fondle her breasts. He climaxed within three minutes, pleasure exploding in him. Jennifer then exchanged a French kiss before he could catch his breath. When she straightened up, still impaled on him, he felt dead tired and spent, but happy.

"Hell, Miss Woods, you certainly didn't lie about your abilities. You should have a very successful career in the porn film industry. Let's talk business!"

"With pleasure, Mister Berman." She replied, coming off him and taking a tissue out of her purse in order to wipe the sperm and liquid dripping from her vagina, while Larry tuck back in his dick after wiping it with a tissue from a box conveniently left near the sofa. Jennifer stayed naked as he started speaking, something that suited him just fine.

"I am due to start filming a new movie, a short one, in about a week, once the script is ready and I have found all the actors for it. I want you on it."

"Thank you, Mister Berman. I should tell you that I am studying at the university during daytime, and that I will be available only on evenings and weekends. I hope that this won't be a problem for you?"

"For that short film, no, as filming it will take maybe a weekend at most. For full length movies, however, it could become a problem. Are you sure that you really want to spend your next years studying?"

"I do! The sex business is an unpredictable one and I wish to have an option for a more long term career. How much do you offer me for that short movie role?"

"Well, since you are an unknown to the public at large, you will understand that I can't pay you premium wages. How about 200 bucks? That ain't bad for a weekend of work."

Jennifer hid her disappointment then, having hoped for a lot more than that. She should however have expected that, considering the sleazy nature of this film producer. Still, she had to make her name somewhere, if she was to hope to find better offers in the future.

"I accept, Mister Berman." She replied, making Larry smile with satisfaction.

"Excellent! Show back here on Friday evening, on September 22, at seven. We will then start filming. In the meantime, could I interest you in a more immediate job opportunity? I would like you to pose for a photographic session. I have an in-house photographer and you could do it right away."

"I will be happy to pose for him, Mister Berman." Said Jennifer, playing the pliant, willing girl.

Two hours later, Jennifer left the studio, fuming: that nude photo session had earned her a miserly forty dollars. She gave a dark look at the sign above the entrance to the studio.

"They should call it 'The Cheapskates Studios'! Well, time to find something more serious than this."

She thought for a moment about the kind of place she should investigate next for her job search, along with where best to look. Then, since she would take delivery of her new car only tomorrow, she looked for a taxi, getting one to stop besides her after a minute. Jumping in on the rear bench seat, she gave a big smile to the driver, an obese man with a short beard and a half bald head.

"Would you know the nearest area where I could find a concentration of night clubs and entertainment establishments of good standing that could be interested in those, mister?"

She raised the bottom of her T-shirt as she spoke, making her big tits pop out, along with the eyes of the taxi driver. The man smiled back at her while admiring her breasts.

"I think I know the place just for you, miss. It's in Santa Monica, only a few miles from here. Consider yourself there."

True to his word, the taxi driver stopped his vehicle in front of what looked like a high end strip club less than ten minutes later. A number of other clubs and bars lined up both sides of the street, which was connected to the Wilshire Boulevard. The driver pointed the entrance to the strip club while twisting his head to speak to Jennifer.

"This strip club, along with most establishments on this street, are either owned or protected by the Mafia. I am not saying that to you to scare you, but rather to say that they conduct serious business and take care of their employees. They also experience a lot less police harassment than other clubs and bars around the city."

"Thank you for the ride...and the advice, my good man." Said Jennifer, giving him a ten dollar bill. Then, out of an impulse, she bent forward and inserted her head and torso between the driver's seat and the front passenger's seat, pulling up her T-shirt and presenting her breasts to the delighted driver.

"Here is the tip! You may fondle them for a few seconds."

"Why, thank you, miss!" Replied the grinning driver, who then dove face-first in her left tit. After a short moment fondling and licking her breasts, the taxi driver regretfully straightened up and, taking one of his calling cards, gave it to her.

"If you ever need another ride, or more information, then don't hesitate to call me, miss."

"Thank you, I will...Russell! By the way, my name is Jennifer. Thanks again for the ride."

First pulling back down her T-shirt, Jennifer then grabbed her large purse and exited the taxi, stepping on the wide sidewalk in front of the club's entrance. She looked up at the neon sign of the club as her taxi drove away.

"The 'PUSSYCAT'! Well, time to purr, Jennifer."

She was about to walk to the entrance of the club when her eyes caught on one of the large posters flanking the double doors of the club. It was the imitation of an old style Parisian cabaret poster from the 1930s, featuring dancing girls in the typical strippers' attire of the time. Patricia/Jennifer slowed down and stopped as an avalanche

of old mental images and souvenirs came back to her mind, returning her to her first years on Earth, after she had reluctantly been abandoned by her mother in the dark streets of Paris as a confused and scared young girl. It was then 1932 and the country, like many other countries, including the United States, was mired in the Great Depression, with mass unemployment and poverty. Patricia, or rather Delicia, her real original name, had survived only thanks to a woman who owned a brothel and cabaret and who had sheltered her after finding her, crying alone at night in a dark street. That woman, Marie Laurent, had then treated her like her own daughter, educating and raising her while Delicia learned more about her new world and about Humans. Marie Laurent had been the only Human to ever know about her true origin and nature, but that had not stopped her from being like a mother to her, showing her the true meaning of kindness and compassion. That kindness and compassion had in turn changed Delicia in a measurable way, making her care more for others than her original nature would have allowed and improving her in many other ways. She had attained the shape and maturity of a teenage girl and had started to dance and perform at Marie Laurent's cabaret, with occasional voluntary stints at the brothel so she could satisfy her constant hunger for sexual energy, when the chaos and violence of World War Two had swept over Europe. Delicia, like her adoptive mother, had stayed in Paris, even after the Germans had occupied it. While Marie Laurent continued to operate her brothel and cabaret during the occupation, often hosting German officers and officials, she also was secretly part of the French Resistance, discreetly collecting information and secrets from the Germans patronizing her establishments, then passing that information to the Allies. Delicia had helped Marie in that role, seducing and treating German officers to some pillow talk. Delicia had even killed a German in bed once. The man, a senior Gestapo officer, had been a true human monster and Delicia had not hesitated to kill him by sucking out completely his life essence while having sex with him. Him being in his fifties and her being only sixteen, his death had been ruled a simple heart attack, but not before Delicia had spent a couple of very rough and painful days in a Gestapo jail. Marie Laurent had saved her then, interceding in her favor with a German general that was a good customer of her cabaret and brothel. After her release, Delicia had continued to help Marie in her secret fight against the Germans, even taking arms during the liberation of Paris and briefly fighting in the streets against French collaborators and pro-Nazi militiamen. Then, the second traumatic event of her life had happened: Marie Laurent was killed by a collaborator during the last days of fighting. After killing that

collaborator, Delicia had then decided to assume the identity and shape of Marie, continuing on in her place while playing a second identity as an escort girl and, later, fashion model. When, after decades of playing the role of Marie Laurent, the time had come to move on and disappear into supposed retirement, Delicia had changed yet again her identity to that of Patricia Love before coming to the United States to start a new life in Los Angeles.

Shaking off the mental images with difficulty, Jennifer then resumed her walking, getting to the door of the club and ringing the buzzer there. A big, beefy man wearing a cheap suit answered the door, looking at her with a closed expression.

“Yes?”

“Good afternoon, mister! My name is Jennifer Woods and I came to see if this club would be interested in my services as a dancer and stripper.”

The doorman, who most probably saw dozens of beautiful women come through every day, looked her up and down with a professional eye, then nodded his head.

“Please come in: I will see if the boss will be willing to see you.”

“Thank you, mister.”

Letting her in, the man then showed to Jennifer a sofa in the entrance lobby, telling her to sit and wait there before disappearing through a door. He was back two minutes later and signaled at Jennifer to follow him.

“If you will please follow me, miss.”

Jennifer got up from her sofa and entered a small anteroom where a female secretary was typing a letter, then walked in a large, luxuriously furnished private office adjacent to the anteroom. A handsome man in his late thirties or early forties and wearing a top quality suit sat behind a huge mahogany work desk. A fleeting expression of stunned admiration appeared on the man’s face before he got up and walked around his desk to come shake hands with Jennifer, a welcoming smile on his lips. The trained eyes of Jennifer did not miss the slight bulge under the left side of his jacket, denoting the presence of a holstered gun. His voice was a deep, resonating one.

“Welcome to the ‘PUSSYCAT CABARET’, Miss Woods. I am Frank DeSoto, owner and manager of this club. I am told that you would be interested to work here as a dancer and stripper.”

"That's correct, Mister DeSoto." Replied Jennifer while shaking his hand. The strength of her grip clearly surprised the owner, who however didn't remark on it, instead showing her a sofa set in one corner of the office.

"Then, let's sit and talk, miss."

Jennifer sat and crossed her legs, making her short skirt uncover more of her long, shapely legs. Frank DeSoto took a fleeting glance at her legs before sitting down, leaving a space between him and Jennifer, who gave him professional points for that: at least he was not going right away for the 'casting couch' method. While she could detect sexual desire in his thoughts, that desire was a controlled one. The club owner then spoke to her in a friendly, relaxed tone.

"So, Miss Woods, tell me why you came to my club, and not to some other club in Los Angeles."

"To be honest, Mister DeSoto, I arrived in Los Angeles only two weeks ago from Paris, where I had spent all my life, and knew next to nothing about this city. I asked around about a high class club with a good, serious reputation and was told about your club. So, here I am!"

DeSoto nodded once, apparently flattered by her description of his club.

"This is indeed a high class establishment and I do care for the welfare of my employees, miss. You said that you lived all your life in Paris. Are you an American citizen?"

Jennifer opened her purse and took out a copy of her résumé, handing it to DeSoto while answering him.

"I am, Mister DeSoto. My parents were an American expatriate couple living in Paris. Unfortunately, they recently died in a car accident. Here is a copy of my professional résumé."

"I am sorry to hear about your parents, miss. Please accept my sincere condolences." Said the owner before starting to read her résumé. His face stayed neutral during his lecture, but Jennifer could sense in his thoughts that he liked what he saw in the résumé. He finally looked back up at Jennifer and gave her a genuine smile.

"I must say that your résumé is quite impressive, Miss Woods. What kind of job are you after exactly?"

"Well, I am due to start attending university classes soon by day. I was looking at working a few hours at night on week days, in order to sustain myself, reserving my weekends for university assignments and projects. As you were able to see in my

résumé, I can sing and dance and played regularly in Parisian cabarets, on top of modeling from time to time. If I can do more than simply stripping on stage, that would be fine with me, but I will take what you will offer me.”

“Then, show me how you dance and sing while slowly stripping, Miss Woods. I will then decide what position I can give you.”

“With pleasure, Mister DeSoto. Do you have a phonograph, so that I could sing and dance to some instrumental music?”

“I certainly do!” Replied the owner while getting up from the sofa, to then walk to a low cabinet pushed against a wall in one corner. He turned his head to look at her as he was sifting through his collection of vinyl records.

“Do you have a favorite piece of music for dancing, miss?”

“Do you have ‘Bolero’, by Ravel, by chance?”

“Yes! That would indeed be perfect. You may take the floor now, miss.”

Selecting a record and setting it on the phonograph, he started playing it, keeping the sound volume moderate while Jennifer positioned herself in the middle of the office, striking a stage pose. DeSoto returned to the sofa and sat in it as the music started and Jennifer started dancing and singing in French. The club owner looked on, truly fascinated, as Jennifer started slowly stripping while dancing and singing. She agreeably surprised him when she switched to singing in Italian after a minute or so, as she was now topless. She switched language again, this time to German, when she ended up fully naked, then approached in dancing steps the sofa, staring at Frank DeSoto with seducing eyes and smile while her supple body moved in fluid motions at the rhythm of the music. The motions accelerated gradually with the rhythm of the music, until her dance attained a crescendo and stopped abruptly at the end of the record, with Jennifer now sitting astride DeSoto’s legs. The owner took a deep breath, nearly hypnotized by her, and gave her an admiring grin.

“Miss, this was about the best, most seductive strip dance I ever saw. You have yourself a job here. How about coming to perform on week nights, from eight to midnight, the hours for my prime audience. In fact, would you be ready to perform tonight?”

“I would be happy to, Mister DeSoto. I would have a couple of questions for you, then.”

“Shoot!”

"First, you may know that, in France, strippers can do full nudity. What about the laws here? What is permitted or accepted?"

"Well, California regulations state that full nudity can happen only in establishments that do not serve alcohol. Since my customers are mostly of high class and are served drinks at their tables, my strippers keep at least a small, and I say small, G string and cannot let the customers touch them."

"Fair enough! My next question is about pay and social status. If possible, I would like to be paid cash and not by check, while performing under a stage name. I would prefer in fact to stay under the radar of the tax collectors. Next, how much per night would you be ready to offer me?"

DeSoto smiled when she mentioned the tax collectors.

"Miss Woods, I completely sympathize with your dislike of the IRS¹. You will be paid cash, on top of the tips you will get from the customers, and I will keep my accounting for you under your stage name. That way, I also evade some taxes, so we both benefit here. As for your pay, you will get the standard hourly wage of my other strippers, plus a bonus for your singing and dancing talents. That will amount to five dollars per hour, plus your tips. Many other clubs take a portion of the tips from their girls, on top of forcing them to give some money to the other employees, but my club is a classy establishment that caters to a respectable, well-to-do clientele, and the cover charges and drinks provide me enough of a profit to avoid having to fleece my girls. I do also happen to genuinely care for my girls."

Jennifer, still naked and astride Frank, smiled to him and gently caressed his cheeks, making him shiver with desire. As far as she could sense, the man was sincere and she was starting to feel a liking for him.

"I believe that you really do, Mister DeSoto. I accept your terms."

"Excellent! One last thing: under what stage name would you like to perform, so that I can have posters about you made?"

Jennifer grinned at that question and answered by giving the name of her previous identity as a stripper in Paris.

"You may advertise me as Mélanie d'Amour, Mister DeSoto."

¹ IRS : Internal Revenue Services. The United States government's department which collects taxes.

20:43 (California Time)
Friday, September 15, 1972
The PUSSYCAT CABARET
Santa Monica, California

“Cousin Nick! Welcome to my establishment! I must say that I am not honored by your visit very often.”

Nick Durante, Capo² of the Gambino crime family for Los Angeles, made a weak smile to his younger cousin Frank DeSoto.

“Well, let’s say that I needed to change my mood tonight.”

On hearing that, Frank became quite serious and lowered his voice to a near whisper.

“Those greedy idiots from the Carmine Family are not trying to cause some troubles again, are they?”

“The Carmines? No, thank God! The last lesson I served them seemed to have made them catch some common sense. Actually, I am having some female-related problems: my wife Monica has been giving me hell for a few days because of some stupid misunderstanding between us. I really could use some female smiles tonight, instead of getting only scowls.”

Nick then half turned to present the man following him along with his usual two bodyguards.

“May I present you Mister Steve Merrick, the Assistant District Attorney for Los Angeles? I was hoping to talk business with him in a friendly, relaxing atmosphere.”

Frank, accustomed to the corrupt, hypocritical practices of the justice and police systems in the Los Angeles area, smiled to the heavysset man with a bald head, shaking his hand.

“Welcome to the PUSSICAT, Mister Merrick. I’m Frank DeSoto, owner and manager of this cabaret. I hope that you will enjoy your evening here.”

“I have heard a lot of good about your cabaret, including the fact that it caters to a distinguished class of customers.”

Frank couldn’t help grin with hidden sarcasm on hearing that: most of his customers might have been rich and or influential people, but they could also be described more rightly as a bunch of hypocritical snobs. However, this is where the money was made these days. While most of his family relatives were part of organized crime or had

² Capo : Italian title for a boss in the Italian Mafia.

connections to it, he personally had done his best to stay relatively clean. As the saying went, you can choose your friends, but not your family.

"I am pleased to hear that, Mister Merrick. Let me find a good table for you and for my cousin."

Frank then led the group to an empty table near the stage of the main lounge, pulling a chair for Nick, then for Merrick, before sitting himself at the table, while the two bodyguards sat at separate tables nearby. The Mafia capo smiled on eyeing the pretty and voluptuous blonde performing a strip on stage at the time.

"Aaah, this should help me get in a better mood. You always hired prime quality girls, Frank."

"Glad that you like, Nick. You may be interested to know that I hired a new girl yesterday, a real young pearl coming straight from Paris. She has the body of a goddess, but more importantly she is truly talented as a dancer and singer, on top of speaking multiple languages, including Italian."

Nick looked at him with genuine surprise.

"Wow! She doesn't sound like your typical stripper. She's French?"

"No, she is American but is the daughter of an expatriate couple. She came to Los Angeles to study at the UCLA and will dance here to help pay for her studies. She is due to do her show in about half an hour."

"Well, I will certainly stay for her act, Frank."

Nick then concentrated on Merrick, speaking with him in a low voice and discussing a few police and criminal matters of concern to him. Knowing when Nick wanted privacy, Frank excused himself and left the table to go attend to other arriving customers, after making sure that his cousin and Merrick got drinks free of charge.

Nick Durante was still conversing with Merrick while watching occasionally the stripper girls when an announcement by the D.J. of the cabaret made him look up at the stage.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the PUSSICAT is pleased to present you tonight the young and beautiful Mélanie d'Amour, direct from Paris!"

"Aah, let's see if my cousin didn't exaggerate about her." Said Nick to the Assistant D.A.. His eyes then locked at once on about the most beautiful girl he had ever seen as she slowly danced her way onto the stage on the instrumental tune of Ravel's 'Bolero'. Incongruously, she wore the conservative uniform of a typical

European college schoolgirl, with pleated skirt, knee-length socks, blouse and blazer with school crest. She also wore a leather school backpack. She however had long, perfectly-shaped legs, a thin waist and a very generous chest. The girl also sang in French to the rhythm of 'Bolero' while dancing around the stage. After maybe a minute of stylish dancing and singing, the girl shed her first piece of clothing, in this case her backpack, soon followed by her blazer. Continuing to dance and sing, she took off in slow succession her blouse, revealing a black leather bra, then her two long socks, which turned out to be simple knit tubes covering the top part of knee-high black leather boots. Next came off the skirt, revealing a sexy black leather panty. Dancing to her discarded school backpack, the girl took a long leather bullwhip out of it and straightened up, whip in hand and the severe look of an S&M dominatrix now on her face. The rhythm and type of music then changed radically, becoming that of a fiery Spanish Flamenco piece. The girl resumed her dance while singing in Spanish and cracking her whip from time to time, then took off her bra, denuding a stunning, firm pair of breasts that made Nick's eyes pop out and drew more than a few admiring gasps from the audience. Wielding her whip with apparent expertise while dancing around topless and staying close to the edge of the stage so that the customers could have a good view of her, the girl finally took off her panty, leaving her only wearing her boots and a tiny G string. Using her whip like a sex toy, she simulated masturbating herself while staring and smiling provocatively at Nick, making him ejaculate involuntarily in his shorts. Nick applauded wildly, like the rest of the audience, when the girl finished her number.

"Mama Mia! Frank was not exaggerating about that girl: she is pure dynamite!"

"She sure is, Mister Durante." Agreed Merrick. The girl then climbed down from the stage, still wearing only her boots and G string, and started doing the rounds of the tables, allowing the ecstatic customer to slip dollar bills in the top of her boots or under the straps of her G string. When she arrived at Nick's table, the latter slipped a twenty dollar bill in the front of her G string.

"You were fantastic, girl. What is your name again?"

"My stage name is Mélanie d'Amour, mister, but you can call me Jennifer. Thank you for appreciating my performance."

She then kissed him on the cheek, bending over and making her fabulous breasts hang down just above his left hand. It took Nick all his willpower not to raise his hand to fondle her breasts then. As she walked away towards the next table, Nick twisted his head to look up at Frank DeSoto, who had approached his table.

"Frank, you will rub in the mud the nose of all the other owners of strip clubs in L.A. with this girl, mark my words."

"I sure hope so, Nick!" Replied Frank, grinning with satisfaction. Nick then signaled him to bend down and whispered in his ear.

"Uh, does your girl accept to see customers in private after her show?"

"I will ask her, but I will in turn ask you to take her to somewhere else then: I am doing my best to keep the vice squad off my back, if you see what I mean."

"I understand perfectly your concerns, cousin."

He then let Frank walk away towards the girl and saw him discreetly speak with her in a dark corner of the lounge. Nick felt his hopes, along with his dick, get up when he saw the girl nod to Frank before looking at Nick and giving him a wink. What he had been getting from his wife Monica in the last few days sure didn't feel much like love.

Jennifer did another performance that evening, starting it dressed like a female police officer and attracting a roaring laugh from Nick Durante and his associate, before going back to her lodge to change into her street clothes. One of Nick's bodyguard picked her up there and politely led her to a big waiting black Ford sedan parked in front of the cabaret. Getting on the rear bench seat with her bag, Jennifer sat besides Nick, gluing her side to his and kissing him.

"Thank you for the invitation, Mister Durante."

"I am the one thanking you, girl, and please call me simply Nick when in private. Tony, get us to the Sheraton Hotel!"

As the driver pulled out of the parking spot, Jennifer kissed again Nick, this time on his lips, while guiding his hands inside her blouse, revealing to him the fact that she was not wearing a bra under it. Now crazy with desire, Nick did not try anymore to restrain himself and fondled her chest, then unbuttoned her blouse and bent down to lick her puffy nipples. She made things easier for him by turning around and saddling him, presenting her breasts directly in his face. She spoke softly in Italian to him while he licked and fondled her.

"Go ahead, my big Italian stallion! My pussy is on fire and wants your cock, badly."

The bodyguard sitting besides Nick, while keeping an apparently neutral professional expression, couldn't help feel his own dick get as hard as a steel bar as he discreetly glanced from time to time at her gorgeous tits while Nick fondled them. The inside of the

car quickly became quite warm by the time that it stopped in front of the main entrance of the Sheraton Hotel. With Nick and Jennifer straightening up their clothes before leaving the car, they then walked with the two bodyguards to the reception counter of the hotel, where Nick rented a luxury suite on the top floor. He walked with nearly indecent haste to the suite, finally closing the door of the suite's master bedroom behind Jennifer and smiling to her.

"Finally: alone with you!"

Jennifer smiled in turn and removed her blouse before walking slowly to Nick and hugging him, while her left hand caressed his hard penis through his trousers.

"Time to let your birdie loose, Nick. Show me what you can do with it."

"It won't be long, my dear. First, though, I will prepare a bit the terrain in advance."

He soon proved to be an experienced lover, caressing and kissing her body all over while undressing her, then making her lie down on her back on the bed before starting cunnilingus on her. Jennifer's breathing quickened as Nick's tongue did its work on her clitoris and vulva. Nick kept up his work until a wave of pleasure exploded inside her, then got on top of her, inserting his penis inside her vagina in one smooth motion.

"Time to show you what I am capable of, my lovely Jennifer."

With Jennifer already plenty fired up and with her vagina well lubricated, Nick started pumping his dick in and out at a fast rhythm, making the pleasure waves return inside Jennifer. Being a vigorous man despite of his age, he kept the rhythm up until she climaxed for a second time in a row, while he himself climaxed with an intensity he had rarely felt before. Collapsing on top of her, he exchanged with her an avid French kiss. While Jennifer didn't use that opportunity to suck in part of his life essence, not wanting to possibly hurt his health, she however made a silent 'Charm' magical spell on him. Gaining a near hypnotic hold on him, she let him lay in bed, straddling him while on her hands and knees and letting him admire and fondle her hanging tits while staring into his eyes and speaking softly to him.

"Tell me about you, Nick. Tell me how you do business and deal with people around you..."

Hours later, with dawn closing in, Jennifer left the hotel by taxi, while Nick took his own car to discreetly return home before his wife could wake up. While she had no immediate use for most of the information she had gained from Nick Durante, Jennifer

could certainly use it eventually to her own advantage. Besides, it had given her a better, clearer picture of who had power in the Los Angeles area and who was vulnerable, something always useful to know. On his part, Nick would be left with a dazed memory of having talked with Jennifer, but without remembering about what.

A week later, on Saturday, she returned to the Pink Films Studios to play in her first pornographic film, a completely forgettable short work composed of a string of sex scenes loosely tied by a mediocre scenario and titled 'Harry's obsession'. The whole thing took all of one weekend to film and left Jennifer rather disillusioned about working with that particular studio, even though she had been able to have her fill of sex during the production. She promised herself afterwards to be definitely more selective about which film studios she would work for the next time.

CHAPTER 3 – FRATERNITY MAYHEM

10:05 (California Time)

Friday, October 13, 1972

North Campus grounds, UCLA

Los Angeles, California

Patricia was walking towards the North Campus Student Center, following the sidewalk from the Broad Art Center and attracting plenty of young male attention on her way, when a couple of rather obnoxious boys approached her with big smiles. Patricia slowed down her pace and eyed cautiously the two young men, who were big and beefy and wore the jersey of the UCLA Bruins, the university's football team. '*Here comes the meathead squad!*' she thought to herself. She had to finally stop, as the two boys cut her path, with one of them presenting her a paper flyer.

"Hi! We belong to the Zeta Beta Tau fraternity and we are passing invitations to a party we are going to hold tomorrow afternoon at our frat house on Strathmore, besides Spaulding Field."

Seeing at once a golden opportunity for her, Patricia smiled in turn to the boys and took the flyer presented to her.

"A party? That sounds groovy! At what time is the fun starting?"

"At five! There will be a free BBQ for supper. All the details are on this flyer."

"Then, count me in!"

"Great! See you tomorrow at five, then."

Watching the two boys walk away, Patricia was not surprised to see that they were only approaching girls with their flyers, preferably pretty ones. She smiled to herself at that: what kind of party would it be with only boys participating? She was already planning her participation to the party as she resumed her walk towards the student center.

16:52 (California Time)

Saturday, October 14, 1972

Zeta Beta Tau Fraternity House

10924 Strathmore, North Campus

Patricia created a sensation when she parked her powerful, fiery red Firebird Trans Am in the parking lot adjacent to the fraternity house, attracting at once a small crowd of young men around her car.

"Hi, guys! I'm here for the party!"

"Wow! That's quite a car you got!" Exclaimed one boy, while another spoke to a friend in a lower voice as Patricia got out of her Firebird.

"And that's quite a girl we got here. She should be lots of fun to have around the party."

"Yeah! She certainly got lots of attributes."

Both of them laughed at that and followed Patricia, who was guided by other boys to the fraternity house's rear lawn, where charcoal grills, folding tables and chairs were set up. An athletic, six foot two inch boy greeted her near one of the grills by handing her an opened beer bottle.

"Welcome to the Zeta Beta Tau Fraternity! I'm Dave Bakersfield."

"And I'm Patricia Love." She answered with a smile while accepting the beer bottle and discreetly examining the boy. He was certainly a handsome young man of about twenty years old, but there was a streak of arrogance in his eyes and general attitude. She also noticed that a girl nearby, a tall, shapely blonde, was now eyeing her with both suspicion and hostility. Patricia was amused by that, as she easily recognized jealousy when she saw it. What was the fun in the game of seduction if you didn't create a little jealousy on the side?

"So, Patricia," said Dave Bakersfield while eyeing discreetly the wide, tempting cleavage provided by her thin, V-neck sweater, "in what year and what program are you at the UCLA?"

"I just arrived last month in Los Angeles and am a freshman studying photography and film at the Arts Department. And you?"

"I am studying business with the help of a sports scholarship. I happen to be the star quarterback of the Bruins, the university's football team."

"Oh, that's interesting!" Lied Patricia, playing the impressionable bimbo. Bakersfield grinned at that, apparently convinced that he was hooking her up. The blonde nearby only became more incensed on seeing that and walked away at an angry pace. Bakersfield didn't seem to be bothered by that, still eyeing Patricia's chest.

“Well, since you are new at the UCLA, I would be happy to guide you around our fraternity house tonight. We will have a barbecue outside first, then we will move inside for the rest of the evening, you know, to avoid hassling by the campus police. They can be really annoying about underage drinking rules. By the way, how old are you?”

Patricia smiled at that question, asked only after he had handed her an opened beer bottle. She made a show of taking a good swig of her beer before lying to him.

“Don’t worry: I’m twenty-two.”

“Excellent! Let’s get the grills fired up!”

He then innocently put his right arm around her waist while leading her to the nearest charcoal grill and was pleased by the fact that Patricia didn’t object to that. With his hopes up, he then ordered around a few of the boys as if they were his personal slaves, making them light up the charcoal grills while others brought thermos containers full of meat out from inside the fraternity house.

Patricia was still with Dave Bakersfield, pretending to be listening with interest to his bragging about his athletic ‘exploits’, when a few boys and girls started booing loudly someone. Twisting her head towards the direction of the booing, she saw a young man that had attempted to join the party being taken to task by some members of the crowd. He looked like any other university student, except that he wore an old khaki army jacket over his T-shirt and jeans. A set of military identity tags also hung from his neck. Patricia took a moment to understand why the newcomer was reviled like this: being new to the United States, she had only recently been able to understand the depth of unpopularity of the war in Vietnam among the young American generation. She had listened in the last few weeks to television news and read newspaper articles about anti-war protests about that war, in which American troops had started to return home while American heavy bombers continued to pound North Vietnam. Patricia couldn’t help feel sympathy for the young war veteran, having been herself a French Resistance member and a combatant as Mélanie d’Amour during the brief street fighting when Paris had been liberated in World War Two. Acting on an impulse typical of her chaotic nature, she walked quickly through the crowd towards the veteran, who was about to turn away, and gently grabbed his left arm while smiling to him.

“Please, stay! Don’t let them chase you away.”

Patricia then faced those that had been booing the young veteran and spoke loudly, nearly shouting at them.

"Why are you making it hard for him? He didn't start the war in Vietnam: politicians did!"

"Then, he should not come and parade in his dirty army jacket and dog tags!" Replied in a harsh tone a boy wearing a Bruins' jersey, prompting a stinging reply from Patricia.

"And who are you to blame him for having been drafted and forced to go fight overseas? Your dad bought you a draft deferment, so that you could play the big football hero here?"

"And what the hell would you know about war, you twit?" Shouted back the blonde that had taken exception at Patricia grabbing the attention of Dave Bakersfield.

"My mother was part of the French Resistance during the Second World War and I have known young French soldiers that had returned from either Indochina or Algeria. If you hate wars, don't take it on the soldiers who were forced to fight them! Now, leave him alone and welcome him home, instead of shunning him!"

Surprised by her reaction, most of those that had been booing then shut up and dispersed, leaving only the football jock and the jealous blonde to face her as she led the young veteran towards the tables where drinks were distributed. Patricia glared at the tall, beefy boy who then tried to block the way. She silently threw a 'Fear' spell at him and the blonde as she growled at them.

"Get out of the way, now!"

Overtaken by sudden near panic thanks to her magical spell, the couple retreated at once, drawing disbelieving looks from both the onlookers around and from the young veteran, who looked at her with both admiration and gratitude.

"Thank you for taking my side. That was very brave of you."

"Paah, that was nothing! Those hypocrites needed a reset anyway. By the way, I'm Patricia Love."

"And I'm Peter Horowitz." Replied the young man, who was about 22 years old and stood a couple inches shorter than her, while shaking her hand. "Was what you said about your mother true?"

"Of course it was! After the Second World War, she married an American businessman who had opened an office in Paris. She taught me to respect soldiers who have to fight wars, instead of blaming them."

"A sensible woman indeed." Said Horowitz. "My own grandfather fought the Nazis when they invaded Poland in 1939. Maybe we could talk later about their respective experiences."

"Maybe, but your own story would interest me as well. Let's cut the war talk for now, if you want to get a beer at that table. Are you a fraternity member?"

"Yes, for what it's worth!" Replied Peter in a bitter tone. "And you?"

"No! I'm part of the crowd of girls invited by fraternity members to spice up this party."

Peter threw an amused smile at her.

"My! You certainly sound like a cynical girl for your age."

"I hate hypocrisy, that's all." Said Patricia before talking to one of the girls manning the drinks distribution point. "I'll have a beer for my friend."

The girl gave a quick glance at Peter but obliged Patricia and opened a beer bottle before giving it to the young veteran. Taking a swig out of her own beer, Patricia led Peter in a corner of the yard that was less crowded and spoke in a low voice.

"So, in what kind of unit did you serve in Vietnam, and for how long, Peter?"

"I was in the Marines. I actually enrolled in the Marines and was not drafted. I served for over four years, including three tours, each of one year, in Vietnam. The last tour was however too much for me and I left the service afterwards, profiting from the G.I. Bill to enter university."

Patricia didn't ask him about what had touched him during his last tour of combat, as she could telepathically feel the accumulated sorrow and horror in his souvenirs. Instead, she turned to a more mundane conversation subject.

"Do you live here at the fraternity house?"

"No! I'm a freshman and can't ask yet to get a room here. Besides, I suspect that I would not be welcomed here. I rent a small apartment near the campus. And you?"

"My parents left me a sizeable inheritance after their deaths in a car accident in Paris. I was thus able to buy a house here in Westwood after arriving from France."

"Oh! I'm sorry to hear about your parents. Please accept my most sincere condolences."

"Thank you! So, what are you studying here at the UCLA?"

"I started studying mechanical engineering. I was a tank driver in Vietnam and always have had a flair for mechanical work. And you, Patricia?"

"I study photography, as part of a degree in Arts. I suppose that you have a part time job to help you live?"

"Yes, I do! While the G.I. Bill covers my studies and rent, I work on weekends as a bulldozer driver with a construction firm."

They chatted for a few more minutes, until the meat cooking on the barbecue grills started being served, at which time they joined the lineup of students forming to get served. Needing only a minimal amount of traditional human food to sustain her present shape, Patricia took only one chicken leg and one potato, plus some green salad, while Peter got himself a thick, juicy steak. As they resumed their quiet conversation among the increasingly boisterous crowd of students fueled by alcohol, Patricia noticed a big, powerful boy who wore a Bruins jersey but who stood mostly alone, apparently not paying interest to the girls around him, contrary to the other Bruins players in the crowd. Discreetly scanning him telepathically, she was surprised to see that the boy was actually admiring secretly Peter's backside. Not commenting or reacting to that, she registered the young man's face in her memory and kept conversing with Peter while munching on her meal. After about an hour, as night fell, the grills were extinguished and the crowd moved inside the fraternity house to continue the party in the residence's main lounge and various rooms. Now out of sight of university police patrols, the students' party turned quickly much more rowdy, while loud music was played in the lounge, prompting many couples in dancing, often glued to each other. With alcohol flowing freely, most of the boys became a lot more audacious in their advances, with quite a few girls responding in kind. On her part, Patricia had a couple of dances with Peter, including a very enticing slow where she let his hands take hold of her bum, with occasional groping of her breasts under her sweater, while she rubbed herself against his crotch, causing quickly a hard erection.

Seeing at one point many of the Bruins players leave the lounge to go upstairs in apparent haste, Patricia exchanged contact information with Peter before excusing herself and going herself to the upper floor. Loud cheers and excited shouts led her to the undergraduates' lounge, where she found over twenty male students watching with glee as a girl danced on top of a large, sturdy table set in the middle of the room. The girl, who was apparently half intoxicated, was already down to her bra and panties and was evidently performing a striptease. 'Finally, some real fun', thought Patricia as she

embraced the scene. Dave Bakersfield, who was part of the watchers, then saw her and shouted at her over the cheers and shouts.

“HEY, PATRICIA, MAYBE YOU COULD GIVE US A DANCE, TOO!”

“WHY NOT?” She replied before jumping on the big table and joining the dancing girl there, making the boys around shout in approval. To their delight, she quickly stripped down to her bra and panties and accompanied the girl in her dance. Seeing her hesitate as the boys encouraged her to strip further, Patricia smiled to her while undoing her own bra.

“COME ON, GIRL, DON’T BE SHY! THERE ARE PLENTY OF COCKS AROUND TO TEMPT AND CONQUER.”

Loud cheers greeted the uncovering of her big, firm 38D breasts, with their nipples puffing up. After a further hesitation, the other girl also removed her bra, revealing much smaller but still nice breasts. With a devilish grin on her face, Patricia went to dance facing her from very close, playfully rubbing her nipples against the girl’s nipples and making them become erect. Warmed up by alcohol, the girl soon got into her game and let Patricia guide her hands to her breasts, with both girls caressing each other’s bodies all over while dancing. As the crowd of boys went truly crazy, Patricia removed her panties, then pulled down the other girl’s panties and glued herself to the girl, with her hands going to her groin and left breast while she licked her right breast. The few girls present in the lounge and watching then either left, not ready to go down to that level, or let the boys around them fondle and undress them. Taking the dancing girl’s hand, Patricia led her around the table, letting the boys closely surrounding it fondle their bodies in passing. She soon faced Dave Bakersfield and went on her knees on the table, opening her legs and presenting her shaved groin.

“COME ON, BIG JOCK! EAT UP!”

Not believing his luck, the footballer started at once to lick her clitoris while grabbing and fondling her tits. Seeing the blonde that had apparently been jealous of her look on with indignation, Patricia shouted at her.

“YOU WANT TO GET HIS ATTENTION? THEN CLIMB ON THE TABLE AND DO YOUR PART!”

The blonde, not wanting to let Patricia keep the upper hand and being already quite drunk, took only a second before quickly undressing and climbing naked on the table. Patricia bent backward while letting Bakersfield continue eating her and used her hands to grab the blonde’s tits, at the same time passing her head between her legs so that

she could lick her clitoris. The lounge then descended into total chaos, with the boys groping, licking and screwing the girls present and with a few more girls coming in to jump into the fray. Patricia ended up with her legs opened and hanging down from the edge of the table while she was down on her back, continuing to lick the blonde's clitoris and vaginal lips. Dave Bakersfield undid his pants and inserted his steel-hard dick in her wet cunt, ramming it in and out with frantic energy and soon exploding inside her in a loud orgasm. Patricia then made the blonde take her place on the edge of the table, to be immediately pounded by another footballer while Patricia quickly washed her vagina and groin with beer poured by another boy. She then let a boy penetrate her while grabbing the stiff cocks of two more boys and alternatively rubbing and sucking them.

She went on with the orgy for another half hour before leaving the lounge with her clothes in her hands, truly sated sexually, pretending to need to go to the washroom. Dressing back in the washroom, she then went down to the ground level main lounge, finding there the big footballer that had earlier attracted her attention. The boy, apparently as lonely as ever, was sitting in a sofa and quietly sipping on a beer while listening to the music from a radio station. Sitting beside him, she smiled to the big young man, who gave her a guarded smile.

"Hi! I'm Patricia! And you?"

"Robert... Robert Purnell."

Sensing his indecision and embarrassment, Patricia bent sideways to speak in a near whisper close to his right ear.

"Excuse me for intruding like this in your personal affairs, but you seem quite lonely. Could I interest you in meeting soon a friend of mine?"

"Uh, thank you for the offer, miss, but I already have a couple of good friends."

"Sure you do!" Replied Patricia, grinning. "You are part of the Bruins team, right?"

"I'm a defensive lineman, yes. What about it?"

Patricia looked him in the eyes, now serious.

"Look, Robert! I am a very perceptive girl and am also a very open-minded person. As a university football player, you have to project the image of a tough, virile young man in order to gain and keep the respect of your teammates. Yet, I saw you ignore the advances of a number of girls tonight, using a number of various pretexts. On the other hand, I also saw you leer at a couple of guys tonight."

Alarm instantly came to Purnell's face and he glanced around quickly to make sure that nobody had heard that, then looked back at Patricia.

"You are mistaken, miss. I..."

"Please, let's cut the bull between us, Robert. I only want to help you."

"Help me? How?"

"By making you look like a normal, girl-loving boy, while presenting you to a friend with male attributes."

Her answer took him completely by surprise and he eyed her with both incredulity and incomprehension. She then went on.

"Did you ever hear about transgender types, or so-called 'shemales'?"

"Uh, yes, but I never met one before."

"Well, I know one well, as a matter of fact. She has all the outside appearances of a grown girl...until she drops her pants. By frequenting her openly in public, you would be able to entertain the image of a masculine guy, while being able to satisfy your special needs in private."

"Why are you saying this to me, miss? Why care like this for a stranger?"

"Let's just say that this would be as much to the benefit of my friend as for yours, Robert. Do you live on campus?"

"No! I would be at risk of others uncovering my secret if I lived here and I would end being kicked out of the football team, at a minimum. I have a rented apartment in Westwood."

Patricia nodded at that, understanding too well what he meant. Homosexuality was still considered a crime in many American states and homosexuals and lesbians were often looked upon like freaks...or worse.

"Then, give me your address and I will tell my friend to go pay you a visit tomorrow morning."

After taking a short moment to think, Robert nodded his head and took out a matchbox and a pen, writing an address on it before giving the matchbox to Patricia, who put it in a pocket of her jeans.

"Thank you! My friend's name is Sylvia, Sylvia Thorn. She will be at your place at around nine in the morning, if that's convenient with you."

"I will be expecting him...er, her."

“Good! I hope that you will like her. Don’t be shy parading in public around the campus with her when you have the chance: it will help you keep your reputation as a virile guy. If you will now excuse me, I have to go to my part-time evening job.”

Not letting him time to ask her what kind of job she was doing, Patricia then got up and left the lounge and fraternity house, to be on her way to her house and change there into Jennifer Woods before going to dance at the PUSSICAT. She was inside her parked car and about to roll when she saw a patrol car of the university police force stop in front of the fraternity house, with two policemen coming out and going to the front door to knock on it. She smiled as she engaged gears and drove off: she had truly lived up to her three words of ‘Seduction’, ‘Sex’ and ‘Sin’ tonight.

CHAPTER 4 – THE PRICE OF SIN

11:06 (California Time)

Saturday, October 28, 1972

Robert Purnell's apartment, Kelton Avenue

Westwood, Los Angeles

Robert Purnell, still lying in bed with the statuesque Sylvia Thorne, admired her while fondling her huge, thick twelve inch cock, concentrating the work of his fingers on its small apple-sized tip, to her obvious pleasure. This was now the second weekend she had been visiting him and she had proved to be a fantastic bed partner, apart from making Robert proud by making other male students who had met them as a couple become jealous of Robert, thanks to her spectacular tits, curved hips, long and shapely legs and truly beautiful face. She was truly the best of both worlds for Robert and had proved as well to be very intelligent and cultured, on top of being an agreeable companion.

"You know, Sylvia, you are lucky not to have met Father O'Malley when you were young: he would have loved to put his hands all over your big dick."

His words seemed to trigger something in Sylvia, who took hold of his hand to stop his fondling, while she eyed him with utter seriousness.

"Tell me more about that Father O'Malley, Robert. Did he abuse you when you were young?"

Realizing that he should not have broached that subject, Robert tried to dismiss it but Sylvia insisted, making him confess an event that had marked him years ago.

"Father Oliver O'Malley is a Catholic priest who runs the Saint-Mary's Orphanage, in Rosemead, in the northeast section of Los Angeles. I spent years as a young boy at that orphanage, before being finally adopted by a decent family. O'Malley brought in his bed at least one boy or girl per week during my time there. He picked me about a dozen times for his fun and did not hesitate to beat or threaten me when I tried to resist him. As far as I know, he still runs the orphanage and was never investigated or even publicly accused of pedophilia."

Sylvia, aka Delicia, aka Patricia, took a moment to digest that information. The hypocrisy of the Christian churches about sexuality had always grated on her, along with their institutionalized misogyny. Taking quickly a decision, she looked into Robert's eyes.

"Robert, do you have by chance some picture of that bastard?"

"No! I didn't want to keep anything that would remind me of him. Wait! Unless..."

"Unless?"

Robert suddenly got out of bed and walked to the chest of drawers in one corner, opening a drawer and taking out a large souvenir box. Searching inside the box, he grabbed a large black and white picture that obviously dated back many years and brought it to Sylvia. The latter saw that it showed three rows of young preteen boys and girls lined up for the picture, with a man in a priest's black robe standing behind the children. Robert pointed at the priest.

"That's Father O'Malley, as he was fifteen years ago, at my first communion ceremony. Add a few pounds and gray hair on him and you will have him today."

Sylvia looked up in apparent shock at him then.

"How old were you when he first abused you, Robert?"

"I was seven. The bastard really liked his boys and girls young. Why do you want to know about him? Accusing him won't do a thing: the Church will cover him in order to avoid a scandal and the police will probably refuse to even investigate."

"I may know a more indirect way to get at him. But you are right, Robert: let's forget him for the moment."

Sylvia then took Robert's hand and pulled him gently back in bed.

01:04 (California Time)

Sunday, November 5, 1972

Boys dormitory, Saint-Mary's Orphanage

Rosemead, Los Angeles

The young boy who was shaken awake in the dark stiffened with fear when he saw the tall, dark silhouette standing over his bed in the obscure dormitory: he knew too well from experience what was to follow. He however did not scream for help or resist and obediently got up from bed to follow Father O'Malley. The only time he had tried to

resist him had only brought him a cruel flogging, while he still ended being abused that night. Led to the priest's bedroom, which was lit, the boy was told to shed away his night shirt and lay on the bed. He again obeyed out of fear and closed his eyes as O'Malley took off his robe. Before closing the lights and joining the naked boy in bed, the priest took his 35mm camera equipped with a flash and snapped a number of pictures of the child, some of them from very close and centered on his genitals.

Unknown to both O'Malley and the boy, Delicia, in the form of Sylvia Thorne, was watching and taking pictures of her own through a window of the bedroom, using a high sensitivity film. She had used the priest's temporary absence from his room to stick in a partially opened position the bottom part of the window's curtains with a piece of chewing gum. The fact that O'Malley let the light on at first was a boon for her, as it allowed her to take clear pictures of his face as he photographed the naked boy. A couple of her pictures even caught O'Malley as he briefly played with the boys' penis to make it erect before photographing it from close by. Now having photographic proof of abuse by the priest on one boy and one girl, both preteens, Sylvia crouched down and quietly hid in the bushes bordering the wall of the orphanage. She then waited until O'Malley had finished with the boy and left the bedroom to lead the child back to the dormitory. Silently opening the window, which she had previously unlocked, she removed the piece of chewing gum and fully pulled close the curtains before closing the window and crouching down, her camera held against her chest. Concentrating on a mental image of her home's lounge, she used a 'Teleport' spell and disappeared from the bushes, reappearing instantaneously in her lounge. Straightening up, she smiled while eyeing her camera: the film in it was going to prove quite useful indeed in her fight against hypocrisy.

10:43 (California Time)

Monday, November 6, 1972

News room, LOS ANGELES TIMES newspaper

"Hey, Eli, you got mail!"

"Me, mail? I never get mail here!" Replied the reporter as the office girl dropped a large envelope on his desk, set with dozens of other reporters' desks in a large open office. Curious, Eli Cohen first examined the envelope but found no return address or

even postal stamps on it: it must have been dropped by hand at the newspaper's reception counter. It however clearly bore his name and position. Now intrigued, Eli opened the envelope and extracted a stack of large black and white prints, along with a cover letter. A quick look at the top picture sent blood rushing at once to Eli's brain: a man wearing the robe of a Christian priest was shown standing near a bed where a young boy lay fully naked. Going through the pile of pictures with growing horror and disgust, he saw that the apparent priest had been photographed, probably secretly judging from the angle of the shots, while sexually abusing a boy and a girl, both preteens, on two separate occasions. Letting out a pungent swear in Yiddish, Eli then grabbed the cover letter and read it: it was short, concise and also damning. The last paragraph in particular struck him, making him read it aloud to himself.

"In case you are tempted to hide this scandal by not publishing those pictures, know that six other newspapers and three radio stations around Los Angeles, plus Reuters and France-Presse, have received copies of these pictures and of this letter at the same time as you did. The L.A.P.D.³ and the local office of the F.B.I.⁴ have also received copies of them. Do you want to be first or last to publish this?"

Eli was not surprised to see that the letter was not signed, nor did it bear any logo or address on it. Overwhelmed by this, Eli spread the pictures over his desk to better examine them. Another reporter who was walking past his desk stopped abruptly and backtracked after a glance at the pictures and stood behind Eli to look with him at them.

"Jesus Christ! Who is that dirty bastard?"

"According to this anonymous letter that came with these prints, he is a Father Oliver O'Malley, in charge of the Saint-Mary's Orphanage, in Rosemead. That letter also says that this priest has been abusing his young charges for over fifteen years now. The letter also states that six of our competitors, along with three radio stations, Reuters, France-Presse, the L.A.P.D. and the F.B.I., have also received copies of these prints."

"Holy shit! We can't let the others cut the grass from under our feet! Even if some lawyers would rule that publishing those pictures could bring a suit from the Church, there is no way that this is staying quiet, Eli."

"I fully agree, Bob. Let's go see the boss at once with this. Damn! This could turn out to be the hottest potato of the year in Los Angeles."

³ L.A.P.D. : Los Angeles Police Department

⁴ F.B.I. : Federal Bureau of Investigations. The federal police for the United States.

"Just in Los Angeles? Make it the whole United States!" Replied Bob Coleman.

14:29 (California Time)
Saint-Mary's Orphanage
Rosemead, Los Angeles

The nun that answered the door of the orphanage was taken somewhat aback at the sight of the four stern-faced men, two of them in police uniforms, standing in the entrance.

"Uh, what may I do for you, gentlemen?"

One of the two men in suits presented a police badge to her while answering her.

"Detectives Jim Reynolds and Greg Loomis, L.A.P.D. Vice Squad, maam. We need to see Father O'Malley, right now!"

Despite her shock at that announcement, the nun led the policemen in, then guided them to the office of Father O'Malley. Presenting himself to the priest, who was sitting behind his work desk and doing some paperwork, Jim Reynolds saw O'Malley's face turn white as a sheet at once, while his hands started shaking. '*The bastard is as guilty as sin!*' thought Reynolds before speaking up again.

"Father Oliver O'Malley? You are under arrest for suspicion of multiple sexual abuse of minors and sodomy of a minor. Greg, cuff him!"

Totally mortified, O'Malley didn't resist and let himself be handcuffed while Reynolds read him his rights. He was then led to a waiting police car while the two detectives went to find the boy and the girl seen on the pictures they had received in the morning.

O'Malley was able to leave the L.A.P.D. central headquarters only six hours later, after a lawyer sent in a hurry by the Los Angeles Archdiocese had paid a huge caution for his release. He was then treated to a very stern interrogation and lecture by no less than Archbishop Manning himself before being allowed to return to his orphanage, with strict orders to stay away from the children and with a bishop delegated to escort him. That was only then that he saw a copy of the Los Angeles Times, with his picture on the front page. Devastated and seeing no way out, O'Mally then fetched the long, thick leather belt he had used so often to flog the children that resisted or didn't obey him, plus a chair that he set under the big rough iron chandelier of his office. Using the belt

as a noose, he climbed on the chair and passed his head in the noose before kicking himself the chair from under his feet.

09:50 (California Time)

Wednesday, November 8, 1972

Office of Archbishop Manning

Archdiocese of Los Angeles

The Archbishop of the Los Angeles Archdiocese, His Eminence Timothy Manning, was fuming as his bishops and vicars assembled in front of his large work desk. He and his ecclesiastical staff had been in full damage control mode since yesterday, doing everything possible to save the local reputation of the Church. Unfortunately, the news of the scandal had quickly spread to the whole of the United States and even all the way to Europe by now. The telephone call he had just received from the Vatican had also done nothing to appease his mood. He spoke up once all of his bishops and vicars were in, waiting with grim expressions on their faces.

“Gentlemen, I won’t need to tell you how serious the situation is right now for our Church. The despicable conduct of Father O’Malley has smeared all of us and the various public medias are having a field day at our expense. I have now had time to review the confidential personal file of Father O’Malley and found out that he was moved to this archdiocese after being accused of molesting children in another archdiocese. Prior to that, he was moved to the United States from his native Ireland after he was alleged there to have molested children in his charge. Whoever protected that priest only delayed the inevitable, while making more innocent young children fall victim to his perversion. My secretary is now reviewing the files of all our priests and officials, looking for more clerics with a stained past, and has already found four more risk cases. This can’t go on! You will all scour your own archives and files and identify to me those who are found with a suspect past, so that I can meet and interview them.”

What he didn’t tell the men assembled before him was that he was also personally reviewing the confidential files of all of his bishops and vicars, to make sure that no more cover-up would be attempted. He then delivered the most unsettling news of the day.

“Know also that I just received one hour ago a call from the Vatican concerning this scandal. The caller was no less than His Holiness The Pope himself! He urged me to deal at once with utmost decisiveness with the crisis at hand and to ensure that such

a thing does not happen again. He also informed me that the Holy Office of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith⁵ is sending us a team of senior clerics to investigate this affair and to find in particular who took those pictures of Father O'Malley and then sent them to the police and medias.”

“The Vatican is sending inquisitors to Los Angeles, Your Eminence?” Gaspd one of the bishops, making Manning nod his head grimly.

“That's right, and they will have full authority from His Holiness The Pope to dig in depth through our archdiocese. Anyone who will obstruct their work or hide facts from them will be disciplined by the Vatican. Am I clear on that, gentlemen?”

When his bishops and vicars meekly nodded and acknowledged his message, Manning dismissed them. Once they were out, Manning sat back in his high chair, thinking. The team of inquisitors would not arrive still for another day or two, at the least. However, the more time was wasted, the more chance that the trail of whoever took and sent the incriminating pictures of Father O'Malley would grow cold. Something had to be done, right now! After a moment of reflection, Manning buzzed his private secretary, making him present himself in front of his desk.

“My dear Willard, I will need you to contact the best private investigator available in Los Angeles and task him to find who took the pictures that incriminated Father O'Malley. The coffers of the archdiocese will be wide open in support of that investigation.”

“I will get on this right away, Your Eminence.” Replied his secretary, bowing before leaving the office of the archbishop.

To Manning's fury, another pedophile priest was exposed by anonymously taken pictures five days later, just as the team of inquisitors from the Vatican was starting its investigation. That second scandal could not be contained either and resulted in worldwide negative attention on the Catholic Church, on top of pushing many past victims of abuse into officially making complaints to the police. The result was a painful loss of face for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and, eventually, costly legal settlements to the claimants of abuse that hit hard the finances of the Church. Alarmed by this second scandal and by the growing number of claims of child abuse, the team of

⁵ Holy Office of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith : Modern name of the Holy Inquisition.

inquisitors redoubled its investigative efforts, but without any success to report to the Vatican after three weeks of work. The private investigator was no more successful in his efforts and could only conclude that some past victim of abuse was now taking revenge on the Catholic Church. However, the sheer number of abuse claimants now popping up only made the investigation more difficult, on top of attracting negative publicity on the Church. Unbeknown to Archbishop Manning, or to even Delicia, someone else than the Vatican was now also paying attention to what was happening around Los Angeles.

CHAPTER 5 – PLAYING ROUGH

16:48 (California Time)

Thursday, December 7, 1972

The PUSSYCAT CABARET

Santa Monica, California

Frank DeSoto was doing some bookkeeping work in his office when he heard some kind of commotion coming from the main entrance of his cabaret. Getting up quickly and walking to the door of his office, he opened it, only to face two pistols pointed at his face from less than two paces. His blood boiled when he recognized the smirking small man standing behind the two gunmen.

“Mickey Carmine? What are you doing here?”

Only then did he see his doorman, inert and lying in a pool of blood near the counter of the cloakroom. Anger instantly rose in Frank, who glared at Micky Carmine.

“Why did you do that? That was totally uncalled for!”

“He became unreasonable and my men calmed him down, that’s all.” Replied in an unapologetic tone the boss of the crime family opposed to the Gambinos in Los Angeles. “Talking of unreasonable...”

Mickey Carmine took three quick steps and slugged hard Frank DeSoto with a right hook, sending him on the carpet of his office, half knocked out.

“Put this inside your thick head if you can, buster: Nick Durante is no more the boss in Los Angeles as of today and this club now belongs to me. You can either be smart and go with the flow, or you could disappear without a trace tonight.”

“You’re the one who is not being smart, Carmine! You really want to start a war with the Gambinos here?”

“And why not? The Gambinos are soft and weak. With Durante gone, they will have no other choice but to deal with my family. Tony, disarm him!”

One of the gunmen stepped forward and pulled out the pistol holstered in Frank’s belt, then, on Carmine’s signal, started administering a savage beating to Frank DeSoto, helped in that by the second gunman. Leaving his men to work on Frank, Carmine directed four more of his men to hide the doorman’s body and to search the club, in case

someone else was inside. They soon reported back that the club was empty, save for an old cleaning lady. Satisfied, Mickey Carmine went to sit behind Frank DeSoto's work desk and gave a mean look at the now bloodied and bruised club owner.

"This club is now mine. My big brother already took care of Durante himself, so don't expect help from your precious cousin. Tomorrow, you will sign a transfer of property act putting this club in my name. If you don't, you will then suffer a regrettable accident and I will still get this club. I know that you don't personally deal in crimes, except for fleecing the IRS, and that you are a good club manager, so be reasonable and you will live, Frank."

"What about my employees?"

"They will keep working as before, but on my own terms, that's all."

Seeing no reasonable way out of this mess, Frank decided to play it safe, for everybody's sake.

"Very well! But please don't be rough on my employees."

That earned him a contemptuous look from Carmine.

"Decidedly, you were definitely too soft to be in this business."

"I was only being a sensible businessman: well treated employees are more motivated and work better and harder than those that are simply covered by their bosses."

"We will soon see about that." Replied Carmine, a mean smile on his face.

17:47 (California Time)

The PUSSYCAT CABARET

Jennifer looked crossly at the unknown man who answered the door of the cabaret.

"Who are you? Where is George?"

"George is, uh, indisposed. You're one of the strippers?"

"Yes!"

The man then finally opened the door wide, letting her come in. Already made suspicious by the man's attitude, Jennifer stopped cold when she saw the large red stain on the carpet by the cloakroom's counter. Recognizing at once what it was, she became frankly alarmed and decided to check at once what was going on.

"Is Frank in? I need to speak with him."

From merely formal, the man's attitude then changed to one of open hostility and contempt.

"You speak too much, girl! Frank is busy right now, so go to your changing room and get ready to work."

Not pushing her luck further and seeing that the man packed a pistol, Jennifer didn't protest further and quickly walked towards the backstage lodges of the cabaret. Passing by Frank's office, she noticed the two musclemen, both wearing concealed pistols, that stood guard on each side of the door. Both men were also total strangers to her. '*This smells like a hostile takeover*', she thought to herself while continuing on her way. Having 'entertained' Nick Durante a few times already and having made him tell her through her spells much about his affairs, Jennifer could only see one group that could possibly dare try a takeover of a cabaret owned by Durante's cousin: the Carmines. The problem was that nobody would be stupid enough to hit on this cabaret without at least ensuring that Durante would not be able to react to this. That in turn meant that something bad probably had already happened to the Los Angeles Mafia leader. Jennifer realized at once the amount of violence and deaths this probably meant and shook her head in disgust: she was no angel, but this was a downright stupid and needless display of violence that could lead nowhere. Even if Nick Durante and most of his lieutenants had been taken out by the Carmines, then one could be assured that such a forceful coup would inevitably attract a most violent reaction from the Gambino family in New York. The Carmines may have proven that they could play rough, but they certainly had not proven that they were smart. Stopping for a short moment while out of sight of anyone else, Jennifer raised her left foot and passed a finger against the sole of her shoe, which had walked on the red stain near the cloakroom, then licked her finger: it was blood alright, fresh blood. Now knowing that something very bad had happened to the doorman, Jennifer resumed her walk, anger building inside her: George was not a bad man per say and had always been nice and polite with her and the other girls. Her problem now was to figure out a way to respond to this.

By the time that she arrived at her small lodge in the back of the main lounge's stage, she had mostly made her mind about how to act next. Since the police could very possibly descend on the cabaret tonight and since Frank may still be alive and inside the establishment, any overt display of magical or supernatural powers was out of the question, as she didn't want to attract undue attention on her. Nor could she act like a

combat beast, which she was not really anyway, for the same reasons. She would thus have to be subtle in her next moves. Changing quickly in her college girl outfit over her leather dominatrix ensemble, she walked out of her lodge and returned to Frank's office, presenting herself to the two goons guarding the door with a bimbo smile painted on her face.

"Hi! I would like to see the manager, please."

The two men exchanged knowing glances before one of them replied to her.

"What's your name, girl, and why do you want to talk to him?"

"I'm Mélanie and I want to discuss my wages with him."

The Mafia muscleman thought that over for a moment before signaling her to wait and then knocking on the door. On hearing a muffled answer, he opened the door partly and stuck his head inside, looking at Mickey Carmine, who was reviewing the accounting books of the cabaret with a downcast Frank DeSoto.

"Excuse me, boss, but a chick named Mélanie wants to talk to the manager about her wages. Should I let her in?"

Seeing alarm and worry appear on Frank's face, Mickey threw him a questioning look.

"Who is that Mélanie?"

"My start performer. She is bringing tons of money to the cabaret. Please don't be rough on her."

"Tons of money, hey? As for not being rough on her, that will depend on her. Let her in, Jimmie!"

"Yes, boss!"

The bodyguard then opened wide the door and let Jennifer in. Mickey's eyes grew wider at once on seeing her.

"Wow! That's one fine chick you have here, Frank. Why don't you go wait outside while I talk to the dame?"

Understanding at once that Mickey's suggestion was more like an order, Frank got up from his chair and went for the door. He hesitated and slowed his pace as he was about to pass by Jennifer, worry visible on his battered face, but she nodded to him to go on and leave. Mickey spoke once the door closed behind Frank, his eyes devouring her.

"So, Mélanie, what exactly do you want? Higher wages?"

"Well, you seem to be the new boss here, so I will have to discuss this with you, I guess. How should I call you, mister?"

"Just call me Mickey. Since you wanted to discuss your wages as a stripper, why don't you get comfortable and come sit in my lap, Mélanie?"

'This should be easier than I even hoped for', thought Jennifer, who then started to slowly shed her clothes with sexy moves, causing Mickey to experience a steel-hard erection. Once down to her leather bottom and boots and with her huge, firm breasts fully exposed, she slowly approached the mesmerized Mickey and sat on his legs, straddling him and presenting her chest to his face while passing her arms around his neck. She then spoke in her softest, sexiest voice.

"So, Mickey, how should I convince you to raise my wages? How about a kiss first?"

While she gave him a French kiss, she guided his hands to her breasts and let him fondle them. With him already well aroused, Jennifer threw a 'Charm' spell on Mickey, mentally convincing him that he could trust her. Rubbing his crotch with her crotch and letting out a fake moan of pleasure, she looked him in the eyes from up close as she threw next a 'Suggestion' spell on him.

"You know, your men told me that they were going to have me after this. They really seem to like me."

"What? The only one you will have is me!"

"Oh? I don't know about that: I heard them discuss how they will kill you to take over from you and then blame poor Frank for your death."

His mind fogged and addled by her spells, Mickey was incapable of thinking straight and reacted on a purely emotional level, while he was experiencing intense desire for her.

"The bastards! Who exactly said that?"

"The two men guarding your door."

Rage filled Mickey, who pushed away Jennifer before getting up and drawing out his pistol. He then charged towards the door, pulling it open and pointing his pistol at one of his bodyguards, who had half turned on him opening the door.

"YOU FUCKERS WANTED TO DOUBLE-CROSS ME?"

He then shot twice the man on his left in the chest with his FN GP35 9mm pistol, projecting him backward as the loud detonations resonated inside the cabaret. The man was dead by the time he fell down on the carpet. Mickey then turned his pistol on the second guard, who was frozen by stupor and incomprehension. The muscleman tried to draw his own pistol on seeing his boss pointing his weapon at him, acting purely reflexively in a defensive gesture, but was shot before he could get his pistol out of his

holster. Mickey was pumping two more bullets in him when the man guarding the main door of the cabaret, the same who had let Jennifer in, reacted in self-defense, convinced that his boss had just gone crazy. He was able to draw and point his pistol just as Mickey was aiming at him. Both shots were near simultaneous, with both bullets finding their marks. While Mickey was hit in his left lung, the muscleman was hit in the stomach and grimaced with pain, but managed to fire a second shot, again hitting his boss but managing only a leg shot this time. Sustained by a flow of adrenaline, Mickey shot back but barely missed, his vision becoming blurred from loss of blood. His three remaining men inside the cabaret, having run to the office on hearing the gunshots, arrived just in time to see the man at the main door shoot their boss in the belly. Not taking the time to wonder why all that had happened, the three intact Mafiosi then peppered the man at the door, killing him in a deluge of bullets. One of the remaining Mafiosi next ran to Mickey, wanting to help him and provide first aid to him. He however made the mistake of keeping his pistol in his hand, pointing it unintentionally at him while running. That made Mickey, now close to losing consciousness and still under Jennifer's spells, fire at him from near point blank range, hitting him in the chest. The Mafioso fell face down with a grunt, losing his grip on his pistol. The two Mafiosi that now remained intact then felt they had no choice but shoot their boss as he tried with his last strength to raise again his pistol. The next five shots finished off Mickey Carmine, making his limp body slide down to the floor, his back against the frame of the office's door.

The two surviving gunmen, stunned and shocked by the firefight they had just been in and wondering what the hell had happened exactly, looked at each other with incomprehension, lowering their guns at the same time. Jennifer jumped in the action then, quickly crouching besides Carmine's body and grabbing his FN GP35 pistol. Using Carmine's body and the door frame as partial cover, she quickly pointed Carmine's pistol at the two gunmen and fired a volley of four bullets at them, hitting hard both men without giving them a chance to shoot back. Seeing that one of the men was still moving, Jennifer dropped Carmine's pistol, now empty, and ran to the dead man by the door, grabbing his own pistol and methodically emptying it in the two men she had shot, killing them. Next, she went to the man shot and wounded by Mickey Carmine, who was now moaning. Turning him on his back, she pressed her mouth against his mouth and sucked his soul before the man could die for good. Reinvigorated by the soul she had just eaten and with no survivors but herself left around the lobby of the cabaret, Jennifer

quickly wiped her fingerprints off the two pistols she had handled before putting them back in the grips of their dead owners. She had just finished doing that when Frank DeSoto cautiously stuck his head out of the cloakroom, where he had been put by Carmine's gunmen. He gave a haggard look around the scene of carnage, then eyed Jennifer with worry.

"Jennifer, are you alright? What the hell happened here?"

Jennifer ran to him at once and kissed him with genuine grief on seeing the state of his face.

"Frank, my God! What did they do to you?"

"I'll live, Jennifer. What about you?"

"Don't worry, Frank: I'm alright. Carmine and his men went crazy and shot each other up. Look, what's important is that we are both alright. I will now have to go before the police arrive: I don't want them to use me as the fall girl in this. Just pretend that I was not here and tell them that Carmine and his boys beat you up before getting into a dispute about how to split the revenues of your cabaret. I will be back tomorrow evening, so don't worry about me. Please take care of yourself in the meantime."

She then kissed him again, passing a 'Suggestion' spell on him to firm up her requests to him, then ran to her lodge and grabbed her purse and suitcase there before concentrating and teleporting back to her house just as police sirens could be heard approaching the cabaret. She was however far from finished for the night and went down at once to the basement of her house, where she took out of their hiding place two grenades, a Colt .45 pistol with silencer and a 9mm, British-made Sten submachine gun dating back from the Second World War, along with spare ammunition magazines. The weapons were part of the arsenal that had belonged to her adoptive mother, Marie Laurent, when she was the leader of a French Resistance cell in Paris. That arsenal, carefully hidden among her furniture imported from Paris, had then followed Patricia Love to Los Angeles. Now, it was going to be useful again.

Having been brought once by Nick Durante to his secret headquarter, so that he could have quiet sex with her there, away from his home and wife, Jennifer knew were to go next. If the Carmines truly planned to take over Durante's little empire today, then they would certainly have hit his hideout in Del Rey, a warehouse situated near both the Marina Del Rey and Los Angeles International Airport, two main access points to Los Angeles for the drugs imported from nearby Mexico. Putting on an old ankle-length coat

with hood and hiding her weapons and ammunition under it, she took her car and drove down to the Del Rey area, parking her car out of sight of Durante's warehouse and continuing cautiously on foot from there, careful not to attract undue attention. She stopped for a moment behind a telephone booth across the street from the warehouse's main gate and examined the grounds carefully in the early darkness of December, using as well her ability to detect minds around her. The warehouse was surrounded by a large fenced lot where maritime containers and old truck trailers gathered dust, while the warehouse itself was a three storey-high building that had seen better days. A seemingly bored man was sitting in the guard's hut at the main gate of the fence, while four cars were parked in front of the warehouse, near a pedestrian door. A red tip of light suddenly appearing inside one of the parked cars then made Jennifer smile to herself: a man was smoking behind the driver's wheel, probably a lookout trying to keep out of the fresh evening air. The moment brought back to her the souvenirs of some of her more exciting times as a young French Resistance girl, when she had been tasked to watch German installations and note the number and positions of the German sentries guarding them. The Humans may be weak, short-lived and lacking in powers compared to her, but they certainly could live interesting lives and produce strong displays of emotion. Their astonishingly quick advances in technology and science during the last few decades also made up more and more for their general lack of magical knowledge or powers.

Having formed her plan of action in her mind, Jennifer discreetly checked that her silencer-equipped pistol was ready to fire and stuck it inside the deep right side pocket of her coat, then threw back her hood, showing her long red hair, before crossing the street at a calm pace. The man in the guard's hut took a moment to notice her and straightened up in his chair, but stayed sitting inside the hut as she approached his small side window. The man eyed her beautiful face and smiled to her while opening the sliding side window.

"Hi, babe! What are you doing here at this time of the evening? You should know that the streets are not safe at this hour."

"I know, and thank you for your consideration, mister. I was sent by Mickey Carmine to entertain his big brother Tony, so that he could celebrate properly his latest business success. Tony is indeed here, I hope?"

"Oh, he is still here with his boys, miss. You will find him upstairs, in the upper storey management office of the warehouse. I can phone him to tell him that you are on your way."

"Thank you: you are a darling." Said softly Jennifer while passing her left arm through the window to caress the man's cheek. As the guard shivered with pleasure at the touch of her hand, she quickly took out and raised her silenced pistol, shooting him point-blank in the heart. Her left hand then grabbed the dying man by his shoulder, preventing him from tipping out of his chair and keeping him seated in it. She next set the man's arms on his narrow counter to help his body stay in place, then pocketed back her pistol and calmly walked towards the pedestrian door of the warehouse and the parked car. The man smoking in the car rolled down his window as she approached him and asked a question in a suspicious tone.

"Hey, lady! What are you doing here?"

"Mickey Carmine sent me as a gift for his brother Tony." Replied Jennifer before shooting the man in the head. She grinned at the dead man as she pocketed again her pistol. "Yeah, a gift from Hell, indeed!"

The next part of her plan calling for a bit more subtlety, she went between the back of the car and the wall of the warehouse and removed her coat, ending in her college girl attire. Pulling down and taking off her panty as well, she stuffed it in a pocket of her coat and took out a grenade before rolling the coat in a ball, with her weapons inside, hiding it under the car. She would probably be bodily searched for weapons by Tony Carmine's men as an elementary precaution before being given access to Tony, so she was going to have to do without her pistol and submachine gun for the moment. Taking her grenade in one hand, she slipped her hand under her pleated skirt and slowly and cautiously inserted it inside her vagina, careful to let part of the grenade's butt plug stick out, so she could grab it easily when needed. Taking a moment to mentally picture back how the inside of the warehouse was made, Jennifer took a deep breath and opened the pedestrian door, setting foot inside the warehouse and heading towards the wooden staircase leading to the upper level offices.

"Hey, there's a young chick in a college outfit coming up the stairs!" Said in a surprised tone the Mafioso tasked with watching the inside of the warehouse from the windows of the accounting office, where five of his comrades were busy counting the

mountain of cash money found in Durante's hideout. His comrades all stopped counting dollars at once and rushed to the windows of the office to look at the said chick.

"Wow! She's quite a looker!" Said a lieutenant of Tony Carmine. "She also seems to know where she is going. I will go check her out. In the meantime, keep counting that money, guys."

Going out of the office and on the wooden gallery that ringed the inside of the warehouse, the lieutenant intercepted the girl, a tall teenager with long red hair and big green eyes, as she set foot on the gallery.

"Hold it there, girl! First off, who are you and what are you doing here?"

"Hi! My name is Jennifer and Mickey Carmine paid me to come as a gift for his brother Tony. Mickey found me at the PUSSICAT CABARET. Mister Carmine is indeed here, I hope?"

"Oh yes, he is!" Said the Mafioso, grinning as he eyed her splendid body and fabulous chest. "I am sure that Tony will be pleased with his gift. But first, I must do a simple formality."

He then patted her down for a pistol, but his search was quite perfunctory and he didn't bother feeling the inside of her legs.

"You're clean! Follow me!"

Bypassing the office where the money counting was being done, the lieutenant went next door to the adjacent office of the manager, where Tony Carmine was reviewing the secret ledgers and accounting books of the late Nick Durante, and knocked on the door.

"Yeah?"

"Boss, your brother Mickey sent you a gift he found at the PUSSICAT CABARET." Said the lieutenant through the door.

"He did? Alright, come in!"

The lieutenant opened the door and let in Jennifer, who then found herself facing a bull of a man, with a square-jawed face and big hands with thick fingers. Tony Carmine also had the deformed ears of a boxer and he certainly could breathe meanness when he wanted to. Right now, he smiled with glee as he looked up and down at Jennifer's body. She then spoke up in her most innocent and cheerful voice.

"Hi, Mister Carmine! Mickey sent me here so that you could celebrate in style. I can also entertain your men after taking care of you, if you want."

"I am sure that the guys won't object to that." Said Tony Carmine with a grin. "But please, make yourself comfortable: there is a bed in the far corner. What is your name, by the way?"

"Jennifer, sir!"

"Just Tony will do fine, Jennifer."

Smiling to him, Jennifer approached the bed, then faced Tony and started slowly, sensually stripping off her clothes. Grabbing a chair and sitting on it, Tony watched her, mesmerized, gulping hard when her huge, firm tits popped out in the open. Soon down to her skirt and boots, Jennifer slowly danced her way towards the Mafia boss, discreetly checking at the same time that the venetian blinds covering the windows giving in on the accounting office were pulled down and closed. She finally sat astride Tony Carmine and started kissing him. As he hungrily returned her French kiss, Jennifer tightly embraced him with her arms, immobilizing his own arms, at the same time that she started sucking out his soul. Not understanding at first what was happening to him, Tony was too late to react and convulsed with a few spasms before dying, with Jennifer savoring the feeling of power and energy from the eaten soul. That however still left six Mafiosi to take care of.

Carrying Tony's body to the bed and laying him on it, Jennifer then silently searched the office for anything useful or important. One thing she grabbed at once was Tony's pistol, a Colt .45 that was accompanied by a silencer and two spare ammunition clips. She also found a backup weapon, a snub-nosed .38 Special revolver, in an ankle holster, along with five extra rounds and a stiletto knife, which she took as well. After a second of reflection, she plunged the stiletto's blade deep in Tony's jugular and twisted it, causing a large wound that could later be assumed to be the cause of death. Finding a sports bag under the bed and searching it, she grinned on finding a silencer-equipped UZI 9mm submachine gun with no less than four full ammunition clips. Two empty clips were also inside, prompting her in sniffing the UZI: it had been fired recently, probably today. '*So, Tony didn't mind doing part of the dirty work himself*', she thought. She certainly could and would use in turn the nasty, compact weapon tonight. The other notable items she found, while not lethal ones, were truly important: three ledger books and a notebook that had belonged to Nick Durante and which listed the financial details of his operations, along with names, addresses and telephone numbers. Jennifer debated for a moment about what to do with them. If the police got hold of them, it could

then unravel the whole criminal empire held until tonight around Los Angeles by the Gambino family. However, that would probably also incriminate Frank DeSoto and the PUSSICAT CABARET, something Jennifer was loathe to see happen. She personally had no special interest in helping the so-called justice system of the Humans. After all, most of what were officially described as crimes here in this world were no more than actions motivated by basic human urges, like greed, lust, jealousy and the wish for power. The only taboos for Jennifer were unnecessary, gratuitous or sadistic violence and the harming of true innocents, mostly meaning children. However, because of those personal reservations, she had been considered too nice for her kind, the main reason she had been treated like a pariah in her place of origin, forcing her real mother to exile her on Earth in order to protect her. Finally deciding to bring them out with her once the job here was finished, she stuffed the ledgers and the notebooks in the sports bag, but took out the UZI and two spare clips, readying the weapon for action. She also put back on her clothes, in case she would have to run away in a hurry, so that she would not possibly leave behind some incriminating evidence against herself. Lastly, she cautiously pulled out the grenade hidden inside her vagina and grabbed both the UZI and the revolver before taking a cautious peep through two blades of the venetian blinds. Five of the six men in the adjacent room were sitting around a large table, counting dollar bills piled on the table before putting elastic bands around the counted wads and then stuffing the wads in a large sports bag set on top of the table. Another similar bag full of counted money sat further away in one corner. As for the sixth man, he was still sitting near the exit door, watching through a window the inside of the warehouse.

Going to the bed and Tony's dead body, Jennifer silently picked the cadaver and set it down near the door giving to the accounting office, lying it on the floor and against the wall. Next, she brought the iron-framed bed besides the body and tipped it on its side, with the mattress stuck between the body and the iron frame. Now having a fairly good protection against the steel shrapnel that was about to fly around, Jennifer set her weapons on the floor near her, ready to be grabbed quickly, and crouched behind her improvised protection. Grabbing her grenade and pulling out its safety pin, but holding the arming lever in place, she carefully calculated the direction and strength of her throw before letting go the lever, opening the door by a few inches after two seconds and throwing her grenade inside the accounting office. The five men counting the dollar bills,

concentrated on their work, didn't notice the grenade at first as it rolled on the floor towards their table. Neither did the watchman, busy looking through his window. Only the lieutenant stopped his counting for a moment when he heard a hard object bounce and then roll on the wooden floor. He was however too late to react before the grenade exploded just under the table. The table and the money piled on it flew upward, projected against the ceiling by the blast while being turned into wood splinters and ripped pieces of paper by the shrapnel. As for the men sitting around the table, the blast and shrapnel mangled their legs, groins and bellies, on top of projecting them violently backward. The watchman was also caught by the blast and fragments, but was hit more evenly over his body. He still went down with a scream of pain as Jennifer threw open the door of the manager's office and came out, both the UZI and the revolver in her hands. Going quickly to the men who were still moving, she shot them one by one, aiming for their heads, then shot the others, making sure that they were dead. Once she was done, Jennifer looked around at the result of her carnage and grinned: more souls on the way to their proper final destination. She was happy to see that the second bag already filled with money was still mostly intact and in one piece: that was cash money she could use to good effect in the future. Grabbing the money bag, then returning to the manager's office to grab as well the bag containing the ledgers and notebook and stuffing her weapons in it, she ran out and climbed down the stairs, exiting the warehouse. She took the time to recuperate her long coat and put it on, throwing its hood over her head, before grabbing again her two sports bags and walking away as if nothing had happened. None of the local residents or passersby that heard the explosion and shots cared enough to detail the lone figure that walked away from the warehouse, or dared following it.

The police patrol car that responded to the rare calls about shots fired didn't know where to look first, having only very confused and incomplete reports to go by. Seeing a security guard sitting in a hut at the entrance of a nearby warehouse compound, the policeman driving the patrol car rolled to it and stopped besides the wicket window of the hut to speak with the security guard.

"Hey, mister! We have reports of shots fired in the area. Would you by chance have heard or seen anything out of the ordinary?... Mister?... Hey, mister!" Taking his flashlight and shining it in the face of the security guard, the policeman's jaw dropped wide open.

"Holy shit, Jim! This guy is dead! Call for some serious backup, quickly!"

Half an hour later, now back in her house and with her car parked inside her garage, Jennifer sat down in a sofa of her lounge and contemplated the ledger books and notebook she had found at the warehouse, still unsure what to do with them. Taking one of the ledger books and opening it, she glanced through the pages of names and addresses accompanied by sums and dates of payments. It was obviously an accounting book on those who had been forced to pay protection money to Nick Durante and his goons. That made Jennifer/Delicia think seriously about the deeper meaning of what she had in her hands. Contrary to extortion by blackmail or corruption payments, which involved people that had something on their consciences and had been asking for trouble, extortion via protection racket basically touched innocent, hard working people who only wanted to earn a decent living for themselves and their families. Most of those victims of the protection racket were in fact rather low income or at best medium income earners. Putting that ledger book aside with the future intention of burning it, Jennifer picked the second ledger book and found that it listed those who had contracted loans from the Mafia at grossly inflated interest rates, something called loan sharking. Another part of the same ledger covered the revenues from the casinos, cabarets and clubs owned by the Gambino family in Los Angeles. Deciding to later burn that ledger book as well, she grabbed the third ledger and opened it. She sucked air in after leafing through only a couple of pages, while glee filled her: that ledger contained a list of all the Los Angeles government officials, politicians, police officers, lawyers, prosecutors and judges that had been paid bribes by Durante's men, along with the dates and amounts of the bribes and the bank accounts information. She had in her hands something that could put in jail or force the resignation of dozens of people, people that were supposed to serve the population, enforce law and order or render justice but were taking money from the Mafia to protect and cover criminals. Jennifer grinned as she read the list of names in the ledger: so many hypocrites, now at her mercy. Now truly satisfied with her accomplishments of tonight, Jennifer put aside for safekeeping the third ledger before picking up the much smaller notebook. Despite its small size, its content proved as hot as that of the third ledger, as it contained the contact information of the drug traffickers providing various hard drugs and marijuana to the street drugs distribution network run by Durante in Los Angeles and the surrounding region. The notebook also listed the account numbers, passwords and access codes of a number of secret bank accounts

used to launder dirty money. Just that list of secret bank accounts was worth millions of dollars by itself! Jennifer put the notebook on top of the third ledger book and sat back with a smile, thinking about all the mayhem and chaos she was now going to be able to cause around Los Angeles. This was definitely a good day to be a Succubus⁶, even for a nice one like her forced to live in exile on Earth.

16:15 (California Time)

Friday, December 8, 1972

L.A.P.D. Homicide Division offices

Central police headquarters, Los Angeles

Lieutenant Christopher Hodges looked at the faces around him as he was about to start the meeting with his men of the Homicide Division. Everybody looked tired, and with good reasons: they had all been working nearly non-stop for over twenty hours, since the shootout at the PUSSYCAT CABARET and the massacre at the Del Rey warehouse. Hodges himself was dead tired. Yet, despite all their efforts, they had precious little to go by.

“Okay, let’s resume quickly the situation, men. Yesterday late afternoon, the Carmines apparently attempted a violent takeover of the Gambino family’s assets in and around Los Angeles. In that, they briefly succeeded, killing Nick Durante and many of his lieutenants and soldiers and grabbing control of what appears to have been Durante’s secret center of operation. However, things then went sour afterwards for the Carmines, and fast! First, we have that bizarre shootout between Mickey Carmine and his own men at the PUSSYCAT CABARET, resulting in eight deaths. Then, less than one hour later, someone hit Tony Carmine and six of his men at Durante’s warehouse, killing them in a manner that could only be described as a massacre. A few hours later, the surviving men loyal to Durante hit back, profiting from the fact that the Carmines were now leaderless, resulting in a number of bloody firefights all across town. At the last count, 43 Mafiosi are dead, while sixteen more are in hospital. Thankfully, the violence has quieted down by now, but we still could see more Gambino-Carmine fighting in the days to come. Also, we can reasonably expect the Gambinos in New York

⁶ Succubus : Female demon of seduction, a chaotic, evil creature from Hell with magical powers, bent on causing mayhem and chaos through seduction, sex and manipulation.

to send extra muscles to Los Angeles to reestablish their local hold here. We will thus have to be vigilant. Ed, you investigated the shootout at the PUSSYCAT CABARET. Have you been able to make some headway in that case?"

"Very little, to be frank, sir." Replied the detective Hodges had addressed. "The only thing we have been able to ascertain through ballistics done on the bullets fired inside the cabaret is that they all came from the weapons of Mickey Carmine and of his six men. No third party seems to have been involved in that firefight. As crazy as it sounds, it appears that Mickey Carmine effectively entered in a violent argument with his own men, an argument that ended in a shootout."

"What about the cabaret manager and owner? He's a cousin of Nick Durante, no?"

"Yes, he is, sir. However, I reviewed his file and I would tend to agree with those that say that he is relatively clean and doesn't do crimes, unless you want to characterize sponsoring strip dancing as a crime. He was severely beaten by Carmine's men when they took over the cabaret in the afternoon. Right now, he is the only witness we have for that crime scene. If no other witness shows up, I'm afraid that we will have to close that case."

"Hmm, they rightly say that dead men don't tell tales. Alright, what about you, Matthew? What can you tell me about the massacre at the warehouse?"

"Well, sir, whoever did it was a real pro. The killer or killers managed to silently kill both of the guards outside the warehouse without raising the alarm inside, then had to walk in plain sight of the upper offices and climb a wooden staircase, again without raising the alarm. That, and the fact that Tony Carmine was killed with a knife only a few feet from his own men makes me think that the killer or killers were insiders who had Carmine's confidence. By the way, neither Tony Carmine nor his men got a chance to shoot back before being killed. The submachine gun and handgun used with a grenade to kill them was not found at the scene, so must have been carried away by the killer or killers."

"What about the grenade used in the warehouse? Could our experts identify its type?"

"Yes, sir! It was an old-fashioned American 'pineapple grenade', as produced during World War Two. There are considerable stocks of them left all around the World, so that doesn't help us much. We also found a large quantity of ripped or burned up dollar bills worth a few tens of thousands of dollars, dispersed all around the crime

scene. It seemed that Carmine's men were counting their loot from the hit on Durante's place when they were attacked and killed."

"I see! Well, guys, we have just worked a lot of hours in a row and we are all quite tired. I will thus cut this short and will enjoin you to go home and catch some sleep. We will resume our work tomorrow morning. Hopefully, some visual witness will come forward to help our investigation."

As his detectives dispersed, Hodges rubbed his eyes, himself tired to the bone. He still had to brief Chief Wilson about the case but suspected that the Chief of Police would not like hearing that they had basically no clues concerning a case that had the whole city on edge. The Mayor's office was also pushing hard for him to get results. Shaking his head in discouragement, Hodges grabbed his old gabardine coat and hat from his office's coat hanger and walked out, intent on going home, have supper and a shower, then enjoy at least eight hours of sleep. Chief Wilson and the mayor could wait until tomorrow.

18:39 (California Time)

The PUSSYCAT CABARET

Santa Monica

When Jennifer showed up at the main entrance of the PUSSYCAT, ready to work, she found a policeman guarding the door and police crime scene tape blocking it. Unsure what to do then, she saw someone wave a hand at her from inside a nearby parked car: it was Frank DeSoto! Walking quickly to his car, she took place in the front passenger seat and looked with concern at Frank's battered face, now sporting a few bandages.

"Will you be alright, Frank?"

"Don't worry about me, Jennifer: the doctor told me that there would be no permanent damage. I will be like brand new after a couple of weeks."

"Still, those bastards were really rough on you, Frank." Said Jennifer, feeling genuine concern for Frank: he had been up to now a more than fair employer and had proved to be basically a decent man, even though he had been connected by family ties to some rather bad characters. He also happened to be quite a handsome man. Frank lowered his head, trying to forget his most painful experience of yesterday.

"Jennifer, I don't know what you did to cause Mickey Carmine to go berserk the way he did, but I must thank you for it. I certainly won't cry about that bastard's death."

"Neither will I, Frank. Unfortunately, poor George was not as lucky as us. I saw on the television news that your cousin, Nick Durante, was also killed yesterday."

"I saw that too. I suppose that a man in his field of work must expect that kind of thing to happen to him eventually."

They were both silent for a moment before Jennifer spoke again in a subdued tone. Contrary to a typical Succubus, she was able to genuinely feel for someone else, thanks to her mixed blood. Her father Gideon had been a fallen angel that had fallen in love with a Succubus and had coupled with her: some of his good side had tainted Delicia's blood, turning her into a chaotic neutral demon girl rather than the usual chaotic evil Succubus. Gideon had also fought off those who had wanted to kill what they regarded as a failed abomination, gaining enough time to let Delicia's mother flee Hell, bringing her daughter to the relative safety of Earth's physical plane.

"I understand that George was married and had three young children. I would like to help his family: my own parents left me a very comfortable inheritance and I would like to open a scholarship fund for George's kids."

Frank looked at her with both gratitude and what furiously looked like love to Jennifer.

"That's a fine idea, Jennifer. You are truly a wonderful girl. I will contact George's widow and arrange a meeting between you and her. Don't worry about caring for the immediate needs of George's family: I will take care of them, on top of paying for George's funeral. In the meantime, take the next week off: having the cabaret repaired and reopened may take a while."

"You are yourself a really nice guy, Frank. Thank you for being what you are." Replied Jennifer before bending sideways and kissing him. It was a genuine kiss, not meant to pass a spell or suck in life energy. She withdrew after a few seconds, regret in her eyes as she stared into the eyes of Frank. As basically an immortal being, she could not logically contemplate taking him as a life companion, as he would grow old and die while she continued to live on for the millennia to come...if no one hunting for her killed her in the meantime. Still, Frank would have made a more than acceptable companion for a few decades. That thought then made Delicia realize how lonely she was in reality, despite all the sexual encounters she had. Basically, she was condemned to leave those she knew and start a new life every forty years or so, and this for eternity. That would have not bothered a common Succubus, who was the perfect image of

selfishness, but she was no common Succubus. With sadness in her soul, she opened her door and stepped out of the car, closing back the passenger door and then watching Frank roll away, waving goodbye at him. At least, now she knew how to spend part of the cash she had grabbed at Nick Durante's hideout.

10:28 (California Time)

Monday, December 11, 1972

L.A.P.D. Homicide Division

Central Police Headquarters, Los Angeles

Police Lieutenant Christopher Hodges was reviewing the pathology examination reports made on the victims of the massacre at the warehouse in Del Rey when he got a telephone call from the Chief of Police, Captain Richard Wilson. It was a short, concise call asking him to go see him in his office at once. A bit worried and wondering what it was about, Hodges nonetheless complied and went up to Wilson's big office, only to find that the other division chiefs had also been called in by Wilson. He guessed that something big must have happened after looking at Wilson's concerned expression. Hodges thus stood in line with the others in front of the Chief's desk as the latter looked gravely at them.

"Gentlemen, I called you here because me, the District Attorney, the Mayor and many others outside the L.A.P.D. and City Hall have received copies of a denunciation letter accusing Assistant District Attorney Steve Merrick of corruption. I have to urge you right now not to spread this around, since those accusations have not yet been proven. However, as a safety measure and in order to avoid tainting any of the investigations you are presently handling, I will ask you to avoid any working contact with Merrick until he has been cleared of those allegations, and this until further notice. The D.A. has already redistributed the dossiers Merrick was handling and he will be on paid leave in the meantime."

"Uh, excuse me, Chief," said the head of the Fraud Division, Lieutenant Berkowickz, "but isn't this a bit drastic of a reaction to a simple denunciation letter. That letter could be a complete lie simply meant to hurt Merrick."

"I would normally agree with you, Berkowickz, but that letter, which was simply signed as 'The Revealer', contained a list of sizeable deposits in a secret bank account allegedly held by Merrick, along with the dates and sizes of the deposits and the bank

account number involved. The D.A. just checked on that bank account and has found that it actually belonged to Merrick, but was a totally separate account from his usual bank accounts and had also been opened at a different bank. The dates and amounts of the deposits made in that account also corresponded exactly with the information in the anonymous letter. There is also the fact that this letter was also supposedly sent as well to the local offices of the F.B.I. and of the I.R.S., plus to a dozen newspapers, radio stations and media companies. Merrick's name is now truly blackened."

"Wait, Chief!" Exclaimed the head of the Vice Squad. "This sounds like the same pattern as the one who exposed those two pedophile priests last month."

Wilson nodded grimly his head at that.

"That's correct! This 'Revealer' may very well be the same person who denounced those priests. In view of how well informed that unknown person proved to be, we could thus assume that the revelations about Merrick could well prove to be solid ones. What the D.A. has found about the bank account deposits is already quite damning. In fact, the F.B.I. and the I.R.S. have already jumped into Merrick's case and have launched their own separate investigations. I fully expect Merrick to be formally charged with corruption in the next few days."

"Did the letter say who paid that money to Merrick and why, Chief?" Asked Berkowickz. Wilson looked at him, then at Hodges.

"As a matter of fact, yes! It also may connect that information to your case about the massacre at the Del Rey warehouse, Hodges. The letter stated that Merrick was in the pay of the late Nick Durante. That 'Revealer' thus may have managed to grab some important papers from Durante, either before or after his death."

That information struck Hodges like a lightning bolt.

"But, that could mean that this 'Revealer' may as well have committed the massacre at the warehouse, Chief. If that's the case, then we are dealing with an extremely dangerous and also very well connected person or persons. This puts this 'Revealer' into a whole new light. He may well be holding compromising information on many other persons."

Hodges somehow didn't like the grim smile Wilson made at his words.

"Funny that you said that, Hodges. The Revealer said in his letter that, from today, the name and pertinent information of another corrupt official will be released every Monday. I can already smell the shit in the pants of many persons at City Hall."

"Holy shit! He could throw the whole city administration into complete mayhem!"

"Well, I hate to say this, but this police department could well be targeted too."

Wilson saw from a corner of one eye his head of the Narcotics Division tighten his jaw then. A flash of anger coming to him, he eyed the man hard.

"What's the matter, Camproni? You didn't seem to like that piece of news one bit."

"Er, I was just measuring the disturbance factor this could represent to us, Chief."

Wilson stared at him for a moment, not convinced, while the others also eyed Camproni with suspicion. Lieutenant Berkowickz then asked a question that temporarily deflected the attention from Camproni.

"Chief, just out of curiosity, how much money did Merrick allegedly receive from Durante?"

"According to the account the D.A. investigated, Merrick received 2,000 dollars...per month, and that since two years ago."

"The fucking rat! He was thus nearly doubling his legitimate salary. The I.R.S. should have fun with him."

"Quite right! Well, you now have an idea of the interesting times we are going to live through in the next few weeks, gentlemen. Hodges, work on the warehouse massacre case with the assumption that this Revealer may well be connected to it. You are now dismissed. Camproni, you stay!"

Hodges wiggled one hand as he walked out of Wilson's office. These were going to be interesting times indeed.

Somehow, Hodges was not surprised to learn on the next Monday that Lieutenant Camproni had been named as 'Corrupt person of the week' by the Revealer. What shocked him, though, was the amount Camproni had been paid by Durante to protect the mobster's drug distribution network: it was even more than for Merrick. From then on, things got really tense in Los Angeles every Monday that followed, with many waiting with dread for the next shoe to drop. The one who got a nasty Christmas gift on Monday, December 25, was in fact no less than the city's Public Works Commissioner, who turned out to have favored relatives and friends of Durante when awarding juicy public works contracts. That case involved millions of dollars of city money and raised a real stink at City Hall. The eyes of the various medias nationwide quickly started staring

at Los Angeles every Monday. Some officials with secrets to hide then started quietly leaving town, disappearing into retirement with their loot before they could be named by the Revealer, while a couple of others committed suicide on seeing their name published. It even came to a point when having your name publicized by The Revealer on a Monday was enough to destroy at once the reputation and career of the one named. Delicia, who was now having a huge success at what was in fact the main purpose in life of a Succubus, the spreading of mayhem and chaos, delighted in seeing all those hypocrites finally pay for their deeds. That mayhem and chaos however attracted more attention on her, both good and bad, from opposite directions. It certainly got many Succubus in Hell jealous about her successes. But again, wasn't creating jealousy one of the goals of a Succubus?

CHAPTER 6 – ANOTHER LONELY SOUL

17:56 (California Time)

Saturday, January 27, 1972

West 1st Street, 'Little Tokyo' District

Los Angeles, California

Patricia swirled around in the narrow space between the two rows of shelves of the store while flapping open and closed the two embroidered silk Japanese hand fans, testing how easy they were to use when dancing. Watched by amused customers and by the befuddled sales lady of the oriental boutique, she did a dozen dance steps before stopping and bringing the two fans to the cashier, putting them besides the wide conical peasant hat she had already selected.

"I will take those two fans as well, miss." She said in Japanese to the sales lady, who smiled to her, agreeably surprised to see a Caucasian woman able to speak Japanese. Patricia paid the total stated by the woman, then put her new acquisitions in her large canvas shopping bag. Happy with her new possessions, which would help her vary her performances at the PUSSYCAT CABARET, Patricia stepped out of the shop and onto the sidewalk running along the southern side of the West 1st Street. She was in the so-called 'Little Tokyo' District, but there was sadly not much left of the original Japanese ethnic neighborhood now. The forced removal to relocation camps of nearly all the ethnic Japanese residents of California in 1942 had spelled mostly ruin to the district, which had been left abandoned and neglected for years. Squatters and wartime migrant workers had taken over the houses of the deported Japanese-Americans, living in them but not caring for them. A rebuilding plan was supposed to start soon, or so City Hall said, but that still left Little Tokyo as a mere ghost of itself for now. The streets of the district, dark at this hour as the Sun had set half an hour ago, were not exactly safe for young women walking alone. That however didn't bother much Patricia, as she was much more than just your average young woman. Still, she kept her senses fully up as she walked towards the nearby Chinatown District, intent on looking there for more exotic lingerie items of interest.

Her eyes suddenly caught on a green, phosphorescent-like sign apparently spray-painted on the brick façade of a building: it consisted of a prominent arrow pointing South, plus the words 'TO FRIENDS' CORNER BAR'. Patricia stopped cold when she realized that the sign was not made of normal paint. In fact, no normal human being would be able to see that sign, as it was a magical sign, visible only to those who had magical powers, like her, or knew how to manipulate or detect magic. Her heart accelerating as curiosity and excitement overcame her, Patricia went the way shown by the sign, going down a dark side street. She found a second magical sign that made her turn left at the next corner. A third sign made her turn again, this time inside a small, poorly lit alley. No more than twenty paces down the alley, she stopped in front of what looked like a small bar. The sign over the entrance was made of normal paint and neon lights and said 'FRIENDS' CORNER BAR'. Another, much smaller sign besides the entrance door said 'Welcome, whoever you are, but leave your quarrels at the door'. The door frame itself was covered by magical symbols glowing a menacing red. '*Defensive runes?*' thought Patricia, now more intrigued than ever. A quick look through the windows of the façade showed to Patricia a long and relatively narrow room, with a bar counter along one side and a double row of tables and chairs. There were maybe a dozen persons inside at the time.

Curiosity devouring her, Patricia pushed open the entrance door and stepped inside the bar lounge. All the customers, along with the barman and single waitress, went quiet and looked at her as she stood motionless for a few seconds by the coat racks lining the wall near the door. The crowd actually looked quite eclectic, with nearly as many women present as there were men, and with the clothes varying from good quality suits to worn jeans and T-shirts. The apparent ages also varied quite a lot, from about twenty to fifty. Using her 'Detect Magic' spell, Patricia was shocked to see magical auras become visible around or on parts of many of the people present in the bar. The barman, a tall, thin man with East European features, then spoke to her, giving her a friendly smile while drying a glass with a towel.

"Welcome to the 'FRIENDS' CORNER BAR', miss. Would you like to sit at the bar or at a table?"

"I will sit at the bar, mister."

"Please, just call me 'Roman', miss. You are with friends here."

“And I’m Patricia.” She replied before suspending her shopping bag and her coat in the wall coat racks near the door, then walking to the bar and sitting on a stool. Patricia was then struck by another, apparently insignificant detail: contrary to all the bars she knew, the wall behind the bar was not lined with mirrors. Eyeing the barman, she noted his very pale complexion and his blood-shot eyes. His aura was also definitely evil. The barman, who had approached her to face her from behind the bar, grinned when he noticed that she was examining him, briefly showing the tips of two upper fangs.

“Do not worry, Patricia. As I said earlier, you are among friends here. You are obviously new here, right?”

“Correct! I arrived from Paris last September to come study at the UCLA.” Patricia then lowered her voice to a near whisper and bent forward.

“I saw the magical markers outside. What is this place, exactly?” The barman appeared in turn somewhat surprised by her question.

“You mean that you never saw a marked refuge before? How long have you been around on this world?”

“In Los Angeles, only a few months. On Earth, forty years. I never saw magic markers in Paris during my years there. What about you, Roman?”

“Well, let’s say that my story goes back much farther than yours, Patricia. To answer your original question, this is meant as a place of refuge, relaxation and rest for those who want to meet their kind, discuss their special problems with other people who can understand and sympathize with them and generally feel at peace from whatever they fear.”

“That’s quite a program, Roman, especially when considering the, uh, nature of many of the people in this bar. I have never seen before a group of people with such contrasting auras and alignments.”

Roman grinned again as he replied.

“This is a marked refuge, Patricia. Besides being magically marked as such, it is also protected by powerful magical wards. Anyone who wants to start a dispute here with the help of magic will be in for a big shock, that I can assure you. If the wards and defensive spells are not enough, then the poor schmucks who will manage to break in will have to deal with the owner, Mister Hideyoshi. Talking of him, maybe you would want to have a chat with him, since you are new around here. He is always interested in meeting with newcomers to Los Angeles.”

"I would definitely be interested to see him, Roman."

"Then, I will go announce you to him, Patricia. I won't be long."

While the barman left by a door apparently leading to some backroom office, Patricia discreetly looked around the bar, taking in the décor and the customers. The place was not luxurious in terms of furniture and decorating, but neither was it a dump. She would in fact compare it favorably to many bistros she had frequented in Paris. A wall menu and prices board told her that, apart from various alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks, the bar also served a limited menu of meals and snacks. That limited menu was in turn a bit strange in its composition, featuring things like roast beef and steak tartar but very few items that would be considered usual American fast food fare. There was something on the list of drinks that was called 'Real Sangria' and which was priced outrageously high. The bar's waitress, a very pretty young woman originating from the Indian sub-continent, then went behind the bar to prepare an order. Watched discreetly by Patricia, the waitress took out of a small electric oven a good-sized piece of beef roast and put it on a plate, then went to take out of a refrigerator a bottle filled with a dark red liquid, filling a glass with it and then putting a straw in the glass. Patricia smirked at that: a Parisian seeing a waitress put a straw in a glass of what appeared to be red wine would have justly screamed sacrilege at that sight. The waitress put both the plate of meat and the glass of red liquid on a serving tray and went to a table where a rather dumpy woman in her forties sat opposite a big, powerful man wearing the clothes of a manual laborer. The waitress put the glass in front of the woman, then the plate of red meat in front of the man. The latter grabbed at once the meat with both hands and started devouring it with gusto, while the woman sipped her drink through her straw with apparent content. The waitress completed that rather weird portrait by going back behind the counter and, taking out of a refrigerator a small food container and opening it, popped what appeared to be a small ball of raw minced meat in her mouth, munching it with obvious delight. *'Lycanthropes and vampires, eating and drinking together in peace: that's what you could call unusual!'* thought Patricia, taking the measure of the place she was in. Her thoughts were interrupted by the return of Roman, who was accompanied by a small man in his thirties who appeared of Japanese descent. The newcomer saluted and briefly spoke with the customers he passed by, exchanging smiles and handshakes with them before stopping besides Patricia, who got up from her stool to face him. The man's magical aura shone with incredible intensity, telling Patricia

that this man was to be treated very carefully. However, his aura was also definitely one of goodness, not evil.

“Good evening, miss. I am the owner of this bar, John Hideyoshi. I hear that you are new in Los Angeles.”

Patricia shook hands with him while answering, finding at the same time that Hideyoshi’s grip was very strong.

“Correct, Mister Hideyoshi. My name is Patricia Love and I arrived from Paris last September. I must say that you own a quite interesting establishment here.”

That made Hideyoshi smile as he showed her the door he had come from.

“Indeed, Miss Love! I believe that we have much to talk about together...in private. This way, please, and do call me simply ‘John’.”

“Only if you call me ‘Patricia’.”

“A fair request, Patricia.”

John Hideyoshi then led Patricia through the door at the end of the bar, where she found herself in a corridor running parallel to the bar lounge, with doors visible on one side and with an emergency fire exit door at one end. The other end of the corridor led to a wooden staircase going up to the upper floor. John went to the staircase and climbed the stairs, followed by Patricia, with both ending in another long corridor with doors on both sides. The nearest door was a richly decorated one made of lacquered wood and also had magical runes around its frame.

“My private suite.” Explained the bar owner with a smile to Patricia while opening the door, revealing the inside of an old traditional Japanese living room. Entering the room, Patricia embraced with her eyes the magnificent collection of antique Japanese weapons and armor around the room, along with the numerous calligraphies suspended on the walls and the sculpted jade and coral art objects on display. John Hideyoshi then showed her a door to their left.

“My office is behind that door.”

She followed him with good grace, entering a decidedly more Western-looking office. Hideyoshi went to sit behind a big work desk made of polished redwood and waited until Patricia had sat in the comfortable easy chair set in front of the desk to speak again.

“You must have hundreds of questions for me, Patricia, while I do have a few for you.”

“Then, let me tell you more about me first, John: as your guest, it is only right for me to be forthcoming with you.”

John nodded his head, obviously pleased by her openness.

“That is most considerate of you, Patricia. I can already tell by your magical aura that you must be someone of substance.”

Those words made Patricia involuntarily giggle a bit before she excused herself.

“Pardon my reaction, John, but I don’t think that I have much clout where I come from. In fact, I have been living in exile on the Material Plane since the age of five. My mother brought me to Paris in 1932, to abandon me there as a lonely, frightened girl in a strange world I knew next to nothing about.”

“Yet, I don’t detect bitterness in your tone as you said that, Patricia. You don’t seem to have a grudge against your mother because of that.”

“That’s because I don’t, John. My mother did so to save me from all those who considered me an abomination and wanted to destroy me. After all that I saw in your club, I suppose that I won’t stun you if I said that I came from the Abyss, what the normal people here commonly call ‘Hell’.”

“I kind of figured that out by myself already, Patricia. From your unworldly beauty, I would have classified you as a probable Succubus, a demon of seduction, if not for your neutral aura.”

Patricia lowered her head at those words, remembering the desperate run for their lives of her mother, with her in her arms, as Gideon fought to buy them a few crucial seconds.

“That neutral aura was in fact the thing that marked me for death in the Abyss, John. My father was a fallen angel who still had a depth of good in him, while my mother, a Succubus with a very long past, had grown wise and tolerant with the millenniums. The mixing of their blood resulted in me, a Succubus who was quickly found too kind and nice by the standards of the Abyss. Mind you, I still take pleasure in creating some mayhem through sex and seduction, but I am neither cruel nor a sadist.”

John nodded somberly, then spoke in a soft tone.

“And do you know what happened to your father and mother after being abandoned in Paris, Patricia?”

“Gideon, my father, most probably was overwhelmed and killed shortly after my mother escape to the Material Plane with me. As for my mother, I don’t have a clue about what happened to her after. She may have returned to the Abyss to intercede for my life and prevent other demons from chasing after me, in which case she probably faced some kind of punishment, or even death.”

Tears then appeared in her eyes, real tears and not faked ones meant to mislead. John saw them and nodded again.

“A Demon able to cry real tears... You are indeed an oddity, Patricia...a wonderful oddity.”

“What do you mean, a wonderful oddity?” Said Patricia, stiffening a bit in her chair. “For Demons, I am a failed being only worthy of being killed, while Celestials will kill me on sight simply for being a Demon, however odd I could be. As for the Humans, if my true nature would be revealed to them, they would probably flee at once, screaming in panic.”

John then smiled benevolently to her while bending forward and putting his forearms on his desk.

“For me you are a wonderful oddity, Patricia. You must have seen the rather unusual collection of persons I have as both employees and customers. I have made my life goal here to help those that are the fruit of Humans and of Outsiders like you, or have been touched in a major way by magical events. I give them shelter when they need it, along with a place where they can talk and reconcile their differences and, hopefully, tone down their evil side or even turn it to good. For those with special needs for their survival, like blood for vampires, I do my best to provide those needs in a way that will not make any innocent suffer as a result. The blood that is served at my bar comes from completely legal blood collections in a clinic I sponsor, with the blood donors being volunteers who are paid for their donations. When a period of full Moon happens to pass, I then provide secure shelters where the lycanthropes who know me can go to in order to pass through that most painful and traumatic period without risking to hurt others around them.”

“Some would call you a saint for that, John.” Said Patricia with a faint smile. John also smiled at that but shook his head.

“Very few would call me a saint if they saw me in my original shape, Patricia. Like you, I am able to shift my shape to human form, in order to live among the Humans. I am also a very old being from an even older line. I may not be an immortal, like you, but I have already lived many centuries and still have many centuries left in me.”

“Could you tell me more about you, John? You truly fascinate me.” Her words made John grin with amusement.

“You? Fascinated by me? From a Succubus with powers of seduction and persuasion, that is quite a compliment. I will tell you more about me...one fine day, but

not yet. What I will tell you is that you will always be welcome here and can count of my protection if you ever need it.”

“John, I must warn you that some of my potential enemies are very powerful indeed.”

“If they ever come for you here, then they may find out that I am a rather tough nut to crack, Patricia. Now, to return to the time you were abandoned in Paris as a little girl by your mother in 1932, how did you manage to survive and prosper then?”

“It was all out of the goodness of a simple Human, a woman who owned a cabaret and a strip club. When she found me in a dark street, alone and crying, I was still in my demonic shape, complete with wings and horns. Despite of that, she went over her initial revulsion and took pity on me. She brought me to her place, hid me there for the first few months while teaching me how to blend in with Humans and educating me. Eventually, I took a new identity and became one of her dancers and performers at her cabaret. Then, the German Army invaded France in 1940, taking Paris as well, and I found myself with my adoptive mother under German occupation. By the way, her name was Marie Laurent. Marie, while continuing to manage her cabaret and entertaining German officers there, was also the head of a Resistance cell and passed on to the British secrets German officers unknowingly gave while sleeping with her girls...including with me. Unfortunately, she was killed during the liberation of Paris by a French who was collaborating with the Germans. I killed that bastard afterwards and am not ashamed to say that I enjoyed killing him. I then used my powers of shape shifting and took the place of Marie, managing her cabaret until officially retiring this year and disappearing, in order to come here and start a new life for a few more decades under a new identity. Presently, I study photography at the UCLA while working part-time as a stripper at a cabaret in Santa Monica. Well, that is basically what I am, John.”

The bar owner was silent for a moment while contemplating her, then spoke in his calm voice.

“That is quite a story, Patricia, a story both tragic and touching. Your Marie Laurent must have been a wonderful woman, despite her professional occupation. So, from what you told me, I can gather that you had to mostly develop your powers and skills by yourself, starting at a tender age indeed. That denotes a very high potential for powerful magic. I am myself a user of powerful magic and it would be a true shame for me to see such a potential being left underdeveloped. I however do know someone who would be a perfect teacher of magic and a mentor for you. You already have innate

powers and spells thanks to your nature, but there is a lot that you could learn still from a proper teacher.”

“What about you? Couldn’t I learn magic from you?”

“Your question flatter me, Patricia, but I am already quite busy overseeing and protecting this bar and its customers and employees. I also run anonymously quite a few more enterprises in and around Los Angeles and in Japan. I may be a very powerful being but I still can be in only one place at a time. However, the one I have in mind for you will be able to devote the proper time to help you improve your magic. Let’s go down and meet him: he is presently in the bar lounge.”

As they were going together down the stairs to the bar, Patricia couldn’t help ask a question to Hideyoshi.

“John, you said that you still had many centuries left in you. Could I ask you precisely how much life expectancy you have?”

“And why are you asking that, my dear?”

She stopped for a moment in the staircase and lowered her eyes, clearly troubled by something.

“Because I may well be living on this Material Plane for eternity, unless someone kills me one day. The idea of living for millenniums while seeing all those I get to know die one after the other scares me, John. I am not like your typical selfish Demon, who cares for no one but himself or herself and could spend eternity simply pursuing power. If someone could be there with me for more than a few decades, a someone I could call a friend, it would help make my existence meaningful. In truth, I am afraid of becoming lonely, and I don’t mean in a sexual way.”

John stared at her for a moment, then patted gently her shoulder to reassure her.

“Patricia, like I said, I will be around for many more centuries. I will be happy to be your friend during those centuries.”

“Thank you, John. That is most appreciated.”

“All in a day’s work, Patricia.” Replied Hideyoshi, resuming his trip down the stairs. They were soon back in the bar lounge and walked to a table occupied by two men, both of which were dressed in good quality suits. Hideyoshi smiled down to one of the men, a handsome man in his early thirties with fine hands.

“Could I ask you to let us speak in private for a moment with Harry, Rick? It shouldn’t be too long.”

"Sure! No problem, John." Said the man before getting up and, taking his drink with him, going to sit at another table where a young woman sat alone. The man Patricia and John now faced looked a lot like a British aristocrat, minus the haughty attitude, and wore a number of rings on his fingers, a couple of them being quite intricate in design. The magic aura of the man was strong, while two of his rings and his watch shone like lighthouses with magical power. The man looked up with interest at Patricia as John presented her to him.

"Harry, may I present you Patricia Love, a new friend of the bar. Patricia, this is Harold McMasters, magician supreme and most honorable man."

"Pleased to know you, Miss Love." Said the man, who looked to be in his mid forties. He was certainly handsome in his own right and his aura was one of goodness. Patricia shook his hand and sat, imitated by John, who continued to speak in a low voice to McMasters.

"Harry, I know that you are already a fairly busy man, but I think that Patricia here is in serious need of a good teacher in magic, in order to fully develop her potential. That could make the difference between life and death for her one day, if you see what I mean."

McMasters stared quietly into Patricia's eyes for long seconds, while she felt his mental attempts at examining her. He finally smiled to her and nodded his head.

"I certainly can understand your predicament, Patricia: a Demon with a neutral aura must be something that could irk many Demons from the Abyss. You are a Succubus, I believe?"

"Correct, Mister McMasters. I..."

The magician put up one hand at once.

"My friends call me Harry, Patricia."

"Sorry, Harry! Well, you certainly read me like an open book, I must say."

"For me, auras have a lot to tell me. Yours is an extremely powerful natural magic aura, Patricia, much more powerful than what I have seen around other Succubus I met in the past."

"Really?" Said Patricia, flabbergasted. After all, she couldn't see her own aura, even in a mirror, so had always assumed that it was a normal one...for a Succubus. Harold nodded again, his expression now somber.

"Really! Your demonic bloodline must be a very ancient and powerful one. May I ask about it?"

Patricia hesitated a bit before answering: she had been so young still when she had been taken out of the Abyss by her mother, too young to then realize how important her mother had been.

“My mother’s name was Lilith.”

This time, even John looked stunned by her answer. He however let McMasters react verbally.

“The legendary Lilith, the first Succubus of all and, according to old Hebrew legends, the real first wife of Adam? And you are her daughter? My God!”

“Well, Lilith did have innumerable children along the millenniums and I am only one among many.” Said Patricia in an apologetic tone. McMasters made a weak smile at that.

“Still! No wonder that many in Hell would want you dead, Patricia, even if just to get back at Lilith. She has made many enemies in the Abyss, jealous enemies. Uh, what about your father, Patricia?”

“His name was Gideon: he was a fallen angel who had fallen in love with Lilith. He was killed while protecting my escape, when Lilith brought me to Earth for my own protection and then abandoned me.”

Harold gave her another somber look.

“The Gideon I know about was an archangel, not a simple angel, and he did fall from the Celestial Plane, thanks to Lilith’s influence, or so says the legends I read about him. So, we have here the daughter of the Great Lilith and of Archangel Gideon: no wonder your magical aura is so strong, Patricia.”

He then looked at John, his expression grave.

“Such magical potential begs to be developed in full, John. I will be honored to be her teacher, that is if she accepts me as her mentor, of course.”

“I am eager to study magic under you, Harry.” Said at once Patricia, who only now fully realized what she represented. Her response made McMasters slap his hand on the table.

“Then, it’s settled! How much of your time can you give me, Patricia?”

“Well, I study by day at the UCLA, while I work part-time at a cabaret in Santa Monica in the evening during the week. That leaves at least part of my weekends free to come see you.”

That made the magician grimace.

"Well, I was hoping for more time than that, but you do have to educate yourself and make a living, I guess. How about if you gave me your Sundays?"

"That I can. In fact, I could go with you tonight if you wish, so that I could start learning from you right away tomorrow morning."

Harold had a malicious smile on hearing that.

"Hum, a daughter of Lilith, proposing me to accompany me home for the night... You must understand that our relation will and must be a professional one only, Patricia."

"I understand and accept that, Harry. This is a very serious matter indeed for me, as it may help me survive my enemies."

Looking pleased, John Hideyoshi got up from his chair and shook hands with Patricia, then with Harold.

"Well, I am happy to see that this business is settled. I wish you the best of luck in your magical training, Patricia. You will always be welcome here in my bar whenever you show up."

"Thank you, John. You were most kind."

"It was a true pleasure to be able to help you, Patricia."

John then walked away, watched by both Patricia and Harold.

"What a nice person!" Said Patricia, meaning it. "The Material Plane could use more persons like him."

"You are damn right about that, Patricia. Well, let's go to my home right away: there is so much I want to teach you."

After paying his bar bill, McMasters led Patricia out to his parked car, a Ford station-wagon, and sat behind the wheel, starting the engine and rolling out of his parking spot as soon as Patricia had closed her door. He soon took the Hollywood Freeway towards the Northwest, prompting a question from Patricia.

"So, Harry, where do you live?"

"In West Hollywood. I have a small mansion and private lot there that gives me all the privacy I need."

"And...are you married? I am asking in case I have to give an explanation to why I am with you."

The magician grinned at that and shook his head.

“Good thinking, Patricia, but no, I am not married: women generally find me too weird.”

“And you are not worried that I could try to seduce you, with me alone with you in your house?” She asked in jest. His answer to that was a most serious one.

“No! Not if you are really serious about studying magic under me, Patricia.”

“Uh, okay! Message received.”

They were silent for the rest of the way until McMasters turned into the private driveway of a walled property. Stopping briefly at the gate, he asked Patricia to get out to unlock and open the forged iron bar gate, passing her the key to the big lock. He rolled a few yards forward once the gate was opened, then waited for Patricia to close and lock back the gate and jump in the car before rolling a further eighty yards or so before parking in front of the main entrance of a European-style, two-storey brick mansion. Patricia eyed with appreciation the building, which was not very big but was nonetheless a nice-looking one.

“Not bad at all, Harry. You seem to have comfortable means.”

“I manage.” Said in a non committal tone McMasters. “Please follow me.”

The inside of the mansion proved to be downright posh, but also showed a distinct taste for old styles and decoration, the way one would expect from the mansion of a British country aristocrat. Harold then surprised Patricia by leading her to the basement level, using a fairly narrow concrete staircase that ended on a short concrete-walled corridor. There were two doors giving on that corridor: a large, wooden door with a simple door handle that couldn't be locked and a steel one that would be more expected of a bank vault than in a private house. The magician made an apologetic smile to Patricia as he turned the wheel mechanism of the steel door.

“The previous owner of this mansion, who had it built to his specifications in the 1950s, was a bit paranoid about the possibilities of a nuclear war and added this nuclear bomb shelter to the house design. While there are no locks on the outer side of this door, once someone is inside he or she can then pull in place locking bolts that would make opening it from outside nearly impossible. That shelter proved perfect for installing my secret magic lab.”

“I see that you added some protection to it yourself, Harry.” Said Patricia, pointing at the numerous magical runes around the frame of the door, which could be

seen only by magical users. Harold shrugged as he pulled open with some effort the thick steel door.

"You can't be too cautious in the magical business: you can literally meet about anything. If someone ever tries to force open that door by using magic, then that someone will have a nasty surprise."

"What about beings who can teleport?"

That earned Patricia a sharp look from the magician.

"You can teleport? How far?"

"I could teleport to the surface of the Moon if I wanted to, and I always arrive precisely where I want to go, as long as I have an idea of where it is and what the place looks like. I can also become invisible and insubstantial and then move through solid objects."

McMasters nodded slowly his head, visibly impressed.

"Those are high level magical powers indeed, Patricia. Did you always possess them?"

"Yes, from birth, but it took me time to learn by myself how to use those powers, along with my other powers."

"Only high level Demons and Celestials hold those two powers. This certainly supports your claim to be the daughter of Lilith."

"It is more than a claim, Harry: it's the truth!" Replied Patricia, becoming a bit testy. The magician nodded his head somberly.

"Please excuse me if I sounded like I doubted your story, Patricia. Well, here you are in my little secret domain."

Entering with Harold in the shelter, Patricia found herself in a room measuring about thirty by forty feet. The walls, ceiling and floor were made of concrete and a number of thick concrete pillars were spaced at regular intervals. Overall, the place gave an impression of near indestructibility. What attracted Patricia's attention, however, was the equipment filling the room, which made it look like a mad scientist's laboratory. Stainless steel tables and counters supported a number of strange instruments, while shelves and cabinets contained all kinds of containers, big and small. One wall was actually lined with wooden shelves full of books, with a comfortable-looking easy chair and a small table supporting a lamp set in one corner near the bookshelves. Harold McMasters gestured with both arms with obvious pride.

"My little private domain. This is where you will study magic, Patricia."

"Not bad, not bad at all."

"This shelter also comes with its own power generator, air filtration system and water filtration system. You should have seen the amount of canned food and water containers I had to haul out after buying this mansion, so that I could equip my lab."

"If the previous owner was so paranoid, how come he sold this mansion then?"

"He broke his neck when he fell down the main staircase one night. His mansion was then repossessed by the bank, as he had a number of large debts."

"He was prepared to survive a nuclear war but couldn't negotiate a flight of stairs? Wow!"

"Wow indeed!" Said Harold, who then looked somberly at Patricia. "Now that we are here and ready to start your training, I will need to know what you know about magic and what are the powers you control."

"Theoretically-wise, I don't know much about magic, except concerning its possibilities, limitations and sources. The powers I have were always innate to me and I learned how to use them through trial and error during my young years."

"And what are those powers, apart from teleporting and becoming insubstantial?"

"First, my strength, speed and sensory perception are all at higher levels than those of a normal Human. I could probably win medals at an Olympic competition. I can also see in the dark, up to about sixty feet. I can detect the thoughts of persons or beings around me within a short distance and can converse telepathically with persons up to a hundred feet away. I can mentally enter the dreams of a sleeping person and then read and manipulate them to plant suggestions in their minds. As a Succubus, I have the power to drain part or all of the life energy of a person by kissing him or having sex with him. I can also suck someone's soul out and eat it, or send it on its way to the Abyss."

Harold, even though he knew about the powers of a Succubus, couldn't help shiver on hearing her last sentence.

"Well, I certainly am happy to be your friend and not your enemy, Patricia. What else can you do?"

"Well, I have the gift of tongues, meaning that I can understand and speak any language spoken to me. Due to my education and experience in Paris, I can also read and write in French, English, German, Italian and Latin, on top of being fluent in Infernal, Celestial and Draconic. Another power I always had is the power to change shape at

will, as long as it is a humanoid form. What you see of me right now is only one of the three shapes I routinely use around Los Angeles. As a Demon, I can manipulate fire, throw balls of fire or project sheets of flames up to fifteen feet away. I can fly with the help of my wings when in Succubus form and I know for a fact that I am immune to diseases and electricity and that my body is very resistant to damage. Finally, I can use magic and cast spells as well, but I must say that this is probably my weakest point right now.”

Her last remark made Harold smile and pat gently her left shoulder.

“And I will be happy to work on that with you, Patricia.”

CHAPTER 7 – IN THE NAME OF THE LAW

08:29 (California Time)

Monday, May 28, 1973

Federal Bureau of Investigation (F.B.I.) local headquarter

Los Angeles, California

Janet Coleman was a bit nervous as she followed the head of the F.B.I. Los Angeles Division, Robert Brown, down the main corridor of the third floor of the F.B.I. local headquarters. At 24 years of age and with a law degree to her credit, Janet was the first female agent assigned to the Los Angeles Division and one of the first female agents in the F.B.I., the agency having accepted its first female trainee agents ever only last October. At five foot seven inch, she was fairly tall for a woman and was very fit, on top of being more than pretty, with brown hair falling to her shoulder blades and large black eyes. She also happened to be an intelligent and proud woman and was resolved to not let her male coworkers discount her or put her down during this first field assignment.

Brown finally opened a door marked 'Vice Squad' and invited Janet inside a large office furnished with a number of work desks and file cabinets, plus a conference table in one corner. The five men inside the office stopped speaking at once and stared at Janet when she stepped inside the office. Now feeling a bit like a fish in an aquarium, Janet stopped near the door as Brown spoke to the men with a cheerful tone.

"Good morning, guys! I brought you a gift today! Please welcome Special Agent Janet Coleman, newly assigned to Los Angeles and fresh from Quantico⁷. She will be starting her work here with you."

The older man in the office, a solidly-built man in his mid thirties, came at once to Janet to shake hands with her.

"Welcome to the Vice Squad, Special Agent Coleman. I am Roger Fairfax, head of the squad."

"Pleased to know you, sir."

⁷ Quantico : Location of the F.B.I. training academy, in the state of Virginia.

Brown then left the office, letting Fairfax free to present the other agents to Janet.

“Let me present to you your partners in this squad, Janet. First, my second in command, Bernard Schiffer, then Martin Prendergast, George Adams and Nathan Chomsky.”

Janet shook hands with them while evaluating them visually. Bernard Schiffer was the archetype of the tall, blond Aryan man, while Martin Prendergast was a thin man that had a bit of a severe look to him. George Adams looked a bit overweight, while Nathan Chomsky clearly showed his Semitic bloodline, with brown skin, curly black hair and curved nose. Fairfax then had the whole group move to the conference table, where they sat down.

“Again, welcome to the Vice Squad, Janet. I am a rather informal boss and we all call each other by our first names here, unless we are facing the big boss of course. So, what are your qualifications, on top of a diploma and badge from Quantico? Tell us about you!”

“Well, before joining the F.B.I., I got a law degree from Harvard, with a minor in Criminology. I am single and was born in Boston. I asked for Los Angeles as my first field posting because it has seen quite a lot of action since last year.”

“You can say that again!” Exclaimed George Adams, rolling his eyes. “That little Mafia war between the Gambinos and the Carmines sure kept the pot boiling for a while. Add to that the fact that the whole city has been on edge since last November, thanks to the weekly anonymous denunciations of the ‘Revealer’. I stopped counting the number of politicians, judges, lawyers, police officers and even priests that have either resigned, were jailed, disappeared or committed suicide. The last one to be accused this morning is a district judge.”

“I saw that in this morning’s newspapers. I presume that the career of this judge is now in the shitters?”

“If this would have been published last November, then he still would have had a chance to deny everything. However, now that multiple investigations have shown that all, and I say all the persons accused by the Revealer were indeed guilty of at least corruption or sexual impropriety, being accused by him now is like a career death sentence. Everybody around City Hall, L.A.P.D. and the main courthouse is now walking on eggs and trying to stay under the radar.”

Janet couldn’t help smile in amusement as she mentally pictured that.

"So, you are saying that this vigilante has actually helped clean up Los Angeles?"

"Er, while I am normally no fan of vigilantes, I must recognize that this Revealer actually rid the city of a lot of garbage."

"And do we have any clue about who that 'Revealer' could be?"

Roger Fairfax took on him to answer that question from Janet.

"None, despite the fact that many agencies and departments have done their best to find out. Hell, we even got the visit from a team of Holy Inquisitors from the Vatican last November, after a pedophile priest was the first to be denounced by the Revealer."

"Inquisitors came to Los Angeles?" Exclaimed Janet, truly surprised.

"Yep! They could find nothing, however, like all the others afterwards. One of them muttered to me in frustration that it had to be the work of the Devil."

"The Devil..." Said Janet in a derisive tone. "Count on Old Lucifer to be blamed for the failings of mere humans. Did the revelations of this Revealer have any impact on the investigations done by this squad?"

"How about a shattering one?" Answered Bernard Schiffer, sarcasm clear in his voice. "Over half of those denounced publicly were engaged in either pedophilia, sodomy, adultery, paying for prostitutes or call girls or abusing women in forced and illegal sadomasochistic games, or a varied combination of any of those. The other half fell into the corruption category. Believe me, getting one more agent for our squad is most welcomed."

"Damn right, Bernie!" Said Roger Fairfax. "Furthermore, getting a female agent like you, Janet, is a definite plus: with the kind of places we have to watch and investigate, a couple will attract much less attention than a pair of big men. It will also makes things much simpler for us when time comes to search female suspects."

That did a lot to reassure Janet about her first field assignment. She had been afraid of being treated like a simple ornament meant to satisfy those who were clamoring for more equality in the agency, an ornament that could then be ignored at will and could be left in some dusty corner while the boys did their things. Her case was actually not much different in ways than that of the first black F.B.I. agents.

"So, what cases are we investigating right now?"

Roger Fairfax nodded with approval at her use of the word 'we' and went to his desk to grab two files, bringing them back to the conference table and sitting down before passing the files to Janet.

"We do have a few more cases that went cold and are kept on the ice for the time being, but two cases still actively interest us at this moment. The first one concerns the sales and trafficking through state borders of pornographic material, meaning films and magazines."

As Janet opened the top file and started reading it, Roger continued on.

"A new, previously unknown pornographic film production studio based here in Los Angeles, has started flooding other states, including on the East Coast, with copies of pornographic films and magazines, some of them involving clearly illegal acts, like sodomy and what many now call 'snuff' material."

"Snuff material? What's that?"

"Well, you certainly can be excused for not knowing about that, since it is a recent trend in pornography and one very few people talk about. 'Snuff films' depict the violent sexual abuse of women or even girls against their consent, abuse that include beatings, floggings, tortures and even death in some cases."

Janet frowned with both horror and disgust on hearing that.

"And there are persons who are ready to pay to see such garbage?"

"Actually, plenty! One of the persons denounced by the Revealer two months ago was in fact a judge implicated in underground sadomasochistic games. He was found in possession of some of the films and magazines produced by that new porn studio. One of the problems with investigating 'snuff' activities is that they often involve rich and influential people, people who can afford the high prices asked for that kind of material. Those same rich people have in turn enough money to pay for top lawyers, while the high profits involved has attracted the organized crime to it."

"My God! Where will this moral rot stop?"

"My thought exactly! This case may have recently taken a twist for the worse: two teenage girls who had disappeared in neighboring Mexico, plus another girl from the state of Nevada, were found dead in the last two weeks. Their bodies showed clear marks of torture. Films have been confiscated that showed those three unfortunate girls being tortured to death by masked men in snuff films produced by the porn studio that is interesting us. The fact that these films involved the kidnapping of those girls and their crossing of state lines makes this a clear federal case."

"Since we know where these girls came from, then I suppose that we know their full identities, right?"

"We do! Police advisories about the disappearance of those three girls had been posted as 'missing persons' by the Mexican Federal Police and the Nevada State Police, respectively. You will find the details and pictures concerning those three girls in that file."

Roger Fairfax then gave a couple of minutes to Janet, so that she could read quickly through the file in question. Janet was shaking her head in disgust as she put down that file.

"How could anyone do this to human beings?"

"Humans are by definition animals, Janet," said somberly her new boss, "and some humans are truly animals in the worse sense of the word. We at the Vice Squad often have to deal with what you could only call human monsters. You will definitely have to keep your emotions in check at times in this line of work. It goes without saying that this case file about this porn studio and the sadistic murder of those girls is our top priority. In comparison, our other case is downright benign. It is a request to check on the legality of the activities of a local strip club, the PUSSICAT CABARET, in Santa Monica. Normally, the F.B.I. would not get involved in it, leaving this to the local police, but the owner happens to be a cousin of the late Nick Durante and, after the gang war between Durante and the Carmines, the Gambino family has sent a new representative from New York, Vincenzo Gambino, to take charge of Durante's assets. It happens that Vincenzo Gambino seems to be a frequent visitor of that club. Our job, on top of checking on that PUSSICAT CABARET, will be to use the occasion to discreetly spy on this Vincenzo."

"That could be a dangerous job, Roger: the Mafia doesn't treat gently those found spying on it."

"Then, we will have to be cautious, don't we?" Replied philosophically his squad leader. "You and Bernard will mostly take care of the PUSSICAT CABARET file, while I concentrate with the others on the porn studio and snuff murder case. You and Bernard will however help us from time to time with the latter case, since investigating the cabaret should not take you too long. Any questions?"

"Uh, yes! I was under the impression that only men, and not couples or lone women, would be interested in going to a strip club."

“That would be true of most strip clubs, those catering to the low and medium classes, but the rich and powerful often want to parade around with a girl at their side to prove their manhood, even if they are married and that girl they are holding is not their wife. The PUSSICAT CABARET is widely acknowledged around Los Angeles to be a classy establishment, with some truly gifted entertainers working there. Read the file on the cabaret case and discuss it with Bernard, then go have a good four hour nap after lunch.”

“A four hour nap, just after lunch?” Said Janet, stunned by surprise. Roger Fairfax grinned with malice at her astonishment.

“You heard me well, Janet. We at the Vice Squad tend to be night owls, with most of our work done at night. Your first visit to the PUSSICAT CABARET will be tonight, that is once you will have looked through a few porno magazines and viewed a few films as well.”

19:50 (California Time)

F.B.I. surveillance car, parked near the PUSSICAT CABARET

Santa Monica, California

“Quite a lot of limousines and chauffeur-driven luxury cars showing up and dropping customers at that cabaret. The customers themselves don’t seem to be poor either.”

Bernard Schiffer smiled at Janet’s comment as they watched people pass in front of the PUSSICAT CABARET or go inside it. They had been doing that now for the last two hours or so, waiting for a particular person to show up.

“Don’t forget that this is a high-end joint, Janet. Well, if Vincenzo Gambino doesn’t show up soon, I think that we will have to go in and start looking around...discreetly of course.”

“You know, Bernie, this feels nearly pointless to me.” Said Janet Coleman, some frustration showing in her voice. “This luxury club doesn’t seem to be the kind of place where true criminal activities would be conducted, certainly not when it is full of so-called respectable citizens. Yes, puritans would call it a den of sin, but strip dancing isn’t even considered a crime federally, as long as customers don’t pay to have sex acts done on them. Previous surveillance reports didn’t notice any suspicious activities around it, like unexplained deliveries and frequent goings in and out of the cabaret and

none of the known employees have criminal records. Even the owner, if you discount the fact that he was a cousin of Nick Durante, is clean and is said by everyone to be a nice guy.”

“I realize all that, Janet,” replied calmly Schiffer, “but we still have to check if this cabaret is hiding something else. Also, one big reason we are here is to spy on Vincenzo Gambino. Even if he doesn’t do anything here but simply watch the dancers, he may still lead us afterwards to some other place that would be of interest to us.”

“Alright, Bernie, I understand. Maybe I am too eager to see action on my first real field assignment.”

Schiffer gave her a amused glance then: he could understand her too well from his own past experience.

“Be careful what you wish for: you may get it, Janet.”

They then fell silent, until Schiffer’s trained eyes noticed a big black Cadillac sedan slowing down as it approached the entrance of the cabaret.

“Bingo! I see Gambino’s car! We’re in luck tonight.”

Her heart accelerating, Janet also recognized the mobster’s car from its license plate. Raising the still camera she had held in her lap, she took pictures of Gambino as he stepped out of the Cadillac with two bodyguards and a young woman wearing an elegant dress. The high sensitivity film loaded in the camera, along with the illumination from the street lights and store fronts made the use of a flash unnecessary.

“He’s got two muscle men covering him, plus has a young woman that I don’t recognize accompanying him.”

“Okay, let’s wait a couple of minutes, then we will enter the club. Remember: you are the friend of Maxwell Brown, a well-to-do lawyer, meaning me.”

“I remember...Max!”

“Good! Look and act inside like you are here for fun, instead of for work. The bureau has provided us with enough pocket cash for that.”

Waiting for Gambino and his group to be inside, the two agents waited another minute, then stepped out of their car and locked it before walking hand in hand towards the entrance of the cabaret. Bernard actually wore a good quality suit, while Janet wore a nice cocktail gown and a set of faked but nice-looking jewels. They were about to get to the door of the cabaret when Janet slowed down and stopped, forcing her companion

to stop as well. She then spoke to him in a near whisper, turning half around as if to kiss him briefly.

"The girl on that poster, the one named 'Mélanie': I could swear that she was featured in one of the magazines I viewed this morning."

"One of the hardcore ones?"

"No, one of the actually legal soft porn ones seized along the others. It was still made by the same producer, though."

"We will check her out later. Now, let's go in before we attract undue attention."

Bernard then gallantly opened the door for Janet, who went in first and was greeted at once by both a big doorman and a young female hostess who smiled to her and Bernard.

"Welcome to the PUSSICAT, lady and gentleman! We have an entrance cover charge of five dollars per person, but it comes with a chip good for a free drink."

"No problem, miss!" Replied Bernard, taking out of one pocket an impressively thick wad of dollars and giving a ten dollar bill to the woman, plus an extra five dollars as a tip. The woman thanked him and gave him two chips marked with the logo of the cabaret. The two agents then walked past the cloakroom and towards the main lounge, finally entering a big room with elevated ceiling and a stage with a walkway in the back. The room was semi-dark and the sixty or so customers already present were watching a young blonde stripper performing on the walkway. Locating first the table where Vincenzo Gambino was sitting, Bernard chose an empty table some distance and to the back of Gambino's table, in order not to attract his attention while they watched him. Helping first Janet to sit, Bernard then sat and signaled to one of the scantily dressed waitresses circulating around the tables. Once the girl was at their table, he gave her the two marked chips and ordered drinks for him and Janet. The two F.B.I. agents then discreetly looked around the lounge while keeping an eye on Gambino, talking between them in very low voices.

"The place certainly looks very classy from the inside, Max."

"It is! This is no cheap truckers' stop. Let's see if the girls are also of top quality."

Janet didn't reply to that and pasted a fake smile on her lips as she watched with Bernard the strip show. The girl was actually a fairly good dancer and she was certainly pretty and sexy, she conceded to herself. Their orders came quickly, allowing them to make a show of raising their glasses to each other. Two minutes later, the girl on the

stage completed her strip and, recuperating her pieces of clothing, disappeared behind the curtains of the stage, applauded by the customers. Two waitresses then circulated quickly around the tables with small wicker baskets to collect the customers' tips for the dancing girl, something that made Bernard nod.

"Smart move, those waitresses passing around and collecting the dancers' tips: it prevents any physical contact between the customers and the dancers that could be construed by undercover police agents as breaking the local indecencies laws."

"It also makes the female customers feel more comfortable about being here: no half-naked girl within reach of one's boyfriend." Added Janet, making Bernard smile.

"There's that too. The owner seems to be doing his best to keep the police away."

After a five minute interlude, during which a small band played a piece of soft jazz music, an invisible announcer then spoke up through a ceiling loudspeaker.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the moment you have been waiting for has finally arrived. Please applaud the magnificent, talented Mélanie d'Amour, from Paris!"

"That's the girl on the poster outside!" Reminded Janet to Bernard, who watched with renewed attention the stage as a young redhead woman appeared from the back of the curtains, dancing onto the stage. She was dressed in a private college uniform and was moving to the music of an instrumental piece that Janet recognized at once.

"Ravel's Bolero? She certainly has more taste than your average stripper." As Bernard watched on, increasingly mesmerized by the girl's beauty and fantastic body, the stripper progressively shed her uniform to the music, eventually revealing high leather boots and black leather shorts and bra. She then grabbed a whip from her school backpack and made it crack as the music changed to the tune of Ennio Morricone's theme from the movie 'The Good, The Bad and The Ugly'. Dancing at an accelerated pace and cracking her whip at intervals in coordination with the musical theme, Mélanie d'Amour removed her bra, uncovering big, firm breasts that made Bernard salivate with desire. She then removed her leather shorts as well, ending up with only her high boots and a tiny G-string, plus her whip. She made a show of crouching near the edge of the stage facing Vincenzo Gambino's table, staring into his eyes with an inviting smile while briefly rubbing her whip against her groin. The mobster apparently loved that but the dancer then wiggled one index, chiding him before getting back up and cracking her whip one last time before withdrawing behind the curtains

under the enthusiastic applauses of the customers. Mélanie then briefly came back to bow to the crowd, acknowledging the applauses, and to pick up her pieces of clothing. Bernard, thoroughly aroused by now, glanced at Janet then.

“Definitely a class act compared to your average stripper. What do you think?”

“She was indeed good. More importantly, she definitely got Gambino’s attention.”

At that moment, one of the two waitresses circulating around with a basket for the tips stopped at their table, prompting Bernard in dropping a ten dollar bill in the already half-full basket. Janet smiled on seeing that.

“This Mélanie certainly endeared herself to you, Max. You’re quite generous with your tip.”

“Hey, I’m supposed to be a well-to-do lawyer, remember? An extra ten dollar expense on the bureau’s budget won’t break the bank.” Countered Bernard, also smiling.

Gambino ended up staying in the cabaret for another hour, long enough to watch a second strip dance by Mélanie d’Amour, before apparently calling it a night and leaving with his girlfriend and his two bodyguards. Bernard and Janet waited a few seconds afterwards, then left as well, hurrying to their parked car to be in time to follow Gambino’s Cadillac. Their chase however ended shortly afterwards, when Gambino’s car entered the walled grounds of a luxurious mansion in nearby Bel-Air.

“Rats! This is Gambino’s official residence.” Said Bernard in a frustrated tone as he watched the Cadillac drop Gambino’s group in front of the main entrance of the mansion. “We won’t learn anything about his possible hidden locations tonight.”

“What about returning to the PUSSICAT CABARET and waiting there for that Mélanie to come out at closing time?” Proposed Janet. “I would like to ask her a few questions about where she had photos taken of her for that magazine made by the ‘Sex Kittens Studios’.”

“A good idea, Janet. I’m on my way.”

Less than fifteen minutes later, they were parking back in their original spot in view of the cabaret’s entrance. The two agents had to wait until past midnight before the first employees started coming out after closing time. They quickly identified Mélanie d’Amour when she exited the cabaret with a suitcase in her left hand and started walking

down the sidewalk, coming in their direction. Apparently, she did not have a car and didn't try to hail down a taxi, walking at a brisk pace instead. On Bernard's signal, Janet opened her door and stepped out of the car, cutting Mélanie's path and forcing her to stop a few paces short of Janet, who flashed her badge.

"Federal Bureau of Investigations! We would have a few questions for you, Miss d'Amour."

"About what?" Asked the stripper, instantly suspicious. "Strip dancing is not a crime in California if you follow the rules, and I do follow them."

"Don't worry, miss: we are not after you. You however may possibly be able to provide some information that could help resolve the kidnapping and subsequent murder of three teenage girls."

"Then, if that's the case, I will be happy to help you as much as I can."

"Thank you, Miss d'Amour. Please take place on the back seat of my car: it will make for a more discreet conversation."

Mélanie d'Amour/Jennifer Woods sat in the car without further ado, then smirked as she eyed the two federal agents looking at her.

"So, the F.B.I. is finally using female agents. How progressive! So, what can I do for you?"

"Did you recently pose nude for a magazine produced by the Sex Kittens Studios, Miss d'Amour?" Asked Bernard, getting an immediate, spontaneous answer.

"Yes! What about it? I believe that the pictures taken of me were perfectly within the law."

"They were indeed, Miss d'Amour. However, the Sex Kittens Studios also produced other magazines and films that featured much harder pornographic scenes, including the torture and murder on camera of three teenage girls who had been kidnapped from outside California. We were hoping that you could tell us about the hidden location of the production facilities of the Sex Kittens Studios."

Janet, like Bernard, saw the dancer's jaws tighten at the mention of the tortured and murdered girls, while a flash of anger appeared in her green eyes.

"I personally did not see such things happen where I had my photos taken, but I could not in all frankness tell you exactly where my photos were taken: me and the other girls who responded to the same kind of anonymous letter as me were picked up at a given street corner by a small delivery van and then brought to an improvised studio inside what appeared to be some old, abandoned property. Once we were finished, we

were driven back to our original point by the same van, which had no windows for its rear section.”

“Could you at least guess in which approximate area that property was, miss?”

“Yes, to a point. From the direction of the Sun at the time I was able to look briefly through a window, plus the limited view I had, I would say that it had to be in the hills north of Santa Monica. I am sorry if I can’t be more precise than that, but I am relatively new to Los Angeles and still don’t know the area in detail.”

“That is still helpful to us, miss.” Replied politely Janet. “What could you tell us about that van and on how you were contacted?”

“That it was a dark green Dodge delivery van. Its license plate was however a fake one, I believe.”

“Oh? How so?”

“Its numbers and letters had no relief and were simply painted on. It was a bit crude but it was good enough from some distance. As for how I was contacted, I received a letter addressed to me at the PUSSICAT Cabaret, with an offer to earn extra money with a short photo session. All the other girls that were with me were also professional or part-time strippers and were contacted the same way at their work places. In the letter, I was told to send a reply to a given post office box if I was interested, which I did. One of the girls told me that it was the second time that she was contacted that way, but that she had to respond to a different post office box than the first time.”

“Damn! These bastards certainly did everything to cover their tracks. By the way, I suppose that Mélanie d’Amour is only a show name, right?”

“Correct! My real name is Jennifer Woods, but I really lived for many years in Paris and returned from France only last year. Those murdered girls, why were they tortured?”

“Apparently, someone at the Sex Kittens Studios used them to make what is called ‘snuff films’, where girls are shown being tortured to death in front of cameras. Believe it or not, but many sick men are ready to pay a lot of money to view such films.” Jennifer gave Janet a sober look at those words.

“Oh, I know very well what men are capable of, miss. I don’t mind simple pornography and do make a living out of it, but I will never condone tortures and killings. I will tell you what: the moment I obtain more information about that hidden studio and

snuff business, I will contact you. I will just need your telephone number to be able to do that.”

“That’s easy enough to give you, miss.” Said Bernard, taking a calling card from a pocket and giving it to Jennifer, who quickly eyed it before putting it in her purse. “In return, we would need your present address and, if you have a telephone, your number.” Jennifer shook her head at once at those words.

“No! You will have to have some confidence in me, mister. Besides, you know where I work. Don’t worry, I will contact you if I find anything about this snuff business. Can I go now?”

Bernard thought only for a moment before nodding his head.

“Yes, you may, miss. Thank you for your cooperation and, please, don’t mention this conversation to anyone else.”

“Do you think that I am stupid or crazy? I know too well what happens to snitches in the wrong kind of businesses.”

On those words, Jennifer stepped out of the car with her suitcase and walked away, disappearing after turning a nearby corner. Janet then looked at Bernard.

“Do you think that she will really help us, Bernie?”

“Maybe, maybe not. Time will tell.”

11:48 (California Time)

Thursday, May 31, 1973

Vice Squad Section, F.B.I. Los Angeles offices

Janet tensed up when she saw the expression on Roger Fairfax’s face as he was coming back from a meeting with other squad leaders. Fairfax then gestured for his five agents to pay attention to him.

“Listen up, people! I got some bad news that may concern us. Two more girls have just been reported as kidnapped, this time from the area of Glendale. The girls were respectively twelve and nine years old. A boy aged eleven was also kidnapped the same day in the same area. We have no firm clues about the perpetrators, but the modus operandi was similar in both cases.”

Janet’s blood froze when she thought about the implications of this.

“My God! Don’t tell me that these bastards from the Sexy Kittens Studios are now possibly going into producing pedophilia, on top of snuff films.”

"As much as I hate to say it, that is a distinct possibility, Janet. More than a few people would pay big money for child pornography. Since I doubt that those bastards will release alive witnesses to such a traffic, then we can only fear the worse for those poor kids."

Janet had to close her eyes, revolted by the thought of seeing three innocent children being possibly abused and killed. Bernard Schiffer, whose desk sat opposite that of Janet, swallowed hard before asking a question to his squad leader.

"Do we have clues, any clues, that could help us find those kids quickly, Roger?"

"The only thing we have is one witness report about a white dodge delivery van speeding away from the area where the two little girls were abducted. That's all!"

"Shit! That ain't much indeed. There must be hundreds of such Dodge delivery vans around Los Angeles."

"Make it a couple of thousands, Bernie." Said Roger glumly. "If we don't..."

The ringing of the telephone on Bernard's desk interrupted him. Nearly jumping on his telephone, Bernard picked the receiver and answered, doing his best to control his voice and tone.

"F.B.I., Special Agent Schiffer!..."

Janet saw her partner suddenly tense up before quickly grabbing a pen and a notepad, writing frantically notes as he answered his correspondent.

"...The bus stop at the corner of Wilshire Boulevard and 26th Street, in Santa Monica, you said?... When?... Got that! Thanks a lot, Mélanie! We will owe you."

Janet was smiling with anticipation as Bernard put down his telephone receiver.

"Mélanie answered a new job offer from the Sex Kittens Studios?"

"It seems so, Janet." Replied Bernard before looking at Roger Fairfax. "The stripper we met at the PUSSICAT CABARET and who posed already for nude pictures for the Sex Kittens Studios just answered a second job offer from those bastards. She is to be picked up by a white van this Saturday morning at seven, at the bus stop on the corner of Wilshire Boulevard and 26th Street, in Santa Monica. With luck, we will be able to follow that van and find where these bastards produce their films...and maybe also find there those kidnapped kids."

"God, I hope so! Okay, we can't afford to screw up this opportunity, guys. We will go in three cars in order to alternate the trail vehicle behind that van. I will also get some backup from the Missing Persons Squad. Drop everything else in the meantime."

07:04 (California Time)
Saturday, June 2, 1973
F.B.I. surveillance car
26th Street, Santa Monica

“There’s the white van!” Nearly shouted Janet, thanks to her nervousness. She and Bernard Schiffer had been waiting in their car, parked a good hundred yards from the bus stop where Jennifer Woods and two more young women were waiting, for a good fifteen minutes now. Two more cars from the Vice Squad, along with two cars from the Missing Persons Squad and one unmarked police van transporting eight heavily armed agents, were waiting further away, out of sight and ready to follow their instructions by radio. There was even a police helicopter ready to lift off and assist with the pursuit. Janet and Bernard watched on as the delivery van stopped briefly at the bus stop, time for one man to open the rear door from the inside and help the three waiting women to get in before closing back the door. The van then started rolling again, turning on Wilshire Boulevard and heading towards the San Diego Freeway. Starting his engine and putting his car in gear, Bernard then started following the van from a respectable distance as Janet spoke in the microphone of their car radio.

“All cars, this is Tail One! The suspect van has picked up three passengers at the predetermined location and is now rolling east on Wilshire Boulevard. Plate number is FC3 448 and the make is a white Dodge delivery van... The van is now passing the corner of 28th Street, still rolling on Wilshire Boulevard...”

Inside the white Dodge van, Jennifer felt anxious, but not for herself. She had seen the newspaper articles about the three missing children and had concluded that their kidnapping was probably linked to this business of illegal porn production. Child kidnappings were still rare around this country and having three of them in the same area the same day smelled of child trafficking of some sort. The fact that it had happened nearly the same day that she had been contacted to do more films from a secret location only reinforced her suspicions. From the little she had seen of the filming location on her first visit there, she knew that there was a basement level made of

concrete, which would be ideal for kidnapers to hold prisoners out of sight and out of earshot. Hopefully, the F.B.I. would not screw up the tailing of the van and would be able to intervene quickly in order to invest the place and arrest those porn producers before any innocents could get hurt. If not, Jennifer was resolved to act herself, albeit as discreetly as possible in order not to reveal to others her powers...or her true nature.

Bernard and Janet had been tailing the white van for a few minutes now and were rolling northward on the San Diego Freeway, staying a good hundred yards behind the van, when Bernard grumbled to himself.

"These guys are going abnormally slow for some reason: I don't like this. It is as if they are expecting a trail and are trying to identify it. I'm going to ask car number two to take the relay from us."

As he was reaching for the radio's microphone, a big four door sedan that had been behind them changed lane and accelerated, as if to pass them. However, it slowed down once side by side with the F.B.I. car. A quick glance at the sedan made Janet shout a warning to Bernard.

"I SEE GUNS!"

Her warning came too late: the two men occupying the right side seats of the sedan fired their submachine guns through their opened windows, peppering the F.B.I. car with bullets. Bernard screamed with pain as three bullets hit him in quick succession: one in his left leg, another through his left ribs and the last one in his back, penetrating at a sharp angle and piercing both of his lungs. Despite his pain and being about to faint, Bernard managed somehow to keep partial control of his vehicle, grunting a few urgent words to Janet, who was still intact by some miracle.

"Wheel...take it, Janet."

Despite the bullets still raking their car, Janet reacted swiftly, an adrenaline surge flowing through her body and partially negating the paralyzing fear that was gripping her. Grabbing the steering wheel, she did her best to keep the car on the road while pulling hard on the hand brake. While her braking saved her from the rain of bullets, the engine took a number of hits and smoke came out from under the hood, while the front right tire blew up. The car swerved violently and started heading for the shallow ditch running along the freeway as the attackers' car sped away. Janet managed somehow to keep enough control to avoid going into the ditch, with their car finally rolling to a stop on the side of the road after long seconds. Her first worry once stopped was to check on

Bernard, who was now slumped over the steering wheel and was unconscious. Checking frantically for a pulse, she found an erratic and weakening one. Grabbing next the radio's microphone, she was about to call for help when she saw the two bullet holes in the now shattered transceiver. Throwing down the useless microphone, she quickly stepped out of the car and ran to the driver's door, throwing it open and bending over Bernard to give him what little first aid she could. The savage horn blow of a heavy truck warned her in time to press her legs against the car, just before a big tractor trailer truck smashed into the opened driver's door, ripping it off and making the car pivot on the spot a full 180 degrees, with Janet desperately holding on to the steering wheel. Thankfully, no other vehicle hit their car after that. Her legs nearly giving up on her and with her heart beating frantically, Janet fought the panic that was about to overcome her and concentrated back on helping Bernard. That was when she realized that her partner had stopped breathing. Checking his pulse again, she felt a mix a discouragement and rage when she found none.

"BASTARDS! YOU BASTARDS! YOU WILL PAY FOR THIS!"

She then slumped down with her back against the car, sitting down on the dirt and grass of the roadside as tears and sobs raked her. She was still sitting on the ground and crying when the car of Roger Fairfax and Nathan Chomsky stopped in front of the wrecked car, with the two F.B.I. agents then running out. Roger took the time to check Bernard first before joining Nathan by Janet's side. Crouching in front of her, he gently grabbed her shoulders to get her attention.

"Janet... Janet, what happened?"

"A...a big blue Buick sedan overcame us and two men inside fired submachine guns at us, hitting Bernie. I managed to keep enough control of the car to make it stop, but couldn't save Bernie. Our radio was hit, so I could not call for help. Those bastards expected the van to be followed and laid a trap for us."

Roger felt bitterness on hearing that: somebody had to have warned those criminals about their operation. However, he could swear that it couldn't be someone at the F.B.I.: he trusted completely every member of his team and of his division. The leak must have been at the level of the L.A.P.D., with which they had to coordinate the use of a surveillance helicopter.

"It's alright, Janet. You could not possibly do anything to prevent all this. I will call an ambulance for you: you were pretty shaken up and..."

"NO!" Replied at once Janet in a fierce tone as she snapped up her head to look at him, fury on her face. "I want to get the bastards who did this!"

Roger took only a couple of seconds to take a decision then, finally nodding his head.

"Very well, Janet. If you feel up to it, then you will continue the chase in my car. Let me call first a patrol car of the State Highway Patrol, so that someone could take care of Bernie's body."

As Roger ran back to his car, Janet got back up, helped by Nathan, then gave a last sad look at the dead Bernard.

"Goodbye, Bernie! I swear that I will get those bastards for you."

She then went to the car's trunk, opening it and grabbing one of the two Remington pump action 12 gauge shotguns stored inside, plus a box of cartridges. She had finished loading the shotgun and was pocketing spare cartridges when a state patrol car stopped behind the wrecked vehicle. Roger, who had run back to Janet and Nathan, took a few seconds to quickly brief the highway patrolman, then signaled his two agents to go back to his car with him.

"Let's go! I asked the police helicopter on standby to lift off at once and try to locate that damn delivery van. With some luck, we will be able to find those bastards."

Running to the car with her shotgun in her hands, Janet jumped in the rear seat, closing her door as Nathan engaged the gears and rolled back on the highway. The driver gave a quick glance at Roger, who was sitting in the front passenger seat.

"Do you think that this stripper who alerted us did so to help those bastards set that ambush?"

"No! If she was in league with those kidnapers, the smart thing to do then would have been not to call us at all, simply informing the kidnapers and allowing them that way to move to another, safer location. No sane band of criminals would purposely kill cops if they could avoid it. The leak had to be an internal one, possibly from within the L.A.P.D., with which we had to coordinate this operation. Rather, I am now afraid that this poor Jennifer Woods may be going to pay dearly for having warned us."

07:55 (California Time)

Abandoned building at the end of Sky Valley Road

Mandeville Canyon, south of Encino Reservoir

The van finally came to a stop after some kind of garage door had been opened and the van had rolled slowly inside. Jennifer was already up from her bench seat, with the two other strippers getting up as well, when the rear doors were opened wide, revealing the inside of a large parking garage. Four men were waiting behind the van, all pointing either pistols or submachine guns at the three women. Jennifer was not really surprised at their hostile attitudes: even if she could not see what happened outside of the van while it rolled, she had heard a muffled fusillade behind the van as they were still on the highway and had deduced that something very wrong had happened. One of the men, whom she had met the first time that she had come here to pause nude, waved his pistol at her.

“Get out of the van, Miss d’Amour. You too, girls.”

“What’s happening?” Asked one of the two other strippers, alarmed. “Why the guns?”

“What happened is that one of you apparently snitched to the police about our operation here. Since only one of you has ever come here before, I thus believe that the good Miss d’Amour will have some explaining to do. Now, stop talking and get out!”

Now tense and expecting the worst, Jennifer climbed down from the van, followed by the two other young women. The apparent leader of the criminals, a big man with multiple tattoos on his arms and a bald head, stepped forward to grab none too gently Jennifer’s left arm, pulling her aside from the two other girls. He then pointed the other girls to one of his men.

“Craig, bring those two to the photo studio and tell Jim to start photographing them. In the meantime, I will be having a little conversation with Miss d’Amour.”

The mean grins that these last words brought to the gunmen said it all to Jennifer about what kind of conversation she was going to face. While the man named Craig guided the two other strippers towards the upper floor photo studio where she had once posed before, Jennifer was pushed towards a corner of the garage where a concrete staircase led down to the basement level. Sandwiched between two gunmen, she thought frantically about her possible options as she went down the stairs. Any way she saw it, those men were not going to let her go alive after this. Even if she could somehow convince them that she had not called the police, they were probably going to kill her anyway in order to eliminate any possible risk to their operation.

Once down at the basement level, a gunman opened a steel-reinforced door and led her inside a second corridor made of concrete, with a series of doors along both sides. The doors had big locking bolts on the outside, making their use quite obvious. She was however not thrown inside one of the cells, instead being brought to a large, windowless room at the end of the corridor. Three men were waiting inside that room, near a camera mounted on a tripod. There were powerful floodlights installed in two corners of the room, pointed at an area in the middle. What was in that area made Jennifer tense up even further. She had seen a similar setup before, at the age of sixteen in 1943, when she had briefly been arrested and tortured by the German Gestapo after a Gestapo officer had died of an apparent heart attack while in her bed. A sturdy chair stood in the center of the space, while an assortment of steel hooks and chains hung from steel rings and pulleys solidly fixed to the ceiling. A set of car batteries and a hand-cranked dynamo rested on a table by one side, with electrical wires attached to them. A collection of whips, pliers and knives was also in evidence, along with a welding lamp. Jennifer was already toying with the idea of simply roasting the six men in the room without further ado when her eyes caught the shapes of two girls in a back corner. The girls were however not the children recently kidnapped, as they were both in their late teens and had definite Latino traits, plus had brownish skins. *'Probably Mexican girls'*, thought Jennifer. One of the girls was either sleeping or was unconscious, while the other was cowering in her corner. Both were naked, bruised and battered and were chained to the wall. Jennifer's idea of killing herself the gunmen went out of the window at that moment, as she would have to kill the two girls after using her demonic powers, if she wanted her secret to be kept. A normal Succubus would not have hesitated to do just that, but she was not your normal, standard Succubus. *'Just one that is too nice for her own good'*. On a signal from the tattooed bald man, two of the gunmen grabbed Jennifer's clothes and started brutally ripping them off her.

"Hey, what the hell do you think that you are doing?"

"Preparing you for questioning, my dear Miss d'Amour. You won't need them anymore anyway."

Jennifer was soon totally naked, attracting leery looks from her captors.

"Well well, that's what I call an appetizing prize! Look at those tits!" Said one of the gunmen while fondling her left breast.

"Yeah, maybe we should have some fun with her before questioning her. What do you think, boss?" Said another gunman, making the bald man shake his head.

"We don't have time for that: we need to know as quickly as possible who she contacted and what she knows exactly about us. Tie her up and suspend her!"

Two of the gunmen then grabbed solidly Jennifer's wrists, so that a third one could tie them together with a thick rope. The rope binding her wrists was next hooked to a chain passing through a pulley fixed to the ceiling, with two men then pulling on the chain and making her rise off the floor. Attaching the chain to a wall hook, the men tied two ropes to her ankles and, pulling hard on the ropes first, attached them to loops fixed to the floor. Now spread-eagled and suspended naked a good foot above the floor, Jennifer could only glare at the bald man.

"You bastards! What the hell do you expect to achieve this way?"

"For one, getting answers from you. Next, it will give us an opportunity to produce a nice film that some will pay a fortune to get a copy of. Third, you will serve as an object lesson on what happens to someone that doesn't obey us. Willie, go get the kids!"

Rage flared inside Jennifer as one gunman walked out of the torture chamber.

"Children? You would expose children to this? What kind of monster are you?"

The bald man, not smiling anymore, took five quick steps and viciously punched her left breast, making her shout with pain. He then pulled hard on her hair as he nearly spat in her face.

"Listen, bitch! The only thing I want to hear from you is answers, that and screams of pain. You can however make it quick for you if you tell me what you know about us and to whom you told it."

"Fuck you, asshole!"

That earned Jennifer a right hook to her cheek that made her head snap around. The bald man then went to grab a long leather bullwhip before approaching her again, a mean smile on his lips.

"I think that I will enjoy this a lot. George, get ready to start filming."

The bald man took out of a pocket a ski mask and covered his face with it before taking position behind Jennifer and to one side.

"You can start filming now, George."

The first lash of the whip, with its tip twisting around her torso and hitting her right breast, made Jennifer cringe with pain. However, what the men couldn't know was that she was much tougher than a normal human being and also more resistant to damage: while still painful, being flogged was a bearable experience for her, as she had found out during

her little episode with the Gestapo in 1943. The bald man administered twenty lashes to her back, not sparing his strength, before stopping for a moment and going to face her.

“So, ready to talk, bitch?”

The answer he got was a ball of spit in one eye. Swearing loudly while wiping the spit away, he was about to resume his flogging of Jennifer when the gunman he had sent out came back with three young children, two girls and one boy, all around the age of ten. The three children were also totally naked and looked scared while trying to cover their genitals with their hands as best they could. The bald man went to them and grabbed the oldest girl by her hair, forcing her to look directly at Jennifer.

“Look carefully, kids, and learn what it will cost you if you don’t do as we tell you. Willie, chain them to the wall, so that they can enjoy the show in full.”

“Yes boss!”

As the gunman, helped by two other men, backed the three children against one wall and then raised their hands above their heads to attach them to manacles, the bald man took position to the front and side of Jennifer.

“If you think that lashes to your back were painful, wait until I fondle your tits with my whip.”

Raising his bullwhip, the man started lashing Jennifer’s chest with savage strength, obviously enjoying his work. Jennifer managed not to scream with pain, but she certainly felt the blows. However, the longer she made this go on, the more time it would give the F.B.I. to possibly find her and rescue her and the other captives. She thus stoically endured the whipping and refrained from using her powers for the moment.

The bald man went at it for a good ten minutes, delivering over eighty lashes to Jennifer’s breasts before stopping, sweating heavily. By now, Jennifer’s breasts were covered with red whip marks.

“You are one incredibly tough girl, I will give you that, but this is only a foretaste. Willie, get the electrodes!”

“Where do you want them connected, boss?”

“Let’s try her nipples first.”

Going to Jennifer while holding the ends of two wires, the said Willie used the metallic alligator clips at the end of the wires to clip one to each of her nipples, then retreated to the table supporting the dynamo and car batteries. On the order of the bald man, he turned a dial, sending electricity through Jennifer’s breasts and torso. They saw her

contort with spasms while grimacing with pain, but they didn't realize that she was actually faking it: Demons were naturally immune to damage from a number of things, one of them being electricity. Willie was sending the fifth long jolt into Jennifer when the noise of a muffled firefight suddenly came from upstairs. Alarmed, the bald man grabbed the pistol at his belt and shouted orders to the five other men present in the torture chamber.

"THE POLICE MUST HAVE FOUND THIS PLACE! GO UPSTAIRS AND GET RID OF THEM!"

The five men, all well armed, ran out of the room at once, leaving the bald man alone with Jennifer and the five other captives. Jennifer couldn't help taunt him then.

"You asshole really think that your men will be able to repel a full blown police assault? You are decidedly as stupid as you are mean!"

"SHUT UP, BITCH! MY MEN ARE ALL EX-SOLDIERS WITH COMBAT EXPERIENCE. THEY WILL MAKE MINCEMEAT OUT OF THOSE COPS."

"The only thing you have proven so far is that you could torture naked and unarmed prisoners, you piece of shit!"

Enraged by her taunts, the man pointed his pistol at Jennifer and fired repeatedly at her from a distance of less than ten feet. Incredibly enough for him and for the captives watching this, none of his bullets seemed to connect, with Jennifer bursting out in derisive laughter.

"You, a combat-experienced soldier? You can't shoot worth dick, asshole!"
Throwing down his now empty pistol, the bald man pushed a scream of rage and charged her with both of his hands held forward.

"I'M GOING TO BREAK THAT PRETTY LITTLE NECK OF YOURS!"

Bending her leg muscles at that moment, Jennifer snapped the ropes tying her ankles in a display of herculean strength, then raised both of her legs up and forward, in time to catch the charging man by his neck in a scissor's grip between her legs. Twisting violently her body left, then right while still suspended from the ceiling, she snapped the man's neck like a simple twig, watched with disbelief by the five other captives. Letting the dead man crumble to the floor, Jennifer then pulled herself up, unhooking her tied wrists and dropping on her feet to the floor. Grabbing next one of the knives that were part of the panoply of torture instruments, she slammed its tip in the wooden table, then used the stuck blade to cut her ties. Making a sign to the two Mexican girls and to the three children to stay quiet, she went to the dead bald man and, retrieving his pistol, took

his spare ammunition clips out of his pockets, inserting a fresh clip in the weapon and chambering a round. She had a mean smile as she left the torture chamber, still naked but with a loaded pistol in her hand.

"Let's see now how brave those bastards really are when confronted with an armed opponent."

Concentrating for a moment, she casted on herself an 'Ethereal Jaunt' spell and became both invisible and insubstantial. Now being like an immaterial ghost, she floated up and passed through the concrete ceiling of the basement, on her way to the ground floor.

Outside of the building, Janet Coleman had to duck again behind a parked car after firing her shotgun, in order to avoid a burst of automatic fire. She and the other policemen around her were now pinned down by a continuous rain of bullets, while two of the tactical squad policemen lay still on the ground, wounded or dead. She looked at Roger Fairfax, who was using the same car as her for cover, and shouted over the din of the firefight.

"THESE BASTARDS HAVE CRAZY FIREPOWER! WE WILL NEED REINFORCEMENTS, LOTS OF IT!"

"I ALREADY CALLED IN FOR THAT. WE SHOULD GET ANOTHER TACTICAL SQUAD IN ABOUT FIFTEEN MINUTES."

"FIFTEEN MINUTES? THE HOSTAGES WILL PROBABLY BE DEAD BY THEN."

"THAT'S THE BEST WE CAN DO FOR THE TIME BEING, JANET: NO SENSE IN RISKING OUR PEOPLE IN A SENSELESS CHARGE AGAINST THAT BARRAGE OF BULLETS."

Janet had to agree with Roger on that. Waiting for another burst to rake again the car she was using as cover, she then popped her torso up, her shotgun leveled and pointed, and fired a slug at an upper floor window where she knew that one shooter was firing at her. She was rewarded by seeing the silhouette behind the window frame throw its hands in the air while falling backward.

"One bastard less!" She muttered to herself while ducking back behind the car. The firefight went on for a couple minutes before the fire from the inside of the building apparently started to slowly die down, making Roger grin.

"THEY MUST BE RUNNING OUT OF AMMUNITION! JANET, COVER ME: I'M GOING FOR THE ENTRANCE DOOR."

Sprinting in a mad dash to the main door of the large house, Roger managed to get to the door intact, sticking his back against the wall to the left of the door. Janet was next to dash forward, joining him as the enemy fire was distinctly slackening.

“Well done, Janet! Your shotgun is loaded with slugs?”

“Yes!”

“Then, shoot off the lock on that door!”

Janet did so, ripping the whole door handle at the same time. Throwing his whole weight behind it, Roger then slammed his left shoulder against the door, opening it wide, before rushing in with his shotgun pointed. To his surprise, the first criminal he encountered lay dead besides the end corner of the corridor leading from the entrance.

“What the hell? This man was shot from behind, from close by in fact.”

“Are these assholes turning on each other now?” Asked Janet, equally dumbfounded.

“Don’t know! However, I will take any advantage we can gain. Let’s clean the ground level methodically.”

Soon joined inside by more policemen and with the firing now being intermittent, they cautiously explored the rooms and garage on the ground level. What they found was a total of four dead gunmen, all shot in the back from close range. That made Roger Fairfax scratch his head in wonderment.

“These guys seemed to have been taken completely by surprise, as if someone sneaked on them in their back while they were busy firing at us. Who could have done that?”

“Maybe one of the persons held captive by these bastards.” Suggested Janet, making Roger nod his head slowly.

“That’s the only thing that would make sense. Okay, let’s go clean the upper floor. Martin, you take four men with you and go clean the basement level.”

“Got it!”

In a once luxurious office on the upper floor, a pot-bellied man with graying hair stopped shoving documents, piles of cash and rolls of films in his leather briefcase when he saw a tall, naked woman armed with a pistol slowly enter, her weapon pointed at him and pure hatred visible on her face. He immediately threw up his hands in the air as he faced her, bordering on panic.

“Please don’t shoot! I’m not armed!”

"We'll see about that. Don't move!"

Walking slowly to the man, Jennifer pressed the muzzle of her pistol under his chin, then searched him quickly. She gave him a mean smile when she found a snub-nose revolver holstered in the small of his back, confiscating it.

"Not armed, hey? And what were you putting in that briefcase?"

"Incriminating documents, rolls of films that I could sell. Look, they are all yours, along with what I have here in cash, if you let me go."

Jennifer glared at him, her face a mere few inches away from his sweating face.

"Your men tortured me, on top of torturing those two Mexican girls and humiliating three young children, and you expect me to let you go like this?"

Her expression then changed completely, with her smiling to the scared man while she pressed her naked breasts against his chest.

"I tell you what: I will send you away in exchange for a kiss."

"A...a kiss? Uh, okay!"

With the muzzle of her pistol still pressed under his chin, Jennifer then kissed the man, opening her mouth full and inserting her tongue inside his mouth. The surprised man, not believing his luck, went with her kiss, with his hands coming up to fondle her breasts. Jennifer's eyes then became fiery red balls as she sent the man a telepathic message while still kissing him.

"May you rot in Hell for eternity!"

She then sucked the man's soul out, killing him nearly instantly. However, instead of swallowing and eating it to gain its energy, she spat the soul out in the air and spoke in Infernal.

"COME TAKE THIS SOUL, OH LUCIFER, AS IT RIGHTLY BELONGS TO YOU!"

A small colorful vortex appeared nearly at once above her head. The floating soul was next sucked inside the vortex, which then disappeared, leaving Jennifer alone with the dead man she still held in her arms. Grabbing the snub-nose revolver taken on the man, she put it in his dead right hand and pressed his fingers around its butt, raising the hand and revolver to the man's right temple before pressing the trigger. The shot went clean through the man's brain, splattering gore and blood against a nearby wall. Only then did she let go the dead man, who crumpled on the floor, the revolver still in his right hand. She gave him a last hateful look before turning around and calmly walking out of the office. She was about to get to the wide staircase leading to the ground level when

Roger Fairfax and Janet Coleman appeared at the top of the stairs, having run up with their weapons pointed. Jennifer immediately froze in order to avoid an accidental shooting, but kept her pistol in one hand, pointed at the floor.

“You can relax, my friends: all those bastards on the upper floor are dead.”

As the two F.B.I. agents looked at her with utter bemusement, she handed her pistol to Roger, butt first.

“I was able to free myself when your assault made those bastards rush out of the basement. I took that pistol from one bastard I killed downstairs in the room where I was being tortured, then was able to take the other bastards in the back one by one, while they were busy shooting at you. I just found what seems to have been their boss, back in that office: he committed suicide.”

Janet looked down at her breasts, noting the red welts from whip lashes, then looked back at her with a sad expression.

“I am sorry if we couldn’t arrive sooner, Miss Woods: we were ambushed on the highway while following the van transporting you. My partner was killed in that ambush.”

“I am sorry to hear that, miss. By the way, you will find in the basement two Mexican teenage girls and the three young children recently kidnapped. They had to watch while I was tortured. The two strippers who came with me are on this floor, safe and sound.”

“My men should be delivering them by now, miss.” Replied Roger, who had lowered his weapon and was looking at her with more than just a little incredulity. “May I ask where you learned to shoot and fight like this?”

“In France! I had a friend who was in the French Foreign Legion and who taught me how to shoot. What’s next now?”

“We make sure that none of these bastards is still hiding, then this will become one giant crime scene. I’m afraid that I will have to ask you to accompany us later on, in order to make a complete deposition about what happened to you.”

“I have no problem with that, mister.”

Roger, keeping only with difficulty his eyes off her splendid naked body, took his vest off and handed it to her.

“Here! You should not go around naked like that, Miss Woods.”

That earned him an amused smile from Jennifer.

“Why? I earn a living by stripping in front of men...and I like it.”

Putting the vest on, she giggled when she saw that it left her hairless groin area and hips uncovered.

“Well, it seems that I still can flash the best part of me to your men. Take back your vest: I will go see in the photo studio if there are some spare clothes there. They had some the first time I came here.”

As she walked away with a sexy gait, Roger exchanged a befuddled look with Janet.

“Well, that’s one wily stripper if I ever saw one!”

15:16 (California Time)

F.B.I. offices, downtown Los Angeles

“...That gang was a truly vicious and dangerous one, sir, and delved in many things apart from hard pornography, human trafficking and kidnapping. We found important stocks of illegal weapons, ammunition and explosives in that building, some stolen from the U.S. Army, plus a stash of cocaine and marijuana. The gunmen that were killed were all Vietnam War veterans that have turned sour after returning from Southeast Asia. Those men were however only the muscles, sir. Their leader, who committed suicide before we could capture him, was a certain Carlo Ponti and was linked to the Gambino crime family of New York. We found in his office a mass of evidence that shows that the snuff films were being produced for the benefit of a select but also very wealthy clientele all across the United States and even overseas. We are still analyzing that evidence but we already have enough to charge some very powerful people around the country. This affair is truly going to cause a bang, sir. Unfortunately, as you know already, this came at a steep price for us: on top of Schiffer being killed, Prendergast was wounded, albeit not seriously. Two men of the L.A.P.D. Tactical Squad were also killed, plus another wounded. Those bastards in that building had some fearsome firepower at their disposal, including M-16 assault rifles stolen from the U.S. Army. If not for the courageous and timely intervention of Miss Woods, we could have lost many more people in that fight.”

“And where is presently this Miss Woods, Roger?” Asked Robert Brown, who had been scribbling notes while Roger Fairfax was briefing him on the morning affair.

“Filling a written deposition, sir. Janet Coleman is with her in my squad office. I have to say that Jennifer Woods has been both very cooperative and very helpful up to now.”

"And the other captives, especially the three kids, how are they doing?"

"The kids are with their parents here and are being gently interviewed, with a social worker and a psychologist present. They should be able to leave within half an hour. As for the two Mexican girls, we were able to ascertain that they were kidnapped in Mexico, then smuggled across the border in a truck, along with six other Mexican girls. Unfortunately, those other six girls were separated earlier from the two girls we found and are now missing. My guess is that they are going to be forced into prostitution by whoever has them now."

"Decidedly, that gang was a real crime fest! Having taken it down is going to do some definite good."

Roger nodded in agreement at that before speaking further to his superior.

"Sir, I have a request about Miss Woods. In view of the number of important and powerful people implicated in this case, many of which are still at large, and considering her primary role in taking out that gang, her identity should be kept secret, for her own safety. The medias should not learn about the help she gave us during our assault of the gang's hideout and she should be mentioned only as a simple victim that we freed. The Gambino crime family just lost a very lucrative source of revenues and Miss Woods happens to work for a strip club that has connections with the Gambinos. If they ever learn that she was the one who tipped us, her skin won't be worth much, sir."

"Hmm, I would tend to agree with you on that, but what about the kidnapped kids? They supposedly saw her kill at least one gang member, on top of seeing her being tortured."

"Janet Coleman already spoke to the kids and their parents and asked them not to divulge any detail of this affair to the press. They accepted to go along with that, sir."

"That's good! About Miss Woods, how severe are her wounds from these tortures?"

Roger hesitated then, not sure what to say.

"Uh, you will probably have some problem believing that, sir, but she refused all medical assistance, saying that her wounds are superficial. I did see her while she was still naked and I have to recognize that her wounds did not bleed: it seems that her tormentor went relatively easy on her, possibly reserving something worse for later."

"Well, she is an adult American citizen and we can't force her to get medical treatment. She will be able to go once she has completed her deposition, but make her

understand that she will have to testify later, when we catch some of the customers of that gang and put them on trial.”

“I will pass the word, sir.”

“Good! You may go, Roger, and thank again your team and Miss Woods on my behalf.”

“Will do, sir.”

Gathering his notes and the case file he had brought with him, Roger then walked out of the office of the senior F.B.I. regional commander and returned to his squad’s office. There, he found Janet Coleman as she was making Jennifer Woods sign her completed deposition.

“So, Miss Woods, all done with your deposition?”

“Yes, and also anxious to go home and rest a bit, mister. Janet told me that I will probably have to testify in court at a later date. I am ready to do that, but will my identity be made public or could I stay anonymous?”

“Public, no! However, we won’t be able to withhold your name from the lawyers of whoever we will charge next in this affair. The customers of that gang we took down with your help have deep pockets and can afford the best lawyers in the country. If things get too dicey for you, however, we could put you in our witness protection program and provide you a new identity.”

“Hell no!” Replied at once Jennifer, her tone definitive. “I have studies to complete and I want to be able to live openly, not as a hidden recluse. I can take care of myself, mister.”

Roger, like Janet, eyed somberly Jennifer for a moment: he wasn’t sure that she fully understood the potential danger she was in because of this affair, but she certainly came across as a brave and tough woman.

“Very well, Miss Woods. Since you are finished with your deposition, Janet will now drive you to your home. We will contact you if and when we will need you to testify in court.”

“Then be warned that you will probably hit an answering machine when you will call me: due to my university studies and my evening job at the PUSSICAT CABARET, I am rarely at my apartment, except for sleeping. However, if you leave a message, I will be able to return your call within a day.”

"That will be fine with me, Miss Woods." Said Roger before extending his right hand. "On behalf of the F.B.I. and of myself, I wish to thank you again for your help in this affair."

"It was my pleasure, mister." Replied Jennifer, getting up and shaking his hand. Janet also got up and grabbed the keys to one of the squad cars.

"If you will follow me, Jennifer, I will drive you home."

"Is that really necessary? I could simply take the bus."

"I would prefer that you would not use public transit for the time being, Jennifer, for your own safety."

Jennifer shrugged and gave up, following Janet out of the squad office and down to the basement garage of the F.B.I. building. They took place in an unmarked car, with Janet sitting at the wheel, and drove out into the streets of downtown Los Angeles. Janet already had the address given by Jennifer but, being new to Los Angeles, used her indications to get to her home, finally parking in front of a rather decrepit-looking apartment building near Chinatown. Janet frowned on examining the four-storey brick building.

"You couldn't afford something better than this, Jennifer?"

"Not until I finish my university studies and get a full-time job. University tuitions don't exactly come cheap. My job at the PUSSICAT pays well, but I also spend a lot on my work wardrobe. You should see the price of fine lingerie these days."

"Well, let me accompany you to your apartment."

"Is that necessary?"

"Why do you ask? Do you have something to hide, Jennifer?" Said Janet, meaning it as a joke. Jennifer didn't reply to that and opened her car door to step out on the sidewalk. She really had an apartment here, a tiny, inexpensive one that she kept as a legitimate address for her two alternate identities as Jennifer Woods and Sylvia Thorn. Walking with Janet to the entrance of the building, she used her key to unlock the main door and entered a rather dirty, small and poorly lit lobby with mailboxes along one wall and a wooden staircase facing the entrance. There was no elevator.

"My apartment is on the fourth floor." Explained Jennifer before starting to climb the stairs, followed by Janet. They crossed paths with three other tenants, two of them black, who were coming down the stairs and gave suspicious looks in passing to Janet. Jennifer finally unlocked a door on the fourth level and opened it, allowing Janet to see

the inside of a small, two-room apartment furnished with old pieces of furniture. Jennifer described the place as she let Janet in.

“This apartment came furnished and has its own small bathroom, even though the plumbing is less than reliable. Since I eat mostly at the university or at restaurants near the cabaret, I didn’t need much in terms of a kitchen, so I make do with a toaster oven, a hot plate and a small refrigerator. The bedroom is to your left.”

Janet looked around, embracing the old, well worn furniture and the discolored wall tapestry. Despite being austere, she had to recognize that the apartment was kept very clean and orderly. Approaching a low table near the single, well worn sofa of the living room, she discreetly checked the number on the telephone and answering machine sitting on the table: the number corresponded to the telephone number Jennifer had provided with her address. She went to glimpse at the inside of the bedroom, which contained an old brass-framed bed, noting the opened closet bulging with various dresses and outfits whose high quality contrasted with the rest of the apartment. Returning to the living room, Janet shook hands with Jennifer, then hugged her on an impulse,.

“Thanks for your help, Jennifer. You are a brave girl indeed.”

“But also a bad girl.” Replied with a malicious grin the stripper. “Are you sure that you don’t want to stay a bit and make yourself comfortable.”

Janet made an apologetic smile at that, seeing where Jennifer was going.

“I’m sorry but no: I have more work to do at the office.”

“Too bad! You can come any time, though, you or any of the guys of the squad.”

“Jennifer, you are incorrigible!”

“I know! That’s why I am called a bad girl.” Replied Jennifer, smiling devilishly.

CHAPTER 8 – TROUBLE FROM HEAVEN

18:12 (California Time)

Thursday, September 13, 1973

Patricia's house, corner of Lindbrook Drive and Malcolm Avenue

Westwood, Los Angeles

California

Patricia was choosing the outfits she would wear during this evening of stripping at the PUSSICAT CABARET when she heard the telephone in her bedroom ring. Hurrying to it, she picked up the receiver and spoke in it in a mellow, sexy tone.

"Patricia Love here!"

She then heard the voice of John Hideyoshi, the owner of the FRIENDS' CORNER BAR, whom she now considered as a good friend. John's voice was tainted with concern.

"Patricia, could I ask you a big favor tonight? I really could use your help here through the night."

"Uh, I was about to go work at the PUSSICAT CABARET, but I could always pass by your bar afterwards, once I leave the cabaret around midnight. What's up?"

"What is up is the full Moon, and this since yesterday night. I have two friends who are having, uh, health issues and who would need close supervision for a night or two."

"Then, I will be happy to come and help. You can expect me at the bar after midnight tonight."

"That will be very much appreciated, Patricia. Thank you in advance for your help."

"It's a pleasure, John." Replied Patricia before hanging up at the same time as Hideyoshi. She then thought about the problem that John was having. It was actually a problem that came back regularly and at known intervals, which involved the periods of full Moon. Most of the Lycanthropes frequenting John's bar had learned to a degree how to control at least partly their shifting between their human and their animal forms during the periods of full Moon. However, full control was hard to attain and they then had to stay inside one of the special rooms in the FRIENDS' CORNER BAR, in order not

to go roam the streets at night and kill or hurt innocents. While in those special rooms however, those Lycanthropes needed someone full time to watch over them and feed them. Patricia had already helped in that respect a couple of time in the past months, something she had been truly happy to do. Watching someone involuntarily turn into an animal, or in a hybrid between a human and an animal, was not a pretty sight and the person involved then needed close supervision for the two to three days during which the full Moon period affected them. Returning to her wardrobe preparations, Patricia finished packing a suitcase with her selected outfits, then changed shape into that of Jennifer Woods before leaving her house and heading towards the PUSSICAT CABARET.

00:10 (California Time)

Friday, September 14, 1973

Little Tokyo District, Los Angeles

Having dropped first her suitcase full of stripper's outfits at her house after work and changing back into her legitimate form, Patricia teleported from her house to a dark, deserted alley near the FRIENDS' CORNER BAR that she used frequently. As usual, nobody was present in the alley and she was able to walk to the entrance of John's bar without delay, pushing the entrance door open and stepping inside the bar. Roman Radu, at his usual post behind the bar counter, smiled to her and nodded his head in welcome.

"Hello, Patricia! John is in the basement rooms."

"Thanks, Roman. Uh, Priti is not working tonight?"

"She couldn't! A bad case of flu weakened her and she was not able to control her condition when the full Moon came. She's in a basement room, watched by John."

"Oh, I'm sorry to hear that, truly: Priti is a good girl."

"That she is!" Agreed Roman. Contrary to what some horror movies tried to make people believe, there was no natural animosity or ancestral conflict between Vampires and Lycanthropes. Both kinds lived their existences according to their individual routines and were indifferent to each other, as long as one didn't bother or invaded the other's vital space.

Using the door near one end of the bar's counter, Patricia then turned right and followed the corridor running parallel to the lounge. At the end of the corridor, Patricia opened another, hidden door and climbed down the staircase leading to the secret rooms in the basement, ending up in a fair-sized room. A number of steel doors with thick Plexiglas windows lined up the walls of the room, giving a view inside sound-proofed, padded cells, each about twenty by fifteen feet in size. Another, normal-looking door gave access to a restroom, while a small counter, a refrigerator, a television, a radio, a small table and two swiveling chairs completed the furnishing of the room. John Hideyoshi was sitting in one of the chairs and looked up at Patricia when she entered the room, with a smile appearing at once on his face.

"Aah, thanks for coming, Patricia! Two of our friends are in real need of help, as you can see."

Acknowledging him with a nod and a smile first, Patricia went to look through the Plexiglas windows of the two occupied cells. The first contained a magnificent Bengali tiger, while the second contained a huge rat measuring a good two feet from nose to rump, not counting the tail. The tiger was turning around its cell with obvious frustration, while the giant rat kept sniffing around the walls of its cell.

"I guess that the tiger is Priti, your night waitress. Who is the other one, John?"

"Jodie Brown, one of our regular customers. She is still quite young and hasn't learned yet how to control her condition, while Priti was weak from a bad bout of flu."

"Roman told me about Priti. Were both given water and food recently?"

"I fed them less than half a hour ago and their water basins are full. There is still some leftover cheese in Brown's food tray, so you will only need to give a slab of beef to Priti at about eight in the morning. If anything unusual or untoward happens, just push the buzzer and contact me by intercom. I have a pile of fresh magazines and newspapers in one corner, along with a radio and a television, to help you pass the time."

"Thanks, John: I will take good care of our friends."

John was about to leave when he hesitated and turned to face Patricia, getting closer to her and gently grabbing her two hands while staring into her eyes.

"Despite all those who call you a bad girl, Patricia, you are in reality a good person, one who cares when it counts. I am not normally fond of Infernals, but you are truly special for a Succubus. Yes, you showed that you can kill if need be, but you also

exposed yourself to pain and danger in order to save young innocents from evil men. You also have none of the selfishness and cruelty so typical of Demons.”

“What are you trying to say, John?”

“That I am growing fond of you, Patricia, or should I say Delicia. We could make a decent couple and live together for the next few centuries, that is if you would also find me to be a good companion.”

Patricia smiled tenderly at John and tickled his nose with her right index.

“I already like you a lot, John, but there is still a small problem concerning you.”

“Oh?! What would that be?”

“While you know what I am, I still don’t know what you are, except that you are not a normal man.”

It was the turn of John to gently smile.

“It is true that I have kept my true nature hidden from you...and from others. Unfortunately, my natural shape wouldn’t fit inside this building. I tell you what: let’s meet in a deserted, secluded place on Saturday night, so that I can show my true self to you. You could come here first, then I could drive you to a deserted spot I know well.”

“That would be fine with me, John. Since I never showed myself to you yet, then now would be as good a time for you to see me as a Succubus.”

Stepping away from him, Patricia quickly removed her clothes, ending naked in front of John, then concentrated. A dim halo of dark light surrounded her as her shape transformed slightly, with a pair of small horns growing on her forehead while her skin turned to a reddish brown color and her eyes became fiery red. The one major change to her human form was a pair of large, black feathery wings. Contrary to popular views about Demons having a forked tail, she had none and otherwise had the body of a normal but stunningly beautiful and sexy human female standing about six foot tall. John eyed her for a moment, appreciation showing on his face.

“You are decidedly a true delight for the eyes, either in your human or demon form, Delicia.”

“I am happy that you like my natural shape, John. Be sure that I look forward to see your own true shape on Saturday. Oh, one last thing before you go.”

Approaching him with a sexy gait, she glued herself to him and kissed him before giving him a malicious smile.

"You know that us Succubi are truly fond of sex, John. If we end up as companions for the next few centuries, then you will have to prove to me that you can satisfy my urges as a bad girl, hmm."

Her challenge made John grin with amusement then.

"I may be a man only in my present shape, but I certainly have everything to satisfy you, my perverted friend."

He then quickly undressed, but Delicia stopped him as he was about to remove his last piece of clothing: his undershorts.

"Wait! Let me uncover myself that little birdie of yours."

Kneeling in front of John, and with her black wings still fully deployed, Delicia smiled as she pulled down John's undershorts, making an already half-erect penis pop out. Using three fingers of her left hand to grab a hold of his member, Delicia took out her tongue and licked once the tip of John's penis, making him shiver with pleasure.

"Oooh! To be frank with you, Delicia, I have not had sex with a Human woman for decades. I would normally be described as a wise old being, but I suppose that a little bit of fun couldn't hurt."

"Decades without sex?!" Exclaimed Delicia in an indignant tone. "That sounds like blasphemy to me! And sex with females of your kind, whatever it is, have you had some in the recent past?"

He answered her in a nostalgic tone, as she kept using her tongue and fingers on his penis while listening to him.

"I haven't met a female of my kind in over three hundred years. In truth, I haven't met any other of my kind for 260 years, after the last one I knew died of old age. I am afraid that I may be the last of my kind on this Earth."

Delicia interrupted for a moment her stimulation of his penis and looked up with sorrow at John.

"I am sorry to hear that, John, truly."

"There is unfortunately nothing that you or me can do about that, Delicia. Still, thank you for your consideration."

Wanting John to forget his passing sadness, Delicia resumed her stimulation work, smiling as she admired his erect penis, now a full nine inches long from tip to base.

"Not bad at all, John. It is a true shame to think that you haven't used it for so long. It should make a nice fit inside me."

"Do you want it bigger? It still can grow more, if you wish so."

Those last words made Delicia grin devilishly.

“Surprise me, John!”

“Alright, but remember: you asked for it!”

With Delicia still holding its base, John’s penis started growing in both length and diameter, until it measured a good thirteen inches in length, with its tip the size of a small apple.

“So, little girl, had enough?”

“How about an itty bit more: I really want to feel you inside me.”

“You are truly incorrigible, Delicia.” Sighed John with false displeasure. His penis then grew again, finally stopping at a length of sixteen inches. Its tip was now the size of Delicia’s clenched fist.

“Now, that’s to my liking! Since size is not everything, let’s see what kind of staying power this nice toy has.”

Delicia renewed her stimulation work with gusto, using both tongue and fingers on the penis’ tip while pinching its base between two fingers. John’s breathing soon accelerated steadily, while his body tensed up. He spoke between his clenched teeth after a minute or so.

“I have to...warn you that...I can control my reactions...to an unusual degree. I however must say that...ooh...that you are quite good at this.”

“You can control your reactions, you say? Then try this!”

Getting up, Delicia impaled herself on the giant penis, taking in her breath as she slid John’s member inside her wet vagina. John then showed some unusual strength by staying up on his feet while she was impaled on him, then started swinging his hip back and forth, making her bounce on top of his penis. At the same time, being quite smaller than her, he lowered his head and started licking and sucking in turn each of her nipples. With the pounding of his penis inside her bringing wave after wave of pleasure to her brain, Delicia abandoned herself into his arms, enjoying to the full the energetic sex. John himself was also apparently enjoying the moment fully, bringing Delicia to an explosive climax after two minutes of hard pounding. He also climaxed at about the same time, however kept on his pounding, his penis still rock-hard. If anything, he accelerated further his pumping, bringing Delicia to a second, brain busting climax after another minute and making her eyes cross under the waves of pleasure, until she blew out air.

“By the Devil! That was great!”

"Wait, you bad little girl: I'm not finished with you." Replied John, whose face was covered with sweat from his strenuous workout. He then made the tip of his penis grow even larger in diameter while continuing to ram it up and down her dripping vagina. Herself sweating from the incredible spasms of pleasure and with her vagina and clitoris feeling as if on fire, Delicia didn't respond to his taunt, instead biting her lips and closing her eyes while enjoying the continuous pounding by his giant penis. Their third climax came at the same time for both of them, with Delicia letting out a loud moan, while John roared in pleasure. He then dropped her naked but on top of the small table and slid his penis out of her vagina, making a good quart of vaginal fluid run out. She hugged him tightly at once while kissing him repeatedly.

"You're fantastic, John! That was the best sex I ever had!"

"I have to say that this reminded me why people are so obsessed with sex. You are a hell of a girl yourself, Delicia."

"You can say that again, especially since I come from Hell! Well, I certainly wouldn't mind being your companion for a few centuries."

"How about working on gradually becoming something more, like becoming true lovers?"

"How about discussing that further on Saturday night, after you could reveal your true nature to me?"

"A fair point! I will be awaiting that night with impatience. I will now have to go upstairs to help poor Roman, who is alone to serve the customers tonight. Remember, if anything happens, buzz me!"

"I will!"

Watching with regret John leave, Delicia then turned around to look inside the two cells holding the Lycanthropes. Both the tiger and the giant rat were eerily quiet as they stared at her, making Delicia grin.

"You liked the show, girls? I can't blame you."

She then sat down on one of the chairs, not bothering to change back to human form or to put some clothes on: the natural state of a Succubus was naked, and she liked it that way.

04:45 (California Time)

Saturday, September 15, 1973

Basement room, FRIENDS' CORNER BAR

Patricia was now in her second night of watching the two Lycanthropes, having been replaced during the day and evening by Harold McMasters, who had volunteered his time to relieve her so that she could go work at the PUSSICAT CABARET. Both the tiger and the giant rat had been asleep for a few hours already and Patricia was passing the time as best she could by reading a few magazines. A weak female voice suddenly made her head jerk up and turn towards the cell that had contained the tiger. What she saw was a naked, disheveled Priti Kumar, standing against the door of her cell.

"Could you let me out, Patricia? I believe that this crisis is over now for me." Jumping to her feet, Patricia went quickly to the cell door, examining Priti through the Plexiglas window: she now appeared completely human, with her skin back to her natural light brown and her fingernails no longer claws.

"Let me buzz John first, Priti. I don't know enough about Lycanthropes to be sure that your ordeal is truly over. It won't be long."

Running to the red button of the intercom, she pressed it for two seconds, then waited anxiously for an answer. To her relief, John's voice came out after a short moment.

"Yes, Patricia?"

"John, Priti is back to human shape. Could you come examine her?"

"I'm on my way!"

John was effectively down in the basement after a mere minute, nearly running down the stairs. He happily smiled on seeing Priti in her cell.

"Thank God! This could easily have gone on for another day. How do you feel, Priti?"

"Tired and also a bit disoriented. What day are we?"

"It is now nearly five in the morning, on Saturday the fifteenth. Are you hungry?"

"A bit, yes. I am also thirsty."

"We will take care of that. Patricia, could you take some meat and milk out of the refrigerator while I get Priti's clothes?"

"With pleasure, John." Replied Patricia, moving at once to the small refrigerator. Priti was out of her cell and half dressed by the time Patricia put a plate of tartar ground meat and a glass of milk on the table of the central room. Priti finished dressing up, then sat down to eat, watched by both John and Patricia. The waitress made an embarrassed smile to them as she ate.

"I am sorry for causing so much fuss. I normally am able to control my shape-shifting, but that damn flu played havoc on me."

"You don't have to excuse yourself, Priti." Said softly John, patting one of her hands. "Your curse is a very cruel and merciless one."

"Uh, pardon my ignorance on this, John," cut in Patricia, "but isn't there any magic spell that could remove that curse?"

"Unfortunately, none exists at this time. I used the word 'curse' to describe lycanthropy, but it is in reality a disease, an old disease tainted by some very powerful and persistent magic. Harold McMasters has been trying for years to find a cure for it, but he would need the help of a top expert pathologist to have a chance to succeed. Unfortunately, contacting a pathologist about this would more than probably result in creating panic and alarm by making known publicly the true existence of Lycanthropes. You can pretty well guess what the government would do if it learned about Lycanthropes, Vampires, Outsiders and the like."

Patricia winced as she thought about that.

"You're right! Soldiers would probably descend on this bar with guns blazing."

"Hey! Could someone get me out of this cell, please?"

Turning their heads, the trio saw a thin black teenage girl standing naked in the cell that had contained the giant rat. John got on his feet at once, going to the cell and unlocking it, then retrieving a small pile of clothes and personal effects from a nearby locker and giving them to the black girl.

"Do you feel completely normal, Jodie? Are you hungry?"

"I could use some cheese and milk, yes?"

"Certainly! Dress up, then sit at the table with Priti."

This time, it was John who fetched the food and drink for the teenage girl, who took no time to start munching on her cheese.

"God, I hate being a Lycanthrope! If not for you and your bar, John, I wouldn't know what to do."

"Look, Jodie, you are still young and learning about your condition. With more experience and practice, you will be able to control your shape-shifting, like Priti usually does."

"Maybe, but in the meantime it is making my life quite miserable. To be frank, I was more than once tempted to commit suicide to escape this curse."

"Please don't say that, Jodie. Look, we will escort you home after this, so that you can rest properly."

"Home!" Said the teenage girl in a derisive tone. "For me, home is either the streets or the hideout of the street gang I frequent in Southeast Los Angeles. The gang leader is probably going to beat me up for not showing up for three days and not bringing him something from my usual stealing. What a useless misfit I am!"

The black teenage girl then broke out crying, prompting John, Priti and Patricia to gather around her to try consoling her.

"Don't call yourself a useless misfit, Jodie, please." Pleaded Priti Kumar. "You can be much more than what you are presently."

"How? I own next to nothing, have no family member left that would even want to see me and have hardly any education."

Patricia, who had been thinking furiously, then patted gently the girl's shoulder.

"We can start by giving you a safe place to call home, Jodie. I am offering you to come stay and live at my place in Westwood. There, you will have ample time to think about what you want to do with your future. You could even return to school and get a proper education."

As both John and Priti looked at Patricia with surprise, Jodie lowered her head.

"That is very kind of you, Patricia, but what about my curse? I will still be facing it every damn month of my life."

"You will learn to fight and control it, given time. Right now, you need a place where you will be able to recuperate and feel safe. Forget that street gang of yours: they accepted you only in order to use and abuse you, believe me. Once you have finished eating, I will get you to my home."

Jodie looked up at her, tears in her eyes.

"Why do you do this for me? You are a Demon. You are supposed to be evil."

"I suppose that I should have been an evil being, yes, but I actually turned out to be too nice by the standards of The Abyss and my mother had to flee with me and drop me on Earth in order to save me from certain death at the hands of Demons made angry by my lack of evil. I want to help you, Jodie, and I am doing it simply because I want to be nice with you and with the others around me."

As Jodie stared at her with disbelief, John nodded slowly his head while looking at Patricia.

"Patricia, I am proud of you, truly. If you need anything from me to help you help Jodie, you will only need to ask."

"Thank you for your offer, John. I will keep it in mind. Alright, Jodie, you are with me now."

That caused more crying from the black girl, unable to believe her luck. She meekly finished eating, then got up and hugged John Hideyoshi.

"Thank you for sheltering me during my crisis, John. I owe you, again."

"It was my pleasure, Jodie. You can thank me by listening to Patricia's advice and building up a new, better life for yourself."

"I...I will do my best to turn my life around, John."

Led by Patricia, Jodie climbed the stairs to the level of the bar lounge, where she got a hug from Roman Radu before she stepped out in the dark alley on which the bar's entrance opened. It was still night, being about five in the morning, and nobody was in sight, with most windows in the neighborhood being dark. Patricia patted her shoulder to reassure her.

"Come, Jodie! You will be safe with me."

She could make only four steps before a tall, winged form dropped down from above, landing in front of her in the alley and blocking her way. Patricia felt instant dread at the view of the bald, muscular giant with green skin and white feathered wings wearing a sort of armor and holding a huge sword. She was now facing an Angel from the Celestial Plane, and no simple Angel at that: it was an avenging Angel, whose main task was to hunt down and destroy Demons. The Angel looked down at both Patricia and the now petrified Jodie with utter hatred.

"You were indeed hard to find, Demon! Your days of sinning and bringing chaos on Earth are however about to end."

"Who..what is that, Patricia?" Stuttered Jodie, paralyzed by fear.

"Something that you would normally call an angel, but one that is definitely not nice, Jodie. Go, return inside the bar, quickly!"

"STAY, YOUNG MORTAL! EVIL IS IN YOU AND YOU MUST FACE THE PUNISHMENT FOR YOUR CRIMES, LIKE THAT DEMON."

"Don't listen to him, Jodie. Run back in the bar, now!" Urged Patricia to the black girl, pushing her towards the bar's entrance. Jodie was finally starting to move when the Angel swung his huge sword at the two women. Patricia tried to interpose

herself to protect Jodie but managed only to absorb part of the blow. Patricia was projected on her back to the pavement, while Jodie crumpled like a broken puppet. Holding her right side and right arm, which had been slashed deeply by the sword strike, Patricia grimaced with pain as she raised herself on one elbow to look at Jodie. The black girl was not moving and blood was flowing out of a long, deep cut to her throat. Anger filled her as she looked up at the approaching Angel.

“YOU BASTARD! YOU KILLED AN INNOCENT GIRL!”

“Innocent by your standards, Succubus.” Was his contemptuous response as he raised his sword again to strike her. “Now, die and be gone, Demon!” Not having any weapons with her and not being a natural fighter, Patricia now had nothing left but magic to help her. Fervently hoping that her magical studies with Harold McMasters would now prove helpful, she muttered a short magical spell, ending in a shout in Infernal.

“MAY THE HOUNDS OF HELL RIP YOU APART!”

What looked like two large dogs with fiery red eyes then appeared instantly, one on each side of the angel. The hounds attacked at once, trying to bite and claw at the Angel. The latter had to concentrate on one hound at a time, hitting one and slicing it in two with his sword, while the second hound took a bite at one of the Angel's legs. However, that bite seemingly did little or nothing to the Angel, who swung again his sword, killing the second hound and making it disappear, like the first one. In the meantime, Patricia had crawled to get near Jodie, still hoping to be able to do something for her. Unfortunately, she found no pulse. In pain, angry and grieving, she looked back at the Angel as he approached her again after killing the two hounds.

“Is that all that you got, Demon? That was pitiful!”

“I am not finished with you yet, you mindless killer! CHAOS HAMMER!”

An explosion of multicolored, ricocheting bolts of energy then enveloped the angel, who stopped his advance at once and raised one hand to protect his eyes. This time, Patricia's spell seemed to hurt the angel in a significant way, making him scream in pain as a number of bolts hit him. Knowing that her spell would be active only for a few seconds, Patricia furiously thought about her next move. She was about to teleport to safety when she saw John Hideyoshi run out of the bar and come to her.

“NO, JOHN! STAY INSIDE OR HE WILL KILL YOU!”

"I AM NOT LETTING HIM KILL YOU, PATRICIA!" Replied John in a firm voice. Stopping just in front of her and shielding her with his body, John eyed with contempt and anger the angel still being struck by the multicolored bolts of energy.

"YOU PRETEND TO DO GOOD, YET KILLED A GIRL WE JUST HELPED THROUGH A PAINFUL CURSE! MY FRIEND MAY BE A DEMON BY BIRTH, BUT SHE IS NOT EVIL!"

"STEP OUT OF THE WAY, HUMAN, OR I WILL DESTROY YOU AS WELL!"

"YOU WERE WARNED, ANGEL! NOW PAY THE PRICE!"

John's shape and size then started changing quickly and dramatically as the angel still was fighting off the bolts of energy. From a man standing five foot five inch tall, John changed into a Golden Dragon of colossal size, its head rising to over forty feet in the air and its body and wings filling completely the dark alley. With the wounded Patricia and the dead body of Jodie Brown under its belly and protected from the blows of the Angel's sword, the Dragon opened its mouth and spit out a cone of ultra hot flames, enveloping the Angel in fire. The Angel screamed with pain as its green skin started roasting and turning black. Even then, Patricia was not sure that John/the Dragon would prevail on the Angel, as she knew that such celestial beings possessed a significant resistance to fire and other types of damage. Not wanting to risk seeing John get wounded or even killed, she then used her last card, one that she wasn't sure would even work. As a Succubus, she could theoretically call to her help a Balor, a powerful Demon from the Abyss. However, she knew from what she had learned young while still in the Abyssal Plane that summoning such a powerful Demon more often than not failed. She was however out of useful tricks and tried her luck.

"TANAR'RI OF THE ABYSS, COME TO MY HELP!"

To her utter amazement, not one but two huge, powerful Balors, twelve feet tall winged humanoids with dark red skin and massive clawed hands appeared besides the angel. Each Balor was seemingly sheeted in flames and held both a great sword and a whip. Posing only for a second to look with amazement at the Dragon breathing fire on the Angel, the two Demons then lashed with their whips at the Celestial, catching both of his arms and preventing him from moving around. Then, as the Dragon kept spitting flames at the Angel, the Balors started swinging their great swords in earnest, slashing deep cuts in the Angel's body. Now facing three opponents who individually overmatched him, the Celestial succumbed under the combined blows of the Balors and the flames from the Dragon after a hopeless fight that took less than half a minute. Screaming a

last shout of pain and despair, the Angel then turned to ashes, destroyed for eternity. The Dragon immediately stopped breathing fire then and changed shape back to that of John Hideyoshi, as the two Balors let out mighty, ferocious shouts of triumph. The Balors then surprised Patricia one more time by bowing to her in respect before disappearing, on their way back to the Abyss. As Patricia was still on the ground, stunned and in pain, John hurried to her and took her in his arms before starting to run towards the entrance of his bar.

“What about Jodie’s body? We can’t let her lie there in the alley.” Protested weakly Patricia. John gave her a no-nonsense look while continuing to run.

“Roman will get her. Right now, you need some urgent help for your wounds.” The Vampire barman effectively ran out of the bar as they were about to get to the door and, going to Jodie’s limp body, picked it up before running back towards the bar. They were all safely inside before the first wail of a police siren could be heard approaching. John gave a knowing look at Roman, who still had Jodie’s body in his arms.

“I guess that a fight between a Dragon and two Demons against an Angel was liable to have had a few persons panic around the neighborhood. Hopefully, those policemen approaching will think that someone had hallucinated and will not inquire too much. Let’s bring the girls downstairs to the basement, Roman.”

“Got it, John!”

The two policemen that arrived a minute later on the scene and stopped their patrol car at the entrance of the alley found nobody at first after stepping out of their vehicle. However, when they looked at the pavement of the alley, they found that a large surface of it had turned into a puddle of liquid asphalt, while a big trash bin was blackened by fire, with its content still burning. An intense heat radiated from the melted pavement, making the senior policeman swear and stop his advance.

“Jesus! Did somebody burn some gasoline here in this alley?”

“It looks like it, Ted.” Replied the second policeman. “Anyway, I don’t see any fire-breathing monster around here. Someone must have been on drugs.”

“Right! Let’s call a fire truck to hose down this pavement and prevent a fire from propagating. I don’t think that we need to do anything else here.”

“Shouldn’t we go ask questions around the neighborhood, to check if someone saw anyone start the fire?”

"At this hour? Only criminals are up at such a time, while the rest of the people are asleep, or should be. Nah! Just call the fire truck."

In the basement of the bar, John gently put down Patricia on the floor, then knelt beside her and smiled in encouragement at her.

"Normally, the spell that I am going to use on you would not work on a Demon, because of its evil alignment. You, however, have just proven to me that you have no evil in you. That obtuse Angel should have realized that quickly enough, but he was too inflexible and arrogant to accept that fact. I regret having to kill him, but he gave me no choice. By the way, you seem to have some mighty powerful supporters in Hell, for a Succubus that had to flee into exile on Earth. You saw how those two Demons saluted you before disappearing?"

"I did and I don't understand that myself." Replied Patricia, clenching her teeth against the pain of her wounds. John noticed that and didn't waste more time talking, approaching his two hands to her wounded side and arm. Muttering a quiet spell, he made his hands start glowing with pale white halos. Patricia felt the pain of her wounds diminish at once, while her cuts started closing and healing at a noticeable pace. John, sweat on his forehead and seemingly exhausted, stopped his treatment once her wounds were fully closed, leaving only slightly red scars on her skin.

"How do you feel now, Patricia?"

"Much better." She answered while cautiously moving her right arm, feeling only some stiffness in it now. "So, you know healing spells as well, John?"

"Yes, and I much prefer to use such spells than combat spells."

Getting up from the floor, Patricia went to Jodie's pale body, which Roman had covered with a blanket, and knelt beside it, feeling sadness returning to her.

"I so wanted to help her. Now, she is gone. At least she will not have to suffer again through the next full Moon. What a tragedy!"

"And a senseless one at that." Added John, equally grieving. They were both silent for a moment before looking at each other.

"So, you are a Dragon. And I thought that Dragons were only mythical creatures."

"For most people they are, Patricia. However, they are revered still by many people around China and Japan, for the good reason that Dragons actually helped make the history of those two countries. My own parents founded the first Japanese imperial

dynasty and ruled under human form over Japan for many centuries. I myself fought as a man on the Imperial side during the various wars fought across many centuries that opposed the standing emperor to the various warlords disputing his authority.”

“But, before that, where did your parents come from? Were they descendants from a type of dinosaur from millions of years in the past?”

“Hardly!” Replied John, smiling. “Actually, us Dragons came from the stars: we are actually of extra-terrestrial origin. The first Dragons to reach Earth by spaceship came over 3,000 years ago and left Dragon eggs and a few adults to take care of them, before continuing on their mission to populate habitable star systems with Dragons.”

“Wow! I am impressed, truly.”

“Thank you, but I wish that story to be kept to yourself, Patricia. Can I count on your discretion about this?”

“Of course, John! About our planned excursion tonight, do you think that we could go for a little flying together, like good little lovers?”

Her request made John smile with malice.

“Why not? I haven’t flown with someone else for over 300 years now.”

CHAPTER 9 – FAMILY VISIT

01:08 (California Time)

Monday, September 17, 1973

Patricia's house, Westwood District

Los Angeles, California

Patricia wearily put down her suitcase full of stripper's outfits on the floor near the closet of her lobby: she really felt the fatigue from performing at the PUSSICAT CABARET tonight, thanks to her recent severe wounds. She also normally didn't perform at Frank's cabaret on weekends, but he had asked her to show up as a favor, in order to please an important customer. That customer had in fact turned out to be no less than the State Attorney General of California, to whom Patricia, in the form of Jennifer Woods, had given her best performance possible. That had in turn earned her some of the biggest tips she had received to date at the PUSSICAT, making it an evening well spent. Thankfully, she still wasn't due to start her new Fall university session for another week still, something that would give her enough time to fully recuperate from her deadly encounter with the avenging Angel. Her thoughts about that desperate battle then reminded her of poor Jodie Brown. She sadly reflected on the fate of the teenage girl for a moment as she stood by her entrance door. The buzzing of her doorbell suddenly made her tense up as she was about to bring her suitcase upstairs, to her bedroom: she rarely received visits at such an hour and she was certainly not expecting anyone tonight. Mentally scanning for thoughts beyond her door, she froze nearly at once on picking up two mental presences on her porch, one of which she immediately recognized but had given hope over forty years ago of ever meeting again. Unlocking her door in a hurry, she opened it and found herself facing a mature woman of stunning beauty who was wearing a contemporary evening dress.

"MOTHER!" She nearly screamed before hugging her visitor in an emotional embrace and exchanging kisses with her. She was still holding Lilith in her arms when her eyes fell on her second visitor, a distinguished-looking gentleman wearing a top quality suit and carrying an elaborately decorated cane. Her joy at finally seeing her

mother again was then replaced with dread and she put one knee down while bowing low to the man.

"Your visit is a great honor for me, Oh Great Lucifer. Welcome to my modest home in this mortal realm."

"No need to bow to me like this, my child." Replied in a suave voice the dandy. "I am the one who is pleased to be able to visit you in the company of your mother." Patricia acknowledged his words with a nod and got back up before showing her two visitors the most comfortable sofa in her living room.

"Please, make yourselves comfortable. Would you like something to drink?"

"I will use this visit to the Earth's Material Plane to reacquaint myself with Scotch, if you have some, my child." Replied Lucifer. "Those mortal humans may be weak by our standards, but they have produced along the centuries quite a few interesting concoctions that would have their place in the Abyss."

"I do have some good Scotch in the house, Oh Great Lucifer."

"Please, just 'Lou' will do, Delicia."

"As you wish, Lou. And you, mother?"

"I will have some Scotch as well, Delicia."

"Then, I won't be long. Please sit in the meantime while I prepare your drinks."

Holding on to the thousands of questions she had now in her mind, Patricia hurried to her bar corner and poured three glasses of fine Scotch, returning to her guests and giving them their glasses before sitting in an easy chair facing their sofa. Lucifer then raised his glass while smiling benevolently.

"To your health, my child."

"And to both of your health as well." Replied Patricia before taking a sip of her Scotch. On his part, Lucifer closed his eyes in apparent appreciation as some of his Scotch went down his throat.

"Hmmm, I really should import some of that Scotch to the Abyss in order to spice up the parties at my court."

Patricia raised an amused eyebrow at his words: compared to what she remembered of a typical 'party' at Lucifer's court, the mythical Valhalla of the ancient Vikings could be described as a meeting place for puritanical sissies.

"So, Mother, to what do I owe the pleasure of this visit?"

"To your successes as a Succubus on this Earth, Delicia." Answered Lilith with a proud smile. "Do you realize that you have furthered the values and beliefs of us

Succubi in this important human city more than any other past or present Succubus? You have also sent to the Abyss quite a few dirty souls that belonged there, something that has enamored you in the eyes of Lou.”

Lucifer grinned on hearing that.

“Indeed! Taking down and disgracing some of those hypocritical churchmen was something I particularly appreciated, Delicia. I heard through the grapevines that the same thing rather incensed Him in the Celestial Plane. Throwing the local church into scandal and disarray in fact probably earned you that unfriendly visit from an Angel on Saturday morning. By the way, you do have a rather interesting friend in the person of that bar owner cum Dragon. The two Balors who rendered assistance to you reported his presence to me on their return to the Abyss.”

Those words made Patricia lower her glass as she stared with stunned surprise at Lucifer.

“So, you are the one who made those two Balors appear, and not my summoning spell?”

“Of course it was me, Delicia! When did you ever hear of a simple Succubus being able to summon not one, but two Balors to her rescue?”

From jovial, Lucifer then became quite serious and put down his glass of Scotch on the low table in front of his sofa before staring into Patricia’s eyes.

“Delicia, I now realize that I made a grave mistake when I let those other Demons chase you out of the Abyss. You may be quite different to other Demons, to the point of near blasphemy, but you also can be a precious asset to me, in your own way. You have managed to learn some powerful magic on your own here and have a potential few other Demons possess. I have thus decided to give you the choice of returning safely to the Abyss if you choose so. Know by the way that Lilith is, as a colorful saying here would say, presently shacking up with me as my first concubine.”

Lilith smiled as Patricia gave her a stunned look.

“It is true, Delicia. I have been back in favor at Lucifer’s court for quite some time already. If you would accept to return to the Abyss, we could then become the most powerful mother-daughter couple in Hell. So, what do you say?”

Patricia was left speechless for a moment as she furiously weighed her answer to Lucifer’s proposition. A normal Demon would have jumped immediately at that opportunity for nearly limitless power and prestige at the highest court of the Abyss.

However, she was no normal Demon, especially now, after 41 continuous years spent on Earth.

“Mother, Great Lucifer, please don’t take the answer I am about to give you as an insult. Your offer is both generous and tempting but, since I have been abandoned as a child in this world, I have learned to appreciate the subtleties and attractions of life on Earth. One could taste here a near infinite variety of experiences, feelings and sights, even compared with the Abyss. I have also made many friends here that I would be loathe to walk away from. I honestly believe that I could help better your cause and unmask hypocrites by continuing to live among Humans, Oh Great Lucifer. If you would let me stay here on Earth, I promise you in exchange to continue to promote your values like a true Succubus would, both directly and indirectly. I know that my predilection to help and protect innocent humans may be anathema to most in the Abyss, but I believe that I could do just that while at the same time sending you dirty souls deserving of your handling.”

She then waited anxiously for Lucifer’s reaction to her response as the Master of Hell stared at her with an inscrutable expression on his face. To her profound relief, Lucifer finally nodded his head gently once and spoke in an even tone.

“Very well, Delicia. I respect and accept your decision to stay here. If you continue the way you have been doing for a year here in Los Angeles, then I don’t expect you to disappoint me. The local Humans have a wise saying that goes like this: when dealing with the Devil, don’t! Well, I have a deal for you, Delicia. In exchange for continuing to promote my values about sex and sin here on Earth, I will give you the ability to come to the Abyss as you please, so that you can visit your mother when you wish to. I will also pass an edict that will forbid other Demons from hunting you down or harming you. Finally, I will leave you one item that should make life easier for you here.” Lucifer then removed an elaborate gold ring from one of his fingers and presented it to Patricia, who took it and examined it. Putting the ring around her left middle finger, she saw the ring shrink at once to fit perfectly her finger.

“What is this ring exactly, Oh Great Lucifer?”

“It is a Greater Ring of Infernal Protection, my child. It will protect you from most Celestial attacks and also from attacks by human weapons. In view of what you have lived through in the recent months, I believe that this ring will prove most useful to you.”

"Indeed, Great Lucifer!" Replied Patricia while examining the ring. She then put one knee on the carpet and bowed in front of Lucifer. "Your gift is a most precious one, Oh Great Lucifer. I will do my best to be worthy of it."

"Then, that's settled!" Declared Lucifer while snapping his fingers together. "From now on, you will be able to teleport at will between Earth and the Abyss. Know that you will always be welcomed at my court, my dear Delicia."

"I look forward to presenting my respects to you there, Oh Great Lucifer." Replied Patricia, still bowing down to him. As both Lucifer and Lilith got up from their sofa, Patricia got back to her feet and went to her mother, hugging her tightly.

"It was such a long time since I last saw you, Mother. Being able to come visit you in the Abyss will be a great comfort to me."

"And it will be a great comfort to me too, Delicia. Take care of yourself here."

"I will, Mother!"

After a last bow to Lucifer, Patricia then escorted him and Lilith to the entrance door, opening it for them. The infernal couple calmly walked out into the darkness of night, disappearing gradually as they went farther, until they were entirely gone. Patricia, standing in her opened doorway, sighed once the couple had vanished.

"Here I am, alone again. At least now, I won't have to worry anymore about demons chasing after me. That leaves only Celestials, the Mob and various other humans to worry about."

She then had to correct herself partly: she was not exactly alone again, even with her mother gone. She had John Hideyoshi, plus all her friends from the FRIENDS' CORNER BAR. Her life in the United States was definitely looking up by now.

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