

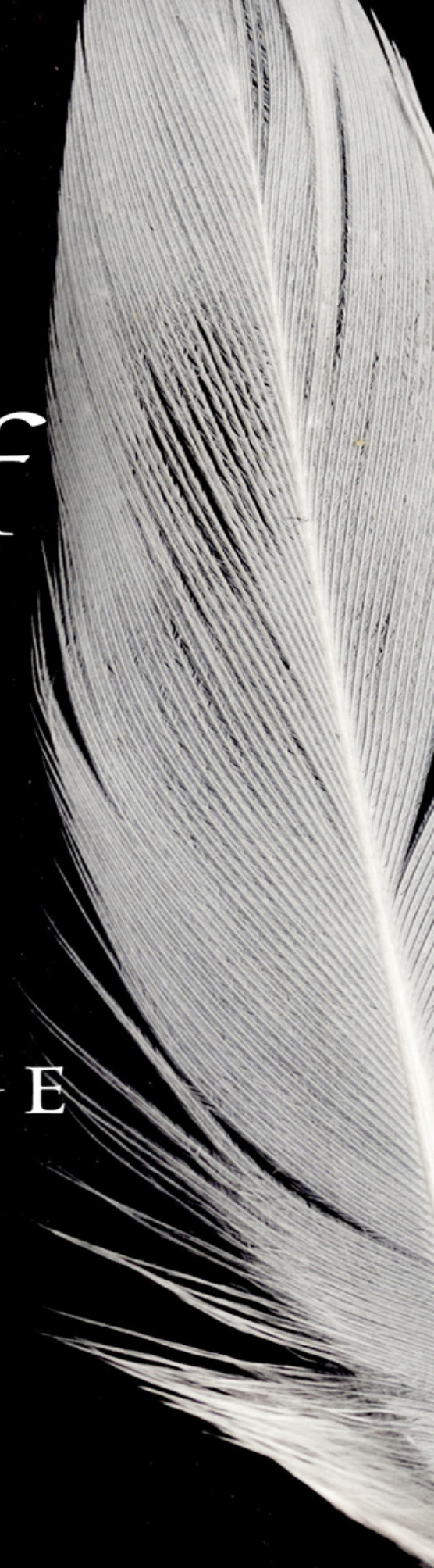
Before

Fifty Shades of Grey

there was...

story of
O

PAULINE RÉAGE



About the Book

A beautiful young French woman, known only as 'O', is taken by her lover René to a splendid mansion near Paris. Here, she is initiated into an elite secret society, where she must learn to serve the sexual fantasies of René and his fellow members. But she must also explore the nature of her own darkest desires - and confront just how far she is willing to go for love ...

Shocking and dangerously sexy, this famous story of love, dominance and submission is one of the most erotic novels of all time. In fact, it is the original *50 Shades of Grey*. Read it if you dare ...

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Also by Pauline Réage

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STORY OF O

Pauline Réage

I

The Lovers of Roissy

HER LOVER ONE day takes O for a walk, but this time in a part of the city - the Parc Montsouris, the Parc Monceau - where they've never been together before. After they've strolled awhile along the paths, after they've sat down side by side on a bench near the grass, and got up again, and moved on towards the edge of the park, there, where two streets meet, where there never used to be any taxi-stand, they see a car, at that corner. It looks like a taxi, for it does have a meter. 'Get in,' he says; she gets in. It's late in the afternoon, it's autumn. She is wearing what she always wears: high heels, a suit with a pleated skirt, a silk blouse, no hat. But she has on long gloves reaching up to the sleeves of her jacket, in her leather handbag she's got her papers, and her compact and lipstick. The taxi eases off, very slowly; nor has the man next to her said a word to the driver. But on the right, on the left, he draws down the little window-shades, and the one behind too; thinking that he is about to kiss her, or so as to caress him, she has slipped off her gloves. Instead, he says: 'I'll take your bag, it's in your way.' She gives it to him, he puts it beyond her reach; then adds: 'You've too much clothing on. Unhitch your stockings, roll them down to just above your knees. Go ahead,' and he gives her some elastics to hold the stockings in place. It isn't easy, not in the car, which is going faster now, and she

doesn't want to have the driver turn around. But she manages anyhow, at last; it's a queer, uncomfortable feeling, the contact of silk of her slip upon her naked and free legs, and the unattached garters are sliding loosely back and forth across her skin. 'Undo your garter-belt,' he says, 'take off your panties.' There's nothing to that, all she has to do is get at the hook behind and raise up a little. He takes the garter-belt from her hand, he takes the panties, opens her bag, puts them away inside it; then he says: 'You're not to sit on your slip or on your skirt, pull them up and sit on the seat without anything in between.' The seat-covering is a sort of leather, slick and chilly; it's a very strange sensation, the way it sticks and clings to her thighs. Then he says: 'Now put your gloves back on.' The taxi goes right along and she doesn't dare ask why René is so quiet, so still, or what all this means to him: she so motionless and so silent, so denuded and so offered, though so thoroughly gloved, in a black car going she hasn't the least idea where. He hasn't told her to do anything or not to do it, but she doesn't dare either cross her legs or sit with them held together. One on this side, one on that side, she rests her gloved hands on the seat, pushing down.

'Here we are,' he says all of a sudden. Here we are: the taxi comes to a stop on a fine avenue, under a tree - those are plane trees - in front of a small mansion, you could just see it, nestled away between courtyard and garden, the way the Faubourg Saint-Germain mansions are. There's no streetlight nearby, it is dark inside the cab, and outside rain is falling. 'Don't move,' says René. 'Don't move a muscle.' He extends his hand towards the neck of her blouse, unties the ribbon at the throat, then unbuttons the buttons. She leans forward ever so little, and believes he is about to caress her breasts. But no; he's got a small penknife out, he's only groping for the shoulder-straps of her brassiere, he cuts the straps, removes the brassiere. He has closed her blouse again and now, underneath, her breasts are free

and nude, like her belly and thighs are nude and free, like all of her is, from waist to knee.

'Listen,' he says. 'You're ready. Here's where I leave you. You're going to get out and go to the door and ring the bell. Someone will open the door, whoever it is you'll do as he says. You'll do it right away and willingly of your own accord, else they'll make you, if you don't obey at once, they'll make you obey. What? No, you don't need your bag any more. You don't need anything, you're just the whore, I'm the pimp who's furnishing you. Yes, certainly, I'll be there, sure. Now go.'

Another version of the same beginning was simpler, more direct: similarly dressed, the young woman was taken off in a car by her lover and by a second man, an unknown friend of his. The stranger drove, the lover was seated beside the young woman; and the one who did the talking, the friend, the unknown stranger in front, explained to the young woman that her lover's task was to prepare her, that he was now going to tie her hands behind her back, unfasten her stockings and roll them down, remove her garter-belt, her panties, her brassiere, and blindfold her; that afterwards she would be taken to the château where she would receive instructions in due course, as events required. And so indeed it had been: once undressed and bound in this manner, and after about a thirty minutes' drive, she was helped out of the car and marched a few steps. Still blindfolded, she passed one or two doors and then found herself alone, the blindfold gone, standing in a darkened room where she was left for half an hour, for an hour, for two - I don't know, but it seemed as though it were an age. When the door finally opened and the light was turned on, you could see that she'd been waiting in a room, just a room, comfortable, yet odd. There was a thick carpet on the floor, but not a stick of furniture in that room. The walls were lined with cupboards. Two girls opened the

door - two pretty young women costumed like eighteenth-century chambermaids, with long, light, puffy skirts that came to the floor, tight bodices that made the bust rise and swell and that were laced or hooked in back, gauze kerchiefs at the neck, wearing elbow-length gauze gloves to match. Their eyes and mouths were painted. Each wore a collar around her neck and bracelets on her wrists.

And then I know that they released O's hands, until that point still tied behind her back, and told her to undress. They were going to bathe her and make her up. But they made her stand still; they did everything for her, they stripped her and laid her clothes neatly away in one of the cupboards. They did not let her do her own bathing, they washed her themselves and set her hair just as hairdressers would have, making her sit in one of those big chairs that tilt backwards when your hair is being washed and then come up again when the drier is applied. That took at least an hour. She was seated nude in the chair and they prohibited her from either crossing her legs or pressing them together. As, on the opposite wall, there was a mirror running from floor to ceiling and straight ahead of her, in plain view, every time she glanced up she caught sight of herself, of her open body.

When she was made up, her eyelids lightly shadowed, her mouth very red, the point and halo of her nipples rouged, the sides of the lips of her sex reddened, a lingering scent applied to the fur of her armpits and her pubis, to the crease between her buttocks, to beneath her breasts and the palms of her hands, she was led into a room where a three-sided mirror and, facing it, a fourth mirror on the opposite wall enabled, indeed obliged, her to see her own image reflected. She was told to sit on a hassock placed between the mirrors, and to wait. The hassock was upholstered with prickly black fur; the rug was black, the walls red. She wore red slippers. Set in one of the little boudoir's walls was a casement window giving

out upon a magnificent but sombre, formal garden. The rain had stopped and the trees were swaying in the wind while the moon raced high among the clouds. I don't know just how long she remained in the red boudoir, nor if she really was alone, as she thought she was, for someone may perhaps have been watching her through a peephole disguised somewhere in the wall. What I do know is that when the two chambermaids returned, one was carrying a tape-measure and the other had a basket over her arm. With them came a man wearing a trailing violet robe with sleeves cut wide at the shoulder and gathered in at the wrist; as he walked, the robe showed to be open at the waist. You could make out that he was in some kind of tights which covered his legs and thighs but left his sex free. It was the sex that O saw first, then the whip made of strands of leather, the whip was stuck in his belt, then she noticed that the man was masked in a black hood completed by a section of black gauze hiding his eyes - and finally she noticed the fine black kid-gloves he was wearing. He ordered her not to move, he told the women to hurry. The one with the tape took the measure of O's neck and wrists. Although somewhat small, her sizes were in no way out of the ordinary, and they had no trouble selecting a suitable collar and bracelets from the assortment contained in the basket. Both collar and bracelets were fashioned of many layers of thin leather, the whole being no thicker than a finger, fitted with a catch that worked automatically, like a padlock, and which needed a key to be opened. Next to the catch, and imbedded in the leather, was a metal ring. They fitted snugly, but not so tightly as to chafe or break the skin. After they had been set in place, the man told her to rise. He himself sat on the fur-covered hassock and made her approach until she stood against his knees. He passed his gloved hand between her thighs and over her breast and explained to her that she would be presented that same evening after she had dined. Still nude, she took her

meal alone in a kind of small cabin; an unseen hand passed the plates to her through a little window. When she had finished eating, the two maids came for her again. In the boudoir, they had her put her hands behind her back and secured them there by means of the rings of her wristbands; they draped a long red cape over her shoulders, and it was fastened to the ring set in her collar. The cape covered her completely, but with her hands behind her back that way she couldn't prevent it from opening when she walked. One woman preceded her, and opened the doors; the second followed, and shut them again. They filed through a vestibule, through two drawing-rooms, and entered the library where four men were at coffee. They wore the same flowing robes as the first she had seen, but were not masked. Nevertheless, O did not have time to observe their faces or recognize whether her lover was there (he was), for one of the men trained a spotlight upon her face, dazzling her. Everyone stood in silence, the women on either side, the men in front, watching her. Then the light was switched off and the women went away, but a blindfold had been placed over O's eyes. Stumbling a bit, she was made to advance and could sense that she was standing before the fire around which the four men had been grouped. In the quiet, she could hear the soft crackling of the logs and feel the heat; she was facing the fire. Two hands lifted away her cape, two others checked the clasp on her wristbands and descended inspectingly down over her buttocks. These hands were not gloved, and one of them simultaneously penetrated her in two places - so brusquely that she let out a cry. Some voice laughed. Another said: 'Turn her around so we can see her breasts and belly.' She was turned about, and now it was on her buttocks that she felt the glow of the fire. A hand moulded itself round one of her breasts, squeezed, a mouth closed upon the nipple of her other breast. Suddenly, she lost her balance and tottered backwards into unknown

arms. At the same instant, her legs were spread apart and her lips gently worked open - hair grazed the inner surfaces of her thighs. She heard a voice declare that she ought to be made to kneel, and she was. It was painful to be on her knees, seated on her heels in the position nuns take when they pray.

'You've never imposed physical restraints, for example tied her up?'

'No, never.'

'Or whipped her?'

'Never. Though, the fact is—' It was her lover who was answering.

'The fact is,' said the other voice, 'that if you do tie her up, if you use a whip on her, and if she likes that - then no, you understand. Pleasure, we've got to move beyond that stage. We must make the tears flow.'

She was then drawn to her feet, and they were probably about to detach her hands so as to tie her to some post or other or to the wall, when someone interrupted, saying that before anything else he wanted her - immediately. She was forced down upon her knees again, but this time a hassock was placed as a support under her chest; her hands were still fixed behind her back, her haunches were higher than her torso. One of the men gripped her buttocks and sank himself into her womb. When he was done, he ceded his place to a second. The third wanted to drive his way into the narrower passage and, pushing hard, violently, wrung a scream from her lips. When at last he let go of her, moaning and tears streaming down under her blindfold, she slipped sidewise to the floor only to discover by the pressure of two knees against her face that her mouth was not to be spared either. Finally, finished with her, they moved off, leaving her, a captive in her finery, huddled, collapsed on the carpet before the fire. She heard drink being poured, glasses tinkling, chairs stirring; logs were added to the fire. Then her blindfold was suddenly

snatched away. It was a large room. Bookcases lined the walls, dimly lit by a bracketed lamp and the flicker of the fire. Two of the men were standing; they were smoking. Another was seated, a riding-crop across his knees, and there was still another leaning over her, caressing her breasts; that one was her lover. All four had taken her and she had not been able to distinguish him from amongst the rest.

It was explained to her that as long as she was in this château it would always be this way: she would see the faces of those who violated and bullied her, but never at night, and in this way she would never know which ones were responsible for the worst of her sufferings. When she was whipped the same would hold true, except when it was desired that she see herself being whipped, as happened to be the case this first time: no blindfold, but the men in masks in order to be unidentifiable. Her lover had picked her up and set her, in her red cape, on the arm of a large chair in the corner by the chimney, so that she might listen to what they had to tell her and see what they wished to exhibit to her. Her hands were still pinioned behind her back. She was shown the riding-crop, black, long and slender, made of fine bamboo sheathed in leather, an article such as one finds in the display-windows of expensive saddle-makers' shops; the leather whip - the one she'd seen tucked in the first man's belt - was long, with six lashes each ending in a knot; there was a third whip whose numerous light cords were several times knotted and stiff, quite as if soaked in water, and they actually had been soaked in water, as O was able to verify when they stroked her belly with those cords and, opening her thighs, exposing her hidden parts, let the damp, cold ends trail against the tender membranes. On the console there yet remained the collection of keys and the steel chains. Midway up one of the library's walls ran a balcony supported by two pillars. In one of these, as high up as a

man standing on tip-toe could reach, was sunk a hook. O, whose lover had taken her in his arms, one hand under her shoulder, the other in her womb which was burning her almost unbearably, O was informed that when, as soon they would, they unfastened her hands, it would only be to attach them to this whipping-post by means of those bracelets on her wrists and this steel chain. With the exception of her hands, which would be immobilized a little above her head, she would be able to move, to turn, to face around and see the strokes coming, they told her; by and large, they'd confine the whipping to her buttocks and thighs, to the space, that is to say, between her waist and her knees, precisely that part of her which had been prepared in the car when she had been made to sit naked on the seat; it was likely, however, that some one of the four men would want to score her with the crop, for it caused fine, long, deep welts which lasted quite some time. They'd go about it gradually, giving her ample opportunity to scream and fight and cry to her heart's content. They'd pause to let her catch her breath, but after she'd recovered it, they'd start in again, judging the results not by her screams or her tears but by the more or less livid and durable marks traced in her flesh by the whips. It was called to her attention that these criteria for estimating the effectiveness of the whip, apart from their just impartiality and from the fact they rendered unnecessary any attempts victims might make to elicit pity by exaggerating their moans, did not by any means bar open-air whipping - there would indeed be a good deal of that in the park outside the château - or for that matter, whipping in any ordinary apartment or hotel room provided a tight gag were employed (they showed her a gag), which, while giving free rein to tears, stifles any scream and even makes moaning difficult.

They did not, however, intend to use the gag that night. To the contrary, they were eager to hear O howl, the sooner

the better. Proud, she steeled herself to resist, she gritted her teeth; but not for long. They soon heard her beg to be let loose, beg them to stop, stop for a second, for just one second. So frantically did she twist and wheel to dodge the biting lashes that she almost spun in circles. The chain, although unyielding, for, after all, it was a chain, was nevertheless slack enough to allow her leeway. Owing to her excessive writhing, her belly and the front of her thighs received almost as heavy a share as her rear. They left off for a moment, deeming it better to tie her flat up against the post by means of a rope passed around her waist; the rope being cinched tight, her head necessarily angled to one side of the post and her flanks jutted to the other, thereby placing her rump in a prominent position. From then on, every deliberately aimed blow dealt her struck home. In view of the manner in which her lover had exposed her to this, O might well have supposed that an appeal to his pity would have been the surest way to increase his cruelty, so great was his pleasure in wresting or in having the others wrest these from her decisive proofs of his power over her. And it was in fact he who was the first to observe that the leather whip, with which they'd begun, marked her the least (for the moistened lash had obtained strong results almost instantly, and the crop with the first blow struck), and hence, by employing no other, they could prolong the ordeal and, after brief pauses, start in again just about immediately or according to their fancy. He asked that they use only that first whip. Meanwhile, the man who liked women only for what they had in common with men, seduced by the sight of that proffered behind straining out from under the taut rope and made all the more tempting by its wriggings to escape, requested an intermission in order to take advantage of it; he spread apart the two burning halves and penetrated, but not without difficulty, which brought him to remark that they'd have to contrive to make this thoroughfare easier of access.

The thing could be done, they agreed, and decided that the proper measures would be taken.

The young woman, swaying and half fainting under her flowing red cape, was released then and, before being led away to the cell where she was to stay, they had her sit down in a chair by the fireside and listen while there were outlined to her, in detail, all the rules she was to observe during her period at the château and also during her everyday life once she'd returned home from the château (not, however, that she was going to recover her former freedom); one of the men rang. The two costumed maids who had received her now appeared, bringing the clothes she was to wear and tokens whereby those who had been guests at the château prior to her coming and after it might be able to recognize her when later on she had left. This costume was similar to the chambermaids'. Over a whalebone bodice which severely constricted the waist, and over a starched linen petticoat, was worn an ample gown, the open neck of which left the breasts, raised by the bodice, practically visible beneath a light film of gauze. The petticoat and gauze were white, the bodice and gown a seagreen satin. When O was dressed and reseated beside the fireplace, her pallor intensified by the paleness of the gown, the two girls, who had not uttered a word, made ready to leave. As they were going, one of the men stepped forward, signalled to her nearest the door to wait, and brought the other back towards O. He took her by the waist with one hand and raised her skirts with the other, making her turn, displaying the costume's practical advantages, having O admire its design, and explaining that, simply by means of a belt, the skirts could be held at any desired height, thus, which meant that all of what was exposed was very ready to hand, thus. As a matter of fact, he added, they often had the girls stroll in the garden or move about the château with their skirts hitched up behind, or - thus - hitched up in front, at the level of the midriff. He bade the

girl demonstrate to O how the skirt was to be kept in the right position: how she was to take in the folds, roll them (like a lock of hair in a curler), keep them just so by means of a belt, the buckle exactly in front, so as to leave the way clear to the womb, or this other way, so, in back to expose the buttocks. In both instances, petticoat and skirt were to fall away in flowing diagonal folds. Like O, the girl's flanks bore fresh marks of the riding-crop. She went away.

This is the speech they then made to O:

'You are here to serve your masters. During the day, in connection with the maintenance of the household, you will perform whatever chores are assigned to you, such as sweeping, putting the books back in place, arranging flowers, or waiting upon table. Your tasks will not be more onerous than these. But at the first word or gesture you will stop in the middle of whatever you happen to be doing, addressing yourself to your one primary task, your only significant one duty, which is to avail yourself to be used. Your hands are not your own, neither are your breasts, nor, above all, is any one of the orifices of your body, which we are at liberty to explore and into which we may, whenever we so please, introduce ourselves. In order that you bear it constantly, or as constantly as possible, in mind that you have lost the right to withhold or deny yourself, in our presence you will at all times avoid altogether closing your labia, nor will you ever cross your legs, nor press your knees together (as, you recall, was forbidden to you directly you set out for this place), which will signify, in your view and in ours, that your mouth, your belly and your behind are constantly at our entire disposal. Before us, you must never touch your breasts: your bodice lifts them supplicatingly to us, they are ours. During the day, since you will be dressed, you will raise your skirt if ordered to, and whoever would have you will use you as he likes, undisguised; but he will not whip you. The whip will only be applied between the hours of sundown and dawn. But over

and above those whippings, which you will receive from whoever desires to whip you, you will be punished, in the form of further whipping, at night for any infraction of the rules during the day: that is to say, for thoughtlessness, for insubmissiveness, for having raised your eyes upon whoever speaks to or takes you: never must you look any one of us in the face. If our night-time costume, what we are wearing now, leaves our sex uncovered, it is not for the sake of convenience, since it would be just as convenient otherwise, but for that of insolence, so that your eyes will focus themselves there and nowhere else, so that you will come finally to understand that there resides your master, your lord, to whom all of you is destined and above all your lips. In the day, when we are dressed in the usual manner and you as you are now, you will observe the same rule and when requested you will simply open our clothing and later close it again when we are finished with you. Also, at night, you will have only your lips wherewith to do us honour, and also your widespread thighs, since, at night, you will have your hands secured behind your back and you will be nude, as you were when brought here a short while ago; you will not be blindfolded save when you are to be maltreated and, now that you have seen yourself being beaten, when you are whipped. In this regard, if it were advisable that you accustom yourself to whipping - and it shall be frequent, daily, so long as you remain here - it is less for our pleasure than for your instruction. This may be stressed by the fact that, on those nights when no-one wants you, you may expect a visit from the valet who has been appointed to the job: he will enter your cell and, in the solitude, mete out to you what you need to receive and which we are not inclined to bestow. Actually, the object of these procedures, as well as of the chain which will be affixed to your collar, is to confine you to within a limited scope and more or less to your bed for several hours every day, a good deal less to make you suffer pain, scream or shed tears than, by means

of this pain, to enforce upon you the idea that you are subject to constraint and to teach you that you utterly belong to something which is apart from and outside yourself. When you are dismissed from here, you will go forth wearing an iron ring on your finger; by it others will recognize you. You will then have learned to obey those who wear the same token - upon seeing it, they will know that you are constantly naked beneath your skirt, however correct or ordinary your dress and that this is on their behalf, this nudity for them. Those who find you uncooperative will bring you back here. You will now be shown to your cell.'

While these words were being uttered to O, the two women who had come to dress her were standing the whole while on either side of the post where she had been whipped; but they avoided touching it, as though it frightened them or (which was more likely) as though they had been forbidden to touch it; when the man had concluded, they moved towards O, who understood that she was to rise and follow them. And so she got to her feet, collecting her skirts to keep from stumbling, for she wasn't used to long dresses, nor to managing in these thick-soled and very high-heeled clogs which only a single broad band of satin, of the same green as her gown, prevented from slipping off. Stooping to gather her skirts, she cast a quick glance around. The women were waiting, the men had shifted their attention elsewhere. Her lover, sitting on the floor, his back propped against the hassock over which she'd been bent earlier in the evening, his legs drawn up and his elbows resting on his knees, was idly toying with the leather whip. At the first step she took to overtake the women, the edge of her skirt brushed him and he looked up, smiling; he pronounced her name, also rose to his feet. Gently, he caressed her hair, ran the tip of his finger gently along her eyebrows, gently kissed her lips. He gazed at her and, aloud, said that he loved her. Trembling, O was