

THE MAFIA MARRIAGE CAPER

LAUREL GALEN



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AN 'ADULT TV' NOVEL

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THE MAFIA MARRIAGE CAPER

By LAUREL GALEN

CHAPTER 1

Detective Ed Miller was really apprehensive. He had received a call the previous evening at home and had been told to report to the office of Division Captain Armstrong the first thing in the morning. He was not told why, and when he had asked, he had been cut short by the caller, Armstrong's secretary, Sarah Fitzgerald, a civilian employee.

“Just be there at eight o'clock,” she said, and hung up.

He racked his brains as he sat there...had he done anything to bring censure on himself? As far as he knew, his record had not only been clean, but exemplary, having been directly responsible for a number of clean busts during his short career with the vice squad.

Arriving a few minutes early, he looked about himself. The room was barely furnished, with only the secretary's desk and a few straight-backed chairs against the wall. A few pictures on the wall were of the Captain and various dignitaries with whom he had been photographed on their infrequent visits to the division.

As he sat in the Captain's anteroom, the outer door opened, and a man stepped in.

He looked vaguely familiar...another cop, but from a different division.

The newcomer nodded at Ed and took a seat.

As they sat, they surreptitiously sized each other up. Ed saw a well-built individual, with brawny shoulders, a full head of blond hair, blue eyes and a confident bearing. Ed, on the other hand, had mousy brown hair, brown eyes and a slight build which had barely made the minimum height for eligibility for the police force. His generally nondescript appearance had made him perfect for his usual role as an undercover agent with the vice squad, since it enabled him to blend in with almost any kind of group anywhere.

For a while, they sat, each occupied with his own thoughts, until the inner door opened promptly at eight, and Sarah Fitzgerald stepped out.

“Captain Armstrong will see you now,” she said, and sat down behind her desk in the anteroom.

The men rose and entered the Captain's office.

He was sitting behind his desk as they came in, but he rose and came around to the front to meet them as they entered. He shook hands with each of them, greeting them by name... “Detective Miller, Sergeant Ellington...sit down,” pointing to two chairs in front of his desk.

Ed was relieved to see the Captain's friendly smile, indicating that his presence there was not due to any transgression on his part.

The Captain said, “I don't know if you know each other. Detective Ed Miller, this is Detective Sergeant Dave Ellington, from the Hillside Division. you'd better get to know each other really well, because we've got a job coming up for you that will have you working together very closely.”

The two men looked at each other with new eyes, now realizing that their being there together had not been a random meeting in the Captain's office.

The Captain continued, “I'm waiting for someone who should be here any minute now. He'll explain to you what your new assignment will be.”

As he finished speaking, his desk phone rang. He picked up the handset, listened and said, “Send him right in.”

The door opened and a man came entered. He was quietly dressed in a dark suit, conservative tie, and an air of steely competence. He shook hands with the Captain, who introduced him to the two men.

“This is Agent Art Goodman of the FBI...Detectives Miller and Ellington,” indicating which was which.

Turning to the two detectives, the Captain said, “Agent Miller will give you the details of your assignment. I should tell you in advance, that it will be dangerous, and it will be completely voluntary on your parts as to whether you'll be willing to accept it.”

“However, “ he continued, “If you pull it off, there'll be commendations.... and promotions.... waiting for you.”

He turned to Agent Goodman. “Go ahead,” he said.

Agent Goodman looked at the two men, and held them in his stare for several pregnant moments.

“You two have been picked for this job, from all the men in the Police Department here, because the various division heads felt that you had the best qualifications for this job.”

Looking at Goodman, he said, “we've been told that you have made a study of the Mafia for many years, and that you have probably the most encyclopedic knowledge of its members and operations in the country. Would you say that that's the case?” he asked.

The detective flushed and replied, modestly, “I'd like to think so.”

While the FBI agent asked Dave Ellington more questions about his background and experience, Ed asked himself what he was doing here, since his previous work had nothing to do with the Mafia, except peripherally, as it pertained to certain drug arrests.

Finally, Goodman finished questioning Dave, and turned to Ed.

"I've been told that you have exactly the right background for the job we need you for," he said.

Ed replied, "I've been waiting to hear exactly what it is that I can do that fits in with anything having to do with the Mafia."

Looking at him closely, the FBI agent said, "we've got Dave here for the Mafia background. We need you for something else."

Ed thought to himself, "*At last, we're getting to it!*"

The agent continued, "I understand that you've been doing a great job with the vice squad. Would you mind refreshing my memory on some of your work?"

Ed thought for a moment, and replied, "I helped set up several major drug busts."

"How did you accomplish that?"

"I went undercover, got in with some drug pushers, found out their suppliers, and when I found out that a big load of coke was going down, I called in the reserves and we busted `em."

"What else did you work on?"

"Well, I've only been on the Vice Squad a short time, but we got some big dope busts during that time."

"That's still not what I'm interested in... for now! What I want to know is how did you get into Vice?"

Ed began to get a glimmering into which direction the agent was heading and he fell silent.

The agent prompted him. ".....Well?....."

Ed replied hesitantly, "They pulled me out of uniform and put me into Vice because...."

The Captain broke in here, "For Christ's sake, Ed, tell him why we did it!"

Red-faced, Ed replied, "I was ...in ... the ... Prostitution ... Detail."

Impatiently, the agent demanded, "Go on!"

In a rush, Ed blurted out, "They dressed me up as a woman, and I helped bust some Johns who propositioned me on the street!"

"Why did they pick you for the job?"

"I guess, because I'm one of the smallest cops in the division, and they thought I could pass better than most!"

"How'd you do?"

Captain Armstrong broke in again, “He did great! When the word got around, the prostitution problem around that block cleared up, and its stayed clean ever since!”

The agent mused, “You must have made a pretty convincing woman!”

Ed said, “Well, yes, but I couldn't take the ribbing I was taking around here for a while. It stopped after they put me into the Drug Detail.”

The agent said, “The Captain showed me some pictures of you dressed up, and if he hadn't told me otherwise, I would have bet money that you were a woman. How did you do it?”

Ed replied, “Some of the policewomen in the Department taught me make-up, and I got fairly proficient after a while. Anyway, most Johns are so stupid, or horny, that they don't look very close until it's too late, anyway.”

Agent Goodman stood still for a while, looking back and forth between Ed and Dave.

Finally, he broke his silence, and said, “From all indications you two would probably be the best men for the job. The Captain told you earlier that this will be not only a *very* dangerous job, but a really big and important one. I'd like you to know up front what you'll be getting into, so I'll tell you exactly what's going down.”

The FBI agent turned his gaze to Dave. “Have you ever heard of Frankie Mattola?”

Dave replied, “Yes, he's the big man in the Mafia for the West Coast. He runs all the gambling, prostitution and drugs for California, Nevada and Arizona, as well as the big cities in Washington and Oregon. he's also known as “Frankie the Boot”, because of all the guys he's had dumped in the Pacific with their feet in cement.”

“Verrrry Good!” purred the agent. “Now, how about Barney de Rosa?”

“He's from Chicago, and he's just as big there as Mattola is here.”

“Excellent!” said Goodman. Do you happen to know his nickname, too?”

Dave smiled. “he's called Rosie the Nose, because its spread out all over his face. He used to be a boxer in prelims, until he found it was much more lucrative, and a lot less painful, to get into the rackets. Nobody dares call him that to his face!”

Ed, who also knew about Mattola and de Rosa, wondered what the FBI agent was getting at, when the latter sat back on the edge of the Captain's desk and looked at him and Dave with a somber gaze.

“O.K., I'll get to the point now. Mattola's son and de Rosa's daughter are getting married in one month in Palm Springs. Its not only their marriage, but the union of two of the Mafia's biggest and strongest families. Mafioso from all over the country will be coming to the wedding, in one of the biggest gathering of these types in years. You can bet that they will not only be greeting the bride and groom, but making plans for the future.”

“What has that got to do with us?” asked Ed.

“Here's where you come in. We need somebody there on the inside, to listen in on their meetings and get us a step ahead on their plans.”

He looked seriously at Ed and Dave. "You're elected."

Ed and Dave, shocked, looked at each other, and almost simultaneously shouted, "you're crazy!"

"How could we ever get in?"

"We'd never get away with it alive!"

The agent held up his hands to stop their outburst.

"Wait! Let me tell you how we'll work it!"

Having gained their attention, he continued. "With a gathering like this, you can be sure there are going to be piles of expensive gifts for the young couple. The saying may be "There's honor among thieves," but the Mottola's are not depending on it. They've hired an outside security company from Palm Springs to stand guard over the gifts. They've specified a husband-and-wife team, so that the guests would not suspect that there's a certain amount of distrust against light-fingered visitors making off with any presents. The Palm Spring security people reported it to the local police, and the police immediately contacted the local FBI agent in charge."

Ed had a sinking feeling as to which of the two of them would be the "wife" of the security guard husband-and-wife team.

He asked, "Why are the Palm Spring police bringing in outsiders from here? What's wrong with using their own personnel?"

The FBI agent replied, "The Mottola's figure that their people might recognize local people and resent it, and it gives us a great chance to get inside their compound, which we've never before been able to do."

The Captain intervened at this point.

"The FBI came to us and asked us to suggest the best team for the job among our personnel. We suggested you, Dave, because of your knowledge of the Mafia and its workings, and you, Ed, because you were so successful on the job, breaking up those prostitution areas."

Ed protested, "that's easy for you to say, when you talk about fooling some hard-up Johns on a dark street corner, but how would I ever get away with an impersonation for any length of time around smart men and women in a well-lighted room? I wouldn't last an hour!"

The Captain replied, "we've already thought of that! We're going to train you for the job so well that your own mother wouldn't know you."

"Train me!" exclaimed Ed, "What do you mean, Train me!"

Calmly, the Captain went on, "The FBI considers this job so important, they're bringing in a make-up and acting coach from The Hollywood Division, and paying for it. This coach is also extremely proficient in the martial arts, who'll give you some training in that too, just in case it turns out that you need it in an emergency."

The agent put in another word, "Please understand that this is an extremely important assignment, and we admit that it will be a potentially dangerous one. It's impor-

tant because if we can get some inside information on these bad guys, it will be a big boost in law enforcement, and it may help put some of these lice away for a while.”

Captain Anderson added, grimly, “... Because of the dangers, this is strictly a voluntary assignment ... you don't *have* to take it. But if you do, and it comes off as planned, there are promotions in it for both of you.”

Ed and Dave looked at each other.

Ed asked, “How much time have we got to think it over?”

The FBI agent replied, “Twenty-four hours! The wedding will be taking place in less than 30 days. you've got to be completely “trained” and confident by then, and Dave here has to be brought completely up to date on the present situation and organization in the Mafia, so that what you two learn can be as useful as possible!”

The Captain finished up the meeting by saying, “This may be the biggest and most important assignment you'll ever have, so give it as much thought as you can, and report back here tomorrow morning with your answer. Take the rest of the shift off.”

Both men stood up, saluted the Captain, and shook hands with Agent Goodman and left his office.

As they passed through the anteroom, the secretary looked up and said, “Good luck in whatever the job is.”

Dave replied for both of them, “Thanks, we'll probably need it.”

As they made their way through the squad room to the entrance of the precinct building, both men were silent, wrapped up in their thoughts.

At the front of the building, they shook hands.

“Quite an assignment,” said Dave Ellington, “Are you going to accept it?”

“We've got 24 hours to think it over, haven't we? Believe me, I'm going to consider it from all angles before I decide!”

They shook hands again, and parted, each walking off in a different direction.

CHAPTER 2

As Ed made his way from the Station to his car, parked on the next block, his thoughts were racing through his head like a whirlwind. While he realized that this assignment was a possible doorway to advancement in his field, he remembered, cringing mentally, the taunts that had been thrown his way during the period when he had been working the Prostitution Detail of the vice squad. As with most cops, the gibes were usually good-natured, but there were several hard-nosed rednecks, who believed that the fact that his work involved dressing in feminine clothes meant that there was a homosexual facet to his character, and treated him with some degree of contempt.

These were the ones who refused to lay off, until he had finally erupted, and after squaring off with two of the worst of the baiters, decked them with a well-directed

punch to the gut in one case, and the other with a kick which had landed him across a desk in the squad room. Afterward, he was treated with some degree of respect, and the gags at his expense tapered off. They finally stopped completely when it became apparent that his work was successful and the prostitution problems in the area of his patrol disappeared.

When his division had been finally cleared up, he had been taken off his high heels and minis, and put to work in the Drug Detail, where he had done excellent work, winning him several commendations.

As he got into his car, he was so preoccupied with the possible ramifications of his new assignment, that he almost ran into another car as he pulled out. The close call made him attentive to his driving, and he proceeded carefully for the next two miles as he drove to his home, an apartment in a quiet neighborhood.

Once in his apartment, he tried to relax, as he considered the possibilities.

His fears that he might be “read” while in close contact with some of the worst elements of society, with the possible disastrous consequences of such discovery, were quite real. He knew that the people he would be dealing with would no more hesitate to give him a one-way trip to the desert area around Palm Springs than smashing a pesky mosquito. On the other hand, his experience with luring Johns to their undoing had gone off without a hitch... he had made a convincing woman, and a sexy one at that!

Furthermore, the Captain had promised that he would receive additional coaching from a Hollywood police expert in make-up and martial arts. He had to smile to himself about the latter, since, unknown to anyone in the Department, he was a Black Belt in karate. While on the Prostitution Detail, he had gone through the course at his own expense, which had enabled him to take care of the wise guys in the department who had tormented him about his work and appearance, not to mention a couple of Johns who had become too aggressive.

He weighed the situation.... the dangers versus the possibilities of career advancement. He knew that if he turned down the assignment, it could possibly brand him as a coward, and his career might go down the drain. While he knew he had as much courage as anyone on the Force, which he had proved many time on his drug busts, perceptions can often weigh more than actuality.

With a certain amount of trepidation, he decided to accept the job. Having made his decision, he spent the rest of the day relaxing by reading and watching television, interspersed with a couple of hearty meals. Fortunately, he was blessed with a splendid metabolism, and while he could eat a heavy meal when he was hungry, it never showed up on his spare frame.

After a refreshing nights sleep, he awoke the next morning with his determination to follow through foremost in his mind. He dressed, breakfasted at a nearby coffee shop, and drove to headquarters.

This time, he found Dave had preceded him to the anteroom. Dave had a determined air about him, and, as they shook hands, said, “I’ve decided to take the assignment!”

Ed replied, "Me too!"

They sat down in adjoining chairs, and discussed the job in low tones until Sarah Fitzgerald, the Captain's secretary, came out of the door, and exactly like the preceding day, said, "The Captain will see you now," and sat down at her desk.

The two men looked at each other, smiled, and filed into the inner office.

This time they came to a halt in front of his desk, and snapped smart military salutes.

The Captain returned the salute, reached across his desk, and shook their hands.

"I take it from your attitudes, that you've decided to accept the assignment?" he queried.

"Yes, Sir," they replied, almost in unison.

"Very good," said the Captain, smiling. "Mr. Goodman, the FBI agent, and I were pretty sure that you would, so we've started the ball rolling."

"You, Sergeant Ellington, will be sent to the FBI headquarters in Washington, D.C., where you will be brought up to date on everything you will have to know about the Mafia people, their personnel, and their rackets. You will spend the next three weeks there and be drilled in everything you will have to know, so that you will be able to recognize any one of them instantly. You will also be given intensive training in all kinds of technical devices, so that you can plant bugs, intercept phone conversations, and do whatever is necessary to make this intervention a success. You will also get special weapons training in order to cover all eventualities. You are booked on a Red-eye flight to Washington tonight. Miss Fitzgerald has your airline tickets ... Pick them up from her on the way out."

The Captain turned to Ed.

"You will go to an address I will give you in Beverly Hills. It is a big private estate which is being loaned to us by a concerned citizen, who is using the opportunity to go away on vacation. You will place yourself under the command of an Agent Vaughn, who will be there with you and train you in make-up, dress and actions for the next three weeks in complete privacy. Your eventual function will be to keep your own eyes and ears open as well as to take as much attention as you can away from Sergeant Ellington at the Palm Springs affair, so that he can perform his functions as well as possible. At the same time, you both will perform the job you are ostensibly being hired for, namely to keep an eye on the gifts for the bridal couple."

He then looked back and forth between the two men.

"You will, after completing your training in Washington and Beverly Hills in three weeks, proceed to Palm Springs, where you will rendezvous with Agent Goodman and a representative of the Palm Springs Police for a final briefing before you start the assignment, which is scheduled to last three days."

"Any questions?"

Quietly from both men, "No, sir."

"Good luck," said the Captain, and shook their hands.

“Thank you sir,” said Ed, and they left his office.

In the anteroom, Dave stopped briefly at the secretary's desk to pick up his tickets, and they walked through the squad room to the street. On the way out, they passed a number of officers at their desks who looked at them curiously and greeted Ed. One of them, Detective Olivetti, seemed more curious than the others, but confined himself to a simple “Hi!” as Ed and Dave passed his desk.

Once outside, they stopped and shook hands.

“Have fun!” said Ed, knowing that Dave was in for three weeks of extremely extensive and intensive briefing.

“You too!” said Dave, knowing that Ed was to be prepared for an extremely hazardous and exposed job at the Mafia affair.

As they had done the previous day, they shook hands once again and parted in opposite directions.

CHAPTER 3

Having learned from his near-collision experience of the day before, Ed drove slowly and carefully to the local post office, where he left a notice to hold his mail for the coming month.

Arriving home, he looked for mail. Except for some junk mail, the box was empty, and would remain so until his assignment was completed.

He reflected on the fact that he hardly ever received anything but junk mail anyhow. His parents had died when he was barely out of his teens, and he had no siblings or other close relatives. He had parted with his last girl friend several weeks earlier on a friendly basis, and had made no new attachments since that time.

He checked his telephone answering machine, and, as usual, there were no messages. He sometimes wondered why he even bothered.

He found that, with good reason, he was nervous, and had difficulty sitting still, so he left his apartment and went for a walk. He walked until he was tired, returned to his apartment, had a small meal, and went to bed. After tossing and turning for a while, he finally fell asleep, but his rest was disturbed by nightmares of Mafia killers stalking him, and when he finally awoke, he felt quite unrefreshed.

He looked at the slip of paper the Captain had given him of the address to which he was to report, and noted that it was located in a remote and exclusive section of Beverly Hills.

He made himself some breakfast, and knowing that he would be gone for several weeks, finished off the few perishable items in his refrigerator.

He wished to make a good impression on the sergeant who was to be his trainer, so he dressed carefully in a natty suit and tie, with carefully-polished shoes .

He didn't know what materials he would need, so he gathered together all the cosmetics he had used on the job, and the few dresses, shoes and other things he had worn, which he zipped up into a clothes bag. Into a suitcase he put a few changes of underwear, some shirts, slacks and a jacket.

Carrying everything out to his car, he placed the clothes bag in the back seat, and his suitcase and cosmetic box in the car trunk. He then went back to lock up the apartment, got into the car, and drove off to begin his assignment.

As he drove, he couldn't help wondering what he had gotten himself into, and he hoped that he would live to see his apartment again, unimpressive as it might be!

Driving through Beverly Hills, the familiar sections began to fall behind him, and he passed larger and more fancy homes the further he drove. Finally, coming to the number, he found himself before a massive wrought-iron gate between two imposing brick gateposts. Seeing that the closed gate barred his way to the building beyond it, he examined the gatepost, and discovered a bell and speaker instrument.

He pressed the bell, and a moment later, an attenuated man's voice said, "Yes?"

Ed said, "My name is Edward Miller. I'm expected."

The voice replied, "One moment, please! When the gate opens, please drive to the main house."

There was a loud click as the speaker hung up. Immediately, the gate began to open slowly, and when the opening was wide enough Ed drove through. In his rear view mirror, he saw it close behind him.

He continued up the driveway, passing several small, apparently unoccupied, cottages.

Arriving at the main house, he stopped in front of the door, which opened immediately and a man stepped out.

He was wearing a coat and bowler hat...the archetypal cliché British butler, and carrying a suitcase and furred umbrella.

He put down his suitcase and umbrella, and opened Ed's door.

"May I help you with your goods, sir?"

Astonished, Ed handed him his car keys, pointed out the one for the trunk, and picking up the clothes bag, walked in through the door.

The butler brought in his suitcase and the cosmetic case and placed them on a chair near the front door.

"Is there anything else I can do for you, sir," asked the butler.

Overcome by the magnificence of the house, Ed was only able to stammer, "N...n...no, I can't think of anything! Where is Agent Vaughn? I'm supposed to meet him here."

The butler permitted himself a wintry smile. "Agent Vaughn is upstairs, and will be down in a few moments. In the meantime, if I may, I will put your *vehicle* in the garage."

The way he pronounced the word “vehicle” it sounded as if he was ashamed to deal with anything but the Mercedes and BMW cars that he was used to handle for his employers.

“I will leave your key on this table,” pointing to one next to the door.

“Where are you going?” asked Ed.

“I'm joining the mahster and his family at their *bungalow* on the Maine coast.”

From the way he pronounced the word “bungalow” Ed was certain that it was merely a twenty-room mansion.

He then left, closing the door behind him. Through the door, he heard his car being started and driven away to wherever the garage was.

Leaving his belongings where they lay, he walked across the room, which he couldn't help comparing in his mind to a hotel lobby, to the foot of a magnificent staircase which led to the upper floor of the building.

He called, “Hello!” and heard his voice echoing around the room.

There was no immediate reply, so he called again, “Hello! ... Agent Vaughn... Hello!”

He heard footsteps approaching toward the head of the stairs, and a moment later he was astonished to see a beautiful woman look down at him.

As she descended the stairs, he thought that he had been trapped in a movie! She was a knockout!...absolutely gorgeous!

She was about five inch's over five feet, although as she slowly flowed down the stairs she gave the impression of greater height. Her blond hair was in a shoulder-brushing pageboy, which bobbed as she progressed downward. Her legs, which were the closest part of her to him, were perfect, a models legs!

Her body was not exactly a perfect hourglass figure, but close enough as not to matter, and the crepe dress she wore clung to her closely enough that whatever he did not see could be easily imagined.

When she finally came to the bottom of the stairs, he could see that her face matched her legs and her body. She was perfectly made up, without a single hair out of place.

Unfortunately, her expression did not match her looks, as she had a severe look on her face, and she snapped out, “What are you gaping at?”

Ed became aware that his jaw was hanging down, so he came to himself and stutted out, “I'm looking for A-A-Agent Vaughn!”

She mimicked him, “I'm A-A-Agent Vaughn!... And who are you?”

Ed made himself overcome his astonishment at this turn of events, and said, “I'm Detective Edward Miller. I'm supposed to meet Agent Vaughn here.”

“You jackass!” she hissed angrily, “I told you that you have just met Agent Vaughn.”

Ed gulped in embarrassment and rising anger at her apparent hostility.

“I'm sorry, Sergeant, I just wasn't expecting...”

She cut him off, “Stop gawking, and let's get down to business!” she said, and continued, “Get your gear and bring it upstairs.”

Ed went back to the front door, picked up his suitcase, clothes bag and cosmetics case, crossed the floor again, and followed her lead up the staircase. He noted that she did not offer to help him with any of it.

At the top, she led the way down a broad hallway, past several doors, arriving at one at the end of the passageway. She opened the door, and stepped in, with Ed following her.

“This is where you'll be staying,” she said. “My room is down the hall.”

Ed had noticed the fact that he had not seen anyone else in the building other than the butler, who had left.

“Are we the only ones here?” he asked.

Agent Vaughn answered, “I've been told that this is a top-secret operation. This entire estate's people, owners and servants, are off to Maine for the next month, and it became available for our purpose.”

If Ed had any thoughts as to why the owners had turned over their property for a secret purpose, he kept them to himself, since he had no desire to exacerbate her apparent hostility any further by asking any more questions... for the present.

“Put your things away,” she said, “and meet me in the kitchen.”

She left the room, closing the door on her way out.

Ed stood where he was and looked about him. The room was almost as large as his entire apartment. It was luxuriously furnished with a bedroom set, which even to his untutored eyes, was of extremely high quality. Aside from the king-sized bed, there was a magnificent dresser with a mirror above it, as well as night stands, comfortable chairs, a large sofa, a large-screen television set, and several lamps,

He stepped over to the closet, which was fronted by three mirrored sliding doors, and opened it. He retrieved his suitcase, took out the few items he had packed, and hung them in the closet, occupying about one fiftieth of the available space. He was able to put his underwear in one of the smaller drawers of the dresser.

He opened another door off the bedroom, and found himself in a huge bathroom, with gold fixtures over the sink and bathtub and, when he opened the shower stall, he found gold controls in the shower as well.

Putting on a pseudo-Bette Davis accent, he drawled, “What ... a ...dump!”

He heard a phone ring, and stepping back into the bedroom, he found a Princess phone on one of the night stands near the bed. It continued to ring, but not believing it could be for him, he tried to ignore it.

However, it kept up a nerve-wracking ring, so he finally picked it up.

“Hello?” he said.

“Why the hell aren't you here?”

He recognized the voice of Agent Vaughn.

She continued, angrily, "didn't I tell you to meet me in the kitchen?"

"I'm sorry, " he said in as conciliatory manner as possible, "I was just unpacking."

"Well get your sorry ass down here on the double," she snapped.

"O.K.!, I'll be right down."

It took only a few moments for Ed to finish putting away the few items in the suitcase. He went to look for the kitchen. He figured it was downstairs on the main floor, so he descended the staircase, and started looking for it. He opened door after door off the main entrance, finding, in turn, a magnificent library, a den with a pool table, a recreation room with an entertainment center consisting of a large screen television and audio equipment, a dining room, and, finally, a short hallway leading to the kitchen from the dining room.

He found Agent Vaughn seated at a table big enough to serve at least 12 diners. He looked around, amazed. The kitchen was huge, with gleaming white appliances stationed around it, grouped about an island with a stove, sink and dishwasher.

He thought to himself, "*The rich certainly are different from the rest of us!*"

"What took you so long?" she demanded.

He shrugged, "What took me so long? ... I got lost!"

"Do you know how to cook?"

"Do I know how to cook?" Ed repeated after her, bewilderedly.

"Please don't echo me, when I ask you a question," she snapped, "Just answer it!"

Nettled by her attitude, he replied, angrily, "I've been cooking for myself for years!"

"Good!" she said, "you'll be doing the cooking here for the next few weeks."

"Why?" he asked, "How about you.?"

For the first time she saw her smile. "If we depend on me to prepare any food, we'll both starve to death! I've never cooked anything in my life."

Ed determined that she was telling the truth, but wondered about a situation where a woman of her age, which he guessed to be about the same as his, had never learned the rudiments of cooking. Up to this point, Ed had no inkling of her background, and, based on her clearly hostile attitude toward him so far, he didn't have the nerve to ask.

Instead, he asked, "what's on the program?"

"The program is, since I'm your superior, and I've been assigned the job of getting you ready for the biggest job of your life, you take my orders, do what I tell you, and no back talk... got it?"

Ed nodded.

She glared at him, and shouted, "When I ask you a question, you answer me, even if its a simple `Yes, Agent or no, Agent!..... Got it?"

"Yes, Agent."

Ed could foresee that the next few weeks were going to be no picnic.

She continued, "The first thing is for you to familiarize yourself with this house. In many respects its similar to the one you will be working in Palm Springs. It's important that you should feel comfortable moving around in a place like this ... not like that crummy little apartment of yours!"

Ed wondered what ...and how... she knew about that "crummy little apartment" of his. He knew it was strictly a place to sleep and eat, but he kept it neat and clean, and comfortable, and he resented her slur on it. Again he wondered about her background, one that would allow her obvious feeling of superiority to him and his.

"Come on, I'll take you on a tour."

It took her nearly an hour to take him over the house and grounds, by the end of which his head was whirling, as she showed him through the many guest rooms, servants quarters, recreational facilities, and garages. He felt that it would take him several days to be completely oriented.

He marveled at how quickly she seemed to have familiarized herself with the place....she must indeed be a quick study.

The ended up the tour in the kitchen, where she said, "Make us some lunch."

He went over to the huge refrigerator, which he found stocked with a considerable amount of food and drink. He pulled out a tray of delicatessen meats, and made a pair of roast beef and Swiss cheese sandwiches. He sliced up a couple of tomatoes, spooned some dressing over them, poured a couple of glasses of milk, and brought everything over to the table, where she was waiting to be served.

Without a word of thanks, she made her way through the food, saw that he was also done, and said, "Now let's get started!"

He picked up the dishes, brought them to the sink, rinsed them, and put them in the dishwasher.

"O.K." he said, "what's next?"

"I want to see what you can do on your own," she said, "Get dressed and made up, and meet me in my room."

During the tour, she had pointed out her room, which was several doors down the hall from the one to which she had assigned him.

As he climbed the stairs on the way to his room, he thought, "*This is it!*" He had to show her that he could do the job he had essentially volunteered for, so he was determined to do as convincing a job as possible.

Reaching the room, he undressed, took a shower, and shaved very closely.

He opened his make-up case, and, seating himself in front of the bathroom mirror, which occupied an entire wall over a double sink, he carefully began to make himself up.

He had been extremely successful as a decoy for Johns while with the Prostitution Detail, and he felt that he knew quite a bit about making himself up in a feminine manner.