



Reluctant Press presents:

Bliss 2



Nick Lorange

AN 'ADULT TV' E-BOOK

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Bliss Part 2

By Nick Lorance

The Offer

Imagine my surprise when I was called to Madam Sofia's office. The call came during my gym period and I arrived in gym clothes for the meeting. An older man was seated across from Madam Sofia and leaped to his feet when I came in. "So this is her?"

"Yes."

"Little lady, did you know you're sitting on a gold mine?"

"I am sorry sir? I don't understand."

"I'm sorry. My name is Moe Greenwald, as in Moe's."

It clicked. "I must apologize, sir. I smashed your window and stole your food. You did receive the pies I trust?"

"Received, tasted, and had others including Miss Sofia taste them as well before you were called in. Peach, Dutch Apple, and walnut. Why walnut?"

"We did not have pecans at hand, so I made a pecan pie with walnuts instead. I hope you do not feel they were insufficient recompense--"

He waved his hand as if that didn't matter. "Kid, you are going to make me a ton of money so I forgive you. I'll let Madam Sofia explain." He waved at the headmistress. Madam Sofia motioned to a chair, and I sat.

"Mr. Greenwald has sampled your pies and at his request, so have I. Lady Charlotte explained that while you had basic recipes, you added ingredients you felt would make them better. That shows some skill. Mr. Greenwald wanted to know who had made them so he can make an offer."

"Offer?"

"What I thought was that I had to have the recipes, or have your girls here can make them to sell to me."

"My pies? But sir, those were gifts--"

He interrupted. "That delectable peach pie you made." He leaned forward. "It's like my mother's recipe, but it's a bit chewy and thoroughly delicious. I'll pay you ten thousand dollars up front for every recipe, or \$2.00 per unit if you make them."

"But the peach pie was easy, sir." I protested. "I simply used fresh white peaches rather than canned peaches or peach pie filling, with a recipe I found on a

site named home ec101 dot com for peach syrup." I explained. Peach syrup was made from whatever peaches were too old for preserves mixed with the necessary spices then boiled to a smooth consistency and canned to make the syrup, then raw uncooked unpeeled white peaches cut in eighths laid in the pan, then covered with the peach syrup and baked.

He nodded, getting the website from me. Then nodded. "You never answered. Do you want to make them or sell the recipes?"

I was confused. "Sir, I would give you the recipes for all of them to recompense you for the damages I have done to you."

"And I refuse. I can sell eight to ten pies a day combined, and that's 20 dollars a day or more. Since Madam Sofia told me you have somewhere between three or five years here. A minimum of \$140 a week, \$7280 a year. That comes to almost thirty-six thousand for the full term, and ten thousand more for each recipe at the end of your sentencing because I am not letting you leave the state without buying those recipes!"

I was stunned. He was willing to pay so much? "Let us set a firm figure, sir. I will sell you the recipes, and we can make the pies here if you supply the ingredients I request. The total would be \$26,000 so I can reimburse you for your pains."

"No. \$40,000 and not a cent less! And if they are made here a dollar and a half a pie extra!"

I felt like I was haggling in reverse. I agreed to stop him from bidding himself into the poor house.

With a smile he agreed, bowing to Madam Sofia, then departed to have the check cut. I looked to

Madam Sofia in the hope that some sense would come of it.

“Moe is a good businessman, Jessica. His offer was honest because he will make six times or more what he is offering even supplying the ingredients and paying to have the finished pies delivered. I have tasted your creations, and agree with him. What you can do is pay the students who are willing to prepare them say a dollar each, and expect that eight to ten to grow to twenty a week or more before the year is out.”

“I understand that, but I still feel like a thief.”

“Let it be, girl. Consider that you can live modestly for five years on what you will make before you leave.”

I sighed, and asked to be allowed to leave. I was just glad I hadn't told him I made quiche too!

The population dropped and rose as girls graduated or reached their sentences. Angela hugged me fiercely when she left, promising to write. It was odd, I only received three letters from my mother before my father sent such a scathing denial of my existence that I stopped writing. But thanks to only a few months here, I had four different girls that had gone on who wrote me weekly. Sara had gone first, becoming our teacher for paralegal training, then Matilda, Halley, Shannon, then finally Angela. Of them all only Sara was still nearby.

In fact the population plummeted, and we soon had more pinks than anything else, causing them to shift pinks into rooms with yellows. Those of us that still had partners remained where we were.

November

How the Pools Worked

I began to wonder what it was with the pools when Sarah came in grinning like a fool, towing Cynthia, one of the greens. Before everyone she spun the smaller girl around, and dipped her, finishing it with a kiss. The older girls were divided, some cheering like fools, the others groaning. As they were being congratulated, I watched Margaret, who wasn't cooking today, and Anna sighing and shaking their heads.

"Damn, now I owe her back rubs for the rest of my time here." Margaret moaned.

"I don't understand." I commented.

Margaret looked about, then motioned both of us to one of the empty tables nearer the door where there were no pinks. "When a new girl arrives, the older girls, the elder pinks and upward can enter a pool betting on who will take the girl's virginity here. We all know that unless you're very strong, everyone will fall eventually."

I nodded remembering. "So you all bet on us?"

"Don't feel bad dear!" Anna touched my hand. "We need something to amuse ourselves, and this hurts no one. You can resist--"

"Like Bella." Margaret laughed. "A couple of years before I arrived, this girl Bella left. Sloe eyed, sheer poetry in motion or so I was told. They bet on her and chased through her through all her years right up until she left a blue."

"She never faltered, and left here chaste as well." Anna quipped, and Margaret and I moaned at the pun. "If it hadn't been for Sonia it would have been de-

clared a dead issue. Sonia had arrived and fallen in less than a week. When she was apprised of the pools she put in her own bet, but she bet jewelry that Bella would not fall." Anna shook her head. "I lost my favorite earrings in that one."

I smiled ruefully.

Margaret leaned forward. "Let's take you for example. There were bets on which of the greens or blues will be your first, then on whether you would pick a yellow or pink, or whether you'd succumb to an already chosen couple. The odds vary from even; that you will take Anna for a lover, or one specific pink, up to ten to one, that you would seduce one of the teachers, like Coach Shannon, or end up with an already existing pair."

I blushed. I got along well with a number of the teachers, and as time had passed, they had shown such interests. But then I stopped herself. "A pink?"

The two women nodded. "It's even odds that you will seduce or be seduced by Tiffany."

I looked across the room. Tiffany seemed to feel my gaze, and she looked up, then away, blushing furiously. "Well she is cute, but--"

"No buts." Anna said. She smiled sadly. "I hoped that we would be first together, but I had bet on you being with me only because I hoped you would not fall for her. You spend a lot of time with her, when she has problems with studies, or the way she was before the 4th of July Ball, you are the one she clings to for help. When you walk by deep in thought her eyes follow you like a lonely puppy." She patted my hand. "Even if you do, I will still love you for your kindness."

Realization

A few days later I understood what they meant. It was PE and we were at the pool. I had taken Coach Shannon's advice, and wore a wine red Catalina swimsuit. As I sat on the edge, kicking my legs idly I heard a low whistle from behind me.

Tiffany stood there shyly. Like me the pink swimsuits had made her look sickly, and a few days before I had made the same suggestion that the coach had. Her new suit was a fiery mix of ruby and salmon that ran in streaks edged with a pale almost orange red like tiger stripes.

"What do you think?" Tiffany asked me.

"Very becoming." I told her. She sat beside me in companionable silence, and we watched as others were doing laps. Someone came over, asking her to join them in the shallow end where they could splash water on each other, and duck another person without fear of accidentally drowning them. I was working in my head on my English composition essay, and soon zoned out.

Then came a scream. My head snapped around. The group with Tiffany had started to swim slow laps in the far lanes and someone was struggling in the water, then going under.

I was on my feet, diving into the water like a knife blade as I swam to her rescue. I reached the struggling girl, and it was only then that I knew it was Tiffany. Her face was raw with both pain and terror, both hands holding one leg. She'd gotten a cramp!

"Calm down!" I shouted, coming up from behind to wrap my arms around her below her own. She struggled against me but after a moment she relaxed, letting

go of her agonized leg, and went limp so that I could support her. I slid my arms up, cupping her chin in my hands as I swam on my back to the edge where others hoisted her out. I climbed out to join her, and almost went back in as she flung herself into my arms sobbing helplessly.

"I was so scared! It hurt, and I thought I was going to die!" I held her, whispering soothingly, and she finally relaxed, leaning bonelessly into my embrace.

"Is she all right?" Coach Shannon had come running when the tumult had begun, and pushed her way through the crowd.

"I think so, coach. It looks like she had a cramp in her leg." I lifted her face. "Are you all right, Tiffany?"

"Of course I am, now." She replied, smiling tremulously. "You saved me."

"I just reacted first." I told her.

"Because you care."

I nodded wordlessly, and went to change. It wasn't that I didn't like her; Tiffany was fun to be around and a good student. But was she someone I would love that way? I was undecided.

I spent the rest of the day focusing hard on study. But still it weighed on my mind. There were bets that Tiffany and I would seduce each other? The more I thought about it the more I considered why they might have thought so. Tiffany would play the girl to my boy if we sat and joked, touching my arm, bumping me with her shoulder, giggling as she looked away then back to me. If Tiffany were a real girl, I would have said she was flirting with me!

If she were a real girl...

With no last class thanks to passing my Home Economics final, I went to the kitchen and supervised the girls making pies. Madam Sofia had been correct; we went from eight pies a day average the first week up to sixteen now. I wondered if I should tell Moe about the quiches. Instead I went and made him some. I decided on a Quiche Lorraine, and followed it up with a Spinach and Mushroom one. There were four different types I had recipes for, and if he liked my fruit and nut pies, who knew?

I asked Lady Charlotte if I could take the advanced class.

December Yellow

Near noon I was told to report to Madam Sofia. I worried, wondering what I had done.

Madam Sofia smiled as I entered. "Jessica, please, sit."

Warily I walked over, sitting. She stood, walking around the desk to sit beside me. "My dear, you have surprised me. You have exceeded all my expectations. In the last months you have protected one from being injured, shown compassion to others, and studied everything placed before you. You are actually above your grade average. Far enough in fact that you are studying some subjects that would be perfect for a student in their second year of college." She leaned forward, touching my cheek. "You are to be commended, and rewarded." She stood, walking around the desk, and opened her top drawer. She drew out a choker in yellow. "If you will..."

I stood, standing like a deer in the headlights as Madam Sofia walked around behind me. I heard the lock click, felt the pink choker come free. She gently placed the new one, and I felt it lock into place. "My dear, You are doing so well!"

The one subject I always had problems with was Latin, and I found people reacted differently to me with the yellow band instead of a pink one. The girls in the class whispered to each other as I sat, taking out my textbook. Lady Cynthia our teacher came in and the class began.

"Jessica, oh my, congratulations on your promotion. All right, conjugate the verb 'to go'." I giggled helplessly, as did others. Lady Cynthia looked about confused. She reminded me of Margaret Dumont, who is unfortunately best known for her straight woman roles in seven Marx Brothers movies. She was so perfect for the roles because she never really understood the jokes.

"May I ask what is so funny?" She asked, causing another flow of amusement.

"I am sorry, Lady Cynthia. The other day a lot of us watched the movie Monty Python and the Life of Brian. There was one scene where Brian was writing 'Romans go home' on the wall when he is captured. But the Centurion said he had written 'you people who are Romans go to the house'. This is followed by a Latin lesson, and in the middle of it he has to conjugate the verb 'to go'."

She blinked. "I trust you are not comparing the teaching styles."

"Oh in no way, Lady Cynthia. You would have to threaten us with beatings or a sword to be as harsh."

Ramona behind me mumbled something giggling, and Lady Cynthia rounded on her. "What was that, Ramona?"

She stood, giggling. "And threatening to cut our balls off if we don't write it a hundred time fast enough."

Lady Cynthia blinked again. "It is nice to know my style of teaching is... sedate in comparison. Very well, Jessica, instead, we will have you conjugate the 'to listen'."

Desiree

Three weeks before Christmas Anna and I were called into Madam Sofia's office together. I didn't think we were doing anything wrong, but I was worried. "Come in ladies, and please have a seat." We did as we were bid, and gave her our attention.

Madam Sofia leaned forward, hands clasped on her desk. "What I am going to say next is not as punishment. You are both excellent students, and obedient. You never cause trouble and are always helping others. However for a few months at least, I will have to break you up into separate rooms."

I'm not sure who was more stunned. We looked at each other, and I knew my own pain mirrored that in Anna's.

"Now as to the reasoning. Margaret and Evelyn will be leaving this week, but I will be picking up a new student today. That means we have more pinks than we have chaperones. One of you must administer to Naomi, the other will bunk with this new student until one of the Greens is promoted."

Naomi was new, less than three months into her four year sentence. She had been punished by my count four times in that time, a record during my tenure here. I didn't think I would be able to control her, and having only been a Yellow for less than a month, I didn't think she would consider me very knowledgeable either.

Madam Sofia caught my expression. "No, Jessica, you will not be sharing a room with Naomi. She needs a firmer hand. I believe you can deal with her, however, Anna."

"So I will be dealing with this new girl instead?"

"Yes. Be here in my office in formal dress at four this afternoon, Jessica. Anna, I have the cleaning girls moving your things to Evelyn's room so Naomi will not have to change. I promise you both this will be sorted out in just a few months."

We nodded. "Very good. Go about your studies until then." We stood and asked to be excused. "Oh, one more thing, Jessica."

"Yes, Madam Sofia?"

"Moe called me. He enjoyed your different Quiche and wants to make an arrangement like the one he has for your fruit and nut pies. I told him that you had informed me that you can make, what is it, four types of quiche?"

"Five now. I also made some Armenian sausage in our last class."

"Well let's not tell him yet. You are going to be embarrassingly wealthy when you leave if we're not careful."

"Yes, Madam Sofia."

I stopped outside the door and threw my arms around Anna's neck. "I don't want to be separated!"

"Neither do I, love. But it's only for a few months."

"Don't care." I found myself pouting like a three year old.

"You will adapt." She lifted my face, and kissed me gently.

"Can we get together after classes?"

"Of course we can."

I shook my head, kissing her again. "As long as it's you and I."

"That's my love." She pecked me on my cheek. I have to go to Latin class."

"Remember to give Lady Cynthia that book."

She giggled. I had read a book entitled *Jingo* by Terry Pratchett in the Common room, and had gotten into one scene where a character was creating phrases like Julius Caesar's *Veni, vidi, vici.*' and became satirical with 'I visited, I caught an embarrassing disease, I ran away' as an example.

Finally it was after three and I was excused to get into my formal wear. I chose the salmon dress, using the garter clips that I was now allowed. The seams were nice and straight in the stockings, and I found myself standing in front of the mirror again. In all of these months I had worn the formal wear only a few times in public, thrice for dances, and the first day. But Anna and I had me in them an average of once a week for the first three months if only to teach me how to dress without assistance.

I saw the limo pull up to the main house. The slim boy wearing a pink choker followed Madam Sofia and the flurry of gowned girls. I went in, climbing the stairs and knocked on the office door. A few minutes later, Sasha and Elspeth brought her in.

Madam Sofia went through the admonishments and explanations, finally ending with "This is Jessica, who will be your roommate. She will get you settled in, Desiree."

"All right."

"The proper form of address in this situation is 'Yes, Madam Sofia.'" I told the new girl. "You will address all students with blue chokers as Mistress, all teachers as Lady, and Madam Sofia as I have directed."

"I am sorry."

"The proper form is, 'I am sorry', with the proper honorific, followed by, 'and I will try to do better. This done while your curtsy.'" She looked confused. I wondered if I had been so confused. "Watch me, and learn." I caught the edges of the skirt, and curtsied. "Now give me a proper curtsy."

She did so, then repeated the apologies, both to me and to Madam Sofia.

"She has arrived late, so I would suggest expediting the nails and hair before going to your room, Jessica. She can go through the rest tomorrow. I will have Gwen walk her through the rest."

"As you would, Madam Sofia. May we be excused?" She nodded, and I led Desiree out.

"Whoa, shit--"

"Desiree, we are in private at this moment, and because you are new I will allow that faux pas. You are

the new girl, and it is my responsibility to assure that you follow the basic rules. I will not force you, but if you do not I will report it and you will be punished. Is that clear?"

"Yes, Mistress."

I found myself in the pedantic form, explaining the rules of dress decorum and cleanliness. Jasmine looked at the crew cut, sighing. "Nothing at all to work with! Well by February her hair will be long enough for extensions," She glanced slyly at me, "if I am allowed them. Until then it will have to be a wig." She brought Desiree into a room I had not seen; of course my hair was long enough not to need a wig. On the walls were racks of wig heads with everything from a bouffant 50s cut to a pageboy to a fall that looked like my own hair. I had found that except for the work of washing it, I rather liked having waist length hair. Jasmine had been teasing me for the last month about a character named Nathaniel in the Anita Blake series of books and was still trying to wheedle me into allowing ankle length extensions, but I was resisting.

"Now with her extensions Jessica's hair is waist length like this wig, but that is a bit of a pain to brush out every night. So let's go for shoulder length." She took down a platinum blonde wig. "Here."

Having never seen this part of the process, I watched, listening as Jasmine explained. After all I would have to help Desiree with this every day until she learned how to do it by herself. Salma who had just graduated to Green worked on her nails, explaining the colors to go with her formals, which I had been informed were Burgundy, Chartreuse, and Azure.

Once hair and nails were done, I took her to see Lady Beatrice for indoctrination. Finally we were done

and headed for the dormitory. I helped her change into a casual dress of light blue with flowers. Then it was off to the cafeteria. "You may dress in casual clothes at the moment. But if I see you in casual clothing later this week or after that, you had best have all of your homework completed and have it ready to show to me. You may study in this room, in the library, in the common room, or in the study room down the hall. You may also study if you do not have a class, or outside when the weather permits. If you do not do your homework, I will punish you. You will get to see someone punished soon enough."

Desiree was as pleased with the fresh whole milk as I had been. I informed her that a dairy farmer nearby had asked the Academy to board a dozen of his milk cows during the winter, and part of our payment was allowing us to use their milk. Madam Sofia had spoken with the local grocery stores, and there were some willing to sell the milk in half gallon or smaller jugs with a representation of the manor house with Academy Dairy below it. Moe had already contracted to buy our milk, buttermilk, butter and cheese excess beyond that.

Dinner was silent between us, though a number of the others came over to size up our newest member. Tiffany nudged me, then leaned over to whisper. "I'm betting you're her first." Which caused me to blush. As I took her on the tour of the grounds, I explained the duties. By dark we were in our room, and I cracked the books for my own studying.

"If you wish to ask questions please do. Since it is your first day, you can go to the common room and watch television or read as you will."

"Thank you, Mistress."

"We are alone here, Desiree. You need not be so formal. Besides, I am only a Yellow, only Blues are Mistress."

"All right, Jessica." She asked a few questions, mainly about the other girls she had met. "But you've been here only a few months? You look so... poised."

"Once you are comfortable, you will be just as poised. Tiffany arrived less than a month after I did and she is already very comfortable."

"What did she say that caused you to blush?"

I lifted the pen, looking at her. "When a new girl arrives, the older girls tend to bet on when you will break your fast." She looked confused. "When you will join those who make love to each other. Tiffany is betting that I will be your first." Her eyes grew wide, backing away hands out as if to ward off a blow. I stood. "Desiree?"

"No." She whispered. "Please..." She was against the wall, and I am sure that she would have burrowed through it if she could had made herself look away from me.

"Desiree? What is the matter?"

"Please." I stepped toward her, and she screamed. "No, Tommy. Please!"

I froze, and an instant later the door was flung open. Monica, one of the greens stared at us separated by the entire room as Desiree collapsed sobbing helplessly.

"Jessica?"

"It's all right, Monica, please, come in and leave the door open." Girls were gathered in the hallway, watching. I walked closer, kneeling in front of Desiree. I

reached out, but didn't touch her. "Desiree, open your eyes, look around. You are not alone with me, so no one can touch you without your leave before you are eighteen. None of us would do anything to harm you in any way." She shook her head, burrowing against the wall.

"What caused it?"

"She had asked about the pool. Tiffany had suggested that she had bet that I would be her first and she panicked."

"But the roommate is always the most likely!"

"That is true, Monica, but I think she fears I might force her." I looked into the hall. "Everyone, listen to me; for Desiree, there is no pool. We will treat her as a younger sister who needs our love and comfort, not our sex."

I took her in my arms, stopping her flailing fists. When I was younger I had tried to coax a feral kitten in, so I withstood her pummeling and clawing until she collapsed against me. I murmured soothingly until she was limp. Monica came over, and took her in her arms, and Desiree let herself be held. One by one most of the girls hugged her though a few gave me disgruntled looks.

One of the girls went to fetch Doctor Mary, who asked two girls to guide the weeping girl to the infirmary. I went to bed confused.

A week later Desiree returned. She was still skittish around all of us, but at least I could help with her training. She needed remedial tutoring badly in almost all of her schoolwork, and instead of handling her tutoring myself, I asked others to do so.

A few days later Tiffany was helping her with Latin. She had a much better grasp of the language than I did. I was walking by when I heard Desiree say, "Dance with a boy?"

"The dances are required, but you only have to dance once during each ball. Here," Tiffany stood, helping Desiree up. "You haven't been to many dance classes, so let's just do an elevator dance."

"Elevator dance?"

"You know; you're not going anywhere but you're still moving. Just sway, but don't move your feet too much." She hummed a slow song, holding Desiree in her arms. They shuffled about, Desiree burying her head against her partner, and I remembered when I had done the same thing for the new teacher. I sighed, walking on. Desiree would be all right. She'd found someone to cling to.

Destruction of a Mind

It came time to prepare for the ball, and like always the Academy fell into the flurry of girls getting ready. I assured Desiree was one of the first in the salon that Saturday afternoon just to insure that no one would tease her into another terrified episode. I needn't have bothered. Jasmine was so professional she was almost emotionless. She changed the wig for something that looked like the Princess in Sleeping Beauty, and worked on Desiree's make up so that she looked divine yet understated. Salma, who had decided to learn more in cosmetology changed out her nail polish for a mint green to complement the gown she would wear.

I went next and Jasmine became her own self again. "You know the Nathaniel look would be so you." She gushed. "Ankle length—"

"No, Jasmine. Even if you took it out tomorrow morning I would be tripping over hair that long."

"All right." She sighed. "Even a change in color would do. You have brown hair, but mouse brown? It looks so, drab."

"All right, you can tint it just a little just this once. But only a rinse."

"Really?"

"Really. It has to wash out when I shower afterward."

"Deal!" Jasmine got the tint ready, and as Desiree watched, I went from brunette to auburn. Both Salma and Jasmine thought it was beautiful and kept jokingly pestering me to let them use the dye that would have to grow out, but I just as jokingly resisted. There I was with my hair first in a French braid down my back then rolled into a spiraled bun only red headed this time. I looked in the mirror where Desiree looked like someone had hit her between the eyes with a red headed hammer. "What do you think, Desiree?"

"Beautiful, Mistress."

"Thank you. But remember. Here in the salon, we are in privy, and do not need the honorifics."

"Lovely, Jessica."

I hugged them both before taking Desiree back to the dorm. We passed Anna who paused, whistling softly. "Wonderful, love." She hugged me, twirling me away in a dance spiral. "I just wish you were better at the tango." She waggled her eyebrows suggestively.

“Well there are going to be a few more years. Maybe you’ll get me to learn it before I leave.” I teased back.

“Maybe.” She kissed me gently, and went on her way.

I took out Desiree’s clothing, and began helping her dress. She had gotten a lime green corset to go with this dress and I assured her lacing was snug but not too tight before she went on to put on the overskirts then finally the gown itself. It hadn’t been that long since she arrived, so there were no needed alterations.

Now she helped me. My own salmon gown had been lengthened by an inch in the last month. I checked myself in the mirror, then moved behind Desiree, and we looked at the vision in the mirror.

“Jessica?”

“Yes?”

“I wanted to apologize.”

“For what?”

The first night, when I freaked.”

“We all have problems, dear, think nothing of it.”

“No.” She spun, holding my hand in both of hers. “My family life isn’t what you would call happy. My father is indifferent to anything that is not wholly masculine in the house. I have such a bad reading level because reading is what sissies do instead of going out and playing sports. I wanted go out for the swim team but only sissies swim or run track instead of playing football. I love computers but only sissies play with computers instead of playing sports like a ‘real’ man.”

"There have always been such people." I told her softly. "One day I can tell you of my stepfather."

"I would love to know I wasn't the only one." She whispered so plaintively. "My brother made it worse, though. I wasn't his younger brother, I was the 'faggot' that should never have been born. Or should bow subservient to a real man." She looked haunted again. "If you aren't a real man, there's only one use for you." She shuddered in memory

I hugged her. "We will help you, Desiree, just give us the chance." I moved away from her, "Ready?"

"But what if one of the men..."

"They will not." I told her. "No one will touch you in that way unless you wish it. If they try, Madam Sofia will bar them from coming ever again."

As the sun set I led her across to the mansion, where the ballroom was already set. I handed her off to the other pinks as I went across to the buffet line. The dessert section was dominated by my pies, half a dozen different fruit and nut pies divided into narrow wedges so the dancers could have more than one variety if they so chose. Then I checked the appetizer section. There were three types of my own sausages there, and I had not yet let Moe know that I was even making them. Only the Armenian sausages were caseless, like breakfast sausage, the other two were Basque and bratwurst. We had spent the last month experimenting, and these were the best. Not all my own, the spicing of the bratwurst had been suggested by Brunhilde, a girl of German descent that knew her grandmother's recipe for the dish, and gladly gave it to me. We had almost frozen our hands off making them, because everything from mixture to tools must be as close to freezing as it can be without freezing the meat itself, and it has to be

done twice, one coarse ground, then again in a fine grind as you stuff the skins. I had found that without some liquid and enough fat all you ended up with was hamburger or hot dogs.

I felt a touch, and turned. When I saw who it was, I curtseyed, smiling. "Mr. Benquist!"

"Please." He waved a hand as if wiping a chalkboard. "You know my name."

"As you will, Matthew."

"I wanted to make sure I got the first dance this time." The music began, a Virginia Reel, and I went into his arms.

"How have you been since I last saw you?" He asked.

"Very well, Matthew."

"And your friend?"

"We will more than friends in the fullness of time, and are content to wait." I watched Tiffany swirl by. "A moment, please." I broke away from him, going to the small chamber band we had. I spoke to Sasha who directed them. "Be sure to play a slow waltz soon, Mistress. Desiree did not have enough time to learn many dance steps." She nodded, continuing to play her cello.

I returned to Mathew and went back to the dance. "I am sorry, I was assuring that my new roommate would have a dance she could do quickly so she can sit out the rest of the evening if she wishes."

"New roommate?"

"Yes, a tragic tale I will not bore you with. The music ended, but I did not move away. "I owe you another dance because our first was interrupted." I saw a

hand tap Matthew, and told the young hopeful the same. He acquiesced, and as the waltz began I saw Tiffany hustling across the floor like a Desiree seeking missile. I was able to catch glimpses of the two shuffling around, deep in conversation, and smiled.

"That was her? I remember the other girl."

"Yes."

"So you have done your good deed for the day?"

"I am free for the rest of the evening, yes."

"I would not say free. Your dancing has improved."

"If you do not improve, you should find something else to do." I opined. "I have had some wonderful teachers in the past months."

We chatted. He lived about thirty miles away in another small town, and worked as a lawyer in business law; writing contracts, assuring the flow of goods needed for the industry for half a dozen counties.

"If you wanted to set up a business, say food processing, how would you go about it?"

"We would need more than one dance to work that out." He reached into his suit jacket, and handed me his card. "Let me know when you have some free time, and I will come to the Academy to discuss it."

"Thank you." I slid it down inside my bodice. He chuckled. "What was so funny?"

"A flat chested little girl stuffing something down her cleavage." We chuckled together as the music ended. "But for that you will have to hire me."

"That would be a problem, I have money, but until I am of age, I cannot access most of it."

“No problem. Just pay me a retainer. When you can access it we can work out how you can pay in full.”

“I wish I had thought of that. I didn’t bring any with me.”

“No worry.” He took out his wallet, and handed me a dollar bill. “An old friend of mine started me in the legal field, and he always allowed his friends to hire him by handing him a dollar as a retainer. Fold it twice.” I folded it in half then again. “Now hand it to me, and say, ‘here is your retainer’.” I did so. “There, I’m hired.”

Then a young man came, asking for the next dance.

Unlike my first dance where I only danced once, or during the second perhaps four times, I found myself partnered with almost a dozen different men that evening. Every time we would sweep across the floor, I looked for Desiree. It was almost nine when I noticed that she was not on the floor, nor in the seating area. I spotted Tiffany nibbling some food, and asked my partner’s leave to walk over.

“Have you seen Desiree in the last few minutes?”

She nodded, wiping her lips. “Some guy came by and asked her for a moment to talk. Her father, I think” I felt a chill.

Monica and Nancy were in the first alcove, whispering as they held hands. I went on. The next held Donna and a man also whispering. Dreading what I might find, as I approached the last. I could hear a man’s voice in a loud angry tone.

“But dad-” Desiree’s voice was pleading.

“Don’t ‘dad’ me! Tommy always thought you were queer, and I have proof in front of my eyes! Dancing with me dressed like a girl!”

“Please-” I heard a gasp, and entered. Desiree stood there, pain wracking her face as her father twisted her arm.

“Sir, you will release her this instant.” He spun, face ugly with fury.

“Back off you little fag.”

“Sir, I will ask you once more. Then I will report you to Madam Sofia and you will not like the outcome.”

He pushed Desiree hard enough to make her crumple to her knees. “Go ahead, cocksucker. I only came to see what they made of my son.” He stormed past me as I ran to the girl. I hugged her, whispering gently, patting her back and hair.

“Please, Jessica, I just want to go away and die.”

“Wait, I will let Madam Sofia know, then I will escort you to the room.” She nodded, and I hurried out. I made excuses across the room until I was able to find Madam Sofia, and told her what had happened. She agreed, and I went to collect Desiree, but she was not in the alcove. Frantic I sped from the hall, running toward the dorm.

Desiree was in our bathroom, wrists slit, bleeding into the toilet as if she had felt her life’s blood wasn’t worthy of the tub. I ripped strips from my inner skirt, and bound her wrists, screaming for help, Coach Shannon came running down the stairway to the second floor. She made sure I had stopped the bleeding, then ran across to the house. Less than ten minutes later Doctor Mary arrived with a full blown first aid kit, and

took over. An ambulance arrived, and both Doctor Mary and Desiree were loaded into it.

I knelt in the pool of blood she had left, and began to clean it up. My hair came undone as I frantically scrubbed, and it fell into the water as I worked. The dye began to bleed into the water, and it looked so much like blood that I began to clean it up as well. Anna and Tiffany found me there hours later, frantically scrubbing a perfectly clean toilet and floor as I cried.

Desiree never returned to the Academy. She would scream if anyone came near her, male or female, and was sent to an asylum nearby. I prayed she would get better, and felt nothing but loathing for the kind of man that would have tormented her so.

February 2003 Partnership

Spring again. I was dressed in the skirt blouse and blazer uniform when I arrived at Madam Sofia's office. Andrea had graduated, and had been replaced by Morgana, one of the new greens. "Is it ready?" I asked nervously.

"Yes." She smiled, coming around her desk to give me a quick hug. "Moe just arrived and is with Herself now."

"Wish me luck."

She laughed softly. "With your talent? I may be asking for a job when I get out of here."

"You and a dozen others." I replied. Morgana had been one of my helpers from the start. We were now producing almost a hundred pies a week and there

weren't enough students to keep that up for long. My repertoire had grown from half a dozen to almost fifteen different pies, and the people who frequented Moe's were demanding more and more. The demand for home made sausage, now five varieties, were almost as frantic.



She went back to her seat, put on a prim expression, and touched the intercom button. "Madam Sofia? Jessica is here."

"Please send her in, Morgana." She nodded toward the door, and I went to it. I grasped the handle, took a deep breath, then walked in, closing the door behind me.

Moe leaped to his feet, coming over to hold my hand. "There's my little mint on two feet." He hugged me, then ushered me to a chair. I sat, and he returned to his own.

Madam Sofia nodded to me. She knew what I was going to say, and her eyes twinkled. "Moe, Jessica has a proposal."

"She does?" His eyes widened. "Another pie or sausage? Just give the word and we'll start advertising it tomorrow!"

"No, Moe. I had another suggestion." Now that it came down to it, I was very nervous. How would he react?

"Well come on, don't leave me hanging!"

"Our production will soon reach the point that we cannot keep up with demand. There are not enough of us working on it to stretch much more."

"I knew we'd reach that point. I just didn't expect to reach it this soon."

"Yet I feel we cannot leave you 'hanging' as you said. I have been saving all of what you have been paying us except for the monies I have given to the girls helping me, so I have about two hundred thousand in the bank right now. I wish to give that money back to you."