

All Secretaries are Women



Part Three

Eleanor Darby Wright



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ALL SECRETARIES ARE WOMEN 3

by Eleanor Darby Wright

XX. THE DAY AFTER THE BALL

Karen Barnes wanted to have lunch with me and wasn't taking 'No' for an answer. She'd be at my door in forty-five minutes. Tricia had better be ready to go with her to *Prospects*. I so did not want to talk to Karen Barnes, not after seeing the report in the local Sunday newspaper of the AIDS ball.

There I was smiling at Damian Robertson, as if besotted with him. I was chilled as I looked at the woman I'd become. When I turned a page, there I was again, in a candid photo. in Damian's arms, looking for all the

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world that I was kissing him when all he was actually doing, at that point, was bussing my cheek.

I shook all the time I prepared myself for meeting Karen. I tried on three skirts before settling on a neutral grey one. I tried on several tops, finally settling for a short-sleeved yellow sweater that made my chest look so female. I'd just decided I couldn't go out in that, not with my hair swirling about my face, when the doorbell rang.

Karen smiled as she came in. "Oh, that sweater is so pretty," she said. "It looks so good on you. It's warm enough that you won't need a coat. Oh, and I love your hair! It didn't get messed about as Sir Edward was dreading! I guess you and Damian didn't make it between the sheets after all!"

"Karen!" I protested guiltily, knowing that I might have if he'd really wanted me to be his woman. Yes, he would have had a shock when he got my panties off me, wouldn't he? She laughed at me, put her arm through mine and gave me a great hug and squeeze.

"Al was green when that Matinich woman, the wife of the guy in international affairs, said Damian had a new popsy to warm his lonely bed," said Karen with yet another giggle. "I was all straight-laced, telling her you were my friend, and not that sort of girl at all. I was right, wasn't I?"

I shuddered and looked at her, the beautiful wife of my boss's brother, a man that the woman inside me was really attracted to. "Well," I began shakily, as Karen roared with laughter, putting her arms about me, hugging me as if I was a girl, just like her, dancing me womanishly around the floor of my apartment, my hair swirling around my neck and necklace.

"I nearly went to bed with Damian myself," she said, picking up my evening purse for me, taking out my perfume and putting some at her wrist to try it out.

"Oh, this is adorable, Trish. You wore this at the ball? Can I wear some with you today as we go out? We'll drive the men at *Prospects* wild again and make all the women jealous!"

"I don't want to do that!" I said, transferring the makeup and lipstick from the evening purse to my day shoulder purse that went with my sweater and skirt.

"No?" asked Karen, her thin nose and pointed chin grimacing prettily at me. "Then you're wearing that lovely sweater and skirt for what reason?" Her rounded cheeks dimpled as she laughed in womanly fashion at me again. She'd left her hair in the same hair style as she and I had worn it to the ball the night before. Mine was stripped of the cap and pony tail and unpinned. The weaves swung thickly about my neck.

"Not for what you think," I told her as I let her take my arm. We giggled together as we went out of my apartment, smiling at Cory and his girl friend, leaving at the same time as us. Ooo, yes, with Karen like she was, I really did feel so girlie and desirable, as a girl, of course, as she danced down the steps at the front of the building entrance.

"You didn't tell me a girl like that lived in the building," the girl said to Cory as Karen and I ducked into her Mercedes.

"Oh dear," laughed Karen, her shapely legs just like mine I was pleased to note. The chauffeur took us down to the restaurant, *Prospects*, that I'd been in just the day before with Karen. There was quite a lineup. I held back and would have walked away. Everyone was looking at me as Karen sailed in and hugged the maitre d', asking him if he he'd seen my pictures in the paper that morning.

We were shown to a table right away by the smiling man, who asked Karen where her picture was. "Oh, they don't take pictures of married women when eligi-

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ble, beautiful girls like Trish are available," said Karen cheerily, ordering soup and a quiche. I nervously followed suit, trying not to respond to the grinning admiration that the maitre d' was trying to share with me.

"Where, where's Barry today?" I asked her nervously when we were alone, glasses of white wine, in front of us. Of course, our nylons were crossed on our legs, mine as nice-looking and slim as were Karen's in her dark stockings.

"In bed, recovering," said Karen with a smile. "I got a little tipsy at the ball last night and that always means that I'm insatiable in bed. It's Barry's own fault. He shouldn't have let me drink so much but then, we were supposed to dance on the second level with the other VIPs and that was no fun. You looked like you were having much more fun on the main ballroom floor. I wanted to come and join you, but Barry said I couldn't, as Dana and Al would have come down as well. That would have put Al right beside you some of the time. Oh," she said then, a bright smile on her glossy, orangey lips, "it's not Barry you want to know about, is it? You want to know all about Al and how he felt at being dumped by you."

"I didn't dump him!" I protested. Oh, I sounded so girlish as I said that. I felt myself wriggling in my skirt, as well, putting on the feminine gestures that I'd tried to learn from Karen as she was so girlie when we were out together.

Karen looked at me with sparkling eyes. "I knew it!" she said. "I told Barry you were looking forward to dancing with Al at the ball. You'd even tolerate a slog about the floor with Barry if you could spend time with his brother. You could have knocked me down with a feather when Al showed up with Dana on his arm, not you, and giving out some story about you really wanting to be there with Damian Robertson."

"Damian came for me and I thought that it was Al at the door," I said, crossing my legs, as smooth and shapely as Karen's. I wished I hadn't worn the tight, revealing sweater now as I saw a lot of men around us sort of glance at me, well, glance at my chest as well as my legs, anyway.

Karen wanted to know what Damian had told me, word for word. She wanted to know about the 'feud' with Dana, that Damian had seemed to be clueless about. "Damian did seem very nice," I told her, flushing as she stared at me. "But, he did bring me home and was really nice. No, he didn't try to come in, but he did tell me that Al has been sweet on Dana for ages." Karen shook her head, smiling, sloshing her wineglass that had a women's lipstick on it, like mine. "But, but Dana's been so very good to me," I had to tell her, so that she wouldn't think I was mad with Al or anything like that, "recommending me to take her place and so on to Al, whose said nice things about her, to me."

There, even when Dana did 'out' me at last, perhaps Karen would recall that and know that, all the wretched things I'd done, had been known to the people who were saying such awful things about me.

"I should have known Dana Hansen had a hand in the catastrophe last night," said Karen with a deep sigh. She put her lovely hand on my arm as I shuddered at her female caress and gasped femininely as well.

"Catastrophe?" I asked, stunned by Karen's words.

"I saw Al this morning," said Karen reaching gripping my hand. "I think he drank all night. He was paralytic and a step away from death's door, I thought, when I first saw him, and it was all because of your rejection of him, you have to know." I tried to intervene to deny what she was saying but she was going on, staring, yet smiling at me as she spoke. "Barry said

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that Al did that once before, drank all night, when the girl he was engaged to went off and married someone else. But that was ten or twelve years ago."

"Oh no," I said, raising a manicured, red-painted hand to my lips, glossy and red like my fingernails I knew. "I didn't reject Al ..."

Karen shushed me as if she understood. "Men," she said before making me drink some more. Then, she continued on. "Luckily, Al zonked out as Barry and I were thinking of calling a doctor. Barry said he'd sit with him," Karen continued with a smile. "I said I'd have it out with you."

"Yes, I have to tell you, my lovely girl friend, darling Trisha, that you can't treat our Alexander like this, you know." She spoiled the order in that by giggling and squeezing my arm femininely again. "It's Barry's words. Al's not like Barry who can roll with the punches. Al's a sensitive guy. That's why when I tease Al, as Barry knows, I make sure that it isn't anything too, too personal to him."

"I'm not treating Al like, like ..." I protested, quivering as I re-crossed my legs and felt the wonderful touch of my stockings, one on the other, as I sat with my woman friend and we talked about our troubles with men.

"You were snuggling up to Damian Robertson as if you liked it," said Karen, smiling directly at me. She was right. As the night had worn on and Damian had been so nice to me, I had enjoyed being a woman and being in his company. I had loved kissing him as well. I flushed as I thought of all the men I'd kissed since I put on a dress. I seemed to like almost any man who kissed me, and cuddled me as if I was a woman, save for Marty.

"Tell me all that Dana told you about the feud she has with Damian," said Karen then. Over the wonder-

ful lunch, I, a glamorous woman, did just that, telling Karen about Technivision, what Dana had said to me, most of it, on the phone or in her office, after she was back from her doctor's holiday, and what Damian had said to me at the ball.

"So now you don't know who to believe," mused Karen, grinning at me then, as she was twirling the remains of the second glass of wine she'd insisted we have. "What I don't see is what Dana expects to get out of all these machinations with you. There must be more to this than stealing Al from you at the ball. Do you know what it is?"

"D-Dana might, might be trying to protect Al from m-me," I told Karen nervously, squirming in my panties and feeling my stockings pull more tightly on my garter belt as I shifted in my seat. Oh, I had some ideas about what Dana was going to with me. I was going to be severely embarrassed in some way, and probably with someone else, probably Damian, if she had something she wanted to get even with him for.

"Why?" asked Karen sharply. "What's wrong with you, Trish? Do you have some big, ugly secret to hide?"

I nodded anxiously, certain that the way that Karen was looking at me, that she could see right through me. I wouldn't have to say more.

"You're married," breathed Karen, sitting back, and showing no willingness to leave or to leave me alone. "I never thought to ask. Are there children?"

"Oh no," I said, holding myself so stiff that I could feel every piece of feminine lingerie that was holding my phoney body to its female shape.

"Good," said Karen, leaning forward to stroke my hand again. "Abusive husband?"

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"No," I gasped, my hair and earrings swinging quite violently about me. "It's nothing like that!"

"You're not married?" asked Karen, her face showing such relief when I shook my feminine tresses again. "Then it has to be something immoral or criminal, doesn't it? Don't tell me Dana knows and is using it against you to bolster her position at Ekco. Oh, that's it, isn't it, Trish? I can read it in your face!"

"No, Karen," I said, shivering, and trying to appeal to her as the new girl friend that she said she wanted to be with me. "It, it, it's just something that would hurt Al a great deal if he knew the sort of girl he's been promoting in the firm. That's why Dana pushed me off on Damian. She doesn't care about him."

"She doesn't care about Al, either," said Karen angrily. "She only thinks of herself, does that woman. Well, Trish, this is a pretty problem. Why don't you tell me your dark, dark secret? I'll bet it isn't as bad as you think it is. You haven't been arrested for prostitution, have you?"

"Oh no," I said with a shudder.

Karen smiled. "You'd make a terrific escort, you know," she said. "Men like the quiet, dewy kind of girl you are. I wanted to try it, you know, but the madam told me I'd have to change my attitude. Men wanted a submissive, sweet little woman in bed when they paid for it. Well, I tried to change and did hook Barry with my new attitude. Then he had the nerve to say to Al, when I could hear him, that he liked his women to be smart and sassy." Karen grinned at me. "I'm making him eat those words."

"I think that he really loves you as you are," I assured Karen, taking a girlish drink, two hands about my glass, my fingernails gleaming. Karen laughed at me, waving off my attempt to take the bill for lunch.



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Girls shared, I had heard, but she wouldn't let me do that, either.

"You are so sweet," she said, shaking her blonde hair back over her shoulders. "I wish I could be a woman like you, Trish, all soft and womanly and cuddly."

"You're all of those things, Karen," I assured her.

"Just not as much as you," Karen said as we left *Prospects*. She wanted to check on Barry and Al, the invalids, as she called them. "Oh, I'll take it easy on Barry, I promise," she said with a brilliant smile that made people all about us smile. "And I've a lot to say to Al. He'll be in touch with you, very, very soon."

Very soon wasn't the next Monday. I did see him in the distance as my heart went flip-flop as I minced along the executive hallway to the office which I shared now with Roz, Dana ensconced where I had sat for a month. Al just waved nonchalantly to me and went back to poring over some document Jim Matinich was showing him.

I felt so forlorn, yes, womanly forlorn, when I went back into the office and sat at the computer, my short dress showing of my pretty thighs. I stared at the screen blankly, wondering what I should be doing. Clearly, Al Barnes didn't care. Dana had taken all the work I'd prepared for the next New Projects committee meeting. She was studying my work hard as she was going to be there in my place.

I quivered and hoped no-one gave her a hard time at the meeting about my work. I felt as if I was living on hot coals whenever I looked up and saw her looking at me, pursing her lips or tapping her cheek with a pencil. Dana sent shock waves through me as I could almost hear the gears turning in her head as she worked out when would be the best time to reveal that Trish Kirk, in her attractive business suit, high heels

and long, stockinged legs, was nothing but another man.

XXI. BEFORE THE STORM

A week went by. No-one spoke to me at all. No-one spoke to me, that is, of the subject weighing down on me. A coward dies a thousand deaths and a brave man, or woman, but one, I kept saying to myself miserably, but each time there was a call for me, especially after Dana went out to a meeting, my heart fluttered. I expected it to be Al with some condemnation of me for pretending to be a woman to him.

One man did come to our office, all the time, but it wasn't the man I wanted to come. Damian Robertson wanted to take me out. He wanted to take me to lunch. Dana, of course, insisted I go with him. Damian joked and talked to me and didn't press it when I told him that I just couldn't go out with him. I had a lot of work to do, looking for a new job, now that Dana was back. He might not see me for a long time, very soon.

Damian was actually nice about it. He didn't try to hold me or kiss me in front of everyone. He complimented me every time he saw me, on my clothes, my new shoes, my makeup, or my hair. And he asked me out every time we met, making me tingle all over in the tight skirts and pretty blouses I had to wear as Dana had become my fashion dictator.

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But a week went by. I got up enough courage to approach Treasury about my checks. Tom Johnson smiled and said he'd do everything he could to get them re-issued for me. He delivered them to me personally and stayed to chat until Dana came out to find out what all the fuss was about.

"Oh, those checks," Dana said, all sweetness and light. "I found those on my desk after you left on Friday, Trish. Of course, I didn't look at them. I quite forgot I had them." She brought them to me. Tom shook his head as he took them and ripped them apart. I had new ones to use.

Dana said something about us girls being so preoccupied with the Ball, to which Tom nodded in agreement. "I saw the pictures," he said as he then went on his way. I'm sure he thought me a real bubblehead which was entirely what Dana wanted him to think.

"Don't think you can run away from me now, Tricia," she said sweetly, as I held on tightly and anxiously to my newly issued finances. "You will go out with Damian to the concert on Saturday. I promised him I'd talk to you and apologize for what I did to your invitation to the ball. But I knew that you and Damian would get along, sweetie. After all, he was boffing," she used the much cruder form of that word so that I would know what she meant, "the last tranny we had working here at Ekco. She was his secretary. They'd disappear for hours and take all kinds of long lunch breaks. But then she had the sex change," her hand made a motion like a pair of scissors cutting paper, "and Damian quite lost interest in the poor, little thing.

"But she married well, well enough, that, when I made just a simple remark about wondering what had become of her, Barry had me in his office and blistered me for even talking about her. If I even mention her name to anyone and he finds out, he'll fire me for cause, he says. Everyone in this firm has their mouth

nailed shut, I'm sure, if they even knew about Angela Morton at all."

"H-How did you ...?" I began nervously. Oh, how I shivered in whatever skirt or dress I was wearing when I met Dana. I didn't feel like a girl when she was in the office, as I often did now with Roz, the two of us often having 'girlie talks' about women's fashions, sales on undies and gowns and such.

"Pillow talk with Damian," Dana said with a laugh. "Yes, I had the bug for him once myself but all that heavy male testosterone, always wanting to be on top; well, I couldn't take it. But it would suit you, darling Trish, wouldn't it? And when you go out with Damian, you won't need to fear him discovering what you are. You're much prettier than Angela ever was. He boffed her for over a year when he first started here. I was thinking of organizing a bridal shower for her when she went off and then it was all over."

"I am not going out with Damian," I told Dana directly, who laughed at me.

"Afraid of your inner urges?" she mocked me. "Don't be, pretty Patty. He'll be delighted by the surprise in your pretty panties, I can assure you. Our wonderful bachelor prince swings both ways, you know. You saw all those female impersonators in the chorus line, the pre-op trannies? Damian has quite a reputation among those so-called ladies and all of it is earned."

I shuddered as I thought of Damian and the beautiful 'girls' at the AIDS Ball. I didn't have a clue whether Dana was telling me the truth or not, but Damian did drop by on Friday and asked if he could pick me up at seven for the concert.

"Wear something really pretty," he told me, with a smile. "We can go dancing ourselves after Mariah finishes her last encore."