

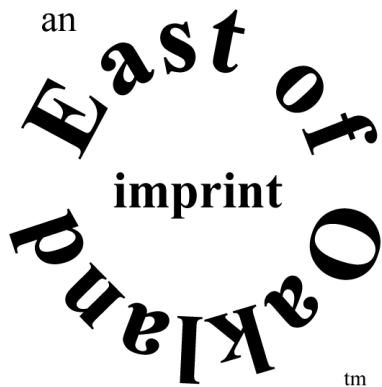
THE FOUNDRY



J. Manque

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fiction

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Where they burn books, ultimately they burn bodies- Heinrich Heine

The Foundry

Saturday, June 27th, 2009

Santos Lane, Walnut Creek, California- it's where I live. By design the name evokes the missionary period of adobe buildings and church bells chiming slowly over the steady hum of insects on long summer days, a time when the only excitement came in the form of hoof beats as mounted Spanish soldiers hunted Indians fleeing a salvation thrust upon them, then returned them to the bosom of mother church- in chains. That was more than two centuries ago. Lines were already being

drawn. The parceling had begun. People were being forced into smaller spaces, but if you looked into the shimmering heat-waves over the endless tracts of land beyond the Mission doors you would have been excused for not seeing it.

Four decades ago you'd find the area filled with ancient oaks that saw the Spanish come and saw them go, two lane roads without sidewalks, and multi-acre lots sprinkled with low sprawling ranch homes designed by Eastern architects who'd never seen a ranch. Even then it wasn't obvious. And how could you care if you had a lawn big enough to throw the long ball to your son, if you could barbecue and hardly hear your neighbors, if you had enough land to plant a tree and imagine it giving shade for generations?

The traffic on the main road, Treat Boulevard, drowned out the daytime insects, but died away at night, letting amorous crickets fill starlit summer nights with sound, completely unaware, and incapable of becoming aware, that the tipping point had been reached- that the subdividing, the reallocation, the zero sum property game marked by cycles of destruction and construction with many losers and few winners, was poised to accelerate faster than any soldier's horse waiting for the church bell's alarm.

Builders had been replaced by developers, who

brought with them all the knowledge gleaned from studying pre-war slaughter houses and post-war assembly lines -destroy completely, cleave small, build fast and cheap with straight lines and even numbers, repeat- and they brought BART with them, Bay Area Rapid Transit, hundreds of miles of heavy rail people mover designed to turn the entire region into a single city in just a few generations. The BART station went up a couple of hundred yards from Santos Lane on an old rancho just inside the boundary of Pleasant Hill, a holdout from the original development. Its land was paved for parking, but they left the oaks, their yawning canopies providing shade on the frequent hundred and six degree summer days so commuters lucky enough to park under them didn't burn their hands on steering wheels and seatbelt buckles after returning from long days toiling in San Francisco, 30 miles away and as many degrees cooler.

The nice homes on the large lots around the station had enough value that mass development couldn't happen in the area immediately around Santos. The developers wanted cheap land and they found it, just to the east, the west, the north, and the south, in the form of walnut, peach, pear, and cherry orchards, cattle land, and open space. Of course I'm talking about this like there was a Santos Lane. There wasn't. Santos Lane, its

entire length, is only about as long as three backyards before BART arrived. After BART, and after the cheap land for miles around it had been built up with smaller ranch home parodies spaced a dozen feet from each other, their occupants choking the roads bumper to bumper twice a day, the land immediately around BART became too valuable not to develop. How could you not pour people into high density apartments and condos so close to a BART station? Barbecues? Lawns? Trees? Wastes of space- like churches, like faith.

If you force people to believe sometimes they do, and that can be as inconvenient as barbarism if it can't be controlled- ask the Missionaries. Ask their successors. So Santos Lane was created and given an empty name to invoke a history beyond fading memories, but only its flavor. And the homes around it families lived in, the trees fathers planted, the lawns sons mowed on weekends, were all bulldozed because it had to happen, because there was so much profit to be had, because nobody had the guts to stand up and say, 'No.' Except the people who did, a handful of times in a dozen mile radius around the BART station and all along its tracks, who quickly learned the scope of eminent domain, that it can be used to profit businesses that contribute to politicians who make the decisions to condemn, while simultaneously discovering the

vagaries of *quid pro quo* in modern American jurisprudence where even judges and government employees can find themselves on the lecture circuit when their decisions fill the right pockets, their fees, apparently, limited only by how full those pockets get. But more on that later.

The real old roads in the area, Las Juntas and Del Hombre, are more appropriately named and don't invoke the divine- and its wrath. And after it was created Santos got its apartment buildings, and like I said, that's where I live, among the holy and the profane. I've always counted myself blessed to be among the later because Moses never did set foot in the promised land. I heard a comedian say that God was a sadistic bastard for letting him struggle towards it for 40 years, letting him get close enough to see it, then killing him for a faith that must have burned as strong as Abraham's, but gripped in a passion that lasted a lifetime. Personally, I didn't see anything funny in it, especially when you consider that Moses was no volunteer. When called he protested, but he followed every order, even sending his army to commit genocide- then sending it back to finish the job when they stopped at a victory that would have made Sherman queasy. God's will can be a bitch, especially when God lives in a little box and only speaks to you

when nobody else is around. The less faithful could actually accuse Moses of being a bloodthirsty psychopath, and God has left nothing in the historical record to dispute that, not even the empty box he came in.

And if you actually read the Bible it's full of stories like that. Job and Lot are two others who got the short end of the stick for their belief, and being near them was no picnic, Lot's wife turned to salt, or his daughters offered up as rape fodder. I wonder what dinner conversations were like after that? I mean, before that righteous man impregnated them both? They weren't good enough for the Sodomites, but they were good enough for old Lot after he tied one on. And if that makes him sound like he might have been passed over for father of the year honors remember this- the incest was his daughters' idea. Nurture or nature? Your call.

Luckily, God never spoke to me. I've never felt his presence in any church, never had a burning bush talk to me, and if I did I would have run screaming to the doctor for a lithium prescription because I know how those stories end, how God rewards the faithful. Yet the good and the redeemed and those seeking redemption still line up to martyr themselves, to suffer for the divine, to willingly take the first step down the road to beatification and sainthood no matter what the toll.

I suppose I should be grateful for my modern church free lane, for my clean little three room apartment, for the way they managed to cram so many of us so tightly together and got us to pay to the point of bleeding for the privilege. At least we didn't do it to His glory. And besides, I never could have afforded one of those ranch houses, not if I'd saved for a thousand years, but at least I'm close to BART. The irony, of course, was that the station, despite all BART's space age pretense, with its oaks that towered and spread over the flat expanses of parking lot, bright green in Spring, deep green in summer, looked like the more peaceful Walnut Creek/Pleasant Hill area I sometimes dreamed about. But even that was fading into memory. I suppose it should have meant something to me.

It didn't.

My mind was occupied with two things, getting the nearly \$1500 a month I needed to afford my palatial abode, and getting laid so I could forget about the former. I never thought that the two would present themselves in one soft curvaceous opportunity on that blistering June afternoon, but they did.

Her name was Sandra. I didn't know that yet. And I didn't know her. I'd seen her many times, and I'd lusted after her like I lusted after the other beautiful women who lived there close to me, flitting in and out of my

field of view like butterflies as they hurried about their lives and I hurried about mine. I'd never even spoken to her, not until I got home with my groceries and saw my chance. She was lying by the simple rectangular swimming pool the contractors somehow shoehorned between the buildings- and she was alone, relaxed.

I rushed to my apartment. I shoved the two grocery bags in the refrigerator without sorting them and tried to make myself presentable. I stripped naked and looked at myself in the mirror. Even though it was late June I wasn't tan. I'd been going in early and coming home late most nights. I still had a job and was doing my damndest to appear indispensable for as long as possible. I knew the universe wouldn't waste a recession as deep as this without screwing me out of a job, and I figured my only chance was that maybe there was a God and I just wasn't faithful enough to be punished. But in addition to my still pale skin, I had a few extra pounds from the winter that I hadn't had time to jog off. If I were a cynic maybe I would have said that was my punishment- maybe I just didn't have the looks to pull women anymore, but regardless of whether that thought crossed my mind, and despite everything I've said, and everything I'm going to say, and it will involve bare flesh, intimate touches, shocking perversions, and the kinds of emotions that

can make all those things truly frightening, my own self confidence, or lack thereof with regard to my external sexuality, is something I'm not willing to commit to print, and as you'll see, I'm willing to commit a lot to print. It's sufficient to say that a pair of sunglasses, my longest board shorts, and a T-shirt later I was on my way to the pool. Make of that what you will.

I knew I had to hurry. Nobody would stay in that heat for long. If you don't live in a hot place where the air temperature gets well above body temperature it's difficult to describe what it's like. It's deceptive, awe inspiring, even pleasant at first. You feel its energy and it makes you feel alive. Stay in it one minute too long and you realize it's trying to kill you, to cook you through slowly. That's one thing I didn't envy the Indians, or even the Spanish. When the temperature climbed there were no cool places in the vast expanse, no standing water, and even the shade of trees becomes stifling.

Sandra had already been in the pool. The water surface was calm, and the footprints to her towel had mostly evaporated, but her red bikini was still dark and wet, as was her hair. I figured I had five minutes to make my move, no more. And seeing her there, up close and nearly naked, she took my breath away. She

was face-down on a huge midnight blue towel, her wrists crossed lazily above her head providing a generous view of her nearly perfect body- long smooth limbs, a narrow waist, wide hips and generously curved buttocks. The taught paper thin cloth couldn't entirely contain her rounded flesh, neither her cheeks nor her full breasts bulging from beneath her chest. In short, she was an invitation she'd delight in pretending she'd never sent to a dozen suitors, maybe more. As you get older each rejection stings just a little more, while the thrill of increasingly rare victories becomes more muted, but only the morning after.

The gate squeaked as I entered the pool area. Sandra's head spun like I'd broken some horrible taboo, but I pressed on. "Mind if I join you?" I asked.

"It's a free country," she said- not a promising start.

I chose a spot as close as I dared, trying not to intrude on her personal space, but getting close enough that she couldn't ignore me, and pitched my towel. I lie down and turned my head away from her. It doesn't pay to seem too eager and I needed time to let my courage reserves recharge. We laid there about five minutes listening to the traffic rumble from I-680 and Treat Boulevard, and after a BART train pulled out of the station and its high pitched motors faded away leaving just the hiss of steel wheels on rails fading rapidly, she

said, "I've seen you around."

I turned my head towards her and our eyes met. Hers were large, blue, and smoldered with unplumbed intensity- even though the the rest of her face and body were relaxed, nearly languid.

"You have?" I asked, trying to play it cool.

"Yeah, you've got a... look."

"I'm not the only one," I told her.

She waited a moment. "Thanks."

"Why didn't you say, 'Hi,' then?"

"I wasn't ready for you. You have to be ready for a man." Her voice was soft, lazy, heat drained.

"I guess that's understandable," I said. Women have rhythms, and I'm not talking about the mundane physical rhythms that pace the moon and dominate our lives and conflicts. "And are you ready for me now?" I asked.

"I've been wanting to talk to you. I was even thinking about knocking on your door."

"I'm Evan, Evan Colton."

"I know," Sandra said.

"Really?"

"Your mailbox."

"Sure, yeah..." I said, feeling like an idiot. "Yours is blank."

"It keeps people you don't want from knowing your

name,” she said.

“Do you want me to know?”

“Sandra Kinezel.”

“That’s a beautiful name.”

“Evan, would you oil me?” she asked, reaching behind her, unfastening her bikini top, baring her entire back to me. “I’ve been so busy at work I haven’t had time to tan and I don’t want to burn.”

“A common affliction,” I told her. I had my hands on her way too quickly, spreading the warm lotion over her soft skin, rubbing it in gently, my erection getting harder by the moment. “Trying to look indispensable for the boss?” I asked.

“Why would you ask that?”

“I don’t know.”

“No. We’re just really, really busy. Our business picks up in hard times.”

“You’re lucky,” I said. “What business are you in?”

“Fantasy... and reality.”

“Sounds interesting. Maybe you can tell me about it over dinner. Do you think you can make time for me to take you out?”

“Actually, I’m looking for a more... professional relationship with you. At least I’d like to combine business with pleasure.”

I took my hands from her back. ‘She’s a whore,’ I

thought. 'I don't fuck whores.' "Really," I said, wiping my hands on her towel, trying to think of an excuse to leave.

"Yes," she said, oblivious. "Have you ever done any modeling? I'm a photographer."

That changed everything. I put my hands back on her electric skin. I began to rub even more slowly, smiling like a mental patient because she couldn't see me. I'd used that line before. I even had an ancient but impressive looking 35mm camera I got at a pawn shop years before and took to bars, telling young ladies I met in them that I was a boudoir photographer. The line worked so often it was ridiculous. Not to be crass, but if you get a drunk girl in lingerie posing on your bed she'll thank you for pointing out her flaws and positioning her so they aren't emphasized, won't question being undressed as the poses go from intimate to lewd, then dance on your flesh pole until she passes out. And the best part about it was ending up with a photographic record of my conquests.

I hadn't used that, 'I'm a photographer,' line in so long, years even. I don't know exactly why I stopped. As I got older there were pangs of conscience, plus dealing with the occasional hangover rage the next morning, and the demands for film already in the mail on its way to a lab that specialized in no questions

asked developing. But as I listened to the line from the other side I wondered if those were just face saving acts. At the beginning I didn't have much guilt, none actually. Those girls painted big targets on themselves; they were going to end up notches on someone's bedpost, so they may as well have been mine. But after a while things catch up to you, things change no matter how much you want them to stay the same.

"I don't have the looks to be a model," I told Sandra. It was true. It was also part of the game.

"Everybody's a model. You just have to get them in the right shoot," she said, and that's when I began to believe she was serious.

"Did you say, 'professional,' as in getting paid?" I asked.

"Sure." Sandra rolled over, leaving her top beneath her, covering her breasts with her hands. "I work for a website that produces erotica. You'd be perfect for a shoot we have coming up. It pays 75 bucks an hour, five hour minimum, but you'll probably only put in a couple of hours. If you're good it might even become regular. Are you interested?"

I think my eyes almost popped out of my head, but I said, "Yeah," as casually as possible, and after a moment added, "Erotica? As in... porn?" Show me a man who doesn't want to be a porn star and I'll show

you... well, it wouldn't come up.

"Call it what you want," Sandra smiled. She spread her fingers, exposing her dark nipples through the gaps between. "If you can get naked and get hard the job is yours."

I couldn't believe my ears. This is how porn films start, at least it's how porn films about porn films start. "75 bucks an hour?" I asked.

Sandra nodded. An hour later we were sitting in the shade by the little duckpond at Starbucks in the Countrywood shopping center on Bancroft, fully dressed, sipping creamy iced coffees in the hundred and four degree heat. It wasn't my idea. I was hoping she'd make me prove what a capable lover I was in the air conditioned comfort of her bedroom, but Sandra was proceeding like a pro. The heat did give us privacy for the discussion, with only one other couple a few tables away willing to brave it. Even the ducks were nowhere to be seen.

"The parent company is Foundry Adult Entertainment," she told me. "It's an umbrella company that runs about a dozen specialty kink and fetish websites that sell videos and stills. I'm one of the still photographers and I edit video. If you want to do this you have to understand this isn't about getting your rocks off, though you might have to get them off, and

do it when you're told; it's about producing product, the best we can possibly produce, and that's how you have to approach it. We need a performer, not a lover." She was speaking in a normal tone, like she was discussing building a fence or auditing a bank.

"And who exactly... would I not be a lover with?" I asked.

"For your shoot, Samantha Whautters. If you've never heard of her she's more than something special, and newbies don't work with her very often. This is like getting off the bus in Hollywood and getting a starring role opposite someone like... Maggie Smith, but good. I know, Judi Dench, a young Judi Dench. We fly her out here from England Business Class about six times a year to perform- Samantha, not Judi," she told me with a smile, "but their talents are similar, if not their genres."

"Sounds big time," I said.

"It doesn't get any bigger."

"And my job is... sex with this Samantha Whautters?"

"Maybe. If that's what she wants. There's no script, just an outline. After that it's all improvisation, and sometimes she doesn't even follow the outline. She has an organic approach. Most of The Foundry's stars do. The only hard rule is that it's safe. That means condoms

for penetration, no body to body fluid transfer, ever, other than saliva. And nobody gets hurt bad enough to need a doctor.”

“Fetish- you said fetish, right?”

“Spanking, wrestling, high heels, bondage, sex machines, water sports, electric play, cross dressing, mud wrestling, discipline, piercing, food,” she recited like a bored waitress going over an oft repeated menu, “just about anything somebody can be turned on by. As long as it’s between consenting adults we’ve probably done it. Do you think you’re man enough?”

“I know I am, but... when do I get a copy of the outline or whatever? How do I know what to do?”

“You don’t. It’s Samantha’s show. She comes up with the whole thing. The outline is for the crew, probably just two of us, maybe three, so we have a general idea what she’s going to do so we can get coverage. You just follow her lead. And you don’t act. This isn’t bad ‘70s porn. You’re not the plumber come to fix the sink or something. You just be yourself and let it unfold around you, like all this,” she said, motioning to the parking lot, to the shimmering heat-waves coming off the asphalt, and world beyond. “It’s that simple. You do it every day.”

I nodded.

“The shoot’s going to be a week from today,

Saturday, the 4th. Since it's your first time I'm going to drive you there."

"No need, I won't get cold feet," I said.

"I'm still going to take you."

"Thanks."

"And one last thing," she said. "You're going to have to talk to Paul, Paul Warcoth. He's the mastermind behind The Foundry. He has to approve all the models."

"Is he going to want to see me naked? Is he a fag or something?" I asked defensively, surprising even myself with what I'd said.

Sandra was annoyed. "He trusts me to pick the right look. He's going to talk to you to make sure you can handle the job. And if you want to ask him about his sexual preferences go ahead, but if you're not hitting on him it's just rude."

"I'm sorry. It's... moving a little fast."

"Don't worry about it. He'll probably do it over the phone. He just wants to make sure you're not crazy. And if he approves the whole world will be able to see you naked on the 4th. It goes out live streaming at eight P.M. That's eleven East Coast time, so we get the whole U.S. audience, and we're popular enough that we get the early risers in Europe. Then we edit it for streaming On Demand, and put together still packages to sell through The Foundry websites and to sub-license to

others. We also sell DVD, Blue-Ray, and print-distributed online, brick and mortar, anywhere we can get product out. So anybody who wants it is going to have it, is going to have you. You understand that, right?"

"Yes... I said I was sorry. I was out of line. I can handle it... They won't know who I am, will they?" I asked.

"Only if you want. Most performers choose a stage name."

And I guess I should interject here that I did choose a stage name which I'm not going to mention, and that Sandra used a *nom de plum* for her work. Only Paul had the guts to use his real name, but I didn't; I've changed his, and all the others, even those previously changed, to protect the innocent. I was going to make a joke here and say, 'protect the guilty,' but the more I experience of life the more I understand that places like The Foundry are so completely innocent, at least when compared to what goes on around them, that even joking they aren't is a sin- and this from a man who believes there can be sin with or without God, many sins, but doesn't believe there are many sinners.

"Now when you talk to him," Sandra continued, "he's going to ask if there's anything you won't do. And he'll honor anything you say, but if you make too many

limits he won't hire you, and if you put any limits at all he'll only pay 20 bucks an hour. That's because he wants Samantha to be able to do what she wants. She's the star. She's the one traveling 7000 miles. People pay for her creativity, not your mores."

"OK, yes, I guess that's fair- safe sex, nobody needs a doctor at the end. I can do that."

"He's also going to offer you a free one week pass to all The Foundry websites so you can look around, see the kind of thing we do. He does that with all the models."

"Right."

"Don't use it," Sandra said. "Promise me you won't."

"Why?"

She paused, then told me, "You don't have the temperament for it."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"You're not into kink, are you? You like your sex straight up. I bet girl on top is exotic for you."

"Is it that obvious?" I asked.

"That's why I chose you- fish out of water- fresh meat. Come and model and there won't be anything you won't be able to take, and my guess is Samantha's going to make you come so hard it hurts. But if you go to those websites you're going to be there ten seconds

and say, ‘This is some sick shit,’ and chicken out like a child watching a horror movie thinking it’s real.”

I hesitated.

“Trust me on this,” Sandra told me.

“I won’t look,” I told her.

Sandra considered, then said, “OK, but if you back out I’ll know you broke your promise. It’ll be over between us, understand?”

“Yes.”

“And you don’t have a girlfriend, do you?”

“I wouldn’t have been hitting on you if I did,” I told her, “and... I was thinking. Maybe we could hook up tonight? You know, do some rehearsals.”

“Let’s wait until after the shoot, see how we feel then, OK?”

“Sure, no problem. I can wait.”

“So, anyway,” Sandra said, “the reason I asked, obviously we don’t have to worry about you having sex, and come Wednesday, no more jerking off, not until after the shoot.”

“What?”

“Look, women know men masturbate, and I don’t care. Have as much fun as you want until Tuesday night, but after that, not even once, mister- until we call it a wrap. Trust me, it’ll be better for the shoot if you’re loaded.”

I paused. Sandra was ignoring the other couple ten feet away who'd taken an interest in our conversation a few minutes earlier and were now hanging on every word. I lowered my voice. "Not that it's a problem with me or anything, but in general men worry about..."

"Coming too soon," Sandra said, finishing my thought in a normal voice. "Don't worry about that. You'll come right on time for Samantha. She'll see to that. She's a pro."

"And... you're not jealous, are you?" I asked.

"I set this up," Sandra said. "I want to see it."

"If you're cool with it..."

"I am, and speaking of cool, I've got to get to work. Oakland will be nicer than this," she said, standing, "I like it warm, but Christ almighty; this is Hell."

I sat there for the longest time thinking about what I'd agreed to, thinking about Sandra, letting the sweat drip from my brow, chewing my ice cubes and wondering where the ducks went when it got so hot, probably Heather Farms I decided. The large lake there wouldn't heat up as fast as the little pond. That had to be it. I stood, tossing the cup into the garbage can and leaving the deck to the couple crazier than me.

Monday, June 29th, 2009

Paul called my cell when I was at work. I slipped outside to talk to him. He was nice enough, I guess, but there was something about him, a strange overtone, not just in his voice, but his entire persona. He sounded like a bookkeeper working in a lion's den- factual and composed, almost to the point of tedium, but with a hint of tension in every syllable of every word, as if they were sharp and had to be handled with care. I guess it was to be expected. I didn't know it at the time, but he was a modern day Irving Klaw, the notorious '50s fetish photographer who made Bettie Paige a star when he photographed her in bondage in her underwear and sold those pictures mail order for a dollar twenty-five a set before being hounded out of business by the FBI when they weren't busy checking under beds for communists.

Paul was a bit less prudish than the great Klaw, and applied modern technology to distribution. He was one of the Internet's most successful entrepreneurs. His sites had already made more than fifty million dollars, and despite having paid almost half of it to the government in taxes, and despite having employed many and never having hurt anyone, he'd been hounded by Federal prosecutors across several districts before landing in the 9th, as far West and as far left as he could get. And these were serious as a heart attack government agents

who wanted to destroy everything he'd created and lock him up with murderers and thieves for actually photographing the reflections in people's psyches and putting them on the computer screens of those who sought them out and had a credit card to pay for them, validation they could see in colored pixels, proof they weren't alone. The government didn't mind Paul chasing the American Dream, but he had the impudence to actually run it down, jump on its back and scream, "This is mine!"

The interview went pretty much like Sandra said. He made smalltalk, not much. He asked if I'd modeled before, if I had any interest in fetishes, if I thought I could handle it. I told him I'd do anything he wanted as long as nobody got hurt. Then he gave me a numerical key he said would allow me to see anything on any of his sites. He seemed quite proud of them, and that was the end. I had the job.

And I honored Sandra's requests. The first part was easy. I wrote down the key Paul gave me, then threw it away so I wouldn't be tempted. I didn't throw it away, away, but I threw it away in the wastepaper basket under my desk. With it there I knew I had it, which gave me a weird kind of comfort, but also knew it was garbage and beyond temptation. At least that's how I justified it to myself, and it worked. I even managed not

to Google Samantha Whautters though I was dying to see what she looked like.

The other part, though. That was difficult. I had Sandra every way I could imagine in my fantasies until Tuesday night, knowing there was a good chance at least a few of those fantasies would become reality come Saturday night after the shoot.

I woke up Wednesday morning thinking about her with the hardest erection I'd ever had. And I didn't touch myself, not from that moment on, and it nearly drove me insane. There was an old *Seinfeld* episode about abstinence from masturbation, euphemized for the censors as being 'master of your domain.' It's one thing to laugh about it, another to actually try and do it. It really was hard, and making the most of the double entendre opportunity here- it was hard all the time. I couldn't stop thinking about Sandra, or this Samantha who was a real life porn star so good they were flying her in from Europe- to fuck me. Try not to get excited about that.

Thursday, July 2nd, 2009

My phone rang that night. It was Sandra's voice on the other end. My body reacted instantly. "I've made

your appointment for five O'clock tomorrow."

"Appointment? Where?"

"At the spa."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Didn't I tell you? We have to do a little exfoliation and clean up. We don't want you looking like a caveman for your shoot."

"No, you didn't mention it. That's fine, I guess. Where is it?" I was thinking I'd have to drive up to the wine country, or Russian River, a traffic nightmare on a Friday evening. To my surprise there were half a dozen day spas in Walnut Creek alone- off my radar, I guess. The one Sandra directed me to was just outside downtown off of San Miguel Road and had a standing contract with The Foundry.

Friday, July 3rd, 2009

I couldn't concentrate at work, so I took a half day, something the most indispensable man in the company doesn't do, and got a dirty look from my boss, Mr. Gomez, for my trouble even though I was entitled to it. This was the guy who begged me not to take a vacation for two years because the company was so busy. I could hear the adding machine in his head churning as I left,

figuring exactly how much my accrued vacation time was worth. It used to be the oldest employee got fired first to keep the health insurance costs down, but that benefit was gone three years ago for me. Now they consider vacation time a fiduciary liability. Fire the people you owe time to and you don't have to pay them for what they've already earned, for releasing the stress the company created. When the economy rebounds you hire new people and they don't start getting vacations for a year- win-win, if you're in management. We live in a 'land of liberty' yet there are no firing squads for people who do that. It's not that I really want to see guys like Gomez shot. If I were the murdering type I could do that myself. But wouldn't it be nice if they were the ones at the head on the unemployment line? What I really wanted to do, though, was strike first, become the porn star, quit my job at the boredom factory, and flip my DVD on Gomez's desk from behind a pair of new Oakleys on my way out. He'd seethe. Veins in his forehead would pulse. He wouldn't be able to live seeing an underling get a better gig than he had, one he'd kill for, one he'd never get the opportunity to do.

I arrived at the spa a few minutes early. I never knew anything like it existed- literally. I'd driven by it dozens

of times without knowing it was there, a long tall brick wall with ivy growing up its face on a street lined with upscale single story retail- picture framing, flooring, high end kitchen supplies and the like.

It might have been an old lumber yard, or corp yard, but a small brass plaque kept free of overgrowing ivy with 'The Garden of Earthly Delights' engraved in it told me I was in the right place. I opened the heavy black wooden door and found myself in a secret garden filled with sound and smell of water. That, too, is something people from temperate or humid climates might not know. When it's hot and dry water has a smell as distinctive as jasmine, if not as strong.

Large leaf waterlilies blanketed three irregularly shaped ponds fed slowly by Japanese bamboo fountains. One side was backed by a hill of dark rocks with gently cascading water shielded by sprawling ferns. A trellis covered with gnarled old wisteria vines that must have been spectacular in the Spring led to a low dark building with tinted windows and no apparent door. Curving paths went around both sides of the building. I followed one, and walked through a series of 'rooms' created by the judicious use of shrubs and small trees. Each had a bench, grassy area, or water feature, sometimes just a wet moss covered volcanic rock, as its focal point. When I finally found a gap in

the building it led to a courtyard, a cloister, with an immense oak reaching into the sky at its center, its limbs overhanging the structure built around it, like the parking lot at the BART station with its dozen spectacular oaks.

Now I want you to know I'm no tree hugger. I never have been. 'Mother Earth,' meant as much to me as crucifixes or Stars of David, but I'm not ashamed to say I reached out and touched the trunk of that tree that five people couldn't have stood around and touched hands, and I felt something ancient and alive. I won't call it religious, or even spiritual. It was something, though.

The entrance to the building was down a few stairs to the left. It was cool inside, and the sound of water continued, minus the sound of traffic when the door closed. I suppose subdued would be the best way to describe the foyer's decor. There were elements of drama- track lighting with micro halogen spotlights on plants, fountains, and artwork, and relaxing as it was, there was no hiding that it was a place of business, that it was built around the tree, that the tree didn't choose that spot because of the business.

It appeared deserted. There was no bell and I didn't want to shout. You don't shout in a place of worship, even a place that only has pretensions to be one, like a library, or a museum. So I picked one of the two

hallways and began walking. The hardwood floor gave way to plush carpeting and my footsteps fell silent. I rounded a corner and came face to face with a young woman. I'm sure she was old enough to vote, and equally sure wasn't old enough to buy a drink, and with the exception of a tiny maid's half apron around her waist she was completely naked. She stared, deer in the headlights, with that odd brew of bewildered innocence and Garden of Eden guilt I hadn't seen since my days as a photographer, and I felt no compunction in not turning away, in looking and evaluating her like a head of livestock, something she invited with a blush that started in her cheeks, filled her face, and flowed down her neck into the valley between her high breasts.

She wasn't a beauty queen. She hadn't been a cheerleader or a prom queen. Her upper torso was a little too narrow; her hips were a bit too wide. She started life as a naturally lean girl whose mother substituted food for affection, a perfect candidate for anorexia had she discovered that in adolescence, now a perfect candidate for something else, but nature is like that. It's not kind no matter how beautiful it is, no matter how much we yearn for it. I brushed her flyaway hair back and put my hands on her creamy shoulders. She hunched forward a bit, subconsciously making her breasts hang lower, look fuller, a purely instinctual

behavior, but I was concentrating on her full parted lips, ignoring the traces of acne medicine on her forehead as my erection tested the fabric of my pants.

Her breath grew ragged. Her nipples hardened, and I knew that no one had ever told her she was beautiful, no man had, anyway. I was about to do just that, and about to throw away any chance I had with Sandra and any career I might have had at The Foundry, when a door closed somewhere behind me. We both jumped. I lowered my hands and snapped around. When I turned back the maid was running away from me, her bare white cheeks jiggling in a way that required a force of will I didn't know I had to keep from following, from tackling. I don't know if she was a virgin, but I knew she'd never had a man the way I was prepared to take her- slow and hard, until she cried, until she begged for more speed.

Then she vanished around a corner and I found my thoughts focused inward, wondering how I could have judged her so harshly, figured out all that was important in her life history in one silent five second encounter, but the narrator in my head never shuts up. And I don't think he was wrong. That's ego and id singing in harmony, self without super ego.

Several seconds later a woman came down the hall from the direction of the sound, a woman who had been

told she was beautiful by so many men she didn't hear it anymore. Tall, thin, and obviously experienced, she had a model's body. Her flawless skin was deeply bronzed by many hours on the spa's tanning beds. Jet black hair sparkled even in the subdued light, and flowed gracefully down her back. Though not as informal as the maid, she wore a thigh baring smock-like dress, mint green, form fitting, with a zipper that ran from her neck to the hem, purposefully designed to invite its removal, standard attire in health spas the world over that sell treatments and promises that never quite dovetail.

"Evan?" she asked, that one word so cool butter wouldn't melt in her mouth.

"Yes," I said.

"I'm Nicola. I've been waiting for you."

"Am I late?" I asked. I didn't mention the maid. That had been something between us, something private.

"You can't be late here. Follow me."

"When I got here," I said, parsing my words, "there didn't seem to be anyone else around."

"We close at four on Fridays, except for VIPs."

"So you're here alone?" I asked.

"Jeanie's here. She cleans," Nicola said, leading me to a small treatment room not far from the entrance.

"You can undress behind the screen. Let's see what we

have to work with.”

I walked behind the screen and began undressing slowly.

“Don’t be embarrassed by your erection,” she added. “I’m a professional.”

“I’m sorry,” I said.

“Don’t be sorry about the noble reflex. It’s when you don’t get it that you begin to die.”

“Still...” I started.

“It’s not hard to figure out. You saw Jeanie, didn’t you?” Nicola asked.

“I think I scared her,” I said.

“She needs more than scaring,” Nicola told me, “but she’s not for you. Sandra would never approve, would she?”

“No,” I said, sliding my underwear down my legs. “Why is she naked?” I asked.

“The same reason you are,” Nicola said, somewhat cryptically.

I stepped from behind the screen feeling surprisingly free, yet still self-conscious.

Nicola observed for a moment, motioned for me to turn, then said, “We do have some work to do, don’t we? Let’s get the hair off your back and shoulders to start.” She pointed to the treatment table. “Face down, please.”

Hot waxing dates to Roman times. If you've never experienced it, and to that day I never had, it sounds horribly sadistic, something only a people who delighted in crucifixion could have developed- having hot wax spread on your skin a few inches at a time, a cloth laid in it before it cools, then the cloth, wax, and every hair under it ripped out with a rapid pull. The truth is it did hurt, both the wax going on and the hair tearing out, but I had other things on my mind- Sandra, Samantha, and Jeanie hovered in the back, while the ever present Nicola reminded me of the popular girls in high school, leading you on then hurting you. I didn't move or react once as my back, shoulders, and ass cheeks were slowly cleared of every hair, every dry skin cell.

Every time Nicola pulled I imagined plunging into her and wiping that superior smirk off her face, and even if I couldn't get my revenge on her, Samantha would certainly feel it tomorrow. Then I'd make love to Sandra. It would be the best night of my life.

"Up on your knees, spread your legs, shoulders down," Nicola ordered.

I complied without speaking, my erection bobbing in the cool air. If this wasn't unusual for her it wasn't about to be anything special for me.

"Spread your cheeks."

I did, and winced as she laid a stripe of hot wax down my ass crack.

She bent so her face was near mine. “Evan, are you all right?” she asked coolly, pressing the cloth into it with a practiced hand.

“I’m fine,” I said; a drop of clear seminal fluid splashed on the table as I spoke.

“Don’t worry. You’re not the first,” Nicola told me. “We sterilize all surfaces before use, Jeanie does. It’s part of her job. She’ll be in here after you leave scrubbing and sanitizing. You remember Jeanie, don’t you?”

I gritted my teeth and nodded.

Nicola moved even closer. Then she whispered, “but if you come, I will have to tell Sandra. I’ve worked with Foundry models before. I know that’s against the rules. You don’t mind me knowing that, do you?”

“No,” I said. As soon as I spoke pulled the cloth and ripped every hair from my ass crack. It was like a lightning strike to my anus, but another drop joined the first.

“Grab the loose skin on your scrotum and pull forward,” she instructed. Two or three careful, but horrible rips later my sack was smooth as a pair of lamb skin gloves and my mind was reeling. I didn’t even notice the wax go on the back of my thighs, barely

registered it coming off. Then it sunk in.

“Wait,” I said, though it was clearly too late. “You’re doing my legs?”

“All The Foundry’s male models get the body builder wax.”

“Body builder?”

“All over hair removal. It causes less anxiety than saying you’ll be shaved smooth as a little girl, but it looks good on camera, and feels great in person,” she said, running a finger down my back, my ass.

“Have you ever been to The Foundry?” I asked.

“Yes. And I’m at their website quite often. A free unlimited key is one of the perks of contracting for them.”

“I didn’t think women...”

“Had sex drives?” Nicola asked.

“No.”

“Were into kink?”

“Well...” I started, but another thousand hairs being ripped from my body silenced me.

“I like to see my work on the net. I take pride in it, but I can also enjoy perversions with the alacrity of any male,” she said. “And you know what?”

“What?”

“I’ve done some shoots for them. Does that surprise you?”

“Not for a second,” I said.

Forty-five minutes later my body was pink and irritated and I didn’t have a single hair below my neck. Nicola had me close my eyes and rubbed a cold and greasy moisturizer into every inch of exposed skin. She finished with my nipples, rubbing them until I began to breathe deeply, reacting to an erogenous zone I didn’t know I had. “Evan,” she whispered.

My eyes snapped open. My face got hot. “Yes.”

“We’re done here. When you dry off a little you can put on your clothes and leave, or you can lie here and take a little nap, or go outside and sit in one of meditation gardens for a little while. There’s no hurry. Let yourself out.”

I nodded.

“And Evan,” she said, looking not at my eyes but my erection.

“Yes.”

“Remember not to masturbate. Sandra wouldn’t like that.”

She started for the door. I stared at her sleek dark legs and in just a few steps my frustration threatened to overwhelm me. I cleared my throat.

Nicola turned. “Yes?”

“What’s your name?” I asked.

“Nicola,” she said, then turned and left.

I didn't feel smug or good about it. I don't like to play games, but I had to pretend I'd forgotten for my own sanity. I laid on the table and thought about Jeanie. I knew she wouldn't come in as long as I was there, and I knew I wouldn't go looking for her, either. Sometimes life is like that. Often it's like that.

When I left the door in the ivy covered wall closed securely behind me. The sun was sinking in the western sky. I drove straight home, and killed time looking at the photos I'd taken all those years ago, pictures taken on the bed I rested on, then fucked in after. I hadn't had those photos out in a year, but I felt good having them, secreted in the back of my closet though I lived alone.

What I did next wasn't from spite. I want to make that very clear.

And it wasn't because of the way Nicola and Jeanie tortured me, one with malice, one without, and by that time I wasn't even sure they were different women. I hadn't actually seen them together. Maybe they were two parts of one spirit split by that towering oak- not likely. More likely Nicola was giving Jeanie what she needed in some hidden place I knew nothing about. I don't think either of them were lesbians, not in the long run, but Nicola had no compass and Jeanie was too innocent for them not to end up in each other's arms if

they were there alone.

Neither of those things compelled me to turn on the scanner I bought to transfer old family pictures to my computer and begin scanning every single negative from my 'boudoir photographer' period- uploading them to several Usenet groups as I finished each conquest's digitization. And I named the files the names of the women before I uploaded them, and put their names, my name, and copyright information in the IPTC information of every picture and to hell with the consequences. They looked good. There wasn't a dog among them. They were part of my history as well as theirs and too bad if they had regrets. We all do.

Why did I do it? Because I was afraid. Why else do people do things? Regardless of what would happen at The Foundry I knew what I'd done with those women was more real because no money changed hands. There's a beauty in amateur sport you'll never see in the pros, and I wanted the world to know I had been a college player even if only one person who saw those pictures looked at its attached information, even if no one did.

It's one of the few things in my life I'd go back and do differently. I certainly had the right to do it. I had the signed releases and in the eyes of the law those pictures were my creations and my property- those faces,

nipples, and vaginas, more than one held open at my impetus as the shutter fell. But you don't have to exercise every right you have no matter what's churning inside.

I finished just before midnight.

I was dizzy. I was exhausted. I was aroused to the point of tears, and I already regretted what I'd done.

I looked at the strange reflection in the mirror, shocked by the smooth hairless form reflected. I tried not to be ashamed, but it didn't matter. My future was only hours away. I turned out the lights and slipped into my bed, amazed by how cool the sheets were, how smooth my skin was as one leg rubbed against the other.

Saturday, July 4, 2009

By the time the sun rose I was a wreck- excited, nervous, horny, and guilty, all wrapped into one package that hadn't slept a wink. I was so nauseas I couldn't eat breakfast, or lunch. I laid down in the late afternoon with the intent of just resting my eyes, but was awakened by the doorbell just after 6:00.

"Are you ready?" Sandra asked as I opened the door. She was wearing dark shorts and a pink T-shirt, her hair

pulled back in lazy ponytail. A few minutes later we were in her Jeep on 680 headed for Oakland. I tried not to look at her white legs on the black leather seat, spread just a bit to keep her left foot on the floor outside the clutch and her right foot on the accelerator. Her soft inner thighs rippled every time the CJ hit a bump. Not only was she taking me to watch my debut as a porn star, but with luck those legs would be wrapped around my pelvis regularly for the foreseeable future.

Sandra looked over. She saw me staring. I didn't look away. "Are you all right?" she asked.

"Nerves," I said.

"You look tired. Have you slept?"

"Not really."

"When's the last time you ate?"

"Last night."

"Oh, Lord, I knew you needed a babysitter. You've got to eat something," she told me, reaching back between the seats and feeling around.

"No, it's cool. I like to be hungry when I make love."

"Don't be an idiot. You're going to pass out as soon as you get your clothes off. Eat this," she said, producing a green speckled Gala apple.

I ate it to the core without saying a word.

"Feeling better?" Sandra asked, holding out her

hand.

I gave her the core. “A little.”

“Try to relax, Evan. You’re tight as a drum. Save it for the performance.”

“I’ll try.”

“Close your eyes and take deep breaths.

Everything’s going to be OK. Imagine the sun setting behind the Pacific the way it has for eons,” she told me.

At first it was hopeless. I never was able to meditate. Then something changed right about the time we entered the Caldecott Tunnel. I heard the road surface change and almost instantly none of it mattered anymore, not Santos Lane, not the ridiculous rent, not the job I’d doubtless lose, not my lust for Sandra, not the reckless plans I made to get her into bed. The road, engine, and tire noise were just the universe pulsing with a consciousness that may have been nothing more than neurons firing in a brain inside my skull, or may have been infinite and timeless- and it didn’t matter which. It was the first real rest I’d had in months, longer if I’m honest. I knew it would end all too soon, and even that was OK, part of some destiny that was part of a universe unfolding in perfection. All the bullshit from all the sleazy self help gurus on PBS made perfect sense as soon as their names and sales pitches were gone.

The Jeep pulled off the freeway and I kept my eyes closed. I kept breathing. I kept watching the sun set and the Pacific darken and there was nothing to fear.

“We’re here,” Sandra said.

I opened my eyes. I blinked. We were in Oakland’s industrial area, at the side of a monstrous, nearly windowless masonry building. It looked like a warehouse, but I learned later that it had been an actual foundry, built during World War II to supply prefab parts to the nearby Kaiser shipyards. The asphalt in the parking lot was old and gray, nearly matching the fresh coat of dark paint on the building.

Sandra opened a steel door with a keycard and let us in. Inside we found ourselves in a warren of passageways, most dim, illuminated by bare incandescent bulbs set into the ceilings. It had obviously been divided and redivided into smaller and smaller spaces as new uses were found for it before Paul bought the whole place in an all cash deal that made headlines. It didn’t register at the time, but I remember reading in the local paper about protests by religious and feminist groups to the new major adult film studio, countered by supporters who said it would breathe life into a derelict white elephant that the city would otherwise have to condemn and tear down at a cost of millions, leaving another rubble strewn lot in

Oakland's industrial heartland.

After going down what must have been close to a hundred feet of windowless hallway with two or three turns, we entered a brightly lit office. And that's where I met Paul.

In person he was as much of an enigma as he was on the phone. He was dressed in black- black T-shirt, black pants, black shoes, black hair, even. But the singularly most striking thing about him was how ordinary he was. If it weren't for the clothing he could have been anyone. Put him in a suit and he could walk into any building in San Francisco's financial district, blue jeans and he could be a plumber or mechanic, give him a badge and helmet and he could ride away on a Highway Patrol motorcycle and not be given a second glance.

He stood. He offered his hand. His dark eyes didn't burn with passion, but were passionate nonetheless. You could tell at a glance he'd never hurt anyone, and that it disturbed him that when people looked at him they could tell that and be comfortable around him. But most people would never see him. He'd fade into the background to be ignored, like parked cars, like trees- because he didn't cause alarm. He'd never be a serial killer, nor would he ever volunteer at a hospice. He'd hover somewhere between banality and infamy, a man who'd make a great father, but would never have

children.

Paul had a calling. He just didn't know it, and those around him didn't know it. And The Foundry was that calling. It became clear to me when I took his hand, when I felt the electricity in a grip that wasn't terribly strong. Yet he was a man who would change the world no matter what it cost. He was one of the volunteers, one of the few who would put Moses and Lot to shame, bloodlessly, and without incest. That's what made him a scary man, and he would have been proud of that- if he'd known. It seems most of don't know the most important things about ourselves because we can't live our lives in a mirror.

"I'm going to go get changed," Sandra said, excusing herself.

There wasn't much smalltalk. Paul sat me down and gave me the model release. He said I was signing my life away, giving him license to use the images created that night in perpetuity, something I knew from my own experience as a photographer. I signed it without reading it. I knew what I was doing. I thought I did, anyway.

"I'm glad you're on board. Sandra has great taste," he said, filing the document in a beat up metal file cabinet. "Now, when it comes to the shoot itself," Paul explained, "I want you to know that this kind of work is

like a magic act. It can look incredibly dangerous, but we know what we're doing. Nobody really gets hurt."

"Sandra told me that and I've been thinking..."

"Yes."

"You're the experts, but I'm not. How do I know what to do and what not to do?" I asked.

"It's easy. You follow our lead first time out. Someone will tell you what to do, or give you a hand signal, or a look. You'll know; you won't be making any decisions, understood?"

I nodded.

"Good, good. And there's one more thing, just like any passenger can pull the emergency stop on a train, any performer can stop a show we're doing if gets to be too much," he said.

"OK."

"Now since these are fetish performances, and sometimes performers get into character and scream, 'Stop, oh, dear God, please stop,' and things of that nature while the show continues, we need a way to really stop it in a real emergency that everyone understands. We use the 'safe word' system. In our case it's a 'safe phrase.' Do you remember Tooter Turtle?"

"No."

"How about the phrase, 'Help me, Mister Wizard'?"

"OK, yes," I said, memories of ancient early

morning cartoons peppered with off brand breakfast cereal commercials came flooding back, the ones they put on before the Ninja Turtles, G.I. Joe, and Captain Planet sold the premium cereals with higher profit margins when parents were making breakfast, when they could hear you say, ‘Mom, I want that.’

“That’s the safe phrase. Say it for me.”

“Here?”

“Right here. Say it out loud and you won’t forget no matter how hard it gets.”

“Help me, Mister Wizard,” I said.

“Now scream it.”

“Help me, Mister Wizard!” I shouted, channeling my inner actor, but still feeling somewhat self-conscious.

“Whisper it.”

“Help me, Mister Wizard.”

“Now keep your lips together and hum it.”

I did my best.

“Did you hear the meter? That’s good enough. That’ll stop the show even if your mouth is full of spaghetti or your lips are pressed against a beautiful blonde’s backside. You always have a safety net. Understand?”

I considered asking about the spaghetti but nodded while wondered just how weird some of these fetishes were.

“Now don’t you dare fucking say that again within a mile of this place, not even as a joke. We do hard work here, and you’re getting paid 10 bucks an hour more than those overpaid bastards at BART threatening to strike. So you don’t say that when the going gets tough. You only say it if you think somebody’s going to die.”

“Emergency only, like 9-1-1.”

“There we go, because if you say it the screens go blank, the toys get put down, and I have to refund a lot of money. If you say it and you don’t need an ambulance I’ll pay you for what you’ve done and say goodbye, no hard feelings, but you’ll never work here again. Got it?”

“Yes.”

“Good, again, glad you’re with us. Now I’ve got to get ready. I’m directing tonight so I’ll be in the control room. You won’t see me, but I’ll be seeing you in just a few minutes. The men’s dressing room is down the hall that way- can’t miss it,” he said, pointing. “Sandra will bring your costume. I don’t think you’ll need any makeup, but she’ll decide.”

“OK.”

“Break a leg.”

It was more of a locker room than a dressing room. Actually, it was a locker room, probably left over from

the days blue collar workers punched time clocks there. The peeling forest green lockers and distressed wooden benches on metal stanchions sure looked it anyway. The place was huge, fitting for the size of the building and workforce it must have once had, with aisle after aisle of identical lockers illuminated by hanging incandescent bulbs in wire cages under wide pressed tin shades. At one end there was a light green tiled shower area with at least 30 weathered shower heads in one giant communal stall. As I walked the aisles of lockers I only saw two or three with locks. I opened several others. All were empty.

“Spying?”

I jumped. I hadn’t heard Sandra come in. “Sorry, just looking,” I said. I turned and got quite a shock. The change was incredible. She’d put on severe goth makeup, a thin band of red around her sky blue eyes, topped with heavy black mascara, and deep red lipstick. Like Paul, she was in all black- spit shined eight eyelet Doc Martens, BDU pants, and a thin ribbed tank-top, braless beneath. “Why did you...” I started, staring but trying not to, but it would have been rude to continue.

Luckily, she misinterpreted what I was going to ask. “Costume,” she offered. “I’m not really on camera talent, but when I take pictures sometimes I end up in the video shots and I have to look the part,” she said.

“Is that the one you want?” she asked, motioning to the open locker door.

“Sure,” I said.

“We better get started then.”

“OK.”

Sandra waited a minute, then leaned in close. “That means it’s time for you to undress,” she whispered conspiratorially.

“Are you going to watch?” I asked.

Sandra nodded.

I stared straight ahead, wondering if I was doing the right thing. It’s one thing to dream of anonymous sex, or being in a porn movie, but when it comes right down to it, there’s always that moment of hesitation- but I made my decision the previous night when I uploaded all those photos I’d taken. Maybe that’s why I did it, so I wouldn’t be able to chicken out without branding myself a coward.

Sandra observed dispassionately as I undressed. I put everything in the locker neatly until I was standing in just my underwear. I looked Sandra in the eye and she nodded again. A moment later my underwear was hanging from a darkly patinated hook in the locker, and I felt like a little boy cold and naked on an examination table in the doctor’s office.

“There, that wasn’t so hard, was it?” Sandra asked.

I shook my head. I stared at her. "Well?" I asked.

"Well, what?"

"Is this good enough?" The truth is I was afraid she was going to dismiss me right there. I had the body builder's wax, but I was no body builder.

Sandra smiled. "You're just what I wanted."

"Really?"

She nodded.

My face got warm. I took a deep breath, then quickly reached into the locker for my pants. "I almost forgot," I said, pulling a six-pack of condoms from the back pocket, "I brought these. I know you said no fluid exchange and..." then I couldn't think of anything else to say. How do you tell your future girlfriend how carefully you've been planning to fuck someone else, even if she set it up?

Sandra smiled and took them. "That's cute. I'll tell Samantha you thought of her," Sandra said, "but we'll supply everything you need." She tossed them in the locker and closed the door. "I brought a lock to keep everything safe," she told me, pulling it from her pocket and slipping it through the door's hasp, clicking it shut. "You see, I'm thinking of you, too."

It occurred to me that I didn't have the key- and that I didn't have a place to keep it, so all I said was, "Thanks."

“OK, time to get you dressed,” Sandra said, pulling several black leather straps and a short length of fine chain from her cargo pockets.

“What’s all that?” I asked.

“Your costume. We’re doing some bondage today. Hold out your wrists.”

I did as she said, and watched somewhat dumbfounded as she wrapped a thick leather strap with a heavy buckle and dangling metal hardware I didn’t yet understand around each wrist, securing them tightly.

“Wait,” I said. “So I’m the one who’s going to be tied up?” I asked.

“It sure looks that way. Have you ever been bound before?”

“No.”

“There’s a first time for everything, huh? Turn around. Spread your legs.”

“Shouldn’t we wait for Samantha?” I asked, as she grabbed my shoulders and spun me.

“You don’t ask John Wayne to saddle the horse,” she told me. More straps were secured to my thighs, as high as they would go, and pulled a little too snug for comfort. Next she took my left wrist and guided it to the left thigh cuff. There was a solid click as she engaged the built in locking mechanism. She did something different on the right side, securing the

length of chain, only about a foot long, to my right wrist cuff. Then the other end was run through a guide attached to the right thigh cuff.

She spun me towards her. "Touch your belly button," she said.

The chain just allowed me to just reach it.

"Perfect," she said. "That way we can give you a little freedom to work, or..." she said, pulling the chain end at the thigh cuff through a one way ratcheting device, drawing my hand towards it until it was as tightly bound as my left, "keep you nice and secure."

I tried my hands and found they were held fast to my thighs.

Sandra saw the surprise on my face when there wasn't an inch of budge and grinned. "Go ahead. Try to get free."

I twisted and pulled, and tried to look at the locks, the buckles.

"Pull as hard as you want. The releases take two hands to operate. Ingenious, huh?"

"I'm not sure if I like this," I said.

Sandra moved close to me, cat-like. "I bet you do," she said, reaching up, wrapping a thick leather collar with multiple chrome rings around my neck, pulling it snug. She let her hands run down my chest until her fingers were on my nipples. She began gently rolling

them between her fingers.

I was instantly aroused. I didn't want to be. I was beginning to zone out. "Not like this," I said.

"Just like this," she whispered, barely louder than the unseen machinery humming softly in a distant corner of the building. "It's amazing. Now tell me it's amazing."

I took a deep breath. "It's amazing," I said.

"I thought it was... There is just one little thing."

"What's that?" I asked.

"You never shut up, do you?" Sandra asked, stepping back and holding up a gag. It consisted of a red rubber ball about two and a half inches in diameter, and a black rubber strap with a chrome buckle. "Open your mouth."

I looked at the thing. I didn't want to talk but I didn't want to be silenced. "Do I have to?"

"Open your mouth," Sandra repeated.

"Don't they make them with holes in them?" I asked.

Sandra laughed and brought it to my mouth. "Trust me, you're not going to want one with a hole in it, not tonight."

I opened my mouth slowly until Sandra was able to push the ball in. She reached behind my head and fastened the strap tightly, pulling the ball in deep,

forcing my jaws uncomfortably wide. My lips formed a seal with the ball's now wet surface and, as I feared, I had to breathe through my nose, but Sandra was reading my mind.

"It's easy. Pull your lips back if you want to breathe through your mouth," she said, then took a step back and ran her eyes up and down my naked body without the slightest hesitation. Indeed, the powerful erection jutting nearly straight out from my body seemed to amuse her. "You must be in love," she said.

I nodded.

"With me or with Samantha?" she asked, and for the first time her voice was tinged with jealousy.

I looked Sandra straight in the eye and nodded.

"So that's for me?" she asked. "You were going to fuck me with it?"

I nodded a third time.

"How charming. You're old enough to know it's not a hard dick that impresses a lady." She gave my erection a playful little swing. "At least not one like this... Words melt a woman's heart- and spread her legs. Do you have a Shakespeare sonnet memorized for me? How about something by Pablo Neruda, or Robert Blake?"

I shook my head.

"OK, then," Sandra said. "Tell me you love me and

I'll save you. Fail and I'll take you to Miss Whautters and let the evening unfold just like she has planned. You'll be fodder for perversions so bizarre you wouldn't believe me if I told you."

I tried to say it. I wanted to say it, but the words were horribly garbled by the gag.

Sandra smiled.

"Have it your way," she said. She gripped my left nipple. "It's time for your visit with Samantha, but don't say I didn't warn you."

I'd never been helpless, naked, and in a woman's control before, not in my adult life, anyway. I was unexpectedly meek. It wasn't a comfortable feeling, though there was an undeniably strong sexual undercurrent. I didn't resist Sandra's gentle tug as she led me out of the locker room, and strangely, I didn't want to. I felt quite secure with that little bit of human contact, with her knowing the way, executing a plan. It's not that I didn't realize it was going wrong, horribly wrong. I tried to imagine taking her out after it was over as I planned. I tried to imagine her bare legs wrapped around me an hour later, this woman who'd showed me her nipples minutes after meeting me, but the picture wouldn't come.

One hallway and one turn later she led me through a door and into a long brightly lit room with at least six jail cells along one wall. These were honest to goodness jail cells like you'd see in any movie- three masonry walls, the front facing one made of bars. Each had a cot, a sink, and a toilet with no screen. At the center of the room were five free standing cages, every wall made from the same bars as the cells, but built as one unit so that they shared walls between them. Unlike the cells the cages had no amenities, and no room for them, their interiors were barely two feet by two feet, smaller than an average shower stall, giving the prisoners within just enough room to stand. And when I say the prisoners within, that was another surprise. Two of the cages were already occupied by men naked, bound, and gagged exactly like I was.

Both were younger. Both were thinner. Sandra guided me to the open cage between them, backed me, and closed the door so I was displayed between them, so that even the most casual observer couldn't help but compare us. And you didn't have to be in that room, jail really, to compare, because the other thing that made an instant impression were the cameras. There must have been close to a dozen security style video cameras in the room, one for each cell, one for each cage, and several on remote control gimbals which could cover

every corner.

Sandra moved close to my cage. She looked me in the eye, saw my confusion. “I’m really sorry about this,” she said. A moment later she turned and left, looking back at the doorway, “It will be quite an experience, though.”

She left us there, alone with our thoughts and the video cameras trained on us. We didn’t say a word to each other. We didn’t look at each other. We stood looking straight ahead as if we were each in our own private elevator waiting for the doors to open. The low muffled rumble of Independence Day fireworks broke the silence. Even with my apprehension about being caged and naked I took it as more than a good sign. I thought it was an omen. In a way it was.

Several minutes ticked by before Sandra’s return. When she did she was holding the biggest digital camera I’d ever seen, big even for a DSLR, with an equally impressive strobe mounted on a frame on its side.

“Is mine is bigger than yours?” Sandra asked no one in particular a moment before she pointed it at the cages and began taking a series of pictures. “This is the camera used to take Obama’s official portrait, not this

particular one, mind you, but one like it.” She moved around behind us and took a few more pictures. “The big difference is this one is being used to document something important about our culture.”

There was a knock on the open door and Sandra lowered the camera. At first glance the woman who entered could have been looking for the librarian’s convention. She was short, with a curvy figure, wearing snug jeans and a long sleeved blouse buttoned up to her neck. Her hair was mousy brown, worn up, highlighting a wide round face. The only hint that she may have been in the right place were her shoes, minimalist high heels in a mottled off white, and thin lips covered in bright lipstick on an otherwise clean scrubbed face.

She obviously knew Sandra, smiling and waving as her picture was taken, tying her to us sequentially in the camera’s memory card. As soon as I saw her I became light headed. I knew it had to be Samantha, but she didn’t look anything like any porn star I’d ever seen. I took several deep breaths through my nose, attracting her attention. “So you’re the new boy,” she said, eying me like a cat with a plump canary.

I nodded.

“I’m Samantha,” she said. “Don’t ever call me Sam. And during a show don’t ever call me anything but Lady Samantha unless you want me to redden that ass

of yours, which I'm more than happy to do." My eyes widened as she produced a small but evil looking black crop she had tucked into the back of her pants. She sliced the air with it and grinned. "And in case you don't know, the show started about five minutes ago," she told us, pointing to the cameras and housings that gave no indication they were on. I'm certainly not an expert on accents, but I'd guess she was from the London area, neither high class, nor Cockney.

Sandra melted into the background as Samantha began her work. And if she was OK with it, if she wanted to take pictures of me tied up and having sex with Samantha while we both got paid, who was I to argue? Sex with a condom is like a handshake to modern girls; that's what I've heard. And if Samantha was going to whip me first, so much the better. I'd take a whipping for Sandra. Maybe that's what she wanted to find out the whole time- if I would, if I could. What could be more romantic?

Samantha took us out of our cages one by one, the man closest to the door first, and stood him facing it. Next she unlocked my cage and stood me maybe two feet behind him, and lined up the last man behind me. She then hooked two double ended leashes to our collars, one from the ring in the back of the collar of the man ahead of me to the ring at the front of my collar,

and another from the ring at the back of my collar to the front ring of the man's collar behind me.

"Walk," Samantha ordered softly. The man ahead of me started, tugging me as the leash tightened. "Stop," she said, and her little riding crop whistled, coming down across my ass with a sharp crack that brought me to my toes and forced a muffled chirp through my gag, leaving a red mark on my ass that would last for days. Holy crap it hurt. It made the hot wax seem like a walk in the park.

My head swiveled to Samantha. I thought it must have been some kind of mistake, that she didn't mean to hit me that hard. "Eyes front," she demanded, pointing with the crop and you better believe I locked them on the back of the man's head in front of me. "Keep that leash slack," she said, lifting the chain holding me to the man in front of me. "Now walk."

Samantha pointed us down a long hallway. She walked next to me for a few steps, making sure the leash in front didn't go taught. The feeling was electric, and even if the excitement was from nerves it was still excitement, and I was semi-erect just thinking about Samantha's curves and the way she'd taken charge, mesmerized by the sound of her heels against the concrete floor. I didn't care that she was marching us towards an internet television studio bound and naked,

or that my first encounter with her crop was more than I bargained for.

We passed widely spaced closed doors as we marched. I learned later they housed other studios, some general, some specialized for specific kinks. I wouldn't have been quite so eager had I known just how specialized the studio she was leading us to was. Sandra took several shots of our coiffe as we were marched down the hall, rushing to get ahead and snapping away as we passed, then repeating the process. When she lowered her camera I glanced at her. Any jealousy that had been there was gone, replaced by a hint of contempt which I couldn't comprehend. Maybe reality was getting to her, too, but I didn't have time to worry about that. It actually took a fair amount of concentration to maintain exactly the right amount of slack in the leash. It would only take a half step error for it to go taught or worse, for me to bump into the man ahead of me- penis first.

And there was more than fear of Samantha's vicious little riding crop at stake, even though its single stripe across my ass was more than enough to make me comply with any order she gave. The truth is we were trying to impress her. We all knew we were in one of the kinkiest porn factories in the world and it was show time. We also knew there was no script and any one of

us could have ended up having sex with her at the drop of a hat, and I'm sure each of us hoped we'd be going first. Even if condoms assured that sloppy seconds wouldn't be truly sloppy, men still have a natural revulsion to going second- or third, and with that riding crop in hand there was no question we'd go in exactly the order she wanted- and come that way, too.

I was just hoping she wouldn't have us go in order of size. I was fairly certain I was the smallest. Men are curious creatures. We don't want to be seen looking but we have to know if it's possible, so I'd glanced as surreptitiously as possible when I saw the other men, and I'm sure they looked at me. I'm fairly average if the internet is correct, and I've never had any complaints, but I'm pretty sure the man in the lead had a little more than half an inch on me, and the one behind not quite as much. I tried to will myself longer and thicker right there in the hallway, but if those pills advertised on every cable channel nearly every day that I'd never admit buying and taking for three months didn't work wishing wasn't about to help. Me? Insecure? Never.

The wide double doors to the studio Samantha ushered us into were already open. And it was every bit a television studio. It had dozens of dazzlingly bright lights suspended on rows of steel pipe suspended well

beneath a ceiling that must have been 30 feet high. The floor was smooth concrete, and on it were three robotic cameras, large things on heavy pedestals. Every one of their functions -tilt, pan, zoom, focus- could be remotely controlled by either a person or a computer in a control room that could be half a world away. Even the pedestals were motorized, allowing the cameras to be moved around the studio floor in any direction without any human assistance. This isn't particularly high tech these days. Most big city television stations have similar setups for local news programming, allowing them to have three fewer union cameramen. Even so, the investment isn't insignificant. It takes years to realize a savings, and as this was my first encounter with The Foundry I didn't as yet realize what a big business it actually was. And they weren't the only cameras. There must have been a dozen smaller versions, HD mini cams that can produce images better than any ten year old video camera, fixed to poles or suspended from the ceilings, a few fixed, the others on automated pan/tilt heads. To use the technical term, they had coverage.

Samantha marched us into a large empty area of even light in front of the cameras and stopped us. I had an immediate and somewhat queasy, 'We're not in Kansas anymore' moment, brought on by the studio's

set, or more particularly, its nearly complete lack thereof, no false walls, no flats, not even cyclorama curtains. The cameras were all pointed at one unfinished concrete wall hurriedly built in time of war. Though it was stained, dark with time, and the studio lights were ‘flagged’ so as not to cast much light on it, the outlines of the rough and irregular timber forms used to hold the concrete were still clearly visible in it. Below the wall were large rusty grates that formed a near continuous drainage system, again, original to the building’s first use when spilled chemicals and slag would be washed directly into the bay. It wouldn’t have been so worrying had there not been new hoses neatly coiled against the wall, had the cameras not been covered in clear plastic except for their lenses, and had there not been three white buckets filled with liquid sitting close-by on the floor.

But in front of them, also on the floor, connected to steel cables running up into the darkness above the lights, were two trusses made from Unistrut, Quicktruss, or some other industrial framing material, one just in front of the other. Each truss was fabricated from three aluminum tubes, held, when viewed end on, in a triangular shape by smaller tubes forming more triangles when looked at from the side, creating incredibly strong, rigid, lightweight beams.

Buckminster Fuller, King of the Triangle, would be proud; trim tabs are found everywhere. What the eternal optimist never seemed to grasp is that they swing both ways.

The nearest of these trusses had six thick leather ankle straps on short chains already attached. Samantha removed the leashes between us and turned us to face the trusses, so that our backs were towards the cameras.

About three feet in front, and between each pair of straps, was a little chalk 'X' on the floor, a red 'X' for the man to my left, a blue 'X' for the man to my right, and a white 'X' for me. Samantha went to the man on my right. "Anus on the X," she told him. When he hesitated her little crop whistled through the air. The studio gave her the scope to swing her arm fully. It landed on his ass with a crack that reverberated through the large space, and before I knew it a second then a third blow landed making him jump and me cringe with every stroke. "Sit," she told the man quietly, and he complied like a little lamb. She helped him to kneel, sit, slide into place over the 'X,' and spread his legs widely so they were near the ankle straps, but she didn't attach them.

Samantha stood and came to me. "Your turn, Sweetie," she said. I guess she knew she wouldn't need to persuade me with the crop. She took me by my upper

arm and helped me to sit. I straightened and spread my legs immodestly like the first man, so that my ankles were near the cuffs on the truss. She knew we'd sit there until she was ready, which didn't take long. The man to my left went to his 'X' as meekly as I had, and with us all seated she went down the line and secured all six of our ankles snugly so that when she was done we were all attached to the truss.

She stood. She smiled.

All three of us stared at the concrete wall as Samantha moved behind us, and I think we all jumped when the second truss, the one we weren't attached to, moved to the sound of an electric winch, raised by the cables attached to each end. Dark and partially occluded by the lattice of the truss itself, I hadn't noticed what was attached to it until they were lifted and began to hang free. There was one for each of us, centered between our ankle cuffs. At first they were just vague and undefined shadowy shapes with looping tails. A moment later it became clear. They were shriveled black rubber bags. Each was suspended from the truss by a stiff rubber neck a couple of inches tall and a few inches around at the top. Black hoses as thick as my thumb protruded from their bottoms and were looped around back into the bags. When they were raised to a nice comfortable working height Samantha

stopped the winch. I was already fairly certain what they were. I tried not to believe it, but when she removed the ends of the hoses from the bag, doubtless put there to keep them off the floor, there was no doubt. They were tipped with the strangest and scariest enema nozzles I could have imagined.

They were brushed aluminum. At nearly six inches long they were the size of some dildos. Their business ends were machined into ball shapes at least an inch across with several holes drilled in them for maximum flow. The balls tapered to a shaft half as wide. Several inches later there was another ball a little wider than the first, then half an inch more shaft, and a wide flat base to prevent over insertion. The bases were threaded to accommodate the attached hoses. Freshly greased, the nozzles glistened in the bright lights. My heart nearly stopped. It was like something out of a nightmare, and just like in nightmares I couldn't speak. I couldn't move.

The flash of the strobe brought me back to reality. I'd completely forgotten about Sandra, about the cameras behind my back. I turned my head to her, but all I saw was the lens, the strobe fire.

"These are heavy," Samantha said and I turned back. She had two of the buckets in her hands, carrying them towards the truss with enema bags. "I should have had

you boys help.” A few moments later all three bags had a bucket near them, and in the lights you could see a few wisps of steam coming off them. Samantha began filling the bag in front of the man to my left. Whatever was in the bucket, it wasn’t just water. It was deep pink or light red, and completely opaque. As she poured the bag began to stretch and bulge, taking on a distinctly spherical shape. For the first time I could see it was made of panels running longitudinally, so it began to look something like a black pumpkin, and when completely filled it must have been ten inches across, maybe more.

I was feeling queasy and somewhat disconnected when Samantha picked up the bucket nearest me. I watched wide eyed as she began to pour its contents into the bag centered between my legs. The fluid was snow white, almost as thick as whole milk. She glanced up at me. “It’s my own special mix. It’s not just the color. It has special ingredients that irritate the bowel. It’ll give you harder contractions for an end you won’t soon forget.” She looked down and filled the bag. When it was nearly overflowing she put down the bucket and said, “The new boy gets something extra,” and spit in my bag with a wink.

I looked for Sandra. She was off to the side, her camera trained on the man to my right. She took picture

after picture as his bag was filled with a happy robin's egg blue mixture. He looked as shocked as I was. He moaned to get Samantha's attention and began shaking his head.

"No," she said, silencing him with a point of her finger. "You don't get anything special in yours." When she finished pouring all three of the black rubber bags were swollen to near bursting.

A few moments later she'd cleared the nearly empty buckets away. Then she helped us to lean back so that our heads were on the concrete and we were looking up into the maze of studio lights and shadows above. I think we all jumped when the truss our ankles were connected to moved. The power of the winch was overwhelming. The motor hummed and our feet were snatched into the air. As our widely spread legs were lifted our bodies were drawn along the cool concrete much faster than I expected, close to a foot a second, smudging the chalk 'X's' we sat on, until our legs were straight up, our hips directly below the bars. But the truss didn't stop lifting. Our pelvises were hoisted without even a shudder. Not in my wildest fantasy did I think that winch wouldn't be able to take the load; the people who set up that studio were clearly professionals, but I'd expected a hesitation, a surge in the motor, something to remind me that three grown

men are substantial, not plucked chickens being readied for stuffing. There was an urge to fight the machine, to pull down, but it would have been a futile gesture; not only was it far too powerful, but there nothing to leverage against, and by the time the thought had run through my head it was clear of the concrete floor, my entire weight supported by the two thick straps wrapped tightly around my ankles.

The motor stopped when we just a few inches off the floor. Even with the blood rushing to my head I had that giddy light in the stomach feeling that fear or rapid movement can induce. I blinked in the bright lights. The perspective was odd, but for the first time I saw clearly what was behind me as I was now facing the cameras, the front of the studio. In addition to the robotic and fixed cameras there were four large LCD monitors suspended from the ceiling- 46 inch? 52 inch? It was hard to tell, but big, all showing razor sharp high def pictures. Three of them showed the images from the large pedestal cameras, one showed what was going out over the live feed. The other, smaller cameras, had, for some reason, smaller monitors, maybe 27 inches or so. These weren't near the individual cameras. They were stacked one on top of the other on a frame off to one side so the robotic cameras didn't interfere with their sight line.

Hanging there I could see the artifice of it all, the cameras, the lights, the monitors, all of which would never be seen by the audience. That, combined with the lack of sleep, lack of sex, and of course, not having ever been to The Foundry's website, made me think it was all a mind fuck, that we were in a Hollywood fantasy factory 500 miles North of Hollywood. The huge nozzle, the unreal volume of strange liquid with its saliva chaser in that bulging bag, now behind me, I decided none of it would end up in me. It was all too big, too much. It would have to be done with camera tricks and slick editing.

It was a short-lived thought.

Samantha pulled on a pair of surgical gloves and went to the man on my right. The live feed monitor switched to a screen filling closeup of his smooth genitals, of his hairless ass, from up high, a camera in the ceiling I hadn't even seen. Samantha spread his cheeks with two fingers exposing his anus. Her other hand came into the shot holding the greased aluminum nozzle. I watched in a combination of disbelief and fascination as she began pressing the huge tip into him, as the hard metal forced his soft flesh to open, to conform to its shape. The man sucked in several sharp breaths. He arched his back. There were a few muted yelps, but Samantha pushed the nozzle slowly,

relentlessly in, like a lava flow, or a glacier advancing. It took just about a minute to complete the insertion, for the wide flat aluminum base with its attached black hose to be all that remained outside the man.

He hung limp, defeated. He had given up all protests, all reaction to the intrusion when the second ball had passed its widest point. The camera switched to a medium closeup of Samantha framed between the man's inverted legs. "There, I think you enjoyed that," she said, resting a rubber gloved hand on his buttocks next to the hose that now appeared to be a part of him, and looked directly into the camera. "This is the kind of thing we can't do in Great Britain anymore, not without risking going to prison, not after the Spanner Case. So Your Majesty, if you're watching," she said, curtsying, "and I know you are. Your subjects, those of us who are consenting adults, would appreciate the freedom to make our own decisions. Scratch the surface and you'll find we care about more than getting drunk and voting people off Big Brother. I don't know if you ever considered that. I know your government didn't. They really don't have to destroy things they don't understand. It's enough to make a republic look sane," she said. "Or maybe they're afraid of what it says about them, Brown and the rest? So go ahead and talk to them for us because we know all about Prince Albert, 'ey? So

it's in your blood, too, his Prussian sensibilities- and the other." She grabbed the erect penis at hand and casually thumbed its pink tip. She pushed the man with her knee, rocking him gently, addressing him, "You'd look good with one. I'll bring my needles next time. It'll take about three minutes, makes peeing interesting, though." She flicked his glans with her finger hard enough to make him flinch, then looked back into the camera. "When you get it all sorted give me a call, Queenie, because I've got some handcuffs and nipple clips with your name on them. And don't worry; I've done women older than you. If you think they're sagging now just wait 'till I hang you by them for 20 minutes. Then you'll see. But you won't care 'cause I bet I bring you off more times in one night than Prince Softy has his whole life; we all know he can walk through metal detectors with no worries, not that he ever has to. I mean, after all, you've given birth for the nation, something no woman should have to do, *noblesse oblige* or not, like a prize cow with royal udders. That's offensive and you should have told 'em. The least we can do is give you the thrills you deserve, after what you've been through... Call me."

The camera panned with Samantha as she turned her attention to me. I jumped at her touch. "Oh, you are eager," she said, and with no further fanfare she parted

my cheeks like the first man's, but I got no closeup. I could see on the live feed monitor that the long shot was held, and the robotic cameras didn't move. "It's not much easier when you're outside the palace, though, is it? We all have our problems," she said, addressing me. The nozzle was cool, the heavy lubrication gooey, yet slick.

Samantha pressed firmly and I gasped at the flash of pain as I was forced open slowly. It was a short little outraged yelp, if I'm honest, a pitiable noise like a dog makes when you step on its tail. I arched my head back and found myself looking at the weathered but clean concrete of the floor. I took several slow, deep breaths waiting for the first ball to reach its widest point. Until then, I could lie to myself, say that I hadn't actually been penetrated, just stretched a bit, but if the ball went in I'd never be able to deny it. If I'm honest I didn't mind seeing the other man skewered, not that I liked what it might portend for me, but it was a ritualized rejection; she wouldn't be fucking him that night, and that improved my odds.

I just couldn't believe she didn't recognize that I was different. I gasped, "Please," through my nose as she continued to press, but there was no reprieve. As the widest girth of the first ball passed the point of no return I got a shock. My stretched sphincter began to

contract around it, helping to pull it into me, as if my own body was conspiring against me. Samantha took no notice of the passion play unfolding in my head dangling by her heels, and as I strained, arching my neck, I could just see the tips of her shoes, the bare white flesh of the tops of her feet, and her ankles that I so desperately wanted wrapped around my waist- and in the sudden realization they wouldn't be, like the first man, I gave up. I let my head drop and my body hang limp.

"I love my country," Samantha said, "but honestly, can you imagine going to jail for this? Or that little love swat I gave you? The losers at the Crown Prosecution Service spent four million pounds and found a man with a needle through his Willie and some bruised nipples. They would have put poor Prince Albert away for life. Honestly, they must have rods up their asses thick as their wrists... no offense."

I wasn't listening, only staring at scene unfolding on the monitor in front of me. I took long deep breaths as the shaft moved relentlessly in. My erection was throbbing. For the entire world watching it must have looked like I was enjoying the treatment, and in truth there were some strange and erotic feelings at the nozzle's bulging tip massaged my prostate from inside, but the last thing I wanted was to be hard as it was

being inserted. I think it was the body's last ditch automatic response to attract an otherwise uninterested female. But Samantha was operating far above such crude displays, in the realm of the intellect, beyond the world of pulsing and dripping flesh.

With that last card played and trumped I was bankrupt and empty. Despite the sexual tension and raw emotions we were engaged in something that wasn't sex, something that was its mirror image, only more intense. And because it was happening to me but beyond my control I could only watch it like a movie.

The truth is with the receding pain my body was threatening to betray me again. I was on the verge of orgasm, and the very idea of that in that situation, of having ejaculate splash inches away from my head, gave me chills. It would have been bad enough to have Sandra, and thousands of others witness it, but I'd come to realize that if we were only props to Samantha then she must have a lover somewhere, someone who held her naked in the night, and the idea of him fondling her breasts as she giggled and told that story was worse than death.

Mercifully, the sharp pain returned when she came to the second, and larger, ball on the nozzle. I already felt like a pig on a spit when she began to force it through my anal sphincter. Sandra was on a stepladder between

two of the pedestal cameras to get some height, her face still hidden by her DSLR's lens. Its strobe continued to fire intermittently, and I finally understood her motivation. She couldn't be jealous of someone who'd been reduced to a prop in a show, a human sex doll that would never be used. Or maybe she was never really attracted to me and this was the price for trying to hit out of my league.

There were a few moments of searing pain as my anus tightened involuntarily and pulled the rest of the ball in quickly, seating the wide flat base and forming a rudimentary, but effective flesh and metal ball valve inside me, ensuring the nozzle would stay in place until it was removed the way it went in.

And that was that. My rejection was complete. My ass still hurting, Samantha walked away from me and repeated the insertion on the third man, and left him, left us, hanging upside down in a long shot on the live feed looking like a Chinatown butcher's display. After the energy and sweat of the insertion it was easy to forget that it had only been the preparation. Now facing the cameras we could see the winch controls housed in a worn industrial switch box hanging from the ceiling by a thick cable, something that may have hung from that spot for half a century and been used to hoist crucibles of molten metal for Liberty Ship castings.

Samantha took it in hand and pushed one of several large buttons.

The strut with the three bulging bags began to ascend slowly. There were no clips on the hoses connecting the bags to the three men on the screen, nothing to prevent the contents from flowing between them. As soon as the bags were lifted higher than our rectums the liquid began to flow through the massive nozzles into our bowels. I'd never had an enema before. The feeling was strange, barely noticeable at first, just an odd sensation that something was happening that I wanted it to stop. If the nozzle's insertion had been intrusive, this was disturbing. In an instant it didn't matter how much they were paying me. I was on the verge of a panic attack. I moaned into my gag. I began rocking back and forth at the waist, causing the whole strut we were hung from to sway gently.

"Oh, look..." Samantha said offhandedly, the screen filling with her face. "It looks like someone really likes it." That's when I focused on the audience at the other end of the cameras, realized I was putting on a show and hated myself for it, forced myself to hang still. The screen changed to a closeup of me, my face a mixture of confusion, distress, and stupidity- the look of a dumb beast in an obvious trap. I remembered my safe phrase. I could have hummed it through my gag, but it

wouldn't undo anything. I didn't care about the money anymore. It wasn't about the money. Fuck the money. They say pride cometh before a fall, but I promised Sandra I could take it. I wanted to prove myself to her, regardless of what she really thought of me, even if proving myself made her think less of me. A contradiction? No. More a case of, 'Damned if you do, damned if you don't,' so choose your damnation carefully, because if Dante is right, hell has many levels.

The odd sensation of the fluid flowing in was soon replaced by a feeling of fullness, that began to feel uncomfortable, yet there was no noticeable decrease in the size of those bags. And that's the first time it registered in my mind exactly how large those 'pumpkins' were. Three liters? Four liters? More? I don't know, but it was already too much, and not just for me. The man to my left began moaning gently, and the man to my right began rocking truss we were hanging from.

Sandra stepped forward. She took a few shots, then spoke for the first time since the ordeal she engineered began. "How much will they be able to take?" she asked Samantha.

"Oh," Samantha seemed genuinely surprised that someone was interested in her work, "it'll all go in."

“It doesn’t look like they have enough room.”

“They could take more. See, as the bags contract they’ll expand. You’ll be able to see it better from the side. The trick is not to fill them too fast. That’s why the bags are just a little above their asses.”

By this time the uncomfortable feeling had become downright painful. The moans of the man next to me had grown louder, more pathetic. Samantha went to him from behind, steadied him with one arm and began massaging his cramping belly with firm counterclockwise strokes. A minute later it was my turn. “We just need to help it go in a little,” she whispered. An occasional gurgle told me she was actually moving the fluid within me, and it did ease the pain. There was still the embarrassment of hanging there naked and hard, but it did ease the discomfort, and a human touch is, after all, a human touch. After a dozen seconds she left me, moved on to the next man, but it was my turn again before it became truly painful again.

The more fluid that flowed in the more normal the process became. It got to the point where it was almost hypnotic, feeling her breasts against my back through her blouse as she worked the fluid in, she occasionally whispered soft words of encouragement. I was still quite erect, quiet aware of the cameras, and watching the images unfold on the monitor, but it was almost like

I was watching someone else's story. And I was no longer just feeling full, but bloated, and quite warm as the fluid raised my body temperature. All three of us glowed with perspiration like we'd been oiled. That's when, to my surprise, I noticed that the bags had shrunk considerably. And in just a few minutes more they were empty wrinkled tubes.

"I told you they'd take it all," Samantha told Sandra softly as she moved quietly around us, taking pictures of bellies which, even from the relatively straight on position of the video cameras showing on the monitors, were slightly distended.

I can't say I was comfortable, or that it didn't hurt, but I was still relaxed, maybe overwhelmed would be a better description, having that feeling you get after you make love once and are ready to go again.

"Now comes the tricky part," Samantha said, "disconnect time." She came to me. "We'll start with the new boy." She began pulling the nozzle out, its removal only a bit less painful than its insertion. "Tighten up. Hold it all in. You squirt me and I'll whip your ass and back until you look like a red striped zebra," she warned.

You'd think there would be relief being freed of the thing, but my anxiety level ramped up as the last ball stretched me, and not just because of Samantha's threat,

but because it was obvious that any leakage would run down my body. The tip nearly free I clamped down as hard as I could, painfully fighting to hold onto the ball.

“Good, boy,” Samantha complimented.

When it popped out not a drop spilled. I drew a long breath through my nose. I don’t know how to explain the sensation of being rid of the thing. It wasn’t relief. It was something akin to freedom, but not freedom. There was simply no way to get around the helplessness, the physical sensations of being hot and uncomfortably full, hanging upside down and bulging. I felt like I was on the verge- of what, I don’t know, but I knew I was somewhere near a tipping point.

One by one the other two men’s nozzles were extracted as neatly and cleanly as mine. There was no relief on their faces either, because there was simply no getting around that Samantha could, if she chose, let us hang there until the inevitable happened, and it’s difficult to imagine anything more humiliating than that, and it wasn’t something that could be put in the backs of our minds. There were occasional and rather ominous gurgling sound coming from deep inside, and despite it, we were all still excited, quite evidently so, as could be seen on the monitors.

Samantha stepped out of the stage lights for a moment. “You boys have been so good about taking

your medicine,” she said, “that I’m going to give you a reward.” When she came back into the picture she was carrying a yellow and white tub labeled ‘Boy Butter.’ She took a large handful of it smeared it liberally on our penises, giving us each a few strokes to ensure it was well distributed, and that we were fully erect. It was thick, greasy, and in such quantities quite disgusting. When she finished lubing the third man she released the ratchets on our thigh cuffs, letting the chain feed out so our right hands had about a foot of movement. “Stroke off for me as fast or slow as you want,” she ordered, “but your ejaculate has to be on the floor before I’ll even consider letting you down. If you get stubborn there will be an awful mess. It’s your choice, though.”

The words were shocking, crushing. It wasn’t just her rejection and power over us being documented. We had to prove to the world that we still wanted her- with orgasm an admission we weren’t good enough. Then it was clear. That was the show Sandra wanted to see me in. That’s why she set it up. She didn’t want to see me have sex with Samantha. She wanted to watch her take me apart, and not even as an individual, but as part of a group. I doubt Samantha even knew my name.

I don’t remember grabbing my erection, but I remember it hard and hot in my hand, the slipperiest thing I’d ever touched, and the lube being forced

through my fingers like mud as I squeezed. My face was crimson. I couldn't believe what was unfolding on the screen. For a moment I didn't even recognize myself.

It wasn't the threat that made me close my eyes and begin stroking. I knew she'd never allow that, but I stroked anyway, because she told me to, because I wanted her, because I couldn't have her. It was wonderful, horrible, exciting, and dehumanizing all at that the same time. Samantha's curves filled my mind, and despite the cramps and the sweat I found myself stroking like an adolescent learning to masturbate in an unlocked room -reckless, fast, confused- the pleasure sweeping away the fear and indignity of it all. There was no use in trying to prove myself with size, rigidity, or staying power. It wouldn't make any difference to Samantha. She'd pictured me there between the others, hanging upside down, stroking furiously before she'd ever seen my face, the way a butcher visualizes a meat display before the farmer delivers the cow. And my chances with Sandra began to recede that hot June afternoon when I told her I'd think about her proposal and vanished over the horizon the moment I set foot in The Foundry.

My entire world was melting into one urgent and uncontrollable reality that washed away every other

thought in my head. For a few glorious moments there was no rejection, no humiliation, no audience, no cameras, just the most intense sexual experience I'd ever had, even if it did threaten to unhinge my mind. As the excitement became concrete, real, and unbearable, I heard excited moans that turned out to be my own. I snorted air through my nose and willed the purgatory to end, but it didn't, not for an eternity, not until everything tightened. I flung my eyes open wide as my body bent involuntarily forward at the waist and froze in shock as it all came flooding back in a near death like experience that lasted but an instant.

The orgasm hit me like a freight train.

My face twisted as I put teeth marks in the gag. Sandra's strobe began pulsing as she took picture after picture.

The first two jets of semen caught me by surprise, hitting my face like ribbons of hot custard. My eyes snapped shut. Samantha laughed and Sandra said, "Money shot," quietly as the camera's shutter dropped and again. I tried to jerk my head out of the line of fire. The third spurt caught the top of it, and the next half dozen diminishing spurts slapped against the smooth concrete.

The other two didn't last much longer. I was still stroking, but dry, and becoming too sensitive to touch

when they grunted almost simultaneously. Their ejaculate joined mine on the floor below, their faces twisted like their fathers' had, riding the same undignified contractions that had created them decades ago in far different circumstances, acts not recorded on high definition video and 21 megapixel stills for posterity.

It took a few moments to regain my composure, and when I did all I could do was hang there, humiliated, panting, cold and hot at the same time, trying to blink the semen out of my left eye. My penis shriveled rapidly into an impotent and pathetic ghost of its former glory. I tried not to think about the DVD in the back of my closet near where I kept my pictures entitled, 'All Facials'- sixteen women of all shapes, sizes, and colors giving blow jobs only to have the man pull out at the end and cover their faces. I'd jerked off watching it. I'd laughed watching it, and never felt a thing for the women. If asked I would have said, "They're getting paid." Perspective changes things.

But it was over. Samantha had done her job. She'd mastered us, rejected us, dehumanized us, and shown the world. And Sandra had the pictures to prove it.

It was hard to believe that all that pain, all that passion, three times over, could be reduced to something like a Jackson Pollock masterpiece on the

concrete floor just beneath my pulsing head. If it was paint on canvas entitled *White on Gray* and signed by the man himself it would have been worth millions. I found out later Samantha's more biological creation made tens of thousands of dollars for The Foundry in streaming form. On Demand, DVD, and other sales would add a zero to it within the year. If I'd known I would have been shocked, but then I didn't know the show was only half over.

I could see Sandra was amused, and Samantha was quite satisfied with what she'd wrought. She let us hang there catching our breaths for just half a minute or so before she approached us, and one by one went down the line, being careful not to step in the messes. She re-tightened the chains between our right wrists and thigh cuffs so there was no more play, so that we couldn't reach our bellybuttons, or anything else. She was preparing to lower us and take us to the toilets, because as defeated as we were the urge to evacuate was back and building stronger than ever. And as badly as I needed to go I wasn't looking forward to that. I was sure Sandra would follow us in, that there'd probably be no door on the stall, but I'd sit there blank faced and stare towards where the horizon should be as she snapped away just to get it behind me because by this time I knew she was a pro, that she wouldn't miss an

opportunity for a photo. I only hoped calmer minds would prevail and those pictures wouldn't end up posted on the website. But after re-binding us Samantha didn't approach the winch controls.

"It is a holiday here, I understand," Samantha said loudly, moving to a workbench in the relative darkness beyond the studio lighting off to the side. "And we should have a proper celebration for our big finish." She came back holding five small wooden blocks painted black, each with a stick in it. She placed them behind us on the floor with sticks pointing straight up. I didn't care what she was doing because it was taking too long. There was genuine pain and gurgling in my bowels. They moved in ways I never suspected they could, and from the perspiration and fidgeting of the men on either side of me it was apparent they were experiencing the same thing, and becoming equally anxious.

I saw a flash. Samantha was kneeling by one of the sticks with a lighter. Its top blazed and hissed; it was a sparkler. Soon all five were alight and Samantha withdrew behind the cameras again. On the screen I saw the surreal spectacle of three bound naked men, glimmering in a film of perspiration, hanging inverted with a row of red, white, and blue sparklers pulsing and smoking behind them. I probably would have found the

tableau amusing if the need to evacuate hadn't been steadily building. The urge turned to pain, the pain to cramps that became excruciating. There was an involuntary contraction and several drops of warm white liquid splashed out of my rectum and ran down my chest, redefining the word 'disgust' in my lexicon. I clenched as hard as I could to keep the floodgates from opening, but I couldn't help feel Samantha misjudged how long it would take to get us down and get us to the bathroom- horribly misjudged.

I didn't think I could hold on for even another minute, but Samantha just stood there and watched, quite content. By this time my face wasn't just moist, it was wet with sweat, dripping.

Several drops of blue liquid splashed onto the floor to my right. Sandra raised her still camera and began taking pictures rapidly. The man to my right began begging first- a series of urgent moans through his gag. Soon we sounded like a choir of seals as we tried to drown one another out and be the first to the toilets. The cramping, gurgling, and urge to expel began to take on lives of their own until nothing else mattered. On about the seventh or eighth rapid flash from Sandra's strobe my eyes opened like saucers. I'd come to the awful realization that there was no reason to color the enema solutions- none at all, unless it were meant to be seen

on camera. I think that thought ran through all our minds simultaneously because the barked moans and garbled begging began to elongate, evolving into plaintive groans, then genuine panic. All three of us began squirming futilely against bonds we could never break, knowing it was already too late.

“I guess I should have warned you,” Samantha said languidly. “If you’re in the first row you’re going to get wet.” The man to my left drowned me out with a shocking groan. It was no longer a mere protest, it was more of a horrified scream. My eyes locked on the live feed monitor as a jet of liquid shot from his anus like a fire hose straight up, then fanned out as gravity took over. A moment later the first droplets hit me, both directly, deflected off the truss system holding our ankles, and splattering off the floor, though most of it was coming down on the poor bastard expelling it.

My horror was actually tinged with relief, because it wasn’t the mess I thought it would be. It was the color that went in- red, almost pink, a bright happy pink, and opaque. And I think the surprise at seeing that wonderfully pure color caused me to relax for just an instant, and before I knew what I’d done it was too late. Quite involuntarily all the muscles in my abdomen contracted and I could do nothing to stop the expulsion. My jet joined the other. I screamed into my gag. It only

took a moment for the warm white fluid to fall back, drenching me front back, face and head.

The scream into my gag was the loudest sound I'd ever made, cut short when I had to blow some of the fluid out of my nose and find a position to hold my head to keep most of it off my face and watch the monitor. In my periphery I could see Sandra's flash, Samantha's smile, but my rage wasn't directed at them. It was directed at the final holdout for proving himself stronger than me, and I felt incredible relief when he, too, finally blew, only a second or so later. I have to admit there was a certain beauty in it as those three geysers shot skyward, red, white, and blue, and I felt a certain awed respect for Samantha who'd thought of the whole thing- and then had the guts to make it happen. She had the right to smile. She had the right to chuckle. She had the right to that little bit of contempt in her eyes as she watched us hose ourselves down.

But the beauty only lasted for two or three seconds. The first man's stream began to darken ominously. In less than a second it was the color of mud. And as my white stream took on a brown tinge the first man's flow became erratic and started sputtering as fecal chunks began mixing with the brown fluid and raining down on him, falling to the floor. Blown apart by water pressure there wasn't a piece more than an inch across, and most

were considerably smaller.

I screamed into my gag anew and looked to Samantha for a help, or just a look of concern in her eyes, but her chuckles had turned to outright laughter. When I looked back to the monitor both the third man and I were already shooting brown fluid; it was already raining down on us, and I'll never forget the feeling as chunks began blowing erratically through my wide open sphincter, their slapping sounds joining the splashes as they landed around my head. Then the fountains began to fail. They lost height. The thin brown liquid began to thicken, to take on the consistency of melted ice cream, and finally stopped, leaving several thick trails of filth dripping from my shoulders, and one flowing down the back of my head.

Two of the sparklers had been extinguished by the flow. The others flickered and smoked. Inches below our heads the floor was covered with a swamp of multi-colored fluid- red, white, blue, and brown, peppered with islands of irregularly shaped and shattered feces, leaving no evidence of the Jackson Pollock blotches our semen had formed on it just a minute before. The blending and flowing colors made it an unspeakable de Kooning style abstract mess, with three Francis Bacon models ready for stylized pigment on canvas dismemberment hanging above.

I can't even begin to describe the hollow feeling, of being so utterly defeated, made worse by the post orgasmic letdown, and the relief of no longer needing to evacuate exacerbated by the way I'd done it, what I'd become a part of. I didn't care that I was naked. I didn't care that I was filthy. I didn't care that my image was being streamed live the world over.

"I guess this proves my theory," Samantha told Sandra proudly, who was still clicking pictures as fast as her camera would allow, "that all men are full of shit."

Sandra knelt, well behind the mess, and took a few pictures. I know they were pictures of my face. I know they were closeups. I didn't care.

Samantha uncoiled a hose and began hosing us down from a distance. The water was warm, and under different circumstances it might have been pleasant. When she had most of the mess off of us she turned her attention to the floor. She began by slowly, methodically, hosing the solids through a large grate in the floor behind us. Then she rinsed the whole floor, mixing the multicolored fluids we'd ejected into a watery purplish broth before it ran clear and the floor was clean, our semen and feces on their way to the state of the art sewage treatment plant visible from Highway 24 just a few miles away to be consumed by bacteria

before its effluent was discharged into the bay. Samantha turned off the water, took off her blouse, and came to us with a bucket of hot sudsy water and a soft brush. She soaped us down one at a time, humming a song I didn't recognize as she worked, scrubbing down every inch of skin and binding with the brush several times with the care and consideration she might give a car. I had to snort suds out of my nose every time the brush ran across my face, the same brush that had just cleaned the genitals of the man next to me, and my own. At least she used baby shampoo so it didn't burn our eyes.

Samantha paused to let Sandra get a few shots of us dripping suds on the clean wet floor before dumping the rest of the bucket on it and scrubbing it down with a push broom, ignoring us, moving between us like we were hanging plants as she worked. That done Samantha turned the hose on us again to rinse, this time with a stinging narrow stream of cold water, raising goosebumps and hardening our nipples. When every soap bubble was rinsed from our bodies and the floor Samantha turned off the hose, put her blouse back on, and walked out of the studio. Sandra following a few seconds later.

We hung there for the longest time dripping cold water and shivering. Then the light banks started going

off one by one, until we were left shivering in the dark. There was probably only about five minutes of blackness, just enough for me to start to wonder if they were going to leave us there for the full five hours, cold, heads pounding, when the overhead lights came on and Paul's voice boomed through an unseen speaker saying, "Streaming has gone to black. That's a wrap. Thanks everybody." The robotic cameras backed away to the very edge of the studio in formation and turned themselves off.

I learned later that the end of the program was Samantha turning out the lights, getting in her car and driving away down a dirty industrial street. The ceiling mounted security type cameras were able to cover her in the hallway, but Sandra had to rush down a parallel hallway, put down her still camera, and pick up a portable video camera to follow her into the parking lot.

Both Samantha and Sandra re-entered the stage. The hanging fluorescent lights were positively dull compared to the studio lights.

"You've done it again," Sandra said, her arm clasped around a grinning Samantha who seemed uncomfortable with the embrace.

"Thanks," she said, breaking free and going directly to the winch controls. She lowered us slowly, stopping several times to make sure nobody hit their head, harder

than it seemed after hanging upside down for so long, our worlds and equilibriums literally turned upside down. After our heads and shoulders were on the cold floor she stopped several times to pull us back from the descending truss, until we were laid out on our backs exactly like we were just before being raised. One by one she helped us to a sitting position. "Take some deep breaths," she said. "It's all over. We don't want anyone to black out and get a bump on the noggin now."

Samantha quickly unbound us, removing gags and all straps with dexterity of an expert and tossing them aside. She gave me a pat on the back when I was free. "You did really well for a first time," she said. I didn't reply as I worked my jaw, held my pounding head.

"Boys, don't go anywhere. We need some group photos," Sandra said. "Turn around. Scooch together. Sit Indian style." Samantha got behind us. She did several poses for Sandra, including one where she knelt with her arms around two of us, her chin on my shoulder. That two minute photo shoot may have been the most surreal part of the evening as I tried to figure out how someone coming across those photos, if they didn't see what came before, would interpret them. Later, when I saw them, the photos didn't seem forced, but Samantha's smile did. She actually seemed a little embarrassed to be there, touching naked men, even if

they were spent, soft, compliant, and covered with goosebumps.

When Sandra lowered her camera she avoided my gaze. “Thanks, Samantha. Guys, you can hit the showers. Come to the office when you’re ready.”

Sandra and Samantha left together. There were wet spots on the knees of Samantha’s faded jeans, the only evidence of the night’s activity on either of them.

I sat naked, alone, and shivering in the studio for a full minute after the other men left, but the cold was finally too much and I followed their footprints through the maze of hallways until they faded, then towards the sound of running water and the locker room. They were already in the steaming water at opposite ends of the huge communal shower stall, at least 30 feet from each other. I chose a shower head between them, as far from each as I could get. It wasn’t lost on me that we were in exactly the same order as we’d been on the set, but I didn’t care. I was cold, the water was hot, and despite the thorough soaping by Samantha I felt filthy. I didn’t think I’d ever get clean. I stared at the wall and scrubbed like a man possessed until my skin was red and I thought I’d bleed. When my bar of soap was halfway gone and I was still no cleaner I stopped and hung my head in the running water. The others had left the shower some time before. I returned to my locker

and sat steaming on the bench until I heard the door echo twice through the locker room. Maybe it didn't matter to them. Maybe they were seasoned, but I didn't want to see their faces. I didn't want to have to interact with them, and I wasn't being a prude; it was my shame, not theirs, that isolated us.

I stood. I dried. Naturally my locker was open. Sandra had been there, probably right after she locked me in the cage. There was nobody else in the building. The only reason to lock it was to separate me from my clothes so she could get me in the cage easier. Hindsight is 20-20. I looked at my clothes hanging where I left them and tried to imagine Sandra wanting to see me go through that, and to calmly photograph me as I did. To heighten my confusion I was becoming aroused again thinking about it, thinking about her bare back on that hot June day, her hands covering her breasts, her fingers spreading- wondering if she knew what Samantha's plans were even then. I dried and dressed quickly, leaving the foil wrapped condoms in the bottom of the locker where they'd been thrown.

I found the office with no trouble, the mental map I didn't know I'd created clear in my mind. I knocked and walked in.

"You did a great job. I'm so proud of you," Sandra said, throwing her arms around me like a friend.

“You don’t hate me?” I asked.

She shook her head and smiled. “Are you ready to go home?”

I nodded.

It was cool outside. The air was fresh, salty.

I didn’t say anything to her. I couldn’t think of anything to say. A few minutes later we pulled into the B of A on Fruitvale.

“What are we doing here?” I asked.

“It’s part of the service,” she said, handing me a crisp engraved business check signed by Paul and countersigned by her. “We always take newbies to the bank to deposit their first check,” Sandra said.

“Sometimes there’s a little guilt and they think if they don’t deposit it...”

“It undoes what they’ve just done,” I said, interrupting. I stared at her.

“It doesn’t,” she said.

“I feel like a prostitute taking this,” I told her, moving the crisp paper in my fingers as I fondled it.

“You’re not a prostitute. You earned it. Sign it and deposit it.” Sandra held out a pen.

“Thanks.” I scribbled my name on the back and got out of the car. There was a steady sea breeze, not bone chilling, but cool. I walked the check alone to the automated teller, inserted my card, then the check, and

watched my balance go up by almost four hundred dollars. I got back in the car feeling like I'd failed a final test.

I still didn't know how to feel. I still didn't know what to feel. A minute later we were at the Fruitvale BART station.

"I would drive you home, but..." she stopped.

"You're going back," I said. I wasn't surprised.

She nodded without looking at me. "I'm going to help edit the video for on demand release. All the cameras record the whole time, so we can go back, analyze, choose shots that are better than went out on the live feed. It makes for a better product."

"Better," I repeated. "Did you know what was going to happen before you asked me to model?" I asked.

"Not everything. I mean... Look, I knew Samantha had done fountains before. I'd never seen one. We got to talking when she was here a few months ago and I told her I wanted to shoot one, how could I not? I mean, it's pretty... out there. And a couple of weeks later she called and said she was going to do one for the Forth-patriotic theme, red, white, and blue. I was in," Sandra said.

"And when you found out you were short a model you thought of me?" I asked.

"Sure. I knew you'd be perfect."

“You told me not to look at the site,” I said.

“And I told you why. Honestly, if you’d seen something like that would you have chickened out?”

“Yes,” I said.

“See?”

“People saw me bound and naked... and... you know.”

“Were you excited? Did you come? Did you get paid for it? Win. Win. Win. And besides...”

“Yes?”

“If it wasn’t you it would have been someone else.”

“I see,” I said. A BART train pulled away from the station. As it faded into the distance only the freeway’s traffic rumble and a distant siren disturbed the night’s silence.

“What do you think of me?” I asked.

“No different than before, I promise,” Sandra said. I nodded.

“There’s nothing wrong in being what you are, what you were born to be,” Sandra replied without the slightest hesitation, as if she were telling me the sky was blue or the grass was green. There was another pause, this time longer, and her tone became more upbeat with every word. “There aren’t many I would have recommended for the wet stage on a first gig. You’re a good model, a real trouser,” she added. “I’ll

use you again- definitely.”

“Will you go out with me?” I asked, sounding so needy I repulsed even myself.

“Seriously?”

I almost laughed and shook my head, but I really had to know. “Yes.”

“Come on. Suppose we clicked. Where do you see us in ten years? Living in one of those condos off Bancroft? Or maybe if we’re really successful in one of those houses a little further down Treat with a mortgage and two kids, going to PTA meetings and just waiting for someone to recognize you? Do you think people leave each other alone in the suburbs? Suburbia is why places like The Foundry exist, so people who live there can see the things they wish they had the guts to do, then scan their neighbors in hopes of recognizing someone and outing them anonymously to relieve the tedium and guilt they’re drowning in.”

“That’s not how you see it, though, is it?”

“What do you mean?” she asked. She wasn’t lying, but it wasn’t the reason. I could see it written all over her beautiful face and deep in blue eyes that hadn’t even been slightly repulsed by what she’d seen.

“I mean Dorthea Lange never fucked the dirt farmers,” I told her.

Sandra looked away, then back.

“You can tell me,” I said. But she didn’t.

“Do you think I have a shot with Samantha?” I asked.

“Why?” Sandra snapped. “So you can be her pet? So she can take you walkies on a leash?”

“Thanks for the ride,” I told her. I got out.

“Wait.”

I stopped. I didn’t look back.

“We all need to be deconstructed once in a while,” Sandra said calmly. “If you were surprised by what you found maybe you need to look a little deeper.”

I continued towards the ticket gates and heard her drive away. There was now a hint of cordite in the cool sea air from the big corporate sponsored fireworks celebrations around the bay- the only shows in town. Most of the local governments banned individuals from possessing fireworks decades before in a belief that people shouldn’t be allowed to celebrate their independence independently, that freedom should be a group activity controlled by politicians, because if you can’t control people then why have all the tools of control? Naturally they didn’t say that. They said it was, ‘For our own safety,’ and that we should thank them for protecting us from ourselves, for allowing us to see even more advertisements for those really useful products we should buy between bursts. I’m sure

Samantha thought she was in the land of the free, but her sparkler display was the one thing she did that night that could have gotten her in trouble- a night in jail, fined 500 dollars, and thrown out of the country and barred from return as ‘undesirable.’

God bless America.

The train was nearly empty, maybe a dozen people per car. I chose a forward facing seat and stared straight ahead trying to ignore the flashing red lights of the ‘security’ cameras in the smoked plastic cases in the ceilings of every car, Big Brother saying, ‘I’m watching you,’ with every flash. In a way they were more intrusive than The Foundry’s HD cameras, because you can’t avoid them, you can’t say, ‘Help me Mr. Wizard,’ and have them turn off so you can go home undisturbed. And the most notable thing BART’s cameras ever did was record a ‘disturbance’ on New Year’s Day. It wasn’t even a fight. It was a scuffle between mutual combatants, idiocy fueled by testosterone.

When the police arrived they quickly did their job as they saw it, taking control of the situation and killing the Negro with the biggest mouth. And the man killed wasn’t even directly involved, but he had the temerity to question being rounded up for being black in the area

of a disturbance, and to do so in a way that offended a cop, who grabbed him by the collar, then screamed profanities in his face from so close that his spit ended up all over the man's ebony skin. But it wasn't over. Next the cop dragged him to the edge of the platform, threw him face down, pulled out his gun, and shot him in the back right between the shoulder blades, the gun's muzzle 18 inches from the heart it destroyed.

The officer was arrested, of course, not on the scene, not by the half dozen cops who watched him do it -eyes wide, jaws open- the same ones who thought anyone in the area of a disturbance should be arrested. But if you've got a badge you need to do more than kill in cold blood before your brothers and sisters in blue will intervene. It was five months after his victim was buried that the trigger man was put behind bars, not because he wasn't smart enough to pull the man he was about to kill out of view of the security cameras on the platform. He did that. Their recordings could be problematic; when jurors actually watch you commit a murder they have a tendency to lean towards conviction even if you have a badge.

The rest was easy. He knew he could count on the silence of the other officers, and civilian witnesses are easily discredited. There's a whole set of machinery in place within police departments to do just that. And if

you read the first explanations from the department you can see how they were laying the groundwork to say all the witnesses were mistaken, mentally unstable, or police hating activists with axes to grind, and that it was an unlucky roll of the dice that lead to a mixture of only these people witnessing an heroic cop defending his community. But if you look back in history there's precedent for it, many precedents. It happens time and time again, every time, actually, if you listen to those explanations- but there you go. It's just a quirk of the universe. Unfortunately, and here's how we know even the officer's comrades were shocked by his actions- not shocked enough to do anything, just shocked enough to have it register on their faces- half a dozen of the 'tainted' witnesses had cellphone cameras and recorded the whole thing Rodney King style. It turned into Rodney King on steroids when they bypassed the mainstream media and clip after clip turned up on YouTube, the same killing from half a dozen different angles. The authorities were finally left with no choice, either do their duty and arrest the murderer or become his accomplices so publicly that their budget might be affected.

So maybe Big Brother can work in both directions, but he shouldn't have to work in either.

I made the transfer at City Center Station and got on

the eastbound train. I didn't sleep. I didn't do anything, not even think. It barely registered in my consciousness that Paul was wrong. There is no emergency stop on modern trains. People are no longer trustworthy enough to recognize an emergency and throw a train a few minutes off schedule if they make a mistake. There are call boxes at the ends of the cars. If there's an emergency, and if you can get to one, and if it's working, and if someone answers, you can explain what's happening, let a professional decide if the train should stop. If you're too panicked to do anything other than scream or shout incoherently the responsibility is yours. If you manage to make clear what the emergency is, but it takes a minute to explain when there are seconds to act, it's not like people are an endangered species. Who cares if a few dozen die?

The trip ended. As usual, there was no emergency. Flames didn't shoot through the car floor. It didn't derail and careen towards a tunnel entrance. Because those things are rare we let them hold our lives in their hands and hope they know what they're doing. When they prove unworthy it's too late to speak, but at least we can go into the beyond knowing we weren't responsible.

The doors opened and I stepped out into the still warm Pleasant Hill air a stone's throw from Santos

Lane. When BART opened it was given an award- Most Beautiful Station in the system. It was those oak trees that did it, and they really were magical in the Spring, and more dramatic than the sound of timpani in summer, inspiring thaumatogeny in the darkest cynic, even in me, but only when I took the time to look at them instead of just seeing them, instead of just letting them become part of the background, letting someone put a price on them.

They were gone, of course, that July 4th night when I arrived. I barely noticed when they were clearcut without notice the previous autumn, the system's only living links to a history before timetables. How could they stay when they sat on so much flat land perfect for upscale retail and high density housing? The developers tried for decades to convince the BART Board that trees and grass, and even places to park cars, were, like churches before them, simply wastes of valuable real estate. They tried to convince them they could best serve the public by selling a beautiful public space entrusted to them to maintain. And Board after Board smiled and told them their job was to pass it into the future, that a few acres could be left not in a natural state -it's hard to call a parking lot natural- but a beautiful one that at least reflected the nature that had once been there.

So how did it happen? Who knows? There wasn't even a whisper that the Board members took bribes, though *quid pro quo* does have a rather strict interpretation in modern courts, which rule that you can profit from the actions you take in public life, you can even get filthy rich from them as long as you don't take a suitcase full of money and count it on the courthouse steps while you're actually in office- and even then you need two reporters, a cop, and a nun to witness it. Personally, I prefer to think that the Board members haven't been promised unlimited contributions for their next campaign, spots on the lecture circuit, or consulting jobs when they leave public life, because as long as it's done with a wink instead of a handshake there'll never be a conviction, not even an investigation. I'd like to think they were just stupid. Politicians who don't understand their jobs aren't uncommon, and it's understandable that those bred in a capitalist system will err on the side of dollar signs when they fail, and if we let them that may one day prove as devastating to our way of life as communist politicians who tried to eliminate greed completely. Of course that makes the failure ours for electing them, not theirs for doing their best.

I walked the long way back to Santos, around the parking lot where its towering oaks had been. They

were building right to the street on Treat Boulevard creating an artificial cliff face six stories high. There might have been space for a thin strip of grass, or maybe a few shrubs, but nothing more. As they say, square footage equals dollars squared.

Roadway, building, roadway- repeating endlessly if they let you, and they will if you know how to play the game, how to share the wealth with a decision makers with loose morals and powerful sleeping pills.

But who was I to complain? Look where I lived, and where I returned, under the yellow haze of sodium vapor lights, a mud brown sky above. I went back there even after looking into The Foundry's mirror. It was just before midnight when I put the key in my apartment door, beneath a florescent light I couldn't turn on or off. I paused. "Drizzle, drizzle, drizzle, drome," I whispered, exhausted, ready to fall off my feet. I turned the key. "Mr. Wizard you were a fuckin' moron," I added, eyes closed. But I couldn't even think about going to bed. There was one more thing to do.

I pulled the crumpled paper with the key Paul had given me out of my wastepaper basket and flattened it. Then I turned on my computer, went to The Foundry's website and followed the link to their Aqua Bondage and Water Sports site. It seemed the most likely place for them to display my newest vocation's labor. Sandra,

of course, was right; just one of the promo pictures would have made me run a mile if I'd seen it before I got into her Jeep that night. I navigated to their 'new stuff' section and began clicking the refresh button on my browser every five minutes like clockwork. But nothing happened.

I dozed off twice, jerking awake both times with my head falling towards the desk. After three on the morning of the fifth, in my sleep starved state, I'd begun to believe I imagined it all, that I'd been offered the job and was checking out the site beforehand and would have to decline Sandra's offer even if it meant she got mad. I began to believe the trees were still in front of the BART station, that a loudmouthed black man wasn't rotting in his grave, that everything was all right. But I still sat there. I still pushed the left mouse button even though I couldn't remember why I was doing it. I only knew I'd do it until sleep claimed me and ended my misery, or death, and I didn't care which because I could see no difference between them.

A third near sleep experience convinced me that I was in fact in purgatory, and that somehow clicking that button determined the fate of the souls of everyone around me. I wanted to scream. I wanted to curse God because that shouldn't be my responsibility no matter what my sin. I settled for sobbing uncontrollably, and

pushing the button and saving or condemning my neighbors with every click.

When the screen changed it jolted me awake like I'd grabbed a live wire. At the very top a new video was listed- *Forth of July Fountain*. Sandra chose a beautiful picture for the promo, the three of us naked, bound, inverted and suspended, with red, white, and blue water jets spewing vertically from our anuses, the streams fanning, breaking, and falling under gravity's pull while Samantha's sparklers blazed in the background. And the picture was beautiful, not a mere snapshot. It was skillfully Photoshopped, a real Ansel Adams job, in the digital domain, of course. The liquid and our skin was highlighted and rich; the background fell into darkness without losing shadow detail. The only pure whites were in our wide eyes and midair sparks at the end of glowing colored trails.

I clicked the picture and it filled my screen, large enough that even with all the motion, and upside down, and the gag in my mouth, even casual acquaintances would recognize me instantly. A chill ran down my spine. I was certain a fuse had been lit, that it would only be a matter of time before someone I knew recognized me, and when they did they'd do what I did next, and The Foundry would get another sale, almost

too small to measure.

I selected the video and carefully entered the key Paul had given me in the pop up box. They must have had fast servers because the high-def QuickTime file started to play almost instantly. The Foundry's animated logo appeared, a glowing crucible pouring molten metal into a sand mold amidst a flurry of sparks. All too soon my computer was inside The Foundry, and I was inside it, watching myself earlier that evening standing bound and naked, locked between two anonymous men also awaiting recognition in a cage in the holding area.

There was no mystery as to how our story was going to end. Anyone who'd seen the promo picture knew that, but as Samantha began preparing her prisoners, moving them inexorably towards that fate she and her audience knew they were going to, a strange thing happened. There was a horrible, wonderful dichotomous disconnect. I watched spellbound, in a kind of forced disbelief, hoping those poor men would be spared, but willing Samantha to show no mercy. Somehow, by virtue of being in control and having the will to continue, she had earned the right to do so. Even the poor bound men in her charge seemed to be urging her on with their compliance, and their erections; they seemed to have earned the destiny we knew awaited them by being so completely under her thumb. I

couldn't wait for the next shock to register on their faces, the next humiliation, the moment she seized a little more control, even as I dreaded them.

And loving it and hating it, fearing it and willing it—it happened, playing out like a nightmare and a dream, slowly. I couldn't tear my eyes away. I had to force myself to blink. Every preparatory step was documented in near real time, from opening the cages to the sweat slowly dripping from our brows as we hung inverted and spent bellies slightly distended waiting for the crescendo. As one humiliation followed another I began shivering uncontrollably, not from fear, or cold, but from welling emotions ebbing and flowing so quickly I can't even describe them. And that's when I understood why people watch, why they have strong reactions ranging from laughter, to anger, to arousal; it's a form of catharsis. When you live your whole life slowly relinquishing control to forces both seen and unseen, sometimes it helps to see others under more direct control, enduring more direct, if no less real, humiliations. And those men and women who watch, dreaming of being in our places so they can forget about those other controls, staring awestruck while masturbating slowly, transmuting degradation into intolerable pleasure, edging, holding back until the finale then releasing themselves in waves of ecstasy as

the unthinkable happens on their screen, find themselves clean, dry, and relatively free after orgasm.

When I understood that my first night at The Foundry became a blessing, not another abject failure in a long string that had defined my life, even though I knew, as Sandra warned, that the opprobrium of that evening could surface any moment, my name and face matched publicly by someone who paid to watch, someone both enthralled and disgusted as I was, trying to ameliorate the later with a sacrifice on the alter of the profane in the name of holiness.

That was a burden I could shoulder.

Moses, the stuttering great law giver, could order genocide -twice- and be forgiven. Maybe I wouldn't be so lucky about a far less significant indiscretion, mere naivety, if I'm honest, and maybe I didn't stand a chance with Sandra; that was over the moment she thought I might make an interesting nozzle in Samantha's fountain, but even after it came to fruition, even after she documented it so thoroughly, I could trust her. She wouldn't repeat the same sin I committed, and there's hope in that. That's enough for one Independence Day.

the end

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About the author

J. Manque is a writer based near San Francisco, California. He's currently working on a million word magnum opus about life and politics in the 1990s. It will likely be released as three or four novels. The first, tentatively entitled ***Love on Concrete***, is scheduled for release in print and eBook form shortly. Here's a brief synopsis-

In the late summer of 1994 an act of civil disobedience triggers a chance meeting between an amateur dominatrix and an IT specialist, resulting in an intense psychological wrestling match that mirrors the politics of change of the mid 1990s. It ends with a torrid confrontation in a rundown motel in Reno's dirty heat hours before the 'Republican Revolution' changes America in ways that are still echoing through the world today. In between the two explore the dark shadows of the human psyche reflected in aspects of sexuality never discussed among friends, but always lurking just out of sight in a dark world of sodium vapor lights and diesel choked streets- in short, our world.

-if you'd like to be informed when it's released, or when other J. Manque writings become available, online or in print, you can become a Twitter follower- twitter.com/jmanque

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