



*Reluctant Press*

# The Pledge

Annie Warren



ILLUSTRATIONS BY C. PITTS

**A 'NEW WOMAN' NOVEL**

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## *Reluctant Press TG Publishers*

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# “CROSSING THE PLEDGE LINE”

By Annie Warren

## Chapter 1: In The Beginning. . .

The summer had all but ended and it was the beginning of a new year at the university. Although the really cool days of autumn were yet a ways off, the foolishness of summer were still abounding and this was true on this campus as with others about the country. For, as with the onset of any new semester but in particular the Fall semester of the school year, there was feverish activity in all of the Greek Houses, in both fraternities and sororities, at the prospect and potential of new brothers and sisters rushing and pledging their sacred institutions, well, sacred at least to the individual houses. But, for this new onrush of applicants, preparations were now afoot just as they had been in years past, and they were being planned for in earnest.

Such pre-pledge activities as were now going on like these, were nothing new. Such planning had been happening since fraternities first formed. But, on the campus in question, for this semester this time of preparation for fraternities could possibly be different or could be involved in other motives than just gathering in a bunch of rushers and making pledges of them. A move was afoot that had at least one fraternity very nervous.

High in the frat house of the Mu Alpha Chi, Omicron chapter, the lights were burning late into the night. Were they studying already? No, not this frat. In reality, it was what could well be termed, a council of war for the fraternity. It was going to happen; it was no longer a rumor but had been stated blatantly and openly.

A sorority, namely the Tau Iota Tau, Sigma chapter, had vowed to successfully rush their fraternity and pledge a member of their sorority to the fraternity as a new “brother” or, if they refused and put up resistance, to bring down the Mu Alpha charter in the process.

The Mu Alpha's were one of, if not the leading, fraternities on campus. They were known for having the most “jocks” and for being the frat that most of the other frats looked up to and tried to emulate. It was for this reason, that they had been targeted by the Tau Iotas. For a woman to successfully break into it would be a coup for the

women's movement on campus and would decidedly take the frat down a peg. The Mu Alpha people were well aware of their status on campus, having painstakingly built it up over the years, and were just as adamant to keep it “unstained” and just as free of women members! That is why the council of war was convened in the first place. If the Tau Iotas wanted war, they were preparing for it.

Just as the Mu Alphas were the most masculine frat on campus, a true bastion of the macho image holders, the Tau Iotas were the most feminine, and at the same time were quite feminist in their orientation, the opposite of the Mu Alphas. They were women and proud of it. They were chased after by many men as they were generally quite beautiful and, by all means (or measures), well built having (and always, it seemed) showing the epitome of feminine figures with full breasts, wide hips and slender waists. They were into women's sports and aerobics as much as the Mu Alphas were into contact and intramural sports. If anything, they were women, by any measure.

Thus, the frat and the sorority were at the same time at opposites, and at a parallel. Both were into sports and the almost flaunting of the perfect body (of their own respective sexes, that is). Thus, as the characteristics of most Mu Alphas was he-man masculine, so the characteristics of the Tau Iotas was curvaceous, feminine and into promoting women as equal or better than men. The sisters weren't militant, bra burning ball-busters, but they were known to take advantage of opportunities when they arose. With the publishing, so to say, of a non discrimination edict from the school's administration, they were presented with an opportunity, and everybody including the Mu Alphas knew they were sure to take it.

Rumor, rather than hard fact, had it that on some other university and college campuses across the country, that some other fraternities had been rushed by some women, but that the tries had been sort of half hearted and so none had really been successful... or perhaps the frats that had given in just weren't admitting it, yet. On the other hand, no one seemed to want to talk about them no matter what had happened.

During the previous semester, two women had unsuccessfully tried to pledge two of the “lesser” fraternities and had been turned down. It was a blatant sexist slap in the face, but there were a lot of complaints (none really filed with the university), and it had eventually got to the deans. It was partially because of these failed attempts and because these women had complained that they had been arbitrarily eliminated from the pledge lists that a ruling had come down from the university administration that said that membership in fraternities AND sororities could not be denied because of race, creed, or SEX. There was the stress on sex, but to be fairer than the fraternities had been, the letter had been sent to all of the fraternities and sororities registered at the university on top of being sent to the Greek Council. It was official.

Now, there was no such “arbitrariness” possible. The complaints had flown around long enough that the sisters had heard of it and had decided to act in the most direct and, as they thought, effective way by “attacking” the bastion, the fortress of fraternity maledom, the Mu Alphas. To this end, the Tau Iotas were now openly threatened that they would break the “fraternity barrier”, one way or another!

## Chapter 2: A Council of War

The Mu Alpha's house lay on "Greek Row" where five fraternity houses and three sorority houses were to be found in a three block stretch. Theirs was the largest of the houses, a full three stories high, not counting the attic. The house was a light gray with white trim. In front of it was a spacious porch with almost filigreed trim around the posts. At the front of this porch were the Mu Alpha Chi letters in white to match the house trim, but also set up with a flood light that came on when the porch light was turned on. The flood, of course was set to make the their letters stand out almost obscenely, not that any of them saw it with anything other than pride.

The house itself was larger than the other fraternity or sorority houses in that set and had more land around it than they did. Their plot of land contained a well manicured lawn and a number of stately oak trees of venerable age. They had bought the house when a non Greek sorority had failed to get enough pledges to keep going, or to keep a house of this size. It was large and impressive; its very presence as backed up by the brothers in deed and action that said "We are the best", and they reveled in that show of ostentation.

On the second floor was a small den like room that was the exclusive realm of the Mu Alpha House Council, the rulers of this particular roost. As we look in on the house, most of it is dark, with only a couple of lights on because it is late and many of the brothers are out. But, the window of the council's den is lit as there is a meeting of the leadership going on. But, beyond just a meeting of the council it is really a council of war, called to plot and plan for a problem that they have had called to their attention. There is no joy in this Mudville tonight.

The members of the council of war sat around a table. Several cups of cold coffee and half empty beers were on it. The word had come in and they knew they had to discuss it. The move was going to be made and the Tau Iotas were going to make it.

They knew of the Tau Iotas as incredibly good looking women built like (need I say) Greek goddesses. Goddesses or not, no one at the Mu Alpha house wanted anything to do with women as pledges. Both the Mu Alphas and the Tau Iotas were known to be aggressive and domineering. The confrontation, if it was indeed to come, could prove to be a battle, a battle royal. The council (actually the house's ruling body) had to meet the threat and had to formulate some sort of a plan on how to proceed. When they came together, now as a council of war, there was no levity or joking around. What they had to do was serious business, but what were they going to do and how were they going to achieve it?

The air in the room was thick with invectives. The feminists were trying to upset the order of things by having a woman join the epitome of the mens' bastions. What made it worse was that the new ruling that had just come down to all of the fraternities and sororities meant that they would have to open their doors and offer pledging regardless, of all things, of the sex of the applicant. Thus, if a woman were to rush them and did not voluntarily withdraw and they didn't have any logical (and/or legal) reason for refusal, then they would have to pledge her.

Their likes and dislikes would, or in this case, could not make any difference. Of course, if ten students rushed, five of which were women, they would still be able to deny nine, putting the women out for space problems, or whatever, but if only one tried, that was a different problem! Plurality could have its advantages as both male and female could be denied. But singularity is what they feared as it would mean a focus on the singular, and thus a harder time to deny them. And, worst of all, they knew that most likely only one woman would rush! Just as the Mu Alphas were the leading Frat and had enough muscle to back it up, so also the Tau Iotas were the leading Sorority. If they said “don't rush them, we will” to the other sororities, then they would have the floor and the other sororities would knuckle down. And now, that one sorority, the Tau Iotas, had promised a pledge and they were sure to follow through, only who? Furthermore, what could the Mu Alphas do about it?

Although, as said, the Mu Alphas were the ideals of the macho “jocks” on campus and the Tau Iotas were the perfections of the feminine with nonstop figures and all, yet with these two groups of people who were epitomes of their sexes, there was no dating between them even though you would almost surely expect it! Thus, at a time when such “liaisons” (or spies) would be the most helpful, there were none.

Without a doubt, the rush was coming on as it always did, and the problem lay in what the frat should do. Cleaning up the conversation, it went something like this:

“All right, guys, word has it that the Tau Iotas are going to rush us this year. With that new ruling out, we can't refuse. So! What can we do?” That was Joe Matthews speaking. Five foot eleven, thin, wiry and muscular all at the same time, he was the captain of the baseball team and President of the Mu Alpha's.

“I don't suppose we could, uh, rough her up? You know, just a bit?” That folks, was Jake Walker speaking. With 290 pounds, six foot three, and as broad as the proverbial barn, he was the captain of the school's football team, but at the frat he was “only” in the position of Sergeant at Arms. That was probably also because he was not the swiftest of thinkers, slow but not dumb-witted. He didn't have an ounce of fat on him; well, there might be some between his ears, but nowhere else.

“You can't do that, Jake. We have to find another way, a legal way. You have any ideas, Al?” The tallest man there was Pete Jones, Captain of the basketball team. Yup! Three captains all residing in one house, and running it too. It was a moot question, however, whether the Mu Alphas got them because they were so macho or they were captains because they were Mu Alphas.

“Roughing her up so that she would 'voluntarily' withdraw would be a way to keep it legal, but the method is illegal. We have to find some way to get her to drop out.” That was Al Peters, the last member of the frat's hierarchy. He wasn't a captain of any team, but had won the pentathlon two years “running”. As the saying goes, they were all jocks! And, it was they that were running the game plan for the house. Not all of the brothers were macho jocks, but it was the macho jocks that were now running things!

“Look, we can't rough her up, though that could be a delightful experience, ” several wry smiles were drawn, “but we can give her a hard time when it comes times to pledge. Hell week and Pledge week can be toughened. Let's say we put more masculin-

ity into it than usual. If they send up a prancing lily, we have a chance of bending a few petals.”

“Uh, Al, they don't have any prancing lilies. Whatever we do will have to be done on one of *their* better 'jocks'. I'll bet they are not happy about sending a woman into macho heaven, and are probably doing it just to be royal pains, but from what I have seen of them, they are probably as good in their female sports leagues as we are in ours, could probably stand a bit of roughing up or give back in kind if we had some of the 'lesser brothers' take on such a task. Roughness won't do it, brothers, we got to get them where it hurts, in masculine, unfeminine activity, dress and appearances. Instead of collecting men, in this case we'll have to 'make one'. Like in the **Rocky Horror Show** where he says 'I can make you a man'.”

“Sure, that's a good idea but can't we find some other way to get at them?”

Cutting this short story of planning war even shorter, it was Al that made the suggestion, “Maybe we could fight fire with fire? You know, rush one of the brothers to their sorority!”

“You gotta be kidding, Al. None of the brothers would ever stoop to such a degrading level!” was Jake's reply. “I wouldn't be caught dead doing that. I'd be tainted as a fag... forever!! What guy in his right mind would want to pledge a sorority; it's insane.”

“Okay, but we will be rushing some new members. Maybe we could get one of them. Yeah... tell me, Al, you got the records on pre-rush information. Any likelies that can be, uh, 'bent'? Who do we have on the obligatory list?” Joe was always a leader even among these “leaders”.

Al riffled through a sheaf of papers in a well worn folder. In it contained the descriptive data on the “obligatory” pledges. These are the sons of the brothers who had continued their contact and support after graduating from school. If they had sons and the sons wanted to (or the fathers wanted them to) pledge, then they were automatically given preference and pledged. It is a sort of 'old boy' system that was as old, if not much older than the whole fraternity system. Once a frat member, always a frat member, and if you have a son who is attending your old alma mater, then he will have “dibs” on being a member of your frat. In some cases, this goes on for generations. He pulled out a computer printed list.

“We currently have four obligatories enrolled, but none of them are on the pre-rush list. Hmmm.” He riffled again through the multiple papers in the folder and pulled out a packet of several letters stapled together. “Most of them are not following the Greek tradition of their fathers, but here is one that has the father demanding we pledge his son.” Reading some of the material he continued, “seems he wants us to make a man of his son. This could be a potential winner.” He looked at another list. “He doesn't seem to be out for any sports. Joe, you really sure you want to do something like this?” He looked over at Joe. “We usually turn wimps out on the first night, you know.”

“Well, it's either we go after him and check him out, or take a chance that some other candidate MAY show up in the rushes.” He reached over and took the packet of letters, scanning it quickly. “Oh yes, I remember this one. Hmmm, his father is literally

demanding that his son be pledged. Tell you what.” He looked up and around the table. “Let's call him in, have a look at him and see what we want to do from there.”

“The Tau Iota's threats have been widely publicized, albeit briefly. National has indicated that they must be stopped and have pledged us whatever resources we may need to stop them. I'll contact National and see if they have a better plan, but for now, it looks like this is it. Fight fire with fire. If they want us to pledge a woman, then we'll just turn around and pledge a man to their sorority.” He smiled. “Well, not TOO much of a man.” There was a light chuckling from the others. “So, we'll look him over, agreed?” The last word was inflected like a question but was not a question, just a statement of fact. As you can see, they were aggressive.

In spite of them all knowing there was no real question asked, there was a nod around the table and the topic was put on hold, tabled until the meat could be examined on the hook. Each of them felt that it was a good solution, and best of all, none of them would have to do it!

The following day, even as a call was being made to the hapless son of the brother, a new name appeared on the list of prospective pledges. It was Gail Baker, well known to the members as an arch feminist, as well as a striking woman with charms that had been distracting on campus to begin with and that would promise to be no less distracting should they be seen in the frat. Even as Joe was talking with National, he knew that the battle lines were being drawn and that the fight was on. . .

### **Chapter 3: Enter Our Hero**

Some of you for sure, are wondering what I, as your narrator, have to do with this tale. Well, quite simply said, Dad had given me an ultimatum that this year I HAD to pledge the Mu Alpha's or he would simply cut off my funding. I knew that I could probably survive without his money, but, well, it was an easier road to travel. And so, I trust you got it! I was the obligatory pledge that they were just talking about. I found out about that council of war meeting later from Joe; he really is a fine fellow and happened to get caught in the middle, but not as in the way that I was. I was REALLY in the middle, as it all turned out; I was going to be involved, but things didn't quite work out like Dad had wanted.

What I had not expected was to get a call from THE Joe Matthews, the frat's President, inviting me to a special meeting of their frat house council to discuss my pledging for the coming semester. He did not say why it was a special meeting, nor did I ask about it. I suppose I should have been at least a bit suspicious as it was slated clearly as “special”. For all I knew, maybe every son of a prior member was given this privilege. I didn't know, and so agreed to go and talk. Talk is cheap, but the result of talk can be expensive in more ways than one.

At that time I was still fence sitting and hadn't even put my name in for rushing yet and thus was most curious as to what they could want in contacting ME. My thoughts, at the time, were that Dad must have been working behind the scenes with them to get me to join (how's that for naiveté?). Yet, Joe was a BIG man on campus. Everybody, including the nerd class, knew who he was and even many of them knew what he looked like. I wasn't really a nerd in the classic sense, but I was not macho either. I admired Joe as a popular and leading figure on campus, but had never met him



like most of the students. Still, I found him to be quite friendly and relaxed over the phone. We set the time for the next day and the ball started rolling.

When Dad had gone to this school, he had not only been on the football team but also, at least for a part of the time, was Captain of the baseball team. He was one of those reasonably all-around athletes. He, however, also had a keen, sharp mind and so graduated with honors *in spite* of his fraternity and sports activities. It was no small feat and he had an honored position in the frat for his multiple accomplishments. When you add to his academic (and sports) accomplishments that after graduating from school he had continued to support the fraternity financially, then, when his only son (me) arrived on campus, it was a given that he (I) could be a brother, merely by asking.

But I didn't ask. I suppose that I might have made it to the scrubs track team, if I had wanted to, but I didn't want to; athletics and all of the macho crap that usually goes with them, just didn't interest me. My heart was set on being a Scientist, like Dad. But he, of course, had always talked up the fraternity life at school here, and he had told me to and had kept up a pressure on me to pledge his old fraternity, had some idea that it would make a man of me by being with all of those jocks.

It seems, however, I had inherited more of my looks and size from Mom's side of the family, ending up shorter than Dad's stocky five foot nine by four inches and weighing almost half of what he weighed. I knew the frat and knew that only a few of them had long hair, but none of them had hair anywhere near as long as my mane that went well down my back. I wasn't a soft, little wimp, but again I wasn't jock material, either.

Well, associating with jocks just doesn't rub off, but I couldn't tell Dad that; nevertheless, he had increased the pressures on me to pledge until finally this semester's ultimatum arrived. Little did he know that the frat was thinking the same thing, that I should pledge, but the reasons were entirely different from those that Dad had. And so, I went (knowingly) to fulfill Dad's wishes and (unknowingly) to fuel the battle with the Tau Iotas by being a football to be kicked around.

**# # # #**

As the meeting began, I had the distinct feeling that I was a side of ham being checked out by the team of frat officers for the dinner menu. All three of them were there in the privacy of the “war room”, well, okay, the council room. But it softened when Joe started laying out the “game plan” as he called it. He started by explaining the Greek System and about rushing, pledging and being a brother. Most of it I had already known, even the “rules” of the Mu Alphas and their desire for excellence (that happened to be based on the physical rather than the mental). I had heard parts of not all of it at some time or another from Dad. Now I was “on the line” with the real thing, not just a memory in Dad's mind.

This part of the “discussion” was like a lecture that he had given many times. Then the voice changed when he was done with the “standard” topic, no doubt delivered to each group of pledges at the start of each semester. He then described the new “ordinance” that would allow ANYONE to rush, including women and that the Tau Iotas

were going to rush a woman. And that, sports fans, as I said before, is where I came in. At this point, the lecture was over and it got down to the nitty gritty... me.

It was a long talk with a lot of arguing and counter arguing. The following is a much abbreviated outline of what was said:

“OK, Collin, that is the system, that is the new ruling, both of which we have to live with. What we want to do is work with you to try to thwart this overt attack on our organization by these women.”

“What can I do? I've known most of what you have told me about the system by hearing it from Dad over the years, more so lately. You want me to take on this woman in single combat or something?”

A smile crossed their faces, probably at the image that this statement conjured up. “No, Collin, in this case you'd probably lose. To put it simply, let's say that since they are rushing our fraternity, we have a deal. We'll pledge you as a full brother immediately, on the basis that you rush their sorority. We want to give them back in kind to see if that will cause them to withdraw their rusher.”

“You want *me* to rush a sorority? Joe, you've got to be kidding, right?. Guys don't rush sororities!”

“No, we're not kidding. This is a serious and probably not much of a game. We want to give them in kind so that they will withdraw their pledge.”

“And, if they don't withdraw, what then?”

“Well, then we'll persist to the end. If you agree to do this for us, we'll back you, finance you, and do whatever has to be done for you to succeed. You have to give your word not to withdraw and you will, among other things, become an instant brother.” He smiled a most friendly smile saying this.

“Can't you just turn her away for some other reason?”

“That's the problem. With the ruling from the University, there is no reason that we can come up with that will give us a reason to refuse. It would mean an instantaneous suit and probably mean that our charter would be withdrawn. The only way is to have her withdraw, for whatever reason.”

“And me rushing them is one of the pry bars you wish to use to get her to give up?”

“You have it right. You will be a brother as soon as you sign this simple agreement.” He shoved a piece of paper at me and I picked it up and read it.

The undersigned in consideration of services rendered will be pledged while bypassing the normal pledging sequence. The service required is to pledge the Tau Iota Tau Sorority and to continue the pledge activities until such time as their pledge to this house be terminated.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

They wanted to fight fire with fire and so my “job” would be to rush their sorority to try and get them to retract their rushee, Gail, from rushing the fraternity. To say that I was less than enthusiastic about it would be a good summary, but they still had more to say.