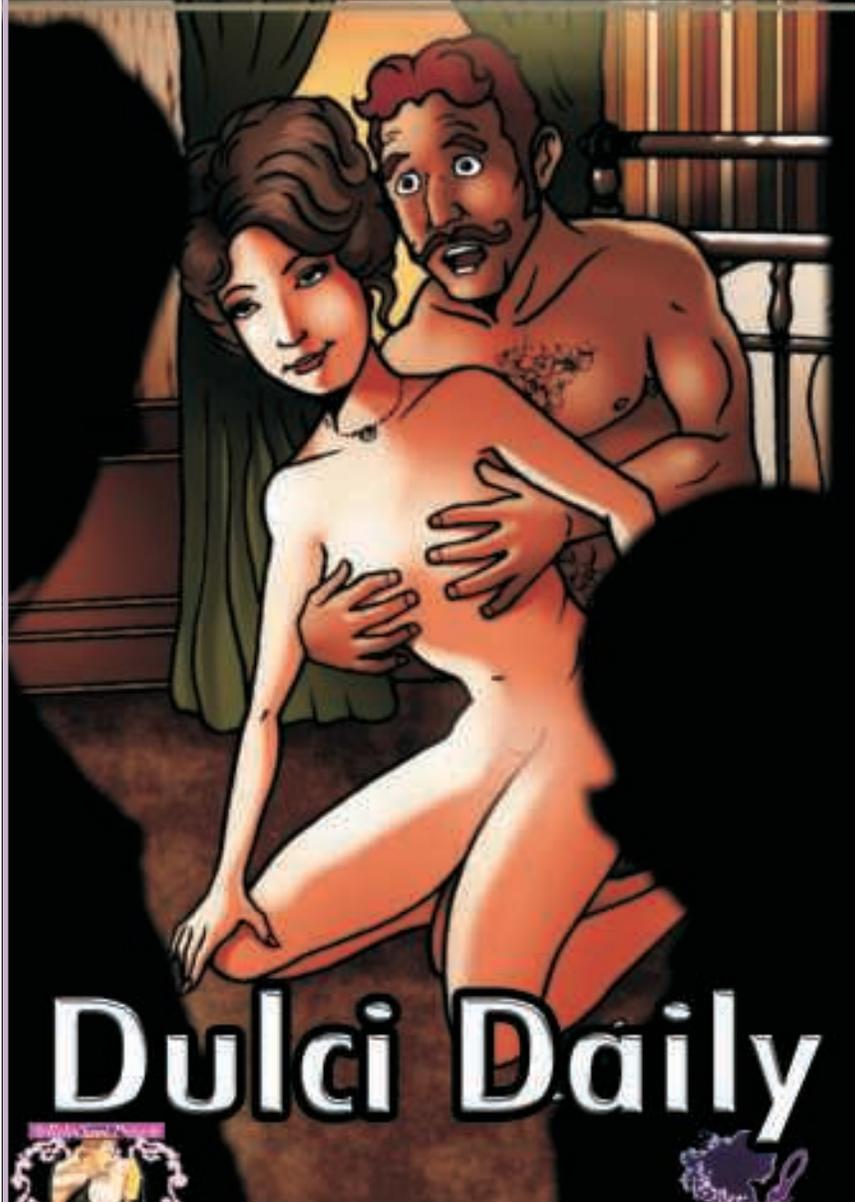


Pauline's Far-Western Adventure



Dulci Daily



An "Adult Tv" Novel



Reluctant Press TV/TS Publishers

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For information address
Reluctant Press
P.O. Box 5829
Sherman Oaks, CA 91413
USA

Call toll free (800) 359-2116

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by Dulci Daily

Chapter 1

“You made my breasts too big,” Pauline Spurtridge remarked, casting a loving but critical eye upon Eliot Randwick’s large nude portrait of her in his Beacon Hill studio, for which she had just been posing.

“My dear Pauline,” Eliot replied, “in such matters, it is necessary to strike a delicate balance between realism, on the one hand, and the presumed desires and expectations of the public, on the other. This picture is to be offered to the public for sale. It would never do to portray your breasts, such as they are, with photographic accuracy—as small, deep pink, twin volcanoes rising out of ultra-petite twin milk-white hills. The work of the true artist, as I al-

ways say, must be kept perfectly distinct from that of the mere photographer.”

“And from that of the mere producer of pornography, as well,” Pauline retorted. “You have well captured the *volcanic* aspect, I must say, but at the expense of decency, modesty, and restraint in portraying my breasts as a whole. There is a fine line, which I fear you have crossed, between the proper portrayal of the nude in fine art and a wholly improper appeal to men’s lower natures, in which the police may well take an undesirable interest.”

“Oh, I think not,” said Eliot, putting down his brush. “After all, I haven’t portrayed you receiving such treatment as *this*.” He approached Pauline, lowered his head, and kissed her volcano-like nipple. She gasped with pleasure and clasped his head in her arms, keeping his lips and tongue pressed firmly to her hot little mound.

“Nor,” Eliot went on when he could speak, “have I revealed such conduct as *this* for the delectation of the police.” He slipped his hand between Pauline’s long, tightly crossed thighs, reaching deep in to touch her slender seven-inch member hidden between them. “Oh, Eliot, you mustn’t!” Pauline feebly protested—but she grasped his shoulders only to clutch him to herself, not to push him away.

“You’re right, I mustn’t reveal it for the delectation of the police,” Eliot said. “It is our secret, and ours alone.” Now Pauline’s hand was on his own as he stroked her member.

“Oh, Pauline, you’re not really going to leave me, are you?” Eliot asked. He kissed her fervently on the mouth, and her lips and tongue responded just as if her answer must be “No, never!” When the kiss had ended, though, her words were these: “Yes, Eliot. My mind is made up. I will return to you, but only after my excellent aesthetic adventure in the Far West.”

“How could it ever compare with our astoundingly excellent erotic adventures right here?” Eliot demanded to know.

"I trust it will be of greater interest to the discerning public, when I write my account of it," Pauline said. "Trustworthy booksellers who know well how to keep such things from the eyes of the police, and connoisseurs of fine literature who appreciate the delicate portrayal of the erotic aspects of life, will greatly appreciate the story of a tall, dignified lady from among the better classes of Bostonians, who plays the prim and proper schoolmarm in a burgeoning Far Western city by day, while by night her conduct in that city's finest gentlemen's club distinctly deviates from primness and propriety. It will only increase the interest of the story when it becomes evident that *this* lady has a rather unladylike secret that she keeps securely concealed between her thighs."

Eliot's face showed his anguish, but his words acknowledged his defeat. "Then this will be our final rendezvous before your departure."

"Yes, Eliot. You may wish to see me off at the station tomorrow morning, but only with the utmost public propriety. This will be our last private time together."

Eliot sighed deeply. "Then let us use it to the fullest," he said, "for all it is worth." Eliot stripped off his clothing, embraced Pauline, and kissed her on the mouth again. The tip of his stout, extended member was pressing hard against the base of Pauline's slim concealed one, at the junction of her thighs. He pressed harder, and Pauline admitted him while standing up with her back against the studio wall. His member forged its way through her junction, into the tight, hot gap between her hidden member and her thigh, while Pauline clutched him hard and kissed him fervently on the mouth. When his member was inserted to the fullest into her womanly entryway, Eliot began to thrust, slowly at first, then faster, while Pauline's slender hips began to move in union with his own.

"Oh, Pauline!" Eliot cried when the climactic moment was approaching. "My love! Stay with me! Stay with me forever!" Pauline did not speak, but only moaned in delight, as Eliot's thrusts brought her to the pinnacle of erotic ecstasy, and her sperm

emerged in great spurts from her quivering member behind her close-clenched thighs, beneath her lean, taut, quaking buttocks.

Pauline bathed first after their encounter, and dressed while Eliot bathed. When dressed, in a stylish cream-colored blouse and a long, deep maroon-colored skirt, she sat in the studio and again cast a critical but loving eye on Eliot's portrait of her. Except for the overly large breasts, she thought, it was rather good. Eliot had almost exactly caught the likeness of Pauline's long, slender, pretty face, with her high arched eyebrows, her bright blue eyes, her small snub nose, and her wide, full-lipped mouth. Above her noble-looking forehead, her dark, carefully arranged pompadour gave a distinct impression of dignity, making it clear that she was no cheap harlot who would reveal her nudity to the vulgar masses, but a true lady who would reserve such display for the most discerning connoisseurs of fine art. Even her unrealistically portrayed breasts, Pauline had to admit upon reflection, were not such as to arouse the prurient interests of men of the baser sort, mere gluttons for pornography; they were quite small for a natural-born woman's breasts, and perfectly formed, true aristocrats among breasts. Below them, her waist was shown only slightly narrower, and her hips only slightly wider, than they really were. The junction of her thighs, with her legs demurely crossed, was perfect, looking as if it could really be that of a natural-born woman. Even the most sharp-eyed connoisseur, surely, could never guess what lay concealed beyond that womanly junction.

"Is it not worthy of a place in the finest gallery?" Eliot asked from behind Pauline as he entered the room.

"It is," Pauline agreed. "You may go far in the world of art, Eliot."

"And why may I not go so far with *you* in my life, at my side every step of the way?" Eliot put his arm around Pauline and returned to the attack. "Pauline,

I beg you, reconsider this ill-conceived plan. In the cold light of reality, think what you are proposing to do: to flee to a rough frontier town thousands of miles from civilization, where unimaginable hardships may await you, merely for the sake of aesthetic adventure, and for the sake of the production of a book that must be carefully concealed from the police! I ask you, can you confidently proclaim that to be a rational course of action?"

"My dear Eliot," said Pauline, not directly answering the question, "you are ten years out of date! The 1890 census officially proclaimed that the frontier no longer existed. This is 1900, and I am going to no mere rough frontier town, but to a young and bustling metropolis that will someday equal or surpass Boston itself in grandeur."

"Yes, perhaps in 1976, when our country will be 200 years old and you will be 106—old enough to settle down at last, but too old to enjoy life, if you should live so long."

"Do not tease me, Eliot. I am still young at heart and adventuresome, but no doubt I shall not be so forever. I propose to have suitable adventures that simply cannot be had, without great danger of discovery and disaster, in the prim and stuffy domain of the Boston Brahmins. I imagine that, by 1906, when our country will be 130 years old and I will be 36, I will be in a mood to settle down—with *you*, if you will have me."

"Pauline, you know I will! But *six years!* To ask me to wait six years—an eternity without *you*—Pauline, that would be cruel! It would be vicious! It would be wholly unlike the sweet, kind Pauline I know so well!"

"Well, my adventures and my book may be completed in less than six years. If so, I shall be sure to let you know."

“Eliot!” Pauline cried at the new South Station, the following morning. “How kind of you to come and see me off!”

“My dear Miss Spurtridge,” Eliot said gravely, “it was the least I could do. As for the *most* I could have done, you have already considered and rejected my proposal of *that*.”

“Oh, Eliot, for my sake if not for yours, be gay, not gloomy!” Pauline exclaimed. “Look at me: do you think I shall be able to pass for a Gibson Girl among the fashion-hungry maidens of Pacificum?” She was wearing a big sky-blue hat with flowers, a high-necked cream-colored blouse with subdued puffed sleeves over a swan-bill corset, and a dark blue ankle-length skirt, with black traveling shoes.

“No,” Eliot said. “Your breasts are too small, and so are your hips. The hourglass figure of the true Gibson Girl is distinctly different from yours.”

“My dear Mr. Randwick! As you were so recently saying, it is necessary to strike a delicate balance between realism, on the one hand, and the presumed desires and expectations of the public, on the other. I have always worn the smallest-busted corset that will fit me, in keeping with my slender profile. It would be absurd for me to try to approximate an hourglass figure too closely.”

“Well, you haven’t done *that* absurd thing, at least,” Eliot said, with an objectionable emphasis on “that.” “Perhaps that will be a comfort to you when you recognize the absurdity of your position in the Far West, and you long with all your heart to return to the comforts of Boston, which you have enjoyed in my company.”

“If that happens, I shall be sure to let you know.” Pauline smiled. Eliot did not.

“All aboard for Albany, Buffalo, Cleveland, Chicago, and points west!” the conductor called. Pauline’s baggage was already loaded into the baggage

car. "Good-bye, Eliot," Pauline said, offering her hand. Eliot seemed unsure whether to shake it or to refuse, but at last he politely shook it. Pauline mounted the steps to enter the train. She took a deep breath and stood still for a moment, but then resolutely stepped forward into her new life.

Nothing worthy of note happened as Pauline traversed the hills and valleys of Massachusetts in silence among her fellow passengers, and arrived at Albany where she would change trains. Some time after leaving Albany, while passing through a nondescript portion of upstate New York, Pauline entered the dining car for dinner. On seeing her eating alone, a sharp-eyed gentleman with a handsome mustache stood near her until he caught her eye. She looked away at once, as a proper lady should, but he seized the opportunity to speak.

"I beg your pardon, Miss," he said, "but is it not amazing how different our times are from those of our grandparents, or even our parents? There was a time, not many decades ago, when it would have been deemed unthinkable for a young lady to travel a long distance alone. Today, it seems, it is taken quite in stride."

"Young ladies today, I believe," Pauline said, "are quite capable of taking care of themselves."

"No doubt they are," said the man, "and yet I cannot imagine that the day has yet come when young ladies would disdain the company of refined and gallant gentlemen."

Pauline looked him in the eye, and could see that he was a tomcat on the prowl. She wondered what would be his reaction if he were to find out what lay beneath her skirt and her drawers. She was going to find out, she knew. He excited her, her hidden member was growing longer, and she would not repel him. Her excellent aesthetic adventure was beginning already.

“Some young ladies,” she said with a coy smile, “would disdain the *flirtations* of gentlemen previously unknown to them, no matter how gallant or refined.”

The man drew very close and spoke softly, almost whispering in Pauline’s ear: “Dare I hope that you are not among them?”

Pauline pursed her lips to control her smile. Her heart was beating hard, and her member was fully erect. “Sir,” she said, looking him straight in the eye, “it is more than obvious that you *do dare*.”

“May I—may I dine with you?” the man asked, breathing hard. He started to sit down at Pauline’s table even before she answered: “Certainly, if you wish.”

“May I ask your name, Miss, and your origin and destination?” said the man after ordering his dinner.

“I am Pauline Spurtridge. I come from Boston. My destination is Pacific Heights.”

“The ends of the earth!” the man exclaimed. “May I ask what brings a lovely, and presumably cultured, Bostonian such as yourself on such a remarkable journey?”

“Oh, I am of an adventuresome disposition,” said Pauline, “and they are in need of school-teachers. I shall be instructing high-school students in the rudiments, and perhaps also the finer points, of English grammar and composition.” She smiled and said nothing of what was to be her second occupation, that of a lady companion at the Victoria and Albert Club. “And may I, in turn, ask *your* name, origin, and destination?”

“I am Mark Ruckaby, a manager in the organization of this excellent railroad. I have come from our offices in New York City and Albany, and now I am pressing on to Chicago. You must be aware that, as New York is the capital of finance, Washington of government, and Boston of culture, so Chicago has become the capital of railroads.”

"I have heard as much, though I know little of railroads. This is my first transcontinental journey."

"I would be more than pleased to accompany you as far as Chicago, if you will permit me."

"Certainly, sir. It would be a pleasure." Pauline gave Mr. Ruckaby her biggest, sweetest smile, sure that he would wish to accompany her to the sleeping car that very night.

He did indeed accompany her there, after conversing with her about seemingly almost all things in heaven and on earth. One subject, however, he did not touch upon until he and Pauline were safely in her sleeping compartment with the door locked. They were sitting upon the bed, still clothed, but Pauline was clutching her excited member between her thighs.

"I have heard," he said, "some very remarkable things about the Far West. It is said, you know, that many—er—female impersonators have fled there, where men abound but women are still scarce, in hope of gaining greater acceptance than in the more prudish sectors of the East."

"Is that so indeed?" Pauline's heart thundered in excitement, and yet in fear. Had this man detected her secret, upon so little acquaintance with her? She had trained her voice, she knew, to sound perfectly feminine, and her face had been indiscernible from that of a pretty girl since childhood. Was it her figure? Her shoulders were narrow for a man, yet broad for a woman, and her hips lacked the delectable swelling of a natural-born woman's hips. And if this man had seen through her costume, what might happen when she was teaching school, when it was of the utmost importance that her secret should not be known?

"I believe it is so," said Mr. Ruckaby. "And I have it upon personal knowledge that some female impersonators are quite indistinguishable from the loveli-

est of women—except in regard to a certain something discreetly concealed beneath their skirts.”

“Er—how remarkable!” said Pauline. “I take it, then, that you have been—shall I say—intimately acquainted with some such female impersonators?”

“I have,” he said, “most intimately indeed.” He gazed straight into Pauline’s eyes at close range. “And I dare say I would not be completely surprised to learn, if I *were* to learn, that I have just made the acquaintance of one more.”

“Oh, dear!” Pauline cried out. “Sir, is my secret really so flimsily concealed as all that?”

“It is not,” he assured her. “Only a true connoisseur such as myself, I am confident, could discern it—at least without an exploration such as this.”

Mr. Ruckaby put one arm around Pauline. With the other, he pushed her skirt up. She did not resist him. Soon his hand was between her thighs, stroking her member through her drawers.

“Ah, yes,” he said. “Oh, this is of the finest! No, from your looks I do not think I could have discerned your secret. It was only from your flirtatiousness, upon first meeting me, that I guessed. Few natural-born women, I believe—except for those of the baser sort, which you quite obviously were *not*—I mean that very few, if any, few decent and dignified natural-born women would have been so obviously eager for male companionship at first sight.”

“I have been so from an early age,” Pauline admitted. She brought her hand up to join his own at the junction of her thighs. “My first full encounter with a man occurred when I was 18 years of age, but I dreamed of feminine loveliness and intimacy with a man for years before that. When I was as young as 13—or perhaps even 12, if I recall correctly—I was secretly pretending to have intimate encounters with a boy, pretending to be his lady love in strictest solitude.”

“How delightful!” said Mr. Ruckaby. “Dare I ask if you have ever kissed a man’s virile member?”

"I have," said Pauline. Eliot had permitted her to kiss his member upon occasion, and had ejected sperm into her mouth, but he had never returned the favor. Before that, she had knelt before several men and kissed their members until they ejected sperm, with her own member clutched between her thighs and ejecting sperm in hiding.

"If you will kiss mine," Mr. Ruckaby said, "I will then explore beneath your skirt and return the favor. Will you?"

"I will, and gladly." Pauline knelt before him as he unbuttoned his trousers to expose his member. It was at least as long as her own and much stouter, with a plum-like bulb. Pauline kissed it, delicately at first, and then with increasing fervor, opening her wide mouth to receive his bulb in its entirety. Her fingers caressed his shaft as he began to thrust, making her head bob back and forth as she kissed and licked his bulb all around. Soon he was gasping with delight, and his sperm was emerging into Pauline's welcoming mouth.

"Oh, my dear Pauline, that was most delightful!" Mr. Ruckaby said, as Pauline discreetly spit out his sperm into a kerchief. "Please, quickly, before the excitement of the moment has left me, bend over on the bed, and let me return the favor!"

Pauline complied at once, turning her back on Mr. Ruckaby and supporting herself on the bed with her arms, while her buttocks were raised and her legs extended almost straight to the floor. He dived beneath her skirt, pulled down her drawers, and knelt behind her. Her member, extending below her buttocks behind her thighs, was soon engulfed in his mouth. He pulled it upward, forcing her to lie face flat on the bed, and kissed it vigorously, moving his head back and forth in rapid rhythm. "Oh, sir, you are exciting me beyond belief!" Pauline cried out. Her hips were vibrating in a most unladylike manner, and her sperm emerged into Mr. Ruckaby's mouth in fast, frantic spurts as she reached the apex of ecstasy.

“Oh, my dear Pauline!” he said when he could speak. “This was an act of unbelievable beauty! May I now sleep with you in the nude?”

“You may,” Pauline said.

They entered the nude and lay down together, Mr. Ruckaby behind Pauline, with his hands on her breasts. He was not yet exhausted, and his member was soon erect again. Pauline’s member, too, was soon rigid between her legs. She reached between her member and her thigh to pull his member through, pressing it into the tight gap that served as her womanly entryway, which Eliot had entered so often. Their second climax was less dramatic than the first, but Mr. Ruckaby still had sperm to spend, and before long it was spurting into Pauline’s hand in front of her junction. Pauline herself had little sperm remaining, but every bit of it drained out onto Mr. Ruckaby’s thighs behind her own, while her buttocks moved in waves like the ocean deep.

They slept soundly together and awoke in the morning. Pauline was refreshed, but still felt the effect of the past evening’s exhaustion. They dressed and ate a pleasant breakfast together in the dining car, still conversing on everything that came to mind. When they reached Chicago, Mr. Ruckaby gave Pauline his business card, and implored her to see him again when she was in that city. Then he was gone, and Pauline was left alone to change trains again.

Not until the connecting train had left Chicago, and the immensity of Pauline’s endeavor stared her straight in the face, did the black reaction set in—as it always did, sooner or later, after she had indulged to excess in erotic delights. Now the very thought of such indulgence seemed worthless, or far worse. She had no erotic feelings at all, and she wished she might never have them again, if possible—but she knew it to be impossible. Sooner or later those feelings would creep up on her again; her nipples would rise, her member would lengthen, her heart would beat harder—and all for what?

She did not know. She feared it was all for nothing. This was the worst of it, and this time the black reaction did not soon recede. Darkness came, and Pauline re-entered the sleeping car; she looked out the window of the train and saw nothing, absolutely nothing. Was this all that lay ahead of her in life—and, after that, in death? The pursuit of erotic satisfaction had practically been Pauline's whole purpose in life since she was 13, if not 12; all matters of education and employment had been secondary to that. When she was old, and erotic delights meant nothing to her any more, would she go mad for lack of any purpose in life? Even before that, would she slump almost lifeless into the slough of despond, for want of purpose beyond brief, evanescent ecstasy?

She must not think so. She must get a grip on herself, her *whole* self, not merely her nipples and her member. Alas, an appalling thought was gripping her, and would not let her go: if her whole self must be gripped, how could anything remain of her to grip it? Could she be at once both gripped and gripper? Even if she could, what if she lost her grip?

Thoughts as absurd as this, and worse, plagued Pauline through the sparsely populated immensity of the Great Plains, through the lonely Rocky Mountains, through the wheat fields, pastures, and apple orchards of the eastern region of Pacificum. Only when she was passing through the last long tunnel, under the last range of mountains before her destination, did she muster enough self-control to proceed with the plan she had set out for herself.

Chapter 2

"I may get off to a slow start as a lady companion here, I fear," Pauline said to Sir Arnold Bathwright in his office at the Victoria and Albert Club, directly across from the Seaview County Courthouse in Pacific Heights. "You see, I happened to over-indulge in erotic delights with a gentleman I knew in Boston, and then with another gentleman I met on the train between Albany and Chicago. It has been taking me a while to recover from the effects of the over-indulgence."

“That is more than understandable, my dear,” said the bald-headed, aging gentleman with a strong British accent. “I am sure you will do very well here. You are even lovelier than your photograph made you appear—and a lady who can take advantage of a casual encounter on a train, in order to indulge in the conduct that is a speciality of our lady companions, is exactly the sort of lady we most desire. You will be glad to note that vulgar expressions such as *‘female impersonator’* are not here applied to our lady companions with special secrets beneath their skirts, such as ordinary ladies do not possess. You will be treated as a lady like any other; only a discreet code in your listing, in our pictorial directory of lady companions, will mark you as out of the ordinary.”

“That is exactly as I would wish,” said Pauline.

Sir Arnold then escorted her to the studio in which she would pose for her photograph in the pictorial directory. “That is precisely the thing,” he said when she posed. “The impeccable pompadour, the bright and daring-looking blue eyes, the full and eminently kissable lips, the high-necked blouse with the most delicate suggestion of the possibility of removing it, the dark and dignified skirt, which yet might be swiftly pulled up or slipped down for the delectation of a member of the club—all this will mark you as a lady companion of the first water.”

“I hope to assume my duties soon,” said Pauline. On hearing Sir Arnold’s compliments, she had found her erotic feelings beginning to return at last, and she felt she could indeed do her duties soon. “But first, I believe, I should begin my daytime employment as a school-teacher at Rutland Ridge High School.”

“Very well,” said Sir Arnold. “This is rather daring of you, you know. The principal of that school, Donald Buckworthy, is a fine man, and a member of this club—but some of the students, I am given to understand, are rather rough characters. They would not take kindly, I imagine, to discovering a so-called female impersonator passing as a female teacher, if that were ever to occur.”

“You do not think it *will* occur, I trust?” Pauline asked. A sudden shiver of fear overcame her.

“I do not,” Sir Arnold assured her. “Your figure is tall and slender, yet not unfeminine; your face, your voice, your dress, and your whole bearing proclaim you to be a true lady of the finest quality. I do not expect your secret to be discovered, except when you voluntarily disclose it.”

“I certainly hope you are right.”

A genuine rough frontier town would not have electric streetcars, Pauline imagined as she rode the streetcar out to Rutland Ridge, near the northwestern edge of Pacific Heights. Indeed, she had read, the streetcars not only were used here but were actually manufactured here by the Magnum Electric Company, the city’s largest employer. Just as she had told Eliot, Pauline had come to a bustling metropolis—still small by comparison with the great cities of the East, but growing rapidly, and bidding fair to enjoy every modern convenience.

Pauline arrived at the high school, a new-looking brick building on Rutland Road, up which the streetcar line ran. In the principal’s office she met Mr. Buckworthy, a tall, still young-looking man with a full head of reddish-brown hair and a mustache to match.

“Miss Spurtridge!” he greeted her. “Say, it’s grand to meet you in person. I’ve been looking forward to meeting you ever since I got your glowing, enthusiastic reference letter from Mr. Oswell.” Pauline smiled. Her former headmaster at Brimwell Academy, Ralston Oswell, had been most helpful to her—not least in writing of her as “Pauline” and “Miss Spurtridge.” Paul Spurtridge, a slender, long-haired young man of aesthetic taste and effeminate demeanor who had taught at Brimwell for several years, would never have dared to try to pass as a female there.

Mr. Buckworthy showed her around the school, advised her about policies and procedures, and gave her helpful hints. Finally he gave her a key and told her, "You may not need this often, but it will be very helpful in case you ever do. This is the key to your bullwhip drawer. Have you ever wielded a bullwhip?"

"Er—no, I have not."

He unlocked the drawer and showed her a large, fearsome-looking bullwhip. "I'd suggest you get in some practice with it before the students arrive tomorrow," he said. "Most of them are well-disciplined, but some are not. You may need to show your skill with a bullwhip on occasion, to keep the ill-disciplined ones in line. Here, stand out of the way and let me show you."

He raised the whip and cracked it hard. An empty student's desk shuddered at the impact. "Now you try it," he said. Pauline cracked the whip against the desk, but it did not shudder.

"It takes practice," Mr. Buckworthy told her. "You'll get used to it. Now, the trickiest maneuver is to wind the whip around a recalcitrant student, and then use it to fling the student sprawling. That one takes considerable practice, and of course you can't practice it on the students, but you can practice it on a wastebasket, like this." He placed a wastebasket upon a desk, stood back, and whipped. Sure enough, the whip curled around the basket; Mr. Buckworthy then yanked the whip hard, and the basket flew off the desk, making a great crash as it fell.

"You should try to master that one if you can, for it has the most impressive effect in showing your control over bad students," said Mr. Buckworthy, "but often a bit of brute-force whipping will suffice, like this." He raised the whip and flogged the desk repeatedly.

"Well, I'll leave you to your practice," he said. "Just lock the door of the classroom when you go out, and we'll see you here bright and early tomorrow."

Mr. Buckworthy left Pauline alone to practice with the whip. She practiced long and hard, imagining



that she was fighting off a monstrosly vile student who was trying to lift her skirt, pull down her drawers, and reveal her secret. By the end of the afternoon she had gained considerable skill, the desk was shuddering repeatedly, and occasionally the wastebasket was even flying off the desk.

“Good morning, class,” Pauline said to the assembled students in her classroom the next morning. “I am Miss Spurtridge, and I shall be your teacher for English grammar and composition.” She surveyed the classroom quickly with her eyes. The students toward the front of the room, mostly girls, seemed attentive; those toward the back, mostly boys, did not. She quickly picked out the worst-looking of the lot, a large, stout, dark-haired, loutish-looking youth whose dark eyes seemed to radiate defiance. Only once, in her years at Brimwell under the name of Mr. Spurtridge, had she had such a rotten-looking student. He had been expelled for openly indulging in self-pollution in the classroom.

“We will begin by taking roll,” Pauline announced. She read off the students’ names and they answered “Here.” She took special note of the bad-looking lout’s name, Frank Scuggotts. He lazily, insolently scanned Pauline up and down with his eyes before answering, “That’s me.” She did not correct him and require him to say “That is I,” as she might have done at Brimwell.

“Very well, class,” she said after the roll call was completed. “Today we shall start with an easy exercise. You are to write a short essay entitled ‘What I Did on My Summer Vacation.’ If you have any questions, just raise your hand and I will come around to your desk. Be sure to write your name at the top of the page. When you have finished writing, bring your essay to my desk.”

“Teacher, I got a question,” said Frank Scuggotts almost at once.

“Yes, Frank?” said Pauline. She moved toward his desk at the back of the room, expecting that he might

need to look up some fairly easy word in the dictionary.

“How do you spell ‘*impersonator*’?”

Pauline jerked involuntarily in fear as she walked. Exercising the most rigid self-control, she kept moving, dictionary in hand, just as if he had asked how to spell some far less offensive word. In vain did her brain rush to supply innocuous explanations of why Frank might wish to spell that dreaded word. Her will had no power at all to stop her galloping heart, her deeply labored breathing, her shaking limbs.

“Frank, here is the dictionary,” Pauline said. She gasped for breath with open mouth, hoping against hope that her gasp was inaudible. “You may look up that word for yourself.”

“Nah, I ain’t too good at looking up words in the dictionary,” he said. “You spell it for me. You *gotta* know how to spell it.” The bad boy was actually leering at her, with lewdness oozing from his eyes and his mouth.

Pauline swallowed hard. “Very well,” she said, trying her hardest to pretend nothing was amiss. She spelled the word, and he laboriously wrote it down. “I knew you’d know how,” he said.

Pauline walked back up to the front of the room with her narrow hips swaying in their most feminine manner. A boy wolf-whistled at her, and other boys broke out in laughter. Pauline reached her desk and collapsed into her chair.

Frank Scuggotts was the first student to finish. He leered and swaggered as he brought his essay up and placed it directly in front of Pauline. She could not force her eyes away from it. It said only this: “I did some sinnin with a female impersonator that was a teacher. She aint a teacher no more.”

Pauline’s brow broke out in sweat, but she dared not apply a handkerchief to it. Her last faint hope, but one, demanded to be heard: had there really been another teacher, another “female impersonator,” who had been discharged for misconduct with Frank?