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***Jo-Anne
Wiley***

***a renegade priestess...
a seventy-year-old vendetta...***

POISON
I want it. In my mouth.

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Poison

by Jo-Anne Wiley

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Chapter One

Haiti

The Mumbo looked resplendent in her top hat; thick black tresses that hung to her waist, were loosely woven with colorful silk ribbon. A dark cape, lined in scarlet satin, was fastened about her neck. She had thrown it back across her naked shoulders from where it hung sharply down, all the way to her ankles. Her skin shone like black, wet stone in the moonlight; sweat glistening from her sinewy flanks, and a belly like river-rock.

Her pale heels flashed to the rhythm of her hips as she strode up the hillside to where the man was trussed to the trunk of the tree.

She leaned into him, cocked her face, and through extended jaws, exhaled heat and moisture into the man's face. The Mumbo smiled, then took up his penis. Squeezed. Hard. The heady beat from the drums intensified. He cried out when she gripped his testicles, tried to turn away, anticipating the nauseating pain.

She thrust a hand around, pinioning his anus, restraining him. The Mumbo lifted his shriveled member and cradled it between the fatty rolls of her sex and, raising her hips, she dry-humped him. She threw back her head in ecstasy as she mocked intercourse, plowing him through the folds of her vagina. And then she acted out a wild orgasmic release.

The Mumbo gripped his penis more firmly; searched the white, wild eyes as she inserted the blade into his bowels, just above the pubis bone. The drums beat harder; maddeningly faster. He howled in disbelief and horror; screeching at the Caribbean night-sky as she tore the knife up. All the way. Until it nudged his breast bone. The entwined ropes of his entrails bulged out through the gash.

"You be me brother now," the Mumbo whispered into his tormented face. And she thrust her hands into the gaping wound; gripped his guts and spilled them out onto her naked belly like a basket of twisting eels. She felt the heat,

the blood, and the juice, trailing down across her sex, dripping from her flanks. The man's lifeblood, pulsating over her. It was her life, now.

She turned to her congregation and raised her arms to the unified cry. The drumbeat was heavy and she stomped her feet; dancing naked in the dirt that was quickly turning to mud... bloody mud! Her hands circled about her head with strands of the man's small intestine, hanging from her fingertips, like purplish-gray Mardi Gras beads. "Re-tri-bu-tion," she screamed.

"Retribution," the gathered assembly chanted and the smoke from the fires bellowed.

Miami

"She's a bug? Is this broad nuts?"

Lindsey's editor peered over her shoulder, was eavesdropping on her computer screen.

"She's not a broad; first thing... and second... she's a *Butterfly*," Lindsey Rey stated emphatically. "And why don't you go read your own damned e-mails?"

"Yours are more interesting." He made a disgusting noise, sucking on a pencil. "Isn't a butterfly a bug? Or is it like a spider? Spiders are different for some reason, yuh know? Not enough legs, or too many. Something like that. What's a butterfly?"

"A woman."

"Woman?"

"Three *women*, actually: *The Butterflies*."

"She thinks she's descended from three women? Hasn't she heard that there has to be a guy somewhere in the mix? You know, someone to do the boinking. Am I right, Lindsey? Sheesh... she really *must* be nuts!"

"You got yellow paint on your teeth." Lindsey leaned back in her office chair, fending off the wave of exasperation while he moved around the desk to face her. "They were three sisters," she continued, "known as '*The Butterflies*'

...and they were beaten to death in a sugarcane field. This woman claims to be a descendant of the youngest sibling.”

His face brightened. “Three broads murdered in a ‘cane field? *Now* I smell a story, god damn it! Okay...” He smacked his hands together. “Get your butt into a car and interview this broad. Where’d it happen? Lake Okeechobee? Somewhere around The Glades? How come I didn’t hear anything about this?”

“Could be because it happened in 1960; six hundred miles south of here.”

His face went blank. “Okay Lindsey; you lost me. Six hundred miles south puts it in the Caribbean! Am I right?”

“Ahhh... you took geography in school. I didn’t know.”

“Very funny.”

“Look, ‘*The Butterflies*’ were three young sisters that banded together to oppose the dictator Trujillo and were clubbed to death, assassinated, for their beliefs; in a sugar cane field near Puerto Plata. This woman, the one who e-mailed me here, claims to be the granddaughter of the youngest sister,” Lindsey repeated.

“Hold on now,” he cautioned, raising an open hand to her face. “You are beginning to sound awfully serious about this.”

Lindsey held up a three-page proposal. “I *am* serious. This woman has a story to tell and I for one, want to hear it.”

“Did you say Puerto Plata? I’ve heard of that. That’s some kinda fancy tourist resort-place.”

“Let’s just say it’s a town with a tourist zone; a beach with resort hotels.”

“Oh please. Spare me the semantics.”

Lindsey shrugged. *Whatever!* “Look. I’ve written a proposal. Read it, then take it upstairs.”

He rocked back on his heels and rubbed his eyes with thumb and forefinger. “Lindsey... Lindsey... Lindsey... You expect me to go to the old man with this and ask him to

sign a chit for airfare plus, what... a week; two weeks in a Caribbean resort town? You outta your friggin' mind? Why would I do that?"

"Because it's your job?" Lindsey said brightly, ever hopeful.

"Look. You're the one with the nice gams..."

"Yeah, another four inches and I would have been a super-model."

"Just slip into a short skirt and go see him. You'll probably get the company jet."

"Hey, you don't have to tell me how a woman gets ahead in this business. How do you think I landed the job in the first place? And there's no company jet!"

"Well I guess I figured it had something to do with your old man, working here for thirty years, like he did. The jet was a joke. Okay?"

"Yeah, I guess. Dad may have helped." Lindsey swiveled her chair around to gaze out the window. Her office was in the venerable old Miami Herald building down on the waterfront. She looked out across the sailboats anchored in the Venetian Causeway, over to South Beach where the gaudy hotels crowded the shoreline like randy circus clowns. To her right, a cruise ship maneuvered in the turning basin. This time tomorrow, the huge vessel, looking more like an obscene wedding cake than a ship, would be off-loading white-kneed tourists in Nassau.

"If you won't do this, I have vacation time coming. I'll go myself," Lindsey told his reflection in the glass. He was busily rubbing a forefinger across his teeth.

"You feel that strongly about it?"

"I have a feeling, that's all."

"Woman's intuition?"

"Writer's intuition," she replied, swiveling the chair back around to face him, lifting her feet from the floor and placing them on the corner of her desk.

"New pumps." She wiggle-waggled her feet.

“So I see...” he replied, trying to keep his eyes on the discrete side of her crossed ankles.

“You like?” she teased.

“Yes. Very much.” Lindsey smiled when she saw him swallow hard. He took an involuntary glance at her legs; his eyes focusing momentarily at a spot above her knees where her tight skirt had slipped tidily up along her thigh.

Lindsey Rey knew it was the privilege of the attractive women but didn’t hesitate, within reason, to use it to get what she wanted. She first became aware of the empowerment when, in her early teens, boys responded with a certain glint in their eyes; something they saved for her alone, and didn’t bestow on her girlfriends: the chubby ones, the ones with stooped posture, no breasts or heavy asses.

She learned early that a coy smile or a touch to the forearm would get ‘most anything: help with her homework or a ride downtown. Then, when she was older, and she had her own car, she could get it washed. And she could go to a dance-club and not worry about whether or not she had any money at the bottom of her purse.

When she discovered sex, she found she could cull out a cute one, and he would satisfy her blossoming feminine desires anyway she pleased, and she wouldn’t even have to reciprocate. She still remembered her girlfriends discussing the finer points of oral stimulation; the conversation quickly degenerated to the merits of swallowing. *Yeck!* Lindsey didn’t divulge that such disgusting behavior had never been demanded of her. It would be years later, that she was finally forced to concede. Finally do the deed:

She made the classic mistake; she had dated an older man.

It had been her ophthalmologist: Doctor Stone. She arrived for her yearly check up; had been going, without fail, since she was a little girl. There was a history of glaucoma and her mother was adamant about the family being

checked each year. But that was fine. Little Lindsey had always liked Doctor Stone. He didn't hurt like the regular doctor; or the dentist, god forbid. But in the ensuing years, she saw less and less of him. His one-man office expanded into a full-service eye clinic. He hired a dozen ophthalmologists, plus support staff, to provide the day-to-day services and busied himself with administrative duties and the odd surgery that required his delicate touch.

Lindsey was barely twenty the day he spotted her in the waiting room. It was like he was seeing her for the first time. He hadn't recognized her at first; she had developed, matured. She was now a coolish brunette of untouchable beauty; her dark eyes full of burning intensity. When he asked the receptionist the name of the girl who was waiting for an appointment, he was stunned: It was little Lindsey Rey! And Lindsey was just as surprised to see him walk into the examination room after the attending doctor had checked her over.

Even in his early fifties, she recognized him immediately. He was terribly handsome, with just a touch of gray about his temples; his skin was smooth and youthful. He dressed and carried himself like a man who knew what he was about; an achiever, but one who had actually done it.

Lindsey thought of the boys at school and was overwhelmed by a feeling of displacement. Like she had been holding her breath, forever, and hadn't realized it.

"Lindsey. My how you've grown," he said. "I must look ancient."

"Not at all," Lindsey managed a tight smile; her voice sounded juvenile.

"You've grown to be quite the young woman." He turned to his colleague and dismissed her. The woman gave him a quizzical look, and just before passing through the door, shot Lindsey a wistful smile. "Mind if I do the examination again?" he continued, slipping onto the stool, "I like to keep on top of my staff. She's new. Did she seem thorough?"

“She is quite lovely. Seemed to do a good job.”

Doctor Stone checked through the woman’s notes. “Okay. Let’s have a look, shall we? Place your chin on the rest.”

Lindsey shifted forward and positioned her face in the yoke, her chin was held firmly by the rubber cup. He swung the instrument down, made adjustments and then turned off the lights. Lindsey was keenly aware of how close he sat, hovering in front of her face, studying the interior of her eyes. It was terribly intimate and she felt the shift in her chest.

“This looks good,” he whispered, his voice parting the darkness, and he shifted his position to explore her other eye. She was concentrating on his breathing; listening to the rhythm, slow and steady. A finger brushed her cheek sending shivers across her shoulder-blades and cinching her neck. She wanted the feelings to last and last.

He re-positioned himself on the stool. “Looks fine,” he repeated, moving even closer. “I’ll get you a klean-x. He reached across to where Lindsey knew a box sat on a side-table and she heard the sound of a tissue being plucked. He moved to place it into her hand. The breath caught in her throat. His hand lightly grazed her left breast; just below the nipple. He had nudged her on purpose, she realized in amazement. She was fearful, but couldn’t deny a thrilling burst of emotion that seemed to center in her chest.

Chapter Two

“Oh,” he apologized, “that was terribly clumsy of me. I’m so sorry.”

“That’s alright,” Lindsey was quick to relieve him of any guilt.

But he was prepared and pounced immediately. “It’s okay?” he asked. “You mean you liked it...”

Lindsey struggled for an answer. “It happens sometimes,” she tried.

“But you liked it?” He pressed her for an answer.

Lindsey didn’t know how to respond. She felt overwhelmed. Her thinking was clouded, like there was cotton between her ears. “Yes,” she finally conceded, not knowing what else to say. Trying hard not to offend him.

“My, that’s so wonderful,” he murmured, spinning out his lines. “You’re such a lovely girl. And so mature.”

Lindsey almost choked when his hand came back up. He cradled her left breast and ran his thumb along the fullness until he found the rising nipple. “If you like it... then...”

“Thank you,” was all she could think to say, feeling inadequate and totally lost; far outside her element and her range of experience.

“Your nipples are so long. You never wear a bra?”

“Sometimes. A sports bra; for running or playing tennis.”

“It’s a wonderful look, on a girl with an athletic build. Like yours.”

“Thank you.”

They were still sitting in the darkness, her face still in the yoke. The position forced her to sit tall with her back arched. He had her just where he wanted. Lindsey heard the wheels of the stool as he pulled around to position himself beside her.

“Doctor Stone...” It was a plaintive cry.

“Hush, child. Just relax now. I’m not going to hurt you.” And his hand moved across to the buttons on her blouse.

“No...”

“Hush...”

His fingers trailed down along the seam, pausing to twist at each button as he went. With her blouse draped open, he reached in. His hands were cool and dry on her skin. She whimpered when he found the nipple and manipulated it between thumb and forefinger. Despite herself, Lindsey couldn't overcome the feeling, tugging at her uterus, and she began to quiver uncontrollably when he pushed the fabric of her blouse from her shoulders, sliding it down, over her back and arms.

She was practically stripped to the waist and was thankful for the darkness. “Doctor Stone?” She asked, respectfully, trying to make sense of it all.

Why would a man want a young girl like me? But then his lips closed on her nipple, sucking it in to where his teeth could nibble and she knew there was no explainable reason. He was using her and she found herself gladly surrendering to it.

Young Lindsey sat in the stillness of the darkened room; listened to the mouth-noises as he suckled. What was coming next? She couldn't get her mind around it; couldn't even begin to speculate; she just surrendered herself up to him.

The end came abruptly, with a sharp rap at the door. “Doctor Stone? You're wanted in reception.”

He bolted upright. “I'll be right out!” he shouted after the receding footsteps. He hit the light switch and got himself a nice look. Her nipples glistened. Lindsey squealed, rushing to cover her naked breasts. Stone licked his lips and, watching her struggle her blouse back into place, he made a decision: she was worth the risk.

He pushed up from the stool. “Maybe we could go out, sometime?” he offered. “I'd love to take you to dinner; get caught up.”

“I guess we could do that,” Lindsey replied, ruefully, doing up buttons.

It wasn't 'till Lindsey got home that she realized the full extent of what had happened to her. She had let an older man bully his way into her clothing. And now, she realized, she had quite enjoyed it.

Lindsey was pretty sure he wouldn't call. It had been a subversive moment. She had been an interesting diversion during a busy workday. It was humiliating, sure, but in the cold light of day, the guy would surely be terribly embarrassed. She would be the last person on earth, he would want to see. Lindsey had underestimated the allure of her breasts.

He drove a Lamborghini Adventura. It was the closest thing to a race-car that they would allow on the highways.

Doctor Stone had admitted to not being able to get the vision of her out of his head. He confessed that when he turned on the examination room lights, he had reeled at the sight of the two ruddy-brown pepper-sprouts; called them both friendly and coy.

It had taken him a week to screw up his courage, but he finally phoned. She couldn't believe he called and was thrilled by the sound of his voice. He asked her to dinner.

Against her better judgment, she said "yes," ...but she didn't want her mother to know. He hastily agreed and they arranged a rendezvous at a nearby shopping mall. That was the first time she had seen his car.

She had dressed in the cutest thing she owned: a blood-red cocktail dress, the shimmering silk ending a dashing eight-inches above the knee. With a daring neckline that dropped dangerously between her breasts and, without a bra, her nipples stood in proud relief. She levered on scarlet four-inch spikes; she looked hot. Maybe a little too hot for her own good! She slipped bikini briefs up her thighs. Having shaved extra close, and then slicking her legs down with baby oil, she didn't bother with pantyhose.

Lindsey had just got herself parked at the Dixie Mall when the Lamborghini pulled in beside her. It seemed too

long for the space. She was impressed to see the passenger door lift skyward, revealing a dark leather interior. Doctor Stone motioned to her. She slipped out of her mother's Mazda and locked the door. It was then she realized just how low the Lamborghini was; close to the ground, but with a rather high door sill. It was going to be like climbing into her bathtub. She considered her shorty dress and realized, with a pang of dread, she couldn't manage the maneuver into his car without flashing her underpants. And what's more, she had an audience.

Three young guys, attracted by the car, had moved in close. Now, attracted by her dilemma, they moved in even closer, jockeying for position. She had no damned choice. There was only one way into his car and that was through the passenger door. She turned and sat on the door sill. Trying to keep her knees together, she lifted her legs. The boys gawked; one smirked and there was a low whistle. Lindsey felt the color rise in her cheeks. She knew they could see right up her bum. She swiveled quickly and pushed off with her hands. Lindsey dropped into the seat with a bounce. There was the soft hum of hydraulics and the winged door dropped into place.

"Hi," she said.

It was a real restaurant. Not some fast-food emporium where you had to line up while your date tried to impress you with small talk on "*two-for-one*" night. There was a maitre d' who greeted Doctor Stone by name. There were cocktails served in crystal, chilled wine, soft candle light and a succulent beef dinner. "*Chateaubriand*" he had called it. Soft music filled the air; a woman playing the harp accompanied by a man on a grand piano. And at the end of the evening, Doctor Stone paid by credit card; left a gratuity.

They huddled close over dinner and Lindsey opened up to him. He listened carefully, asked the right questions. It might have been the martini and wine, but Lindsey nattered away easily. She caught him up to date; her life at home,

her graduation from high-school and her interest in journalism. She talked about university, the struggle to remain at the head of her class and her goal to win a Pulitzer Prize by the time she turned thirty. She entertained him with the disastrous history of her love life; the list was short and unimpressive. By the end of the evening, she had even told him how she had lost her virginity; what a disappointing experience it had been. She was surprised at how it all spilled out, so easily.

He had laughed, genially. "Most people expect a symphony," he explained about virginity, "but end up with a garage band!" He was good at saying just the right thing. Later, parked beside her mother's Mazda, he had leaned over and placed his mouth on hers. It was unhurried; non-threatening. And he asked her if she would like to go to the theater...

"What movie?" she asked innocently.

His eyebrows rose in surprise. "Ben Hepner," he said. He's singing "*Tristan und Isolde*" ...opera," he said.

"Opera," she repeated, and thought about her meager wardrobe.

Back in her mother's car, she found a matchbook cover and wrote down "*Tristin and Isolde*." She was determined to learn more.

In the town library, the next day, Lindsey explained that she was going to the opera the following weekend, Ben Hepner, and wanted to learn all about it. The librarian was thrilled and brought out a book outlining the opera that included the lyrics, in German, with an English translation. She provided Lindsey with a synopsis, several old playbills, an audio tape, and even a bio on Hepner. By the time Saturday rolled around, Lindsey knew when to clap, when not to clap, and was one of the first to jump to her feet at the end and shout "Bravo!" at the top of her lungs. She loved it!

Once again, the evening ended with a warm kiss, nothing more, except a promise of dinner at a supper-club he knew, where they boasted a fine jazz quartet.

The supper-club was a slice of old Louisiana. They sat side by side on a bolster behind a round table draped in a checkered cloth. She sipped a mint julep and he drank draft. Between sets, they ate catfish nuggets and she talked about her week of classes.

The evening was laid back and Lindsey was happy to be in designer jeans, though she had dressed-up in a frilly blouse and heels. When he cracked some silly joke, she laughed gaily and, reaching under the table, had squeezed his leg. She turned to him, expecting a kiss and her hand slipped higher. Unexpectedly, her fingers came to rest on the head of his penis. He wasn't wearing underwear. The protruding member ran down, along the inside of his thigh, and was as hard as an iron bolt.

Lindsey gaped and hurried to pull away, but he had already placed a hand on her arm. She blushed and turned back to the stage where the musicians were just getting seated. As they started into the first tune of the set, Lindsey stroked his penis for him.

Lindsey had been in a couple of "*intense*" relationships, so she knew what to do, sort of. Under the soft cotton of his slacks, the size and shape of him was revealed. She traced fingertips about the tip, following the line of the ridge that marked the point where the head joined the circumference of the shaft. She moved higher, gripped him firmly and slowly massaged him. Then she reached down and cupped his testicles; bobbed them in her fingers. She didn't dare look into his face; just kept caressing. But it was so mechanical. And it left her feeling terribly inadequate.

Dr. Stone was so sophisticated and Lindsey was sure he was comparing her fumbling fingers to the seductive love-rituals of much older, talented women. He might even be laughing at her; or worse, feeling sorry for her. She was

dismal. And was relieved at the end of the song when she was beholden to lift her hand free, so she could applaud the performers. She vowed that, in the future, if he gave her a second chance, she would do whatever was necessary, anything at all, to please him. She finished him off with a light squeeze.

Doctor Stone made no attempt to reciprocate; went back to sipping his beer and enjoying the entertainment. By the time they returned to the Dixie Mall to retrieve Lindsey's car, though, he was already talking about a dinner party he was hosting. He wanted to introduce her to some of his friends. Just two other couples," he said. "at my apartment. You'll enjoy yourself, I promise." But Lindsey detected a sense of excitement about him, a tendency he had never displayed before. And he was quite insistent that she should attend. Lindsey wondered if it was his way of getting her close to a bedroom. But subterfuge didn't seem his style. "Wear your red dress," he said.

He had contrived to possess her innocent beauty; for himself *and* his friends. He had worked his way through each step of his conspiracy with deliberate intent; like a mathematician working his way through a complicated equation. He had used deceit and deception. And the bait was well placed. When he had her at her most vulnerable, he pounced...

Chapter Three

Lindsey drove around to his condo on Saturday night. She had never been before and was curious to see his apartment and find out how he lived. As it turned out, he lived quite well. He had a penthouse on the roof and the exterior wall was solid glass. The place was right out of the pages of Architectural Digest. The salmon was already in the oven and a woman in a black pantsuit with white apron, was hovering about the kitchen door. An older couple were already seated on the sofa and chatting over drinks. Doctor Stone introduced them; Ray and his friend Rebecca.

“And this is Mary,” Doctor Stone indicated the woman in the apron who had come forward to stand by Lindsey’s elbow.

“Can I get you something from the bar?” the woman asked.

“Would a martini be okay?”

Doctor Stone laughed at her naiveté. “Mary’s specialty,” he said. “And Mary’s preparing the dinner tonight. You’re in for a treat.”

Mary acknowledged him with a cock of her chin. “You spoil me, dear sir,” she said with a saucy sparkle about her eyes. Lindsey had no doubt the woman was capable of serving up more than food and drink. Mary moved along to the bar at the end of the room in search of the cocktail shaker.

There was a knock at the door and Doctor Stone ushered in a second couple. Lindsey couldn’t help but stare. The woman was in her thirty’s, perhaps late thirty’s. She was statuesque and stunningly beautiful, but it was the woman’s dress that could halt traffic.

It was closer to a negligee than party wear. In deep purple, the loose folds draped the curves of her body. The neckline plunged to below her navel, and the hemline wasn’t much further below that. If the woman was wearing

underwear, it could only be panties, and the briefest pair at that.

Their names were Farthington and Carmen. Once again, the woman was introduced as his *friend*. Rebecca went to the woman and kissed her full on the mouth. Lindsey wondered if it was some kind of *European* thing. They must have been known to Mary because, when she returned, she had three drinks on her tray. She passed Lindsey a martini, a caesar went to Carmen, and a large scotch whiskey to Farthington. Her tray empty, Mary rushed back into her kitchen. Doctor Stone was close on her heels.

Farthington took a prodigious slug of his scotch and sighed. "Bloody hell; been looking forward to that one." Then he turned and saluted Ray and Rebecca. "Good to see you both! Rebecca, you're looking quite *butchy* this evening. Can always count on you; not to disappoint."

She smiled. "You always liked a girl with balls, Farty."

He laughed in return. "And you, Ray. How's life down on the ranch?"

"Haven't seen it a year; wretched black flies, you know. But they tell me all's well. Into the spring calving, presently, whatever that might entail."

Then Farthington had turned to Lindsey; studied her with a critical eye, for a moment, while sipping scotch. "And your Stoney's latest acquisition," he said, surmising her curves.

Lindsey wasn't sure what he meant, by *acquisition*, but she smiled prettily and held out her hand. He took hold of her fingers, but instead of shaking her hand, he lifted it. Lindsey knew it was to raise her hemline. He spun her around. "Lovely," he said to no one in particular. "A bit young, but all the bits seem to be in order, and nicely packaged as well."

Lindsey suddenly felt naked and looked around for Doctor Stone to come and rescue her, but he was still in the kitchen, with Mary.

“You’ll make a nice addition to our little group,” Farthington drolled on.

“Oh leave her alone, Farty,” Rebecca cut in from her spot on the sofa. “She’s just a girl.”

“But you like her, don’t you,” he shot back, “you old lezzie...”

Rebecca sneered at him and looked away. “Stone?” she called out. “You better get in here. Farty’s fixin’ to fuck your girlfriend!”

To Lindsey’s relief, Doctor Stone stepped back through the kitchen doorway but, with a flash of jealousy, Lindsey watched him wipe lipstick from his cheek. Stone laughed. “Farthington. What are you about?”

The man humped his shoulders, all innocence, but at least he let go of Lindsey’s hand.

“Your little Lindsey’s about to be ravaged,” Rebecca warned.

“Nonsense,” Farthington defended himself. “I was just admiring the packaging.”

“At least give the poor girl a chance to get something to fill her tummy,” Carmen piped in.

The kitchen door swung back. “Dinner in ten minutes,” Mary rang out. “Time for one more cocktail.”

Lindsey watched her cross the room in the direction of the bar. Mary was a tall, lively woman; seemed randy as hell. She appeared slim and lithe in her black pantsuit.

“It’s these damned Democrats. They want to give all our money away...” Ray was discussing politics.

“You need to drop by and see the new trainer. He’s only twenty-six but he can dig his toenails into my bed-sheets, anytime...” Carmen was talking sex.

“But they need to sign a guy like Jackson. We need the strength in the back field...” Doctor Stone was talking sports.

Lindsey sat listening to the general hubbub of the party. Mary brought the tray of drinks and Lindsey started in on a

second martini.

“Okay people,” Doctor Stone announced, “bring along your glasses. Let’s head into the dining room.”

It was an adjacent room dominated by a dining table draped with a linen cloth. There was a silver service, real china and crystal glasses. The lighting was low and dozens of candles flickered from the surrounding side-tables. The setting was terribly romantic. When everyone was seated, Doctor Stone splashed crisp, cold white wine into large goblets. With two drinks on an empty stomach, and now wine, Lindsey’s head had begun to swim and she looked forward to the meal being served. Mary didn’t disappoint her.

She breezed through the doorway with a silver platter the size of a child’s snow-saucer; covered with a silver dome. “Bon appétit,” Mary said, placing the platter in front of Doctor Stone who stood at the head of the table. Then, excusing herself, Mary returned to her kitchen.

Doctor Stone bowed his head. “Thank you Lord for all the goodies we will be enjoying this evening.” He gave Lindsey a rather poignant wink before whisking the cover off the platter.

Lindsey gazed down on a whole fish; a fish as long as her arm. It was complete: head, tail, and all the bits in between. Mary had sliced it on the diagonal, but it was all there. The salmon had been dressed with a delicate herb stuffing and was served on a bed of wild rice. There were freshly steamed asparagus and grilled spring onions. The platter was garnished with slices of fresh avocado and the gravy boat was filled with a steaming dill-cheese sauce.

“God Stone, you’ve done it again,” Farthington murmured, the anticipation evident in his voice as he gulped icy Chablis. Everyone watched as Doctor Stone served up huge slabs of meat onto hot dinner plates. Lindsey ate like a trooper and begged seconds. Desert was a parfait: ice cream, whipped cream, and a generous drizzle

of orangey Grand Marnier. Chocolate ladies fingers garnished the sides of the parfait dishes. It was a perfect complement to the dinner; not too heavy on the stomach but cleansed the palate nicely. The steaming rich Jamaica coffee helped settle the full feeling and went well with the snifter of brandy Doctor Stone placed in front of her.

They took their coffees and brandies into the living room where Farthington produced small Cuban cigars from his breast pocket. Ray accepted readily. Doctor Stone declined, but accompanied the two men out onto the terrace, his brandy in hand. Carmen trailed along, professing to enjoy the aroma of a good cigar. Mary disappeared into the dining room to deal with the gastronomic aftershocks, leaving Lindsey and Rebecca facing each other across the coffee table. There was an awkward silence. Lindsey looked wistfully toward the terrace, but the men were in deep conversation, the cigars glowing in the night air. Rebecca finished her brandy and Lindsey looked around when she heard the woman set her snifter down and get to her feet.

Rebecca was a mannish, big-boned woman. Shoulders and hips. But not unattractive with her high, prominent cheek bones and deep set eyes. In her forties, her hair may have lost some of its luster, but even so, the soft curls, closely cropped, framed an attractive face.

“So Lindsey; how are you enjoying our little group?” Her voice was deeply resonant, like the roll of a ten-pin bowling ball. The woman had slipped in to join Lindsey on the sofa.

Lindsey’s fingers trembled as she set down her glass, the mellowing effects of the brandy suddenly gone. “Everyone’s been very nice,” Lindsey said, realizing she sounded guarded. “Except Farthington; I’m not sure he likes me.”

“Rebecca laughed, a low chesty rumble. “Don’t take any notice of Farty. He’s playacting.”

“Playacting?”

“Well sure. We all are, really. Farty’s not at all like that. He’s a dammed accountant, for Christ’s sake. You can’t get

more stodgy. He dreams of being obnoxious. But he can't get away with it in real life. So he comes here. We know he's not really like that, so put up with him playing the horse's ass. And he's married to a lovely woman."

"But I thought he and..."

"Carmen? Good god no. Carmen's married to an orthopedic surgeon; she's a head nurse at Trinity, a very responsible job. But her fantasy is to be the world's most notorious slut. And, as you've seen, she loves to dress for the occasion. She has the largest collection of the most bazaar underwear. But this is the only place she gets to wear any of it. Her husband doesn't suspect."

"And you?"

Rebecca smiled, a look of deliberation about her lips. "I come here to punish myself for being a lesbian," she confessed without prejudice.

Lindsey gawked. She couldn't help herself. Rebecca's bold admission was surprising.

"These men compromise my body," Rebecca continued. "I try to fight them off, but they always win. I get a rousing good screw, sometimes by all three of them. I'm reminded of what I am and what I should have been. My partner works for the *Count Me First* rally; the self-help tour that travels the country this time of year. I come to these dinner parties to work out my frustrations; every four or six weeks. We take turns hosting them."

"But I don't understand."

"How old are you, baby?"

"Twenty."

"That's the reason, then. You're young yet. At twenty, everything is all rosy. But soon that sweet little cottage you dreamt about turns out to be a dingy one-bedroom apartment. And the landlord is threatening because last month's money went to the car payment on that forth-hand junker your husband bought, just before he lost his job. Your daily debate is whether or not to buy booze or baby formula.

And then you find out that hubby has been boinking Mrs. Thunderthighs down the hall. And everything ends in a landslide of pills and whiskey.”

“But it’s not going to be like that!” Lindsey leapt to defend herself. “I’m going to be a journalist. Win a Pulitzer Prize.”

The room went silent a moment as both women reassessed.

“Really. A journalist...” Rebecca confirmed.

“Yes.”

“You can write. You’re serious about it.”

“I’m enrolled in the communications division at the University. I’m at the head of my journalism class.”

“The head. You’re sure.”

“Yes. I graduate this year. No one can touch me; not even close.”

“Just a sec...” Rebecca pulled her cell phone from her bag and scrolled through the menu.

Chapter Four

“Ted. Hey, it’s Rebecca... Yeah... You doin’ okay? You ever get that ink out from under your toenails?” She paused a moment, then laughed. “Don’t worry. I’ll never tell your wife, but you do owe me, remember?”

She listened a moment longer, a mischievous smile playing about her mouth. “Look, Ted. I got something for you; a journalism student.”

Lindsey held her breath.

“Yeah, I know... But she’s good. She’s going to win a Pulitzer. Trust me.”

He responded.

“Don’t give me shit. I’m the one doing *you* a favor, here. See the girl. She’s the best the University has to offer this year. And she’s got nice tits!” Rebecca turned to Lindsey and winked. “You’ll thank me.”

Rebecca listened again. “You heard what I said.” Rebecca scrambled for her bag. “Give it to me again.” She scribbled on the back of a business card. “Yeah. She’s good down there as well!” Rebecca snapped her phone closed and turned to Lindsey.

“You know the Boston Globe?” Rebecca asked.

“Yes, of course.” Lindsey was breathless.

“His name is Ted Turlow; Editor-in-Chief. But don’t call him Mr. Turlow, he hates it. Call him sir until he asks you to call him *Ted*. Here’s the number.” Rebecca passed Lindsey the business card. “It’s for his executive assistant. Contact him next week and he will set up the interview.”

Lindsey was stunned. If it worked out, she would be fast-tracked to one of the country’s major dailies. And this woman, sitting beside her, had done it with one phone call. “I don’t know what to say.” Lindsey found herself reeling with the anticipation.

“You don’t have to say anything. Ted’s a pussycat, really. I worked for him a dozen years.”

“You worked at the Globe? You’re a journalist?”

“Mmm. Was. Features writer... but that was another lifetime. Now look, wear something sexy; he likes a tight youthful body, but don't expect to land a job by flashing a little cleavage. Ultimately it will come down to how good you are. But I got a feeling you'll do okay.”

Lindsey wanted to believe that, but wasn't as sure. “I have to work up my resume.”

“Don't bother. Ted hasn't time for damned resumes. Give him the hardest-hitting story you've ever written; one where you worked hard to dig up some dirt. Something he can sink his teeth into. And well, if you start to lose him, you *do* have nice tits.”

“I arrived at school one morning,” Lindsey offered, “and there was a guy hanging from the flagpole. I used to carry a camera, in those days, and got a great shot of the ambulance attendants cutting him down.”

“He was dead?”

“Oh no. Worse. He was hanging by his wrists; a couple of feet off the ground. He had raped two of the first-year students and some of the senior girls decided to do something to curb his appetite. They had trussed him up during the night, pulled his pants down, and twisted a wire around his scrotum. They hung one of the school fire extinguishers from the other end of the wire.”

“Ouch!”

“Yeah, I know. Everyone knew who had got to the guy and I interviewed a couple of the senior girls. Later that day, I went to the hospital. I flirted with one of the interns; told him I was the guy's sister. The intern told me that the circulation had been cut off and they had amputated.”

“They cut off his nuts?”

“Oh yeah. I wrote it up, but the school paper refused to print it. But the editor of the City magazine wasn't so prissy. I got two pages.”

“And you still have a copy of the magazine?”

“Sure.”

“Perfect! Ted will love it!”

Rebecca shifted a little closer and reached out boldly with both hands. Lindsey went as cold as granite. Rebecca hooked fingers into the loose neckline of Lindsey’s red dress and pulled the silk away from her chest so she could peer down.

“My, Stoney *was* right. You do have long nipples.” She enjoyed the view for a moment longer before dropping her hands down to the hem of Lindsey’s dress. She lifted the fabric and studied the spot where Lindsey’s white pants bunched and disappeared around her crotch. “My... my. You’ll do. Yes, you’ll do nicely.

Lindsey wasn’t so naive as to think the woman wanted only a polite “*thank you*” for her efforts with the editor-in-chief at the Boston Globe. At some point in the future, there would be a phone call: an invitation to dinner, or perhaps for the weekend. The woman would expect a little favor. A favor she would want Lindsey to plant between her thighs. Would Lindsey be capable? What was the job at the Boston Globe worth to her? God, anything...

Instead of working for the weekly rag from Backside, outta Nowhere, her career would be a rocket-ride. After two years of hard work at the Globe she could virtually write her own ticket; work anywhere. She could practically taste a Pulitzer!

Rebecca had just dropped Lindsey’s hemline, smoothed the folds along her thighs, when the sliding glass door opened and the men entered, Carmen snuggling seductively between them. The shoulder of her dress had slipped into the crook of her elbow and her right breast bobbed as she walked; the cheeky nipple teased and glistened with mouth-moisture. Someone had been sucking on something other than a cigar out on the terrace.

They came toward Lindsey; the scent of sweet, black tobacco followed. With a churning stomach, Lindsey perceived a certain intensity in the way they moved, lips

thin with anxiety, eyes hooded. All except Carmen, of course. She smiled giddily, like she was party to an inside joke.

“Oh... oh,” Rebecca exhaled. “I need a cold beer. Enjoy your party.” And she moved off to the end of the room, leaving Lindsey to fend for herself. Not that there was much of a defense to be mounted against three men.

“Sweet Lindsey,” Doctor Stone called to her, reaching down to grasp her hands. He’d never called her “*Sweet Lindsey*” before. “Everyone’s been dying to get to know you. Intimately. He pulled her to her feet, and stepping back, dragged her to the center of the room. The others closed ranks around her.

“Doctor Stone. I don’t know what you’re asking of me?”

She was aware that someone was touching her about her bottom but she was too bewildered to mount a protest.

He laughed then. Like he sensed victory. “These are my friends,” he said. “I’m asking you to be a good girl, for me, and for them.”

It tumbled home then. She was expected to provide the evening’s entertainment. “No, I can’t,” she pleaded. But he was already forcing her to the carpet. “Please! Don’t make me!” Lindsey was down and Carmen stepped in to take her shoulders. Doctor Stone removed his jacket, folded it lengthwise and draped it across the arm of the sofa. Stepping forward, he stood directly in front of Lindsey’s strained position and pulled down the zipper of his slacks. Reaching in, he extracted a long rubbery penis and pushed toward Lindsey’s face.

“Take it,” he demanded. “Take it. Suck it. And swallow what I give you.”

Straight forward. Uncomplicated: *Take it... suck it...* Lindsey, on her knees, was paralyzed.

Lindsey was aware that Carmen had shifted position. Her hands now held Lindsey’s head, fists of hair snared on each side; presenting her mouth to Doctor Stone’s rising penis.