

The Crybaby Contests

Last night was funny! I woke up around six to take a leak. In passing I looked through the living room doorway. My cat Pasadena was sitting on the stereo rack I built myself. It's a mostly glass rack with a black wenge wood frame and I put it right by the window in between the speakers, where a good amplifier belongs. Pasadena sat on the top layer, squeezed in between the amp and the record player, a narrow space of some four or five inches wide. He sat looking out the window as he always does. Only the curtains were closed see! He sat looking upright as he had all day, staring at the curtain right in front of his nose. In the dark. Flabbergasted. Getting dimmer as the years go by. Hey dude, where's the view..? Where have all these snowy roofs gone? He's called Pasadena because he loves to sing on the rooftops and woo the ladies. Also it's my favorite band. And yours.

Yesterday had been a dark day. Winter had really shown it's depressing true self and for the first time since the end of November I had closed the curtains and lit a few candles, wishing you were here with me in quiet desperation. Allowing forbidden fantasies in which I could open up a bottle of merlot for us and we could speak of my love for you in soft intimate tones. Tell you how I absolutely worship your beautiful silk bosom despite your warning it might give me an erection. When in fact everything about you gives me that. Even your chic calfskin gloves that are your second skin. Your old fashioned Hollywood hairdo makes my mouth water. And your eyes so full of street wisdom.

"Naughty Peter... naughty. My beautiful silk bosom? Gentlemen don't speak to ladies like that, even if your choice of words is perfect. They make polite conversation like their mothers have taught them. Subjects they know interest the elderly. Literature, art and decent music, like The Andrew Sisters, Big Bands or the Pasadena Roof Orchestra. Stuff like that. It's one of the reasons I make you wear your device, to try and make a gentleman out of a sex addict..." That's you speaking to me through the void. Because you're so far away from me. But I'm still a bit like Pasadena. I'm not good at grasping changes in the outlook.

This night I'm doing the same thing Pasadena did. I'm sitting looking at the curtain. Not on the stereo rack but on my leather Chesterfield facing the speakers. In the silent night.

I woke up all excited. Jumped out of bed and stood staring at the little steel vault screwed to the bedroom wall beside the door. I went to sit in the living room in the dark first, my heart bumping like crazy, thinking over the sudden revelation you'd given me in my dream, about the end of the war. That's what you said before you left. "So this is it honey. I'll see you when I see you..." You'd put the little key to my red Perspex chastity tube back into the key-vault, clicked it shut and rotated the four wheels for the very last time.

"This is the end of the war as far as I'm concerned," you added as you stood in front of the tiny steel box on the wall and opened your leather purse and began putting on your calfskin gloves. "We won't have you screwing around anymore, that's a relief. I know a lot of ladies that'll be overjoyed when I tell them of your liberation..."

You had that let sink in properly, looking at my face with your sexy pink lips twisted in a funny little smile. For seven years I tried to figure out what it meant and now suddenly it has been revealed to me.

You put on your mantle, the chique short one that bends to the salient line of your magnificent breasts.

"So... Peter: Bye bye..." A short disinterested stroke of my left cheek, a quick little smile as you pat me on the head for the last time. I smell the bittersweet calfskin all around me and love it as always. As always you are omnipresent, a tall lady, towering over me on your expensive snakeskin pumps. Your bosom accuses me of being a small man and your eyes are that of a streetwise old girl that seems to own my house and only just tolerates me in it. Even now when it is the last time you're here.

You turn your back to me, still smiling slightly as if leaving me amuses the hell out of you. I hear your high heeled feet descending the stairs carefully. The gloves squeaking softly on the banister. I can hear your wide silk skirt swishing with every step down. You're so elegant. You put on your best skirt and blouse to break off with me. Even put on nylons and pumps. The front door closes. The clicking of your heels

endlessly fading on the pavement as you are leaving me. Destination unknown.

That was seven years ago. I haven't heard of you since you left. You guys won the war alright! I haven't looked at a woman or a girl or even at a sexy lantern pole for quite a long time. Just been working, living my life, playing my ballroom and jazz records and cd's in the evening, drinking merlot with moderation, thinking how motherly proud you'd be of me being all gentlemanlike.

The strange thing is it gives me a certain sexual gratification thinking these thoughts of you being proud of me, patting my head softly, admiringly, smilingly across the void. You're even telling your friends in the void about me and they are smiling too. Elderly ladies smiling at me, their smiling lips expressing amused contentment tinged with just a bit of disdain. They used to be quite pretty when they were younger and their eyes can still easily express disdain when they look at a man. Not that it gives me an erection obviously, for I'd have to unthink them in that case wouldn't I. It's more like a warm, lonely nearness of femininity that lingers in my belly and makes me hear your confident low voice saying 'very good Peter...' at the head of the other lady's voices, nodding with disdain in their eyes and saying 'yes, very good Peter... well done...' in unison as if I'm being baptized or something and they're the choir. It stimulates me and makes me cry at the same time.

Yet tonight I had a dream of you telling me the war had ended, winking at me lecherously from the crowded foyer of a cinema and the thought of sex with you was foremost in my dreamtime mind. Then we walked to the seaside, arm in arm, the promenade cold under the soles of my feet and you wore your six inch spikes for me. Suddenly I was in your arms and I felt the hard bra in your blouse pushing against my naked shoulders, my arms around your high silk hips, my eyes turned hungrily up at your wrinkled face, to your strong mouth, your sly prostitute's eyes so amused, for I was too short to kiss your pink lips. I just drank in the sweet sticky smell of your lipstick and your chewing gum as you smiled down at me and seduced me to try and kiss your lips by jumping up at them in public. Oh your crooked smile as I jumped up time and again. There were soldiers and sailors standing around laughing and yelling 'Sharon... Sharon...' and clapping their hands every time I jumped.

It was as strong as a headache. My penis was throbbing inside its blood red plastic cage like in the days of old. I ran into the living room and sat staring at the curtains, thinking about wars and the year they ended. Which war could you have been referring to? I wanted to be absolutely certain. Picking the wrong war would devastate me. Was it the Crimean War? I know when it ended but you're no Florence Nightingale. The Opium Wars? You're not a bit the old hippie girl. You're more the jazz type. You despise drugs, free sex and men who partake in them. First World War? Second? The Falklands? Jeez, so many wars. But you know I'm a sucker for all those historical tidbits. 'Mister Know-it-all' you sometimes called me and it wasn't a compliment. No my love, I think you want to rub it in, pick an easy one to humiliate me in liberation. Besides, your father died in the Ardennes. How easy can this riddle be. For how old are soldiers that die in the Ardennes? How old are their daughters? How old her sons?

Pasadena was sitting between the amp and the record player again, watching me this time, not the curtains. His eyes were closed but for two narrow suspicious slits like he was thinking I was talking to him about World War Two to compensate for the missing snow covered rooftops he loves so much.

After a while I made up my mind and stopped mumbling at my cat. I stood up, limbs all shaking and stood before the vault. I set the wheels at 1945 and pushed the lever down like it was a time machine.

The vault opened and I took the key out. Tears were streaming down my face. I'm such a crybaby. I guess they must have been tears of gratitude. For releasing me from across the void. My love for you shall never end my darling.

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I was lying on my bed naked, stroking my recovered penis. I stared at the ceiling for a while but then I closed my eyes and saw you. You are sitting on the arm rest of my Chesterfield. I am in it naked. A blood red silk breast is hanging in front of my eyes, pointing at the open windows. The choir ladies are standing on the pavement below. I can hear their voices as they exchange opinions of my manhood. It seems I'm not much of a man. It is summer in my fantasy. It always is. You have to be a sick motherfucker to mix the weather into your sex fantasy. Even if you haven't had one in seven years.

You don't think I'm much of a man either. Very lightly you touch my cheek with the tip of your silky red tit. "Now Peter, I want you to show the ladies outside on the street what a man you really are..." you say.

"Yes Sharon," I reply modestly, demurely. I begin to cry softly.

We get off the Chesterfield and you take my hand and lead me to the open window. "Show them, darling," you urge me. I push my pelvis out, over the windowsill, my penis in both hands as if I am about to sprinkle the ladies in the street with a golden shower. But it's tears that fall down on their upturned faces and they are not afraid of me. They are laughing and you are laughing too beside me. You are like a big silk mother that's laughing at her little boy, just a bit disappointed at his small stature, his childishness, his shyness. "Don't go away girls..." you call out.

We sit in the Chesterfield again. Your red breast touches my face again. The tip against my right eye. My eyelid feels the elasticity of your silk breathing. The hardness of a well filled cup. I am in paradise. "Now Peter, you know as well as I that lonely little men like you don't deserve to be called a man, do you..?"

I nod in silence, afraid of the terrible humiliation that's bound to come.

"What would you like to call yourself then, little Peter.. if not a man..?"

"I... I don't know Mummy..." I reply and begin sobbing softly.

You're smiling down at me. Your gloved hands lift my chin, wipe my tears away softly. They put my wet face against the tip of your blood red breast again. The silk sticks to my skin. It moves over the soft hard bra tip, swishing softly. Somewhere inside your red blouse something makes a sticky sound as you increase the heavenly silicone pressure against my nose.

"But I think you do my little darling..." you say. "I do believe you do my little one... Come, and Mummy will show you..."

You get up from the armrest and lead me naked into the bedroom. My baby blue taffeta silk dress is lying on the bed waiting for me. Why

baby blue? I don't know but it has to be that way. The snow white bra lying on top of the shining silk pushes its empty cups up hard like a bored girl yawning. Your spare silicone breasts are lying beside it like puddings on display. They stick to my chest and are heavy in my cups. The taffeta dress rustles as it sinks down coldly over my skin and covers me in a gleaming layer of cool feather weight baby blue heaven. And when you take me to the open window all rustling and perfumed like The Empress Sisi in Venice and I hear the ladies' crystal laughter rising up from the street I... I...

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A shop in the west side you used to take me to. It's somewhere behind the West Boulevard I dimly remember. Also there was something about a hotel that you knew quite well. One of these rundown Victorian piles forever trying to emulate The Grand and the other big hotels on East Boulevard. A small cinema nearby that you used to be taken to by your lovers. You were always chattering happily when we went to the west side. Even that last time.

A chilly fog is descending over the city. It shrouds me in anonymity. Somewhere in the unseen distance I hear the roar of the surf. The clatter of rolling gravel as the waves retreat from the shingle hissing angrily at their failure to flood the land. The door jams a little. Could be the moist air.

"Oh hello Peter, are you doing well..?" the old lady asks and smiles sweetly, eyes twinkling. She's tall just like you are. Her small wrinkled hands are putting a number of brassieres back into a salmon pink drawer that sits on the counter. When she's done she turns around and shoves it back into the stack of drawers behind her. It covers the lower half of the entire wall. The drawers have enameled plates screwed on with different sizes on them. As she turns I take a quick sneak at her breast line. She's a worthy lingerie shopkeeper. I've always admired her when mummy and I went shopping in the west side.

"Yes Mrs. Marshall," I reply, "...and may I say you look as ravishing as ever?"

She looks at me with self-confidence. "Finally come looking for your mummy..?" she asks. I start blushing. Damn this blushing. I can't seem to enter a shop these days without blushing. I'm forty three damn

it. This chastity has really done more damage than good. I'm glad it's over. Time to get back into the fast lane again.

"Has Sharon been in here lately..?" I inquire.

"Sure. She's a very loyal customer and a true friend. She's in here regularly. She lives nearby. She bought a beautiful snow white Himalaya a few months ago. You should have seen her Peter..."

Why is it every handsome lady deems it necessary to swamp me in innuendo? Is it because I am small and most likely won't have anything like a sexlife? What they don't ever acknowledge is that it takes a bit of courage to step inside the lady's world and start asking questions. Granted, Mummy introduced me, taking me along whenever she went into town. She even took me here when both her breasts were amputated and she needed a new set. But all the same. I'm here. And I am not afraid. I am a man.

"I believe you Mrs. Marshall..." I endeavor hurriedly, but it is too late. Mrs. Marshall turns around again and pulls a drawer open. She takes a white bra out and shows it to me. To my surprise it is the exact same bra that I saw lying on the bed for me while I was masturbating. Its cups are straight into my face accusingly in Mrs. Marshall's small old hands as she brings them closer. She turns her hands and shows it to me sideways. "See that gorgeous line Peter..?" she says in a seductive tone. But I have no words to answer her. My eyes are devouring the most beautiful piece of lingerie I have ever seen. I feel an erection coming. From looking at a bra. Hallelujah, I am alive again. Where is the choir now? They're never around when you need them most.

"She always was one gorgeous lady," I say, "...much the same as you are. Do you wear Himalaya yourself?"

Mrs. Marshall smiles and winks at me. "At our age is there any other way to draw men's eyes little Peter..?" she replies. To my sweet shock she turns halfway around and pushes her bosom out slightly, Mummy's bra held in front of it for comparison. The silky blouse she's wearing shows a gorgeous swelling, youngish and arrogant. No sagging here..! I can see a sharp white cup edged with lace shimmering through the refined fabric. She looks me in the eye sideways. "The Himalaya look..." she says. "It's the latest thing. I sell a lot of these. Your mother bought three. She likes men – well... real men at any rate Peter – to look

at her. Especially after the mastectomies. But why is it..." She turns back to me, "...I have the feeling you'd love to own one yourself..?"

I am thunderstruck by her words. I'm blushing like a beet root and I feel tears welling up inside me. A warm longing bogs my abdomen like coming home after a rough adventure in the wild. I feel as if I'm drifting freely while the heavy swamp draws me down in vain with sticky fingers. But I am weightless, like your silk skirt descending the stairs dancing around your nylon knees, like my baby blue dream dress. I'm floating. My fantasies are finally in the open and I am free.

Mrs. Marshall smiles at me again. "Just teasing. Tell you what Peter," she says in a sort of kind yet condescending way. "I have a lady coming in in a few minutes. I'll be taking her into the booth at the back for a while. So, my little friend, why don't you come back at nine tonight? Ring the bell at the adjacent door. It can't miss. I'll help you find your mum..."

The door is pulled open with some difficulty and a sour looking woman in her sixties enters. Her hairdo and eyebrows and the dark sheen that covers her mean upper lip are covered with tiny drops of mist. I slip outside, still walking on air. I am coming home at last. I feel certain of it. You are calling me from across the void. The war is indeed over and liberation beckons from all around me in this misty suburb by the sea. And as I walk back to the bus stop, looking in mild and loving surprise at the vague shapes of people, lantern poles, litter bins and parked cars that appear out of the fog, I have an intuition you are waiting for me this very moment in some central heated living room somewhere near.

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When I ring the bell that evening the fog has subsided. A man of my height and age opens the door and asks me very politely to follow him up the stairs.

"There you are Peter..." Mrs. Marshall says gaily as we enter the living room. It is decorated in the most feminine way I have ever seen. Furniture and cupboards are lined with frilly pink silk and lace ribbons. Large framed covers of fifties fashion magazines are hanging on the salmon pink silk draped walls, lit by beautiful lilac silk lampshades. They all depict classically dressed American ladies Vogue style. There is

a lot of silk on them too, a fact that visibly pleases them. It's so tender to their expensive skin. The rest of the room is indirectly lit in soft white that seems to shine through the ceiling like magic, contrasting beautifully with the silk draping. Its sheer female elegance overwhelms me and I turn to Mr. Marshall in wonder but the mystery is soon resolved. His wife looks him in the eyes with a haughty little smile and says "Randolph..?" very softly.

Mr. Marshall jumps to attention and with a polite little bow to his charming mistress he leaves the room in a hurry.

"I'm so glad the mist's abated," she says and turns to me and invites me to sit with her on the Victorian two-seater with a graceful gesture. I sit down next to her, quite close actually. The elegant little couch doesn't leave me much room to maneuver.

"These seaside towns seem to be perpetually covered in fog," she says with a frown. "When one does go out in it..." she lifts a pleat of her silk skirt in a dainty hand and looks at it sternly, "...the bloody mist covers a lady's clothes with salty soot. Would you imagine Randolph has to steam wash skirts and dresses every time we've gone shopping in the fog Peter?"

"It's the exhaust gasses I imagine. The fog prevents them from rising..." I reply limply and Mrs. Marshall looks a little disappointed.

"You're not one of those technical know-it-alls are you? Dreary lot..." She frowns again and regards me as if I'm covered in soot too. But she quickly shrugs it off.

"Anyway, your mum and I always have a chardonnay together," she says. "Randolph..!" She hasn't raised her voice noticeably.

The door opens and Mr. Marshall enters quietly. He bows before his wife again. "Yes Claire..?" he inquires shyly. His voice is barely audible. His politeness is really something. What a pervert. I think I like him.

"Pour Peter and me a glass of chardonnay will you my darling..?" she says in a rather friendly voice. "And be sure you put the bottle straight back into the Frigidaire. You know how I feel about you drinking..."

Again Randolph makes one of his pretty bows. He gets upright only after Mrs. Marshall says "Yes thank you Randolph," in a somewhat mocking matron's tone. He seems to like it very much. He blushes a little and looks briefly at her wrinkled face. I can see how he adores her. He must at least be a bit perverted. We could learn to understand each other better, given the time and the opportunity.

Meanwhile his wife is studying my face, the mockery still lingering on her lips. "And so, little Peter," she says, "...we come to the question why. Why come to me to find your mother?"

"Well, since you've helped her after the operation and sold her the prostheses I thought she might..." I hesitate.

"You thought she might. Well, that's enlightening. You're a fountain of clarity I must say. So on the off chance you picked a lingerie shop she's taken you to, what... once or twice, to help her carry a new bra, or a pair of silicone prostheses, to inquire about her new whereabouts..?"

I nod. "Yes Mrs. Marshall," I reply as polite as I can. Randolph comes in and places glasses of chilled white wine on tiny round tables at each end of the couch. Here comes the Marshall ceremony again. Randolph lingers on, bent over slightly in front of his wife, eyes on her bosom. She keeps him waiting a dazzlingly precise amount of time for complete humiliation before releasing him with a subtle "very good Randolph..." I would gladly trade places with him. Her voice is sheer magic. It is honey with just a touch of vitriol. A kiss from her lips means a slow painful death. I never knew she was that devastating.

"Bollocks Peter..." she answers resolutely as soon as her husband has left the room. She sips from her glass and puts it right back in the exact middle of the little table beside her without looking. She is very precise in everything. I am a little afraid of her. "Bollocks. You could have asked the hospital, the insurance company, a hundred places she must have taken you to carry her bags for her. You might have looked her up in the phonebook. She is listed you know..!"

There I am blushing again. She is looking right through me. With a calm finesse she finishes me off. "But no. Brave Sir Peter thought she might..."

I can feel her eyes on me. I am looking at her silk skirt. Pleats fall elegantly around her crossed knees. One of them – the sooted one - touches my trouser leg. I can feel the fabric coolly against my skin or is it my imagination again. I imagine a lot of things. Sometimes I think I am a little psychic. There is that magic voice again too. She pours vitriolic honey on my sensitive soul. It is a liquid precision bombardment.

“I know what really brings you here. You must have been so lonely. It’s something she’s told you in a dream isn’t it..? The seven meager years of Egypt come to an end after Joseph had a vision...”

I’m nodding again. Well, I should confess it was the masturbation fantasy that really put Joseph on the right track to Potifar’s wife, but I don’t think she would like the man to man type small talk. I watch in silence as her dainty little hand takes the pleat of her wide silk skirt and lays it across my thigh. The hand caresses the shiny silk on my leg smoothly, admiringly. Her eyes are on me again. I can feel the smile inside them and the honey and the vitriol. She is in charge and I’m all hers. She could start a collection of us. Put us in glass jars between the Vogue covers on her silk wall. I’m beginning to think that would be fine with me. Randolph and I could have endless discussions on her merits and her shortcomings.

“Stands to reason,” she says with something of triumph in her voice. “She is a beautiful lady and a disastrous mother. An excellent combination for haunting the dreams of little boys and men. Was it the breasts? That’s what usually gets the message across. It happens to be my specialty...” She looks at the door and says “Randolph..?” very softly. There is a playful glint in her eyes as she looks me over expectantly.

Right enough the door opens and Randolph enters the room again on tiptoes as if he hadn’t left it a minute ago. I don’t know how he does it.

“Yes Claire..?” he whispers. She fixes her eyes in his calmly and that paralyzes him to the point that he just stands in front of her and kind of looks at nothing in particular a bit glazed.

She turns to me again. “Don’t mind him Peter. Tell me about your dream. Did she beckon you from afar?”

“Not from very far. Not from far and away across the ocean of time or something. It was in the foyer of a cinema, at a sort of prostitutes’ union party. After a couple of beers she took me for a walk on the boulevard. The war had just ended and I was naked. It was nineteen forty five and I felt liberated. I took off all my clothes for her and folded them up neatly and put them in her hands for safekeeping. She threw them in a litter bin and then we embraced and I...”

“...Felt her breasts?”

“Yes. I... I...”

She puts her arm around my shoulder. The creamy silk of her sleeve tickles my neck. At the same time she twists her upper body slightly. The magnificent snow covered Himalaya’s are now slightly facing me, shimmering visibly in the shiny cream colored fabric. Her hand covers mine and puts it in her silk lap as if by accident. Her other arm pulls me closer almost unnoticeably. I am inclined to lay my weary head on her shoulder but the presence of her husband holds me back.

“She let you touch them..?” she says softly.

I look at her face. It is tilted upwards toward Randolph. I see the corner of her mouth conveying an unfathomably subtle message to him, clothed in a silk marital language. Randolph is blushing heavily. He looks very unhappy and with a cry of pain he turns around and runs out of the living room. I hear him crying softly in the hall but Claire doesn’t seem to care. She turns to me again, an amused smile on her handsome old face. She pulls me in and puts my face against her neck. The skin feels old and soft. It’s beginning to sag a little, bulging over the pretty lace collar. I smell a bitter sweet perfume that is somehow familiar. “You ready..?” she whispers.

“Yes Claire...” I reply. I kiss her neck lovingly, expectantly and even a little afraid. Our folded hands slide upwards over the silk together, making the sweetest sound. The trajectory bends outwards sharply. And then the fullness of her silicone breast standing resolutely in the Himalaya cup shocks me to the bottom of my soul and I can’t help but cry. I’m sobbing in her arms, desperately lonely for you, mother, who are calling me from somewhere very near.

Claire’s voice in my ear is like some dazzlingly expensive oriental fabric with magic woven into it. “I seem to make men cry this

evening..." she says. "It's almost like the old days on the pier together, the games we played, your mother and I. The Crybaby Contests we used to call them..."

The silk rustles, the bosom trembles against my chest and she looks down on me. She is laughing silently, a perfumed old girl seductress. Her fingers wipe the tears from my eyelids gently. "Come with me my little friend," she says.

She gets up and we leave the pink silk living room and I see Randolph catching a sneak look from a half closed doorway. We descend the stairs, Claire's silk skirt emulating yours in elegantly billowing weightlessness like when you left me. She leads me through a narrow corridor and opens a door and suddenly we're inside the shop. I am surrounded by mannequins in expensive looking lingerie standing in the semi darkness.

"Feel free to admire the girls..." Mrs. Marshall says lightly. "Great tits on some of them..."

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The booth is lit in indirect ochre from a slit around the top of the four walls. It is rather small and breathes calm and reassuring female professionalism. We are gathered here to make you whole again. It isn't cheap, but you shall be all woman as you've always been, as you have a right to be once more.

We are sitting in expensive white leather office chairs across a glass coffee table. Claire looks at me in a new crispy way I haven't seen before. The sharply cupped breasts inside her blouse seem to acquire new depths. Maybe it's the lighting.

She swivels her chair around and produces two yellow linen boxes that she places on the coffee table. Her fingers rip one open with an ugly Velcro sound that explodes in the booth like Hiroshima. Maybe I'm a bit on edge. I could use a coolant and I regret leaving my chardonnay upstairs in Silk Paradise. Randolph is probably sipping from it right now. That is if his wife doesn't use a breathalyzer.

Mrs. Marshall takes out a large skin colored silicone prostheses and weighs it in her hand admiringly. She hands it to me and I hesitantly take it from her. It is very heavy. She rips the other box open and takes the

prostheses out and hands it to me. “These are double D’s, the size your mum wears, that I wear on my right. Same brand, her exact same breasts that you’re holding in your hands. And mine. Feel how heavy they are? Try to squeeze them. You’ll get a notion of the sort of girls we were...”

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She switches off the ochre booth lighting for special effect. We are in total darkness but for a tiny red LED light on the coffee machine blinking on and off signifying that the water canister is empty. I hear her ancient voice meandering to the past. Your breasts are heavy on my hands.

“We resided in a little rum hole in the arcades at the west end of the promenade where the fish stores are. It was called The Popeye and that’s exactly what most of them did once their hungry little eyes got used to the dark. They saw us sitting at the bar sipping quietly through our multicolored reeds and popped their eyes like dogs in a Tex Avery cartoon before the feature film began.

“For a while The Popeye became the scene of the jazz set. Those were the days of our youth. We were called Olive, Sharon and I. Someone yelled ‘hey Bluto, give Olive a drink,’ and we’d both be getting fresh cocktails. We didn’t know a lot about bebop but we understood cool. Cool ran through our veins like lifeblood, from our Hollywood hairdo’s to the index finger with which we summoned them to come and chat us up. It shone out of our heavily made up eyes. We even exhaled our smokes through our nose, that’s how cool we were.

“When jazz ended and the hippies arrived we stuck around but they didn’t. They preferred the park, playing their guitars and making out with long haired no bras. Business dwindled. But old Bluto was a stubborn geezer. ‘No psychedelics in my clam joint’ was his motto and we decided to stay cool and remain his pearls.

“And priceless we were. We considered ourselves the queens of the boulevard. We were both gorgeous girls. We were tall and busty and possessed the arrogance to go with it. After your grandfather died during the war your grandmother kicked her daughter out on the street for insolent behavior. You know what she’s like. From what I heard just about anything you or your mother said was insolence.”

I'm nodding unseen. She was vicious my grandmother. I lived with her for years as a kid. I still shudder when I think of her, like right now. The Victorian wallpapered en suite. The clock on the mantel shelf. The teas in silence, sitting on opposite sides of the table in the front room bay window. The streets with cars I imagined on the red and green woolen lines of the table Persian. Parking places. Special fast lanes for the police and the fire brigade that I considered to be of the utmost importance. My finger tracing their track. Granny's bitter voice saying 'stop it Peter..!'

"I never had the pleasure of meeting the old lady," Mrs. Marshall says. "Is she still alive?"

"I don't know. I never heard from her after I left."

"Good for you. Anyway after a series of foster homes Sharon got herself a cheap room in the attic of The King George Hotel here in the west. It's right across the street. Earning money was never difficult for her. She attracted men like flies buzzing around the honey jar, doing her all kinds of favors, buying her the things a pretty young lady needs. Some guy was always holding her hand, hoping for a brush of her breast against his arm, or both of them pushing briefly against his chest when she kissed him goodbye and whispered 'thank you for taking me to the movies love...' in his ear with a little smile on her face that said 'now get lost you sucker...'

"The pier on East Boulevard was our hunting ground. And that's where the Crybaby Contests began. I met a little guy in a pinball hall, Little Florrie, poor sod. Florrie, what a name... Anyway I went with him for a few weeks just for laughs and then broke up with him in the Popeye. Your mother was present. Florrie began to cry. He clung to my skirt, he begged your mother to intervene on his behalf and when Bluto kicked him out onto the promenade we had a laughing fit. Afterwards we felt exhilarated. We even went looking for him on the boulevard to hurt him some more, like we were hooked on some weird psychedelic drug or something. Bluto began paying us to bring them in and trample on them and destroy their faith in women. He set us up against one another to create a contest, which was a brilliant move. Soon the Popeye was the most dangerous place in town for aspiring romantics. You were hurt by either of us. There was no escape. During the weekends it was loaded with curious guys, waiting in line to have their hearts broken. I don't think there was a place like ours anywhere on the South Coast.

Maybe in the Northwest. I once heard there were some pretty devastating girls working the coast over there too.

“Your father was a sneaky little rattlesnake. He worked on a fishing boat. Cried easily for a tough sailor, just like you do. You’re his spitting image, little Peter. Only his bite was pure venom...”

The blinking red sheen from the coffee machine reveals a corner of her mouth as she lifts her head and I see her smiling in the dark. Her voice sounds amused too. Yet I can hear a bitter undertone.

“Randy used to smile while he was crying. It was very curious. Haven’t seen anything since, not even in the cinema. Looked us in the eye unblinking, accusing us of crushing his heart, tears streaming down his face, grinning all the while like Robert DeNiro. Well, I have seen it obviously. Don’t remember in what film though. It’s been so long ago. Ages since I saw a new film now the Roxy has closed down, it must have been on the telly...”

“Anyway we tossed him over and back Sharon and I. That was against the rule of the house. A crybaby usually got one cry. One from both of us. If one of us hurt a crybaby one day the other clamped him against her DD cups, comforted him a little and began a new pain game the next, trying to outdo the other in efficiency. Until he broke. After one round Bluto wouldn’t let him into the Popeye anymore. Make room for a new crybaby. A freak show. That’s what it was really, a vaudeville. Two whores performing their little guy act on stage for a cheering public. The winner got a bonus from Baron Death like that Caribbean geezer in the Bond movie.

“But your father was a stubborn little sailor. And he irritated us. Always knew better, had a technical explanation for everything, a bleeding know-it-all that’s what he was. Probably to compensate for his smallness. We abandoned the rules this once, just for him. We tossed that crybaby over till he didn’t know his head from his arse. He even mixed up our names in the end, tipsy turvy like a drunken cockroach. Or should I say a scorpion...”

“It was a lot of fun. Until he finally managed to knock me up, the vicious little sex addict. I remember him working himself up on top of me, grasping my tits like there’s no tomorrow, pecking away down there in a rage. I could hardly see him, it was hilarious..! Nor feel him, the little

shrimp. I started to laugh. Just couldn't keep it inside me and foolish old me I explained the Crybaby Contest rules as he lay fucking the steam out of his ears like Popeye the Sailor man. And what a lucky bastard he was, getting to... oh, round six, or seven because we had such a great time playing him from both sides. He smiled like Robert DeNiro. 'This means war baby...' he cried and then he came, sobbing and grinning at the same time. What a creep!

"That poor excuse for a man upstairs that you think is my husband? Well, he is my son. Little Randy junior, the result of condom failure. Randy had ripped it off his pecker unseen while I lay admiring my breasts..."

I'm feeling something creeping up across my backside. I shiver when it reaches my neck and for a moment I can hear my teeth rattling softly.

"I should have warned Sharon about the condom trick. But it was too late. He was on the war path and in her room in the King George the same day..."

My strength falters and a silicone breast slips from my hand and splashes on the floor like dead jelly fish on the quay. It is the dark of night. The ship is lit by halogen quay lights. My father is dressed in a yellow suit. He looks angry as his black boots wade through the haul that is spread out slippery across the aft. He bends over and a second later another jelly fish flies through the air and crashes on the quay. My father is angry with the world. He is hurt by the world, lured into its shining silk seduction Babylon for a moment and rejected as jelly fish in a herring catch. He stamps on jelly fish with his giant boots and swears never to come back to the world of whores, never to return to harbor again. Not even to reclaim his children.

"So, Peter... now you know..." she says softly as my tears stream down my face in the darkness. I'm such a crybaby. Did I mention that?

Mrs. Marshall switches the booth lights on and opens the door and she leads me through the shop where the mannequins are waiting in their underwear in the dark with blind eyes and white pouting lips. They are standing in the ghostly sheen of the white TL lit marquee of the cinema across the street, next to The King George Hotel. Rambo Five was the last movie it played. That was seven years ago if I remember rightly.

It must have been the fifth although the number has gone. As Claire unlocks the shop door for me, nodding at the cinema front and I cross the street I can see it as a phantom shadow capital V on the dull, dried Perspex. Time stands still when you're at the movies!

*

It is called the Roxy. The lettering above the marquee is in neon italics, fixed to ancient point-welled metal casings that were died yellow once upon a time to make them blend into the fake Bauhaus summer resort cinema front. The yellow paint is blistering, the loose shards blown off by the salty wind from the beach. The neon letters have died out years ago. A lifeless bluish sheen splutters momentarily near a contact, humming angrily at its own weakness. Most of the other contact points have given up fighting.

From the inside the letters are even uglier. The first floor foyer windows offer a view of their rusted nakedness. In a corner of the foyer a Christmas tree is waiting to be decorated. I hear your footsteps calmly descending unseen somewhere behind the ancient wood paneling. You wear very high heels, the careful yet confident sound they make on the wooden stairs is unmistakable and my heart is pounding in my chest. I think I hear the hissing of silk around your nylon knees. A hidden door opens behind a cardboard lobby standee depicting Sylvester Stallone half naked, two giant knives in his uplifted fists, the Beijing Forbidden City in the cardboard background. A helicopter buzzing overhead with real turning rotors till the batteries went dead and the LED anger in Rambo's eyes died with it. The Pasadena Roof Orchestra is playing softly from a multitude of ceiling speakers. It's my favorite: Isn't It Romantic? Oh god, I used to play it all the time for you. You were crazy about it. You were crazy about dancing on it with your son naked in your arms, clasped against your hard silk breasts, playing your cruel games with his castrated love. I remember well. It's all coming back now that I know who you are.

"Rambo is dead..." you say, closing the invisible door and stepping into view. "He forgot to bend his head when he stepped out of his chopper."

Oh mother, you are so tall on your black pumps. When I step into your silky black whore's embrace I realize I forgot how tall you are, how

beautiful and young your bosom is, how seductive your pink smile, and how much I am still in love with you now that Joseph has come home to Potifar's wife.

*

After I've inserted new batteries for Rambo in a hole in the standee's white cardboard backside and I've discovered how to switch off the silly turning rotor we begin to decorate the tree together. Boxes full of balls and tinsel garlands and other stuff are on the tables surrounding us. You play one of your cruel little games again like the ones you used to with me and daddy. The game begins when you ask me to bring you a ball and I fetch one for you. The boxes all contain balls of the same color and I choose a red one. But you shake your head frowning impatiently. I put it back into the box and take one out of another box and bring it to you. I run, anxious for your approval.

"Can you do nothing right..?" you say in a soft cruel voice. I am running back and forth, bringing you all colors but it is never the right color. The last ball is. I must have been afraid of it. It is the sweetest pale baby blue and you smile and pat me on the head and say "very good Rambo..." in an amused voice. You know about subtle condescension like your friend Claire.

"Thank you mother," I whisper standing helplessly before you.

You smile down on me from a cloud of female mystery. "As a child you were very fond of that color," you say and you nod at a spot on the foyer ceiling, somewhere above The Forbidden City. "Most boys love fierce colors but you were very girly, you preferred soft pastel shades and soft silky fabrics. Coarser stuff made you cry." You giggle. Why do you always giggle? Is it to underscore the crying you speak of? Don't you always do that? Giggle when you say cry? Do all women do it? It is worthy of an anthropological investigation but I have more important matters on my mind.

"You had a dress that color Mummy, a baby blue silk dress. I remember now..." My knees are shaking. Man's self destruction knows no bounds.

"Very good Rambo..!" you reply and pat my head again. "You loved it. You came sneaking from behind all the time to stroke my

buttocks and press your cheeks against them as if I were your favorite angel. Do you remember that I bought you a pretty baby blue silk dress for your birthday? One just like mine? Never seen you so happy. You wore dresses a lot before you went to live with granny. Bring me another blue ball..."

"The war isn't over is it Mother?"

"No Rambo. The war never ends..."

"So 1945 wasn't really liberation, it was just a part of your strategy?"

"I'm afraid it was, son."

"So... Won't I look sweet in a pale blue taffeta dress running after you to kiss your silk ass like a lovesick little puppy dog? Like in the old days?"

"Hmm, yes... I would like that very much." You smile an amused little smile like the ones in my fantasies.

"And the ladies..? The choir..?"

You laugh as if I've said something utterly ridiculous. Maybe 'the choir' is a little off the mark. But the dress was correct, I had that right, so the ladies will probably be there too. Only they don't really sing. They croon, they giggle. They fake orgasms. They whip and they cane.

"Well... the other whores then..."

"You'll meet them on Christmas Day. And Peter, I wouldn't call them that in their faces as you used to do from what I hear. They're mistresses. You and Randolph'll have a hard enough time with us without the ugliness. Besides, it doesn't suite little men like you to call a lady anything. You just run our little errands and be obedient and polite. That's all we ask."

After we've finished decorating the tree I switch off Rambo and we go through the hidden door. We ascend a narrow staircase and go through another door that comes out on a long corridor. There are rooms on either side. They're not very big as the ones in The Grand of course, but the George looks clean enough even if the floor creaks and the carpet is a little worn. A pretty girl in uniform coming out of a room looks at me

as if I don't fit here. She thinks I'm a customer taken up to Sharon's room to be whipped and tortured.

"Tell William I'll be leaving the George next week will you?" you say to her. "I'm moving in with this little chap."

The girl looks at me and laughs. "Think you can afford Mistress Sharon then..?" she says. Now you both smile at me. "Can you, Peter..?" you ask.

I nod. "Yes mother..." I reply. I'm blushing happily. You pull me close. I'm feeling like your puppy already.

*

Your suite on the loft. There is no elevator and I hear you breathing heavily when we enter. The living room is the exact opposite of Claire's silk paradise. You live in stylish sobriety. It's got a half round floor to ceiling lead came window in soft pastel shades of brown and blue. One should remember a room like this I suppose but I don't. All I see is how you'll want our house redone. I hope you let me keep my stereo.

You lead me into another room.

The bed.

You open a wardrobe. There is no leather and latex stuff, just silk and satin, which has always been your thing. But the top shelf is an array of SM paraphernalia, all neatly beside each other like an antechamber of hell. You take out a black pouch just like the one you bought for me long ago. The strange thing is that I am not afraid of it. I long for it, for the warmth and the eerie closeness it'll produce just like after you left me. Only now it'll be even better, more real. The chastity device shall bring us closer than ever now that you'll be my mistress wife.

And indeed after you've locked me in again you kiss me. You put your tongue in my mouth but it isn't a prostitute's tongue. It is a mother's tongue. It is strong and calmly penetrating and I almost swoon in your arms.

*

We go shopping again together. It isn't far, just across the street. In the booth my chest is sprayed with skin glue and I'm fitted with a perfect

bosom. Mrs. Marshall fetches a pretty snow-white bra for it from the shop and it is familiar of course like everything else. I know a Himalaya when I see one.

Afterwards Randolph takes me to his room and lends me my baby blue silk dress from his wardrobe. He's a closet transvestite. Who wouldn't be, living with a girl like Claire. It's about time he stepped out of the closet and Christmas is an excellent occasion. I get pretty white sandals on my feet with heels that make me stand up and take the world like a man. I blush when I stand before you and Claire in the pink silk living room. You look exceedingly happy. I'm crying like a baby and I see you smile through my tears while you whisper my name over and over again.

Naturally the occasion calls for some ceremony. Claire tells her son to go and put on his light brown taffeta dress and cream sandals with her eyes. Randy and I prepare plates of assorted tapas for the ladies and open a chilled bottle of chardonnay from the Frigidaire. We enter the living room all shiny and rustling and blushing with delight. We place the glasses and plates on the little round tables on each side of the couch. We make a pretty reverence and kiss our mother's hand in unison. The tears are in our eyes again as we look at each other and slide into a silk embrace, soft laughter and gloved hands applauding off-screen. You and Claire raise your glasses and toast to the end of the crybaby contests and my brother and I watch you getting tipsy in sheer adoration of your weathered beauty.

*

Memories of my childhood are vague. I'm sure it'll all come back to me, drifting to the surface one dreamy night now that I'm in chastity again. The blue and brown window should. I just hope there won't be any of the granny stuff. That I can do without.

She was a tall woman, big breasted, sour looking, spiteful. She may have been a good wife but she was a lousy widow and an even worse grandmother. She was a lot bigger and stronger than I and she would beat me sometimes. I was fifteen when one foggy day I slipped out of there for good and embarked on my path of sin. I know now that it was you I was looking for all the time, you in every girl I lusted after, you

who had sent me away to live in that silent, joyless, clockticking hellhouse in the first place.

I never found you. It was you who found me. Some whore somewhere must have told you about me and you got a little curious. Or a little angry. Or both. And there you were one day, all shiny silk and gloves and vero cuoio heels. We had battles of will of course. Men and women do. It's a war out there. But I guess I've always known in my heart of hearts that you guys will win it someday. Your war games were based on that assumption and I never stood a chance against your formidable confidence, your religious belief in femininity and in male inferiority and ultimate defeat. It's all written down in the chromosomes.

Of Christmasses I have no recollection. Not in the George, of which I have no memories except the baby blue silk dress and your silk buttocks and skirt pleats that I tried to lift in my little hands and look underneath. Not at granny's. She hated anything that interrupted the silence of the clock on the mantel shelf in her en suite coffin. Not at my place when you and I were lovers. This is my first Christmas and our tree has balls that match the colors of our dresses, the colors of my hidden youth.

My brother and I are standing in the lobby just behind the glass doors. It's getting foggy again as the evening sets in. Ladies appear out of nowhere dressed to the tees and Randolph and I swing the glass doors open for them and make a pretty curtsy. With welcome hands we invite them to walk the broad stairs up to the foyer. The stairs have beautiful carpeting like the old theaters in Milan and Vienna, but the carpet's worn like the corridors next door in The George. The things I could do with this place to make it whole again.

Women have never liked me. Maybe I tried too hard to explain how the world works. How everything fits together if you listen closely to the sound it makes and if you heed your mystic eyes and technical handbooks. A lady your age sweeping out of the mist and stepping through the doors proves my case. She feigns delight at finally seeing me. "You must be Peter..." she calls out in the lobby. "He's the CF from that little sailor Claire and Sharon shared back in the sixties," she tells her friend. Her laugh is a harsh sound much like opening a Velcro box. It scares Randolph visibly. We usher her upstairs in a hurry.

When everybody has arrived we lock the glass doors and take up our foyer duty. I'm standing behind a small buffet with glasses of wine and bottles of beer on the counter. I'm a little jealous of Randolph who is waiting. All the ladies seem to like him terribly. He's held up at almost all tables and talked to by gentle SM mistresses with smiling eyes. They feel his silk sleeves and admire his bosom. He looks very happy now that he's finally in the open. But it's a good thing there aren't any men present. He is a little weak. A perfect little princess. I find him very attractive.

But I don't think the world is a happy place for men. Again my point is proven when later on there's a sudden disturbance outside. A drunk in the street rattles at the closed doors and begins to scream abuse up to the foyer windows. His slurred words are apparently directed at Rambo, or at the Roxy itself. At first at least. Later it becomes a bit personal.

"You fuckin' whore..!" he yells. You and Claire look at one another briefly, your eyes lit up with sudden curiosity. Could it be..?

I look at Randolph. He has a startled look in his eyes and throws a frightened glance at his mother. Mrs. Marshall keeps him in check with her eyes calmly in his, conveying her desire through the ether as I have seen her do before. He's as quiet as a rabbit in the poacher's light. With rustling dress skirt I run to the windows, an action that causes immediate giggling. I look down over the dead neon letters and see a small man standing on the pavement looking up, swaying gently in the sea mist, feet well apart. After considerable effort he manages to focus on me. Horror appears in his drunken eyes and for a moment I can sense his disgust. "You fuckin' homo..!" he screams with spittle flying and turns around sort of giddy, making that well known dismissing hand gesture at me that men have for occasions like this, when finding further words to describe me has failed.

The man looks at the hotel entrance a few yards down the road. He shakes his head fatalistically, mumbling 'fuckin' whore' again, judging the way his mouth moves around it. He sticks his hands in his trouser pockets and after a few trials begins walking away in the middle of the street, in the direction of the ocean, swerving left and right. After a last 'fuckin' whore..!' echoing through the deserted street he disappears from view. The sound is blanketed by the dense evening fog and I have the

feeling I won't see him again ever. It's a mixed kind of feeling. No, it is a very sad feeling. He'll probably drown one drunken night hating the world, slipping on the deck in rage, falling overboard crying you fuckin' whores for the last time before sinking through the waves staring like Robert DeNiro in Cape Fear.

I can sense you standing behind me and I turn around and you wipe the tears from my crybaby cheeks with a black silk gloved hand.

"He tries every once in a while, doesn't seem able to grasp the fact the Roxy just does private parties nowadays. Claire won't let him in obviously. Can't have drunks touching the customers in a lingerie store. They won't let him into the George either, not even for one or two coffees in the lounge to sober up. He's a bum, a drunk, a hateful little guy. Forget about him."

"We could remove the Rambo from the marquee for you, Randy and I. And put 'Roxy Party Centre, by invitation only' on it instead."

"And sully your dress..?" You laugh and pat me on the head. "No sweetie, he'll give up trying one of these days. Besides this is the last time Claire and I throw a party on this scale. Time to wrap up, sweetie."

'Sweetie..?' That's a new one. I sense you haven't said it to anybody in a long time and I feel my skin glowing like the Christmas tree. You embrace me and we dance by the window still grinning and sniggering about the sweetie. "What shall I call you next? Olive perhaps..?" I ask and I slip my arms around your silky hips and lay my head upon your breasts. Your low voice is smooth, a bass to our dresses' taffeta rustling. The sound mesmerizes me.

"You were always a wild one, a real Popeye and Olive child, you know that? Always knew better than the other boys. Always wanted to have the last word. You were a pest to the girls and I wasn't at all surprised when I learned what a terrible little sex addict you'd become. Just as that sorry chap outside, your dad. I had to put an end to that, son. I felt to blame. Now you're a decent little crybaby, just like your brother. Look at that sweet boy, you just have to adore him in his pretty dress. Look at how he adores his mum."

I tear myself loose from the body heat adapted silk silicone breasts that have been my lifeline and I see Claire and Randolph dancing just

like we do. He looks up at her handsome wrinkled face as if he is in heaven. The soundtrack provides the perfect atmosphere for it with brass gliding velvety into the cascading refrain:

Isn't it romantic? Merely to be young on such a night as this
Isn't it romantic? Every note that's sung is like a lover's kiss
Sweet symbols in the moonlight, do you mean that I will fall in
love perchance? Isn't it romance...

My guess is it's a very old tube amp. A Siemens or a Philips from before the war. No other machines have that warm sound, old fashioned and yet crystal clear like a silk sheathed blanket. You can almost smell the tubes glowing through the ceiling speakers if you have a nose for sound. Maybe Randy and I can sneak up later to have a look around in the projection booth. I'll teach him all there is to know about sound systems.

By Castre