



Reluctant Press presents:

Miss Katherine's Fancy

Philippa Peters



An 'ADULT TV' E-BOOK

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MISS KATHERINE'S FANCY

by Philippa Peters

A continuation and culmination of Miss Katherine's Fan

I. Mrs. MCDOWELL'S MISGIVINGS

"This bedroom will do well enough," said Sarah Lubbock to her husband who dragged the struggling girl into the room. Her pretty bonnet had been lost in the struggle to get her out of the coach and up the stairs.

The girl was crying and begging Sarah to let her go. Sarah Lubbock smiled as she listened to the familiar voice, begging to be set free. As soon as she had put the pistol away, the girl had attempted to escape from the hackney cab. George had had to jump down from the driver's seat and sprint after the girl who at last seemed to understand that Sarah would not fire at her.

The girl's long skirts and high-heeled slippers ensured that she could not run quickly or far. George was on her after barely ten yards. The sight of a man beating a woman and calling her a 'nagging whore' was familiar around Cleveland Street and its environs.

Several people scurried down the street as George used his horse whip across the girl's derriere. She squealed in the same pretty voice that she had been trained to use by Sarah Lubbock, her governess. She had learned her lessons well, gloated Sarah Lubbock, as she finally was able to soothe the horses and get out of the rocking cab.

"Enough, George," Sarah had to say. A rough-looking man, a sailor from his walk, stopped and might have intervened. "Those lashes will more than make up for the money she stole!"

Katherine, the girl she had trained to speak as she did, to act refined, to be in all ways the belle of the ball and the debutante of the year, as the broadsheets called her, called out hoarsely for help. The sailor listened to Sarah's cultured accent, however, and waved a hand at the thief getting what she probably deserved.

George took Katherine by her long, dark ringlets and dragged her down the alley between Mrs. McDowell's establishment and the similar establishment next door. Sarah brushed past the drudge who tried to keep her from entering the back of Mrs. McDowell's establishment.

"Bring her in here," Sarah commanded. George looked back anxiously at the lightly tied-up hackney at the street end of the alley. In the end, he knew better than to disobey his wife, so a blubbering Katherine was brought into one of the empty back bedrooms and manacled to the wide four-poster bed that dominated the room.

Esther McDowell came speeding along the passageway, followed by the drudge and a large, shambling man, a guard obviously, whom Esther had the sense to stop when she saw that her visitor was Sarah Lubbock.

"The hackney cab in front?" Mrs. McDowell enquired in her falsely, genteel accent. She tried, did the woman, but in times of stress, her accent would fail and she would be drop her 'aitches' like the Cockney Londoners.

"I think there's a report of one being stolen from a hiring line in Highbury," said Sarah.

Mrs. McDowell pursed her lips. "It could bring the Peelers right to my door," she complained.

Sarah nodded to her husband. "Get rid of the cab, George," she said blithely. "Take some toffs for a ride and send them off by themselves up the Mall. Serve them right when the law catches them."

George grinned and left. A man of action, he could be depended on to be cunning and vicious in carrying out any orders Sarah gave him.

Mrs. McDowell ordered off the servants who had come after her. She closed the door firmly in their faces as they peered in at the sobbing girl and the black-dressed, rich-looking woman.

"That's the girl I saw you with at Marie Lecannet's," accused Esther McDowell.

"You saw me with Kate," said Sarah with a little smile on her face. She appreciated the girlish tones that emanated from the young woman on the bed who squirmed and tried to smooth down her skirts even though her wrists were manacled above her head. "But you didn't see me with any girl."

Mrs. McDowell's head whipped around and she looked at the young girl struggling on the bed. Her hair had come loose and long, dark ringlets fell across the girl's face. Her lips were blushed with some kind of lipstick.

"She, she can't be!" Esther McDowell crowed at last. "Besides, you were governess in the Earl of Hutton's house, I heard. You were governess to that Missy who's turned the head of one of the Royal Princes. Oh! Oh!" Mrs. McDowell's manner changed completely

as she studied the manacled girl in her spare room. "It is Miss Katherine Grimond as I live and breathe!"

"Your eyes don't deceive you," began Sarah Lubbock.

"I'm not 'avin' nothin' to do with kidnappin', Sarah!" screamed Esther. The other woman's attempted to explain to her how she was going to be helping Sarah from that point on. "That's a capital offence. Or I could be transported!" The fear in her voice was overwhelming. "It's Australia and Botany Bay and never coming back, if you survive the sea voyage," she went on. "I'm not riskin' it, Sarah. I'm not. Not even for you, I won't!"

"You're not hearing me, Esther," said Sarah, standing and pushing her former friend and madam down on the single chair in the room. Sarah pushed the legs of the girl she had called Kate across the bed. Then she callously pulled up the girl's dress and petticoats to reveal shapely legs in silk stockings and silkier bloomers.

"You're thinking that George and I have kidnapped Miss Katherine Grimond, perhaps for ransom," said Sarah, taking the other woman's hands between hers. "But we haven't. There isn't any Miss Katherine Grimond. I told you. You're not seeing a girl, though you think you are. You're not hearing a girl, though he cries just like one, I have to admit. I taught him that."

"That's a boy?" asked Esther McDowell in astonishment. "I could swear... but why?"

"Kate here managed to get her master's ward with child, didn't you Kate, my darling?" asked Sarah. "Ruined the poor girl and her master's prospects of marrying the ward. So, the master wants vengeance, see?" Sarah said to Esther.

"He wants his rival to become a woman?" Esther asked doubtfully.

"Only so that she can be married and bequeath all her estates and her late brother's to her beloved husband," said Sarah. "See, the poor girl thinks that her betrothed is actually going to marry her and that they will live happily ever after, as man and wife. It's amazing how a few kisses go to the head of the pretty girls like Kate, pretty girls who aren't really girls."

"And you've kidnapped her," said Mrs. McDowell slowly. "So, this lordling can't marry her and he won't get her money if she turns up on the riverbank with her throat cut. Is that what you have in mind? He can't go to the Bobbies, can he? Or she's slitted and they'll be looking between her legs and, oh, I see it! He's going to paying big for her return." She snickered. "You going to promise never to tell the papers? I know just the writer who'd delight in putting out such a story if I suggested it to 'im for just a small fee and a smidgin' of proof, like lookin' at 'er with 'er bloomers down."

"There's bigger fish to fry," said Sarah Lubbock. "There's a prince involved as well." Her voice became savage. "Prince Albert dallied with her on the Kent County Hunt and we got fired for not looking after her. What would he pay when he finds out that he's going to be the laughingstock of London? We'll spread his story all over London and the proposal he made to her, his sweet, little catamite, when he saved her from the runaway she faked on the Hunt."

"The Prince proposed to 'er...to 'im?" asked Mrs. McDowell.

"We'll say that he did," Sarah told her friend. "Don't worry about the truth, Esther. We'll have enough truth in the story to make everyone believe it's real. You can even help me write it and put it in print. It can make all our fortunes!"

"But that will bring the Peelers on us, for sure," whispered Mrs. McDowell. "Oh, Sarah, why did you ever come to my place with such a scheme?"

I could not get my hands free. Sarah had cruelly chained both of my hands to the bed. At the end of my so-called training as a girl in Oakthorpe Manor, I had only had one hand manacled. A long chain had allowed me some respite from always having one hand stretched above my head. Unfortunately, Sarah had gone back to the cruel torture of having both of my hands manacled above my head to the iron railings of the big bed.

Sarah caressed my legs as she proposed outlandish scheme after outlandish scheme to extort money from Lord Douglas Moore, my 'betrothed.' I, a man, was set to be the Spring bride to the man who had wreaked a terrible vengeance on me for loving and impregnating Maddie Conley-Shore, his ward. She was off in Italy, somewhere, having my child. I was about to become a father, and a bride, at almost the same time, or so I expected.

Sarah declared me to be a gold mine to the doubtful, older woman she leaned over. The Earl of Hutton would pay, she said. The Prince would pay. I shuddered at the story they proposed to print. It was so close to the truth that the Prince would surely believe it was me who was the source for such a story. That thought made tears well up in my eyes again. I didn't care what Lord Douglas thought of me, or about the schemes he had to be rid of me. He would have given me to George Lubbock to have his way with me if I had refused Lord Douglas a kiss. I didn't care about any schemes to ruin Lord Douglas Moore.

I had been trying to run away from Lord Douglas when the Lubbocks, dismissed by him despite the havoc they had wreaked on me in the name of his vengeance, had caught me. I had the little money I had saved, now in Sarah's purse, and my jewels, including the ruby that Douglas had given me as a betrothal ring. I was engaged to marry him or so Lord Douglas thought. I shivered as I recalled kissing him and thanking him for the matching necklace and earrings. I knew I would use the jewels to finance my escape even as I tried to find the same passion in the tender kisses I gave to Douglas that I had felt in kissing Prince Albert.

But my wits weren't as scattered as they had been when I lay down in the grass with Albert. He had kissed me forcefully. I had shamed myself by responding as fiercely as any young, precocious maiden would have who was in love with a man like Prince Albert.

A pang of emotion went through me as that thought entered my skull; I tried to force it out. I was not in love with Prince Albert, even though his kisses had set me on fire, a fire I never remembered feeling in Maddie's bed. What I would have done if the Prince had taken me to his bed, I shuddered to think. I'm sure that I would have gone with him and lovingly done whatever he wanted right up until, inevitably, he found out what and who I was.

Then, I would have cried. He would have beaten me. He would have disgraced me and I would have deserved it. I imagined him taking me in his arms and saying he was sorry and, yes, kissing me. Our lips would be glued together again. I would press my rounded, womanly body against him and he would hug me until I could go no further.

I flushed and wriggled as Sarah's hand caressed the stocking top and the garter in the middle of my thigh, beneath my bloomer. Mrs. McDowell wanted to know why Sarah had fled to her house, of all the brothels in London, with me when she had captured me. Madame Lecannet had been very forthright about the blonde girl whom I had seen, sitting in Mrs. McDowell's cubicle in her shop. Her breasts were so gorgeous that I had had to blush and look away. She had pouted at me in my boned dress and shaped, corseted figure.

Esther McDowell had led us to believe that the blonde was one of the girls who worked at this establishment on Cleveland Street. Madame Lecannet had revealed to us that the blonde girl was not a 'soiled dove.' Madame Lecannet had said that the blonde was a guttersnipe, a boy, whom Esther was attempting to transform into a woman. She had implied that Esther was struggling to do it for some purpose of her own. I immediately construed that it was a bad purpose.

"You have here a sister to this one," said Sarah, stroking my thighs, through the thin silk of the bloomers. Mrs. McDowell smiled at me then.

"I don't," Mrs. McDowell said vaguely to Sarah. She looked at me with increasing interest.

"A blonde girl," said Sarah smugly. "You were having dresses made for her at Madame Lecannet's. We talked about her with Madame."

Esther pressed her lips together and shook her head. "My little Edith," she said. "Well, what could I do? My sister, Mrs. Price, you may remember her, sends me her last boy and asks me to find him a trade. All that boy wanted to do when he got here was dress up like the girls. What a struggle I've had keeping him out of their beds.

"He grew his hair long. The girls have all had a hand in curling it for him, prettying his face and showing him how to wear his corsets so that his figure became like theirs. Oh, but you're doing the same things I did to Edith with this one, I can see.

"I was sure your Kate had a pretty bosom of her own and she does, doesn't she, just as my Edith does. You know where the silly girl is now, don't you? She had her eighteenth and she eloped from me. She's run off with some scutty little sailor, not even one of the lords or rich men who would have paid to be entertained by her. She wouldn't have had to reveal herself fully. She could have been one of London's leading whores, a real courtesan, if she'd listened to me.

"But no, the boy-girl is in love and I'm out hundreds, thousands of pounds."

As Mrs. McDowell wound down, her voice got slower and slower. She looked at me, then at Sarah in silent appeal.

"No!" I gasped in a panic. Both ladies burst out laughing as they studied my wriggling body with interest.

"Kate could pay our way here," said Sarah, deliberately putting her hand between my legs. I tossed and turned on the bed and tried to kick her.

"I think so," said Mrs. McDowell slowly. "But we must improve her temper. I think she was fed too well at the last establishment she was in. It has made her feisty. No good for us in our business to have an unwilling slut."

"No," I moaned again.

"We must change that No to a Yes," said Mrs. McDowell, her eyes glinting. "If you left her with me for a while, Sarah, I would have her longing to be used by me."

"By the gentlemen who come here to be dressed like sluttish girls by you?" asked Sarah with a knowing look. She began to unfasten my dress and show off my corsets to Mrs. McDowell.

"Oh no," said Mrs. McDowell brightly. "Those men would love to be just like Kate, as rounded and female as she is. They come to me. I've made it a specialty since I started training Edith. I have dresses of the right size and styles. I have wigs, corsets and makeup, French perfumes and jewellery by the ton. I have Earl's sons and Earls, Baronets and scions of ducal families, even a Royal. You should see the Duke of Clarence when he is here.

"Of course, he always has to go and present himself with the girls in the parlour when he is totally dressed. Some of my most sophisticated gentlemen know who he is and they delight in having him perform like a woman for them. The Duchess, Georgina, I should say, was so proud of herself on her last visit. She entertained four gentlemen over the course of the evening and earned a hundred pounds for the house. She thought she was quite fine enough to go up to the gaming clubs on Henry Street in her drag. I had to be very firm with her. She is most eager to go out and expose herself, is Georgina. She really does think that men find her attractive and not a figure of fun.

"Now, this one, Sarah, if you let me tutor her, we shall make into a proper Princess. My most discerning clients will find her most amusing. I would allow her to go out to gaming clubs, but only the finest like Monte's and Darrow's. We should try her in Edith's wigs. I do believe we could make her over so that even the Prince wouldn't know her any more."

"Kate would love that," said Sarah, standing and taking Esther McDowell by the arm. "She has started already to enjoy the attentions of men, haven't you, my pretty girl?" She stroked my breasts over the corset that held and shaped me. I reacted to her, swinging my legs and arching my back. I tried to get away from her as I writhed over the petticoats and dress that surrounded me.

"George likes her as well," said Sarah with a wicked grin. "I'll finish her for the night in a while when George gets back. She is much weaker than when we started changing her but I don't want to have to slap and beat her any more. George left her fanny quite red after he finished with his whip on her. She won't run from him after that.

"Is there a kettle on anywhere, Esther? I could really do with a good cup of tea."

They left, still talking about things they could have me do which would make money for them. Finally, I dozed until George came back, several hours later.

George leered at me. "You don't tell Sarah," he said, glancing back over his shoulder at the door of the room. "If you do, I'll whip you twice as hard and twice as long as you think I can."

He unlocked my manacles and I put my arms down in relief, only to have George take my hands. He put them on his shoulders and lay down beside me. "Tight about my neck," George muttered and pulled my body against his. His kiss was demanding, smelling of alcohol. He loosened my corset, popped my breasts forward and began to kiss them avidly as I rolled beneath him.

"Don't!" I screamed at him. Sarah came marching in to the room, dresses, nighties and lingerie over her arms. George jumped from me. My breasts felt abused.

"She threw herself on me!" he began.

"Just as the barmaid did, and the governess, and the upstairs maid, and the assistant cook, and the daughter of the parson!" raged Sarah. "She is the worst, George, because she isn't a she! You're fooling around with a man!"

"You had me kiss her before," protested George. I tried to gather my clothes and slide from the bed.

"To teach Katherine a lesson," Sarah stormed on. "But I don't want my husband, no matter what a, a, cockroach he is, getting all lovey-dovey with a sissy-boy. Now, where do you think you're going?"

I had some idea of getting out the door, getting away. Sarah caught me and I struggled. She was right. She was much stronger than me. The starvation rations she had put me on had robbed me of my strength. The constant workouts on the dance floor tired me.

"Tomorrow, we shall start a new phase of your training," said Sarah grimly. She laced me up tightly again, increasing the pressure on my chest. A light, filmy nightie flowed over me in familiar fashion. Only the bed was unfamiliar. The manacle held me to the bed. Sarah took off my bloomers, undid my stockings and softly rolled them down my legs while George gaped at me.

"I hope the other men we have in mind for Kate," said Sarah savagely, "will find her as attractive as you do, George."

Sarah smiled as she took an enormous key from the pocket of her dress and I was locked in with my dreams and my misery. I pulled a soft counterpane over myself and blew out the candle Sarah had left me. I could still feel the imprint of George's hands on me. I could feel his weight on me, pressing on my breasts. I shuddered and tried to sleep.

It wasn't George on me. I was back in the grass by the path and it was Albert, Prince Albert, with his arms about me in my thin nightdress, his weight on me, his mouth on my breast. I wanted him to do that, to kiss me, to have his hands slipping down my body like that. Sleep came, finally, when I surrendered myself totally to the imagined caresses of my wonderful Prince.

II. SIR FRANCIS PULTENEY'S FOLLY

"I am not having George take a ransom note anywhere," said Sarah to Esther McDowell as she fitted a blonde wig over my natural hair. It was amazing how long and

curled mine was but Sarah tied it back and pinned it flatter than I would have thought possible. She put the wig on me; it fitted perfectly after she combed and pinned it to me tightly, gluing along the hair line so that I was completely blonde.

In the mirror, I looked like some courtesan at the court of the Sun King, so high was the hair on my head. My eyebrows were bleached and my skin was whitened not only by powder but by some liquid Mrs. McDowell made me wear as a foundation.

My lips were a bright red and shaped into a cupid's bow. My eyes were like deep holes of blue and black paint. My eyelashes were thickened by false ones, the whole eyelid painted. I thought I had butterflies on my lids as I batted them.

Heavy jewellery was at my neck, on my ears, in my hair and across my shoulders, between my breasts, on my arms, wrists and fingers. I even had anklets of gold that my dress occasionally swayed apart enough to flash at anyone looking at me.

I was laced into a dress no self-respecting woman would have worn. The dress showed that I had breasts. I was taped so that my chest was as fleshy as any of the other young debutantes that I knew. There was barely enough material to cup and support them. No woman I knew would have worn a dress with such a front, not even in bed.

"The latest fashion from Paris," Mrs. McDowell proclaimed. The dress followed the shape of my corset faithfully, making me out to be a very curvaceous woman.

"How do you propose to make our demands on His Lordship then?" asked Mrs. McDowell. She patted my shaped and padded fanny and I squirmed, to her amusement.

"I shall write him a letter, naturally," said Sarah haughtily. "We can pay one of your helpers here on Cleveland Street to take the letter and deliver it to Acton Square. Better than sticking it in the Royal Mail."

"And quicker," agreed Mrs. McDowell. "There," she said, spinning me so that my dress flared. "'Er own mother wouldn't know 'er now, would she?"

"Are you sure this Lord Pulteney can be trusted?" asked Sarah doubtfully.

"He was after my Edith," said Mrs. McDowell with a smile. "When I let him know that I have a finer example of sissy-boy, he'll be very content, Mrs. Lubbock, he really will."

"She looks too real," worried Mrs. Lubbock, turning me so that I could see the painted girl in the mirror, her dress flaring out. I shook as I touched the silk skirts of light blue and white silk. Sarah peered over my shoulder and adjusted my necklace between my breasts. I saw that the girl in the mirror had lovely, pear-shaped breasts above the tight ribbon tied beneath them that helped them to appear to be so womanly.

"Pulteney might ask to be convinced before he spends the night with her," Sarah said. Mrs. McDowell shrugged. She doused me again with perfume. She called it 'La Passione.' It was musky and unlike anything Sarah had made me wear before.

"Then, our little dove will give 'is Lordship a taste of 'er charms," said Mrs. McDowell with certainty. "The other girls won't object. They've seen young men in a 'ysterical state before."

I left the room to which I had been confined for two days, rustling and wobbling on the white slippers. My dress was wide enough to brush against decorative tables and chairs along the hallway.

There was music and laughter coming from the well-lit hallway as the two women ushered me to the top of the stairs. I was brought slowly down into a circle of girls and women sitting around the large foyer.

They were dressed in the same wanton style as me, with earrings like mine, wigs like mine, makeup like mine but their bosoms were larger, fleshier in almost every case. Many of them had dresses pinned up at the front, as mine was, exposing their black stockings.

“ ‘Oo’s the new one then, Mrs. M?’ ” asked a girl with high, white curls just like my own. Many of the girls and women, the prostitutes of Mrs. McDowell’s bawdy house, stopped talking briefly to look at me.

“This ‘ere’s Antoinette,” said Mrs. McDowell, leading me to a sofa, where I sat with all the grace that I could. I was aware that I was being watched avidly by over twenty women.

“Looks like a virgin,” said one of the women in a Northern accent. I couldn’t look up at all the painted eyes studying me. That brought a round of titters from many of the girls. I could feel a flush running all over me.

“Now, now, Belle,” said Mrs. McDowell from the middle of the chair. “All right girls, there are lights along the road and here is Munday.”

Munday was the man who had followed Mrs. McDowell to the room I was incarcerated in. But now Munday’s hair was greased back, he was shaven and he wore a butler’s uniform. “Mrs. McDowell,” he announced formally, “You have some gentleman callers this evening. Shall I bring them through to the reception area?”

“But of course,” murmured Mrs. McDowell. I glanced up at her in surprise. She had gone all girlish as a number of men were led by Munday into the foyer where all the girls were sitting. A harpsichord was playing in the background from a large open room, its floor wooden and gleaming with polish, to the left of where I sat.

“Welcome, welcome, to our little soiree,” burst out Mrs. McDowell. The men came forward, looking about keenly, bowing to her as she curtseyed to them all. “Girls,” Mrs. McDowell said. We all stood and then curtseyed to the men. I felt the slightest tremble as I bowed to the little group of six men.

I had to stand there as the men surveyed us all and exchanged pleasantries with Mrs. McDowell. One man regretted that he could not stay long, owing to another appointment. Mrs. McDowell suggested ‘my daughter, Renee.’ The man agreed and a smiling girl went tripping up the stairs. The man held her hand eagerly as they vanished into the darker halls above.

“Well, the Duchess is not here tonight,” said one of the men. Many of the girls giggled just as much as the men did.

“Oh, Sir Arthur,” said Mrs. McDowell, sounding for all the world like a teenaged girl, acting like one as well. “Such spicy games are the speciality of the house.”

"There is one of those nancy-boys here tonight, is there?" asked an older, red-faced man who looked like he spent a lot of time on the land.

"Just one," said Mrs. McDowell, not looking at me. "And if you can spot her, you will receive an evening on the town with her entirely free of charge."

Sarah was watching us from the entrance to the dancing room. I saw her frown immediately at what Mrs. McDowell said.

"That's why I love this house," said another man, grey-haired but young-faced, laughing at the others in the group. "Isn't it why we all come here, not only to be amused but to be challenged by the most beautiful ladies of the night in London?"

Many of the girls in my line of sight were smiling at that remark.

Munday came back then, clearly to introduce some more men to Mrs. McDowell. She waved the five men left to meet the girls even as she told Munday to show the next party in. The men looked about and strolled over to various girls who curtsayed again and chatted, smiling, to the men who accosted them.

I watched as the second group came in. Several of the men looked familiar but then they were fashionably dressed, like many of the men I had danced with at the balls I had been forced to attend. Several of the girls were sitting with men at their individual love seats and chaises lounges as a third group was announced. More men came in.

A dark-haired, younger man came up to me. I curtsayed, my legs trembling as much as my bosom, which the man was smiling at. "And who might you be, my pretty?" he asked me.

"An-Antoinette," I told him. I glanced up at him, but I couldn't keep my eyes on his face.

"A pretty name for a pretty girl," said the man. "A French name. Does that mean that you have a drop of French blood in you, as I have?"

"N-no, sir," I stammered.

"Pity," said the man with a toothy smile. "We've all heard such stories about French girls and their knowledge of lovemaking. But I expect that I will not find you lacking in that department, will I?"

"No, sir," I said, unable to think of what I could say to drive this man away from me.

Mrs. McDowell saved me then by bringing another gentleman to introduce to me. "Antoinette," she said in the same giddy, girlish voice she was now using. "This is the gentleman I hoped would be here for you this evening and he is come." She ushered forward a fair-haired young man, who frowned at the man who had been addressing me.

I curtsayed again, hearing the first man claiming that he was with 'the girl,' me, first.

"Oh, Sir Gerald," said Mrs. McDowell. "Underneath all that powder and paint, she is not your kind of girl. Sir Francis is much more likely to find Antoinette to his liking than any other girl here tonight. You, Sir Gerald, should meet a new girl I have here from Yorkshire, all newness and shyness. Her name is Belle."

Sir Gerald looked as if he might be obstinate. The second man took my hand abruptly and pulled me back to the sofa where I was forced to sit. I had to rise a little and smooth my skirts beneath me.

"Mrs. McDowell tells me that you are a girl like her nephew, Miss Edith," he said to me, a thin smile on his lips.

"That, that, your lordship," I said, "is, is a contradiction in terms, I think."

"Oh, I love that," said the man, undoing his thick, tweed coat. "A contradiction in terms. I hope, Antoinette - that is your name? - that you are just that, a contradiction in terms like the nephew named Edith. Are you a contradiction, Miss Antoinette?"

What could I say? More and more men were coming into the establishment. It seemed that several girls were talking to more than one man at a time, just then.

Munday did his butler's duty and called out, "Gentlemen, the bar is now open and the musicians are ready. The ladies desire to dance at the gentlemen's pleasure."

"Well?" said the man I supposed to be Sir Francis Pulteney from what I had heard. "Are you a contradiction, Miss Antoinette?"

I hated to admit it to a man like him. He held my hand, stroking my long, polished nails as his watery-blue eyes looked at me intently.

"I, I think that I am, sir," I answered him. A gleam came into his eyes.

"Good," he said. He stood up and took me by the hand to assist me to my high-heeled feet. "I hope that you can dance well, Antoinette," he said. He left his coat behind as we followed the crowd, such as it was, onto the dance floor. "That was one thing that Edith could not do well. She didn't dance the quick steps well. But she was clingy in the passionate, slow waltzes and that makes up for so much, don't you think?"

"I would think so, your Lordship," I murmured. Sir Francis swept me out onto the floor and I reacted to him just as I had been trained. I had to hang on to him as the other dancers were not organized in any set or line. This was not like dancing at a ball at Acton Square. Sir Francis swung me as expertly as the Prince had done, his moves a mirror image of Albert's.

"Oh, very nice, Antoinette," said the man I was dancing with. "You have danced a lot with men."

"Oh no," I said before I even thought about it.

"You have never been to a ball?" asked Sir Francis in surprise. He looked down at me and that gleam came into his eyes again. "If it proves true that you are the contradiction that you say you are, Antoinette, I will take you to a ball. You would like that, wouldn't you?"

Pulteney was laughing at me, I could tell. I had heard stories of young men sneaking ladies of the night, whores, into great balls and grand occasions. That often led to duels by those offended by having whores passed off as grand ladies. If I was taken to such a ball and discovered, I would be flogged for sure, by the servants of whomever I had deceived.

"I would love to go to a great ball with your Lordship," I murmured. I couldn't believe how the women on the floor threw their arms about the men they were dancing with and clinched with them; their buxom bodies pressed against the men they were dancing with.

An older man, white whiskered and white mustached, came away from the bar area where he had been standing with about ten other men who didn't have women. He put out a hand as if to take me. I stood there, a little uncertain what to do. Sir Francis lifted my arms and put them about his neck, shaking his head to the man who had come to claim me.

"Oh, right, Frank," said the man, looking a little disappointed. "I'll have that one later on tonight when you've finished with her."

Sir Francis leaned over me and hugged me to him, my breasts pushing into his chest. "Now won't he get a surprise later on tonight?" he whispered in my ear. "But I don't recommend Mr. Eastley, Antoinette. I really don't. The man has no discretion. It would soon be all over London about the contradiction he found at Mrs. McDowell's establishment. Now, you act like a girl, you dance well, you speak well and you look suitably feminine for me to maintain the reputation I have. How do you fancy an evening of gaming, Antoinette?"

"I'm obliged to attend my cousin and his friends this evening. A woman like you on my arm would give the night the appropriate fillip. So let us retire to Mrs. McDowell's office and we can test whether the contradiction is real or not."

Other men and women were going up the stairs and into the house. Sir Francis, his arm about my waist most possessively, guided me across the foyer to a room where Sarah Lubbock was waiting for me, her arms folded.

"Mrs. McDowell permits the use of this room," said Pulteney. Sarah opened the door, then followed us in. I stood there, a man's arm about me, claiming me.

"This one is mine," said Sarah grimly. "She's a special one and Esther needed one now that Edith has eloped to Scotland."

"She is gone to be married?" asked Pulteney. We were in the middle of a little sitting room, a table and chairs behind us, a sofa, armchairs and a fire to our left. He laughed aloud, his voice more a cackle than a true human laugh. "Pray tell, is it to a man or to a woman?"

"I believe it is to a sailor boyfriend," said Sarah, a smile crossing her face. "I gather that Edith was quite the romantic."

"She was," said Sir Francis. He pulled my body against his again but it wasn't for a dance this time. He kissed me firmly. His hands were on my derriere, pulling me against him, his leg separated my skirts, my stockinged legs tightening about him as he thrust against me.

Sir Francis mauled my mouth, his face becoming covered with my makeup. Oh, I must have looked a sight as he kissed and kissed me, rocking me so that my tasselled earrings swung about me. My breasts, such as they were, bounced against him. I shuddered as he lowered his head and began to kiss them.

"I think you should go upstairs and take a room, the pair of you," said Sarah. She was standing there, watching him kissing my breasts as if they were womanly. She must know how loathsome I found such attentions, how shameful they were. But her eyes only gleamed as she saw me humiliated by Sir Francis Pulteney.

"I don't have the time now," said Sir Francis thickly. "But I really do have to know about your charge, Mrs., Mrs. ..."

"Smith," said Sarah forcefully.

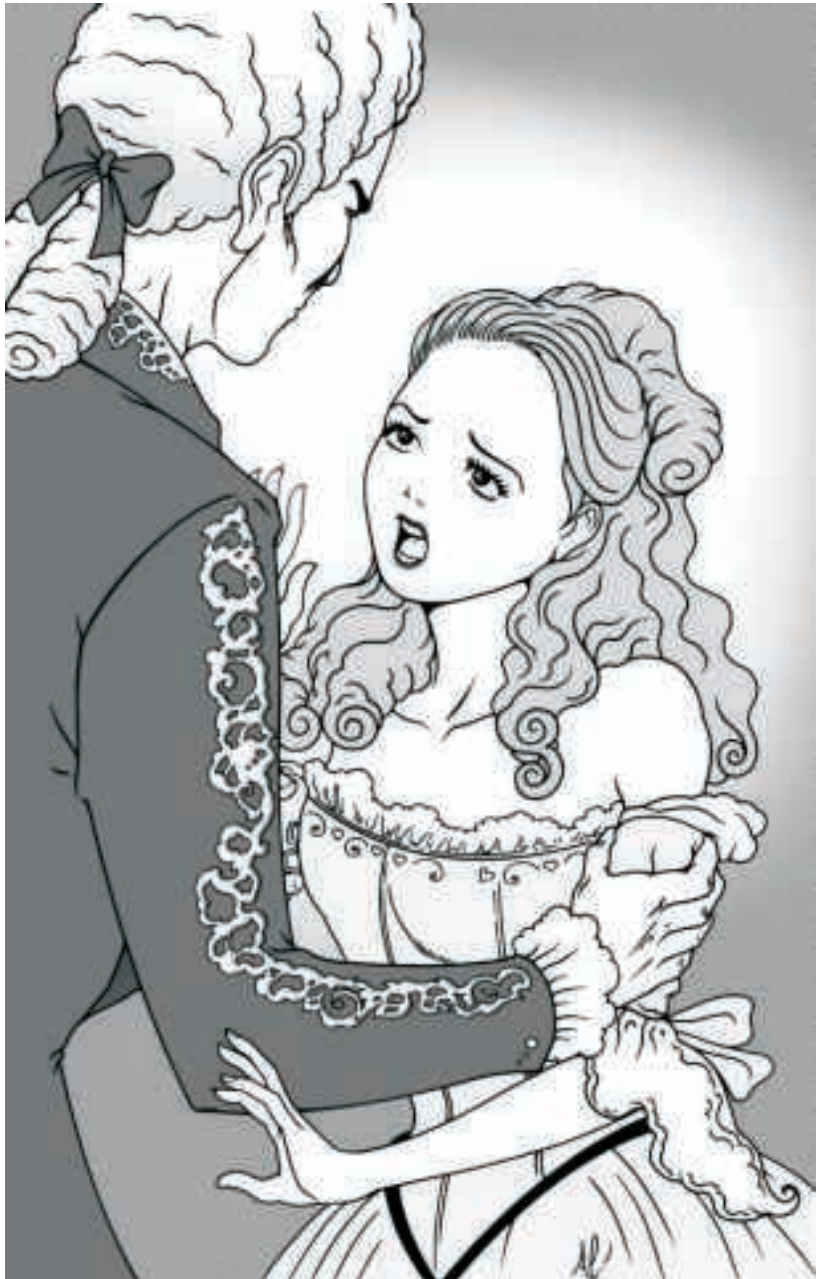
Sarah undid my dress as Sir Francis continued to kiss my neck. She stroked my arm as if to console me for what was about to happen to me.

Sir Francis put his hand between my legs and pulled my petticoats aside. I gasped and squeezed against him but Sarah was holding my arms. My bloomers were brought down and Sir Francis's hands were on my bare thighs, stroking my garters. I weaved unsteadily, moaning. Sarah held me still while the masculine hand explored me.

My panties were pushed aside and my maleness found. Sir Francis took hold of it and caressed it. I found myself shaking worse than I ever had in my life before.

"It is true," said Sir Francis. He had one hand on my manhood, stroking it, the other was about my waist holding me to him. Sarah pushed on me so that I had to kiss him again while he was playing with me; my thighs were clasping down on his hands. I had never been so terrified in my life. I knew what depravity was going to be performed on me and that I would have to do it in return to this horrible man.

"What a contradiction!" marvelled Sir Francis Pulteney, finally, reluctantly, taking his



hand away from me and lowering my skirts.

"She is everything that you desire in a woman?" asked Sarah. I felt as if I was going to be sick as my skirts swept about me. Not even the relief that swept over me as I clutched at my dress stopped the distress threatening to overwhelm me.

"Oh, more than that," murmured Sir Francis. He put his hands about my breasts, cupped them, then kissed them firmly. I felt my nipples harden. Sir Francis noticed and was pleased.

"P-please d-don't," I begged but both of them only laughed at me.

"Tonight," His Lordship promised me, "we shall have a night as man and woman that neither of us will ever forget. But we shall start at Monte's." He glanced up at Sarah. "Re-do her makeup and her undergarments. I expect that I am covered in some of that stuff you are putting on her face."

"You will take our man with you to Monte's," said Sarah as she gave the man a cloth and a towel and pointed to a bowl of water on the table. "His only task will be to see that she is delivered back safely to this establishment this evening."

"I can assure you, Mrs. Smith," began Sir Francis.

"It is the only way that I will allow my valuable merchandise to be taken out of this house," said Sarah, working on my face quickly and skilfully. "And, so that you may understand how much I value what you called a contradiction, Your Lordship, our man is armed and will not hesitate to use his pistol if need be. He has killed before and will again at any attempt to abscond with my lovely one."

"I suppose that I shall be paying for this security as well," said Sir Francis with a touch of bitterness.

"A thousand pounds for the night?" asked Sarah, stroking my hair and pinning strands back to where they should be. "I think she is worth it. And so will you, my lord, after the night you will have when your gaming is done."

"A thousand!" screeched Sir Francis Pulteney. "For a boy-whore!"

"For a very special whore," said Sarah levelly. "For a whore whom you wish to take into the most expensive gaming club in London and with whom you intend to deceive your brother, your cousin and your friends. Quite a service. I could get as much from the crowd out there and I would have takers."

Pulteney opened a coat pocket and took out a wad of notes which he threw angrily across the table. "I just made my first wager of the evening," he said, looking most severely at me. "I expect to receive everything that a man could want out of a girl like this. If she fails to meet my expectations, I will expect my money back. I, Mrs. Smith, can employ an army of men if I am crossed."

I shook with fright as Sarah put her arm about me. "Antoinette has been properly schooled, Sir Francis," she said. The notes disappeared quickly into the pockets of her dress. "She will be everything a girl should be on her first date with a man. She knows what is in store for her if she doesn't satisfy you entirely, Your Lordship. I guarantee that

once her maidenly protests are easily overcome, as you would expect, she will satisfy you entirely."

III. SARAH LUBBOCK'S FIRST REQUEST

Lord Douglas Moore stared at the note that had been delivered to his house that afternoon and felt a stab of fear run through him. All about him, the house was in an uproar, thanks to the wife of his brother. He should never have brought Katherine to this house. He should never have let her mingle with his brother's family. William, the Earl of Hutton, was as bad as the rest.

William had even sent a note to the redoubtable William Gladstone himself, seeking his assistance in finding those who had kidnapped his brother's ward. Lord Douglas had been on the point of telling him several times that the girl who was causing them all such grief was not a girl at all. That would have shut up all this caterwauling.

Some revenge, thought Lord Douglas. He should have known that there was something wrong with that Lubbock woman. She had taken the simple act of vengeance he had planned and complicated it. But she had made Peregrine Grimond into a far sweeter, far lovelier person, if you could say such a thing about another man, than he had ever imagined she would. Now, the whole world knew 'her' and loved 'her' as Katherine Grimond.

His first reaction on not finding Katherine in the house had been anger at himself. He had known that her womanliness and femininity had all been a sham and he had fallen for it. He had felt a sharp stab of rage as he thought how he had begun to think of her as the woman she projected herself to be and how he had announced their betrothal. He remembered how he had kissed her and she had kissed him.

Douglas Moore had known that Katherine was the only woman in the world for him. He had wanted her, wanted her to be the woman that he saw in front of him. He had wanted to see her in the fantastic bridal dress that Madame Lecannet was charging him an arm and a leg for. But it was all going to be worth it, he had told himself. She, Katherine, the former Peregrine, would be spectacular as a bride and grateful to him for marrying her and making her into a woman and a wife. He had hardly dared to think what would come later. But they could adopt an heir if she wanted children.

But when hadn't been in the house for some time, Douglas was certain that Katherine had run away from him. Then, the butler reported that Miss Katherine had walked over to General Webster's to see Miss Lucy Webster. Douglas had felt a surge of relief pass through him.

Then, he made a visit to the Websters only to find that Katherine had never arrived there. The Earl of Hutton insisted on calling for the Peelers which Lord Douglas Moore didn't want to do. He hadn't wanted the commissioner, Sir George St. John, in his brother's house, not after the way he had been smiling and charming Katherine at the debutante ball where Katherine had come out.

The Peelers, though, had come up with the most salient fact of all. A young woman had been seized right off the High Court Road. A bunch of kids had seen it and the de-

scription they gave of the hackney cab and the driver matched a person that the whole household knew.

It spread like wildfire in the house and who knew where else. George Lubbock and his wife had kidnapped Katherine Grimond. The fan she had dropped from the cab that had been picked up by one of the kids was recognized by the Countess as one she had given to Katherine. There was no doubt that the darling of the house had been taken by the evil George Lubbock and his wife.

Commissioner St. John went off and come back late at night to report that a hackney cab had been stolen in Central London in the afternoon. It was found in the West by a band of louts who said that a man, described as George Lubbock again, had abandoned it to them. Sir George said that he had all his men in London, all the constables and special constables, on the lookout for the Lubbocks and Katherine.

There'll be a ransom note soon, said the Commissioner. "Don't you worry, Your Lordship. They won't hurt a hair on your ward's head. She is too valuable to them. Snatching her off like that in broad daylight. Amateurs! We'll catch them soon and it will be Australia for them!"

All very well, thought Douglas, as he turned the note over again. How could he explain what Sarah had written in the ransom note? The household knew he had received it and he expected St. John to be after him to see it, to read it, to want to know what the ransom note demanded.

No, he couldn't show them that one, Lord Douglas thought. He reached for a pen and began to write the note that Sarah should have written. It was brief but it took him four tries to get the writing something like hers.

It just asked for money. Fifty thousand pounds. Lord Douglas could never afford the hundred thousand Sarah really asked for. He couldn't involve the Prince as she had threatened to do. He couldn't let anyone see the references to Peregrine. Katherine's name wasn't in the note at all, or how Sarah called Peregrine 'her' and promised to return her to her betrothed if the ransom was paid. He left out all reference to the papers and the story they would have to tell if he didn't comply.

But what if the constables found her? Lord Douglas thought in panic. What if they found Katherine alive and the Lubbocks insisted on telling the whole story? Would it be better if they found Katherine dead? It might be if he could get custody of the body before anyone examined it. Why should they examine it, after all, if she was dead, shot, say, or her pretty neck was slit open?

There was a knock on his study door. Lord Douglas got up and let in his brother and the police commissioner. "We heard you have a note. Ah," said the policeman, seizing it from where Douglas had tossed it to look casually flung away. Sir George carefully read the note aloud, then put it in an empty bag he had brought with him. It seemed that the policeman had come prepared to find just such a note.

"We'll get that to the lab," said St. John.

"A lab?" asked William. "But why?"