

Story of O
by Pauline Réage

I

The Lovers of Roissy

one day takes O for a walk in a section of the city where never go - the Montsouris Park, the Monceau Park. After have taken a stroll in the park and have sat together side by side on the edge of a lawn, notice, at one corner of the park, at an intersection where there are never any taxis, a car which, because of its meter, resembles a taxi.

«Get in,» says.

gets in. is autumn, and coming up to dusk. is dressed as always is: high heels, a suit with a pleated skirt, a silk blouse, and no hat. But long gloves, which come up over the sleeves of jacket, and in leather handbag has identification papers, compact, and lipstick.

moves off slowly, still not having said a word to . But pulls down the shades of the windows on both sides of the car, and the shade on the back window. has taken off gloves, thinking wants to kiss her or that wants her to caress him. But instead says:

« 's in your way; let me have it.»

gives it to him. puts it out of reach and adds:

« also have on too many clothes. Unfasten stockings and roll them down to above knees. Here are some garters.»

By now has picked up speed, and has some trouble managing it; 's also afraid may turn around. Finally, though, are rolled down, and 's embarrassed to feel legs naked and free beneath silk slip. Besides, are slipping back and forth.

«Unfasten your garter belt,» says, «and take off your panties.»

's easy enough, all has to do is slip hands behind back and raise slightly. takes the garter belt and panties from her, opens bag and puts them in, then says:

« shouldn't sit on slip and skirt. Pull them up behind and sit directly on the seat.»

is made of some sort of imitation leather, which is slippery and cold: 's quite an extraordinary sensation to feel it sticking to thighs. Then says:

«Now put your gloves back on.»

is still moving along at a good clip, and doesn't dare ask why just sits there without moving or saying another word, nor can guess what all this means to him – having there motionless, silent, so stripped and exposed, so thoroughly gloved, in a black car going God knows where. hasn't told her what to do or what not to do, but 's afraid either to cross legs or press them together. sits with gloved hands braced on either side of seat.

«Here are,» says suddenly. Here are: stops on a lovely avenue, beneath a tree - are plane trees - in front of some sort of small private home which can be seen nestled between the courtyard and the garden,

the type of small private dwelling one finds along the Faubourg Saint-Germain. are some distance away, and is still fairly dark inside the car. Outside is raining.

«Don't move,» says. «Sit perfectly still.» reaches for the collar of blouse, unties the bow, then unbuttons the blouse. leans forward slightly, thinking wants to fondle breasts. No. is merely groping for the shoulder straps of brassiere, which snips with a small penknife. Then takes it off. Now, beneath blouse, which has buttoned back up, are naked and free, as is the rest of body, from waist to knee.

«Listen,» says. «Now 're ready. This is where leave you. 're to get out and go ring the doorbell. Follow whoever opens the door for you, and do whatever 're told. If hesitate about going in, 'll come and take you in. If don't obey immediately, 'll force you to. bag? No, have no further need for bag. 're merely the girl 'm furnishing. Yes, of course 'll be there. Now run along.»

was simpler and more direct: , dressed in the same way, was driven by lover and an unknown friend.

was driving, was seated next to the young woman, and was who explained to the young woman that had been entrusted with the task of getting her ready, that was going to tie hands behind back, unfasten stockings and roll them down, remove garter belt, panties, and brassiere, and blindfold her. That would then be turned over to the château, where in due course would be instructed as to what should do. And, in fact, as soon

as had been thus undressed and bound, helped her to alight from the car after a trip that lasted half an hour, guided her up a few steps and, with blind-fold still on, through one or two doors. Then, when was removed, found standing alone in a dark room, where left her for half an hour, or an hour, or two hours, can't be sure, but seemed forever. Then, when at last was opened and turned on, could see that had been waiting in a very conventional, comfortable, yet distinctive room:

was a thick rug on the floor, but not a stick of furniture, and were lined with closets. had been opened by two women, dressed in the garb of pretty eighteenth-century chambermaids: full skirts made out of some light material, which were long enough to conceal feet; tight bodices, laced or hooked in front, which sharply accentuated the bust line; lace frills around the neck; half-length sleeves. were wearing eye shadow and lipstick. wore a close-fitting collar and had tight bracelets on wrists.

know it was at this point that freed O's hands, which were still tied behind back, and told her to get undressed, were going to bathe her and make her up. proceeded to strip her till hadn't a stitch of clothing left, then put clothes away neatly in one of the closets. was not allowed to bathe, and did hair as at the hairdresser's, making her sit in one of those large chairs which tilts back when wash your hair and straightens back up after has been set and 're ready for the dryer. always takes at least an hour. Actually took more than an hour, but was seated on this chair, naked, and kept her from either crossing legs or bringing them together. And

since was covered from floor to ceiling with a large mirror, which was unbroken by any shelving, could see, thus open, each time strayed to the mirror.

When was properly made up and prepared—eyelids pencilled lightly; lips bright red; the tip and halo of breasts highlighted with pink; the edges of nether lips rouged; armpits and pubis generously perfumed, and perfume also applied to the furrow between thighs, the furrow beneath breasts, and to the hollows of hands - was led into a room where

, and another mirror behind, to examine closely. was told to sit down on the ottoman, which was set between the mirror, and wait. was covered with black fur, which pricked her slightly; was black, the walls red.

was wearing red mules. Set in one of the walls of the small bedroom was, which looked out onto a lovely, dark park. had stopped, were swaying in the wind, raced high among the clouds.

have no idea how long remained in the red bedroom, or whether was really alone, as surmised, or whether was watching her through a peephole camouflaged in the wall. All know is that when returned, was carrying a dress-maker's tape measure and the other a basket. With them came dressed in a long purple robe, full at the shoulders. When walked flared open, from the waist down. could see that beneath robe had on some sort of tights, which covered legs and thighs but left exposed. was the sex that saw first, when took first step, then the whip, made of leather thongs, which had stuck in belt. Then saw that

was masked by a black hood - which concealed even eyes behind a network of black gauze - and, finally, that was also wearing fine black kid gloves.

Using the familiar tu form of address, told her not to move and ordered the women to hurry.

then took the measurements of O's neck and wrists. Though on the small side, were in no way out of the ordinary, and was easy enough to find the right-sized collar and bracelets, in the basket was carrying.

were made of several layers of leather (being fairly thin, so that was no more than the thickness of a finger). had , functioned automatically like a padlock when it closes, and could be opened only by means of a small key. Imbedded in the layers of leather, directly opposite the lock, was a snugly fitting metal ring, hallowed one to get a grip on the bracelet, if wanted to attach it, for

fit the arms and neck so snugly - although not so tight as to be the least painful - that was impossible to slip any bond inside.

So fastened the collar and bracelets to neck and wrists, and told her to get up. took place on the fur ottoman, called her over till was touching knees, slipped gloved hand between thighs and over breasts, and explained to her that would be presented that same evening, after had dined alone.

did in fact dine by , still naked, in a sort of little cabin where passed the dishes to her through a small window in the door. Finally, when the dinner was over, came for her. In the bedroom, fastened the two bracelet rings together behind back. attached a long red cape to the

ring of collar and draped it over shoulders. covered her completely, but opened when walked, since, with hands behind back, had no way of keeping it closed. her, opening the doors, and followed, closing them behind her. crossed a vestibule, two drawing rooms, and went into the library, where were having coffee.

were wearing the same long robes as the first, but no masks. And yet did not have time to see faces or ascertain whether was among them (was), for shone a light in eyes and blinded her. remained stock still, the two women flanking her and the men in front, studying her. Then went out; left. But was blindfolded again. Then made her walk forward - stumbled slightly as went - until felt that was standing in front of the fire around which were seated: could feel the heat, and in the silence could hear the quiet crackling of the burning logs. was facing the fire. lifted cape,

-after having checked to see that were attached - descended the length of back and buttocks. were not gloved, and penetrated her in both places at once, so abruptly that cried out. laughed. else said:

«Turn her around, so we can see the breasts and the belly.»

turned her around, and was against back. seized one of breasts, fastened on the tip of the other. But suddenly lost balance and fell backward (supported by whose arms?), while opened legs and gently spread lips. grazed the insides of thighs. heard them saying that would have to make her kneel

down. This did. was extremely uncomfortable in this position, especially because forbade her to bring knees together and because pinioned behind her forced her to lean forward. Then let her rock back a bit, as nuns are wont to do.

« 've never tied her up?»

«No, never.»

«And never whipped her?»

«No, never whipped her either. But as a matter of fact...»

was lover speaking.

«As a matter of fact,» went on, «if do tie her up from time to time, or whip her just a little, and begins to like it, that's no good either. have to get past the pleasure stage, until reach the stage of tears.»

Then made get up and were on the verge of untying her, probably in order to attach her to some pole or wall, when protested that wanted to take her first, right there on the spot. So made her kneel down again, this time with bust on an ottoman, hands still tied behind her, with hips higher than torso. Then , holding with both hands on hips, plunged into belly. yielded to a second. wanted to force way into the narrower passage and, driving hard, . When let her go, by beneath blindfold, slipped to the floor, only someone's knees against face, and was not to be spared. Finally let her go, a captive clothed in tawdry finery, lying on back in front of the fire. could hear glasses being filled and the sound of the men drinking, and the scraping of chairs. put some more on the fire. All of a sudden remo-

ved blindfold. , were lined with bookcases, was dimly lit by a single wall lamp and by , was beginning to burn more brightly. were standing and smoking. was seated, a riding crop on knees, and was lover. had taken her, and had not been able to distinguish him from the others.

explained to her that this was how it would always be, as long as was in the château, that would see the faces of who violated or tormented her, but never at night, and would never know had been responsible for the worst. would be true when was whipped, except that wanted to see being whipped, and so this once would not be blindfolded. , on the other hand, would don masks, and would no longer be able to tell them apart.

had her to feet, still wrapped in red cape, made her sit down on the arm of an easy chair near the fire, so that could hear what had to tell her and see what wanted to show her. were still behind back. showed her the riding crop, was long, black, and delicate, made of thin bamboo encased in leather, the kind one sees in the windows of better riding equipment shops; the leather whip, which had seen had been carrying in belt, was long and consisted of six lashes knotted at the end. was a third whip of fairly thin cords, each with several knots at the end: were quite stiff, as though had been soaked in water, which in fact had, as discovered, for caressed belly with them and nudged open thighs, so that could feel how stiff and damp the cords were against the tender,

inner skin. Then there were _____ and steel chains on the console table. Along one entire wall of the library, halfway between floor and ceiling, ran _____ which was supported by two columns. _____ was imbedded in one of them, just high enough for a man standing on tiptoe, with _____ arms stretched above _____ head, to reach. _____ told O, supporting _____ shoulders, and the other in the furrow of _____ loins, which burned so _____ could hardly bear it, _____ told her that _____ would be untied, but merely so that _____ could be fastened anew, a short while later, to the pole, using these same bracelets and one of the steel chains. _____ said that, with the exception of _____ hands, which would be held just above _____ head, _____ would thus be able to move and see the blows coming: that in principle _____ would be whipped only on the thighs and buttocks, in other words between _____ waist and knees, in the same region which had been prepared in _____ that had brought her here, when _____ had been made to sit naked on the seat; but that in all likelihood _____ would want to mark _____ thighs with the riding crop, which makes _____ which last a long time. _____ would not have to endure all this at once; there would be ample time for her to scream, to struggle, and to cry. _____ would grant her some respite, but as soon as _____ had caught _____ breath _____ would start in again, judging the results not from _____ screams or tears but from the size and color of the welts _____ had raised. _____ remarked to her that

_____ - besides being equitable - also made it pointless for the victims to exaggerate _____ suffering in an effort to arouse pity, and thus enabled them to resort to the same measures beyond the château walls, outdoors in the park - as was often done - or in any ordinary apartment or hotel room, assuming _____ was used

(such as the one _____ produced and showed her there on the spot), for _____ stifles all screams and eliminates all but the most violent moans, while allowing tears to flow without restraint.

_____ was no question of using it that night. On the contrary, _____ wanted to hear her scream; and the sooner the better. The pride _____ mustered to resist and remain silent did not long endure: _____ even heard her beg them to untie her, to stop for a second, just for a second. So frantically did _____ writhe, trying to escape the bite of the leashes, that _____ turned almost completely around, on the near side of the pole, for _____ which held her was long and although quite solid, was fairly slack. As a result, _____ were almost as marked as _____ backside. _____ made up _____ minds, after in fact having stopped for a moment, to begin again only after _____ had been attached first to _____ waist, then to the pole. Since _____ tied her tightly, to keep _____ waist snug to the pole, _____ was forced slightly to one side, and _____ caused _____ buttocks to protrude in the opposite direction. From then on _____ landed on _____ target, unless aimed deliberately elsewhere. Given the way _____ had handed her over, had delivered her into this situation, _____ might have assumed that _____ would have been the surest method for making him redouble _____ cruelty, so great was pleasure in extracting, or having the others extract, from her this unquestionable proof of _____ power. And indeed _____ was the first to point out that _____, the first _____ had used on her, left almost no marks (in contrast to the whip made of water-soaked cords, which marked almost upon contact, and the riding crop, which raised immediate welts), and thus allowed them to prolong the agony and follow _____ fancies in starting and stopping.

asked them to use only the leather whip. Meanwhile, who liked women only for what had in common with men, seduced by the available behind which was straining at knotted just below the waist, made all the more enticing by efforts to dodge the blows, called for an intermission in order to take advantage of it. spread the two parts, burned beneath his hands, and penetrated - not without some difficulty - remarking as he did that would have to be rendered more easily accessible. all agreed that could, and would, be done.

When untied the young woman, staggered and almost fainted, draped in red cape. Before returning her to the cell was to occupy, sat her down in an armchair near the fire and outlined for her the rules and regulations was to follow during stay in the chateau and later in daily life after had left it (which did not mean regaining freedom, however). Then rang. who had first received her came in, bearing the clothes she was to wear during stay and tokens by which

and

, might recognize her.

was similar to theirs: a long dress with a full skirt, worn over a sturdy whalebone bodice gathered tightly at the waist, and over a stiffly starched linen petticoat.

scarcely concealed the breasts which, raised by the constricting bodice, were only lightly veiled by the network of lace. was white, as was the lace, and

were a sea-green satin. When was dressed and resettled in chair beside the fire, accentuated by the color of the dress,

, had not uttered a word, prepared to leave. seized one of them as she

passed, made a sign for the other to wait, and brought the girl had stopped back toward O. turned her around and, holding her by the waist with one hand, lifted skirt with the other, in order to demonstrate to O, said, the practical advantages of the costume and show how well designed it was. added that all one needed to keep the skirts raised was a simple belt, which made everything that lay beneath readily available. In fact, often had the girls go about in the chateau or the park either like this, or with skirts tucked up in front, waist high. had the young woman show O how would have to keep skirt: rolled up several turns (like a lock of hair rolled in a curler) and secured tightly by a belt, either directly in front, to expose the belly, or in the middle of the back, to leave the buttocks free. In either case, fell diagonally away in large, cascading folds of intermingled material. Like O, bore fresh welts from the riding crop. left the room.

is the speech then delivered to O:

« are here to serve masters. During the day, will perform whatever domestic duties are assigned to you, such as sweeping, putting back the books, arranging flowers, or waiting on table. Nothing more difficult than that. But at the first word or sign from anyone will drop whatever you are doing and ready yourself for what is really your one and only duty: to lend yourself. are not own, nor are breasts, nor, most especially, any of bodily orifices, which may explore or penetrate at will. will remember at all times - or as constantly as possible - that have lost all right to privacy or concealment, and as a reminder of fact, in our presence will never close lips completely, or cross legs, or press knees together

(may recall were forbidden to do this the minute arrived). will serve as a constant reminder, to you as well as to us, that , , and are open to us. will never touch breasts in presence: raises them toward us, that may be . During the day will therefore be dressed, and if should order you to lift skirt, will lift it; if desires to use you in any manner whatsoever, will use you, unmasked, but with this one reservation: the whip. will be used only between dusk and dawn. But besides the whipping receive from may want to whip you, will also be flogged in the evening, as punishment for any infractions of the rules committed during the day: for having been slow to oblige, for having raised eyes and looked at the person addressing you or taking you - must never look any of us in the face. If

- the one am now wearing - leaves sex exposed, it is not for the sake of convenience, for would be just as convenient the other way, but for the sake of insolence, so that will be directed there upon it and nowhere else, so that may learn that there resides master, for whom, above all else, are intended. During the day, when are dressed in normal attire and are clothed as are now, will apply, except that when requested will open clothes, and then close them again when have finished with you. Another thing: at night will have only lips with which to honor us - and wide-spread thighs - for will be tied behind back and will be naked, as were a short while ago. will be blindfolded only to be maltreated and, now that have seen how are whipped, to be flogged. And yes, by the way: while is perfectly all

right for you to grow accustomed to being whipped - since are going to be every day throughout stay - is less for pleasure than for enlightenment. How true is may be shown by the fact that on nights when desires you, will wait until whose job it is comes to solitary cell and administers what are due to receive but are not in the mood to mete out. Actually, both - which when attached to the ring of collar keeps you more or less closely confined to bed several hours a day - are intended less to make you suffer, scream, or tears than to make you feel, through this suffering, that are not free but fettered, and to teach you that are totally dedicated to something outside . When leave here, will be wearing on third finger an iron ring, which will identify you. By then will have learned to obey those who wear the same insignia, and when see it will know that beneath skirt are constantly naked, however comely or commonplace may be, and that is for them. Should anyone find you in the least intractable, will return you here. Now will be shown to cell.»

While were talking to O, the had been standing on either side of the stake where had been whipped, without touching it, as though terrified them, or as though had been forbidden to touch it (which was more likely); when had finished, came over to , who realized that was supposed to get up and follow them. therefore got up, gathering skirts in arms to keep from tripping, for was not used to long dresses and did not feel steady on the mules with thick soles and very high heels which only , of the same

green as dress, kept from slipping off feet. As bent down turned head. were waiting, were no longer looking at her. , seated on the floor leaning against the ottoman over which had been thrown at the beginning of the evening, with knees raised and elbows on knees, was toying with the leather whip. As took first step to join the women, grazed him. raised head and smiled, calling her by name, and too stood up. Softly caressed hair, smoothed eyebrows with the tip of finger, and softly kissed her on the lips. In a loud voice, told her that loved her. , trembling, was terrified to notice that answered « love you,» and that was true. pulled her against him and said: «Darling, sweetheart,» kissed her on the neck and the curve of the cheek; had let fall on shoulder, which was covered by the purple robe. Very softly this time repeated to her that loved her, and very softly added: « 're going to kneel down, caress me, and kiss me,» and pushed her away, signaling to the women to move aside so could lean back against the console. was tall, but was not very high and , sheathed in the same purple as robe, were bent. stiffened from beneath like drapes, and slightly raised heavy sex and the light fleece above it. approached. knelt down on the rug, green dress in a corolla around her. squeezed her; whose nipples were visible, were at the level of lover's knees. «A little more light,» said . As were adjusting the lamp so that would fall directly on sex and on mistress's face, which was almost touching it, and on hands which were caressing him from below, suddenly ordered: «Say it again: '

love you.'» repeated « love you,» with such delight that hardly dared brush the tip of sex, which was still protected by its sheath of soft flesh. , who were smoking, commented on gestures, on the movement of closed and locked on the sex had seized, as it worked its way up and down, on the way streamed down ravaged face each time struck the back of throat and made gag, depressing tongue and causing her to feel nauseous. It was which, half gagging on the hardened flesh which filled it, murmured again: « love you.» had taken up positions to the right and left of who had one arm around each of their shoulders. could hear the comments made by those present, but through their words strained to hear lover's moans, caressing him carefully, slowly, and with infinite respect, the way knew pleased him. felt that was beautiful, since condescended to thrust himself into it, since deigned publicly to offer caresses to it, since, finally, deigned to discharge . received it as is received, heard him cry out, heard the others laugh, and when had received it fell, face against the floor. picked her up, and this time led her away. banged on the red tiles of the hallway, where succeeded doors, discreet and clean, with tiny locks, like the doors of the rooms in big hotels. was working up the courage to ask whether was occupied, and by whom, when , whose voice had not yet heard said to her: « 're in the red wing, and is Pierre.»

«What valet?» said , struck by the gentleness of the voice. «And 's your name? «

«Andrée.»

« is Jeanne,» said .

« is the one who has the keys,»

went on, «the one who will chain and unchain you, who will whip you when are to be punished and when have no time for you.»

« was in the red wing last year,» said. «

was there already. often came in at night.

have the keys and the right to use any of us in the rooms of section.»

was about to ask what kind of person

was, but did not have time to. As turned a corner of the hallway, made her halt before a door similar in all respects to the others: on a bench between this and the following door noticed a sort of thick-set, ruddy peasant, whose was practically clean shaved, with small black eyes set deep in skull and rolls of flesh on neck. was dressed like the valet in some operetta:

whose lace frills peeked out from beneath

black vest, which itself was covered by a red jacket of the kind called a spencer. had black breeches, white stoc-

kings, and patent-leather pumps. too was carrying a leather-thonged whip in his belt. were covered

with red hair. took a master key from vest pocket, ushered the three women in, and said:

« 'm locking the door. Ring when 've finished.»

was quite small, and actually consisted of two rooms. With closed, found themselves in an antechamber which opened into the cell proper; in same wall, inside the room itself, was

which opened into the bathroom. Opposite the doors

was the window. Against the left wall, between the

doors and the window, stood

, which was very low and covered with furs. There was no other furniture, no mirror. were bright

red, and the rug black. pointed out to O that

was less a bed than a matted platform covered with a black, longhaired imitation fur material.

, hard and flat like the mattress, was of the same reversible material.

was a thick, gleaming steel ring which was set at about the same height above the bed as

had been above the floor of the library; from it descended directly onto the bed, its links forming

a little pile, the other end being attached at arm's length to a pad-locked hook, like a drapery pulled back and held in place by a curtain loop.

« have to give you bath,» Jeanne said. « 'll unfasten dress.»

were

, located in the corner nearest the door, and

. and did not allow O to go in until was naked. put dress away in the closet next to the washbasin, where

already were, and remained with her, so that when had to squat down over the porcelain pedestal found surrounded by a whole host of reflections, as exposed as in the library when unknown hands had taken her by force.

«Wait until 's Pierre,» said , «and 'll see.»

«Why Pierre?»

«When comes to chain you, may make you squat.»

felt turn pale. «But why?» said.

«Because have to,» replied. «But 're

lucky.»

«Why lucky?»

«Was it who brought you here?»

«Yes,» said.

« 'll be a lot harder with you.»

« don't understand...»

« will very soon. 'm ringing for Pierre. 'll come and get you tomorrow morning.»

smiled as left and , before following her, caressed the tips of O's breasts. , completely taken aback, remained standing at the foot of the bed. With the exception of , which the water had stiffened when had bathed and were tighter than before, was naked.

«Behold the lovely lady,» said as entered. And seized both hands. slipped one of the bracelet hooks into the other, so that were tightly joined, then clipped both hooks to the ring of the necklace. Thus were joined as in an attitude of prayer, at the level of neck. remained to be done was to chain her to the wall with the chain that was lying on the bed, and was attached to the ring above. unfastened the hook by which was attached and pulled on it in order to shorten it. was forced to move to the head of the bed, where made her lie down. clicked in the ring, and was so tight that

could do no more than move from one side of the bed to the other or stand up on either side of the headboard. Since tended to shorten the collar, that is, pull it backward, and tended to pull it forward, and was established, with joined hands lying on left shoulder and head bending in direction as well. pulled the black cover up over O, but not before had lifted legs for a moment

and pushed them back toward chest, to examine the cleft between thighs. did not touch her further, did not say a word, turned out the light, which was a bracket lamp on the wall between the two doors, and went out.

Lying on left side, alone in the darkness and silence, hot beneath two layers of fur, of necessity motionless, O tried to figure out why was mingled with the terror in her, or why seemed itself so sweet. realized that was the fact that had been deprived of the use of hands; not that could have defended her (and did she really want to defend ?), but had been free would at least have made the gesture, have made an attempt to repel the hands which seized her, the flesh which pierced her, to protect loins from the whip. had been taken away from her; was inaccessible to her. How strange was not to be able to touch one's knees, or the hollow of one's belly. The lips between legs, were forbidden her, and perhaps were burning because knew were open to the first comer: to the valet Pierre, if cared to enter. was surprised that had left her so untroubled, so calm, whereas

, and , quite distressed her. turned over slightly on stomach, recalling that loved the furrow between buttocks which, except for this evening (if had been he), had never penetrated. hoped had been he; would ask him? Ah, never! Again saw which in the car had taken garter belt and panties, and had stretched the garters so that could roll stockings down to

above knees. was so vivid that forgot were bound and made the chain grate. And why, if took the memory of the torture had gone through so lightly, why did , make heart beat wildly and eyes close with terror? did not stop to consider whether was only terror; was overwhelmed with panic: would pull on chain and haul her to feet on the bed, and would whip her, with belly glued to the wall would whip her, whip her, kept turning in head. would whip her, had said would. 're lucky, had repeated, 'll be a lot harder on you. had she meant by that? no longer felt anything but the collar, the bracelets, and the chain; was drifting away. fell asleep.

In the wee hours of the night, just before dawn when is darkest and coldest, reappeared. turned on the light in the bathroom, leaving the door open so that fell on the middle of the bed, on the spot where was curled, making a small mound beneath the cover, which silently pulled back. Since was sleeping on left side, face to the window and legs slightly drawn up, the view offered him was that of white flanks, seemed even whiter against the black fur. took the pillow from beneath head and said politely:

«Would you please stand up,» and when was on knees, a position managed by pulling up with the chain, gave her a hand, taking her by the elbows so that could stand up straight with face to the wall. , which was faint, since the bed was black, illuminated body, but not gestures. guessed, but could not see, that was undoing the

chain to rehook it to another link, so that would remain taut, and could feel it growing tighter. , which were bare, were solidly planted on the bed. Nor was able to see that had in belt not the leather whip but the black riding crop similar to the one had hit her with while was tied to the stake, but had only used it twice on her and had not hit her hard. felt Pierre's left hand on waist, gave a little as, to steady , put right foot on it. At the same time as heard a whistling noise in the semi- darkness, felt a terrible burning across back, and screamed. flogged her with all might. did not wait for screams to subside, but struck her again four times, being careful each time to lash her above or below the preceding spot, so that would be all the clearer. Even after had stopped went on screaming, and streamed down into open mouth.

«Please be good enough to turn around.» said, and since , who was completely distracted, failed to obey, took her by hips without letting go of riding crop, brushed against waist. When was facing him, moved back slightly and lowered crop on the front of thighs as hard as could. had lasted five minutes. When had left, after having turned out the light and closed the bathroom door, was left moaning in the darkness, swaying back and forth along the wall at the end of chain. tried to stop moaning and to immobilize against , whose gleaming percale was cool on tortured flesh, as slowly began to break. , toward which was turned, for was leaning on one hip, was facing the east. extended from floor to ceiling and except for the drapes - of the same red material as that on the wall - graced it on either side and split into

stiff folds below the curtain loops which held it, had not curtains. watched the slow birth of pale dawn, trailing mist among the clusters of asters outside at the foot of window, until finally appeared. from time to time fell in swirls, although was no wind. In front of the window, beyond the bed of purple asters, was a lawn, at the end of which was a pathway. was broad daylight by now, and had not moved for a long time. appeared on the path, pushing a wheelbarrow. could be heard squeaking over the gravel. If had come over to rake that had fallen in among the asters, was so tall and the room so small and bright that would have seen O chained and naked and the marks of the riding crop on thighs. were swollen, and had formed narrow swellings much darker in color than the red of the walls. Where was sleeping, the way loved to sleep on quiet mornings? In what room, in what bed? Was aware of the pain, the tortures to which had delivered her? Was the one who had decided what they would be? recalled had seen in engravings and in history books, who also had been chained and whipped many years ago, centuries ago, and had died. did not wish to die, but if was the price had to pay to keep lover's love, then only hoped was pleased that had endured it. All soft and silent waited, waited for them to bring her back to him.

had the keys to any locks, neither the locks to the doors nor the chains, the collars or bracelets, but carried, each of which, in the various categories, opened all the doors or all the padlocks, or all the collars. had them too. But in the morning

were sleeping, and was who came to open the locks. who came into O's cell was dressed in a leather jacket and was wearing riding breeches and boots. did not recognize him. First unlocked the chain on the wall, and was able to lie down on the bed. Before unlocked wrists, ran his hands between thighs, the way, whom had seen in the small red drawing room, had done. may have been the same one. was bony and fleshless, with that piercing look one associates with the portraits of the Huguenots, and was gray. met gaze for what seemed to be an endless time and, suddenly freezing, remembered was forbidden to look at the masters above the belt. closed eyes, but was too late, and heard him laugh and say, as finally freed hands: « will be a punishment for that after dinner.» said something to who had come in with him and were standing waiting on either side of the bed, after which left. picked up the pillow, was on the floor, and the blanket that had turned down toward the foot of the bed when had come to whip O, while wheeled, toward the head of the bed, a serving table which had been brought into the hallway and on which were coffee, milk, sugar, bread, croissants, and butter.

«Hurry up and eat,» said. « 's nine o'clock. Afterward can sleep till noon, and when hear the bell will be time to get ready for lunch. 'll bathe and fix hair. 'll come to make you up and lace up bodice.»

« won't be on duty till afternoon,» said. «In the library: 'll serve the coffee and liqueur and tend the fire.»

«And what about you?» said.

«You're only supposed to take care of you during the first twenty-four hours of stay. After that you're on your own, and will have dealings only with the men. You won't be able to talk to you, and I won't be able to talk to us either.»:

«Don't go,» said. «Stay a while longer and tell me...» But I did not have time to finish sentence. I opened; I was lover, and I was not alone. I was lover, dressed the way he used to when I had just gotten out of bed and lighted the first cigarette of the day; in striped pajamas and a blue dressing gown, the wool robe with the padded silk lapels which I had picked out together a year before. And I were worn, I would have to buy him another pair. I disappeared with no other sound except the rustling of silk as I lifted skirts (I were a trifle long and trailed on the ground) - on the carpet I could not be heard.

I, who was holding a cup of coffee in my left hand and a croissant in the other, was seated cross-legged, or rather half-cross-legged, on the edge of the bed, one of my legs dangling and the other tucked up under her. I did not move, but I suddenly began to shake in my hand, and I dropped the croissant.

«Pick it up,» said. I were first words.

I put the cup down on the table, picked up the partly eaten croissant, and put it beside the cup.

I still lay on the rug, beside I bare foot. This time I bent down and picked it up. Then I sat down near O, pulled her back down onto the bed and kissed her.

I asked him if I loved her. I answered: «Yes, love you!» then got to my feet and made her stand up too, softly running the cool palms of my hands, then my lips,

over the welts.

Since I had come in with my lover, I did not know whether or not I could look at I who had entered with him and who, for the moment, had I back to them and was smoking a cigarette near the door. I was not of a nature to reassure her.

«Come over here so I can see you,» I said, and having guided her to the foot of the bed, I pointed out to my companion that I had been right, and thanked him, adding that it would only be fair for him to take O first if I so desired.

I, whom I still did not dare to look at, then asked her, after having run my hand over breasts and down my buttocks, to spread my legs.

«Do as he says,» said I, who was holding her up. I too was standing, and I was against him. With my right hand I was caressing one breast, and I was on my shoulder. I had sat down on the edge of the bed, I had seized and slowly parted, drawing the fleece, the lips which protected the entrance itself. I pushed her forward, as soon as I realized I was wanted from her, so that I would be more accessible, and I slipped around my waist, giving him a better grip.

This caress, to which I never submitted without a struggle and which always filled her with shame, and from which I escaped as quickly as I could, so quickly in fact that I had scarcely had a chance to be touched, this caress which seemed a sacrilege to her, for I deemed it sacrilege for my lover to be on my knees, feeling that should be on hers, I suddenly felt that I would not escape from it now, and I saw I doomed. For I moaned when I, which were pressing upon the mound of flesh whence the inner corolla emanates,

suddenly inflamed her, left her to allow the hot tip of the tongue to inflame her even more; moaned even more when the lips began again: felt the hidden point harden and rise, caught in a long, sucking bite between teeth and lips, which did not let go, a long soothing bite which made her gasp for breath. lost footing and found again lying on the bed, with on mouth; were pinning shoulders to the bed, while were raising and opening legs. , which were beneath back (for when had propelled her toward the unknown man had bound wrists together by clipping the wristbands together), were grazed by the sex of the man who was caressing in the furrow of buttocks before rising to strike hard into the depths of belly. At the first stroke cried out, as though had been the lash of a whip, then again at each new stroke, and bit mouth. tore himself abruptly away from her and fell back on the floor, as though struck by lightning, and too gave a cry.

freed O's hands, lifted her up, and lay her down beneath the blanket on the bed. got up, escorted him to the door. In a flash, saw released, reduced to nothing, accursed. had moaned beneath the lips of the stranger as never had made her moan, cried out under the impact of a stranger's member as never had made her cry out. felt debased and guilty. could not blame him if were to leave her. But no, was closing again, was staying with her, was coming back, lying down beside her beneath the cover, was slipping into moist, hot belly and, still holding her in this embrace, said to her:

« love you. When 'll also have given you to the valets, 'll come in one night and have you flogged till

bleed.»

had broken through the mist and flooded the room. But only woke them up.

was at a loss what to do.

was there, as close, as tenderly relaxed and surrendered as was in the bed in that low-ceilinged room to which, almost every night since had begun living together, came to sleep with her. was a big, mahogany, English-style four-poster bed, without the awning, and were taller than those at the foot.

always slept on left, and whenever awoke, even were it in the middle of the night, inevitably reached down for legs. This is why never wore anything but a nightgown or, if had on pajamas, never put on the bottoms. did so now; took that hand and kissed it, without ever daring to ask him for anything. But spoke. Holding her by the collar, with two fingers slipped in between the neck and collar, told her it was intention that henceforth should be shared by him and those of choosing, and by those whom did not know who were connected to the society of the château, shared as had been the previous evening. That was dependent on him, and on him alone, even though might receive orders from persons other than himself, whether was present or absent, for as a matter of principle was participating in whatever might be demanded of or inflicted on her, and that was who possessed and enjoyed her through those into whose hands had been given, by the simple fact that had given her to them. must greet them and submit to them with the same respect with which greeted him, as though were so many reflections of him. Thus would possess her as a god possesses creatures, whom lays hold of

in the guise of a monster or a bird, of an invisible spirit or a state of ecstasy. did not wish to leave her. The more surrendered her, the more would hold her dear. The fact that gave her was to him a proof, and ought to be one for her as well that belonged to him: can only give what belongs to you. gave her only to reclaim her immediately, to reclaim her enriched in eyes, like some common object which had been used for some divine purpose and has thus been consecrated. For a long time had wanted to prostitute her, and was delighted to feel that the pleasure was deriving was even greater than had hoped, and that bound him to her all the more, as bound her to him, all the more so because, through it, would be more humiliated and ravaged. Since loved him, could not help loving whatever derived from him. listened and trembled with happiness, because loved her, all acquiescent trembled. doubtless guessed it, for went on:

« 's because 's easy for you to consent that want from you what will be impossible for you to consent to, even if agree ahead of time, even if say yes now and imagine capable of submitting. won't be able not to revolt. will be obtained in spite of you, not only for the inimitable pleasure that will derive from it, but also that will be made aware of what has been done to you.»

was on the verge of saying that was slave and that bore bonds cheerfully. stopped her.

«Yesterday were told that as long as are in the château are not to look a man in the face or speak to him. applies to me as well: with me shall remain silent and obey. love you. Now get up. From now on the only times that will open mouth here in the presence of a man will be to cry out or to caress.»

So got up. remained lying on the bed. bathed and arranged hair.

made her shiver, and had to sponge without rubbing to keep from reviving the burning pain. made up mouth but not eyes, powdered and, still naked but with lowered eyes, came back into the room.

was looking at , who had come in and was standing at the head of the bed, she too with head bowed, unspeaking. told her to dress O. took the bodice of green satin, the white petticoat, the dress, the green mules and having hooked up O's bodice in front, began to lace it up tight in the back. was long and stiff, stoutly whaleboned as during the period when were in style, with gussets to support the breasts. The more was tightened, the more were lifted, supported as were by the gussets, and displayed more prominently. At the same time, caused stomach to protrude and backside to arch out sharply.

was that was very comfortable and to a certain extent restful. made you stand up very straight, but made you realize - why, was hard to tell unless was by contract - the freedom, or rather the unavailability, of left unrestricted.

, seemed to the girl to be less a protective outfit than an instrument designed to provoke or present. When had tied the laces in a double knot, took dress from the bed. was a one-piece dress, with the petticoat attached to the skirt like a detachable lining, and , cross-laced in front and tied in the back, was thus able to follow more or less the delicate contours

of bosom, depending on how tightly was laced. had laced it very tight, and through the open door was able to see reflected in the mirror, slim and lost in the green satin which billowed at hips, as would have done. were standing side by side. reached out to smooth a wrinkle in the green dress, and stirred in the lace fringes of bodice, were long and the halos brown. was of yellow faille.

, who had come over to the two women, said to O: «Watch.» And to Jeanne: «Lift your dress.» With both hands raised the crackling silk and the crinoline which lined it, revealing as did a golden belly, gleaming thighs and knees, and a tight black triangle. put hand on it and slowly explored, and with excited the nipple of one breast.

«Merely so can see,» said to O. saw. saw ironic but attentive face, carefully watching Jeanne's half-open mouth and neck, which was thrown back, tightly circled by the leather collar. What pleasure was giving him, yes she, that girl or any other could not?

« hadn't occurred to you?» added. No, had not occurred to her. had collapsed against the wall, between the two doors, arms hanging limp. was no longer any need to tell her to keep quiet. How could have spoken? Perhaps was touched by despair. left Jeanne and took her in arms, calling her love and life, saying over and over again that loved her.

with was moist with the odor of Jeanne. And so? slowly ebbed: loved her, ah loved her. was free to enjoy with Jeanne, or with others, loved her. « love you,»

had whispered to ear, « love you,» so softly was scarcely audible. « love you.» did not leave until saw that were clear and expression calm, contented.

took O by the hand and let her out into the hallway. again made a resounding noise on the tile floor, and again found a valet seated on a bench between the doors. was dressed like Pierre, but was not Pierre. was tall, dry, and had dark hair.

preceded them and showed them into an antechamber where, before a wrought-iron door that stood between two tall green drapes, were waiting, some white dogs with russet spots lying at feet.

« 's the enclosure,» murmured. But the valet who was walking in front of them heard her and turned around. was amazed to see turn deathly pale and let go of hand, let go of dress which was holding lightly with other hand, and sink to knees on the black tile floor - for was tiled in black marble. burst

out laughing. came over to O and politely invited her to follow him, opened a door opposite the one had just entered, and stood aside. heard laughter and the sound of footsteps, then closed behind her. never - no, never - learned what had happened, whether had been punished for having spoken, and if so what the punishment had been, or whether had simply yielded to a caprice on the part of the valet, or whether in throwing on knees had been obeying some rule or trying to move the valet to pity, and whether had succeeded. During initial stay in the château, which lasted two weeks, only noted that, although was absolute, was rare that

did not try and break it while were alone with the valets, either being taken to or from some place in the château, or during meals, especially during the day. was as though gave them a feeling of assurance which nakedness and nocturnal chains, and the master's presence, destroyed. also noticed that, whereas the slightest gestures which might have been construed as an advance toward one of the masters seemed quite naturally inconceivable, was not true for the valets. never gave orders, although was as implacable as an order. had apparently been enjoined to punish to the letter infractions of the rules which occurred in presence, and to punish them on the spot. Thus, on three occasions, saw who were caught talking thrown to the floor and whipped - once in the hallway leading to the red wing, and twice again in the refectory had just entered. So was possible to be whipped in broad daylight, despite what had told her the first evening, as though did not count and was left to discretion.

made outfits look strange and menacing. wore black stockings and, in place of the red jacket and white ruffled shirt, a soft wide-sleeved shirt of red silk, gathered at the neck and with the sleeves also gathered at the wrists. was who, on the eight day at noon, whip already in hand, made , who was seated not far from O, get up off stool. , whose bosom was all milk and roses, had smiled at him and spoken a few words so quickly that had missed them. Before had time to touch her was on knees, hand, so white against the black silk, lightly stroking the still dormant sex, which she took out and brought to half-opened mouth. That time was not whipped. And since

was then the only monitor in the refectory, and since closed eyes as accepted the caress, began talking. So was possible to bribe the valets. But what was the use? If was one rule to which had trouble submitting, and indeed never really submitted to completely, was the rule forbidding them to look men in the face - considering that applied to the valets as well, felt in constant danger, so compelling was , and was in fact whipped by both the valets, not, in truth, each time noticed her doing (for took some liberties with instructions, and perhaps cared enough about the fascination exercised not to deprive themselves, by too strict or efficacious an application of the rules, of the gazes which would leave face or mouth only to return to sex, whips, and their hands, and then start in all over again), but only when in all probability wanted to humiliate her. No matter how cruelly treated her when had made up minds to do so, nonetheless never had the courage, or the cowardice, to throw at knees, and though submitted to them at times never tempted or urged them on. As for the rule of silence, meant so little to her that, except in the case of lover, did not once break it, replying by signals whenever would take advantage of their guards' momentary distraction to speak to her. was generally during meals, which were taken in the room into which had been ushered, when had turned around to Jeanne. were black and was black, , of heavy glass, was black too, and had a round stool covered with black leather on which to sit. had to lift skirts to sit down, and in so doing rediscovered, the moment felt the smooth, cold leather beneath thighs, that first

moment when lover had made her take off stockings and panties and sit in the same manner on the back seat of the car. Conversely, after had left the château and, dressed like everyone else except for the fact that beneath innocuous suit or dress was naked, whenever had to lift petticoat and skirt to sit down beside lover, or beside another, were it on the seat of a car or the bench of a cafe, was the château rediscovered, proffered in the silk bodices,

was denied, and the terrible silence. And yet had been such a comfort to her as the silence, unless was the chains.

should have bound her deep within , which should have smothered her, strangled her, on the contrary freed her from . would have become of her if had been granted the right to speak and the freedom of hands, if had been free to make a choice, when

prostituted her before own eyes? True, did not speak as was being tortured, but can be classed as words? Besides, often stilled her by gagging. Beneath , beneath , beneath that defiled her, that rent her, lost in a which restored her to love and perhaps, brought her to the edge of death.

was anyone, anyone at all, any one of the other girls, opened and forced like her, girls whom saw being opened and forced, for did see it, even when was not obliged to have a hand in it.

Thus, less than twenty-four hours after arrival, during second day there, was taken after the meal into the library, there to serve coffee and tend the fire. , whom had brought back, went with her, as did another girl named Monique. was this same valet who took them there and remained in the

room, stationed near the stake to which had been attached. was still empty. faced west, and in the vast, almost cloudless sky slowly pursued course, rays lighting, on a chest of drawers, an enormous bouquet of sulphur colored chrysanthemums which smelled of earth and dead leaves.

«Did mark you last night?» asked O. nodded that had.

«Then should show it,» said. «Please roll up dress.»

waited till had rolled robe up and behind, the way had done the evening before, and till had helped her fasten it there. Then told her to light the fire. 's backside up to waist, thighs, slender legs, was framed in the cascading folds of green silk and white linen. had turned black.

was ready on the hearth, all had to do was ignite the straw beneath the kindling, which leaped into flame. Soon caught, then the oak logs, which burned with tall, crackling, almost colorless flames which were almost invisible in the daylight, but which smelled good. entered and placed a tray filled with coffee cups on the console, from which had been removed, then left the room. went over near the console, while and remained standing on either side of the fireplace.

Just then came in, and left the room. thought recognized one of the men from voice, who had forced her the previous evening, who had asked that rear be made more easily accessible. As poured the coffee into the small black and gold cups, which handed around with the sugar, stole a glance at them. So was thin, blond boy, a mere stripling, with an English air

about him. was speaking again; now was certain.
 was also fair, thick set with a heavy face.
 were seated in the big leather armchairs,
 feet near the fire, quietly smoking and reading
papers, paying no more heed to the women than if
had not been there. Now and then
was heard, or
From time to time put another long on the fire. was
seated on a cushion on the floor beside the wood basket,
Monique and Jeanne, also on the floor, across from her.
 overlapped one another.
 was a dark red. Suddenly, but only after had
elapsed, called Jeanne, then Monique.
told them to bring the ottoman (was the same ottoman
on which had been spread-eagled the night before).
 did not wait for further instructions, kneeled
down, bent over, breasts crushed against the fur and
holding both corners of the ottoman in hands. When
 had Jeanne lift the red skirt, did not
stir. was then obliged to undo clothing - and
 gave her the order in the most churlish manner - and
take between hands that sword of flesh which had so
cruelly pierced O at least once. swelled and stiffened
beneath the closed palm, and saw these same hands,
Jeanne's tiny hands, spreading Monique's thighs, into the
hollow of which, slowly and in short spasms which made
 moan, plunged.
 , who was watching in silence, motio-
ned to O to approach and, without taking eyes off the
spectacle, toppled her forward over one arm of chair
- and gave him an unhindered view of
backside - and seized womb with hand.
 was in this position that found her when, a
minute later, opened the door.

«Please don't let me disturb you,» said, and sat
down on the floor, on the same cushion where had been
sitting beside the fire before had been called. wat-
ched her closely, and smiled every time which
was holding her probed and returned, seizing both front
and rear apertures at once and working deeper and deeper
as opened further, wrenching from her a moan which
 could no longer restrain.

 had long since gotten back to feet;
was fiddling with the fire in place of O. brought René
a glass of whisky, and kissed hand as handed it
to him, then drank it down without taking eyes off O.
 who was still holding her then said: «Is
yours?»

«Yes,» replied.

« is right,» went on, « 's too narrow.

 has to be widened.»

«Not too much, mind you,» said .

«Whatever you say,» said, getting to feet.

« 're a better judge than I.» And rang.

For the next eight days, between dusk when stint
in the library came to an end and that hour of the night -
which was generally eight or ten o'clock - when was
returned to cell, in chains and naked beneath red
cape, wore an ebonite shaft simulating an erect male
member which was inserted behind and held in place by
three small chains connected to a leather belt around
hips, in such a way that

 could not expel it. followed the
furrow of buttocks, the two others the fold on either
side of the belly's triangle, in order not to prevent anyone
from penetrating that side if need be.

When had rung, was to have the coffer brought
in which contained, or one of whose compartments contai-

ned, an assortment of small chains and belts, and whose other held a variety of these shafts, ranging from the very thin to the very thick. all had one feature in common, namely that flared at the base, to make it impossible for them to slide up inside the body, an accident which might have produced the opposite effect from that desired, that is might have allowed the ring of flesh to tighten up again, whereas was to distend it. Thus quartered, and quartered each day a little more, for , who made her kneel down, or rather lie prone, to watch while or , or , fastened the shaft that had chosen, each day chose a thicker one. At the evening meal, which the girls took together in the same refectory, after bath, naked and powdered still wore it, and could see that was wearing it, because of the little chains and the belt. was only removed, by the valet, when came to chain her to the wall for the night if had asked for her, or, if had, when locked hands behind her if had to take her to the library. were the nights when did not appear to make use of this passage thus rapidly rendered as easy as, though still narrower than, the other. After eight days was no longer any need for an instrument, and told her that was happy was now doubly open and that would make certain remained so. At the same time, warned her that was leaving and that would not see him during the last seven days that was to spend in the château, before came back to pick her up and take her back to Paris.

«But love you,» added, « do love you. Don't forget me.»

Oh, how could forget him! was the hand that blindfolded her, wielded by the valet Pierre,

was the chain above head, who came down on her, and all the voices which gave her orders were voice. Was growing weary? No. By dint of being defiled and desecrated, it seems that must have grown used to outrages, by dint of being caressed, to caresses, if not to the whip by dint of being whipped.

should have by slow degrees cast her upon benumbing banks, into a state bordering on sleep or somnambulism. On the contrary. The bodice which held her straight, the chains which kept her submissive, refuge of silence - may have been responsible in part - as was

and, even when were not, the spectacle of the constantly available bodies. Also the spectacle and the awareness of body. Daily and, so to speak, ceremoniously soiled with saliva and sperm, felt herself literally to be the repository of impurity, the sink mentioned in the Scriptures. And yet , having become less sensitive, at the same time seemed to her to have become more beautiful and, as it were, ennobled: mouth closed upon anonymous members, the tips of breasts constantly fondled by hands, and between quartered thighs the twin, contiguous paths wantonly ploughed.

was a source of surprise, and yet was indeed from within, and bespoke calm, while on face could be detected

When had informed her that was leaving, had already fallen. was naked in cell, and was waiting for them to come and take her to the refectory. As for lover, was dressed as usual, in a suit wore

every day in town. When took her in arms,
irritated the tips of breasts.

kissed her, lay her down on the bed, lay down beside her and, tenderly and slowly and gently, took her, alternating between the two tracks open to him, before finally spilling himself into mouth, which then kissed again.

«Before leave,» said, « would like to have you whipped, and this time 'll ask permission. Do you agree?»

agreed to it.

« love you,» repeated. «Ring for Pierre.»

rang. chained hands above head, to the chain of the bed. When was thus bound, kissed her again, standing beside her on the bed. Again told her that loved her, then got down off the bed and nodded for Pierre. watched her struggle, so fruitlessly; listened to moans swell and become cries. When flowed, sent Pierre away. still found the strength to tell him again that loved him. Then kissed drenched face, gasping mouth, undid bonds, laid her down, and left.

is a vast understatement: was henceforth nothing but vigil day and night. During the day was like a painted countenance, whose is soft and is meek and - was the only time she abided by the rule - whose were constantly lowered. made and tended the fire, poured and offered the coffee and liqueurs, lighted the cigarettes, arranged the flowers and folded the newspapers like a young girl in parents' living room, so limpid with open neck and leather collar, tight bodice and prisoner's bracelets, that all it took for

was to order her to remain by sides while were violating another girl to make them want to violate her as well; which doubtless explains why was treated worse than before. Had sinned? Or had left her so that

would feel freer to dispose of her? In any case, the fact remains that on the second day following departure as, at nightfall, had just undressed and was looking in the bathroom mirror at the almost vanished welts made by Pierre's riding crop on the front of thighs, entered. were still two hours before dinner. told her that would not dine in the common room and said to get ready, pointing to the Turkish toilet in the corner, over which had to squat, as had warned her would in the presence of Pierre. All the while remained there stood contemplating her, could see him in the mirrors, and see , and was incapable of holding back the water which escaped from body. waited then until had bathed and powdered . was going to get mules and red cape when stopped her and added, fastening hands behind back, that was no need to, but that should wait a moment for him. sat down on a corner of the bed. Outside was storming, a tempest of cold rain and wind, and

swayed back and forth beneath the gusts. From time to time would splatter against the windowpanes. was as dark as in the middle of the night, although had not yet struck, for was well advanced and were growing shorter.

When returned, was carrying the same blindfold with which had blindfolded her the first evening. also had a long chain, which made a clanking noise, a chain similar to the one fastened to the wall. had the

impression that couldn't make up mind whether to put the blindfold or the chain on her first. was gazing out at the rain, not caring what wanted from her, thinking only that had said would come back, that were still five days and five nights to go, and that had no idea where was or whether was alone and, if was not alone, who was with. But would come back. had laid the chain on the bed and, without interrupting O's daydream, had covered eyes with the blindfold of black velvet. was slightly rounded below the sockets of eyes, and fitted the cheekbones perfectly, making it impossible to get the slightest peek or even to raise the eyelids. Blessed darkness like unto own night, never had greeted it with such joy, blessed chains that bore away from .

fastened the chain to the ring in collar and invited her to follow him. got up, felt being pulled forward, and walked. were icy cold on the tiles, and gathered was following the hallway of the red wing; then which was still as cold, became rough underfoot: was walking on a stone floor, made of sandstone or granite. Twice made her stop, heard the sound of a key in a lock, of a lock being turned and opened, then locked again. «Careful of the steps,» said , and went down a staircase, and once stumbled. caught her around the waist. had never touched her except to chain or beat her, but here was now forcing her down onto the cold steps, which tried to grasp with bound hands to keep from slipping, and was taking breasts. moved from one to the other, and as pressed against her, could feel him slowly rising. did not help her up until had taken pleasure with her. Damp and trembling with cold, finally descended the last steps and heard

another door open, which went through and immediately felt a thick rug beneath feet. was another slight tug on the chain, then were loosing hands and untying blindfold: was in a round, vaulted room which was very small and low: were of unplastered stone, and were visible.

was fastened to the wall by an eye-bolt opposite the door, which was set about three feet above the floor and allowed her to move no more than two steps forward.

was neither a bed nor anything that might have served as a bed, nor was there any blanket, only three or four Moroccan-type cushions, but were out of reach and clearly not intended for her. Within reach, however, in the niche from which emanated the little light which lighted the room, was a wooden tray on which were

, which had been installed along the base of the walls and set into the walls themselves to form around the entire room a sort of burning plinth, was nonetheless insufficient to overcome the odor of earth and mud which is the odor of ancient prisons and in old châteaux, of uninhabited dungeons. In that hot semi-darkness, into which no sound intruded, soon lost all track of time. was no longer any day or night, never went out.

- hardly mattered which - replaced the water, fruit, and bread on the tray whenever was gone, and took her to bathe in a nearby dungeon. never saw the men who came in, for each time preceded them to blindfold eyes, and removed it only after had left. also lost track of them, of who were and how many were, and

were ever able to identify who were touching. At times were several, more often only one, but each

time, before came near her, was made to kneel down facing the wall, the ring of collar fastened to the same eye-bolt to which the chain was attached, and whipped. placed palms against the wall and pressed face against the back of hands, to keep from scratching it against the stones; but scraped knees and breasts on them. Thus lost track of the tortures and screams which were smothered by the vault. waited. Suddenly no longer stood still. In velvet night was so unfastened. had been waiting for three months, three days, or ten days, or ten years. felt being wrapped in a heavy cloth, and someone taking her by the shoulders and knees, lifting and carrying her. found herself in cell, lying under the black fur cover, was early afternoon, were open, free, and was sitting beside her, stroking hair.

« must get dressed now,» said, « 're leaving.» took a hasty bath, brushed hair, handed powder and lipstick to her. When returned to cell, , , , and were on the foot of the bed, as were and . was even the coat wore over suit when turned brisk, and a square silk scarf to protect neck, but no garter belt or panties. dressed slowly, rolling stockings down to just above knees, and did not put on suitcoat because it was very warm in cell. Just then, who had explained on the first evening what would be expected of her, came in. unlocked that had held her captive for two weeks. Was freed of them? Or did have the feeling that was missing? said nothing, scarcely daring to run hands over wrists, not daring to lift them to throat.

Then asked her to choose, from among the exactly

identical rings which showed to her in a small wooden box, the one which fit left ring finger. were strange iron rings, banded with gold inside, and was wide and as massive as that of an actual signet ring, but was convex, and for design bore a three-spoked wheel inlaid in gold, with each spoke spiraling back upon like the solar wheel of the Celts.

tried, though a trifle snug, fit her exactly. was heavy on hand, and gleamed as though furtively in the dull gray of the polished iron. Why iron, and why gold, and this insignia did not understand? was impossible to talk in this room draped in red, where was still on the wall above the bed, where was lying on the floor, this room into which might emerge, was sure to emerge, absurd in opera outfit, in the dull light of November.

was wrong, did not appear. had her put on the coat to suit, and long gloves, which covered the bottom of sleeves. took scarf, bag, and carried coat over arm.

made less noise on the hallway floor than had , were closed, was empty. was holding lover by the hand. who was accompanying them opened the wrought-iron gates which had said were the enclosure, which was now no longer guarded by valets or dogs. lifted one of the green velvet curtains and ushered them both through. fell back into place. heard the gate closing. were alone in another antechamber looked onto the lawn. All there was left to do was descend the steps leading down from the stoop, before which recognized the car.

sat down next to , who took the wheel and started off. After had left the grounds, through

the porte-cochere was wide open, stopped a few hundred meters farther on and kissed her. was on the outskirts of a small, peaceful town, which crossed through as continued on route. was able to read the name on the road sign: Roissy.

II

Sir Stephen