

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS

'S' - A Story Of Submission
Philippa Masters

Contents

Cover

Also by Philippa Masters

Title Page

Chapter One

Chapter Two

Chapter Three

Chapter Four

Chapter Five

Chapter Six

Chapter Seven

Chapter Eight

Chapter Nine

Chapter Ten

Chapter Eleven

Chapter Twelve

Chapter Thirteen

Chapter Fourteen

Chapter Fifteen

Chapter Sixteen

Chapter Seventeen

Chapter Eighteen

Chapter Nineteen

Chapter Twenty

Chapter Twenty-One

Chapter Twenty-Two

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THE AWAKENING OF LYDIA
LYDIA IN THE BORDELLO
LYDIA IN THE HAREM
MADAM LYDIA

'Well?

The single syllable left S confused.

'Well?' The question was louder, impatient.

'I'm sorry, ma'am.' S found that she could do no more than whisper. 'I don't understand.'

'What is it you want?'

After a moment of blankness, S suddenly understood.

'Please, ma'am,' she said, her voice clearer now. 'Would you spank me, please?'

'What for?'

'For coming without permission, please, ma'am.'

S – A STORY OF SUBMISSION

Philippa Masters



One

SHE WAITED EXACTLY as the very detailed instructions required of her. She felt conspicuous standing facing the sooty wall of a railway embankment, when any normal person would have been facing outwards, leaning back against the wall if anything – but it was a very secluded part of the town.

She felt vulnerable too, standing completely still with her hands behind her back and her head bent, but that was what the letter had said she had to do. And there was also, in that feeling of vulnerability, an excitement, a feeling of being wanted, that her empty life had craved.

She waited.

She waited until tears began to well behind her eyelashes. It was not going to happen. He had not been telling the truth.

Several cars passed, and with each one her heart leaped, then dived again when it carried on without stopping. Then one stopped, and suddenly she could not breathe.

The touch on her shoulder made her start with shock even though she was waiting for it, and she very nearly turned to see who it was. The letter had warned her not to do so, however, and she caught herself just in time. She froze, and at the same time seemed to heat up with relief.

She could feel the presence all around her. She stood absolutely still, though her heart was flying like a lark in spring.

A lark scared by a hawk.

Nothing was said. As the letter had told her, a soft black cloth was bound over her eyes. Now she was blinded, all

her other senses surged into overdrive.

She could hear soft breathing; she could feel the warmth of someone close by. Then she felt the hand.

It was cool. It slipped around her neck, then down, down inside the curled collar of the belted, wraparound coat her instructions had told her to wear. Down over her collar bone, over her sternum, to touch on her breasts. Not gently, not appreciatively, but roughly, pulling and pinching. Satisfied that she was not wearing a bra, the hand abruptly pulled away.

The period of helplessness was gone. She knew that he had come for her. Her breasts still tingled from the touch of that glove, even as the hand moved to check beneath the back of her coat.

Her nipples became harder as the glove moved up the back of her stockinged thigh. No, she rejoiced inwardly, there are no panties. I've done as I was told. Maybe, just maybe, this is it – freedom at last!

The hand withdrew from between her legs. Strong hands gripped her upper arms and she was spun round, pushed forward. Her head was pressed down as she was escorted into a vehicle. It had to be a car. The roof was low, the seat was soft, and the engine-note was quiet as the vehicle waited to move off.

The letter had told her that she would be taken to a car. It had also said that once the car had begun to move she was to take off her coat.

She could sense another person in the back of the car with her, and knew there must be at least one other because the engine-note changed and the car began to move off smoothly.

This was it. This was the moment.

If she did as she had been told, if she took off the coat, it would be commitment. Total commitment. Commitment to a surrender which scared her as much as it excited her. She

wanted this, wanted this path away from her dreadful, boring, empty existence.

The letters, always typewritten and unsigned – until the last few, which had the simple signature ‘Seigneur’ – had made it clear again and again that this was *her* choice, that none of the steps so far had been irrevocable, and that none would be until the final one.

The words that had begun this whole frightening, thrilling process. The words that had caught her attention in a magazine she’d idly picked up to read during a solitary lunch-break from her dull job with a dull solicitor in a dull office. The words that had haunted her brain until she had finally succumbed, and written to the box-number.

FREEDOM THROUGH SUBMISSION?

That was all the little framed advertisement had said, together with the PO box number to write to.

Their stark simplicity had fascinated her, and touched a spark to something she had fantasised about for years. The question mark had seemed to drill into her. She had written her letter and posted it off, not really expecting a reply. She was never that lucky. If a reply came at all, it would probably be from someone trying to sell something boring and useless.

When the reply came after only a few days, it was even more intriguing than the advertisement. Enigmatic, too, and a little disturbing.

‘Freedom is costly,’ it had said. ‘Freedom requires trust. Without trust there can be no submission. Without submission there can be no freedom.’ Nothing else.

She read it a couple of times. She decided that it was silly and threw it into the waste basket. Then she took it out again and smoothed out the creases.

The strange message nagged at her. Over the next few days she kept taking it out of the drawer and looking at it, then putting it away again. She began several times to write another letter to the box number, but threw away every attempt. Then the second message came, a week later.

‘Yours is a solitary existence.’ It was a statement, as though whoever had written it knew her, and it sent a tiny chill down her spine. ‘You can change that if you are brave.’

Again there was nothing else, except that this time there was another box number. After a lot of doubt and nervousness, she decided that the inclusion of the box number was an invitation to reply.

She sat, pen in hand, staring at a blank sheet of paper for hours, several evenings in a row. Then it came out in a flood – a long, long letter pouring out her life and her frustrations, saying that she was not solitary but lonely. Even the simple act of slipping the stamped envelope into the post-box gave her a momentary sense of freedom, or at least of relief – a sense that was immediately overtaken by something like panic.

It was too late to retrieve the envelope. She was committed. She had poured everything into that letter, written things she would never have dreamed of telling anybody face to face. During the days and nights that followed she found herself praying that whoever read her outpourings would not turn out to be a blackmailer or something even worse.

A week passed. And another. Even her usually blinkered boss noticed her increasing tension.

When the next letter came, she actually cried a little, tears of relief and gratitude. Whoever had written it seemed to know her, to understand the things she had poured out, and – most of all – not to judge her.

The exchange of letters became more frequent. Hers asked questions, told secrets and described longings. The

other's gave no answers, but opened a path to her. A path that demanded trust, that offered freedom – a demanding freedom, in a world that was left vague, that frightened her but was also deeply, irresistibly exciting.

Her excitement was made all the deeper when, towards the end of this beginning, the title 'Seigneur' appeared. She looked it up in the big dictionary at her local library. It meant 'feudal lord'. She looked that up, too. A feudal lord was one to whom his subjects owed absolute service, and who in turn had absolute authority over his subjects.

That primeval thing which had been the subject of her unfocused fantasies for so long, and which now seemed to be coming alive, was especially stirred by the phrase she came across during her research.

Droit de Seigneur – the right of the lord; especially, it said in a footnote, over his female subjects, hinting that such rights were predominantly sexual.

As the car accelerated smoothly away, her fingers tugged at the belt of her coat. She shrugged the garment from her shoulders, electrically aware of how the motion made her breasts tremble. She pulled her arms from the sleeves and placed her hands flat on her stockinged thighs, feeling her nipples harden still further at the sudden sense of danger.

Even the act of pulling on the stockings had felt like a kind of exciting surrender. She'd hardly ever worn stockings in her life, finding tights easier and more sensible. But then, everything in her dull life up till now had been 'sensible' and she was escaping into fantasy.

Her heart racing, she sat straight, her head up and her shoulders back, her knees the twelve inches apart that the letters had required of her – had required of her for several weeks now.

At first she had been deeply self-conscious about that requirement, and had often lapsed. The mental effort of remembering to keep her knees exactly twelve inches apart

whenever she sat down had been enormous. The letters had explained that it was an exercise in discipline, a necessary step along the path, and she had accepted that. She had even sat during the evenings in her bed-sit with a ruler clamped between her knees to get used to the feeling.

Now, even in the scary confines of the car, blindfold and naked save for her shoes, stockings and gloves, she knew that her knees were exactly twelve inches apart.

She had obeyed every one of the instructions precisely, shaving her whole body, applying lipstick to her nipples and labia as well as her mouth, bathing with unperfumed soap so that the pure musk oil she had been told to apply between her sex-lips would have its full effect.

She had never felt so feminine in her life, so aware, so sensitive. Every inch of her skin seemed to tingle. Even the slight draught flowing from the car's air conditioning system across her left shoulder felt as though it were deliberately teasing her senses.

She yearned to be touched, longed to hear a voice, but there was silence except for the sounds of the car's motion. She remained in untouched isolation; the only physical sensations she felt were caused by the car travelling along whatever road this was.

The car bounced and there was a rattle of gravel. They seemed to swing in a long half circle, as though negotiating a sweeping drive; then the car came to a halt.

There was the sudden gust of cooler air as the door opened, and a hand gripped her arm. She was grateful for the support as she climbed from the car, intensely, overwhelmingly aware of her nakedness, of the strength of the hand which held her and of the breeze playing across her overheated torso.

Once they were out of the car, her wrists were taken and moved behind her back and some kind of manacle was locked around them. She knew it was of metal – at least in part – because of the chinking sound it made, but it felt soft

through the lace of her gloves, as though it were cushioned.

Her high heels made walking across the gravel awkward when the hand gripped her elbow and she was led forward. She managed, though, her mind racing. Where was she? Who was watching this?

The letters had told her that if she kept the rendezvous and complied with the instructions, she would be surrendering herself to a world of new possibilities, a world in which she would be valued, loved. They had also repeated that no step until the last would be irrevocable. She could pull back at any time.

The words, in capital letters, with their tantalizing question-mark, reverberated in her head: FREEDOM THROUGH SUBMISSION?

She followed where the hand on her elbow led: up some wide stone steps that made her stumble, until a pair of strong hands grabbed her to stop her falling. Then through a doorway; the impression of the unknown hands were hot on the skin of her waist and ribs. Then across a floor that sounded like parquet, and into a room that smelled of leather and brandy and something else, though she could not quite recognise it.

She was brought to a stop, her shoes planted on deep carpet. She was confused for a moment. The letters had said about her knees being apart whenever she sat down but had not talked about when she was standing. She decided to stand with her feet apart, but was worried about how far apart they had to be to make her knees spread by the required twelve inches.

Nothing happened.

Nothing happened for a long while.

She began to feel afraid. Her ears strained against the silence, desperate for a sound, any noise that would indicate she had not been abandoned. She wanted to move,

but forced herself not to. She wanted to call out, but the letter had told her not to speak unless permitted.

FREEDOM THROUGH SUBMISSION? The words burned in her consciousness. At that moment she felt very, very far from being free.

The strain of standing absolutely still, with her wrists locked behind her back and her feet wide apart, made her increasingly aware of her nudity and her vulnerability – and of the insistent tingling in her nipples and her sex.

Suddenly a door opened. After a few seconds, it closed again, and she almost quivered, her senses springing to attention. There was a rustling of cloth, the chink of glass and then the soft gurgle of liquid being poured. She detected a hint of perfume. There was the click of a lighter, then the waft of cigar smoke.

Her senses told her that there were at least two people in the room with her. Nobody spoke. She felt somebody approach and could hardly breathe with the tension.

She flinched as a hand cupped her breast – a strong hand, softly exploring. All the tension that had been screwing tighter and tighter inside her for hours suddenly focused deep in the pit of her belly. The hands explored her, lifting her breasts as if to weigh them, then letting them drop as though to check their bounce. Thumbs rolled her nipples, setting off sparks deep inside her.

One of the hands moved down to cup her sex, probing her. Like a bolt of lightning, an orgasm shot through her, so sudden and so overwhelming that her legs buckled and a strangled sob was torn from her chest. Her knees hit the carpet with a thud, still an instinctive twelve inches apart. Her torso flexed and rippled for a full twenty seconds; her head fell forward as she sobbed and panted through the most overwhelming physical sensations she had ever experienced.

Afterwards, as the echoes of her orgasm subsided and she began to get her breathing under control, hands reached down and untied her blindfold.

She discovered that there were not two people in the room with her, but three. She recovered her senses and struggled inelegantly to her feet; she stood facing them, blushing furiously at what had happened and desperately aware of the honeyed nectar oozing from her shaven vulva.

The man sitting in the deep leather chair, his brandy glass and cigar close at hand, looked at her impassively. He appeared to be in his mid-forties and was elegantly and expensively dressed in a dark grey suit, with a cravat rather than a tie at the neck of his silk shirt.

His complexion was dark and his features narrow, with a nose that was rather large for the rest of his face. His eyes, though, were gentle, and she felt a wave of thankfulness. With eyes like those, she knew that he would be kind to her. He turned to the woman who sat in an identical leather chair on the opposite side of the wide fireplace. 'Rather an extreme reaction, don't you think, my dear?'

'Indeed,' she said, crossing her long legs and taking a sip from her glass. 'More importantly, it was without permission.'

Both looked at the blushing woman standing before them. Her eyes flicked nervously from one to the other, and then across to the third person in the room - another man, but very different from the first.

This man stood beside the door. Loomed, rather. He was well over six feet tall, with broad shoulders that strained the cloth of his tuxedo jacket. His hair was cropped very short and tribal scars marked his face. The cool way his eyes moved over her body made him seem rather menacing.

She dragged her eyes away from the intimidating figure as the first man spoke again.

‘You will be known as S,’ he said. His voice was quiet; its air of natural authority was increased by the slight trace of a foreign accent. He picked up a sheaf of papers which she recognised as her letters.

‘I shall assume that, since you are here and have carried out our instructions, you are willing to take the next step,’ he continued, glancing at the letters then looking up at her again. Somehow, his tone told her that no response was expected.

‘You are not a virgin, but have little experience of sex,’ he read. ‘You are twenty-three years old, you live alone, and you have not had a boyfriend for over two years. You hate your job and your life in general. And you are here in the hope that we can help you. Is that not so, S?’

She was suddenly in a quandary. It was obvious that he wanted a response, but he had not actually given her permission to speak. She wanted to say yes, but he had not said that she could. She nodded, and was gratified by the slight smile that passed across his features. She had made the right choice.

Her reactions were almost as fast when he asked her to say her name and gave her permission to speak. ‘Marga – I mean S, sir.’ Saying it seemed somehow to make it concrete, more real. She was S. She was no longer the mousey, frustrated creature of before. She was S. She felt a deep excitement rising again in her breast at the prospect of surrendering herself to someone who *knew*, someone who cared and whose eyes were so deep and gentle.

She was S: a cypher, no more than a letter. But she *was*, she existed!

‘Good. Now then, S.’ He emphasised the single syllable of her new name. ‘In our interesting correspondence, you agreed that if you came here to us, it was on the understanding that you wished to submit yourself to us. Is that not so?’ He paused. ‘You may answer.’

‘Y-yes, sir.’

'Again, good, although I must instruct you that you will address me as "Seigneur" from now on. In addition, I should advise you that we require obedience in all things, and remind you that you may - what is the word? - renege at the beginning of any step on the path.' He paused again. 'This is such a beginning. Do you wish to retreat?'

The word 'renege' - to refuse, to deny; to retreat; to run away from - was hard. His tone was almost cold.

'No, Seigneur.' Her voice was very small, cracking slightly with nervousness.

'Even knowing that each step will be a step into the unknown, and that once it has begun it must be followed until the next step is due?'

She hesitated. It was true that she did not know what the 'next step' would entail. She would be stepping into a void of possibilities. It was a frightening prospect; but then again wasn't that exactly what she had longed for?

'No, Seigneur,' she whispered. 'I don't want to renege, please.'

'Good. Well done.' He spoke as if she had just passed a test, and her heart gave a little flutter of happiness. He turned to the woman sitting opposite him. 'Do you have any requirements before we send her off? No? Good. Kano, please proceed.'

The huge African moved for the first time. S shivered involuntarily at the way his eyes, cool and impersonal, moved over her body as he approached her. He moved behind her and the room darkened again as he replaced the blindfold over her eyes.

She felt his grip firm on her upper arm; the pressure was light but insistent as he began to lead her away. She heard the door open, then felt the change of air as he led her through it.

Kano walked her along a carpeted corridor, then through another door and up what her straining senses told her was a flight of uncarpeted wooden stairs. S felt another

door open and knew that she was being led into a room. She was brought to a standstill.

'Remain absolutely still and keep your eyes closed for a count of thirty.' He spoke for the first time, his voice low in S's ear. She was surprised to hear that he had a very English public school accent.

The blindfold was removed, and S obediently remained frozen still, her eyes tight shut. The 'one-and-two-and-three-and-' she was counting in her head was punctuated by the sound of the door opening and closing, and the unmistakable noise of a key turning in a lock.

'-twenty-eight and twenty-nine and thirty.'

S opened her eyes and looked nervously around her. She was in some kind of attic, bare except for a thin mattress on the floor to one side, and lit by a single, dim electric bulb high up in the apex of the wooden roof. Although it was not cold, she shivered. There were spiders' webs among the roof-timbers, and she was scared of spiders.

Quite what she had expected had never been clear in her head, or rather had been denied as being too fantastic. What she was not prepared for was to be left alone.

She sat down on the mattress, her movements awkward because her hands were still manacled behind her back. The silence and isolation forced her in on herself. She made herself count the knots in the bare boards of the floor and walls to take her mind off her nakedness and vulnerability.

It did not really work. What seemed like hours and hours dragged past, and S wriggled around, stretched out full length on the thin mattress, and tried to make herself sleep.

The stress of the momentous afternoon and evening had exhausted her, and finally she began to drift into a merciful slumber. Dreaming, S moved, rolling on to her side and then on to her front. One leg bent and slid off the mattress. The rough material of its covering pressed against her breasts, the thickness of its raised edge against her pubis.

Unconsciously, S began to move her body, her dream a swirl of gold and black and red; most of all, she was aware of music and a pair of gentle, knowing eyes.

Two

‘STAND UP!’

The voice brought S instantly awake. She scrambled awkwardly to her feet, her eyes fixed nervously on the impassive figure of Kano as he stood in the doorway.

When she hurried to stand, feet apart, in the middle of the little attic room, Kano’s eyes descended to the parting of her legs then moved across to the mattress. S felt herself burn with embarrassment as he raised a single eyebrow and turned back to her.

There, on the edge of the mattress, was glaring and undeniable evidence of what she had done during her dream, the previous night. The lipstick with which she had been instructed to paint her sex-lips had not been for mere decoration.

Wordlessly, Kano approached S with the length of black silk that he had used to blindfold her, the previous day. He tied it on her again, making sure that she could see absolutely nothing. She was led down some stairs, through several doors, and along corridors. Kano brought her to a halt, and she felt him unlocking her manacles and untying the blindfold.

S found herself in a large bathroom, tiled in a soft coral colour. Kano nodded towards one side and leaned against the door-frame, folding his arms. She gave a stifled gasp of shock when she saw what he had indicated, and stared at him in open-mouthed astonishment.

Kano remained motionless in the doorway, clearly intending to stay.

‘But ... You can’t - I can’t -’

‘You have not been given permission to speak.’ His voice was as emotionless as on each of the other times that he had spoken to her. S stared at him for a long while, embarrassment coursing through her. He returned her look coolly, and S realised that she had no choice – or rather, that she had already chosen.

She moved across the room, the high heels she was still wearing clicking on the tiled floor. She turned and sat. From where Kano stood he was looking directly at her. S straightened her back and parted her knees, knowing that he could see everything. Somehow, it seemed appropriate.

Kano’s impassivity seemed even more intimidating than before. He stood there watching her perform a very intimate bodily function as though it were nothing, as though she were a mere thing, and S felt a shiver of dread run down her spine: yet it was also a shiver of excitement.

The tall African was no longer wearing the formal clothes of the previous night. The crisp and perfectly pressed white shirt he now wore set off the dark mahogany of his skin, and stretched over his deep chest and broad shoulders. His tan chinos were equally immaculately creased, and fitted perfectly over his long legs. S blushed furiously and tore her eyes away when she realised that she was staring at his crotch.

Flustered, she dabbed herself dry with a wad of tissue, stood up, flushed the toilet and looked to Kano for further instructions. Still silent, Kano nodded towards the shower unit.

Since the previous night, S had become almost unconscious of her appearance. Suddenly she was burningly aware of the stockings and garter-belt, and of the effect of the stiletto-heeled shoes on her movements. She caught glimpses of herself in the mirrors set into the walls of the bathroom, and blushed again at what she saw.

She was desperately aware that as she leant round the edge of the shower unit to check and adjust the taps and

switch on the spray, she was presenting this enigmatic man with a blatant view of her bare backside. Somehow, without willing it, she turned her back to him as she bent from the hips to take off her shoes, presenting herself in even more detail.

She twisted and flexed her back to unclip the rear suspenders from the lacy tops of her stockings, then lifted first one foot then the other on to the edge of the bath to roll the sleek nylon down her legs.

She knew that she was displaying herself but she did not know why. She knew only that something inside her was rising to a rolling boil.

The hot spray of the shower against her body made her gasp. She had not slid the door of the unit across, and she was aware that Kano could see her clearly as she soaped herself, the suds of the shower gel oozing luxuriously over her skin. The heat of the water, the scent of the suds, the feeling of her own hands smoothing over her skin, and – most of all – the knowledge that she was being watched all the time, all conspired to send her into a semi-trance of excitement.

A cough from the watching Kano brought S back to her senses. She was washing between her legs, and her fingers had begun to do more than simply wash. She stopped, mortified, and quickly rinsed her skin clean, then draped a towel over her head as well as her shoulders to hide her blushes. She heard Kano say, 'Four,' but she did not understand its significance.

She towelled herself dry and turned to face Kano. Still unnervingly impassive, he held out the black silk of her blindfold. Wordlessly, S took it from his hand and tied it around her head, making sure that she could see nothing at all. She instinctively placed her hands behind her back, and felt surprised that Kano did not handcuff her – surprised and, to her shock, a little disappointed.

A strong hand took her by the arm and led her away. Strangely, she felt comfortable rather than nervous now; even, in a way, contented.

There were more corridors and corners, more doors; but this time there were no stairs. When Kano stopped her and removed the blindfold, S found herself in what seemed nothing other than a theatrical dressing room.

A large dressing table, bare save for hairbrush and comb and a small number of cosmetic items, sat in front of a large mirror. The mirror had fluorescent tubes flanking it rather than the bare bulbs she had expected. Racks hanging with dozens of unidentifiable costumes stood on two sides of the small room, while Kano occupied the remaining side. He inclined his head towards the dressing table.

S sat down on the upholstered stool, electrically aware of the sensation of the moquette against her bare skin. She half-looked at herself in the mirror, regretting as she had a million times before that her hair was so mousey and her features – in her opinion at least – so ordinary.

She brushed her hair with almost painful vigour, trying to give life to it as she always did, but still not really looking at her reflection. When she leant towards the mirror to begin work on her eyes she was forced to look at herself. She paused, surprised at the way her hair shone and looked much lighter, softer, than it usually did, framing her face in the way she had always wished it would and it never had, even when she'd paid hairdressers exorbitant sums.

Containing her delight, S applied eye-shadow and liner and mascara carefully. It seemed right that she had no choice of the type and colour of the cosmetics, nor of the powder or the shade of the blusher she applied next. There was only one of each item on the dressing table, selected for her by someone else.

As S applied the lip gloss she realised that the make-up was bolder, more dramatic, than she would have chosen for herself. The lipstick was a deep red, almost burgundy, and made the soft contours of her mouth seem fuller, more inviting – and much more provocative than the soft pinks she usually went for. She gazed at her reflection for a long time, drinking in the transformation that the mere selection of colours had made. How else would she be transformed?

She rose and turned towards Kano, her face alight with pleasure, hoping for a glint of approval in his eyes. It came, but she had no time to savour it, for he gestured towards her wrap and then to the dressing table.

S looked around her, puzzled. Then she realised what he meant and flushed deeply. One item remained untouched on the shiny surface of the dressing table: a stick of rouge, lighter in tone than her lip gloss, yet still a very bold red.

S untied the sash of her wrap with trembling fingers and let it fall. She uncapped the stick of rouge and, with a single nervous glance towards the man leaning against the door, brought it towards her breast. Kano nodded.

With the stick in her right hand, she cupped first one then the other breast with her left. The touch of the rouge on her areolae was like a jolt of electricity. When she had rouged her nipples before leaving for the rendezvous, it had felt as erotic as anything she had ever imagined. Then, she had been alone. Now, she was in the presence of a man, facing him, painting her nipples in the lewdest manner, and the situation had her panting. Her nipples had never seemed so sensitive, had never stood out so eagerly, had never wanted so much to be touched.

Her hand was trembling so much that she smeared the rouge on the second nipple, and had to wipe it off with a tissue and begin again. She was concentrating so hard that she did not see the flicker of satisfaction in Kano's eyes when he saw the uncontrollable ripple of sensation race down her bare torso.

When she had finished, S gulped in a deep breath and looked up at Kano with huge eyes. It was almost as though her nipples could feel the touch of his glance as he inspected her, they were so tight and sensitive.

His face remained expressionless as he glanced further down. He did not need to nod or gesture. S knew at once what was required. She moved the stool a little closer to the dressing table. She turned and sat, facing Kano, her bottom on the outer edge of the stool, her back against the dressing table. Blushing again, but now through arousal rather than embarrassment, she splayed her thighs.

To touch her fingers to her labia in this situation, in front of this man, sent her mind spinning. Suddenly, without thinking, she was looking up at the impassive African, and holding the rouge out to him, her eyes saying what her mind would never have been able to encompass.

He understood. Instead of reaching out and taking the rouge, his lip curled in a sardonic half-smile and he shook his head. Tears of shame that she should have wanted Kano to do this next thing for her blinding her eyes, S reached down and parted her labia. The cool slickness of the rouge as she began to paint her sex-lips sent a shiver through her; she felt deeply humiliated as she painted herself in a way that could only be for someone else's pleasure. That flash of amusement in Kano's eyes burned in her consciousness.

S was once again in the plush room she had been brought to, the previous night. Once again Seigneur and the woman were seated in the leather chairs on either side of the fireplace. This time, though, S was neither handcuffed nor naked.

When she had finished her extraordinary make-up, Kano had handed S a cotton smock to put on, though it was not like any garment she had ever worn before – nor imagined wearing. Although it was made of cotton, it was in fact the softest, sheerest cotton chiffon, so translucent that it was

hardly there, and so soft and clinging that it was as though the very pores of her skin were contoured through it.

It was made of two rectangular panels, front and back, connected by spaghetti-straps tied at the shoulders and at the hips, leaving a gap of at least three or four inches down the sides. Although the neckline was high, the softness and transparency of the cloth only served to draw attention to the shape of her breasts and the prominence of her rouged nipples, while the hem floated loose and teasing, just a few inches below the join of her thighs.

Wearing the smock, S felt somehow more naked than if she'd had nothing on at all, and was achingly aware of the way that her state of arousal was pressing her over-sensitive nipples out towards her judges.

And judges they seemed to be, at that moment.

'Five counts in only twenty-four hours.'

The woman's voice was sardonic. She was wearing a gown of green satin that simply must have been moulded to her slender body. Her hair was swept up and back, to fall in a swathe of waves about her shoulders. Her mouth was a curl of red distaste and her eyes hard, as she contemplated the figure before her. S stared at her like a startled rabbit, awed by her cool beauty and frightened by her words and tone.

'Five transgressions is five too many!' The woman's voice was cold. 'I think we have been wasting our time.'

'Oh, come now, Carla!' The man's tone was gentle, easing the sudden tension in S's heart. 'We are only at the second step. We should at least hear the defence as well as the prosecution before deciding.'

S felt a surge of gratitude at Seigneur's words. The word 'prosecution' chilled her, but he had also mentioned 'defence'. She did not yet know what she needed defending against, but she knew somehow that Seigneur at least would be fair.