



Reluctant Press presents:

The Making Of Belinda

Philippa Peters



ILLUSTRATIONS BY HARLEY SPINN

A 'NEW WOMAN' E-BOOK

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THE MAKING OF BELINDA

by Philippa Peters

XVI. RENEWED

A continuation of The Making of Lady Caroline

I don't know how they did it but the nanotech specialists Lady Myra Colach employed restored me to my full manhood. I was once again Willen Smit, investigator, currently employed by the Minister of Internal Security.

I hated my memories of my time on the planet Carmichael. No, that's wrong. I did hate myself for the way I felt about them. I was ashamed of myself for the way I had acted, what I had done, and yet so much of it was not my fault.

'Not my fault.' I'd heard those words so many times in my sixty-five years. My first wife said it to me when she left me for a younger man she'd gotten to know in my long absences out among the stars and planets of the Nebula Kingdom. The truth was I rarely thought of her, Tanya Durrin, as she was now. My second wife, Arisa, I remembered all too well. She belittled me all too often after the first heady, romantic love, under which we had entered a ten-year marriage, had faded.

Arisa had called me 'boring' and 'unimaginative.' She had expected me to take her with me, to places like Shalimar, the infamous station where every sexual appetite could be met, according to its proprietors. Biosculpture was the favored means by which Shalimar Station achieved its release of healthy and unhealthy passions. Wild stories traveled to jaded, settled worlds like Nebula Prime about what went on there.

I had been there, chasing a traitor for then-Director Colach, and found a station surprisingly well-regulated by any standards. Pursue any pleasure and Shalimar Station would assist, save that it permitted no harm to any sentient being. Its simulation chambers for the darker vices required programming skills equal to those of the most superior of Nebulan

institutes of learning. A month there with Arisa and she could not settle down once more to a regular existence on the fringe of noble society on Nebula Prime.

I didn't want to let her go and I could have kept her by contract law. We still had eight years on our marriage but it was pointless. I was heartsick to let her go but I couldn't stand her insults about my 'puny' manhood and 'pedestrian' lovemaking any further.

The nanotech transformation Lady Myra had proposed for me to undertake on the Carmichael investigation I welcomed in my heart of hearts. I knew it would be expensive and hurtful but when I had seen the forceful man I would be transformed into, I was glad. I wanted to be someone else. Despite all the pain, and the loss of months of my life to sedation while the nanobodies worked on me, I expected to come out of it as a better specimen of the human male.

Of course, it hadn't worked that way. My awakening on Frank Station had not been as a male. It had been as a *female*. No, I did not have a larger penis, one of the things I had surreptitiously noted in the briefing holographs. I had no penis at all. The medtech who awakened me had explained that I hadn't lost anything. Through 'minor surgery,' I had just had my male parts 'tucked away.'

But that wasn't the end of it. The Carmichael scientists weren't content with that. No, they had used the work of the traitorous doctor, or so I thought, who had countermanded Lady Myra's orders to transform me even further into an anatomical female. And I enjoyed it. I loved being pampered and treated as a female. I found love and sexual fulfillment. I was 'sold' at a bridal auction and fetched a record price. I had been a bride, and a wife.

My dreams, nannie-inspired nightmares the psyches said, seemed to tell me that I had been a mother as well. I know my husband, the man I should have been, told me I was pregnant with his child, but I was sure that was just a story. The man whom I had loved, Rohan—I can hardly think of him that way without my temperature rising and hot flushes coming over me—rescued me from the clutches of my controlling husband. Rohan Sutcliffe begged me to stay on the planet and be his wife, Lady Sutcliffe.

How could I do that? I knew who I was. I had come to my senses in meeting Lady Myra again. Let Arisa have her Shalimarian fantasies as everyday living, I had reasoned. I was Willen Smit, not Lady Caroline McDonald. I had done my part in containing the breach of nanotechnology to semi-barbarians. In the real world, I knew, I would be able to look back guiltily, well with guilty pleasure, on my time as a woman.

And so, Lady Myrna had had her specialists reprogram the nannies that prolonged my life, slowing its aging to a crawl. They transformed me back into Willen Smit. It was, after all, what she had promised. Both of us lived by that, the contract. It was the basis of all law in the Nebula Kingdom. Rewards followed.

I think the first women, over a year after my 'restoration,' were paid for by Lady Myra. On the balmy beaches of the Turquoise Ocean, I was no woman's idea of a catch and yet women approached me, smart, beautiful, intelligent women and, over my hesitations, bedded me. Rena Coxilain was the first.

I guessed what was going on and so I played along with her. But it was different for me as she groped me and I realized what it was she wanted. I knew how she wanted to be

touched, where and with what intensity. I re-lived Rohan doing that to me, touching me just there, and when Rena moved under me and clutched me, I knew exactly what to do. I knew how to delay. In my mind, I remembered it all.

Rena snuggled up to me, after I had taken her at last, and she became even more amorous as I recalled vividly what I had done to Rohan to make him love me. Our lovemaking sort of blurred. I didn't mind at all when she took control. For a moment, I thought of her as Rohan and my intensity spiked, much to her delight.

She had to leave, to 'go back to work,' she said, in a dull, government office on Simulla, a nearby system, part of the Nebula Kingdom since its inception. She thanked me for the wonderful time she had had and looked at me wistfully from the transporter as she left for the shuttle to the station. I think she was sad to leave me which cheered me no end. I did think of looking her up for a while but Gianna Massaman picked me up that very day.

She was red-headed and demanding. She made love to me for a week and I don't think there was a sexual position we didn't try. She was the one to tell me, after she had ridden me ecstatically for minutes, to keep on fantasizing about whatever it was I was fantasizing about because it was making me pleasure her in ways she hadn't been pleased in fifty years.

That's it with longurum drugs. We all look like twenty-year-olds, even when we pass the century mark. We all know, too, that we will fade very fast when the end comes, at one hundred and thirty, a hundred and fifty, or a little more if we're lucky.

I couldn't tell Gianna what I was fantasizing about, even though she did ask me in a very friendly way. She was a professional, I guessed, and wanted to know so that she could use the knowledge in future on some of the other 'projects' she might have to enlist for Myra Colach. How could I tell her that I thought of myself as her, with her pert, 'young' breasts, thin waist and wide hips? I was thinking how it had been when I had just a few tufts of hair on the opening between my legs and how Rohan had found and agitated my clitoris—I'm sure it had been a vestige of my penis—to make me so warm and willing and desirous of him filling me as his tongue filled my mouth.

I got agitated and hot and nervous and I tingled all over at the thought of it. Such thoughts restored my desires and delighted my bed companions. So it was that Gianna introduced me to Merra Tinnett, who looked at me very doubtfully even as Gianna whispered in her ear.

I don't know what Gianna said; I had had to come back from the Island Sands to New Vienna to begin work again. Merra tentatively agreed to let me take her out for supper in the capital and even let me bed her. "Oh oh," she said at one point as I was lost in a dream of a man named Dickens who had made love to me so wonderfully on the grass beside a lake near Cartmoor on the planet Carmichael.

"Do that to me again," she whispered. "Gianna was so right about you."

I'm certain Merra wasn't a courtesan. She worked for an aeronautical company in its costing department and she asked me to live with her after we had been going out on occasion for a month or so. I agreed, puffed up with pride at the conquest of such a willing and affectionate woman.

I hadn't thought about the tantalizing effect her clothes would have on me. She liked to dress in the modern style of short dresses and colorful, old-style underwear, showing off lots of leg and garters and frilly panties. She soon realized that I was aroused by such and so she wore them even more. I was in agony at times when she dressed or undressed slowly in our bedroom as I remembered how it felt to slowly put on stockings and fasten them to my garter belt. I remembered how Rohan's hands, and John's hands, and Martin's hands had stroked my quivering thighs. I remembered how they had kissed my legs as I kissed Merra's and buried my face in her panties as they had in mine.

It didn't take much time before I *had* to try on her clothes. What a mistake. I was taller than I had been as Caroline. The nannies had seen to that, turning my bones to mush before placing on them the imprint of Willen Smit once more. My heart beating wildly, I looked at myself in the mirror and I was grotesque. I looked *nothing* like I had once looked.

I even tried on Merra's makeup and a hairpiece and it made little difference. I only felt guilty and embarrassed for myself. I liked the feel of her garter belt about me and the airy feeling of a dress on her stockings that I wore but when I looked at myself, I could have cried. Anyone seeing me like that would have known it was me. How they would have laughed at me to see me like that.

But I couldn't stop. Merra once asked me if I had been wearing her clothes and I admitted to idle curiosity once making me try on her panties, the black ones, like my black shorts, that I'd first mistaken for them. She didn't say much and I stopped, cold turkey, from doing that.

Merra still liked the way we made love, however, and she proposed that we try a five or ten year "probationary marriage," as they were properly called. I didn't see anything wrong with trying that. I did like her a lot and she seemed to like me. I know we told each other that we loved each other in the throes of passion but don't we all do that when the urge is on us? I mean, I'd even told three men that I loved them passionately and I had meant it at the time. I had been a woman then and I *had* loved them. Well, it had only been a fleeting emotion with John. I had hated him more than loved him most of the time, even though I had whispered 'I love you' at the right time.

I would probably have married Merra if it hadn't been for Lady Myra Colach calling me into her penthouse office in the Ministry of Internal Security and reminding me that I still had a contract to fulfill.

"I did fulfill our contract," I protested. "You've gained control of the fifth nanobody production facility in the Nebula and the Giant's Rim. You've got the scientists on Carmichael," she gave a most unladylike snort, "who were producing and designing nannies. You've plugged the leak and stopped the assassinations of Kingdom leaders by lookalikes. I've done my job."

"There were four questions you contracted to solve," Lady Myra said to me, easing back in her huge, black plushie. I had the hard, office chair this time. "The source of the assassins you found, was, in a way, the primary task you were given. You found the machines on Carmichael, yes, and the technicians doing the work there, yes, and you did give us valuable leads on who the traitors in our midst might be.

"Now hear this well, Investigator Smit. Not one of the four tasks I gave you has been satisfactorily completed."

I was stunned. I had undergone a nanotech transformation and she was saying that it had all been for naught? I was not going to go back to Carmichael. I could not meet my former lover as myself. I just couldn't. I would have to pay forfeit on the contract, even if it wiped out the small riches I had amassed over the years.

"We shot the director of nanotech research at the Royal Hospital," said Colach in her calm, serious voice. "We also shot his sister and his wife since neither passed the blood tests we gave them. We have slaughtered over seventy agents of our own who might have been sources for the leak of our nanotechnology but none of them was Emmus Vanyon.

"I'm told by the leading nano-scientists we have that he was ahead of his field. His supposed supervisor was so much in awe of him that he let him do as he pleased. He was a traitor, we know that. We have an interesting confession from Lord John McDonald. To save himself from becoming a comfort girl on a military space ship, he has given us valuable leads.

"Firstly, Vanyon thought he was selling nanotechnology to the Shelter Republics. His sister was his contact. Only he didn't know that the contact she had in the Congreve Bureau of External Relations was already a compromised agent for Carmichael. Everything the Vanyons thought they were turning over to Congreve for the fortune they thought they were amassing in Terran funds on Solidor was all a shell game."

"He's on the run with nothing?" I exclaimed.

"Not quite," said Colach grimly. "McDonald made him think that he was working for Congreve by the assassinations and substitutions he planned. He intended to be rid of Vanyon several times but he kept coming up with the innovations for which you made such an interesting guinea pig. The replacement for Marissa Deverie, the medtech who was assigned to you, was supposed to be Vanyon's assassin. This Nonie Regallam turned on McDonald, he says. He rues the fact that he relied on an off-worlder. She got Vanyon out with her on a trader to Solidor. Our surveillance shows that the pair of them met with the Congreve envoy there.

"We think Vanyon has sold them on the original idea of nanotech transformations, look-alikes as a form of bioweapons. It would have been easy for him to take with him samples of his nanobody work, in his own body, or hers, for that matter, in a time-delay implant. Remove it and he'd have all the nannies he wanted to start a replication facility. It wouldn't have to be large, not like the one on Carmichael, if his aim was just to produce specialized assassins."

"So Congreve has nanotechnology just like us," I said. "Don't tell me that you aren't using it in the same way against them. Isn't that the main reason you didn't flatten the Lannan plant with a T-missile?"

"We have the edge on them for now," Lady Myra said with her cold smile, the one that never lit up her eyes. "We think, however, that Congreve has given Vanyon a staff to work with. How long do you think it will be before his agents become undetectable? They don't have to aim at replacing ministers, McDonald's mistake. A fusion engineer on a Hammer-

class warship could change the course of a battle. Low-level penetrations. It's what I would do."

It's what you are doing, I thought. Then I looked up into her unclouded violet eyes and wondered why she had told me that. If I was ever interrogated, I'd be compelled to relate this conversation. Crafty Colach, I thought. She was making me think she was doing the opposite of what she had said; then again, that could be a ruse as well. Oh, this could tie up my brain for weeks under any truth-compelling drugs an interrogator might use.

"We've been looking for Vanyon and Devarie for the last year while you have been recuperating. We think we have found them," she said, sliding across a picture of a prison facility to me. "Drune Redemptory Institute on the Antarctic continent of Congreve. They only send killers, rapists and the scum of their system there. You'll love it. A hundred prisoner kills a year by other prisoners alone. You're going to feel right at home."

XVII. IMPRISONED

It was only a biosculpt this time and I was Madden Stanger, a killer of twenty-three. Twenty-three known murders, that is. He was a suspect in fifty more. The contract was simple and clear. Kill the real Stanger. Take his place. Get myself arrested and not killed by some stud-happy police officer and be sent to Drune where I would be eligible to be 'redeemed,' brainwiped and made into a dull, shambling 'service' worker, a mindless automaton for the rest of my days.

I had an implant to resist a brainwipe if it came to that. Long before that, I would have devastated Drune Redemptory Institute, destroying its newly appointed 'Medical Research Officer' and his wife and assistant. Colach didn't have to tell me how she had obtained her information or how she knew that Vanyon was being coy with his new employers. He hadn't as yet given them enough information to make Congreve set up a screening system such as Kingdom Security was utilizing to find impostors.

By the quality of the information I was reading, it must be such a one who was feeding Colach. Vanyon wanted a manufacturing plant under his own control, with the profits accruing to him, it appeared. Vanyon had learned from his dealings with Lord John McDonald. At the mention of his name, Colach looked at me very shrewdly.

"No," she said with that irritating smile. "You don't have to be a woman this time. You get to keep your manhood for this one. If you lost it on this one, we wouldn't be able to replace it as it is."

Oh, joke on, I thought, doubling the price in my head for this contract. But it was uncomfortable to talk about, to even think about, Carmichael. Thank goodness that this was to be a straightforward insertion-assassination exploit. It would take away some of my memories of what I had done, what I had so loved doing, on Carmichael. I didn't have to think about being some man's wife. Those nightmares I had of being a mother and Lady Myra supervising the birth would recede. I knew they had never happened, *couldn't* have, and action would be the antidote I needed to banish such awful thoughts.

Only then did I realize that I hadn't thought of Merrra at all as I joined with Lady Myra on the specifics of my contract. This time, I was no stalking horse for another operation.

But Colach would know if and when I succeeded, or if I failed, through whatever source she had supplying me with information on the Drune Redemptory Institute.

Merra was angry with me when I left. She refused to say that she would wait for me. She told me to look for my things in the nearest community storage when I returned as she would change the locks as soon as she met someone new. I didn't know whether to believe her. I tried to kiss her warmly as I left on the transport Colach provided but my last good-bye with Merra was like kissing a block of ice.

How Colach knew Stanger was holed up in Port Nomair, the second biggest city on Congreve, I didn't ask. If it hadn't been Stanger, it would have been someone else like him, I thought. I hated to think of him as an 'asset' of Nebula Kingdom Security but it was very likely that Stanger had carried out some of his jobs for the same woman I was now working for.

The look on Stanger's face when I entered his squat was priceless. "Who, who the gods' forsaken are you?" he screamed, looking at his mirror image.

"I'm you," I said as I slashed his throat with an old-style bayonet, a relic found on lots of barbarian planets.

I think he said, "Who would want to be?" before he died. The furnace was right where my instructions had said it would be and burned as fiercely as it should. I wondered if Stanger would have been pleased with the last act of his body's existence being the warming of a hundred or more squatters in his building.

His rooms were quite richly decorated; I hardly had to feign being in a blissful sleep when the Congreve minions of the law burst in and captured the notorious Madden Stanger. I wasn't in the local prison a day before they transferred me to Drune to serve out the sentences already imposed on Stanger in absentia by five different courts in the Shelter Republic.

Drune was one of the coldest places I have ever been. The open, barred windows saw to that. How stupid, I thought. I could get out of them within the hour, particularly since the guards at the place had not even found the implant in my arm that they were intended to find.

I was congratulating myself on how well I was doing, easing back into my cell from the air vent system, a redundancy with the open air window, when I suddenly became aware that there was another presence in my cell.

I swung for it right away just as a stunner bolt hit me in the chest. I came to strapped to a gurney with the woman known as Marissa Devarie sitting in a chair, watching me, a cutter beam in her lap.

She really did look like the medtech who had awakened me on Frank Station so long ago, awakened me as a woman. I had to remind myself that this was the one who had helped to kill that Marissa. She should have been strapped to a gurney just like me.

"You're quite a man, Madden Stanger," she said, smiling in a most friendly fashion. "Where did you develop the skills to disable surveillance and to roam freely through a high security prison undetected and what have you been up to? You have been working for the Tyrant, haven't you?"

In the Republic, the ruler of the Nebula Kingdom was always called the Tyrant. "I've done a few for them," I said, giving her Stanger's leer. "I've done a lot for your bosses."

Devarie grimaced. "Raping and murdering the Evaritach sisters wasn't done for anything but your own pleasure," she said, nodding to someone who stood in the shadows beyond her.

The beam pointed at me as a hand steadied my leg.

"What are you doing?" I said in a panic as a familiar odor hit my nostrils. The plasma in which nannies were cultured had a distinctive odor to me though so many claimed that it was a figment of the imagination and the plasma was as odourless as it was colorless.

"Justice, Madden Stanger, justice," said the woman raising the beam as I broke the bond holding me and flung myself from the gurney.

She should have fired and not talked. I felt her neck break as I hit her but that was all I felt as whatever was in the cocktail they had injected into me scattered my wits and knocked me out again.

I awoke in agony, every part of my body throbbing in pain. I struggled to open my eyes, blind in the glaring light, my throat parched. I tried to move my arms but I was pinned in two places.

I croaked, expecting someone to come to me with cooling water but there was no one there, or so it appeared.

Then, someone said, "Is it safe to approach her?" and my blood ran cold. I felt chills go through me. I tugged on my restraints again but my arms lacked force. Oh, it *can't* be, I thought, not again.

"You didn't want a dull mind," said a voice I recognized. I had heard it before the first time I went under.

"Nor did you," retorted the first voice.

"No, of course not," said Emmus Vanyon. It must be his voice, I thought as I gathered my wits much more quickly than I had the first time I had a nanotech transformation. "Where is the redemption if they do not feel the justice of what has been done to them? And this one deserves to feel it even more than the others after what he did to Marissa Devarie."

She *wasn't* Marissa Devarie, I tried to say, but my throat wouldn't form anything else but squawks.

"She's a pretty little thing," said the first voice. I felt a soft touch on my face, gentle fingers stroking my face and touching the long hair on my bare shoulder. I wanted to jump

up right away but I couldn't. My legs were restrained as well. "What are you giving her there?"

"A birth control implant," said Emmus Vanyon. "We don't want our serial killer here to become pregnant, do we? Not until she has been well and truly redeemed by the guardians of our special block."

"Can she hear us?" asked the first voice anxiously as I squirmed in frustration, anger and, yes, I admit it, fright.

"Oh yes," came Vanyon's cool voice. "And understand us, can you not, beautiful Belinda? Yes, that is your name from now on. I am also stepping up the Meringal. I learned about this from Marissa who said they used it extensively on Carmichael. It makes anyone weak as a kitten. Little Belinda here will be purring in your lap before the end of this week, I promise you, Chief Provost."

I shivered blindly in fright as the men left me then. I shivered even more as the cold in the room seemed to increase. *The Meringal*? I thought. What had I read? It made you feel that you were always cold, I recalled. Prison officials everywhere used it to control unruly prisoners. I shivered for over two hours before I was attended to.

"Belinda Loren," said the woman who wiped my eyes and mouth and gave me a sip of water as I shivered. Slowly, the light began to fade about her dark cloud of hair. "Such a pretty name for such a pretty girl," she said, and her teeth gleamed in the predatory smile she gave me.

She turned the gurney so that I was standing up. I wobbled but my hands and legs didn't move, couldn't move, the way I was pinioned. Something else moved though, something I knew well. My chest moved. I had breasts again. I tried to scream but all I could do was croak as the woman began to wash me and I felt the hair falling over my shoulders. How long had I been out this time?

She was a big woman. She must be, to be bigger than I am, I thought. And then the horror gripped me again. They had called me 'little' Belinda. It's going to be like Carmichael all over again, I thought in fright, with no Rohan this time to intercede and make my journey into womanhood easier than it might be.

She wasn't a big woman. Two men came in and watched her as she cleaned between my legs and removed a catheter from the orifice in front of me. I felt her fingers freeing me from the machines that had fed me and cared for all my bodily needs while I had been reshaped by nanobodies once more. If she was a big woman, the men were even bigger, for they were taller than her. One of them was Emmus Vanyon.

"Is it safe?" asked the other one, still worried.

I tried to glower at him. Be worried, provost, I thought. I know a hundred ways to kill you that do not need strength.

Vanyon stared at me, whoever I was, constrained and shivering. "Do you want to survive?" he asked.

I had to think about it. I should have said, No, but he looked at me piercingly and I waited too long.

"Madden Stanger wants to live," he said to the dark-haired man beside him with the thin, aquiline features. "They all do. Keep a guard with you at all times if you decide that this delectable little morsel is yours. Keep her restrained. It may not be so pleasurable for you but you might also keep her strapped to a gurney and tip her up like this when you wish to take her. She will feel it, I assure you, and she will be as afraid of you as all those young girls she once raped and murdered were of Madden Stanger. Justice will truly be served as she is redeemed, I promise you."

The last was said so ferociously that fear threatened to overcome me. Vanyon must have seen it in my eyes. He reached out a hand and touched my breast, rolling the nipple between his finger. I could not move my body enough to get away from him.

Then he stuck his hand in me, inside the female sex organ they had created out of mine and I jumped.

Fury and fright drove me as I flexed but the restraints did not move. All I succeeded in doing was toppling the gurney, leaving me fastened to it on my side.

The Chief Provost and the woman were laughing as they righted me.

"Double the Meringal before you let her off the gurney," instructed Vanyon, leaving me to them. "I have a dinner engagement with a duchess, a lady and a vidcast actress. Give this one six hours more and I think she will be docile enough for you to start her redemption."

On Congreve, I quivered to remember, 'punishment' and 'redemption' were interchangeable words.

After six lonely hours, I was numb throughout my body. When the woman undid my restraints, I couldn't even sit up and go to the bathroom without her. She went and got a male provost to come and help her lift me while the Chief covered us with a stun rifle.

"She doesn't weigh anything," the big guard said as he lifted me off the gurney and stood me up, holding me under my arms as my legs threatened to buckle. "Who was she before?"

The woman mouthed something at him.

"This is him?" asked the provost and his knee came up and hit me in the stomach. I couldn't have stopped my reaction if I wanted to and I didn't want to stop it. I threw up all over him.

The provost swore and slapped me. He slapped my face and then turned me over. I was sick some again and he slapped me on my naked posterior.

"Enough, Sattel," said the Chief Provost, though there was laughter in his voice. "Though I never thought I would see the day when one of my guards would be paddling Madden Stanger on his pretty little bottom."

Sattel, still swearing, lifted me easily and deposited me in the bathroom. The woman ran the shower. For the first time, I got a look at myself, or rather at Belinda Loren.

I was small and thin, my hair long and blonde. I had a woman's body once more, my legs and hips rounded and smooth. I had breasts, a little more than I had had as Caroline; no wonder I felt them each time I moved. I had a little triangle of blonde curls where my

masculine parts should be, but they weren't there, only a familiar pinkness about the feminine slot.

I shuddered and the girl I was looking at did as well. She had a turned-up, little nose, very full lips and wide-set blue eyes. My eyebrows were non-existent and I looked young and very vulnerable. The slim implant passage that had lain along my arm was gone. The blades, the wire, the plastic explosive sheet, were all gone. I am a woman, I thought in dismay. I was practically defenceless.

"Yes," said the woman provost. She smiled at the horror that must have showed as I looked at myself. "You look like the older Evaritach girl. That's why we're calling you Belinda. Devarie insisted on it. Now you can know how the real Belinda felt when you kidnapped her, after we put you in a cell with a wirehead. Be nice to him and you might live out a night or two. Justice, isn't it, that the rapist is raped in turn?"

The fanatical look on her face terrified me. Were they *all* fanatics on this planet? I looked to the big man, Sattel, but he was only grinning at me as water cascaded over me, plastering my hair to my head.

"Enough," said the Chief Provost, nervously fingering the cutter beam, keeping it pointed in my general direction. "Get her cleaned and dressed, Tannie. Enough with the threats. The Director himself is down to see this one and how we work it."

That didn't stop the provosts from pushing me about and fiercely drying my hair. Then I was shoved into a hallway. The whistles and catcalls started as men in the cells across the divide saw me. "Bring her in here! Bring her in here!" was the nicest of the shouted comments; the men screamed what they would do to me as I was paraded naked past grinning scruffs and obscene prisoners.

I was humiliated and debased. One prisoner suddenly loped over from a detail he was on and seized me and began to kiss me roughly. I couldn't move my arms as his huge tongue licked my clenched, frightened lips. I heard the screaming and whooping of men all around me as the prisoner kissed me ardently. The scruffs with me were just laughing along, too.

The prisoner reached for my alert breast and I reacted by instinct. I brought my knee up between his legs and he choked as the breath left his body. Just reacting, I thrust the heel of my hand into his beak-like nose, feeling great satisfaction as it crumbled under my fist. He sank away from me, croaking and rasping in a pool of blood. I had lost my strength. Normally, that blow should have driven bone fragments into his brain and he should have been lying at my feet, dead, not gasping for air and spreading out bubbles of air everywhere.

The prison behind me erupted in noise. The scruffs, the provosts, grabbed me and hustled me through a security gate, along a passage, past a line of jeering scruffs and into a room that the woman scruff had to open with a plastic key and a pass code.

They threw me into a chair; I noted that the room was a dressing area of some kind. The Chief Provost was trembling; he regarded me with horror while I was feeling rather good. *All right*, I thought, my breasts heaving as I breathed heavily. So, I was smaller than every man and woman I had seen so far. But there was still hope. Strength wasn't everything.

The door opened and two more men, not in green uniforms but in civilian blue suits, entered. "We couldn't contain that," babbled the Chief Provost. "This is Madden Stanger and he's as dangerous as he ever was!"

"Oh, I doubt that," said one of the suits. He smiled at me and indicated for me to rise. Then he indicated that I should pirouette, which I did, thinking how Caroline had done it so many times in dances with men, loving the feel of skirts about her legs.

"Oh, yes," said the speaker, smiling again. He had touches of grey at his temples but his hair was thick and dark brown. He had a thick nose that balanced his face. He was striking rather than handsome and he was, given that he'd allowed himself laugh lines at his eyes, probably over a hundred years old.

"Very dainty, isn't she?" he said. He stepped over close to me and touched my hair. "So beautiful," he added. "Do we have a hairdresser on staff?"

There was silence for a moment. The blue suit stopped his inspection of me, resting his hand lightly on my waist while I trembled violently at his light touch.

"The female provosts have beauticians on their staff for their own use," said the Chief Provost.

"Very good," snapped the suit. "In two hours, I want to see Belinda Loren in your office, Citizen Lake," he named the Chief Provost at last. "I want her dressed and groomed, much as I admire the way she appears now." His hand gently caressed my back and I felt the softness of his hands, the soft texture of the bureaucrat, the pencil pusher. I still shook in panic, though, as his hand lightly skimmed my posterior and his dark grey eyes locked with mine. "You will enjoy it, my little sweetie," he said to me. "There'll even be an assignment for you if you are very, very good. I have someone in mind for you to kill for me."

XVIII. RESTORED

It was a thrill to put on a bra and to feel my jiggling breasts at last get under my control. It was wonderful to put on stockings again and the garter belt sent waves of pleasure and excitement through me. Attaching the garter belt and checking my stockings for catches was just as sensuous as it had ever been. If I had a pecker—oh, I hate that word, but if I had had one—it would have been standing at attention as I put on pink lace panties to match my bra.

The dress was a vivid black and white with flirty, rustly petticoats and a deeply plunging neckline. I pirouetted and asked Sattel to zip me up which he did and I thanked him as prettily as I could with a little pout over my shoulder. He seemed to be turning white and green at the same time as I went on tiptoe and squealed in excitement at all the lovely shoes in the cupboard.

The black high heels with open toes and a bloodflower worked in leather across the toes fitted me perfectly; I flounced up and down the dressing area, pressing my skirt back against my thighs as I looked at them.

"These are perfect," I said hoarsely to Tannie, the female provost. I smiled at her. "See? I'm nearly as tall as you are now."

"You've done this before," Tannie sneered. "You're a murderer *and* a pervert."

I took a paper cup and got myself some water from the faucet in a sink area, swinging my hips and getting the feel back of how to move in my high heels. Oh, it was marvellous. I swung my hair over my shoulders.

"Oh, it's so wonderful to be a woman again," I said, pouting at Tannie. "It must be *wonderful* to work here and have so many men under your control."

As I thought, Tannie was on the verge of losing it. She was reaching for her iron fist even as Sattel reached out and grabbed her arm. "Don't touch her," he said thickly and I saw that I had affected him too with my dressing so easily and confidently as a woman. "The Directors will bust you if you mark her anywhere."

Luckily, the hairdresser, makeup artist and beautician arrived then and I greeted them with a great smile. I sat in a chair and discussed with Vonda, the hairdresser, how she might style my hair. She loved my long hair and how silky it was

"You haven't cut this in a year," she said, happily starting into her work as the other two women engaged me in a conversation about the shades to suit me best. Beyond us, I could see the scruffs becoming more and more out of sorts. I don't know what they had expected. Perhaps they thought I would be cowering in a corner by now and they would have to beat me to put on lipstick or have my nails done. More fool them. I knew how to be a girl and I would find my way out of this institute, even if I had to marry the Director himself.

I didn't mean that, Rohan. I didn't.

It was so different to walk in a short dress with my legs exposed all the time. My chest bounced, my hair bounced, and my dress bounced against me. My earrings jiggled against my neck; I felt less and less like myself as I took short steps in the high heels I had chosen. That was why I was swinging my dress and petticoats so much.

We went through office passages; the provosts or office workers who looked at me almost all smiled at me. I shuddered inside. I had been so confident in the change room with the women attending me, putting on the scowling scruffs, but this was entirely different, to be out among people and to have them studying my legs and my figure. We turned onto one passage which had a dark, tiled wall at the end. I watched the blonde girl strutting down the passageway, her blonde hair curving nicely under her jawline, her earrings bobbing as she walked. She was the epitome of femininity with her cute face and curvy figure. *That's you*, I thought, looking at her shapely legs and I went hot all over in shame and embarrassment as I thought how I had been naked in front of the men whom I now had to see.

The office was luxurious with tapestried and painted walls in contrast to the functionality of the rest of the building. I would not have known I was in a prison as I was ushered into a spacious living room with comfortable plushie sofas and low tables. A wide win-

dow, curtained in white, surrounded by a soft, green tasselled frieze and drawn back, heavy green curtains, showed a fake, woodland scene.

The Director rose as I was ushered in, smiling, in sharp contrast to the scowl on the face of the other man with him. "Sit here, my pretty Belinda," he said courteously and shooed away all of the guards, including the Chief Provost. Then, he had his Sub-Director pour me a flute of bubbling wine. It was pink, cold and delicious. I left just a touch of lipstick on the glass.

The Sub-Director was staring at my hands, at the rings I wore and the length and shaping of my pink painted nails. I guessed what he was thinking and he was right to be worried. In a sense, I was now armed with several, dangerous weapons. Not that I could get out of this prison using just them. Not in a direct way, anyway, I thought, crossing my legs and seeing the man's eyes bulge as he looked at them. I quivered inside as I thought about what I might have to do in order to work my way out of this prison I was trapped in.

The Director sat beside me on the sofa and put his hand on my wrist, touching the bracelet there. "This is a most pleasant surprise," he said. "None of our other heroines, shall we call them that, have woken up and taken to femininity as easily as you have, Belinda. Why is that?"

I wanted to shrug but something of my training as Lady Caroline McDonald returned to me. I knew that a woman didn't do that. Speak lightly on something inconsequential, I remembered.

"I have always been very adaptable," I said demurely, my darkly painted eyelashes descending in front of my eyes. *Oh no, don't do this*, I said to myself but I couldn't seem to help myself. "I try to make the best of a bad situation. Wouldn't you do the same if you were in my place?"

The Director laughed. "But you adapt too well," he said and I felt a chill in my bones as I sipped on the pink, frothy, woman's drink. I looked up at him, trying to open my eyes wide to show how guileless I was. It didn't work. "We didn't know up till now Madden Stanger was a fairy. You hid that very well. Tell me, was that the reason why you killed all the women you did? Where they just prettier than you as you were then?"

What could I say to that? The Director was trying to put me in my place. That was clear. What could I do now? Fight back at the way I was dressed or at the indignities that they had done to my body? It was too late now.

I smiled at him as I sipped my froth. "Oh, Lord Director," I said. "That wasn't the nicest thing to say, was it? Surely you didn't have me all dressed up just to discuss ancient history."

That was too much for the Sub-Director. "Ancient history?" he snarled. "You're a terrorist of the worst kind. You kill for money and your own pleasure. You deserve the redemption that is coming to you. We should give this one as a prize to those in solitary confinement. The Lorcaz brothers should have her together."

"Can't do that, Derry," said the Director, letting his hand fall on to mine. I couldn't stop from giving a minute tremble at his touch. *What a way to go*, I was thinking, as the female play toy of homicidal maniacs! I had heard of the Lorcaz brothers and the rampage of



killing they had been on after being informed upon about their illegal liquor-making. They had been arrested after destroying a family they accused of informing on them as well as ten members of the local settlement force. Each brother massed over three hundred pounds.

"You see, Belinda," said the Director, nodding to his colleague. "What my friend does not know is that the Nebulan doctor who did this so spectacularly to you is currently engaged on redeeming the Lorcaz. It will be so much more of a challenge, don't you think? All of that bulk has to be lost. The tattoos! But such pretty little rosebuds they will be when we awaken them. Besides, we do not allow the prisoners to redeem our little sweeties. That wouldn't be fair, would it, not when we have so many cold and lonely provosts who would like to have their beds warmed. Provost Tannie Herres, now, has had her long-time partner just muster out. She needs comforting."

I thought of the big woman guard who had awakened me so roughly after this nanotech transformation and I shuddered again.

"I am Brian Curliver," the Director went on, "in charge of the Redemptory Services on the entire planet of Congreve. Derry here is in charge of experimental research. He isn't very taken with this new line of redeeming we are trying, save in its most vengeful form. I must tell you that I agree with him."

His hand brushed my dress and I felt it on my leg, my smooth leg, my rounded, feminine leg. I didn't have to shake on the outside. I was shaking so fiercely on the inside that he must surely have read it in my eyes. I thought I could seduce this man, that I might

even enjoy it, but the look in his eyes was harsh and awful. I would not want to be in his clutches for one second longer than I needed to be.

"You deserve to be treated savagely," Curliver went on. "You have raped and attacked women with impunity. Now you stand to be treated in the same fashion as you have treated your female victims. Which is why the provosts can have you first. They know who you are and what you have done. They know that Madden Stanger not only raped women but he raped men as well. He would deserve to be treated in like fashion, wouldn't he?"

I could feel the blood pounding in my head. *Yes, perhaps he would*, I wanted to say. But wouldn't one zap of a cutter beam be better. One zap and a monster would be gone from the world forever. Why prolong the torture?

I felt his hand on my thigh and gently press my skirts between my legs. I squirmed and wondered how he would react if I pushed the glass into his face. Oh, he did not know yet what a weapon he had handed me.

I was suddenly aware of the stillness between the two men and suddenly I knew why. Why spend what they must have spent to have me transformed as they had? They had a proposition for me now that they had threatened and terrorized me enough.

"You look very pretty," said the Director, his hand on my leg, "But how good are you really? Can you maintain this female attraction you give off even in the most intimate of situations?"

I leaned forward and gave my glass to the Sub-Director, taking Brian Curliver's hand in mine. I uncrossed my legs and leaned my body into his. I pulled his arm about me and, lifting my head, kissed him gently on the lips. I put his arm on my breast and he squeezed me even as he began to kiss me back.

It had been so long since I had kissed a man not counting the attack on me in the prison. He pushed his tongue between my lips and I got a jolt from that. I had forgotten how aggressive a man can become when he is aroused; when he pulled me into his lap and raised my dress, I realized how much the Director had been aroused by me. I wiggled my panties and garters against him as he put both arms about my breasts as my hair caressed his face and I offered him my mouth for a kiss.

Suddenly, I went flying across the room, landing in a heap with my dress up about me, exposing my panties and underclothes to the grimacing Director and his aide. "Oh, she is ready," breathed the Director, unsteadily. "She will drive my brother crazy."

The Sub-Director had a stunner in his hand. "But she is Madden Stanger," he said, his face having a haunted look. "She has, no, *he* has, killed a hundred people and more."

"For other people," said the Director, adjusting his clothing, then coming to help me arrange my skirts and put my dress down about my knees. "I daren't kiss you again," he said thickly, hugging me and stroking my hair. "If I do, I shall have to bed you and that will not get us to the capital tomorrow."

Within minutes, I was in a beautiful fur coat and fur hat and gloves. I had thigh-high, lined boots and a purse and I was led outside to a thopter parked on the light snow covering of the exercise yard.