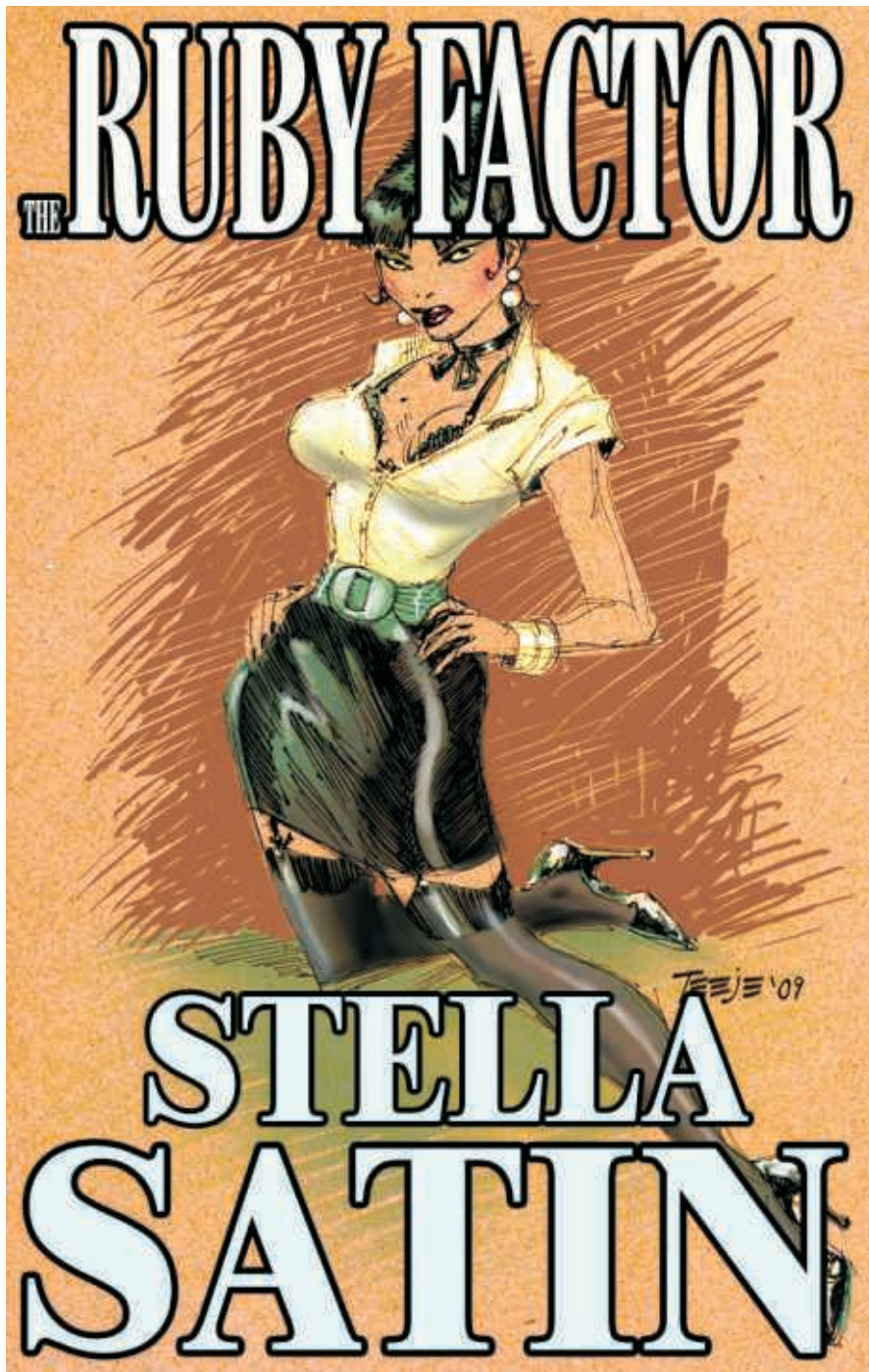


THE RUBY FACTOR



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THE RUBY FACTOR

By Stella Satin

Ever fantasized about living the life of a king? Think you'd like it? Then get the job I had. Go ahead – if you dare! Let me tell you about it and how it came about. See what you think then.

God was it GOOD! As far as I was able to find out, my mom or my dad did this guy, Rod, some fantastic favor one time. I don't know what it was, but it must have seemed tremendous to him because when they got killed in an auto accident, the very first time I knew of his existence, was when he showed up at the funeral service.

I was in my last year of college – a BS in Political Science and hadn't met, nor heard, of him until this big bluff guy came up to me, introduced himself as Rod, and said the standard condolences. I thanked him politely then wandered off. Frankly, I was in a bit of a daze. My dad was the greatest guy on earth, but I probably missed my mom the most – she and I had this special 'thing' that was our secret and I knew already that there wouldn't be any more phone calls to the one person who knew what I wanted – needed – and didn't make any big fuss about it when I got desperate. Maybe it was her that got me so dependent? I don't know, but I missed them both badly.

Anyway? After the funeral, I went back to college, not very sure what to do. One night, one of the guys yelled out to me. "Hey Lewis? Some broad on the phone for you."

"Tell her to piss off!" I yelled back. "If she doesn't know my cell number? She's probably just a pain in the ass."

I was just going out at the time, so passed closely to the hallway where the fraternity phone was and the guy – don't know who he was – just some frosh – was back on the phone. Looked at me kinda funny. He knew that he'd better not screw with any seniors like I was, so I was pretty sure it wasn't some kind of joke on his part when he didn't hang up, just said. "Lewis? I don't know. I have the feeling that you'd better take this." With that, he held the phone out to me.

I took it. "Whatdafuck you want?" I snarled into it. This language to any woman was very much against my grain but we had been really bugged by salespeople on the phone at that time.

A cool, educated voice ignored my attitude. "Lewis? Hi. I'm Liz, Mr. Ryan's secretary. I suggest that you go out of your front door. There's something bright red out there. It's for you. I'm sure that you're bright enough to figure out how to make it go. Then? If you want to talk to me? I'm available at 555 245 6799. This is the only time I'm going to give you this number – and I ASSURE you that you'll want to call me – so write it down if you will. Again? My name is Liz."

"Okay. Got it." I said carelessly, repeating it as I scribbled it on the wall beside the phone.

"Good. Call me." With that, she hung up.

I looked at the dead phone in my hand, then at the frosh. Shrugged. "Goddam weirdo." I said, but my curiosity was aroused, no two ways about it. Stepped out of the front door.

"Jesus Murphy!" I breathed when I saw the bright red Mercedes convertible with four or five envious students standing around, staring at it. One or two looked like they wanted to climb into it, but nobody dared. The car was awesome! Slowly I walked down the path, even though I gave myself a good pinch first – the awful thought had come to me that it might be a dream – but it was sore enough to ensure that I knew I was awake. Anyway, I slowly made my way down to the car.

"Hey munchkin!" This footballer from another house knew me from a number of parties we'd both been to. "Who owns is the car?" The envy was obvious in his voice.

"Would you believe?" I said in my smart ass mode. Then pointed at myself, grinning. Walked around the car looking in it as he laughed at my joke. It was immaculate – not one thing showing ownership on the seats or anywhere. I sighed and went to open the driver door – it was unlocked and you could feel the solid engineering even in the door as it swung open invitingly.

"Hey guy!" A spectator yelled out. "Knock it off! You might get it dirty!" At this, everyone else laughed. But what made me do it? I don't know. With all my old jalopies that I had driven when I could afford one, I'd always kept a spare key under the front seat and it just seemed a reasonable place to look. I felt my eyes widen as my fingers ran into a set of keys. Pulled them out – Mercedes keys all right – there was a leather key fob with the well known symbol attached. But what was also etched into the leather? A small gold name in script. "Lewis"!

I licked my lips and held the keys up so that the people could see them and there was a sort of giggled hush of amazement, even though they couldn't make my name out on the key chain. I then sat in the driver seat. How did I know that the seat and mirrors would be exactly correct for me? I didn't – but they were. I then reached over to the glove compartment box. It was locked, but a small key on the ring unlocked it. I then opened it to sighs from all of the onlookers who were crowding around, and there were more of them now.

There was the standard owner manuals and plastic paper thingies – but there was an envelope with my name on the outside.

Inside was a photocopy of the pink slip that said that Lewis K. Chapman was an employee of Mr. Rod Ryan and the car was for his use. There were Insurance and Registration papers as well. To my utter astonishment, it also said that I had an assigned parking spot - first floor – in the Tower! The ultimate, parking spot for the whole university! Where it was joked that only the Dean, Regents, and God could park! I looked at the windscreen and although I'd never seen one – knew that it was a valid sticker to get me parking that was stuck there!

I wanted to drive that car SO BAD. But I needed to call that woman first. HAD to! Accordingly, I gave the crowd a look as if to say “Told you it was mine!” then ostentatiously brandished the keys as I put them in my pocket, put the papers back and locked them in the glove compartment, jumped from the car, and tried not to hurry back to the fraternity house. I certainly wasn't to use my cell and call her from out there with an audience listening to my every word. The footballer yelled out “Hey Munchkin!” again, but I didn't have the time – so I pretended I didn't hear him and scooted back to the house.

“Hey Liz!” I gulped into my cell phone once I had copied the phone number that I'd so callously written just a short time before and had then reached the privacy of my room – my roomies were gone at the time. “I'm really sorry for being so rude. Can you tell me what this is all about?”

Her voice was still cool and collected. “Lewis? You don't need to apologize to me. I'm well paid to do things like that. I'm Rod Ryan's private secretary and I don't pretend to know very much about this situation, but I think he feels a debt of gratitude to your parents even though I . . .”

“What did they DO?” I interrupted.

“I have NO idea, but believe me, if Rod takes you under his wing – and I think he has? You're in fat city.”

“Huh? Surely he wants ‘something’ out of me?”

“You got that right Lewis. I know that he checked you out VERY thoroughly, because I'm the one that did all of the work. Your grades up until college were better than average for a while. This last few years . . .?” She sighed.

“Not very good?” I sighed in return

“Got that right.” She laughed. “He'd like you to raise them up. Not ‘A’ or anything like that – but ‘B's would be nice. Absolutely NO ‘D's.”

She stopped.

“That IT?” I asked, still waiting for the hammer to drop.

“Yup!”

“What does the car have to do with it?”

“An incentive. Get a decent passing grade – and it's yours to keep. Keep going the way you are, and we simply take the car back.” She paused. “You probably haven't looked at

everything yet – but there's stations for free gas. Telephone numbers for roadside service – everything. Insurance covered. Rod doesn't want you paying for a thing."

"Wow! Can I come and meet him?"

"Not right now if you don't mind. He'd prefer you to finish out your senior year. Then he'll probably ask me to get in touch with you. Sound okay?"

"I'm thoroughly lost." I admitted. "Don't know what to say. But thank you."

I could practically feel her shrug over the telephone. "No need to thank me, Lewis. I'm just the errand girl."

"I was brought up always to be polite to ladies." I said, "So the thank you stands – but thank him for me as well. Okay?"

"Nice to talk to someone who is polite to ladies!" She laughed. "and I'll pass your thanks on to Rod. But I have to go now. Call me if you have the slightest problem. Okay?"

And that was that. I was now the proud – bet your ass I WAS proud – possessor of a fantastic automobile. Now I could drive it!

To be perfectly honest? The car scared me at first – and when I drove it into the Tower Parking for the first time? Damned near shit myself – wondered if they were going to accuse me of 'something' and laugh. But to my amazement? It was a valid sticker – and valet parking! The guy there was puzzled by my youthful appearance, but assured me respectfully that all I had to do was call – and my car would be there - washed no less – by the time I picked it up. He also assured me – almost with grateful tears – that all tips had been well and truly taken care of – he or his staff would be fired if they ever took a dime from me! I certainly wasn't going to argue!

I had less than three month to go. Think I went out and had a great time? WRONG!

Once the word got out about my car – and WHERE I parked it? (If you think that female college students don't care about things like that? Boy, have you got another think coming!) I had women all over me. A young man's fantasy? Think I took them up on it? WRONG AGAIN!

To begin with, women scared me. My mom was the only one who seemed to know what made me tick, but the aggressive types who were now finding ways to meet me? They were exactly what I wanted – but I had enough sense to stay away from them. I'd really looked at my grades – they were not good in any way, shape, or form. With them as they were, I might pass – but by the skin of my teeth. If you think I was dumb enough to pass up what was mysteriously being offered? Boy – you're wrong again! I dove into the books – and hardly brought my nose up for air until the exams were over. In actual fact? I moved my grades up to an A- level!

The day of my graduation came – and I was bursting to meet this donor of mine in real flesh. Knew well that he hadn't made any impression on me to begin with, but had the feeling he'd be there. I was intensely curious, to say the least. But my name was called and I went up for my diploma in an almost dead silence – very few friends and no relatives to speak of. To say I was disappointed, is putting it mildly. I was disgruntled to say the least as I stepped down from the stage. By the time my foot hit the lowest step, I'd figured out

my celebratory beer bust haunts was the place to go. Knew I'd have some company. A drunk was what I needed.

Finally, it was over. I went back to my seat until the ceremony was all over. We all threw our hats in the air, then headed for the groups of well wishers. I had nobody, except to hang around the fringes of some acquaintances who were too busy with their own kin and friends. Then she was standing beside me.

"Congratulations Lewis!" Smiled this blonde, immaculate, vision of loveliness in a tailored, raspberry skirt suit with a scarlet blouse. "Sorry I'm late. Rod wanted to be here, but there was some delay in Afghanistan and he could not make it." She saw my look of disbelief. "Lewis? Trust me. Rod even tried to get a private jet to make it here. He left it until the last minute to have ME come. That's why I'm late!"

She was believable. Christ – this blonde could have sold me the Brooklyn Bridge there and then. Then? She came and kissed me! On the lips no less!

"Congratulations Lewis! This is for you." With that she handed me an envelope. "Rod's plans were thrown off, so this is a kind of stop gap graduation present. The pink slip for the car is in this . . ."

"Wow!" I interrupted.

She grinned. "Rod always holds his promises and he's been very impressed by what you've done with your grades, so the car is now yours. There's an address of a house near Palm Springs and directions. He wants to meet with you next week sometime – you have to call me at the phone number listed there to make arrangements." She grew a little more serious. "If next week is inconvenient, he can always change it, but he really is a VERY busy man and if I were you, I'd make every attempt to be there, so . . ."

"Ma'am? You kidding?" I broke in. "I'm gonna meet with this man come hell or high water! No way am I not going to be there. Just tell me the time – and if he ever wants me to jump? My only question is 'how high'."

She nodded her head in agreement and her smile was warmer again. "Good way to approach him Lewis. He doesn't like 'yes men' but when he wants something done? You'd better have a damn good reason for not doing it."

I started to interrupt, but she held up a hand. "Lewis? I KNOW this must be strange to you, but he's due back in the States in about two hours – and I better be there. I have a private jet booked to get me to his airport, so have to hurry. My cell phone number is in the envelope – so call me if you have anything that's really important. I'll answer – or promise to call you back – promise! There's also some money to tide you over until next week. Go and have a good time. Rod specifically told me to tell you that there's plenty more where it comes from – so just spend it and have a good time." She looked at her watch – a Rolex? "Lewis? I hope that he offers you something. You seem like a very nice boy. I really must fly – but congratulations on your graduation!"

"Can I walk you to your car?" I offered.

For the first time, she seemed surprised. "Of course. Rod is a nice man, just not too courteous to women – I'm just not used to that. I'm afraid that the parking isn't too good here with the ceremony being today – so don't put yourself out."

“Ma’am? My pleasure.” I said, and we started walking.

We didn’t have much time to talk and I was busting to open the envelope but she was giving off signals that I should wait until later. I wanted to pump her about Rod but she made it clear that she just wanted to talk about other things, so I basically walked her to her car and chatted about mundane matters. For some reason, I wasn’t too surprised to find out that her car was a brand new silver, Jaguar. She seemed surprised again when I opened the door for her – but it was only a few seconds before she was on her way.

The envelope was one of those standard Manila types about six inches by four. I could tell that there was a fair amount of contents but wanted some privacy and found a quiet spot in the gardens and got a seat before opening it slowly. There was the pink slip for the car, some other stapled documents. No check or cash that I could see, but there was a fairly slim white envelope – with ‘Lewis’ written on the outside. I opened it. Inside was a card – and some currency bills. I don’t consider myself a greedy person, but a sense of disappointment washed over me – I don’t know what I expected, but it didn’t look like a lot. Then I noticed that the bills were all in denominations of \$1,000! Fifteen of them!

My breath left me with a whoosh, and in a weird state, I read the card – just a simple congratulation message signed ‘Rod’. I couldn’t breathe – this was more money than I’d ever held in my life! I stuffed everything back in the envelope and took off, trying to walk my excitement off. It was a weekend, and I knew that my bank was closed, so suddenly I was in a panic of getting mugged. Finally though, I calmed myself down, went back to my room where I hid all of the bills except one. Then I called for the car, took the bill to a local liquor store where I knew they had done a mess of business that week end, and changed the big bill in for more reasonable currency.

I did NOT know what to do with myself! I wasn’t a drinker and, for sure, had no desire to spend my money on fast women, so as my clothes and stuff were already packed I went and had my non essentials picked up and put in storage, then I took my suitcases and checked into the fanciest hotel in town. Got a nice room, though I drew up short of spending my money on a suite – it was far too expensive for my taste and I’d never been a big spender.

On the Monday I went and opened a new bank account with \$10000 of my money and the rest I kept for spending. Splurged on some new clothes and went out for a fabulous dinner. On the Tuesday I called Liz.

“Liz? Good morning. I’m sorry if I’m too soon. But I’m going out of my mind and . . .”

“Good morning Lewis!” she answered cheerfully. “You’d like to come down? Is that what you’re saying?”

“Exactly!” I croaked.

“Well? Come on DOWN! Bring your stuff and head this way. You know how to get here?”

“Got the directions right here!” I said.

“We’re expecting you.” She said. “Anything else?”

“How long will this take?”

“First time? God only knows. Figure on at least one overnight stay. Maybe longer.”

My introduction to the big time had actually happened, but it didn't really begin until I went to Palm Springs and met Rod.

The house – it was a rental – didn't look that ostentatious from the road, but I discovered in the period that followed that Rod's philosophy didn't think much about owning. Things that were owned, tied him down. He rented the very best – had no problem in paying for it – but moved around. I learned that this time in Palm Springs was basically a vacation for him – if the man ever didn't work – but this was the closest he came.

In any case, I found the sprawling desert home with no problems – apart from the well hidden security gate which was opened by Liz when I approached, and closed quietly behind me.

Rod stood alone out in front of the house when I drew up. A craggy oak of a man in his early to mid sixties. Gnarled and deeply tanned. Piercing blue eyes and a thick crop of hair, white on his head and steel gray on his thick forearms. He was in swimming trunks, an old sweat shirt with torn off sleeves and flip flop shoes.

“Hi kid.” He greeted me as I got out of the car. “Been waiting for you. You did really good at college – and I was really proud.”

“Gee Mr. Ryan? I don't know where to begin . . .” I started.

“Lets go inside out of this heat. One of the gals that come with this house will empty your trunk and unpack your luggage. Want a beer?” With that, he started leading me into the house.

“Yeah. But . . .” I started.

“Let's get to know each other before we get down to business, huh? A beer first! You can meet Les at the same time.”

A little while later, I had an ice cold beer in my hand, and sat in a private patio just beside a huge spa and swimming pool. Les was a tall, rail thin man in his late fifties who deferred to Rod, although they both seemed to consider themselves as good friends. Liz had met me – absolutely beautiful in well worn sportswear, then disappeared quickly.

“Business quick. Then down to some fun.” Rod said. “Les and I have talked this over. We don't really need someone in with us, but you're young enough – and he agrees that I owe your family . . .”

“Can I ask what for?” I interrupted.

“No.” This was said firmly. “I owe your family and you're the only one left. I'll make you an offer – and you can turn it down, but that's as far as I want to go. You say you don't want to join me – and you leave here with that car and my thanks. You say yes – and you're in. You ever screw up badly, I let you go. I don't have a fixed salary in mind, but I don't think you'll complain. It's that simple. Shall I go on?”

“Please do sir.”

“I'm not sir – I'm Rod. When I ask you to do something you either do it – or convince me that I'm wrong. You go against me too many times, and you're out. Understood?”

“Yes si – Rod.”

You will travel with Les and myself. We go all over the world and we deal in oil drilling rights. Don't ask HOW we know where a good area is, but we do. We lie, cheat, and steal the best deals we can get – then sell them to our competitors. Bribe a lot of politicians – both American and foreign. That give you a problem?”

“No Rod.”

He looked at Les, then back at me before saying what came next. “A delicate answer – and one that I want you to answer honestly. It matters to me what you say – because if you are a homosexual it will limit your use in some countries and will curtail your use to us – but that is all. Are you a homosexual?”

“No SIR! I mean No Rod!” I snapped.

“You like girls?”

I sighed. “As far as I know. They just scare me a bit.”

He burst out laughing, but it was more relief than anything else. “Don't get mad at me Lewis, but you've been checked out very closely. We just couldn't figure you out sexually, but that answer you just gave is great and explains a lot. Les isn't scared of girls – and neither am I – but there was a time when it might have been true. Right Les?”

Les laughed. “Long time ago, I think.”

I sensed that I'd just got over a supreme hurdle. “But what am I supposed to DO, Rod?”

He stood. “Screw that now kid. Let's celebrate you coming on board.”

* * *

It's six years later – and I have no idea – NONE – of what being poor means. I have become accustomed to Rod throwing packages of money at me after some deal has taken place. To the best of my knowledge, I have proven myself valuable at times. Both Rod and Les are intimidating. Friendly, but scary. Nobody in their right mind is ever scared of me. I'm small, hardly have a muscle to my name – but in hanging around with Rod and Les, I've learned what goes and what doesn't. I have this innate sense – knowing when someone can be bribed. In the one or two instances where Rod or Les have disagreed? They've learned that my judgment is good – and I've been paid accordingly.

But to prove the point that I started the last paragraph with? I have a hefty – very hefty – bank account. One time, I'm going through an old duffle bag that I'd been using in Iran. Going through it? There's \$100,000 in \$1,000 bills that I'd forgotten to deposit – FORGOT I had that amount of money! Money that Rod had tossed to me – as an afterthought if I remember correctly. See what I mean?

The one area that that we had the slightest difference in how we saw things? Sex. If it hadn't been for that, we'd been totally compatible. But neither of them saw women as I did. Make no mistake about it. They LOVED women! At the same time, they saw that sex

as being made simply to satisfy them! I tended to see women as things of beauty. Things to be worshipped. Regal beings who were a higher caste than mere men!

Rod and Les were both married but it was a standard thing for us to have other women entertain us everywhere we went – well at least when the wives weren't present. What got me? Their wives were lovely! Always dressed in the height of fashion! Yes, Rose – Rod's wife and Dallas – Les's - were mature women – that IS true! But they were always good humored and seemed to accept things when either Rod or Les would look at them blankly and say something like "Gotta LOT of work tonight darlin'. Might be best if you pissed off – okay? See you next week?"

And these women would smile at each other, get a hold of Liz – if she hadn't gone already – and disappear. An hour or so later, the hookers would be there. Lovely young girls who'd be SO friendly and loving. The girl – or girls – assigned for me, would join me in whatever bedroom I had when we'd split up, but there was rarely any sex – I thought far too highly of them for that. (For some reason, I often thought that the girls looked a little disappointed? But I always made sure that they were tipped very well). Yes, I lost my virginity, but only dabbled in sex when I'd drink too much – I drank a fair amount by this time - and to be quite honest, wasn't very good in bed. Too passive I think.

Ellen changed things a lot. Took quite a few years, but she changed things a lot.

I had been jealous I guess of Rod and Les. Didn't have a woman of my own to boss around. It was probably something like that. Hell, here I was – close to twenty seven years old – and always without a woman of my own? I mean, my only bone of contention with the other two guys was the disrespectful way they treated their women. I was actually ashamed of my gender at times – the so-obvious way they'd send Rose and Dallas off back home – then bring hookers in. The strange thing? Neither of these wives seemed to mind! Would smile knowingly at the other – and then go pack. I thought them both wonderful!

I think that both Rod and Les read me incorrectly when I approached them with my need for an assistant. Eyed each other with looks that said they were trying not to grin. Agreed absolutely that I MUST have an assistant! One that would be available to me when we were back in the States. There is no way in hell that I'd have hired a male assistant. I thought about it – but knew that the other two would draw incorrect assumptions. Sometimes they looked at me kinda funny as it was.

I had never told them of my attraction to strong willed, dominant, women. At the same time? This type of woman was one that I knew that I MUST avoid for my own peace of mind. Accordingly, I made sure of the woman who would be my assistant. Talked to a LOT that Liz looked out for me. Ellen fitted the bill perfectly.

Naturally she wasn't much taller than me. Had to be well educated. (Why, I don't know). But a Princeton BS in Business Admin, with a Wharton Masters in economics? Okay. Good looking? Of course! Good figure? Made sense. Shy and demure? Of course she was! Think I didn't know what I was doing? There was NO way that I wanted some girl who attracted me sexually – I SAW the danger so made sure to avoid it. Ellen was PERFECT! It wasn't long before even Rod and Les were casting covetous glances her way – but she was loyal to me!

I learned to be completely dependent on her when I was back in the States. I had the idea that she and Liz might not get on too well, but they were like sisters! In fact, I became pretty sure that Liz filled in Ellen with many things that she shouldn't have – but all of the women were tight with each other – almost like a club. Rod and Les then discovered another use for me – squiring all of the women – though Liz didn't join us very much – around boutiques and giving a 'man's' opinion on dresses and accessories that they'd try on. I pretended not to like this, but secretly got a great thrill. More than once I'd lay out my own money to buy them something they liked. Rose and Dallas were always patting me on the cheek and saying coyly 'how sweet Lewis is! Then they'd laugh heartily as I blushed.

And another few years went by. Ellen started becoming less formal with me. Naturally, I was abroad for quite a few times, but I think she was tied in with Liz in some way. Would often call me just before I'd call her to join us when I got back I was delighted. Naturally I didn't divulge this – pretended annoyance with her and she'd blush SO prettily and say she was sorry – but she'd be there the next time all the same.

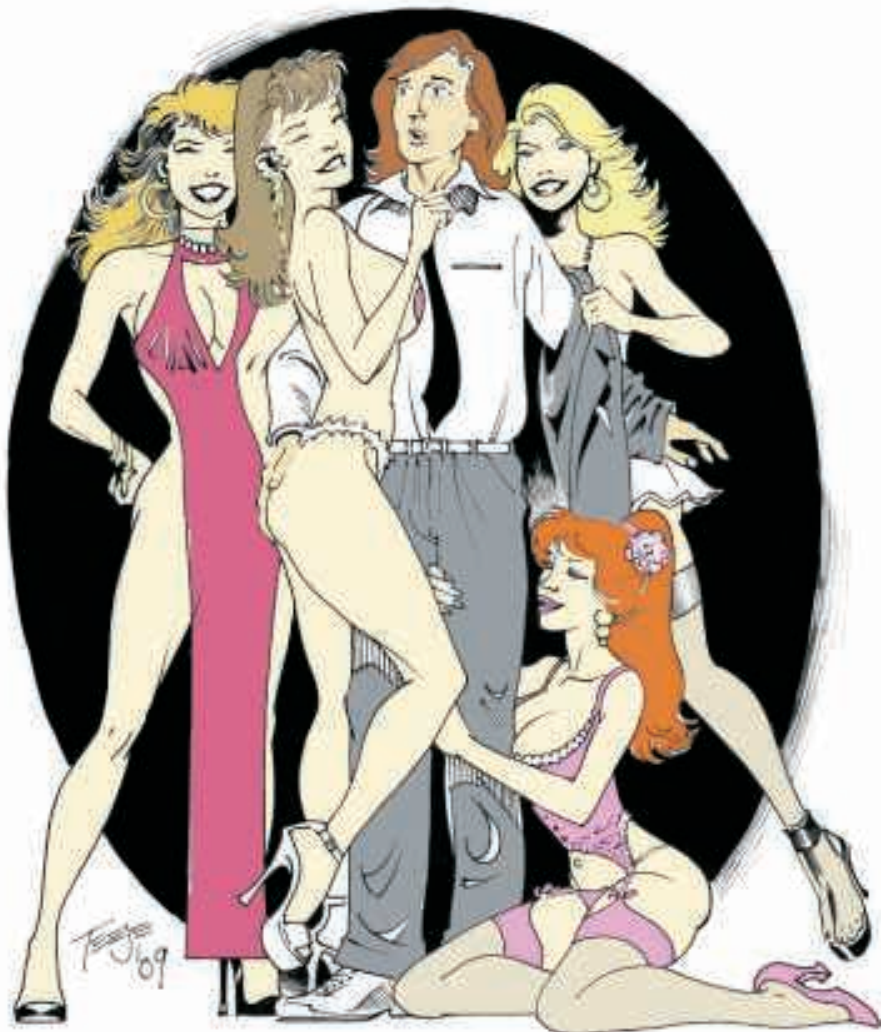
Then, one time I'd made a rather stupid mistake in filing that caused a little disturbance. She smiled so sweetly, that I knew the annoyed voice she put on was just in fun.

"Lewis! Don't you think you should know your alphabet by now? You mis-filed this folder! Deserve a good spanking!"

"I'm sorry Miss Ellen!" I said, in a little voice pretending fear, although in my heart of hearts I could feel my sexuality rising.

"I should THINK so!" She said next. "You do this again – and I'll make sure that you are DISCIPLINED!"

I couldn't seem to leave the subject alone. "By YOU Miss Ellen?"



Almost panting inside at the very thought.

She smiled gently and seemed to stop teasing. "Of course not sir. You're FAR to big and strong for me."

I hid my disappointment. Conversations like this were so rare – and SO exciting, but I knew that they couldn't continue or I might make a real fool of myself. "I'm glad you recognize that fact!" I said gruffly.

Then she blinked – sexily, I thought. "Oh yes! But I might get Rose and Dallas too help me! I don't think that you'd be strong enough to fight three women. Think you'd learn your alphabet then?"

If she had even pushed me slightly, I think I'd have fallen over. The very thought of being forced over feminine knees by three – THREE - women? But I mumbled something about my poor clerical skills were why she was hired in the first place – and I then quickly disappeared as if I were busy. Made a big sigh of relief once I was on my own. Thanked the good lord that she hadn't known what she was doing to me. Thought that was the end of that particular subject – but there was a little more to go.

Less than a week later was one of those days when I escorted the women out for lunch and then to a boutique that they enjoyed. Being such good customers, they – and I – were always welcomed with a glass of wine to aid us in our wanderings around the racks. The women had wandered off into a lingerie area while I was glancing at a case with accessories. Suddenly, Rose's voice called out, quite loudly.

"Lewis? Lewis? Come here please!"

It was more an order than a request, but I smiled and went in between the racks that I'd last seen them. Rose stood at one end, holding a negligee outfit up against herself. She saw me. "Girls? Let Lewis come here. I need his opinion!"

I really wasn't suspecting, or expecting, anything. Ellen and Dallas were in the rather narrow rack between Rose and myself. Smiling, she squeezed into the racks of lingerie to let me pass, then as I approached Rose, closed ranks and pressed in at my back. I now had the feeling that I was trapped by women – and in the middle of a lingerie section at that.

Rose smiled at me. "Thank you for coming darling." She cooed at me. "Now, do you think this color is right for me?"

"To be honest Rose? It's a little wishy-washy for you, I think. I always feel that you suit primary, bold, colors much better. But it's your choice, of course." I was masculine and forthright I felt.

She looked a little peeved, I thought. She even sounded a little out of sorts when she said. "I guess I can get this in an other color. But feel the fabric, Lewis."

"Huh?" I mumbled. I'd never been asked to actually feel the materials involved before.

"For goodness sake!" She snorted. "Feel the fabric, would you?"

Blushing, I took it in my hands for a second then, as if it were red hot let it go.

"Lewis! You're beginning to BUG me!" She snapped. "Now stop with the bullshit and feel the fabric! Let it go when I tell you!"

I wanted to look around me wildly, but could almost sense the women enclosing me at the back – and this dominant woman at the front. The close rows of silky and multi-hued garments on either side seemed to be hemming me in. Knew that I was becoming quite faint, but tentatively took it in my hand.

“Better. But do you think it will wash okay – or should it be dry cleaned?” She was smiling again.

I blinked. “I . . . I . . . Honestly Rose? I have no idea!”

She made a tutting noise impatiently. “Lewis? How can I value your opinion on things if you answer like that?” Then she looked at me coyly, with a teasing smile in her eyes. “Ellen told Dallas and me that she might ask for our help if you start making goofs in the office? I may do the same if you start giving bad advice in the boutiques! Think that the three of us girls could maybe teach you the error of your ways if you give us bad advice, or do naughty things?”

I was horror struck, and had a lot of erotic sexuality mixed in with a sort of excited fear. Looked directly into her humorous eyes and felt myself blanch.

“Oh ROSE! Stop teasing the poor dear!” Dallas said at my back. “He knows that we’d never spank him – doesn’t he?”

“Do you honestly think that?” Rose asked, smiling openly now.

“Aw, come ON ladies!” I managed. “Can we change the subject? This is embarrassing!”

“Okay. But would you like to let go of my negligee now?” Rose taunted. “Or do you like it too much?”

I made it through that day, but found an excuse to hide in my room after dinner that evening.

Things did seem to return to normal for a while. I did notice a difference in all the lady’s attitudes if Rod or Les were present. Poor, downtrodden women. The injustice of my gender’s treatment of them made me boil at times – though in all honesty? The women seemed to hide their true feelings very well. Naturally, I would never complain about this to either Rod nor Les. They were marvelous people – I just felt that they were back in the dinosaur age. There was just no sense in talking to them. Accordingly, I just went along.

Looking back though? There were some changes – primarily between Ellen and me. I can’t pin down any exact date though. Things just seemed to happen of their own accord. Maybe even I started - or incorporated them? I don’t know. I DO think I remember the beginning of the end though – or was it the end of the start? I don’t know.

Think of the flat, oil rich, State of Louisiana. I’m down there on my ownsome. Bribing officials. Buying up large plots of worthless – at least that’s what most people thought – land that had lain fallow for many years. Life was pretty tedious. I’d spend my days in sweaty county offices, being glad handed by some good ol’ country boys. Drink more white lightning than was good for me. Eat a sort of Cajun food that was delicious, but didn’t do my gut any good. And suddenly? There was Ellen sharing my house with me.

Don’t get me wrong. One thing I’d learned from Rod? I never lived cheap. It was a lovely home and the people who ran it for me? Couldn’t have asked for more. But I was

lonesome! Just accepted Ellen's appearance as a gift from the upper powers when she showed up. Never asked one question. It didn't take her long to fuck me. I guess I had been waiting for a long, long, time. The timing was perfect.

Sometimes it rains in Louisiana. This may come as a surprise to some, but when it rains? My god! The skies open up – and any earth turns a muddy red. If you have business that involves the land? Sit and have a drink or two until it clears up.

I lost my virginity on the second afternoon of the rains. Yes, yes, yes – I said that I lost it before. But this time – it COUNTED!

The people that ran the house had asked me if they could take time off and look after some other property they owned. Left a TON of stuff in the fridge and freezer for me to eat. I looked at Ellen when they suggested this. She shrugged – so I shrugged. That night, after a nice diner – and lots of wine, we were alone, together. We left the lights out, and the firelight danced off the walls, while the rain beat on the windows. Very romantic. She smiled at me.

"Been a long time." She said lazily.

I blinked. "A long time for what?"

She smiled gently. "I want to prove to you that all I want to do is make you happy. I sense your discontent with this place and feel that right now's the absolutely best time for us to get together." She started taking her blouse off.

Panic started growing in me. "I would hate to think that I'm taking advantage of your position!" I managed stiffly, grabbing at straws. "After all, I am your boss!"

She laughed openly. "That's why I love you SO much! Rod's wife and Dallas and I have talked about you SO often! A gentleman through and through!" She kicked off her shoes, then undid some fancy catch at her waist, and her skirt fell down about her ankles. She grinned at me and stepped out of it – then kicked it to one side. Then her grin faded.

"Am I embarrassing you Lewis?"

I looked at the vision in champagne colored lingerie – a beautiful thing. "Please don't think such a silly thing!" I mumbled. "You are absolutely beautiful! AWAY above me!"

I had moved to the couch after dinner and she approached me – absolutely secure in her loveliness. Looked down on me kindly. "I don't think that you ARE Lewis. But are you homosexual?"

I started to answer her, but she held up a hand to stop me. Continued. "I don't CARE if you are, Lewis. Can understand perfectly if you don't want to make love to me – honestly. I'd just feel that I'd have to apologize for embarrassing you."

"Aw shit Ellen!" I blustered. "I'm not that way! You are absolutely gorgeous to me!"

"Very well then?" She sat on the same sofa as I did, but maintained a good gap between us. Draped her arms over the back and stared seductively at me. "Come on then darling! Make violent love to me!" Grinned in a friendly fashion at the words that were coming out of her mouth.