

Sweet Charity



Cynthia Leigh

A "Spectrum TV" Novel

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By Cynthia Leigh

Public Assistance

“I. . . I beg your pardon?” Jaye stared at his inquisitor, a rather plain and overweight but forceful older blonde woman who was sitting across the desk from him, writing busily. “I’m afraid I don’t quite understand your question.”

“Are you married, divorced, or separated, legally or otherwise?” she repeated testily. “Did you ever live with anyone for sex? That should be plain enough!”

Jaye blushed and dropped his eyes in shame. “No, I’m none of those.”

“Single,” she wrote. “Do you have anyone living with you at present, like a husband, boyfriend, lover, Significant Other, live-in, whatever?” she persisted.

“Oh, for goodness sake!” Jaye exploded, “No! I’m not living with someone and I certainly wouldn’t be sleeping with a man if I were!” he squeaked, outraged.

She gazed at him steadily, hostilely. “I shouldn’t make any bets on that! I have seen scads of pretty

boys like you with male husbands!" she muttered hotly, obviously disbelieving him.

"Well, I don't!" he exclaimed, suddenly aware of his more than handsome face.

"Are you now pregnant, or have you ever been pregnant?" she continued without looking up.

"My God!" Jaye exploded indignantly. "Of course not! I'm not a female!"

"No," she wrote mechanically. "May I remind you that I'm only asking the questions I'm required to ask by law? Now then, do you have any dependents under the age of five?"

Jaye was plainly chastened by her words and answered woodenly. "N-no. . ."

"None." She made another notation on the paper. "Do you have any under twelve years of age?" she asked.

"Wh-what?" he croaked in disbelief.

"Have you any children under twelve years of age?" she repeated laconically.

"No, I don't," he replied. "I have already told you that I'm not married," he explained.

"What does that have to do with anything?" she demanded pointedly. "All you have to do is have relations with a virile male to get pregnant!" she continued, "What marketable skills do you have? Where have you worked before?"

"I . . . I haven't," he admitted, blushing. "I just graduated from University last month and I haven't found a job yet. That's why I'm here. I find that I'm in need of temporary financial assistance to survive. My savings are exhausted."

"Then you have no job experience?" she asked dully.

He shook his head. "No."

"None." She scribbled hastily and shook her head. "I do believe that about covers it," she sighed, leaning back in her chair. "I am afraid we cannot assist you

for at least forty-five days, Jayce. . .” She pronounced it “Jay-cee.”

“What?” he asked incredulously. “But. . . but. . . why not?” he demanded.

She gazed at him frostily, her black eyes hostile.

“Frankly, you just don’t fit our requirements for any basic familial assistance. You are not a pregnant, minority, under-aged female with dependent children, nor are you of any minority, involuntarily unemployable, non-relocatable faction. In short, you do not have a qualifying disability of any sort!” She giggled, “Well, you are a white male who is under twenty-one, which could be construed as a gross handicap in your case!”

“That’s not a bit funny!” he snarled, his voice rising angrily, as it always did when he was angry.

“Please control your temper, Jayce,” she warned testily. “I’ll not tolerate any disruptive outbursts nor negative attitudes. This is not some barroom where you may brawl at your leisure! Please, control yourself, dearest!” she repeated.

“I’m sorry, Miss. . . Mrs. . . er. . .,” he stammered, blushing brightly.

“It’s Ms., Ms. Marcie Jackson,” she frowned.

“I. . . I’m sorry, Ms. Jackson,” he apologized abjectly. “And, I’m ‘Jayceee.’, not ‘Jayce’ (Jay-Cee),” he explained. “It’s on my application.”

“What?” She glanced at the form, then back at him. “An honest mistake.” She waved her hand, dismissing his protest airily. “At any rate, as I have said, even in your rather unique circumstances, there’s absolutely nothing we can do to help you for at least forty-five days, as I explained.”

“But. . . but. . . I’m flat broke! I have no job, no money, nowhere to live, no food, not one single asset to tide me over until I do find work. Nothing!”

“Yes, Jayce (again she pronounced it “Jay-Cee,” much to his annoyance). I can understand but I’m sorry, you just don’t fit into a single one of our categories for dependent aid and the rules are strictly en-

forced after the adverse publicity recently that caused the Department to tighten up and, well.."

"Then what am I to do?" he cried, his eyes overflowing maddeningly with their unspilled tears, his lower lip beginning to quiver uncontrollably. He stared at her in disbelief. "What am I to do? How am I to live until then?"

"I'm sure I don't know, Jayce," she murmured gently.

"I'm flat-assed broke," he exclaimed vehemently.

CHAPTER II

"I'll do anything, . . ."

"I'm flat-assed broke," he repeated dejectedly.

"I heard you the first time," she sneered.

He glared at her fearfully, eyes brimming with tears.

She glared back and he soon dropped his gaze, nonplussed at the intensity of her unblinking stare.

"Wait, I just thought of something," her voice lapsed. Then, "How dependable are you, Jayce?" she asked conspiratorially.

"Extremely, Ms. Jackson!" he declared fervently. "I really do need a job, and I need one desperately!"

"Well. . ." she seemed to pause, thinking, weighing. . . then, "Well, this is entirely beyond my authority but I have this friend at the Employment Bureau who might help you find a temp. . ."

"Oh, I was already there " he interrupted. "They had nothing at all for me. In fact, it was the lady who works there who suggested I try your agency when she couldn't help me."

Her brows arched questioningly. "Please don't interrupt when I am speaking, Jayce," she admonished sternly, holding her hand up to warn him. "It's rude!"

"I'm sorry," he mumbled, blushing and falling into an embarrassed silence.

She went on, "To whom did you speak?"

He fumbled in his coat pocket, pulled out a piece of paper and read, "Mrs. Michelle Johnston. . ."

He looked up and blushed.

"She sure was a pretty broa. . . er, I mean the woman was a very nice Black lady and. . . and. . ." he stuttered in confusion.

"I see." Her voice dripped acid. She picked up her phone, punched in a code and waited a minute. Then, "Hi. It's Marcie at P.A. Is. . .?"

She paused, looked up at Jaye. "Would you wait in the outer office, Jayce? And, please? If you would, close the door behind you."

It was not a request!

She watched as Jaye left the room, noticing with approval his smooth, gliding walk, the obvious sway of almost too-wide hips, the slow, deliberate placement of each foot, toe first, then heel — like a dancer, or a female wearing high heels! He was not very tall, she noted, only about five foot two or so, his weight about one ten or twelve, she judged absently. Why, he even had long hair, his ponytail halfway down his back, and that fit right in with her ideas. . .

"Hi, Michelle, Marcie here. Hey, Girl, do you remember a dopey college grad you saw earlier?"

"I gets lots uh them. Refresh muh memory, girl."

"Five two or so, weight one ten, bangs, blue eyes, pretty and effeminate?"

"Blonde? His ponytail hanging almost to his waist in back?"

"That's the one."

"Nope, never saw him befo' in mah life!"

"He's here now."

"Sure, uh cute fairy named 'Jaime' or something?" Michelle asked.

"Jaye, with a small 'e' at the end."

"Yeah, ah 'member him, the smart-assed little honkey bastard! So, what about him? He's fresh out uh college with no local references. He has no rela-

tives to sponge off and no job. He gots no money, no phone, no 'partment, which means he gots no address neither. He gots nothin' and he *is* nothin'! And I gots nothin' fer him. . . fer *him!*" Michelle repeated., giggling.

"Right, nothing for an unemployed, unmarried twenty-year-old white male, with a college degree?"

"That's it, Babes. You catches on real quick, fer uh white gal!"

"Yeah, I sure do, don't I?"

They both laughed.

After a bit, "But what have you for an unmarried female, high school drop-out, two kids, pregnant, husband or live-in boyfriend, or both, neither working, on welfare, untrained, desperate?"

"Well, let's see: waitress, maid, dish-washer, laundress, motel room cleaning woman, nurse's aide, baby sitter, nanny, mother's helper. . . Why?"

"You did say 'maid,' didn't you?"

"What's with your earpans today, girl?" Michelle laughed good-naturedly. "Sure ah did. Lots uh jobs fer maids. Damn! Ah cu'd use uh hunderd good women and ah still gots more openings for maids than ah cu'd evah handle! So what?"

"Well, we need a maid, don't we?"

"Do we needs uh maid? Do birds fly? Is the Pope Catholic? Are fire engines yellow? You know the answer ta that question, Baby! But what in the pluperfect hell does that have ta do with our little fairy, Josey, Jaime, Jakey, Jerry, or whatever the Hell it is!" Michelle squeaked indignantly.

"Jaye, with a small 'e' at the end."

"Oh, yeah, Jaye with his fucking 'e' at the end! So, what about little Jaye and ah didn't forget to add his fucking little 'e' neither!" she grumbled.

"Well, Jaye with his fucking little 'e' at the end, as you put it, is willing to do almost anything for money. He has no place to go and no relatives. Kiddo, he's made to order for us! Get it? Maid to order. . ."

“Uh ‘guy?’” Michelle’s voice was incredulous. “Hey, Girl, ‘member, we needs uh maid, not uh butler, and we damned sure don’t need no stud. . .”

“I know! I know! Listen, I have a great idea!”

“Let’s have it then. I’m all ears, Girl!”

“What happened to your big tits and fat ass?” Marcie teased.

“You know what ah means, Smart-Ass!” the woman giggled. “What do you have in mind for the little pansy?”

Abruptly, her speech became crisp and articulate.

“Doesn’t Hattie need a cleaning woman at the Majestic?”

“Does the sun rise in the east? They come and go there. You know that!”

“Well, little Jaye with his fucking little ‘e’ at the end, won’t dare tell us ‘no’ because we can put the hurt on him for turning down any job. . . no matter what it is, as long as it’s legitimate!”

“But if it’s not in his line, he wouldn’t be required to take it. So, how in blazes does that change anyth. . .”

“But that’s the beautiful part of the whole thing, Marcie. He’s desperate and he doesn’t have to know that! Not if we don’t tell him, that is”

“Goddess, my pussy’s gushing, Girl!” she exclaimed. “OK. . . go on. . . what else yuh be thinking?”

“We’ll have Hattie assign him to Jolene and. . .”

“Jolene? Our Jolene? Mah Sistuh, Jolene? She don’t like boys — well, most boys — but especially she don’t like smart-assed little college boys! Remember the last one? He only lasted five minutes! She’ll give little Jaye with his ‘e’ nothing but pure-dee hell!”

“That’s tough titty, Kitty! She’ll have him whipped into shape in, I mean, she’ll show him the ropes. I mean, she. . . she. . . oh, nuts, you know what I mean!”

“No, Babes, I don’t know what yuh honkey ass means!” Michelle teased gently. “So, go on, dig yer hole a little deeper...”

“I’ll dig your hole. . .,” Marcie threatened.

“Promises! Promises!” Michelle teased. “Tell me about our new maid!”

“OK, suppose Hattie does assign him to Jolene and suppose we let Jolene know that she has a free hand with his training and suppose he has an accident while working and suppose he has no spare clothes and suppose Jolene bullies him into a dress and suppose if she does, suppose she makes him wear one every day after that? And suppose he’s forced to live there to be available and on-call? And, suppose, if after a couple weeks working every day and not able to look for other work, suppose someone makes a pass at him and suppose they get caught and suppose there’s a big scene and suppose Jolene fires him, and suppose he comes to see us again? And, just suppose. . .”

“Geez, it sounds good to me, so far,” Michelle admitted. “Sounds like you have it all figured out. And suppose we ‘discover’ what he’s been doing for Jolene, and how, and all, and we suggest a full-time maid’s position with us, and. . .”

“Now you got it, Girl!” Marcie enthused. “What do you think?”

“Well, he was quite soft-spoken and subservient when he spoke to me earlier, and he is the right size — smaller than either of us and he is pretty for a li’l white boy and intelligent to boot. I say, ‘Let’s go for it!’”

“Great! Set it up with Hattie and I’ll send her. . . er, him, over. OK?”

“Sure, Sweetie.” Michelle paused momentarily, then, “I love you, Baby,” she whispered tenderly.

“I love you too, Mike,” Marcie replied softly. “Now, hop to it, Girl!”

“As Master orders, so shall it be done,” the woman purred throatily.

“I’ll ‘Master’ you when I get my hands on you, Woman!” Michelle giggled.

“Promises! Promises!” came the throaty rejoinder just before she hung up.

“Marge?” she giggled, pressing her intercom. “Would you please tell Jayce to come back in? Thanks.”

Marcie leaned back in her chair and gazed out the window. “I am woman, hear me roar, in numbers too big to ignore!” she hummed softly as the door opened.

“Ms. Jackson? The girl at the desk. . .” Jaye began.

Marcie glared at him hostilely. “Sit down, Jayce, and listen. I think I might have found a something that’s within your work experience parameters.”

“Great! I’ll do anything!”

“Be quiet! There’s a hotel downtown, The Majestic.”

“Yeah, I stayed there. Nice place. My room was especially clean.”

“Yeah, well, if Hattie hires you, you’ll find out first hand how those rooms get so clean.”

CHAPTER III

“Such a pretty name.”

“Mrs. Harris? Mrs. Hattie Harris? I’m Jaye. I was told to report to you.”

“Such a pretty name. Are you the boy from the labor pool?”

“Yes, Ma’am, only it’s the State Employment Center. . .”

The woman waved her hand in dismissal.

“They’re all the same thing, dearie, all the same.” She took a form from her desk top and wrote something down. “Now then, what experience do you have; cleaning hotel rooms, I mean?”

“Well, my Mother taught me how to do housework when I was a little boy.”

“Great! More boys should learn how!” she enthused. “Are you willing to clean dirty toilets and bathtubs? Are you averse to using vacuum cleaners, mops, dust rags, disinfectants and harsh detergents?”

“No, Ma’am, I have no objections at all.”

“Good. Now, you will have to reside on the premises.”

“That’s all right with me, but why?”

“Well, sometimes we have to have a room cleaned in a hurry and don’t have the time to call someone in from outside.”

“Oh, I see,” he agreed. “Sure. Is it part of my salary?”

“Yes, and your meals are included too. Just see Cook down in the kitchen and she’ll fix you right up.”

“Good. I am sort of hungry.”

“Now you’ll be part of Ms. Jolene’s gang,” the lady mused absently, gazing at Jaye steadily. “She’s strict and demanding but that’s what we pay her for.”

“Ma’am?”

“She has high standards and expects her girls to meet them.”

“Oh,” Jaye giggled. “I’m not a girl.”

“Eh? No matter, you’ll have to measure up anyway. . .”

“I’m sure I won’t have any problem,” Jaye reassured her. “After all, I need the job, so I’ll work extra hard to please.”

Mrs. Harris giggled. “Oh, make no mistake about that!” She rose. “Now, if you’ll walk this way, I’ll show you where you’ll be living and I’ll introduce you to Jolene.”

“If I could walk that way, I wouldn’t need the talcum.” Jaye giggled.

“Eh? What?”

“Oh, nothing,” Jaye murmured quickly, blushing furiously.

CHAPTER IV

“Jolene?” Mrs. Harris began, “This is Jaye C.”

“Glad to have yuh aboard, Jayce,” the black woman greeted curtly. “Do yuh gots any ‘sperience?”

She pronounced it Jay-Cee too, much to Jaye’s utter disgust, but he held his tongue. After all, he needed this job!

“Yes, Ma’am, only it’s Jaye.”

“Hunh?”

“My name,” he explained. “It’s Jaye C., not Jay-Cee.”

“Oh.” The woman was obviously unimpressed. “Yuh gots any ‘sperience?”

“No, not really,” he admitted. “But I do know housework.”

“No,” she mimicked, “but he do know housework! Big deal! I’ll find out in a helluva hurry, *boy*,” she muttered.

“I’ll leave you with Ms. Jolene, Jayce,” Hattie smiled. “She’ll show you the ropes. You’re on the payroll now!”

They watched her swaying bottom as she hurried off about her business.

“Goddess! The things they expect me to work with!” Jolene sputtered. “Now I have to teach men!” She glared angrily at Jaye for a moment. “Well, come on, I ain’t got all day. Grab your cart.”

She pointed at a nearby maid’s cart.

“Sure, Jolene,” Jaye agreed. “Just show me what you want.”

“That’s Ms. Jolene, to you, Buster,” the woman snarled, “and you work for me, *boy*, and don’t you ever forget it!”

“Yes, Ma’am,” Jaye backpedaled quickly. No use antagonizing her needlessly.

“Are those all the clothes you own?” Jolene sneered, indicating his well-worn jeans and plaid shirt.

He nodded. “Well, yes, but. . .”

“Humph!” she snorted. “Well, come on anyway.”

CHAPTER V

“Are you the cook?” Jaye asked the grossly fat woman nervously.

“Yeah. So what?”

“I was told to see you and you’d give me something to eat,” he explained.

“Oh, yeah, and you’d be the new housemaid, Jayce, right?”

“Yes, only it’s Jaye C., not Jayce.”

“Whatever. Ya wan’ sum’tin tuh eat, doncha?” she demanded.

“Yes, Ma’am,” he agreed.

“Then it’s Jayce,” she chuckled triumphantly, indicating a nearby table.

Defeated, Jaye sat and waited.

Several minutes later, she shoved a full plate in front of him and he began eating immediately. Whatever it was, it sure tasted good to his hungry stomach!

He paid no attention when someone else sat down and began to eat. A gentle, Oriental voice interrupted his concentration. “Excuse me?”

“Yes?” he demanded crossly, looking up. Then he blushed and stared into the deepest black eyes he had ever seen.

“May I have the pepper?”

Jaye stared unabashedly, mesmerized by her beautiful eyes.

“May I have the pepper?” she repeated, smiling quizzically.

“Hunh? Oh, sure.” Jaye passed her the container.

“Thank you,” the girl whispered. “You must be the new maid.”

“Yes,” he agreed softly. “I’m Jaye.”

“Yes, I know.”

“Oh? And you are. . . ?”

“I’m the bus boy,” she explained, laughing at the incongruity.

Jaye giggled. “That’s something, isn’t it?”

“What?”

“They hire a boy to be a maid and a girl to bus tables.”

The girl smiled. “Yes, strange!” She held her small hand out to his. “Hi, I’m Mitzu Maksuki, but my friends all call me Missy.”

“Hi, Missy. My real name’s Jaye C., but everyone calls me Jayce, so I guess I’m stuck with it.”

“Jayce. . .,” she whispered, pronouncing it softly, slurring the vowels in an Oriental manner, sending shivers up and down his spine. “It suits you,” she murmured softly.

In spite of himself, Jaye blushed deeply.

“How do you find the work?” Missy asked politely.

“He don’t find it,” Cook interjected, sliding dessert from a tray, “it’ll cum tuh him. Jolene sees ta that!”

Jaye blushed and ignored Cook’s jibe. “It’s all right. Nothing I can’t do,” he admitted. “Although Ms. Jolene’s quite a martinet.”

“A what?”

“Martinet, you know, like a slave driver.”

“Oh, like a Simon Legree?”

Jaye grinned. “Yeah, exactly, except no whip. . . at least, not yet,” he quipped cattily.

“Whip?”

“Yeah, you know, Simon Legree.”

“Oh, I see. . . I think. . .”

“Yeah, well, look, I got to get back to work. Ms. Jolene only gave me half an hour to eat,” he smiled apologetically.

Missy grinned back. “Look, I live on the eleventh floor. Why don’t you stop in after work? I get off at three.”

“Great! I’m off at two.”

“See you then.”

A shy smile and she was gone.

“Better getsa wiggle on, *boy*,” Cook admonished. “That Jolene woman, she sure don’t like to be kept waitin’!”

Jaye grinned wryly. “Don’t I know it!” He stood, started for the door, then turned back. “Thank you, Ma’am. That was good!”

“Aw, yer only sayin’ that ‘cause it’s true!” the woman waved airily, secretly pleased. “Get on with you, now!”

Laughing softly, Jaye said, “Got.”

CHAPTER VI

“Yuh missed a spot.”

Jaye straightened up, stretching the soreness from his tired muscles, fingers pressing the small of his back gratefully.

“Hunh?” he asked, distracted.

“You’ll just have to do it again,” Ms. Jolene ordered, her finger pointing to the gleaming tiles in the shower. “There’s dirt in those cracks!”

Dutifully, Jaye sprayed the whole area with the scrubbing foam, waited for it to stop foaming, then washed it off carefully. “Is that better, Ms. Jolene?”



She crowded in beside him, her finger pads caressing the tiles sensuously as the sound of her scratching nails made him shiver.

He watched as she curled her wrists and inspected her pads minutely. Then, "Lots better, *boy*."

Jaye felt a surge of relief at her words, thankful he'd passed.

"Yer comin' along, *boy*," she praised. "Damned if'n yer not 'most good's mah uthra gurls a'reddy. Keep it up 'n ya'll gets yer firs' raise yet."

"Thank you, Ms. Jolene," Jaye replied politely. "I'm just trying to do a good job for you. . . er, I mean, the hotel, of course. . ."

"Well, well, ain't you the sweetest one now?" she teased. "Finish them beds and you're done for the day, y'hear?"

"Yes, Ma'am," he replied. He watched as she walked away, hips swaying with a sexy rotation that excited him.

"Yes, Ma'am," he repeated softly.

Some minutes later, Jaye had stowed his cart in the maids' closet and was on his way to the kitchen. As he passed the dining area, he saw that Missy was hard at work.

Feeling sorry for her, he entered, took a pan and began to bus tables. Missy grinned her appreciation and redoubled her efforts. Soon, the final table was wiped and they carried the dishes into the kitchen.

The dish washer cocked his grizzled eyes at them and smiled crookedly. "That about it, Missy, Jay-Cee, *girl*?" he asked insolently.

Missy nodded. "For now," she answered.

"Better be," came the snarled reply. "I gets off in ten minutes."

"Oh, Oscar," Missy whispered, "We'll finish up for you. We don't have to do anything else tonight. . ."

"Well, if'n I ain't done on time, I'll letcha finish up, OK?"

Missy smiled. "Jayce and I'll be happy to help you, Oscar."

They went to the kitchen table and sat down to rest.

"You kids hongry?" Cook asked shortly.

"Yes, I am," Missy admitted shyly.

"Me too," Jaye added just as shyly.

"Wash yer hands then, 'n I'll feed yuh," the woman admonished.

Obediently, the two young persons wet to the sink, washed thoroughly, wiped their wet hands on handy paper towels, and returned to the table.

Cook brought two plates and glared at them suspiciously. "Ya'd better lemmie see them grimy paws uh yer'n," she ordered.

Giggling, they held their hands out like small children, palms up.

Cook examined the two pairs of hands, then snapped, "Over!"

They turned their hands and held them up again.

"Guess they'll do. . . fer now," the woman admitted grudgingly. "But I ain't agonna tell yuh ever time!"

"Yes, Ma'am," Jaye whimpered, chastened.

"Yes, Ma'am," Missy echoed shyly.

The two children ate hungrily, consuming everything on their plates.

"Yuh wan' more?" Cook asked incredulously.

Missy shook her head. "None for me, Ma'am. I have to watch my figure."

"I'd like more," Jaye announced.

"Wouldn't do yuh no harm tuh watch yer own figger, Kid," she snapped.

Jaye flushed. "Why? No one cares about mine."

"No man's gonna care neither, if'n yuh don'!" the woman retorted.

“A man? Who cares what any man might think?”
Jaye asked, startled.

The woman laughed. “Other gurls do.”

“But I’m not female,” Jaye protested, face reddening even more.

“Whut’s that got to do with anythin’?” she demanded querulously.

Jaye was reminded of the questions in Ms. Jackson’s office and he blushed. “I am not a girl,” he repeated. “And I don’t care what men think of my figure!”

“That’s whut all the li’l fairies say,” the woman muttered.

“Never mind, Jayce,” Missy soothed. “I know what you mean.”

“Hey, I’m off until morning. What say we watch some TV?” Jaye proposed

“Sure. What’s on?”

“Beats me, but we’ll find something. Come on!” Jaye grasped Missy’s fingers in his and pulled her from the bench.

“Yuh kids mine yerse’fs upstairs,” Cook warned. “That Ms. Jolene woman don’t ‘low no monkey business up there!”

“We won’t,” Jaye laughed.

“See ‘at yuh don’ neither!”

But they were already gone.

CHAPTER VII

“But, I’ve already finished room 6-B,” Jaye complained softly.

“It didn’t pass my inspection,” Jolene snapped peevishly.

“What’s wrong with it?” Jaye persisted.

“The tub tiles’re filthy!”

“Filthy? But. . .”

“Look, just do as I tell you, OK?”

“Yes, Ma’am,” Jaye sighed, retracing his steps to room 6-B. “Damn tub tiles! It’s always the damn tub tiles!” Jaye muttered under his breath.

“What’re you muttering about, *boy?*” Jolene demanded.

“I said, ‘it’s always the tub tiles’,” Jaye repeated.

“Do them right the first time and I won’t find dirt,” she snarled. “Why? Do you think I’m picking on you, *boy?*”

“Oh, no, Ma’am,” he hastened to reassure her. Secretly, he did think she was finding fault with his work when there was none to find.

Kneeling by the tub, he ran enough water to cover the bottom, then sprayed a liberal coating of foaming cleanser on the offending tiles. He scrubbed them as thoroughly as possible, paying closer attention to the cracks between the tiles, where Ms. Jolene always found fault.

He was leaning over the tub, his cloth wiping the tiles clean, when Ms. Jolene leaned over him, her fingers streaking the clean tiles. Her breasts pressed into Jaye’s face when he turned to her and he started involuntarily.

“Still no good enough,” she told him.

Jaye looked at the tile where she was pointing, his face brushing across her stiffened nipples accidentally. Jaye started and jerked back. He tried to catch his balance, but started to fall instead.

“Watch it, *boy!*” Ms. Jolene admonished, then she deliberately tripped him and Jaye felt himself falling. He tried for balance, his fingers grabbing into her bulging blouse front! There was a sharp ripping sound and he fell right into the waiting tub of soapy water. . .

SPLASH!

To add insult to injury, Ms. Jolene fell right atop him! Jaye squirmed about beneath the woman, getting soaked in the process. Ms. Jolene lay quietly on him, her breath soft and sweet against his cheek.

“Oh, Ms. Jolene!” he squeaked. “I’m all wet!”

“Yeah, and clumsy too, *boy*,” she commented sarcastically.

“But. . . but. . . you tripped me!” Jaye protested.

“I what?” Ms. Jolene screeched in outrage.

“You tripped me,” Jaye repeated.

“Why, you insolent little puppy!” Ms. Jolene snarled, “I should skin you right out of those wet pants and spank you good for that!”

“But you *did!*” Jaye persisted. “I felt you!”

“What you felt, Boy,” Ms. Jolene sneered, “was me trying to catch you! Why in Hell would I want to push you?”

“I don’t know,” Jaye admitted reluctantly, ashamed of his accusations.

“Well, finish this tub, and let’s get on with it. You have five or six more rooms to do yet.”

“Yes, Ma’am.” Quickly, Jaye flushed the tub and polished the chrome.

Jolene nodded her acceptance and turned to go, Jaye right behind her.

Out in the hallway, Ms. Jolene cocked her head. “What’s that noise?”

Jaye listened. “I don’t hear anything.”

“That sloshing noise,” she explained. “Sounds like wet, squishy shoes.”

“Oh, that’s me,” Jaye admitted sheepishly. “My shoes got soaked too.”

“Well, come along then,” Ms. Jolene sighed. “I can’t have you catching cold, not while you’re working for me, *boy*. Bad for business.”

Obediently, Jaye followed Ms. Jolene to the maids’ closet. She riffled two or three piles of clean clothing, then pulled several items from the piles and gave them to Jaye. “Here, these’ll hold you until yours’re washed and dried.”